

# **Things Are Different, But You Still Pretend**

**by**

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**CrissColfer || RPF || M**

*Darren and Chris attended East Clovis High together, and even started dating. All was great until Darren disappears off the face of the planet after graduation, with not so much as a phone call. They meet again when Darren is cast on Glee!*

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## Chapter One

*"No!" Chris yelled, slamming his fist on the desk. "No, no, no, no, no!"*

*Amber ran to Chris. "What is it," she asked, startled.*

*Chris hit his head against the desk before burying his face in his hands. "This can't be happening..," he mumbled.*

*"What is it sweetie?" She rubbed his back consolingly.*

*Normally Chris didn't act out in anger like this. There they were enjoying lunch in Chris' decked out trailer, when he suddenly started freaking out after rifling through some papers.*

*"The new cast member," Chris groaned, barely believing it. "Of all people..,"*

*"Who is it?" Amber was curious now.*

*"His name is Darren Criss," Chris sighed.*

*Chris slid the paper toward her so she could see. "Aw, he's cute," she exclaimed, eyeing his bright eyes and curly hair. He seemed like a nice guy to hang around with, judging by his photograph alone.*

*"So what's the problem?"*

*Chris finally looked up at her, his eyes pleading. "We used to date in high school."*

Darren stretched out on the lawn, twisting his fingers in Chris' thick hair.

"I love you so much, you know that right?" Darren sighed. He closed his eyes, soaking up the sun of the beautiful spring day. Chris took a moment to look up from his studying to admire Darren's long black lashes fanning across his cheeks. Chris was crazy about this boy, and he wanted to spend forever with him.

"I do," Chris smiled, placing a chaste kiss on Darren's lips. "I love you, too."

"It's crazy that I'm graduating already. I can hardly believe it," Darren had a sense of wonder in his tone.

"I know," Chris agreed with a hint of sadness. Although Darren was only 2 years older than him, he knew Darren wanted to stay in California and pursue his dream of either being a musician or an actor. Their relationship could survive this. A couple hour drive wouldn't kill them.

Darren opened his big hazel eyes and gazed at Chris like he was the most beautiful thing in the world. "Don't worry, babe. I'll still be here for you."

Chris sighed. "I just wish I wasn't younger than you, that's all."

Darren shrugged. "Age doesn't matter, you know that. Plus, you're a lot more mature beyond your years, Chris."

Chris blushed at the compliment, but chose not to respond. He looked back at his History book again, copying down quick notes for the test tomorrow.

"So have you gotten any college acceptance letters yet?" Chris asked, curious.

"Yeah," Darren chuckled. "So far only from the University of Michigan, isn't that wierd?"

Chris' heart constricted painfully. "Why did you apply there?"

"My mom said it might be a great experience for me to go to college somewhere far from here, but I told her I couldn't leave you," Darren smiled slightly, sliding his thumb across Chris' cheek. "So stop worrying."

"Sorry," Chris was ashamed of his attachment to Darren, but he had done so much for Chris in such a short period of time. "It's just that.. you saved me, Darren. I'm not sure how to function without you."

Darren's eyes shined with emotion, knowing all too well the bad place Chris was in last year. He was being tormented constantly by his peers, to the point where he stopped eating and skipped class out of fear.

"I mean, thank goodness you moved to Clovis for some ungodly reason. I'm not sure if I would still be here if you hadn't."

Darren grabbed Chris' face, but Chris stared pointedly at the ground. This was not a subject he took lightly, and he was uncomfortable whenever him and Darren talked about it.

"Don't say things like that, Chris," Darren's voice broke. "You have so much to live for. You can't let assholes bring you down. Fight. Win. You are an extraordinary person destined for greatness, don't you ever forget that."

Chris looked up to Darren, his eyes welling with tears. "When you say things like that, it makes me feel like you aren't real."

Darren pulled Chris into a tight embrace, stroking his back. Darren kissed his hair.

"You are the most amazing person I know," Darren breathed. "Just go after your dreams. I know for a fact that you will fulfill them all."

Chris pulled back, holding Darren's neck and crashed their lips together. Darren kissed back with just as much passion. He guided Chris slowly down onto the towel they were laying on, and slipped his thigh between Chris' legs.

Still to this day whenever Darren traced Chris' bottom lip with his tongue, Chris got shivers all the way down his spine. Chris granted his tongue access, and Darren slipped it in, searching. Chris sucked on his tongue slightly, eliciting a groan from the older boy. Darren rutted his pelvis into Chris'. With a shock, Chris realized Darren was hard.

Chris gasped, breaking the kiss, but made it off to be lack of oxygen, not surprise; so he nibbled his way down Darren's neck, sucking and biting just enough not to give him any bruises.

Darren was Chris' first boyfriend, and despite them being together for quite a while, they hadn't ventured much down the physical road. They were very close friends for a long time before actually getting together, but Chris appreciated the support system all the same.

When Darren arrived in Clovis from San Francisco, it was like the heavens had sent him to Chris by workings of fate. Chris was being shoved into lockers, getting swirlies, and belongings vandalized on a regular basis. Chris contemplated self harm, and even entertained the thought of suicide because it was so bad. But there was always the thought in the back of his mind of how he couldn't do that to his parents and sister; and how selfish it would be.

So he stuck his neck out with his new, out and proud companion, and faced high school with as much courage as possible. Being bonded under such grave circumstances changes people; and one thing led to

another, they eventually started dating. It was mostly platonic, save for the occasionally kissing and hand holding, but Chris was supremely happy.

Darren still mentioned from time to time that he wasn't even sure if he was fully gay or bi or what, but Chris was absolutely sure, so he didn't want to push Darren. Whenever things got a little heated, they would maybe frot for a bit or feel each other up through each other's clothes, but the activity never really lasted for long. It was mostly because Chris was extremely insecure about his borderline chubby physique and his delicate, almost feminine-like skin and voice. However, Darren always insisted he loved Chris just the way he was.

But now, Darren wasn't stopping, and Chris was estatic. He felt sexy. He felt wanted. Chris stroked down Darren's back before daringly grabbing the perfect swell of his ass, grinding up into him. Darren moaned, fisting Chris' hair and pulling slightly. Chris bit harshly into his collarbone, causing Darren to thrust down once more. The sensation was overwhelming.

Chris gasped again, licking the shell of Darren's earlobe, and in the heat of the moment whispered, "Wanna go all the way?"

With that, Darren stiffened and got off of Chris, looking a little shaken. "Oh, shit I forgot I needed to be home early for dinner tonight. See you later!"

Darren bolted out of Chris' backyard, leaving him flustered and frustrated. What was that? Chris was beyond confused, and still a bit hazy from his high.

Chris packed up his homework and went back inside, trying to push down the swarming of worrying thoughts about Darren's behavior. Chris reasoned that he probably thought they were moving too fast and needed to cease and dissis. That was perfectly fine with Chris. They had all the time in the world to discover each other fully.

What Chris didn't know was how wrong he was.

Since that day, Darren started becoming more distant.

He would smile warmly and be his usual bubbly self on most occasions, but whenever Chris would try to be at least a little intimate, Darren got weird. Chris felt rejection flow through him every time, but he knew

that if something was really wrong, Darren would talk to him about it. That's what they always did. It was possible he was just stressed about finals and his impending graduation.

Darren still walked with him down the hallways and to class, keeping an eye out for people who were planning on giving them a hard time, but he seemed oddly silent.

Already having targets painted on their backs for being gay, they would never kiss or anything like that in public, but he usually gave Chris a hug before parting ways. He did not do that this time.

But Chris' dread over what was to come of this was snuffed by his workload and preparation for Darren's graduation. Chris fussed over whether he should throw a party for Darren, but decided against it, since Darren's mom insisted that Chris just go over to their place afterward.

In no time, it was the day of, and Chris was perched on his chair next to his and Darren's parents, camera out and peering out into the sea of uniform clad grads. Darren looked up and waved to them, and Chris waved enthusiastically back, then snapped a picture.

Chris got bored halfway through the ceremony, so he just watched Darren, thankful to have somebody so wonderful in his life. He stared in a trance when Darren would sneak a peek at his cellphone or scratch his nose. He was so precious and perfect.

Once they all strode out to the music, Chris nearly ran out to congratulate his boyfriend, the parents hot as his heels. However, Darren was nowhere to be found.

After several minutes of frantic searching, Darren's father placed a hand on Chris' shoulder.

"Hey, son, Darren just called. He isn't feeling well and wants us to come straight home. He said he'll give you a call later."

"O.. kay," Chris said, uneasy. Darren seemed fine earlier. Maybe it was a sudden stomach flu?

Chris went home with his parents and hung out with his sister, Hannah for a while. They played some boardgames, while Chris kept his phone nearby. But a call never came. All through dinner Chris had to fight off the sense of foreboding in his stomach so he wouldn't have a panic attack or throw up.

Even though Chris knew something was very wrong, he didn't want to be annoying, so he decided to let Darren rest for the night, and if he didn't call tomorrow, Chris would call him instead. Just to check up on him.

Chris slept badly that night, and kept having nightmares of abandonment and regret. When he woke up he felt awful, but he couldn't take it anymore. He needed to find out if Darren was okay. If they were okay. Darren was his rock, his safe place. He couldn't lose him now, not ever.

Chris called Darren's cellphone periodically throughout the day, but there was never any answer. Chris even considered sending a text, but he knew his dad would be mad since their plan didn't cover that kind of usage. Chris decided to switch tactics and call Darren's house phone.

Someone answered on first ring. "Hello?" It was Darren's mom. She seemed like she was slightly out of breath.

"Oh, hi Mrs. Criss. It's Chris. Is Darren there?"

"Uh, yeah, but he's indisposed at the moment. Can I leave a message?"

Chris couldn't help but pick up on her uncomfortable tone. "Is he okay? I was just worried he hadn't called."

"Yeah, he's fine," she assured. "He's just packing."

"Packing?" Chris was utterly confused.

"Yeah, he got accepted into the University of Michigan! Isn't that great? He leaves tomorrow."

"What?" Chris nearly yelled, completely floored.

"Did he not tell you honey?" She sounded unsure.

"No!" Chris' tone was dejected.

"Oh, well I'm sure he'll come by and explain everything, you know.. say goodbye," she reasoned in a soft voice. "You should be happy for him, he's taking a huge step in his life!"



"But I thought he would talk to me about this!" Chris knew he sounded like a child, but this was a serious slap to the face.

There was shuffling on the other line. "Chris, dear. Let me have him call you back, okay?"

"Uh, sure-"

"We're a bit tied up at the moment, he has a lot of things, as you know..,"

"Please tell him to come by later," Chris begged.

"I will dear," she promised. "Goodbye."

Chris hung up, his heart in his throat. Was this some sick joke? Why would Darren suddenly decide to move halfway across the country without telling his best friend and boyfriend about it?

Chris threw his cellphone at the wall, and it fell apart with a clatter. Anger tears were streaming down his face.

He couldn't believe it! Darren of all people would keep something like this from him? They were supposed to be partners! Chris knew he would have enough respect to tell Darren something so game-changing.

Chris knew for a fact that Darren wasn't a coward. So why was he running? He must have been considering this since that fateful day, but he made it sound like he wasn't interested in leaving Chris. Quite the contrary actually. What changed?

Chris waited all day for Darren to come by. But he never did.

## Chapter Two

Chris woke with a start, and he didn't even realize he had been crying until he sat up, with tears dripping off his face and onto his pillow. Chris wiped them away and peered at his clock. It was 4:03 am, and he had to be on set in 3 hours.

Chris groaned, and his eyes burned. He scrunched up his face trying to remember what he had just been dreaming, when like a dark cloud looming above him; he was drenched in cold sweat as it all came rushing back to him.

Darren.

Chris dreamt of stolen, loving glances across the campus of his dreadful school. He dreamt of butterfly kisses, warmth and protection. He'd dreamt of a sense of security and being loved. He dreamt of Darren's dazzling smile, puppy-dog eyes and curly hair. He dreamt of soft touches, secret whispers and broken promises.

Chris' heart ached remembering all the good times, but it all didn't matter because Darren had left him. It was so long ago, and completely irrelevant, but the feelings were still there, fresh in his mind.

Chris had to face his last 2 years of high school, absolutely alone. There were days where Chris just wanted to end all the pain, but that little voice stopped him. So he fought on, just like Darren told him to. Even if Darren didn't need that much decency after what he did.

All Chris' life experiences had made him cynical, sarcastic, witty and quick on his feet. He was completely skeptical of the concept of love, and whenever his heart was in danger of being shattered again, he just walked away before he got in too deep. Chris would never trust anyone to ever get that close again, and he was just fine with that. He had his friends, and that's all he needed. In a way, being cast on Glee had saved his life. He was fulfilling his dreams, and he finally had his own group of people that he could confidently call his close friends. It was really the first time in his life he hadn't felt completely alone. Chris had never been so happy, he was almost certain of it. But of course that had to be ruined too. By Darren. His past with Darren was just a distant memory now, and should have stayed that way.

Except, fuck. Chris was going to meet Darren on set today. Chris' stomach twisted in agony as a wave of several unpleasant emotions washed over him. But most of all, Chris had so many questions.

Like, did Darren ever realize how much he hurt Chris? He abandoned Chris, knowing all too well how fragile he was. Does Darren really know how much he's ruined Chris of any chance of trusting anybody ever again? Did Darren try out for Glee, knowing that Chris was part of the cast? Has Darren watched from afar, and saw Chris grow famous and follow his dreams? Did Darren watch Glee? Was he a fan, still knowing Chris was part of the cast?

But on the contrary, and would be worst of all, has he never watched Glee before and was in for an unpleasant surprise? Or furthermore, did Darren know Chris was on the cast, but didn't care? Chris even went as far as to question that even maybe Darren watched Glee and had no idea who Chris was, because he was that careless? That someone like Chris was just a blip on his radar; utterly unimportant and without significance?

So many questions. So many emotions. It made his head hurt. It was too much for Chris to handle. He didn't want to deal with all of this, but he had to. There was no other way.

How did Darren even get a part on Glee anyway? 'Character Blaine Anderson, member of rival show choir to New Directions.' Possible love interest of character Kurt Hummel.' That was all the paper said that Chris found on his desk earlier that day, save for Darren's stupid head shot grinning up at him. Fucking bastard.

Since Darren had tragically disappeared from Chris' teenage life, Chris never went looking for him, because he knew it was a lost cause. He just moved on, even if it was the most difficult thing Chris ever had to go through, he survived.

So if Darren had become a household name, Chris would probably be the first to know. Right? But he hasn't heard Darren's name breathed or muttered anywhere in the media that Chris has been exposed to so much lately. However, it was certainly possible that they hired Darren Everett Criss, a nobody (much like Chris himself before being cast) and the creators recognized his talent enough to give him a part. But Chris wanted to be sure.

He flipped off his covers and grabbed his laptop from the desk. Chris sprawled out on his bed, laying on his stomach as his computer hummed to life. It only took a handful of seconds, and he was already clicking his internet browser and typing 'Darren Criss' into Google.

The first thing that came up was YouTube, so Chris decided to click on the link entitled 'A Very Potter Musical, Act 1 Scene 1'. While the video loaded (the WiFi was really bad here sometimes), Chris pressed

pause while eyeing the name 'StarKidPotter' but then gasped moments later because the video had millions of views. Was Darren an internet sensation?

Chris opened up a new tab and typed in 'StarKidPotter' into Wikipedia, and short web page came up. Chris scanned it, but the only thing that stood out was 'a group of students from the University of Michigan Theatre put on their own productions in Ann Arbor and Chicago...' Realization dawned on Chris that this is what Darren had been doing all this time. He fulfilled his own dreams, but far away from LA... until now.

Chris switched tabs and pressed play on the video. After some title credits, Darren appeared under a spot light (with a huge mop of hair that almost made Chris laugh) and began singing, causing Chris' heart to flutter and his throat clamp shut. He hadn't heard that voice years, and it just did something to him. Chris could only bare about 15 more seconds before he slammed his laptop closed, tears pricking his eyeballs. Of course Darren got a role on Glee. He was dreamy, charming and talented...

How was Chris going to survive facing him again if he couldn't finish just one measly video?

Chris strode into Fox Studios with the bad kind of spring in his step. He needed to pee really bad because he got 3 coffees to make up for his lack of sleep. His hands kept twisting his favorite scarf, which was hanging loosely around his neck.

"Hey Chris," Chord greeted, walking to his trailer already in his Sam outfit. Chris just nodded to him absentmindedly before making his way to make-up and wardrobe. However, he was stopped by Ryan Murphy himself at the doorway.

"Hey Ryan," Chris tried to say coolly, but failed miserably. Instead he sounded like a frightened child. "What's going on?"

"We don't need you until later for filming," he smiled knowingly. "Have you read the new script?"

"Uh, yeah," Chris muttered, flustered and digging through his bag. "Oh yeah, uh, Kurt spies on the rival show choir, meets a new student he can relate to and even considers transferring because of Karofsky."

"Right you are," Ryan said approvingly. "So, instead what I would like you to go do right now is meet your new costar."

Chris' stomach dropped. "What? Why? Shouldn't everyone meet him?"

"They already have," Ryan interjected, grinning confidently. "They love him. He's really great, you know."

Chris managed not to roll his eyes. "I'm sure he is," Chris said in a strained voice. Ryan didn't seem to pick up on Chris' sullen demeanor, thankfully.

Of course everyone loves him, Chris thought bitterly to himself. It was probably because Chris hadn't told anybody but Amber about his and Darren's past; and even then, he didn't even explain the worst of it. A small part of Chris wanted to blab to everyone about what a huge dick Darren really was, you know, to show his true colors so they wouldn't be fooled by his sunshine and rainbows appearance. Chris was sure that would work since the whole cast referred to him as their 'little brother' so they'd probably ally against the newbie out of loyalty to Chris. But Chris couldn't do that. His gut and pride told him that. It would be extremely petty and childish to do such a thing; and also in a way, it also felt kind of like losing. Chris was not a loser.

Ryan was unaware of Chris' inner monologue, so he continued. "He should be in his trailer now, you should go meet him." And with that, he patted Chris' shoulder and walked off.

Chris' first instinct was to run and hide. Every fiber of his being protested and screamed at him to just bolt, because he really, really didn't want to see Darren. Or talk to him. Or nothing having to do with Darren. Chris just wished this wasn't happening. What have I done to deserve this? Chris cursed nobody in particular.

But despite it all, and against his better judgement, Chris forced his legs to the trailer Ryan had gestured, swallowing his heart which was beating rapidly in his throat. Chris knew he couldn't run away from this. He learned the hard way that sometimes you just have to face your past, whether you like it or not. And it was obvious Darren wasn't going anywhere, so Chris couldn't avoid him forever.

Chris stood outside the trailer which had a little paper taped to it that said 'Darren Criss' for what felt like hours. Chris stared at the flimsy steel door, the hand he was prepared to knock with balled up in a fist.

Chris closed his eyes and took in deep lungfuls of air. He could do this. He just needed to push everything aside, swallow his pride and get it over with. He could just say hi, and besides that, no interaction would be required and rendered unnecessary except for onscreen, where Chris would be in character. That thought brought utter joy and relief to Chris because that would just make things just so much easier!

Whenever Chris was Kurt, he was fully immersed. Kurt was a part of him now, and he was so easy to just escape into once in a while. He sometimes loved Kurt more than he loved himself.

Just as Chris was about to raise his hand to knock, the door flew open and there Darren stood, gaping. To Chris, Darren looked like he was just about to leave, but he was rooted on the spot, gripping the doorframe with great force. Chris just stared back, his pulse quickening to a frightening pace. It was possible he was going to pass out. Or die.

Everything was in slow motion. Like it was only yesterday since the last time Chris saw him, and everything came rushing back to him with a terrible, cruel force.

Darren.

Chris was assaulted with so many sensations, and all the air from his lungs disappeared.

For starters, Darren looked amazing. All traces of baby fat from high school were gone. He was more chiseled and manly. His hair was cropped short and he sported a very complimentary stubble. The flop he wore in college didn't really suit him in Chris' opinion because it didn't grant his heartbreakingly handsome face many favors. And lest not pass by the fact that Darren had filled out. Holy arms. With a start, Chris realized Darren wore a ratty t-shirt he recognized (a shirt that Chris has even worn at some point), but it hung tighter to his chest than Chris remembered.

Chris looked back up to Darren's face, blushing, and his heart broke all over again. He felt like his insecure, damaged, unpopular, unsuccessful teenage self staring back into the eyes of the bane of his existence. Oh his eyes. They were limitless and glorious. Chris could get lost in them for an insurmountable amount of time, and the world could pass him by without a notice or care. Chris felt like he was suffocating on another planet.

Yet, he was brought back to Earth when Darren finally breathed, "Chris..,"

## Chapter Three

Darren Criss was never one to be surprised. By extension, It was a rare moment when Darren was caught off guard. So, whenever it happened, it completely mind-fucked him. One of those moments was seeing Chris after so many long years standing gloriously on the threshold of his trailer.

Darren knew that running into Chris was inevitable that day. Darren had seen this coming for a long while now. Darren knew exactly what he was in for when he tried out for a role on a TV show that Chris Colfer, his former boyfriend from high school was currently the star of.

But nothing prepared Darren for how breathtakingly beautiful he looked. Seeing him on a two-dimensional TV screen did not do him justice in the slightest when compared to the reality. Chris was like a magical creature sent from the heavens with only one purpose: to strike people dumb by his sheer perfection.

Darren's breath caught in his throat and he felt tears flood his eyes. Chris had always been stunning in high school, but it was nothing compared to now. He shot up at least half a foot in height, all his baby fat was gone, and every curve and his line of his physique appeared to be chiseled by the Gods. It made Darren's heart ache, beating irregularly and mourned for his lost past.

After an eternity of getting lost in those galaxy eyes, Darren finally breathed, "*Chris..*,"

A tremor rolled through Chris, and Darren was instantly aware that Chris was just as affected by this encounter as he was. Or at least he hoped.

Chris pressed his lips together into a hard line after a long pause and responded with a resolute, "No."

"No?" Darren was confused.

"No," Chris agreed. "Just stop."

"What am I doing?" Darren asked, slightly put off that their first interaction in years was going in such a odd way.

"You're using the bedroom voice," Chris said in an unreadable tone. "Don't do that."

"But I haven't see you-"

"Let's just cut to the chase," Chris interrupted, his tone flippant. "Ryan told me to say hi because we're going to be working together quite a bit as our characters have overlapping story lines."

"Okay," Darren said, slightly irritated. "But I also wanted to catch up."

Chris' lip curled. "What made you think I would want to do something like that?"

Darren felt like he was slapped in the face. "We used to be so close," Darren protested, bordering on whining. "Our past together still means something to me."

Chris laughed without humor. "In case you forgot, you fucking just left without even saying goodbye," Chris said harshly. "So, clearly our relationship meant jack shit to you if you could pull something like that. I'm not interested in conversing with someone who cares so little about me."

"That's not true," Darren's voice broke. He was finding it hard to breathe. "Just hear me out."

"I don't really have time for this," Chris huffed out, looking at his watch. Now Darren was really questioning whether Chris felt any care for him anymore in return. Darren couldn't really blame him either, however. What he did was unforgivable.

"Please," Darren begged. "Let me take you out to lunch, my treat."

Chris looked incredulously at him. "You seriously have the nerve to ask me out on a date?"

"What? No," Darren stammered, his face flushed. "I have a girlfriend, so it can't be date. Just as friends catching up on lost time."

Chris deadpanned. "Girlfriend," he repeated, his voice monotone.

"Yes," Darren said in a small voice, his stomach twisting in knots. "We've been together quite a while now."



"Oh," was all Chris said. By social norm, Darren expected Chris to say something along the lines of 'i'm happy for you' or even ask about her. But Chris didn't. Once again, Darren felt like he was punched in the gut.

"Yeah, so we can talk some more about things if we can just sit down for a while, preferably over food since I'm starving," Darren said insistently.

Chris just stared at him, relatively expressionless. However, Darren could see into the depths of his glorious eyes that a battle was raging. In that moment, Darren would have given anything to know what he was thinking.

Finally, Chris sighed. "Fine. I guess I really don't have a choice either way."

Darren frowned, his heart constricting painfully. "Okay, let me grab my jacket. I'll drive."

They drove in Darren's car in utter silence. As Chris stared out the window, Darren gripped the steering wheel, thinking he was going to go insane. It was like Chris' thoughts were screaming next to him, and Darren could only guess what they were in his wildest dreams. He knew that he'd probably rue the day he wouldn't be able to read Chris like a book anymore. And Darren was now aware of the fact that he blew his only chance to ever be privileged enough again for Chris to actually share his innermost thoughts with him. Chris was completely shut down, and even as much as Darren knew he deserved it, he thought he was going to die because of the anxiety of it.

"So," Darren said, trying to ease the tension. "What do you like to eat?"

"Food," Chris responded sarcastically. It unnerved Darren to no end. Why did Chris have to be like that when Darren was trying to make amends?

"Fine, how about sushi?"

Chris just shrugged in response, still staring out the window. Darren parked sloppily, but he just had to get out the car. He felt like he was going to suffocate in there if he stayed a second longer.

Chris got out and walked alongside Darren with at least a foot of space between them. Even though they hadn't been around each other in years, Darren still had the nearly irresistible urge to reach out and take his hand. He barely managed to suppress it, however.

When they sat down at their little booth, Chris crossed his legs and hummed, looking pointedly at the ceiling. Darren started to grind his teeth, and prepared himself to start a conversation when the waiter came by.

Once they ordered what they wanted, Darren couldn't take it anymore. "Please, just say something to me," he pleaded.

"Like what," Chris responded immediately. "There isn't much to say. You're the one who took me on this little outing. What's your purpose?"

"To see what you've been up to. I've missed you," Darren's voice dripped with affection, causing Chris to cringe.

"Well," Chris began in a sing-song voice. "Let's see, I'm on this little show called Glee. Have you heard of it? I play Kurt, the gay one."

Darren narrowed his eyes. "Really, Chris?" Darren asked lowly, frustrated by his behavior.

"Yes!" Chris exclaimed, keeping up the charade. "I love it. The cast is my family. It would be a shame if any outsiders ruined that."

Darren cracked his knuckles in irritation. "Could you please cut that out?"

"Cut what out?" Chris asked blissfully.

"Jesus fucking christ Chris, I'm trying here, throw me a fucking bone," Darren positively snarled.

Chris' whole demeanor changed. "I don't think you're going to get what you came here for," Chris said icily, scowling.

"Oh yeah?" Darren's patience was running thin. "What do you think that was exactly?"

"My forgiveness," Chris sniped. "Its not going to happen."

Darren clenched his jaw. He felt a nerve jump and his face twitched in anger. "Why can't you just let go of the past?"

Chris leaned in, looking gravely serious. "I don't think you have a fucking clue what you did to me, Darren. It's something people don't tend to forget."

"I have an idea," Darren said quietly.

"No, I don't think you do," Chris said through gritted teeth. "I suffered every single fucking day. People would yell slurs at me, beat me up, threaten my life and my family-"

"I remember," Darren's voice got even quieter. His heart was starting to ache more, getting flashbacks about how hard it had been for them. For Chris especially.

"I wasn't a fucking coward like you and ran away from who I was," Chris continued loudly and coldly. "There were days I considered just taking my own life, but I held onto my dreams. I cried for months every single day after you left, but something about the pain made me want to survive. If someone I loved so much could just do that to me, someone who apparently loved me back, it made me trust nobody except myself. I always expect people to let me down, so I fought every single day to prove them all wrong. Now here I am. Are you satisfied?"

Darren couldn't find words for the longest time. Thankfully the waiter came by with their food and Chris started scarfing it down, desperate for this to be over soon as possible, Darren suspected.

Eventually Darren plucked up the courage to say, "I'm so proud of you."

"What?" Chris said mid-chew, his mouth full and caught completely off guard. "What did you say?"

"I'm proud of you," Darren repeated, his voice brimming with emotion. "You accomplished everything you ever wanted or dreamed of. You're writing children's books and screen plays for movies. You've won a Golden Globe, nominated twice for an Emmy. You've changed people's lives, Chris, and I couldn't be more positively moved and proud of you. You deserve everything that's good in the world and more."

And that was it. Darren's words caused a flicker in Chris' resolve, and his eyes filled with tears. Chris swallowed loudly, and wiped his nose on his napkin.

"Just shut up," Chris managed to say, his voice shaky. "Please."

"No," Darren said determinedly. "I mean every word."

Chris shook his head, tears leaking out of the corner of his eyes. He looked embarrassed that he was crying in public. Chris wasn't really one to cry. Not since Darren left.

Darren went on, seizing his chance now that Chris was vulnerable to emotion. "Chris you don't know how sorry I am. For everything. You are right. I was a coward. I was afraid of my sexuality, and how being with you would define me in the future. I am a poor excuse for a San Fran native."

Darren hung his head, ashamed, and Chris found himself having a difficult time forming a response. Chris wanted to badly to just tell him to fuck off, but he couldn't find it in himself to do such a thing. So he settled with saying nothing, trying his best to not break down into sobbing hysterics.

"I left because I didn't know who I was, and I wanted to heed my mom's advice," Darren explained, putting his hands on the table, wanting to reach out to Chris. "Moving to Michigan was the best and worst decision of my life. I've met the most wonderful people imaginable there. They are my best friends, but also it was so hard to leave you, but I knew I had to. I needed to find myself, and it really dawned on me when you asked me to make love to you that one day. But I knew one day we were destined to cross paths again." He smiled slightly.

"You couldn't have possibly known something like that," Chris finally spoke up. "That's all very wishy-washy."

Darren pretended like Chris hadn't spoken at all, continuing his monologue. "So after I graduated, I moved back to LA looking for an acting job. I played some shows and looked you up. Imagine my surprise and pride seeing you on a hit show, yet I wasn't really surprised at all to see how much your character was affecting the public mind. You really are that inspiring, Chris. So the second I heard about casting calls for the second season, I didn't hesitate to try out."

Chris looked speechless, blinking rapidly like Darren was some sort of mirage.

"I... I don't understand," Chris stammered. "You tried out for a show knowing that you could possibly costar along with me?"

Darren nodded, ecstatic that he was finally getting through to Chris. "It was my dream to work with you."

"But," Chris began to protest but Darren cut him off.

"Also, I just missed you so much. I want to make things right, so we can be friends. It would literally mean the world to me, Chris. If you could grant me just that much kindness."

Chris considered him for the longest time, and Darren's body was taut with anticipation. Finally Chris opened his mouth and said, "I'm sorry, Darren, but I can't."

And with that he got up and left the sushi restaurant, leaving Darren heartbroken and devastated.

## **Chapter Four**

When Chris stormed out of the sushi restaurant, he really didn't expect Darren to chase after him.

"Chris! C'mon I drove us here, let me take you back to the set," Darren called, jogging through the parking lot to catch up with Chris. Darren grabbed his shoulder, but Chris yanked it out of his grasp.

"I'm perfectly capable of getting a cab or calling someone else to come get me," Chris snapped, digging through his bag to pull out his cell phone.

"In this traffic, you'll be waiting for a long time," Darren pointed out. "Please, let's just be civil adults here."

Chris bared his teeth at the poorly veiled insult. "I'd rather fucking wait for hours than spend even one minute in a car alone with you." Chris jabbed his finger roughly into Darren's sternum.

Darren backed up and pinched the bridge of his nose, breathing slowly. He needed to calm down. Chris had every right to turn down his offer of being friends, even still hate him. But they needed to keep some peace if they were going to work together.

"Please Chris," Darren said calmly. "We can keep this relationship strictly professional. As much as I want more, I really would like to not have hostility here. We're costars, so we are going to be around each other a lot."

Chris bit his bottom lip, his eyes softening. Darren was right, but Chris really didn't want to admit that out loud.

"Fine," Chris sighed, crossing his arms. "I just want to know one thing."

"Sure," Darren nodded, prompting Chris with a respectful gesture of his hands.

"Why do you want more from me? It doesn't make sense."

Darren pushed down his flash of annoyance and hurt. "I already told you, it's because I still really care about you."

Chris scoffed. "A likely response."

"It's true," Darren protested, lip pouting. Chris was torn between the overwhelming desires to bite that lip or to punch him so hard that it made that stupid lip bleed.

"That doesn't explain why you never called," Chris pointed out bitterly, kicking the black top with the toe of his shoe.

"What?"

Chris pushed on, irritated by Darren's ignorance. "In some strange, twisted way I can see your reasoning to why you left me all alone, but we had a certain relationship dynamic, Darren. Why didn't you ever talk to me again?"

Darren smiled sadly. "I was too afraid," he admitted. "I honestly thought I would hold you back from your dreams."

"That's a fucking ridiculous assumption," Chris bit out. "You knew how much I cared about you. I deserved at least a fucking phone call."

Darren ran a hand through his curls, frustrated. "You're right, Chris. I'm a fucking asshole. I wanted to call, I really did. But once I was moved into my dorm at the University of Michigan, the more terrified I felt at the prospect of speaking to you again. As more time passed, it got even worse."

Chris was quiet for a few moments before he said harshly, "You know, I would've never fucking done that to you."

Darren sighed again, his heart hurting, a pounding migraine coming on. "I know. You're a better person than me. I deserve to be your punching bag."

"I'm not going to hurt you," Chris said quietly, balling his hands into fists. Even if he ever wanted to strike Darren, that was something he wouldn't resort to, even in the worst of moments.

Darren pulled out his jingling keys. "Let's go back. They're probably wondering about our whereabouts."

They drove again in silence, but it wasn't as bad this time. Darren finally said he wanted to say, and even though nothing really good came from it, at least he got it off his chest. Also, now Chris' thoughts seemed much less loud, but still persistent none the less.

"I have another question," Chris said after a while.

"Hmmm?" Darren prompted, slightly distracted by the heavy traffic.

"You have a girlfriend," Chris stated, his tone bordering resentment.

"That's not a question, Chris."

"Ugh, fine," Chris paused, shifting awkwardly in his seat. "You finally figured it out then? Are you like bisexual now?"

Darren clenched his jaw. "No."

"No?" Chris was confused.

"I'm straight," Darren informed, his voice wavering so slightly.

Chris instantly got pissed off again. "So I was just like some fucking experiment to you or something? That makes me feel awesome."

"No, I loved you I really did," Darren insisted. "But I like girls."

"That's a fucking crock of shit!"

"No it's not! How is me loving you a load of bull?" Darren demanded.

"You're making me out to be some freak accident or fluke or something!" Chris shrieked.

"You weren't," Darren panicked, his chest tightening. He really didn't want to give Chris the wrong idea and make him hate him further. "I just have never been sexually attracted to men except for you. It took me a while to figure that out; crazy adventures in college and all, but now I'm finally with someone I really like. Who is female."

Chris saw a faint blush creep up on his cheeks. Darren's discomfort made Chris feel better, as bad as that sounded, despite the fact that Chris felt revolted at the idea of Darren fucking a girl.



"But we never had sex though, how could you possibly know that you were attracted to me in that way," Chris asked quietly, feeling self-conscious.

"I know, but, I just know," Darren stammered, avoiding Chris' gaze.

"Huh?"

"Chris, I wanted to have sex with you, I was just scared because I was a virgin," Darren let out in a rush, his body tingling with latent arousal. Thankfully Chris didn't seem to notice.

"You were?" Chris' eyes widened, surprised. Darren always seemed like the more experienced and knowledgeable one. Once Chris actually thought about it, they never really talked about past sexual experiences. They were too shy.

"Yeah," Darren swallowed. "And having sex with a girl seemed like a less daunting task. So once it happened, turned out I liked it. So I'm not gay."

"You're not making any sense," Chris said sharply. "You're fucking logic is skewed."

"Can we please change the subject," Darren's stomach was twisting in knots.

"Whatever," Chris muttered, crossing his arms and looking out the window again.

Chris was quiet for a bit before he turned to Darren again, the wheels turning in his head. "Since we're going to be working together, I can deal with that. But don't expect pizza nights, beers or hanging out on a regular basis. We can go over scripts together if you have a question, and we can practice and theorize, but that's it alright? I take this job very seriously and it means a lot to me."

Darren nodded, feeling relieved at the prospect of this actually working out alright. "Deal."

Darren flipped through his new script, thinking back on his first week of being on the Glee cast. He seemed to get along okay with everyone, and he was already growing a great fondness for Amber, who's voice was out of this world. However, he didn't see them much because he was off with the Warblers.

Thus, for the most part him and Chris kept things professional, so the hostility was at a minimum. It was clear nobody suspected they had a past together, nor did Chris tell anyone, otherwise Darren would be expecting hellfire.

Darren was already blown away by working with Chris. Filming 'Teenage Dream' with him was breathtaking because it was really something else to see Chris fall into an entirely new character. Darren just ate it up, because when Chris was Kurt, Kurt was swooning over Blaine, who by extension was Darren. He didn't know why this was his favorite part, but the creators instantly picked up on their chemistry.

So here he was, and the script was reading now was rather short since the only scene Darren had to do was the Breadstix scene with Kurt and Mercedes; which was actually quite a funny sequence and he was looking forward to it.

Darren's stomach rumbled, so he decided to order some thai food. Ordering the grub just for himself and listening to the silence of his empty apartment made him feel lonely. Even though Chris was totally uninterested in being friends, maybe Darren could bribe him into coming over to go over the script together. Darren could pretend he was feeling clueless, and Chris would come straightaway since he was nothing but a perfectionist.

Darren took out his iPhone and hesitated over the call button before pressing a shaking finger to the touch screen and put the phone to his ear. It rang a few times before abruptly going to voicemail.

Maybe Chris accidentally pressed ignore. Maybe he pressed it on purpose. Either way Darren decided to call again to make sure, feeling a little weird about his behavior, but chose to ignore the implications.

It didn't even ring once when Chris answered in a breathless, "Hi?"

"Hey, Chris. It's uh, Darren. Obviously. I was just wondering-"

"I'm kind of in the middle of something," Chris interrupted urgently, struggling with each word like he had just run a mile. *Whywasheoutofbreath?* Darren wondered. "What do you want? Is it an emergency?"

"No.. just.. are you alright," Darren asked, a little concerned.

"Yeah just-" Chris broke off and moaned quietly. The sound shot through Darren, making his heart constrict nervously and his body became rigid as a board. *WasChris..?*

"What are you doing, why did you answer, you're supposed to be fucking me," a muffled voice whined on the other line. Darren's mouth fell open. Chris was having sex right now. Or he was supposed to be, but he answered the phone. Shit.

Darren felt blood rush to his face, and probably another questionable area but he spluttered, "oh, fuck sorry, I didn't mean to-"

"No it's fine, I'll call you back soon okay?"

"No, please don't," Darren begged before hanging up the phone quickly. He ran his hands over his face, mortified. He couldn't believe that just happened, and now Darren worried if he'll be able to look at Chris in the eye on set Monday without blushing.

Who was Chris having sex with anyway? Was it somebody Darren knew? Was this guy Chris' boyfriend? Realization hit Darren once he remembered that when they talked last week, they didn't talk about Chris' personal life at all. Darren did most of the talking, and Chris was like an iron wall of secrecy.

This made Darren curious, frustrated, and jealous all at the same time. He suddenly felt so overwhelmed that tears flooded his eyes. They once dated and were in love, it was only natural to feel this way, right? Darren considered calling his girlfriend to cheer him up, but he really didn't feel like talking to her at the moment.

Darren plopped himself down on his couch again, pushing away his forgotten scrip and resting his chin into the palm of his hand. He wanted to be apart of Chris' life. They were separated for so long, and it made him feel sick to his stomach how far they've grown apart. Even though he knew it was entirely his fault, he felt like he a duty to fix it. It was possible that Chris would maybe cave in some day. It was possible. It could happen. Never say never.

Darren laughed bitterly to himself and walked into the bathroom. He needed to take a nice and long hot shower to clear his head. He stripped naked and got in, letting the steam soak into his pores, and he sighed contentedly.

Chris was fucking some other guy right now. Darren shook his head like it would make that incriminating thought go away, but even more curiosities flowed in. How big was Chris? Was Chris reaching orgasm

right now? If so, what did his face look like when it happened? Was the guy screaming because Chris was pounding into him so good?

Darren's body stilled when he realized that he started stroking himself without even knowing it happened. He was actually painfully hard and aching knowing that Chris was a top. Fuck. Shit. Fuck. That was really fucking hot.

Darren imagined Chris spreading his thighs apart and working him open before sliding his cock in and going to town. Darren's finger pressed his hole lightly before he groaned loudly and came faster than he expected to, his come splattering the bathroom wall.

"Oh," Darren whispered as his legs almost gave out from the force of his pleasure. He leaned against the wall, feeling his nerves twitch and caressing his sensitive skin with his fingertips, letting the shower wash his filth away.

Well, ok. This was new. This was also bad. Even though Darren didn't want to admit that his sexuality was in question once again, because shit, he just imagined his ex and current costar fucking him. Suddenly Darren felt like he didn't know anything anymore, and he felt just as lost as he did when he was a senior in high school.

The only thing Darren knew in that moment was that needed to get Chris back, no matter what the cost.

## Chapter Five

When Darren woke, he knew he was having some sort of inappropriate dreams, because he woke up with raging morning wood.

He rubbed his eyes and brief flashes of the essence of *Chris* flowed through him, and memories from the previous night slammed into his consciousness. He had called Chris, and Chris had answered; while fucking someone else and talking to Darren. And Darren had jerked off to that idea in the shower, and for the first time touched himself intimately on his .

Darren pressed down on his erection and groaned. His sexuality was definitely in question; there was no doubt about that. He just didn't want to admit that out loud, so he stored it into a dark corner of his mind.

Darren's eyes flew open when he heard the buzzing of his doorbell. He slipped on loose pajama bottoms and attempted to smooth down his dick before going to the door, and opening it without seeing who it was through the peephole.

"Hey babe," Mia said, throwing her arms around Darren's neck. "I've missed you."

Darren hugged her back, surprised by her presence here. He thought she was in Chicago at the moment with her band.

"Why are you here," Darren found himself asking, trying not to sound as put off as he felt. He really just felt like being alone today. He was in one of those, everything I know, I am now questioning moods, and other people, especially his girlfriend being around probably wouldn't help in the slightest.

"I wanted to come spend the weekend with you," Mia explained while she smiled dazzlingly. "And before I leave, I wanted to visit the set with you, see your new costars and the lot."

Darren forced a smile back. "Oh, great."

"Surprise," she held up a bag of groceries that appeared to have movies and junk food in them. "I've had a long week, and I'd like to just relax with you, Dare. Bad flight, too."

Darren felt warmth spread through his chest. He was being stupid. She was just thinking of him, and brought the perfect remedy to perk him up from his first stressful week.

"Thank you," he held her face and pecked her quickly on the lips. "I really needed this."

Mia wrapped her arms around his waist, pulling him close. "I always know what to do," she sighed. "I could tell there was something up when we were texting yesterday, so I took some time off before we play a few more gigs."

"You're the best," Darren whispered, feeling utterly appreciative, kissing her hair and leading her to the living room. "So what do you have for me?"

Mia slipped off her heels, and dug through the grocery bag, pulling out the new limited edition of the Lion King. "Tada!"

Darren grinned, taking the movie from her and putting it into the DVD player. She plopped on the couch, covering herself with a blanket, and Darren joined her, snuggling.

Halfway through the movie Mia started mouthing at his neck and the sensitive skin behind his ear, causing his spine to tingle. He closed his eyes and leaned into her touch, tangling his fingers into her hair. He felt himself growing hard again, and out of habit, Mia slid her hand down his stomach and cupped him through his pajama bottoms.

As if on cue, Darren's phone went off loudly, causing them both to twitch in surprise.

"Hold on," Darren grunted, leaning forward on the couch and picking up his iPhone from the coffee table. His heart froze and he gulped loudly to see Chris' face lighting up the screen.

"Who is it?" Mia asked, pausing the movie.

"Er, I need to take this," Darren said, getting up from the couch and going into his bedroom, leaving the door ajar.

"Hello?" he answered.

"Hey," Chris greeted, and thankfully he wasn't out of breath this time.

"What's up?" Darren asked, trying to sound casual.

"I just wanted to call and apologize for last night that was kind of embarrassing."

Darren forced a laugh. "No, it's cool, I just don't know why you answered the phone when you were busy fucking someone."

Chris spluttered for a moment, not expecting Darren's forwardness. "You just called multiple times; it could have been an emergency of some sort."

Darren's heart fluttered. "Careful, Chris it sounds like you actually care about me and my well-being."

Chris was quiet for a moment, not really sure what to say. He wasn't going to admit to anyone, most of all to Darren himself that he got a little joy out of answering the phone when he called, because now Darren knew that he was hooking up with guys. Also, his reaction was priceless. Chris secretly wanted to stir Darren, just for fun. Kind of like a little pay back for what he did, and see what actually falls through or gets to Darren ultimately.

"I would've done it for anyone," Chris settled on that answer. "Well, I've gotta go write some more, I'll see you Monday."

"Alright, bye."

They hung up, and Darren stared at his phone for a while, lost in thought. Mia came into his room and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Everything okay," she asked quietly. "Who was it?"

"Oh," Darren snapped out of his reverie. "It was just Chris. Chris Colfer."

"Your new possible on-screen love interest," she giggled. "I'm glad you guys are getting along."

Darren sighed, running a hand through his unruly curls. "Well, not really."

"What do you mean?" Mia was confused.

Darren realized his mistake, but he couldn't back out now. "We went to high school together for a while actually."

Her eyes widened. "Really?"

"Yeah," Darren confirmed. "And we sort of had a falling out, and he's still bitter about it."

Mia shook her head. "Well that's stupid. You are a wonderful person, and if he fails to see that, he doesn't deserve your friendship."

Darren laughed nervously, feeling like a complete and utter asshole. "Yeah..," he agreed vaguely.

She squeezed his shoulder. "I hope he gets over it soon. I can tell this is bothering you."

"Me too," Darren agreed without thinking. "I mean, I wasn't very nice to him back then, but we used to be really close. And I don't know anyone else on set except him, so it would've been nice to have a friend. It's a shame, you know?"

Mia nodded sympathetically, rubbing his arms. "Well, I've got just the thing to cheer you up, sweetie." She leaned in and started kissing him slowly. Darren kissed her back, enjoying the feel of their lips sliding together.

"So where were we," she whispered, her hands gliding down his chest again reaching for the waistband of his pajama bottoms.

He tried to give into it like before, but his mind kept nagging at him about last night and how he touched himself and what Chris' hand would feel like instead of hers because he couldn't remember that far back and he really wanted to. So bad. Darren's whole body clenched in discomfort, so he grabbed Mia's wrists to stop her movements.

"I'm sorry, but I'm not the mood," Darren said apologetically. "It's not you, it's just I have a lot of things on my mind. I'm so sorry, babe. Can we finish the movie?"

"Sure," she agreed softly, taking his hand and leading him to the couch. Darren was thankful that she wasn't like most girls and didn't get pissed off so easily from rejection, so they were able to enjoy the rest of the movie, singing along a bit and laughing.



They spent the rest of the weekend just lounging around; chatting and Mia even went over his script with him. Darren was really happy for her presence because he *was* feeling lonely on Friday, but Darren just barely managed avoiding sleeping with her by the time Monday rolled around.

It just felt wrong when they started getting into it, especially curled in bed at night. He didn't know what it was, but something in his gut made him not want it at all. He suspected that he was afraid of the face-to-face intimacy sex required, and she would notice if he was not as connected or was feeling a bit off. Darren gradually started feeling even more like shit than before, which was really saying something.

His alarm went off, and Darren slammed the snooze button, groaning.

"Time to get up," Mia said cheerfully, stroking his back. "You don't want to be late for your second week of work on Glee!"

Darren buried his face into a pillow. "But I don't wanna get up."

"You're such a grumpy-pants," she snipped, smacking his butt before climbing out of bed in just a t-shirt and undies. "Let's go shower, maybe you'll feel better."

Darren sensed an edge to her voice, and he knew immediately what was wrong. She was starting to feel insecure that they didn't have reunion sex like normal after her arrival. *C'mon, Darren, courage, you can do this...* he argued with himself.

He turned his head to smile at her, trying to push Chris out of his mind. Stupid Chris is seriously cock blocking him without realizing. Mia grinned flirtatiously, stripping down her layers until she was naked, and swayed to the bathroom, shooting sultry looks over her shoulder.

*Well if Chris can have sex, why can't I?*

Darren squeezed his eyes shut and shook his head as his mind assaulted him with images of Chris fucking some faceless guy. It got really vivid when he imagined Chris' ass cheeks clenching with each powerful thrust, his sculpted chest flushed and sweaty.

Darren was suddenly overcome with feelings of jealousy, payback and arousal. Yeah, if Chris could have sex, why couldn't he? Darren was a perfectly capable lover, and it wouldn't be fair if Chris got to have all the sex in the world, and Darren didn't.

Darren's cock instantly hardened as he rushed to the bathroom, flinging off his boxers in the process. He and Mia washed each other's hair before he fucked her roughly against the slick wall, her screams of pleasure filling the bathroom. She felt absolutely amazing but Darren was only thinking of Chris.

Darren drove to set while Mia sipped her coffee and stroked his leg. "Thanks, Darren," she said quietly, leftover arousal evident in her voice.

"You're welcome," Darren replied, turning to grin cheekily at her before he pulled up into Fox Studios.

His stomach twisted nervously. He was bound to run into Chris eventually that day and Darren worried that Chris would mention their dating past to Mia. She had no idea that he used to date a guy, and he preferred to keep it that way.

"I'm really excited to see what it's like," Mia exclaimed, momentarily distracting him. "I really do love the show!"

"Well, here we are," Darren stated obviously, before getting out of the car and heading to the set, hand in hand with Mia.

Out of nowhere, Darren was assaulted by hugs and playful arm punches by none other than the Warblers, and Darren introduced Mia politely.

While she talked to them about her personal life and answered their prying questions, Darren glanced over Riker's shoulder and saw Chris in the distance, looking around nervously before climbing into his trailer.

"Give me a moment," Darren mumbled distractedly, and Mia merely nodded, continuing her deep conversation with Curt.

Darren jogged over to Chris' trailer, and it was soon obvious that Chris was not alone in there. Darren hesitated in front of the door before he heard a piercing moan reverberate through the air.

"Fuck, Chris, harder," The voice commanded, breathy and high-pitched. A tremor of arousal rolled through Darren, and out of morbid curiosity he peeked through the trailer window.

It was blurry, but Darren could make out Chris slamming a shorter figure with dark hair into the wall, fucking him from behind. Chris' pants and boxers were around his thighs, so Darren had a clear view of his ass, contracting with exertion. Darren licked his lips, groaning deep in his throat. The things he would do that ass.

Darren's mind wandered, thinking of *what exactly* he would do to that ass as he slowly reached for his aching cock, fully aware he was outside in public where anyone could see, but too lust-driven to even care. He needed to jerk off, now.

Just as Darren undid the button of his jeans, a voice came from behind him, making him jump at least a foot in the air.

"Darren, what are you doing," it was Mia, raising a questioning brow and crossing her arms. "You look like a peeping Tom."

"Oh," color rose to Darren's cheeks, crossing his legs and leaning against the railing to hide his arousal. "It's just Chris' trailer, I wanted to say hi-"

Another moan was heard from inside, and Mia instantly looked awkward. "Um, I suggest we come back later."

"Right," Darren agreed, his voice a higher octave than normal.

They shuffled off, Darren's mind whirring as Mia chatted about her conversation with the Warblers in attempt to brush off the uncomfortableness. Darren didn't hear a thing because he couldn't stop thinking about Chris' cock inside some other guy right now, and how bad Darren wished it was him instead.

Yes, this was going to be a long day.

## **Chapter Six**

Darren stabbed his salad violently as he watched Chris at the table over giggling and flirting with his adorable little boyfriend, or whoever the hell he was. Either way, this boy was making Chris laugh until his face scrunched up, and Darren used to make him laugh that way. This was absolute torture.

Darren seethed with jealousy all through the rest of the lunch break until he felt a presence beside him.

"I think you should go talk to him," Mia said, eyeing Darren with concern. "You've been staring at him for the past 20 minutes."

"Why would I want to do that?" Darren laughed shrilly and high pitched, blatantly ignoring her comment on how long he had been staring. "Where have you been anyway?"

Mia raised her eyebrow at Darren's disingenuous laugh and demanding tone. "Just chatting with the girls. Everyone here is really nice, you're very lucky, Dare."

Darren stabbed his salad again, and shoved it into his mouth, not really tasting it. "Yeah."

Mia scrutinized Darren for a long moment before grabbing his wrist and forcing him to stand up abruptly. "C'mon, let's go."

"Where?" Darren snapped without meaning to.

"We're going to go sit with Chris and his.. friend," Mia informed. "So you can stop pouting."

"No, please don't make me," Darren begged, sounding almost child-like. "It'll be unbearably awkward."

"I don't care," Mia sniped. "You have no choice in the matter, and you're going to thank me for it later."

They trudged forward toward Chris' table, and Darren muttered under his breath, "Not likely."

As they approached the table, Chris gave Darren a disgusted look, pulling his beau closer to his body. Darren's body shook with a tremor of rage as it licked his insides.

"Hello there," Mia greeted brightly. "My name is Mia Swier, I'm Darren's girlfriend. Nice to meet you!"

She held out a hand, and Chris stared at her impassively. Darren could see a flicker of something behind his eyes as he considered Mia, but Darren couldn't put his finger on it exactly.

Chris finally shook her hand. "I'm Chris, and this is Max."

*Max.* Stupid Max. He had big puppy dog eyes and a lovely smile that Mia was already falling in love with, Darren could tell.

"So you must be the infamous Darren Criss," Max acknowledged, holding his hand out to Darren in turn.

Darren gripped his hand a little too tight, panicking a little. "I, well, um, what do you mean?"

Max smirked at Chris. "Harry freakin' Potter of course! Duh!"

Max laughed cheerfully, and Darren relaxed. He was safe... for now.

"Do you mind if we join you?" Mia asked politely.

"Not at all," Max enthused, gesturing for them to sit down. Chris looked slightly annoyed that Max didn't even consult him. *Ah, so you win some and you lose some.*

Darren grumbled inaudibly as he took his seat next to Mia, completely losing his appetite.

"So how did you two meet," Chris asked in a falsely sweet voice. Mia didn't seem to notice, but Darren knew him well. It was a voice Chris used a lot when he was speaking sarcastically to bullies back in high school.

"Mutual friends," Mia answered promptly. "We've been dating on and off for a couple years actually."

"How nice," Chris continued in that same voice, and it made Darren cringe.

"Darren told me that you and him went to high school together in Clovis," Mia said, still trying to engage Chris, finally catching on to his abrasiveness.

"Did he now?" Chris grinned at Darren wolfishly. "Did he mention anything else?"

*Oh god, no.*

Mia looked confused. "Not.. really? He just said you guys aren't really on good terms anymore, and that's sad. I hope it changes since you guys are working on screen together as possible boyfriends."

"Could you not talk like I'm not here," Darren interrupted, crossing his arms in agitation. They were getting too dangerously close to the truth, and he couldn't have that.

"Indeed, *boyfriends*," Chris dragged out the 's' as long as he could, still looking pointedly at Darren. Darren was in full-fledged panic mode, aware of Chris' game. Darren just worried if Chris would follow through. However, on the plus side Mia still looked quite dumbfounded.

Max sensed the tension so he cut in, "Kind of like how I want Chris to be my boyfriend, but he keeps playing hard to get."

Max bumped his shoulder into Chris' playfully, and it made Darren want to punch him in the face.

"You love it," Chris drawled. "But I don't do boyfriends," Chris said quietly, his eyes flashing. "Friends with benefits on the other hand..," Chris trailed off and Max swooped in to kiss him briefly.

"I'll get you someday," Max teased, and it was then Darren had enough. He stood up suddenly and stated, "I need to go," before storming away in the direction of his trailer.

Once Darren reached it, he wrenched the door open and let it slam behind him. He turned and punched the wall, pain shooting up his arm.

Darren normally never got this angry, but something about the way Chris was dangling Max in front of him really seeped to his core. If his song 'Jealousy' was any more relevant now, he didn't know when it would be.

The doorknob of his trailer turned a minute later, and fresh air flowed in. Darren whipped around and saw Chris stride in, door slamming shut once again.

"What are you doing here," Darren demanded. "I want to be left alone."

Chris crossed his arms and stuck his hip out. "Mia made me come talk to you."

"Why?" Darren's voice was dripping with acid.

"Because she wants us to make amends or something, I don't understand why she cares so much though."

Darren sighed, running his hands through his hair and started quickly pacing. "That's Mia, she's like that."

"Well isn't she a fucking peach," Chris said icily.

Darren gritted his teeth, turning to glare at Chris. "Don't talk about my girlfriend that way. You don't fucking know her, and she's really sweet, so stop treating her like shit just because she happens to be dating me."

Chris took a step back, holding his hands up in surrender. "Fine, sorry."

Darren didn't expect Chris' passivity when he was still running on a rage high. Darren felt like his chest was toppling in confusion, urging him to continue fighting. So he did.

"You're one to talk," Darren spat. "You're all over that Max guy like you're trying to tease me on purpose!"

Chris scoffed. "Oh, don't flatter yourself, Darren."

"No," Darren insisted. "You answered the phone knowing full well I was calling, and you're fucking him in your trailer without even bothering to keep him quiet! It seems a little reckless, even for you!"

Chris looked mildly surprised. "You saw us fucking in my trailer?"

Darren ignored him. "It's really not that necessary to flaunt your sex life around like that! And from what I could tell from overheard whispers from the cast and your friends, this is fairly recent behavior. Like really recent."

Chris sneered. "So you thought I was a blushing virgin or something, unable to find guys who actually wanted me. Not all guys are as confused as you are, Darren."

"No that's not it," Darren stamped his foot, clenching his fists. "You know I want you, and I was supposed to be your first! And the Chris I knew wouldn't just troll around for quick fucks! He'd want it to mean something!"

Chris went silent. Darren's echoing yells reverberated around the room in the ringing silence. Darren stood there breathing heavily for a moment, trying to read the look on Chris' face. What Darren would give to know what he was thinking in that moment.

"You said you want me," Chris pointed out finally, his voice steady and monotone.

"I already told you that last week. I wanted to sleep with you when we were together, but I was too scared," Darren explained in a rush, his anger finally simmered down to just mere annoyance.

"No," Chris shook his head. "You said want. As in present tense."

*Oh- shit.*

Darren realized his mistake. His rant was like a confession, and Chris didn't miss a thing. "Oh I... I didn't mean it like that-"

Chris stepped forward and grabbed his face roughly, crushing their lips together with bruising force. Darren froze, his body not quite responding right away until Chris swiped his tongue along his bottom lip asking for entrance. Darren granted him instantly, groaning as Chris explored his mouth with his insistent tongue, Chris' fingernails digging into his scalp.

Darren kissed him furiously, grabbing at Chris' hips and pulling them flush together. He put everything he had into that kiss, with so much desperation, want and pure *need*... until he had to breathe, breaking it to pant, heat rising to his cheeks with the realization of Chris' hard length pressed against his thigh.

"Chris, I-" Darren began, looking searchingly into Chris' breathtaking eyes, feeling emotion over take him but Chris cut him off.

"Shut up," he growled, shoving Darren to the couch and climbing on top of him. Chris quite literally ripped open Darren's shirt, and scraped his teeth down his neck. Darren bucked up and moaned loudly, hardly believing this was actually happening. He wasn't going to question it. He couldn't. Not now.

Lost in the ecstasy of the moment of so many overwhelming sensations, they didn't notice that Max and Mia were approaching the trailer with mumbled voices, deep in trivial conversation, unaware of what frivolity was going on inside.



## Chapter Seven

Amber saw two figures approaching Chris' trailer that she at once recognized as Mia and Max; Chris' and Darren's significant others. She was already planning on going to see Chris before shooting, so she saw it was a little weird seeing those two by themselves when she was under the impression they are all eating lunch together.

"Hey guys!" she called, walking swiftly toward them. "Where are Darren and Chris?"

"In there," Max gestured the trailer. "We were giving them a few minutes alone to work out whatever was going on between them."

"It seems as though the yelling has stopped," Mia commented, smiling brightly at Amber. "I still don't get it though."

Amber walked in stride alongside the other two, trying to look natural. "What don't you get?"

"Why they are fighting," Mia questioned. "They are almost giving off the impression of quarreling lovers."

Amber laughed uncomfortably. So clearly Darren hasn't told Mia, and judging by the equally as puzzled look on Max's face, neither had Chris.

"Look guys," Amber lowered her voice conspiratorially. "I don't mean to overstep here, but there is something those two aren't telling you."

All three had ceased walking. "What?" Max asked sharply.

Amber instantly regretted bringing it up at all. It really wasn't her place. Her mind whirled, trying to think of something to say to salvage the situation.

"No, Darren already told me," Mia assured. "They went to high school together."

Max nodded at her words, and then looked questioningly at Amber. "Is Darren bi?"

Mia laughed, waving him off as Amber squirmed. They were getting close to the truth, and it really should have been from Darren or Chris. Not her. "He may act a little gay sometimes, but trust me, he's straight," Mia explained, amusement still in her eyes.

"How about we have them explain what's going on," Amber cut in, starting to walk again. The others followed. "I really don't know what's going on between them myself."

They approached the trailer door, and Mia pulled it open. She was fully prepared on saying something like 'hey you guys done fighting in here, you two have a job to do', but she was shocked into silence by the sight before her.

Chris relished in the high of dominating Darren completely. The dynamic was completely shifted from what it was in high school. Darren was the one begging like an incoherent fool for more while Chris obliged him. But this time, Chris wasn't going to stop like Darren had. He was going to keep going and going until he had Darren's virginity completely, and it appeared that Darren had no quarrels with that; not in the slightest.

Chris' rage and lust fueled every touch and taste, his entire body shaking with anticipation. Chris surged in for another heated kiss and then eyed Darren's sweaty and flushed chest hungrily. Chris ground his hips down roughly into Darren's, the hot friction painful and exhilarating.

"Chris, *please*," Darren pleaded, his voice completely wrecked, trying to pull off Chris' clothing but failing. "I *need* you."

Chris clawed down his chest again, causing Darren to arch off the couch, thrusting his hips up once more. Chris leaned in close and nibbled on his earlobe. Darren's body felt like it was on fire, and Chris' searing fingers and tongue weren't helping.

"I want to hear you say it," Chris whispered hotly in Darren's ear. Chris nuzzled Darren's hair slowly, dragging out his sentence before biting down on his neck, then licked the smarting skin.

Darren gasped, his eyes rolling into the back of his head. "Say what," he managed. He was so painfully hard he thought he was going to die, and to feel Chris through his jeans was torture.

"How bad do you want me Darren," Chris continued, his voice low and dangerous. "Tell me how fucking full of shit you are when you say that you're straight."

Darren whined as Chris cupped him through his jeans and squeezed. Darren didn't answer, just panted, until Chris pressed down on him again.

"I'm so fucking gay for you Chris," Darren groaned. his eyes bugging out. "I fucked my girlfriend this morning, and all I was thinking about was you riding me."

Chris laughed harshly, "Nice try, but I'm not a bottom."

Darren wanted to scream '*Iknowsofuckingjusttakemenow!*' but Chris trailing his tongue along his collarbone and unbuttoning his pants made Darren lose all coherent thought. "I have something else in mind."

"Yes, Chris," Darren begged, feeling the pressure on his cock disappear as Chris pulled Darren's pants and boxers down to his ankles. "*Anything*. Do anything you want to me."

Chris smirked, stroking Darren's thighs for a moment before pushing them apart, leaning in to flick his tongue on the head of Darren's fully erect cock. Darren groaned loudly, thrusting up again, but Chris pushed him down. "Lean back," he commanded.

As Darren did what he was told, Chris murmured in a gravelly voice, "I'm going to fuck you so good, that you won't be able to be with anybody else without thinking of me ever again."

"*Fuck*," Darren whimpered as Chris pulled him to the edge of the couch, forcing his ass cheeks to spread and went straight for gold, swirling his tongue around Darren's hole. Darren positively writhed in pleasure, so Chris held onto his cheeks a little more forcefully before shoving his tongue inside Darren. Chris groaned because the taste of Darren was like victory and the best kind of gritty sweetness.

Darren pulled Chris' hair forcefully, crying out in pleasure, thrashing his head around, screwing his hips down into Chris' face and clenching his thighs.

That was when the trailer door opened.

Mia blinked a few times to make sure what she was seeing was actually happening. When the image of her boyfriend, legs spread and getting *rimmed* by Chris Colfer didn't go away, she had to accept it as reality. But the reason she stood there so long gaping was that she clearly was missing a few pieces of the puzzle. How did Chris and Darren get in this situation when they were so hostile and clearly didn't enjoy each

other's company at all only minutes before? She was about to explode because not even  $1 + 1 = 2$  made sense anymore, but Max finally broke the shocked silence.

"Chris," he let out incredulously. "What are you doing?"

Chris laughed, his peals of high-pitched joy echoing around the trailer. The fact that Darren was found in such an incriminating position by his girlfriend no less brought him great pleasure. The only part of him that complained was his poor neglected cock straining against his jeans.

"I think I'm just gonna leave," Amber muttered before dashing out of sight. Chris would explain everything to her later, no doubt. She looked as if she'd just seen a ghost; so he guessed she probably needed time.

Max stepped into the trailer, but Mia was still frozen on the spot, astonished and horrified. Darren was wide-eyed and caught, his pants still around his ankles as he was unmovable as well from the unexpectedness of the entire situation: from Chris finally wanting him back to people walking in on their delicious treachery.

"Chris I thought we were exclusive," Max went on to complain. "What is going on here?"

Chris stood up, dusting himself off. "What on earth gave you that impression, Max?"

Max spluttered for a moment. "But you told me you weren't sleeping with anyone else at the moment except me."

Chris nodded slowly, a look of haughty derision set on his face. "Yes, just because you're my regular fuck doesn't mean we're boyfriends. I've told you this."

"But-"

"Oh my god," Darren finally exclaimed, clambering off the couch and pulling up his pants hastily. He tripped to Mia, eyes pleading. "I can explain."

She finally unfroze, putting up a finger to insinuate that she needed a moment, and sort of collapsed against the doorframe. "Explain."

Chris folded his arms, smirking and ready for the drama to unfold. Max momentarily forgot his issue with Chris so he could witness the exchange.

Darren sighed, running his fingers through his hair out of nervous habit. "Chris and I dated in high school."

Mia and Max let the loaded sentence roll over them for a bit.

"I don't understand," Mia said quietly. "You've always been a person who seemed comfortable with and sure of your sexuality."

Chris snorted and Darren glared at him before turning back to Mia.

"Chris was my first and only boyfriend," Darren explained. "I was the one who ended things because I was unsure of what I was."

Mia took a step toward him, looking searchingly into his eyes. "Why didn't you ever tell me?"

Darren shrugged helplessly. "It's kind of hard to say my first ever relationship was with a guy, yet I was straight at the same time. Especially to my girlfriend."

"I'm sorry but no," Max cut in, jealousy eminent in his voice. "What Chris was doing to you.. nothing could have been gayer."

Chris laughed again, and Mia's gut twisted uncomfortably. She had almost forgotten, but she would never forget again. Darren getting anally pleased by another man's tongue was forever imprinted in her brain.

"I have to agree with Max," Mia admitted. "I think you're a bit confused."

"No, you don't understand," Darren defended. "I've never been into any other guys my whole life in that way! Just Chris."

"Sexuality is a lot more fluid than you think," Mia stated sagely. "It's not all black and white."

"I know but," Darren stammered. "I've never done anything like this before-"

"It's okay, Darren, I get it." Mia paused. "But you do realize you cheated on me right?"

Darren hung his head. "I know. I didn't mean to, it just happened, and I-"

"Shh," Mia hushed him. She seemed a lot more calm now. "I think I understand. It makes so much sense now. You've been acting a bit off for the past few days and I now know why. You have unresolved feelings for Chris, and that's why you were unable to make love to me all weekend."

A small blush rose on her cheeks because she normally was private about her sex life. But what Chris and Darren just did kind of broke the ice for anything awkward ever again.

"You're right." Darren's eyes were shining. "Just know I'm so sorry that you had to find out like this."

She smiled sadly, and kissed him on the cheek. "Call me once you've figured everything out ok? I won't hold it against you. Take your time, love."

And with that she left, all three men staring blankly in her wake. They were quiet for the longest time until-

"So," Max began. "There are no words, really."

"Max," Chris stated bluntly. "Can you give Darren and I a few minutes alone."

Max frowned. "To finish what you guys started?" His tone was biting, and Darren found himself wanting to punch him in the face again to make him shut up. What was his business here anyway? He wasn't even Chris' fucking boyfriend.

Chris opened the door and pointed out of it. "Even if that were the case, it would be none of your business. Please leave."

"Fine," Max grumbled. "I'll call you I guess when you stop being such a dick."

"Whatever," Chris responded. "You knew what this was from the beginning."

"I thought you didn't do boyfriends," Max pointed out.

"I don't," Chris said with a tone of finality that finally made Max leave.

Once he was long gone, Chris went to his mini-fridge and pulled out a Diet Coke. He took a long pull before saying, "Your girlfriend Mia is actually pretty cool. Now I feel bad for not being so nice to her."

"As you should," Darren interrupted in a bitter voice. "And ex-girlfriend. I'm pretty sure she broke up with me just then."

"Right," Chris said, rolling the bottle cap between his nimble fingers. "I expected her to freak out on you."

"Me too," Darren admitted before slumping back onto the couch with a deep sigh. "I suppose this all happened for a reason, but I still feel awful."

"Well don't," Chris acknowledged, sitting down close to Darren. "She was right, you know. I was telling you the same thing last week, but you didn't seem to listen."

Darren didn't answer, just glared at the floor so Chris ran a palm up his thigh teasingly.

"Stop," Darren objected, pushing Chris' hand off him, even though his dick perked with interest. "I'm not in the mood anymore."

"Suit yourself," Chris replied flippantly, downing the rest of his soda. "What do you suggest we do now then?"

Darren got up, picked his shirt up off the floor and put it back on. He almost forgot that Chris had torn it off him earlier. "Well for starters, we need to go to work."

"Of course."

"And then," Darren trailed off for the longest time. "Later we pick up where we started."

Chris sensed dark, leftover arousal in Darren's voice and grinned triumphantly. "How about you come over tonight?"

Darren leaned down between Chris' thighs and kissed him briefly, almost too romantically. When their lips slid together, sparks flew between them. Darren finally pulled back and Chris noticed his mouth was parted slightly and his pupils were fully dilated. It was then Chris knew he had Darren completely.

"Okay."



## Chapter Eight

Darren was so antsy the entire day of filming that once finished he basically sprinted out to his car, fumbling with his keys and nearly dropping them in his anticipation of getting to Chris' house as soon as possible.

Darren had received a single text message from Chris that contained his exact address with a flirtatious little wink face, and Darren was nearly hard in his pants already knowing what was to come.

Darren and Chris were going to have sex. *Finally.*

After so many years of being apart. After being boyfriends in high school, but never quite taking that next step because of various blockades. After they were both walked in on by people who were basically their significant others, yet nothing bad came from it. Darren was finally going to be able to share a part of himself with Chris, and also ultimately figure out how he really feels about Chris, or men in general, and the ever-looming question about his sexuality.

Darren was positively springing with each step, his entire body thrumming with excitement. He climbed the steps to Chris' apartment three at a time, and once he reached the landing his heart was hammering in his chest and his stomach twisted with nerves.

Darren knocked on the door to the apartment loudly, bouncing on the balls of his feet. He just couldn't stop moving. He wanted to jump in the air, kick off the walls or fist pump, but just in case Chris was looking through the peephole, Darren didn't do any of those things. He just had so much pent up energy and sexual frustration begging for release.

The second the door opened, Darren was on Chris in a heartbeat, grabbing his face and attacking his lips. Chris responded with much enthusiasm, making a surprised little humming noise in his throat, reaching wildly behind him so he and Darren wouldn't go crashing to the floor.

Darren shoved Chris into the side of the nearest flat surface, which was a countertop, and Chris pushed all items out of the way while Darren lifted Chris up onto the table, kissing him hungrily. Chris wrapped his legs around Darren, pressing their rapidly hardening cocks together, causing both men to groan.

Darren nipped his way down Chris' neck before sucking on his pulse point, making with Chris' zipper and button. But Chris grabbed his wrist to cease his actions.

"Tut-tut," Chris scolded, pressing a finger to Darren's lips when he pulled away, looking questioningly at Chris, a triangular eyebrow raised. "Let's take this to the bedroom, it will make this much easier."

Chris hopped off the table and grabbed Darren's hand, leading him to his bedroom. It was then Darren found himself having a difficult time breathing as the gravity of the situation dawned on him. He was going to have sex with Chris. *Gay* sex. And Darren was going to bottom, because Chris said he was exclusively a top. Oh boy.

Darren sat on the edge of Chris' bed, fidgeting nervously and twisting his sweaty fingers together as Chris rummaged through his bedside drawer. They were actually going to do this. Darren closed his eyes and took deep breaths in his nose and out his mouth to calm himself down. After a few minutes or so, Darren felt Chris' weight on the bed next to him.

"Okay, so I need to know a few things before we start," Chris began, his voice gentle.

Darren nodded, still with his eyes closed. He was sure if he looked at Chris in that moment, he would just maul him, no questions asked. But they really need to hammer out a few details. It was necessary.

"This is your first time being with a man," Chris stated, sounding really formal, and not really like a question.

Darren nodded again, but then bit his lip. "Sort of."

Darren felt Chris' penetrating gaze, so he opened his eyes so he could keep a proper conversation going. "I've kissed guys, and I gave a guy a hand job once when I was really drunk in college."

"Okay," Chris confirmed, the corner of his mouth quirking up with amusement. "This is going to be a lot different though, you sure you're ready?"

Darren reached out to caress Chris' cheek. Chris looked away, looking slightly uncomfortable with the intimacy. "I *want* you, Chris. So much."

Chris laughed nervously. "Well at least that's settled then." He paused for a moment looking conflicted. "How do you feel about using a condom?"

Darren tapped his chin. "Well, Mia and I don't use them since she's on birth control, so I guess it's really up to you, depending if you're clean or not."

"I am," Chris assured, looking a little sheepish. "I was just asking because I just realized Max and I used the last one, so I wanted to run the idea by you first."

Darren gulped. "Barebacking."

Chris nodded. "Yes, barebacking. Nothing between my cock and inside your asshole."

Darren flinched at Chris' forwardness, but his dick twitched in his jeans in interest. Well clearly it wasn't an objectionable idea. Actually, the more Darren thought about it, the more he felt desperate for it. His being positively *itched* for Chris' touch.

"Well let's get to it then," Darren whispered, starting to lean into Chris, his voice breathy and wavering.

Chris surged forward, catching Darren's bottom lip between his teeth and nibbled, pushing him onto his back and climbing in between Darren's legs. Chris lay flush on top of him, tangling his fingers in Darren's curly locks, while Darren's hands roamed the expanse of Chris back, like he couldn't get enough.

Chris thrust his tongue into Darren's mouth, and Darren sucked on it, moaning like a whore and thrusting up into Chris, seeking out any kind of friction for his aching cock. Chris gripped onto Darren's shoulders as they rutted frantically together, too caught up in the moment to start removing clothing just yet.

"You're all mine right know," Chris growled. "*Mine*, and nobody else's."

"Yes," Darren whimpered as Chris licked a long stripe with his tongue down Darren's throat. "*Yours*."

Chris' eyes darkened with ravenous lust as he looked piercingly into Darren's eyes. "I'm going to fuck you now," he informed, his voice gravelly and wrecked.

"*Please*," Darren whimpered, thrusting up into Chris' palm as he pressed down on Darren's erection and undid his jeans at the same time.

As Chris dragged Darren's pants and underwear down and off his legs, Darren leaned up and pulled his shirt swiftly over his head, desperate to be naked as soon as possible. When Chris noticed this, his eyes roamed Darren's form, eyes positively shining with lust, his pink tongue peeking out to moisten his dry lips.

"Wow," Chris sounded amazed. "You've.. filled out."

Darren blushed deeply, feeling exposed since Chris was still fully dressed. "I'd like to say the same thing about you, but-"

Chris silenced him with a quick, dirty open-mouthed kiss, as Darren made with Chris' pants, who sighed with the relief of less pressure on his straining cock. Chris stood up to shimmy his undergarments all the way off, and when he gripped the hem of his t-shirt Darren's hand shot forward, stilling him.

"Allow me," he murmured warmly, slipping Chris' thin t-shirt over his head. Darren spread his legs apart as Chris kneeled between them. Darren didn't even notice Chris fumbling with the lube because Darren couldn't stop staring. Chris was built gorgeously, modestly so, his lean muscle moving lightly under his pale, beautiful skin.

"You're gorgeous," Darren breathed, splaying his palm over Chris' heart and stroking smoothly across the muscular planes. "Wow."

A faint blush crept up Chris' neck, and Darren thought it complimented him well. Darren grabbed his neck, curling his fingers in Chris' locks and kissing him deeply, breath hitching with the heads of their cocks brushed together from the closeness.

"If you keep sweet talking me, it'll prolong me being inside you," Chris pointed out with a wink, his chest heaving slightly as Darren's calloused fingertips brushed over his perfect pink nipple and into his fine chest hair.

Chris shivered, his mouth falling open slightly, his hand running tantalizingly up Darren's inner thigh and his other clutching the open bottle of lube. Darren shuddered in return, leaning back on his elbows and presenting himself openly for Chris to prepare.

Chris stared. Not even in his wildest dreams he imagined his high school love spread out like this and ready for him. If Chris really thought about it, he probably would have been in the opposite position if him

and Darren ever gotten that far back in those days. But since Darren left, Chris never wanted to give up control like that. He felt so uncomfortable at the idea of being so exposed and vulnerable with somebody else, so he just kept his sex life carefree, and he was always doing the fucking. It was easier that way.

"I'm going to make this good for you, I promise," Chris whispered in a rare moment of tenderness, slathering his fingers with a hearty amount of lubricant and circling Darren's hole lightly.

"I trust you," Darren whispered back, possibly more affectionate than Chris expected or intended, which made him inwardly cringe. God, why did he have to talk like that?

Chris pushed a finger in, and Darren found himself holding his breath, getting used to the unique intrusion. Even when he did it to himself that one time, he was never *inside*, so this was an entirely new experience. But the fact that it was Chris' long, nimble finger doing it, Darren found himself impossibly aroused by it.

"How does it feel?" Chris asked tentatively.

"Good," Darren grunted. "More, do more."

Chris obliged by pumping his finger steadily in and out, before adding a second, scissoring slightly on the upstroke and searching for Darren's sweet spot.

When Chris brushed the tiny ball of nerves, Darren keened, his arms shaking so bad he collapsed onto the bed, gaping at the ceiling. His hair was already matted to his forehead and chest shining with sweat.

When Chris was up to three fingers, and Darren was screwing his hips down onto them, groaning needily, Chris took it as a good sign that Darren was ready. Chris splayed one hand next to Darren's head, while the gripped his lubed cock, circling Darren's entrance teasingly.

"So how do you want to do this?" Chris asked a writhing Darren Criss in the sheets, who's muscular thighs wound themselves around Chris' waist, trying to guide him inside.

"This is good," Darren let out, his eyes so dark that it gave Chris the good kind of chills. "I want to see your face."

Chris pushed the tip of his cock past the rim and watched Darren's face scrunch up in half pleasure half pain. "You know," Chris muttered, resisting the overwhelming urge to sink himself all the way into the tight heat. "If you're on top of me, you can control how deep I go in, and all that. You might like that better, since this is your first time."

Chris wasn't really sure why he was being so thoughtful to Darren's comfort considering everything that has happened and what was going to happen; but Chris was struck with this *feeling* of something clicking in his brain. The second he started pushing inside Darren, in the far-reaches of his mind something acknowledged the fact that they were like two missing puzzle pieces finally finding each other once again.

Chris pushed those demeaning thoughts out of his mind, and concentrated on the task at hand. Since Darren hadn't answered, Chris continued sliding himself in, slowly until he was fully sheathed.

Darren was panting, gripping Chris' forearm like a lifeline, his knuckles turning white. Chris rolled his hips in deep experimentally, and Darren's eyes rolled into the back of his head in turn, his jaw going slack. Chris thought it was one of the hottest things he had ever seen in his life.

"You okay?" Chris chanced, placing his other hand on the other side Darren's head and kissing the tip of his nose. His wrist was starting to cramp, but he barely noticed.

"Mmmhmm," Darren mumbled, nodding frantically. "Move please."

Chris pulled almost all the way out before snapping his hips forward again, slapping loudly and deliciously against Darren's ass. Chris did it again until he was slamming into Darren, who moaned loudly with each powerful thrust.

Just as Chris felt like he was getting close, Darren said brokenly, "Yeah, I think I'd like to be on top, to see what it's like."

Chris made a noise of affirmation, placing his knee strategically on the outside of one of Darren's loosened thighs and flipped them over expertly, still managing to stay inside Darren, who swayed with confusion for a moment.

"Jesus, you're like a fucking ninja of some sort," Darren chided, running his rough fingertips up Chris' gorgeous pale pallor to give himself a moment to breathe.

Chris chuckled lightly, rubbing Darren's thighs soothingly, loving the quiet burn of Darren's dark smattered hair upon his thighs. Each time Darren's heart beat, Chris could feel it on his cock, in time with his own heart. They were one.

For a moment, Chris tried to forget Darren leaving, all the empty promises, and the tragic heartbreak. As Darren experimentally impaled himself on Chris' cock, his thigh muscles clenching gloriously, his eyes fell closed, and Chris found himself struck in awe by his beauty.

Darren's eyelashes were out of this world; longer, darker and thicker on anyone Chris has ever seen. The dusted rouge upon Darren's olive skin, his bruised lips and shiny, sweaty sculpted body was a sight to see. It made Chris' heart ache.

Chris' conflicting emotions were soon drowned out by the overwhelming pleasure of seeing Darren pick up an even pace, and falling completely apart above him. The sight alone was enough to make Chris come on the spot, but he held on, wanting to drag this out as long as he could.

And it was in that exact moment right before orgasm that Darren realized that he was in the right place. The place he was supposed to be all along. With Chris, and nowhere else in the entire world. Something clicked into place inside him, and never in his life had ever felt sure sure about anything. Chris was his soulmate.

Tears sprung into his eyes because he was so overcome with emotion. The guilt. The pain. The love. He had left Chris in high school, and despite all the good that had come from it, Darren realized he had made the worst mistake of his 20 odd years. He was sure nothing else in the world could compare to that kind of anguish and loss. He was certain if he ever lost Chris again he would die on the inside.

As many women he's kissed and made love to, none of it compared to this. *This*. Right here. With Chris inside him and filling him up in more ways than one. Darren's chest expanded with this overwhelming pleasure, touched to his core as he felt like he was riding the most exquisite high of them all. Darren wanted to grab his own heart, for fear it might explode, because he was feeling all this. *Too much*.

It was just so perfect, and every fiber of his being relished in the utter *rightness* of the situation. Like all the questions Darren has ever asked the universe suddenly made sense. It was as if he never had to ask anything ever again. Because he already knew.

And the most tragically beautiful part of all, despite everything, Chris was still willing to be here with him. He thrust steadily up into Darren, panting and chest flushed. Darren blinked his tears away to stare into his lover's eyes, searching for the expected reflection of pure affection and contentedness.

But instead, a darkness crawled over Darren as he looked into those dilated pupils. Although every feature of Chris' face was expressing arousal and pleasure, his eyes told the truth. They were cold, distant and simmering with something else very sinister. The complete and utter opposite of what Darren was expecting from Chris.

*Chris.* His Chris. The boy he fell in love with all those years ago in high school the moment he laid eyes on him. His delicate features, his square framed glasses, his cute upturned nose, his freckles, his stunning eyes, his chestnut hair. Darren knew now that he's always loved Chris and always will. But he didn't love him back. Not anymore.

Darren's orgasm hit him then, and it was the most painful experience of his life, because when he wailed, it was with sorrow of the reality of his heart breaking, because he didn't want to believe it. To believe that Chris was just using him. That innocent, precious, caring Chris from all those years ago would do something like that. Darren prayed, hoped and wished that it wasn't true.

When he came back down from the grotesque high of his body peaking, tears of anguish fell down his cheeks when he felt Chris convulse inside him as he came too. Darren held still, clamping his lips shut before he would break down in sobs. He just wanted to go home to deal with his feelings, away from the boy he loved so dearly it hurt.

Darren grit his teeth and dared to look down again into those eyes one last time that told a story. And for that single, long moment Darren stared deep into them; he saw as they guardedly gazed back through a haze of leftover lust. Time had slowed down.

Chris had just realized Darren was crying, his eyes widened minutely, and for the briefest of moments, Darren saw a flash. It was very quick, but it was so significant; it gave Darren hope. The slightest inkling that maybe one day he could finally break through to Chris.

Because what he saw was regret. Pain. Love. Exactly what Darren was feeling only moments before, but what felt like an eternity because epiphanies really take a toll.



Darren opened his mouth to say something, *anything*, but Chris rolled them over, pulling Darren into his arms and held him fiercely, his softening cock still inside him.

Darren felt uncomfortable and gross with come drying on his skin and dripping out of him, but he wasn't sure why Chris was holding him this way, so he just gave into it. Because for now, he wanted the boy he loved to cuddle with him in a post-sex haze. Even if it was a lie, Darren desired to be wanted, just for a few minutes at least.

Chris held on with all his might. His throat was constricted, closed completely shut. He knew if he just looked at Darren just one more time, into those heartbreaking eyes, Chris' resolve would waver. His walls would crash down and he would openly weep. He wouldn't be able to stick to the plan, but he absolutely had to.

He had taken Darren's gay virginity. And it was *amazing*, better than he ever imagined, even as a teenager. But his heart wouldn't allow it to be more. Darren was the one person he relied on back then, but now he only had himself. Darren would just hurt him again.

The man he held in his arms right now was the one who made Chris question everything about himself. The man that had singlehanded made him cry more than any bully, family member or stranger. The one person who has aided Chris the most in being the most shut off, guarded and cautious person he knew himself to be today.

Chris couldn't love Darren, because it was just not possible. Not anymore.

## Chapter Nine

Chris didn't know how long he was awake for, but there was a soft blue light shining through his blinds and reflecting on Darren's naked back. He knew it was early, but he couldn't tear his eyes away from Darren to look at his clock.

Darren appeared so peaceful and beautiful it broke Chris' heart all over again. His eyelashes fanned delicately over his cheeks while the swell of his ass was half covered by a thin sheet. Darren's arms were folded neatly under his head as he snoozed, his abdomen rising softly. Chris reached out to stroke the smooth muscular planes of his back, Darren's soft skin glorious under his fingertips.

Once Darren woke up things would change, so Chris preferred it this way. The quiet. The calm. Chris wanted this moment to last forever, so he could appreciate and love this man before having to face the world and the pain.

Everything was going to change today. It was all part of the plan. It had to happen. Needed to happen. Nothing could stop the inevitable, but Chris just needed a few minutes alone with Darren. A few minutes to appreciate what could have been instead of what was.

Tears leaked out of the corner of Chris' eyes and onto his sheets, an overwhelming sorrow overtaking him. He didn't want to do this. He just wanted things to be easy and he could just fall into Darren's arms and everything would be okay. But that wasn't the way the world worked.

Chris let himself feel everything, because in this moment, it was the only time he could. It wasn't the same when he was completely alone, and it definitely wouldn't be the same if Darren were awake, gazing at Chris like he had last night just before orgasm. It just hurt too much. Chris was sure that if Darren looked past Chris' carefully built walls for too long that eventually Chris would give up and just be vulnerable again. But he couldn't risk it. Not again. Because this time, it would completely destroy him.

Agony, regret, remorse, longing and passion washed over Chris, slamming into his heart and making his body curl up on itself as if for protection. Chris was afraid of holding Darren too close for the sake of his quiet sobs; he only wanted to hold onto this as long as possible. This was his last chance.

Even as painful and awful as it was, Chris felt like this was healthy to *feel* so much for a change. He knew exactly how things were and the reality of the situation; he was aware what he could have had, and what

he had lost because of heartbreak. It was possible that going through with the plan was going to be harder than he bargained for. He had shared a special part of himself, and taken that from Darren. It was difficult to explain, even to himself, but it was there, as if tangible, hanging in the air for Chris to admire at a distance; because it could never be.

Darren stirred and Chris froze, preparing to throw up his blockade and feign the real emotion he was just feeling, but Darren just sighed, still deep in the world of dreams as he adjusted his position slightly.

It only made Chris cry more, because his honest, true time with Darren was almost up. He knew that now, and that knowledge and the suddenness made the shockwaves of pain more intense. Chris put his fist in his mouth to keep from making audible noises of heartbreak and pressed his forehead to Darren's shoulder, breathing him in.

Chris pulled his fist out of his mouth and wound his arm around Darren's back and silently wept into his shoulder, kissing it momentarily before succumbing completely to his emotions. Falling completely under so he could experience his wound fully before it healed forever, like a long-forgotten scar.

Soon, like a inner-built time clock, Chris pulled away, giving Darren one long, last loving glance. It took all he had in him to kiss Darren's hair and stroke his neck one last time before he got out of bed, a piece of himself forcibly ripped from within and preserved forever in that spot. It was that part of himself that retained small hope. The part of himself that loved Darren more than breathing and life itself. The part of himself that he gave to Darren wholly, but he would never know. He couldn't know.

Chris prolonged the moment just a second longer before turning away, wiping his last tears shed for Darren ever again away. The wheels in motion for the days events were ready to unfold and Darren had no idea.

Darren woke up shivering, the bed cold and empty from at least a while of neglect. Before cracking open his eyelids, his blurry vision giving away the fact that Chris was no longer beside him; which was odd considering this was his apartment. Darren flailed out his arm, pressing down on the fluffy comforter for good measure to make sure when something crumpled under his forearm. Darren unfolded the piece of paper in his hands, blinking a few times so he could read properly.

*Dare - Went to set early. I left you some coffee and a doughnut. See you there. 3 - Chris*

Darren smiled, warmth blooming through his chest as he clutched the note close, breathing it in. It smelled mostly like fresh paper, but there was a hint of recently-showered Chris that gave Darren some serious flashbacks from last night.

The highly erotic sensations and overwhelming emotions namely.

So this was really good. Chris had used the old nickname that he had given Darren in high school, so unlike what he suspected and dreaded more than anything else in the world, there wasn't any trouble in paradise. Well no more trouble than normal when it came to them.

They had made love, and Darren didn't regret a single second of it. In fact, he felt like he had made huge headway into his own self-discovery in this big confusing world of sexualities and responsibilities. It was like a huge weight had lifted from his chest and shoulders as he hopped up merrily from the bed and jogged to the bathroom to take a long-awaited piss.

Darren inhaled his doughnut and chugged his scalding coffee before throwing himself into his car and drove back to his apartment. Sure, it was probably bad to be a little late only a couple weeks into work, but he really didn't want to spend the day in the same outfit again. Plus, it would also raise questions that Darren wasn't sure he could answer yet without discussing with Chris first, for each other's sakes.

As Darren got ready he acknowledged the dull ache in his ass and his sore muscles every time he shifted every which way. He welcomed it whole-heartedly, however because it was a beautiful (and arousing) reminder and proof of what had happened last night. It had *actually happened*, and Darren felt like he was carrying something new inside him that he never felt before. He had shared the most intimate part of himself with Chris, and he never wanted that to go away. Not in a million years, because this feeling, although currently unnamable, was euphoric.

Darren half-ran onto set, feeling sweat pool under his armpits and soak his ratty old t-shirt while his Freelance Whales bag sprang against his ass with each quick stride. Thankfully when he made it to his trailer, there were no scolding producers or managers, so Darren tossed his bag aside and then rushed to makeup, hair and wardrobe hoping they weren't wondering where he was too much.

Once the hollywood magicians had turned Darren's disheveled 20-something musician-y appearance into dapper high schooler Blaine Anderson, Darren made his way out to search for anybody he knew to feel

less lonely. After about 20 seconds he saw Chris skip toward him, beaming brightly and already dolled up as Kurt.

"Hey you," Chris greeted, his teeth showing completely and his eyes were scrunched up adorably. Darren remembered when he made Chris that happy in high school. He was so glad that he was able to do it again.

"Hi," Darren returned warmly, taking Chris' hand and kissing it. "I'd thought you left me this morning all alone."

Chris' eyes flashed with thinly veiled panic, his mouth opening and closing quickly without response until Ian interrupted. "C'mon guys we need you!"

Darren frowned slightly at Chris' strange reaction, but followed him nonetheless, fully preparing himself to immerse into character.

The scene went well, and like always (but now it was even more obvious to himself), whenever Chris looked at Darren with awe-struck adoring eyes, it made his heart do black flips. Sure, it was *still* Chris being in character, but now there was the undercurrent of how they had had sex last night. *SEX*. Real, unadulterated gay sex. It was a huge deal, and soon hopefully Darren would break down Chris' walls, get him to trust again and eventually have *Chris*, not Kurt gaze so wantonly with love without reserve or restraint. It was all Darren wanted and more.

Darren was tapping a vending machine impatiently around lunch time when he heard footsteps to his left. His face immediately brightened at the sight of a chipper Chris once more skipping his way toward him. Odd really since that was more like his character than himself.

"So I would like to ask a question," Chris began, his voice brimming with excitement and interrupting Darren's innermost thoughts. "I'm having a little cast get-together in my trailer tonight. So you're invited too, naturally. Please come?"

Darren nodded, smiling slightly. "Sounds fun."

Chris tapped his shoulder while stating, "You need to meet everyone else, I insist."

"Not a problem," Darren agreed, tilting his head and admiring the way they had done Chris' hair. "You look great."

Chris blushed light pink. "Why thank you, lover," he purred, turning around and batting his eyelashes over his shoulder.

Although Darren wasn't complaining about the way Chris was acting so flirtatiously, swinging his ass with each step in a tantalizing manner, it was rather Kurt-like. Not Chris-like. And Darren loved Chris, not Kurt. Signs say that Chris was really getting into character today, and Darren really admired him for it. Deeply.

The rest of the day went swimmingly, even though Darren's presence in scenes wasn't entirely necessary, but he spent some time goofing off with the Warblers and went over the script while eyeing other cast members with shy fascination. With utter joy, Darren saw that Kurt was transferring schools, so that only meant he and Chris could spend even more time together!

With this thought keeping him warm as he dressed up in the brisk evening of his trailer, Darren shaved and splashed some cologne on his face in anticipation of some hot and heavy action with Chris tonight.

He had overheard from Cory and Heather earlier that whenever Chris threw a party, it was for a special occasion of some sort since he always went all out, decking out his trailer lavishly. Maybe Chris was doing this for Darren. Maybe it was for another reason entirely, but it didn't really matter because the brief periods Darren saw Chris today weren't nearly enough to sate his desperate need to be in his presence.

As he walked through the cool lot, his dress shoes echoing around the trailers and clacking against his eardrums, soon nearby he could hear the distinctive thumping of bass. Quickening his pace, Darren made his way to the shaking trailer, with lights shining through the windows, very eager to get inside and socialize.

"Heyyyyyy," Lea greeted at the doorway, already smashed drunk, and *how already* was beyond Darren's comprehension. "I think we should be best friends."

Darren chuckled awkwardly as Lea leaned her entire body weight on him, arms wrapped tightly around his middle, nuzzling his shirt. "You smell good," she told him.

"Er, thanks," Darren said, sounding more like a question as his eyes scanned the dark trailer for Chris. He could already see Mark and Chord dancing, well more like thrusting the air while their dark drinks sloshed over the side of their cups.

And to his horror, Darren finally located Chris, who was wrapped tightly around another guy, who looked much like Max, his entire face being eaten in haste of dancing tongues and smacking lips.

Sure, Chris and Darren weren't boyfriends, but seriously *what the hell?* A fury so deadly burned hotly in Darren's chest as he pushed Lea into an exasperated Dianna and stormed toward the couch where Chris lay, fists clenched.

"Chris?" Darren chanced, raising his voice indignantly over the loud music.

Chris pulled away from Max, his eyes drooping with drunkenness as the glittering of the disco ball from above danced upon his pale flesh. "Sup?"

"What do you mean 'sup'," Darren snarled, teeth bared. "What are you doing?"

"Well," Max interrupted haughtily. "He's making out with his newly minted *boyfriend*, that's what he's doing."

Darren saw tunnel as the word echoed across his mind several dozen times. "B-boyfriend?"

"Yup," Chris smirked, stroking his own thigh as a nervous tick. "I thought to give Max a chance."

"But," Darren protested, suddenly finding it hard to breathe. "But.. what happened between us last night, did that-"

"We fucked," Chris interjected bluntly. "I got it out of my system, and now we can move on. So you can go back to Mia now, yeah?"

Darren ground his teeth as hot angry tears streamed down his cheeks. "I can't believe you're doing this."

"Well what did you expect Darren," Chris challenged. "After all that you've done to me?"

Darren furiously wiped tears from his face. "But I never expected you to play me like that! How could you?" Darren demanded. "We were acting like boyfriends all day!"

Max laughed high-pitched and shrill, making Darren cringe intensely. "Clearly, the guy doesn't know the difference between his character and real life, Chris."

Chris just responded by kissing Max deeply once more, pulling him into his lap. The sight slashed a huge gash into Darren's heart, so awful he could have collapsed from the pain. But he couldn't. He had to get out of there.

Darren sobbed all the way home, unendingly thankful that he didn't get into a car crash because he could barely see past his salty tears of sorrow. But maybe he wasn't lucky enough to die tonight.

He ran blindly into his apartment, locking the latch and doorknob before going to his kitchen and pulling out his bottle of vodka from the cabinet. Darren unscrewed the cap and plunged the alcohol down his throat until he couldn't see, tears and snot mixing in as he choked and burned. Darren didn't even bother with a glass because he just wanted the pain to go away. It was just too much.

The numbness soon overtook Darren as he drank himself into oblivion that night.



## Chapter Ten

*Darren sat in his cold dorm, getting the sudden onslaught of sorrow he was now burdened to carry with him always. He was no longer able to arrange and unpack. It just felt wrong. All of this. Why had he come here?*

*Darren kicked the nearest box, tears falling afresh down his cheeks. The tear tracks were painful, rutting their familiar red rash path down his face and onto his jeans, leaving tiny stains. Darren sucked in a shaky breath and held it so he wouldn't arouse worry in any of his dorm-mates.*

*He had cried the whole drive to LAX. He had cried the entire plane ride. His mother looked reluctant to let him go as she helped escort him to the terminal, completely at a loss of how to help her son. But she realized this was his decision, and he was coming to terms with it in his own way. All she could do was give Darren her unyielding support, for which he was eternally grateful.*

*It was only a matter of time before Chris knew where he went. That Darren had abandoned him. Although Darren's heart wracked with shockwaves of the most awful pain the world, his brain told him that this is where he should be. But why couldn't he move from this spot anymore?*

*"Hey, man you alright," a voice asked, startling Darren as he hastily wiped his cheeks and sniffled. "Yeah, fine."*

*The boy, probably a freshmen like Darren sat down next to him and rubbed his back tentatively. His eyes were soft brown displaying to Darren that he seemed genuinely concerned. "Whatever's bothering you, I'm sure it'll pass," he offered helpfully.*

*Darren attempted to smile. "I really appreciate it thank you. I'm just really far away from.. home." **My heart. My love. My liveliness.***

*The boy nodded, "I'm Joey by the way. Joey Richter."*

*Darren shook his hand formally, the angle slightly awkward since Darren didn't want to touch Joey with his snotty hand. "I'm Darren Criss."*

*Joey smiled in a crooked way, and Darren found it adorable making his heart warm unexpectedly. "Well it looks like we're going to be roommates, huh? What you studying?"*

*"I'm a theater geek," Darren admitted sheepishly. "I hope this means we can still be friends."*

*"The best of!" Joey exclaimed, jumping to his feet. "C'mon, let's nerd up our room!"*

*As the two boys chatted excitedly about their lives, their aspirations and their dreams, Darren nearly forgot the anguish of earlier, just for long enough he was able to feel content. Maybe he could survive here, with his new friend.*

Darren woke up with his head pounding horribly with each dull thunk of his heartbeat. He shifted his deathly sore body and noticed his cheek was pressed against something wet on top of a cold porcelain surface. Darren groaned out loud, wiping the hopefully just drool from his cheek, and pushed himself away from the toilet, his spine colliding roughly with the hard bathtub.

Darren had an inkling he hit rock bottom, because never in his life had he felt so terrible, and had drank so much by himself, especially by means of self-medication. And the worst part was that nothing came from it except his tortured body and a foul-reeking bathroom. He still had to go to work today.

Like a terrifying reminder, Chris' name drifted lazily over his consciousness despite the fact his brain was fighting his very long stretched out blackout. The last thing he could remember was the pain, and the sweet glorious burn in his throat as he downed his whole bottle of vodka.

Darren had succumbed to this path once in college, and it was a very dark time. Darren was utterly terrified of going to that place again, so he really had no choice. He needed that one person who always brought him back from the brink of depression. The one person who had saved him from Chris feelings last time.

He needed Joey.

With shaking, weak hands Darren patted his pocket discovering it wasn't there as usual. Darren fought down his flare of panic with reason. He had come home with his phone, so it was probably somewhere in the house.

Darren took a few deep breaths, fighting further nausea and then crawled slowly on his hands and knees out of the bathroom. Squinting against the brightness of the clear morning seeping through his bedroom, he spotted his phone face-down on his mattress. Darren grabbed it, then flopped on the floor, groaning, unlocking the screen in the process.

To his horror, it was past 7:00am, meaning he was supposed to be on set, like *now* but it only got worse. When Darren's screen popped to life, the text message application was still open, Chris' name at the top above a series of text messages.

*Oh, god.*

**From Darren:**

(9:07pm) Hi Chris.

(9:42 pm) crhis

(10:01 pm) i know you arnt texting bcak because you hate me for some reason

(10:03 pm) you dont know how sorry i am for evrything

(10:04 pm) i love you, chris y

(10:07 pm) ou don't know how much

(10:26 pm) but i didnt deserve waht you did to me

"Fuck," Darren grit out, pressing the heel of his palm into his forehead roughly. He didn't remember writing any of that, but thank goodness Chris didn't respond. Hopefully they didn't go through. A man could dream.

Darren swallowed his pride, acknowledging the dull ache in his chest and sharp pain in his head as he pulled up his contacts and clicked on Joey. He put the phone to his ear, swallowing thickly because his mouth was so parched.

Joey picked up on third ring, "Hey man."

"Hi," Darren croaked, closing his eyes to somewhat soothe his pounding headache. "What you up to?"

"Laying in bed," Joey informed, making noises that sounded like he was stretching pleausrably.

"Oh did I wake you," Darren asked feeling like a nuisance. "I'm sorry."

"Shouldn't you be on set," Joey inquired with a tired laugh. "Miss me already?"

"When you going to come visit me on set?" Darren asked, trying to avoid the bad news as soon as possible. He didn't want to sound needy.

"Um," Joey trailed off, stretching again and groaning happily. "I could today if you want. I don't need to head back to Chicago for a few days."

Darren's heart lifted with relief. "Can you come get me?"

"Is there something wrong with your car again," Joey sounded exasperated. "I keep telling you that you need to check out the heater core, I'm pretty sure that's it."

"Actually no," Darren said glumly. "I just can't drive today. Hence why I'm late."

Joey was quiet for a long moment, the realization of what Darren's hidden meaning was roll over him. "Oh, Darren what happened?"

Darren bit his lip, feeling his throat close and tears start to well up again. "Chris."

Joey sighed irritably. "Darren, I told you deciding to try out for a show he worked for would only share a likeness of walking straight into hell."

"I know," Darren whispered lowly. "You were right, but it's also more than that."

Darren imagined Joey's eyebrows shooting up. They knew each other well. "I thought he wasn't interested in being friends, but was keeping things civil?"

Darren gulped loudly, allowing his tears to drip out of the corner of his eyes and onto the carpet. "Something happened."

"If he hit you-" Joey began heatedly, but Darren cut him off.

"Nothing like that," Darren assured sadly. "It was my fault really."

"Go on," Joey prompted gently, and it only made Darren cry more.

"We had sex," Darren choked out.

"What?" Joey spluttered. "When?"

"The other night," Darren sobbed. "It meant nothing to him, but everything to me."

Darren started heaving with sorrow over the line, and it made Joey's heart hurt. He couldn't do anything now, especially over the phone so he hopped out of bed and grabbed random clothes in the process of running to the bathroom. "I'm so, so sorry.. just.. hold on Darren. I'll be there as quick as I can."

"Thanks," Darren mumbled, his voice broken. "You're a lifesaver." *Literally.*

After Darren hung up, he continued crying knowing that despite the fact that Joey was going to do everything in his power to make things better, Joey could never change the fact that Darren had to face Chris every single day of the week. And Darren knew deep down that the wound would be ripped open cruelly every time Darren saw his face. What was he going to do to cope?

Chris couldn't sleep. No, his mind kept him awake the entire night so he could torture himself. Darren's face flashed across his mind every few seconds or so, reminding him of the harsh reality. Darren's heartbroken, crumpled face when Chris deliberately smashed everything they shared together back into his tortured expression at the party last night. It was the most horrible thing Chris ever saw and ever done, and he was going to have to live with it forever. Chris wasn't sure if he could.

The dark-toned skinned man with dark curly hair sleeping next to him was not Darren. The man that Chris fucked the entire night into the sheets was not Darren. It was Max. It was never going to be Darren. And this was an awful tragedy.

Chris gave up on going to sleep around 4:00am, so he grabbed his phone to sit on the couch and watch the sunrise. Maybe the lovely sunshine radiating through the tall buildings would help his cold, defeated heart. Just maybe.

What Chris hadn't prepared for was his small little notification on his Blackberry screen telling him he had multiple text messages. He vaguely remembered his phone beeping last night in the process of flipping

over Max before entering him for the third time. When Chris clicked on the application his heart immediately jumped to his throat, beating rapidly.

*Darren.*

Late in the evening last night, and based on the misspelling, Darren was probably drunk or inebriated in some sort of way. And not only that, but professed his love for Chris. *He still loved Chris*, even after all this time. Even after all that had happened. And Darren was right, what Chris did wasn't fair.

*But was necessary*, Chris reasoned with some dark, sadistic corner of his mind. He knew Darren was his soulmate, but it could never be. Chris would just die alone, and he needed to come to terms with that. Darren deserved to find someone else and be happy. Have kids. Chris couldn't give him that. Chris had nothing to offer but pain and resentment. Darren deserved so much better, and that Mia was probably the one for him. She seemed nice enough.

Chris gagged and clutched his Blackberry to his chest, tears leaking freely as he tried to control his breathing. He couldn't break down now, he promised himself he wouldn't. But as always, Darren throws a curveball and completely surprises him, good and bad.

God, Chris hoped that Darren didn't expect anything back. Chris wasn't sure if he could respond. What would he say?

*Fuck off?* No, that was clear already. Darren didn't need reminding.

*I'm desperately in love with you too, but we can't be together?* No, that would be even worse.

It was possible that Darren wasn't aware of his actions last night and was just as mortified as Chris was once he realized he sent them. But Chris had no way of knowing for sure because he had never seen Darren take a sip of alcohol in his life, not even in high school.

So all Chris could do was clutch his phone and his semblance of sanity, knowing that the words near his heart were true, and that's what would get him through his days. Darren loved him. *Darren loves me*. That was all he needed to know, and somehow it made the sunrise more beautiful than Chris expected.

*The music was clawing at Darren's eardrums. Couldn't somebody turn it down? But Darren got distracted by a solid pair of lips moving eagerly against his, recently shaved stubble burning them. Darren couldn't tell if*

*the rush in his blood came from the alcohol or the fact that this was the first guy Darren was kissing since.. since.. **him.***

*"What are we doing," the boy asked against Darren's lips, his voice husky and dripping with arousal. "We can call a girl over here or something.. to make this less gay if you want."*

*Darren grunted in displeasure, tipping the half-empty bottle of spiced rum clutched in his left hand in his mouth and swallowed hugely. "Just shut up and kiss me alright?"*

*The boy responded by throwing himself at Darren, his mouth hot and insistent, tongue lashing and burning. Darren shoved down the guys loose pajama pants (as this was a pajama-themed party) and took his half hardened cock in his palm. Darren just didn't even care anymore as he gave an experimental pump. The boy gasped, collapsing against the door frame and attempted to keep quiet as Darren snapped his wrist quicker, keeping an ear trained on the voices in the other room, really hoping not to get caught.*

*"Oh god, yes," the boy panted, but Darren covered his mouth with another searing palm. Darren didn't even know his name. All he knew that this guy was a friend of a friend of this girl who he knew who invited him here. Joey was around here someplace with the others, probably feeling awkward. But Darren had to.. finish this.*

*Darren closed his eyes and gave into the utter wrongness that this was. He'd fucked lots of drunk girls at these parties in his dorm, barely remembering them the next day, but this was new. Darren reasoned that it felt wrong because he wasn't gay, but he knew deep down that wasn't the real reason. It was because it wasn't Chris.*

*This guys' body felt wrong, all the way down to his unimpressive cock. This was supposed to be with Chris. Chris is who his heart belonged to. Chris, it's always been Chris. Darren grit his teeth and tried not to cry as the boy came all over his fist. Darren wiped it with disgust on the boy's pants, before pulling them up and stumbled away.*

*"Hey! Thanks!" He called, but Darren just glared over his shoulder and warned, "Don't mention it.. seriously."*

*Darren approached a group of people who were about to do a round of harsh shots, and he took one and downed it before the rest, placing the rum bottle on the table, feeling that itch in his spine. Even though he could barely see straight and the world was spinning, Darren needed more. More with a side of more.*

*"Hey'm gimme 'nother," Darren slurred, reaching out toward the host, but he tripped into someone who turned out to be Joey.*

*"There you are," Joey sighed with relief. "I was starting to get worried."*

*Darren drooped in Joey's arms, eyes sagging. "I need Chris. Where is he?"*

*Jaime, who was standing next to Joey gave him a concerned look before murmuring tentatively, "Let's take him back to your guys' room."*

*"Good idea," Joey said, heaving Darren more into him as Jaime assisted. Once they left the loud room of smelly people, Darren started to feel the crushing blackness take over his brain. But he held on long enough to hear the rest of their conversation.*

*"He's been doing this a lot lately," Jaime whispered, sounding deeply concerned. "His grades are suffering, and he's becoming more withdrawn."*

*Joey, who knew the reason was deep down for Darren's behavior was noble instead and decided not to mention it. If Darren wanted the others to know his secret, he would tell them eventually. But Jaime was right, it was getting worse and Joey was starting to feel at a loss. He was helpless, but he couldn't stand to see his friend during his downward spirals. So he only had one option left.*

*"I might have to enroll him in the program," Joey states somberly.*



## **Chapter Eleven**

Joey found Darren sprawled out on his bedroom floor, snoring loudly. He kneeled down and slapped his cheek a little, making Darren twitch awake and blink in surprise.

"Oh hey," Darren croaked. "Thanks for coming to save me, man."

"Anytime," Joey promised, helping Darren sit up before giving him a cup of water and a couple of painkillers. "Now let's get you showered and dressed, you don't want to get fired from your new job."

Under normal circumstances Darren would've felt utterly humiliated with having another man help him into the shower, but Darren really didn't care anymore. He felt terrible, and having Joey there with him was like a reminder his life wasn't too bad. He had people who cared about him and would never hurt him like Chris did.

Darren cried a little so Joey wouldn't see as he fetched Darren some clothes. Darren took his time getting ready, and Joey didn't say a word, because he really didn't know what to say. He just hoped that Darren wouldn't fall under as bad as last time. It was the best he could possibly hope for. It made Joey hate Chris, even though he had never met him.

While Darren brushed his teeth sluggishly, Joey excused himself to make a quick phone call.

"Hello?" the woman answered, sounding a little winded.

"Hey Mia," Joey greeted, lowering his voice so Darren wouldn't hear.

She sounded surprised. "Oh, uh hey Joey, how's it going?"

"Pretty good, um I was calling because I needed to ask something of you, and you can decline if you want. But it's really important."

"What is it," Mia questioned, sounding deeply concerned.

"It's Darren," Joey whispered meaningfully. "He's fallen off the wagon again."

Joey drove up to Fox Studios and turned to Darren, unbuckling his seat belt.

"Ughhhhh," Darren complained, his forehead pressed against the passenger window. "Do I have to go in?"

"Yes," Joey said in a hard voice. "And you need to tell them you're very sorry that you are late, and it'll never happen again."

"But what if it does?" Darren whined, but Joey leaned over him to open his door, trying to nudge him out.

"Doesn't matter," Joey said patiently. "Now go. I need to go pack and arrange my flight, but I'll pick you up okay? Just text me when."

Darren nodded, rubbing his head and stepped out of the car, dragging his feet inside the set. After a couple of minutes of avoiding any human in sight, Darren was flanked by his manager, looking extremely irritated.

"Darren!" he called. "Where have you been? I've called you about 18 times!"

"Sorry," Darren mumbled, not being able to meet his manager in the eye. "I just didn't feel well and slept through my alarm so.."

"Well c'mon," his manager said, grabbing Darren's arm with a little more force than necessary, leading him to hair, make-up and wardrobe.

Darren was pushed down into a swiveling chair next to Lea Michele, who was getting her hair curled as one of the beauty experts started working on him.

"Hey there," she greeted brightly. "It's Darren right? I'm Lea. I didn't get the chance to properly introduce myself at Chris' party last night."

Darren winched but reached his arm awkwardly to shake her hand briefly, smiling at her, but it didn't quite reach his eyes. His head was still killing him. "Nice to meet you."

"So are you excited for the event tomorrow night?" She asked, her voice brimming with sheer excitement. "I already have my dress picked out and everything!"

"Event?" Darren asked, his voice uncharacteristically hoarse.

"Oh, we have one every year to promote this season's Glee," she said frowning slightly. "I'm sure you're going since you're our new star!"

"Great," Darren said half-heartedly. He really needed to catch up with his manager. A red carpet event? Darren had never been to one before, and the thought of it made him truly terrified. He was probably going to get asked all these questions, especially about Chris since their plots were overlapped. Fuck.

"Don't sound too excited," Lea teased, oblivious to Darren's disheartened demeanor. "Teenage Dream is so amazing, Darren! Our biggest hit ever! It's such an accomplishment!"

And for the briefest of moments, Darren pulled himself out of his self-pity to really let her words sink in. It was sort of a big deal, and he wasn't even paying any mind because Chris is a plague constantly clouding his thoughts. Tears sprung to Darren's eyes and he wiped them away. He smiled fully for what felt like the first time in years.

"I'm so blessed," he managed, and Lea squeezed his hand.

Darren felt so much better once he was dolled up as Blaine. Despite probably having to work with Chris, there was a sense of promise that he could pretend today. Because he was someone else today, he needed a break from Darren.

That was until he was metaphorically punched in the face seeing his ex-girlfriend Mia Swier stroll up to him, her eyebrows taut with worry on her forehead. He nearly tripped over himself at the sight, her long flowing hair whipping behind her in the mild wind.

"Hi Darren," she said somberly as she approached, her eyes wide and anxious. "How you feeling?"

"Uhm... fine?" Darren's mind caught up with itself as he put two and two together. "What are you doing here? I thought you were out of town."

"Joey called," she confessed, and Darren instantly got angry from the implications.

"I don't need a fucking babysitter," he snapped, storming away from her in a random direction, but she jogged to keep up.

"Darren, I'm just really concerned about you," she says quietly, trying to put a hand on his shoulder to stop him, but he shrugged her off.

"Why do you even care anyway," Darren grumbled, turning around to face her completely. "I cheated on you! And you barely freaked! Who does that? I actually fully expected you to never talk to me again."

Mia pressed her lips into a thin line, breathing loudly out her nose before she muttered, "Some things are more important than that."

"Like what?" Darren couldn't help the fire that increased in his chest. She was always so put together and so fucking righteous. It wasn't normal! The fact that he didn't deserve her patience and understanding made him want to bash his head into the wall.

"Like your safety," she pressed. "You almost drank yourself to death last night."

"Well unlike you some of us mortals have moments of weakness," Darren snipped bitchily.

"Darren," she states quietly, crossing her arms and titling her head. She just looked him with a mix between worry and disappointment. It made his resolve waver completely, and he deflated in front of her.

"I'm sorry," he whispered miserably. "About everything."

"It's okay," Mia whispered back just as quietly. "Now I want you to tell me what happened."

"Do I have to," Darren groaned, falling into step with her as they made their way to his destination.

"It might make you feel better," she reasoned. "Even if I don't want to hear some of the details, I'm here for you."

"Thanks," Darren said sincerely, and then he had a thought. "On a random note, would you like to join me to a red carpet event tomorrow? I need a date."

"Darren," Mia warned, but he cut her off.

"As friends I mean," Darren coughed uncomfortably. "You don't have to, I just really need some support right now. I'm not used to all this."

She smiles genuinely and squeezes his elbow. "Of course I'll come."

Darren's scene was relatively short, so he found himself relaxing in his trailer a bit over an hour later, flipping absently through a music magazine, admiring guitars he could never own in a million years.

Mia sat on the floor, rubbing his feet and Darren realized he could easily fall into the step of his old life where Chris didn't cross his mind every waking minute, and where he had a girlfriend who loved him completely and would always support him.

"So," she prompted after a while. "Are you going to tell me what happened between you and Chris?"

Darren tensed, afraid to answer because nothing coherent or toned down formed in his mind. He knew she wouldn't really appreciate *'as I was riding his cock, I realized I was desperately in love with him, but he was just using me for revenge sex.'*

"Nothing really," Darren settled on, even though it was a complete and utter lie. He really wanted to be honest with her, but he knew if he said the actual words he would probably break down into sobs. Mia really didn't need to see that.

"Darren, I know when you're full of shit. Just please be straight with me so I can help," she pleads, her voice full of emotion.

Darren let out a long sigh. "We had sex."

Her eyebrows shot up and her mouth fell open, "Really? Like sex sex?"

"Yes," Darren squeaked, squeezing his eyes shut so he didn't have to look at her. "Fully penetrative anal sex."

"So you fucked him," she asked bluntly, feeling jealousy darken her heart, but she wanted to know. She wanted to know desperately if she lost her once longtime boyfriend to men forever.

"No," he said even quieter, feeling his face flush. It wasn't every day you had to admit you bottomed in gay sex to your once girlfriend whom you've dated for many years now. It was really awkward, to say the least. At least it was better than crying about it.

"Oh," Mia peeps after a long moment, realization dawning on her. "I.. I need to go."

Darren eye's snap open. "What? Why?"

"I-I have a thing.. um, I'll see you later I promise," she stammered, grabbing her things hastily. "Call me?"

Before Darren could get another word in, she was gone, leaving his trailer door wide open and tapping against the side of his trailer, a cool breeze ruffling Darren's now free curls. Darren stood there for a moment, pondering, letting the breeze hit him was kind of freeing so he let the moment last as long as possible.

That was until Darren saw two figures make their way toward his direction, giggling and jabbering about who knows what, but Darren's heart sunk when he realized it was Chris and Max hand in hand.

Darren considered bolting inside, slamming the door and just rocking in the fetal position until they were gone, but he couldn't move. He was frozen because Chris had noticed him standing there the same time Darren did. Chris halted, just staring openly and Darren did the same, his heart beating irregularly as their gazes bored into each other.

*He probably saw the text messages* Darren panicked briefly, noticing it took Max much too long to realize that Chris wasn't paying attention to him anymore.

Max glanced up finally and made eye-contact with Darren and frowned. He then mumbled something unintelligible to Chris before suddenly sinking his mouth on Chris', and slamming him into the trailer they were next to.

Darren gasped, gripping the trailer door really tight as Chris responded with enthusiasm, winding his arms around Max's waist and pulling him deeper into the heated kiss. *Now that was totally 100% intentional, and fucking rude* Darren's mind screamed at him as he slammed the door shut in front of the awful scene before him. Darren couldn't take another second longer without feeling like he was going to die.

Now Chris was just flaunting it on purpose! He knew perfectly well that Darren loved him, but he didn't even fucking care! Chris was nothing more than a petty man with a grudge he could never let go.

Angry tears flooded Darren's vision as he paced around the trailer, a terrifying pull settling in his chest. Darren was sure he was about to have a panic attack. Before that could happen, Darren flung himself to his bag, rummaging his hand frantically before pulling out a silver flask and popping the lid.

The harsh brown liquid burned his throat gloriously as he tipped the flask back, and his body instantly relaxed. Sweet, *sweet* alcohol. Darren collapsed on the floor, hugging the flask to his chest as his breathing slowed down.

Darren took a few more deep pulls before screwing the lid back on, saving the rest for later. Darren's body and mind started humming pleasantly as the liquid made magic within his veins. Why didn't he drink all the time? Things were always better this way.

In his rush of endorphins Darren almost didn't hear the muffled, "Bye Max!" sounding from outside his trailer. Darren scrambled up and peeked through the blinds, seeing a mussed up Chris Colfer kissing his fucking *boyfriend* breathless before turning away and waving. This was his chance.

It seemed in that moment the right thing to do, and without any inhibition, Darren threw open his trailer door and stomped up to Chris, ready to explode all of his feelings everywhere. Chris needed to know what he had done, and if he had any sense of decency or human emotion left, he'd hopefully feel a little remorse.

"Hey!" Darren hollered. "Hey Chris!"

Chris stopped abruptly, turning around to face Darren looking utterly shocked; his eyes bugged wide. Darren got right up into his face, his rancid breath washing over Chris' face, who cringed.

"Are you drunk," Chris accused with disdain, wrinkling his nose. "You reek."

"So what if I am," Darren flailed his arms, glaring. "Like you would fucking care!"

"Well if you care about *your* job, you wouldn't drink on it," Chris snapped, looking like he was about to leave, but Darren anchored him with a death grip.

"Let me go," Chris said quietly, his voice simmering with rage.

"No," Darren growled, squeezing his grip on Chris. "I have something to say to you."

"There's nothing left to be said," Chris retorted, his eyes angry slits. "If you don't let me go I'll get my body guard. He wouldn't have any qualms with tackling you to the ground."

Darren let go like he was on fire. "Fine! Whatever! Be a fucking selfish asshole and don't listen to anything anybody ever has to say to you."

Chris opened and closed his mouth a few times, not really sure how to respond to Darren's outburst, so Darren took the initiative.

"Are you happy with your new loving *boyfriend*, Chris? Is he super wonderful and does he treat you right? Do you guys have sex all the time now still as a newly minted couple?"

"That isn't any of your business," Chris said stiffly, his face turning impassive.

"Isn't it though?" Darren's voice was rising at an alarming rate. "You sure like to make it everyone's business by parading your affections around for everyone to see! Like what the *fuck* is your problem? You know how I feel about you, but you just can't pass up the opportunity to make me hate myself and you more!"

Chris' mouth feel open, his eyes looking glassy. "What do you want from me?"

"WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM *ME*," Darren positively screams. "HAVEN'T YOU DONE ENOUGH? ARE YOU HAPPY NOW THAT YOU'VE COMPLETELY BROKEN ME CHRIS?"

Chris flinches backward as spit flies from Darren's mouth, his face bright red from yelling in exertion, so he takes a moment to collect himself, panting, but he still feels anger and alcohol burn hot in his veins.

Darren glances down at the ground for just one second, not being able to stomach Chris' heartbreakingly beautiful face any longer when a solid body slams into him.

Darren's back collides roughly with the trailer behind him, his brain barely registering the fact that a pair of hard lips are pressed against his, a high pitched whine coming from Chris' throat. Chris' mouth parts, his sweet breath ghosting in an exhale over Darren's nose, who breaths in shock, and a moment too soon Chris pulls away.



Darren opens his eyes to see Chris retreat in a quick sprint, tears spilling hot and fast over his cheeks. Darren sways, tracing a fingertip lightly over his bottom lip.

*Did that really happen?*

## Chapter Twelve

Darren was lying stiff, staring at the ceiling. He actually slept relatively well last night because he had managed to drink the right amount to sleep it off. His brain felt groggy and body fatigued as he tried to chase after the fleeting dream that was still on the edge of his mind.

But what he knew wasn't a dream was the fact that Chris had kissed him yesterday afternoon. It had actually happened, and Darren remembered with absolute clarity. Darren traced his lips again and closed his eyes, trying to remember the feeling. His heart tugged and searched because he desperately wanted to know what it meant. But Darren came up with no logical reasons except to maybe shut him up; because he was screaming in Chris' face before it had happened. So yes, the kiss certainly had done the job. He was still so speechless, he wasn't really sure if he could speak to Chris today knowing that he'd probably act like it never happened.

So Darren wanted to lay there all day and do absolutely nothing. The thought of going to the red carpet event to promote Glee and be all professional was terrifying. Darren was pretty sure he'd rather count each dot on the wall than do interviews with people who were going to ask him uncomfortable questions that would most likely all relate back to Chris and their characters.

Thankfully they had the day off though, so Darren didn't have to watch Chris pretend to love him, and Darren wouldn't have to pretend he wasn't using his character as a shield for the truth. When he looked at Kurt as Blaine it was probably the most honest Darren could act the entire day. Because there were no barriers. Nobody judged him. Because his character was gay. Darren *wasn't*. He was the 'brave, young and hot male actor' who was comfortable enough with his heterosexuality to play a gay character. *HA!* Darren's mind mocked at him.

Darren rolled over and groaned, his body screaming at him not to get out of bed and do responsible things. Darren just wanted to pout and be curled up in a warm ball safe away from the world. And he probably could for a while; be alone with himself and his thoughts. But that was until Mia strolled through his bedroom, the bathroom door banging loudly against the wall as she toweled her wet flowing hair.

"Hey get up sleepy head," she berated in an affectionate tone.

Darren rolled his eyes at her as she brushed her hair in his mirror. Even though things were still a little awkward since neither of them knew where their relationship stood and she did sleep on Darren's couch instead of his bed, but there were just some routines they couldn't break even has hard as they tried.

"Thanks again for coming with me this evening," Darren told her, stretching his back leisurely. Once he heard a faint pop in his shoulder, he kicked the blankets back and rubbed his eyes, body fully prepared to get out of bed.

Darren didn't even realize that he was naked until Mia turned from the mirror and she blushed, tossing her towel on top of Darren and strode awkwardly out of the room. "Go shower up," she called before closing the door behind her.

So yes, things were still weird. And Darren didn't really blame her either. She recently learned he had gay sex and he was the one being done up the ass. And yes, even though after Darren told her that, she walked out of his trailer. And furthermore, Darren was the one who had to call her later that night to make sure he still had a date to the red carpet. Surprisingly, she yes and said she should come sleep over so they could get ready together to match accordingly.

Darren's shower consisted him softly banging his head against the wall and groaning as the spray washed over him. God, he really didn't want to do this. But he had to put on a happy face and suck it up. This was his life now; he was Glee's new golden boy.

In hindsight, Darren realized how much he's changed his perspective on things. In another world where had never moved to Clovis and dated Chris, but somehow events turned out the same way and he was fortunate enough to get on Glee; he'd probably be best friends with Chris and Darren would be constantly moved to tears because of how thankful he was for being recognized on such a popular TV show. Darren wished he felt this way, but all he felt really was bitterness.

He had joined Glee for all the wrong reasons, and all he desperately wished for now was to go back to his friends in Starkid and just stay there safe and make silly stage productions and enjoy the small spotlight YouTube provided.

Darren didn't know how long it had been when he heard a quiet knock on the bathroom door. "Hey, Darren you alright in there? It's been nearly 45 minutes."

"Yeah," Darren called back to a concerned Mia. "I'll be right out!"

To not worry her further, Darren shampooed and conditioned his hair so fast that he probably lost quite a bit of hair to the drain. He then stepped out of the shower, nearly slipping and wiped off the mirror to look in at it as he groomed himself to the decency a red carpet required before he went to get his suit from the fitters. Darren nearly smiled when he remembered that he and his manager had rushed to them right before closing last night to get a suit last minute since Darren was a complete idiot and had forgotten. He was also extremely fidgety since the kiss with Chris so the worker kept poking him. They probably wouldn't be happy to know that Darren will most likely be a regular since they usually tailored all the Glee stars.

Once Darren was dressed in simple clothing with his dress shoes in hand, his hair damp and hanging into his eyes, he smiled at Mia who was curled up on the couch. She was painting her nails red to match the dress she was going to wear, which was currently draped over the armchair.

"Your tie is red right," Mia questioned for maybe the fifth time. "And it was this shade?"

"Yes," Darren assured patiently. "I promise you. We'll look great together."

Mia looked at him, her eyes sparkling with slight sadness before he smiled at him half-heartedly and returned to her nails. The harsh smell of the formula had Darren wrinkle his nose, but he sat next to her anyway and turned up the volume on the television.

They sat in amiable silence for a while, Darren occasionally exchanging text messages with his manager before Mia sat up with care and blew on her nails, observing them to make sure they had dried enough. Seemingly satisfied, she grabbed her dress and went to Darren's bedroom, closing the door softly behind her.

Darren sighed, his head falling into his hands. He was pretty sure things with Chris could probably never be fixed properly, but with Mia there still was a chance. And he needed to do it soon before things grew too much between them beyond repair. Darren was so used to having her in his life, he felt like the air would disappear from his lungs at the thought of her not being in his life.

After a few minutes, without any permission from Darren since his ass had barely gotten off the couch, his manager strode in, looking extremely frazzled. His glasses were askew and he had his phone in hand, frantically tapping a text message back to god knows who.

"Where's Ms. Swier?" he asked, looking up with an air of derision. "We need to go, the driver is waiting."

"Just give the lady a minute," Darren responded in irritation, settling back into the couch and placing his dress shoes into his lap. "I'm all ready to go." Darren even patted his pockets for good measure and to double check.

"Good," his manager said shortly, perching himself on one of the barstools and fiddled with his phone.

A few minutes later, Darren's bedroom door opened, so he shut off the television and stood up to take in Mia's appearance. She was dawned in a red-strapless dress that laced in the back and cut off mid-thigh, but it was still modest in a way. Not too showy; especially since her hair was flowing around her angular face.

"Wow you.. you look beautiful," Darren choked out, and his manager hummed in approval.

"Is everything okay?" She asked sheepishly with an upturn of her painted lips before doing a spin in her heels, allowing Darren to give her another once over. His throat got a little tight as he took in her curves. He couldn't find a flaw in sight.

"Perfect," he responded, taking her arm as the three of them rushed out of his apartment.

When they arrived at the tailors, Darren's heart raced as he slipped into his suit, only to be assaulted with workers to check him before he left. Mia seemed pleased that the red was the perfect shade, and his manager seemed much less annoyed now Darren's hair was better combed and his suit was crisp and sharp, making him look much more elegant than he felt.

Mia fiddled her thigh and drummed her nails on her armrest while Darren fidgeted uncomfortably. He really hoped he wouldn't leave sweat stains under the armpits of this suit because of how freaked out he was. He had never been to a public event before of this domain and he really wasn't sure what he was expecting.

"Okay," Darren's manager began in a breathless voice, finally closing out his phone and stuffing it into his pocket. "Step out one at a time. Darren first. Go take pictures and approach each interviewer one by one. E!News is first, and you'll recognize their logo in case you get a little woozy out there. Then Mia, you come with me. You'll get a few photos taken and then once Darren is wrapped up interviewing, you'll take photos together. Then there will be group shots, but I'm not sure if you can be in them Mia. It might be just for the cast. And then there's the after party. That's about it. So just find me and we can all go together, agreed?"

Darren nodded dumbly. In only a few short sentences his manager had explained the entire evening. Even though it sounded simple and quick, it only heightened Darren's anxiety and he was suddenly having trouble swallowing, especially since the car pulled to a stop and the driver nodded at them. He then got out of the car to walk around to Darren's side and his manager whispered. "Ready?"

"Ready as I'll ever be," Darren responded shakily, squeezing Mia's thigh before the door was pulled open and bright lights and loud cheers exploded into Darren's reality. But he still managed to find the courage to step out with his best smile stretched across his face. The driver pat him happily on the back.

"I can do this," Darren mumbled to himself, confidence in stride as he approached the long line of photographers now screaming his name.

"So how's it working with your new co-worker Darren Criss?" The interviewer asked Chris, who a thin mustache and annoyingly shaped tape-recorder in his hand. "We hear you were a fan of his previous work."

Chris scoffed, his most practiced plastic smile in place. "Oh yes," Chris chided. "He didn't believe me when I said at first that I saw A Very Potter Musical. But it's true. I'm a fanboy."

The interviewer laughed while the cameraman took a step closer. Chris tried not to concentrate on it even though still to this day being under the spotlight was unnerving. "So you guys have a lot to talk about?"

"Of course," Chris responded brightly. "He's actually a big fan of Disney, comic books and musical theater like I am, so we are never bored." *That's for sure...* Chris' mind echoed back at him.

"You sure he isn't gay too?" The interviewer joked, and Chris barely managed to hide his reaction before he laughed a little too high pitched and fake. Chris really wasn't sure what his face revealed because all he could really distinguish was sick sense of irony and karma.

"Oh, no no," Chris insisted, feeling himself blush. "I've met his girlfriend." Fuck, if there was a god out there somewhere, Chris was sure the point of all this was just to be mocked. *Is Darren gay? HA HA HA well he sure liked having sex you, but he really is in love with a girl.. so FUNNY!*

However, Chris somehow survived the rest of that interview and countless others, making Chris wonder how Darren was doing. He wanted to punch himself in the face for being the least bit concerned, but he tried to assure himself that despite his undying love for the man, his only real interest was because he hoped Darren gave nothing away about their confusing past.

Chris rode to the after party with Lea, and he noticed with amusement that she had already started drinking champagne and her boobs were starting to fall out of her revealing dress. Nobody would probably mind anyway. So Chris strode inside once they arrived with their arms linked and they laughed cheerfully at inside jokes, and Chris couldn't help but kiss her on the cheek.

There was the sound of clinking glasses coming from one room and pounding music from the next of the grand building. Chris had always enjoyed these parties even though dancing in promotion around photographers and sponsors usually meant sweating, and Chris really liked his suits. But Lea insisted, yanking on his arm once their managers drifted off of their own accord, so Chris agreed, but conceded he needed a drink first.

And by workings of fate, Chris saw Darren leaning heavily against the bar, his arm wrapped around Mia, who looked so *gorgeous* Chris wanted to puke. He hesitated for a second, considering turning around when Mark clapped him on the shoulder out of nowhere, leading them both to the bar.

"Hey there Chrissy, what's happening?" Mark greeted, his suit jacket already gone and his white sleeves already rolled up. "Harry and I have been showing off our moves, you should come. I think Lea's with him now."

"I just wanted a drink," Chris responded airily, feeling Darren turn his attention to them as they approached and was suddenly hyper aware of his gaze.

"Well let me buy you one," Mark insisted. "Just in case they realize you're still 20 and being famous doesn't let you always get away with bumming."

Chris rolled his eyes dramatically, staying back as Mark ordered whatever the hell and he turned toward Darren finally, nodded toward him politely. Chris did the same to Mia, and she smiled awkwardly back, and he couldn't help but notice it was a strange sort of grin fixated on her face. It gave Chris the sneaking suspicion that Darren had probably told her they had sex.

Chris wanted to burst out laughing, whether from tension or self-gratification but Mark stopped whatever his inappropriate reaction would be in its tracks when he shoved a drink into Chris' hand, causing it slop over his knuckles. Chris groaned in disgust.

"Oh you won't complain once that baby is in you," Mark assured, wiggling his eyebrows. "Oh, hey Darren! You and your girlfriend want to come dance with us? It'll be fun!"

Darren smiled widely and agreed, "Sure," before taking Mia's hand and started to guide her in the direction Mark and Chris were headed.

The music slammed against their ear drums as they immersed themselves in the densely packed bodies of mussed up dress clothing and sweet smelling sweat. Luckily it wasn't long until they found most of the cast, because Harry was getting a lot of whoops and attention from the surrounding crowd.

Much to Darren's displeasure however, Chris was assaulted from behind by none other than Max Enrich, who was dressed similarly, but his bow-tie was completely undone around his neck, his suit jacket also missing from sight.

"Here let me take that," he heard Max holler over the volume, pressing his hot lips to Chris' neck and slipped the jacket over his shoulders. Max then handed the jacket to who Darren recognized as Chris' manager before she disappeared into the crowd, an impassive look on her face. Max then twirled a now jacket-less Chris, his smile carefree.

*Wow we're just a bunch of privileged assholes* Darren realized with disgust as Mia started swaying her body ever which way to the beat. Darren wrapped his arms around her waist possessively and chanced another glance in Chris' direction. Chris met his gaze for a moment, but looked away, pulling his beau closer and they started to kiss heatedly.



Darren grit his teeth because he knew he was stupid to think that even though Chris knew perfectly well how much Darren wished for him not to flaunt his and Max's relationship around in front of him, Chris was still petty enough to do it anyway. Even after the kiss they shared and the confrontation that they had. Even though they were at some event and were supposed to act like responsible and professional adults.

*Well two can play at that game* Darren thought darkly, pulling Mia closer until her round ass was pressed against his crotch, and he started to rut against her. In the back of Darren's now inebriated mind, what he was doing was wrong on so many levels, but since Mia was reaching similar levels of intoxication, she responded with enthusiasm.

The song changed to something heavier and *sexier* and Darren slipped his hands low onto her thighs, squeezing them and pulling her back completely flush against his front. She moaned wantonly, catching Chris' attention (which Darren noticed with a rush of adrenaline and pleasure on the corner of his eye), and Darren dared to dip his fingers just under the hem of her dress between her thighs.

Chris frowned in disdain, the atmosphere reaching alarming temperatures, but he yanked Max's hips to his own, jealousy a fire in his chest. He thrust his tongue into Max's mouth and slotted his growing, angry erection against Max's thigh and asserted his dominance. Max was all but willing. *He's so pathetic, he'd do anything for me* Chris realized, feeling the burn of his drink scorch his veins.

Darren turned his and Mia's dirty dancing to face Chris head on just in time for Chris to press his palms to Max's ass, overtly thrusting against his leg. Chris grinned evilly as him and Darren made eye contact, and suddenly there was nothing but them in the room, and the hot bodies at their disposal.

Mia didn't notice a thing as she slung her arm around Darren's neck and yanked on his sweaty hair, breathing raggedly in his ear as he rucked up her dress in order for his fingers to dance up her inner-thighs. He pressed his cock into her ass and she whimpered again, his fingers finally pressing on her soaking underwear.

But all Darren could see were Chris' eyes. His intense, boring midnight gaze. Chris shoved himself roughly against Max, who was in his own world, his head falling to Chris' shoulder as he whined pleas of desperation and want. Chris then smoothed his hand down Max's ass crack, eyes never leaving Darren as if in a trance; and Darren followed his movements too. His fingertips slid through the side of Mia's underwear, and she moaned again deliciously as he swiped through her slick folds, causing her knees to shake.

It was *on*.

## Chapter Thirteen

If Darren was going to be honest with himself, he really didn't know how it progressed from there. From the dance floor of packed bodies and sweat condensation hanging in the air and being pulled into their lungs until breathing was no longer an option. And the fact that Darren was basically fingering his girlfriend right in front of Chris who was also palming Max roughly through his slacks simultaneously; their eyes connected and never wavering. Well, that was another thing entirely.

Maybe it was because of the rush of endorphins that had attacked their systems mixed with the perfect concoction of alcohol. Maybe it was the fact that Chris was having a difficult time keeping in check as of late. He *had* kissed Darren yesterday with no much as an explanation so now the unresolved sexual tension was at a high. Darren turned his burning questions and unending frustration and hurt into pure, raw sexual energy.

And Chris was racking back if not two-fold. That probably explained why no less than 20 minutes later they were in the back of one of their escort cars going who knows where with both Mia's undies and Max's pants around his ankles.

Chris and Darren gazed heatedly at each other, each look containing a thought-bubble and something so much more as they both wrenched their lovers thighs apart, crawling between their knees eagerly. As a synched up sex machine they both yanked their bodies forward until both Max and Mia were spread and ready at the edge of their seats.

Under normal circumstances both Chris and Darren would question their significant other's behavior since they seemed all too willing. But in that moment it didn't seem surprising in the least. It was like they absorbed some of the intensity both men were giving off and reflected it outward to create a incoherent, lust-filled environment.

So when both Mia and Max wrapped their thighs around their lover's heads, they didn't even try to shield the keens that the tongues elicited out of them. Darren was positively salivating, with drool almost leaking out of the corner of his mouth as he lapped through Mia's slick folds; her aroma thick and intoxicating.

Chris felt like he had a lot more to work with. He poked his tongue out to trace along each vein of Max's cock, before teasing his balls and pressing against his puckered entrance. But they both threw their heads

back all the same, especially when Chris pressed his tongue inside the squeezing muscles and Darren shoved his finger inside Mia to caress against her g-spot.

Darren could hear the soft grunts coming from Chris as his talented tongue worked Max open, who was getting louder and louder by the minute. So Darren tried to make Mia scream by flicking his tongue against her clitoris while he circled his fingers and pressed in deep and rough. Her walls contracted around him, asking for more as a gush of thick lubrication trickled out of her. By the sound of her hitched breathing and tell-tale spasming muscles a second later, Darren realized he just made her come.

So Darren withdrew, licking his lips and grinning and murmured, "*I won.*"

Chris didn't respond right away, so Darren watched in awe as his face pressed fully between Max's ass cheeks, going completely to town that Darren barely even registered the fact that Mia kept nudging him, making pathetic whimpering noises, begging him to return to his activities. To keep her at bay, Darren slid his fingers between her slick crevice again, teasing but not enough to make her orgasm again.

He just couldn't tear his eyes away from Max's pulsing cock leaking against his navel, flushed and ready to explode at any moment. Darren was painfully hard in his pants at the sight, wishing painfully that he was the one Chris was giving special treatment to. Darren could remember all too well with way too much clarity that even his asshole tingled in response.

Chris' fingertips were white and pressing and spreading Max's cheeks so wide that Chris' tongue could reach places beyond imagination. Max fisted Chris' hair as his mouth fell open in utter ecstasy, Chris' name falling from his parted lips. Max then came a few moments later, his come spurting from his throbbing cock and coating his chest all the way up to his neck.

Darren was truly stunned because Chris hadn't even touched him; and that was truly impressive. Chris then pulled away with a satisfied smirk, gazing longingly at Darren with heavy lids and saliva-slick lips. "No I think *I* won," Chris countered lowly.

Darren grit his teeth, a low growl building in his chest as he glared back at Chris. Darren's body was taut and coiled to spring at any moment; a ferocious urge to rip all of his clothes off and fucking him into the car floor was nearly overwhelming. But he held on for fear that he was weaker-willed than Chris. He just needed to *win*.

Without any warning after getting so lost in those midnight blue irises, Chris grabbed Darren's wrist and forced him away from Mia's intimate areas. Mia mourned the loss but watched with wide eyes along with a shocked Darren as Chris stuck Darren's fingers into his mouth and lapped greedily. Darren bit his lip and groaned as Chris' tongue swirled around his calloused fingertips, taking all traces of Mia away. Darren didn't understand it, but now his desperation was feverish.

Chris watched Darren the entire time, his eyes boring into his soul until finally he pulled off Darren's fingers with a faint pop. Chris then licked his ruby red lips, so utterly sinful and Darren wanted to bite them until they were blood red. Darren's body was shaking with the brink of control, every vein and nerve in his body thrumming with need.

So Chris yanked Darren further, pain shooting up his shoulder until Darren found himself face-planting in Max's lap. Max twitched a little, his softening cock looking abused and Chris' saliva still dribbling down his thighs.

"Clean him before it dries all the way," Chris commanded, his voice hot and delicious on Darren's flesh, his grip tight and unrelenting. Darren gazed up at Max, who's eyes were completely black before he stuck his tongue out and licked long stripes up his navel and neck, collecting his come and pulling into his mouth. The bitter taste made him groan, and his cock strain impossibly harder against his zipper. Although Darren knew for a fact that he'd probably taste nowhere near as good as Chris, it was a treat in itself to have Chris grip his thighs tightly as his tongue worked over Max's chest.

Once Darren pulled away he glanced a chance at Mia, and much to his immense surprise she had taken up on touching herself, her head lolling against the seat and watching his every move. Was Mia really getting off to him being with another guy?

He gazed questioningly at her and although her eyes seemed a little fogged over she nodded minutely and that was when Darren let something inside him break free. He turned around in Chris' grasp and launched forward, crushing their lips together with bruising force before thrusting his tongue into Chris' mouth.

Chris squeezed Darren's ass and pulled him into his lap, scratching up his back and mussing up his suit until he tangled his fingers in Darren's hair and yanked. Darren groaned, hot breath ghosting over Chris' face as Chris sucked on his tongue, pulling the taste of Darren and Max mixed together until it no longer existed.

Once they broke free of the kiss, Darren was panting raggedly, staring ravenously at Chris who just started back before his eyes darted over Darren's shoulder. Chris took in Mia, legs splayed and her pink lips spread as her fingers worked quickly against herself. Chris couldn't help but grin evilly, feeling like he could do absolutely anything in that moment. It was frighteningly powerful, especially with the alcohol burning through his veins so he winked at Mia before shoving Darren's head down, who instantly started to ravish Chris' neck.

"Darren," Chris whispered brokenly, his voice sounding like grinding machinery. "I want you to suck me off. Right in front of Mia. And let her taste before she comes again."

Darren's mouth fell open and his eyes shined with lust, hardly believing his ears. Chris sighed impatiently and started fumbling with his pants. *Thank goodness this is a large car* Chris thought to himself as Darren's shocked expression still hasn't changed.

"Please," Mia whimpered and it made a shiver roll down Darren's spine. Was this actually happening? Even if it wasn't, Darren wasn't going to waste time being a fool so he pushed Chris to his back, picking up where Chris left off and shoved his dress pants down passed his knees.

"Do you think you can do it?" Chris teased breathily and Darren just shot him daggers before gripping Chris' fully flushed cock surely into his palm and just *felt* it. It was so smooth and long and Darren wanted to worship it since he really didn't get a chance to last time they were intimate and this was just so unexpected and probably would never happen again so he wrapped his perfectly plump lips around the head of Chris' cock as if he needed it to require breathing capabilities.

The first thing Darren heard was a deep groan reverberate from his chest and down Chris' shaft. Chris tasted *amazing*, and was hot and heavy along his tongue. The second thing was the combined sighs of relief from Mia and Chris. But what Darren didn't expect was Max to hiss, "C'mon Chris do you see that pretty little mouth? Don't let him take full control!"

Darren glanced up through his lashes and Chris gazed at him like a blind man seeing the sun for the first time. Then his expression darkened minutely so he could frown at Max and counter, "Shut up and finger yourself, Max. This is just a show, you can't direct it."

Chris leaned back against his elbows to admire Darren again, his cheeks hollowed out and his lips just looking so much fatter than normal. The blush on Darren's cheek bones was positively mouth-watering and Chris bet that Darren was built by the sex gods to just do as he was doing.

Encouraged, Darren started bobbing his head, his gaze never leaving Chris as his tongue played along the underside of the shaft and head before creating a perfect vacuum and sucking so hard that Chris assumed that Darren was trying to pull the orgasm out of him. Bless him.

Darren then cradled Chris' balls and rolled them gently, causing Chris' eyelids to flutter shut and Mia to moan quietly. Darren wondered how he looked to her right now, and he had special grim satisfaction that he was still one-upping Max in this situation. No matter how hard Max tried, Darren would win. And even Chris knew that.

Chris twined his fingers in Darren's curls and tugged slightly, thrusting his hips up into the hot wet cavern and Darren's throat gave way to the nudging and face-fucking. Darren wanted to cry it felt so good to be used like this and the fact that this was his first experience sucking a cock, he actually felt so full and suddenly craved another to fill him at his other end. Well that certainly explained a few things.

Darren then gave Chris free reign as his hips jabbed forward and cock slid down Darren's relaxed throat. Chris was surprised Darren had such control over his gag reflex, but then again he was a little distracted when he pulled his thick veiny cock from the confines of his slacks and started pumping himself frantically.

A cacophony of loud moans and shuddering gasps erupted around the car as they all came simultaneously. White stars exploded behind Darren's vision as his entire body writhed and exploded with mind-numbing pleasure. The only thing he could vaguely concentrate on was the obedient gulping and swallowing as Chris gave him all he had to offer.

Once Chris was a gasping, sweaty mess against the ground, Darren sucked him dry and withdrew, wiping his lips and smiling happily down at the man he so desperately loved and even in situations like this was still a million miles away.

Darren turned to see Max and Mia kissing lazily, and he couldn't even bring himself to care as he collapsed backward into the side door, his entire body feeling like wriggling jelly and his mind a haze of fatigue.

Darren nearly felt sick to his stomach and felt like he was going to pass out, so he just lay there breathing slowly to collect himself.

Nobody knew how long it had been when Mia pulled up her underwear and straightened her dress while Max and Chris tucked themselves away and tried to fix up their mussed up hair. Darren still couldn't move, but he settled with opening his eyes, letting the idea of the situation to roll over him.

"Well," Max began. "That was interesting."

"Unexpected," Chris agreed. And Darren couldn't help but notice he seemed troubled. Once all the energy was released and once it was all said and done, reality came back and Darren realized with cruel force that nothing had changed.

Chris hadn't come running back in slow motion into his arms and crying on his shoulder begging for them to be together. Chris hadn't professed his undying love to Darren and asked for forgiveness. No, all this was was a competition. Nothing more.

Darren felt like he was going to choke on misery. He had to get out of there. He wanted to run away and never look back. He wanted to drown himself in even more alcohol even though the world was still spinning out of control around him. So he settled with squeezing his eyes shut until the car fatefully pulled up to the curb and Darren flung himself out, a confused Mia hot on his heels.

Thankfully Darren recognized the street corner was a block away from where he lived and just ran, letting the tears and pain flow behind him and out his eyelids as the cold wind whipped against his face.

And it was one of those nights where Mia had to call Joey again for support.



## Chapter Fourteen

*Darren squeezed himself between Mia and Joey, a large tub of delicious popcorn cradled in his arms. Joey made a noise of excitement in his throat and grabbed a fistful before stuffing it into his mouth. Brian, who was sprawled out on the floor in front of their shabby couch looked up hopefully and Darren gave a resigned sigh before letting him take his fair share.*

*"So what are we watching exactly?" Darren asked curiously. "The premiere of some new show?"*

*"It's called Glee," Joey said through his mouth-full of popcorn, allowing for crumbs to escape his lips and scatter across the front of his shirt. "I think it might be a musical? I dunno, I just thought it would be fun and just down our alley."*

*"Sounds good to me," Darren said, shrugging. He turned and grinned at Mia, the girl he had been seeing the past few weeks and she beamed back, popping a few pieces of popcorn prettily into her mouth. Darren already took a liking to her, even though she was Joey's friend first, he just seemed to hit it off with her instantly.*

*Joey was so sick of Chris this and Chris that, and despite the fact he himself harbored feelings for Mia, she seemed more interested in Darren so he took one for the team. In his opinion, it was totally worth it because Darren was already starting to talk, and hopefully think about Chris less frequently.*

*Darren leaned in and kissed Mia affectionately on the cheek and she blushed, smiling widely and her eyes sparkled with the possibility of young love. Darren's heart fluttered in his chest, feeling possibly the best he had in a very long time. She was smart, beautiful and they always found things to talk about. Always.*

*The commercials only lasted a few minutes longer when the announcer claimed the series premiere of new comedy Glee was starting momentarily. The screen blackened for a beat and a hush fell over the group. The first scene displayed cheerleaders and the one and only great Jane Lynch and Darren instantly felt he'd probably like this show.*

*But what he wasn't prepared for was in no less than a couple scenes later was the face that haunted his dreams and nightmares. The face that caused Darren the most agony and the most pleasure than anything else in the world. Nothing could have prepared him, not a million years would be nearly enough.*

*The main character Mr. Schue stated, 'Hey Kurt, making some new friends?' as he strolled by a group of kids right as the name 'Chris Colfer' flashed under the devil himself, his face un-changed from high school and wide-eyed, dressed in the fashion only seen in Hollywood.*

*Darren froze, all the air disappearing from his lungs and just like that Chris' character, Kurt uttered the lines containing 'Alexander McQueen' and "You'll all work for me some day!" and that's when Darren stood abruptly to his feet, knocking the bowl of popcorn to the floor, much to the dismay of Joey and Brian.*

*"Where are you going?" Joey asked, alarmed, but Darren didn't answer him, he bolted from the room.*

*"Maybe the popcorn wasn't agreeing with him," Brian joked with a chuckle and Mia swatted his arm.*

*Darren collapsed in the hallway leading to the bathroom in their tiny apartment and started heaving. His fingers and toes started to tingle as his full-fledged panic attack set in, the oxygen not quite reaching his limbs and Darren was terrified that he was going to pass out.*

*But he couldn't calm down. It only got worse and worse, especially when Chris' face and melodic tone kept flashing through his brain, torturing him. Then like a final mother load, Chris' distinct voice was to be heard singing 'Mr. Cellophane' from the television and Darren started to rock, tears rolling down his cheeks as his lungs burned.*

*A few minutes later, there were heavy footsteps to be heard before, "Darren? What's the deal? The show just started-"*

*When Joey rounded the corner he saw Darren on the ground, his knees pulled up this chin and gasping for air. "Darren? Are you okay?" Panicked, Joey went to Darren's aid, holding his shoulders and tried to relax him. "What's going on?"*

*Joey had no idea what to do. He had never seen Darren act in such a manner before and it ran a cold chill up his spine. He knew something was very, very wrong but he knew that if Darren didn't relax soon, they would have to call an ambulance to provide oxygen or medication or **something**.*

*"Darren breathe," Joey begged. "Just tell me what's wrong."*

*"Chris," Darren gasped through white lips.*

*"What?" Joey's brow furrowed. "What about Chris? He's not here."*

*"He's there," Darren manages through constricting airways. "Glee, and I-I. I can't Joey."*

*"Oh, OH! Oh my god," Joey realized as more tears sprung to Darren's eyes, as if begging to take the pain away. It made Joey want to cry too. So he yelled, "Guys turn the TV off!"*

*The second the sound clicked off Darren's entire body willed to relax and he deflated in Joey's arms. Joey held him tightly and he couldn't help but ask, "Was that really your Chris?"*

*"Yes," Darren breathed, and that was the last of it. Joey held him until his breathing slowed down considerably and neither Brian or Mia understood what happened, not for a long time because Joey didn't like to share the intimacies of their conversations.*

*But Mia instantly understood completely the moment she saw Darren gaze longingly at Chris her first visit on set.*

Darren was faintly aware of soft voices murmuring from the next room as he floated back into consciousness. His head didn't hurt as bad as he thought it would today, but it was probably because the voices came from, now that he recognized them, Mia and Joey. Darren realized with shame that they probably took care of him last night. He felt like a piece of shit because of it too.

Darren groaned, rolling over from having his face pressed into his pillows and realized he was still in his suit. It made him feel at least a little better that they didn't change his clothes or that it was necessary. He sat for a moment rubbing his eyes trying to remember last night, but he only got brief scatters here and there of flashing cameras and hollering voices. But there was a feeling in Darren's gut that held a sense of foreboding, so maybe he really didn't want to know what happened.

"Morning guys," Darren croaked as he padded into the kitchen to make some coffee. His sock was hanging loose so he kicked it off and he noticed that Joey and Mia were a little cozy looking, their heads leaning toward each other as they watched TV on quiet. Once they heard Darren talk they flinched fractionally apart and smiled nervously.

"Hey man," Joey greeted. "How you feeling?"

Guilt twisted in Darren's gut because he had no recollection of Joey coming over last night. "I'm fine. When did you get here?"

"About an hour after you guys got home from the after party," Joey informed with a somewhat pained grimace. "Mia told me that it would probably be a good idea if I stayed the night here."

"Oh," Darren responded resolutely, mussing his scruffy hair. "Obviously I drank a lot, but what exactly happened last night? I only really remember the event."

Mia blushed a deep red, sinking a little and avoiding Darren's gaze. Darren was about to open his mouth to press further since she seemed to know, but then Darren was struck with her taste hot on his heavy dry morning tongue and he winced.

"Well," Joey began awkwardly, getting to his feet and making his way to Darren. "I don't really know, but you were really upset. You and Chris got into something apparently, and I'm not surprised of course, but you were completely out when I arrived."

Darren stared pointedly at the coffee cup that was brewing at a glacial pace. "I'm sorry," Darren muttered quietly.

"Darren I don't want you to be sorry," Joey insisted. "I just want you to be okay. Chris isn't good for you. He's hung heavy on your head for years now and I think it's time that you need to let go. Otherwise you need to quit your job. I'm sorry, but it's just not good for your health."

"You don't think I know that?" Darren snapped, instantly on the defense. "You don't think I know how much pain Chris has caused me? Of course I do! So I think it's interesting that you are telling me how much pain he's causing when you don't even know what it feels like!"

A flash of hurt crossed Joey's expression as he put his hands up in surrender. "You're right, Darren. But I know what it's like to see my friend get hurt and there really isn't anything I can do about it. I just don't want to see you hurt anymore. I want you to be happy."

Darren sagged and hung his head, "I know."

Joey took a tentative step forward and squeezed Darren's shoulder gently. "I want to help in any way I can. I know that Chris is probably not a bad person, but he or whatever comes with him makes you turn into an alcoholic and it scares me, Darren."

Darren cringed. He didn't like the term 'alcoholic'. It made him sound like a wife-abuser or something with yellow teeth and a terrible temper. His throat closed up and he couldn't respond, so he just attempted to smile and nod, his eyes turning glassy.

The three of them spent most of the day lounging on the couch and watching random television shows. Darren sipped his coffee and he noticed Mia was looking particularly stiff, and it made Darren deeply curious what exact sexual acts they performed last night and why. If anything, it would probably make him feel worse since she probably felt used, so he decided not to ask. Especially with Joey around because that would be extremely awkward.

Just as Darren started to relax a bit, his head heavy and eyelids tired, Joey stood up and stretched before reaching for his keys on the coffee table. "So I'm going to go grab some stuff from my place so I can stay the weekend comfortably, is that cool?"

Darren nodded, trying not to feel weird by the fact it sort of seemed like Joey was babysitting him and it made him feel like scum of the earth, but then again it will be really nice to spend some time with him. They hadn't really hung out lately because of his hectic Glee schedule.

"Okay," Joey nodded, heading toward the door. "I'll give you a call when I'm on my way back so I can pick something up for us to eat."

Darren gave an affirming reply and quick smile before Joey was gone and then him and Mia were alone. The awkwardness instantly intensified, despite the fact that their positions on the couch hadn't changed. Darren chanced a glance over in her direction and her eyes were still glued on the television, but her mouth was downturned in discomfort. Darren felt like he was going to suffocate because he hated prolonged silences like this so he floundered to say something.

"I'm sorry," Darren blurted, turning toward her overtly.

Mia looked slightly surprised. "For what?"

"Last night," Darren clarified. "I can tell something happened, and whatever it was I really hope it wasn't too bad and you don't hate me."

Mia's expression softened. "Darren, I could never hate you."

"Then will you tell me," Darren pleaded. "I hate blacking out and I hate not knowing things, especially if I partook in such things."

Mia looked at the ground as if deliberating, chewing her bottom lip and picking invisible lint off her leggings. "I'm not really proud of what happened," she admitted, sounding utterly ashamed. Darren didn't understand it.

"It's okay you can tell me," Darren said softly, scooting closer to her on the couch. After a long pause she looked up, her eyes guarded and wary.

"We did.. things," Mia stammered, looking like she wanted to be anywhere else but there.

"I gathered that," Darren replied carefully, his hand squeezing into a fist from anxiety.

"Given I was drunk too, I should have stopped it from happening because you were just *so* inconsolable afterward," Mia fretted, her eyebrows taut with worry, looking like she was about to cry. "Things just got really hot and heavy on the dance floor at the after-party with Chris and Max, so we all continued such.. *activities* to an inappropriate degree and-"

But Darren froze when like a horrible rush everything came flowing back, drowning out the rest of her words. The taste of Chris' cock hot on his tongue mixed with the leftover afterthought of Mia, who was watching alongside Max with lustful eyes.

Mia noticed the change in Darren's expression and she blinked, a soft tear rolling down her cheek. "I should have known that Chris was just doing it as some sort of contest and not to get close to you. I was just so caught up in the heat of the moment and I'm so *sorry*, Darren. Please forgive me."

"No," Darren said forcefully, reaching for her hand and squeezing. "You didn't do anything don't apologize. It was my fault for going along with it. *I* should be apologizing to you instead."

Mia shook her head, more tears spilling as she wrenched her hand from Darren's grasp and got to her feet, snatching her purse and jacket. "I need to go, Darren. I'm sorry I just need a breather, but I'll be back later I promise. I just can't deal with this right now."

"Don't be sorry-" Darren called, but the door closed behind a whip of her hair with a snap.

And Darren was alone. Completely alone. Nothing but his thoughts to keep him company. But he couldn't have that.

So Darren got showered and dressed down. He ironed his suit and made food for his ravenous stomach to keep himself busy, but the thoughts of Chris would pierce through at unexpected moments.

Eventually he stopped fighting them off and Darren found himself mulling. He found himself revisiting all the history he had with Chris and all that has happened since down to each detail. Even the ones that would irk him greatly or tear through his chest.

Then the itch came back with alarming power. The itch to drink. The itch to make those pervading thoughts go away because there was no other way. Darren ceased making his bed to surge to the kitchen into his liquor cabinet. It was empty.

With absolute rage, Darren realized that Joey or Mia must have cleaned it out as he slept because he was sure he had a whole bottle of silver tequila that hadn't even been opened yet. *That shit's expensive* Darren thought bitterly so he grabbed his jacket. *I'll just buy more and get Joey to pay me back.*

Darren drove down the block to the nearest liquor store white-knuckled the entire way, his body thrumming with the unhealthy need to be not in stable mind. He was basically feverish when he grabbed his replacement, paid for it at the counter and drove home, knowing it was just *sitting there* ready to be drunk.

The second Darren arrived home he screwed off the bottle and tipped it down his throat, not even bothering to get himself a glass. The room was quiet except for the pleasurable rushing sound in his ears as he sated his desperation, all thoughts becoming background noise except for more, more, *more*.

When Darren passed out that evening, he didn't wake up.

## Chapter Fifteen

Joey just had one of those *feelings* when Darren didn't pick up the first time.

By the seventh phone call without an answer, Joey's heart constricted with worry as he eased his foot on the gas pedal, surpassing the speed limit just enough so he wasn't being reckless.

In a world where Chris didn't exist to torment Darren, Joey would have been at most irritated by his friend's lack of attentiveness to his cell phone. Darren probably would have left it in the bedsheets and he couldn't hear it while he was masturbating or showering, but this was a different kind of world. A kind of world where Darren had reckless behavior and Joey had a right to be extremely paranoid. So he called Mia.

"Hello?" She answered on the first ring.

"Hey are you with Darren?" Joey asked breathlessly, weaving through cars and his adrenaline on a high.

"Not right now," Mia answered a little haltingly. "I was actually going to head back here in a few I just needed a while to myself."

Joey's throat closed up. "He's not answering his phone."

"Really?" Mia sounded worried too. "I'm sure it's nothing, but I'll meet you there."

Joey hung up and drove faster.

His mind was a whirl of sounds colored with anxiety and fear. It only heightened as he climbed the stairs to Darren's apartment and sprinted to his door. Joey nudged against the doorknob to see that it was locked. He fumbled with shaking fingers for his keys, the metallic slide loud and harsh against his eardrums.

The door creaked open as if in slow motion from some sort of horror movie. Joey stopped breathing. The room hung heavy of alcohol and despair. There were empty bottles, open cabinets, strewn papers and broken dishes scattered across the floor.



"Darren?" Joey called shakily, his voice breaking off in the end, his entire body alert for any sort of movement or sound. Darren was many things when he was drunk, but never destructive, and frankly it terrified Joey to his core.

Joey went to the counter and saw a knife sticking up, the sharp end dug snugly into the wood. His throat tight and airways constricted he walked forward hesitantly, reaching to pull the knife out when he saw that it was piercing a picture.

Not just any picture. The picture Darren always carefully folded and kept in his wallet for safe keeping. The picture Darren would look at with tears streaming down his face. The picture Darren would clutch to his chest if things were just a little bit too hard for him some days. The picture of him and Chris taken only weeks before Darren left him forever.

The knife was sticking up right where Darren's heart would be and globs of tears clung to the old photograph, sliding down as Joey removed the knife and placed it carefully onto the countertop.

*Clunk.*

Joey's head whipped around at the subtle sound, his entire body on edge. It sounded like it came from the hallway so Joey walked slowly in that direction, avoiding broken glass and sheet music and empty cans until he caught sight of a figure at the end of the hallway, slumped against the bathroom door on the floor. Joey flicked on the light, and the sight that illuminated made his stomach lurch.

Darren's skin was sallow, pale and extremely clammy. The sound Joey guessed was from the large bottle of alcohol slipping from Darren's loose grasp and was now leaking the rest of its contents onto the floor.

"Darren?" Joey chanced again, his voice strangled. Even though Darren's eyelids were fluttering and his breaths came out in shallow, rattling gasps, Joey had a feeling Darren was completely gone to the world. Completely gone, and somewhere he shouldn't be.

Joey rushed forward, a painful lump rising to his throat as he pressed against Darren's pulse-point. His skin was a frightening contrast of being on fire and ice cold, his heart beat slow and meaningful.

"Darren," Joey said much more loudly and urgently, cupping his face and slapping slightly to wake him. Darren didn't respond, if anything his slack neck fell further, his body completely and utterly useless. Not

even when Joey shook him forcefully did he wake; Darren's head just lolled, mouth hanging open in clanging, heavy breaths.

The door suddenly banged open and Joey flinched, looking over his shoulder to see Mia stride in quickly, taking in the scene around her with wide eyes. "Joey? Joey is everything oka-"

Mia halted at the threshold of the hallway, staring down Joey and Darren, her words dying in her throat. Tears sprung to her eyes, her hand clapping against her mouth, but she made no move to come forward.

"What's wrong with him?" Joey asked, his voice raspy and weak. "He's never been like this before, I can't wake him up!"

Tears spilled over Mia's cheeks as she removed her hand from her mouth and pulled out her cell phone, dialing the distinct tones of 911. She still hadn't answered Joey, so she turned away, unable to see Darren like that anymore until emergency service picked up.

"Hello? Yes I need an ambulance," Mia said into the speaker in a frantic rush, repeating Darren's address a couple of times, her heart pounding out of her ears as dread consumed her completely. "Please hurry, my friend has severe alcohol poisoning."

Chris and Max ate in amiable silence, their feet brushing under the booth as the waitress poured them more water. "How's everything tasting boys?" she had asked and they both nodded, making noises of affirmation as they stuffed their faces. She dodged away in hopes of getting a decent tip from the cute couple.

"So I'm thinking we should go see a movie tonight, what do you think?" Max asked, slurping up a penne noodle and chewing slowly, the faint spice sparking along his tongue. Chris dabbed the corner of his mouth with a napkin, swirling some more noodles with his fork.

"Sure," Chris agreed. "I'm not sure what's out, but I'm good with that. No romantic comedies though, please."

Chris gagged dramatically and Max laughed, his eyes sparkling. It made Chris look down into his plate because it reminded him too much of Darren. "Here let me check my phone for times."

Right as Chris began to pull up a webpage from the shitty WiFi of the dinky restaurant, his phone buzzed with an incoming call from a number he did not recognize. Under normal circumstances Chris would have ignored the call or let it go to voicemail, but something in his gut made him pick up.

"Hello?" Chris answered promptly.

"Mr. Colfer?" A woman's voice chimed professionally over the line. "May I speak with him?"

"Speaking," Chris responded, a little confused.

"I'm calling on the behalf of my patient Mr. Criss, as you were on his emergency contacts. We need you to come down to General right away."

Chris' heart clenched with worry. "Why is he okay?"

"We can't discuss this over the phone," she responded in a hard voice. "He already has a few friends here, but I need to call his family-"

"I'm coming," Chris interrupted with a promise, standing abruptly from the booth, grabbing his things in a flurry before hanging up on her, despite the fact she continued talking. It didn't matter, Darren was in the hospital and that's was all Chris needed to know. He had to be there. Darren's safety was important. But Chris couldn't help but feel his stomach contract in fear wondering what could have possibly happened and if his forever beloved was going to be okay.

"I have to go," Chris said shortly to a bewildered Max.

"What's happened?" He asked, swallowing hugely and looking like he was going to join Chris.

"No," Chris said a little too sharply. "You stay here, I'll explain later okay?"

And with that, Chris was gone, making Max feel more painfully useless than average.

When he arrived to the main hospital, Chris couldn't even remember his drive over. It was like he was on auto-pilot to cope so he wouldn't have a panic attack. He should have known that the way he and Darren have been going would result in collateral damage. How could have he been so *stupid*? But then again,

Chris' mind tried to reason that maybe he was being a little too vain and this was a separate accident all together. One could hope, at least.

So Chris focused on the fact that despite everything he was somehow miraculously on Darren's emergency contacts. That kept his unsettled heart warm in the chill of the hospital as he made his way up to the front desk.

"May I help you?" The receptionist asked sweetly, peering through her square-rimmed glasses. "What's your name?"

"My name's Chris Colfer. I'm here to see patient Darren Criss," Chris informed instantly. "I was called in since I'm one of his emergency contacts. I'm not really sure what's going on."

"Give me a moment, please." The receptionist clicked through her computer, images flashing against her frames. "Got it," she mumbled under her breath after a moment before picking up a phone and dialing. "I'm calling someone to take you up."

Chris waited, fidgeting until a plump woman in scrubs approached, her hair in a messy ponytail at the top of her head. "Chris Colfer?" Chris nodded. "Come with me please."

They walked in silence, their footsteps echoing across the pristine walls. Chris really hated hospitals. It reminded him of the times where Hannah would have really awful seizures and they'd have to rush her into the ER if they couldn't manage it. It made Chris feel sick, especially since he couldn't take wondering anymore.

"Why is he here anyway?" Chris huffed out of his tight chest, his heart pounding loudly against his ribcage and body taut with worry. "What happened?"

"Your friend had a few too many," she replied, slightly exasperated, her eyes drooping with tiredness. "We had to pump his stomach because he didn't respond to paramedics rolling their knuckles against his sternum, a standard procedure for alcohol overdose."

"What?" Chris gasped. "Is he going to be okay?"

"Yes," she replied. "He was very lucky to get to us in time, he was hovering in a quite dangerous place there for a while. He's sleeping now, so you can wait for him to wake up."

She stalled in the hallway they had just turned into, guesting toward a room before turning the opposite way, padding quickly down the hallway, her stethoscope bouncing against her chest and hair bobbing.

Chris walked up to the room and glanced in, his stomach flipping and heart contracting painfully at the sight of Darren laying broken in the bed, tubes and lines hooked up to his body as he rested. He really didn't look good. He looked colorless, like all the life and joy was drained from him; and that was the biggest tragedy of all. Darren was *good*. He never deserved to be in his position, despite all the mistakes he's made.

Mia and Joey's fingers were twined on the bedspread near Darren's knee as they peered down at him, their faces clear with concern as they comforted each other with just that small touch. Chris felt like he was intruding on an intimate moment. He felt like an outsider. Why had he come? He was nothing to Darren.

*But he's everything to me.*

Chris wanted to run away and cry forever. He wanted to go somewhere far away, never to be seen again so he couldn't ever hurt anybody again. Especially Darren. Chris couldn't help but feel like he contributed to this, and for that he shouldn't be here to comfort or see Darren. Chris is what's *wrong*, and he should stay far away if it meant Darren would never hurt again. Chris was the *poison* that had driven Darren to this point. He didn't deserve to be on Darren's emergency contacts or even in the presence of Darren anymore. Not after this. Chris should suffer for this. If he didn't deserve to be happy before, he definitely didn't now.

Chris turned to leave, tears falling thickly from his eyeballs and clinging to his lashes and making his nose run. His entire body wracked with sorrow and he almost wished death upon himself, but that would be far too kind. Before Chris could get to the elevator he heard a voice shout, "*YOU!*"

Chris whipped around just in time for Joey's body to collide with his, Chris' back smacking against the wall and erupting pain along his shoulder-blades and skull. Joey's teeth were bared, his eyes rimmed with red, and his forearm pressed against Chris' throat, constricting his airways.

Chris gasped, neck straining as he stared back into Joey's shining, determined eyes filled with nothing but fear and hatred. "What are you doing here? You have no right to be here!"

Chris wanted to break down and sob, '*I know I know just let me leave and I'll never be a problem again.*'

"Joey stop!" Mia ran over and attempted to pry him off, but he was too strong, too upset, too driven. "Don't hurt Chris, Joey. Please don't," she begged.

"Why?" Joey snarled, his eyes wild but vulnerable at the same time. "After all he's done? All he has done is caused pain to Darren! For *years*! THIS IS HIS FAULT!" He bellowed.

Chris flinched and cried some more, but his arms hung uselessly at his sides. He deserved this. He didn't need to fight Joey off, he needed Joey to continue belittling him until satisfied. Chris deserved this.

"Just *look* at him," Mia pleaded, feeling her heart drop at the sight of Chris slumping against Joey, barely even trying to gasp at breath. It was so pathetic and heartbreaking and she didn't want to see it anymore. "Let him go, Joey!"

Joey looked like he gave in as he relinquished his hold, Chris crumpling to the floor and coughing, grabbing his throbbing throat. Mia was surprised that nobody was around to see this exchange and was thankful because Joey probably would have been taken away and put in confinement.

"No, he needs to *look* at this," Joey said lowly, his voice harsh as he dug through his pocket and pulled something out, thrusting it in front of Chris' face. Chris blinked away his tears, sniffing and sobbing until he could see.

It was a picture of him and Darren about a month before Darren graduated and changed Chris' life forever a second time over. It was worn and wrinkled with age, a little splotchy but it made Chris cry harder. That was when he was most happy in his life, snuggled up with his boyfriend as they took each horrible day by day together. *Together*.

"You see that Chris?" Joey sounded like he was verging on hysterics, his blunt finger pointing at the slashed mark along Darren's chest from the knife. "I found this picture before I found him. He almost *died* Chris, and it was all because of *you*. You broke his heart then and you broke his heart now, but now you're playing with his life. You fucking *disgust* me!"

Chris couldn't take it anymore, he pushed Joey's hand and the picture away just in time for him to bow forward and retch all his guts out until he was dry heaving and wailing. Pain shot through his heart and lungs and just *everywhere*. Chris felt like he was dying. He wanted to die.

This pain was so much worse than anything Chris had felt in his life. The guilt of knowing how much he has really hurt Darren was worse than any bully punching him repeatedly. Worse than the terror of living day by day fearing for his own life and his sister's well-being. Worse than the pain of Darren leaving and Chris breaking his own heart repeatedly after they slept together just that short time ago. He would gladly take it all now because nothing could compare to this.

Joey softened at the sight of Chris like this, succumbing to the pain, almost horrified as Mia clutched his arm until her knuckles were white. Chris' stomach was empty but convulsions of self disgust kept coming up until he couldn't breathe anymore, tears staining his cheeks until he ran out and he was choking. Mia and Joey were helpless, all traces of anger gone. This was a broken man who knew what he had done.

The only thing that granted reprieve of Chris' anguish was the soft, barely discernible sound of Darren whispering his name. He croaked and coughed until it came out more clear, making Mia and Joey rush to Darren's beside.

"*Chris*," Darren sighed, his eyes welling with tears. "I need Chris."

## Chapter Sixteen

Everyone stilled, turning toward Darren's direction to see if he hadn't just mumbled in his sleep. Chris got shakily to his feet, avoiding his acrid vomit and peered through the door, a safe distance from Joey.

What they all saw was Darren sitting up in his hospital bed, fully awake with bloodshot eyes, his head hanging heavy and he just looked so, so tired. It made Chris' heart ache, like each beat worse than before in succession, reminding him that he still did not belong, no matter what Darren said. Yet, there was some magnetic connection from Darren's steady gaze that didn't allow him to flee, so he waited with bated breath until Mia took the initiative.

"How're you feeling," Mia asked gently, going to his side and placing a placating palm on his knee. Joey oriented himself as if blocking Chris from following suit. What Joey didn't realize however was that Chris was probably physically and emotionally unable to breach the threshold of that room and face Darren after what he had done.

Worst of all, Chris feared he'd finally break down completely; stripped bare without a cause. Chris felt so open, raw and vulnerable, and it absolutely terrified him. He felt more naked than he ever had in high school. He was feeling *everything* all at once; no numbness of protection to be found. It was like sounds were extra loud and the lights were extra bright. An illumination of Darren's alcoholism to Chris' being.

Darren gazed complacently at Mia for a moment before speaking once more, his voice still terribly raspy. "I need to be alone with Chris."

"I don't think that's a good idea," Joey cut in, stepping forward and talking with his hands for emphasis to each syllable. "I really don't."

Darren shook his head, pressing his lips into a hard line, his eyes set and determined. "This is my decision, Joey."

Joey instantly flared up, taking another step closer toward Darren's frail-looking form. "Clearly *your* decisions and choices haven't been working out very well huh? Do you think your decision to drink yourself to death was very beneficial for any parties involved?"

Darren eyes widened, and he opened his mouth to say something, but Joey continued.



"It was *your* decision to make all these terrible choices and to be so affected by somebody who clearly isn't any good for you. But you know what Darren? It was my fucking decision to take care of you and pick up all the pieces in college and now today. If it wasn't for me, you wouldn't be here right now making another bad *decision*!"

Stunned, Darren leaned back into his pillow and Mia stiffened, eyes darting nervously around the room. After his outburst, Joey breathed heavily for a moment until his eyes softened and the clenched fists at his side loosened once he realized how bad that might have sounded. "I'm sorry Darren I didn't mean-"

Darren put up a hand to silence him. "It's fine," he said shortly, his tone mostly unreadable until the emotions starting lacing through with more intensity as he progressed. "I know that you are under a lot of stress and I'm so sorry for putting you in this position, but please, *please* don't place all the blame on Chris, alright? It takes two to tango, good or bad."

Joey looked like he was going to respond, but he came up short or was either at a loss of words or felt really bad, so he settled with nodding, giving Mia a little shrug. "Want to join me in the cafeteria?"

"Okay," she agreed softly, patting Darren's knee once more before departing with Joey, their arms linked and her head leaning on his jutting shoulder as they mumbled quietly. Chris watched them go, feeling his nerves itch up his spine and constrict his airways as he turned back to read Darren's facial expression.

It was mostly impassive as he waited for Chris to come in, to brave the inevitable storm. In Darren's opinion Chris looked likened to frightened prey of some unforeseen force. But Chris was playing both parts.

He was afraid of himself. He was afraid of the truth, and Darren finally knowing it. He was afraid of Darren never forgiving him even though Chris really thought he deserved no understanding or sympathy. But hopefully Darren would understand. It was time.

Their tremulous relationship had taken a new turn and it was all because of what Chris had done in response to Darren breaking his heart all those years ago. It was all terribly petty and just not even worth it. It finally made sense now. Darren didn't leave because he wanted to. He left because he felt like he had to, and he suffered just as bad or possibly worse than Chris. How could he be so blind? Chris held onto the past for way too long. It was time to move on. To grow. To change. So Chris breached the threshold and walked slowly over to Darren's beside.

Silence hung heavy in the room as they just stared into each other's eyes, hesitant and searching. After a while Chris' grip on the armrest became vice-like and he felt like he was going to pass out when Darren swallowed hugely, "Can I have some water?"

Darren blinked slowly and Chris nodded, squeaking through his cold lips, "Sure."

Chris grabbed a plastic cup next to the sink and filled it up with water, hyper-aware of all his movements, the awful taste in his mouth and his heart pounding knowing that Darren was watching him. Even though the last time they were around each other Darren's lips were around his cock, this was the first real interaction they've had since they were young boyfriends; and they both knew how monumental this moment was, so they needed to tread carefully.

Chris handed the cup to Darren and their fingertips brushed, sending an electric current up his nerve-endings and setting him even more on edge. He watched Darren swallow the water eagerly, trying to form anything worthwhile to say in his mind. Once he was finished, he took Darren's cup and threw it away, waiting, his heart in his throat. They stared at each other again.

"You're here," Darren finally breathed, his eyes shining as he choked up a little. He felt absolutely drained and each movement took a toll in his exhausted, tortured body. But Chris was here, despite it all.

Chris took his hand. "I am."

Darren smiled, but it didn't quite reach his eyes. He bit his lower lip as he looked down and blinked, tears breaking free and rolling softly down his unusually pale cheeks. Chris wanted to kiss them away, but instead he just squeezed Darren's hand tighter.

"Darren, I am so sorry," Chris whispered, his voice breaking as his tears chased Darren's in a race down his cheeks. "I'm more sorry than you'll ever know."

"Why are you sorry, this isn't your fault," Darren insisted, and it made Chris feel absolutely sick to his stomach again.

"Yes it is," Chris disagreed meaningfully. "This is my fault. I did this to you."

Darren's bottom lip trembled. "I never meant to hurt myself. I didn't mean to scare everybody, I must look absolutely pathetic. I just wanted the pain to go away."

Darren started to cry harder, his chest shaking and Chris pressed his palm to Darren's cheek and forced him to look back up. "No," Chris shook his head, wiping tears away. "You're not pathetic. You were just dealing with all the shit I was handing to you. It was just so unfair of me."

"I'm weak," Darren sobbed, his chest collapsing and face pressing further into Chris' hand as he wept. "Whenever I can't handle something I just have the devil's drink take it away. It's a terrible crutch, and along with you is my biggest weakness."

"And you're mine," Chris said softly. "Also my warped sense of justice."

Darren sniffled, visibly less upset, but he looked so fragile like he'd break at any moment. "Justice?"

"The only reason I've been doing all these horrible things to you was to make up for the suffering you caused when you left me," Chris explained, cringing inwardly. "I went too far. There is a reason why the saying 'an eye for an eye makes the world blind' holds merit, Darren."

"I don't quite understand," Darren acknowledged in a small voice, making him sound painfully young.

"I was scared Darren," Chris confessed. "I was scared that after we slept with each other that I'd be hurt again, so I took all that negative energy in hurting you like you did me, but it just made me feel worse. Worse than I ever have in my life because I didn't realize that you already reaped what you sowed. I was selfish. I should have known that you were just as affected by you leaving as I was. I just hope one day you can forgive me my mistakes. I never expect you to love me again, but if you ever grant me the kindness of forgiveness, even if I don't deserve it, you'll make me a happy man."

Darren soaked in what Chris had said, his heart lifting slightly only to be crushed. "I will always love you, until the day I die, Chris."

Chris shook his head sadly, his voice shaking. "You shouldn't. You deserve so much better."

"No I don't," Darren stated miserably, but Chris pressed on his face again, staring him down. "Yes you do," Chris said fiercely, getting the overwhelming urge to kiss Darren. But that was no longer his privilege. "You deserve the world and more, and although it kills me I can't give it to you, I know someday someone will."

"Why do you sound so sure?" Darren asked quietly, blinking against his sore red-rimmed eyes. "Why do you have so much faith in me when I broke the only promise I ever made you?"

Chris took a moment to gather the powerful emotion overtaking him, his entire body nearly shook. "You need to believe in yourself, Darren. You need to quit playing victim and start seeing what a truly wonderful person you are.. and I.. I-"

Chris shook again more overtly and Darren placed his other palm on top of Chris' which was already holding Darren's hand. His skin was hot and clammy to the touch, but absolutely perfect. It was everything Chris needed to say what he always needed to say, "I forgive you."

"What?" Darren could hardly believe his ears.

"I forgive you Darren," Chris repeated, his tone bordering on reverence. The words coming out of his mouth instantly set free his body, like an entire weight was lifted off and Chris suddenly felt like anything was possible. More tears sprung to his eyes as he clutched desperately to Darren's hand.

"I forgive you, but it's so much more than that. I held on to heartbreak for so long. I turned into the very person I feared the most, a bully of sorts and I need to come to terms with that one day but Darren I don't know how to fix this, but I will try. I'll do anything in my power to make this better because nothing else is more important to me. This is my promise to you, and I promise that no matter how long it takes, I will never break it-"

Chris planned on saying more as a speech filled him in surplus, but Darren surged forward, winding his fingers in the hair at the nape of Chris' neck and pulled him in for a hard kiss, his nose exhaling loudly and a small whimper of desperation tumbling out of his throat. Chris' body felt like it set on fire as a chorus of hallelujah courses rang through his head.

But Chris pulled away. "Darren, I got sick I..," he gestured to the hallway. "We can't."

"I'm sorry," Darren's head hung, but he stayed in Chris' space, his breath tickling over Chris' skin. "I just couldn't help myself."

Chris swallowed, reaching up to brush the hair out of Darren's eyes. "Just wait okay? If not for me, do it for you. Take some time. Let's start over so we can make this better. There are so many wounds, and I don't want you to end up resenting me. All I have to offer right now is my little promise, and my love."

"You still love me?" Darren asked, because he honestly hasn't been sure for some time now. He was never sure if someone who did the things Chris did could actually mean he still held love in his heart, not just hatred but Darren was beginning to understand. Chris was deeply damaged, and Darren always knew that. He handled betrayal in a dark way, but so did Darren so he couldn't really blame him. They were only human after all.

"I've always loved you," Chris cried, tears streaming freely down his face. "I never stopped loving you. I will always love you. You were my first love, and that's something that never goes away.. case in point."

Darren laughed shakily. "True."

Chris smiled until his phone buzzed, his display informing him of 5 missed calls. "Ugh, it's Max."

Darren suddenly felt guilty and a little irritated. "I mean you can invite him if you want."

"God you're always so courteous and I'm so awful," Chris pouted, blacking the screen out on his phone and setting it aside.

"What why?" Darren asked, not expecting Chris to say that.

"I've been using him to get to you obviously," Chris said miserably, like what he was uttering was a sin. "But I'm not that heartless. I can see he really cares about me and I really tried to move on and love him instead, but I.. *couldn't*. It just wasn't possible. Now what am I supposed to do?"

Chris sounded like he was bordering on another panic attack, which Darren saw the conclusion of right when he woke up, and he really didn't want to see it again. It was probably the most horrible thing he ever saw. So he took Chris' hand again.

"We'll figure it out."

## Chapter Seventeen

Chris visited Darren every single day up until he was released and stayed as long as he was allowed, much to Joey's dismay. Whenever Chris entered the room, bringing Darren better attempts of food than the hospital's, Joey would huff out in displeasure and leave, pulling out his phone to most likely text Mia. Even though Chris wasn't ever Joey's friend exactly, it still hurt a little. He didn't like feeling like the enemy.

"Don't worry," Darren laughed lightly. "He'll come around, I promise. Just give him time."

"He doesn't need to," Chris pouted. "He has every right to hate me forever."

Darren shook his head, scoffing a little and placed his hand over Chris'. "You are too hard on yourself."

Chris withdrew. "I have done so much wrong."

Darren forceably took Chris' hand back, furrowing his eyebrows. "And you're making an effort to make up for all of it, Joey understands it. I do too. He just doesn't think I should have forgiven you so easily."

Chris didn't attempt to take his hand away this time, but he continued sulking. "Why did you? After everything? I was so horrible to you, Darren. I don't think I could ever forgive myself."

"You'll have to eventually," Darren said quietly, his thumb brushing over Chris' knuckles. Just the small touch alone sent shivers down Chris' spine. They stayed like that for a long moment, just enjoying being in each other's space without hostility or resentment. It was peaceful; wonderful. Chris hoped it could always be like this.

"So are you getting discharged today?" Chris asked just to say something. He just liked the sound of Darren's voice, nectar to his own self-help.

Darren nodded, taking a sip of the soda Chris had bought him. "I think the nurse was getting the papers now."

"So..," Chris began, and Darren didn't really like that tone.

"So what," he questioned, getting a little nervous. Darren wasn't going to lie, he was anxious about his release. He would be out in the real world, and out of this safe haven that had brought feelings to surface and he and Chris' true reunion since high school. What would happen to them once they were back out there? Would things spin out of control once more? The thought made Darren feel sick.

"Where does it leave us?" Chris asked, frowning slightly. But Darren couldn't help but smile with relief. Clearly they had the same concerns.

"Hopefully on a path of recovery," Darren said with conviction, squeezing Chris' palm before turning it over to trace the lines. "I don't want this to go away," he admitted quietly, averting his eyes from Chris', a hard lump in his throat.

"It doesn't have to," Chris said softly, and Darren's heart pattered with joy. "But it's not only us that need recovering."

Darren lifted his head to meet Chris' gaze. "What do you mean?"

"Your.. alcoholism," Chris whispered, and Darren flinched. "I was fortunate enough to have not found you like Mia and Joey, but I don't ever want to. Ever."

Darren wanted to cry. He could tell that they were shaken up about it, and Darren had to come to terms with how terrifying it was for not only himself but everyone around him. Something straight out of a horror movie. The doctor even said that he was hovering dangerously close to death, and Darren never wanted to scare anybody he loved like that again. "I know."

"So maybe a twelve step program?" Chris suggested carefully. "I heard Joey that he attempted to intervene with one in college, but you objected after so long."

Darren chewed on his lip. "The program just doesn't seem right to me," he explained. "It wasn't because I didn't want to get better, because I really did. And I do now. Because I scare myself in that dark place. But there's something about giving up all responsibility to some sort of divine superpower seems a little skewed."

"I understand," Chris said softly. "But it helps for a lot of people, so they have to be doing something right. I'll even go with you if you'd like." Darren's mouth crooked up, giving Chris confidence that Darren

seemed to find the idea nice. "I just want you to be better, Darren. Addiction can be very detrimental, and it breaks my heart knowing that in some way I contributed to it."

"I know," Darren repeated in a low tone. Chris didn't like hearing it. He almost sounded angry. It made Chris' heart hurt, and he just wanted all the hurt to be gone forever, as naive of a wish that was.

"Well, how did you pull out of it last time?" Chris asked helpfully. "Obviously alcohol is everywhere, especially in show business. And Joey hiding it didn't really help either-"

"Just having support," Darren clarified, cutting in so he didn't have to relive the memory. "I had my friends, and all the bad feelings seemed to go away." Chris let Darren stroke his hand, but he couldn't help but feel like he was still the problem, and could never be the solution. He swallowed hard, trying not to run away and cry.

Darren took a deep breath after a long moment, his voice shaky and sincere. "And I have you now, in a positive way, so I have an inkling that things will be okay."

Chris was suddenly so overcome with emotion at Darren's words, that he almost caved in on himself, but to keep himself together, he leaned in and kissed Darren on the forehead hard and affectionate, Darren leaning into the touch. "I'm really happy to hear that. You don't know how much that means to me."

"I think I do," Darren promised.

Joey was grumbling about something, stuffing Darren's things into a bag, the damning clothes from that night washed and good as new, ready to join Darren on his venture home. The prospect of being alone struck panic to Darren's heart, but his throat closed up whenever he tried asking for some company. It sounded needy, and Darren didn't want to be more of a nuisance that he already has been.

"Alright," Joey said with a tone of finality, throwing the duffel bag over his shoulder watching Darren ease himself into the wheelchair with a frown. "Now, now you know they make patients leave in those so there won't be some lawsuit if you tumble down stairs or something."

"I know," Darren acknowledged, twisting his hands together before caressing the rubber of the wheels, suddenly unable to meet Joey's gaze. "I just - I don't know."



"Don't worry," Joey said softly, immediately understanding. "Chris will be there waiting for you when I drop you off."

Darren perked up. "Wait really?"

Joey's lip twitched. "Yeah," he said in a hard tone. "Not that I'm his biggest fan all of a sudden, but I sort of approve of what he's doing. Plus, he's willing to bend over backward to take care of you he told me so I can have a break."

Darren was struck between the two conflicting emotions of disgust with himself and gratitude for the friends he had. So he settled with biting his lip, letting curiosity consume him instead, because it was a lot easier to deal with.

"So what is Chris doing for me exactly that you suddenly approve of?" Darren couldn't help but ask eventually while Joey wheeled him down the busy hospital corridors.

"Can't say," Joey responded with a hint of playfulness and it made Darren's heart do a back flip because finally.

"Can't you just give me a hint," Darren egged on, a grin stretching across his face. He couldn't help it because in that moment it really felt like things were going to go back to normal. The good normal.

"Nope," was all Joey said until they reached the parking lot, his car parked and doors already open.

"Thank you so much," Joey said to one of the hospital workers, who handed Joey his keys. "Alright, get on up."

Darren got to his feet somewhat shakily and took a deep breath. It was a gorgeous day and the birds were chirping despite the fact that the sun was beginning to settle in the west. "Take me home, Joey."

Joey walked Darren all the way up to his apartment in amiable silence, hand ghosting over the small of his back. Darren thought it was strange because it wasn't like he was deathly ill and was going to trip at any moment, but Darren didn't want to say anything. He appreciated the intimacy of it, and he was happy to let Joey comfort him in any way he wished.

But Darren would be lying to himself if he wasn't starting to panic when he climbed the steps to his loft. Bad things had happened there, and even though Darren knew it was most likely all cleaned up from the emotional tornado in his drunken haze, he couldn't stop getting mental images of a wrecked apartment, the stench of liquor hanging heavy with sorrow.

"You alright?" Joey asked tentatively, rubbing Darren's shoulder, his eyes wide and concerned. "You want me to go in with you?"

"N-no, no it's alright," Darren assured, his voice cracking a little. "If Chris is waiting in there for me I'll be okay."

"Okay," Joey echoed, his tone gentle. "Call me if you need anything alright? I'll be here in a flash."

Darren nodded, gulping again as he pulled Joey into a bracing hug, suddenly overwhelmed and choked up. "Thank you, Joey. For everything, I'm sorry for all I put you through - No Shh just let me finish - tell Mia that too if you're going to see, alright?"

Joey looked like he was going to protest but he nodded instead, squeezing Darren's arm again before turning to leave. Darren faced his door, hand hesitating over the knob, his heart in his throat.

I can do this.

Darren took a deep breath and turned the handle, the door swinging in and his eyes fell upon a soft lighting in his apartment, far from what was normal and what he expected. He gasped when he finally lay eyes on Chris.

There were candles all around, giving the room a comfortable, romantic atmosphere. Darren stepped in and saw rose petals laying everywhere, more than he could even count and that wasn't even the best part.

Chris looked magnificent. His hair styled wonderfully, dressed up in nice jeans and a snug black thermal, holding a fully formed rose himself. He was sprawled on floor upon a fuzzy blanket, treats of all wonders and assortments laying with him, waiting to be eaten.

"What is all this?" Darren asked in awe and Chris smiled. His favorite, crinkling smile and it was like seeing the sun rise for the first time.

"This is for you," Chris responded quietly, his midnight blue eyes glistening from the flicker of the candles around him, the warm honey color caressing and complimenting his skin. Darren wanted to clutch his own heart it nearly hurt to look at him. "Come sit with me. I have all this chocolate fondue and treats we shouldn't waste."

Darren managed to sit himself down, his heart thumping in his ears and limbs shaky from nerves and exhilaration. This was the most beautiful, sweepingly romantic gesture anyone had ever done for Darren and he honestly didn't know what to say except for, "Thank you."

"You are so welcome," Chris whispered, reaching up to caress Darren's cheek. Darren closed his eyes, his lovely lashes fanning against his cheeks as he hummed. Chris then reached down and grabbed the juiciest, darkest strawberry he could find and dipped it into the chocolate, raising it to Darren's lips.

Darren opened his mouth, sucking the strawberry between his lips and bit down, sweet sugary goodness sparking pleurably along his taste buds. Chris smiled and Darren felt like he was in heaven. Chris then pulled the stem out of Darren's mouth, who chewed slowly, gaze never leaving Chris'.

And it was then Darren couldn't handle it anymore. He couldn't handle Chris smiling, his sparkling eyes, his grand gestures to make up for all that had happened. He couldn't handle following Chris' advice that they wait for time to heal because the way the candle flickered across Chris' face in that moment rendered it all impossible. Darren couldn't control himself anymore.

He surged forward, taking Chris lips into his own, moaning desperately as his chest expanded with powerful emotion. He clutched at Chris' neck as leverage, keeping him sane and grounded with the beautiful realization that Chris was kissing him back, with just as much. If not more.

They made out heatedly for the longest time, feeling each other out, hands groping to make sure everything was real, helpless whimpers breaking free from their throats and vibrating their slick lips and dancing tongues. It was so much different than ever before, and it made their hearts sing; light on a cloud of euphoria and love.

Finally, Chris broke away panting, twining his fingers in Darren's curls, pressing their foreheads together, trying not to cry he was so happy. "Darren?"

"Mmm?" Darren hummed, trying to control his breathing through his nose, stroking his palms over Chris' shoulders and biceps.

"Are you sure you're ready?" he asked shakily, realizing it was a loaded question.

Darren pulled away, eyes shining and lip quivering. Chris wanted to curl up in a ball and sob because there was so much trust and intimacy in Darren's expression. Chris knew he didn't deserve it but he couldn't help but soak it up. At least in this one, special and perfect moment. Then, Darren nodded, smiling and tightening his grip on Chris, a tear escaping down his cheek.

Chris swooped in to kiss him again, full of passion, promise and without regret. He allowed just enough distance between them to emit the scariest words he had ever said to anyone, but he never wanted it more than now,

"I'm ready to give myself to you."

## Chapter Eighteen

Darren didn't want to rush this. As far as he was concerned, this was the most fragile moment of his life, and he wasn't going to take a second for granted. But he had a feeling deep down that everything was going to be perfect. He could just tell, especially when he looked into Chris' eyes. There was absolutely no trace of past negativity, just pure love and no room for anything else.

When Darren laid Chris upon his bed, Chris looked absolutely terrified. Darren couldn't blame him, so he decided right then and there to do everything in his power to make Chris comfortable and let go completely so he wouldn't be scared anymore. Darren wanted Chris to know that he would never do anything to make Chris hurt ever again. This was a promise he could keep always.

Darren bowed his head and cried silent tears, kissing Chris slowly and meaningfully. Chris clutched to him like a lifeline, his entire body shaking. Their lips slid together, warm and loving, tongues shy and languid. Darren tears dripped onto Chris' cheeks and Chris could taste the salt from them, trying to contain within himself everything he was feeling so he wouldn't break down completely in Darren's arms. Darren had never before seen Chris this vulnerable in his life, not even in high school so it changed the game entirely.

Darren undressed Chris slowly, reveling in and worshiping each inch of skin being exposed with such reverence it was as if he had never been with Chris before. Something about this felt entirely new and Chris could sense how painstakingly important it was. It hung heavy over both of them, reaching out to their darkened past and shining instead a gorgeous light anew.

Chris kept switching between squeezing his eyes shut and biting his lip to staring into the depths of Darren's soul, as if attempting to be constantly connected through physical desire and rejoicing thought alone.

Darren could feel Chris' heartbeat fluttering under each pulse-point he passed, so he attempted to calm Chris by tracing the tips of his fingers over his pale, glittering skin. Over his sternum, nipples, elbows to hipbones; everywhere he could reach until Chris was fully naked, his cock snug against his navel and almost completely hard.

"I love you," Darren murmured over Chris' skin, lips memorizing each dip and curve all the way from his eyelashes down to the tips of his toes.

"I love you," he repeated again, with more emotion this time, his voice velvety and soft, filled with a promise that could never be broken again. Darren kept saying it over and over again with fervor as if it would finally sink into Chris' pores and consume him completely with honest truth without losing its effect.

And that's how Chris felt, keeping a steady gaze on his lover's ministrations, his throat closing up tight with emotion with each passing second. Chris couldn't tell if he was overwhelmed with happiness or nerves with the realization that he finally believed him.

Darren loved him.

Darren loved him just as much as Chris loved him back; the exact opposite of what Chris had been telling himself for years on end. He now knew how devastatingly wrong he was for so long, and he wasn't even sure how to deal with it.

Chris wanted to sob, shout with joy and curl up in a ball with Darren and never leave his bed again all at the same time. He felt like he was going to explode from within, and he wasn't sure how long he could contain himself before Darren saw how much he was actually feeling. Chris had an inkling that this was karma or kismet or some kind coming back to him for shutting himself off for so long. Everything felt amazing and everything hurt so good all at the same time, causing Chris to shake uncontrollably down to his bones. It was like a religious experience how honestly moved he was, and how every light brush of contact was nothing short of powerful.

"Shhh," Darren whispered, his touch feather light and ghosting over every part of Chris imaginable while his cheek nuzzled gently into Chris' thigh. Darren hummed pleurably and Chris let out a strangled sigh, feeling anxiety leave him with each exhale until finally he responded to Darren's touch, allowing his legs to splay open invitingly.

Chris felt his heart jump to his throat, for he expected Darren to go straight to business once Chris made his earth-shattering move, but he instead just stroked Chris' sides soothingly, his cheek burning gloriously along Chris' pale, smooth flesh. Darren was caught up in the moment of everything that he'd rather just drag his lips down Chris' thigh right then, his slight stubble a little scratchy but absolutely exhilarating.

Darren hitched Chris' leg to the side, erupting goosebumps all over while he pet Chris' skin, sending shock-waves of pleasure out to Chris' very nerve-endings. Darren smiled with such contentedness, Chris

relaxed further, Darren's quiet hums a lulling song. Darren then pressed a soft wet kiss to the inside of Chris' knee, surprising Chris with the intimacy and lack of ticklishness.

Darren opened his eyes, his irises like liquid gold baking on a beautiful, recently-mown lawn. Chris' breath hitched and he almost felt like he was floating out of his body, drowning in all that was their love; all that was everything here in this moment.

"You are the most beautiful person I have ever seen," Darren informed quietly like nothing else he had ever said before mattered. "And I can't wait to spend my life with you."

Darren's words hung in the air for a full minute at least until just like that, all shreds of doubt disappeared from within Chris, loosening their death-grip hold in his being and floated away into space. Chris was now more eager than ever to be taken in such a way by Darren, and positively itched to begin a chapter of something entirely new. He wanted to be sure that he was going to share this with Darren and nobody else.

Chris surged forward, frantically pulling Darren's shirt over his head, his fingers fumbling with the buttons of Darren's jeans. Darren's eyes widened for a moment at Chris' sudden frantic urgency, but then softened when a small desperate whine slipped through Chris' lips when he pulled an almost completely naked Darren between his thighs and up onto his body for a fiery kiss.

Darren instantly responded, absently kicking his jeans off his feet while his palms cupped Chris' face, kissing him back with just as much. They felt their cocks grow hard between them, their skin sliding in absolutely ecstasy with each slight movement molding more into each other until they were nearly one. Chris' legs wound around Darren's waist, pulling him closer until Darren was laying heavily on top of him, his knees digging into the mattress below as he started a slow grind.

They kept that up for a while, exerting themselves to the point where Chris had to break the kiss to pant into Darren's mouth, while Darren held him close, pressing their foreheads together and staring meaningfully into his eyes. The slide of their sweat and pre-come made it easy for them, but Chris couldn't help but feel astounded by the gorgeous sensation.

Of all the times he had sex with someone, it had never been quite like this. Chris never knew why he had felt so disconnected in the past whenever he went through the motions of intercourse. Even if he'd fucked

countless boys and men and had felt the shallow pleasure of achieving orgasm, Chris never realized there could be so much more.

Everything has changed.

Even though he had sex with Darren once before there was more to it than getting yourself and the other off. There was more than to just jumping straight into the mechanics of it, getting right to business, because frankly there was also foreplay. The leading up, Chris found was a lot more intense than the actual carnal act. There were a wide range of emotions; but that seemed way too small to describe it.

The feeling of blissful oblivion bursting through his chest, prickling at his eyeballs. The quiet, heated desperation that came with wanting to be close to somebody so much, but wanting it to last as long as possible just to hold onto it as long as he could. It was like he discovered a whole new plane of love-making, and there was so much more for him to find.

It was above all, intimate. The way Darren's limitless eyes pierced into his own, seeing everything and nothing all at once. The silent communication of wonder, acceptance and astonishment. Chris clutched to Darren's biceps, trying to grasp and take hold of what was happening to him but it was almost too much. He was going to fall under like he had fallen so hard in love with this curly-haired man, and there was nothing to stop it.

"Please," Chris whispered brokenly after an immeasurable amount of time, his groin burning and stirring, begging for release.

Darren smoothed Chris' hair back off his forehead and flexed his ass-cheeks, grinding down once more before sitting back on his haunches, groping for the lube. It was then Chris' heart started thumping in his chest again, but he pushed passed the nerves and hooked his leg over Darren's shoulder as he leaned down, his fingers slick and expression anxious.

"Ready?" Darren double-checked, his voice like honey dripping off as silk scarf.

"Yes," Chris amended, nodding vigorously, digging his heel into Darren's muscled shoulder-blade. "I love you."

Darren's eyes shined, eyebrows drawn up and nothing but pure contentedness etched into the lines of his face. "I love you too, Chris."



Chris played with the sparse hair under his belly-button, gulping as Darren's eyes flickered down to his ass. Chris slid his palm down low, passed his leaking cock and pulled his cheeks apart, wanting to assist Darren in any way, knowing full well that he had never done this before.

"I'll go slow," Darren promised.

A pleasant warmth fell over Chris as Darren lubed his fingers up even more for good measure before trailing them so light against his entrance he barely felt it. Chris exhaled shakily, concentrating on each one of his taut muscles, forcing them to un-clench. Darren pressed a little harder against his rim, circling it gently and Chris shivered.

It was then Chris recognized with resounding force that this is the way it should have been. Darren should have been his first, and he Darren's. With further realization however, it dawned on Chris that even though they both have slept with so many other people to count, they both were technically each other's firsts in this most important way. At least they had that to hold onto.

Chris couldn't help but break into a slowly emerging grin and Darren leaned forward for a short, sweet kiss before returning to his ministrations. His pointer finger pressed in, Chris' muscle giving way with some resistance and Chris hissed at the intrusion.

"This okay?" Darren questioned softly.

"Yes," Chris insisted raggedly. "Keep going. Even though I've never bottomed before I've done this to myself."

Darren nodded understandingly, pumping his pointer finger in and out a few times before sliding in his middle alongside, pushing them in all the way up to his knuckles.

"You feel so good," Darren groaned, relishing in the compressing heat and the rapid heartbeat of Chris' muscles against his fingers. They twitched as Chris exhaled again, a subtle flush heating up his chest and neck. "And you look so beautiful like this."

Chris blushed further, groping for Darren's other hand and squeezing tight. He felt like he was on emotional display. Everything was out in the open, and he had nothing to hide anymore. It was exhilarating and terrifying at the same time, but Darren's steady, confident gaze told Chris that he had nothing to be afraid of. Not anymore. They were finally together.

Darren continued until he was up to three fingers, splaying them wide and dragging them up against Chris' unforgiving walls until the relaxed, willingly suctioning up what Darren had to offer with each caress and pull. Chris squeezed his hand really tight, prodding Darren to let him know that he was ready more than ever.

Darren withdrew his fingers, and Chris' gaping hole clenched around the loss, tingling and waiting in anticipation for Darren to push inside. Chris could see Darren was shaking now, his thighs rolling and muscles flexing as he coated his flushed cock generously, eyes firmly trained on what he was doing.

"Hey," Chris whispered, leaning forward and putting a finger under Darren's chin, lifting his head. "It's okay."

Darren blinked, his eyes glassy. "I just want this to be perfect for you."

"It already is."

Chris leaned forward for another kiss, allowing his tongue to trace the seam of Darren's mouth, coaxing his own tongue out to play until their lips were slick, their moans vibrating down each other's throats with each moan swallowed.

Darren shuffled forward to his knees, lowering himself slowly on top of Chris until they were pressed tightly together, Darren's arm still between them holding the base of his cock. He broke the kiss and took a deep shuddering breath, their faces so close that Chris could feel Darren's eyelashes tickle against his skin.

"Okay," Darren breathed, anchoring himself to Chris, Chris wasn't entirely sure, so Chris cupped his cheek, smoothing his thumb over his cheekbone.

"I love you so much Darren," Chris whispered, his breath puffing pleasantly over Darren's sweaty face. "And now I need you."

Darren swooped in for another peck, nodding again and glancing down, watching himself slowly sink in passed Chris' rim. Chris groaned, the burning incredible and so potent he couldn't help but throw his head against the pillows, his legs winding tightly around Darren's waist.

Chris' back bowed the further Darren slid in, the walls of his muscles catching on Darren's bare skin until he was fully sheathed, his hipbones digging into the sensitive, fleshy part of his ass.

"You okay?" Darren double-checked, and Chris couldn't help but let out a shaky laugh.

"More than okay," he responded fondly, his palms smoothing over the contours of Darren's sinewy back, rounding around the muscle of his lower abdomen until caressing lightly where they were connected.

It was warm, slick and wet, and Chris could feel his asshole stretched and already sore around his rim, but each minute movement of Darren deep inside shot sparks of pleasure up his spine. Chris raked his fingers through the coarse hair at the base of Darren's cock, the backs of his nails scratching up his clenching abs before Chris slung his arms around Darren's neck, pulling him close.

"Make love to me," he begged, and Darren didn't need telling twice.

Darren fucked Chris nice and slow like each thrust was nothing short of meaningful. He angled his hips just right so the bed didn't creak; the majority of the movement just in their groins. Chris' cock dragged against his navel while Darren would pull out slowly before snapping roughly forward, his cock so deep that Chris could barely breathe, especially when gazed against his prostate.

Chris didn't know how long they lasted, because here in Darren's arms, with Darren inside him and connected to him in the closest way possible made time slow down and completely warp.

In their world nothing but them existed. Not East Clovis High where their story began or the Glee set where their story ended and began anew. Not alcohol, tarnished photographs, past regrets, or future endeavors. Not even Max Enrich, Mia Swier or Joey Richter.

It was just them.

## **Chapter Nineteen**

"You nervous?" Chris asked quietly, wiping his sweaty palms against his slacks. He could only make out the sliver of light that gave way to Darren's face, his eye crinkling up into big smile.

"No," Darren realized, taking a step toward Chris. "Not anymore."

Chris took his hand, twining their fingers together. "You sure you wanna go through with this?"

Darren brought Chris' hand up to his mouth and brushed his lips softly over them. "I'm more sure than ever. I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of hiding from who I really am. I just want to get everything out in the open and over with."

Chris' face scrunched up into a smile, his heart lifting, hardly believing that only a few months ago he and Darren were in such a terrible place. Now Darren was planning on coming out on national television in less than 10 minutes, and Chris was the one that was shaking with nerves.

"Now I'd like to welcome stars Chris Colfer and Darren Criss from Glee, who play the beloved characters Kurt Hummel and Blaine Anderson!"

The two of them walked out with big smiles and arms brushing, waving to the screaming crowd until they sat down in the cushy chairs, facing the host of the Today Show.

"So," she began once they settled. "You guys had your big kiss on last night's episode."

Chris nodded enthusiastically. "We did."

"Finally," Darren scoffed with a playful eye-roll.

"How was it?" she asked with a grin.

"Well," Chris began, but Darren cut in.

"It was fantastic," he enthused. "A really beautiful moment for both of those characters. It built up just enough to have everyone root for them, despite the fact that they are homosexual couple, which is not seen often on television. I am so thankful to be apart of all of this."

"A huge burden and a blessing at the same time," Chris supplemented. "The fans are really crazy about this couple."

The host started nodding, a huge smile stretching across her face, and that's when Chris knew it was coming.

"It has been reported that you two are very close on set," she began, her eyes shining with gossip. "Care to elaborate on your work relationship?"

"Well," Darren trailed off, fingers twitching on his leg. Chris almost expected Darren to grab his hand and hold it. "Chris is really a generous talent, such an honor to work with him. I haven't really had the chance to hang out with the rest of the cast yet, but hopefully in the future!"

"Darren and I like to tease each other," Chris offered carefully, avoiding any eye-contact with the members of the audience. He wanted Darren to take the step when he was ready, but a gentle nudge in that direction would probably be appreciated. "We like lots of the same things so we have plenty to talk about. Also I think people underestimate Darren, he's an amazing actor and he really doesn't get enough credit-"

"Chris."

Chris halted mid-ramble and turned to face Darren who had interrupted him. His expression was so soft and affectionate, it took a moment for Chris to collect himself. "What?"

"Let's just tell them."

Chris sucked in a quick breath, heart in his throat. "Okay."

"What is it?" The host wondered. A tense silence had fallen upon the room.

Darren took a deep breath. "We-"

It was as if time had slowed down. Darren bowed his head, his eyelashes fanned against his cheeks as he steeled himself. Chris reached out to squeeze his thigh for reassurance, to show that he was there. Then, after a long moment, Darren turned his palm up and twined their fingers together tightly from habit.

"We had a reason to come here," Darren announced, lifting his head and facing the audience head on, confident and vulnerable at the same time. "Chris and I would like to formally come out as a couple."

There was a beat before the room broke out in excited whispers and shocked gasps. However before Chris could even acknowledge more of the situation Darren grabbed his head and pulled him in for a wet kiss that seemed to reverberate around the room with finality.

"Wow," the host exclaimed, clapping her hands together. "Oh wow! Well, we have to go to commercial, but when we come back we have a lot to discuss with these two!"

The cameras went off air, and Darren sort of collapsed into Chris' side, his hands shaking. Chris held his shoulder steady and stroked his hair. There was commotion all around, but it all fell on Chris' ears as white noise. Nothing else mattered right now except for Darren.

"Are you okay," Chris whispered, kissing his temple.

Darren turned and pressed their lips together sweetly, visibly relaxing. "I am."

"You sure?" Chris had to double check. "This is huge."

"It is," Darren conceded, smiling slightly.

"I hope you're prepared for it," Chris warned. "This is only the beginning."

Darren stroked Chris' cheek, not caring who saw, his face suddenly serious. "I can do anything if I have you."

Chris' heart flipped in his chest, his stomach swarming with butterflies. He was so in love with this man, that he actually couldn't even collect himself as he normally did on TV before there was the signal that they'd be back on only in a minute or so.

Darren straightened up in his chair and dug into his pocket, pulling out something a bit crumpled, smoothing out the tips with his fingers. His heart felt warm as he gazed at the photograph. It was like closure. All the bad was behind them all, and now the bright future was ahead, and Darren couldn't wait to take it on. It only got better from here.

"We getting lunch with Mia and Joey afterward?" Chris giggled, bumping his shoulder into Darren's as the cameras turned on them, hands clasped.

"Yeah," Darren grinned. "I think they said they had something to tell us."