

Can't Take My Eyes Off You

by

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Cheerio!Kurt/Nerd!Blaine AU || NC-17

Blaine's been in love with Kurt since freshman year, problem is, Kurt's his best friend. He's managed to hide it for over three years but everything changes the moment Kurt vows to help him find someone to lose his virginity to.

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Chapter One

Blaine Anderson was twelve years old when his family had uprooted from Westerville and moved to Lima. His first day a Lima Middle had gone, well, less than perfect. He'd tripped on his way down the hall and had to suffer through the snorts and jeers from his new classmates as he struggled to his feet, blushing furiously and scurrying away to his next class, which he ended up being late for because he'd gotten lost.

It wasn't until lunch that his day finally turned around. He'd been sitting alone, picking at his packed lunch, head hung and shoulders slumped and resigning to the fact that he'd be just as alone here as he at been at his old school, when it had happened.

"What are you eating?"

Blaine looked up from his sandwich at the boy standing next to him, clutching his tray of food and smiling kindly. He had wide blue eyes, neatly combed-back brown hair, and was dressed smartly in a crisp blue shirt and pale gold bow tie.

"Oh, um...t-turkey," Blaine said, looking back at his food again.

"Can I sit with you?"

Blaine blinked in surprise and lifted his eyes to the boy again.

"O-oh...sure," Blaine said, moving his drink to the side to make room for the boy's tray.

"Thanks," he said, smiling brightly as he sat, laying his napkin across his lap and scooting his chair closer to the table. They ate in silence for a moment before the boy cleared his throat softly and Blaine looked up at him again.

"So, you just moved here, right?" he said as he cut his green beans into small bites.

"Yeah," Blaine mumbled, pushing his glasses up his nose. "Um...from Westerville."

"I'm Kurt," the boy said, holding his hand out to him. "Hummel."

Blaine looked down at his hand for a moment before taking it in his own and shaking it with a small smile.

"Blaine," he said, brightening a little. "Anderson."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Blaine Anderson," Kurt said happily.

Blaine grinned, feeling lighter than he had all day, and turned back to his lunch.

"Welcome to Lima, new kid!"

Blaine looked up at the shout, gasping as he was doused in cold milk by two burly eighth graders passing the table. They roared with laughter and walked off, high-fiving and leaving Blaine dripping and blinking milk out of his eyes, his glasses smeared over with the stuff.

"Sorry about that," Kurt sighed, pushing his own sopping food away and pulling out the kerchief in his pocket. "They do that to all the new people. They *still* do it to me, actually." He smiled sympathetically. "Here, let me help."

He pulled Blaine's glasses off and wiped them dry, lips pursed as Blaine shook milk out of his eyes, shivering as liquid tricked down the back of his neck and spine. Kurt set Blaine's glasses down on the table and scooted closer to him, lifting his kerchief with a questioning look.

Blaine nodded slightly and allowed Kurt to pat his face dry, though his shirt was still soaking wet and he could feel that it had gotten in his hair as well.

"Thanks," he said, ducking his head and smiling when Kurt had finished.

"No problem," Kurt said, setting his kerchief down and holding up Blaine's glasses. He paused before putting them on, cocking his head to the side. "You have nice eyes."

Blaine blushed and accepted his glasses back. "Thanks," he mumbled, placing them back on his face.

"Come on," Kurt said, pushing his chair back and standing up. "The second floor bathroom is the best place to clear up. I've got an extra shirt in my locker for emergencies like this that you can borrow, too."

"Really?" Blaine said in disbelief. "I mean...you're not worried that people will make fun of you for helping me? No one likes the new kid."

"Oh who cares what they think anyway?" Kurt said, glaring at the boys who'd thrown the milk at Blaine. "They're idiots. And *I* like the new kid so there." He nodded with an air of finality.

Blaine grinned and stood, abandoning his soggy food and following Kurt out of the cafeteria. They'd been best friends ever since.

They'd changed over the years, of course, but they'd grown even closer in spite of it. They stuck with one another through everything. Halfway through eighth grade, Kurt had come out and for a long time, Blaine was one of the only friends he had left. He'd stood up to countless bullies, taunts and jeers that had left him trying to comfort a puffy-eyed, red-nosed Kurt in the second floor bathroom.

Then they'd started high school and Blaine had come to an awful realisation. He was gay. Well, that wasn't the bad part. The bad part was that he was in love with Kurt.

It was in freshman year that he realised it, back when he and Kurt were still both outcasts, and at first he thought he might have a shot if he ever worked up the courage to tell Kurt how he'd felt.

But then Sophomore year had begun and Kurt had joined the Cheerios, the McKinley cheer team, and everything changed. He grew taller, leaner, started hanging out with the rest of the Cheerios and the football team and quickly risen up the social ladder.

Blaine had watched him turn from relatively shy and reserved, talking openly only with his closest friends since he'd come out, to a loud extrovert, always at the center of a crowd of chattering Cheerios or laughing students in his group.

One thing *did* stay the same over the years though, their friendship. Even when Kurt started dating in junior year and Blaine joined Glee Club, they still spent as much time together as possible. They still walked to class together, when Kurt's current boyfriend wasn't insisting on jamming himself between them, still studied after school together, still spent every Friday night watching movies in Kurt's basement, though Kurt's new step-brother, Finn, had become an institution in the ritual.

He'd thought it would be difficult, hiding the fact that he was in love with Kurt when he'd first realised it, but three years had given him plenty of time to learn how to act indifferent whenever Kurt talked about other boys, and lately, chattered on and on about his current boyfriend, Jason, who was, of course, center forward for the Titans' soccer team and one of the most popular students at McKinley. It was natural that Kurt, as co-Captain of the Cheerios, should date someone like him. Tall, muscled, wavy blonde hair and dark blue eyes that had half the girls in the school swooning over him.

And then there was Blaine, quiet and reserved, sticking to his books and Glee Club. In fact, if not for Kurt, he probably wouldn't have any semblance of a life outside of school. Though, lately, their evenings together watching movies and simply talking for hours on the phone were marred by Jason, who either ended up joining them, in which case Blaine was forced to sit silently through a movie while the two of

them made-out on the couch next to him—listening to Kurt make the most wonderful noises, tiny whimpers and breathy sighs—or he'd interrupt like he had tonight and pull Kurt away from Blaine.

And now it was senior year and Blaine had all but lost any chance of ever telling Kurt how he felt about him. He'd made himself a promise though when the year had started. Even if it took him until graduation to do it, he was going to tell Kurt that he was in love with him. Worse case scenario, of course, would be that Kurt wouldn't feel the same way, but at least then Blaine could go away to college and live in peace and, hopefully, forget about his feelings for him.

At least then he wouldn't have to spend hours listening to Kurt talk in depth about every experience he had with his various boyfriends, from his first kiss to the first time he had sex and everything in between, leaving Blaine with unbelievably vivid images of Kurt, sweaty and panting and whimpering desperately, something he knew he'd never be able to get out of his mind or, even worse, experience for himself.

But for now, he was content with what they were now, simply best friends despite how different their cliques at school were. It was good enough for Blaine just spending time with Kurt, sharing their evenings, like this one, plopped on Blaine's bed and studying.

Well, Blaine was attempting to tutor Kurt while Kurt tapped out texts to Jason on his cell phone, giggling every few minutes and sighing happily.

Blaine cleared his throat softly to try and get Kurt's attention, drumming his fingers on the page of his Calculus textbook.

"Kurt."

Kurt grinned at his phone, thumbs racing over the screen and eyes darting back and forth.

"Kurt."

Kurt laughed softly, brushing his hair back off his face.

"KURT!"

"Huh?" Kurt looked up from his cell phone with a mildly surprised look.

Blaine sighed and fixed his glasses, pursing his lips as Kurt slipped his phone into his pocket with a guilty look.

"Sorry," he mumbled with a small shrug.

"What did we agree on?" Blaine said.

"No cell phones when we're working," Kurt droned, rolling his eyes. "Sorry. Jason was texting me."

"Of course he was," Blaine grumbled under his breath. He cleared his throat. "Just...can you put it away? We need you to pass this test or you won't be able to stay on the Cheerios."

Kurt sighed heavily and flopped back on Blaine's bed. "Fine," he groaned, pouting. "I *hate* Calculus."

"I've heard," Blaine said, smiling faintly. "But you need to get a 'B' so let's just get back to studying, okay?"

"How can you even concentrate on this stuff?" Kurt said, rolling onto his stomach and kicking his legs. "It's so *boring*."

"I like it," Blaine said, shrugging.

"Well, I guess I'm lucky you're my best friend then, huh?" Kurt said, nudging his arm lightly with his toe and smiling.

"Yeah," Blaine said with a nod.

Kurt snorted and flipped back onto his back again, stretching out on the bed. He groaned quietly and closed his eyes as he reached his arms over his head and arched his back slightly, his red and white uniform top riding up his torso and revealing his jutting hipbones and a wide strip of his stomach.

Blaine swallowed dryly as his eyes found the pale skin. God, he was beautiful. He shifted nervously and rubbed his suddenly sweaty palms on his slacks, pushing his glasses up his nose and trying to return his focus to his book.

"R-right so...um, we really need to get through chapter four."

Kurt groaned. "Fine," he grumbled. "Give me a problem."

"Alright," Blaine said, flicking through the pages, "so, five over x to the one-half plus x to the one-third—"

"What are you doing for Homecoming?" Kurt said loudly.

"What?" Blaine said, looking up from his book and cocking his head to the side.

"Homecoming," Kurt said eagerly. "It's two weeks away. Any plans? Ooo, any *dates*?"

Blaine snorted, blushing faintly and pushing his glasses up his nose as he cleared his throat. "Er, no," he mumbled. "No...no dates."

"Hmm," Kurt said, pursing his lips. "We really need to find one for you."

"I really don't care," Blaine said with a small shrug. "I was just going to hang out at the house or something."

"No!" Kurt said, looking appalled at the very thought. "You can't skip our last Homecoming!"

"Why not?" Blaine said, cocking an eyebrow.

"Because it's *Homecoming*," Kurt said, rolling his eyes and propping his chin up on his fist. "You know you don't have to go with a date, even. You can come with me and Jace."

Blaine forced a small smile.

"I don't want to get in the way," he said. Honestly, he really just didn't want to spend the night having to watch Jason being all over Kurt in a dark corner of the gymnasium while he sat at a table by himself and sipped punch for two hours.

"Oh, you won't get in the way, stupid," Kurt said, smacking him lightly on the arm. "I want to hang out with you. It's our last Homecoming together."

He smiled, the corners of his eyes crinkling up, something that always made Blaine melt a little inside, one corner of his mouth turning up in a dreamy smile.

"Well...alright," he said reluctantly. "If you want me to."

Kurt beamed and Blaine's stomach squirmed happily. Who was he kidding? He'd do anything to make Kurt smile like that.

Kurt's phone buzzed loudly in his pocket and Blaine stiffened. It buzzed again after a few seconds and he could almost hear Kurt squirming.

"Just answer it," Blaine mumbled.

"Sorry," Kurt said apologetically, sliding off the bed as he pulled out his phone. "Hey, babe," he said happily into the mouthpiece. "Huh?...No, I'm studying with Blaine."

Blaine snapped the book shut moodily, watching Kurt out of the corner of his eye.

"Breadstix?" Kurt said. Blaine looked away quickly as Kurt glanced at him. "Well...I've really got to finish my history paper and study for the test on Friday...yeah...*Jason*." Kurt giggled and Blaine scowled. "Jason I can't I have to study...unless I can bring Blaine and his amazing Calculus abilities along." He grinned and winked at Blaine from across the room. Blaine smiled tightly back. "Yeah?...Jason!" Kurt's eyes widened and Blaine saw a faint blush darken his cheeks as he lowered his voice. "Jason, Blaine's right here... Yeah? Well, maybe if you're good I'll think about it." He smirked, biting his lower lip and Blaine couldn't stop himself from sighing at the sight of him.

"I can't, Jason," Kurt said with a small sigh. "I promised Blaine I'd study tonight...well, you know I want to, babe, but I told Blaine I'd hang out with him."

Blaine lowered his head, picking at the corner of his book. He'd been feeling more and more like a burden to Kurt ever since he and Jason had started dating that summer. He hated watching Kurt falling in love with someone else, but he hated the thought that he might be bothering him even more.

"Just go," he said, standing up and tossing his book onto his bed.

Kurt blinked and looked up at him.

"Jason?" he said, "Babe, hold on for a second, okay?" he covered the mouthpiece and lowered the phone from his ear. "What's wrong, Blaine?"

"Just go," Blaine repeated, straightening a few things on his desk, though he wasn't really paying attention to what he was doing. "I know you want to."

"Blaine," Kurt said gently, taking a few steps towards him.

"Don't worry about it," Blaine said in a falsely cheery voice. "It's fine. We'll...we'll study tomorrow."

"Are you sure?" Kurt said anxiously.

"I'm sure," Blaine said, smiling.

Kurt beamed and held the phone to his ear again. "Jason?...Yeah...yeah, I'm coming over... Mhmm. We'll study tomorrow, Blaine says... Alright... See you in a few." He blushed at something Jason said, ducking his head and touching his arm absently. "I love you too." Blaine bit his tongue hard and swallowed back the lump growing in his throat. "Ok...bye."

Kurt flipped off his phone, sighing dreamily as he tucked it into his pocket. He tugged on his coat and turned back to Blaine.

"You're sure you don't mind postponing?" he said guiltily.

"I'm sure," Blaine said, nodding.

"You really are the best," Kurt said fondly, kissing him on the cheek. He paused, face falling slightly. "What's wrong?"

"What do you mean?" Blaine mumbled.

"Well, you've just been acting...off," Kurt said, chewing his lower lip, "ever since Jace and I started dating."

"That's not true," Blaine said, scuffing his toe against the ground.

"Yes it is," Kurt said, laying a hand on Blaine's shoulder. "Blaine—"

"I'm fine," Blaine said. "Really."

"Are you *sure*?" Kurt said, biting his lip and tilting his head to the side.

"Fine," Blaine said, nodding. "Go on. I'll see you at school tomorrow."

"Okay," Kurt said, giving him a quick hug. Blaine closed his eyes and breathed in slowly, shivering at the sweet smell of him. And then he was pulling away and grabbing his books from the bed. "Bye!"

"B-bye," Blaine said, gripping the edge of the desk. He heard Kurt's footsteps on the stairs and closed his bedroom door before flopping face-down onto his bed, groaning at the scent of Kurt still lingering there.

He fisted his hands in the blankets and scowled against the pillow. Who was he kidding, thinking he had any sort of a chance with Kurt? Kurt was a cheerleader and he was in the Glee Club. There was no way Kurt would ever consider dating him when he had someone like *Jason*.

It took a moment for him to realise that the pillowcase was wet with tears and he rolled over and glared at the ceiling. He hated feeling like this about Kurt. He shouldn't be having these feelings about his best friend. Kurt was wonderful and gorgeous and sweet and so much more than Blaine deserved.

Chapter Two

Blaine smiled softly at the pictures hanging in his locker, the ones of him and Kurt from over the summer, a strip of black and white photos from the booth at the mall they'd taken during one of their many trips together, just walking around, Kurt stealing sips from Blaine's banana milkshake every now and then and Blaine casting him lovestruck looks when he was pointing something out or commenting on someone's outfit.

The third one was his favourite, where Kurt had been in the middle of laughing at something Blaine had said, head resting against Blaine's shoulder, eyes crinkled up at the corners as Blaine watched him with a fond look.

He glanced at the mirror hanging under the pictures, scrutinizing his own reflection, his thick-rimmed glasses and heavily gelled hair, the dark blue bow tie done up neatly around the collar of his crisp shirt, which was tucked into the waistband of his khakis.

He screwed up his face, adjusting his glasses and looking back up at the pictures of him and Kurt again, at how incredibly different the two of them really were.

"Sorry about last night."

Blaine's heart fluttered as he closed his locker with a soft snap, smiling at Kurt, who was leaning up against the wall of lockers next to him, books tucked against his chest and head lowered so he was looking up at Blaine through his lashes with the familiar apologetic expression he always wore when he broke their plans like this.

"It's fine," Blaine said, shrugging. "Did, um...did you and Jason have fun?"

Kurt blushed faintly, grinning and playing with the hem of his uniform top.

"Oh," Blaine said, heart sinking. "Right...so...we're still studying together tonight, right?"

"Of course," Kurt said cheerily, linking their arms together as they walked down the hall. "I promise I'll be a good student tonight. If you think you can teach me anything, that is." He laughed and Blaine leaned a little closer to him, feeling his stomach flipflop pleasantly at the sound of his laughter.

He was suddenly jostled to the side and pushed away from Kurt as a pair of arms wrapped around Kurt from behind and picked him up, spinning him around as Kurt yelped and giggled.

"Jason!" he squealed, squirming as Blaine stumbled a little, straightening up and fixing his glasses as he narrowed his eyes at the tall boy currently kissing the back of Kurt's neck. He lowered Kurt onto the floor and Kurt turned in his arms and fisted his hands in his letterman jacket, pulling him down into a slow kiss.

Blaine scowled at his shoes as Kurt draped his arms around Jason's neck and sighed happily. They broke apart with a loud, wet smack ten seconds later and Blaine resisted rolling his eyes as they rubbed their noses together.

"Hey, babe," Jason said, one arm wrapped around Kurt's waist.

"Hey," Kurt said, playfully tweaking his jacket zipper. "How was your English test?"

"Eh." Jason shrugged. "It went alright, I guess. But I was too busy thinking about you to concentrate."

Blaine gagged a little.

"Aw," Kurt cooed, blushing. "You're sweet."

"So," Jason said, lowering his voice, though Blaine could still hear him. "I've got a free period and you've got study hall...wanna come with me to the building behind the bleachers?"

"Smooth," Blaine mumbled, rolling his eyes.

"Oh," Kurt said, eyes widening slightly. "S-sure."

Blaine's jaw dropped in disbelief. He wanted to grab Kurt and shake him for falling for such an idiot. Why did he even *like* Jason? They'd barely known each other when they'd gotten together. He probably didn't know about the time Kurt had gotten the flu in ninth grade and Blaine had spent every evening at his house for a week, feeding him soup and holding a cool cloth to his forehead while they watched musicals together.

Or about the time during Sophomore year when Kurt had first tried out for the Cheerios and Blaine had talked to him on the phone until two in the morning trying to help calm his fears that he wouldn't make the cut, celebrating the following day when Kurt's name *was* on the list by taking Kurt to movie, though Kurt had ended up falling asleep against Blaine's shoulder halfway through, exhausted from talking the night before.

Blaine was the one who knew Kurt inside and out, not Jason.

"See you later, Blaine," Kurt said in a rush as Jason grabbed his hand and dragged him off down the hall.

Blaine tried not to think about the idea of Kurt stretched out in the back of the dirty shed by the football field, sweaty and groaning, head thrown back and lips parted. He shifted his books in his arms as he made his way to class, shoulders slumped and head hung.

"So how's Glee Club going?"

"Fine," Blaine mumbled, not looking up from the textbook lying open in his lap.

"You have Sectionals the week after Homecoming, right?"

"Mhmm."

"I'm going to come this year, I promise," Kurt said earnestly.

"Okay," Blaine said, though he didn't want to get his hopes up again; Kurt had promised to make every one of his competitions since he'd joined the Glee Club freshman year but hadn't attended a single one yet, always having something come up at home or with the Cheerios or whatever boyfriend he was with at the time.

Kurt set down his phone and sat up as he slid over the bed towards him, laying his hand over the page so that Blaine was forced to look up at him.

"What's wrong?" he said, grinning.

"Nothing," Blaine said shortly, pushing his hand away.

Kurt's face fell.

"Is this because I was texting again?" he said guiltily.

"No."

"Is it because you don't have a date for Homecoming?"

"No."

"Blaine."

"There's nothing wrong, Kurt," Blaine said sharply.

"Hey," Kurt said gently, sitting up and moving closer to him. "What's wrong? Really, Blaine."

Blaine sighed and rubbed his eyes under his glasses.

"I'm just tired, I guess," he said, shrugging.

Kurt huffed and reached up to gently pull off his glasses, folding them and setting them on his bedside table.

"You need to stop worrying about school so much," he said, moving to sit behind him. "You need to relax and loosen up. Let your hair out of the gel every now and then, you know?"

Blaine laughed softly as Kurt's fingernails scraped over the nape of his neck along the soft hair where the gel wasn't quite so thick. He stiffened when Kurt's hands settled on his shoulders and started kneading the tense muscle.

"Wh-what are you doing?" he stammered.

"Rubbing your shoulders, silly," Kurt said, breath tickling over Blaine's ear. "How else are we going to relieve your tension. It's not like we can have sex." He laughed at the idea and Blaine forced himself to join in, biting back a groan as Kurt's thumbs pressed into the dip behind his shoulder blades.

Kurt continued for a few minutes until Blaine's shoulders felt loose and pliant and he was slumped forward in his seat, smiling complacently.

"Alright," Kurt said, patting his back. "Lie down."

"What?" Blaine said, sitting up straight and waking up from his half-drowse instantly.

"On your stomach," Kurt said firmly. "I need to do your back."

"N-no, that's okay," Blaine said anxiously, shifting his hands over his lap and praying that Kurt didn't see the slight bulge there.

"Blaine," Kurt said with a dead-panned look. "Lie down."

Blaine swallowed thickly and complied, lying down on his stomach, arms crossed and head resting on them over Kurt's pillows, the smell of Kurt soaked through the soft fabric. He suppressed a whimper as Kurt straddled the top of his thighs and slid his hands down his back.

"You're so *tense*," Kurt said as he worked at the muscles in Blaine's back with his fingers. "No wonder you're uptight all the time."

Blaine frowned, opening one eye to peer at him. "I'm not uptight," he said.

Kurt snorted. "Yeah, okay," he said, rolling his eyes.

"I'm not!" Blaine said, "I let you take me to parties and stuff all the time."

"Where you always end up sitting in the corner by yourself," Kurt retorted.

"Well that's only because you're too busy sucking Jason's face off to pay attention to me," Blaine muttered bitterly.

Kurt seemed to take it as a joke and smacked the back of his head.

"Hey!" Blaine said, rubbing his head and grimacing at the stiffness of his hair beneath the gel.

"That's what you get for being jealous," Kurt said with a sniff.

"J-jealous?" Blaine said nervously. "Who's jealous? What are you talking about?"

"You're jealous that I have a boyfriend and you don't," Kurt said, grinning and rubbing circles into the small of Blaine's back with his thumbs. "You know, if you actually *talked* to guys, you'd find one. You're a hottie, Blaine."

It was Blaine's turn to snort now as he shook his head and rolled his eyes.

"You are!" Kurt insisted, leaning forward to work at Blaine's neck. "If you just got rid of the glasses and the gel and dressed a little bit less like a grandpa you'd be gorgeous. I'd totally tap that."

Blaine forced himself to laugh, though he suddenly had the urge to break all his glasses and flush his hair gel down the toilet.

"Mmm, feeling better?" Kurt said after another minute of rubbing his back.

"A little," Blaine said with a shrug, though he'd been trying to focus on not getting an erection for the past fifteen minutes.

Kurt sighed sympathetically and Blaine bit his tongue hard to keep from moaning as Kurt's hands slid up under the back of his shirt, warm and soft across his skin.

"Jesus, Blaine," Kurt mumbled. "You must be in pain all the time."

Blaine gave a choked reply, unable to think of anything coherent to say as a constant stream of '*don't get a boner*' was running through his head. He couldn't take Kurt touching him like this, fingers pressing into his back and palms skimming over his skin. Kurt hit a particularly sensitive spot and a soft groan escaped his lips before he could stop it.

"Oh, there's the spot," Kurt said with a grin, immediately focusing on that area.

Blaine's toes curled and a cold sweat broke out across his forehead. His erection was straining at his zipper now, he'd given up completely on trying to stop it now that Kurt was massaging the tender spot at the base of his spine, humming quietly above him, his warm weight pressing down on his thighs.

"We really need to get you laid," Kurt said conversationally.

"What?" Blaine yelped, eyes snapping open.

"Yeah," Kurt said enthusiastically. "If you get laid, you'll be so much happier. Less stressed and all that. Just look at me. I feel great and Jace and I have sex all the time."

Blaine scowled briefly but forced himself to answer. "Well, m-maybe I don't want a boyfriend right now," he said.

"Who said anything about a boyfriend?" Kurt said with a light laugh. "I just said I wanted to get you laid. You don't have to be dating the guy."

"Oh," Blaine said, blushing. "W-well...I-I really want to wait, you know? For the right guy to come along." *You.* "So...yeah."

"Aw," Kurt said with a fond smile. "You're so cute, Blaine."

Blaine frowned as Kurt slid off his back at last and stretched out beside him with a yawn. He didn't *want* to be 'cute', he wanted Kurt to think he was sexy, to make those dreamy sighs over him like he made over

Jason, to touch him like he just had but everywhere and with a lot less clothing between them. Okay, well, the last part he was willing to put off.

Most of all, though...he just wanted to kiss Kurt. He wanted to cup his face in his hands and kiss him slowly under the moonlight and brush his hair back out of his face until he nuzzled into his hand like he'd seen him do with Jason countless times before.

"So," he said, rolling onto his side when he'd calmed himself down. "What...what sort of thing should I wear? To...to get g-guys, I mean? Like, um...what do *you* like in a guy?"

"Oh, you know," Kurt said, shrugging, "the usual. Tall, dark, and handsome." He laughed. "I dunno...I like guys who make me laugh and are sure of themselves. And they can't be completely stupid. Yeah, I know, Jace is no Blaine Anderson but he's in AP Calc with us and he gets A's and B's."

"Uhuh," Blaine said, nodding and hoping he didn't sound too eager for more information. "Wh-what else?"

Kurt smiled, a faraway look coming over his face. "Well...when Jace and I first started dating, he was always really sweet and held my hand and asked to kiss me and that sort of thing. He was so romantic."

"He's not anymore?" Blaine dug casually.

Kurt's smile fell slightly. "Well, no, he is...sometimes. I mean, we're more comfortable with each other now so I don't expect him to get me flowers and do that sort of thing anymore, you know?"

"I'd get you flowers every day," Blaine said quietly.

Kurt turned to him with a taken aback look. He smiled faintly, looking touched.

"Well, then I envy the boy that snatches you up," he said. "He'll be one lucky guy."

Blaine forced a small smile in reply. They were so close, barely a foot apart on the bed, side-by-side and he couldn't do the one thing he wanted to the most, simply reach out and touch him, brush his fingers over his cheek and through his hair, kiss him until neither of them could breathe anymore.

"Blaine?"

"Hmm?"

"Can I ask you something?" Kurt said anxiously.

"Anything," Blaine said with a reassuring smile.

"You like Jason, right?"

"I-what?"

Kurt shifted, propping himself up on his elbow and resting his chin on his hand. "It's just that, sometimes, it seems like me being with him bothers you," he said, biting his lip. "I want you two to get along. You're my best friend, Blaine, and he's my boyfriend. I don't want the two of you hating each other."

"Does he hate me?" Blaine said.

"Well...no," Kurt said with a faint frown. "I think he's more...I don't know, indifferent? He said he doesn't mind you."

"Well...I don't mind him then," Blaine lied, shrugging. Truth be told, Jason actually *was* a decent guy, though Blaine thought that that was what annoyed him the most about him. It made it so much more difficult to hate him for being with Kurt.

"Come on, Blaine," Kurt said, trailing his fingers down Blaine's arms with a small pout. "You can be honest with me. Why don't you like him?"

"I didn't say I didn't like him," Blaine grumbled.

"Blaine."

"It's nothing, Kurt."

"*Blaine.*"

"He's taking you away from me," Blaine blurted.

Kurt blinked. "What? What do you mean?"

"I barely see you anymore without him texting you or calling you or..." he sighed and flipped onto his back, staring at the ceiling. "I just feel like you don't want to spend time with me anymore. Like I'm just a burden and that you'd rather be with him than me. And-and I'm your best friend, Kurt. I don't want to feel like a burden or for you to feel like you *have* to hang out with me and-" he cut himself off at the look on Kurt's face, his wide eyes and lips parted in surprise. He looked horrified.

"I'm sorry, I'm just being stupid," Blaine said hastily, sitting up and sliding to sit on the edge of the bed.

"No you're not!" Kurt said, moving to sit behind him. "Blaine...I had no idea you felt that way." He rested his chin on Blaine's shoulder and Blaine could feel his warm breath on his cheek, his skin tightening up and tingling as a shiver ran down his spine and he turned to look at him, their faces only a few inches apart.

"I'm sorry," Kurt said with a crestfallen look. "I don't think you're a burden at all. I love spending time with you, Blaine. I love spending time with both of you." His face brightened. "We could always try hanging out together! Outside of when he's there for movie night, I mean."

"Hmm..." Blaine didn't respond beyond the small hum of acknowledgment.

"No?" Kurt said, lower lip sticking out with disappointment. "Worth a shot I guess."

Blaine smiled, softening at his expression.

"I've got an idea," Kurt said, pulling away from him and sitting back on the mattress, Blaine immediately missing his warmth.

"What's that?" Blaine said, turning on the bed to face him again.

"You and Jace don't get along all that well and I don't think just the three of us hanging out will work," Kurt began, preening himself absently as he picked lint off his uniform top. "But maybe it will work better if there were *four* of us."

"What do you mean?" Blaine said, brow furrowing in curiosity.

"A double date," Kurt said with a bright smile, crossing his legs primly. "You, me, Jace, and...I dunno, we'll find someone...but wouldn't that be fun? We could all go out to dinner together!"

Blaine, for multiple reasons, hated the idea, but how was he supposed to turn Kurt down when he looked so expectantly excited, eyes bright and hopeful, such a gorgeous shade of blue-grey shot with gold that Blaine thought he could happily get lost in them for days.

"Alright," he said, smiling reluctantly. "Anything you want. But you'll have to help me, I'm-er-I'm not really good at that sort of thing." He cleared his throat, straightening his glasses distractedly.

Kurt beamed. "I'll take care of everything," he said, clapping his hands together and letting out a tiny sound of enthusiasm even as Blaine felt his heart sink a little lower in his chest.

Chapter Three

Blaine doodled absently on the corner of his page, drawing a small heart with the initials K.H. curling around each other at the center, small enough that no one else could read it. Sighing, he traced the letters with his pencil a few times, resting his chin on his fist and tapping his foot absently against the leg of his chair.

His eyes flicked over to Kurt, who was sitting two seats away down the row from him, staring blankly at the chalkboard, eyes glazed and out of focus. Blaine smiled fondly at the sight of him, the way his head cocked to the side slightly, his plump pink lips parted as he gazed vacantly ahead, obviously not taking in a word of the lecture. He rarely did, which was why Blaine so often had to tutor him.

"You're the only one I can learn Calculus from, Blaine," Kurt had said when he was pleading Blaine to tutor him. *"I'll fail if you don't help me and if I fail I'll be off the squad!"*

He'd pouted, looking up at Blaine through his pale eyelashes and biting his lip. Blaine had never been able to resist giving into him when he gave him that look, which always made him feel exceptionally warm on the inside, spreading out from his belly to the tips of his fingers.

He sighed dreamily, chin resting on his fist as he looked over at Kurt, admiring the long line of his neck and the way a single strand of hair fell over his forehead when it started to come loose from its impeccable style.

His heart ached in his chest and he forced himself to look away, turning back to his book and jotting down the problem being worked out on the board, finishing it off himself quickly before continuing with his doodle, adding a +B.A. under Kurt's initial and scowling as he scribbled it out. He really needed to stop acting like a lovesick child all the time.

"Blaine...Blaine!"

Blaine looked up from his notes and glanced at Kurt. He gave him an inquisitive look and Kurt held up a slip of paper, which he passed to the girl sitting between them. She sighed and gave the note to Blaine, who opened it with a small smile.

So I was thinking about the double date idea I had. What about Greg Tanner? He's pretty hot and he's bi. What do you think? He's on the soccer team, too, so we could totally go on a double date!

Blaine spared another glance to look at Kurt, who was wriggling his fingers and winking at Jason, who was three seats away towards the front of the room. He mouthed 'I love you' and Jason mouthed it back before his eyes darkened slightly and Blaine could clearly make out the words 'I'm fucking you tonight' on his lips. Blaine's gaze snapped to Kurt, who, to his dismay, grinned and gave him a sultry look, running one finger over his bottom lip before sucking the tip of it into his mouth. He winked at Jason before looking back at his notes again, smirking faintly.

Blaine glared over at Jason, turning away quickly when he saw Jason watching him, eyes narrowed slightly. He cleared his throat, blushing a little as he bent over the note to scribble a reply to Kurt.

Greg is still going on and off with Paula. I'm not about to get attached to someone who's going to dump in me two days when Paula wants him back. Plus he's an idiot.

He passed the note back towards Kurt, tapping his pencil off the desk as he waited and trying not to stare at Kurt, though he found his eyes wandering over to him every now and then. He smiled when Kurt finished writing and looked over at him, slipping the note to the girl between them.

Well, Jason thinks him and Paula are through for good from what he said earlier. And he likes shorter guys. I think he'd like you. And I know he's not picky about who he sleeps with so we can get you laid, too. Kill two birds with one stone, haha. Unless you were serious about the whole 'waiting for the right guy' thing.

Blaine scowled at Jason's name as he wrote out his reply.

I was serious. I don't want to just give up my virginity to someone I barely know.

He passed the note back, glaring briefly at Jason. Glancing over at Kurt, he saw the sympathetic look pass over his features. The teacher turned her back on the class as she wrote something on the board, continuing with the lecture obliviously.

Kurt slid the paper back towards Blaine and Blaine scanned it quickly.

Blaine, you realise it's not that big of a deal. It's just sex.

Blaine blushed as he wrote out his reply and passed it back.

It is to me.

He glanced over at Kurt to see him smile fondly at his words as he scribbled out a reply, which he passed to the girl between them, who sighed with an annoyed look and thrust it towards Blaine.

"Ms. Matthews, did you and Mr. Anderson have something to share?"

Blaine stiffened their teacher's, Mrs. Danes, words as she gave them an expectant look, the rest of the class turning in their seats to face them.

"You know the rules, Mr. Anderson," she said sternly. "Pass notes in my class, you can read them out loud."

Blaine swallowed, eyes widening in horror, well aware of the twenty-some pairs of eyes suddenly on him.

"M-ma'am, please--"

"You know the rules," Danes said, cutting over him.

Blaine half glanced at Kurt as he unfolded the letter with trembling fingers. He scanned it quickly, whimpering at what Kurt had written and glancing pleadingly at Danes, who gave him an unyielding look. He swallowed hard and read, his voice shaking and nearly sticking in his throat.

"You're just too sweet for your own g-good," he said, the paper shaking slightly in his hand. "I guess it doesn't really matter if you're a...a v-virgin, though. Let's f-focus on getting you your...your first k-kiss first."

The room was dead silent as he set the paper down on his desk, a high-pitched whine loud in his ears. He refused to look at Kurt, though he could see his wide eyes and apologetic look in his peripheral vision. Heat crawled uncomfortably up the back of his neck and suddenly felt trapped, desperate to sink into the floor away from the soft titters slowly cutting the silence.

Danes cleared her throat, the tips of her ears slightly pink as she shuffled the papers on her desk. "W-well, Ms. Matthews, Mr. Anderson, you know the rules. Detention."

"It wasn't *me*!" the girl said angrily. "It was *them*!" She gestured to Blaine and Kurt and Blaine heard Kurt mutter '*bitch*'.

"Fine then," Danes said brusquely, regaining her strict demeanor. "Detention for all three of you. After school this evening."

"But, ma'am, I have Cheerios practice," Kurt said, obviously suppressing a grin when Danes' face paled slightly. They all knew that no teacher in their right mind would try and keep Sue Sylvester's Captain from a practice.

"Very well, Hummel," she said with a stiff nod. "You're excused. But I expect you to make up the detention next week."

"Of course, ma'am," Kurt said with a winning smiling that barely concealed a smirk. Blaine knew he would manage to get out of the detention one way or another. Kurt practically had the entire staff wrapped around his finger thanks to Coach Sylvester.

The girl tried to protest too but Danes silenced her with a stern look as Blaine sank down in his seat. There was painful, constricting lump in his throat and his eyes started to prickle at the corners.

Oh, christ, don't cry, he pleaded, blinking hard and swiveling his eyes around to try and find something to distract him, though his gaze fell on Jason, who was narrowing his eyes in his direction again.

Blaine hurried to lower his head and focus on his book, though he didn't take in another word of the lecture, trying simply to ignore the eyes flicking back to him for the remainder of the class.

When the bell rang, Blaine hurried to scoop up his books and rush from the room, staring at the floor and avoiding his classmates' eyes. He ran to the nearest bathroom before Kurt could catch him, locking the door behind him after checking it was empty and slumping down against the wall onto the floor, tears burning his eyes.

He took off his glasses and rested his forehead on his knees, breathing slowly through his nose to try and calm himself down.

It couldn't really have been a shock to his classmates that he was a virgin, but for it to be revealed to the entire school—because he *knew* it would spread, things like this always did at McKinley—that he'd never even been kissed? He'd never been so humiliated in his life. And that included the time Karofsky and Azimio had shoved him into his own locker and left him there for all of sixth period one day after gym.

And Kurt. Kurt was going to be apologising every ten minutes for it because he felt *sorry* for Blaine for not having the same experiences he'd had. He felt like a child, naive and hopeless and so desperate for Kurt to notice him, to feel even some shred of what he felt for him that he would do anything. Instead, he felt like he was moving further and further away from the possibility of that ever happening.

He squeezed his eyes shut and blinked a few times to clear them. Wiping his glasses on his cardigan, he gathered up his books again, checking his reflection briefly in the mirror to make sure he didn't show any evidence of his distress before unlocking the door and stepping back into the hall again.

Someone cat-called loudly the moment he was in the hall.

"Hey, Anderson, I'll kiss you if you want."

"Why don't you just ask Hummel for a three-way?"

Blaine blushed scarlet, lowering his head as he walked down the hall, which had suddenly become a gauntlet of whispers and laughter and insults.

"Hey, Blaine–"

"Shut your damn mouth, Gallagher!"

Blaine whipped his head around to see Kurt shouting at the boy who'd called out, back ramrod straight and expression twisted in disgust.

"Like you're one to talk when we all know Amanda wouldn't let you past first base!"

The boy blushed as his friends roared with laughter and continued in the opposite direction, Kurt striding in towards Blaine with a dignified sniff, chin lifted in the air.

"I'm sorry," he muttered when he reached Blaine. "I didn't think–"

"Don't worry about it," Blaine said, shrugging and staring at his books. "Everyone was bound to find out sooner or later."

Kurt face softened with sympathy. "Just ignore them, Blaine," he said gently. "It doesn't matter what they think."

"Right," Blaine mumbled as someone jeered in his direction.

"Listen," Kurt said with a small sigh, taking his arm and pulling him into a deserted alcove. "I know I brought it up last night but it...it's not a big deal really. Sex I mean."

"Yes it is," Blaine grumbled, frowning at his knees. He tugged at the hem of his cardigan. "And look at me, Kurt. I dress like an idiot."

"No, you don't," Kurt said sternly.

"I do," Blaine insisted. "No one in their right mind would date me, much less have sex with me. You said it yourself. I dress like a freaking grandpa."

"I love the way you dress," Kurt said firmly, still lightly gripping Blaine's arm. "You know I was just playing around with you. Maybe it's not a very...conventional wardrobe, but we can always tweak it. Make it more modern, if you'd like?"

Blaine hung his head.

"Blaine," Kurt began gently. "You're an amazing guy. You're funny and sweet and so smart and absolutely adorable. Any guy would be lucky to have you."

Blaine blushed, trying not to look too pleased as he pushed his glasses back up his nose.

"And you know what?" Kurt said firmly.

"What?" Blaine said, glancing up at him and catching a familiar look of determination on his features.

"You don't think anyone would want to have sex with you?" he said slyly.

"I *know* it," Blaine said.

"I'll take that challenge," Kurt said, locking their arms together as usual and pulling him along with him, ignoring the sniggers directed at Blaine.

"What?" Blaine yelped.

"Blaine," Kurt said with an air of resolve. "This year, I'm going to find you your 'right guy'. I'm going to find you someone to lose your virginity to."

It was a horrible idea, Blaine knew it, but before he'd been able to protest, Kurt had started chattering excitedly about makeovers and wardrobe changes and possible prospects for Blaine to date.

Blaine didn't know what to do, but he really only grasped one thing during Kurt's non-stop talk, whatever Kurt had in mind would mean the two of them spending a *lot* more time together. Time Kurt would be away from *Jason* and his stupid, perfect hair and muscles and soccer scholarship. The very thought of him made his blood boil.

But right now, he was sitting in Kurt's basement that Friday night with Kurt's step-brother, Finn, sharing a bowl of popcorn with Kurt and watching *Pulp Fiction*. It had been Finn's turn to choose the movie that week.

Kurt was stretched out on the couch, feet propped on the armrest and head on a pillow in Blaine's lap, the bowl of popcorn sitting on his chest, which was covered loosely in Jason's soccer jersey. One arm was draped back over Blaine's legs, fingers occasionally tapping Blaine's thigh to get his attention.

"This is stupid," Kurt whispered, glancing up at Blaine and pulling a face.

Blaine smiled, opening his mouth to allow Kurt to pop a kernel of popcorn into it.

"I dunno," he said with a shrug. "It's not bad."

Kurt clucked his tongue. "You're like Jason," he said with a roll of his eyes. "He loves the blood and gore and, urgh...gross."

"Well, I don't like *that*," Blaine said, frowning at the thought of being compared to Jason. "It's a good story, though."

"Hmm, I guess," Kurt mumbled, chewing slowly on his popcorn and sipping from their shared ginger ale, which had been resting between his hip and the couch. He passed Blaine the glass back and snuggled a little closer to him, brushing dangerously close to his groin. Blaine breathed slowly through his nose and tried to keep his concentration on the screen, smiling when Kurt tutted and scoffed at something in the movie.

"How was your detention the other day?" Kurt said, finally choosing to ignore the movie altogether. "Was Sami being a total bitch about it?"

Blaine shrugged. "She just kind of glared at me a lot," he said, thinking back to his time after school earlier in the week. "It wasn't bad. Just did some homework. Mr. Hanson had me clean up the leftover Halloween decorations from last week but that's about it. We talked about my last history paper a little."

"Teacher's Pet," Kurt muttered, grinning.

"Am not," Blaine said with a frown.

"Are too," Kurt retorted playfully. "You're the biggest Teacher's Pet in McKinley and it's adorable. I love watching you get excited about Seventeenth Century French literature or gush over our last Calculus lesson. It's so sweet."

He smiled fondly, patting Blaine's leg, and Blaine took the opportunity to stare at the way his eyes sparkled at the center.

"So what are you doing for Homecoming?" Kurt said. "Made up your mind yet?"

"Not really," Blaine said with a small shrug, setting the glass down on the side table. "I mean...you wanted me to come so I guess I will."

Kurt smiled mischievously.

"What?" Blaine said, narrowing his eyes in suspicion.

"I found a date for you," Kurt said smugly.

"Is that so?" Blaine said, feeling wary. "Who?"

"He goes to Dalton," Kurt said enthusiastically. "You know, that private school your Glee club competes against sometimes?"

"Yeah," Blaine said slowly. "So what's his name?"

"Sebastian," Kurt said, grinning. "Jace said he knows him from soccer camp or something like that but he's super cute, Jace showed me a picture of him from over the summer. *Very* nice."

"And he's gay?"

Kurt snorted. "No, Blaine, I'm setting you up with a straight guy," he said, scoffing. "Of *course* he's gay. Very open about it too so you won't have to worry about him being afraid to be affectionate with you and all that."

"Oh...good," Blaine said blankly.

"I'll see if I can snag a picture for you so you won't be worrying over what he looks like," Kurt said, turning back to the screen and dropping a few kernels of popcorn into his mouth.

"What do you mean?" Blaine said.

Kurt paused mid-chew, looking up at him again. "He agreed to go to Homecoming with you," he said, swallowing.

"What you mean—you already *asked* him?" Blaine said, eyes widening.

"Well...yeah," Kurt said slowly. "I mean, Jace did but...is that a problem? I thought you didn't want to go alone."

"I-I don't," Blaine said, scratching the back of his neck nervously. *I want to go with you.* "But I would have thought you'd have, er, asked me first or something. You know...before you went through the trouble," he added quickly so it didn't come off as accusatory.

Kurt brushed him off with a wave of his hand. "It's no problem," he said airily. "It'll be fun. And who knows, maybe he'll be 'the one'." He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively and Blaine gave him a tight smile, his face falling into misery the moment Kurt looked away.

Okay, calm down, he told himself, taking a deep breath, you can show Kurt how much fun you are with another guy. Maybe he'll get jealous. Maybe he'll realise he's madly in love with you. Maybe Sebastian will be fun. Maybe you're an idiot and should just give up already.

He suppressed a groan of annoyance, gazing imploringly at the ceiling with a silent plea.

Kurt fell asleep halfway through the movie, cheek pressed to Blaine's thigh as his head slipped off the side of the pillow. Blaine smiled down at him, watching his chest rise and fall slowly, his lips just barely parted and eyelashes curled against his cheeks. He looked angelic.

Finn was snoring in his chair, his own bowl of popcorn spilt across his lap and his mouth hanging open.

Blaine turned the TV down so as not to wake either of them, setting the remote back down as Kurt snuffled a little in his sleep, eyelids cracking open.

"S'movie over?" he mumbled sleepily.

"No," Blaine said, "but you can go back to sleep." He brushed his fingers gently through Kurt's hair and Kurt hummed contentedly.

"That feels good," he murmured, eyes sliding closed and a drowsy smile turning up his lips slightly. "I like it when you do that."

Blaine smiled, slowly running his fingers through Kurt's soft brown hair and over his scalp.

"You're going to be a great boyfriend to someone, Blaine," Kurt said with a wide yawn, nuzzling into Blaine's lap. "Some guy will be lucky to have you."

Blaine forced a smile as Kurt glanced up at him. He swallowed back the tight pain in his throat and took a shaky breath as Kurt drifted off again, chest aching at how stunning he was, his gorgeous profile, his smooth, soft skin, the long line of his pale neck disappearing under the loose, low-slung collar of Jason's soccer jersey. He was perfect.

So perfect it brought a dull ache to his chest when he thought of him. His smile, his laugh, the way he would brush his hair back off his forehead without even realising he was doing it. How he would purse his lips in a tight line when he was annoyed with something, though it only made Blaine's stomach squirm pleasantly at how cute he looked when he did it.

Blaine let his head fall back against the couch cushion, eyes closing and tears slipping out from under his lids and down his cheeks.

"I don't want to be with 'some guy'," he whispered into the dark silence, lightly pushing a few strands of golden-brown hair off Kurt's forehead, "I want to be with you."

Chapter Four

"So tell us more about Sebastian, babe."

Blaine scowled down at his tray, spearing a French fry on his fork and trying to avoid looking at Kurt, who was practically sitting on Jason's lap as he fed him fries from his plate.

Jason swallowed, setting down his drink and absently stroking his fingers down Kurt's spine.

"Well, he plays soccer and lacrosse," he said, drumming his fingers on the tabletop thoughtfully. "And his parents own some restaurant chain in Pennsylvania."

"Ooo, so he's rich," Kurt said, grinning at Blaine as if this was a tantalizing extra.

Jason chuckled. "Yeah, he's pretty rich," he said, opening his mouth to allow Kurt to place a fry on his tongue, kissing him on the nose as he chewed. "He boards at Dalton too since his parents live in Pittsburgh."

"So you two can have lots of privacy in the dorms," Kurt said suggestively, winking in Blaine's direction.

"He's in that Glee Club thing there, the Warblers?" Jason said, glancing at Kurt for his nod of confirmation. "Yeah, he seemed like a cool guy. He was a lot of fun. Not really my type though." He grinned as Kurt smacked his arm playfully, turning his head to kiss him, lightly sucking on his lower lip before pulling back. Kurt sighed and continued feeding him with a dreamy look.

"I'm heading to Chemistry," Blaine grumbled, realising he'd lost his position in the conversation now that Kurt had started licking up the ketchup he'd smeared on the end of Jason's nose with the tip of his tongue.

It was positively nauseating watching them, though mostly for the fact that Blaine wished *he* was the one doing those things with Kurt. He would gladly let Kurt feed him and cuddle him and lick things off him. The idea of Kurt's tongue on his skin made him blush as a wave of want washed over him and stirred in his gut.

Thankfully, he and Kurt didn't take Chemistry together, Kurt opting for the lower level class and Blaine taking the AP course with only dozen other graduating seniors, two of whom, Mike Chang and Quinn Fabray, were in Glee Club with him. He'd actually become relatively good friends with both of them over the years, the fact that they all had less than perfect fathers a largely contributing factor recently.

"Hey," Quinn said, smiling as Blaine sat between her and Mike.

"Hey," Blaine mumbled, pushing his glasses up his nose and pulling out his chemistry textbook.

"What's wrong?" Mike said, setting to work on folding up a paper football like he always did at the start of class. The three of them were ahead of the rest of the class like they had been since the end of the first week and often he and Mike ended up playing paper football at their desks at the back of the room while Quinn read, occasionally watching them or joining when she got bored with her book.

"Nothing," Blaine grunted.

"Is it Kurt?" Quinn said gently.

"What?" Blaine said, stiffening. "N-no."

"Liar," Mike mumbled, rolling his eyes.

"Blaine," Quinn sighed with the air of a mother sitting down a toddler to explain something for the dozenth time. "When are you going to tell him you're head over heels for him?"

Blaine flashed her a warning look and glanced around the classroom.

"Calm down, no one's going to hear," Quinn said, rolling her eyes. She tucked her short blonde hair daintily behind her ear. "So what happened this time?"

Blaine hesitated for a moment before slumping in his seat in defeat. "Kurt's trying to set me up with one of Jason's friends," he said, staring moodily at the cover of his Chemistry text. "Wants me to go to Homecoming with him."

"Well, tell him you don't want to go," Mike said. "Simple as that."

"Um, I already said I would," Blaine said, blushing.

Quinn pursed her lips, giving him a disapproving look.

"What?" Blaine said defensively. "Kurt wants me to go and he happened to find someone for me to go with. Besides, I want to keep an eye on them."

Quinn rolled her eyes, though she was smiling faintly. "You're so in love with him," she said.

Blaine didn't deny it.

"So, what's this mystery guy like?" Quinn said, propping her chin on her palm and giving him an expectant look. "You haven't met him yet, have you?"

"No," Blaine sighed. "Kurt just mentioned it on Friday and Jason hasn't given him a picture or anything yet but I think he's bringing it tomorrow. He goes to Dalton apparently. Plays soccer and lacrosse. Oh, and he's on the Warblers."

"What?" Mike said, head snapping up.

"What?" Blaine said, turning to him.

"You're going to Homecoming with our competition for Regionals?" Mike said sharply.

"I-I dunno," Blaine said shrinking in his chair.

"Mike."

Blaine swiveled in his seat just in time to see Quinn flashing Mike a stern look.

"Fine," Mike sighed. He cleared his throat. "He sounds...very nice."

"And rich," Quinn said. "And *strong* if he plays lacrosse *and* soccer. I bet he's hot."

"He's *gay*, Quinn," Blaine said.

"Doesn't stop him from being attractive," Quinn said with a small grin. "So when are you meeting him? At the dance?"

"Kurt wants us to meet him for coffee on Saturday," Blaine said.

"Well, hey," Quinn said, laying a hand gently on his arm. "Maybe he'll be really nice. Maybe he'll help you get over Kurt, yeah?"

"Yeah," Blaine said, smiling though he knew *nothing* would help him get over Kurt. He would always love him. "Maybe."

"That's the spirit," Quinn said, patting his arm.

"Am I going to have to sit here and listen to you two talk about boys or are we playing football?"

Quinn rolled her eyes at Mike's annoyance, cracking her book open and immediately diving into it as Blaine turned in his seat, holding up his hands so his fingers formed two 'L's as Mike carefully positioned the paper triangle under his index finger, tongue sticking out of the corner of his mouth as he took aim.

Blaine tried to keep his focus on the road, ignoring the sounds coming from the back seat of his car and trying not to look at the rearview mirror. He gripped the steering wheel painfully tight, hands shaking a little as he heard Kurt groan softly.

"Jason."

Blaine couldn't stop his eyes from flicking to the mirror as he merged lanes, his legs going weak at the sight of Kurt's head thrown back against the headrest as Jason sucked on the side of his neck. Blaine couldn't see his hands but he could guess easily where they were if the quiet whimpers Kurt was making were any indication.

He remembered the first time Kurt and Jason had been intimate together in the same room as him over the summer. They'd been watching a movie together and Blaine had half-dozed only to wake up curled up on one side of the couch, which was rocking gently each time Kurt ground his hips down into Jason's lap, loud, wet smacks reaching his ears as they kissed each other greedily.

Blaine had pretended to be asleep, staring at the glowing blue television screen and trying to block out the sounds even as hot tears slipped down his cheeks and soaked his pillow. He'd had to bite his lip hard when Kurt let out a shuddering moan into the darkness, quiet but still clearly audible.

"We can't do this again," Kurt had whispered as he fell against Jason's chest, breathing heavily. "I feel so...weird with Blaine in the same room."

"He's asleep, babe," Jason had murmured. "Besides, I couldn't resist when you looked as sexy as you do."

"I'm wearing my uniform," Kurt said, the smirk clear in his voice. "Like I do every day."

"Well it's hard to keep my hands off you all the time," Jason mumbled. "And I missed you at camp. It was lonely there."

Kurt laughed silkily. "A week with a group of sweaty guys without shirts," he said, "yes it must have been awful for you." He giggled and Blaine guessed Jason had tickled him.

"Love you," Jason said tenderly.

"I love you too," Kurt sighed.

Blaine had buried his face in his pillow, crying silently against it and begging for sleep.

Since then, they'd slowly progressed from simply exchanging gentle pecks every now and then to shoving their tongues down each other's throats to groping each other when they thought Blaine wasn't looking. Blaine had never brought it up because he was sure Kurt would get upset about it and he didn't want to be rude. Kurt was happy and Blaine wasn't about to be the cause of his unhappiness.

So he kept his mouth shut and his eyes fixed on the road ahead, flicking on the radio to try and drown out the low, breathy whines coming from behind him. His fingers were wrapped painfully tight around the steering wheel by the time he'd pulled into the lot of the Lima Bean, immediately leaping out of the car into the cool October air and sucking in a deep breath through his nose.

Kurt and Jason clambered out a few minutes later, cheeks flushed pink and hair mussed. Kurt had the collar of his jacket turned up but Blaine still caught a flash of reddened skin where Jason's lips had been moments before.

"Ready to meet your date?" Kurt said brightly, bouncing to Blaine's side and grinning.

"Yeah, I guess," Blaine mumbled, shrugging and shoving his hands in his pockets.

"Come on, you'll like him," Kurt said, opting to take Jason's hand in his own rather than linking his arm with Blaine's as he did when the two of them were walking alone together. "Sorry we couldn't find you that picture though."

"I have no idea what happened to it," Jason said with a small frown. "My mom probably put it in an album or something. But I promise he's not hideous."

Kurt laughed and Blaine smiled reluctantly as he pulled open the door to the coffee shop, the bell overhead tinkling merrily as he stepped inside.

"We'll get the drinks, babe," Kurt said, pecking Jason on the cheek briefly as he and Blaine moved towards the line at the counter, Jason moving to a table by the window.

Blaine caught Kurt eyeing Jason as he walked away and sighed, shoulders slumping a little as he kicked the ground absently.

"So are you excited?" Kurt said, sliding his arm into Blaine's so their elbows were locked.

"I s'pose," Blaine said.

"Oh, I'm sure he's great if Jace likes him," Kurt said airily. "We'll get working on your wardrobe tonight, yeah?"

"Oh...sure," Blaine said. "We have to finish studying for your test though."

"Yeah, yeah," Kurt said, waving him away. "We've been studying for over a week, I'm sure I'll be fine."

"Let's hope," Blaine said with a small sigh. "You need to pass."

"Oh, I'll pass," Kurt said airily. "Who could fail under your tutelage?" He nudged Blaine with his elbow before ordering their coffees with a bright smile. "Medium drip, non-fat mocha, and a caramel latte, please." He glanced at Blaine. "Do you want biscotti? I swear I won't eat it all this time." Blaine nodded, smiling faintly as he thought of every time Kurt had said the exact same thing only to end up sneaking nibbles from Blaine's biscotti as they drank.

"And two biscotti," Kurt added, pulling out a few bills and passing them to the girl behind the counter. He accepted the biscotti, neatly wrapped in wax paper, and took a tiny bite of one before passing them to Blaine. They waited for a few minutes, sharing the first biscotti, Blaine breaking off pieces and popping them into Kurt's mouth when he opened it with a hopeful look, beaming as he chewed.

Kurt gathered up his and Jason's coffees when they were done, Blaine grabbing his own and following Kurt to the table where Jason was sitting. There was another boy sitting across from Jason, his back turned to them, dressed in a navy and red blazer and dark slacks, his brown hair styled in the perfect combination of sleek and messy that Blaine had never been able to attain with his own thick curls. Even though he was sitting, casually lounging back in his chair, Blaine could tell that he was tall, taller than Kurt perhaps.

Kurt quickly took the chair closest to Jason, requiring Blaine to take the seat next to Sebastian, who turned as he sat, grinning. He was handsome for sure, with straight white teeth and dusky, fern green eyes, outlined with a dark ring of stormy grey and a faint line of goldenrod lancing out from his pupils.

"Hey," he said, eyeing Blaine for a long moment, eyebrows raising in approval, before his eyes returned to his face. He set down his coffee and held out his hand. "Sebastian Smythe."

"Blaine Anderson," Blaine muttered, shaking his head and slouching a little in his seat. The way Sebastian was leering at him was slightly uncomfortable.

"Nice to finally meet you," Sebastian said, tapping his fingers off the side of his cup, where Blaine could see that the barista had written her number on the cardboard holder. Sebastian chuckled when he saw him looking at, sliding the ring off and tossing it aside. "Yeah, they do that a lot." He shrugged, taking a sip of his drink and gazing at Blaine over the rim of his cup.

He cleared his throat, setting his cup down. "So," he said, draping his arm over the back of his chair. "I guess I'm you're Homecoming date."

"I guess so," Blaine mumbled, blushing faintly as he caught the hungry look in Sebastian's eyes. He lowered his head, picking at his remaining biscotti and adjusting his glasses.

"So, Sebastian," Kurt said, sounding pleased with the turn of events so far. "Tell us about yourself. Jace said you play lacrosse and soccer and of course you're in the Warblers."

"I'm the lead, actually," Sebastian said, eyes flicking to Blaine as if to catch his reaction.

"The lead?" Kurt said with a lot more interest than Blaine knew he actually felt. "Fascinating."

"Yeah we killed our Sectionals last weekend," Sebastian said. "You guys have some real competition for Regionals, Blaine." He patted Blaine on the shoulder, though his hand lingered a little longer than necessary, fingers trailing down Blaine's arm to his elbow as he let his arm drop to his side again.

"Oh, I don't know," Kurt said, grinning. "Blaine's *quite* the singer. One of the best I've ever heard."

"Hmm," Sebastian said, sipping his coffee and staring at Blaine's lips, Kurt changing his focus to Jason as he draped his arm around his neck and kissed his ear. "Well I can't wait to see your mouth at work, then."

Blaine nearly choked on his coffee, sputtering and blushing scarlet. He coughed, eyes watering as Sebastian patted his back much lower than normal, rubbing it gently when Blaine finally caught his breath.

"Better?" Sebastian said, eyebrow cocked in concern.

"Yeah," Blaine said, clearing his throat and taking a sip of his coffee. "Um, fine."

Sebastian took another gulp of his coffee, staring openly at Blaine as he did. It made Blaine feel dirty, being gawked at like that. No one had ever looked at him like that before and he didn't like it at all, the greedy glint in his eyes like a dog eyeing a particularly juicy piece of meat.

He glanced at Kurt pleadingly but turned back to his biscotti when he saw that Kurt was much too preoccupied with kissing Jason over their coffees to pay attention to him.

Sebastian leaned back in his chair, turning a little to face him. "So, Blaine. Any interests outside of...what's your little club called again? The New Directions?"

Blaine frowned at the amusement in his voice, as if he didn't see them as any legitimate threat.

"Um, yeah, New Directions," Blaine said, nodding. "Um...w-well, I really like Calculus and Chemistry and...stuff."

"Oh, I'm sure you're amazing at Chemistry," Sebastian said, eyes roving hungrily down Blaine's body. He grinned. "You're a smart guy, then, huh? Jace said you were a bit of a nerd but if we're being perfectly honest, I think that's hot. I've got a thing for the whole innocent, blushing routine." He gestured to Blaine's pink cheeks. "Such a turn-on."

Blaine swallowed thickly, trying to get his throat to work though he didn't have a valid response for what Sebastian had said.

Sebastian glanced at his watch and drained his coffee. "Well, I've got to get going," he said, setting his cup down again.

Kurt and Jason pulled apart with a sound like a vacuum being pulled from a drain and turned to face them.

"Leaving already?" Kurt said, glancing at Blaine, who tried not to stare at his wet, swollen lips and flushed cheeks.

"Got a lacrosse game later," Sebastian said. "Need to warm up." He turned back to Blaine. "I guess I'll see you Friday, Blaine." He winked, squeezing Blaine's shoulder and adjusting his tie before turning to leave.

"Nice meeting you!" Kurt called after him, looking vaguely triumphant. He smiled, turning back to Blaine. "He seems fun, yeah?"

"Yeah," Blaine said, forcing a tight smile. "Fun."

"So I thought when we go to the mall to get new clothes for you, we could look for a few things for me, too," Kurt said, reaching across the table to take the last piece of Blaine's biscotti and popping it into his mouth. "I need new jeans."

"What are you talking about?" Jason said with a laugh. "You have at least a dozen pairs."

"I think you mean *only* a dozen pairs," Kurt said seriously. "I need another pair of white ones since Finn spilled Bolognese sauce on my others."

"Aw, I liked those jeans," Jason said, frowning. "Your ass looked amazing in them."

"My ass looks amazing all the time," Kurt said with a haughty sniff.

"Mmm, that's true," Jason murmured, nuzzling against his ear. "It looks extra amazing in those, though."

"Well, I'll see what I can do," Kurt said, sighing with a look of mock distress.

"How are you going to know if they're right if I'm not there?" Jason said.

"I think Blaine is an adequate judge of asses," Kurt said, glancing at Blaine, the corner of his mouth twitching. "Blaine, can I trust you to be an objective observer of how amazing my ass looks?"

Blaine tried not to blush as he nodded. "S-sure," he said, voice a little higher than normal.

He knew exactly which jeans the two of them were talking about, white skinny jeans that fit Kurt like a glove, hugging his ass and thighs so perfectly that Blaine had nearly passed out the first time he'd seen them wearing them the year before. It didn't help that Kurt had clearly not been wearing underwear at the time.

It had taken all of Blaine's self-control not to stare when Kurt studied with him in said jeans, lying on his stomach and tapping his foot absently against the side of the bed. It was so incredibly tempting to just reach out and run his hand gently over the smooth curve, to feel the way the firm flesh gave way beneath his fingers before trailing down the inner seam of Kurt's thigh and down the defined muscle of his calf before moving his hand back up, gripping Kurt's hip and turning him over onto his back to kiss up the long line of his neck.

He'd wanted to touch Kurt so badly, even if it wasn't anything sexual, just simply feel the warmth of his leg through the fabric, fan his fingers over his thigh and tuck his hand behind his knee, brushing his thumb over the dip of his kneecap where he knew Kurt was ticklish just to watch him giggle and squirm, eyes crinkling up at the corners.

"See?" Kurt said, snapping Blaine out of his fantasy. "Blaine will be sure to help me find the perfect replacement."

Jason didn't look completely thrilled with the idea but smiled all the same and squeezed Kurt around the waist. "You can always model them for me when you get home," he said, grinning and kissing Kurt's cheek.

"Mmm, of course I will," Kurt said, leaning against his shoulder.

Blaine continued nursing his coffee for the next twenty minutes, drawing random patterns on the table with his finger as Kurt and Jason continued to be overly affectionate with each other. It was with immense relief that Blaine finally watched Jason leaving when one of his friends arrived to take him to soccer practice.

"I'll see you Monday, babe," Jason said, pressing a kiss to Kurt's lips before slipping on his jacket and leaving with his teammate, disregarding Blaine completely.

"So," Kurt said scooting around the table towards Blaine and giving him an expectant look. "What did you think of Sebastian?"

"Oh, um..." Blaine tried to search for a word besides 'dog' or 'pig'. "He's a bit...forward."

"Well, obviously he's interested in you," Kurt said excitedly. "This is good, right?"

"Er..."

"Homecoming is going to be so much fun!" Kurt said happily, beaming and laying his hand on Blaine's arm.

"We're still going to the game together on Thursday?"

"Of course," Blaine said, smiling. "Wouldn't miss it."

He didn't remotely enjoy going to Jason's soccer games but they'd gone to the Homecoming game together every year. Kurt had to cheer the football game on Friday but not the soccer games, so it was really the only chance now that had to go to an event like this together still without Kurt being busy or Jason tagging along.

"I'll bring the blanket if you bring the hot chocolate," Kurt said with a grin.

"I always do," Blaine said, stomach squirming as Kurt laughed and squeezed his arm.

"Come on," Kurt said, standing and tossing his empty cup in the trash. "Let's get to the mall before it gets too busy, yeah?"

Blaine stood with him, allowing Kurt to link their arms together as they walked out to his car. He opened the passenger door for Kurt, grinning when Kurt feigned swooning and laughed before climbing into his seat.

Blaine slid in behind the steering wheel and turned the car on, suppressing a smile as Kurt started flipping through the radio stations, stopping on a station playing *Sunday Morning* and leaning back in his seat, drumming his fingers on the console and humming along softly.

"I really love this song," Kurt sighed, a faraway look in his eyes. He turned in his seat to face Blaine. "You should sing it for me. I love it when you sing to me."

Blaine blushed, trying not to grin too broadly.

"Yeah?" he said, eyes flicking off the road for a moment and onto Kurt.

"Mhmm," Kurt hummed, nodding, chin resting on his fist.

Blaine forced himself to look back at the road as he started to sing just as the first chorus started.

That may be all I need

In darkness, she is all I see

Come and rest your bones with me

Driving slow on Sunday morning

And I never want to leave

He glanced over at Kurt, who was smiling softly, expression so tender that Blaine could almost pretend that it was love behind his eyes rather than friendly affection.

Fingers trace your every outline

Paint a picture with my hands

Back and forth we sway like branches in a storm

Change the weather, still together when it ends

He had a sudden image of the two of them wrapped up together in the sheets together, simply lazing in bed, skimming their fingers down each other's skin and sharing small smiles and languid kisses, not a care in the world. His face fell a little at the thought that it would never happen, that he'd always be watching Kurt falling in love with someone else, always someone else. He blinked a few times and swallowed hard

as his throat burned, the image of Kurt in a tux, marrying some tall man, nameless man while Blaine stood beside him, forced to pretend to be happy as he lost everything.

"Mmm, your voice is amazing," Kurt said, sitting back in his seat again and closing his eyes. "I wish Jace knew how to sing like you. Or play the piano. I love it when you play the piano." He sat up a little straighter in his seat. "Remember last year, when Danny and I broke up and you sang to me?"

Blaine thought back to the day, nearly a year ago, when Kurt's first serious boyfriend had broken up with him. Danny was a McKinley graduate who Kurt had met through the Cheerios sophomore year when Danny was on the football team. Blaine remembered listening to Kurt gush about him before they started dating, how he was sure no one like Danny would notice him.

They'd started dating a month after their junior year had started, after Kurt had had a few small flings over the summer that only lasted a week or two at the most. He and Danny had dated for nearly three months, only to break up just before Christmas when Danny decided he didn't want 'some high school boy' hanging all over him anymore.

It had taken all of Blaine's self-restraint not to hunt Danny down and sock him in the jaw when Kurt had called him, sobbing into the phone and barely coherent as he begged for Blaine to come over. Blaine had nearly crashed his car in his haste to get to Kurt, who was a weeping mess, face streaked with tears and eyes red and puffy by the time he arrived with a tub of Kurt's favourite ice cream and a few choice CD's.

Kurt had practically flung himself into Blaine's arms, crying into his shoulder and saying something about not understanding why Danny had left him and how he'd been his first, a thought that made Blaine sick to his stomach. They'd gone up to Kurt's room and curled up on the bed, Kurt quickly eating his way through the ice cream, ending up with his head in Blaine's lap as he sobbed, Blaine brushing his fingertips calmingly over his cheek and through his hair as he allowed him to vent.

"I d-don't understand wh-what I did wrong," he'd choked, hiccupping and wiping his eyes for the hundredth time, throwing the tissue onto the growing pile next to him. *"He said he l-loved me."*

"Well, he's an idiot then," Blaine said. It felt like someone had hollowed out his chest, seeing Kurt so completely broken. *"And he obviously didn't deserve someone as amazing as you."*

Kurt had swallowed, sniffing loudly as he blinked owlshly up at Blaine through swollen lids. *"Y-you really think I'm amazing?"* he said, hiccupping softly.

"I know you are," Blaine said, smiling and plucking up a tissue to dab at Kurt's splotchy cheek. "*You're the most amazing, wonderful person I know.*"

Kurt's eyes swam with fresh tears, lower lip quivering tremulously. He was so tragically beautiful like this Blaine had to stop himself from crying at the sight of him. What he wouldn't have given to simply kiss his tears away.

"*You're such a good friend, Blaine,*" Kurt said shakily. "*I don't know what I did to deserve you.*"

"*You didn't have to do anything,*" Blaine said, heart sinking at the word 'friend'. Really, that's all he was. Always friend, friend, friend and nothing more.

Kurt had sniffed again, scrubbing at his eyes with his knuckles. "*I probably look hideous,*" he mumbled.

"*You look fine,*" Blaine assured him. "*As always.*"

Kurt had given him a grateful smile, tears still clinging to his long eyelashes.

"*Will you sing to me?*" he said hopefully. "*I always feel better when you sing to me.*"

Blaine nodded, Kurt snuggling closer to him and closing his eyes as Blaine combed his fingers through his hair and sang *I'm Gonna Find Another You* softly to him. Kurt had fallen asleep like that, curled up nestled in Blaine's lap with a faint smile on his lips.

Ever since then, it always happened the same way, Kurt would find a new boyfriend, something would go wrong and they'd break-up for whatever reason, and Blaine was always right there with ice cream and a warm shoulder for Kurt to cry on as he reassured him that there was nothing wrong with him, that it was all the fault of whatever lunatic was willing to give up someone so perfect.

"Of course I remember," Blaine said, fingers tightening a little around the steering wheel. "Asshole."

Kurt laughed. "You always hate the guys I date," he said fondly.

"No," Blaine said, "I hate the ones that hurt you." He glanced over at Kurt, who was smiling softly as he gave his arm a squeeze.

"You're so good to me," he said. "What did I do to deserve you, Blaine?"

It was a question he asked Blaine often, though Blaine simply brushed it off with a bashful smile as he always did.

Kurt leaned back in his seat again, closing his eyes as he propped his feet up on the dash. Blaine had to force himself not to look at his long legs, bent slightly and covered in jeans that might have been painted on.

They reached the mall a few minutes later, Kurt linking his arm in Blaine's and leading him towards the entrance, chattering excitedly.

"We'll get you some nice, dark jeans, I think," he said, eyeing Blaine with scrutiny. "That would look good with your skin tone. Then we'll get some polos, they'll show off your arms. I'm thinking vertical stripes on some things, they'll make you look taller." He let out a little squeal of excitement as they pushed through the double doors. "Ooo, this will be fun! And then you can stay over Friday after the game, you have slept over in *ages*, and Saturday we'll have you all dolled up for Sebastian."

Blaine gave him a tight-lipped smile. A pair of tall boys walked past and Blaine tightened his hold protectively on Kurt's arm when one of them made a face of disgust in their direction.

"Okay," Kurt said, pulling him towards Urban Outfitters. "We're starting here."

The next three hours were a blur of fabric and colours and 'no this belt with those shoes' and 'stop making that face, Blaine, and try it on', by the end of which Blaine was thoroughly exhausted and ready to go home and collapse on his bed.

Kurt, however, was in his element. By the time they'd finished with getting clothes for Blaine and were on their way to Macy's for Kurt's pants, Blaine was extremely glad that his father's accountant paid his credit card bill because he didn't think his father would be pleased knowing Blaine had just racked up over five hundred dollars in one day on clothes alone. He didn't think he'd lose too much sleep though given he'd seen his mother spend two thousand dollars on a whim for a dress she'd worn once.

He flopped down on the bench in the changing rooms, shoving the bags he was carrying underneath it and letting his head drop back against the wall as Kurt stepped into one of the stalls with several pairs of white pants.

"Oh, I like these!" Kurt called from the other side of the door after five minutes, during which he'd discarded four pairs of jeans over the top of the door. "I'm coming out, okay?"

Blaine stifled a yawn into the back of his hand, sitting up a little straighter blinking sleepily as the door swung open. His mouth went dry and his hands shook in his lap as Kurt sashayed out into the hall, biting his lip and turning on the spot.

"How's my ass look?" he said, craning his neck back to try and look for himself before glancing at Blaine with an expectant look. "Blaine?"

"What? Oh...f-fine," Blaine squeaked.

"Like, 'fine' fine or 'I want to rip your clothes off' fine?" Kurt said, pursing his lips and frowning.

Blaine laughed nervously. He tried to turn away but he couldn't stop staring at how well the fabric hugged Kurt's ass, though he supposed that was the point. It was meant for Jason though...not him.

"I like them," Kurt said, running his hands over his own ass and nodding. "Yeah, I'll get these. Give me a minute to change back and then we can go. You look dead on your feet." He patted his cheek fondly. "Sorry I made you suffer through shopping with me. I know you hate it."

"I don't hate it," Blaine said, shrugging as Kurt stepped back into the dressing room. "It's just not really my thing. I like it because you enjoy it though. Like you when you came to my piano recitals."

"I loved your piano recitals, though!" Kurt said, head poking out from under the door. "I wish you would have kept going to lessons."

"I don't really have time with Glee," Blaine said, watching the white denim pooling around Kurt's ankles as he shimmied out of the jeans.

"Well, I'm coming to your Sectionals this year, I swear," Kurt said as he pulled on his jeans. "You can take away all off my Marc Jacobs if I don't."

Blaine smiled as Kurt slipped on his boots and stepped back into the hall, jeans draped over his arm. He zipped up his pants and grinned.

"Ready to go?" He picked up a few of Blaine's bags for him and held out his arm for Blaine to take.

Blaine gathered up the rest of his bags and followed him out into the main area of the store to pay for Kurt's jeans, Kurt chatting happily about how excited he was for Homecoming and doing Blaine's makeover.

"I can't wait to get your hair out of them helmet of gel," he said with a grin. "I haven't seen it loose in over a year."

"It's easier to manage this way," Blaine said, glancing at Kurt's hair. "You're lucky, your hair is perfect."

"Oh, well...yeah," Kurt said, patting his hair and preening himself as Blaine laughed.

Chapter Five

The air was cool and crisp, smelling of leaves and popcorn as both crunched under their feet as they made their way from the snack stand to the bleachers, walking behind the tall metal structure crisscrossing overhead, Kurt holding a paper bag of popcorn and Blaine clutching a thermos of hot chocolate and a thick blanket of Kurt's.

"Ugh, why can't people use a damn trash can?" Kurt grumbled as he skirted a discarded container of nachos. "These boots aren't cheap and that yellow would just *not* match my sweater." He gestured to the navy and grey sweater that hung down to the middle of his thighs, hugging his hips and waist to show off the slight curve of his frame.

Blaine grinned, stepping over a soda can as they reached the far end of the bleachers and walked around to the front. They stepped up the metal stairs to the back row, Blaine spreading out the blanket on the cool bench, sitting down and keeping his eyes fixed ahead as Kurt bent over and fiddled with the lacing on his boots, his rear-end barely a foot from Blaine's face.

"Okay," Kurt said, plopping down next to him and sitting flush against his side, wriggling a little in his seat and sticking the popcorn between his legs. "Popcorn?"

Blaine took a few kernels and popped them into his mouth, smiling as Kurt leaned against his shoulder, shivering slightly.

"Here," Blaine said, reaching over him to pull the end of the blanket up and around his shoulder, doing the same on his own side so they were wrapped snugly in the fabric.

Kurt unscrewed the lid from the thermos and took a sip of hot chocolate, sighing at the warmth.

"Mmm, you make the best hot cocoa," he said, passing the thermos to Blaine. "You need to teach me the recipe."

"I could but then I'd have to kill you," Blaine teased, grinning as Kurt rolled his eyes and laughed sarcastically.

"Hardy har," he said, pursing his lips as Blaine took a drink, warm liquid flooding through him and out to his tingling fingertips and toes. He turned to Kurt, who burst out laughing, nearly falling forward off the bench.

"What?" Blaine said, nonplussed by his reaction.

"S-sorry," Kurt choked, giggling as he tried to compose himself. "You've just—you've got—here."

He reached up, grinning, to brush his thumb over Blaine's upper lip, glancing up at him as he gathered up the bit of hot chocolate clinging to Blaine's skin. Blaine held his breath, praying he didn't blush as the soft pad of Kurt's thumb slid slowly over his lip.

"There," Kurt said, absently sucking his thumb clean as he faced forward again. Blaine wondered if he could taste him on his skin.

"Mmm, I love doing this," Kurt said, rubbing his hands together to warm them. "Especially since the JV cheerleaders cheer the games. I would *not* want to be out there right now." He shivered and cuddled closer to Blaine under the blanket, chewing on his popcorn happily.

Blaine looked down at the underclassmen Cheerios on the sidelines, clutching their pompoms and shivering in their thin uniforms.

Kurt checked his watch, craning his neck towards the locker rooms where he knew Jason and the rest of the Titan soccer team would be appearing any second. He clapped and cheered excitedly with the rest of the crowd as a dozen or so boys in red and white jerseys and black shorts walked onto the field from the lockers, Blaine clapping politely as well, though he only did it for a second or two as Kurt had thrust the popcorn into his hands and jumped to his feet, waving enthusiastically as Jason passed their spot.

Jason winked and grinned as he waved back and pretended to catch the kiss Kurt blew him. Blaine glowered at him as he turned to huddle with his teammates beside their bench while the opposing team made their way to their own side.

Kurt sat down again, cheeks flush pink and breathless.

"Oop, sorry," he said, giggling a little as he took his popcorn back from Blaine. He wiggled into a more comfortable position next to him, one hand resting on his thigh, which was pressed to Blaine's, leaving his fingers grazing Blaine's jeans.

"So what's going on with Glee Club?" Kurt said, though his eyes were fixed on Jason as he warmed up, jogging and stretching and messing with the soccer ball in a way that Blaine was sure he was showing off for Kurt.

"Good," Blaine muttered.

"Any solos this year?" Kurt said, smiling as Jason flicked the ball up into the air with his foot and balanced it on his head.

"Um, yeah, actually," Blaine said, fiddling with the corner of the blanket. "I'm, um...I'm singing *Boomerang*."

"Ooo, I like that song," Kurt said, turning to him at last. "You'll sound great singing it. I *swear* I'm coming this year, whether Coach likes it or not. I'm sick of her springing last minute practices on me. I'm the Captain this year so she *has* to let me go. She always lets Santana and Brittany go. Of course they're *in* the club so..." he trailed off, pursing his lips.

"I understand," Blaine said. "I know you work hard. You care about being on the Cheerios."

"Well, I care about you too," Kurt said guiltily. "I *really* want to be there for you, Blaine. You made it to Nationals for me last year. I hate not being there with you. You love the Glee Club and I want to be there for you." He bit his lip, looking down at his lap. "I feel like a bad friend."

"Kurt, it's not your fault," Blaine said reassuringly. "Really. I'd love to have you there but I'm not going to hate you for not showing up."

"I'll be there," Kurt said firmly. "Even if I break my arm, I'm *going* to be there and I'm going to watch you sing and be amazing and win. Got it?"

Blaine grinned. "Okay," he said. He knew Kurt wanted to support him, but he also knew how unpredictable his cheering coach could be and didn't try to get his hopes up too much.

He watched Kurt out of the corner of his eye through the game, smiling as he chatted happily about school and cheering and Homecoming, Blaine occasionally chiming in though he was content to simply sit and listen to Kurt, to watch the way his lips moved and his eyes lit up when he got excited about something. It gave him an excuse to stare at him without looking like a complete creep.

Sometimes when he would see Kurt reaching for the popcorn, he'd copy the movement, stomach backflipping happily when Kurt's hand brushed his own and he flashed him a small smile.

They drained the last of the hot chocolate and emptied the popcorn by the end of the first half of the game, Kurt hurrying down to the sidelines to give Jason a long kiss over the fence before the team retreated back to the locker room.

Blaine watched the way their fingers tangle together in the links in the fence, sighing and dropping his gaze to his lap, not looking up even when he heard Kurt making his way back up the bleachers and sat next to him again.

"Whew, it's cold," Kurt said, wrapping the blanket tightly around himself. "...what's wrong?"

"Huh? Oh...nothing," Blaine mumbled. "I'm fine."

"Blaine." Kurt pursed his lips and gave him a *don't-give-me-that* look.

Blaine sighed, adjusting his beanie around his ears. He hesitated for a moment, chewing on his lower lip as Kurt gave him a steady, curious look.

"You promise you won't get mad at me?" Blaine said anxiously.

"Of course not," Kurt said, face falling into concern. "What's wrong?"

Blaine cleared his throat, twisting his hands in his lap. "It's just that, um, sometimes...you and J-Jason are...er, a little bit...touchy?"

Kurt didn't answer and Blaine turned to see him blink in confusion.

"What do you mean?" he said.

Blaine rubbed the back of his neck nervously. "Er, um...PDA."

Kurt stared at him for a moment before his eyes widened and his eyebrows shot up with comprehension.

"Oh...oh," he said, looking shocked. "I-I'm sorry, I...I didn't know it bothered you."

"I'm not angry," Blaine said hastily. "Not at all. It's just...a little much sometimes."

"I'm sorry," Kurt said, laying his hand on top of Blaine's. "I wish you would have told me sooner. I *told* Jace it was weird," he added under his breath as he hid his face in his hand.

"You know I'm not angry right?" Blaine said anxiously.

"Of course," Kurt said earnestly. He gave him a bashful, apologetic look. "I guess I don't realise what I'm doing sometimes. I get a little wrapped up in everything with Jace." He smiled. "You'll know what I mean when you get a boyfriend like that."

Blaine smiled even though his chest was aching, Kurt's fingers caressing the back of his hand soothingly.

"Come on," Kurt said, standing and pulling Blaine up with him, the blanket still draped around their shoulders. "Let's walk."

Blaine grabbed the empty thermos and followed him down the stairs, Kurt pausing at the bottom to adjust the blanket before setting off around the track that looped the soccer field.

They walked in silence, enjoying the cool, clear air and the warmth of each other under the blanket, Kurt eventually stopped on the far end of the field at the sloping grass opposite the snack stand and bathrooms.

Kurt spread the blanket out in the grass and lay down, patting the spot next to him and smiling as he tucked his hands behind his head and Blaine stretched out next to him, knees bent and hands resting on his stomach.

The sound of the crows was faded here, simply background noise to the quiet rustle of grass and trees behind the field.

"I love nights like this," Blaine said.

"Why's that?"

Blaine glanced over at him out of the corner of his eye. "Because you can see everything," he said, smiling. "All the stars and galaxies and...everything. But even with all of that, it's not even a fraction of the universe. There're still a million lifetimes of space outside of it all that we'll never know."

"Well that's depressing," Kurt said, frowning.

Blaine grinned. "I just mean that...stuff doesn't seem so bad when you think of how small it is in comparison."

"Stuff?" Kurt said, sounding amused.

"Yes...stuff," Blaine replied, Kurt laughing quietly.

"You remember in seventh grade," Kurt said, eyes reflecting the scattered stars overhead. "When you slept over the first time and laid out back and we tried to count all the stars?"

Blaine smiled at the memory. "Yeah. We both fell asleep and your Dad had to carry you inside because I couldn't wake you up and you wouldn't let me go. You sleep like a log, you know that?"

"Shut up," Kurt said, smacking his arm and grinning. He rolled onto his side to face him, head propped up on one arm. "I really love that you're my best friend, Blaine," he said. "I'm glad I chose your table to sit at."

"Me too," Blaine said, trying not to think about how perfect and pink and soft Kurt's lips looked. He wanted to taste them so badly, to reach up and cup Kurt's cheek and stroke his skin as he pushed himself up to catch his lips against his own before wrapping his arm around Kurt's waist and pulling him down against his side. He wanted Kurt to push him back in the grass and thread his fingers through his hair, to pull off his glasses so they wouldn't get in the way when he kissed him.

"Blaine?"

"Huh?" Blaine jumped, blinking to clear away the images of him and Kurt rolling around in the grass, laughing and kissing, from his head.

"I said do you want to go back to the bleachers?" Kurt said. "The second half started."

"Oh...right, sure," Blaine said as Kurt pushed himself up and straightened his sweater, smoothing down the front so his hands glided from his ribcage to his hips. He brushed the grass off the fabric before picking up the blanket and shaking it out, folding it over his arm.

They made their way back to their seats in the bleachers, huddling under the blanket as they sat on the cold metal and a stiff breeze blew through the stands.

A few of Kurt's friends from the Cheerios, Santana Lopez among them, joined them after a few minutes and Blaine was left to sit and listen as they discussed their outfits for Homecoming. Kurt had gone with them over a month ago to help them pick out their dresses, apparently. The topic of the conversation turned to their dates and Blaine was suddenly nervous as he remembered that he'd be going with Sebastian.

"I am so *sick* of Greg," one of the girls, a short blonde with wide blue eyes, said with a furious glare towards the goalie.

"Why don't you just dump him for good, Paula?" Santana said with a disdainful look. "He's such an idiot."

"Yeah, well..." she trailed off, lips pursed.

"Well, it's a good thing you have him off the market," Santana said with a faint smirk. "Otherwise Kurt would be setting him up with Blaine."

"What?" Paula yelped, rounding on Kurt and flashing Blaine a look.

"Oh you were broken up when it happened," Kurt said, unfazed as he rolled his eyes, Blaine shrinking under Paula's glare.

"Yeah so you set him up with our competition instead," Santana said with a reproving look.

Kurt snorted. "It's just Glee Club," he said. He stopped, turning quickly to Blaine, laying his hand on his arm. "Not that there's anything wrong with Glee Club, it's just...you know...*Glee Club*."

"Right," Blaine said blankly.

"I like your singing," Kurt said worriedly.

"I know," Blaine said, smiling.

Kurt looked faintly relieved as he turned back to the other Cheerios, hand still resting lightly on Blaine's arm.

Blaine kept his eyes fixed on his knees, watching Kurt out of the corner of his eyes, feeling a certain warmth in his belly every time he laughed or pushed his hair back or gave his arm a squeeze. He didn't know whether to hate or love that Kurt was such an affectionate person.

When they were alone and Kurt was snuggled against his chest as they watched movies together, he could lie there and watch him, lightly brush his hair back or squeeze him around the waist. But now, when they were around Kurt's friends and so close to Jason himself, it was torture having Kurt touching him, brushing his fingers over his arm, leaning against his shoulder, even jumping into his lap when Santana waved a hot dog in his face, threatening to spill mustard on his new white jeans.

"You suck!" Kurt pouted, folding his arms as Santana laughed and Blaine tried not to think about the fact that Kurt's ass was pressed against his groin.

Jason managed to snatch the ball from one of the other team's forwards at that moment and Kurt squirmed excitedly in Blaine's lap, bouncing slightly. Blaine bit his tongue hard to hold back a groan, trying to conjure up disgusting images as heat started building in his gut and creeping up his face.

Thankfully, Jason scored and Kurt leapt to his feet, jumping up and down and cheering as he waved furiously to Jason, who was high-fiving his teammates and beaming in Kurt's direction.

The final whistle blew five minutes later, a two-one win for the Titans. Blaine watched bitterly as Kurt jumped the fence between the bleachers and field and practically leapt on top of Jason, kissing him hard and wrapping his legs around his waist so Jason stumbled a step back before catching him.

Kurt, to Blaine's surprise, pulled back after a few seconds, dropping back to the ground and looking flustered as he glanced in Blaine's direction. Jason tried to kiss him again, frowning and saying something Blaine couldn't make out.

Kurt replied and Blaine caught his own name on his lips, Jason's gaze immediately flashing in his direction. Blaine hurried to look away, busying himself with folding the blanket and straightening his coat. When he turned back, he saw Jason and Kurt disappearing under the far end of the bleachers, Jason looking sour and Kurt staring guiltily at his feet.

Blaine hesitated for a split second before stepping up to the top bench and hurrying as silently as possible along the back of the bleachers, thankful for the loud, chattering crowd that hid his footsteps.

He stopped directly above Jason and Kurt, ducking down and peeking through the breaks in the metal as he strained his ears to hear them.

"—because it *bothers* Blaine, Jason," Kurt was saying patiently. "And I don't want him to be uncomfortable around us. I *want* you two to be friends."

Jason snorted. "You and I *both* know that's not going to happen," he said. "No one else has complained about it. I want to be able to kiss my boyfriend when I want to."

"You *can*," Kurt sighed, sounding mildly annoyed. "I'm just saying we have to cut back a little. I *told* you we shouldn't have started doing that stuff around Blaine."

"Well you weren't complaining when I was getting you off under the blankets last week," Jason said bitterly.

Blaine blushed as he remembered watching a movie at Kurt's house the previous weekend, Kurt and Jason under a blanket on Kurt's couch together. He hadn't even caught that they'd been doing anything other than exchanging lazy kisses.

"Jason," Kurt said warningly.

"What?" Jason said, throwing up his hands. "I'm pissed! It's not fair for him to...to dictate what we can and can't do."

"He would do it for me if it was turned around," Kurt said coolly.

"Yeah no shit," Jason mumbled.

"What's *that* supposed to mean?" Kurt said, voice lowering dangerously.

Jason sighed, shaking his head.

"Blaine is my best friend and you're my boyfriend," Kurt said. "I want *both* of you in my life and if you're not going to like each other than you're going to have to compromise. Blaine has, he just said the other day that he felt like you were taking me away from him."

"Oh, for the love of—"

"I want to split my time up between the two of you," Kurt continued, cutting over him. "I don't want either of you to feel like I prefer one over the other but I'm only one person, Jason, I can't please everyone *all* the time."

"Well, I'm your boyfriend," Jason grumbled. "I should have precedence, don't you think?"

"Why's that?" Kurt said, folding his arms over his chest.

"Because I love you," Jason said, voice gentler than before.

Kurt was silent for a moment, face hidden by the shadow of the bleachers.

"I love you, too," he said softly.

They were quiet for a few seconds and Blaine held his breath as he clung to the bench beside him.

"I'm just really sick and tired of having to deal with him, Kurt," Jason mumbled at last, running his fingers through his hair absently. "Do you have any idea how hard it is to keep my teammates from throwing slushies at him? They're ready to turn on *me*! He's the biggest *nerd* in the whole school."

"Yes, and he's also my best friend, that's why I asked you to tell them to back off," Kurt retorted. "I don't see why him being smarter than those idiots is such a problem for them. He's put up with enough from them already and if my own *boyfriend* isn't willing to do this for me—"

"No, I didn't say I wasn't willing to do it for *you*," Jason said hastily. "Babe, I'll do whatever you want, I just...I don't get why you're still friends with him. You're completely different. I mean...look at you. Look at *him*."

"He's my *friend*," Kurt said dangerously. "You've known since we started dating that he and I were close."

Jason snorted disdainfully.

"What?"

"Nothing," Jason mumbled. "I just can't see how you don't realise that he's completely in—" Blaine froze, clinging to the metal edge of the bleacher so hard it dug painfully into his palms. "...never mind."

"No, what?" Kurt said with a little more force.

"It's nothing," Jason said, shaking his head. "I gotta go get changed. I'll call you tonight, okay?"

Kurt sighed. "Okay," he said resignedly. "I love you?"

The side of Jason's face that Blaine could see softened. "I love you too," he said, laying his hands on Kurt's hips as he kissed him.

Blaine let out a shaking breath as he slumped back against the metal seat, legs wobbling and heart beating so fast he thought it might try and leap right out of his throat. He closed his eyes, breathing slowly through his nose as he tried to wrap his mind around what he'd just learned and tried not to panic.

Jason knew.

Blaine spent the night and most of Friday in a constant state of panic. Jason *knew* he felt something for Kurt. Did he know he was in love with him? Had he caught the way he would stare dreamily at Kurt across the room when he thought no one was looking? Did *other* people know?

He was silent most of the day and barely managed to focus in class or Glee. Kurt had Cheerio practice after school and Blaine was going to go home and get packed before going to Kurt's house after the football game. Most of the Glee Club was going to the game but Blaine had a French paper due the following Monday that he refused to leave until Sunday to finish.

"*You study too much,*" Kurt had said with a roll of his eyes when Blaine had told him when he was skipping the game. "*I have the same essay due and I'm not even started.*"

"*Yeah, well, you're a French prodigy,*" Blaine had mumbled.

Kurt had laughed. "*Well, I have to be better than you at something,*" he said.

It was true, though, French was Blaine's worst subject whereas Kurt could, and did, speak it fluently, laughing as Blaine stared blankly and tried to keep up. He loved listening to Kurt speak French, though, even if he could barely understand a word of it. The way the words rolled off his tongue so effortlessly when they were studying together and Kurt was helping him with conjugation had him getting completely lost in his voice, which was probably why he was so bad at the subject in the first place.

He hung around the choir room after the final bell, when everyone else was heading out to their cars to head home, chattering excitedly about Homecoming, though Blaine himself wasn't remotely excited for it, to spend the night with someone he barely knew while Kurt and Jason danced too close and shared *those* looks. The ones where Kurt's eyelashes fluttered and the very corner of his lips turned up. The looks that made Blaine's heart skip a beat even though they weren't directed towards him.

He sat down at the piano, playing absently and singing under his breath, smiling as he thought of Kurt and how he would sit on the floor next to Blaine's piano at home and listen to him play, chin resting on his fist and a soft smile playing over his lips.

"Hey."

Blaine stilled his hand on the keys and looked over his shoulder, smiling a little wider as Kurt poked his head around the doorway of the choir room, glancing around to make sure it was empty before joining him, Blaine scooting over on the bench to give him room to sit.

"What are you playing?" Kurt said, plunking a few keys with his thumb before letting his hand fall back into his lap.

"Nothing, really," Blaine said, feeling the back of his neck prickle with heat at how close Kurt was to him.

"Oh, come on," Kurt said, knocking his shoulder against Blaine's. "Play for me. Please? I need to be ready to dance tomorrow anyway, right?"

Blaine played his fingers over the keys for a moment, drumming them lightly across the surface without pressing down before he started to play. He could see Kurt's smile widened as he recognised the song.

"Sing for me?" Kurt said quietly, resting his head on Blaine's shoulder.

Blaine swallowed hard to unstick his throat as Kurt traced his fingers over the keys next to his hand as he tried to mirror what he was playing.

You've been on my mind

I grow fonder every day

Lose myself in time

Just thinking of your face

Blaine glanced over at Kurt, who was smiling softly as he listened, eyes fixed on Blaine's fingers as they glided over the keys, his lips silently forming the words Blaine was singing.

God only knows

Why it's taken me so long

To let my doubts go

You're the only one that I want

Kurt sat up and slipped off the bench, grinning as he twirled gracefully on his toes, arms outstretched. Blaine nearly forgot to stop playing as he watched him moving fluidly around the piano, fingers slipping up on the keys so that he had to catch himself as he missed a beat.

I don't know why I'm scared, I've been here before

Every feeling, every word, I've imagined it all

You'll never know if you never try

To forgive your past and simply be mine

Kurt stopped halfway through the bridge, pulling out his cell phone. For one horrible moment Blaine thought he was texting Jason, but then music started playing from the speakers, picking up where Blaine left off as Kurt set his phone on the piano and grabbed Blaine's arm, pulling him to his feet and laughing as he stumbled and fell against him.

"Wh-what are you doing?" Blaine stammered, blushing as Kurt draped his arms around his neck.

I dare you to let me be your, your one and only

"Dancing with you, silly," Kurt said, sighing a little impatiently and placing Blaine's hands on his waist.

Promise I'm worthy to hold in your arms

"Why?" Blaine said, wishing his palms would stop sweating now that they were pressed against Kurt's waist over his uniform top.

So come on and give me a chance

Kurt rolled his eyes. "Stop asking so many questions and dance with me, Blaine," he said, returning his arms around Blaine's neck and resting his head on his shoulder.

To prove that I'm the one who can

Blaine gulped as Kurt's hair tickled across his jaw and cheek and he moved a little closer to him, sighing quietly.

Walk that mile until the end starts

"Are you excited about tomorrow?" Kurt murmured, turning his face into Blaine's neck so his breath ghosted over the sensitive skin.

"Um...sure," Blaine said, trying to keep from stepping on Kurt's toes as he moved his feet. It was funny how he could pull off a complicated routine for glee and not miss a beat but something as simple as turning on the spot became impossibly difficult when his body was brushing against Kurt's like this.

Kurt lifted his head from his shoulder to look him in the eye, smiling softly and blinking slowly in a way that made Blaine's heart flutter.

"It'll be fun," he said, fingers lightly grazing over the hair at the nape of Blaine's neck. "And I promise I won't spend the whole night with Jace, okay?"

Blaine let out a huff of laughter, Kurt grinning and squeezing his shoulder.

"Just promise me something," Kurt said.

"What's that?" Blaine looked up, quirking an eyebrow at Kurt's stern expression.

"When you're busy getting to know Sebastian," he said, features softening slightly, almost to vulnerability as he reached up to straighten Blaine's glasses for him with a caring look. "Make sure you save a dance for me, okay?"

Blaine nodded, his breath catching when Kurt shifted slightly closer to him, though he turned his head to press a kiss to his cheek before giving him a tight hug. Blaine let his arms wind around his waist to hold

him back, breathing in the scent of his shampoo and cologne and biting his tongue hard to stop himself from saying the three words burning in his throat.

He couldn't say it. He never could. Because there was Jason, there would always be a Jason or a Danny or someone else standing solidly in his way.

It shouldn't be so hard to say something so simple. Especially to someone he'd known for so long, someone who knew every part of him, who he himself knew every part of in turn.

Really, it was just words, just sounds he'd whispered a thousand times into the darkness, but try as he might, he couldn't say it now. They stuck like glue in his throat when Kurt was near him like this. He didn't even know if he *wanted* Kurt to hear them because he was sure he'd never hear them back.

Three words shouldn't be able to cause so much pain. They certainly weren't meant to, he knew that. But he would never say them without Kurt wanting to say them back.

Chapter Six

Kurt's father answered the door when Blaine rang the bell later that night, his overnight bag full of various clothes Kurt had helped him pick out draped over his shoulder.

"Hey, Blaine," Burt said, smiling as he stood aside to let Blaine in. "How've you been?"

"Good," Blaine said, waving to Finn, who was relaxing in the living room, flush with victory from his football game and grinning broadly.

"Kurt's upstairs," Burt said, clapping Blaine on the shoulder. "Probably on the phone with Jason." He rolled his eyes, chuckling, and Blaine forced a stiff smile.

"Thank you, sir," Blaine said, stepping past him and heading up to the second floor where Kurt's room was situated.

The door was cracked, music thrumming from inside, and he pushed it open, poking his head around the corner. Kurt was stretched out on his bed on his back, chatting happily on the phone and tapping his foot absently in time with the music, dressed in a t-shirt and a pair of blue silk pajama pants that hung low on his hips, his shirt rucked up his waist as he traced his fingertips absently over his stomach.

"No, I don't," he said, giggling into the phone and waving to Blaine with a bright smile. "No, it doesn't, Jason. My ass does not look like it belongs on a Greek god, you're an idiot." He laughed at something Jason said. "Okay...I gotta go, babe, Blaine is here. Yeah, I'll text you later. Love you too. Bye."

He tossed his phone on the bed beside him, beaming as he sat up cross-legged and Blaine let his bag slide onto the floor at the foot of the bed.

"Hi," he said brightly.

"Hey," Blaine muttered, rubbing the back of his neck. "So...um, I brought my contacts and everything like you said."

"Good," Kurt said excitedly as he slid off the bed. "First step is your hair, so get in there and get all the gel out and we'll cut it." He steered Blaine toward the en suite bathroom.

"C-cut it?" Blaine said anxiously.

"Yes, cut it, Blaine," Kurt confirmed, shoving a towel into his arms. "Now go get in the shower and don't come out until you've gotten all the get out. Hopefully I won't fall asleep waiting."

Blaine schooled, Kurt laughing as he closed the door behind him. Sighing, he pulled off his glasses, blinking as everything went fuzzy without them, and slowly stripped off his shoes, slacks, very and shirt, folding everything carefully and laying them in a neat pile before flipping on the shower.

He shivered as he as he waited for the water to warm, trying to keep his mind away from the fact that Kurt showered here. That Kurt was *naked* here on a daily basis. He'd spent the night at Kurt's house a hundred times when they were younger, but he'd never been so conscious of his surroundings before, the fact that it was Kurt's soap and shampoo sitting on the ledge, Kurt's clothes in the hamper. The room smelled like Kurt, a warm, fruity smell, something like guava and passion fruit, not over sweet or cloying, but a comforting scent that brought back a thousand memories, memories of falling asleep on Kurt's bed, leaning against each other, Kurt's head resting in the crook of Blaine's shoulder and his hair tickling his chin.

He scrubbed his hair clean, taking an extra minute to enjoy the almost too-hot water cascading over him that left his skin just slightly reddened from the heat, but stepping out onto the rug and towelling himself dry. He rubbed at his hair for a moment, tousling the wet curls, before tucking the towel around his hips and shoving his glasses back on his face.

It was then that he realized he'd left his bag, and all his clean clothes, in Kurt's bedroom. He could still hear the music playing on the other side of the door and didn't think Kurt would hear him over it if he tried to get his attention.

Groaning in frustration, he tightened the towel around his hips and cracked the door opened, steam escaping over his head into the room. Kurt must have sensed the movement, as he looked up from his magazine, grinning, when Blaine opened the door a little wider and stepped out onto the carpet.

The smile slowly faded off Kurt's face, lips falling open and eyes widening. He blinked a few times as if he was trying to clear something from his mind and Blaine suddenly felt self-conscious.

"What's wrong?" he said wrapping his free arm around himself.

"Nothing," Kurt said a little breathlessly. "You...you've been working out."

"Huh?" Blaine said glancing down at his own chest and arms, the muscles that had finally started to define themselves the previous year. "Oh, not really. Well, sometimes I play baseball with my cousins from Westerville but..."

Kurt cleared his throat quietly and sat up. "You look good," he said, smiling. "Sebastian will be pleased, I'm sure."

"Oh. Right. Sebastian," Blaine muttered, brows creasing in a frown.

They looked at each other for a long moment, Blaine's fingers wrapped around the knot of the towel around his middle and Kurt's expression steady, unreadable. His eyes dropped to Blaine's chest for a split second before he shook his head and looked away.

"So you should probably get dressed," he said brusquely. "Just put on your pajamas, we'll figure out what you'll wear tomorrow. I've got a smock so don't worry about get hair on your clothes."

Blaine moved to get his bag, Kurt carefully avoiding looking at him as he flipped through his magazine, though his eyes weren't moving as he looked at the pages.

Confused, Blaine pulled on fresh boxers, a pair of loose sweats, and an old t-shirt, ruffling his hair again as he walked back into the bedroom, where Kurt was sitting in the small alcove off his bedroom where his vanity was placed next to the window, the carpet ending and the floor tiled.

"Have a seat," he said, patting the chair in front of the mirror and smiling, scissors and comb in hand.

Blaine sat, anxiously running his hand through his long curls. Kurt smacked his wrist with the comb.

"Stop touching," he said sternly, draping a smock around Blaine's neck and fastening it behind his neck. His lips twitched and Blaine grinned, leaning back in the chair.

Kurt ran his fingers along his scalp and through his curls, face softening slightly, and Blaine closed his eyes.

"I forgot how curly your hair was," Kurt said, tugging on one of the curls and letting it spring back, fingertips massaging Blaine's scalp gently. "I like it."

Blaine smiled, a wave of drowsiness washing over him as Kurt rubbed his head and twisted his hair between his fingers, humming quietly as he started to cut, the soft *snip* of the scissors as lulling as his touch.

"Not too short," Blaine mumbled.

"I'm just making it a little more...manageable," Kurt said reassuringly, dragging the comb slowly through Blaine's hair and trimming the tips of his curls. "I promise you'll look fine. You'll still have your curls."

Blaine opened his eyes in time to see Kurt grinning in the mirror as he cut, head quirked to the side. He sighed, clucking his tongue quietly.

"I really don't know why you feel the need to put all that gel in your hair, Blaine," he said, shaking his head. "It really is nice. And it's so soft and...fluffy."

"Fluffy?" Blaine said, brow furrowing in confusion.

"Mhmm," Kurt hummed, patting the top of his head and ruffling his curls. "I like it."

Blaine tried not to look too pleased as he settled back and closed his eyes, allowing himself to get lost in the way Kurt's fingers played through his hair and across his scalp, so soothing he thought he might fall asleep.

"Done," Kurt said brightly ten minutes later, setting down the scissors and comb and pulling the smock from around Blaine's neck. "You're much easier than Finn. He fidgets all the time."

Blaine leaned forward in the chair, brushing his hand through his shortened curls, which Kurt had pushed to the side and fluffed up slightly, giving them the look that he'd just gotten out of bed. In a good way thought. Usually when he got out of bed he looked like he had a dead animal on his head.

"Do you like it?" Kurt said warily, looking up from cleaning up the little strands of hair scattered across the floor.

"Yeah," Blaine said, nodding slowly and turning his head to the side to observe it from different angle. "Yeah, it's nice."

"And you won't have to coat it in gel anymore," Kurt said, dumping the dustpan in the trash and straightening up, draping his arms around Blaine's shoulders from behind and resting his chin on the top of his head.

Blaine stiffened as Kurt's hugged him, smiling as he gave him a long look in the mirror before kissing the top of his head.

"Come on," he said, patting Blaine's shoulder as he pulled away. "I'm exhausted. We had to do like ten basket tosses at the game and after catching Santana so many times, it starts to wear on you."

Blaine swiveled his chair around, biting his lip as his eyes trailed down the way the line of Kurt's spine was visible through his t-shirt.

"So, um, am I sleeping on the couch or do you having a sleeping bag or..." he trailed off as Kurt looked over his shoulder with a perplexed expression.

"What are you talking about?" he said, laughing. "You're sleeping up here. In my bed. Like you always have."

Blaine's mouth went dry, breath catching as a thousand different scenarios went through his mind, of how many things could happen on Kurt's queen-sized bed. Yes, they'd shared a bed before, but that was back when they were younger and Blaine had been so desperately in love with him, before Kurt had had a boyfriend and grown so tall and gorgeous. There'd been plenty of times they'd dozed off together but to actually sleep in the same bed... Blaine didn't think he'd survive the night.

"That's not weird is it?" Kurt said, pausing as he absently sifted through his stack of DVDs. "I mean, we practically sleep together half the time anyway when we nap studying and whatever."

"N-no," Blaine said, voice rising half an octave. "No, it's fine, completely fine. Totally fine. It's...it's fine."

Kurt quirked an eyebrow, looking amused as he turned back to his DVD's. "So what do you want to watch?"

"Oh," Blaine said, shaking his head a little to rid himself of thoughts of sleeping with his arms wrapped around Kurt's waist. "Doesn't matter."

"Okay, um...how about this," Kurt said, picking up *Pretty Woman* and holding it up for Blaine's approval.

Blaine shrugged and stood up to move nervously to the bed as Kurt popped the movie in and flicked off the lights before leaping onto the bed with him and lying back against the pillows.

Blaine grabbed the remote off Kurt's bedside table and flipped on the TV as he lay down trying not to react too much when Kurt snuggled under his arm like he always did when they watched movies together.

"You're so comfy," Kurt said, smiling from where his head was resting in the crook of Blaine's arm. "Sometimes I just want to keep you here as my pillow."

Blaine smiled, though his face fell into misery the moment Kurt looked away. He didn't know how much longer he could keep this charade up, especially when Kurt was drawing random patterns on his chest with his finger, nuzzling against his side as they watched the movie.

"So have you talked to Sebastian at all since Saturday?" Kurt said, eyes fixed on the screen.

"No, I, um...forgot to give him my number," Blaine lied. Well, it wasn't completely false. He *had* forgotten to give Sebastian his number, but he hadn't been planning on giving it to him if he'd asked.

"Oh, well, you two will get to talk plenty tomorrow," Kurt said. He smirked. "If you have any time for talking, that is." He twisted his head around and Blaine's eyes widened at the proximity, at how close his lips were to his own. "You look really good, by the way. Sebastian won't be able to keep his hands off you."

Blaine responded with a tight-lipped smile. He wasn't looking forward trying to stave off Sebastian's advances the following evening. It had been bad enough in the full light of the Lima Bean, he couldn't imagine what he'd be like in a darkened room with a few hundred other hot bodies.

Kurt ended up drifting off halfway through the movie, curling against Blaine's side, one arm draped over his chest and his legs tangled around one of Blaine's.

Blaine smiled and brushed a few strands of hair back off Kurt's forehead. His heart ached, seeing him like this and knowing he couldn't simply lower his head and kiss him like he so badly wanted to.

"I love you," he murmured, combing his fingers through Kurt's soft hair.

Kurt shifted closer to him in his sleep, smiling faintly, and leaned into his hand. He mumbled something incoherent and scooted over so he was flush against Blaine's side, his groin pressed to Blaine's hip.

Blaine's mouth went dry, eyes widening, as he realised that Kurt was half-hard under his thin pajama pants.

"K-Kurt," he whispered, tapping Kurt's shoulder.

Kurt made a soft noise of protest and clung tighter to him, tilting his head up and brushing his lips over his throat. Blaine's eyes rolled back and his toes curled in his socks as Kurt kissed his neck lazily, pushing his hips against Blaine's side and sighing. His lips were warm and soft, very slightly damp and sending pleasant little shivers down his spine. He wondered when they might feel like against his own lips, drawing his lower one away from his teeth softly and sucking on it.

He swallowed, a cold sweat breaking out across his brow, his body refusing to work for him to push Kurt away.

"Mmm, Jason."

Everything shattered and hot tears welled up and splashed down Blaine's face within a matter of seconds. He lifted Kurt's arm off him and gently disentangled himself from him, pushing up off the bed and wrapping his arms around his chest.

Kurt rolled over, whining softly and blinking blearily as he woke up.

"Blaine?" he mumbled, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "What's--"

His eyes widened and Blaine kept his own fixed on the ceiling as Kurt pulled a pillow into his lap, blushing furiously.

"I, um...I should...go," he said, getting up and looking vaguely confused.

"We're at *your* house," Blaine said, frowning.

"Oh," Kurt said, stopping in the process of sliding off the bed. "Right..."

"Do you want me to leave?" Blaine muttered.

"Huh? No, you're staying the night, silly," Kurt said, smiling over his shoulder as he picked up his phone off the bed. "Just...I need to run to the bathroom and...call Jason..."

Blaine's eyes widened as Kurt hurried into the bathroom and shut the door behind him. He hesitated for a moment before tiptoeing over to the door and pressing his ear to it. There was the soft sound of water running but Blaine could hear him sitting down on the closed toilet lid.

"Jason?"

Blaine pressed his ear a little harder to the door, holding his breath.

"Hey...yeah. I am. Yeah...Blaine's in my room, I'm in the bathroom...I was just thinking about you." His voice dropped seductively and Blaine's knees shook. *"Touching myself...mmm, yeah, baby...yeah, feels g-good--"*

Blaine clapped his hand to his mouth and backed away from the door, blushing scarlet. Sitting down hard on Kurt's bed, he tried not to think about the fact that Kurt was...well...*that* ten feet away from him. It was

even harder not to think about the thought of Kurt sweating and flushed pink, biting his lip and touching is own-

"Oh."

Blaine swallowed to try and get some moisture in his throat. One thing he'd never actually thought about was what Kurt might look like. What his...*cock* might look like. But suddenly he couldn't get the idea out of his mind.

He scowled as he realised that Kurt was in there...talking to Jason as he...

He closed his eyes and took a few deep breaths in an attempt to clear his mind of Kurt and *Jason*, thankfully, by the time Kurt had reappeared ten minutes later, he had managed to calm himself down. He had to bite back a whimper at the sight of Kurt's flushed cheeks and mussed hair.

"Sorry about that," Kurt said, smiling as he set his phone on his bedside table. "I...uh...wanted to check in with Jason."

"Right," Blaine said flatly, nodding. "Did you want to finish the movie?" He gestured lamely to the TV, where the movie was still playing.

"Sure," Kurt said brightly, shrugging as he flopped down on the bed and pulled a pillow against his chest.

Blaine bit his lip, suddenly ready to just leave because he knew that staying here with Kurt wasn't going to do anything to help his crush. But Kurt was giving him the familiar pleading look, looking at him through his lashes, face hidden behind the pillow below his eyes. He sighed, melting a little at the expression, and lay down next to him, allowing Kurt to take his usual position against his side, thankfully falling asleep before he could focus more on the idea of being in the same bed as Kurt and all the things it could lead to.

He woke up feeling incredibly warm and cozy, something weighted and limp lying across his chest, gentle breath blowing over his neck. Blinking and yawning, he looked down at Kurt, whose face was smushed into Blaine shoulder, his eyelashes resting curled against his cheeks, chest rising and falling slowly with his rhythmic breathing.

Glancing at the clock, Blaine saw it was already close to ten. He adjusted his glasses and rubbed his eyes, settling into the pillows as he watched Kurt sleep, lightly carding his fingers through his hair. Kurt sighed,

snuffling and smacking his lips as he curled his fingers in Blaine's shirt and held onto him a little tighter, one leg twisting around Blaine's. He burrowed into his chest, body flush and warm against Blaine's.

Pale sunlight shafted through the break in the curtains, soft and golden across Kurt's face to give him a faint glow. He laid there for a long time, simply stroking Kurt's temple and thinking how nice it would be to just tilt his head down and press a kiss to his forehead, to tuck his fingers under his chin and lift his head up to tell him he loved him before catching his lips against his own.

Kurt grumbled and shifted, eyes fluttering open half an inch. He blinked a few times, gaze falling on Blaine, and smiled lazily, one side of his mouth lifting up. Yawning, he snuggled closer to Blaine and sighed contentedly.

"Morning," he mumbled.

"Morning," Blaine replied.

"Sorry I fell asleep on you," Kurt said with another yawn as he slowly sat up. "You're just really comfortable."

"It's okay," Blaine said, watching as Kurt stretched his arms up over his head and arched back and made a low noise in his throat.

"I'm going to shower, I think," Kurt said, voice still rough with sleep. He rubbed his eyes, sliding off the bed and gathering a sweater and jeans from his closet before retreating to the bathroom. "We'll figure out what you're wearing tonight when I'm done," he called as he closed the door behind him. "Why don't you go get breakfast, I'll be down in a few."

Blaine flopped back on the bed, pressing his face into the pillows and sighing at the smell of Kurt permanently embedded in the fabric. He dragged himself to his feet and shuffled downstairs, yawning and scratching absently at the back of his head, pushing his glasses up his nose.

The kitchen was quiet and empty, Burt and Carole already having left for work, and Finn, he assumed, still asleep. Kurt still hadn't come downstairs when he'd finished his cereal and he plopped down on the couch, flipping absently through the television channels and gazing around at the pictures on the wall, mostly of Kurt and Finn at various ages. There were a few of him with Kurt, as well, including one of the pair of them from the previous summer from Kurt's birthday party, Kurt hugging him around the shoulders and planting a kiss on his cheek, face scrunched up in a grin.

It had been taken right after Kurt had opened the new iPod Blaine had gotten him and Blaine remembered his squeal of happiness when the paper had fallen away and he'd practically tackled him in the hug, lips pressing firmly against his cheek, which had felt like someone had set it on fire even after he pulled away.

He touched the spot absently, sighing.

"Did you eat?"

Blaine turned in his seat to see Kurt coming down the stairs, smoothing out his sweater and picking off a few pieces of lint with his fingernails.

"Yeah," Blaine said, tossing the remote aside. "You want me to make you something?"

"I can make my own breakfast, Blaine," Kurt said with a tinkling laugh. "I'm just going to get some coffee, why don't you go get changed into the first outfit I laid out for you? It's on the bed."

Blaine watched him pulling the coffee beans from the cupboard, humming quietly, for a moment before retreating upstairs again and changing into the dark green sweater and jeans he'd laid out for him, scrutinising himself in the mirror. Really, it wasn't that bad. Nothing like what he usually wore, but he could see the appeal. It wasn't quite like what Jason and his friends wore, graphic tees and distressed jeans from American Eagle and Hollister, but he thought Kurt must like it if he'd picked them out.

"Wow, you look great."

Blaine glanced in the mirror at Kurt, who was grinning and leaning against the doorframe, mug in hand as he sipped slowly.

"Yeah?" Blaine said hopefully.

"Mhmm," Kurt said, moving towards him and smoothing down the fabric at his shoulders. "It's all about finding the right balance. I love your clothes but sometimes they're a bit...hmm, I don't know, you have a lot going on sometimes. If you tone down one or two things, it will help the rest pop more." He paused, hands resting on Blaine's shoulders. "I like this but not for tonight. You need to try a few other things on."

They spent the next hour or so mixing and matching different outfits until Kurt had finally settled on one for him to wear. A dark grey, tweed blazer over a muted blue argyle sweater, a pair of dark wash jeans, and two-toned saddle shoes.

"There," Kurt said, adjusting the collar on his blazer. "You look like a professor. But in a good way. Like a sexy professor."

He grinned and turned back to finish off the last dregs off his coffee, Blaine shedding his blazer and draping it over the back of his chair.

"What time are we leaving?" he said, tugging the sweater over his head and folding it neatly, refusing to let it get dirty. He tugged on a t-shirt and sat down on the edge of Kurt's bed.

"Jace is getting here around seven thirty," Kurt said, setting down his mug and sitting next to him. "And we're meeting Sebastian there." He grinned slyly. "So, anything, er, planned for after the dance?"

Blaine frowned. "No...why?" he said.

Kurt nudged him with his elbow, giving him a dubious look. "Nothing at all?" he said. "Nothing involving you and a certain Warbler and the back seat of his car?"

Blaine stared at him in confusion for a moment before catching on to what he was suggesting and blushing furiously.

"O-oh, well, I-I, n-no, I didn't-"

"Blaine, I'm just teasing you," Kurt said, laughing. "I know you said you wanted to wait for sex. But maybe you'll get a nice big goodnight kiss, yeah?"

"Erm..."

"You'll have to tell me all about it later," Kurt said, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively.

"Right," Blaine muttered. He had no intention on kissing Sebastian, or even dancing with him beyond what was completely necessary. And he didn't think he'd be able to talk about kissing someone else with Kurt when all he could think about was how soft Kurt's lips had been against his neck the night before, when he'd thought he was Jason and- No, he needed to stop thinking about that. It wasn't helping things.

"Come on," Kurt said, patting his leg. "Let's veg out and watch The Bachelor until dinner, I think there's a marathon on today. Oh, and I have that really good frozen yogurt downstairs, I'll go get it."

Blaine heaved a sigh, lying back on the bed and scowling at the ceiling as Kurt stood up to get flip on the TV before walking out into the hall.

"Mmm, you look so good in your jacket, babe."

Blaine glared at the back of Kurt's seat, trying to drown out the sound of him cooing over Jason's outfit as they drove to the school together, Kurt's arm reaching across the console so his hand resting lightly on Jason's thigh. He'd taken Blaine's comment about PDA to heart and wasn't all over him, but it still dug at Blaine to watch him brush his fingers along the inseam of Jason's slacks every now and then with almost imperceptible movements.

"You look sexy as hell," Jason said, eyeing Kurt up and down as they pulled up to a stoplight.

That was, at least, something they could agree on. Kurt has dressed in a pair of skin-tight black pants, boots that hugged to the middle of his calves, and a thin white shirt layered under a dark vest that fit snugly around his waist and chest. With his hair perfectly styled as it always was, Blaine knew it was going to be torture trying to keep his eyes off him the entire night.

"Well, I try," Kurt said, preening himself and grinning. He turned in his seat to look back at Blaine. "And you look pretty hot yourself, Blaine. It's so weird seeing you without your glasses though."

Blaine smiled in reply, blinking a little as he felt his contacts drying. He hadn't worn them in so long, it was strange trying to readjust to the feel of them.

Jason pulled up to the school ten minutes later, Kurt having spent the time wondering aloud who was going to be crowd Homecoming King, though he was sure it would be Jason.

"I mean look at you," he said as they walked into the school together, his arm wrapped around Jason's waist and Jason's slung around his shoulders. "You're the perfect Homecoming King. Especially after Thursday."

Jason grinned and kissed the side of his head. "Well, I guess we'll have to see won't we?" he said, eyes flicking to Blaine for a split second. "You could be surprised by who wins."

Blaine frowned in confusion but didn't say anything as he followed them inside. To his disappointment, Sebastian was leaning against the wall outside the gymnasium, where the steady thud of loud music was audible through the closed doors. Blaine had been hoping that he would, for whatever reason, not show up.

"Well, hey, Blaine," Sebastian said, eyeing him with an appreciative look. "Don't you look nice."

"Er, thanks," Blaine mumbled, folding his arms self-consciously over his chest as Sebastian approached him, dressed in his Dalton uniform—did he even *own* other clothing—and laid his hand on the small of his back and leaned in close.

"No, you look *really* good, Blaine," he said in a low voice. His hand ran slowly up Blaine's spine and came to rest on his shoulder. "Sorry about the uniform. Have to represent Dalton and all that."

"Right," Blaine said, shrugging his shoulder a little to try and get his hand off, though he didn't seem to notice. Or maybe he just didn't care.

"Come on," Sebastian said, steering him towards the door, through which Jason and Kurt had already disappeared. "Let's go. I want to dance with you."

Blaine reluctantly gave into the pressure of his arm and stepped through the swinging door into the gym, loud bass pounding in his ears immediately, thumping steadily in his chest. A few people turned to stare at him as he walked past, eyes widening in surprise and mouths falling open. Blaine frowned and tightened his arms around himself, wishing he had a mirror to see if he'd perhaps messed up his hair in the car.

"I guess they aren't used to seeing you like this," Sebastian said, lips barely an inch from Blaine's ear. Blaine jumped and Sebastian chuckled softly. "Sorry. I just mean you certainly weren't dressed like this when we met. You look hot, Blaine. Not that you didn't before but, well, this is even better."

Blaine spluttered, not sure how to reply to this remark.

"Relax," Sebastian said, turning him around so they were facing each other and pressing his hands to Blaine's hips and squeezing gently. "You're so uptight. You need to loosen up a little, Blaine." He moved closer to him, lowering his head and giving Blaine a hungry look. "Enjoy yourself."

Blaine swallowed, Sebastian's breath hot over his face.

"Blaine!"

They both turned at the sound and Blaine nearly cried in relief at the sight of Quinn and Rachel fighting through the crowd towards him, both of them casting Sebastian a haughty look.

"Oh, hey guys," Blaine said, mouthing 'thank you' when Sebastian had focused his attention on them.

"Hi," Rachel said cheerily, dressed in a pale lilac dress that fell just above her knees, hair pulled up in a braid. "We thought you might want to come hang out with us for a little bit since you'll be spending the entire night with your date. Sebastian, you should go get Blaine something to drink."

"I don't think Blaine—"

"Sure," Blaine said, talking over Sebastian and disentangling himself from his grip to follow after Rachel and Quinn at top speed, leaving Sebastian frowning after them.

"You look fantastic by the way," Rachel said, beaming over her shoulder at him.

"Thanks," Blaine muttered, tugging at the sleeve of his blazer. "Kurt picked it out."

Quinn flashed him a look at the sound of Kurt's name.

"Oh, that's right, Finn said he took you shopping," Rachel said, nodding. She, like most of the people in the school, was completely oblivious to Blaine's feeling for Kurt. For one, he knew she would try and fix the two of them up together, but also because she was never tight-lipped about the secrets people confided in her.

"I have to go hunt down Finn again," Rachel said, standing on her toes and looking around. "I'll be right back." She smiled before disappearing into the crowd again.

"Wow, I wonder if they could get any closer?" Quinn muttered, pulling a wry face as she looked through the crowd.

"Who?" Blaine said, frowning.

Quinn nodded and Blaine turned to where she was looking, stomach dropping as his eyes fell on where Kurt was dancing with Jason, his hips rolling and gyrating in time with the music, body pressed against Jason's and eyes closed. They were practically dry-humping each other in the middle of the dance floor. Given that half the other couples were doing the same thing though, no one said anything about it, though a few people were throwing them annoyed or disgusted looks.

He barely registered the pair of hands falling on his hips from behind until he suddenly felt hot breath on the back of his neck and jerked around, tearing his eyes away from Kurt and Jason, who were now so close, he didn't think he'd be surprised to find out they'd simply fused into one person.

"What are you doing?" he said, taking a step back from Sebastian, who grinned and stepped closer to him, crowding against him. He glanced to Quinn, who gave him an apologetic look but didn't seem to know how to deal with Sebastian's reappearance.

"Dancing with you," Sebastian said, hand returning to Blaine's hip and trailing dangerously close to his groin as it slid down his thigh. "I'm your date, aren't I? Your friends can't take you away from me that easily." He lowered his head as if to kiss him and Blaine stumbled back from him.

"I, um...I have to...um, bathroom," Blaine spluttered, barely taking a moment to register his annoyed look before turning, running past Quinn and pushing through the crowd towards the hall.

He made his way to the bathrooms outside of the gym, clutching the edge of the sink at staring at his reflection in the cracked glass and taking a deep breath. An involuntary shudder ran through his body at the thought of Sebastian's hands running along his leg the way it had.

"You're here for Kurt," he muttered, frowning. "Kurt."

He splashed cold water on his face, trying to push away the fact that Kurt had been grinding against his, very attractive, boyfriend for the past twenty minutes since they'd arrived at the dance. Brushing a few loose curls off his forehead, he was still trying to adjust to not having it gelled up, he tried his face with a paper towel and leaned against the wall, dropping his head back against the tile and closing his eyes as he tried to compose himself.

The bathroom door swung open and banged against the wall, Blaine jumping as his eyes snapped open and he turned to see Jason glaring at him from the doorway.

"O-oh...hi, Jason," he said meekly.

Jason shut and locked the bathroom door silently before turning back to him, jaw clenched and eyes hard.

"Wh-what are you doing?" Blaine said anxiously.

Jason took a few steps towards him, staring down at him, blue eyes flashing dangerously.

"You and I need to have a little talk," he said, narrowing his eyes. "About Kurt."

"What do you mean?" Blaine said, taking a step back, his hips hitting the edge of the sink.

"You know exactly what I mean," Jason said, voice lowering to a growl. "I'm not an idiot, Anderson."

Blaine didn't think it would be smart to say he disagreed.

"I see the way you look at Kurt," Jason said, eyes narrowing dangerously. "I think you know I know that you're in love with him."

"I d-don't know what you're talking about," Blaine said, voice rising nervously as Jason stepped even closer to him. He'd never realised just how tall he was before.

Jason laughed drily. "Don't play that shit, Anderson," he said, poking him hard in the chest. "Anyone with a pair of eyes can see the way you stare at him like you're some love struck twelve year-old girl. It's pathetic and it's creepy and it needs to stop."

"What's it matter to you how I feel about Kurt?" Blaine said. "He's dating *you*, not m-me."

"It matters because you share his fucking bed sometimes," Jason growled. "You two talk *all the time*. You spend more time with him than I do. And knowing the person who my boyfriend occasionally sleeps with because you're 'just friends' would probably beg to fuck him is not comforting."

Blaine flushed with anger. "I never said I wanted to—"

"To what?" Jason snapped. "To fuck him? Oh you've got that innocent shit down for sure but I bet you jerk off to him, don't you? I bet you have dreams about him, you fucking little pervert." He grabbed Blaine by the collar and pushed him roughly against the wall, ignoring his whimper and snarling in his face.

"Kurt's *my* boyfriend," he said. "And no one's fucking him or touching him or any of that but *me*, got it? If you want to have some little crush on him or whatever, I really don't give a shit but you'd better keep your hands off him. I know you're important to him or...*whatever* so I'm not going to tell you to stop being his friend but if I see him getting cozy with you or hear about him 'cuddling' with you one more time I swear to *god* I will tell him everything and break your damn nose. Understand?"

Blaine nodded shakily, his whole body trembling as Jason released his collar and he slumped against the wall, heart racing in his chest.

"And another thing," Jason said, stopping at the door. "You're going to continue to date Sebastian or the same rule applies."

He barely registered Jason leaving, slamming the door loudly behind him as he did. Knees wobbling and palms breaking into a cold, clammy sweat, he slid down onto the floor, trying to gather his wits about him.

He took slow, deep breaths through his nose, wiping his hands hastily on his jeans and patting his forehead and eyes with the cuff of his jacket. He sat there for what must have been half an hour, slowly calming himself down and trying not to think about the fact that Jason had just threatened to tell Kurt how he felt about him, that he was in *love* with him.

The worst part of it was, he'd never actually thought about having...sex with Kurt before. When he pictured them together, it was all soft kisses and slow caresses across each other's skin. He didn't want to do something so carnal as *fuck* Kurt. The very word hung oddly on his ears. No one should 'fuck' someone like Kurt. Kurt deserved to be made love to. But even that was such a foreign concept that Blaine wouldn't know what to do with himself even if the opportunity existed.

And as for masturbating—he blushed at the thought—it was something he almost never did and he *definitely* didn't think about Kurt while doing it. He'd tried once and felt so disgusted with himself that he could barely look Kurt in the eye for a week.

In all honestly, he loved the physical relationship he had with Kurt, how close they could get with one another, it was those moments that he thought hurt the most thought because they made him love Kurt all the more and there was nothing he could do about it.

Then there was kissing. Yes, if there was one thing he wished he could include in their relationship, it would be kissing. He just wanted to lie down and familiarize himself with every aspect of Kurt's lips. The shape. The feel. The taste. Everything. He thought he could probably spend hours doing it and never get tired.

But now Jason wanted him to stay away from Kurt. Well, not entirely. But not being able to curl up with Kurt on the couch or his bed when they watched movies anymore when Kurt was always the one to initiate it... He had no idea how that was going to work.

Well, he thought bitterly, you can always tell him you don't want to since you've got a boyfriend now.

Resentful and still feeling jolted by what Jason had done and said, he pushed himself to his feet and slowly made his way back out to the gymnasium, shoulder slumping when he heard *So Close* playing over the sound system.

He glanced around for Sebastian, though it was a half-hearted attempt and he was about to give up and sit alone in the corner when someone called his name and he turned to see Kurt jogging through the slowly moving couples.

"Blaine!" he bumped into someone and hurried to apologise before reaching Blaine, looking concerned. "There you are! I've been looking for you! They're announcing King and Queen next and I wanted to dance with you before in case it's Jace."

Before Blaine could stop him, he grabbed his hand and pulled him out into the middle of the dance floor, draping his arms around Blaine's neck and smiling.

Blaine tentatively put his hands on Kurt's waist, glancing around to see if he could find Jason and not catching sight of him through the crowd.

*So close was waiting, waiting here with you
And now forever I know*

"So where were you?" Kurt said with a frown. "Sebastian said you just vanished."

"Oh...um, bathroom," Blaine mumbled. "Just, headache."

"Mmm, I know what you mean," Kurt said, nodding sympathetically. "They play the music so loud in here sometimes."

*All that I wanted to hold you
So close*

Kurt sighed and laid his head on Blaine's shoulder, tightening his arms around him and swaying gently with the music. Blaine looked down at his profile, unable to resist sliding his arms around so his hands linked at the small of his back. He could feel Kurt smiling against his jaw.

*So close to reaching that famous happy end
Almost believing this was not pretend*

"Will you sing?" Kurt murmured, fingers playing with the hair at the nape of his neck.

Blaine bit his lip as he caught Jason glowering at him from the opposite side of the room, eyes narrowed and arms folded across his chest.

"Please?" Kurt said, lifting his head and pouting faintly.

Blaine relaxed at the look in his eyes and nodded, Kurt beaming as he rested his chin on his shoulder again, giving him a small squeeze as he sang softly in his ear.

*And now you're beside me and look how far we've come
So far we are so close*

Blaine closed his eyes, listening to the instrumental build of the song play around the room, dozens of happy couples dancing around him while he was standing there with the person he loved more than anything in the world and he couldn't say a thing about it. He let his head rest on Kurt's shoulder, knowing it might be the last time he was able to be close to him like this if Jason had his way, soaking up his warmth and smell and the way his fingertips drew tiny circles over the back of his neck.

He sighed contently as Blaine murmured the song gently in his ear, struck by the irony of the words and wondering just why the universe had it out for him.

*How could I face the faceless days
If I should lose you now?*

"Blaine?"

"Hmm?"

*We're so close
To reaching that famous happy end*

Kurt lifted his head from Blaine's neck, eyes wide and vulnerable.

"What's wrong?" Blaine said.

Kurt bit his lip, looking down at Blaine's chest.

And almost believing this was not pretend

Kurt glanced up at him. "If you and Sebastian become a thing," he said timidly. "You'll still spend time with me right? I mean...after what you said about me and Jace, I thought about how awful it would be for someone to steal you away from me. D-don't get me wrong, I want you to be happy and be so in love with someone you can't stand because it's amazing—" Blaine felt a pang in his chest. "—but I want you to still be my friend. Promise we'll still be just as close. No matter what happens?"

Let's go on dreaming for we know we are

Blaine glanced at Jason, who was still scowling at him, and felt his heart sink in his chest. But he nodded and smiled just the same as he looked back at Kurt.

"Of course," he said.

So close

Kurt beamed and hugged him, arms secure around his neck and breath tickling over his skin.

So close

"You're the best, Blaine," Kurt mumbled.

And still so far

Kurt pulled away from him as the song ended, giving his hand a squeeze as Figgins, their principal, stepped onto the stage with a slip of paper.

"I should go find Jace," Kurt said.

"No need," Jason said as he appeared from the crowd and wrapped his arms securely around Kurt's waist from behind, glaring at Blaine over Kurt's head.

"Oh, good," Kurt said excitedly. "You're about to be crowned."

Jason chuckled and kissed him on top of the head and Blaine had the sudden desire to punch the blonde right off his stupid hair style.

"Quiet please," Figgins said in his thick accent, adjusting the microphone. "It's time to crown the 2011 McKinley Homecoming King and Queen."

Kurt squirmed excitedly, clutching Jason's hands where they were resting on his stomach.

"This year's Homecoming Queen is—" Figgins unfolded the paper he was holding, grinning out at all of them. "Santana Lopez!"

"That's right!" Blaine heard Santana cry from near the stage. He grinned as she strutted onto the stage, dressed in a sleek black dress, long hair pulled up and falling down her back in waves. She took the crown from Figgins and placed it on her head, smirking around at the rest of the girls who'd been in the running.

"You can all suck it," she said smugly, folding her arms across her chest and cocking her hip to the side.

"Oh my god," Kurt said, giggling into his hand.

"Yes, thank you, Ms. Lopez," Figgins said, looking mildly confused. "Now, on to the King."

Kurt squealed quietly and Jason leered in Blaine's direction, Blaine giving him a nonplussed look in return.

Sebastian sidled up to his side at that moment, looking annoyed.

"There you are," he said, laying a hand on Blaine's back. "You're a slippery one, aren't you?"

"Shh," Kurt hushed him, flapping his hand in his direction.

"The 2011 McKinley Homecoming King is..." Figgins looked mildly bewildered as he unfolded the paper, glancing up into the crowd before reading the name. "Blaine Anderson."

Silence reigned for several seconds before whispering broke out and half the room turned in Blaine's direction. Kurt gaped at him, mouth hanging open and eyes wide.

Blaine felt the blush creeping up his cheek as several hundred pairs of eyes focused on him.

"What are you doing?" Kurt hissed, regaining his composure. "Go."

He reached over to push lightly against his arm and Blaine stumbled forward towards the stage, keeping his eyes fixed straight ahead as the people around him stared and muttered angrily as he passed. His foot caught on the stairs on the way onto the stage and he nearly tripped, face heating up further as a few people tittered.

Santana didn't smile as he passed her. In fact, she looked mildly worried.

Figgins smiled as he set the plastic crown on Blaine's head, Blaine wishing he had somewhere else to look besides the hundreds of faces watching him. His eyes found Kurt immediately and he flashed him a pleading look, Kurt shrugging and giving him a *what-can-I-do* look.

Blaine blinked, the lights on the stage overbright and focused directly on his face. He felt sick to his stomach, wanted to retreat back to the bathroom where it was safe and he was alone and no one was *staring* at him like they all were right now.

"Right," Figgins said, stepping back and presenting Blaine as if he was some product on the Home Shopping Network. "Well, congratulations, Mr. Anderson." He clapped a few times but no one else copied him and he stopped immediately. "So, now it's time for our King and Queen to—"

"Hey, Anderson!"

Blaine looked up at the shout, which had come from directly above him in the rafters, which were blocked out in the white lights.

"Congrats!"

Blaine frowned, blinking and shielding his eyes as he stared up.

There was the rush of falling liquid and he barely had time to close his eyes as what must have been two gallons of red slushie hit him hard in the face. It felt like someone was dousing him in the Artic Ocean, cold, wet, and sticky, dribbling down his back and chest and in his hair. He gasped and coughed as it filled his mouth, the room erupting in jeers and laughter around him.

His eyes stung, though he couldn't tell if it was from the slushie or the tears of embarrassment burning in his throat.

"What is *wrong* with you!"

He heard Kurt forcing his way through the crowd and climbing onto the stage, boots clomping heavily on the floor.

"Blaine, oh god, are you okay?"

Blaine scooped slush out of his eyes, wiping the residue away with the sleeve of his, now ruined, jacket and blinking a few times. One of his contacts had fallen out and Kurt was blurred around the edges on one side as he watched him in concern.

"Oh, Blaine," he said pityingly. "Come on. Let's...let's go, I'll help you get cleaned up."

Blaine shivered and slipped a little in the slush, skin on fire with shame even though he felt like a giant popsicle from the slushie. He swallowed a few times as Kurt led him carefully off the stage, shouting angrily at the people who were still laughing at Blaine.

Blaine followed blindly after him, stumbling into the hall, still shaking slushie from his hair and face, cold trickling down his spine and coating everything. He'd been slushied before but this was a thousand times worse.

"Here," Kurt said as they reached the bathroom, sitting Blaine down on the bench in the corner. "Give me a second. I'll be right back, I swear."

Blaine nodded, listening to Kurt's retreating footsteps and the door closing as he left. He worked on picking the chunks of ice out of his clothes and hair until Kurt returned a few minutes later, sounding breathless.

"Okay," he said, sitting down next to Blaine. "Take out your contacts."

Blaine fished the other contact out of his eye and Kurt tossed it in the trash, passing him a bottle of eye drops and waiting for him to put them in before patting his face with a wet towel.

"I'm so sorry, Blaine," he said. "It was two...two *idiots* from Jason's team. He's yelling at them now."

Blaine bit his lip. Of course Jason would say that. Of course he would do whatever it took to get into Kurt's good graces, even if it meant pretending to help Blaine when Blaine was positive he'd been the one behind it all in the first place. He wanted to scream.

"Are you okay?" Kurt said gently as he wiped Blaine's temple.

"M'fine," Blaine mumbled. "I've had worse." And by worse he meant being threatened by Kurt's boyfriend not an hour ago.

"Oh, Blaine," Kurt said, sighing. "I'm so sorry. I am *so sorry*. I-I...I can't *believe* those *idiots*." His voice cracked with furious tears and he sniffed as he paused to wipe his eyes. "You don't deserve any of the crap you get at this school. You're such a wonderful friend and person and...I don't see why no one else sees that."

Blaine smiled wryly. "Thanks," he said, reaching up to touch Kurt's hand lightly.

Kurt smiled sadly, brushing the towel lightly over Blaine's cheek, eyes glittering with tears.

The door swung open and Jason and Sebastian walked in, breaking the silence. Kurt sniffed and continued patting Blaine's face, fussing over him and looking flustered.

"Come on, babe," Jason said, jerking his head towards the hall. "Sebastian is taking Blaine home. I told off Greg and Eric though." He looked at Blaine. "Sorry about them, Blaine."

"It's fine," Blaine said, meeting his hardened gaze with one of his own.

"Well, if you're *sure* you're alright," Kurt said, dithering on the spot.

Blaine smiled. "I'm fine," he said. "Really."

"Well, I'll text to later, okay?" Kurt said as he straightened up.

"Sure," Blaine said, stripping off his blazer as he stood. He saw Kurt's eyes linger for a fraction of a second on where his soaking wet shirt clung to his chest and threw Jason a vindictive look while he was busy gathering Kurt's things.

"Oh, here," Kurt said, turning back to him and passing him a pair of glasses. "I knew you kept a spare in your locker."

"Thanks," Blaine said, putting them on.

"Call me if you want me to stop by," Kurt called over his shoulder as Jason all but dragged him back into the hallway.

"Well," Sebastian said as the door swung shut. "That was...interesting. You okay?"

"Fine," Blaine mumbled. "Can you just take me home?"

"Sure," Sebastian said, tugging off his blazer and holding it out to him. "Here. If you're cold."

"Oh...thanks," Blaine said, slipping the jacket over his shoulders so the sleeves were draped loosely around him.

"Come on," Sebastian said, laying his hand on Blaine's back and leading him into the hall. "You'll have to show me where you live. Let's hope we don't get lost and have to park somewhere overnight." He grinned, eyeing Blaine greedily and Blaine shuddered, glad he had the slushie as an excuse.

He managed to convince Sebastian to turn on the radio on the drive so that he wouldn't have to talk to him, curling up in the front seat of his Mercedes and staring at his own reflection in the glass.

School was going to be absolute *torture* on Monday. Not to mention he had Sectionals the following weekend and how the hell was he supposed to focus now when the whole school was laughing at him? And now Kurt was back at the dance with Jason. Maybe they'd decided to ditch the dance in favour of a more private location, like the back seat of Jason's car. The thought made him sick to his stomach.

By the time Sebastian pulled up to his house fifteen minutes later, Blaine was thoroughly depressed and wanted simply to take a hot shower and sleep until Monday.

"Whoa, hold up," Sebastian said as he made to open his door and climb out. "Don't go so fast."

Blaine sat back in his seat, giving him an expectant look.

"So...are we doing this again?" Sebastian said, one arm resting around the back of Blaine's seat as he leaned closer to him. "Only maybe next time you can spend more than five minutes with me."

"Er..." Blaine thought of what Jason had said, sighing in resignation. "Yeah...sure. Why not?"

"Great," Sebastian said, moving even closer, his other hand resting on Blaine's knee. "I'll get your number off Jason and maybe we can go to a movie together and not watch it."

Blaine resisted rolling his eyes with difficulty.

"Well, I should go," he said, turning to open the door again.

Sebastian's hand suddenly came up to cup his chin and turn his face back so he could kiss him, hard. Blaine's eyes flew open, along with his jaw as he gasped, Sebastian taking the opportunity to shove his tongue so far into his mouth he thought he might choke on it. He finally got his brain working enough to pull back, staring at Sebastian as he clamped his mouth shut.

Sebastian licked his lips, looking down at Blaine's with a hungry look and breathing a little heavily.

"I'm gonna go now," Blaine said, hurrying to tug off Sebastian's blazer and grab his own before climbing out of the car before he could pull him back, walking quickly up the drive and into the house.

He stopped inside the door, trying to decide if he wanted to laugh or cry because he'd just had his first kiss and it was *mortifying*. He settled somewhere in between with a distressed huff, tossing his blazer into the laundry hamper on his way up to his room, the house silent around him.

He took a long, hot shower, scrubbing the stickiness out of his hair and off his skin before pulling on fresh pajamas and climbing into bed, prepared to sleep for twenty-four hours when his phone beeped on the table beside him.

Rolling over, he smiled as he saw Kurt's name flash on the screen above a text.

Soooo?

Grinning, Blaine snuggled into his blankets and held the phone up to his face as he replied.

So what?

Don't 'so what' me, Blaine Anderson, I want details. Anything happen?

Um, he kissed me.

:O Do tell!

He tried to choke me with his tongue.

Oh my god, what?

No really, he like...shoved it in my throat. Is that normal? Is that how people usually kiss?

Omg, Blaine, you're adorable. Lol, no, people don't usually kiss like that. Maybe he's the one who needs practice.

Maybe I'm a horrible kisser.

I'm sure you're a wonderful kisser. You've got big juicy lips.

Blaine blushed as he read Kurt's words.

Kurt!

:D Well you do. I'm just being honest. So did he ravish you?

No, I was too busy trying not to suffocate.

LOL. Blaine, oh my gosh. Are you going to go out with him again?

Blaine frowned, wishing he could just say 'no' and be done with it. But Jason's threat was still fresh in his mind and he sighed as he typed.

Yeah. I mean...I guess so.

You should. He's really cute. And first impressions aren't always accurate. Kissing-wise I mean.

Well, I hope so. It felt like he had an anaconda living in his mouth or something.

XD Blaine! You're going to make me wake up the rest of the house.

Oops, sorry. :(

It's okay. I just wanted to check in with you before I went to bed, make sure you're alright. You are alright, aren't you?

Yeah. I'm fine.

Promise?

I promise, Kurt.

Alright, then, night! :)

Night.

Blaine hovered with his fingers over the keys for a moment, the words 'I love you' typed out next to the send button. He stared at the screen for a full two minutes, teetering on the edge of decision and wishing he could simply lower his thumb half an inch to send the text.

Sighing heavily, he wiped the box clean and tossed his phone onto the bed beside him, rolling onto his side and, thankfully, falling quickly to sleep.

Chapter Seven

Blaine woke the next morning to another set of texts from Kurt.

Hey, sleepy, just checking to make sure you're doing alright after last night. :)

Jace is hanging out with some friends most of the day today do you want to hang out?

I made pancakes for breakfast and Finn nearly choked on one and for some reason it made me think of you talking about Sebastian and I couldn't stop laughing.

Answer your phooooooooone.

:(Blaaaaaine.

How are you still asleep, oh my god, it's NOON.

Blaine grinned, rubbing sleep from his eyes and yawning as he tapped out a reply

Sorry, I was recovering from my traumatic experience last night. Are you coming over?

He sat up, stretching, and put on his glasses before crawling out of bed. Memories of the night before came slowly back to him and he scowled, balling his hands into fists at the thought of Jason. His phone beeped and he sat back down on the edge of the bed to read Kurt's reply.

You're up! :D Yeah, is it cool if I come over? Finn and Dad are watching football and it soooo boring. It's bad enough pretending I have to like it when I cheer for it. You're the only person I'll watch football for outside of Cheerios. And that's because you let me snuggle you. :P

Well, I wasn't going to watch any of the games today so you're safe. But yeah, I'm not busy today. Did you finish your French essay? It's due tomorrow.

Oui c'est fait. I did it this morning while you were sleeping for fourteen hours.

I'm allowed to sleep. I had a bad night.

I know, I'm sorry. I'm not angry at you. I really am sorry that those morons did that. I really wanted to go home with you but Jace wanted to stay. I'm sorry. :(

It's okay. I understand. Are you coming over then?

Yeah, give me half an hour. And pick out a movie, yeah? See you soon. :D

Yup. :)

Blaine tossed his phone onto the bed, shuffling to the bathroom and changing into a sweater and jeans, resisting the urge to style his hair like he always did. It felt strange leaving his hair loose but if Kurt liked it, he would leave it that way. And he had to admit it was growing on him. Plus it gave him an extra twenty minutes that he didn't have to worry about working on it.

He thought about the night before, the laughter and jeers from nearly every other student in the school and felt his stomach clench painfully. He'd been tormented since he'd moved to Lima. Shoved into lockers, slushied, had his clothes stolen during gym, all of it. Strangely enough, the worst part of the memory had been that Kurt had had to see him like that, that he hadn't had the guts to stand up for himself and that Kurt had had to do it for him.

For the most part, he'd gotten used to the bullying, but he didn't think he'd ever get used to the pitying looks he got from Kurt every time he ended up in the bathroom picking ice out of his hair and shirt and trying to decide if he wanted to scream or cry or both.

"Hellooo?"

Blaine poked his head out of the bathroom, smiling as Kurt stepped into the room and closed the door behind him.

"Hey," he said as Kurt toed off his shoes and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Hey," Kurt said, leaning back and propping himself up on his elbows. He patted the bed next to him, grinning expectantly. "So tell me all about last night."

A deep blush crept up Blaine's cheeks as he sat and Kurt crowded against his side with a scheming look.

"So what happened?" he said secretively.

Blaine cleared his throat, fidgeting. "Not much, really. Um, I...well, he took me home and...and I tried to leave and he kind of...grabbed my face and stuck his tongue down my throat."

Kurt started giggling uncontrollably, burying his face in his hands and falling back onto the bed.

Blaine's mouth twitched up in a grin, heart flip-flopping at the sound of Kurt's laughter and the way his eyes crinkled up with his full smile.

"Well maybe it will get better next time," Kurt said, gasping as he caught his breath and wiped his eyes on his sleeve. His face grew serious as he turned to Blaine. "I mean...you *do* want to go out with him again, right? He didn't try to like...force himself on you did he? You're not just going out with him because Jace and I set you up with him right?" He laid one hand on Blaine's leg. "Because I want you to be with the person you want to be with. I don't want you to feel pressured into a relationship because it's what *I* want for you." He smiled tenderly. "I just want you to be happy, Blaine. I want you to know what it's like to...to be in love."

Blaine took in his earnest look, the affection in his eyes, and it felt like someone was tugging his heart down into his stomach.

"I know," he said, voice breaking. He cleared his throat and hurried to turn away from Kurt, blinking rapidly.

"Blaine? What's wrong?" Kurt moved his hand to Blaine's. "Are you okay?"

"Fine," Blaine croaked. He turned back to Kurt, whose eyes widened in concern and sympathy.

"Blaine—"

"Kurt, I-I...I have to tell you something," Blaine said, taking hold of his hand and clutching it tightly.

"Sure," Kurt said, nodding encouragingly. "What is it?"

"Kurt, I lo—" He stopped himself, shaking his head. Who was he kidding? He'd never be able to tell Kurt. He was too weak even for that.

"Blaine?" Kurt sounded worried now, his free hand moving to brush his fingertips over Blaine's temple.

Blaine took a deep, steadying breath, swallowing back his words and quickly producing others.

"I just think...I think you deserve everything," he said in a rush, the words tumbling out of his mouth.

Kurt smiled, though he still looked tense.

"You too," he said, giving his hand a squeeze.

"You deserve better than Jason," Blaine said before he could stop himself, saying anything but 'I love you' now.

Kurt blinked.

"Wh-what?" he said quietly.

"I just think you're too good for him," Blaine blurted out loudly. He blushed, clamping his mouth shut as soon as he said it.

"What?" Kurt repeated a little more stiffly.

Blaine sighed, scratching the back of his neck nervously. "I just...you're so smart and...and funny and...I really think you could do better than him."

Kurt frowned faintly. "What, are you saying I can't pick my boyfriends well?" he said, voice lowering and eyes narrowing.

"What?" Blaine yelped. "No, no, Kurt, I—"

"Blaine, we've been best friends for six years," Kurt said, folding his arms and standing to pace in front of him. "And maybe we've been spending a little less time together because of Jace—"

"A *little* less time together?" Blaine said, stumbling to stand as well as he felt a twinge of annoyance. "Kurt, we barely spend *any* time together anymore now without you and Jace sucking each other's faces off or running off to have sex every two minutes! It makes you look like a slut!"

He clapped his hand to his mouth the second he said it, eyes widening.

"What?" Kurt said coolly, his eyes narrowing dangerously. Blaine could almost see sparks flying from them.

"I-I'm sorry," Blaine said hastily, trying to take his hand. "I just meant—"

"I get what you meant," Kurt said, yanking away from him. "You're jealous that I have someone who really loves me back and now I'm spending time with them and not just you. I talked to Jace about what you said, Blaine. I told him how you felt and told him I would have to spend less time with him for you *and* that we'd have to stop being so affectionate around you and...and he stood up to his friends for you and I thought you, of all people, would be *h-happy* for me."

"Kurt, I..."

"Just stop, Blaine," Kurt said, lips quivering as tears welled up in his eyes. "I think I...I should go."

He tugged on his shoes and strode out with his nose in the air, stopping at the door to glare back at him, eyes still over bright.

"And for your information," he snapped, Blaine recoiling at his tone. "Enjoying myself with his boyfriend doesn't make me a slut. Just because you're too much of a prude to let anyone do anything with you doesn't mean you have a right to be angry at me about it." He huffed, nodding sharply, and flounced out without another word.

Blaine stared after him, mouth hanging open. Groaning in frustration, he let his head fall heavily against the wall with a soft *smack*.

"*Idiot*," he growled, digging his fingernails into the wall. He fell back onto his bed, glaring at the ceiling and wishing he could keep his big mouth shut.

"Great idea, Blaine," he snapped at himself. "Call the guy you love a slut, *that'll* win him over."

He tugged at his own hair and flipped onto his stomach, burrowing into the pillows and hating himself.

He didn't know if he drifted off or simply fell into a stupor, though he snapped back into consciousness when his phone beeped on his nightstand two hours later and he nearly fell off his bed in his haste to grab it.

He fumbled with it for a moment before holding it to his face, stomach contracting when he saw Kurt's name on the screen over a text.

Hey.

Hi.

Blaine responded anxiously. There was a pause and he was just about to start frantically typing an apology when Kurt's reply came through.

I'm so sorry, Blaine, I shouldn't have blown up like that. I know the PDA annoys you and I'm really trying to stop. I didn't mean what I said, you're not a prude just because you're not ready for sex.

I'm sorry I've been...forcing the idea onto you lately. Just because it's what I want doesn't mean it's what you want. I guess I've just been stressed with Cheerios and everything lately and I'm taking it out on you, which I shouldn't.

I'm sorry. :(xx

Blaine breathed out a slow sigh of relief, the knot loosening in his chest as he typed out a reply.

I'm sorry, too. Really really really sorry, Kurt. You're not a slut. Not at all. That was a horrible thing to say and I really didn't mean it. I never should have said that and I really hate myself for it. Maybe I am a little jealous, I guess.

He wasn't about to say that Jason was the one he was jealous of.

Can we agree to forget about it?

Yeah, definitely. :)

Thank god. I've been freaking out for two hours. Just the thought of fighting with you makes me sick.

Me too. I hate when we fight.

We're like an old married couple. :P

Blaine's stomach squirmed.

Well, I forgive you but I expect my slippers and pipe at the usual time.

Oh, really? Well then you'd better rub my feet and draw me a bath.

Blaine flushed at the thought of Kurt bathing, arms draped over the sides of the tub and head resting back, long neck stretched and damp with humidity.

I'll have your fresh robe and bonbons ready.

I expect it. ;)

Blaine grinned, rolling onto his back, phone hovering over his face.

So you're coming to Sectionals for sure, right?

I don't understand why you want to come, Jason, but of course you can. I'm going to support Blaine.

Blaine frowned at the message in confusion.

Oh my god, sorry, that was for Jace!

He wants to go to Sectionals with me.

Is that okay?

Blaine's heart sank.

No, of course he didn't want Jason there, keeping him away from Kurt and sneering at him as he pawed Kurt like a damn dog.

Blaine? Is that okay?

Oh, yeah, sorry. Yeah. It's fine.

Are you sure? I mean...you obviously don't like him.

I'm sure. As long as you're there.

I swear I will be. :)

Jace is calling me, but I'll call you later, yeah?

Sure. Bye. :)

Bye! :D

Blaine tossed his phone onto the bed beside him, pressing the heels of his hands into his eyes and taking a deep breath. Of course Jason would want to come and ruin the first competition Kurt had a chance to come to since he'd joined Glee Club. He grumbled and rolled onto his stomach.

Stupid Jason with his stupid damn soccer scholarship and his perfect blonde hair and body; he had everything and Blaine was permanently stuck in the damn friend zone. It was moments like these he wished he had more of a backbone. He wanted to fight for Kurt, he *would* fight for Kurt, but he didn't know if Kurt wanted to be fought for.

Kurt's not yours to fight for anyway, a voice in the back of his mind said quietly. *You're the bad guy trying to steal him away.*

"I'm not stealing him away," he mumbled crossly. "I was here first."

Very mature, the voice said snippily. *You can't be angry if you don't say anything to him in the first place.*

"Well if he loved me back, he'd have said something," he said, frowning.

Maybe he's thinking the same thing about you.

He snorted, huffing as he realised he was arguing with his own self-conscious. Kurt wasn't in love with him. If he was, he did a damn good job of showing it with the way he changed boyfriends. He sifted through the books on his shelf, grabbing a random one and cracking it open as he flopped back on his bed to try and distract himself.

His phone rang sometime after dinner as he was staring blankly at the television, not taking in anything happening on the screen and considering calling Mike to see if he wanted to play XBOX.

He slammed his hand into the table in his haste to answer the call when he heard Kurt's ringtone, swearing loudly before pushing the talk button.

"Hello?" he ground out.

"Everything okay?" Kurt said, sounding concerned.

"Fine," Blaine grunted. "Hurt my hand."

Kurt clucked his tongue sympathetically.

"You're such a klutz sometimes," he said with a sigh. "It's adorable."

Blaine smiled, resting back in the pillows and flipping off the TV to enjoy the full effect of Kurt's voice.

"So what are you doing?" Kurt said, something rustling in the background.

"Nothing really," Blaine replied, tucking one arm behind his head. "Just watching TV." *Waiting for you to call.* "You?"

"Helping Jace with English because he sucks at it."

"Hey!"

Kurt giggled at Jason's annoyed cry in the background and Blaine scowled as he realised Kurt wasn't alone.

"So are you ready for Sectionals?"

"I guess," Blaine mumbled.

"You'll do great," Kurt said earnestly. "I know it."

Blaine smiled dreamily.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," Kurt said, the grin evident in his voice.

He let Kurt's wash over him, closing his eyes as he let him talk his fill. Neither of them brought up their argument from before. That was the thing Blaine loved about their friendship. On the rare occasions they *did* argue, neither of them dwelled on it, they never did, because they both knew how much they needed each other, even if it was for different reasons.

There'd been times when Kurt would be in a huff over something Jason—or whoever he'd been dating at the time—had done for days on end and Blaine felt a certain sense of victory knowing there had never been that wall between the two of them.

They'd been talking for twenty minutes when Kurt suddenly yelped, the phone rustling loudly against something.

"Jason!"

"Hey, Blaine," Jason said, grunting and obviously struggling to keep the phone from Kurt, sounding amused.

"Give it back, Jason!"

"Calm down, babe," Jason said, laughing. "So, Blaine, Kurt has to go do...other things but he'll see you tomorrow!"

"Jason!"

"Chill, babe, you'll talk to him tomorrow," Jason said, voice echoing as he pulled away to talk to Kurt.

Kurt grumbled but stopped protesting as Jason turned back to the phone.

"Enjoy, creep," he hissed into the phone.

Blaine frowned as he heard the phone rustling, everything louder as Jason turned on the speaker.

"That was mean," Kurt said grumpily on the other end.

"Mmm, I'm sorry, babe," Jason murmured. "I just couldn't keep my hands off you anymore."

There was the wet sound of kissing followed by a soft, breathy sigh from Kurt.

"Jason, I—" He gasped, the springs creaking under him as a zipper rasped open. "Jason."

"I'm going to take care of you, baby," Jason said, voice low and seductive.

Blaine's hand shook around his phone, tears stinging his eyes as Kurt whined, high and needy, the sound of fabric shifting loud through the speaker.

"J-Jason...baby, oh...oh *god* you feel so good."

There was a wet pop and a rough moan followed by steady, smacking, sucking sounds. Kurt whimpered and sighed, a low stream of encouragement and "*god, please*" rushing from his mouth.

Blaine wrenched the phone from his ear and threw it across the bed, an equal mix of anger and heartache stewing in his gut. He felt sick, gripping his face in his shaking hands as tears trickled down his face.

Why was Jason doing this to him? Why was he waging war against someone he'd already beaten? Why did he want to torture him like this?

He took off his glasses to wipe a trembling hand across his eyes, hiccupping quietly and blinking a few times to clear his vision as he put his glasses back on, waiting a few minutes before checking his phone, relieved to see the call was over, though there was a text from Jason—whose number he'd saved for Kurt.

Hope you enjoyed listening to me sucking Kurt off. He looks so good when he comes. Don't forget our deal, creep.

Blaine stared at the message for a long minute, a flare of hate leaping inside him, though it was quickly extinguished by the overwhelming sense of defeat. Slumping his shoulders, he tossed his phone aside and curled up in his blankets, feeling hollow and heavy at the same time, like an empty weight had settled in his chest.

He wished he could scream at Jason, punch the sneer right off his face. He wished he could stop feeling so damn miserable all the time. He wished he could just stop loving Kurt.

"Are you nervous?"

"A little."

"You shouldn't be," Kurt said, sipping his water as he followed Blaine through the lobby of the performance hall where Sectionals was taking place that year. "You're going to be amazing, you know that?"

"I guess," Blaine mumbled as Jason approached from the bathroom, immediately throwing his arm around Kurt's shoulders and flashing Blaine a triumphant look.

"Hey you," he said, kissing Kurt firmly on the cheek.

"Hey," Kurt said, face lightening up as he giggled. "You've been so cuddly lately."

"Just because I love you," Jason said, squeezing him around the shoulders.

Kurt bit his lip, looking pleased. "I love you too," he said.

"Blaine! Hey!"

Blaine turned, stomach twisting painfully when his eyes fell on Sebastian striding across the lobby towards him, dressed—as always—in his Dalton uniform. He'd been texting Blaine throughout the week, short messages like 'can't want to try kissing you again' and 'you looked so good Saturday' that Blaine tried his best to ignore, though he was forced to pretend to be excited about them when Kurt was around with Jason.

"Oh...hey, Sebastian," he mumbled as Sebastian approached, grinning and eyeing Blaine with the usual leer. "I didn't know if you were coming."

"Of course I would come," Sebastian said. "Have to support my boyfriend, don't I?"

Blaine tensed at the word, Kurt positively squealing with excitement beside him.

"Are you two official then?" he said, eyes bugging as he looked between them.

"I—"

"Of course they are," Jason said, chuckling. "Why else would Sebastian say so?" He looked at Blaine, eyes hardening. "Right, Blaine?"

Blaine's shoulders slumped as he nodded. "Right," he muttered. "We're...we're dating."

"Oh my gosh, this is great!" Kurt said, clapping his hands together and practically skipping as Sebastian's arm slipped around Blaine's waist, Blaine struggling to keep from cringing. "We can go on double dates and *prom* and—"

"Babe, calm down," Jason said in an amused tone. "Honestly, you'd think *you* were the one dating Sebastian."

Kurt giggled and leaned against Jason's shoulder. "Sorry," he said. "I'm just happy for Blaine."

"I can tell," Jason said, glancing up as the lights by the auditorium doors flickered on and off. "We should find our seats and let Blaine get back with the rest of his friends."

"Oh, right!" Kurt said. He ducked from under Jason's arm to give Blaine a quick hug, planting a kiss on his cheek and crying "good luck!" before following Jason into the auditorium, arm around his waist.

"Well, I should get going," Blaine said, desperate to escape from Sebastian as quickly as possible.

"Hang on," Sebastian said, pulling him behind a tall potted plant next to the stairs so they were out of sight from the crowd. "I haven't wished you good luck yet."

"Oh, it's fine, you—"

Sebastian crowded him up against the wall, planting his hands on either side of his head as he leaned down to kiss him, barely hitting the corner of his lips before moving down his jaw to his neck, hands sliding down the wall to grip his hips as he pushed against him.

Blaine gasped as Sebastian's tongue ran slowly up his throat, hot and wet and nothing like when Kurt had kissed him in his sleep. He thought of Kurt being the one doing it and his knees shook.

"Mmm, you like that?" Sebastian murmured, nipping at his ear.

"I-I have to go," Blaine said, laying his hands on Sebastian's shoulders and pushing him away.

Sebastian pulled back reluctantly, licking his lips and drinking in the sight of him, the snug black pants and red button-down he was wearing.

"Well good luck," he said, voice rough.

Blaine ignored him, ducking under his arm and scrubbing at his neck as he hurried down the hall around the back of the auditorium to the greenroom, where the rest of the New Directions were already lounging around, chatting and looking mildly bored. Sectionals had become old news for the most part now that they hadn't lost it the previous two years that they'd formed the club.

"Where have *you* been?" Quinn said, eyeing the reddened skin of his neck with a distasteful look. "Was that from—"

"Yes," Blaine mumbled, tugging up the collar of his shirt to hide his neck. "And no, I don't want to talk about it."

"Blaine, you can't just let him blackmail you like this," Quinn said seriously. "What, is he going to make you marry Sebastian just because he's jealous? It's ridiculous."

Blaine shuddered at the idea of marrying Sebastian, rubbing hard at his neck with his cuff again, though he didn't think he'd get the dirty feeling off until he showered. How the hell was he supposed to pretend to date him?

He still couldn't believe he almost told Kurt that he loved him not even a week ago before having to listen to him and Jason doing...that over the phone. And school had been torture, people bowing to him in the hall and laughing their heads off as they walked away and he blushed hard, Kurt telling them off for making fun of him until they finally started to wane at the end of the week.

"Blaine, I'm serious," Quinn said, lowering her voice. "If you told Kurt what he said to you—"

"Why would Kurt believe me?" Blaine sighed, throwing himself down on one of the couches against the wall. "As far as he knows, Jason is a knight in shining armour who defended me against his friends." He scowled.

Quinn pursed her lips, brow furrowing. "We'll figure something out," she said at last, perching on the arm of the couch next to him. "Eventually."

"Hopefully before Sebastian tries to molest me or something," Blaine grumbled.

"Don't say that," Quinn said quietly. "That's awful."

"Sorry," Blaine said, leaning back and adjusting his glasses on his nose. "I'm just...ugh, I don't know. I don't know what to do anymore."

Quinn laid a hand gently on his shoulder. "It'll be okay," she said, giving his arm a squeeze. "We'll figure it out."

The lights flicked on and off and Rachel leapt up, looking flustered.

"Okay, everyone, let's go," she said, fixing her hair absently. "Blaine, are you ready?"

Blaine nodded, swallowing dryly as everyone's eyes found him.

"Alright, let's go," Rachel said, ushering the others out of the room with her to head onto the stage, glancing back at Blaine. "Good luck! We'll see you in a minute!"

Blaine watched them file out, tacking a steadying breath when the door closed behind them. He closed his eyes, smiling as he thought of Kurt, before heading out into the hall himself, stepping behind the curtain, the rest of New Directions gathered behind him in the darkness.

Someone announced them and he shook out his hands to loosen them as the music started up, light piano with tinkling bells, and he slipped between the break in the curtains and sang.

The fire was out

But then the phone rang

And all of the heat came back again

As much as I try

You're hard to resist

All that it takes is just one kiss

His eyes found Kurt in the crowd, sitting in the very center, only five rows back from the stage, beaming and wiggling his fingers in a wave before flashing him a thumbs-up. Blaine felt his heart swell in his chest so quickly he was almost lightheaded, not even the glare Jason was giving him enough to quell it as he sang straight to Kurt, the curtains sliding open behind him.

And I'm putty in your hands

I'm under your spell

You send me spinning

Kurt's eyes positively sparkled as he watched him, biting on his knuckles and face light up by the back glow of the bright stage lights.

You pull me in close

You throw me away

I keep coming back like a boomerang

You tell me to go

You beg me to stay

I keep coming back like a boomerang

Around, around, around, and back again

Around, around, around, and back again

Around, around, around, and back again

Around, around, around, and back again

Jason's arm slid around Kurt's shoulders but Kurt didn't seem to notice, smiling softly as he watched Blaine performing. Blaine could barely focus on the choreography, nearly tripping up and receiving glares from Rachel as she passed him before he took center stage again, everything else fading into the white lights as he found Kurt again.

(Boom, boom, boom)

And now my heart is racing

(Boom, boom, boom)

And after you I'm chasing

(Boom, boom, boom)

You gotta catch me when I fall

You send me spinning

Kurt covered his mouth, squirming happily in his seat, Jason giving him an irritated look and Sebastian looking annoyed on Kurt's other side, though Blaine ignored them both. All he could see was Kurt, Kurt's smile and the way his eyes crinkled up at the corners and how amazing he looked in the light, a strand of hair loose from its hold and falling across his forehead that Blaine wished he could jump off the stage to push back off his face before kissing him until they couldn't think anymore.

You pull me in close

You throw me away

I keep coming back like a boomerang

You tell me to go

You beg me to stay

I keep coming back like a boomerang

Around, around, around, and back again

Around, around, around, and back again

Around, around, around, and back again

Around, around, around, and back again

He hit his final mark, breathing heavily as the crowd erupted in applause, Kurt leaping out of his seat and jumping up and down as he clapped, pointing and shouting something that looked like 'my best friend', though it was hard to tell.

Blaine had to bite his tongue to keep from smiling too broadly, though he felt like he might be walking on air, the horrible events of the week before wiped from his mind by Kurt's cheers, which lasted so long Jason had to force him to sit down—looking bitter—so Finn and Rachel could start their duet.

Surrounded by a haze of adrenaline, Blaine hurried off the stage with the others a few minutes later, still trying to process that he'd just sang *to* Kurt in front of an audience, if front of everyone, and Kurt had cheered like he had and he thought he could probably die happy at that moment just from the look on Kurt's face.

"Come on, let's go watch the next group," Finn said, ushering for everyone to follow him around to the other side of the stage where they could gather together as the next glee club trooped onto the stage behind the curtain.

"I'm running to the bathroom," Blaine said, still trembling with excitement as they waved him off and he jogged down the hall to the bathrooms where they were situated around a corner near the stairs where Sebastian had kissed him.

He slowed as he approached the corner, taking a few calming breaths and wiping his sweaty palms on his pants. Angry voices reached his ears and he stopped, slowly stepping to the corner and frowning as he distinguished Sebastian's voice.

"I told you to tell Blaine to stop seeing Kurt," he said impatiently.

"Get off my *back* already!" someone else, *Jason*, snapped. "I did what you told me to do, Sebastian, what more do you want from me? I can't just *stop* them from being friends! At least they're not all over each other anymore, that's something, isn't it?"

"Have you even *looked* at Blaine?" Sebastian hissed, narrowing his eyes at Jason. "He's so in love with that stupid—"

"Watch it," Jason growled.

"Fine, *your boyfriend* then," Sebastian said, rolling his eyes. "Blaine's so in love with him, I'm surprised he hasn't got actual hearts popping out of his damn eyes. You saw him singing to Kurt. Christ, if the entire audience didn't see it..."

"Well I told him to back off," Jason grumbled, shrugging Sebastian's hand off his arm. "I'm doing the best I can, okay?"

"Well, it's not enough," Sebastian said irritably. "How am I supposed to get him to concentrate on me if he's too busy dreaming over that...over your boyfriend? Who, by the way is the most oblivious person on the planet if he can't see that Blaine's in love with him."

"Watch who you're insulting, Smythe," Jason snapped.

"I'll insult him if I want, he's distracting Blaine from me. We had a deal, Jason. You said you would hook me up with Blaine if I would keep my mouth shut. So far, I'm really the only one keeping up my end of the deal seeing as Blaine is making eyes at *your* damn boyfriend."

"You think I like this?" Jason said, voice rising. "I'm sick of that creep! He spends all his time staring at Kurt like some lovesick puppy and *I* have to put up with it because Kurt's so damn affectionate with him. Fuck, I had them slushie him and then had to convince my teammates to take the fall so I could defend that little

asshole and...*fuck* I hate him so much." His voice lowered to a growl and Blaine could picture him balling his fists.

He shuffled closer to the corner, holding his breath as his heart pounded frantically in his chest. He glanced at the wall opposite him and caught sight of the huge mirror on the wall just around the corner, angled perfectly to give him a view of the two boys, standing a few feet apart, Jason almost backed against the wall.

"Well, you'd better figure something out," Sebastian said. He stepped closer to Jason, nostrils flaring and eyes flashing dangerously. "You don't want me to tell him do you, Jason? About our little secret?"

Jason paled and he swallowed hard. "You can't," he breathed, shaking his head. "You can't tell him. Please."

"Why not?" Sebastian purred, forcing him up against the wall and laying one hand on Jason's thigh. Jason looked like he might be sick. "We had so much fun at soccer camp. Maybe Kurt would want to join in."

"Stop," Jason croaked. "Please. It was...it was a stupid mistake."

"More like twelve stupid mistakes," Sebastian said, Blaine leaning even closer and straining his ears to hear him. "Thirteen if you count the time we made out in your bunk."

"You can't tell him," Jason pleaded desperately. "We were only together for three weeks when it happened and...and I never should have done it. Please don't tell him."

"Mmm, then I expect you to do a better job of taking care of Blaine," Sebastian murmured, so close to Jason now that their lips were almost touching. "Because I want him. And the only way that's going to happen is if you get him away from Kurt, got it?"

"Yes," Jason said, voice cracking. "Yes, just...please don't tell Kurt. He'd break up with me."

Sebastian snorted. "Whatever," he grunted. "Just take care of it, Jason, okay?" He closed the gap between them and kissed him, biting on his bottom lip before Jason could turn away, looking disgusted and bright-eyed. "And as always, you can give me a call if you decide to dump that boyfriend of yours. You were pretty good in bed."

Blaine heard the bathroom door swing open as Sebastian stepped inside, Jason slumping back against the wall and sliding down a few inches as he clutched his face in his hand and shook.

Stunned, mouth hanging open and feet glued to the floor, Blaine stood there for what must have been the better part of a minute before he finally convinced his brain to work and he turned to walk quickly back towards the auditorium, breaking into a run when he was sure they wouldn't hear him.

He nearly ran head-on into Kurt at the entrance, skidding to a halt before he slammed into him, though Kurt threw his arms around him in a hug the moment he stopped.

"You were amazing, Blaine!" he cried, gripping him tightly. "Absolutely incredible!"

"I—oh...thanks," Blaine said, taking a few seconds to realise what he was talking about. That's right. They were at Sectionals. They'd performed. *Jason had cheated on Kurt.*

"What's wrong?" Kurt said as he pulled away, still beaming.

Blaine opened his mouth, ready to blurt out everything he'd heard. But then he remembered Jason's threat, that he'd tell Kurt everything, that he loved him, and clamped his mouth shut. He couldn't tell Kurt about what he'd heard because then Kurt would find out how he felt about him and he couldn't tell Kurt how he felt about him without knowing he felt the same way, which he was sure he didn't.

He was completely trapped.

Chapter Eight

Two weeks. Two long weeks had Blaine completely at war with himself.

He knew he should tell Kurt about what he'd overheard, but he couldn't bring himself to it knowing he'd have to see the utter heartbreak on Kurt's face when he realised Jason had cheated on him. He might not like Jason, not in the least, but Kurt was, supposedly, in love with him, and Blaine didn't know if he could deal Kurt being completely broken like he'd been so many times before.

Not to mention the fact that if he told Kurt, Jason would surely tell Kurt how he felt about him and Blaine was most definitely not ready that. He wasn't ready for Kurt's reaction, for the rejection and inevitable loss of him as a friend. And having Kurt in his life as just a friend was better than not having him at all.

But then he thought Kurt deserved to know about it, that he shouldn't be left to date someone who was not only blackmailing him but had cheated on Kurt with the before Blaine was now being forced to date. And then there was the fact that Jason was apparently being coerced into what *he* was doing because of Sebastian. Sebastian, above all, was the one pulling the strings, but it was still obvious that Jason had no problem with what he was doing to Blaine if the way he looked at him was any indication.

He couldn't even celebrate winning Sectionals as he was too busy trying to figure out what he wanted to do, all while trying to fend off Sebastian and keep some amount of distance between himself and Kurt when they were together to satisfy Jason. It was incredibly difficult to do, though, when Kurt was the biggest cuddler Blaine had ever met and constantly tried to curl up next to him when they watched a movie together.

The constant battle going on inside his head was leaving him exhausted and stressed, barely able to concentrate on Glee or even school, which normally helped relax him. It was when he got a 'B' on a Calculus quiz that Kurt seemed to realise that something was wrong, hurrying after him when the bell rang after class before Blaine could dash away once again.

"Blaine! Blaine, wait up! Blaine, I swear to god if you don't stop..."

Blaine stopped suddenly and Kurt almost ran into him as he slid to a halt, eyes narrowed and brow furrowed.

"Okay, enough of this," Kurt said, linking his arm firmly in Blaine's. "You're talking to me whether you like it or not."

Blaine glanced around quickly to make sure Jason wasn't in the vicinity before nodding curtly in assent.

Kurt looked relieved, though his expression quickly turned serious again as he pulled Blaine with him down the hall.

"So are you planning on telling me what's wrong?" he said.

"Nothing's wrong," Blaine said, brow furrowing as he avoided his eye.

"Really, because you've barely talked to me for two weeks and I don't know why," Kurt said, sounding hurt. "I mean...I'd understand if you were spending time with Sebastian but Jason said you two have only seen each other once and that was on the weekend so would you explain to me why we've only been together twice outside of school since Sectionals?"

Chewing nervously on his bottom lip, Blaine stared down at his feet. "I-I...um...I don't know," he muttered. "I just...um, maybe since I have a b-boyfriend I shouldn't be with you so much?"

Kurt stopped, Blaine swallowing hard as he pulled up with him, anxiously lifting his eyes to Kurt's face. He looked hurt and confused, betrayed almost.

"What?" he said. "But...but we were just talking about Jason and I spending too much time together cutting in on...on us. I don't...I don't understand. Why don't you want to spend time with me? Do you...not want to be my friend anymore?"

"I didn't say that," Blaine said hastily. "Of course I want us to be friends."

"Best friends?"

Blaine nodded. "Best friends," he said. "We'll...we'll always be best friends."

"Then why do you want to distance yourself from me?" Kurt said softly, lowering his head. "Did I do something wrong?"

"Of course not," Blaine assured him. *I love you and I can't say anything and your boyfriend is blackmailing me to stay away from you and date someone who gropes me every chance he gets.*

"Then what's wrong?" Kurt said with a vulnerable look. "Is there something going on between you and Sebastian? Please, Blaine. I want to talk to you. I-I miss you."

He ducked his head, scuffing the ground with his toe and shifting on his feet.

"Kurt, I—"

"Hey, loser!"

They both turned to see Dave Karofsky, one of the football players and a usual tormentor of Blaine's, raising a slushie, a devilish smirk on his face as he reeled his arm back to strike. Kurt ripped his arm away from Blaine's and Blaine squeezed his eyes shut, bracing himself for the impact of cold and wet.

There was the loud, lewd *smack* of slush on skin and he frowned as he remained dry and clear, cracking one eye and clapping a hand over his mouth at the sight of Kurt standing between him and Karofsky, mouth hanging open and face twisted in disbelief and shock as bright blue trickled down his skin and stained his clothes.

He shivered, whimpering as he blinked slush from his eyes, which immediately started watering as the dye and sugar hit them.

"Oh shit," Karofsky muttered, the plastic cup falling from his hand.

"Man, Erickson is going to *kill* you," Azimio, another burly linebacker, said, sounding amused as Kurt looked down at his once white and red uniform. "If Sylvester doesn't do it first."

Karofsky took one final look at Kurt, flashing Blaine a glare before turning and setting off down the hallway at a jog, Azimio laughing before following after him.

"Are you okay?" Blaine said, staring in astonishment at the state of him.

"It's so c-cold," Kurt said, voice wavering as his lip quivered. "Oh god, it's everywhere." He squeaked, arching his back slightly, no doubt some of it trickling down his spine.

"Come on," Blaine said, careful not to slip in the puddle of ice and blue goo spreading across the tiled floor. "Let's...let's get you cleaned up."

Kurt followed him blindly, eyes closed against the burn of the dye.

"H-how can you s-stand this?" he said, shivering violently and sliding a little on his wet sneakers as Blaine helped him into the bathroom and sitting him down in the chair in the corner. "It's like getting p-punched in the face."

Blaine wet a paper towel with warm water and gently wiped it over Kurt's cheek.

"You shouldn't have done that," he said, a pang rising in his chest as Kurt shivered and sniffed. "You didn't need to. I've been slushied plenty of times before."

"And I c-can't understand how you d-deal with it," Kurt said. "God, Blaine, I'm so sorry you have to p-put up with this all the t-time. You don't deserve it."

"Well, neither do you," Blaine said quietly, tilting Kurt's head back to dribble water over his eyes.

"More than you," Kurt mumbled.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Blaine said, frowning and cleaning dye from Kurt's neck.

"It means you're a much better person than I am," Kurt said as he scrunched up his face while Blaine wiped carefully over his eyes. "And don't try and deny it."

Blaine smiled faintly, brushing the towel lightly over Kurt's temple as Kurt's lips turned up in a grin and his tongue flicked out to catch a bit of melting slush.

"At least it doesn't taste half bad," he said, smacking his lips.

"Always the optimist," Blaine said, shaking his head. He straightened, helping Kurt to his feet. "Come on. Let's get your hair washed."

"Wait," Kurt said, grabbing his wrist and blinking, eyes slightly red. "Wait, don't...don't go."

"We're just going to wash your hair," Blaine assured him, vaguely confused.

"Please tell me what I did wrong," Kurt said. His voice cracked and broke, tears welling up in his blue eyes and slipping down his cheeks.

Blaine knelt down next to him again, bewildered. "You didn't do anything wrong," he said, lightly touching his fingers to Kurt's cheek.

"P-promise?" Kurt said, lips quivering again.

"I promise," Blaine insisted. "Kurt, I *swear* you didn't do anything wrong."

"Then what's going on with you?" Kurt said with a quiet sniff. "You've been off since Sectionals a-and you said it wasn't because of Sebastian and...and now you said it's not because of m-me and I'm *worried* about

you, Blaine. You n-never miss a thing on our Calc quizzes and I just want to make sure that...that what they did to you isn't—"

"No, no, Kurt, it's nothing to do with that," Blaine said as he caught on to what Kurt was saying. "I got over that weeks ago. Like I said, I get slushied all the time. And I'm in Glee Club so...public humiliation comes with the territory. It's not as bad as the time they tried to hang us from the flagpole freshman year and we had to hide out in the dumpster for an hour."

Kurt hiccupped and choked back a giggle and Blaine smiled.

"I remember that," Kurt said softly. "It wasn't so bad. You were there."

Blaine's heart flipped pleasantly in his chest.

"So you're sure you're alright?" Kurt said.

"I'm sure," Blaine said, patting his knee. "Seriously, it has nothing to do with that."

"Then what is it?" Kurt said, scrubbing at his eye absently.

Blaine straightened his glasses as he tried to think of some alternate excuse for avoiding Kurt. But he couldn't.

"Kurt," he began carefully. "If...if you knew a secret about someone that would make them unhappy but help them in the long run...would you tell them?"

Kurt frowned, blinking as he considered the question. "Well, I guess it would depend what the secret was," he said at last, cocking his head curiously.

Steeling himself and taking a deep breath, Blaine nodded. Kurt deserved to know, he'd just taken a slushie for him for christ's sake and if Jason told Kurt he was in love with him, well...he'd cross that bridge when he came to it.

"Kurt, I have to tell you something," Blaine said gently. "About...about, um...Sebastian." He thought it might be easier telling it from Sebastian's angle since Jason's threat was still looming over him.

"Okay," Kurt said expectantly. "What about him?"

Blaine gnawed on his lip. "Kurt, he—"

The bathroom door swung open and smacked loudly against the wall, Jason stumbling in looking flushed and out of breath, letterman jacket crooked and forehead damp with sweat.

"Kurt," he gasped, hurrying to Kurt's side and shoving Blaine unceremoniously out of the way. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Jason," Kurt said with a calming smile.

"Oh, I'm going to *kill* Karofsky," Jason muttered viciously, plucking a chunk of ice from Kurt's uniform. "Why the hell would he slushie you in the first place? Asshole."

"Well, he wasn't aiming for me," Kurt said.

"What do you mean?" Jason said, pausing from pulling slush from Kurt's hair.

"He was trying to hit Blaine," Kurt replied.

Jason's eyes flicked to Blaine. "And what...you—"

"I stepped in front of it," Kurt said with a shrug.

"*Why?*"

"Because Blaine's had enough slushies in his face, don't you think?" Kurt said, looking mildly confused.

"Jace, after what they did to him at Homecoming, I'm not about to just let them *treat* him like that. Not if I'm there to stop it."

"Babe, look at your uniform," Jason said with a gesture towards the stained fabric. "Sylvester will murder you!"

"She'll murder Karofsky," Kurt said, voice hardening. "And my uniform is *not* as important as Blaine."

Blaine could tell Jason was barely suppressing the urge to roll his eyes.

"Okay," he said in an indulgent voice. "Whatever you say, babe."

Kurt opened his mouth angrily to continue the conversation, but Jason was already pulling him to his feet.

"Come on," he said with a sigh. "Let's get this off you. You need a shower."

"Blaine was helping me," Kurt mumbled, though he allowed Jason to lift his arms to peel the drenched uniform top over his head, leaving his blue-stained undershirt the only thing clinging to his chest.

Blaine felt his heart quicken in his chest at the sight of Kurt's toned shoulders, arms, and abdomen. He wasn't overly muscled, but it was enough to make his head spin.

"I've got him from here, *Blaine*," Jason said with the hint of scathing undertone on Blaine's name as he led Kurt from the bathroom.

"I'll see you in French!" Kurt called back to him. "You can tell me whatever you were going to tell me then, yeah?"

"Yeah," Blaine said meekly, shrinking under the glare Jason flashed him as he left. He slumped back against the sink, folding his arms across his chest as he tossed the wet towels into the trash, promising himself that he'd tell Kurt about what Jason had done by the end of the day. Kurt needed to know. Kurt *deserved* to know.

The final bell came and went and Blaine still hadn't brought the subject up to Kurt again—he'd been too busy in French trying to understand the lesson to talk about it, Kurt whispering help in his ear every few minutes when he got confused.

"So am I allowed to come over tonight?" Kurt said as they packed up their books. "Are you going to tell me what's wrong?"

"Er." Blaine paused in the process of fastening his messenger bag. "Y-yeah," he said at last. "Yeah, you can come over. I'd rather tell you there."

"It must be a big secret if the location of where it's told is so important," Kurt teased, nudging him with his elbow. "It wouldn't happen to have anything to do with you and Sebastian getting a little down and dirty, would it?"

Blaine flushed. "N-no," he said, shaking his head hard. "No, it...no."

Kurt hummed in amusement, swinging his bag over his shoulder. "Well, I'll see you in a bit then," he said. "Coach is probably *still* chewing out Karofsky and I need to get the spare uniform from her. Thanks for letting me borrow your sweater by the way." He plucked at the cardigan Blaine had loaned him that he always kept in his locker for just such an occasion.

"No problem." Blaine tried not to concentrate too hard on the fact that Kurt was wearing *his* clothes and, not to mention, looked very good in them.

"Alright, see you soon," Kurt said, waving cheerily as he jogged out into the hall where Jason was already waiting for him, immediately snaking his arm around his waist and kissing him, Kurt squeaking in surprise before sighing as he relaxed into the kiss.

Blaine finished packing up his things and hurried past them, not missing the way Jason glowered at him even as he sucked on Kurt's bottom lip. He took a few deep breaths to calm himself down, gripping the strap of his bag tightly and making his way to his locker, which happened to be only a few down from Mike's.

"Hey," he grunted, fiddling with the dial and tugging his locker open.

"What's wrong?" Mike said, lifting an eyebrow. "No, wait. Let me guess. Kurt."

Blaine flashed him a warning look, pulling a few things from the depths of his locker and stuffing them in his bag.

"Have you told him about Jason yet?" Mike said, leaning against the wall and surveying him with an expectant look.

"No," Blaine mumbled. "I'm telling him tonight."

"Hmm," Mike said doubtfully. "I heard he took a slushie for you."

"Yeah, so? He's my friend," Blaine said, frowning.

Mike looked mildly amused as he shut his own locker with a snap. "You two are really *the* most oblivious people on the planet, you know that?" he said, shaking his head.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Nothing, nothing," Mike said, waving him off. "I've got to go find Tina. I'll see you Monday."

Blaine stared after him, hand hovering in mid-air over his books. He blinked to clear his head, slowly pulling the last few things he needed from his locker before closing the door and adjusting his bag on his shoulder.

What one earth did Mike mean? Was he implying that Kurt actually *did* have some sort of feelings towards him besides friendship? He scoffed at the idea like he always did when it popped into his mind.

Hitching his bag higher on his shoulder, he fished his car keys out of his pocket, fumbling with his phone as it beeped with a text. He groaned internally at the sight of Sebastian's name.

Hey, you. Busy tonight? Thought we could finally go see that movie.

Blaine pulled a face as he replied.

Can't. I'm hanging out with Kurt tonight. Sorry. Maybe another time.

He shoved his phone back into his pocket, grateful that he had Kurt as an excuse to avoid Sebastian. He thought he might feel bad for him if not for the fact that he was clearly just trying to get into his pants, something Blaine was not about to let happen as long as he had any say in it. He hoped he'd eventually just give up in the end and leave him alone.

He drove home, humming along with the radio and letting his mind wander back to the day he'd mentioned earlier, when he and Kurt were *both* bullied. Before he'd even come out. They'd been cornered by a group of seniors outside the school during lunch, chased up the stairs in the courtyard and told they were going to 'represent McKinley' at the top of the flagpole.

Kurt had kicked one of the boys hard in the shins, grabbed Blaine's hand, and pulled him between another boy's outstretched arms before any of them could catch them. They'd sprinted around the school and clambered into the empty dumpster, wheezing and shaking as they waited for the boys chasing them to run by.

Blaine had slumped back against the metal interior, closing his eyes and silently thanking whoever had decided to let them escape. He'd tensed when he heard Kurt crying quietly next to him, opening his eyes to see him curled in the corner, lip quivering and tears streaming down his face.

"Hey. What's wrong?" Blaine said, scooting across the rusted bottom of the dumpster towards him.

"I d-don't know what to d-do," Kurt said, sniffing and wrapping his arms around his knees.

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know wh-what to do to make them st-stop treating us like this," Kurt said, scrubbing furiously at his eyes. *"Why do they h-hate me so much just because I'm d-different? I didn't ask to be gay."*

Blaine bit his lip, tentatively laying his arm around Kurt's shoulders. Kurt had immediately leaned into the touch, snuggling against his side and crying into his shoulder. Blaine felt his stomach squirm like it had been for the past few weeks every time Kurt was close to him, something he couldn't quit explain, though he enjoyed it all the same.

"I know," he said, gently cradling the back of Kurt's head. *"They're idiots, Kurt."*

"I just wish that...that someone else here was g-gay," Kurt said. *"I'll n-never even have a b-boyfriend until I'm old and in college."*

Blaine smiled, kissing the top of Kurt's head. *"If I was gay, I'd be your boyfriend,"* he said.

Kurt fell silent, tilting his head up to look at him. He hiccupped softly, cheeks pink and damp, tears clinging to his long eyelashes. *"R-really?"* he said quietly.

"Really," Blaine replied. *"Who wouldn't want to be your boyfriend?"*

"Anybody," Kurt mumbled bitterly.

They'd stayed there for the better part of an hour, until Kurt had calmed down enough to climb back out of the dumpster with him when the lunch bell finally rang and they were safe to make their way back into class. Kurt had remained quiet and demure for the rest of the week, stealing glances that made his heart flutter happily, though Kurt would turn away, blushing, the moment he saw Blaine looking in his direction.

It hadn't been for almost two month that Blaine realised that what he was feeling was love, that he was completely in love with his best friend and, quite obviously, gay, though his aversion to the Playboy magazines his cousins had shown him were probably also a good indication of that.

He hadn't even come out to Kurt, and the rest of the school, until halfway through Sophomore year. By that time, Kurt was on the Cheerios and already climbing his way up the social ladder, though he'd seemed shocked when Blaine had confessed to him, barely speaking for the remainder of the day and distancing himself physically from Blaine for some time after, though he'd returned to his usual, cuddly self eventually, Blaine suddenly much more conscious of where they touched and how he placed his hands.

The house was quiet and empty, as usual, when he made his way through the entry, toeing off his shoes and climbing the stairs to his bedroom. The housekeeper had tidied for him while he was gone, putting his books back on the shelf in a neat line rather than scattered across his desk and dresser where he left them when he was finished.

He tugged his phone back out of his pocket as he lay back down on his bed, wrinkling his nose when he saw Sebastian's name again.

Are we ever going out? You spend too much time with Kurt.

He's my best friend.

Blaine slipped off his sweater, tossing it over his chair and arranging the pillows against the headboard as Sebastian replied.

I thought I was your boyfriend.

You are.

You don't act like it.

Well, I want to take things slow.

Because of Kurt.

No.

Right.

Blaine swallowed dryly. Sebastian knew how he felt about Kurt. Surely he wouldn't tell him? No, the secret Jason was holding over Blaine's head was the only thing keeping Blaine from breaking up with Sebastian in the first place. The sound of wheels crunching across the gravel made him straighten up breathing a long sigh of relief when he saw Kurt's Navigator in the driveway.

I have to go. Kurt's here.

Whatever.

Blaine looked down at the screen for a long moment before tossing his phone aside, crossing his legs and sitting up as he waited for Kurt. He fiddled with the hem of his shirt, trying to gather his thoughts as to exactly what he was going to say. How was he supposed to tell his best friend his boyfriend had cheated on him?

Kurt beamed the moment he stepped through the door, jumping onto the bed next to him and scrambling to sit against the headboard beside him as the bed bounced.

"You're happy," Blaine said apprehensively.

"I get to hang out with you again," Kurt said brightly. "I told you I've missed you."

"Me too," Blaine said.

"So what's this big secret about Sebastian you have to tell me?" Kurt said, wiggling his eyebrows. "Is he really a spy in disguise? Does he have a foot fetish?" He gasped and lowered his voice. "Did he ask to suck your toes?"

"What?" Blaine said, unable to stop himself from laughing. "No."

Kurt giggled. "Sorry. I met a guy last summer who said he wanted to suck on my toes. Needless to say the affair didn't last long. Thank god Jace came along."

"Right," Blaine said, heart rate kicking up at the sound of Jason's name. "About that."

"I thought it was about Sebastian?" Kurt said, frowning faintly.

"It...it is," Blaine stammered. "It's about b-both of them."

"Okay," Kurt egged slowly.

Blaine cleared his throat, turning to face him and laying one hand on his arm. "Kurt."

"Yes?"

"Kurt, um...l-last summer." Blaine could barely look him in the eye as he said it, palms starting to sweat with nerves. "Last summer when Jason was at s-soccer camp. He and, er...he and Sebastian, th-they, um—"

"Just tell me, Blaine," Kurt said, sounding impatient.

"Jason cheated on you," Blaine nearly shouted. He cleared his throat, blushing. "J-Jason...he cheated on you. With Sebastian."

Kurt stared at him for a full ten seconds, expression blank.

"What?" he said at last.

"Jason cheated on you...with Sebastian. At soccer camp," Blaine repeated quietly.

Kurt frowned, eyes narrowing as he chewed at the inside of his cheek.

"What are you talking about?" he said, nearly laughing. "No he didn't."

"I overheard them talking about it at Sectionals," Blaine said in a small voice. "I'm really sorry, Kurt, I—"

"Jason would *never* cheat on me," Kurt said, voice rising and hardening dangerously.

"Kurt, I heard them—"

"Well then you heard wrong," Kurt interrupted. "Jason loves me."

"Kurt—"

"Or maybe you're just making it up," Kurt said.

"No, Kurt, I would never—"

"I thought you were over the whole 'jealousy' thing." Kurt pushed away from him, sliding off the bed and to his feet. "I thought we were past this, Blaine?"

"Kurt, it has nothing to do with—"

"Why would m-make something like that up?" he said, voice cracking and tears springing to his eyes. "Just because things aren't perfect between you and Sebastian doesn't mean you have to try and ruin my relationship with Jason!"

Anger bubbled up in Blaine's gut and he pushed himself to his feet with him. "I'm *not* making it up!" he said loudly. "Why the hell would I make it up?"

"Because you're jealous!" Kurt retorted, dashing tears from his eyes.

Blaine laughed harshly. "Yeah, I'm so jealous of the loving relationship you and Jason have," he said, sneering. "All you two do it have sex anyway. When's the last time you sat down and talked without feeling the need to rip each other's clothes off?"

Kurt opened his mouth and snapped it shut again, jaw clenching and tears sliding down his cheeks.

"That's what I thought," Blaine grunted. "I'm your best friend, Kurt. I've known you for six fucking years and you're not going to believe me over some guy you've been with for a few months? That makes me feel just great, you know? When have I ever lied to you before? What reason would I have to lie to you?"

Kurt whimpered, sniffing and biting his lower lip to stop it from trembling.

"Exactly," Blaine snapped. "I've been nothing but supportive of you and your 'relationships' for so long and I just...I'm trying to *help* you, Kurt and you don't care about anything but sex and it's...it's disgusting!"

Smack.

Blaine reeled back at the slap, clutching his cheek in disbelief as white lights popped in front of his eyes.

Kurt squared his shoulders, glaring down his nose at him through watery eyes, cheeks streaked with tears.

"I'm *not* disgusting," he said, voice wavering slightly.

"Kurt, I'm sorry, I didn't mean—"

"You called me a slut not two weeks ago," Kurt said stiffly. "I think it's pretty clear what you think of me. I get it, Blaine, you don't approve of me or...or *whatever* but I'm not going to just stand here and let you insult me. Not again."

Blaine straightened, rubbing his jaw. "Kurt, I didn't mean...there's nothing wrong with you, I just meant that...please, just listen to me," he said desperately. "*Please*. Jason and Sebastian, I swear I heard them talking about it."

Some of the fight seemed to leave Kurt, his shoulders slumping as he hung his head. He looked suddenly vulnerable.

"He would never do that to me," he said quietly. "He...he loves me."

"Maybe so," Blaine said. "But I swear I heard them, Kurt. Please believe me."

"I—"

Kurt's phone buzzed loudly in his pocket and he jumped in surprise, shoving his hand into his pocket and pulling his phone out. He stared at the screen for a moment.

"It's...Sebastian," he said quietly. He hesitated for a moment before holding the phone to his ear, wiping his eyes on his sleeve. "H-hello?"

Blaine watched him anxiously. Why would Sebastian be calling him? What could he possibly need to talk to him about? Unless he was going to tell Kurt that Blaine was in love with him. He had the sudden urge to knock the phone out of Kurt's hand.

"Wh-what?" Kurt said timidly, clutching the phone to his head. "N-no, you...you..." Fresh tears welled up in his eyes, lips trembling. "H-how...n-no," he choked. "Wait, no, don't—" He stopped, pulling the phone away from his face and staring at it in disbelief.

"What's wrong?" Blaine said anxiously.

"That was Sebastian," Kurt said brokenly. "H-he...he told me..." He looked up at Blaine, biting back a sob. "He told me that...that Jason ch-cheated on me. You were right."

He stared his phone for a few seconds, taking slow, deep breaths, before punching angrily at the screen with his fingers, eyes sparking dangerously as he held it to his ear.

Blaine heard the line clicked, Jason's 'hey, baby,' just audible from where he was standing.

"Don't 'hey, baby' me!" Kurt snapped. "You'll never guess who just called me. Your little *friend* from soccer camp. Yeah. Yeah he told me just how *lonely* you were without me while you were there. I don't want to hear it, Jason! How c-could you?" His voice broke and he struggled to steady it. "No, no I'm not—no, we're done!" He wrenched the phone away and threw it onto Blaine's bed, brows contracted and jaw clenched.

His face fell slowly and he seemed to shrink a little in on himself, face twisting in sorrow as he wrapped his arms around himself and let out a soft whine before breaking down completely into broken sobs, his whole body shaking as he choked and squeezed his eyes shut.

Blaine had barely lifted his hand before Kurt was stumbling forward into his arms and sobbing into his shoulder, clutching at his shirt and nearly falling over as his knees trembled.

"Wh-why would he d-do this to m-me?" he cried, words barely distinguishable behind his tears as Blaine helped him onto the bed and held him against his chest.

"I don't know," Blaine said, sighing and hating Jason for doing this to Kurt, for letting him fall in love with him so that he would have so far to fall.

Kurt curled into a ball on his side, facing away from him and rocking slightly, whole body racking with sobs. Blaine laid down next to him, Kurt immediately leaning back against him as his arm snaked around his waist and he stroked his hair softly.

"I'm s-sorry I didn't believe you," Kurt said. "I'm s-sorry, Blaine. I'm sorry I h-hit you." He twisted his head around to look at him. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Blaine assured him, smiling. "Really. It barely hurts anymore." Kurt sobbed even harder as he ran his fingers over the redness blooming on Blaine's cheek.

"I'm such an i-idiot," he said furiously. "I just...I don't understand w-why he would ch-cheat on me."

"Neither do I," Blaine said, dabbing at Kurt's cheekbones with his sleeve.

Kurt pulled himself into a tighter ball, burying his face in his arms and letting out a wail like a wounded animal as he cried.

"I love him," he said, voice muffled in his shirt. "I love him so m-much, why would he d-do that?"

Blaine bit his lip hard, swallowing down the lump growing in his throat at the sight of Kurt crying, so desperate and broken and beautiful, arms wrapped around himself as he shook silently.

He glanced around the room for some form of comfort, eyes falling on his CD collection stacked neatly on his desk. He picked up his phone off his nightstand, smiling at the picture of the two of them on the screen before flicking through his iPod, stopping on *The Heart of Life* and hitting play.

Kurt stopped at the sound of the soft guitar through the speakers, sniffing and sitting up with a small, confused frown as he turned to look at Blaine, who merely smiled and slid across the bed towards him, singing gently. He stopped beside Kurt, brushing his hand over his cheek. Kurt closed his eyes as Blaine started stroking his temple, nuzzling into his hand in a way that made Blaine's heart flutter.

I hate to see you cry

Lying there in that position

There's things you need to hear

So turn off your tears and listen

Blaine grazed the backs of his knuckles over Kurt's cheek, wiping away the tears clinging to his skin. The corner of Kurt's mouth twitched in a tiny smile as fresh tears rolled down his cheeks.

*Pain throws your heart to the ground
Love turns the whole thing around
No, it won't all go the way it should
But I know the heart of life is good*

Blaine took hold of Kurt's hand where it was resting on the bed, gripping it in both of his own and rubbing small circles with his thumb. Kurt's lips quivered and he hung his head, sniffing as his shoulders shook and tears dripped down into his lap. Blaine's voice cracked slightly as his vision blurred and he swallowed down the lump forming in his throat.

*You know it's nothing new
Bad news never had good timing
Then the circle of your friends
Will defend the silver lining*

Kurt stopped shaking as he looked up slowly, brows furrowed in a tiny frown. Blaine smiled, squeezing his hand gently. He looked taken aback, like he'd just come to some sort of sudden realization, eyes still puffy and red though no longer shining with tears and the ones on his face quickly drying.

*Pain throws your heart to the ground
Love turns the whole thing around
No, it won't all go the way it should
But I know the heart of life is good*

Blaine's heart leapt into his throat as Kurt took his hand in his own and looked down at it with a vaguely shocked look as he admired the way their fingers slid together and locked so smoothly.

Kurt looked back up at him, head tilted just slightly to the side. Blaine swallowed dryly as Kurt's eyes flicked down to his lips for a split second. He held his breath, feeling lightheaded and weak as Kurt leaned just slightly closer, chin lifting and eyelids dropping half an inch so they were hooded without being fully closed.

Blaine couldn't think, couldn't even believe that this was really happening, that he was a mere six inches from kissing Kurt Hummel, his love, his best friend, his everything, his—

Kurt's phone buzzed loudly next to him and his eyes flew open as whipped he his head around, his hand already gone from Blaine's and flying to his phone. He fumbled to pick it up and answer it.

"Jason?" Kurt's voice cracked as he said it, Blaine's heart dropping in his chest.

He could hear Jason's voice on the other end of the line, catching small phrases like 'stupid mistake', 'it didn't mean anything', 'I'm so sorry, baby', 'I love you'.

"I love you too," Kurt sobbed, breaking down into tears again. "I-I don't want us to b-break up, either but I just...w-why did you do it?"

Blaine looked down at his hands, where Kurt's fingers had been laced with his only seconds before, his breath catching as he sighed and blinked hard, Jason's apologies muffled against Kurt's ear.

"I love you too, babe."

Kurt hung up the phone as he turned to Blaine, crying again though he was smiling, eyes sparkling.

"We're not breaking up," he said, sniffing and letting out a relieved laugh.

"Why not?" Blaine said dully, shoulders slumping forward.

Kurt sat down on the bed next to him, a lovestruck look in his eyes as he flopped onto his back. "He said it was a stupid mistake and...and he wanted to tell me but he was afraid I'd leave him but Sebastian was blackmailing him and it just turned into a huge mess and, well...he said he loves me and he hates himself for doing it and he'll do anything to make it up to me."

"So you're staying with someone who cheated on you?" Blaine muttered.

"People make mistakes," Kurt said quietly. "I-I don't want to lose him."

"So you're okay with being with him knowing that he was willing to leave you here, alone and missing him while he was having sex with someone else?" Blaine said, balling his hands into fists as he felt his hate for Jason intensifying. How could Kurt be so damn gullible? Why had he even fallen for Jason in the first place?

"I l-love him," Kurt said in a small voice, twisting his hands in his lap as he sat up. "A-and you forgive people you love, right?" He looked up at Blaine, biting the corner of his lips anxiously. "You don't think I should stay with him, do you?"

"No. I don't," Blaine said bluntly. "What if he hurts you again?"

Kurt lowered his eyes to his lap, looking open and helpless, exposed, like the shell he'd been building around him for so long was cracking and falling away.

"I just want to be loved," he said.

"You *are* loved." A painful knot tightened in his chest as he realised just why Kurt was with Jason, or any of his other boyfriends, in the first place. He'd gone so long believing no one would ever want him, thinking he'd be alone forever, that he wasn't going to give up a sure thing like Jason if he didn't have to.

Now that he thought about it, Kurt had never been the one to end a relationship, it had always been whoever he was with at the time. Blaine wondered if he was even able to do it, to step away from something that guaranteed him affection. He didn't think so.

"I'm sorry, Blaine," Kurt said, shaking his head. "I-I can't—"

"I know you can't," Blaine said in a resigned voice.

"I love him," Kurt whispered.

"Do you love *him* or the *idea* of him?" Blaine said, giving him a steady look.

Kurt bit his lip, eyes puffy and red from crying, face streaked and stained with tears, cheeks flushed, and *still* the most beautiful thing Blaine had ever seen.

"I-I...I think I should go," Kurt said quietly. "I need to talk to Jason."

He stood, gathering up his things and pulling on his shoes. He paused at the door, looking back at Blaine with the same expression of guarded vulnerability, tapping his fingers against the doorframe and pursing his lips before taking a quick breath and stepping out in the hall, shutting the door behind him and leaving Blaine alone in silence like so many times before.

Chapter Nine

"Don't you just love Christmas?"

Blaine grunted in reply to Kurt's dreamy question, continuing his task of stringing up decorations in the hall. The task of preparing the school for the holidays had, for whatever reason, fallen to the Glee Club and Kurt had volunteered to help Blaine, no doubt to try and lessen some of the tension that had risen between them since the fiasco three weeks before.

Blaine wasn't sure which was worse, the fact that Kurt was now clinging to his and Jason's relationship as if his life depended on it, or that Jason was still holding the threat of telling Kurt everything over his head. He'd grown bitter about the whole situation, withdrawn and cold towards his friends, most of whom had no idea about what had happened, other than Quinn and Mike, who Blaine had told Monday when he stomped moodily into Chemistry class.

"But he almost kissed you!" Quinn said, sounding exasperated when Blaine had finished relating the story.

"I swear, when the two of you finally get together...you're giving me grey hairs, you know that?" Mike said seriously, pointing to his own dark head.

Blaine had silenced them both with a look, in no mood to be trifled with. If there was one thing to be grateful for, it was that Christmas meant end of term exams and he could use the excuse of studying to avoid Kurt, who was busy helping Jason or practicing for Cheerios for the most part anyway.

Kurt at least had the decency not to talk about Jason when they were around each other, desperately making small talk while Blaine replied in clipped tones. He missed Kurt, there was no denying that, missed the long talks they used to have before bed every night, occasionally falling asleep with the call still connected, missed the physical contact they used to have. Now when they were alone together, they sat on opposite sides of the bed or couch, barely talking as Kurt cast Blaine anxious looks. At least now Kurt wasn't trying to figure out *why* Blaine was upset. He knew full well.

"Could you pass me those lights?" Kurt said, reaching down from the ladder he was perched on.

Blaine mutely pressed a string of white lights into his hand, turning back to the garland he was stringing around the trophy case.

"Thank you," Kurt said in the same, overly cheery voice he'd been using for weeks. He stretched up on his toes to reach the top of the doorframe, his uniform sliding up his back to reveal a wide stripe of skin that

immediately drew Blaine's eyes. He wondered if he wasn't wearing an undershirt on purpose and scowled at the idea.

Kurt hummed under his breath, carefully pinning up the lights to the frame and wiggling his hips a little in time with the music. Blaine closed his eyes for a moment before returning his focus to the garland.

"So, any plans for the holidays?" Kurt said, carefully arranging the lights to drape around the door.

"Not much," Blaine muttered. "Mom and Dad are going on a cruise so I'm home alone....again."

"You'll be alone for Christmas?" Kurt said, sounding appalled.

Blaine nodded.

"Well that's stupid," Kurt said, hopping down from the ladder. "You should stay with us! Like you did freshman year, remember? That was fun, right? We built snowmen and—"

"I don't think Jason would like that very much," Blaine said flatly.

Kurt's face fell.

"Oh," he said in a small voice. "Right. W-well, he doesn't dictate who I can spend time with."

Blaine scoffed quietly, turning back to the garland and muttering under his breath.

Kurt sighed tremulously and Blaine looked up to see him slump against the wall, lip quivering and tears welling up in his eyes.

Blaine's gut churned at the sight and he hurried to set down the garland and pull him into a hug when he stretched his arms out hopefully, like a child asking for his favourite blanket.

"I'm s-sorry," he said. "I just...I hate you being disappointed with me and—and I hate not talking to you, Blaine. I d-don't know what to d-do. I just want to make everyone h-happy."

"I know," Blaine soothed, "I know. I'm sorry. I hate it though. Knowing he hurt you. What if he hurts you again?"

Kurt sniffed, pulling back to wipe his eyes.

"I don't kn-know," he mumbled.

"Are you going to take him back if he does it again?"

"I don't *kn-know*," Kurt said, sounding frustrated. He took a calming breath and stared down at his shoes.

"He made a mistake, Blaine."

"He *cheated* on you, Kurt."

"We can't all be perfect like you," Kurt said. It wasn't sarcastic or biting, his voice small and honest as he said it, eyes flicking up to look at Blaine through his lashes for a split second before he coloured and returned his gaze to his feet.

"I'm not perfect," Blaine said.

"Yes you are," Kurt mumbled.

"No. I'm not."

"Are too," Kurt said, mouth twitching upward and eyes flashing playfully. He bit his lip, glancing up at Blaine and smiling coyly.

Blaine heaved a laboured sigh, rolling his eyes dramatically and suppressing a grin.

"We'll agree to disagree," he grunted, flushed as Kurt hugged him and pressed a wet kiss to his cheek. "And I still don't like him." He never would like Jason after what he'd done but he knew he couldn't continue to stay mad at Kurt, not when he looked at him like that, with wide, teary eyes, bottom lip jutting out in a pout.

Kurt sighed quietly. "I know," he said.

Neither of them pressed the matter as they continued working, steadily moving down the hall until they reached the choir room, where most of the Glee Club was loitering around, a few people decorating the scotch pine in the center of the room.

Puck, Sam, Finn, and Mike were tossing a football between each other, Tina and Mercedes fiddling with the piano and singing random snatches of songs as Rachel tried to balance on her toes to place the star on the tree. Rory finally took pity on her and moved to help, setting down the box of ornaments he'd been hanging up.

"Why does Rachel even do Christmas stuff?" Kurt muttered. "She's Jewish."

Blaine stifled a laugh, shrugging. Quinn looked up from her book to give him a dubious look, lips pursed. She'd spent the past week soundly abusing Jason at every opportunity and she wasn't incredibly fond of Kurt at the moment either. Blaine saw her shoulders rise and fall with a sigh as she clucked her tongue disapprovingly and returned to her book, eyes unmoving over the page.

The bell rang to signal the end of class and the start of rehearsal. No one made much of an effort to react though as Schue wasn't even there yet, no doubt visiting Ms. Pillsbury since they'd spent the whole class decorating.

"Aw, do I have to go?" Kurt said, pouting.

"Nah, we're not doing anything anyway," Blaine said with a shrug, setting the empty box down in the corner and plopping down in one of the hard plastic chairs.

Kurt smiled timidly around at the other club members, most of whom smiled tightly back if at all. As many of them had been on the receiving end of slushies and torment from Jason and his friends, their reluctance was understandable. Blaine knew full well that most of them only tolerated Kurt for Blaine's sake.

"Blaine, why don't you play something for us?" Tina said, swinging around to face Blaine on the piano bench.

A few people echoed the request, Kurt nudging him lightly and nodding, giving him a hopeful look.

Blaine sighed, rolling his eyes as he stood and straightening his sweater, reddening as Kurt clapped his hands together and sat down with him on the bench.

"Here," Mike said, snatching up a folder from the pile on the piano and spreading the music out for Blaine. "Do this one."

Blaine stared at the pages for a moment, blushing and glaring at Mike, who pulled a look of innocent confusion.

"Mike, I don't think—"

"Ooo, I've never heard this song," Kurt said, cocking his head to the side. "Go on, then."

Blaine flashed Mike a pleading look, though he ignored him completely, a faint smirk on his lips. Blaine exhaled shakily, resting his fingers on the keys and scanning the sheets quickly before he started playing the light beat.

*Hello, tell me you know
Yeah, you figured me out
Something gave it away
It would be such a beautiful moment
To see the look on your face
To know that I know that you know now*

His voice shook slightly and he was sure his face was flaming red at how insanely appropriate the song was. Mike was grinning like an idiot, shaking with silent laughter and looking smug, Quinn rolling her eyes in the corner.

*And baby that's a case of my wishful thinking
You know nothing
Well you and I
Why, we go carrying on for hours on end
We get along much better
Than you and your boyfriend*

Kurt flipped the page for him in the pause, smiling warmly as Blaine looked over at him and lightly touching his wrist as he let his hand fall back into his lap, his foot tapping under the piano, their legs brushing together occasionally, Blaine hyperaware of every minute movement after they'd gone so long with barely any contact.

*Well all I really wanna do is love you
A kind much closer than friends use
But I still can't say it after all we've been through
And all I really want from you is to feel me
As the feeling inside keeps building
And I will find a way to you if it kills me
If it kills me*

Mike's face split into a mischievous grin and Blaine frowned as he tossed the football to Finn and slid across the floor to the box in the corner, rummaging through it with his back to Blaine, who craned his neck to try and see what he was pulling out.

*How long, can I go on like this,
Wishing to kiss you,*

*Before I rightly explode?
This double life I lead isn't healthy for me
In fact it makes me nervous
If I get caught I could be risking it all*

He looked at Kurt out of the corner of his eye, heart fluttering when he smiled over at him, turning faintly pink and holding his hands tightly in his lap as he listened.

*And all I really want from you is to feel me
Yeah, the feeling inside keeps building
I'll find a way to you if it kills me
If it kills me
It might kill me*

Blaine tapped out the last few notes on the keys, uncomfortably hot around the collar and wishing he could sink into the floor, incredibly grateful that no one but Mike and Quinn knew how significant the lyrics really were. The song was practically written *for* him.

Kurt tuned to face him, biting his lip, colour high on his cheekbones. "That was...really good," he said quietly.

"Thanks," Blaine murmured, tugging at the suffocating fabric of his sweater. Kurt's eyes flicked back and forth between his own before dropping to his lap. He made to push himself to his feet, clearing his throat.

"W-well, I should find Ja—"

"Ah, ha, not so fast."

Blaine swiveled to see Mike standing behind them, grinning cheekily and dangling his hand over their heads, fingers wrapped around a dark sprig of—

Kurt let out a soft 'oh' and Blaine blushed impossibly darker, giving Mike a glare that he was shocked didn't set his hair on fire.

"Well, you know the rules," Rachel said matter-of-factly as she sat next to Finn, absently playing with her hair. "I had to kiss Puck. Though I still think that mistletoe was planted." She flashed Puck a look and he smirked, Finn narrowing his eyes in his direction.

"Yes, Blaine, the rules," Mike repeated, nodding sagely.

"I don't think—"

"Well," Kurt said, coughing quietly. "Since it's tradition."

Blaine's eyes snapped back to him, stomach somersaulting at the way Kurt was looking at him, head lowered, watching with a bashful smile.

"Get on with it already, jesus christ," Santana said, sounding annoyed. "You're best friends, it's not like you haven't done it before." She lifted her eyebrows in surprise at the looks on their faces. "Really?" Huh. Well what a waste of sex."

Kurt laughed breathily, twisting in his seat to face Blaine again.

"Y-you don't have to do this," Blaine stammered.

"Yes I do," Kurt said softly, hand gripping the bench behind Blaine's back.

It was so clichéd and silly, the mistletoe and the damn song but for the second time in his life Kurt was leaning towards him, lips smooth and pink and Blaine was actually going to taste them and he couldn't be bothered around the fact that the situation was so ridiculous or that a dozen people were in the room.

He could feel Kurt's breath on his lips, warm and with the faint hint of peppermint from the candy cane he'd been eating earlier. His heart was in his throat, his palms slick with sweat in his lap. He thought he heard someone say his name followed by quick footsteps but Kurt was closing his eyes and pushing his lips out in a slight pucker.

A hand gripped his shoulder like a vice, another grabbing his collar and yanking him back away from Kurt off the bench.

"Jason!"

Blaine barely had a chance to register Kurt's cry or Jason's twisted expression of fury before a fist collided with his jaw and pain exploded at the impact, head spinning and the world flipping upside down as he stumbled back and tripped over his own feet. He fell down hard, black blurring the edges of his vision and stars popping across his lids every time he blinked.

"Blaine!"

Cries of shock and anger echoed around the room, Kurt dropping off the bench to Blaine's side, cradling his head in his lap.

"Oh, god, Blaine, are you okay?" he said, sounding tearful as he lightly touched the rapidly swelling lump on his chin and straightened his glasses, the taste of blood sour in Blaine's mouth.

Kurt rounded on Jason, who was standing over them, fists clenched, nostrils flared and shoulders rising and falling, his hackles raised in a snarl.

"What the hell?" Kurt shouted. "Why did you do that?"

"He was going to kiss you!" Jason snapped back, pointing accusingly at Blaine. "And you were going to kiss him back!"

"Because there was *mistletoe*," Kurt said, jerking his head in the direction of the mistletoe where it had landed on the floor a few feet away where Mike had dropped it when Jason had hauled Blaine up.

"So you're going to just start kissing him!" Jason barked, face red and eyes wild.

"You're going to yell at me for *kissing* him after what you did to me?" Kurt said, angry tears dancing in his eyes. "Just...calm down, Jason."

"No!" Jason snapped, Kurt recoiling at the way his voice cracked like a switch. "No, I *won't* calm down! Not when it's *him*!"

"What are you talking about?" Kurt said, tears sliding down his cheeks, the rest of the room dead silent as they watched them with wide eyes, mouths hanging open.

"I'm so damn *sick* of him!" Jason seethed, glaring at Blaine. "He's always in the fucking way. *Always*. I can't take it anymore. I don't want him around us! I'm not *dealing* with him anymore."

"What do you mean?" Kurt said in a hushed whisper, pushing himself to his feet.

Jason raked his hand through his blonde hair, a tic starting up in his forehead. "I mean that...that you have to make a choice, Kurt," he said, voice dropping lower. "It's either me...or *him*." He spat out the last word, giving Blaine a dirty look.

Kurt stared at him for a few seconds before speaking in a small voice. "You can't make—"

"Well I am," Jason cut over him. "So...pick. Me, the person you love, or that excuse you call a friend?"

Mike took an angry step forward, Finn and Puck rising to their feet protectively.

"Why are you doing this, Jason?" Kurt said shakily.

"Because I'm not putting up with him anymore," Jason said, shaking his head. "I'm *done*. So make your decision, Kurt."

Kurt swallowed thickly, glancing down at where Blaine was half sitting half lying on the ground, nursing his throbbing jaw.

"I—"

Blaine winced as his jaw gave a particularly hard throb and Kurt's face seemed to tighten before falling miserably.

"Blaine," he said in a small, weary voice. "I...I choose Blaine."

Jason looked hurt for a split second, a brief glimpse of vulnerability before his expression twisted into disgust again.

"*Fine*," he ground through his teeth. "Fine. Fine, I hope the two of you are *very* happy together. Fuck you both."

He turned and stormed towards the door, knocking the pile of sheet music off the piano as he did, pages fluttering down in a mixed mess.

"J-Jason, wait!" Kurt ran after him, tears streaming down his face as he followed him into the crowded hall.

"No!" Jason shouted back at him. "No, I'm not putting up with him anymore! And if he's around...we're done."

"P-please, don't d-do this," Kurt choked. "Please, I l-love you."

"If you love me so much, why are you picking him?"

There was silence save the bustle of students in the hall around them.

"That's what I thought," Jason snapped.

"Jason, wait!" Kurt called, voice broken as he let out a weak sob.

The room was dead quiet, a few people watching Blaine, frozen on the ground, others staring at the door as Kurt stepped back inside, eyes red and face streaked with tears. He walked silently across the room to Blaine, kneeling down and taking his hand, avoiding his eye as he did.

"Come on," he said, tone flat though Blaine caught the faint quiver in his voice. "Let's go get you some ice."

He helped Blaine to his feet, ignoring the gaping looks and Finn's outstretched hand and wrapping his arm around Blaine's waist. They walked silently into the emptying hallway, Blaine probing the cut on the inside of his cheek where his teeth had caught with his tongue, wincing as pain shot up his jaw.

"Are you okay?" Kurt said quietly.

"I'll live," Blaine said thickly.

Kurt's bottom lip quivered and he sniffed, chest twitching as he hiccupped. He led Blaine to the cafeteria, helping him into a chair next to the ice machine. Tugging off the silk scarf he was wearing, he scooped ice into it to create a makeshift icepack, kneeling next to Blaine and holding it carefully to his face.

"How's that?" he said, eyes full of concern.

"Better," Blaine said, grinning lopsidedly and grimacing.

Kurt swallowed, eyes swimming with fresh tears.

"I'm so sorry, Blaine," he whispered. "I-I—"

"It's not your fault, Kurt."

"Y-yes it is," Kurt said, nodding his head hard and choking back a sob as he lifted the ice away and looked at the bruise blooming over Blaine's jaw, red and purple and harsh. "I'm s-sorry."

"Hush. It's okay," Blaine soother, brushing his fingers over his cheek. "I'll be fine, I promise. I'll have a headache for a while but..."

"I-I just...I don't underst-stand why he m-made me choose between y-you," Kurt said, taking a shuddering breath.

Blaine shifted in his chair, blushing as he cleared his throat and Kurt looked up in question.

"You picked me," Blaine said, trying to sound casual.

Kurt frowned at the uncertainty in his tone.

"Of course I did," he said. "You're my best friend. You're...you're more important than anyone else. I know it might not seem like it sometimes because...because I'm not a very good friend sometimes—"

"Stop."

"I'm not," Kurt continued, dragging the heel of his hand over his damp cheek. "But...it's true. *You'd* never make me choose like that. Right?"

"No," Blaine said honestly, shaking his head and stilling when the movement sent a fresh wave of pain through his skull. "I don't like him but...he made you happy. You...you loved him."

Kurt hung his head. "I thought he loved me," he said, sounding defeated and lost.

"You don't need him, Kurt," Blaine said bracingly. "You're so much better than him. You deserve someone who'll be there no matter what happens, someone who's...loyal to you."

"Someone like you?"

Blaine's heart skipped several beats before he caught Kurt's small smile and realised he was joking. He laughed nervously.

"Right," he said, thankful that the scarf was covering half his face to hide the flush in his cheeks. "Are you going to be okay?" he said gently when Kurt's face fell again. He looked completely heartbroken and Blaine had the sudden urge to hunt Jason down and give him several bruises to match the one on his own jaw.

"I...I guess so," Kurt mumbled. "I don't know what I'm going to d-do without him." He wiped his eyes quickly as tears slipped down his cheeks again.

"You're strong and he's not worth your tears anyway," Blaine said, thumbing away the tears on Kurt's cheekbone. "Especially after what he did to you. No one in his right mind would give up someone willing to forgive them for something like that. He's an idiot."

Kurt leaned absently into Blaine's hand, searching for the warm comfort.

"So, ice cream and bad movies?" Blaine said, smiling.

Kurt bit his lip in consideration of the suggestion.

"No," he said at last. "No, I...I'm not going to mope around. Not this time." He nodded resolutely. "I want to go out."

"Out?" Blaine repeated, wincing.

"Yes," Kurt said, adjusting the ice on Blaine's jaw. "Do you think you're up for it?"

"Depends," Blaine said slowly, opening and closing his jaw to try and work out the growing stiffness.

"Where do you want to go?"

Kurt's lips turned up in a grin, eyes shining with a playful glint.

"Scandals."

Helping Kurt get drunk enough to forget Jason right after he'd been punched in the jaw was not high on Blaine's list for evening activities. But it certainly sounded better than having to watch Kurt sob in his lap for hours straight, so he'd popped several pain medication and gone home to get changed before picking Kurt up at his house—his stomach squirming when Kurt appeared at the door with his hair styled messily, dressed in a pair of unbelievably tight jeans and tall boots—and driving to Scandals, the only gay bar for fifty miles.

They'd each been given a fake ID by the boy Kurt had been dating before Jason, who had, funnily enough, left Kurt for someone he'd met at the bar. They hadn't used them more than a few times when Kurt had dragged Blaine along for a 'night out'. He'd given up trying to get Blaine to go when he realised that Blaine was in no way enjoying himself. But tonight was an exception; Blaine was willing to watch after him at the bar if the alternative was Kurt being utterly heartbroken over someone as worthless as Jason.

Kurt pulled him towards the bar from the parking lot, giggling excitedly when they got past security into the rather depressing, single room that made up Scandals. There weren't many people even remotely close to their age, mainly older men who leered openly at Kurt as he made his way to the bar with Blaine, preening himself as he sat down at one of the worn stools.

"So what are you drinking?" he said, leaning towards Blaine as he sat and walking his fingers over the countertop.

"Er, I wasn't going to drink," Blaine said, patting his keys in his pocket.

"Oh, you can have *one* drink," Kurt said, waving him off. "It'll wear off by the time we leave."

Blaine didn't try to think about how long it would be until that time came around, instead pulling out his wallet as Kurt ordered them each a daiquiri and a shot of tequila for himself. He downed the shot the moment it was set in front of him, wrinkling up his nose and hissing as he set the glass back on the bar.

"Blech," he said, sticking his tongue out and reaching for the daiquiri as the bartender set it down. He sucked at the straw happily, peering around the room as Blaine took a tentative sip of his own drink, surprised by how faint the taste of alcohol was in it.

"This place is depressing," Kurt said, pulling a face and swirling his straw in his already half empty glass.

"Well there aren't many other bars we can go to unless you want to drive to Columbus," Blaine said with a shrug and slipping a twenty dollar bill across the bar to pay for their drinks.

"Hmm," Kurt hummed, narrowing his eyes at a man across the room who was eyeing him. He shuddered and turned his back to him. "Gross."

Blaine suppressed a grin, wincing a little and tenderly touching the bruise on his jaw. "You can't expect there to be a ton of young eligible gay men here," he said. "It's *Lima*."

"Well, *you're* here," Kurt said, lifting his eyebrows. "So I can hope, can't I?" He plucked up the cherry resting on top of the whipped cream topping his drink, sucking it clean before pulling it from the stem and chewing happily. "Do you like your drink? You've barely had any of it."

"I told you, I'm driving," Blaine said, taking another small sip of his daiquiri.

Kurt sighed dramatically. "And *I* told *you* you need to loosen up and have a little fun," he said, pursing his lips. He pulled the straw out of his nearly empty glass, slowly licking it clean and sucking the end before draining the last dregs of his drink. "You should come dance with me," he said matter-of-factly.

"Wha—no," Blaine said, blushing furiously when Kurt stood and tugged lightly on his hand, pushing his thighs apart and standing between them.

"Come *on*," Kurt said, ruffling his hair. "Please?"

"Kurt—"

Kurt snatched his glasses off his face, giggling wildly as he danced out of his reach. "Got your glasses, now you have to come," he sang, sticking out his tongue and shoving Blaine's glasses on his face. He stumbled back a step, blinking hard and scrunching up his face. "How do I look?"

"Ridiculous," Blaine said, hauling himself up and reaching for him to try and take his glasses back, though Kurt held them to his face and shook his head.

"Nope, not until you dance with me," Kurt said childishly.

Blaine sighed, squinting against the fuzziness around him. "Fine," he grumbled, holding out his hand expectantly.

Kurt pulled off his glasses, stepping up close to him rather than placing them in his hand and gently pushing them back on his nose.

"There," he said, the playfulness in his voice gone. "All better."

Blaine could see the alcohol already starting to affect him, pupils dilated wider than normal, even for in the darkness, eyes slightly out of focus. His hands dropped down and came to rest on Blaine's hips, pulling him closer so their bodies were a hairsbreadth apart and Blaine could feel the heart coming off him.

"Aren't you going to dance?" Kurt murmured, breath hot on Blaine's face as he moved his hips in time with the beat of the music.

"I-I'm not very good at it," Blaine said, swallowing hard.

"Mmm, that's okay," Kurt said, words slurring together. "I can show you."

"Excuse me?"

Kurt turned away from Blaine, who took the opportunity to let out the shaky breath he was holding. There was a young man, somewhere in his early twenties, standing behind Kurt and holding out a drink.

"Yes?" Kurt said politely.

"Would you like to dance?" the man said, flashing a dazzling smile. "Unless it bothers your boyfriend of course."

"Oh, Blaine's not—"

"I'm not his boyfriend," Blaine said, praying he didn't sound too bitter. "Go ahead, Kurt, I'll just be...over there." He trailed off as Kurt beamed at him before accepting the drink from the man and following him to the other end of the room.

Sighing, Blaine slouched back to the bar, throwing himself down on the stool, pulling his drink toward him and sipping it moodily as he watched Kurt dancing and making eyes with the man.

Over the course of the next half hour, he lost count of how many glasses had passed through Kurt's hands, though he was flush and flirting heavily with the man buying them for him when he stumbled back to the bathroom, no doubt ready to burst with the amount of liquid he'd consumed.

Blaine narrowed his eyes as he watched the man buying Kurt drinks glance around the bar before slipping down the hall towards the bathrooms after Kurt. Blaine pushed his drink away and stood, following after the man, who was just about to push the bathroom door open when Blaine caught up to him.

"Hey," he said sharply.

"Oh...hello," the man said, frowning. "Can I help—"

"Back off him," Blaine said.

"I thought you weren't his boyfriend?" the man replied, arching an eyebrow.

"I'm not," Blaine said, taking a step closer to him and giving him a warning look. "But I'm his best friend and he's not going home with you and he's *not* having sex with you in a dirty bathroom so you can just fuck off."

The man eyed the bruise on Blaine's jaw, no down wondering just how he'd gotten it.

"Alright," he said at last, throwing up his hands in surrender. "Fine. I'll go."

"Good," Blaine grunted. "You do that."

The man sighed and left, Blaine following him back out to the bar and watching him go before moving to lean against the wall opposite the hall, where he could watch Kurt stumbling back out of the bathroom a few minutes later, wiping his hands on his jeans and peering around for the man. He looked vaguely disappointed for a moment before shrugging and happily returning to his drink.

Blaine relaxed a little, smiling when Kurt's eyes fell on him, lighting up as he made his way across the room, drink clutched in one hand and a wide grin pasted on his face.

He giggled tipsily as he reached him, falling against Blaine's shoulder and sloshing his drink over the side of his glass, cheeks tinged pink and eyes out of focus.

"Blaine...Blaine," he whispered loudly in Blaine's ear. "Blaine, dance with me."

"Kurt, you're drunk," Blaine said, unable to keep the grin off his lips at how giggly he'd become.

"So what?" Kurt mumbled, draping his arms around Blaine's neck and crowding into his space, burying his face in his neck. "Feels good."

"You're going to be sick," Blaine said, resting a steadying hand on the small of Kurt's back, heat prickling his neck as Kurt breathed heavily across it.

"No'm'not," Kurt slurred, running his free hand over Blaine's arm and side. "M'fine. Dance with me."

"Kurt—"

"Fine, I'll dance with myself," Kurt said, pulling away from him and walking towards the bar, hips swaying in time with the music. He drained the rest of his glass before slamming it on the bar, nearly tripping on his own feet and giggling madly.

Blaine stifled a grin in the back of his hand, hesitating for a moment when Kurt staggered over to the DJ, stretching back over the table and flinging his arm out to touch the man's chest, batting his eyelashes as he said something Blaine couldn't make out.

The man gave him a dubious look before shrugging and nodding, Kurt letting out an excited squeal as he straightened and absently ruffled his own hair, eyes falling on Blaine immediately.

Blaine's breath hitched at the way his eyes darkened, hair falling across his forehead as You Make Me Feel Good started playing and he strut across the room, mouthing the words as he went and running his hands down his own hips and thighs.

"Funny. I thought you two were just friends."

Blaine turned at the voice, stomach turning at the sight of Sebastian, who was leaning against the wall, arms folded across his chest and a sneer on his lips as he watched Kurt dancing by himself in the middle of the room, hips moving sinfully and eyes closed.

"We *are* just friends," Blaine said, balling his fists at his sides.

Sebastian chuckled. "No need to guess when you got that," he said, nodding to the bruise on Blaine's jaw. "So what did you do to piss Jason off?"

"None of your business," Blaine snapped. "And why are you here anyway? Are you following me now?"

Sebastian scoffed. "Scandals is where I meet most of my...boyfriends," he said airily.

"Right," Blaine grunted, knowing full well that most of Sebastian's 'boyfriends' were men like the one Blaine had ordered to leave, just looking for a quick fuck in the bathroom and nothing more. But Blaine wasn't about to let Kurt become someone else's faceless hookup. Not on his watch.

"Why did you tell him?" Blaine said, turning to Sebastian. "Why did you tell Kurt about you and Jason?"

Sebastian shrugged, folding his arms a little tighter across his chest. "Because Jason wasn't giving me what I wanted."

"Me."

"Beg pardon?"

"You were telling Jason to give you *me*," Blaine clarified.

Sebastian looked mildly surprised for a moment, his face quickly smoothly back to impassivity.

"I overheard the two of you talking at Sectionals," Blaine grunted, returning his gaze to Kurt, who was still dancing by himself. He snarled at the way some of the men were eyeing him, like a pack of hungry wolves watching a lamb.

"Oh," Sebastian said, nodding. "I see."

"Why didn't you tell him?" Blaine said with a frown. "Kurt? About...me and...how I feel about him?"

Sebastian shrugged again. "My problem was with Jason, not you," he said. "Well...no, I had a problem with you being a massive prude but...this is much more amusing." He sneered as he watched Kurt. "He's such a wreck."

"No he's not," Blaine snapped.

Sebastian gave him a cool look. "He's a drunk, single, *wreck*," he said, moving closer to Blaine. "And he *still* doesn't want you, Blaine. Just give up already for christ's sake. It's pathetic."

"I love him."

"Well he doesn't love you," Sebastian said. "And you're just wasting your time on a used up piece of ass that won't want you for anything more than a rebound fuck and a shoulder to cry on."

Blaine glared furiously back at him, wishing his words didn't cut as deep as they did.

"You don't know Kurt," he said through gritted teeth.

"I know enough guys like him," Sebastian said, unfazed by his anger. "And trust me, I can tell you how it ends. You're thirty and alone, scrounging for scraps of affection every time another asshole leaves him and he comes crawling to you for reassurance that he's not completely worthless."

"Shut up," Blaine snapped. "You have no idea—you don't know—shut up."

Sebastian chuckled smoothly. "Right," he said. He turned to face Blaine, taking a step towards him and backing him up against the wall, resting one hand near his head and trailing the other down his chest. "Kurt's never going to want you, Blaine. Why not get with someone who already does?"

"I don't want *you*," Blaine said, hands shaking with anger.

"Come on now, it'll be fun," Sebastian said, voice lowering to a purr as he hooked his fingers on Blaine's belt loop.

"I said I don't—"

"Hey!"

Sebastian fell forward as if something had hit him hard in the back, rounding on whoever had shouted with a furious look and gasping in surprise as liquid splashed across his face and neck.

Kurt smiled vindictively, folding his arms across his chest and clutching his empty glass as he watched Sebastian wipe the remainder of his drink out of his eyes.

"What the fuck?" Sebastian spluttered, shaking whatever it was Kurt had been drinking from his eyes and blinking hard. "What the *fuck*?"

"Leave Blaine alone," Kurt slurred, poking him hard in the chest. "He doesn't want a diseased douchebag like you anyway."

Sebastian snarled. "I swear to god, I'll—"

Kurt yelped as Sebastian grabbed his collar roughly, though he released it a split second later when Blaine's fist collided with his gut and he shoved him back against the wall, blood pounding in his ears so suddenly he felt lightheaded.

"Don't—*touch*—him," he growled, feeling an intense satisfaction at the glint of fear in Sebastian's eyes as he coughed painfully and tried to regain his breath. "Got it?"

"Fine," Sebastian gasped. "Jesus."

Blaine released him, trembling a little at the rush of adrenaline as Sebastian straightened his collar, glaring at them both before stalking out.

"Are you okay?" Blaine said, turning back to Kurt and adjusting his collar carefully.

Kurt nodded silently, eyes wide and lips parted.

"That was hot," he breathed.

Blaine flushed, trying for aloof and probably failing miserably when Kurt absently licked his lip.

"We should probably go," Blaine muttered, glancing around the bar and the faces turned in their direction. "Before we get kicked out."

"Good idea," Kurt said, following him towards the door and shoving his empty glass into the hands of a random man before they stepped out into the cool night air together.

Kurt leaned against Blaine's shoulder as they made their way out to Blaine's car, his arm sliding around his waist, fingers playing across his side. He tickled him lightly, giggling when Blaine squirmed and playfully pushed him away.

"Come on," Blaine said, smiling as he pulled his keys out of his pocket and unlocked the door. "Let's get you in—"

Kurt grabbed his shoulders and pushed him against the side of the car, pressing his body against him and placing his face close to his.

"You didn't have to do that," he murmured, index finger running along the line of Blaine's collarbone through his shirt.

"D-do what?" Blaine said, leaning back as far as he could, which wasn't much given his back was flat against the car.

"Punch Sebastian, silly," Kurt said, hitting him lightly on the shoulder. "But I'm glad you did. He was a jerk."

"Y-yeah," Blaine said, nodding automatically.

Kurt giggled. "You're cute," he mumbled.

"Kurt, we should—"

Kurt fisted his hands in Blaine's shirt and pulled him into a kiss, effectively shutting him up and frying a few of his brain cells in the process.

Blaine was shocked his head didn't explode in the short seconds that followed, when he attempted to process the fact that Kurt, *Kurt* was kissing him, lips slightly chapped and unmoving but soft and warm and completely perfect. His heart leapt up into his mouth, beating so quickly he was concerned for his own health though he didn't really care because after nearly four miserable years of waiting, Kurt was *finally* kissing him and it was more amazing and exhilarating than he could ever had imagined.

Kurt pulled back with a soft *smack*, biting his lip and releasing Blaine's shirt.

"There," he said, absently straightening Blaine's glasses. "Since we never got to earlier."

He pulled open the passenger door and climbed into the seat, humming absently as he shut the door behind him.

Blaine stood there for a long minute, thankful that the car was there to support him because he was sure his legs weren't doing any of the work at that moment. He gripped the door, whimpering and wishing the feeling would return to his body.

The door cracked open behind him and Kurt popped his head out, looking concerned. "Are you coming?"

Blaine nodded mutely, knees wobbling as he made his way around the car and nearly fell into his own seat, fumbling with the keys as he stuck them in the ignition.

Kurt leaned back in his seat, propping his feet up on the dash and humming along with the radio as they rode, unaware that Blaine was internally freaking out beside him.

He couldn't stop licking his lips, trying to get the last bit of the taste of Kurt off them, his fingers clenched white around the steering wheel as his brain someone how, barely, still functioning enough to get them back to Kurt's house. *It didn't mean anything*, he repeated over and over in his head, *it's just because he's tipsy and from the mistletoe*.

The rest of his body didn't much care if it meant anything or not, though, his palms sweaty and his legs still trembling under him. He glanced over at Kurt every now and then, wishing he could just pull the car over and tug him into his lap and kiss him until he knew every last bit of his soft lips by heart.

Blaine pulled his car into Kurt's driveway a few minutes later, grateful that Burt and Carole were gone on some meeting for Burt over the weekend, Finn no doubt at Rachel's or Puck's. He had to help Kurt out of the car, sagging under the weight of him as he staggered and fell against him, giggling loudly.

He managed to get him up to his room without too much difficulty, struggling a little with getting his boots off as Kurt kept playfully yanking his feet away every time he tried to undo the laces. He eventually got him sitting on the bed in his shirt and jeans, grinning lucidly.

"That was fun," he said as Blaine sat next to him, sure to keep ample space between their bodies. "*You're* fun."

"I'm just a good designated driver," Blaine said, grinning as Kurt laughed perhaps a little harder than he normally would.

Kurt fell back on the bed, sighing happily.

Blaine yawned, glancing at the clock and realising it was already past midnight. He considered simply curling up next to Kurt and sleeping on his bed with him, but he didn't trust his hands not to wander when Kurt was so loose.

There was soft, choked sound behind him and he turned, heart sinking when he saw tears streaming down the side of Kurt's face as he sobbed quietly, whole body shaking.

"Kurt..."

Kurt stopped trying to be silent when he saw Blaine watching him, letting out a loud sob and sitting up as Blaine held out his arms to him, allowing him to lean against his side and cry into his shoulder.

Blaine sighed, stroking Kurt's hair gently as he sobbed into his shirt, his own heart aching at the fact that he was hurting. He rubbed his back, making soothing noises, the post-kiss euphoria draining away as Kurt shook and clutched at him desperately.

"I don't k-know what I did wr-wrong," Kurt choked, voice muffled against Blaine's sweater. "I l-loved him."

"I know," Blaine said soothingly. "I know, Kurt. You didn't do anything wrong, he's an idiot for giving you up. You're perfect."

Kurt sniffed, lifting his head from Blaine's shoulder and giving him a watery look, wiping the heel of his palm under his eyes.

"Do you really think so?" he said quietly, bottom lip jutting out slightly as he searched for reassurance, tears clinging to his long, pale eyelashes.

"Of course I do," Blaine said, smiling and brushing his hand over Kurt's cheek. "You're amazing, Kurt. You're smart and funny and beau-wonderful. Any guy would be lucky to have you."

Kurt smiled gratefully, eyes slightly out of focus from the alcohol.

"You're such a good friend, Blaine," he slurred softly, scooting a little closer to him on the bed. His eyes swept down Blaine's body, fingers trailing down his arm and coming to rest on his thigh.

"You know," he began, looking back up at Blaine coyly. "I'm kind of glad things didn't work out with you and Sebastian."

"Why's that?" Blaine said, swallowing hard as Kurt leaned closer to him.

"Because he was an asshole," Kurt said, his breath hot across Blaine's face. "He didn't deserve your virginity."

"D-didn't he?" Blaine said, inching away from him.

Kurt shook his head, following him on the bed and sliding his hand up his thigh, eyes glinting and one corner of his mouth turning up in a hungry smirk.

"Nope," he said silkily. "You know how I said I was going to find you someone to lose it to?"

Blaine nodded shakily.

"I'm going to keep my promise," Kurt purred. "But maybe we don't have to *find* someone. You deserve someone who really *knows* you. Knows your body." His fingers ghosted over Blaine's crotch and Blaine whimpered.

"You look so good," Kurt purred. "So *hot*, Blaine. We should have done the whole makeover thing a long time ago. Not that you weren't hot before but..."

Blaine's heart dropped in his chest. No, this wasn't what he wanted, Kurt drunk and horny and looking for a rebound. *Exactly* what Sebastian had said would happen. This wasn't what he wanted at all, *especially* not for his first time. A lump rose painfully in his throat and he tried to swallow it back as he croaked shakily.

"Kurt, I don't think—"

He let you a muffled yelp of surprise as Kurt tackled him with a playful growl, pinning him to the bed and crushing his lips against his own in a greedy, messy kiss, teeth clacking and Kurt's tongue forcing its way into Blaine's mouth as Blaine gasped, the taste of alcohol strong on Kurt's breath. Pain shot up from the bruise on his jaw.

Kurt groaned, tangling one hand in Blaine's hair and groping at his belt as he ground his hips down against his thigh, his erection pressing against Blaine's leg.

"Come on, Blaine," Kurt breathed, pulling away and kissing sloppily over his jaw and down to his neck, Blaine still in complete shock and unmoving, his words stuck in his throat. "Let's just fuck. Friends fuck each other, right? And I promise your first time will be good. You look so hot, Blaine, so hot now, god I want you. I want you, Blaine."

He grabbed Blaine's crotch and palmed him roughly through his jeans for a moment before fumbling with his zipper, sucking hard on Blaine's pulsepoint and moaning, a spark of electricity skittering down Blaine's spine.

"You taste good," Kurt murmured, his lips and breath hot against Blaine's skin. "I want you. I can feel it. You want me too. You're *hard*, Blaine."

For a moment, Blaine got lost in the taste and feel of Kurt's lips against his own as he kissed him again, his arm sliding around Kurt's waist and pulling him impossibly closer before his common sense kicked back in and he remembered that this was *not* what either of them wanted.

He finally managed to catch his breath and jumpstart his brain again, taking hold of Kurt's shoulders and attempting to push him off.

"Kurt-Kurt, s-stop, we can't--"

"We can, Blaine," Kurt said, voice low and rough and *god* Blaine had wanted to hear him sound like that before, to call *his* name out and want him back but not like this.

Blaine turned his head away from Kurt's mouth and tried to pull himself out from under him even as Kurt grinned and growled, grinding down against his leg and licking his lips.

"Come on, Blaine, it'll be fun, just harmless fun," he said in the same gruff tone, tugging at the waistband of Blaine's jeans.

"No-Kurt-no!" Blaine forced him off onto the bed next to him and pulled back, sliding off the bed and dragging his hand through his hair as he paced aimlessly, trying to calm himself down.

"Why not?" Kurt said, sitting up and sticking out his lip in a pout, pupils wide and hair deliciously messy. He bit his lip and Blaine's knees shook. "I'm horny. It'll be fun. Don't you want me?"

Blaine let out a humourless laugh, hot tears burning the corners of his eyes. He couldn't take this. It was too much pain to deal with.

"Blaine?"

"I can't do this anymore, Kurt!" Blaine cried, rounding on him and throwing his arms up.

"Do...do what?" Kurt said, frowning and tilting his head to the side, eyes sliding in and out of focus.

"I can't...I can't be your friend anymore, Kurt," Blaine said in a defeated voice.

Kurt blinked a few times, lips parted, wet and red, cheeks flushed.

"What?" he said at last, sounding genuinely confused.

"I can't be your friend anymore," Blaine repeated lamely, turning to leave and struggling to blink back tears.

Kurt eyes widened and he scrambled to the edge of the bed, grabbing Blaine's wrist and forcing him to turn back to him, looking frightened.

"Wh-what? No, Blaine, we don't have to do that, I'm sorry, I didn't—I just thought—if you don't want me—"

Blaine smiled, shaking his head and swallowing down the burning lump in his throat.

"You don't understand," he said, voice cracking. "It's exactly the opposite of that."

"What do you mean?" Kurt said in a hushed voice.

Blaine sighed.

"I'm in love with you, Kurt," he said quietly. "I have been for so long and...I just can't do it anymore. I can't watch you be with someone else and then pick up the pieces when you get your heartbroken only to have to see you fall in love with another guy again. I just can't do it anymore. It hurts too much," he finished brokenly, hanging his head as he gave up on fighting tears and let them fall free down his face.

Kurt was silent for a long time, hand still loosely resting on Blaine's wrist.

"Blaine..." he began feebly.

Blaine shook his head.

"I can't, Kurt," he whispered. "I'm sorry. I've tried ignoring it. I've tried getting over you but I'm not going to ever be able to do that as long as we're friends."

He disentangled himself from Kurt's limp fingers and took a few steps back. He paused, reaching out to brush the backs of his fingers down Kurt's cheek.

"You're so beautiful," he said.

"Blaine..." Kurt's eyes were swimming with tears, his bottom lip quivering, and Blaine had to resist the urge to gather him up in his arms and brush his hair back, whispering soothing words in his ear until he smiled like he'd done countless times before.

"I'm sorry," Blaine said, turning away from him and taking his coat from the bed before walking out into the hall without another look back.

Chapter Ten

Two hundred and thirty-three texts. Ninety-seven calls. Forty-five voicemails.

All this had accrued in the two days since he'd told Kurt that he loved him, since he'd left Kurt alone in his bedroom and driven home to throw himself down on his bed and scream into his pillow until his throat ached and the fabric was soaked with furious tears.

He refused to read Kurt's texts, to answer his calls. He needed to cut himself off from him completely, a clean break, to have any hope of getting over him. He spent most of the weekend curled up on his bed, torn between rage and heartbreak and wishing he could just hollow out his chest and stop feeling altogether. Anything would be less painful than this emptiness that felt like someone was tearing out his heartstrings and strangling him with them.

The worst part of it all was that everything reminded him of Kurt. The pictures on his corkboard all had Kurt in them, he had a sweater that Kurt had forgotten hanging over his desk chair, the cashmere still holding to the faint smell of him. When he arrived home after leaving Kurt's house, eyes already red and raw from crying, he buried his face in the sweater and just inhaled the smell of him until he cried himself to sleep.

He dreaded going back to school on Monday, wondering if he might just be able to feign illness for the last few days before winter holidays. He couldn't see Kurt, not now, not when everything was still so raw and fresh and open. Not to mention Kurt would surely corner him at some point and force him to talk to him. So he pulled the oldest trick in the book and held the thermometer to his lamp before slumping downstairs and declaring himself sick to his mother, who took one look at him, his exhausted eyes and dejected expression, and ordered him back into bed.

He spent the rest of the week skulking around the house, reading his books and every now and then clearing out the new messages from Kurt from his phone. The calls had started to drop off, though he was still texting him at least twenty times a day. Blaine would feel a twinge of guilt every time his phone beeped, but then he remembered the look on Kurt's face when he'd confessed and reminded himself that this was for the best, that he needed to cut himself off from Kurt to get over him.

On Friday, the last day before the holidays officially started, he was surprised to find a new text on his phone, not from Kurt, but from Mike.

He set his book down, shifting the cocoon of blankets around him and rubbing his sore eyes to read it.

Kurt quit the Cheerios.

Blaine stared at the message for a few seconds, unsure of how to react, before replying.

What? Why?

Probably because he's been a mess all week. He hasn't said a word in class and every time I see him and he thinks no one's looking he's crying. What the hell happened?

Guilt bubbled up in Blaine's gut and he kicked the blankets off him, suddenly uncomfortably warm.

I told him.

That I'm in love with him I mean.

And he didn't feel the same way?

Didn't really give him a chance to tell me he didn't. He tried to have sex with me and I told him I couldn't be friends with him anymore because I was in love in him.

Oh my god. Has he tried to talk to you? Have you talked at all about it?

I don't know what he has to say about it, I've been ignoring his calls and stuff.

What? Blaine, you idiot.

What? I have to get over him.

And what if he does feel the same way?

He'd have said something before.

You two drive me crazy.

Blaine smiled faintly, face falling when he thought of Kurt being alone at school, miserable and crying, another stab of shame and guilt hitting him hard.

So he's been upset? And he quit the Cheerios?

He's been a mess. He wore sweatpants two days in a row, Blaine. SWEATPANTS. And he didn't even make fun of Rachel's reindeer sweater at lunch. He's seriously messed up. You two need to talk.

Okay, okay, I'll...I'll call him.

Promise?

Yes, I promise.

Good. And I don't believe that crap about you being sick. You're avoiding Kurt and that's not going to help anything. Talk to him before I lose my sanity.

I will.

Sighing, he tossed his phone onto the bed beside him, biting his lip and settling back against the pillows again. He thought he really *should* call Kurt, make sure that he was okay. The Cheerios were one of the most important things in his life and for him to be so miserable that he would actually quit...

He picked his phone up off the bed again, thumb hovering over Kurt's number for a full two minutes before he finally pressed it, jiggling his foot anxiously as the phone rang. The line clicked halfway through the second ring?

"Blaine?" The broken, cracked quality of Kurt's voice sent another wave of guilt through him.

"Um, hi," Blaine mumbled.

"H-how are you feeling?" Kurt said, sniffing quietly, voice thick as if he had a cold, though Blaine knew it was because he'd been crying.

"Fine," Blaine said, fingers drumming on his thigh.

"Aren't you really sick?"

"Oh...right," Blaine said hastily. "Yeah, I'm feeling a little better. You?"

"M'fine," Kurt replied, though the way his words shook suggested otherwise.

Blaine cleared his throat. "Mike said you quit the Cheerios," he said in a would-be casual voice.

Kurt chuckled wetly on the other end. "*Actually I got thrown off,*" he mumbled. "*I just asked Coach to let me say I quit to maintain some of my dignity.*"

"Wha—why did she kick you off?" Blaine said, frowning.

"I've been...um, missing practice and, er...messing up routines and things," Kurt said haltingly. "I've had an off week."

Blaine didn't reply, letting the silence stretch on for nearly a minute. He could faintly hear Kurt's quiet crying on the other end.

"I'm sorry I didn't reply to any of your messages," he said eventually.

"It's okay," Kurt said, sniffing. "You've been s-sick."

"Yeah," Blaine said, trailing off and rubbing the back of his neck. "So—"

"I've missed you," Kurt said quietly. Blaine heard something shifting on the other end of the line. "Do you really not want to be f-friends anymore?"

Blaine sighed slowly. "Kurt, I...I don't..." He huffed, trying to gather his thoughts and translate them into words. "I don't know how I'm supposed to be...friends if.... I need to get over you, Kurt."

He heard Kurt exhale quickly. *"So you really love me?"* he said in a small voice.

Blaine chewed on the inside of his cheek for a moment. "Yeah," he said reluctantly. "Yeah...I do."

"Oh," Kurt said quietly.

"Yeah," Blaine muttered.

Neither of them spoke for a long time and Blaine wished he could simply reach through the phone into Kurt's head to dissect what he was thinking.

"You know, I-I've always wondered what it would be like," Kurt said at last.

"Like what would be like?"

He could hear the smile in Kurt's voice. *"Kissing you,"* he said.

"What do you mean?" Blaine said, heart suddenly beating a quick tattoo against his ribcage. Could Mike have been right? Did Kurt actually feel the same way?

"Well, that's something you always sort of wonder, isn't it?" Kurt said. "What it'd be like to kiss your best friend? Just to see what it would be like, you know?"

Blaine's hopeful smile melted off his face, his stomach sinking and filling up with something solid and heavy.

"That's what it was to you?" he said stiffly. "Just...some experiment?"

"Wha—no, Blaine, that's not—"

"I have to go. I hear my parents," Blaine lied, bitter and hurt.

"Blaine, wai—"

Blaine didn't give him a chance to finish, ending the call and throwing his phone moodily onto the bed beside him. He ignored it when Kurt tried to call back a few seconds later, simply shutting it off altogether when it didn't stop ringing after five full minutes.

He glanced at the picture of him and Kurt on the nightstand, scowling and feeling used as he reached over and slammed it facedown onto the surface before rolling over and falling into a fitful doze.

His parents left two days before Christmas, his mother fussing over him, asking if he needed anything at all and threatening to stay behind if he was still sick.

"I'm *fine*, Mom," Blaine insisted, rolling his eyes as she dithered.

"Call us if you need anything at all," she said for the tenth time.

"Mom, how are you supposed to help me when you're in Hawaii?" he said, barely able to conceal a grin.

"Oh, you know what I mean," she said, straightening his jacket yet again.

"Go," Blaine said, pushing her lightly towards the door and his father, who was impatiently checking his watch.

"Alright, alright," she sighed, slinging her purse over her shoulder and sweeping back her dark hair before planting a kiss on his cheek. "Be good. Don't open your presents until Christmas. Are you going to Kurt's?"

"Er, no," Blaine said as his gut twisted painfully. "He's, um...busy with family."

"Oh," she said, blinking in surprise. "Alright...well. Be good."

"I will," Blaine said, forcing a smile and waving as they stepped down the path towards his father's car and drove away, his mother blowing him a kiss from the passenger seat.

As a child, Blaine would have loved having the house to himself, when he and Kurt could turn up the music as loud as they wanted or run around the house without fear of his father scolding them to be quiet. More recently, it was nice not to have to worry about his mother trying to talk to him when he was alone with Kurt, tangled together on his bed and watching a movie or simply talking until they ran out of words and just enjoyed each other's presence.

Now, however, he did what he'd done the rest of the week and simply wandered absently around the house, working through the books on his shelf and turning on movies without actually watching them. His phone remained off and silent and he wondered vaguely how many messages he had.

He couldn't stop replaying what Kurt had said over and over again, torn between hurt and spiteful pleasure at hanging up on him. He didn't know what to feel anymore. When he crawled into bed on Christmas Eve, he couldn't help but lift up the picture lying on his nightstand, holding it close to his face in the dark and running his thumb over Kurt's laughing face, a sudden, deep sense of longing rising up in the pit of his stomach.

He missed Kurt. No matter what he told himself or anyone else, there was no denying it. He missed talking to him, having him close, his steady, reassuring warmth on his skin. And he hated that he couldn't *stop* missing him. Couldn't stop loving him. It made him want to pull his own hair out in frustration.

Instead, he threw the picture across the room, where the frame hit the wall hard, the glass shattering and tinkling down to the carpet, long, fragmented slivers that caught the moonlight streaming through the curtains to set it dancing across the wall.

Tears prickled the corners of his eyes and he buried his face in his pillow to stop them, tossing and turning until well past three am on Christmas morning until he finally fell asleep.

He dragged himself out of bed around noon, making his way downstairs to where the huge Christmas tree was twinkling in the living room. There was a pile of neatly wrapped presents that had been there for over a week, all with his name on them in his mother's neat handwriting.

He opened the new laptop, clothes, books of sheet music, and iPod unenthusiastically, gathering them up and dumping them on his bed before flopping down next to the pile and scowling at the ceiling. After a few minutes, he sighed and forced himself up to put everything away, carefully folding the clothes to pack in

the dresser. He froze when he pulled open one of his drawers, shifting a few things aside to encounter a small, wrapped package. He lifted it out, realising it was his Christmas gift to Kurt, which he'd bought over a month ago.

Peeling off the red bow and green and gold wrapping, he turned the delicate music box over in his hand. They'd been at an tiny antique shop outside of Lima, looking for something for Kurt's aunt's birthday, when Kurt had spotted it, the round, gilded box with a worn golden clasp that, when lifted, allowed the lid to spring open, revealing a soft interior of deep blue silk, a porcelain dancer turning at the center as tinkling music played *Ave Maria*.

Kurt had watched it, eyes filling with tears as he lightly touched the silk lining.

"My mom used to have something like this," he said, biting his lip and running his finger along the rim of the lid. "She'd wind it up and lie down with me when I couldn't sleep. It got broken in the move to the new house."

He'd checked the price, face falling it when he saw how expensive it was, though he shrugged it off and went back picking through the shelves. Blaine had pretended to forget his wallet when they'd gone out to Kurt's car ten minutes later, bribing the store owner to hold the box for him until he could come back alone a few weeks later to pick it up.

He turned the little gold key at the back of the box, lifting the lid open and running his thumb over the decorated surface as the mechanism clicked and chimed softly. A lump rose in his throat and he swallowed a few times to try and force it away even as tears blurred his vision and splashed down onto the silk lining. He snapped the box shut, setting it on his nightstand and busying himself with putting away his other gifts.

He knew he needed to distract himself, find something that would help him take his mind off Kurt. Wandering around the house, he stopped at his father's office, poking his head inside, eyes falling on the liquor cabinet in the corner, the key still stuck in the lock.

Hesitating for a moment, he slipped inside the room and shut the door behind himself before padding across the carpet and pulling the door open. There were at least fifty bottles of various spirits inside, though he had no idea what any of them were. He tested a few, popping corks and unscrewing lids, screwing up his face at the burn until he found one that wasn't *too* unpalatable.

Taking one of the tumblers from the shelf, he poured himself a measure of whatever it was he was drinking—the label was so worn he had no way of telling—and took several large swallows before refilling and shoving the bottle towards the back of the cabinet.

He sipped slowly, taking a seat in his father's large desk chair and turning slowly as he allowed the warmth to seep down into his belly and out through his limbs. A sense of detachment slowly crept over him, his brain uncoiling like a spring too tightly wound. He sighed in satisfaction, blinking sluggishly and smiling as he drained the last few drops of his drink before rinsing out the glass and setting it carefully with the other.

Lightheaded and incredibly warm, he hummed in the back of his throat as he made his way back to his bedroom, stumbling a little as he did and running his hand along the wall for support. The heady sense of blithe contentment bubbled up and spilt out of his mouth in a quiet giggle as he fell back onto his bed and wrapped his comforter snugly around himself, yawning hugely.

Something had pressed against his hip and he frowned as he fished around in the blankets, finally pulling out his cellphone and staring at it for a long moment. A slow grin crept over his face as he turned it back on, ignoring the messages he had and immediately dialing Kurt's number. He sang under his breath as he listened to it ring, Kurt's voicemail message coming up after the fifth one.

"Kurt!" he said loudly when the line clicked. "Oops, that was loud, sorry." He laughed at nothing, blinking hard and rubbing his eyes under his glasses. "Are you having a good Christmas? Did you get lots of nice things? I bet you did..."

"So it's Christmas an-and I have something to say to you." He paused for a few seconds, shaking away the fog of the alcohol. "You know how my parents went on a cruise and I told you they were going alone? Well they invited me. They wanted me to come but you know what *I* said? I said no because I wanted to spend time with you. I gave up *Hawaii* to spend Christmas with you and now...now I'm stuck in this damn house by myself and...and...*fuck*."

He closed his eyes for a moment, an onslaught of emotions hitting him hard. Anger, grief, and loneliness swirling together in his brain.

"I'm stuck by myself on Christmas and...and you're probably with your family, baking cookies and drinking eggnog and having a blast and...dammit it's not fair." He took as deep breath as his voice wavered. "It's not f-fair that you're so fucking perfect and I'm complete mess because I can't...can't stop loving you."

He swallowed and squeezed his eyes shut, exhaling shakily and wiping the back of his hand across his cheek to gather up the tears.

"No matter what you do or who else is around I can't stop...I can't stop looking at *you* and...and thinking about you a-and it's not *fair*. I waited for you for so long and I-I should have just given up and even now I *still can't* and I h-hate it. I hate what loving you has done to me. I hate that I'm so fucking *broken*. I hate that I can't hate you no matter how much I wish I could."

He gulped back a low sob and pressed his face into his pillow for a few seconds before holding the phone back to his mouth.

"I don't know what to do anymore," he whispered thickly. "I never do without you."

Breathing in slowly, he ended the call and tugged the blankets more tightly around himself, hot tears sliding down the side of his face onto the pillow. He reached out for the music box on the nightstand, flicking it open so it started playing softly, the sound combining with the effect of the alcohol to lull him to sleep.

The dull pounding in his head woke him up the following morning. Shielding his eyes against the viciously bright sunlight, he squinted and staggered out of bed, fighting the urge to vomit as he made his way to the bathroom and gulped down several glasses of water. He paused when he glanced out the hall window on his way back to his room, eyes falling on a dark car parked in the driveway that looked incredibly familiar, though the now steady throb in his head seemed to be affecting his ability to place it.

Frowning, he made his way downstairs and slipped on his jacket and boots before tugging open the front door, leaping back when a huddled form on the stoop jumped at the movement.

His eyes widened as the figure disentangled itself from the blanket it was wrapped in, yawning and blinking blearily.

"K-Kurt?" he said incredulously. "What...what are you doing?"

"Waiting for you," Kurt mumbled, rubbing his back as he sat up, hair tousled and eyes red. "I guess I dozed off. I haven't slept in three days so..."

Blaine stared at him for a long moment. "You're going to get sick," he said, concern welling up inside him when Kurt sneezed and shivered.

"M'fine," Kurt said, waving him off and rubbing his eyes. He looked up pleadingly, eyes filling with tears. "Can we talk? Please?"

"I—yeah, I guess," Blaine said. "Do you want to go inside?"

"No, here's fine," Kurt said, running a hand through his rumpled hair. "The cold helps with staying awake and I don't want to impose."

The fact that they'd reached this point, that Kurt thought he'd be imposing simply by stepping inside Blaine's house, made him realise suddenly just how deep of an impact what had happened had on their relationship.

He shut the door quietly and sat down next to him, keeping a few inches between them though he would like nothing better than to cuddle next to him and share his warmth.

"Do you want my coat?" Blaine said, plucking at the sleeve of the one he was wearing.

"N-no, I'm okay," Kurt said, though his teeth chattered a little as the end of his nose was bright red.

"How long have you been out here?" Blaine said.

"Oh...not long," Kurt said, shrugging though he didn't look him in the eye. "A few hours," he added in a mumble.

"A few...*hours*," Blaine said, mortified. "Kurt, it's freezing out here. There's snow on the ground! Why didn't you just wait in your car?"

"I don't know," Kurt said, lip quivering. "I'm sorry."

"No, Kurt, don't...don't be sorry," Blaine said, reaching out to take his hand, the ungloved tips of his fingers bloodless and pale. He stopped, hand hovering between them before he withdrew it and placed it back in his own lap.

"I brought you this," Kurt said, pulling a bottle of water from his coat pocket. "I knew you'd need it. Sorry it's a little frozen."

"It's fine," Blaine replied, smiling faintly as he unscrewed the cap and took a sip of the frigid water. "Thank you."

"You're welcome," Kurt said lightly. They sat for a moment in awkward silence, birds twittering away in the trees and snow falling softly on their heads.

"So I guess I don't need to ask how your Christmas went," Kurt said at last.

"No, probably not," Blaine mumbled. "What about yours?"

"Um, it was o-okay."

Blaine looked up at the shake in his voice to see him hastily wiping his eyes.

"Fine, it was horrible," Kurt said, catching him watching him. "I hated it. I was miserable without you." He wrapped his arms around himself, resting his chin on them and staring across the lawn. "I miss you, Blaine." He turned his head slightly to look at him. "And for the record, I didn't see kissing you as an experiment."

"But you said you'd wondered what it would be like," Blaine said, hoping to convey how much what Kurt had said hurt, though it was difficult to express his own feelings when Kurt was so clearly distressed next to him.

"That doesn't mean I was just doing it to...to try it out," Kurt mumbled into his arms before letting them fall to his sides again.

"Then tell me this," Blaine said, sipping at the bottle of water. "When you...kissed me...was it like kissing Jason? Or Danny or...any of those other guys?"

Kurt didn't answer immediately, fingers absently twisting the hem of his shirt as he fidgeted.

"No," he said at last, voice tiny and timid as he shook his head very slightly.

Blaine nodded slowly, taking a gulp of water more to have something to do with his hands than anything else. He'd thought hearing Kurt say it flat out like that would hurt more, though he found himself wonderfully numb to the pain, most likely a side-effect of all the alcohol he'd had the night before.

Kurt cleared his throat softly and Blaine lifted an eyebrow in question.

"It...it wasn't anything like kissing them," Kurt said quietly. He seemed to hesitate for a moment, the pink tip of his tongue slipping across his lips. "None of them made me feel like...that."

"Like what?" Blaine said, setting down the bottle and shivering a little in the crisp chill of the morning, snow sparkling on the lawn around them.

Kurt smiled very faintly, as if he was reliving a pleasant memory. "Like I was losing myself," he said, eyes fixed on his hands. "Like nothing else mattered. Like I could be drowning and I wouldn't care because it like it was...how it was supposed to be." He looked up to meet Blaine's eyes at last. "It felt right."

Blaine didn't answer, watching him closely and absently chewing on the inside of his cheek.

"Are you saying you're in love with me?" he said after a long moment.

Kurt blinked and his eyes were suddenly over bright and swimming with tears. "I don't know," he said, shaking his head and looking back at his hands again. "I don't know what I feel anymore, I just know that...when I was kissing you, I didn't feel like such a horrible person anymore. I felt happy." He closed his eyes, sniffing and breathing out slowly, tears clinging to his eyelashes when he opened his eyes again.

"I was in love with you for nearly four years," Blaine said quietly. "And you tried to use me for rebound sex. You'll excuse me if I find it hard to believe that you felt something when you kissed me."

Kurt recoiled as if Blaine had physically struck him, wrapping his arms around himself, bottom lip quivering. "I *did* feel something," he said insistently. "I swear Blaine."

"And what about Jason?" Blaine said, almost laughing out of sheer frustration. "I thought you loved him?"

"I thought I did too," Kurt said, voice wavering. "But...maybe I didn't. I don't...I don't *know*, Blaine, I just know that I felt something when I kissed you that I've never felt with any other guy and I don't want to lose that. I don't want to lose *you*." He paused, quickly swiping his sleeve over his cheeks. "Sometimes you don't see something that's right in front of you until you want to. And I-I see it now, Blaine. I see *you* and I know it might be too late but if it's not then I'll do whatever it takes to fix it." He took a deep breath, shoulders relaxing slightly as he gave Blaine an anxious look. "So...i-is it too late?"

Blaine picked up the bottle, taking a long drink from it and setting it back down before he turned to look at him. "So you love me?"

"I—"

"Don't answer that," Blaine said quickly, holding up his hand. He closed his eyes for a moment, inhaling slowly through his nose, the cool air soothing to his pounding head. "I don't want you saying yes now because you think it's what you're supposed to say," he said slowly, carefully choosing his words. "I don't

want you saying yes and then changing your mind later when you realise it's *not* what you want. I've waited for over three *years* and...if you think this is really what you want then...then I can wait a little longer to make sure that *you're* sure." He turned to Kurt, who was watching him with a stricken expression. "I'm not going to give up trying to get over you just to be treated like another...boy toy."

"I would never do that to you," Kurt whispered, shaking his head. "Never. Blaine, you have *always* meant more to me than anyone else. And I screwed up. I shouldn't have tried to have sex with you. I was way too drunk and way too emotional but when I kissed you in the parking lot that...*that* made me feel something. And, hell, maybe I was scared of feeling something like that towards you again because it sure as hell didn't work out the first time around and I maybe that's why I acted the way I did, I don't know...."

"Wait...again?" Blaine said, frowning.

Kurt smiled humourlessly and slipped his hand into his pocket, pulling out a folded slip of worn paper and holding it up.

"What's that?" Blaine said curiously.

"It's something that I think you need to read," Kurt said, pressing the paper, smooth with age, into Blaine's palm.

"Okay..."

"It's a letter," Kurt said with a weary sort of sigh. "That I wrote to you in freshman year that I...I couldn't give to you then. But now I'm ready." He pushed himself to his feet, straightening his coat. "I have to get back home and you probably want to finish sleeping off that hangover but...read it. Please." He pulled his keys from his pocket and took a few steps towards his car, boots crunching in the snow. He stopped at the door and looked back at him. "You waited three years? Well...so did I. I just tried to move on with my life. But maybe it didn't work as well as I'd hoped."

He tugged the door open and climbed inside without another word, the engine rumbling to life and gravel crunching beneath the tires as he pulled out and drove away.

Blaine stared after him for a moment before setting his bottle down and unfolded the paper with his numbed fingers, blowing on them briefly to try and regain some feeling as he started to read, smiling at how, even at fourteen, Kurt still had the neat, flowing handwriting.

Dear Blaine,

I love you.

Chapter Eleven

Blaine gaped at the words for a long minute, unable to fully wrap his mind around the fact that Kurt had actually written them, though the handwriting was definitely his. He blinked a few times and inhaled sharply through his nose, the cold air burning his lungs as he forced himself to continue reading.

Yeah, I know, it's crazy but it's true. I love you. I have since seventh grade, almost longer than I can remember. I've known I was gay for, well, for a long time, but it wasn't until I met you that I felt I was really sure because I'd never felt that way about someone else before. I'm not really sure what made me want to sit with you that day, maybe it was because I knew what it was like to be alone, but I'm glad I picked your table.

I don't know what made me realise it but there was a point where every time I saw you, I got butterflies in my stomach, my hands would start to sweat whenever you sat next to me, I blushed when you touched me or hugged me. I know it sounds silly because you're not gay but I can't help it, I fell in love with you and I don't know what to do but I think you deserve to know. I know I would if it was me. It just hurts sometimes to see you knowing we'll never be together and I think if you know maybe it will be easier to get over you once you've said it yourself.

I hope this doesn't stop us from being friends but I understand if you don't want to be anymore.

Kurt

There was a line jotted across the page followed by more writing, fresh ink dark on the page as if it had been penned more recently, perhaps even that day.

I never got the courage to give it to you. I wanted to. After you told me you would be my boyfriend if you were gay, I ended up hiding it in my room because it gave me hope that you might want me one day. That you might, I don't know, realise you were gay and want to be with me. Then you came out and you didn't say anything about it and, well, it hurt like hell and I had to take a few days to try and convince myself it was never going to happen, to try and get over you. When I joined the Cheerios and people started...noticing me, I started dating because I knew it made it easier. I thought I'd gotten over you but kissing you at the bar brought all those feelings back. I don't know if it's love or not but I know I don't want to give it up without a fight in case it is. I understand if you don't want to try it but it seems like a waste of a lot of time wanting each other to give up without even trying to make it work. I understand if you're angry with me though, and I won't hold it against you if you don't want this, but I hope we can still be friends.

I hope you'll call me, I miss you.

Blaine read the letter through a second time before folding it carefully, chewing the inside of his cheek and allowing the words to sink in. Kurt had been in love with him. For just as long as he'd been in love with Kurt. And the worst part about it was there'd been nearly a year of overlap from when he'd realised his feelings and when he'd come out, which meant that entire time they'd been harbouring feelings for each other, both too afraid to admit them for fear of rejection. He wanted to laugh at the absurdity of it all.

He slipped the letter in his pocket, blowing on his numb fingers and stomping his feet as he stood up and went back inside the house. Leaning up against the door, he lightly touched where the letter was resting in his pocket before making up his mind and jogging up the stairs to his bedroom. He took a hurried shower and changed into some of the clothes Kurt had helped him pick out before putting in his contacts, slipping his glasses into the pocket of his coat alongside his phone. He carefully wrapped Kurt's music box in a sweater and made his way back downstairs and out to his car, pausing to check his reflection in the mirror.

There was a part of him, a large part, that was still hurt and angry about what Kurt had done, but Kurt was right. It was petty to give up nearly six years of friendship, and maybe more, over one fight. Try as he might to deny it, Blaine still loved Kurt, he didn't think that would ever change. And now, knowing Kurt might feel the same way about him, he couldn't stop the giddy smile from spreading over his face as he pulled out of the driveway and set off on the familiar route to Kurt's house.

He tucked Kurt's music box under his arm and made his way up the walk, pausing for a moment before knocking on the door and wondering briefly what Kurt's family knew about the situation. Kurt's father opened the door a few seconds later and a look of intense relief swept over his features.

"Well thank god you're here," Burt said, ushering Blaine inside. "He's been a mess all week. We keep trying to talk to him but he won't budge, just kept saying he screwed everything up with you and something about Jason breaking up with him and...well, he looked pretty down when he got home a few minutes ago." He took Blaine's coat for him and gave him a questioning look. "Don't suppose *you* can give me a little insight into what the hell is going on?"

"Er..." Blaine glanced at the stairs leading to Kurt's room, the music box clutched to his chest, still wrapped in a sweater. "W-we got into an argument the night he and Jason broke up but I think...I think it's going to be alright."

Burt let out a slow sigh, rubbing his eyes in a tired gesture. "Well let's hope you have more luck with him than I did," he muttered, clapping Blaine on the shoulder before turning away and heading to the kitchen, calling over his shoulder, "Let me know if you two need anything."

"Will do, Mr. Hummel," Blaine said as he toed off his shoes and padded up the stairs to Kurt's room, the door of which was cracked open.

He pushed the door open a little further and poked his head inside, something twisting in his chest at the sight of Kurt curled into a ball on his bed, head pressed against his pillow, face streaked with tears and eyes softly closed. The steady rise and fall of his shoulders indicated that he was asleep, Blaine wondered how he'd been managing to stay away for the past three days.

There were photo albums scattered across the bed and floor, all open to pictures of the two of them throughout the years. As Blaine stepped carefully over them, he caught sight of the pile of photographs in the trash that had Jason in them.

He set the music box down on Kurt's bed, shifting a few albums to clear a spot for himself before sitting down near Kurt's waist, biting his lip and swallowing back the lump in his throat when he saw a crumpled strip of photos clutched in Kurt's fingers, the same ones Blaine had hanging in his locker at school.

Blowing briefly on his fingers to warm them, he gently brushed Kurt's hair off his forehead, lightly rubbing his thumb over his cheek where it was still damp with tears. Kurt sighed in his sleep, his face relaxing, brows unfurling and some of the tightness leaving his jaw. He turned his head into Blaine's hand, nuzzling his cheek into his palm and smiling faintly as he curled up a little tighter.

"S'nice," he mumbled. He said something else Blaine couldn't make out and yawned, smacking his lips a little as he eyes fluttered open. His smile widened at first when his eyes fell on Blaine, though it faded as he seemed to remember what had happened, replaced by an anxious look as he pursed his lips and lowered his head.

"Hi," he said quietly.

"Hey," Blaine replied, turning on the bed and letting his hand rest on his own knee rather than Kurt's face.

"How are you feeling?" Kurt said, shuffling back to sit up and scrubbing his eyes.

"A little better," Blaine said. "A shower helped."

Kurt nodded, tucking his knees up to his chest and wrapping his arms around them. He peered at Blaine over the top, eyes, puffy and red, just visible as he watched him nervously.

"So I think we need to talk," Blaine said. "Nothing bad," he said quickly when Kurt's lip started quivering. "Just...talk. We need to figure out what this—" he gestured between the two of them, "is."

Kurt nodded in assent against his knees.

Blaine took a deep breath, twisting his hands in his lap and frowning as he tried to put his thoughts into words.

"What... what do *you* want from all this?" he said, lifting his legs onto the bed and turning so he was fully facing Kurt.

Kurt slid his blunt fingernails absently over his over forearm, shrugging his shoulder slightly. "I'm not sure," he said honestly. "I just know that I need you in my life. In whatever capacity you want to be there."

"But how do you want me to be in it?" Blaine said. "Do you want us to just... just try and forget about all this and be friends? Because I'm going to be perfectly honest, I don't know if that will work."

"You're probably right," Kurt said, more to himself than to Blaine. He cleared his throat and looked up. "I'm sorry. For never telling you before. I should have. I was just too afraid because I was sure you were going to say no and... and I'd rather have you as a friend than nothing at all."

Blaine couldn't help but smile at how strongly the feeling resonated with him. "I know what you mean," he muttered, falling silent when he saw Kurt smiling sheepishly back at him. "I have to ask," he began slowly. "Was the whole, trying to find me someone to lose my virginity to, was that something you really wanted to do or... what?"

Kurt fidgeted a little, brow creasing. "I think there was a part of me that felt like finding you a boyfriend, seeing you falling in love with someone else, would help me put my feelings for you behind me for good. I think, deep down, I knew they were still there, I just didn't want to recognise them. It hurt enough the first time." He ducked his head again, suddenly interested in a loose thread on his sleeve.

"We're not very bright, are we?" Blaine said. Kurt's eyes lifted curiously to him again. "I mean, Mike was right, we really are the two most oblivious people on the face of the planet."

Kurt smiled, shaking his head though his eyes lit up and before long he was shaking with silent laughter, Blaine grinning next to him and feeling an impossible weight lifting from his chest. Kurt quieted, though he didn't stop smiling as he lowered his hand from his leg and let it rest on top of Blaine's, eyes softening hopefully.

"Are you sure this is what you want?" Blaine said, turning his hand in Kurt's and watching their fingers slide loosely together. "I don't think either of us wants to be hurt again."

Kurt shifted, sliding his legs down and bending them to the side as he shook his head and leaned closer to him. "I won't hurt you," he said quietly.

He wet his lips, eyes flicking down to Blaine's mouth before lifting back to his eyes anxiously as he planted his hand on the bed and leaned closer to him. Blaine's fingers curled in the bedspread, breath hitching as Kurt's eyes slid shut and his lips parted, warm air ghosting across Blaine's face. He was so close now he could pick out the individual eyelashes fanning across his cheeks.

"Wait," Blaine choked out quickly. "No, don't... don't move," he added when Kurt tried to pull away, gripping his arm so their lips hovered an inch apart, air suddenly hot and close around him.

"What's wrong?" Kurt whispered, opening his eyes and searching Blaine's face. "I want to kiss you."

Blaine bit back a whine, forcing himself not to simply move his head forward to connect his lips to Kurt's. "I know," he said. "M-me too."

"Then why—"

"New Year's," Blaine said breathlessly. "We should... we should wait until New Year's. That way we can see how the next few days go and, um, make sure this is what we want. We shouldn't dive into this too quickly. You and Jason only broke up two weeks ago."

Kurt sighed, pulling away and sitting back against his pillows. "Yeah," he said, nodding. "You're probably right. I don't want to screw this up more than I already have."

"Hey, no, it's not *all* your fault," Blaine said, scooting closer to him and squeezing his hand. "I shouldn't have ignored you, that was... petty of me."

Kurt smiled gratefully. "So we're going to, er, test drive this and see if it's what we want?" he said, admiring the way their hands fit together with a small smile.

"If that's okay with you," Blaine said. "I just think, um, neither of us wants to mess this up so we should probably go slowly."

"It'll make it much more special when we *do* move forward," Kurt said, smiling and blushing faintly.

Blaine felt heat prickling up his neck and face when he realised what Kurt was talking about. He cleared his throat, looking at anything but Kurt's face, eyes finally landing on where he'd set the music box next to him, still carefully concealed in his sweater.

"I have your Christmas present," he said, voice higher than normal. He coughed and lifted the bundle from the bed to hold out to Kurt, who accepted it with a surprised look.

"You still got me a present," he said in a small voice.

"Of course I did," Blaine said. "I actually got it a while ago but... sorry it's not wrapped, I, well, it's a long story." He watched anxiously as Kurt peeled away the fabric, gasping softly when the sweater fell away to reveal the delicate music box.

"Blaine," he breathed, lifting the lid so that the tinkling music filled the air. He looked up, eyes brimming with tears. "Thank you. You didn't have to get this for me."

"Yes I did," Blaine said, smiling. "After seeing the look on your face when you saw it, I wasn't about to leave it there."

Kurt carefully shut the lid, setting the box next to him and leaning forward to pull Blaine into a warm hug, burying his face in Blaine's neck and breathing in slowly.

"Thank you," he said, words muffled in Blaine's coat, thick with emotion. He took a shuddering breath and shook in Blaine's arms, clinging to him even tighter.

"I was so afraid I'd lost you completely," he sobbed. "I thought we were never going to be friends again and I can't lose you, Blaine. I c-can't live without you and I'm so s-sorry I ever took you for granted. You've always been there for me and I promise I'll n-never do it again."

"Kurt, it's fine," Blaine said, wrapping his arms securely around his waist. "You're not losing me."

"I th-thought I destroyed any chance of being with you," Kurt said quietly.

"You haven't," Blaine said reassuringly, closing his eyes and rubbing Kurt's back gently.

Kurt pulled back, sniffing softly and brushing his fingers over Blaine's cheek, the touch sending sparks dancing across Blaine's skin as he registered that there was now much more behind it. He lifted his hand and hesitantly gathered up Kurt's tears on his thumb, heart swelling in his chest when Kurt sighed and relaxed into the touch.

"Thank you," he said, nodding to the music box. "I love it."

"I knew it was important to you," Blaine said, heart beating faster as Kurt tangled their fingers together again.

"Oh, I have your present too," Kurt said, pulling his hand away and wiping his eyes before twisting around to reach into his bedside table to pull out a neatly wrapped package, which he placed gently on Blaine's lap.

"You didn't have to get me anything," Blaine mumbled, face heating up as Kurt beamed and bit his lip, bouncing in his seat as he waited for Blaine to pull back the wrapping paper.

Blaine laughed as he lifted a bow tie from the top of the package, red with small silver stars on half, the other half green with golden stars.

"It's reversible," Kurt said brightly. "I know how much you love wearing them and I thought it was festive. Do you like it?"

Blaine nodded, giving his leg a quick squeeze before lifting the layer of tissue paper from the remaining gift in the box. He glanced up at Kurt, who nodded encouragingly, before picking up the framed picture. The frame itself was hand-painted with tiny music notes, pompoms, and half a dozen other things that held some sort of significance to one of them or their relationship. The picture was from the summer before, soon after the end of the school year on one of the days the two of them had been lying in Kurt's backyard together, sides pressed together as they enjoyed the warmth and freedom, and Kurt had pulled out his camera and told Blaine to smile, though they'd ended up looking at each other rather than the camera when the shutter clicked. It had been one of those moments when Blaine had wanted nothing more than to lean over and kiss him, wrap his arms around his waist and breathe him in.

He'd never actually seen the shot before, Kurt usually kept them on his camera and scrapbooked them all with each passing season, and his throat went dry at the way Kurt was looking at him. It was an expression he'd worn himself countless times when he was watching Kurt, the soft smile and dreamy look in his eyes.

"I kept trying to find the right picture to put in it," Kurt said quietly. "I must have changed it a dozen times. I found this one on my computer last week and... I think it was then that I realised I wasn't *really* over you. I never got to tell you though." He lowered his head, looking up apologetically.

"I'm sorry," Blaine mumbled, setting the picture back down.

"It's okay," Kurt said. "I can't imagine it was easy watching me with all those other guys. I mean... I think deep down I was jealous of Sebastian when I saw him with you but I kept telling myself it was because I was afraid of losing you as a friend."

"I guess we've both been a little silly," Blaine said, stomach squirming happily as Kurt took his hand again. He hadn't quite absorbed that they were really doing this, that they were going to be together after he'd waited for so long. There was such a large part of him still terrified it was all going to come crashing down around his ears, leaving him even more scarred than just leaving things as they were with a clean break. But he knew he couldn't walk away without trying to make things work between them, not after they'd both spent so long hoping and watching each other.

Kurt's thumb rubbed small circles on the back of Blaine's hand and Blaine looked up with a small, questioning smile.

"I really want to kiss you," Kurt said in a small voice, the colour rising in his cheeks. He sighed and shrugged his shoulders. "But I'm willing to wait until New Year's. It will be like we're starting everything fresh with a whole new year." He slid down the bed so he was just propped up against the pillows, giving Blaine a hopeful look. "Are we still allowed to cuddle? I miss cuddling you."

Blaine let out a small huff of amusement, Kurt jutting his lip out in an exaggerated pout.

"I don't think there'd be any problem with that," Blaine said, Kurt squirming happily and scooting to the side to give him room to lie next to him on the bed as Blaine cleared a few things off the bed and slipped off his coat before lying down.

For a moment they simply stared at each other, enjoying the closeness and the how much more it held for them now. Kurt rested his hand lightly on Blaine's arm, rubbing it gently and smiling. The gesture was incredibly calming, and soon Blaine found his eyelids drooping. His head was still aching dully, though the pain wasn't nearly as noticeable as it had been that morning and after having to deal with the bruise on his jaw, now fully healed, it wasn't difficult to push aside.

"Blaine?" Kurt said softly.

"Hmm?"

"Will you... hold me?"

Blaine opened his eyes fully again, Kurt biting his lip apprehensively, hand pausing on his arm as he waited.

"I just always feel safer when you're close," Kurt explained. "A-and I'm... really tired and I like the idea of falling asleep in... in your arms."

Blaine smiled, pushing his fingers through Kurt's hair. "Yeah," he said, "c'mere."

Kurt looked relieved, rolling over to face away from him and scooting back so he was pressed against Blaine, moulding their bodies to fit together. He sighed as Blaine's arm came to rest around his waist, one foot tangling around Blaine's ankle.

"Is this okay?" Kurt said nervously.

"Perfect," Blaine sighed. They'd done this before, when Kurt was broken-hearted and crying, but Blaine had only ever dreamt of being able to hold Kurt like this, to be able to bury his face in the back of Kurt's hair and breathe in the scent of his shampoo, to press a tender kiss to the nape of his neck and feel his stomach twitch with a giggle, to wind their fingers together against Kurt's chest and feel him drift off against him.

He lifted his head off the pillow, resting his cheek on Kurt's shoulder to watch him doze, the bags under his eyes still dark but softened in sleep. He looked content, peaceful, though Blaine couldn't stop the pang in his chest knowing he'd been the one to make him lose sleep in the first place.

"I love you, Kurt," he whispered, kissing his shoulder before lying down again, shifting closer to him and tightening his arm around his waist.

"Mmm, you too," Kurt murmured sleepily.

Blaine didn't know if he was fully asleep or not when he said it, though he didn't really think he cared anymore now that Kurt was actually, truly, finally his.

He didn't register much when he shifted slowly out of his drowse. He was warm and incredibly comfortable, heat wrapped around one leg, which was bent and pulled up slightly, his arm snugly around another body, hand splayed across the person's chest. Sighing and nuzzling into the soft hair near his nose, he twisted his fingers in the fabric under them, his other arm numb from resting under his head. He instinctively pushed himself closer to the warmth, groaning quietly at the friction against his half-hard—

He jolted awake and scrambled back so quickly from Kurt that he fell off the bed with a loud yelp, thudding to the floor and struggling to catch his breath as it was knocked out of him.

"Blaine?"

"I'm fine," Blaine said, clearing his throat when it came out as a nervous squawk. He fought against the blanket still tangled around him for a moment before sitting back against Kurt's bed, breathing heavily and pressing the heel of his hand down against his crotch.

Kurt giggled and Blaine jumped at how close the sound was, blushing hard when he turned to see Kurt kneeling on the bed behind him, smiling sleepily, hair ruffled and face pink from the warmth.

"Problem?" he said, voice still rough and scratchy from sleep.

"Erm, n-no," Blaine stammered, pushing himself quickly to his feet and straightening his sweater. He blinked a few times to moisten his contacts, willing his blush to go down, among other things.

Kurt pulled the blankets up to his chest, tucking his legs up and smiling serenely.

"That was nice," he said. "I like sleeping next to you." The colour on his cheeks darkened and he fiddled with the corner of the blanket.

Blaine, sufficiently calmed down, climbed onto the bed next to him. Kurt hesitantly moved closer to him, leaning against his shoulder and sighing when Blaine slid his arm around his waist.

"This is weird," Kurt said, wrinkling up his nose. "But... a good weird," he added quickly when Blaine paled. He smiled and traced down the line of buttons on Blaine's sweater. "I'm still trying to wrap my mind around the fact that I can just—" he kissed Blaine's neck, arms snaking around his waist as he trailed his lips over Blaine's throat. Blaine's eyes slid closed, toes curling in his socks. "Whenever I want," Kurt finished quietly, resting his head in the crook of Blaine's shoulder. "It's nice."

"Yeah," Blaine said breathlessly. "Nice."

"I like that I make you nervous," Kurt said, rolling onto his stomach and propping his chin up on his fist, his other hand combing through Blaine's curls. The corner of his mouth quirked up. "It's cute."

Blaine tried not to fidget too much as Kurt's fingers trailed over his scalp and neck, playing over his collarbone and tweaking the top button on his sweater.

"To tell you the truth," he said, grinning mischievously and swinging his leg over Blaine's lap so he was sitting on his hips, fingers fisted in Blaine's sweater. "It's kind of hot."

Blaine's breath caught as Kurt leaned down to press his forehead against Blaine's, grinning as Blaine shrank into the pillows and swallowed, his mouth suddenly dry.

"You're not just going to let me take advantage of you, are you?" Kurt teased.

Blaine hesitated for a moment, reminding himself that he was allowed to touch Kurt now, that *this* was okay and normal. He grinned and grabbed Kurt's waist, flipping him over on the mattress and wriggling his fingertips over Kurt's sides as he fell back with a *whoosh*.

Kurt yelps and squirmed, eyes crinkling up as he laughed and attempted to swat away Blaine's hands.

"Stop! No, truce, truce!"

Blaine poked him in the stomach and Kurt squealed, locking his legs around Blaine's waist and snatching at his wrists, forcing them away from his sides.

"Not fair," he gasped, still laughing and pink-cheeked.

Blaine simply smirked, twisting his wrists in Kurt's hands and pinning his arms over his head against the pillows.

"Yeah?" he said, surprised by the roughness of his own voice.

"Yeah," Kurt breathed. He rubbed his lips together to wet them. "You know, you make me nervous too."

"Really?" Blaine said, torn between shock and excitement at the statement.

"Really," Kurt echoed. He was much closer than Blaine remembered and it took him a moment to realise that he'd been leaning down towards him, like he was magnetically drawn to his lips, bitten red and so soft. Maybe it was silly to wait until New Year's, what difference would a few days make anyway?

Kurt's eyelids fluttered, chin lifting expectantly.

"Kurt? Are you and Blaine awa—"

Burt appeared in the doorway before Blaine could react to his voice, though he jumped back off Kurt the moment he saw him, stammering and blushing scarlet.

"Dad!" Kurt hissed.

"Sorry, sorry, just checking you were up and if you wanted lunch," Burt said, looking away, though Blaine could see the ghost of a smile on his lips.

"We'll come down when we're hungry," Kurt said, folding his arms crossly.

"Alright, chill," Burt said. "And... just make sure you keep the door open."

"Dad!"

"I'm going, I'm going," Burt said, now barely concealing a grin as he turned to leave, "about time," clear in a gruff grunt from the hall.

Kurt groaned in embarrassment and flopped back on the bed, arm draped over his eyes.

"You still want to wait, don't you," he said, lifting his arm to peer at Blaine from under it.

Blaine nodded.

"I mean... I *want* to kiss you," he said. "I really *really* do." Kurt looked mildly pleased. "I just don't want to do something either of us will regret. I'm a lot newer to this than you. I'm... woefully inexperienced. I don't think I really want to count Sebastian's attempts at eating my face."

Kurt stifled a laugh and smiled reassuringly. "It's okay," he said, sitting up. "Really. You're right. We should... we should ease into all this."

"And you're sure you're over... Jason?" Blaine said anxiously.

"I'm sure," Kurt said stiffly. "He... he said some, um, not nice things to me at school last week."

"Like what?" Blaine said suspiciously when Kurt refused to look at him.

"It's not a big deal, Blaine," Kurt mumbled.

"Kurt."

Kurt sighed. "Just stupid stuff like I was horrible in bed and an arrogant brat and I wasn't worth the hassle." His voice grew fainter as he spoke, eyes brightening with tears when he fell silent.

"You know none of that's true, don't you?" Blaine said. "Well... I can't comment on the first part but you're not an arrogant brat and you're not a hassle but if you *were*, you'd be worth it. He's just bitter and if he really loved you he would never have said that."

"I guess," Kurt mumbled.

"Kurt," Blaine said sternly. "Don't listen to him. Please. You're perfect."

"Nobody's perfect," Kurt said.

"Well, you are," Blaine said. "For me at least. I love you." It was freeing to finally be able to say it out loud rather than whispering it in the dark when Kurt was fast asleep.

Kurt visibly relaxed at his words, wiping his eyes on his sleeve and shuffling across the bed to curl up with his head in Blaine's lap. Blaine automatically stroked his fingertips over his temple.

"Why do you love me?" Kurt said, barely audible, almost fearful, as if he was afraid Blaine would consider the question and not be able to find a good enough answer to stay.

"Because you make me smile," Blaine said without missing a beat. "You always have. I can sit and talk to you for hours or not do anything at all and still be happy. We can spend days on end together and never get sick of each other. You make me feel... complete, as cheesy as it sounds. You're my friend. I could never think about falling in love with someone else and, well, why would I want to?" He smiled. "Good enough answer?"

"Great answer," Kurt sighed, eyes sparkling with tears again, though this time there was a small smile playing across his lips.

The next few days were nothing short of blissful. They spent every spare moment together, Blaine all but moving in with Kurt and his family since his own house was empty, either up in Kurt's room, stretched across the bed with their hands tangled together while they talked or watched movies, or downstairs helping Carole make favours for the New Year's party being hosted at their house that year. It was almost as if nothing had changed, they still talked for hours on end and made fun of Finn and argued jokingly over trivial things, but now it was all intercut with shy smiles and the light brush of fingers or feet under the table at mealtimes that made Blaine's heart skip in his chest.

The best part of it might have been their friends' reactions, though, when Kurt was leaning against Blaine's chest the day before New Year's Eve, laptop on the bed between his legs as he checked his Facebook and decided he ought to change his relationship status.

"In a Relationship with Blaine Anderson'," he said brightly. "Doesn't that look nice?"

Blaine tried not to look too pleased, though his stomach was squirming happily. Barely ten minutes had passed before both of their pages had exploded with comments, which Kurt read through, rolling his eyes.

Blaine glanced over his shoulder at a few of them, smiling when he saw Mike's "*ABOUT DAMN TIME*" at the top.

"Honestly, you'd think they'd have better things to talk about," Kurt muttered, closing his laptop and pushing it away before returning to his former position against Blaine's side.

He ended up being forced out of the house early afternoon on New Year's Eve, Kurt mildly frantic with trying to help Carole set up for the party before he left himself.

"I'll see you at ten, okay?" he said, flour dusted on his cheek and hands as he helped Blaine into his coat and towards the door. He kissed him a little absently on the cheek before hurrying back towards the kitchen where Carole was calling for his help.

Blaine smiled, brushing the flour off his sleeve as he made his way out to his car, pulling out his phone to respond to his mother's voicemail from earlier that day, leaving a message himself before driving carefully back home on the slick roads.

Be careful on the way over, roads are bad. Love you.

He sent the message to Kurt before tucking his phone back into his pocket as he hung up his coat and left his shoes by the front door, glancing at the clock and wondering what on earth he was going to do for five hours. He tidied the parts of the house he'd managed to dirty since his parents had left, showered and changed before flipping through the TV channels absently.

Fidgeting in his seat, he couldn't stop himself from being nervous about that night. It was the first night he was going to be alone with Kurt with their newly established relationship in place, not to mention he expected to kiss Kurt at midnight. What if he was a horrible kisser? He didn't have anyone to go by but Sebastian and he didn't think he was exactly one to be judging the quality of kissing. It couldn't really be *that* hard though, it was just kissing.

There was a knock at the door and he suddenly wished he'd done more to prepare himself as he stumbled into the entry and pulled the door open to let Kurt in.

"You were right about the roads," Kurt said, shivering and stomping his boots as he stepped inside, clutching a plate of food he'd taken from the party and a bottle of sparkling cider. "They're awful. Good thing neither of us has to go anywhere." He smiled, nose and cheeks pink from the cold. "I didn't know what all to get so I snatched a few different things, I hope that's okay?"

"Fine," Blaine said a little tightly as he took the plate and bottle from him and took them into the living room, Kurt trailing after him.

"I always love your Christmas trees," Kurt sighed as he sat down, admiring the massive tree still lit and decorated by the window. "So pretty."

Blaine didn't reply as he sat next to him, leaving a foot of space between them on the couch and twisting his hands nervously in his lap.

Kurt frowned faintly before scooting over to him and tucking his legs up on the cushion as he pressed a kiss to his cheek.

"I missed you," he said, taking Blaine's hand in his own. "It's crazy at the house. Finn was about to go insane. I'm glad I got to come over here rather than trying to deal with all that for the rest of the night."

Blaine nodded silently, knee bouncing slightly.

"What's wrong?" Kurt said quietly, sounding worried. "You didn't change your mind about... us, did you?"

"What?" Blaine yelped. "N-no, I just, um..."

"Blaine, are you nervous?"

Blaine opened his mouth, shutting it quickly and ducking his head as the blush crawled up his face.

"Don't be," Kurt said gently, stroking his arm with his free hand. "If you wait a little longer, that's fine with me. Whatever you're comfortable with. But you're going to have to kiss me eventually, you're not getting out of that."

"I don't want to," Blaine said. "G-get out of it, I mean. I want to kiss you. I'm just worried that I... won't be very good at it. I don't want to disappoint you." He looked down at his knees, thankful for the low lighting

in the room, the warm glow cast by the strings of lights on the tree, as it helped hide the fact that his face was bright red.

"You could never disappoint me," Kurt said, cupping his cheek so he turned to face him. "And we've got a lot of time to practice." He kissed Blaine's forehead before taking the remote control from the coffee table and turning on the New Year's show, snuggling against Blaine's side and absently rubbing his knee as they watched and snacked and shared the bottle of cider, Kurt tittering when the bubbles tickled his nose.

Blaine tried to enjoy the performances but he couldn't keep his eyes off the clock as it slowly drew closer to midnight and panic started to set in. He wished he would have just kissed Kurt back in his room, this drawn out wait was making the anxiety twist and knot in his stomach. He felt like he'd set some high expectation for himself when he had, in reality, no idea what he was doing.

At five minutes before midnight, he was almost shaking with nerves, palms slick with sweat and breath short and shallow, mind a blur of panicked thoughts and a constant stream of *ohgodohgodohgod*, Kurt's head still resting against his shoulder.

Kurt lifted his head, smiling faintly when the countdown timer on the screen was a sixty seconds.

"You know you don't have to kiss me if you don't want to," he said softly. "Not now at least."

"I do," Blaine said, nodding. "But what if—"

Kurt pressed his index finger to his lips. "I'm sure you're a wonderful kisser," he said. "And I'm not going to leave you if you're not. We've both waited a little too long for that, don't you think?" He smiled and gently pulled off Blaine's glass, folding them and placing them lightly on the table before turning to face him again. He brushed his fingers through Blaine's hair and cradled the back of his head with one hand, the other resting on his lap.

"Is this okay?" he murmured.

"Do you love me?" Blaine said before he could stop himself.

Kurt smiled, glancing at the timer, now at twelve seconds.

"Yeah," he said, nodding. "I do. I love you, Blaine. Sorry it took me five years to say it."

Blaine barely had a chance to smile before Kurt tilted his head forward to kiss him, lips just brushing over his own, though it still sent sparks racing down his skin, his eyes automatically closing. Kurt pressed a few short pecks to his lips, sweet and delicate, his hand sliding down to rest on the back to his neck.

"That wasn't so bad, was it?" Kurt murmured, eyes half-hooded as he smiled and touched his forehead to Blaine's.

Blaine shook his head, tugging lightly at Kurt's shirt to pull him back and kiss him again. He loved the taste of Kurt's lips, the way they fit so nicely against his own, the warmth they held and the plump softness of the pink skin. He kissed Kurt's bottom lip, then the top, getting a feel for them, wanting to explore every last bit of them and wondering why he'd not wanted to do this five minutes ago.

He supposed it was the fear that he was putting everything, every last bit of his heart, into this, into Kurt and how much he loved him, and that Kurt wouldn't feel the same thing back. But Kurt loved him back, Kurt wanted him just as much. And maybe they *were* going to take it slow for more reasons than one, but that didn't stop him from being prepared to spend countless hours like this, sitting neck to Kurt and exchanging tender, closed-lipped kisses that left him aching for more, something hot and comforting dripping down into his stomach and filling him up until his fingertips were tingling and he was struggling to catch his breath.

Kurt opened his mouth slightly and lightly kissed Blaine's lower lip, sighing as he repeated the movement a few times, teasing Blaine's lips apart so their mouths slid together wetly, smooth and slick. Kurt switched the angle, tilting his head in the opposite direction, breath catching in a tiny whimper in his throat as he exhaled through his nose.

The room was silent save their quick, sharp breaths, taking in those brief moments where they broke apart for air before diving back in. Blaine never wanted to stop now that he'd started, each graze of skin making his skin light up, oversensitive and receptive to the tiny shifts of Kurt next to him.

His lips felt heavy and swollen and he was sure they were bright red, cheeks flushed as the blood rose to colour the thin skin. He kept his lids cracked, just to be able to watch Kurt, to be sure that it was really him, that he was actually there, kissing him back and making those tiny, breathless sighs.

Kurt opened his mouth a little further and Blaine copied the change, sucking in a breath as Kurt pressed their lips together even closer, melding their mouths so that everything was hot, wet, heavy breath, and then Kurt's tongue skimmed across his lower lip, smooth and slick, and Blaine groaned before he could quiet himself, low and rough in the back of his throat.

Kurt whined in reply, fingers tightening in the hair at the nape of Blaine's neck as he pushed forward. Blaine gave into the pressure, keeping his head tilted up so his lips stayed connected Kurt's as he fell back against the armrest, which pressed halfway up his spine.

There were a few desperate seconds as they shifted, arranging limbs and bodies so that Blaine was lying back with one leg hanging over the edge of the couch, Kurt draped on top of him and propped up slightly on his knees, before they reconnected their lips, no longer the careful, succulent kisses they'd been sharing, more frantic, pressing, the quick slid of mouths together.

Blaine's hands hovered over Kurt's back and sides for a moment before settling on his hips, one of Kurt's hands tangling in Blaine's hair, the other resting on his chest, smoothing over the fabric of his sweater, now unbearably warm, though Blaine wasn't about to stop to take it off. He understood what Kurt had said about that first, drunken kiss, like he was drowning in the taste and feel of it all. He decided then that he'd never get enough of Kurt's lips, never get over the sensation.

He tentatively licked at the corner of Kurt's mouth, Kurt immediately responding by dropping his jaw open further and sliding his own tongue over Blaine's teeth and around to swipe across his lower lip. Blaine lifted his back slightly from the couch, pushing up towards the warmth radiating from Kurt's body.

Kurt broke away with a loud, wet smack, something Blaine would normally find lewd and something to wrinkle his nose at, but that he found, now that he was part of the one making it, made him shiver pleasantly.

Kurt breathed out heavily, swallowing and licking his lips, red and ripe and smooth. His hair had become a mess, sticking up and ruffled, as if the act of kissing somehow related to the neatness of one's hair no matter where the other person's hands ended up. His eyes were wide and hooded all at once, pupils dilated out to fill up the pale blue irises, his face lit up with the glow of the television and yellow Christmas lights. Blaine wondered if he looked just as wrecked.

They stared at each other for a few seconds, searching each other's eyes, before moving simultaneously towards each other, Blaine wrapping his arms around Kurt's waist and pulling him down against him as Kurt crushed their lips together, desperate and messy and hungry, no longer carefully measured and sweet.

Blaine's hands were roaming Kurt's back and arms of their own free will, Kurt whining and scraping his teeth down Blaine's jaw and chin, biting gently before continuing to his neck, mouth hot and wet against

his throat, tongue working over his pulse point as he twisted his head back and groaned, whole body quivering with a wonderful mix of love and lust.

"I love you," Kurt breathed, kissing over his neck where his collar rested against his skin. "I really, really do. God, Blaine, you taste so good."

Blaine bit his lip hard, digging his fingers into Kurt's back into the firm, shifting muscles on either side of his spine.

"Kurt." His voice was broken, low and pleading, and Kurt whined as he pushed his hips down. The friction rocked through his entire body, legs and arms tensing as he jolted up to meet Kurt and threw his head back with a loud moan.

Kurt sat up suddenly, smoothing his hair down and clutching his forehead, which was gleaming with sweat.

"What?" Blaine breathed, trying to pull him back down to kiss him again.

"W-we need to stop," Kurt said, his voice just as broken as Blaine's. "Before we can't stop ourselves anymore. W-we're going slow, remember?"

Blaine slumped back against the armrest, raking his hand through his hair and closing his eyes as he took a deep breath.

"Yeah," he said, nodding as he willed his blood to cool down. "Yeah. I—thanks. I don't think I would have stopped myself."

"I guess I should take that as a compliment," Kurt said, grinning. They took a minute to breath, exchanging small, bashful smiles.

Kurt shifted and laid down with Blaine, half on top of him with their legs tangled together. "And you know, for the record—" he pressed a soft kiss to Blaine's lips. "You're a fantastic kisser."

Blaine smiled, lacing his fingers together at the small of Kurt's back.

"I love you," he said, kissing his forehead.

"I love *you*," Kurt said, tapping the end of his nose and squirming happily. "And I love being able to say that." His face fell into a serious expression. "And I'm not just saying that because I feel like I have to. I had

enough time to think about it. And spending nearly a week dying to kiss you, to show you affection, well...I've never felt like I really *needed* someone like that before. I've *wanted* someone. But you're the only person I've ever needed. Does that make sense?"

"Perfect sense," Blaine said, nodding. He knew exactly what Kurt meant. Because he felt the exact same way.

Chapter Twelve

"Kurt, we don't—"

"Blaine, I *want* to."

"But they might—"

"I don't care. What's wrong with me wanting to show off my boyfriend?"

Blaine chewed his lip nervously for a moment before taking Kurt's outstretched hand. Kurt smiled warmly and pressed a soft peck to his lips, straightening his bag on his shoulder as they set off across the parking lot towards the school. They'd spent New Year's lying around Blaine's house, talking and finishing up the homework they'd put off. And kissing. Lots of kissing.

It amazed Blaine how many different kinds of kisses there were. Short, chaste ones when they laced their fingers together and caught each other's eye, slow, lazy ones that made him feel like he was melting in the taste of Kurt, the weight of his arm around his waist and the careful brush of his fingers through his hair; greedy, slightly sloppy ones that left them both flushed and breathing heavily as they sat on opposite sides of the bed to cool down. He was quite sure which were his favourite yet.

Kurt had finally left late that evening, Blaine walking him out to his car and the two of them leaning against the hood and exchanging languid kisses until they were both pink in the face from the cold and Kurt climbed into his car with a shy 'I love you' and left. Blaine hadn't been able to stop grinning the rest of the night, resisting the urge to bury his face in his pillow and squeal.

But now it was their first day back at McKinley together since their fallout and subsequent getting together and Blaine was incredibly anxious as to what sort of repercussions they might have to face.

"It's going to be fine, Blaine," Kurt said bracingly. "We'll just stop by Coach's office and I'll get my position back on the squad and everything will be... fine."

Blaine nodded silently as he followed him inside and they made their way towards Coach Sylvester's office, hands tightly clasped.

The few people they passed openly stared, whispering behind their hands to one another. Blaine squirmed anxiously trying to avoid their gazes and keeping close to Kurt, who didn't seem to notice as he strode purposefully into Sylvester's office.

She was sitting behind her desk, flipping through some cheerleading magazine and drinking some brownish, gloppy shake that made Blaine wrinkle his nose as he sat down next to Kurt in front of her.

She looked up, raising her eyebrows as she set her drink down.

"Porcelain," she said, straightening up and pushing her magazine away. She glanced at Blaine. "Porcelain's friend."

"It's Bla—"

"Don't care," she cut across him, eyes fixed on Kurt again. "Didn't recognise you without your uniform."

"That's why I'm here, Coach," Kurt said, legs crossed neatly and hands folded in his lap. "I want back in."

"Nope," she said, sitting back again and picking up her magazine.

"But, Coach," Kurt began, leaning forward in his chair. "I'm fine now, everything's been worked out a-and I'll be able to do the routines, I promise. I won't cause any more problems." He smiled at Blaine and took his hand. "Blaine and I worked it all out."

Sylvester eyed their hands with a mildly interested look.

"I can see that," she said. "You got over Erickson pretty fast."

Kurt blushed. "Jason and I are over and he doesn't matter to me anymore," he said stiffly. "I'm with Blaine and I'm happy."

"You were happy with the others too," Sylvester said, sipping her shake.

"This is different," Kurt said insistently. "Blaine and I aren't breaking up. Ever."

"That's what you said about the rest of them," she said. She leaned forward in her seat. "Let me break it down for you, Porcelain. I just can't have someone as emotionally volatile as you on my squad. Especially not running it."

"Emotionally volatile?" Kurt said, looking affronted.

"I don't know how many times you've missed practice to cry over losing some boy," Sylvester said. "Well, I put up with it because you were good. But there's only so many times before enough is enough. You're off

the squad and that's final." She settled back in her chair again. "Besides, your position has already been filled."

"What?" Kurt squawked. "By *who*?"

"Santana," Sylvester said in a bored voice. "She might have those fake melons on her chest but she works hard and she wanted the spot. Came asking for it before break."

"She—what?" Kurt's face fell, voice small and quiet. He looked betrayed and hurt, shoulders slumping.

"Yep," Sylvester said, not looking up from her magazine. "So take Frodo here and get out of my office and for god's sake, teach him how to dress himself, that sweater is offensive to anyone with working corneas."

Blaine looked down at his patterned sweater and flushed, tugging self-consciously at the sleeve and shrinking in his seat.

"Fine," Kurt said waspishly as he stood, chin jutting out and nostrils flaring. "*Fine*, I don't want on your stupid Cheerios anyway. Come on, Blaine."

He turned on his heel and walked to the door, Blaine scrambling to get his bag and follow him.

"And for the record," Kurt said, stopping at the door to glare back at her. "I think he looks adorable."

It took Blaine a moment to realise Kurt was talking about him. He smiled faintly as he trailed after him into the hall, hurrying to keep up with his long, quick strides.

Kurt froze as they rounded the corner and Santana walked past, head high and a triumphant smirk on her face. She smiled indulgently at Kurt as she passed, a devious glint in her eyes as she tossed back her ponytail and continued down the hall with Brittany.

Blaine watched Kurt's jaw tense as he set off again, turning into the nearest bathroom, Blaine following him in anxiously. Kurt stopped at the second sink and stared at his reflection in the mirror for a long moment. His lip quivered and Blaine tentatively reached for his arm.

"Kurt?"

Kurt burst into tears, muffling the sound in his hands and turning into Blaine's hold as he wrapped his arms around him.

"I'm s-sorry," Kurt choked. "I know it's stupid, it just f-feels like she went behind my b-back and I thought she was my f-friend!"

"I know," Blaine said gently, hushing him. "It's okay. They didn't appreciate you anyway."

Kurt pulled back enough to dab at his cheeks with his sleeve, hiccupping softly. Blaine wet a paper towel and carefully wipe the rest of the tears away.

"Better?" he said, kissing Kurt's cheek and brushing his hair back.

Kurt nodded, smiling gratefully.

"You're right," he said thickly. "I don't need them. I've got classes to focus on anyway. And you. Think of all the free time we'll have together now!"

"W-well I've still got Glee rehearsal," Blaine said, stomach sinking with guilt when Kurt's face fell.

"Right," Kurt said, furrowing his brow in thought. "Well, I can always... well, I'll figure out something to do while you're busy."

"We'll still have lots of time together," Blaine said reassuringly. "I promise."

"I know," Kurt said, taking his hand, eyes softening dreamily as he looked at him. "I love you."

"You too," Blaine replied, heart swelling happily.

Kurt tugged lightly on his hand to pull him closer and connect their lips, sighing and sliding his tongue coaxingly across Blaine's mouth, which fell open automatically at the touch. Kurt leaned back against the sink, draping his arms around Blaine's neck and smiling against his lips.

"Mmm, I love your lips," he murmured. "They taste so good." He pressed another short peck to the corner of his mouth before pulling back with a sigh. "We should probably get to homeroom."

"Yeah," Blaine said reluctantly. "Are you sure you're going to be alright?"

Kurt nodded, hitching his bag on his shoulder and twining their fingers together again. "I'll be fine," he said. "I just need to... to figure out what I'm going to do, you know? I mean, I still want to go to New York and everything after graduation but now I just feel like... maybe I put too much investment into my relationships before. Does that make sense?"

"Yeah," Blaine said, nodding. "I never would have said it but... I kind of agree. Sorry."

"No, no, it's true," Kurt said. "I think I put more stock in the need to have a boyfriend than I did into what was important. I think I just... I felt like you didn't want me so when I found a guy who did, I was willing to do anything not to lose him." He stopped at his locker, looking vaguely downtrodden. "I was really stupid, wasn't I?"

"Wha—no," Blaine said, shaking his head and gently lifting Kurt's chin with his fingers when he lowered his head. "You just wanted to be with someone. There's nothing wrong with not wanting to be alone. As long as you stay with the person for the right reason."

A small smile crept over Kurt's lips. "I'm staying with you because you're my best friend and you make me happier than anyone else," he said. "Is that a good reason?"

"I'd say so," Blaine replied, sighing happily when Kurt leaned down to kiss him gently, swinging their arms a little and bouncing on his toes.

"Hope you wear a condom, Anderson, you don't want your dick to fall off!"

Kurt fell back hard on his heels, whipping his head around as a pair of Jason's teammates roared with laughter, high-fiving each other as they continued down the hall. A few people sniggered and glanced in their direction, Kurt stiffening and paling slightly.

"Kurt, just ignore them," Blaine murmured. "They're just being stupid."

Kurt didn't reply, simply pursed his lips tightly and turned the combination on his locker, fingers trembling a little as he pulled the door open. A group of football players walked by and one of them, a beefy linebacker Blaine didn't know the name of, knocked his shoulder hard against Kurt's, pushing him roughly against the wall and sending the books he'd just pulled from his locker spilling onto the ground.

"Hey!" Blaine shouted as Kurt knelt down to pick up his books, lip quivering and eyes swimming with tears. "Watch it!"

The boy turned and sneered at him. "What are you gonna do about it, *homo*?"

"Don't call him that," Kurt snapped, straightening up, books in his arms and eyes hard.

"You can't tell us what to do anymore, Hummel," one of the other boys retorted. "You're just a bottomfeeder now."

Blaine saw Kurt's jaw working as he swallowed, back stiff as a board and lips pursed in a tight line.

"You're a nobody, Hummel," one of them jeered, the other guffawing as they turned and walked away.

Kurt's nostrils flared, eyes fixed on the backs of the retreated football players and face pale and almost grey. He looked like he might be sick.

"Kurt, are you okay?" Blaine said, gently touched Kurt's arm and pulling his hand back when Kurt jumped.

"Sorry. Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Kurt said, voice unnaturally high and wavering. He smiled tremulously. "Really." He cleared his throat. "I need to get to homeroom. I'll see you in English."

He pressed a quick, off-center kiss to Blaine's lips before snapping his locker shut and walking away with a distinct stiffness to his step.

Blaine sighed, gnawing at the inside of his cheek anxiously. He'd worried about this, that Kurt's banishment from the Cheerios and separation from Jason would result in a very long, sharp fall from the top of the social ladder, especially now that he was dating Blaine. He also knew the only reason *he* hadn't been bullied much over the past few years was because Kurt had enough pull around the school to stop most of the student body from bothering him. He'd still gotten the occasional slushie or push into a locker but it hadn't been nearly as bad as their freshman year, when they were both being tossed into dumpsters or insulted every time they walked down the hall. They might be bigger than they were then, but Blaine couldn't shake the awful feeling that things were going to get much, much worse.

Unfortunately, he was right. The entire day was full of hissed insults and subtle shoves in crowded hallways that left him aching and bruised across his arms and chest and back. He was used to the abuse however, hadn't gone two days without *something* bad going wrong since he'd moved to Lima. Kurt, on the other hand, was used to people fawning over him, hanging on his every word and clustering around him in the halls between classes. He hadn't been treated this way in years.

By lunch time, he was shaking so badly he could barely hold his fork, his clothes and hair rumpled and his eyes constantly filled with unshed tears. He didn't say a word about it though, simply kept a firm hold on Blaine's hand, shrinking against his side with the walked to class together, eyes darting around nervously when a group of students passed them.

Blaine tried his best to take the brunt of the abuse but he couldn't be by Kurt's side at every second since their schedules were different for some classes and when he left his AP Chemistry class—having spent the entire period retelling everything that had happened to Mike and Quinn, who were both relieved that they'd finally "gotten their heads out of their asses and gotten together" as Mike put it—to pick up Kurt from his own class, he rounded the corner leading to Kurt's class just in time to watch Kurt get a face full of purple slushie, the soccer players who had thrown it roaring with laughter as they continued down the hall.

Blaine hurried to Kurt's side, tugging off his sweater so he was dressed in just his undershirt and draping it around Kurt's shoulders.

"Come on," he said gently as Kurt scooped slush off his face, lips blue from the cold and whole body trembling. There were a few people watching them, some of them looked amused, others coldly indifferent. He wondered just how many of the students at McKinley actually disliked Kurt but had never said because of his status. He wondered how much worse it was going to get.

"I'm taking you home," he said, steadying Kurt as he slipped a little in the puddle of slush. "We've only got French left and we can afford to miss it, okay?"

Kurt nodded silently and Blaine could see him struggling not to cry, lips pressed together tightly and eyes bright with tears beyond what the slushie had caused.

He helped Kurt to the bathroom in the gym, pulling spare clothes from his own locker and helping him clean up and change before taking both their bags and leading Kurt out to his car. Kurt climbed silently into the passenger seat, head resting against the window as they rode along in silence, Blaine glancing anxiously at him every few seconds.

Kurt's house was, unsurprisingly, empty when they reached it, and he helped Kurt up to his room, forcing him to take a hot shower and simultaneously seething and heartbroken that Kurt had already suffered so much.

He sat down on the edge of Kurt's bed, pressing the heels of his hands against his eyes until white lights popped in front of them. He knew he wouldn't have a problem adjusting to the increased level of abuse but Kurt hadn't had to deal with this sort of thing for years, he was admired and loved and McKinley—well, he *had* been—and to go from that to being shoved into lockers and insulted on a daily basis... He thought of the half second of hesitation there had been when Kurt took his hand after lunch and wondered

if he'd been having second thoughts about their relationship. Not that he'd blame him, Kurt hadn't signed up for this sort of suffering.

There was a low, broken sound from the bathroom, the door of which was ajar, steam wafting out from the shower. Blaine pushed himself to his feet and carefully made his way over to the door, placing his ear by the opening, heart sinking when he heard the unmistakable sound of Kurt crying on the other side. The steady thrum of the shower hitting the tile drowned out most of it, but every now and then Kurt would let out a muffled cry, no doubt burying his face in his knees, and Blaine could feel tears prickling the corners of his own eyes.

The water shut off a minute later and Blaine retreated back to Kurt's bed, waiting a few minutes until Kurt appeared at the door in a soft white robe, eyes downcast and red.

"Do you feel any better?" Blaine said gently as Kurt sat down next to him.

Kurt shrugged his shoulder jerkily, slouched and slumped in his seat, head hung and hands resting limply in his lap.

"Kurt, I'm so sorry," Blaine said, moving closer to him. "I know this isn't what you were expecting to happen. I don't want you to have to deal with every day. It's not fair to ask that from you. If you... if you want to break up, I understand."

"What?" Kurt croaked, eyes widening as he looked up at him, face stricken. "N-no, I don't want to break up with you! You're all I have left." His lips trembled and tears pooled in his eyes. He looked so defeated, so hopeless, that Blaine wanted to cry, to gather him up and kiss him until he stopped hurting. He seen Kurt cry before, but he'd never looked so utterly helpless.

"Please don't go," Kurt said, shaking his head as tears slipped down his cheeks.

"No, Kurt, no I'd never leave you." Blaine scooted closer to him as he let out a low sob and started shaking with silent tears. "I was just... forget I said anything." He wrapped his arm firm around Kurt's waist, pulling back quickly when Kurt hissed in pain and cried even harder.

"What's wrong?" Blaine said, eyeing him nervously.

Kurt shook his head hard, holding his arm around himself.

"Kurt, what's wrong?" Blaine said a little more firmly.

"N-no, I don't want you to s-see," Kurt sobbed, pulling away from him and clutching at his robe.

Blaine laid one hand gently on Kurt's knee. "Kurt, please, you have to show me or I can't help," he said, voice cracking slightly when Kurt pressed his lips together and whined softly. "Please."

Kurt sniffed, falling silent for a moment to look at him before nodding, wiping the back of his hand over his cheek as he stood up and fumbled with the knot on his robe before slipping the fabric off his shoulders.

Blaine sucked in a quick breath through his teeth, fists clenching in his lap as he stared at the bruises spattered across Kurt's back and shoulders, even disappearing below the waistband of his black briefs. Kurt turned around to face him, head hung, and Blaine bit his lip hard at the sight of a dozen more dark, splotchy marks covering his chest and arms.

"Oh *Kurt*..."

"I didn't want you to see," Kurt said, fresh tears running down his cheeks and splashing on his bare chest.

"Kurt, of *course* I need to see," Blaine said, reaching out to pull Kurt's arms away as he tried to fold them across his chest. "You can't... I don't want you hiding this sort of thing. We need to go to Figgins about this as soon as possible, they can't do this to you!"

"They did it to you," Kurt said, absently wiping his eyes again. "They did it to us before and no one did anything, what makes you think they'll do something now?"

Blaine remained silent, mostly for the fact that Kurt was right, though it also had to do with the fact that he couldn't tear his eyes away from the harsh bruises staining Kurt's smooth, usually flawless skin.

"Come here," Blaine said, patting the bed next to him.

Kurt hesitated for a moment before moving to sit next to him, hands in his lap.

"Lie down," Blaine said gently, nodding to the pillows. "Please," he added when Kurt gave him a quizzical look.

Kurt slid back on the bed, looking mildly nervous and trying to cover the bruises with his arms as he stretched out, head resting on the pillows.

"What are you doing?" he said anxiously as Blaine turned on the bed and moved closer to him, gently pulling his arms away from his chest and laying them at his sides.

"They're idiots," Blaine said, anger clouding his mind for a brief moment. "They're idiots and you and I are going to be out of this... this hell hole in a few months and we'll never have to deal with any of them again. And I'm going to do whatever I can to *make* them stop. I'll go to Figgins, I'm not going to shut up until they stop."

Kurt smiled, brushing one hand through Blaine's hair before cupping his cheek. "I don't deserve you," he said. "I never did."

"Hush, you," Blaine said, giving him a mock stern look. "You're perfect."

"I look a rotten piece of fruit," Kurt grumbled, looking down at the bruises decorating his body and pulling a face.

"You're still beautiful," Blaine said, lying down next to him and propping himself up on one arm. He trailed his index finger down Kurt's sternum, sure to keep his touch light as he passed over the first bruise at the bottom of Kurt's ribcage. Each time Kurt's chest rose to inhale, the skin across his ribs stretched and each narrow ridge of bone was visible, the gentle, shadowed curve down to his flat stomach sharpened.

The muscles in Kurt's stomach fluttered under Blaine's fingers as he brushed his left hand slowly across it, only his fingertips sliding over the pale skin, his index finger catching on the dip of his bellybutton. Kurt gasped quietly and let out a tiny squeak of laughter when Blaine turned his hand over and let the backs of his fingernails follow the path his fingers had just taken.

He didn't know how many times he wanted to do this, to touch every inch of Kurt's skin, to feel it under his hands and explore his body. But this was different, this wasn't a silly fantasy come to life, this was a way to show Kurt that he really and truly loved him, that he'd do anything for him. Because he did. And he would.

He planted his hand on the bed on the other side of Kurt's waist, lowering his head to kiss Kurt's shoulder, leaving soft pecks over the curve and the jutting end of his clavicle. Kurt sighed, some of the tension fading from his shoulders as Blaine moved his lips down to brush over the sharp line of Kurt's collarbone.

Leaning over Kurt, careful not to put an pressure on him, he mouthed at the hollow of his throat between his collarbones, smiling as the skin vibrated with a breathy whimper as Kurt tilted his head back further. He let his lower lip drag up the taut tendon in Kurt's neck, dusting small kisses across the underside of his jaw, Kurt whining and breathing sharp and shallow under him.

"B-Blaine—"

"Shh," Blaine said, blowing a stream of air across the spot where Kurt's pulse was ticking away in his neck.

Kurt lifted one hand to tug lightly on Blaine's shirt, a needy whine rising in the back of his throat when Blaine shook his head.

"Kiss me," he breathed. "Please."

Blaine smiled, lifting his head from Kurt's neck and pressing his lips gently to Kurt's, Kurt's fingers digging into his arm as he exhaled sharply through his nose and pushed hard into the kiss.

Blaine pulled back after a few seconds, leaving a second, quick kiss on Kurt's mouth when he whimpered in protest.

"Trust me, okay?" Blaine said, kissing his forehead when he furrowed his brow in confusion.

Kurt nodded, closing his eyes and leaning his head back again, tongue sliding absently across his lips as Blaine lowered his head to his throat again. He laid his left hand flat on Kurt's stomach, rubbing softly over the barely there swell of his warm belly, which he'd heard Kurt complain about a thousand times—"I can't get rid of this stupid baby fat, I'm going to look like a *cow* forever".

Kurt shuddered, one hand curling in the blanket, the other twisting in the pillowcase by his head as Blaine's hand grazed of his hipbone and his fingers skimmed across the skin just above the waistband of his briefs. They'd let their hands wander a little on New Year's, resting on hips and thighs and Kurt had even dipped his hands into the back pocket of Blaine's jeans at one point, but it hadn't been this deliberate, this careful. Blaine found himself blushing when his eyes trailed slowly down Kurt's bare chest and stomach, briefly flicking to where his briefs hugged his hips and thighs, the bulge in the tight fabric clearly visible even from his current angle.

"Sorry," Kurt murmured, colour rising in his own cheeks. "It just feels really good. You can stop if you want. I know you're not ready for any of... that."

Blaine bit his lip.

"No... I'm not," he said. "Not really but... I want to keep going. If it's not going to bother you."

Kurt laughed. "No, it's not going to bother me," he said, stroking the backs of his fingers over Blaine's cheek. "It feels really good."

"Okay," Blaine said with a relieved smile. "Just let me know if you want me to stop."

Kurt hummed in agreement, closing his eyes again as Blaine went back to kissing under his collarbone. He shifted a little down the bed to reach Kurt's chest, nuzzling the soft skin and breathing in the smell of his soap. There was a dark, purpling bruise at the tender spot near his armpit, uneven and splotchy, and Blaine very lightly kissed across the mark, heart wrenching and tears welling up in his eyes as he brushed his thumb across the spot.

"I'm sorry," he whispered. "I never wanted this to happen to you."

"It's not your fault," Kurt murmured. "None of this is your fault. Stop blaming yourself."

Blaine cleared his throat and blinked a few times, shifting his lips to the hard surface of Kurt's breastbone through the thin skin, tiny bruises speckling the spot, as if someone have pushed him hard in the chest with their fingers. It made him sick to his stomach knowing that that was exactly what had happened.

He paused when he reached Kurt's nipple, staring at it for a moment and blushing again. Glancing up, he saw Kurt's eyes were still closed, a content smile spread over his face, and he tentatively brushed his lower lip over the hardened pink nub.

Kurt jumped, gasping and exhaling shakily, groaning and arching off the bed when Blaine opened his mouth and pressed a wet kiss to the spot, letting his tongue drag over the skin and shivering at the fact that he was the one making Kurt sound that way.

He closed his eyes, humming softly against Kurt's skin and mouthing at the skin just below his nipple, Kurt's chest rising and falling with each shallow breath under him, his body twisting and undulating as he groaned and sighed breathlessly.

"*Blaine.*" He let out a long, shuddering moan, one hand twisting in Blaine's shirt before grabbing at his bare bicep. "Oh my god."

Blaine closed his eyes, taking a slow, deep breath to try and calm himself down as he felt his jeans becoming steadily tighter. Kurt squirmed as his hot breath blew across his skin and Blaine gently stroked his hip before leaving a tiny kiss on each of his ribs on the left side of his chest, swiping his tongue across the bottom one and rubbing his nose against the tiny dip between the two sides of his ribcage.

Kurt giggled suddenly and Blaine grinned, blowing a thin stream of air over the spot and chuckling when Kurt laughed and wriggled under him. He kissed the spot before moving down to Kurt's stomach, warm and soft and smooth, a thin trail of silky, pale hair running down from his navel to disappear under the waistband of his briefs.

Kurt sighed with a low hum of contentment, relaxing again as Blaine kissed carefully over the sensitive skin. He ran both hands flat down Kurt's chest and ribcage, careful not to push against any of the bruises as he thumbed lightly across his bottom rib, burying his face in the hollow of Kurt's hip and breathing in slowly.

"You smell so good," he murmured, kissing the spot before resting his head flat against Kurt's stomach, the warm skin pressed to his ear and cheek. He lifted his head, looking up at Kurt, who smiled softly and combed his fingers through his hair. "Will you roll over? Onto your stomach?"

Kurt gave him a curious look before nodding, Blaine lifting off him, sitting back on his knees and all but holding his breath as Kurt turned smoothly onto his back, his long legs tangling together for a moment before straightening out, his arms folded under his head.

"God you are... so gorgeous," Blaine breathed, eyes trailing down the smooth curve of Kurt's spine, his skin darkened here and there with bruises, to the dimples at his lower back, and the round swell of his ass. He squirmed as he smoothing his hand over the base of Kurt's spine, Kurt sighing and humming softly as he did.

He dragged the backs of his fingernails up Kurt's back, tiny bumps rising on Kurt's skin as he went, muscles bunching and twitching as Kurt shivered. He swung one leg over Kurt's thighs, settling down to sit on the back of his legs and leaning down to kiss the back of his neck.

"Is this okay?" he murmured, running his hands down Kurt's arms and smiling when his fingers grazed close to his underarms and Kurt shuddered.

"Mhmm," Kurt groaned. "So good."

Blaine skimmed his lips over Kurt's shoulder, hands gliding back up his arms and resting on top of Kurt's fingers. Kurt opened his fists, spreading his fingers to allow Blaine's to fall between them. Blaine buried his face in Kurt's neck, letting his body drape across his back. He breathed in slowly, closing his eyes and concentrating on the rise and fall of Kurt's shoulders beneath him.

"I love you," Kurt murmured, turning his head and catching Blaine's lips against his own in a slow, slightly awkward kiss.

Blaine smiled as they broke apart with a wet smack, resting his forehead against Kurt's temple and letting his eyelashes brush over Kurt's cheek with tiny butterfly kisses. Kurt's shoulders and chest shook with a small, silent laugh.

"I wish I didn't have to go back," Kurt sighed, "to school I mean. I wish I could just... just stay here with you." He swallowed, eyes swimming with tears. "Why do they all hate me all of a sudden? I thought... I thought they were my friends."

Blaine sat up and slid off his legs, allowing him to turn over and sit up, tucking his legs up to his chest and resting his chin on his knees, shivering in the chill.

"I know," he said, draping a blanket around his shoulders. "Just... forget about them. You still have friends. You've got Finn and I know Santana is your friend, she just...." He trailed off as Kurt buried his face in his knees and started crying again, shoulders shaking gently.

"Everyone at that school hates me, don't they?" he said, voice muffled in his own skin.

"What, no, Kurt, of course they don't," Blaine said, gently laying his arm around his shoulders.

Kurt sniffed and lifted his head from his knees. "Then why didn't any of them *do* anything about it?" he said.

Blaine sighed, allowing Kurt to rest his head against his shoulder as he wrapped the blanket more securely around him. "Sometimes it's easier for people to watch someone else suffering if the alternative is them suffering too," he said. "I know... it's ridiculous."

"I should have done more to stop them when it was you," Kurt murmured. "I'm so sorry you've had to put up with this, Blaine."

"It hasn't been bad in a long time," Blaine said, stroking his hair absently. "I promise. I kind of expected it to get worse after you and Jason broke up and you left the Cheerios. People take too much stock in status at the school. Well... everywhere, I guess. But I promise I'll do whatever I can to protect you, okay? I'll talk to Finn and the other guys in Glee. They'll help."

"I don't want to bother anyone," Kurt mumbled.

"You're not a bother," Blaine said, kissing his temple and squeezing him gently around the shoulders. "You never are."

Kurt smiled and snuggled closer to him, curling into a ball on his side and trailing one hand down Blaine's chest.

"I'm so glad I have you, Blaine," he said softly, sounding sleepy. He yawned. "I don't need anyone else anyway."

Blaine smiled, glancing down at him to reply and biting his lip when he saw he'd fallen asleep. He pressed a tender kiss to his temple, leaning his head against Kurt's and brushing his hand over his cheek, thumbing away the tear trickling down his face and wishing more than anything that he could stop him from hurting, that he could rebuild the bubble of safety he'd had before everything had crashed down around him, leaving him vulnerable and terrified as he'd been when they were fourteen. He wished he could protect him from the world. But he knew he couldn't, no matter how hard he tried.

Chapter Thirteen

The abuse he and Kurt were receiving, thankfully, began to peter off over the next month, though Blaine guessed a largely contributing factor was Kurt's father storming into McKinley on a warpath and shouting at Figgins for a full twenty minutes after seeing the bruises covering Kurt's chest and back one morning when he woke Kurt up to go to school and Kurt was already getting dressed.

He'd scolded them both later that afternoon when Blaine had driven Kurt home from school, Kurt hanging his head and leaning against Blaine's shoulder with a tearful look.

"You boys are human beings," Burt said, sounding exasperated and perhaps still a little shaken from Kurt's injuries, eyes brighter than normal. *"I don't care if you don't think it's a big deal, you do not let them do that to you. If they do it again, you come straight to me or to Figgins or somebody, understand?"*

They both nodded silently.

"Good," Burt grunted, absently tugging off his baseball cap off and running his hand over his bare head. *"Nobody pushes my son around. And Blaine... well, you might as well be my son so..."* he trailed off, shaking his head distractedly as he retreated to the kitchen, muttering something about his heart.

There was still the occasional slushie or hissed insult or shove into a locker, but it was tolerable and Kurt was no longer pale and terrified when he was walking down the hall, clinging to Blaine's hand like a lifeline. Blaine still caught him watching the Cheerios practice with a longing look every now and then but he seemed happier, especially when they were alone together.

They'd fallen into a rhythm of sorts during those times, the first brush of their hands on the bed or couch leading to shy smiles, which led to soft kisses, which led to roaming hands and greedy, desperate, crushing lips, after which everything came to a screeching halt and they ended up sitting a few feet apart, breathing heavily and avoiding each other's eye.

Kurt had been beyond patient and sweet when it came to that sort of thing, letting Blaine take complete control and insisting that he couldn't care less about sex as long as they were together. Blaine was starting to get antsy, though. In those moments when things got heated and their hips would slot together just so and Kurt's fingers would dig into his bicep as he rocked down against him with a high whine before wrenching himself away and apologising breathlessly, Blaine was torn between taking a cold shower and pulling Kurt back on top of him and letting his hands figure things out for themselves.

He'd wanted Kurt for years, but it had only been within the past six months that he'd actually really *wanted* him. Yes, he'd been attracted to him, yes he'd loved him, and yes he'd imagined kissing him countless times, but the idea of just tearing off one another's clothes and letting bare skin slide together was still a fairly new concept to him. Not to mention he was embarrassingly aware of how little experience he had compared to Kurt.

But he still found himself thinking about it more and more lately, sometimes at the most inopportune, and ridiculous, times. One unseasonably warm day in early February they'd been eating lunch together and Kurt had been playing absently with his pasta, Blaine struggling not to openly stare at the way his boatneck t-shirt showed off his neck and collarbones when Kurt had twirled his fork in his fettuccini and popped it in his mouth, slurping a little to suck the end of a noodle into his mouth before licking up the sauce gathered at the corner of his lips. Blaine had watched him eat for a full five minutes before he realised he was staring and turned blushing back to his own food, Mike snickering next to him.

He couldn't help it though. Now that he was *allowed* to think about Kurt like that, he couldn't stop. Even when Kurt was innocently working on his homework, sitting cross-legged on Blaine's bed and running the end of his pen absently over his bottom lip, Blaine was restless and hot around the collar imagining his finger following the same path as Kurt's pen.

At the moment, they were cuddling together on Kurt's bed, Kurt absently stroking along the outer seam running up Blaine's thigh as they watched *America's Next Top Model*, Kurt occasionally remarking on something or scoffing quietly, head resting against Blaine's chest by his collarbone and his feet hooked loosely around Blaine's ankles.

Blaine was barely paying attention to the screen, mind fixed on Kurt's fingers, now trailing up his hip and over his arm, making the hair stand up as a shiver ran down his spine. Kurt's blunt fingernails traced lightly across his wrist, thumb rubbing over the thin skin on the inside of his forearm.

He felt uncomfortably warm and fidgety, struggling not to squirm as Kurt shifted his position so one knee was brushing Blaine's groin and his breath was tickling over his neck as he exhaled through his nose.

The screen shifted to a commercial and Kurt muted the television and smiled as he turned his head to kiss Blaine's neck softly, humming in the back of his throat, his arm slipping around Blaine's waist so his hand was resting on the small of his back, warm against the bare skin exposed where his shirt had ridden up.

Blaine closed his eyes, attempting to conjure up something vile and failing horribly when Kurt's lips brushed wetly over his pulse point and he couldn't stop the soft moan from rising in his chest, fingers clenching to bunch up the soft cashmere of Kurt's cardigan.

The sound and movement brought with them a sudden tension, a thickness to the air, Kurt breathing out hot against the damp skin his lips had just left as he pushed his leg forward so his thigh rubbed between Blaine's legs and over his groin. He inhaled sharply when he felt Blaine hard against him, digging his fingers into his back and kissing him a little more eagerly.

He pulled back suddenly, pushing away from Blaine and muttering apologies.

"Kurt, stop," Blaine said, grabbing his arm as he tried to climb off the bed.

Kurt looked back at him with a stricken expression.

"Kurt... I want..." He swallowed thickly. "I don't want to stop."

Kurt blinked, searching his eyes and working his jaw anxiously.

"Are you sure?" he said. "We don't have to—"

"I know," Blaine said, nodding and tugging him back onto the bed. "I want to."

Kurt's eyes widened briefly before Blaine's arm wound around his waist and he tumbled back onto the bed with him, the initial, awkward tangle of limbs sorting itself out, leaving Kurt straddling Blaine's thighs, sitting up on his knees and leaning forward to kiss him, fumbling with the buttons on his cardigan when Blaine tugged at the hem, his other hand resting on the side of Kurt's neck.

Kurt stripped his cardigan off and tossed it away, scooting closer to Blaine and gripping his shoulders as he settled down against him and pressed their bodies together. The sound of heavy, quick breaths and the wet smack of their lips moving together filled the room, sharp and loud in the silence. Kurt ran his hand down Blaine's chest and side, wrapping it around the top of his thigh and kneading the spot, rubbing his thumb over the front of his jeans.

Blaine groaned and bucked his hips up almost involuntarily, eyes rolling back as Kurt cupped his groin and palmed the shape of his cock through the denim, breathing hot against his neck.

"K-Kurt—"

Kurt kissed him hard, swallowing down his moans as he fumbled with his belt, pausing and waiting for Blaine's frantic nod before unbuckling it and popping open the button on his jeans. He yanked down the zipper, shoving his hand into Blaine's briefs as he swirled his tongue around his mouth.

Blaine inhaled sharply as Kurt's fingers wrapped around him and pumped slowly, his hand soft and dry and the friction a little rough but *so amazing*. He groaned and twisted and jerked his hips up, grabbing Kurt's shoulders and throwing his head back into the pillow, making small, broken sounds in his throat.

"Is this okay?" Kurt breathed close to his ear, scraping his teeth down his jaw and biting gently at his chin.

"Mmm—I-I—yeah," Blaine gasped. "Kurt... jesus christ."

Kurt smiled against his jaw, nipping lightly and pumping his hand faster, rutting against Blaine's thigh and panting hard.

Blaine barely had time to be embarrassed by how quickly he was coming undone, dizzy with pleasure and the fact that it was *Kurt* doing it to him. He still had quite grasped the fact that he was his. But it was definitely Kurt's back he was running his hands up, smooth and warm, Kurt's lips and tongue moving open his neck, Kurt whispering 'I love you' in his ear when he arched off the mattress and let out a stuttering whine before falling back onto the bed, sticky and hot and lightheaded.

It took a moment for him to catch his breath, feeling blissed out and weighed down by the sudden drowsiness that hit him, Kurt kissing lazily over the sweaty skin of his neck. The mattress creaked as he ground down against Blaine's thigh, his breath catching after a few seconds. He whimpered softly, hand jerking where it was resting against Blaine's stomach.

Blaine slid his hands further up the back of Kurt's shirt, wrapping his arms tighter around him and pulling him down closer, twisting his head to the side until Kurt lifted his own from Blaine's neck and kissed him, at first just a hard press of closed lips, slowly changing to languid, wet kisses, tongues gliding together and lips swollen.

Kurt broke away for a moment to allow Blaine to pull his shirt over his head and throw it aside, leaving his chest bare, before leaning back down to kiss him again as Blaine ran one hand down his chest, combing the other through Kurt's hair and cradling the back of his head.

He felt wrung out and heavy, like a sponge trying to soak up more than it could hold, his arms flopping back down to his sides like limp noodles. Kurt laughed lightly, leaving short peck across his lips that he

barely responded to, sated and sleepy. He hummed softly, nuzzling against Kurt's cheek and opening one arm for him to lie down next to him.

"One second," Kurt whispered, climbing off him and moving to get something from the bedside table. After a few seconds he reappeared, Blaine watching him wipe a tissue across his stomach through half-closed lids.

Kurt tossed the tissues in the trashcan beside his bed before lying down against his side and draping one arm across his waist. He pulled a face, no don't from the uncomfortable stickiness in his jeans, but didn't bring it up further.

"You feel okay?" he murmured, kissing his jaw.

Blaine nodded, managing a small smile as he wound his arm around Kurt's shoulders and kissed the top of his head.

"Perfect," he said. "Sleepy."

Kurt hummed in reply. "Me too," he said around a yawn. "Love you. So much."

"Love you," Blaine mumbled in reply, wrapping his other arm around Kurt's waist and linking his hands at the small of his back, Kurt burrowing against his side as he curled his legs up and they both slipped into a contented doze.

The shift in their relationship had Blaine in a constant state of dazed happiness. The following day in Chemistry class, Mike had taken one look at him and burst into a fit of hysterical laughter that lasted a full three minutes, Blaine blushing and glaring at him as Quinn pursed her lips, looking mildly amused.

"Sorry," Mike finally managed to choke out when the bell rang. *"You're just really, really obvious. You look like you just waltz in on a cloud and you've got this dopey smile on your face. I always wondered what you'd act like when you finally had sex."*

"We didn't... do that," Blaine hissed, waving his hand to shut him up. *"Just... shut up. Jerk."*

Mike had snorted and flipped open his textbook, half-laughing for the rest of the period and casting Blaine amused looks as he tried to concentrate on his own notes.

Yes, he thought maybe he was a little obvious with the dreamy way he was walking around the rest of the day, but he couldn't help it. Kurt would skip up to him between classes and peck him on the cheek with a bright welcome as he slipped their hands together and chatted absently about his day, Blaine watching him adoringly, heat prickling up his neck when he remembered the high, breathy sounds he'd made the previous evening.

The fact that he no longer felt the need to try and restrain himself was incredible. He and Kurt could arrive at his house after school, when his parents were still out, and drag each other upstairs, laughing and tugging off their coats as they all but slammed the door open to his bedroom and collapsed onto the bed together, kissing and kicking off shoes as he rolled across the mattress and got tangled up in one another and the blankets, legs wrapped around hips and hands undoing buttons and zippers until they eventually ended up out of breath and sweaty, nearly naked and grinning like idiots.

Then there were the times where they were careful and deliberate, slowly working each other out of their layers and tracing their fingertips over one another's skin, breathing out hot and heavy and ghosting their lips together until they were both strung out and silently begging the other, hands clutching sweat-slicked shoulders and low, broken moans filling the close air. Those times when one of them would end up blanketed across the other, legs a jumbled mess and hearts thudding just a few inches apart as they fell asleep, warm and wrapped around one another.

Blaine kept waiting for the ball to drop, for something or someone to send it all crashing down on top of him, for it to be some long, elaborate dream. But it didn't and it wasn't and he'd never been happier in his life.

The weekend before Valentine's Day, Kurt all but locked Blaine in his house as he went shopping with Santana, who he'd long since made amends with and was trying to convince Coach Sylvester to let Kurt back onto the Cheerios for Nationals. He remained tight-lipped and refused to tell Blaine anything other than ordering him not to make plans for Valentine's Day because he had been apparently making his own for several weeks.

And so Blaine spent the day in his room admiring and carefully wrapping the necklace he'd bought the week before. He'd been lost trying to figure out what sort of thing to buy Kurt now that they were dating, but when he'd gone with Mike, who was buying his own present for Tina, to the mall and stopped at the jewellers, he'd found the simple silver necklace resting in the front display case and felt relief sweeping through him. There was a small, white gold key embedded with several tiny diamonds at the hook, a single, larger diamond at the center of the curling heart that formed the bow.

He carefully curled the white ribbon he'd just tied around the box, smiling as he slipped the gift into his dresser until Valentine's Day before confirming that the florist would have his roses ready to pick up before school that morning.

He'd never thought he'd actually have someone to celebrate Valentine's Day with before, and he *definitely* hadn't expected it to be with Kurt. He wanted it to be absolutely perfect but Kurt refused to let him have any say in the planning.

"I want to show you how much I love you," he said when Blaine insisted that he take some part in the planning. *"Plus it's really fun watching you squirm."*

Smiling as he thought of the memory as he walked into school Valentine's Day morning, a veritable explosion of pink and red hearts strewn across the walls like remnants of a grisly crime scene, Blaine shifted the strap of his bag on his shoulder and clutching the dozen red and white roses he'd picked up on his way there in his other hand.

He tucked the flowers behind his back when he saw Kurt at his locker, scolding Finn about something and shaking his head, though he brightened when Blaine approached.

"Hey," he said cheerily, shooing Finn away and beaming. "Happy Valentine's Day, Valentine."

Blaine grinned and pulled the roses from behind his back. "You too," he said as Kurt's eyes lit up.

"I thought I told you not to get me anything?" Kurt said, pursing his lips even as he accepted the roses, closing his eyes as he inhaled slowly. "Mmm, thank you though, they're lovely." He pressed a quick kiss to Blaine's cheek.

"I got you something else," Blaine said, reaching into his bag and pulling out the carefully wrapped box, ignoring Kurt's disapproving look as he pushed it into his hands. "Open it."

"Blaine—"

"Please?" Blaine said. "I *wanted* to get you this, Kurt. If you don't like it, I'll take it back but... it's our first Valentine's *together* and I wanted to do something for you, too."

Kurt sighed, gently placing the roses in his locker before tugging the ribbon loose from the box. "You're too sweet for your own good, you know that?" he said, a small smile turning up the corner of his lips as he pulled off the wrapping paper. He opened his mouth and inhaled softly when he lifted the lid from the box, a smile spreading across his face and his eyes filling with tears as he looked up. "Blaine..."

"Here," Blaine said, taking the necklace from him and reaching behind his head to fasten it around his neck. "Do you... do you like it? There aren't many options for men's jewellery that don't involve skulls and I know the whole 'you have the key to my heart' thing is really cheesy but I just thought—"

Kurt clamped his hand over Blaine's mouth, looking amused.

"I love it," he said, lightly touching the pendant. "I really do." He lifted his hand away from Blaine's mouth and kissed him gently. "Thank you." He shut his locker and took Blaine's hand with a small smile. "Can I walk you to class?"

"Are you going to keep me in the dark about what exactly you're doing?" Blaine said, cocking an eyebrow as they set off down the hall, blissfully ignorant of the sneers still being thrown in their direction every now and then.

Kurt hummed and nodded. "Yep," he said with a sly grin. "It's more fun that way. But you'll find out after lunch, I promise."

Blaine squeezed his hand, heart fluttering a little when Kurt reached up to touch his necklace with a smile. "I can't wait."

"Would you chill out?" Mike hissed, glaring at Blaine and holding up his pencil threateningly.

"Kurt said I'd find out what he's doing after lunch," Blaine breathed in reply. "It's after lunch. I'm anxious."

Mike huffed and turned back to his Chemistry quiz. "I thought things were supposed to be *easier* when you two got together," he muttered.

Blaine narrowed his eyes at him for a moment before turning back to his quiz, jotting down a few answers and glancing at the clock for the twentieth time in five minutes. He hadn't seen Kurt at lunch or in the hall on his way to class and he was starting to wonder if something had, in fact, gone wrong. He tapped his pencil against his desk, chewing his lip and jiggling his foot under the table, ignoring Mike's annoyed huffs.

The intercom by the door squealed and the class turned to stare at it as something rustled on the other end and someone cleared their throat.

"Sorry about that."

Blaine's stomach squirmed at the sound of Kurt's unmistakable voice came over the speaker.

"First off, Happy Valentine's Day to everyone," Kurt said brightly. "Except for the idiot who broke into my locker and stole the roses my boyfriend gave me, you can rot in hell for all I care." He coughed and Blaine felt a twinge of annoyance in his gut at whoever had taken Kurt's flowers. "Moving on. I have a message for said boyfriend and I just couldn't bear to wait until the end of the day to give it to him so... Blaine, I love you. And hopefully I won't have to stay after for detention because of this."

Blaine couldn't help but laugh, smiling as he propped his chin up on his hand and kept his eyes on the intercom as it crackled and something shifted on the other end. He could feel the rest of the class's eyes on him as *Can't Take My Eyes Off You* started playing over the speaker, the sound echoing slightly as it came from the hallway—and Blaine guessed the rest of the school—as well.

He tried not to grin too broadly as his phone buzzed in his pocket and he checked it as their teacher stood and made his way into the hall, looking annoyed and muttering something about disruptions.

Do you like your surprise so far? :)

I love it.

I love you.

Please don't get in trouble.

Lauren Zizes rigged it so I could talk from the janitor's closet. By the time they figure out where I am I'll be gone. Plus Rachel and Finn's ten minute long make-out session in the hall this morning was much more scarring than this.

Just be sure to be at the front entrance at the end of the day, okay?

Sure thing. Be careful getting back to class.

Of course.

I love you.

You too.

He slipped his phone back in his pocket, resting his chin on his fist and tapping his foot absently as he listened to the music still playing around the school.

*I love you baby and if it's quite all right
I need you baby to warm the lonely nights
I love you baby, trust in me when I say
Oh pretty baby, don't bring me down I pray
Oh pretty baby, now that I've found you stay
And let me love you baby, let me love you*

Blaine might as well have been floating to the rest of his classes that day, books clutched to his chest and a dreamy smile on his face as he made his way to pack his things in his locker at the end of the day. Humming in the back of his throat, he slipped his books into his locker, pausing to smile at the pictures he and Kurt had taken two weeks previously on a trip to the mall. They hung next to the old strip of photos, though in the new ones, there was a different energy around them, they were sitting closer, Kurt actually perching on Blaine's lap in the last one and wrapping his arms around his neck to kiss him firmly on the lips when the shutter clicked.

Leaning against the locker next to him, Blaine sighed, feeling slightly punch-drunk from how happy he was.

His locked slammed shut suddenly and he jumped back away from Jason's sneering face, dropping the last two books he was holding at his feet.

Jason let out a snort of derisive laughter, folding his arms across his chest and giving him a look of utmost disgust.

"Wh-what do you want?" Blaine said, bending down and scrambling to pick up his books and the papers that had flown from between their pages.

"So are you two fucking?" Jason said bluntly. "I'm sure you are, Kurt gave it up to me after a week and a half."

Blaine didn't answer, heat crawling up his neck and face as he busied himself with gathering up his notes, head bowed low.

"Oh my god, you *aren't* fucking yet," Jason said, laughing. "Jesus, either you're a fucking prude or Kurt's using you because he is a *freak* in bed. God, he used to beg for it. Like a *whore*."

"Shut up," Blaine growled, pushing himself quickly to his feet and clenching his fists tightly at his side. "Shut *up* about Kurt, you bitter asshole. In case you forgot, *you* broke up with *him*."

"I think we both know that's *your* fault," Jason said, voice dropping threateningly. "You know, I thought you two were screwing around behind my back at first but then I realised you were just some stupid, lovestruck nerd who Kurt was dumb enough to fall for. And look where you've got him. Off the Cheerios, barely any friends, probably sits at home alone crying his eyes out when you're not around. You're a selfish little prick, you know that? Your life may have gotten better when you started dating Kurt but what about him? You killed his social status and now he's just a nobody like you."

"Kurt loves me," Blaine snapped. "And I think he's better off with the friends he has now, not the people who pretended to be his friends until he wasn't 'important' any more. And he's *definitely* better off without an ass like you."

Jason scoffed. "I suppose you told him all about the phone call and the blackmail and everything then?"

"No. He didn't."

Jason whipped around, jaw tensing when his eyes fell on Kurt, who was standing a few feet behind him with his arms folded across his chest and his eyes narrowed. He was dressed in a crisp, red and white Cheerios uniform.

He took a few steps forward, eyeing Jason coldly.

"What phone call?" he said in a clipped voice.

"Kurt, it's not a big deal," Blaine said gently. "Let's just go."

"No," Kurt said, sparks practically flying from his eyes as he glared at Jason, who shrank a little under the ferocity of his gaze. "I want to know what he's talking about." He took another step closer to Jason. "Did you blackmail Blaine when we were dating?"

Jason squared his shoulders, shrugging defiantly. "So what if I did?" he said. "You were *my* boyfriend, not his. I saw the way he looked at you. Anyone with eyes could. You were the only one too blind to see that he was obsessed with you."

"So, what, you blackmailed him?" Kurt said, looking disgusted. "To do what?"

"Date Sebastian," Blaine said when Jason simply rolled his eyes. "And... stay away from you."

"And the phone call?" Kurt said, rounding on Jason and looking furious.

Jason half-glanced down the hall to see if anyone was going to come to his rescue, huffing when he realised they were nearly alone.

"I made him listen to me giving you a blowjob," he said at last. "Big fucking deal. Now he knows how much you beg for it."

Kurt's nostrils flared, eyes flashing dangerously as he raised his hand and slapped Jason hard across the face with a resounding *smack*.

"You," Kurt snapped, poking Jason hard in the chest as he yelped in pain and clutched his cheek. "Are an *asshole*. Thank *god* you broke up with me." He shook out his hand, wincing a little as he grabbed Blaine's with his uninjured one. "Ready to go?"

Blaine nodded. "Are you okay?" he said, glancing down at Kurt's reddened hand.

"Fine," Kurt said briskly.

"So... Sylvester let you back on the Cheerios?"

"Mhmm," Kurt said with a bright smile, tugging at his hand. "Come on. I don't want to lose our spot."

"What spot?"

Kurt grinned. "You'll see."

An hour later, they were stretched out on a blanket together in the back of Kurt's car, the back seats folded down and the rear door hanging open as they watched the sun set from their position at the edge of a wide, bare field off an old side road outside of town, the remnants of the picnic Kurt had packed pushed to one side and a second blanket wrapped around both their shoulders.

"I'm sorry I couldn't buy you anything fancy," Kurt said quietly, fingers tracing randomly across Blaine's chest and head resting against his shoulder.

"I don't care," Blaine murmured, kissing his hair and lightly touching the pendant hanging from Kurt's neck. "I really don't. This is perfect. Completely perfect." He shivered as a blast of cold air swept through the car.

Kurt hummed and snuggled closer to him under the blanket, his hand sliding down his stomach to rest on his thigh. "You know, I can think of a few ways we could warm up."

"Oh yeah?" Blaine said, tightening his arm around Kurt's waist when he tugged his shirt free from where it was tucked in his jeans.

"Yeah," Kurt murmured. "But you're going to have to take off your clothes."

"Seems counterproductive to me," Blaine said as Kurt slipped out from under his arm to pull the tailgate closed before crawling back to him and climbing into his lap, arms snaking around his neck as he grinned playfully.

"Trust me."

Chapter Fourteen

Regionals for Glee Club came and went, Kurt cheering from the front row as Blaine and the other members of the New Directions accepted the first place trophy, his face glowing with pride and love. Blaine had ended up riding back to Lima with Kurt, the two of them pulling off a side road and clambering into the back seat of Kurt's car to tear at each other's clothes and exchange greedy kisses, ignoring the cramped position and painful press of door handles and seat buckles against their skin.

He didn't know how much he liked admitting it to himself but Blaine could finally understand why it was that Kurt had so many times skipped out on possible plans in favour of the physical intimacy Blaine hadn't been able to offer him at the time. It was an amazing feeling, being close and touched and *wanted* like this. He might think that they had a problem if not for the fact that they would still spend those nights together where they would simply lounge talking for hours on end or texting one another until three in the morning when one of them finally drifted off to sleep.

Kurt was, quite literally, his other half. In fact, he thought Kurt probably owned more of his heart than he did at this point, that he could so easily crush it and toss it away like a scrap of paper that he was sure it would frighten most people. It didn't scare him though, because he knew that he had just as much of Kurt's heart in his own hands. Kurt was everything to him and he took comfort in the fact that he could look down at Kurt when they were lying together, Kurt draped over Blaine's stomach with his arms folded on his chest and his chin resting on his hands as he smiled softly up at him as Blaine carded his fingers through his hair, and see that Kurt felt exactly the same way. He wondered why more people didn't fall in love with their best friends.

Spring slowly arrived, snow melting away and leaving piles of dirty slush to cover the parking lot, Kurt wrinkling up his face in distaste as he tried to avoid stepping as they walked together into the school, Blaine watching him fondly and letting his mind wander. It was those little gestures, those moments that were so completely *Kurt* that had him thinking of just how familiar, and yet so *unfamiliar*, it all was to him. They still had countless experiences to share and there were times when he couldn't help but start to list them off in his head and let himself bury them deep inside his brain for the day when he could check each one off. He wondered if Kurt ever did the same.

Kurt and the rest of the Cheerios left for a weekend in early May to go to their Nationals championship, Kurt pouting faintly when Blaine dropped him off early to ride the bus to the competition and fiddling with the zip on his bag to put off leaving as long as possible.

"I wish you could come along," he said quietly, chewing at his bottom lip and ignoring the scowl Coach Sylvester was throwing in their direction as she ushered the rest of the Cheerios onto the bus.

"I know," Blaine said, reaching across the console to take Kurt's hand and squeeze it gently. "But we can talk on the phone and it's only for a few days."

"I'll just miss you," Kurt sighed, gripping his hand back and glancing out the window as the bus horn blared.

"You too," Blaine said, "but you need to get going. I don't want to get you in trouble."

"Okay," Kurt said reluctantly, leaning over the console and resting his hand on Blaine's cheek as he kissed him, slow and sweet. Blaine had long since decided those were his favourite kisses, the ones that had Kurt sighing and breathing soft against his lips when he pulled back, lingering with their lips close for a moment before pressing a final, quick kiss to the corner of his mouth, like a tiny signature, and drawing back completely.

"Call me when you get there," Blaine said, smiling as Kurt climbed out of the car and swung his back over his shoulder.

"Okay," Kurt replied a little sadly. "Love you."

"You too," Blaine said. "Be safe."

Kurt smiled and waved in acknowledgement, jogging towards the bus and arguing with Coach Sylvester as he climbed on and the doors closed behind them. Blaine watched the bus pull away and out of the parking lot, yawning and rubbing his eyes before shifting his car back into gear and driving home. He tried not to think about the fact that Kurt would be gone for a full four days and flopped down on his bed to try and get a few more hours of sleep before the day really started.

He woke up to his phone blaring beside him sometime around noon, groping blindly for it and his glasses and frowning as he saw Kurt's father's name flashing on the screen.

"Hullo?" he muttered, running his hand through his hair and yawning.

"*Blaine?*" a voice on the other end said, sounding strained and anxious.

Blaine grunted in reply.

"It's Kurt's dad," Burt said, the sound of chatter and what sounded like an intercom clear in the background.

"What's up?" Blaine said, stifling another yawn.

"Now, you have to promise not to freak out."

Blaine bolted upright in his bed, heart suddenly hammering in his chest.

"What's wrong? Is it Kurt? Is he okay?"

"Calm down," Burt said quickly. "He's fine. A little banged up but he'd fine. Someone hit their bus on the way to the competition. Kurt was sitting near where the car hit and he got cut up by the glass and hit his head pretty hard but he's fine. Everyone's fine. We're at the hospital now waiting for him to finish getting stitched up but he wouldn't stop telling me to call you."

Blaine slumped back against the pillows, taking a few deep breaths and closing his eyes.

"Blaine? You okay?"

"M'fine," Blaine croaked. He cleared his throat. "You're sure he's okay?"

"Just a few stitches and a headache," Burt said reassuringly. "He said to tell you not to worry but if you want you can come by the house in about an hour. We're leaving the hospital as soon as he's checked out and done filling out all the insurance papers."

"Um, yeah," Blaine said, pushing himself up and scrambling to grab clean clothes. "Yeah, I'll be there. Um... tell him... can you tell him I love him?"

He could almost hear Burt's smile on the other end.

"Sure thing, kiddo," he said gently.

Blaine ended the call and dragged his hands down his face, blinking hard and willing himself not to panic. He showered quickly, nearly stepping out with shampoo still in his hair, and dressed before driving to Kurt's house, waiting anxiously on the front step for his father's car to pull into the driveway, Finn and Carole climbing out and Burt helping Kurt out onto the pavement.

"Dad, I'm *fine*," Blaine heard Kurt grumbling from the other side of the car. "Seriously, I can walk."

Kurt's face lit up when he walked around the front of the car and spotted Blaine, though his expression fell a little when he saw how drawn and anxious he look as he hurried down the path to him.

"Dad, I thought I told you to tell him I was fine?" Kurt said, sounding annoyed as he scowled at his father.

Before Burt had a chance to answer, Blaine was wrapping his arms around Kurt and burying his face in his neck, soaking up his warmth and smell and vitality.

"Hey, no, Blaine, don't—I'm fine," Kurt said gently when Blaine tightened his grip around his middle. "Honestly, it was only five stitches, I've had worse."

Blaine huffed out a nervous breath at his airy tone, kissing him wetly on the cheek and giving him a final squeeze before pulling back, though he refused to let go of him.

"Don't... don't scare me like that," he murmured.

"I'm fine," Kurt repeated with a small smile. "Really. Do you want to go upstairs?"

Blaine nodded, scrubbing the heel of his hand roughly across his cheek, one arm still securely around Kurt's waist as they made their way inside with Kurt's family, Finn and Carole discussing lunch and Burt reminding Kurt to be careful with his stitches and make sure he didn't fall asleep as he and Blaine climbed the stairs to his bedroom.

They lay down on Kurt's bed together, curled on their sides, Blaine holding Kurt against his chest and pressing light kisses to the back of his neck as he traced the veins on the back of his hand.

"I'm sorry I scared you," Kurt said quietly.

"Don't worry about me," Blaine said. "Are you okay? Do you want to talk about it?"

Kurt shook his head. "No. It was... Blaine I was scared when it happened. It wasn't even that bad when you look at it but just... we were just riding along listening to Santana complain about something and laughing and all of sudden everything changed and there was glass breaking and people were screaming and I thought someone was going to die..."

Blaine responded by tightening his arm around Kurt's waist and kissing his hair softly.

"I really love you, you know that?"

Kurt's voice trembled a little as he said it, his hand settling on top of Blaine's and clutching it tightly against his chest. He turned his head slightly and Blaine pushed himself off the pillow to look at him.

"I mean it," Kurt said in a small voice. "You're all I could think about when it happened, Blaine. I-I want everything with you."

Blaine smiled and kissed his temple. "Me too," he murmured against his skin.

"Yeah?" Kurt said, sounding so hopeful and scared it nearly broke his heart that he could ever think that Blaine *wouldn't* want everything with him.

"Yeah."

Six months after they'd started dating, after Kurt's stitches were gone and only a thin pink scar remained across the curve of his forearm, after Blaine had gotten over the sting of losing Nationals, after graduation and come and gone and summer was roaring through Lima with a vengeance, heat so thick it shimmered and rolled across the pavement in waves, they finally did share everything with one another.

It wasn't some long, thought-out and planned event like Blaine had always assumed it would be, just another lazy afternoon where the sun was too hot and the air was too heavy and they were lying on Blaine's bed, reveling in the coolness of the sheets and air-conditioner, half-dressed and letting their fingers trail over bare expanses of exposed skin, clothes discarded on the floor nearby.

They'd been spending months memorising each other's bodies, their hands taking the familiar paths over lines of muscle automatically now. There had been hours upon hours of working each other up and watching one another fall apart with fingers and tongues dancing across skin, always learning and going further until there wasn't anything left to discover. Blaine was sure Kurt knew his body better than he did and he was certain he could say the same about Kurt's.

But still there was that final barrier they'd been skirting around for months, sometimes getting close only to pull back and return to the starting line, always dancing around each other, never bringing up the topic, allowing it to sit and simmer in the back of Blaine's brain until he thought he might boil over with the amount of time he'd spent thinking about it.

Now, with Kurt making his way slowly down his chest with his lips, leaving wet, lingering kisses across his warm skin, Blaine felt like a kettle moments away from bursting with steam, shivering and aching with need as he ran his hands through Kurt's hair.

"I want you," he said hoarsely.

Kurt hummed and smiled against his skin, nuzzling his bellybutton before kissing his hip.

"Kurt."

Kurt looked up curiously, leaning into his hand when he ran it over the side of his face.

"I want you," Blaine repeated, licking his dry lips. "All of you. If... if you want."

He could sense Kurt searching his eyes, his own clear and impassive despite his dark pupils.

"Are you sure?" Kurt said quietly.

Blaine nodded, propping himself up on one elbow to kiss him. "Absolutely," he murmured. "Are you?"

"Yes," Kurt breathed. "I love you."

"You too."

Blaine rolled to the side of the bed, Kurt rubbing his back gently as he reached into the side table and pulled out the bottle of lube he kept inside, fumbling with trembling fingers and exhaling shakily as he sat back and Kurt straddled his hips again.

Kurt smiled reassuring, pressing light kisses to his cheek and jaw as Blaine popped open the bottle and slicked up his fingers, rubbing them together for a moment before reaching behind Kurt and brushing lightly over his entrance.

Kurt inhaled quickly through his nose, releasing the breath haltingly against Blaine's neck as he began working him open with his fingers. They'd done this a few times before, teased and touched and learned each other inside and out with fingers and tongues, Blaine bumbling his way through most of it as Kurt whispered words of encouragement in his ear and fell apart beneath his touch.

"Blaine, you feel so good," Kurt breathed, brushing his nose against the side of his neck and kissing the spot where his blood was rushing through his veins. "S-so *good*—ah—right there, oh god, *Blaine*."

Kurt arched his back and dug his hands into the sheets, mouth hanging open and eyes fluttering closed as Blaine twisted and bent his fingers inside him.

"Blaine, p-please," Kurt whined breathlessly. "Please, I need you."

Blaine nodded, swallowing to try and wet his dry mouth as he pulled his fingers free and poured more lube onto them, Kurt curling his fingers around the back of his hand as Blaine coated himself. Kurt leaned down to kiss him, deep and slow, stroking both their hand up Blaine's cock before pulling them both away and scooting up the bed.

Blaine's breath hitched in his throat, Kurt whimpering and exhaling hard over his lips as he sank down around him, torturously slow and hot and tight and perfect. He knew it only took a few seconds but it felt like ages until Kurt had settled in his lap, each tiny shift in their bodies setting his skin on edge, fraying his nerve endings so they sparked and skipped like live wires.

For a long moment they stayed like that, foreheads pressed together and eyes half-closed as they breathed each other in, Blaine running his hands up and down Kurt's spine and pressing into the tense knots of muscle.

"Alright?" he murmured, kissing just to the side of Kurt's lips.

Kurt nodded silently, leaving a few short, messy kisses over his jaw before sitting up with a soft groan, legs bent and splayed on either side of Blaine lips as he leaned back, propping himself up with one arm, the other hand resting on Blaine's stomach.

He gently rocked his hips, small movements that still had sensation rocketing across Blaine's skin, now gleaming with sweat despite the air-conditioning, the humidity plastering his hair to his forehead. He kept a firm grip on Kurt's hips, rubbing his hipbones with his thumbs and attempting to take in every shift and bunch of muscle as he moved, each bead of sweat trickling down his body, the way he threw his head back and mewled in the back of his throat each time he rolled his hips down.

Blaine let his fingers roam over Kurt's chest and down his stomach, sweeping over the lines of muscle and the fine trail of hair that led from his navel to cock, resting heavy against Blaine's stomach.

"You're so beautiful," he whispered, fingers brushing over the outline of Kurt's ribs.

Kurt merely smiled and lifted his hand from Blaine's chest to rest over top of the fingers pressed to his chest over his heart, the steady, rapid thud of muscle strong against Kurt's ribcage, powerful and so alive it

made Blaine think back to the time he'd thought for one horrible, heart-wrenching second that he'd lost him forever.

"Blaine?"

Kurt stilled, sounding anxious as he took in the set line of Blaine's jaw and his tightly pressed lips.

"I'm okay," Blaine said, squeezing his hip. He blinked a few times to clear away the fuzziness at the corners of his eyes. "I love you."

Kurt smiled sympathetically and gently cradled the side of his face in his hand. "I love you too."

Blaine propped himself up on his elbows, tilting his chin up for Kurt to kiss him, both of them breathing sharply through their noses, low groans and soft whines slipping between their lips. He wrapped his hand around Kurt and pumped gently, Kurt's hips jerking and snapping with less timing until Blaine felt wet heat seeping over his fingers and down his wrist, Kurt gasping and shuddering and clenching down around him to send him crashing over the edge into blissful oblivion as well, black creeping up around the edges of his vision for a few seconds before they collapsed back onto the bed together, kissing without really realising what they were doing, a steady stream of *'IloveyouIloveyou'* coming from one of them though he wasn't really sure who it was.

He could feel Kurt's breath hot on his collarbone where his face was pressed against his skin, his hands stroking absently down his spine before coming to a rest to lace together at the small of his back.

"Was that... was that okay?" Blaine said nervously, suddenly self-conscious. Yes, he might have gotten plenty of experience with Kurt but this was still something new and raw and unexplored for him.

"Incredible," Kurt mumbled, voice muffled against Blaine's shoulder. "You... you feel perfect, Blaine."

Blaine relaxed a little and kissed the top of his head. "Do you still want everything with me?"

Kurt smiled, letting out a little huff of amusement through his nose. "Of course I do." He lifted his head from Blaine's shoulder, eyes still glazed, face flushed and hair a mess. "Do you?"

Blaine nodded and Kurt smiled again, blinking slowly and letting his head fall back against Blaine's shoulder as he closed his eyes, Blaine forcing his eyes to stay open as long as possible to watch him sleep before he finally followed after him.

The question cropped up in their relationship as the years slipped by, when they waiting for their acceptance letters from their selected schools in New York and tried to figure out where they were going to live and how they were going to afford it, spending their time in college in a tiny one bedroom apartment with broken fixtures and barely working appliances; when they argued and fought and screamed until they were red in the face, cheeks streaked when tears, and one of them finally raised the question, '*do you still want this?*' and the inevitable '*always*' that followed; when Blaine arrived home from work one evening the year after they'd gotten their diplomas and they'd finally moved into a decent place, Kurt waiting at the door with a box and a ring and looking like he might be sick as he made his rehearsed speech about how he'd 'fallen in love with his best friend' and waited for Blaine to get over his stunned silence and say yes; when they went to the shelter and picked out the dog with the biggest brown eyes they could fine, Kurt clucking his tongue as it licked his face, though Blaine could see him trying not to smile as he agreed to take it home, where it took up a near permanent residence at Blaine's heels and the foot of their bed, Kurt only weakly protesting that it should sleep on the floor before sighing and scratching it behind the ears and allowing Blaine to pull him down against his chest and kiss the back of his neck as he ran his thumb over the band on Kurt's finger; when ten years had passed since they'd left high school and they couldn't walk down the hall past their empty second bedroom without feeling like something, or someone, was missing and spent sleepless nights filling out paperwork and waiting and hoping and finally getting the envelope in the mail that meant they were going to be a family, Kurt dissolving into tears as he threw himself into Blaine's arms and the dog leapt around their ankles and barked excitedly; when they were simply lying in bed together, Kurt's head pillowed against Blaine's chest, the dog sleeping across their feet and the baby monitor silent on the table beside him as he kissed Kurt's hair and whispered the question that had become like a promise in his ear.

"Do you still want everything with me?"

Kurt would smile and sigh contentedly, leaning into Blaine's hand as it combed through his hair.

"Yes. Forever."