

Hearts Flying High

by

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Klaine || Romance/Angst || T

Kurt had always believed he was happy with his life and the direction it was going; That is until he met Blaine, the cute businessman who happened to board his flight and make him question everything he'd once believed about himself.

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Contents

Chapter One	- 3 -
Chapter Two	- 15 -
Chapter Three	- 27 -
Chapter Four	- 48 -
Chapter Five	- 67 -
Chapter Six	- 83 -
Chapter Seven	- 97 -
Chapter Eight	- 118 -
Chapter Nine	- 146 -
Chapter Ten	- 163 -
Chapter Eleven	- 176 -
Chapter Twelve	- 189 -
Chapter Thirteen	- 219 -
Chapter Fourteen	- 244 -
Chapter Fifteen	- 257 -
Epilogue	- 283 -

Chapter One

Twenty-five year old Kurt Hummel stepped into the familiar cabin of the plane on a chilly October morning, ready for the same, boring routine he trudged through every day. He adjusted his hat and quickly made his way down the aisle of the first class section of the plane, making sure all trays were secure and any trash left from the previous flight was thrown away. He checked his watch before letting out a stiff yawn. 6:45 AM. His first flight of the day was set to leave at 7:35 AM, leaving him little time to sit down before passengers started boarding. He chugged his quickly-cooling coffee before tossing it in the trash and heading to help load the remaining luggage onto the plane.

Being the steward for the first class passengers had its ups and its downs. While the cabin was more spacious with better food, more comfortable seating, and all around nicer accommodations, many of the people he met were uptight businessmen or women who believed they were better than everyone else because they had a high salary and held a top position in a big firm. Many high society women, most likely the wives of those businessmen aboard, flew first class as well. There was nothing Kurt despised more than a prissy woman complaining that her seat was too small, her coffee was too hot, or the lettuce in her salad wasn't crisp enough. Despite everything he went through on a daily basis, Kurt was able to force a smile on his face and appeal to the demands of each passenger. Not all passengers were rude and discourteous, however. Occasionally, he'd get someone who would make an effort to make small talk, or someone who put a smile on their face and refrained from complaining about anything. Those were the passengers Kurt enjoyed. Those were the passengers he wished he could see more of.

Kurt finished up with the luggage and returned to the cabin, standing by the door and awaiting the oncoming passengers. The minute the first man set foot onto the plane, he knew that particular day was going to be one of the more rough ones. The man, most likely in his early fifties, immediately complained about the cool temperatures inside and the draft he felt when he sat down. Kurt rolled his eyes and took in a deep breath before approaching the man. "Excuse me. I'm Kurt Hummel, your flight attendant. Is there a problem I can help you with?"

The man looked Kurt up and down disapprovingly before saying, "There's a draft coming from above. I'd like it to be taken care of."

Kurt nearly tripped over the man's rather large carry on as he tried to get closer. Holding in every curse word he could, he hoisted the bag over his head and shoved it into the overhead compartment before turning back to the man. "I can close the vent if you'd like," he offered.

"Well that would stop the draft, don't you think? That's what I want, so close the damn thing!" Kurt was used to dealing with rude men like the one standing before him. It was the major downside to his job, but this man in particular was getting on Kurt's nerves. He reached above the man and closed the vent before putting on the best fake smile he could and turning his attention back to the man.

"There. That should stop the draft and help with the cooler temperatures. Is there anything else I can help you with?" he asked in an overly-polite manner.

The man ran a hand through his greying hair before answering. "Yes. I'd like a coffee. And bring me some sugar and a spoon along with it." Kurt didn't miss the man's lack of manners, but ignored his impolite attitude and walked away. He returned five minutes later with a cup of coffee in hand and sat it down on the tray in front of the man. "It's about time," the guy mumbled as he took the sugar and spoon from Kurt's hands and began tearing the little packages open. "That will be all. You can go now."

Kurt did as told and returned to the back of the cabin where he was to remain until needed. After noting that the time was approaching 7:30, he picked up the speaker and began reciting his speech over the intercom. "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. May I have your attention please? My name is Kurt Hummel and I'll be your flight attendant this morning. I'd like to welcome you aboard American Airlines flight 740 with non-stop service from New York City to Los Angeles, California. Please turn your attention to the overhead TVs for a safety demonstration video. Please follow along with the safety card located in the seat pocket in front of you."

Kurt pressed play and waited for the next couple of minutes as each passenger pretended to pay attention to the safety instructions being played to them. Once the video was finished, he took the speaker in his hand once again and continued his speech. "Please make sure your seatbelt is securely fastened at this time. To fasten, insert the loose metal buckle into the holder. Tighten so it fits firmly around your waste. To fasten, pull the loose belt. I'll be around soon to help anyone who may be having trouble. Also, make sure all carry-on items are stored in the overhead bins, or underneath the seat in front of you."

Kurt paused to make sure the aisles were clear of any luggage before continuing. "Please take note of the four emergency exits on this plane. One is located where you boarded in the front of the plane, one in the back, and one located over each wing. Each exit is equipped with a safety slide that can be detached and used as a flotation device. Please take this time to locate your nearest exit. Keep in mind that it may be behind you. If cabin visibility is reduced, lighted strips along the floor of the cabin will lead you to the nearest exit. Remember, red lights mark an exit."

Kurt took a deep breath before heading down the aisle once again. He checked to make sure everyone had their seatbelt fastened and had located an emergency exit before taking his place at the back of the plane and finishing his speech. "In case there is a loss in cabin pressure, yellow oxygen masks will deploy from the ceiling compartment located above you. To secure, pull the mask towards you, secure the elastic strap to your head, and fasten it so it covers your mouth and nose. Breathe normally. Even if the mask does not inflate, please keep in mind that oxygen is flowing. Please make sure to secure your own mask before assisting others. In case of water landing, life jackets are located under your seat. To fasten, place the vest over your head and secure both straps around your waste. To inflate, pull the red handle or manually inflate by blowing into the red tube. Remember, *never* inflate the vest inside of the aircraft. Also, a beacon light will activate upon entering water. Please make sure you have read the safety card for this flight. As we come through the cabin to perform our final safety checks, please make sure your seatbelt is indeed fastened, your seat back, tray tables are in their full upright and lock position, and all carry-on items are stored properly. Thank you for your attention, and we wish you a good flight on American Airlines."

Kurt emerged from behind the curtain and made the final checks before signaling to the pilot that they were ready for takeoff. He made his way to the back to sit down in his own chair and fastened his seat belt. No matter how many times he'd flown, there was nothing Kurt loved more than the feeling of taking off. The instant change in speed made his stomach twist in the best ways, and the minute the wheels raised off of the ground, he felt like an entirely new person. He felt more powerful when he was high in the air. All of his problems were left below him, and the only thing he had to worry about while in the air were the needs of his snobby passengers.

Once they'd reached the appropriate elevation, he flipped a switch which turned the seatbelt light off, unbuckled himself, and stood up. He began making his way to the front of the cabin to make sure each passenger's needs were satisfied. It didn't take long to make his way through, and he reluctantly asked the angry man he'd previously encountered if he needed anything. The man replied with a quick and harsh "no" before Kurt moved on past him.

As he passed the plane's tiny bathroom, the door swung open with great force, knocking him sideways into the opposite wall. He turned around to see a man about the same age as himself reaching towards him. "Oh my gosh! I'm so sorry!" the man said. Kurt felt the man's hand rest on his lower arm, steadying him until Kurt was able to regain his balance. "Are you ok?" Kurt nodded once before looking into the man's eyes. He was immediately drawn to the warm caramel color that surrounded his pupil and the little sparkle that reflected off of the overhead lights. It took a few seconds to realize he was staring before he moved his gaze elsewhere.

"Yes," Kurt confirmed, looking down towards the ground. It wasn't long before he looked back up and noticed the man patting at his slick, gelled hair. Once he returned any stray hairs back in place, he reached out his hand, and Kurt cautiously grabbed it.

"I'm Blaine Anderson," he smiled.

Blaine, Kurt repeated in his head. Blaine was the name of the boy standing in front of him. Blaine, the boy with the perfectly styled hair and eyes anyone could get lost in. "Kurt Hummel." He shook Blaine's hand and held on a little too long before releasing it and returning his own hand to his side. He nervously picked at the bottom of his uniform top and bit his lip, trying to avoid staring into Blaine's eyes.

"Is that weird? I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that," Blaine laughed nervously.

"Is what weird?" Kurt asked, confused.

"Introducing myself. I don't know how these things work. Normally I just remain in my seat the entire flight and I tend to ignore the flight attendants as much as possible." Blaine looked away before Kurt could get a good look at him, but he could've sworn he started to see Blaine's cheeks start to turn pink.

"Oh, um...no. It's, it's actually kind of nice. It's a change from the impolite demands I usually get." Blaine looked back up at Kurt and he noticed that Blaine was in fact blushing. "Do you fly a lot?"

"Yeah. I spend Monday through Friday in New York and Saturday and Sunday in Los Angeles."

"I don't think I've seen you on a flight before. I'm sure I'd remember you. I tend to remember the rare few who don't nearly spit in my face." Kurt immediately shut his mouth, afraid he'd said too much and tried to switch back into his professional mode.

Blaine, however, made it hard for Kurt to think about his job every time he opened his mouth to speak. "I usually fly at night. If you are the flight attendant for every Friday morning flight to L.A., maybe I'll have to change my usual flight times."

Kurt momentarily forgot how to breathe. Was Blaine flirting with him? Was one of his passengers flirting with him? Kurt felt his face start to get warm, and before he knew it, he was blushing along with Blaine. He tried to remain as professional as possible, but couldn't help the next words that slipped off of his tongue and out of his mouth. "You should get right on that. Just so you know, I also have a 12:00 flight back to

New York on Sundays," he winked, and immediately cursed at himself for giving Blaine the power to make him forget about his job.

"First thing I'll do when we land." Blaine grinned and Kurt immediately fell in love with his large smile, not taking long to notice the dimples that appeared on his cheeks how the corners of his eyes began to crinkle. He could definitely get used to seeing a familiar face every week, especially if that face belonged to the charming Blaine Anderson. "Sorry again for slamming the door into you. I'll be more careful next time," he laughed and Kurt couldn't help but to laugh along with him. "I'll let you get back to your work. See you on Sunday, Kurt." Blaine placed his hand on Kurt's arm once again and winked before turning around and returning to his seat.

Great, Kurt thought. How am I supposed to focus now? He disappeared behind the curtain until his face returned to its normal color, but no matter what he did for the rest of the flight, he couldn't take his mind off of the mesmerizing man that was Blaine Anderson.

That night, Kurt lied awake in bed, unable to take his mind off of the man he'd met on the plane. There was something about Blaine that instantly grabbed Kurt's attention, more so than any man ever had before. Kurt had dated a little on and off since high school, but it was never anything too serious. Whenever he started to feel more lonely than usual, he'd go out to a gay bar and pick up a new guy. They'd go on a date or two until Kurt was satisfied, and then he'd stop returning the other man's calls. He wasn't necessarily afraid of commitment, but he was more afraid of getting hurt. He was afraid that one day, the guy would wake up and realize Kurt wasn't what he wanted. Kurt was just a flight attendant, someone who didn't have the same goals and ambitions as a stereotypical gay man. Although he loved fashion, he didn't have any desire to become a designer. He wasn't overly flamboyant in public, and tended to only be affectionate inside the confines of his apartment. His small, one bedroom apartment reflected his dating life, consisting of a tiny kitchen, one loveseat, and a bed—one he'd recently upgraded from a twin to a Queen. It didn't have room for a second person, barely even being big enough for Kurt himself. He never met a man with the intention of getting to know them on a personal level. He never met their family, and rarely stuck around long enough to meet even their closest friends. He didn't expect to have that same person in his life two weeks later, let alone five, six, seven months down the road.

Kurt was happy with where he was in life. He had a job that, for the most part, he enjoyed, and a decent salary—one that kept him living comfortably and not wanting for much. For years, he'd been content to

come home from a long day of flying and sit on the couch, browsing through the latest issue of Vogue or watching Project Runway reruns. He'd make a late dinner for himself, change into his pajamas, and curl up with a blanket and spend time by himself, happy to be away from the chaos that came with an airport.

Kurt loved the New York City lifestyle. He enjoyed the busy streets, the fast-paced environment, and being in a city that never slept. Since moving to the city, Kurt felt less like an outcast. He loved the fact that he could walk down the street wearing whatever he wanted, and no matter how crazy he looked, he somehow blended into the crowd. Everyone around him was eccentric and unique in their own way, and that's what he was drawn to. He had even gotten used to the less glamorous parts of the city, such as car horns continuously honking, impatient drivers, homeless people begging for food and money whenever you turned a corner, and the heavily-littered sidewalks. He liked that about New York. He liked that there was always something new to discover about the city, and it wasn't the perfect, idealistic place that a lot of people were led to believe.

So to say that Kurt Hummel wasn't happy, would be like saying the sky wasn't blue and money grew on trees. It just wasn't an accurate way to describe Kurt's life. He had a few acquaintances, people from work who he'd occasionally go out for coffee with, but no one he could really rely on to be there in the long run. He didn't have anyone to invite over for dinner on the nights he wasn't busy working, or call up when he wanted to get out of the house for the day. Although he didn't have many friends in New York, he was okay with being alone. That is until he met Blaine Anderson.

One short conversation with Blaine had turned Kurt's entire plan for his life upside down. Blaine was something Kurt never knew he wanted until he was presented with the man himself. He loved Blaine's bashful, but confident personality and the way he could take his breath away just by muttering one simple sentence. He had instantly taken away every coherent thought Kurt had, leaving him speechless in the dapper man's presence. To say he was attracted to Blaine would be an understatement. Blaine was exactly what Kurt wanted in a man. Although he was slightly shorter than Kurt, he held himself up with such dignity and poise that it almost felt like he was taller than he actually was. Blaine's warm eyes instantly captured Kurt's focus and it took every ounce of strength Kurt had to look away. Blaine's hair was perfectly styled, indicating that he was a man who put time and thought into his appearance and how he presented himself to others. He wanted to impress the person, but at the same time, refrain from looking like he was trying too hard. Kurt smiled at the thought of the tiny curls he'd seen at Blaine's hairline, imagining what it would be like to see Blaine outside of the business environment; out of the suit and tie, with un-gelled hair and a more casual setting.

Yes, Kurt had it bad for a man he'd just met, and it scared him. He laid in bed and curled himself up underneath his sheets, imagining what his future could be like if Blaine were to become a part of it. He could picture Blaine flying back from Los Angeles, getting off of the plane and waiting for Kurt to finish up with work. They would drive back to Kurt's apartment together, and for the first time, Kurt wouldn't have to eat alone. He'd have someone to sit at his two-person table and discuss his day with. Kurt loved the idea of Blaine being someone he could talk to outside of work; about the other things that interested Kurt. Based on the way he dressed, Kurt suspected he was into fashion to some extent. His excitement swelled at the thought of sharing opinions on the latest trends or going shopping for a new outfit. He wanted Blaine to be someone he could spend time with, something Kurt had never thought he wanted before. He couldn't pinpoint exactly what it was about Blaine that changed his entire opinions on his life, and he didn't know if he was happy with the new developments or not.

Kurt tossed and turned for two hours before his body was finally able to give in and allow him to fall asleep. The last thought on his mind was Blaine. He needed to find a way to get to know Blaine outside of the confines of the cabin. Who knows, maybe Blaine was just a natural flirt who had no interest in Kurt what-so-ever. *Yes, that is probably the case*, Kurt thought. *There is no way Blaine could be interested in someone like me.* He finally shut his eyes and dozed off to sleep, dreaming only about one particular man.

Kurt attempted to busy himself the next day to take his mind off of the intriguing man he'd met the previous morning, but failed miserably. He had Saturdays off, which normally would allow him to clean up his apartment and take care of any errands he had. However, on this particular Saturday, Kurt found himself aimlessly wandering through the city, urging himself to think about anything not related to Blaine. It wasn't long before he saw a man about Blaine's height, also with gelled hair, passing him on the sidewalk and instantly directing his thoughts back to the topic he was trying so hard to avoid. For the next hour, anytime Kurt saw a man in a suit, a man with a nice smile, a man with perfectly styled hair, he immediately wondered what Blaine was doing that very minute. He knew it was probably creepy that he was thinking about someone so often, seeing as he had just briefly met him on the plane, but he couldn't help himself.

On the plane. While I was at work, Kurt thought. *This is wrong. This is wrong on so many different levels and goes against every rule in the professional handbook.*

He couldn't help it though. He wanted Blaine to be feeling the same things, wondering what Kurt was doing at that very minute, wondering what Kurt did in his free time. Kurt didn't know exactly what kind of profession Blaine was in—obviously one that paid well based on his first class flight, and he guessed Blaine held some sort of significant position—but he assumed Blaine didn't have much free time. He was aware that businessmen were typically busy people. They always had office meetings to attend, stressful situations to deal with, and deadlines to meet. Even if Blaine was thinking about Kurt as much as Kurt was about Blaine, there was no way he'd be able to make time for Kurt in his life, at least not the amount of time Kurt would want.

Kurt tried to shake off the thought of a future with Blaine once again, and before he knew it, he found himself strolling through Central Park. Autumn in the city, especially Central Park, was one of Kurt's favorite times of the year. The leaves on each tree had changed from their lackluster green color to very vibrant reds, oranges, and yellows. He took in the sight of the falling leaves and with every deep breath he took, he could recognize the familiar smell of Fall. Central Park was a good distraction for a while. It was a place where Kurt could come and forget every worry, everything wrong with his life for a few hours and just enjoy nature. He watched as numerous squirrels scurried around, eager to find as many nuts as possible before winter finally hit. The birds had mostly flown south for the winter, but the few that remained soared above his head, and he found their calls peaceful.

Not even the magical sanctuary of Central Park could keep Kurt's mind off of Blaine for much longer. Many times, he'd close his eyes and imagine himself there with Blaine by his side. He thought about wandering down the path, hand in hand with Blaine while he whispered something in the other man's ear, receiving a smile and quiet laugh from the one standing next to him. He hoped Blaine was the type to enjoy life; one to enjoy what was around him, never taking anything for granted. If anything, what Kurt wanted in a partner was someone who could cuddle up with him and enjoy a rainy day or forget about what work needed to be done for a few hours while they took a walk and simply enjoyed each other's company. He didn't have to have someone with a good paying job or someone who could make him breakfast in bed every day. All Kurt needed was someone who could look at something as plain and ordinary as a blade of grass and see the beauty in life. If he were to finally let someone into his life and into his heart, that person would have to understand him on a deeper level than he'd ever allowed anyone before.

Kurt visibly sighed once he realized how long he'd been thinking about Blaine before turning around and heading back towards his apartment. He had given up on pushing Blaine to the back of his mind. Instead, he'd decided to go home and watch one of his favorite movies, wishing Blaine were right there next to him.

Sunday morning proved to be one of the slowest mornings Kurt has ever experienced. He was unable to fall asleep as early as he wanted to the night before and woke up forty-five minutes prior to the time his alarm was set to go off. He glanced at the clock, seeing that it was only 4:15, and decided to go back to sleep without success. Fifteen minutes later, he gave in and pushed the warm covers off of his body before climbing out of the bed. After grabbing a towel from his hall closet, he headed into his bathroom—rather spacious for the size of his apartment—and turned the water on. He hung the towel up and began shedding his clothes, taking his time before stepping into the shower.

Kurt always made time each morning to take a decently long shower. He loved feeling the warm water flowing onto every inch of his body from the showerhead above him. The warmth surrounding him helped to ease any tension his muscles had acquired from the stress of the previous day's work. He stood under the water for five minutes before he grabbed a bottle and began to massage the sweet-smelling shampoo into his hair. Before long, he'd unknowingly let his imagination carry him away and his hands were instantly replaced with Blaine's. He imagined Blaine's fingers being the ones running through his wet hair and gently massaging his scalp before moving down to the base of his neck.

Kurt soon snapped back to reality and realized Blaine wasn't there with him, and faced the harsh reality that there was a good chance he never would be. After rinsing out the last bit of shampoo, he squeezed a decent amount of conditioner in his palm before running his hands through his hair once again. He stood under the water for no less than five minutes and allowed the conditioner to soak into his thick hair before sticking his head back under the stream of water to rinse out the last bit. He grabbed his soap and began running it all over his body before capping it and placing it back in the shower caddy hanging behind him. Once finished, he was unwilling to leave and decided to stay in the shower for an additional fifteen minutes, letting his mind wander to what his tasks for the day entailed. As always, he would board flight 7:40 to Los Angeles and arrive at the all too familiar airport. However, he didn't give much thought to his first flight of the day, instead choosing to focus on the flight back to New York later that day. The flight where he could possibly see Blaine again.

Part of him couldn't help but to think Blaine was just being flirty, not really serious when he mentioned changing his flight times in order to be on the same flight as Kurt. However, a larger part of him thought Blaine might have actually meant what he said. The way Blaine looked at him while saying those words and the tone of his voice had shown nothing but complete sincerity. Changing flight times was often tricky for people the first time it was done, but he figured Blaine had gone through it many times before, making

the task a little easier to handle. The airlines were cooperative for the most part and tried to accommodate to every passenger's needs. It wouldn't be impossible for Blaine to catch the 12:00 flight back to New York instead of the flight he normally took, nor would it be illogical. Catching a 12:00 flight would put him in New York around 8:45—given the time differences—but still allow him to take care of any last minute business he need to while still in L.A.

Kurt turned the water off, telling himself that the only way he'd find out which flight Blaine had decided to take was if he actually made it to work. He grabbed the towel and tied it around his waist before stepping out onto the cold tile floor. He walked towards the sink and pulled out his toothbrush, applying toothpaste to the end and capping the tube. As soon as his lips touched the hard plastic, he heard his phone ringing in the other room. Groaning, he pulled the toothbrush out of his mouth and sat it down before retrieving his phone from his nightstand. He picked it up to see a too-familiar name lit up on the screen, grumbling as he answered it.

"Hello?" he said, a little too bitterly.

"Whoa there, dude. Can you be a little nicer to your brother?" Finn teased.

"Sorry. I just didn't get much sleep," Kurt replied with a yawn.

"Everything alright?" he asked, concerned for his step-brother.

"Yeah. I just have a lot on my mind is all." Kurt paused, wondering what reason Finn could possibly have for calling him so early in the morning. "Is everything okay with you? It's a little early for a morning chitchat." Kurt walked to his dresser and pulled the top drawer open, eyeing a pair of boxers before pulling them out.

"Yeah. Nothing's wrong, but Rachel's in labor. We just brought her in about twenty minutes ago. I thought you might want to know, with it being your first niece and all," Finn's voice held a mix of emotions between nervousness and excitement.

"Really?" Kurt's bitter attitude was immediately washed away at the sound of Finn's words. "That's great! How's she doing?"

"She's doing well. A little nervous and not sure what to expect, but that's normal. I can't believe she's finally coming. Our little Elizabeth." Kurt could almost see the smile spreading across Finn's face.

Kurt nestled his phone between his ear and shoulder as he removed his towel and pulled on his boxers. "I wish I could be there. Tell Rachel I said hi. And be sure to send me a picture of her as soon as she's here. I want to know everything."

"I will. Rachel will insist on it." Kurt slipped his undershirt over his head, grunting as he struggled to put it on. *"Are you ok, dude?"* Finn asked curiously.

"What? Oh, yeah. I'm fine. I'm just getting ready for work." He managed to straighten out his shirt before taking his pants off of their hanger and sliding his foot through the pant leg.

"Do you want me to let you go?" Finn offered.

"No, you don't have to, but you should probably get back to Rachel. You should be there for her. She's going to need you," Kurt pointed out as he slipped his arms through his white button up shirt, pushing each button through it's corresponding whole.

"Oh. Right. Rachel. The baby. I'll call you the minute Elizabeth is in our arms."

"Thanks, Finn. I'll talk to you later!"

"Bye, Kurt."

Kurt pressed end and threw his phone on the bed before returning to his bathroom and finally brushing his teeth. After walking back into his bedroom, he took notice of the time. 5:15. He still had half an hour before he had to leave, and absolutely nothing to do apart from putting on his tie and jacket, leaving his mind plenty of time to wander back to Blaine. He doubted Blaine would be up at that time, seeing as it was only 2:15 AM in California, but a small part of him hoped he was still on Blaine's mind, whether that be in his conscious thoughts or subconscious dreams.

The next half hour drug on as he fixed himself a cup of coffee and ate a bowl of cereal while browsing through the New York Times' art section. He liked the arts section the best because it's where he found the most beauty amongst all of the black and white. The stories held multiple meanings, allowing him to interpret the words in the way he chose to do so. They didn't just hold another statistic or the latest political drama. What the stories expressed was something a little more closely related to life and the wonders behind it. He could look at each article and see real people. He could see someone like himself,

living their dream whether it be musically, artistically, theatrically, etc. He could feel the emotions of the writer and pick up on the excitement they put into the article.

By the time he reached the past page of the Arts section, he'd taken in the last drop of coffee. After rinsing out the mug, he tightened his tie and pulled on his coat while walking over to pull his hat off of the hook by the door. He took one last look around his apartment before he grabbed his phone, keys and wallet off of the table and happily walked through the door, knowing that there was the possibility he would be seeing Blaine in a little over seven hours.

Chapter Two

After landing at LAX, Kurt adjusted his tie and hopped off of the plane, more nervous than he'd been in a while. He was embarrassed by the fact that he was more aware of his surroundings than usual. Every week he stopped to get a bite to eat before flying back to New York, ignoring all of the eager tourists, businessmen and women, and families scurrying around, just trying to move past them without seeming too annoyed. Today, however, was different. Kurt kept his head held high and made eye contact with every person possible. He secretly hoped one of the many faces in the crowd would turn out to be Blaine. He didn't know what he'd say to him if he *did* happen to run into him, but he looked anyway.

By the time he made his way to order, he hadn't seen a single person even resembling the well-dressed man he'd been subtly looking for. He pulled out his wallet to pay the man behind the counter before he grabbed his food and sat down at one of the small, round tables nearest to him, scarfing down his sandwich as quickly as he was able to, careful not to get anything on his uniform. Not even five minutes later, he resumed his standing position and began making his way towards the terminal, assuring himself that Blaine could still be somewhere inside the crowded airport.

Kurt went through his usual routine, urging the next hour of the day to go by much quicker than it had been. He wasn't able to think about how apprehensive he was to see the identities of the upcoming passengers because from the minute he stepped onto the plane, he was immediately whisked away to help clear out the trash and help with the luggage. It wasn't until the passengers were beginning to board that he was able to take his place by the door, greeting each person as they stepped inside and took their seat. He kindly smiled at each person as they walked by, waiting for the one man who would make his smile significantly less forced. The one person he would be genuinely happy to see, the one who would make it impossible to erase the smile that so willingly spread across his face even if he were to try.

The flow of passengers began to slow before stopping altogether, and Kurt felt his heart sink to the bottom of his stomach when he realized Blaine had never boarded the plane. *He could still show up. He might be running a little late*, he tried to convince himself. He glanced at his watch, noting that the plane was to take off in a little more than five minutes, giving Blaine very little time to walk through the door. When the time approached 11:55, he reluctantly closed up the plane and scurried to the back of the cabin, pulling the curtain closed behind him. Each intake of oxygen felt like a thousand needles hitting the back of his throat, and he could feel his unsteady breath struggling to make it into his lungs. He was aware of the tremble in his voice as he greeted the last few passengers and knew it'd only get worse if he were to try to speak for a longer period of time. Not trusting his voice to make it through the full speech, he flipped the switch for

the automatic, pre-recorded safety message and sat down in the seat behind him, allowing his shaky legs to rest. He took a deep breath to try to steady himself before he had to go back out.

He's just a stranger. I'm just me. There was no reason for him to want to change his flight just for me. He was mortified that he even considered Blaine would want to see him again, even if it were just for a five hour flight to LA and back. He felt stupid for allowing Blaine to become so heavily engraved into every thought he'd had the past weekend. Blaine had just been a flirty passenger who felt the need to be exceptionally kind to Kurt after nearly knocking him into the wall. Kurt didn't know why he had gotten so caught up on Blaine. He'd never needed someone in his life before, even when he had a man who actually wanted to be there by his side through everything. He had always been happy living alone and following his own schedule without having to worry about someone else, so why did he feel sick to his stomach over losing something he never even had in the first place.

When he heard the speakers go silent, he slowly stood up and pushed the curtain aside, stepping out into the isle to go through all of the necessary precautions. He was almost to the back again when a deep voice broke through the silence. He turned around and was immediately face to face with the bitter man from before. The minute the man recognized him, he smirked at Kurt and broke eye contact. "I'd like my coffee again. This time, please bring it a tad quicker than you managed to the other day." He pulled out a newspaper out of his briefcase and began to read it, waiting for Kurt to walk away.

"Great," Kurt mumbled, not caring if the man heard him or not. *I don't get Blaine, but I get this man again.* He made his way towards the back, mentally preparing himself for what he believed would be one of the worst flights of his life.

The next couple of days were proving to be some of the hardest Kurt had experienced since his high school days of constantly being slushied, turned down for every solo he wanted, being thrown into dumpsters, and shoved into lockers. He wasn't physically being hurt, of course, but the emotional pain he was going through was enough to bring his mind back to his past. He was emotionally distraught in high school as well—first crushing on his straight classmate who later turned out to be his brother, and then going through a series of undesirable events such as his father landing in the hospital after a heart attack and being verbally abused by McKinley High's hefty football player. High school wasn't a time he liked to look back on. It was a time he'd tried to move past and forget, and for the most part, it was working. He had a great job and lived in a city with acceptance. It was everything he'd wanted for his life, if not more.

However, Kurt couldn't help but to think about what had happened in the past. He knew those days were over, and he was finally able to be himself without the threat of being beat up, or even worse, killed. Kurt knew he was physically safer in the city that never slept, but he suddenly felt like he wasn't *emotionally* safer. Seeing Blaine, getting so involved with the *idea* of Blaine, made him realize that he was missing out on experiences he thought he didn't even want. He was missing out on dating while he was young; while life was still care-free and he didn't have to worry as much about being a responsible adult. He was aware that he was growing up and growing up quick, but he still held on to the hope that he'd be able to at least fulfill some of the events on his bucket list before he was too old to do so. He wanted to experience life while he was young, yet he'd been closing himself off from experiencing it with someone else. Someone who *mattered* to him.

Kurt knew he had to move on past Blaine. Was he attracted to Blaine? Yes. Had he been imagining a life with Blaine? Yes. But Kurt knew that a life with Blaine just wasn't in his future. Although he couldn't be with Blaine and the two of them couldn't grow old together, meeting Blaine had helped him to realize that he actually *did* want someone in his life. He wanted someone to come home to, someone to take out to the movies or a nice dinner, or just someone to take a walk with. Kurt simply wanted a boyfriend. His problem, though, came with *where* he had always picked up a guy. He always settled for what was easy, not what would give him a quality man. What was easy was picking up a guy at a gay bar who was already half drunk, getting a couple more drinks in him, and then taking him home, knowing the guy would hardly remember the night come morning. He was never sexually involved with any of them men he'd met, partially because they tended to pass out as soon as they made it home, though that wasn't always the reason Kurt had put a stop to any advances they may have made. Every time one of them would lean in for a kiss or their hands would wander to uncomfortable territory, Kurt's dad popped into the back of his mind. He'd remember the conversation he had with his dad during his junior year of high school. He didn't want his first time with a guy to be a one night stand. Call him a silly romantic, but he wanted it to mean something. He didn't want to have sex. He wanted to *make love*.

Due to the lack of serious relationships in Kurt's life, he found it difficult to approach a sober man, always afraid of being rejected when he couldn't hide behind a mask of alcohol. There was a reason he'd never been in a relationship. He was socially awkward at the most inconvenient times and as soon as he'd get the courage to make a move, he'd back out. On multiple occasions, he'd tried convincing himself that it just wasn't the right time in his life or the right person. When the right man came along, he would just *know*. He would want something more than one night with the person. He would want something like what he could picture with Blaine.

Kurt could picture a future with Blaine. That was predictable and what he expected to see running through his mind. What he *didn't* expect to see was the man he'd crashed into as he turned the corner that following Friday morning, sending his cup of coffee in the air and his bag to the ground.

"Oh. Excuse me. I'm so-" Kurt heard a familiar voice and immediately looked up, just as a pair of warm, hazel eyes gazed into his. Once again, Kurt found himself lost in the swirl of caramel before finally snapping out of the trance he was in. "Kurt." Blaine muttered, his voice barely above a whisper, but so velvety that Kurt immediately felt like he could melt into a puddle at any given moment. "Hi." He exhaled before showing the slightest hint of a smile.

"H-Hi," Kurt stuttered, still in shock over seeing Blaine again just when he'd convinced himself he never would. "You remembered my name." He could feel his cheeks start to flush and immediately looked down at his coffee-stained sleeve. Blaine followed his gaze and walked a few feet to retrieve a handful of napkins before returning to Kurt's side.

"Mind if I..." he trailed off, gesturing to Kurt's sleeve.

"N-no." Kurt cursed himself for not being able to form a full, coherent sentence. Any rational thought he had immediately disappeared as Blaine gently took Kurt's hand in his, pulling his arm closer and dabbing at the navy blue sleeve with his free hand. He could feel Blaine's blood pounding through the veins in his hand as they rested against Kurt's palm and his warm skin felt like satin against Kurt's. It took everything he had not to curve his fingers around Blaine's hand any further and give it a tight squeeze. Blaine let the coffee soak a bit before lifting the napkin up, making a point not to rub anything in.

"There. All better," he said, tossing the coffee-soaked napkins into the trashcan.

"Thank you."

"It's nothing. You get used to it after flying for so long. I can't even begin to tell you how many times I've had a coffee mishap due to the terrible turbulence on the plane," he laughed. "Besides, it was kind of my fault your coffee ended up all over you in the first place."

"It wasn't your fault. I wasn't watching where I was going. Maybe I should start paying more attention to my surroundings and not so much the thoughts screaming at me inside my head."

"What were you thinking about that had you so distracted from reality?"

You.

"Just...work, mainly. Thinking about what I have to get done in a few minutes," he lied.

"Do you need to go right now, or can I buy you another coffee?" Blaine looked hopeful as he suggested spending more time with the adorable flight attendant, and Kurt almost thought he could sense that Blaine wanted to talk to him more, not that he was just being polite after nearly knocking him over for a second time.

Kurt looked away shyly before turning his focus back to Blaine. "I have a few minutes, but you really don't have to buy me another coffee. I can get free coffee on the plane anyway."

"I want to." Blaine smiled and picked up Kurt's bag before walking past him. "You coming?" he asked, pausing to look back at the boy he was waiting on, hoping he'd follow him to the coffee stand.

"You know, you should really work on where *you're* going, Mr. Anderson. That's the second time you've smacked into me," Kurt joked when he caught up to Blaine. He actually surprised himself when the words flowed so easily out of his mouth. Was he really flirting with Blaine? The same Blaine he'd spent the past week thinking about?

"You remembered my name too, I see," Blaine pointed out.

"Of course. I had to for liability purposes. If I had been severely injured, I was going to have my lawyer get in contact with you." Kurt reached out for his bag, but Blaine pulled his hand farther away, just out of Kurt's reach.

"I'll have you know that I'm not usually this bad about colliding with people. Something must be forcing us together, Kurt. What could that possibly be?"

Kurt was silent, not knowing how to answer Blaine's shamelessly flirty question. "I think you're just a klutz," he finally replied, "and you just don't want me to think you are. You'd rather I believe you're some super poised businessman, but you already blew your cover, Blaine. I've caught you now."

They finally reached the coffee stand, taking note of the long line. Blaine hesitantly turned to Kurt and asked, "Is this line too long? I don't know when you need to get back, but this will probably take at least twenty minutes to get through."

"I'm fine. I have plenty of time. I show up to work early for a reason." He stepped into line behind a plump old lady with two small children, most likely her grandchildren. The young girl was tugging on her purse, begging for attention as her blonde curls bounced up and down, while the little boy was spinning in circles as the lady tried to get him to calm down and move closer to her.

"For the record, I could never forget your name, Mr. Kurt Hummel, steward of flight 740 to Los Angeles, California," Blaine interrupted Kurt's focus on the family before him.

"O-Oh?" he inquired.

"Um, I know this may seem creepy, but...." He trailed off and turned his gaze towards the trio Kurt had been starting at. "I've actually been thinking about you this past week."

Kurt's heart sped up in his chest, beating so fast he felt like it was going to take off without him. Blaine had just admitted that he'd been thinking about Kurt, and even if it wasn't as much as Kurt was thinking about him, he was still happy. Some part of him felt relieved that he may not have made up the entire attraction between the two of them in his head after all.

"Kurt?" Blaine waved a hand in front of his face, trying to get his attention.

"What? Oh. S-sorry," Kurt apologized.

"Gosh, no. I'm sorry. Crap. I shouldn't have told you that. You probably think I'm some psycho stalker and now I'm going to show up on the same flight as you because I switched my flight times and it's going to be awkward and you're eventually going to ask for a restraining order and now you probably think I'm into you and you're probably not even gay and-"

"Blaine!" Kurt cut him off as he placed a hand on his upper arm, forcing Blaine to turn towards him. "You're rambling." One little laugh out of Kurt's mouth was all it took for him to feel Blaine relax beneath his touch. "For the record, I've been thinking about you too. And I *am* gay, Blaine. I thought at least that much was obvious."

"Oh." Now it was Blaine's turn to be at a loss for words.

"Did you really change your flight times?" Kurt questioned as they moved forward in line.

"Um, yeah. Sorry if that is weird. I just mentioned it and you seemed all for it. Gosh, I'm probably messing everything up," Blaine looked away again, but not before Kurt could see his pink cheeks.

"It's not weird, Blaine. I'm-I'm glad. But...why weren't you on the plane last Monday?"

"I wasn't able to get my flight changed in time. Believe me when I say I tried as hard as I ever have. I did everything I could, but they were booked and I wasn't able to obtain a ticket."

"Well, you certainly know how to surprise me, you know. Here I was all week thinking I made everything up in my head and you were just being flirty, not actually wanting to have such an amazing flight attendant as moi."

Blaine chuckled. "And what makes you think you were better than any of my previous flight attendants?"

"Because I'm more attractive than them, I have a much better personality, and if you get on my good side, I can sneak you an extra cookie or two," he winked.

"I'll have to keep that in mind. Tell me, am I on your good side right now? Can I get an extra cookie on this next flight?"

"I can't make any promises. I don't know you that well yet, Blaine. We'll just have to see how well you impress me during these next five minutes." They approached the front of the line and Kurt turned to the girl behind the counter, missing the look on Blaine's face as his mouth remained gaping open. "I'll have the grande non-fat mocha, please."

"Is that all for you?" the lady asked as she wrote Kurt's order on the side of a cup with a black sharpie.

"Um, no." Blaine cut in, moving closer to the counter and incidentally, also closer to Kurt's side. Kurt didn't miss the way Blaine's arm subtly brushed against his own and the smell of his cologne on his dry-cleaned suit. "It's on me. I'll have a medium drip, please."

The girl placed the two cups on the counter beside her before ringing up their order. "That will be \$8.25." Blaine pulled out a few bills and a quarter and handed them to her before moving off to the side. Kurt followed and sat down at the small table closest to the counter.

"Thank you. You really didn't have to buy me another coffee."

"Hey, if I'm going to get that extra cookie, I need to do everything I can to make you believe I deserve it."
He pulled out a chair and sat down across from Kurt.

"Oh, I think you've already earned yourself that extra cookie just by being your charming self."

"You think I'm charming?" Blaine grinned. "Like, as in, *Prince Charming*?"

Kurt buried his face in his hands. "Please tell me you're not some twenty...." He drew out the last word

"Six," Blaine supplied.

"Twenty-six year old man who's addicted to Disney movies."

"They're classics, Kurt. How could you *not* like them? I mean, Prince Charming is attractive even in cartoon form, the music is greater than anything you'll hear on the radio now days, and don't even get me started on how much I cry every time I watch Bambi."

"How bad do you want that cookie, Blaine?" Kurt asked in a dull voice, though clearly amused by Blaine's slight obsession with Disney.

"My mouth is shut." Blaine made the motion of locking his mouth and throwing an imaginary key over his shoulder as their orders were placed on the counter.

"I've got them," Kurt offered, standing up and quickly retrieving their drinks before sitting back down.

"Thank you," Blaine said as Kurt handed him a cup. "So, Kurt, tell me something about yourself. How old are you?"

"I'm twenty-six as well."

"Good. This is going well."

"Is it?" Kurt laughed.

"Yes, it is. So, Kurt, twenty-six year old flight attendant of New York, when do you have to return to your job?" Blaine stirred a packet of sugar into his coffee before licking the stick and placing the lid back on.

Kurt checked his watch. "Actually, I should probably head back now. And you probably need to go through security pretty soon so you can get everything checked in." He stood up, extending his hand out to Blaine. "This was nice, though. Thank you."

Blaine took Kurt's hand. "You're welcome. I had a good time, even if it *was* too short for my preference." They held hands a few seconds longer than needed, staring into each other's eyes as if everything going unsaid was being transferred between them before Kurt released Blaine's hand and returned his arm to his side.

"I'll see you on the plane?" Kurt picked up his bag and threw the strap over his shoulder.

"Yes, you will."

Kurt smiled at Blaine once more before turning around and walking away. He was suddenly much more excited about the upcoming flight than he'd been an hour earlier.

It shouldn't have been a shock to Kurt that Blaine was the first passenger to step foot onto the plane, but he was pleasantly surprised nonetheless. He brought with him a black, leather briefcase and had taken off his suit jacket and slung it over his arm in the time since Kurt had left him. For the first time, Kurt was able to see just how toned Blaine really was. The sleeves of his baby blue button up shirt fit snugly around the contour of the muscles in his upper arms and Kurt found himself paying a little too much attention to the attractive man before him. He cleared his throat before eagerly putting on a smile. "Hello. Welcome aboard," he said professionally, moving aside to make room for Blaine to squeeze by him. "Do you need help finding your seat?"

Blaine grinned and looked down at his ticket, pretending to be confused. Kurt knew there was no way he would have any problem finding his seat, seeing as he was basically a pro at flying, but went through the customary questions anyway. Blaine scrunched his nose up a bit in a way the Kurt found quite cute, cuter than he normally would on anyone above the age of six. "Actually, I think I might. I'm new to this flight. Usually I fly at a later time, but you see, there were some problems with my other flight. Would you mind helping me find my seat?"

Blaine flashed a smile at Kurt and Kurt moved closer, glancing over his shoulder as if he were checking to see which seat the ticket belonged to. To keep up the pretense that he was in fact helping his first passenger out, he reached around and grabbed the ticket from his hand, not missing the slight touch between their fingers as Blaine handed over the slip of paper. "Seat 16A. That's near the back. Just follow me and we'll get you settled in." He took a step away from Blaine and it wasn't long until the businessman began to follow him down the aisle towards the back of the cabin. Kurt stopped in the second to last row and moved aside to allow Blaine to slide into the seat. "Here we are. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

Blaine swallowed the words that wanted to come out of his mouth and instead, muttered a simple "Thank you." He sat down in the semi-comfortable chair and placed his briefcase on his lap. "This will be all."

Kurt tried to hide his disappointment, but new Blaine was just trying to be professional about the entire situation. He knew it would be a bad idea if either of their bosses realized they knew each other outside of work, especially if they had gone so far as flirting on their coffee date. Was it a date? They went because they wanted to. They flirted a little. They got to know each other. Blaine paid, even if he insisted it was just because he'd spilt Kurt's first cup. It kind of *seemed* like a date. Kurt turned his thoughts back to the job he was supposed to be doing. "Can I put your carry-on up for you, or do you need it?"

Blaine *did* need his briefcase if he planned on getting any work done during the nearly six hour flight to L.A., but he nodded and handed it over anyway, knowing that when he did need it again, Kurt would have reason to come back to help him out. Blaine looked to his side when Kurt lifted the bag into the overhead compartment and noticed the little patch of pale skin that emerged at Kurt's waist as he stretched his arms high over his head. He tore his focus away from the boy before he was caught and Kurt soon lowered his hands again, placing his left hand on the seat in front of Blaine.

Blaine and Kurt both felt nervous, not sure exactly how to act around one another or what to say. Kurt had tried coming up with something that wouldn't seem too forward or flirty, but every time he looked at Blaine, all he could think about was how much he liked him. "Kurt," Blaine started, but paused when he heard hushed murmurs coming from behind Kurt. He sighed before pointing and Kurt spun around to look at the passengers that were beginning to board. "I guess you should do your job now."

Kurt gave him a warm smile, deciding to be risky and place a hand on top of the one Blaine was resting in his lap. "Let me know if you need *anything*, okay?" Blaine couldn't hold back the laugh that escaped through his lips. "It's my job," Kurt clarified.

"Mhm." Blaine didn't buy it. "Well, then go do your job. I'm not going anywhere, Sir, and I would like my coffee as soon as possible," he joked, acting like one of the many needy and demanding passengers Kurt despised. "I was also promised a few cookies."

Kurt rolled his eyes before removing his hand and fixing his jacket. "I'll have to have a word with whoever promised you. We aren't supposed to give out more than one to each passenger."

"Go do your job, Mr. Hummel." Blaine turned away and grabbed the newspaper in front of him, opening it up to begin reading the arts section as if he no longer wanted to be in Kurt's presence. After staring at Blaine for a few minutes, Kurt turned around and gave the attention needed to the oncoming passengers, politely welcoming them to the flight and helping them out when the occasional person asked for help. A few times he'd glance back at Blaine, finding him studying the newspaper intently, noticing how his brow furrowed when, Kurt assumed, he read something he disagreed with. Blaine didn't look up at him once during the entire fifteen minutes, at least not to Kurt's knowledge, but he found Blaine's deep concentration to be a desirable characteristic.

The flight took off at its usual time, 7:35 AM, and everything had been going smoothly. Kurt remained at the back of the cabin for the majority of the time, occasionally making his way down the aisle to mak

e sure everyone was satisfied with the flight. When he would reach Blaine, he'd simply smile and ask if there was anything he needed, in which Blaine would reply with a quiet "no" before mirroring the smile spread across Kurt's face.

It was around 8:15 when Kurt decided he had made Blaine wait long enough for his cookie—or two—and slowly wheeled the cart out of the back of the plane and into the cabin full of eager passengers. Blaine turned around when he heard the creaky wheels of the metal cart and his face lit up when he noticed the tray of cookies on top. Kurt rolled his eyes when Blaine made eye contact and handed the last row of passengers their cookie before approaching Blaine.

"Hello, Sir. May I offer you a cookie today?" Kurt asked as he placed a cookie on a small, paper plate.

"Yes, please," Blaine replied as he watched Kurt place an extra cookie on top.

"Here. I give my favorite passengers an extra little treat. Don't tell the others. They'll be jealous." Kurt passed the plate to Blaine and pushed the cart slightly forward.

"Well, thank you, Sir. I appreciate it." Blaine grinned as he bit into one of the cookies. "Mmm. You make these?" he asked with his mouth still full.

"Not big on manners are we, Mr. Businessman?" Kurt joked.

Blaine swallowed before answering. "Sorry. Normally I am. Cookies are my weakness."

"I'll have to keep that in mind. And sorry to disappoint you, but, no. I didn't make these."

"Can you cook?" Blaine asked.

"Maybe you'll find out someday." Before Blaine had time to make any sort of snappy comeback, a passenger behind Kurt cleared her throat and asked for a cookie. Kurt reluctantly turned away from Blaine and attended to the rest of the passengers.

The next few hours went by too fast for Kurt's liking. He was able to have a few short interactions with Blaine, but was careful not to draw their conversation out any more than necessary in case someone were to become suspicious. Before he knew it, he was ushering each person out of the plane, thanking them for choosing American Airlines. Kurt looked up to see his last passenger making his way towards the front of the plane.

"Thank you for flying with me." Kurt altered his wording slightly. "I hope you'll choose American Airlines again."

"I think I will." Blaine stuck his hand out to shake Kurt's. As Kurt's palm met Blaine's, he felt a small slip of paper preventing their skin from touching. As Blaine let go, he slipped the paper into Kurt's palm, smiling and walking out of the plane. Kurt watched him walk away, and as soon as he was out of sight, he looked down at the paper in his hands and began to unfold it. He saw two words written neatly on the paper, followed by 10 numbers.

Call Me.

Chapter Three

Between getting ready for his flight back to New York, as well as the flight itself, it was 9:45 that night before Kurt was able to find time to even think about calling Blaine. He'd considered calling him while he picked through his salad at lunch earlier in the day before finally deciding that giving Blaine some time to get out of the airport and back to his hotel would be a better idea.

He approached his car, flinging the door open as he tore off his hat and aimlessly threw it somewhere in the back before sitting down in the driver's seat. After loosening his tie, he searched in the pocket of his pants for the little slip of paper that meant more to him than it should've. After removing his hand, sans the slip of paper, he started to get worried, thinking he'd somehow allowed the little piece of paper to slip out of his pocket without his knowledge. He frantically looked around him—on the seat, on the floor, between the seat and the console, on the ground outside of the car—before reaching into his other pocket, only to discover the same fate. After calming himself down enough to think a bit more clearly, he felt a wave of relief wash over him as he stuck his hand in his jacket pocket, remembering he'd moved it there for safer keeping. He removed the slip of paper and unfolded it, staring at the numbers on the paper as he reached over and grabbed his phone. He could feel his hands shaking and the butterflies in his stomach had suddenly become quite active. He took a deep breath as he began dialing the number and slowly raised the phone to his ear after pressing send. It rang a few times before a familiar voice broke through on the other line.

"Hello?" Blaine asked in an inquisitive tone.

Once Kurt realized Blaine didn't have a clue who the unknown number that showed up on his phone belong to, he quickly spoke up. "Hi, it's Kurt."

"Oh, Kurt," Blaine instantly sounded a bit more enthusiastic about taking the call.

"Sorry if this is a bad time. I didn't know how long I was supposed to wait before calling..." he trailed off.

"No, It's not a bad time. I'm...I'm actually glad you called."

Kurt wasn't sure what to say. He was never one to be flirty or even one to carry on a conversation for very long. That was the good thing about being with someone without the intention of having them around for very long. If things got awkward or he said the wrong thing and screwed up, it wasn't a big deal. The guy

was already going to be out of his life anyway, he'd just sped up the process. But with Blaine, Kurt was scared to say the wrong thing. He was scared that if Blaine got to know him, he wouldn't be what Blaine wanted, and the last thing Kurt wanted to do was screw things up with Blaine.

"You were?" Kurt finally said.

"Yeah. Your voice...it's...it's nice. I like hearing it." Blaine was glad Kurt wasn't there to see him blush, but little did he know that Kurt's face was just as red. *"Sorry, I'm probably messing this up again."*

"No," Kurt said quickly, "you're not."

"Promise?" Blaine sounded genuinely concerned.

"I promise," Kurt assured him. "So what's on your agenda at 6:45 every Friday night?"

"Finally getting some dinner. There's this amazing little place near my hotel that I try to eat at whenever I get the time. You have to try it sometime."

"Unfortunately, I don't have the time to leave the airport. I've been flying to L.A. and back for almost five months now and haven't once gotten out to see the city."

"It's not much to see. There's a lot of traffic and the streets are trashed, but some of the little shops are pretty cool. Maybe I'll have to take you sometime," Blaine suggested.

As Kurt began fiddling with the piece of paper in his hands, the edges were starting to become crinkled. He sat the paper down in the passenger's seat, trying to ignore the nervous feeling in the pit of his stomach at the thought of exploring the city with Blaine by his side. "I'd really like that."

"Mmmmm, this is so good, Kurt. I'm telling you! They have the best chicken here," Blaine's voice practically melted through the phone.

Kurt laughed. "Are you talking to me on the phone and eating simultaneously, Blaine?"

Blaine paused for a few seconds to finish chewing. *"Maybe."* He couldn't help but to smile every time he heard Kurt's high-pitched laugh.

"I can let you go, you know. I wouldn't want to interrupt your love affair with your meal."

"It's not a love affair. I just happen to like it quite a bit."

"Are you at least eating by yourself? I'd hate to see you subject others to your make-out sessions."

"They're not make-out sessions." Blaine rolled his eyes despite the fact that Kurt couldn't see. *"But, yes. I'm alone."*

Kurt wasn't convinced. "Blaine, are you lying to me?"

"Plus three people from my office," he mumbled.

"Blaine!" Kurt practically shouted.

"Sorry, sorry! I'll step away from the table. Will that make you feel better?" Kurt heard a chair sliding across the floor and a quiet "excuse me."

"A little. Although I can just hang up and call back later," he offered.

"No. I'm already on my way outside. Talk to me." There was a sound of a door closing and the voices on the other line were silenced, apart from Blaine's.

"Ok, Blaine. Were you at a business dinner?"

"No, just a few guys from the office, like I said before. We go out to eat quite a bit when we're in L.A. Make fun of the boss, gossip about work, the usual."

"Any of these guys interested in you?" Kurt asked curiously.

"Why do you ask?"

"No reason."

"Mhm." Blaine murmured, knowing Kurt had some kind of hidden agenda. *"Actually, all of them are. They've all asked me out on numerous occasions. I even made out with two and had sex with one. It was great sex too. Hot. And in the back of a taxi."*

Kurt didn't pick up on the sarcasm that laced through Blaine's voice? "Really?" His heart dropped.

"No, Kurt. They're all straight," Blaine chuckled. *"Two of them are even married and one has a son on the way. You don't have to worry about them."*

"Who said I was worried?"

"You weren't?"

"You said I didn't have a reason to be." He heard Blaine exhale on the other line.

"Kurt, can I take you out next week?" Blaine said rather bluntly.

Kurt was speechless, not sure if he even heard Blaine correctly. That was the last thing he expected to hear during their first phone call, and it took everything he had not to scream "yes." Instead, he steadied his breath before asking for clarification, worried he'd misinterpreted Blaine's words. "What?"

"I want to see you, Kurt, away from the plane and the airport. Can...can we maybe go out for dinner or something when I get back?"

"Yes, under one condition," Kurt agreed.

"What would that be?" Blaine asked cautiously.

"I get to plan the entire night. You don't get to ask questions about where we're going or what we're doing. All you get to do is tell me when you're free, and I'll do the rest."

He could hear Blaine laughing on the other line. *"Deal. Would you be free on Tuesday night?"*

"I think I can work something out."

"Great. What time?"

Kurt paused for a minute while he thought about the plan already working itself out inside of his head. He already had a pretty good idea what he wanted to do and where he wanted to take Blaine, but he knew he'd have time during the weekend to work out the minute details. "You know the Starbucks on the corner of Broadway and Reade Street?"

"Yeah, I've been there a few times."

"Great. Meet me there around 7:00? Be sure to have a light dinner beforehand."

"Are we going to have a coffee date?"

"No, that's just a good meeting place. Now no more questions, okay? This is all up to me." At that moment, Kurt heard his phone beep, signaling he had an incoming call. He quickly removed his phone from his ear to see the Finn's name flashing across his screen. "Blaine, I hate to go, but my brother's calling me." He sighed.

"Oh, ok. That's fine. Can I call you tomorrow?" Blaine asked, and Kurt picked up on the disappointment in his voice.

Kurt would have to talk to Finn about bad timing later on. He wished more than anything that he could just sit on the phone with Blaine for the rest of the night. "Absolutely. Please do."

"Great. I'll talk to you sometime tomorrow night then," Blaine confirmed. *"Goodbye, Kurt."*

"Bye, Blaine."

After hearing the line go dead, he pushed send and took the Finn's call. "Hello?"

"She's here!" Finn said in an overly-excited manner.

"What?" Kurt suddenly felt a little less bitter about having to hang up on Blaine. "Elizabeth?"

"Yes! Kurt, I'm scared. She's so little. What if I hurt her?"

"Calm down, Finn. You'll be fine. Tell me about her!"

"Well, she has Rachel's dark hair. Mom says she has my eyes. She was a little over seven pounds. The doctors say she's healthy and that the delivery went well and there weren't any major concerns which is good, I guess. I just can't believe she's finally here."

"I can't either. Tell Rachel I'm on the first flight to Ohio. I'll be there by tomorrow morning, okay?"

"Dude, you're coming here? Isn't that kind of hard with your job?"

"No. I have tomorrow off and I'll just ask for Sunday and Monday off as well. I never miss flights, so they shouldn't give me any trouble. I'm not going to miss this. I can't wait to see her. Just wait until her Uncle Kurt gets to spoil her crazy!"

"You'll be her favorite person."

"That's the plan," Kurt laughed.

"Look, I have to go. Rachel's awake and I guess she wants to see if she can hold the baby now. I'll just talk to you when you get here, I guess. Are you going to need a ride from the airport? I can come get you or get mom or dad to pick you up."

"I'll just take a cab. You guys stay at the hospital and be there with Rachel and Elizabeth. I'll be fine."

"Alright. Talk to you tomorrow, Kurt."

"Bye, Finn."

Kurt pressed end and tossed his phone onto the passenger's seat next to Blaine's phone number. He didn't know how his life had suddenly become so great, but with Blaine and Elizabeth now in the picture, he finally felt like he had everything he ever wanted.

Kurt stepped through the hospital doors the next morning after catching the earliest flight from New York to Ohio. He was eager not only to see his new niece, but also his family. Living in New York limited the time he was able to spend with the ones he loved, and he made sure every little bit of time he spent with them was time well-spent. With a new addition to their happy family, Kurt was determined to make it

back to Ohio more often than he had in the past couple of years. He didn't know if he would ever have children of his own, and there was no way he was going to miss out on watching Elizabeth grow up.

With the help of a few nurses, he managed to find his way to Rachel's room with ease. After quietly knocking a few times to make sure it was ok for him to come in, he cracked the door open just enough to squeeze through. The first thing he noticed was the bundle of joy wrapped up in blankets and nestled in Rachel's arms. Finn sat next to her on the bed and Kurt smiled at the sight of the young family.

"Hey," he whispered, careful not to wake up the sleeping baby.

"Hey, Kurt," Rachel replied, not bothering to keep her voice quiet. "Elizabeth's been waiting for you."

"She's excited to see her uncle." Kurt looked to his right to see Burt and Carole sitting on the couch in the corner of the room.

"Do you want to hold her?" Finn offered.

"Can I?" Kurt moved forward and held out his arms as Rachel slowly lowered Elizabeth into his arms. He held on tight and smiled as he looked down at her. She had the longest, most beautiful eyelashes he'd ever seen on a baby, and the hair on top of her head was as dark as he'd imagined. He lifted up his free hand to run his fingers along her tiny hand and she immediately wrapped her fragile fingers around his. He couldn't stop looking at her. Everything wrong in the world seemed to disappear when he looked at the perfect little girl in his arms. As soon as she was placed in his arms, he knew he'd fallen in love with her. Kurt knew there was no way he could love anything as much as the sweet baby, so innocent of all the bad in the world. "She's beautiful," he finally said.

"Isn't she? I can't believe I finally got to look at her after all of these months of waiting." Rachel sighed and started at her daughter snuggled tightly in her brother-in-law's arms.

"October fourteenth. The day your lives both changed for good," Kurt laughed. "No more date night or rough sex or quiet evenings to yourself."

"Like you get any of that," Finn joked back. "Well, the quiet evening to yourself maybe, but the sex-"

"Finn! Kurt! Stop it!" Rachel scolded, giving Burt and Carole an apologetic smile before changing the subject. "How did your flight go?"

"Just like any other flight," he said without removing his eyes from the baby.

"I think you might have a problem, Rachel. I doubt Kurt's going to want to give the baby back to you," Burt joked.

"Oh, I am not changing any dirty diapers. I'll just tell you that right now. There is no way I'm allowing this little girl to ruin any of designer tops. I don't care how cute she is."

At that moment, a young nurse stepped into the room and began making her way towards Rachel and the baby. "Hey, sorry to break up the party. We just need to take her away for a little bit to run the necessary tests if that's okay with you."

"Of course." Kurt reluctantly handed Elizabeth over to the nurse, watching her carry away one of the greatest things in his life.

"Elizabeth is a pretty girl, isn't she? She already loves her uncle Kurt more than anyone else, right? Don't you, Lizzie?" Kurt cooed, rocking Elizabeth back and forth in his arms.

"Oh my gosh, Kurt, no! You are not nicknaming her Lizzie," Rachel groaned. "Her name is Elizabeth!"

"Rach, she's going to get tired of writing that out all the time." Kurt looked down at the sleeping baby and watched her eyelids flutter as she began to wake up. "Oh, look at those beautiful little eyes. They look just like your daddy's. Yes they do, Lizzie!"

"Kurt!" Rachel scolded.

"Fine, sorry." He turned his attention back to Elizabeth and leaned down to place a sweet kiss on the tip of her nose. "You'll still be Lizzie to me, okay precious?" He whispered into her ear—too quiet for Rachel to hear—as he moved to kiss her cheek. He took in the smell of her skin, the perfect balance between baby powder and lotion. She was everything he had imagined she would be. What he hadn't imagined was how attached he would get within hours of seeing her. As he pulled back and squeezed her tight in his arms, his phone began ringing inside his pocket. Groaning, he pulled it out and read the name flashing across the screen. Blaine. Sighing, he stood up and handed Elizabeth off to her proud grandpa.

"Wow, you're giving her up just like that? Must be an important call," Burt joked and took Elizabeth into his arms.

"I'll just be right back. I expect you to return her to me as soon as I step back into this room," Kurt warned, smiling as he took Blaine's call and quickly exited the room. "Hello?"

"Hi."

"Hi." Kurt made his way to the chair located just outside the room and sat down, trying to ignore the dirty upholstery and the tears in the fabric.

"Hello."

Kurt giggled like a thirteen year old with a crush, pulling his legs up against him and resting his feet on the edge of the chair. "Are we going to do this all night?"

"Sorry."

"It's okay." Neither one of them said anything for a few seconds and instead just enjoyed the silence of the call, knowing they were so far away but somehow still connected. "So I'm in Ohio right now," Kurt finally said.

"Ohio? Really? What for?"

"It's where my family is, where I grew up. Lima to be more exact. My best friend, sister-in-law, high school competitor, whatever you want to call her," he laughed, thinking about all of the memories he'd had with her over the years, "she had her baby last night. I came to see her."

"Aw. Kids are great. If my dad hadn't expected so much of me, I would've considered a job as a teacher."

Kurt didn't miss the way Blaine sounded disappointed, unhappy with his job, wanting more from his life, but he let it pass, not wanting to get into anything too personal just yet. "I'm looking forward to spoiling her to death."

"She'll be one lucky little girl. Was it her first one?"

"Yes. Her name is Elizabeth," he sighed. "She's perfect in every way."

"Well congratulations, Uncle Kurt. You must be excited."

"I am. The wait for her to get here seemed endless." Kurt smiled at a young couple as they passed by, most likely on their way to a checkup. She was barely showing, but had the glow that all new mothers had and it was apparent on the man standing next to her as well. It was something he hoped to see on his husband in the future when they held their daughter or son in their arms for the first time.

"You should send me a picture of the two of you. If she's half as beautiful as you, she won't have any problems getting whatever she wants."

Kurt started blushing upon hearing Blaine's compliment and began chewing on his bottom lip. Talking on the phone with Blaine was more nerve-wracking than actually being with him, though he was happy to feel so close to Blaine despite how far away they were. "I don't know about that. She's much better looking than I am."

"Kurt, I..." Blaine stopped talking, immediately regretting how slow his filter could be to react at times.

"Yes, Blaine?"

Kurt could hear Blaine hesitating on the other line. "I... should you get back to them? I don't want to keep you..." he trailed off.

"No, they'll be fine. It's nice to get out of that tiny hospital room anyway." Kurt rested his chin on his knee. "I can't wait until Tuesday night. Getting out of my apartment for something other than work or errands will be nice as well."

"I assume you aren't going to be my flight attendant tomorrow, are you?" Kurt thought he heard a hint of sadness in Blaine's voice, despite his teasing tone.

"I'm staying here until Tuesday morning, but I asked Kassie to cover my shift. You'll love her. She's one of the top-rated flight attendants the airline has."

"She's not you, though. She won't give me an extra cookie or entertain me while she passes. Whatever will I do without that extra sugar and conversation, Kurt? I'll die!"

"Someone's being a bit over-dramatic. You seemed to get along just fine before." Kurt couldn't contain the smile plastered on his face. Blaine was the perfect balance between mature and immature; between playful and serious; between what Kurt looked for in a man and what he actually needed from a partner.

"You won't think that when I flop over dead."

"I'll tell you what. I'll buy an extra cookie and give Kassie specific directions as to who to deliver it to. Will that work?"

Blaine grumbled, but accepted Kurt's offer *"I guess it will have to. You'll just have to make up for it on Tuesday."*

"I'll be more than happy to. I may even make a special batch of cookies especially for you if Kassie tells me you didn't give her any trouble."

"You bake?" Blaine asked, surprised.

"Of course I do, so be sure to treat Kassie well, and you'll find out just how talented I am come Tuesday."

"This sounds like something I want to see," Blaine's voice was muffled by what sounded like a full mouth.

"Blaine, are you eating again?"

"Why would you think that?"

"You are *always* eating, aren't you?" Kurt shook his head. "I'm surprised you look the way you do with as much as you eat."

"You barely even know me," Blaine pointed out, as if that changed anything. *"You don't know my eating habits."*

"I know you well enough to know that you eat enough food to feed a family of four. I don't think I've talked to you a single time when you haven't been eating or drinking *something*."

"Not true!" Blaine disagreed.

"You have cookies on every flight, coffee when we talked in the airport, when I called you last night you were eating dinner, and now your mouth is stuffed with...."

"*Pie,*" Blaine supplied.

"Pie?" Kurt questioned. "Do you ever eat anything healthy?"

"*I eat salad sometimes.*"

"You do?"

"*Yes. On tacos.*"

"Blaine, a little lettuce on a taco doesn't constitute a salad," Kurt laughed. "Besides, why are you eating right now? It's 4:00 in the afternoon!"

"Ah, it is there, but here it's only 2:00. I'm on my break, flopped on my small office couch and eating some chocolate pie," Blaine said through a full mouth.

"Now I'm starting to rethink where I planned to take you on Tuesday. I need to get some decent food in you."

"*Are you taking me somewhere unhealthy, Kurt?*"

"You shouldn't be as excited about that as you are."

"*Is that a yes?*"

"I am not giving you any more clues. You'll just have to wait and see."

Their conversation was interrupted as the door beside him creaked open and Burt appeared in the doorway. "Sorry to interrupt, but Elizabeth seems to want her uncle back. I don't know what you did to that girl, but she's already in love with you."

"It's the charm of Kurt Hummel."

"What?"

"Oh, nothing. I was talking to my dad. Apparently Elizabeth just can't get enough of me."

"I want to see just how charming Kurt Hummel can be."

"Tuesday." Kurt mumbled quietly and glanced at his dad out of the corner of his eye. "Sorry, I don't want to go, but..." He trailed off, not wanting to complete the sentence.

"Go be with your family. I'll see you on Tuesday."

"I can't wait. Bye, Blaine." He ended the call and stuffed his phone into his pocket as he stood up.

"Who was that?" Burt asked curiously.

"Just someone from work. I'm having him take over my flights for the next couple of days while I'm here so we were just rearranging times and stuff." Kurt hated lying to his dad, the one person who had always accepted him and been there for him, but he wasn't ready to talk about Blaine. Not yet. Blaine had just come into his life, and as selfish as it sounds, Kurt wasn't ready to share him yet. He wanted a little bit of time to get to know Blaine for himself before hearing his family's opinions on the matter.

"Alright, well you better get in here pretty quick. I'm not sure she can wait much longer."

Kurt scurried inside and scooped Elizabeth up in his arms, followed closely by Burt. He still couldn't contain the smile Blaine had put on his face, lucky that he could pass it off as nothing more than the baby he held in his arms.

Burt snapped a quick picture of the two of them on Kurt's phone, which he proceeded to send to Blaine as asked. He was surprised when he received a reply not even a minute later.

Good looks must run in the family. The baby isn't the

Only gorgeous thing in that picture.

Kurt smiled and sent a quick reply before placing his phone back in his pocket, conflicted as to whether he wanted Tuesday to come quick or savor the time he had with his family.

"You'll call us as soon as you land, won't you?" Carole clung to Kurt in the airport on Tuesday morning. It felt as if she'd forgotten that he was used to flying to and from New York, as if it weren't his job.

"Of course I will," he assured her anyway. He turned to his dad and wrapped his arms around him. "Make sure you send me a lot of pictures of Lizzie, okay?"

"You're still calling her that?" Burt pulled away and slid an arm around Carole's waist.

Kurt shrugged. "What Rachel doesn't know won't hurt her."

"You could always come back and see her for yourself, you know." Burt nudged him in the arm.

"I know. I'll make it back more often," Kurt promised. The overhead speaker called for any remaining passengers for the flight to New York and Kurt picked up his bag, pulling his ticket out of the front pocket before zipping it shut. "I guess I should go."

"Tell that Blaine kid thanks for taking over your flights," Burt reminded him.

"What- oh, y-yeah. I will, Dad." He moved forward to hug Carole and Burt one last time before telling them goodbye and heading into the terminal.

The next few hours were a blur to Kurt. He was anxious to see Blaine later that night; to finally spend time with the boy that consumed so many of his thoughts lately. Once home, he'd changed as quickly as he could, then moved into the kitchen to make the cookies he'd promised Blaine—a peanut butter cookie fused together with a chocolate cookie, his personal favorite. The cookies didn't take long to make—he was finished within 45 minutes—which left him with nothing to do but sit on his worn down couch as he watched each minute tick by on the clock. After an agonizingly long wait, the hour hand hit the six and the minute hand hit the three and he shot up from the couch. 6:15. By the time he got his coat on and made it to the coffee shop, it'd be around 6:45, a decent time to arrive, he reasoned. He slid his arms through his form-fitting jacket and swung a scarf around his neck before quickly exiting the apartment. He fumbled with his keys as his anxiety spiked, but locked the door and hurried down the stairs and into the streets. He was surprised when he reached Starbucks to find Blaine inside, his hair void of gel, his curls running free, and his suit replaced by a light grey cardigan and a pair of jeans that hugged his hips in a way Kurt found mesmerizing. He noticed the way a curl fell down across his forehead and way the tight cardigan

accentuated every contour of his chest. He was breathtaking. Kurt stood in the doorway staring at him until Blaine looked up from his paper and smiled in his direction. Kurt quickly made his way over and sat down across from Blaine, placing his bag on the floor next to his chair.

"Hey," he said after loosening his scarf a bit.

"Hey yourself. You're early," Blaine noted.

"As are you. Just couldn't wait any longer to see me? Kurt joked.

He wasn't expecting to hear Blaine actually say yes. "I just...I also wanted to make sure I could find the place."

"You said you've been here before." Kurt sank back in his seat and made himself comfortable.

"It's been awhile. I live on the other side of town so I don't make it over here too often. It's a bit of a walk."

"Did you walk all the way here? You should've told me. I could've picked somewhere a little closer." Kurt slumped down and tried to shake off the guilt he had.

"It's fine. I like the exercise." Blaine shrugged it off like it was nothing, but Kurt remained silent. "I'll take a cab home." Blaine reached across the table and placed his hand on top of Kurt's, both of them immediately focusing on their joined hands. Blaine jerked his hand away. "Sorry."

Kurt was disappointed by the loss of contact, but tried not to make too much of it. He reached down into his bag and pulled out a container of freshly-baked cookies. "Kassie said you were very well-behaved on the flight, so as a reward, I did a little baking earlier today."

Blaine's face lit up as he took the container from Kurt. "You really baked me cookies?"

"Of course. I said I would, didn't I?" He reached across the table and removed the lid, revealing the cookies packed tightly inside. "It's my favorite kind of cookie to make, so you'll have to let me know what you think."

Blaine reached into the container and grabbed onto a cookie, but Kurt slapped his hand away. "What was that for?"

"Not now! Would you like to go now? I have a feeling you'll love this place." Kurt placed the lid back tightly on the container and stuffed it back into his bag."

"You're just a tease." Blaine playfully stuck out his tongue.

Kurt paused halfway between sitting down and standing up, unable to contain the laughter that escaped his lips. "Did you seriously just stick your tongue out at me?"

"What can I say? I've been told I have the maturity of a five-year-old. I claim it's how I compensate for being so professional and grown up all day in the office." Blaine stood up and slipped on his jacket. "Are you still not going to tell me where we're going?"

"Not a chance. I want to see the surprised look on your face when you see the place." Kurt took his place beside Blaine and led him towards the door.

"What if I've been there before? If it's somewhere with deliciously unhealthy food, there's a very good chance I have."

"You said you don't make it over here much and this place is relatively new. It opened over the summer." Blaine's smug smile disappeared and Kurt chuckled. "Exactly. Now come on. It's only a few blocks away."

They wandered into the streets which were lit up by hundreds of lights, creating the illusion that it was actually the middle of the afternoon rather than 7:00 at night. Kurt looked up at the skyscrapers they were passing, seeming to take in the city as if he'd never seen it before. Perhaps he *hadn't* seen it in the same way as he had with the boy he liked by his side, on what seemed like the first real date he'd had in years. The city seemed different to him because he finally had someone to share it with. He had someone else who understood the rushed environment, the dirty streets, the mixed smell of exhaust and fast food. Unlike his family, Blaine knew how to deal with the rude pedestrians, homeless men, and those people who were always placed sporadically throughout the city (the ones who always tried handing you fliers or asking for a minute of your time). Kurt could point out his favorite spots to eat as they passed, make little remarks about something he'd seen in a store that he made a mental note to buy later on, or point out the graffiti (what Kurt prefers to call art) lining every inch of a building. Kurt enjoyed having someone to talk to away from work, away from the people he saw on a daily basis because he *had* to, not because he had the desire to be around them on his own.

They continued on their way, Kurt taking occasional shortcuts down an alleyway or across a park, until finally reached their destination. At least Kurt knew they had arrived. His sudden halt resulted in Blaine bumping right into him, nearly knocking him over. Thankfully, Blaine reached a hand out and held onto Kurt's arm to keep him from toppling over onto the ground and mussing his much too expensive jacket, which Kurt silently thanked him for.

"Well, this is it." Kurt held the door open for Blaine as he looked up at the brightly colored sign above the entryway. "It's my favorite frozen yogurt place. They've got twenty different flavors and more toppings than you could count on two hands."

Blaine stepped inside and suddenly understood why he, or anyone else for that matter, could love it so much. It didn't look like a normal ice cream shop with white tables and neutral-colored walls. Instead, it looked like he'd stepped into one of Willy Wonka's factories. The walls were blue with vertical green strips, the ceiling pink, and the floor orange. The counters weren't your typical box-like counters, but rather very rounded, very colorful pieces of furniture. The design on each tabletop imitated hundreds of tiny sprinkles and swirls were carved into the backs of the dark purple chairs. He'd never seen anything like it before. Kurt looked pleased when he saw Blaine's expression, the one that confirmed he was right about Blaine liking the place.

"This place..." Blaine trailed off, still looking around in awe.

"Oh, if you think the appearance is cool, wait until you actually taste the frozen yogurt. Come on. I'll help you out." Without giving it a second thought, he held out his hand. Blaine was hesitant to take it at first, mainly because he didn't want to take things too fast, but his desire to be as close to Kurt as possible took over. Blaine gave in and grabbed his hand, allowing Kurt to lead him to the beginning of what seemed like an assembly line.

"Any preference on flavors? They've got quite a bit," he asked, grabbing two cups and handing one to Blaine, who grabbed it from him with his free hand.

"Any suggestions?" Blaine asked in return. He could feel his voice shaking and he hoped Kurt couldn't tell how nervous he was to be standing so close to him, to have his hand still wrapped in Kurt's.

"Well, I personally like the fruity rather than the sweet. I'm a health freak, unlike you." Kurt nudged him in the side. "Mango and raspberry are my favorite. But since you seem to like the sweet stuff, I'm regretfully

recommending the cotton candy, red velvet cake, or peanut butter and chocolate swirl. Of course you also have your standard chocolate and vanilla." Kurt let go of Blaine's hand and walked to one of the self-serve machines, filling his cup up with raspberry before returning to Blaine. "Still can't decide?"

"They all sound so good." Blaine continued staring at the machines, not quite sure what to make of everything. "I think I'll go with vanilla."

"Vanilla? They have sickeningly sweet flavors, and you choose to go with the original?" Kurt exaggerated his shock.

"I'll go crazy with my toppings. Plus, I have the cookies you baked for me for later." Blaine pulled the lever down on the machine closest to them and allowed the frozen yogurt to fill his cup.

"Ready to move on?" Kurt asked once they were finished. Blaine nodded and followed him to a bright yellow counter. "This is the fun part."

Blaine looked at the counter in front of him. In multicolored bowls packed tightly together, one could find any kind of topping they could possibly want: fruit (strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, cherries, bananas, kiwi, etc.); candy (reeses peanut butter cups, m&ms, butterfinger, snickers); cereal (captain crunch, cocoa puffs, rice crispies, cookie crisp); granola; various nuts such as almonds, pistachios, and peanuts; standard toppings like sprinkles' and much more. "Seems a little overwhelming," Blaine noted.

"Eh, it can be. But you've got me to help you out. For instance, I don't recommend bananas or rice crispies, but almonds and raspberries are fantastic on vanilla, especially if you add white chocolate chips to the top." Kurt sprinkled a few chocolate pieces onto his.

"You really know your combos."

Kurt laughed. "Well, I've been coming here once a week since it opened. It's my one indulgence." He picked up a spoonful of raspberries. "May I?" he asked, holding them over Blaine's bowl.

"Sure." He turned the spoon over and continued to put almonds and white chocolate chips on top as he mentioned before.

"You won't regret this," Kurt assured him.

"If I do, I'll just take yours," Blaine joked.

"You just try to do that. I dare you," Kurt giggled and finished putting toppings on his own. They each grabbed a spoon and walked over to the cash register. Blaine pulled out his wallet, but before he even had a chance to open it, Kurt grabbed it from his hands. "Don't. I brought you here. I'll pay."

Kurt paying made Blaine a little uncomfortable, but he went along with it anyway. He couldn't remember the last time someone paid for his dinner, apart from the business dinners he was always expected to attend. "Thanks, but you really didn't have to do that."

"I wanted to. Now unless you'd absolutely like to stay here and eat, I'd really like to take you somewhere else to eat this. It's close, I promise, so you won't have to walk too much more today."

"Where would that be?" Blaine questioned.

"You'll see." Kurt walked out the door, this time not even waiting for Blaine to follow.

He hurried out of the frozen yogurt place and jogged to catch up with Kurt. Getting lost in New York City wasn't exactly what he had planned for the night and he wasn't too familiar with that part of town. After five minutes of walking and not a single word or bite of their dessert, Kurt stopped and turned to face Blaine. "I'm sure you've been here before, but I'm going to take you on a *proper* tour of Central Park. This is one of my favorite places in the city."

Blaine looked around. "Wow. Well, I certainly didn't expect this," he said, reminding himself that the entire night was the complete opposite of anything he could've imagined when he got out of bed that morning. They started walking down a path, the city lights blocked by the trees above their heads. Instead, the path was lit with light posts placed every couple hundred feet.

"Would you like to sit down so we can eat?" Kurt asked after noticing that Blaine hadn't even touched his frozen yogurt.

"Yeah. That'd be a good idea." They made their way over to one of the benches located along the side of the path and sat down. Blaine took his first bite and immediately fell in love with it. "Oh my gosh! This is amazing, Kurt!"

"I told you you'd love it," he laughed. That was something Blaine noticed about Kurt. While he was serious and mature, he was still laid back and easy-going. He seemed to laugh at everything, not in an obnoxious way, but in a way that was kind of refreshing. It was an endearing quality that Kurt held. You could tell that overall, he was happy with his life and he wasn't afraid to show it.

"This is like...orgasmic."

Kurt stopped moving, his spoon suspended in midair, and eyed Blaine with wonder. "Did you really just say that?"

"It's like sex in my mouth, yes. Not that I would know what sex is like, but that's not the point." Blaine made an effort to shut his mouth when he began to ramble, hoping Kurt hadn't picked up on the latter statement. Kurt continued to stare at him like he was the most interesting man in his life, which to be honest, he kind of was. "What?" Blaine took another bite, this one much larger than the first.

"You just... I never know what to expect from you. Sometimes, I feel like I'm talking to a five year old and other times a teenage boy, but it's in the best way. In the end, you still end up proving just how mature you are. It's weird." Kurt laughed nervously and looked away. He felt a cold hand on his own and looked down to see Blaine's hand taking his, resting gently on Kurt's lap. It sent a chill up Kurt's already cold arm and his stomach flopped even more. Blaine was close enough that their knees brushed against one another he had to make a conscious effort not to jerk away when they did so. He tried to ignore Blaine's close proximity and continued. "You're like this perfect balance between a happy, giggly clown and an old businessman."

"Wait a second." Blaine sat his cup of yogurt down on the bench next to him. "Did you just compare me to a *clown*." Blaine shook his head and erupted with laughter. "And *I* am the one that's unpredictable? That's the first time I've ever been compared to a clown. Clowns are often made fun of, you know." He teasingly stuck out his bottom lip, pretending to be offended.

"You just compared eating your ice cream to having sex. I think you deserve that one." Kurt stood up and tugged on Blaine's hand. "Now come on. It's time for your tour of the park." Blaine hopped up onto his feet and grabbed his yogurt. The two of them began walking down the path, still hand in hand, neither of them bothering to pull away.

Chapter Four

Half an hour later, Kurt and Blaine found themselves off the path and wondering through the freshly cut grass of Central Park. Their hands were still joined and their shoulders were glued together. Kurt had pointed out his favorite places in the park and Blaine gave his input on the different aspects.

Blaine finally stood still and pulled Kurt to a stop beside him. "Would you like to sit down?" he suggested.

"Here?" Kurt looked around took in the landscape that surrounded them—the trees were almost completely bare by mid-October, the bushes had lost their greenery, and the grass was slowly dying. However, Kurt still couldn't believe how beautiful the nature all around him was. "Sure." Blaine knelt down to sit on the ground and stretched his legs out in front of him. Kurt did the same and tucked his legs underneath him. "You're lucky I like you. This could give me grass stains and ruin my clothes."

Blaine turned his head towards Kurt. "You like me?" he said inquisitively.

Kurt blushed, but kept his eyes locked on Blaine's. "That's nothing you shouldn't have already known." He nervously plucked a few pieces of grass out of the ground and tossed them aside.

Blaine began to stare at him intently. "Can I ask you a question? You don't have to answer if you don't want to."

"I'll try my best."

Blaine took a deep breath and leaned back on his elbow. "Why did you decide to become a flight attendant? You seem like such an intelligent, likeable, motivated person. Why didn't you do something else with your life? Why do you like flying so much?"

Kurt leaned back into a laying position and stared up at the sky, remaining quiet. Blaine laid down beside him and rested his folded hands on his stomach, allowing Kurt the time he needed before answering. Kurt didn't know how to answer Blaine's question. There were so many aspects of his life and past that he hadn't been comfortable enough to share with anyone, not since they happened. He wanted to be honest with Blaine, but he wasn't ready to tell him everything. Kurt was afraid of opening himself up to the pain he'd experienced. He was afraid of breaking down in front of Blaine. But most of all, he was afraid he'd

realize that if Blaine had been in his life when he was in high school, he wouldn't have allowed Kurt to give up everything he had left behind.

"Flying isn't something I'd always been accustomed to. When I was growing up, it was just my dad and I. He always had to be at the shop, even on his days off, so it didn't leave us with much time to travel. My mom died when I was younger. I don't remember much about her, but she would always tell me that no matter what, I should make sure I saw the beauty in life. She would tuck me in every night and tell me how much better her life was with me in it. One of the few things I still remember about her is the Fridays we'd spend together. She would pick me up from school and take me to the park. Even as a child, I didn't like to run around and get dirty, so instead of playing on the slide or her pushing me on the swing, we'd just walk. We'd walk up and down the paths that snaked through the park. Maybe that's where my love for nature began. She loved taking photographs of the flowers and trees, the birds in the sky, anything she saw as beautiful so that she could mark it in time. In her eyes, everything held some kind of beauty, even the things that people would normally turn away from. One of the days that stands out to me the most is one of the last Fridays I got to spend with her before she died. Looking back, I think she knew it was her time to go. She sat me down in the grass, kind of like we are now, and took me into her arms."

Blaine focused on Kurt attentively and noticed the first tear leak out of the corner of his eyes and fall down his cheek. Without thinking, he reached up and brushed it away before taking ahold of Kurt's hand. "S-she... she told me that no matter what I had to remember those moments. I had to remember what was important in life and the beauty that God had created. I-I'm not much of a religious person, but my mom was. She went to church every Sunday and Wednesday. She taught a Sunday School class and played hymns on the piano every night. That day in the park, she told me that I had to get out of Ohio one day and see the world in the way she was never able to. I promised her I would. That day, I made a promise to her as well as myself that I'd make it out of Lima. She wanted me to visit other countries and immerse myself in other cultures. My mom was the most important person in my life. She was my inspiration, the person I looked up to the most, and she was my best friend. I know that sounds crazy, but she was. I miss her so much, but when things get hard, I think about her. Maybe she's up there in Heaven looking down on me, or maybe Heaven doesn't even exist. I don't know. But wherever she is, I know she's looking down on me and she's happy with my life.

"Being a flight attendant allows me to travel. It allows me to experience parts of the world that she wasn't able to. I'm doing this not only for me, but for her. She's with me wherever I go; it's like I can feel her presence. I enjoy being free to go wherever I want. I'm not tied down to a city, sitting in an office all day

doing paperwork or taking phone calls or answer emails. I'm living my life. *Really* living it, and I'm doing it all for her." Kurt felt Blaine squeeze his hand slid a little closer to him.

"I'm not good with words. I never have been. Maybe that's another reason why I like art, nature, the beauty of life so much. It's able to express what I'm not. What's inside of me, I can find in something as simple as a flower petal or as complex as the birds in the sky. I've never been one to be able to form the right words. I'm not some big, poetic speaker. When I speak, it's all jumbled up words. But life. Looking at everything around me, it's its own unique form of poetry. It's beautiful."

In that moment, after hearing Kurt say what he'd said and open up to him as much as he had, Blaine knew he was falling in love. Kurt was someone he could see himself with for the rest of his life, and the thought terrified him. He wasn't ready to love; he didn't know *how* to love. But loving Kurt seemed easy. It seemed effortless and a warm, comfortable feeling ran through his entire body.

Without giving it a second thought, he leaned his head forward and gently placed his lips against Kurt's, lightly cupping his pale cheek. Kurt smiled into the kiss and wrapped an arm around Blaine's side. When they pulled away, neither of them said a word, but they both knew what was happening. Somehow, deep down, Kurt knew he was in love with Blaine and Blaine was in love with him in return. It wasn't his first kiss with a boy, but it *was* his first kiss with someone he cared deeply about. He knew that Blaine was in his life for good. Kurt wouldn't wake up in a week and walk away like he had with every other man in the past. The connection he had with Blaine ran deeper than anything he'd ever had with anyone before. Even without words, they were each other's everything. Even their unspoken thoughts were known to each other the moment they locked eyes. Kurt nestled into Blaine's side and buried his face in his chest.

They laid in silence for a few minutes, Kurt taking in the sweet smell of Blaine's clothes as Blaine stared at the few stars in the sky that were bright enough to see through the lit up city. Blaine absentmindedly rubbed his hand up and down Kurt's arm and pulled him closer to keep the warmth between them. The cool October night wasn't unbearable if they were together, but alone, it could get a bit frigid. Blaine wanted to stay in that moment for the rest of the night. Although he knew he couldn't, he felt like he could fall asleep in the middle of Central Park with Kurt in his arms.

Eventually, Kurt shifted his head and rested his chin on Blaine's shoulder, looking up with his sparkling blue eyes. "Hey, Blaine?"

"Hm?" Blaine tilted his head to the side, only to be met with Kurt's face just mere inches from his.

"Would you like to come to my place tomorrow night? We can make dinner and hang out." His arm tightened around Blaine's torso. "You don't have to if you don't want to, I just thought maybe you would like to," he quickly added.

"How early can I get there?" Blaine grinned in response and Kurt relaxed. He tightly squeezed Blaine before standing and extending a hand to help him up as well. Blaine hesitantly glanced down at his watch and looked back at Kurt with a saddened smile. "I don't want to put an end to the night, but it's getting kind of late, and I have to work in the morning."

"Oh, y-yeah. Sure."

When Kurt looked towards the ground, Blaine placed a finger under his chin and forced them to look eyes. "Can I walk you home and catch a cab from there?"

"I think I'll stay here a bit longer. It's peaceful at night without all of the tourists. I can walk you to the cab though."

"No, it's fine." Blaine's hand lowered and found Kurt's hand, lacing their fingers together. "I'll just see you tomorrow. I get off work at 4:00, so is 5:00 at your house okay?"

If Kurt had his way, he wouldn't even have to leave Blaine at all. "It's perfect."

"Great. I'll call you tomorrow before I head over and get the directions from you." Blaine leaned forward and placed a kiss on Kurt's cheek before giving his hand another squeeze and pulling away slightly. "Thank you for tonight; it's more fun than I've had in a long time."

"Me too. I can't remember the last time I was this happy."

"I'm glad. Be sure to let me know when you've made it home safely, okay?" Kurt nodded. "Goodnight, Kurt." He released Kurt's hand and walked to the path before disappearing from sight, leaving Kurt standing in the park, alone and speechless.

After a long day at work, Blaine finally found himself walking down the streets of New York making his way to Kurt's apartment. His directions were easy to follow and before he knew it, he was standing in

front of apartment 218, unable to knock. His hands were balled, clenched so tight from his nerves that they were starting to lose feeling. He wanted to knock, but part of him was scared about what would happen once he did. He was scared of the possibility of losing the friendship he had with Kurt once he was on the other side of the door. Although he had experience, he felt like an amateur when it came to dates and love, and he didn't want to say the wrong thing or be too forward. It may not have even been a date at all. Kurt may have just wanted someone to hang out with so he wouldn't be spending the night alone, and Blaine happened to be the one person who didn't have much of a social life outside of work.

He finally sucked up the courage and quickly knocked on the door, knowing Kurt was waiting on him. Not even ten seconds had passed before Blaine was staring him in the face.

"Hi," Kurt spoke first. Blaine couldn't help looking him up and down, taking notice of the tight jeans he was wearing and the purple shirt which accented his arm muscles quite well. Blaine tried to tear his eyes away before he could notice he was staring. "Come in." Kurt opened the door even more and stepped aside.

His apartment was much different from what Blaine had expected. The living room was to the right and housed a single couch and a small entertainment center. Behind the living room, he could see what looked like a doorway to the kitchen. "Hey." Once he took everything in, he looked down at his hands.

"Are you ok?" Kurt asked, concerned.

"Yeah. I'm just nervous." Blaine decided being honest with him from the beginning was the best idea. After all, Kurt was fairly new to everything as well so he felt more comfortable sharing his nerves.

"Why are you nervous?" Kurt took a step forward, but still maintained his distance.

"It's been a long time since I've done this."

Kurt grabbed his hand. "Hey, relax. You're not going to mess anything up if that's what you're worried about." Blaine didn't understand how he could be so calm about everything. So comfortable. So *good* at this. "You hungry? I hope you didn't eat too much today."

"I'm starved, actually. I skipped lunch. I had a bunch of meetings and paperwork to get caught up on."

"Let's make dinner then. I've got every possible pizza topping you could ask for."

"Anchovies?" I joked.

"Um...let me just run to the store," he laughed, and his laugh was one of the most beautiful things Blaine had heard all day. Kurt's laugh was the sound that could instantly calm his nerves and make him forget about everything that had happened earlier in the day.

Blaine laughed along. "I really am glad to be here."

"Good. I'm glad you're here too." Kurt pulled on his hand. "Come on. Let's go to the kitchen. You can tell me all about your day at work while we attempt to make a pizza." They walked into the kitchen and Blaine situated himself against the counter near the edge of the room so he wouldn't be in the way. "Have you ever made pizza before?"

"Does frozen pizza count?" Blaine moved a few steps closer to Kurt.

"You're in for a fun time if you've never done this before. My dad was never one to cook, so I ended up making all of our meals growing up, and pizza was one of my go-to dinners. I've been making them for as long as I can remember. Do you wanna pass me the flour?" As Blaine handed him the container of flour, he noticed several bowls filled with toppings lined up in the center. "I didn't know what you liked on your pizza. I personally like green peppers and tomatoes. It may sound disgusting, but it's actually pretty delicious."

"Well maybe I should try that." Blaine watched as Kurt poured various ingredients onto a bowl, creating what was starting to resemble dough.

"Get over here and help me knead this. We're supposed to be making it together." Kurt nodded his head in Blaine's direction and motioned him over.

"Okay, but if the finished product is unrecognizable, don't say I didn't warn you!" Blaine closed the distance between them. He was standing so close that he could smell Kurt's cologne every time he moved and could feel his warm skin brush up against him several times. It was enough contact to send a wave of warmth through Blaine's entire body.

"You'll do great. Just hold your hands out." Blaine did as told and Kurt sprinkled a light layer of flour on each hand, rubbing his fingers through it to spread it evenly across Blaine's palm. "That'll keep the dough from sticking to your fingers."

Without giving much thought to the idea, Blaine placed his hands on each side of Kurt's face, hoping he wouldn't regret it. Kurt froze for a few seconds, standing in shock, before sticking his hand in the flour jar and flicking it in Blaine's face. "So this is how you like to play?" Blaine teased. He took Kurt's smile as permission to go on, so he grabbed a handful of cheese and dropped it above his head. Kurt returned the favor by dumping the entire bowl of olives on top of Blaine's curls.

For the next few minutes, they ran around the kitchen, throwing every topping they had at each other. Blaine finally managed to corner him, leaning his hands against the counter with one arm on each side of Kurt's body. He didn't know what he was going to do because neither one of them were armed, and if he moved Kurt was sure to make an escape. They stood inches apart, their bodies practically smashed together. Blaine reached his right hand down and poked Kurt in the side, testing to see how ticklish he was. Blaine soon realized just how ticklish Kurt was when he squirmed to the floor, landing on his butt. Just when Blaine thought he'd won the fight, he felt a hand impact the back of his knees and his legs gave out. He landed on the floor in between Kurt's legs and when he turned to look at him, his flour-streaked face was inches away from Blaine's.

He felt Kurt wrap his arms around Blaine's body and rest his clasped hands on his stomach. "I say we both give in and declare this a tie." He could feel Kurt's warm breath on his lips. "Would you still like to make a pizza? I've got more toppings." Blaine nodded, unable to speak with Kurt so close. They looked into each other's eyes for a moment before Kurt leaned forward and pressed a chaste kiss to Blaine's lips.

Blaine wasn't entirely sure what they were. They had kissed, twice now. Kurt obviously trusted him enough to talk about his past, a part of his life that meant a lot to him. They flirted back and forth and enjoyed each other's company, but they had never talked about what was going on. They were friends, but hadn't even verbally acknowledged it. Blaine wanted more from Kurt, but he was terrified Kurt wasn't ready for a relationship.

"I'm still starving, by the way. We should make this quick." Blaine stood up, extending his hand out to help Kurt up. He took it and pulled him up but they didn't release hands. "I think our dough survived that little attack."

"You better watch out from now on. I'm going to get you back some time and it's going to be when you least expect it. Just wait." He placed Blaine's hand into the bowl and they started kneading the dough, their hands occasionally brushing against each other. "So how did your day at work go? You haven't told me what you actually do."

"My dad owns an insurance company. It's based in New York, but there's an office in LA as well. I'm actually at the head of the company along with him, which requires me to fly back and forth from New York to LA every week. I have to meet with customers, oversee the other employees, take care of major paperwork, and sign more papers than you could imagine. It's a decent job, I guess. It pays well and I have job stability. Everyone needs insurance and my dad isn't going to fire his son unless I do something to deserve it."

"But you aren't happy there." It wasn't a question.

Blaine shrugged. "Everyone thinks my dad is a bad guy. Everyone in the company, that is. They actually don't like working for him because he can be a hard ass, but that's what makes him respected in the industry. He doesn't take anyone's crap. I would've loved to go into teaching, but my dad said if I went to school to teach, I'd have to pay for it on my own, and I didn't have the money at the time. I was a poor high school graduate who had just applied for his first job. College wasn't an option at the time."

Kurt rolled the dough into a ball and placed it in the middle of the pan before spreading it out. "Why didn't he want you to teach? What's so bad about educating others?"

"He didn't think I would be reaching my full potential. He also believed it was a stupid profession to go into in this day and age. I would be competing with too many people for too little jobs. Schools are letting so many teachers go, and they don't get paid very well as it is." When Kurt was ready, Blaine poured the sauce onto the dough and began spreading it with a spoon.

"So, he wanted you to work for him instead?"

"I think it was always his plan. He worked for another insurance company until I was eight, when he broke off and started his own. He...uh...He was actually the guy on the plane the day we met. The rude businessman who was complaining about his coffee."

"You have got to be kidding me." Kurt stood with his mouth gaping and eyes wide.

Blaine tossed some cheese on top of the pizza. "Yeah. He's really not a bad guy. I know it seems like it, but he looks out for me and that's what matters. He's there for his family. He just expects more from people than he should which leads to him coming off as a bit of a jerk."

"You speak highly of him and you seem to have good judgment. I trust you if you say he's a good guy."

"He would actually disapprove of you," Blaine admitted. "That's probably why he treated you so bad. He thinks people like you are those who failed in college or didn't have a job lined up for them once they graduated. He feels like what you do is a sign of failure in life and all you're good for is doing what other people ask of you."

Blaine placed the last bits of tomato on the pizza and Kurt slipped it into the oven. "But you don't think that?"

"I don't judge people. I get judged enough by being gay. It's not in my place to tell anyone else how to live their life or what will make them happy. You told me why you wanted to be a flight attendant. My dad may not be able to see that there are deeper things in life and happiness than money or success or status, but I do. I think what you're doing is great, Kurt."

Kurt moved closer and wrapped his arms around Blaine's waist, pulling him into a hug. "Thank you, Blaine. That means a lot. I- I don't usually talk about her. My mom. It hurts too much to go back to those times, but it's nice to talk to someone who understands."

"You should talk about her more often. Your face lights up when you're talking about her. It's obvious how happy she made you."

"I trust you. To be completely honest, I haven't told anyone about the conversations we had in the park, not even my dad. It's just not something I wanted to share with anyone."

Blaine's face was filled with regret. "Oh, Kurt. You know you didn't have to tell me about that. It was something private between the two of you and-"

Kurt placed a finger against Blaine's lips to silent him. "I wanted to. I wanted you to know about her. She would like you. She liked anyone who cared about her only son; anyone who made me smile."

Blaine began to blush and looked away. "I'm glad you told me about her. I wish I could've met her. She sounds like an incredible lady."

"She was." Kurt took a deep breath and pulled away from Blaine. "You ready to sit?"

Blaine nodded. "I'm ready to sit." They joined hands and walked into the living room. While their pizza was cooking, Kurt continued to talk as Blaine listened attentively to the sound of Kurt's voice, wondering if there was any sound more beautiful than the one he was hearing.

"What would you like to do now? This night is just as much about you as it is about me." Kurt took a slice of pizza and bit into it. "You... are a fantastic pizza maker. Seriously. Try it."

Blaine grabbed a slice of his own and bit into it. They went with his signature green pepper and tomato pizza. "This is amazing. You have good taste."

"With the toppings? Told you. I knew you'd like it." Kurt opened his can of pop and sat the other next to Blaine. "? Game? Just talk? What would you like to do? We've got all night."

Blaine looked around the room as if it would somehow help him decide. That's when he noticed a stack of movies beside the TV stand. There were quite a few, but one particular series stood out. "What would you say if I told you I've never watched a single Harry Potter movie?" He grinned, knowing that to any Potterhead, that was some kind of cruel joke.

"You...never?" Blaine shook his head and Kurt stood up, making his way towards the stack. "You do realize that I never would've even talked to you if I had known you were a Harry Potter virgin." Panic streaked across Blaine's face and he worried he had already made a mistake. Kurt noticed his expression and smiled. "Hey, relax. I was kidding." After slipping the first movie into the DVD player, he returned to Blaine's side with two remotes in his hands. "You ready to go to Hogwarts?" he asked.

"Let's go," Blaine nodded. Once Kurt pressed play, his left hand found Blaine's right, their fingers intertwining. Halfway into the movie, Kurt wrapped his arms around him and pulled their bodies close. Blaine rested his head on his left shoulder and their free hands found each other.

Blaine had to admit, the movie was a lot better than he'd expected. The entire phenomenon seemed like a fad and he'd never been one to go along with what everyone else was doing, but he had a feeling if he hung out with Kurt long enough, that would slowly change. Not in a bad way of course, he just made him feel more comfortable being himself. The entire concept of the movie astounded Blaine, from the well-written

storyline to the unique characters and the imaginative world that JK Rowling had created. When the credits began scrolling across the screen he was a bit disappointed.

"It's only 7:00." Blaine looked up at Kurt when he spoke. "You up for year two?" His voice sounded anxious.

"Yes. Absolutely!" Blaine sighed in relief, knowing he could stay cuddled on the floor with Kurt.

"You liked it?"

"Maybe..." he grinned guiltily.

Kurt shifted slightly but didn't let go of Blaine's hand or remove his arm from behind him. "I...have a suggestion. You don't have to accept my any means, but," he paused. "Would you...would you maybe want to stay here tonight?" Blaine took a deep breath and felt the air fill every square inch of his lungs. "I just thought we could watch the next three movies or so and you could go home tomorrow instead. We could plan another night to watch the rest." He looked away and Blaine saw his cheeks start to fill with color.

"I'd love to," Blaine said, squeezing his hand. Relief washed over his face and he pulled Blaine as close as possible.

"I guess I need to go put the next DVD in." Kurt stood up reluctantly and Blaine watched as the Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets menu popped up on the screen. After returning to the floor and resuming their previous position, Kurt turned his head, his face so close it was almost touching Blaine's. "I'm really glad you agreed to stay tonight."

Blaine smiled, returning his attention to the screen and watched the movie begin.

When Blaine awoke the next morning he found himself sprawled across the couch with a fuzzy blanket draped over his body. It took him a few minutes to remember where he was and once he did, it took even longer to remember how exactly he'd ended up on the couch. Once Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire ended, it was nearing 2:00 in the morning. They decided to call it a night, Kurt retreating to his room and Blaine making himself comfortable on his couch. Regardless of how he ended up there, Blaine was happy

to be waking up in Kurt's apartment and was eager to see the man again. He sat up, attempting to straighten out the mess his hair had become over the night and looked around the apartment.

"Hey!" He heard Kurt say from somewhere in the kitchen. A few seconds later he appeared in the doorway wearing an apron over a pair of Nike sweat pants and a light gray T-shirt. Blaine guessed this side of Kurt wasn't one people saw too often. "I hope I didn't wake you. I thought you might enjoy breakfast when you woke up."

"You're cooking?"

"Pancakes. I hope you like them. I don't know many people who turn down a good flapjack..."

Blaine laughed. "Oh, yeah. They're great. Can I help with something?" He pulled the blanket off his lap, tossed it aside, and began to stand up.

"No! Don't. I've got it. I'll be right back." With that, Kurt disappeared behind the wall, returning a few minutes later with a tray filled with various items. He placed the tray on the coffee table and sat down next to Blaine on the couch. "We've got pancakes, peanut butter, syrup, strawberries, bananas, blueberries, bacon, and orange juice. Take your pick." He handed me a plate.

"Wow. Once again. You've thought of everything." Blaine decided to go for strawberries as a pancake topping and spooned them onto his plate. "You really didn't have to go to all of this trouble, though. I'm content with living off of Captain Crunch and Rice Crispies."

"I know, but I wanted to. I enjoy cooking when I have the opportunity and I wanted you to have a proper breakfast for once," he said, referring to Blaine's cereal choices.

"Well, thank you. These pancakes are delicious," Blaine said, taking his third bite.

"Good. I'm glad you like them."

There were a few minutes of silence as they ate, stealing a glance when they thought the other wasn't looking and occasionally making eye contact and getting caught. "I'm really glad I came over yesterday. It was definitely one of the best nights I've had in a long time."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah." Blaine finished off his last bite of pancakes. "I don't want to, but I should probably be going now. I'm supposed to be at the office by 11:00."

"Oh, right. I forgot you had work. I'm sorry." Kurt stood up and started gathering the dishes, placing them back onto the tray.

"It's fine. We should-we should do this again... but I get to host next time." Blaine leaned forward and gave Kurt a quick kiss before heading towards the door. "Thanks again, Kurt," he said before shutting the door behind him.

Sitting in a taxi on Monday night wasn't what Blaine originally had in mind when Kurt had agreed to go to dinner at one of Blaine's favorite restaurants. What would've been no more than a ten minute drive in any average town took over half an hour due to the hectic traffic in the city. They didn't mind it much, though, because it allowed them to have time together, something they rarely got during the weekend. There wasn't much talking going on between the two of them, but the silence was far from awkward.

Kurt sat up a bit when the taxi finally came to a stop and groaned when Blaine removed his hand from his back. Blaine grabbed his wallet and pulled out a couple bills to hand to the cab driver. "Thanks," he said as he paid. He grabbed Kurt's hand and started to slide towards the door. "Come on. Let's eat." Kurt followed him out into the crowded streets of New York and they immediately walked through the massive front doors of the Italian restaurant in front of them. It was a pretty large place, dimly lit with candles burning at each table. Everything was very spaced out, allowing for intimacy between each party and the majority of guests spoke in hushed tones. It looked like something out of a romantic movie and based on the décor and waiters' attire, Kurt was pretty confident that the place wasn't all that affordable.

"How many in your party?" the greeter asked.

"Two," Blaine answered.

"Right this way." The young girl led them to a table against the wall, setting their menus on the table and filling their glasses with ice cold water. Kurt was surprised when Blaine pulled out his chair and waited for Kurt to sit down before taking his own seat. "Your waiter will be with you briefly," the greeter told them and returned to her position near the door.

"This place looks really nice," Kurt mentioned. "I don't know if I can aff-"

Blaine cut him off. "Don't even finish that sentence. Don't worry about anything. Get whatever you would like. It's on me. I'm just glad to have someone to come with me this time," he laughed.

Kurt opened the menu and took a look. He soon realized that they had just about anything you could ask for, from classic spaghetti to manicotti to lasagna. "Do you have any suggestions on what to get?" Kurt was overwhelmed by the variety of foods they had to offer.

"I'm an Alfredo person myself, but the tortellini is really good as well."

At that time, a slender man appeared at their table. "Hi. My name is Matt. I'll be your waiter tonight. Can I start you off with a drink?" They both ordered iced teas, and upon his return with their drinks, they ordered their dinner. They went with Kurt's suggestion of each getting something different and sharing—Kurt getting the tortellini and Blaine getting the Alfredo as always.

"So how was work this weekend? Any unbearable clients?"

"Oh, I don't know? Any unbearable passengers?" Blaine asked in return.

"There was this one. He kept demanding another cookie. Other than that, they were great," Kurt joked.

Blaine pretended to be offended, but quickly got over it. "LA is worse than New York. I think it's due to the fact that most of our clients in LA are private homeowners, the type who own expensive houses, whereas in New York, we deal more with small businesses. Struggling business owners don't seem to threaten you with money and status quite as often."

"You have status too. You're at the top of the company."

"Only because my father owns it." Blaine began playing with his straw.

"Don't say that." Kurt reached across the table to place a hand on top of Blaine's. "I'm fairly confident you would've made it up to that same position in time had you started working for a different company instead. Maybe not as quickly, but it would still happen."

"Thanks for the confidence, but if I wasn't working for my dad's company, I wouldn't be in the insurance industry at all."

"Well, you would work your way up to the best paid teacher in the state." Kurt rolled his eyes and returned his hand to his lap when his phone beeped. He reached into his pocket to retrieve it and paused when he read the email on the screen. Taking a deep breath, he typed a couple lines in reply and shoved it back into his pocket.

"Everything okay?" Blaine asked when he noticed Kurt's face fall into a nervous expression.

"Yeah. Just... Rachel. Sending me a picture of the baby. She sends about five a day," he rolled his eyes again, trying to play off his anxiety over the email he'd just sent.

"Oh, can I see?" Blaine asked

Kurt couldn't tell if he had bought his excuse of the picture or if he was just playing along. Regardless, he pulled out his phone once again and opened up one of the emails Rachel had sent earlier that day before sliding it across the table. Blaine took a look at the sleeping baby with her light pink dress and freckled cheeks.

"She's adorable. So who does she look like the most? Her mom or dad?"

"A little of both, actually. Finn, my stepbrother, insists she looks like Rachel, but he's never been too bright when it comes to anything more than sports or food."

"Do you know when you're going to get to see her again?"

"No, I don't," Kurt said sadly. "Hopefully soon. I want her first words to be Uncle Kurt."

Blaine chuckled. "If she knows what's good for her, I'm sure they will be." He took a sip of his drink before proposing something to Kurt. "I have a question. What would you say to meeting my friends? They're all coming over on Wednesday for dinner and I was wondering if you might want to come along if you aren't busy."

"To meet your friends? Um, y-yeah. Sure. What time?"

"My dad actually gave me the day off, something about how he was glad I was actually going to be social for once, so I was thinking maybe you could come over around noon and we could go grocery shopping? You seem to know more about cooking than I do and I could use your help."

"Well, I'll never turn down a chance to impress anyone with my cooking. I'm in."

Their waiter arrived with their food and they began talking about friends, work, the minor details of their life, enjoying the time they had to get to know one another better. At the end of the night, Kurt insisted they get into separate cabs since they were going in opposite directions. Blaine kissed him on the cheek before climbing in the cab and taking off in the opposite direction than Kurt's.

Two days later, Kurt found himself scurrying around Blaine's kitchen, rushing to get the last dinner preparations done while Blaine tidied up the living room. Blaine's friends—the few co-workers he hung out with outside of work—were set to arrive within the next fifteen minutes. Kurt was anxious to become a part of Blaine's world, apart from work. He was nervous, but excited to establish a relationship with those Blaine had known prior to Kurt.

Kurt had just begun tossing the salad when he heard the doorbell ring and a knock on the door. *Here we go*, he thought. He placed the salad bowl in the center of the counter as Blaine walked in, flanked by two men, a woman, and a little girl, most likely around the age of three. The woman smiled kindly and the little girl nervously pulled on her pigtails. Kurt knelt down in front of her and she hid her face behind the lady's leg.

"Hey, Sweetie. I'm Kurt." He introduced himself to the bashful girl. "What's your name?"

She poked her head out from behind the leg and inched forward but still kept hold. "Carla," she said innocently.

"Well, hi, Carla. I'm glad you're here," he said sweetly and stood up as Blaine made his way to his side.

Blaine was impressed by how sweet Kurt was with Carla. Carla didn't take to anyone very easily, but after just a few seconds with Kurt, her shyness had disappeared. Seeing Kurt with Carla only helped to confirm that he was not only going to make a great uncle to Elizabeth, but a great dad someday as well.

"Kurt, this is Jonah and his wife, Stacy, and their little girl," Blaine introduced.

Kurt stepped forward slightly and shook their hands. "It's nice to meet you."

The other man spoke up. "I'm Luke. Blaine here doesn't like to introduce me, I guess." He reached out to shake Kurt's hand.

Blaine rolled his eyes. "I was getting there, Lucas." Kurt chuckled when he saw Luke grimace. "Guys, this is my boyfriend, Kurt."

Kurt instantly froze beside Blaine after hearing his introduction; after hearing the little nine-letter word that had just slipped out of his mouth. Boyfriend. They hadn't talked about their relationship, how they would introduce themselves, what they called what they had. It wasn't that Kurt didn't like the way the word sounded coming from Blaine's lips, but it was something completely new to him. He'd never referred to anyone as his boyfriend, and no one had cared enough about him to consider using that term.

Blaine didn't seem to notice Kurt's attention drift away. He continued talking and Kurt was pulled out of his trance when he felt Blaine's arm wrap around his waist and pull him across the kitchen floor. "Kurt made dinner. He's a much better chef than I will ever be." Blaine felt Kurt shift himself behind him to hide, much like Carla had done just a few minutes earlier.

"It smells delicious," Stacy complimented. She picked Carla up and smacked her hand away when she reached for the bowl of strawberries. "Not yet, Carla."

Kurt smiled towards the mother and daughter. He had always enjoyed kids and the wonderful life they had. They were all so innocent; didn't have a care in the world. They saw the good in everyone else. He loved the imagination young kids seemed to have, something that seemed to dwindle with age. If there was anything Kurt worried about, it was that he'd never have a child of his own. A little girl with blonde curls and rosy cheeks or a dark-haired boy with dusty hands and grass-stained knees. He wanted a child he could raise with absolutely no judgment towards other, much like the way his own mother had raised him. He wanted to raise a child to notice the small, wonderful things in life rather than the much bigger materialistic parts.

The six of them filled their places, Stacy helping Carla with the toddler-likeable food, and made their way to the dinner table. Blaine's dining room wasn't used too often. When it was just him, there was no need to

sit down at the table and eat his dinner. It was much easier to stick his microwaveable meal on a paper plate or take the carry out containers to his coffee table where he could sit on his couch and eat. A couple nights a month, he found himself locked away in his office, not even coming out for dinner, but that wasn't too often.

"So, Kurt, you treating my man here alright?" Luke slapped Blaine on the back and shoved a piece of chicken in his mouth.

"I-I..." Kurt began stuttering, whether over Luke calling Blaine "his man" or because he was still trying to process that Blaine thought they were a couple, he wasn't sure.

"You'll have to excuse him," Blaine leaned over and whispered to Kurt. "He's a little blunt sometimes." Blaine looked over to his friend's barbecue-coated lips. "And a bit of a slob," he added as an afterthought. He briefly rubbed the top of Kurt's leg to try to calm his nerves.

"I can't help it. You've met your dad. If I were to act like this at the office, he'd have me fired. I have to let my true self come out at some point," Luke defended, but wiped away the sauce with his napkin.

"So, Kurt, what is it you do again?" Stacy changed the subject and Kurt gave her a thankful glance.

"I, um..." He suddenly remembered his conversation with Blaine the previous week when he said his father would disapprove of Kurt's profession, and hesitated to answer. But these were Blaine's friends. They may work for the same company as Blaine's dad, but that doesn't mean they share the same opinions. "I'm a flight attendant. That's actually how Blaine and I met."

"That's probably exciting," Johan said, doing his best to make Kurt feel included in their group. "Do you enjoy it?"

"The people aren't always the nicest and I get tired of always seeing the same thing—LAX—but it's a nice job. It's always a pleasant surprise when they send me somewhere new, though."

"Do they ever switch you for good?" Stacy asked.

"Not usually, but they..." Kurt looked towards Blaine. "They, uh, the airline actually asked if I wanted to fly back and forth to Ohio instead, but I turned them down." Kurt hid his face from Blaine and nonchalantly took a bite of his potatoes.

"Why did you turn it down?" Blaine finally asked after a long moment of silence.

Kurt shrugged. "The pay raise wasn't that great. I-I like LA and-"

"There was a pay raise?" Blaine interrupted, dropping his spoon and creating a loud clashing sound when it hit his plate. "Your family is in Ohio!" Their voices were beginning to raise.

"Oh, your family? Tell us about your family!" Stacy tried changing the subject, feeling awful for brining the current one up in the first place.

"I still wouldn't be able to see them. I barely have any time to grab lunch between flights."

"Is this what that email was about the other day? I knew something was wrong and you lied and said it was a picture from Rachel, didn't you? You didn't want me to know what was going on. What's the real reason you refused to change flights, Kurt? Ohio is closer and there's nothing special about LA. Please tell me it wasn't because of me."

"You switched flight times because of me!" Kurt argued.

"Yes, but that didn't prevent me from making more money or make me lose out on an opportunity to see my family. Kurt, you shouldn't have done that when you don't even know if we-"

"What? Won't work out? Won't be together for long? This was *my* decision, Blaine, and I did what I wanted to do. I'm happy with my schedule and the way things are."

"You can't be happy! You're never able to spend time with your family. And you would have more money to do what you want."

"I thought you said not everything in life was about money!"

"It's not, but-"

"No. No but's. I need some air. Excuse me." Kurt stood up and pushed his chair back under the table. "It was nice meeting you guys," he said to the three stunned faces staring back at him, before running to the balcony and closing the door behind him.

Chapter Five

Kurt knew he'd been on Blaine's balcony for over an hour, but he couldn't bring himself to slip back inside and face the friends he'd just met hours earlier. Though he wasn't completely to blame, he'd screwed up on a night that was important to Blaine. A night in which two different parts of Blaine's life were supposed to merge together and become one unified body. He felt bad for embarrassing Blaine and himself in front of their guests, but a part of him knew he had to say what he said.

The sun was setting behind the city and the air was just beginning to pick up a chill when he heard the glass doors slide open behind him and felt a blanket being draped over his shoulders. He looked to the side to see Blaine kneeling down on the ground next to him. They sat in silence for a few minutes before Blaine spoke up. "Jonah and Stacy had to get home to put Carla to bed and Luke went with them, but they said it was nice meeting you. They hope to do this again sometime. Dinner and all that."

Kurt didn't say anything, just giving a slight nod. He buried his face in his knees which were pulled up close to his body. Blaine shifted slightly and wrapped his arm around Kurt's shoulder to pull him closer. "I'm sorry, Blaine. I-I shouldn't have done that. Told you in there like that. It wasn't the right time."

"Shhh. It's my fault too. I shouldn't have overreacted the way I did. It's your life, not mine. I have no right to tell you what to do or how to live it, I just care about you. I want to make sure you're doing everything you can to make yourself happy because I *want* you to be happy. You deserve all the happiness you can get. Kurt, look at me please." When Kurt's eyes were on his once again, Blaine continued. "Kurt, your family is in Ohio and a raise would be great for you. It'd give you a little extra money to go home and see them. You could watch your niece grow up. I haven't known you for very long, but I do know how important your family is to you, and I don't want to see you giving up that opportunity just to be my flight attendant."

"Blaine, it's not like that. The raise is the only good thing about flying to Ohio, but it's nothing substantial. I'm happy where I am. I only work three days out of the week, sometimes four or five, and I get to spend my flights with you. Please, understand that I gave this a lot of thought. I even went so far as to make a pro/con list. The pros were so much more numerous." Kurt nuzzled into Blaine's side and the warmth of his body felt nice in contrast to the cold air surrounding him. "And don't apologize for giving me your opinion. Sometimes that's exactly what someone needs to hear. I shouldn't have gotten so mad at you when you cared so much. I'm just not used to that."

Blaine buried his face in Kurt's hair and kissed the top of his head. "I didn't mean that, by the way. About us not being together for very long. I just wanted you to think about yourself and not worry about me. You may not be used to people caring, but I'm not used to things lasting."

"I'm sorry your friends had to see that."

"It's okay. They're used to it. Luke always fights with his boyfriends; that's why he's still single."

"He's gay?" Kurt asked, shocked and feeling a little threatened that Blaine was so close to someone who would be so eager to take him away from Kurt.

Blaine just shrugged it off. "Yeah. The more you get to know him, the more obvious it gets."

"Earlier, when you introduced me, you introduced me as your boyfriend." Kurt tilted his head so he could look at Blaine again.

"Oh. W-was that okay with you? I-I didn't mean anything by it. I guess I just assumed. I mean, we've kissed and went on a date." Blaine was rambling, quite quickly and without pausing for a breath. "It seems like you maybe liked me as more than a friend. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said anything. We can just forg-"

Kurt placed a finger over his lips to silence him. "Do you want me to be your boyfriend?" Blaine nodded slowly. "Good. I want you to be my boyfriend, Mr. Anderson."

Blaine's smile was bright enough to light the entire city. "I feel privileged to be dating one Mr. Kurt Hummel."

"You should. I don't let just anybody claim that title." Kurt let out a content sigh. "I don't think we should tell anyone though, at least not yet. I'm just afraid that my bosses won't like me having a romance with one of the passengers. It sounds like a scandalous movie to me," he laughed.

"If that's what you want. Like I said, I just want you to be happy." Blaine pulled Kurt as close as possible and began kissing him, this time not worrying about being gentle or sweet. The kiss was full of passion, emitting every emotion Blaine had been trying so hard to keep inside. Kurt's lips moved against his in a way he had never felt with anyone else before and it sent shivers down his spine. Their tongues found each other and began exploring as their hands intertwined and Blaine's free hand reached up to cup Kurt's face. Blaine felt intoxicated by Kurt and found it almost impossible to pull away.

Kurt looked through the glass doors and into the kitchen, noticing the stack of plates and pans on the kitchen counter near the sink. "Would you like to clean up the dishes now? I can help."

Blaine released Kurt and tugged on the blanket as he stood up, forcing Kurt to his feet as well. "Thank you for tonight. Things may not have gone as planned, but they really did like you."

Kurt didn't say a word, but instead, walked into the kitchen leaving a love-struck Blaine on the balcony.

They found themselves curled up on the couch later that night, finally able to finish their Harry Potter marathon—Kurt had brought the DVDs with them in the event they had some time to themselves. Kurt listened as the familiar scenes played on Blaine's screen and it wasn't until he had allowed his face to bury in the crook of Blaine's neck that he realized how exhausted he actually was. His eyes began to close involuntarily but he quickly opened them back up.

"Tired?" Blaine asked. He had his right arm wrapped around Kurt's body and the fingers on his right hand danced around on the open palm of Kurt's left hand.

Kurt lifted his head up just enough to look him in the eyes. "I haven't gotten much sleep the past few nights. It's no big deal."

"Is everything okay?" Blaine asked, worried.

"Yeah, everything's fine. I've just had a lot on my mind."

Blaine leaned forward to and grabbed the remote to pause the movie. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Kurt sat up slightly and supported his weight on his elbow. "I've been thinking about you." Blaine's mouth formed an "oh" but no words came out. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Of course." Blaine pressed a kiss to Kurt's temple.

"How many relationships have you been in? Serious relationships, that is."

Blaine shifted uncomfortably and looked away. He wasn't expecting *that* question to come out of Kurt's mouth, at least not yet. He knew they would eventually have to talk about it, that it would eventually come up in one of their conversations; topics like that always did. But he wasn't ready to talk about it yet. His past wasn't something he was proud of or liked to think about too often, and he was scared that the truth would make Kurt reevaluate a future with him. "One," he finally muttered and began to stare at the paused frame on his TV.

Sensing Blaine didn't want to say much more about his past relationship, Kurt moved on to talk about his own experiences. "I've never been in a serious relationship. I've dated guys, but never for more than a few weeks at a time. It was never something I wanted. Not until I met you. It may seem silly to be thinking about having a future with someone you've only known for a couple of weeks, but it just seemed like new possibilities had come up. Possibilities I didn't even know I had."

"Are-Are you going to run out of his relationship?" Blaine was worried he'd end up heartbroken with nothing left of the boy who was unknowingly teaching him how to love; teaching him what *real* love could be like.

"What? No!" Kurt finally sat up all the way. "Blaine, you don't have to worry about that. Those guys, the ones I dated, they just weren't right for me. That's why it never lasted. I'd intentionally picked them because I knew after I started to get to know them, they'd be the complete opposite of what I wanted. It was *easy* to let them go. It would be much harder to allow you to slip out of my life. You *are* exactly what I want. It's scary as hell, but it feels right. So please, don't worry about that, okay?"

Blaine forced Kurt to lie back down beside him and quickly kissed him. "Today has been good for us, don't you think? This is kind of our first real conversation, at least about relationships and our futures."

"Yeah. It's been nice. It feels better to know things are out." Kurt smiled into Blaine's shirt.

"Are we ready for the rest of the movie?"

"Tired," Kurt yawned and closed his eyes once again.

Blaine pushed play anyway, knowing it would only be a matter of minutes before Kurt was asleep in his arms.

"What is that?" Kurt was sitting on Blaine's couch after work the following night when Blaine walked out of his room carrying a box. When Kurt spotted the familiar logo, he stared at him as if he were crazy.

"Twister." He sat the box down on the coffee table and removed the lid. "Come on. Didn't you ever play this when you were younger? It will be fun." He unfolded the plastic mat and spread it out across the floor. After picking up the spinner, he removed his shoes and stepped onto the mat, spinning the plastic arrow. "Left foot blue." He glanced at Kurt and waited for him to stand up.

"You're serious..." Kurt laughed.

"I wouldn't joke about something like this. Now get over here." Kurt did as he was told and placed his left foot on the blue circle next to Blaine's. Blaine spun five more times before handing it to Kurt. "Your turn."

Kurt sighed, but took the spinner from Blaine anyway and gave the little black arrow a flick. "Right hand read." Blaine immediately reached in front of him and placed his hand on one of the red circles. "Hey! You stole my circle!"

"What do you mean *your* circle?"

"I mean that's my circle. You made it impossible for me to reach any of the other ones."

"Not impossible, just challenging. You can always crawl over me." Kurt shot him a look of annoyance. "Hey. I'm in it to win it."

"If I fall, you're going down too."

"We'll see about that," Blaine said as Kurt began to reach across his back. Before he could put his hand back on the ground, he felt something poke him in the side. He immediately squirmed and by the time he realized it was Blaine's finger it was already too late. He lost his balance when Blaine tickled him and fell down on top of him. "I think it's a tie," Blaine declared.

"I think you're a cheater!" Kurt stuck his tongue out at him, but sat between his legs and let his back rest against his chest. Blaine put his arms around Kurt's stomach and held tightly on to him.

"Do you really think that wasn't fun?" Blaine whispered in his hear and reached up to run his hand through Kurt's hair. "Have I mentioned how much I love your hair?"

"I don't think so," Kurt said quietly, leaning into his touch.

"Well I do. Never change it. I like the way it curls around your ear. It's cute, just like you." That's all it took for Kurt to melt inside and the millions of butterflies in his stomach took off at once. It had been a while since someone had genuinely called him cute. "You ready for Willy Wonka now?"

"Willy Wonka? That was your big plan for the night? Watching a bunch of oompa loompas dancing around in a chocolate factory?" Kurt chuckled and nestled his head against Blaine's shoulder. "Sounds perfect. You know, when I was little I wanted to be an oompa loompa. That or marry one. I hadn't decided."

"Really? Well I must be disappointing then. I'm no oompa loompa."

"Eh, things change. I'd choose you over an oompa loompa any day." Kurt pulled away from him and stood up, extending his hand for Blaine to take. Once he helped him up, he sat down on the couch and waited for Blaine to slip in the DVD. "You know, I haven't even seen the new Willy Wonka movie. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. One should just never remake the classis. It's like if they were to redo something like The Sound of Music or Dirty Dancing. It's just wrong."

Blaine took his place next to Kurt and laid down on the couch, as close to each other as they could be while still comfortable. "You're so silly sometimes, but I agree. You aren't missing out on much. Johnny Depp isn't even that great of an actor."

"Yeah. He's not even that attractive," Kurt pointed out and he noticed Blaine rolling his eyes. "What?"

"Nothing. I just can't believe you said that. Can't say I disagree with you though. I'm much more of a Chris Pine type of guy myself."

"He has pretty eyes," Kurt agreed. "Not as pretty as yours though. You may like my hair, but I love your eyes. I could never get tired of looking at them."

"You're perfect, you know that?" Blaine began rubbing circles into his side.

"Not quite," Kurt rejected. Blaine kissed the top of his head before turning his attention to the movie. There wasn't anything else he'd rather be doing.

"I have an idea," Kurt said when Blaine returned, carrying two cans of pop in his hands. When the movie ended, the two of them remained curled up on the couch with a blanket draped over their warm bodies. After about ten minutes of silence and just enjoying each other's presence, Blaine sat up, pulling Kurt along with him. They decided they were both thirsty so he quickly disappeared into the kitchen.

"What is that?" he asked as he sat down on the couch across from Kurt, facing his direction and crossing his legs. Blaine handed him a coke before taking a sip from his own can.

Kurt mirrored his position on the couch and placed his hands on his knees. "We should go to a bar tonight," he suggested. "I mean, I don't want to get drunk, but I want to go. I can't remember the last time I allowed myself to be so loose and let go of reality for one night. I mean...we don't have to if you don't want to, but I'd like to."

"Of course we can. I know the perfect place too." He placed his hand on top of Kurt's.

"You know where the good bars are? Should I be worried about that?" Kurt joked.

"I don't drink, so I don't think you have anything to worry about."

"Ever?"

"Not anymore."

Kurt sensed there was more to the story but shook off the feeling. "Stop giving me reasons as to why you're perfect. No one is supposed to be perfect."

"I'm not. Now come on. I wanna take you through Central Park along the way. I'll take you to a bar, but I want a little more sober time with you first." Blaine stood up from the couch and made his way over to the coat closet.

"Not that I'm complaining about a walk through Central Park with you, but I already told you I'm not getting drunk. It's already 7:00 anyway. I just want one drink, and then we can leave."

"You say that now, but just wait," Blaine contradicted. He pulled on his shoes and grabbed their jackets while Kurt tied the laces on his knee-high boots.

"You have so little faith in me!" Blaine held up a jacket and Kurt slipped his arms through the sleeves. Their hands found each other and they walked out of the apartment, pausing just long enough to lock the door behind them.

When they finally made it out of the building and onto the streets, Blaine moaned. Kurt looked up to the sky to find dark clouds streaking across the sky and a few drops of water landed on his face. "I guess we can take a cab instead."

"No," Kurt grabbed his arm and turned him around when he started to head towards the street and pulled himself close to Blaine's side. "Let's walk anyway. When's the last time you danced in the rain? I mean, people always do when they're younger but never when they grow up. There's something magical to me about walking through Central Park with you. I always feel like I'm sharing a part of myself that only you understand. It'll be a blast, so what do you say?"

Blaine wrapped his arms around Kurt's waist and their bodies were pressed so close that Kurt could almost feel Blaine's heart beating inside of his chest, despite the numerous layers between them. He imagined Blaine could feel his as well. Blaine had the ability to make Kurt feel nervous as well as strangely at ease all at the same time.

"I think that sounds like a plan. We better get going, though. You've got a long night ahead of you."

By the time they reached Central Park the drops of rain falling on their faces had grown in size and number. Kurt's jacket was damp and he could feel the warm water seeping through his jeans. They jumped into every puddle they saw as Blaine held his hand and led him around the park. By the time the rain was steadily falling, the sun had completely set behind the horizon and the only lights in the park were the lamps set periodically along the sides of the paths. When they finally stopped running around, Blaine pulled Kurt as close as he could. "Thank you for playing in the rain with me," Kurt whispered in his ear as a smile spread across his face.

Blaine looked him in the eyes as if he were searching for permission for what he was about to do next—afraid Kurt was scared of what might happen if they kissed in public. Kurt leaned his forehead against Blaine's and wrapped his arms as tightly around him as he could, clasping his hands together against the small of Blaine's back. Blaine moved his head closer and lightly placed his lips against Kurt's. Kurt could feel the rain enter through the corners of his mouth when Blaine's warm lips opened up, continuing the kiss. He brought his right hand up to Kurt's face and slightly deepened the kiss. His tongue barely found

Kurt's before he pulled away. The entire kiss was tender, yet passionate, and to Kurt, it was perfect. When they pulled away enough to look at each other once again, neither of them said anything; but they didn't need to. Their smiles were confirmation enough of how happy they were in that moment. They were together, and for the first time, Kurt had someone to be affectionate with in public without the fear of being abused, physically or emotionally. He had someone to stand up with him, his knight in shining armor, as sappy as that sounds. He wasn't in Lima anymore, and he definitely wasn't with someone who was just looking for a one-night stand, something Kurt was used to.

Blaine finally broke the silence. "Are you ready to go get drunk?"

"I'm ready to go get *one* drink." Kurt rolled his eyes.

"I'm just predicting it'll have more of an effect on you than you believe." He pulled away even more and laced his fingers in Kurt's before bringing their hands to their face and kissing the back of Kurt's.

"We'll see about that," Kurt challenged.

"Kurt, come on, get in the cab." Kurt felt Blaine pull on his arm, trying to force him inside the yellow car. "We're going home."

Kurt stumbled off the sidewalk and almost fell off the curb, but Blaine caught him and wrapped a hand around his waist. "I don' wanna go home. I wanna play in duh rain," he said, slurring his words.

"The rain is gone. Come on. Turn around." He sat Kurt down on the seat and slid his legs inside. Kurt felt Blaine's hands push on his side, moving across the seat just enough for him to slide in beside Kurt. He told the cab driver the address of his apartment as he shut the door and buckled up.

"Tired," Kurt said, laying his head on Blaine's chest.

"We'll be home soon," he responded.

"M'I brunk?"

"Shh. Just a little. It'll wear off in a few hours." He rubbed Kurt's arm and sat back against the window. To Kurt, it only seemed like a few minutes had passed before Blaine was dragging him through the front door. "Go sit down on the bed. I'll be right there." Kurt stumbled through the door and pulled off his coat as he sat down on the bed. Not even a minute later Blaine appeared in front of him and unlaced his shoes. "Just lay down for a bit, okay? Get some rest. I'll be right in the living room if you need anything."

Once he left the room, Kurt rested his head on one of the pillows at the head of the bed. The past couple of hours were no more than a blur. He didn't know how much he drank or how long they were even there. All he knew was that he was definitely a little tipsy.

Kurt drifted off to sleep and woke up two hours later when Blaine came into the room to change into sweats. He shifted in his bed and looked in Blaine's direction. "Oh. I'm sorry for waking you." He quickly pulled his sweats over his boxers and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"It's fine. I'm sorry for drinking so much."

"You actually only had one drink. It was just big and you asked for extra tequila. I knew it would affect you more than you thought it would," he laughed.

"I guess I should've listened to you."

"It's okay. You were having fun and I was there to take care of you. That's all that matters." Blaine moved onto the bed and rested his back against the pillows next to Kurt. "I was going to go to bed, but if you want to do something else I can stay up."

"It's fine. I've actually got a headache now. I should probably get some sleep."

"Alright. Well if you change your mind, don't be afraid to wake me up." When Blaine pulled back the covers and slid under them Kurt started to move, but Blaine stopped him. "Why...why don't you, you know...stay in here tonight?"

Kurt stared at him, trying to comprehend what he was saying. "With you?"

"Yeah. I mean, you're already in here and this bed is much more comfortable than the couch," Blaine paused. "But, I mean, if it makes you uncomfortable in any way you can just forget it."

"No. It doesn't." Kurt crawled under the covers next to him. "Thanks for tonight," he said and leaned up to place a kiss on Blaine's lips.

"You're welcome. It was definitely on my list of favorites. At least the first half was."

"What? Do you mean you don't like to take care of my drunken ass?"

"No, I like taking care of you. It was more of the fact that you were trying to make out with me in the middle of the bar. Gay bar or not, I've never been one to flaunt my relationship in public."

Kurt blushed. "Was I really? I'm sorry."

"Yeah. That's why getting you into the cab was so difficult. I had to help you remain upright but every time I would get close to you, you would try to force your tongue into my mouth. It made walking rather difficult."

"Oh my gosh. I'm never drinking again," Kurt groaned, covering his face and burying it in Blaine's chest.

"You can drink again. You just can't have tequila in public anymore."

"You'd really go to a bar with me again after tonight? Are you aware that you're kinda crazy?"

"I think it's cute. Plus, you weren't *that* bad. If we weren't in the middle of a crowded room, I don't know that I would've stopped you."

"Oh really?" Kurt said, shifting into a more comfortable position. "We're not in public right now..." He trailed off and a grin spread across his face.

Blaine leaned closer and Kurt felt Blaine's lips crush against his own. "You're right. We're not," Blaine mumbled. Kurt wasn't expecting him to actually go along with what he was suggesting, but Blaine grabbed the side of his face and Kurt felt Blaine's tongue test its boundaries on his lips. When Kurt opened his mouth slightly, Blaine slipped his tongue inside and sucked on Kurt's bottom lip. The entire kiss was wet and Kurt's slightly drunken state couldn't have helped any. Blaine briefly pulled away and his eyes met Kurt's as if they were searching for some kind of permission to continue. Kurt placed his lips back against Blaine, this time forcing *his* tongue into *Blaine's* mouth. Their legs intertwined and Kurt buried his right hand deep into Blaine's thick curls. Blaine pulled away before anything more could happen but rested his

forehead against Kurt's. "I could get used to this," he said, giving Kurt one more kiss, much more chaste than the first one.

"I think I could too." Those were the last shared words that night before the two drifted off to sleep.

"Shit." Blaine woke up to the sound of Kurt scrambling out of bed. "Shit shit shit."

He grabbed Kurt's arm and pulled him back down onto the bed. "What's the matter?"

"Blaine, it's 5:45. I have work today. We have to be at the airport in forty-five minutes and I still have to go home to get my uniform!"

"You look adorable in that little hat, by the way." Blaine smirked and enjoyed the pleasant picture in his head.

"Don't even try to make me feel better." He leaned forward to kiss Blaine. "I'll just go grab a cab home and see you later."

"Wait." Blaine stopped him from standing. "Let me just change and I'll go with you."

"Blaine, I-"

"Just give me five minutes, okay?"

Kurt silently nodded and Blaine disappeared into his walk-in closet. Kurt impatiently drummed his hand against his knee and didn't take his eyes away from the closet's doorway until Blaine emerged three minutes later, full dressed. By the time they reached the cab, they had thirty-seven minutes before Kurt had to be at the airport. They arrived at Kurt's apartment in a decent amount of time, and Kurt tossed his car keys in Blaine's direction.

"What are these for?" Blaine picked them up and inspected the little, silver keys.

"Can you get my car while I go change? It's in the lot I always park it." He hopped out of the cab, but stuck his head back inside the door. "You can pick me up in front and drive to the airport while I finish getting into my uniform.

"But, I-"

"Please, Blaine? We have to be at the airport in twenty-five minutes."

"Y-yeah. I'll go get it," Blaine gave in, knowing he'd do anything Kurt asked him to. He hated that, because there was still the fear that Kurt would run. That Kurt would ask him to leave because he wasn't used to being in a relationship, and he knew if those words ever came out of his mouth, he'd have to obey. Kurt wasn't used to making a commitment with someone, and commitment was something Blaine had also begun to fear over time.

"Thank you," Kurt sighed in relief and ran up the stairs into his apartment complex.

Blaine paid the cab driver and stepped out of the taxi to find Kurt's car. It didn't take long—it was in the exact place Kurt had parked it for the past two weeks. He stuck the key in the ignition and Kurt's car roared to life. It wasn't the first time he'd driven a friend's car, but it was the first time he'd driven Kurt's. It'd been awhile since he'd driven in the city—for his own convenience, he preferred to take a taxi—and all he hoped was that he would make it to the airport with little to no trouble.

He pulled the car around to the front of the apartment and saw Kurt already waiting on the curb, dressed in his pants, white button up shirt, and untied shoes with his jacket and hat in hand.

"Thank you so much, Blaine." Kurt slid in the passenger's side door and began lacing up his shoes. "We have eighteen minutes. Apart from the event of any roadwork or heavy traffic, I think we'll make it on time."

Blaine reached over to rest a hand on Kurt's leg. "You have to admit that we both slept pretty well last night."

"Yes, because I had a hangover and passed out." He slipped his jacket on and buttoned it up.

"So it had nothing to do with you sleeping beside me?" Blaine said with wide, puppy eyes.

"Maybe a little bit." Kurt reached over and brushed a curl away from Blaine's forehead. "You know, you're not looking so dapper today, Mr. Anderson. The people at the office might wonder what you're up to."

"I'll just tell them I had this horrible flight attendant who made me want to pull my hair out so much, I went so far as to actually attempt to do so."

Kurt rolled his eyes and grabbed Blaine's hand and rested them on the console between the two. "If my dad knew I was dating someone who was so rude to his son, he would put a stop to it."

"Wait, your dad doesn't even know about us?" Blaine took his eyes off the road for a few seconds to look at Kurt, wanting to see his expression when he answered.

"Well, no. We agreed not to tell anyone."

"But he's your dad. My friends know!"

"Yes, but they knew before *I* did. You introduced me as your boyfriend before we agreed not to tell anyone."

"Your family isn't just anyone, Kurt. What happens if they come to New York to visit you? Are you just going to lock me away while they're with you? Do I not get to meet the people who are most important to you? Are you that ashamed of me?"

"What? Why would I be ashamed of you?" Kurt squeezed Blaine's hand, but Blaine quickly pulled his hand out of Kurt's. "Blaine, I didn't know this was so important to you. I would've told them if I had known, I just...my dad can be a little overprotective. I've never really talked to him about boys, and I've never had to bring a boyfriend home to him. I'm just worried about how he'll react."

"Well the last time I was brought home to a parent, they disapproved and nearly threw me out of the house. I'm not expecting anything better than that." Blaine's eyes grew wide and he instantly regretted mentioning that part of his past, no matter how small a piece of the puzzle it was.

"What do you mean? What happened?" Kurt held his hand out, palm up, but placed it back in his lap when Blaine didn't take it.

"Nothing. I shouldn't have said anything."

"Blaine, what are you doing for Thanksgiving?" Kurt finally asked.

Blaine shot a few side glances at Kurt before shaking his head. "I don't know. My dad gives the office the week off, but he still goes in. I usually just take that time to catch up on errands and stuff."

Kurt extended his hand again. Blaine looked down at it for a few seconds before finally taking it.

"Will you come home with me? Not to my apartment in New York, but to Ohio? I want you to meet my dad. You can see Elizabeth and Rachel and Finn. You can meet Carole. Carole is going to fall in love with you." Blaine's grip on Kurt's hand tightened. "Oh, turn left up here. We're parking in the employee lot," Kurt pointed when he noticed they'd arrived at the airport. "So what do you say? Will you spend the week with me?"

Blaine's breath caught in his throat, but he finally managed to exhale and loosen his hold on Kurt's hand a little. "Kurt, you don't have to."

"But I want to." He leaned over to rest his head on Blaine's shoulder and smiled up at him. "Please?"

There was that look again; those words that Blaine couldn't resist. All it took was Kurt asking him once before Blaine knew it'd be impossible to turn him down. "I'd like that."

"Good. I'll get the flight set up when I get home." He kissed Blaine on the cheek before pulling away and returning to his side of the car. "You'll have to show them my ID when you get to the gate. It's the only way you'll be able to get in."

They made their way inside and Blaine found a spot relatively close to the front. He unfastened his seatbelt and reached towards the door handle.

"What are you doing?" Kurt asked.

"I'm opening my door." Blaine acted as if Kurt were going crazy.

"You can't go in there yet. We can't show up together. Let me go first, and you can follow in a few minutes, okay?" Blaine pulled his hand away from the door and nodded his head in agreement. "Thank you." They each leaned in to kiss each other goodbye. "I'll see you on the flight."

"I'll be waiting."

Chapter Six

"Dad. Hi. It's me. I-It's Kurt."

"Yeah, I can hear you, buddy. You on your way here yet?"

"Um, y-yeah. Actually, I just stepped off the plane a few minutes ago."

"Oh. Did you need me to pick you up? I can come if you need me to."

"No, it's okay, Dad. I can just get a cab." Kurt led Blaine around the familiar airport on their way to get their luggage. Blaine remained quiet and allowed Kurt to talk to his dad, who still had no clue he was expecting an additional visitor for Thanksgiving. It was the Tuesday before and they'd just flown into Columbus on the mid-morning flight from New York.

"When do you think you'll get here?"

"Um, maybe two and a half hours, give or take." *There's our bags*, Kurt mouthed to Blaine as their suitcases passed by on the conveyer belt. Blaine slung Kurt's bag over his shoulder and pulled the handle up on his own suitcase.

"Alright. Well I hope you're hungry. Carole's making a big homecoming dinner for you."

"Dinner? Thanksgiving isn't for another two days, Dad. She knows she doesn't have to cook, right?"

"It's Carole. She's as happy to see you as I am, and I think this is her way of convincing you to come home more often."

"Well that's good. We're actually starved. We didn't have time to eat breakfast."

"We?" Burt wasn't sure if he misunderstood Kurt.

"O-Oh. Um, yeah. I-I brought someone home with me. I hope that's okay." Kurt glanced over at Blaine as he walked patiently beside Kurt. They headed out of the front of the airport and Blaine managed to flag down a taxi and loaded their bags in the trunk as Kurt slid inside.

"Kurt, if this is another cat, you better make sure Rachel doesn't see it. Remember the last time you-"

"Dad," Kurt cut him off and Blaine slid in beside him. "It's not another cat. He, um, h-his name is Blaine." He reached out to grab Blaine's hand and snuggled up to his side. "I'm sorry if this is short notice, but I wanted you to meet him and-"

"Is this Blaine guy, uh, who is he?"

Kurt hesitated. This was the conversation he wanted to have with his dad in person. The one where he introduced Blaine as his boyfriend, and Burt could see how great Blaine was for himself before forming an opinion. Kurt didn't want to tell his dad that his only son was bringing home his first boyfriend over the phone, but it seemed he had no other choice. "He....Blaine is my....boyfriend," he finally said, letting out a deep breath.

Burt was silent on the other line for what seemed like an eternity to Kurt before responding. *"Y-your boyfriend."*

"Yes. My boyfriend," Kurt repeated, this time with a little more ease.

"Is...does he make you happy?"

Kurt smiled up at Blaine who was gently rubbing his arm as he spoke with his dad. Blaine stared out of the taxi and took in the unfamiliar city he'd just stepped foot into. Kurt watched Blaine's profile and noticed the corners of his lips turn up, the way his long eyelashes curled perfectly, and felt the warm arm around his side pull him closer. "Yeah, Dad. He does."

"Well, I'll let you...go. Um, I'll see the two of you in a few hours?" Burt suddenly wished Kurt had been bringing home a cat instead. A cat would be much easier to prepare himself for than Kurt's boyfriend. *Boyfriend.* The word seemed so foreign when associated with Kurt. His Kurt. The Kurt he'd had tea parties with. The Kurt he'd helped patch up after a bicycle accident. The Kurt who put on numerous mini concerts in their tiny living room as he grew up. To Burt, it didn't seem real that Kurt had other priorities in his life now like, dare he say it, love.

"Alright. I love you, Dad."

"Love you too, Kurt." Kurt didn't miss the way his voice cracked on the last word.

"Bye." Kurt ended the call and slipped his phone into his pocket and yawned.

"You were up all night packing and barely got any sleep. Why don't you take a nap on the way to your house?" Blaine suggested.

"I don't want to leave you by yourself for two hours."

"I'll be fine. I'm enjoying the scenery. It's something new and different from New York." He pulled Kurt's head against his chest and kissed his soft hair, smelling the sweet smell of Kurt's organic, coconut shampoo. Kurt closed his eyes and hummed into Blaine's shirt. "You got the hard part over with, at least—you told your dad about me."

Kurt laughed quietly. "If you think that was the hard part, you're in for a treat."

When the cab pulled up to one of the many unfamiliar houses, Blaine kissed Kurt's forehead and nudged him in the side, fully aware of the two faces peeping through the curtains. Kurt tossed and mumbled a bit, but cracked his eyes open just enough to prove he was awake.

"We're here, sweetie." Blaine forced him to sit up—over the course of the two hour car ride, he'd managed to shift into a laying position with his head wresting in Blaine's lap. Blaine didn't mind of course. It allowed him to absentmindedly play with the thick hair on top of Kurt's head as he gazed out the window.

Kurt sat up and looked towards the house. "We are," he smiled, suddenly much more awake. "Come on. You have to meet them eventually." He took Blaine's hand and pulled him out of the taxi. Blaine paid the driver as Kurt hoisted their luggage out of the trunk and he drove off at once. He extended his arm in the air with his palm up and waited for Blaine to take it before pulling him close to his side. Kurt led them down the sidewalk and past a few well-trimmed coniferous bushes, his grin spreading wider with each step they took towards the house.

Blaine's nerves were starting to get to him and he hoped Kurt couldn't feel his palms start to sweat or his pulse start to accelerate. Meeting someone's parents was a big step in any relationship, but for Blaine, it was one of the most nerve-wracking experiences he went through. Blaine was broken. He was haunted with past experiences, past mistakes, and past rejection. He was afraid that Kurt's family, however kind and accepting they may be of Kurt's sexuality, wouldn't like him because they wanted more for Kurt.

"...which is actually the same one my mom planted when I was little." Kurt stopped talking when he realized Blaine wasn't paying attention. "Blaine, is everything okay?"

"What? Yeah." Blaine felt bad that he'd spaced out when he realized Kurt had been talking about his mom, something he didn't often feel comfortable doing. "I'm sorry, I just got distracted. This is all so overwhelming. What were you saying about your mom?"

"I was just talking about how-"

"Kurt!" Carole opened the front door and stepped onto the porch, pulling Kurt into a hug. "It's so good to see you, honey!"

Burt stepped through the door behind Carole and immediately looked Blaine up and down as if his appearance was the only thing influencing his opinion. Blaine awkwardly shifted his weight from one foot to the other as he glanced at Kurt and Carole interacting. When Kurt looked up, Blaine gave him a desperate look as if pleading to help him, which he quickly complied to.

"Dad, this is Blaine." Kurt resumed his position close to Blaine's side and wrapped a comforting hand around his waist. "Blaine, this is my dad, Burt, and his wife, Carole."

Blaine moved forward and held out his hand, hoping Burt would at least be kind enough to shake it. Instead, he was surprised when Burt wrapped his arms around him and gave Blaine a hug. "There's no need to be formal. We love hugs around here," Burt said, pulling away, "don't we, Kurt?"

"Of course we do," he grinned in response.

Blaine sighed in relief when he felt Burt's acceptance. The three men made their way inside and sat down on the couch as Carole made tea. Blaine didn't want to push his boundaries; didn't want Burt to regret giving him a chance. He kept a small distance between himself and Kurt on the couch, but Kurt wasn't having any of that. Kurt moved over and curled up against Blaine's side.

"Dad likes to watch the sports channel with Finn," Kurt explained. "Finn and Rachel will be here any minute, so now is your only chance to escape."

Blaine glanced at a Burt who was reclined in his chair and intently watching the game on the TV. "It's fine. I'll watch the game with them. Football isn't too bad. You might be able to enjoy it too." He thought he heard Burt chuckle, but insisted it must've been his imagination.

Kurt didn't point out that it would be nearly impossible for him to enjoy watching the game, short of Blaine putting on the uniform and playing himself. Instead, he kept his head rested on Blaine's shoulder with his legs draped over Blaine's knee and pretended to watch the game.

Not too long after Finn arrived—Rachel ended up driving separate and hadn't arrived with Elizabeth yet—Kurt wandered into the kitchen in hopes of escaping the rest of the football game. To Kurt's surprise, Blaine seemed to be enjoying himself. He knew more about football than Kurt had expected him to, which made it easier for him to interact with Finn and his dad. They talked about other teams, past players, predicted what plays the teams would make, and groaned in unison after each incomplete pass. It made Kurt happy to see Blaine fitting in so well with his family. It felt like Blaine had become a part of it long ago, rather than a few hours earlier.

"Hey, sweetie. Game not too interesting?" Carole was in the process of cutting up some fruit for their fruit salad.

"Not at all. I just don't understand the point of a sport like football or what could possibly claim the attention of a man for such a long period of time." Kurt sat down on the bar stool behind the counter and picked up a knife to help cut the strawberries.

"You used to play, Kurt," Carole laughed. "Didn't you at least have a little bit of fun?"

"Carole!" Kurt hissed and looked into the living room just as the three boys erupted in cheers. Obviously something good had just happened. "Blaine could hear you!"

"You don't want him to know?" she eyed him cautiously.

"I just...he doesn't know that much about my time in high school; at least not yet. I'm not ready to explain everything that happened."

Carole nodded, but remained silent. They continued chopping the fruit and once that was finished, Kurt stood up and headed to the pantry. "Mind if I make dessert?" he asked as he browsed the shelves.

"Not at all. Any idea of what you want to make?"

"Just whatever I can find. Blaine loves anything sweet, and although I shouldn't encourage his unhealthy eating habits, I want him to feel comfortable here." He pulled out a box of graham cracker crust mix.

Carole placed a hand on Kurt's arm and pointed into the living room. Kurt followed her finger to the three men, all sitting on the edge of the chairs and incredibly close to the TV in anticipation of the next move. He noticed Blaine's smile, and the way he seemed so relaxed while sitting next to Kurt's dad. "I think he'll be fine," Carole said softly. She looked up to study Kurt; the way he was looking at Blaine, the things he said about the man in the other room, the way he acted when they were around each other. "You really like him. I can tell."

Kurt blushed and tore his eyes away from Blaine. He pulled a few bowls out of the cabinet after deciding on a raspberry cheesecake. "I do. He sort of popped up out of nowhere when I least expected it, but he's exactly what I've needed." He smiled affectionately at Blaine before pulling the ingredients he needed out of refrigerator. "It's funny because until I met him, I had no clue what I was missing out on. I had convinced myself I was happy with my life and how independent I was, but now I don't know how that could've been possible."

"How long have you known him? I mean, when did you guys actually start dating?" Carole had stopped everything she was doing and totally focused all of her attention on Kurt. It was one thing Kurt loved about Carole. No matter what she was doing, she always took the time to be there for Kurt. She was there to listen, to comfort him, to be a friend when he didn't have anyone else to go to. He had grown quite fond of his stepmom and although no one could replace his mom, Carole was the best alternative he could've asked for.

"We met a little over a month ago, but we've only been together for a couple of weeks. It seems like so much longer though." He measured out a few ingredients and poured them in a bowl. Carole took the measuring cups from him and quickly rinsed them out before setting them back on the counter. "I... It's crazy how close to him I feel. I've told him things I've never told anyone else. Things about my mom and conversations I've had with her. Those were things I kept so private because they were a part of her that only I knew about. They were memories I didn't have to share with anyone else. But with Blaine, I want to

tell him everything about her. I want to share her with him. I want Blaine to feel like he met her himself because she was so important to me. I..." He continued stirring the contents in the bowl as a tear escaped his eye. "I'm sorry. I should've have gotten into this. I don't want you to feel like she's more special or her opinion is more important than yours is."

Carole reached across the counter to stop Kurt's hand from stirring. Once he looked up, she smiled. "Kurt, I know how important your mom is to you. I love you, but she'll always have a special place in your life. You don't have to worry about that."

"Do you like him? Blaine?"

"Yes. He's sweet. I don't know much about him, but I can tell he's a good guy with the right intentions."

"What about my mom. Do you think she would like him?"

"Of course she would. You were in entire world, Kurt. If I know anything about your mom, it's that her number one priority was to see you happy. *Blaine* makes you happy and that's all that would matter to her." She brushed away the tear on Kurt's cheek and began stirring. "Mind if I help out? I'm just waiting for the chicken to finish in the oven."

"Of course." No, Carole wasn't Kurt's mom, but it was times like these when he didn't know what he would ever do without her.

"Touchdown!" Finn shouted and bounced in his chair. The game went to commercial, signaling that halftime was starting. "I'm going to go grab a snack and call Rachel. You guys need anything?"

"No thank you," Blaine said politely.

Burt shook his head. Once Finn left the room, Burt turned to Blaine. Blaine was suddenly uncomfortable being alone with Kurt's dad. All of his fears came rushing back to him. Yes, Burt had accepted him at first, but that didn't mean his opinion wouldn't change once he got to know him better. Burt could have put on an act to satisfy Kurt, trying to convince him he was okay with the situation when, in reality, he wasn't. Blaine stiffened and sat up straighter on the couch before meeting Burt's eyes.

"So you like football?" Burt asked. He was still leaning forward in his chair in a casual pose, something that made him a little less intimidating to Blaine.

"Yes, sir. A little," Blaine replied. "My brother used to watch it when I was younger and I'd picked up on the basic rules and principles of the game." He realized that was the first time he'd mentioned his brother. He hadn't even told Kurt about Cooper Anderson, his defiant brother who broke out of the Anderson household and never looked back, something Blaine wasn't able to do. He rarely talked to him, not because they didn't get along, but because his father had forbid him from doing so. Yes, Blaine was an adult and his dad was no longer able to stop him, but talking to Cooper was hard on him. He was envious of the life Cooper had and how brave and courageous he had been. Cooper was stronger than Blaine; strong enough to leave the house when Blaine was just fourteen.

"If only Kurt had been that easy-going. He always complains when we turn on a game. Maybe you can be the one to change him," Burt laughed.

Blaine didn't. His tone was serious when he spoke. "I would never do that. I don't want him to change anything about himself. At least not for me. He's perfect." Blaine's voice was barely above a whisper.

Burt rubbed his hands together and eyed Blaine. He reached for the remote and muted the TV while the halftime show was going on. "What are your intentions with Kurt?"

There was the question Blaine had been dreading. He wasn't ready to have a serious conversation with Kurt's dad. He wanted Burt to get to know him first; to form a solid, positive opinion about him before getting into anything regarding his relationship with Kurt. "What do you mean?"

Burt leaned back in his chair and took a sip of his soda. "I just want to make sure you aren't going to hurt Kurt. You're the first boyfriend he's ever had. You're the first person he's ever brought home to us, so he must see something good in you. I'm not saying I don't because I do. I think you're a great person and you seem to care a lot about him, but I want to hear it from you. I want to hear in your words what your intentions with Kurt are."

Blaine took a deep breath and let Burt's words sink in. He took a few seconds to think about how to start and what to say to convince Burt that he was whole-heartedly in his relationship with Kurt. "Kurt makes me happy. He's teaching me to... He's the person who's gotten me to open myself up again. When I'm with Kurt, it's like everything else in the world disappears. Every worry, every fear, every complaint. When I'm

with him, the only thing I care about, the only thing I see, the only person I want to be with is Kurt. No one else. It seems as if there's no one else in my world because no one else matters. I *am* in this relationship with the best of intentions and I never want to hurt Kurt. I never want to see the smile on his face and the light in his eyes disappears because it's a beautiful thing to see."

Burt studied Blaine as he spoke. He listened carefully to every word he said and the way he said it. He watched as Blaine's eyes communicated the emotions behind what he was saying. There was one thing Blaine hadn't mentioned. One thing Burt still wanted to know. "Do you love him?"

Blaine froze. His heart picked up speed, his hands tightened, and his clothes felt like a confinement of fabric and heat. Love. After everything that had happened in his past, love was something Blaine was convinced didn't exist. He had believed he'd never fall in love; until he met Kurt that is. He knew he was falling in love with Kurt, despite everything that had happened to convince him otherwise. Falling in love with Kurt wasn't something he could prevent from happening. Perhaps that's why it felt so *right*. It wasn't forced. It wasn't something he willed to happen. It just *happened*. Blaine finally looked up at Burt, wanting to convince him that his love for Kurt was something real, something that ran deep in his veins. "Yes," he finally said. Once the words were out, he couldn't help but to smile. It was the first time he'd admitted to anyone how he felt. For the first time, Blaine was able to say the words out loud. "I'm completely in love with your son. He's everything to me, now."

Burt smiled and placed a hand on Blaine's knee. "Welcome to the family, Blaine." He felt Blaine relax beneath his hand. "And it's Burt. Sir makes me feel old and Mr. Hummel is too formal." Burt turned his attention back to the TV, leaving Blaine feeling like he finally had a place to call home.

"Guess who's here." Rachel sang as she peeked through the kitchen doorway with Elizabeth's carrier in her hands and a diaper bag slung over her shoulder. Kurt immediately set the dishes he was washing down and rushed over to the two of them. "Sorry we're late. I had to take advantage of the little one sleeping and clean the house up a bit."

"You're not late, Sweetie. There wasn't a set time for dinner." Carole followed Kurt over.

"Can I hold her?" Kurt asked with excitement and bounced up and down in anticipation.

Rachel rolled her eyes and set the carrier down on the table. "She fell back asleep on the car ride over, so if you wake her up, you get to deal with her."

Kurt was barely listening to a word she said though, as he unbuckled Elizabeth and gently eased her out of the carrier. He wrapped a blanket around her and held on tightly, looking down at the face of the beautiful baby in his arms. She had already grown much more than he was expecting and the hair on the top of her head was thicker than the last time he had seen her. He frowned when he realized how fast she was already growing up and that he wasn't home to see it.

After a few minutes of staring at Elizabeth, lightly running his hands along her nose, brushing his fingers across her hair, playing with her delicate hands, he turned to Rachel. "Rachel, there's someone I'd like you to meet." He spun around and walked towards the living room, leaving Rachel turning to Carole for clarification. Carole just smiled and shook her head before nodding in the direction of the living room.

Kurt walked into the living room to find Finn back on the couch and Blaine and Burt much more relaxed than before. "Blaine, I have someone I'd like you to meet." He moved to the couch and sat down next to his boyfriend. "Actually, two someone's," he corrected when he noticed Rachel in the doorway. "This is Elizabeth."

"The one and only," Blaine joked. Blaine would be lying if he said he didn't like the sight of Kurt holding the little baby girl. It looked as if it were something out of a magazine, something staged. The way he smiled down at the little girl and held onto her protectively seemed like something that couldn't be real. He looked happy and his face lit up, as if holding Elizabeth was his favorite thing in the world. "She's pretty."

"Would you like to hold her?" Blaine nodded and Kurt carefully placed her in Blaine's arms. He rested his chin on Blaine's shoulder and scooted as close to his side as he could. "You look amazing holding a baby," he said, smiling up at Blaine.

"You should see yourself," Blaine retorted. The two of them stared down at Elizabeth again and Blaine reached his hand up to play with her fragile fingers. She stretched her hand open and wrapped her tiny fingers around his own, much larger, finger.

"I think she likes you," Kurt said with a smile. Rachel cleared her throat from where she was watching in the doorway, startling Kurt and bringing him back to the present. "Blaine, this is my sister-in-law and best

friend for all intents and purposes, Rachel." Rachel stepped closer to the couch. "Rachel, this is my boyfriend, Blaine."

Rachel smiled knowingly, as if she had already suspected as much. "Nice to meet you, Blaine." She held out her hand, but withdrew it when she realized he couldn't do the same with her daughter in his arms.

"It's nice to meet you, too," he said politely.

Kurt kissed Blaine's cheek and snuggled close to his side. He wrapped his arms around Blaine's side and nuzzled his nose into Blaine's neck. He actually shocked himself with how affectionate he found himself towards Blaine with his family in the room, but he didn't care. He wanted to show them how he felt about Blaine and how much he cared for the man he'd brought home to them.

"Hey, Rachel, I think you have *two* people you're going to have to pry away from Elizabeth now," Burt joked.

"Elizabeth loves us, Dad. We're going to spoil her rotten. Aren't we Lizzie?" Kurt cooed. She began to shift in Blaine's arms and slowly opened her eyes, allowing them to see her bright blue irises.

"Kurt, you *have* to stop calling her that! I already told you she is going by Elizabeth!"

Kurt ignored her attempts at correcting him and brushed his fingers along her cheeks. "You're much softer than your Uncle Blaine. His cheeks are all rough like sandpaper." He moved his hand up to run a finger along Blaine's jaw.

"Hey, I didn't have time to shave before we left. That's not very nice of Uncle Kurt to say, is it, Lizzie? He didn't shave this morning either."

"*Blaine*, not you *too*," Rachel groaned.

"He knows what's best for him," Kurt chuckled.

"Wait, you said *Uncle* Blaine," he pointed out. "Are you sure you want to compete for her favorite uncle?"

"There won't be any competition. It'll be me," Kurt replied with confidence.

"Yes! Another touchdown!" Finn yelled, oblivious to anything else going on around him. He looked towards the other people in the room and muttered, "Sorry."

"When is this game going to be over? It's all you can talk about," Kurt complained.

Rachel sat down next to Kurt on the couch. "Oh, don't pretend like you don't like it. It should remind you of the glorious days when you played yourself!"

"*Rachel!*" Kurt hissed.

"You played football?" Blaine raised his eyebrows with curiosity.

Kurt sighed before explaining. "It was just one game during my sophomore year. I was trying to hide my sexuality and got the position of kicker. I actually helped to win the game."

"Wow. I never would've thought that of you," Blaine sounded impressed.

"I try not to think about it too much. It wasn't the best part of my teenage years."

Elizabeth started to whimper in Blaine's arms. "She probably wants her swing. That always calms her down." Rachel stood up and took the fussy baby from Blaine.

"Dinner's actually done if you guys are ready to eat," Carole said as she came back from the kitchen. "Kurt, Blaine, why don't you guys go get washed up and Finn can help me set the table." She looked towards her son who was too into the game to even realize she was talking.

Kurt pulled Blaine off the couch and led him upstairs to his bathroom. "You can use this bathroom to wash your hands. I'm just going to run to my room for a second." He kissed Blaine's cheek before prancing back out into the hall.

Blaine quickly washed his hands, enjoying the way the foamy soap made his hands smell like Kurt—clean with a hint of sweetness. He wandered out into the hall to find Kurt's room, but stopped when he noticed numerous photos in various sizes of frames hung up on the wall across from him. He studied each one—school pictures of both Kurt and Finn, one of Kurt and his dad, a family portrait including what had to be Kurt's mom, a few pictures of Carole and Burt's wedding, Finn's football pictures—and paused when his eyes moved to a close up of Kurt and Finn on a stage in matching black and gold uniforms. It looked like

they were performing and he could see other people in the background dressed the same. Kurt and Finn were both smiling, though their mouths were both open. Blaine assumed they were singing; however, Kurt had never mentioned being in any type of show choir before.

"Whatcha looking at?" Kurt emerged from his room.

"Oh, uh, this picture of you and Finn."

Kurt moved closer and discovered which picture Blaine was talking about. He froze when his eyes moved across the familiar black shirt and golden bow tie and suspenders. Blaine's hand found his and squeezed it tightly. "That....that's nothing. It's just a silly picture. I don't even know why they've still got it hanging up on the wall."

Kurt tried to brush it off as if it was nothing, but Blaine didn't buy it. "Is this a show choir, Kurt?" Kurt tried to pull away, but Blaine held on, sensing his hesitation. "Hey, you don't have to tell me if you don't want to, but I... I just want you to know that you can talk to me about anything."

"I didn't get in," he said suddenly. Blaine cocked his head Kurt continued. "NYADA. I made it to the finals. I went in for my final audition and I was so sure I was going to be one of the very few applicants to make it, but I wasn't. They rejected me and in that moment, it felt like my entire world was crashing down around me. Everything I'd worked towards for the past three years no longer mattered. Every glee club practice and competition; every solo I got; every time I fought to sing lead. None of it mattered. I felt like I had nothing going for me anymore. NYADA was the thing that was going to get me out of Ohio. I was going to move to New York and not only pursue my dream of being a performer, but I was going to do what my mom wanted as well. I was going to see the world and experience things that she never got to." Kurt looked back up at the picture hanging on the wall. "This was during the regionals performance my senior year. It wasn't too long before my NYADA audition. At this time, I had my entire future planned out. Rachel and I were going to move to New York together. We were going to struggle in the city, but in the end, we were going to be stars. We'd be on Broadway and get to live our lives doing what we loved."

"Did she get in?" Blaine spoke for the first time since Kurt began.

"No, and that's one of the only things that got me true. We were there to support each other through that time. She didn't give up though. She got involved in local theater the summer after we graduated and got into Julliard under late admissions. She begged me to apply, but in the end, I could no longer see myself as

a performer. Glee club was everything to me. It was where I was finally accepted and the members were some of my best friends. They were the first people I came out to." He paused and took a deep breath before continuing. "But it wasn't for me anymore, and that's when I decided to become a flight attendant. I did all of the necessary training and applied to the airline and got the job. For the first time since NYADA turned me down, I felt like I was in control of my future."

Blaine wrapped his arms around Kurt's waist and pulled him tight to his chest. He pressed his lips against Kurt's and didn't waste any time before deepening the kiss. Blaine wanted to convey to him how much it meant to him that Kurt was so open and trusted him so much with the things in his life he wasn't comfortable talking about. He ran his hands through the hair at the base of Kurt's neck just before he pulled away. They rested their foreheads against each other while their breaths steadied enough to speak again. Blaine felt like it was almost the perfect moment to tell Kurt he loved him, but it was too soon. He didn't want to scare Kurt away, especially not right when he was becoming so close.

"I think you are an amazing singer," Blaine whispered.

"How would you know?" Kurt asked, just as quietly.

"Because you have the voice of an angel."

Kurt laughed and placed a kiss on the tip of Blaine's nose. "Is that so?"

"Yes."

"How about I take you on a tour around Lima tomorrow. I can show you where I went to school and the places Rachel and I used to always hang out. Would you like that?"

Blaine nodded. "Yeah, I would."

"Then that's what we'll do." Kurt kissed him again. "Would you like to go eat dinner now? Everyone's probably waiting for us."

Blaine nodded again and followed Kurt to the kitchen.

Chapter Seven

The next morning, Kurt knocked quietly on the door of the guest room before peeking his head inside to find Blaine still fast asleep. He strolled over to the side of the bed where Blaine was laying, careful to avoid the suitcase lying in the middle of the floor. He watched as the sheet draped across Blaine's bare back rose and fell with each breath he took and the way his face was buried into the pillow to where Kurt could only see his eyes and part of the smile that was subconsciously pulling at his lips. He knelt onto the bed and leaned in to press a kiss to Blaine's temple before stroking his cheek affectionately. Blaine stirred a bit and began to mumble incoherently, but his eyes remained closed.

"Wake up, sleepy head. We have a big day ahead of us." When Blaine turned his head away from the pillow, Kurt leaned down to kiss his lips.

"Mmm'ood morning. Nice way to wake up." Blaine wrapped his arms around Kurt and pulled him close. Kurt could feel the heat radiating off of his warm body and he knew the strength of Blaine's grip was probably wrinkling his clothes, but he couldn't bring himself to care. He melted into Blaine's embrace and allowed himself to be held by his boyfriend for a few minutes before forcing himself away.

"Blaine, we have to get up now."

"Jus' one more minute. You smell good." Blaine buried his face in Kurt's neck and placed light kisses along his collar bone.

"That's because I'm a couple steps ahead of you. I've already showered and gotten dressed."

Blaine pulled away and looked Kurt up and down. "How?"

"It's not that hard. You just have to get undressed, turn on the water, and step inside. Come on, I'll show you." Kurt sat up and tugged on Blaine's free arm.

"You know what I mean," Blaine laughed. "When did you get up?"

"A couple hours ago," Kurt brushed it off like it was nothing, but glanced over to the nightstand when Blaine took a look at the clock. 8:57.

"You woke up at 7:00?"

"It takes a lot of effort to make myself look this good. I let you sleep in a little bit, though. I thought I could make you breakfast while you get ready. My dad and Carole are already gone."

"You don't have to do that. I can just have cereal or something."

Kurt shook his head. "No, Carole only keeps healthy, whole-grain cereal in the house because of my dad's heart and I know for a fact you wouldn't even eat it if I doused it in sugar and milk. I'm making you breakfast, so get up and shower."

Blaine stood up next to Kurt. "You said you were going to show me how to shower?" he teased, earning a playful smack on the arm from Kurt.

"I think you can figure that out on your own. I'll just be right downstairs if you need anything." Kurt kissed his cheek before twirling around and leaving the room.

Blaine went through his morning routine as Kurt busied himself in the kitchen making French toast and sausage. By the time Blaine joined Kurt in the kitchen and began eating the delicious breakfast, it was nearing 10:30. After finishing up, the two began to make their way to the school—on foot at Kurt's request, and also because they didn't have a car to drive.

As they walked through Lima, Kurt pointed out a few restaurants that were his favorite as well as a bookstore he had insisted was the most unique one in the state. Blaine made mental notes of Kurt's favorite places in hopes he'd be able to go along with him some day in the future. At one point, Kurt pointed out the theatre to their right. "That's where I performed in my very first play."

After about half an hour of walking, they'd finally made it to McKinley High School, a place Kurt was sure he'd never step foot inside of again. However, like he always did, Blaine had been able to change his mind without even asking. Kurt took him on the grand tour—showing him the cafeteria, the rooms he'd had classes in, and the locker that used to be his. The quiet halls and empty classrooms were all new to him. He'd seen them hundreds of times over the course of his high school career, but they were never the same as they were at that moment. In fact, for once, he felt safe walking down the hall with Blaine's hand in his. He wasn't afraid of being shoved against the locker or of one of the football players screaming names at

him as they walked past. It was a nice feeling, and Kurt was glad he'd decided to visit one last time. It gave him some sort of closure he'd never had.

The last thing left to show Blaine was the place where he'd spent the majority of his good times in high school. "This is the auditorium, where all of the magic that is Kurt Hummel began." They stepped through the doors and slipped past the curtains.

Blaine looked around the stage. It looked like any ordinary high school auditorium, apart from the beautiful boy in the spotlight. "So this is where you sang every solo in the glee club?"

"Not quite. Rachel was always the one to get the solos. I was just a backup singer like all of the rest. My talents weren't appreciated as much as they should've been."

"Are you ever going to show me your talents?" Blaine inquired.

"You want me to sing?" Kurt asked for clarification.

"Would you?"

"There's no music."

"You don't need music. Music would just distract me from your voice anyway."

Kurt shifted nervously. He was hesitant to sing for Blaine. Standing on the stage for the first time in nearly eight years was hard enough, and he was afraid that singing would be too much. However, Blaine still had that magical aura around him. The one that made Kurt relax the instant he stepped into it. He knew he would eventually have to face his fears and conquer all of his past demons, and if he couldn't do that in Blaine's presence, he doubted he would be able to do it at all.

"What would you like me to sing?" he finally asked.

"Anything you'd like. I'm not picky." Blaine hopped off the stage and took his place in the audience. Kurt watched Blaine from the stage and his thoughts drifted to what his future could be like. He thought about what it would feel like to be singing on a big, Broadway stage and look out every night to find Blaine in the very first row grinning back at him. He knew Blaine would support him from his very first show until his

very last. He was surprised that he could actually see that future again; the same future he had given up on as a senior so many years ago.

"Do you like musicals?" Blaine heard Kurt ask from the stage.

"Of course. Are there people who don't?"

Kurt laughed. "Unfortunately." He moved to the center of the stage and took a deep breath before belting out the first couple of lines of the song he'd chosen to sing. Blaine immediately recognized the song. It was one he'd heard countless times on his iPod. He'd watched the movie every chance he got when it first came out. It was from one of the Broadway shows he wanted to see the most. Although the song was typically sung by a male with a much deeper voice, Kurt made it his own. His soothing voice filled the entire auditorium. Blaine closed his eyes for a minute and forgot he was even in a small high school in Ohio. The voice he was hearing up on the stage, the voice radiating off of the walls surrounding him, was one that belonged on a well-known stage in New York. Kurt's voice was even greater than Blaine could've ever imagined and his talent deserved to be shared with more than just Blaine.

Softly, deftly, music shall surround you, feel it, hear it, closing in around you, open up your mind, let your fantasies unwind, in this darkness which you know you cannot fight, the darkness of the music of the night.

Blaine opened his eyes again to see Kurt still standing in the same spot. He had seemed to loosen up a bit and gestured for Blaine to join him on the stage.

Let your mind start a journey through a strange new world, leave all thoughts of the world you knew before, let your soul take you where you long to be.

Kurt continued singing as Blaine made his way up the steps on the side of the stage and joined him in the middle. "Sing with me?" he asked before continuing.

Floating, falling, sweet intoxication, touch me, trust me, savor each sensation.

Kurt reached out and grabbed both of Blaine's hands, lacing their fingers together and leaning into his body. He felt even more at ease as Blaine sang along with him and he could feel the vibrations running through Blaine's chest with each note he sang.

Let the dream begin, let your darker side give in to the power of the music that I write, the power of the music of the night, you alone can make my song take flight, help me make the music of the night.

When Kurt finished the last line of the song, he met Blaine in a sweet kiss, a kiss Kurt had always dreamed about. A kiss on stage, one of the places that had always meant the most to him. With Blaine, he felt like all of his dreams were coming back to him at once.

"'Music of the Night.' That's one of my favorite songs," Blaine said once they'd pulled apart. "How did you know?"

"I didn't. It's just one of my favorites as well. The lyrics are incredible and the music is powerful." He leaned in again, this time for a much more intimate kiss. He felt Blaine's hands move to cup each side of his face and Kurt snaked his hands around to Blaine's back. His fingers made their way under the hem of his shirt and rubbed the small of Blaine's back soothingly.

"Hey now, keep everything PG in the school, guys."

Kurt pulled away from Blaine and turned around to see Mr. Schuester walking into the auditorium. "Mr. Schue!" Kurt exclaimed.

"Hey, Kurt. It's good to see you again." He gave him a quick hug before gesturing to Blaine. "Who's this? Someone special I take it?"

Kurt returned to Blaine's side and took his hand. "Yes. Someone very special." He looked up towards Blaine who was focused on the stranger in front of him. "Mr. Schuester, this is Blaine, my boyfriend. Blaine, this is Mr. Schue. He is New Directions' director as well as McKinley High's Spanish teacher."

"Hey, Blaine. You're a lucky one for getting Kurt. He was one of my best students." Kurt grinned at the compliment.

"I'm very lucky to have him. Being in Lima is making me realize it even more."

"Blaine and I both live in New York now," Kurt clarified.

"Oh, that's right. Rachel said something about that last time I saw her. I take it you're doing well?"

"Yes, very well. New York is wonderful."

"That's great. You guys deserve everything you want." Mr. Schue looked down at his watch. "I'd love to stay and catch up some more, but I've actually gotta head to glee club rehearsal. It's a last minute practice before sectionals next week. You two are welcome to join us if you'd like."

"No thanks. I still have some things to show Blaine and we should probably grab something to eat pretty soon." He nudged Blaine in the side, forcing Blaine to focus on him again.

"Well it's been good to see you. You'll have to come back more often."

"I'll try my best."

"It was great to meet you, Blaine. You take care of Kurt."

"I will, sir."

"Bye guys."

"Goodbye," they said in unison as Mr. Schue exited the auditorium.

"Would you like to go get a bite to eat? I know you have to be hungry." Kurt's hand found its way back under Blaine's shirt and rubbed his stomach, taking note of the firm muscles beneath his hand.

"Contrary to your belief, I'm not always eating. You just happen to catch me at bad times."

"Whatever you say, Honey. Let's go. It's time you discovered the wonderful establishment that is the Lima Bean."

"Do you always choose to walk around Ohio?" Blaine inquired. He and Kurt were slowly making their way to what Kurt insisted was the most popular hang out in all of Ohio, or at least Lima.

"I didn't used to, but in New York you don't really have any other option. I've sort of gotten used to it." Kurt swung the hand that was holding Blaine's back and forth and leaned into his side. "Plus, we don't

have anything important to be doing today and this allows us to have a little more time alone before we have to go home."

Home. Kurt's home. A home that Blaine was so easily welcomed into. It wasn't the first time Kurt had referred to it as "home." He never said "my home" or "my dad's home." There was no possession to it, only a sense of belonging. Blaine already felt like a part of Kurt's family; after just one night with them, he felt more welcome than he did by his own family. He loved his parents, but the support and love the Hummels openly showed towards one another was something Blaine wasn't used to. It was something different and refreshing. Something he wanted to hold onto.

"Well, I won't complain then." Blaine let go of Kurt's hand and wrapped it around his waist. He felt Kurt wrap both hands around him and the way they were holding onto each other and pressed so close together almost made it impossible to walk. Kurt stumbled a bit, but continued laughing and placed a light kiss to Blaine's chin.

"We're here!" Kurt pulled away enough to open the door and the two of them slipped through and away from the cool air outside.

"So this is the Lima Bean." Blaine took a look around. He had to admit, it was a lot larger than he'd expected it to be and the place was packed, just as Kurt had predicted.

"Yup. It's where I spent half of my high school career." Blaine shot him a look and he corrected himself. "Okay, maybe that's exaggerating a little, but I did come here quite often."

"Is the coffee any good?" Blaine already knew the answer, but he was dying to get something to eat. He wouldn't tell Kurt that, of course, because it would only fuel his beliefs about Blaine's never-ending hunger.

"Of course. Come on, I'll buy you a drink."

Kurt pulled Blaine to the counter as Blaine shook his head. "No way. You got me out of New York and brought me here this week. The least I can do is buy you coffee." He pulled out his wallet as Kurt ordered a nonfat mocha.

"And for you, Sir?" The barista turned to Blaine.

"I'll have a medium drip, please." Blaine pulled out his credit card and handed it over once the girl had finished placing their orders. Kurt kept his arm looped through Blaine's and smiled at the girl behind the counter. Blaine got the feeling Kurt knew her prior to their visit; high school, he assumed.

"Can I see your ID, please?" She asked after glancing at his unsigned card.

He pulled it out to show her, but wasn't quick enough putting it back. Kurt snatched it out of his hands and began inspecting it. "Very nice picture you've got there," he joked. Kurt's eyes scrolled across the card, reading every little detail documented—restrictions, driver's license number, height, weight—until he noticed the Birthday. November 22. After a few quick calculations in his head, Kurt realized the 22nd of November happened to fall on the same day as Thanksgiving—tomorrow. He wondered why Blaine hadn't brought it up, but decided not to question it; at least not at the time. Kurt handed the card back over to Blaine and grabbed their drinks from the counter.

"So, what else is on our agenda for the day?" Blaine took a seat across from Kurt at one of the smaller, round tables.

"Well, I thought once we were done here, we could walk around a bit and if there was anything you wanted to see, I could take you." Kurt took a sip of his coffee and made a bitter face. He removed the lid and began to stir in a couple packets of sugar. "Is there anywhere in particular you would like to go?"

"Not really. I mean, you know what's around here. This is all new to me." Blaine looked up at Kurt just as he licked the stick free of all coffee and noticed the little bit of foam remaining at the corner of his mouth. "You... have a little something...." He motioned towards his mouth.

"What?" Kurt tilted his head, oblivious to what Blaine was trying to say.

Instead of clarifying, Blaine leaned forward and wiped the little bit of coffee from the corner of Kurt's mouth before pressing a light kiss to the spot. "There. All better," he smiled.

Kurt's face turned red as he looked around, as if he were expecting his bullies from his past to pop out at any minute or an older couple shaking their head in disapproval. Instead, he noticed that no one cared. No one was studying them or shooting them disgusted looks. Maybe Lima was improving after all; or maybe it was just a rare day when the people in the coffee shop were like those in New York—respectful and accepting of his love.

Kurt looked at Blaine—his hair un-gelled (as Kurt has requested earlier that morning), his baby blue polo, the way his eyes crinkled at the corners as he looked adoringly back into Kurt's eyes. It took all the restraint he had not to lean over and kiss the smile the tugged at Blaine's lips. "I have an idea."

"Hm?" Blaine mumbled as he took a sip of his coffee.

"Why... why don't we skip walking around? We have plenty of time this weekend to explore a little. Do you... do you maybe just want to go back to my house and hang out? Carole had to work today so she won't be home until dinner and my dad's taking care of a few things with the shop. We'll have the house to ourselves." Kurt tried his best to not imply anything with his words, but one look at Blaine's speechless face showed him he had failed. "I mean, I just thought maybe we could watch a movie or something and then later we could get dinner started for my mom and dad."

Blaine didn't miss the word "mom" coming out of Kurt's mouth and made a mental note to ask him about it later. "That actually sounds really nice. I don't care what we're doing as long as I get to know more about your life away from the hustle and bustle of New York."

"G-great," Kurt stumbled nervously and cursed himself for being so anxious of what was to come of the night. Although he didn't have any detailed plans when he suggested they have a quiet afternoon to themselves, he could help but to think about what *could* happen during their time alone. He knew it was silly—they each had an apartment to themselves in New York so time alone was something that came easily—but having time alone where he grew up was something different to Kurt. He felt like Blaine was able to see his past without words. He hoped Blaine could feel the love radiating through the house without it being pointed out. But most of all, being at home with Blaine reminded Kurt of what he had imagined high school to be like. If he had found someone as out, proud, and genuine as Blaine in high school, quiet afternoons to themselves would've become a regular routine.

After finishing up at the Lima Bean, Kurt and Blaine made their way back to his house where they flopped onto the couch. Kurt rubbed at his stomach and groaned. "I feel like I ate three meals all at the same time."

Blaine moved to Kurt's side and pushed his hand away. Instead, he lifted Kurt's shirt up slightly and rubbed soothing circles into his stomach. "You didn't even eat anything for lunch," Blaine laughed but his voice held a little concern.

"It's normal. Sometimes dairy upsets my stomach a little." Kurt rubbed his hand along Blaine's back in return.

"Well," Blaine leaned forward and placed a trail of kisses along Kurt's stomach before moving to place a peck against his lips, "we should lie down on the couch and watch a movie until your tummy feels better." He leaned forward again, but this time kissed Kurt with a little more intensity and passion.

"You're amazing, do you know that?" Kurt looked Blaine in the eyes and found it impossible to look away. Blaine broke the gaze first when he stood up. "Where are you going?" Kurt tugged on his arm in a failed attempt at pulling him back down to the couch.

"I'm going to the kitchen for a minute. Just stay there and lay down. I'll be right back." Blaine leaned down to kiss Kurt's forehead before disappearing into the kitchen.

Kurt could hear a couple cabinet doors opening and closing and the sound of the microwave beeping, but tried not to think too much about what Blaine could possibly be doing. He reflected on the past twenty-four hours they'd been in Ohio. His family instantly fell in love with Blaine and if the smile constantly plastered on Blaine's face said anything, Kurt was sure Blaine had become quite fond of his family in return. Although bringing Blaine to Ohio was a scary step for Kurt, he felt like he'd made the right choice. Seeing Blaine where he grew up felt so natural to him. It seemed as if Blaine had been a part of his life all of the times when he had no one. Every time he struggled to get out of a dumpster, bruised from being shoved into a locker, or frantically picked up his belongings after being thrown to the ground; Although Blaine hadn't been there, Kurt somehow knew Blaine understood what he'd gone through. He knew that if Blaine *had* been around during those times, he not only would've protected Kurt, but stood up to the boys who were bullying him.

Kurt was brought back to reality when Blaine strolled in carrying a mug of hot liquid and a plate with a piece of toast. Kurt glanced at Blaine and waited for him to explain, but he never did. Instead, he placed the cup and plate on the coffee table in front of him and sat down at the end of the couch next to Kurt, forcing him to lie down. Kurt rested his head on Blaine's legs and looked up at him. "Are you going to tell me why you suddenly got the desire to make toast?"

Blaine leaned forward to pick up the plate. "My mom used to make me toast with peanut butter when I was little and had an upset stomach. Toast and hot tea helped soothe it a little bit." He sat Kurt up slightly and picked the piece of toast off of the plate. "Would you like a bite?"

Without saying a word, Kurt opened his mouth and waited for Blaine to feed him the toast. He bit off a small piece and swallowed before burying his face in Blaine's lap. "I already feel better, but I don't know if it's because of the toast or you."

"Well, the toast, of course. It's magical."

"Unless you found some way to bring Hogwarts's magical feast to Lima, Ohio, that's just any normal piece of bread," Kurt mumbled into Blaine's side.

Blaine sat the plate back on the table and wrapped his arms around Kurt before sliding down onto the couch. They laid next to each other on the couch and Blaine continued to gently rub Kurt's stomach while simultaneously placing light kisses to his nose, lips, cheek, forehead, anywhere he could reach. Kurt smiled into his chest and fisted the hem of his shirt. Kurt's cold hands against Blaine's warm side startled him at first, but it didn't last long. Within ten minutes, Blaine was holding Kurt tightly against his chest, barely having enough time to pull the blanket that was draped across the back of the couch on top of them before they were both sound asleep.

"What should we do?" Burt whispered to Carole as he stood over his sleeping son and his boyfriend. Carole and Burt had both arrived home at the same time, only to find Blaine and Kurt curled up on the couch.

"Just let them rest. They obviously need it." Carole looped her arm through Burt's and pulled him towards the kitchen. Burt sat down at the table and reached towards the candy bowl, huffing when Carole slapped his hand away. "What's wrong?" She sat down beside him.

"This is just weird. Kurt's my little boy, Carole. He's not supposed to grow up, at least not this fast. Now he's in there on the couch, *my* couch in *my* house, asleep with his boyfriend. And not just any boyfriend either. Someone who is just as deeply in love with Kurt as Kurt is with him." Burt rested his elbows on the edge of the table and buried his face in his hands.

"They make a great couple, you know. Just from the little I've seen of him, I can tell Blaine is a sweetheart who would do anything for Kurt. And I know for a fact that Kurt is absolutely crazy about him."

"Did he talk to you? He disappeared into the kitchen for a while during the game yesterday."

Carole sighed. She knew Kurt confided in her and expected things to remain between the two of them, but she couldn't stop the smile that appeared on her face. A little vague information wouldn't hurt anything, she reasoned. "He did. Based on the way Kurt talks about Blaine and how his entire face lights up at the thought of him, I think Blaine is one of the best things to happen to him. You should be grateful for Blaine."

"I didn't say I wasn't grateful. Blaine.... He told me he was in love with Kurt."

Carole rubbed Burt's arm in an attempt to calm down his strained heart. "Did you believe him?"

Burt didn't hesitate. "Yeah, I did. I do." He looked in the direction of the living room, but was unable to see the two sleeping boys. "For some reason, I believe every word he said."

"Then I don't think you have anything to worry about. I know Kurt always sees the best in people and overlooks all of the bad, but it seems like with Blaine, there isn't much bad for him to look past." She stood up and pushed in her chair. "Come on. Why don't you help me make dinner so it's ready when the two of them wake up?"

Burt remained still for a few seconds before joining her near the cabinet. He knew she was right about everything; what he didn't know is how he managed to find someone that meant so much to him and only hoped Blaine could be that someone for Kurt.

"Burt!" Carole spat, running after the man who had managed to escape when she turned her back to put the chicken into the oven. "Get back here!" She pulled the mittens off her hands and sat them on the counter.

Burt ignored her calls and continued to walk towards the living room. "I'm just going to sit down here in my chair and watch some TV before dinner." He didn't attempt to keep his voice down.

"You are spying on Kurt and Blaine," she whispered harshly.

"Well, someone needs to make sure they don't try anything." He sat down in the chair and looked up at his wife. "Oh, what?"

"You know what. Come on, let them be." She tugged at his arm and he reluctantly stood back up. "Even if Kurt *does* want to do something with Blaine, it is his choice. He's twenty-six and in love. There's not much you can do to stop him."

Burt looked horrified at the thought. "Not in my house."

Carole tugged again. "Well, you don't have to worry about them doing anything right now. They're asleep on the couch in the *living* room." She looked over when she saw Kurt shift and mumble something to a sleepy Blaine. "Oh, honey, I'm sorry we woke you." She gave Burt a look to show him she wasn't pleased.

Kurt yawned and loosened his hold on Blaine a bit, but Blaine made no effort to move. "S'okay. Sorry we fell asleep."

"You're fine, sweetheart." She turned back to Burt. "Your dad was just agreeing to help me with dinner. It'll be finished within the next hour if you're hungry."

"He doesn't feel good," Blaine finally spoke up. He turned his head to kiss Kurt's arm and opened his eyes.

"M-my stomach was just a little upset, but Blaine helped it. I'm fine now." He felt uncomfortable talking to his dad and step-mom while lying down so he sat up and pulled Blaine along with him.

"Are you sure? You don't have to eat anything if you don't want to. I can wrap it up for later."

"I'm sure," Kurt assured her. "It smells delicious. Blaine and I had actually planned to make dinner for you guys until I fell asleep."

"You can make that fancy pumpkin roll you make every year that I love," Burt suggested. "Get an early start to your Thanksgiving baking."

"Dad, you can't have that anymore. I'm not taking chances with your heart."

"It's been eight years, Bud. I think I'm fine."

Kurt shook his head. "You've been okay because I'm constantly watching what you eat. And when I'm not, Carole is. I will, however, make you a nice sugar-free fruit dessert instead."

Burt scrunched up his nose in disapproval, but Carole pushed him in the direction of the kitchen before he had time to say anything. "Just come in when you're ready, boys." She smiled at them before disappearing around the corner. Kurt heard her bickering with Burt over what vegetables they were going to make before he tuned them out.

"Do you really feel better?" Blaine pulled Kurt closer once again and pulled his hand up to kiss it.

"Yeah, I do. Thank you for everything." He leaned in for a quick kiss, but soon got wrapped up in the moment—the feeling of Blaine's smooth lips against his; the way Blaine had started rubbing his stomach again; how Blaine's curls felt running through his fingers; the tingle that ran through his mouth when their tongues clashed against each other. He whimpered a bit when Blaine nipped at his lip, but made a note to stay quiet. His dad or Carole walking in on him wasn't something he had been hoping for. He hadn't expected to be interrupted by anyone else, though.

"Ew, not in front of the baby, dude. I don't want her seeing that stuff yet."

Kurt quickly pulled away from Blaine and swiped a hand across his lips at the sound of Finn's voice. Blaine sunk down in the couch, but couldn't escape Finn's stares.

"What's going on in here?" Burt returned to the doorway just as Rachel walked through the front door.

Finn handed the baby carrier off to Rachel and shrugged as he moved to sit down. "Kurt and Blaine were just—"

"Finn, enough." Kurt turned his attention to his dad. "Apparently Finn can't handle when two people speak to each other in a lovingly way." The last few words were heavily accented and he directed them towards his brother-in-law. Burt only nodded before disappearing again, leaving Kurt on the couch with Blaine as Rachel and Finn fussed over whose turn it was to change Elizabeth's diaper.

"I need to go out for a bit before dinner. Will you be fine alone for a few minutes?" Kurt looped his arm through Blaine's and rested against him.

Blaine nodded in reply. "Do you want me to come with you?"

"No, that's okay," Kurt said a little too quickly. "It shouldn't take long. You can just stay here and make sure Elizabeth gets changed." He looked in the direction of the couple who were still bickering before standing up.

"Alright, well be careful!" Blaine tilted his head up and Kurt leaned in for a kiss.

"I always am. I'll be back before you know it." He kissed Blaine once again before disappearing through the front door.

The rest of the night was even better than Blaine could've imagined. Once Kurt made it back to the house, the entire Hudson-Hummel family sat down for dinner, a concept Blaine wasn't used to apart from the fancy business dinners he'd unenthusiastically attended over the years. But dinner with Kurt's family wasn't like that. There wasn't anything formal about the way they positioned themselves at the table; the order in which they ate their food; the conversations that came about during the meal. Everything was laid-back and Blaine found himself enjoying their time together. Kurt had joked around, saying Blaine would be happy in any room filled with food, but that wasn't it for him. He genuinely liked sitting down at the table and sharing with the others what he did that day. Carole had taken a specific interest in not only Blaine's current life, but his past as well, something Blaine answered with great care. All six of them remained at the table long after they were finished and continued talking—asking about Blaine's career, asking Kurt about the interesting things at work, Carole explaining the drama that went on at the hospital, Rachel and Kurt bickering over which artist was more likely to win a Grammy, and of course Finn rambling incoherently about football. When the attention wasn't on him, Blaine sat back and relaxed, watching how Kurt's family interacted with each other, and he had to say it was something he wanted to be a part of far into the future as well.

Finn and Rachel had to leave shortly after dinner—Elizabeth was getting fussy, signaling it was almost time for bed—but Kurt and Blaine made themselves comfortable on the couch and watched a movie along with Burt and Carole. Blaine was still uncomfortable being so close to Kurt at first, but Kurt relaxed into Blaine and soon all of his thoughts were washed away. It felt nice to be able to hold onto Kurt, knowing he wasn't going anywhere and the boy he loved was someone he could see himself with for the rest of his life. He could imagine Kurt lying with him, but instead of Burt and Carole on the other side of the room, it would be their children. It was a life that Blaine knew he wanted, but up until he'd met Kurt and seen what

kind of family he had come from, he was beginning to believe that life would never come for him. The only thing that kept him up at night was the fear that Kurt didn't want the same thing. At least not with him.

Once the movie was finished, Kurt and Blaine made their way upstairs and into separate rooms. They'd agreed for Blaine to stay in the guest room during their visit, at least for the first couple of days, just to make sure his dad was more comfortable. Blaine would be lying if he said he hadn't wished he could curl up beside Kurt in Kurt's bed and bury himself in the sheets that smelt just like his boyfriend, but he knew staying in a separate room was for the best. Blaine loved Kurt's family, and he didn't want to do anything that might compromise their opinions about him.

Blaine had been lying in bed for a couple hours letting his mind wander—from his work to what had happened in Lima so far—and all of his thoughts seemed to lead back to the man who had just appeared in the doorway.

"Blaine," Kurt whispered from the hall. Once Blaine turned his head to get a better look, Kurt moved inside and quietly closed the door behind him. "Hey, can't sleep either?"

Blaine didn't make an effort to sit up. "Not really. I think I've got too much on my mind."

Kurt walked to his bed, careful to avoid any creaky parts of the floor to avoid waking his parents. "What are you thinking about?"

Blaine slid over to one side of the bed and reached out a hand. "Come here." Kurt did as told and laid down next to Blaine.

"What are we doing?" he laughed. Their hands found each other and squeezed tight before resting on the bed in the miniscule space between their bodies.

"Looking at the ceiling," Blaine said as if it was the most obvious answer.

"And why are we doing that?" Kurt turned his head to look at Blaine, but Blaine's eyes remained fixed above him.

"Close your eyes." Kurt did as told. "Are they closed?"

"Yes, yes."

"Okay, now imagine the future; a life without any problems, no regrets, and nothing but love. You're out in your backyard, whether that be in Ohio, New York, or somewhere else, laying on your back and staring up at the stars. Can you see that?"

"Mhm. It's nice."

"Now as the stars are twinkling, you feel a warm body lay down beside you and without taking your eyes off of the night sky, you can tell who it is. You just *know* who it is based on the way their hand molds around yours. The wonderful smell that instantly takes over. The way your body starts to tingle and butterflies start fluttering around in your stomach. They're everything to you and even though it scares the shit out of you, you can't help but to know you're completely in love with them. You know you'd do anything they asked because they're the most important thing to you now. Can you feel that?"

Kurt nodded. He could feel those things right there with Blaine whether he wanted to or not. "Yeah, I can."

"Think about the perfect life. You don't have to worry about what others will think about you if you kiss your boyfriend in public. All that matters is showing him you love him right there in that moment. You don't have to fight for the right to marry the love of your life. Your marriage means just as much to society as a marriage between a man and a woman. You're promising to always be there for that person, no matter what they need. You can go to work and not have to worry if you're making enough money to live happily. You don't regret anything in your life or wish you'd done something different. "

Kurt rolled onto his side and nuzzled himself next to Blaine. He wrapped a hand around Blaine's side, but kept his face looking towards the ceiling and his eyes closed. "That's a nice life. I want that."

Blaine began to rub Kurt's arm softly and continued. "Now think about those stars. Think about how each one is unique in size and brightness. Imagine being able to stay out there all night, every night with someone you loved. With the person you want to spend the rest of your life with. And just when you think you've taken in everything and are about to fall asleep, you see a falling star and you wish on it, though you can't think of anything to wish for. You already have everything you ever wanted. Then man next to you starts to whisper in your ear and you realize it's actually a song. That he's singing to you." Blaine turned his face away from the ceiling to look at Kurt. He took a few seconds to admire Kurt's beautiful profile before leaning in to whisper into his ear. Kurt immediately recognized the song being sung. It was one that encompassed everything he'd been feeling with Blaine in the past couple of days.

Without you, the ground thaws, the rain falls, the grass grows, without you, the seeds root, the flowers bloom, the children play

Kurt finally turned his head to look at Blaine, finding him much closer than he expected. He took advantage of their lack of space and leaned into kiss Blaine, softly at first, just barely pressing their lips together. It wasn't long before Blaine's hand was on the back of his neck, pulling him close. Blaine's tongue found its way inside of Kurt's mouth, running along his teeth and Kurt nibbled on his lip, receiving a groan from the other man. "Blaine," Kurt mumbled. His voice was horse and he lacked the ability to breath, something that often happened around Blaine. Kurt felt himself being rolled over and he opened his eyes to find Blaine on top of him. He turned his head to the side when Blaine's mouth made its way across his cheek, along his jaw, down to his neck. Kurt kissed the firm muscles in Blaine's arm and whimpered when he felt warm, wet kisses on his skin along the collar of his t-shirt.

Blaine's arms finally gave out and before Kurt had time to do anything, Blaine's hips were rocking against him, causing the both of them to moan in pleasure. "You're so beautiful," Blaine whispered against his skin.

"Blaine... my parents..." Kurt was too entranced by Blaine's every touch to form too many coherent thoughts.

Sighing, Blaine pressed a few more kisses to Kurt's lips before rolling onto the bed next to Kurt, keeping his arm wrapped around him. "I like making out with you."

Kurt laughed and pressed a kiss to Blaine's unruly curls. "Even with my parents in the other room?"

"Even with your parents in the other room," Blaine nodded. He leaned in with an open mouth to kiss Kurt once again, but was stopped by Kurt's finger.

"We can't do anything here. I... I don't want to be doing something with you only to have my dad walk in on us." Kurt was disappointed. Blaine often kept himself guarded and unwilling to test their boundaries. His eagerness to take things slow was one quality Kurt loved about him. They had both been through things in the past that left scars on their hearts and bitter memories in their thoughts; however, Kurt was also a 26-year-old-male with a gorgeous boyfriend. He'd be lying if he said he hadn't thought about what things would be like with Blaine, but he knew the time wasn't right. They'd only known each other for a little over a month. Lazy kisses while lying in bed, quick pecks when they entered or left a room, and a few

slightly less than chaste kisses when they said hello or goodbye was all Kurt needed. At least it would be for a while.

Blaine leaned in again, this time kissing the corner of Kurt's mouth before resting his head on the pillow beneath him. *I love you*. He wanted to say those three words to Kurt, but he was afraid. He was afraid Kurt didn't feel the same way and that he'd get his heart broken. He was scared to say he loved him, only to realize he didn't. Blaine was afraid he still didn't know what love was, and that he had somehow convinced himself he was in love with Kurt because he was so lonely. Blaine had promised himself years ago that he'd never tell anyone he loved them, not until he was absolutely sure it was the truth. He had told himself he wouldn't go through the heartbreak he'd gone through before or cause that same heartbreak for someone else. So instead, he said two little words. "Thank you."

"For what?"

"For coming in here and talking to me. I missed you," Blaine smiled.

"We weren't even apart for two hours." Kurt rolled his eyes but couldn't hold back the grin that spread across his face.

"That doesn't mean I don't want you with me. This week has been wonderful so far and it's made me realize how lucky I am to have you." Blaine kissed Kurt's shoulder. "How sweet you are." His neck. "How much I can trust you." His ear. "And how happy you make me." His lips.

Kurt looked up towards the ceiling and closed his eyes, imagining the life Blaine had described. Blaine took one look at Kurt before doing the same once again. "So is this what you think about when you can't sleep? The future?"

"Sometimes. It's what I used to do when I was little and couldn't sleep. I'd just stare up at the blank ceiling and imagine I was somewhere else. It also helped a lot when I was going through some rough times after I graduated. It was nice to be able to picture myself somewhere else without any problems in my life."

"What happened? After you graduated, I mean."

Blaine turned away and stared back up at the ceiling. "I just did a few things I wish I hadn't. Not bad things per say, I just regret some of the decisions I'd made. I actually have a brother. I don't think I've mentioned that."

"No, you haven't," Kurt said shocked.

"Well I do. His name is Cooper. I don't talk to him much because sometimes it's just hard to think about the life he has. He was able to break away from our family once he graduated and live on his own. He didn't have to work for my dad or listen to what he said, and I was envious. At the time I graduated, we hadn't heard from him in almost eight months. My dad was so livid with him that he told me I couldn't even invite him to my graduation. Not having my brother there hurt a lot. Coop was always someone I looked up to as I grew up. To me, he was everything I wanted to be. I think that's where part of the problem came in. I wasn't strong enough to break away like he did. I couldn't look at my dad and tell him I wasn't going to work for him. So instead, I did whatever I could to take control of my life. Some of those things weren't the best decisions I've ever made, and although they turned out fine in the end, I still regret ever making them in the first place." Blaine went silent and the only sound was the steady rhythm of their breaths. "Sorry, I didn't mean to get into all of that."

Kurt leaned up to place a kiss against his lips. "You're fine. I'm always here when you need to talk. So when's the last time you talked to your brother?"

"A couple months ago. Right before I met you, actually. My dad doesn't like that I still talk to him every once in a while. The two of them aren't on the best of terms."

"But you don't have to listen to your dad."

"No, but I do have to work for him. He can't make decisions for me, but if I make a wrong one, at least wrong in his mind, I'll have to hear about it every day for the next week."

"Well, I'd like to meet Cooper one day, if you'll let me," Kurt said cautiously.

"I-I'd like that. I want to see him again; I just don't want to do it alone. It's been years since I've actually been with him in person and we've both changed. I'm just afraid he won't like the person I've become. I'm not as carefree and outgoing as he is. I may appear that way at first, but I'm not."

"You've become an amazing person. There's no way he could dislike you."

"Yeah, I guess that's true. I mean, you find me irresistible."

"What makes you think that?"

"Are you saying it isn't true?"

"No, you are pretty irresistible," Kurt giggled and kissed him once more. "Do you think you can sleep now?"

"I suppose." Kurt began to sit up, but Blaine pulled him back down. "Will you stay with me tonight?" Kurt didn't even take the time to answer before snuggling into Blaine's warm embrace and falling asleep.

Chapter Eight

Blaine awoke the next morning to the light touch of a balloon hitting his arm. He brushed it aside, but felt another one against his fingers. And another. With his eyes closed, he reached his hand beside him to find Kurt's body replaced with yet *another* balloon. Confused, he cracked an eye open to find the entire room covered in blue and black balloons. On the floor, on the dresser, on the chair, on the desk, on the nightstand. They were *everywhere*. He turned his head when he heard someone clear their throat on the other side of the bed and Kurt plopped down on the mattress next to him, holding a single white balloon with "Happy Birthday" scribbled on.

"W-what?" Blaine looked around the room again, unsure what to think about the surprise he'd woken up to.

"Happy Birthday, Blaine." Kurt crashed their lips together after seeing a small smile on the other man's face.

"But... how?"

"I saw your birthday on your license yesterday when you were paying so last night before dinner I went to the store and bought balloons. I spent the past hour blowing them all up. Do you know how much blowing you have to do to blow up 127 balloons? A lot."

"Well, at least you'll have a lot of practice," Blaine mumbled sarcastically.

"What?"

"N-nothing." Blaine turned red and used the balloons as an excuse to look away. "Your blue to black ratio seems a little off."

"That's because there are 100 black ones and twenty-seven blue ones. One for every year you've graced this earth with your lovely presence."

Blaine laughed and pulled Kurt on top of him. Kurt was happy to oblige, straddling Blaine before leaning down for another kiss. "Happy Birthday, Mr. Anderson." He let the weight of his body fall onto Blaine and crossed his arms on Blaine's chest, resting his chin on top.

"I can't believe you did this. Why?" Blaine looked at the balloons on the bed beside him, still surprised by what Kurt had done, and ran his fingers over the white one.

"Why not? Why didn't you tell me it was your birthday?"

Blaine shrugged the best he could with Kurt on top of him. "It's Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is all about what you're thankful for and spending time with family. I didn't want to take away from that by celebrating my birthday as well. I'll have plenty more birthdays."

"And there will be plenty more Thanksgivings as well," Kurt tapped the tip of Blaine's nose with his finger while the corner of his eyes started to crinkled. "Besides, I don't know about you, but I'm quite thankful for your existence. I want to celebrate your birthday, okay? Will you let me?"

"What does that entail?" Blaine was still a bit shocked by the display surrounding him.

"Just an extra cake to bake and a present or two."

Blaine hesitated. "What kind of present? I don't want-" He was silenced by Kurt's lips against his. Kurt's hand found the firm muscles of Blaine's side and he pushed himself up slightly before shifting and relaxing between Blaine's legs.

"Well, I thought maybe we could have some fun and play a little," Kurt winked.

Blaine began to stutter and his cheeks turned pink. "O-okay." He cupped Kurt's face and leaned up to kiss him.

"Great. Let's go." Kurt climbed off of Blaine and kicked a few balloons out of his way.

"Wait, where are we going?" Blaine sat up but didn't move off of the bed.

"To the kitchen. I said we were going to have some fun, didn't I? Baking with you is sure to be a blast." Kurt knew he'd tricked Blaine into thinking they'd have a few more hours in bed together, a few hours to relax and enjoy his birthday together, but he didn't seem to care. That was half the fun. "Let's go make your birthday cake." When Kurt reached out his hand, Blaine took it, knowing there was nothing he could do to stop Kurt from baking once he had something in mind. He pulled him in for one last kiss before following him out of the room.

"Do you always make people's birthday cakes?" Blaine walked down the stairs alongside Kurt and swung their joined hands up to kiss his knuckles. Kurt leaned into his side and rested a head on his shoulder before leaning up to kiss Blaine's cheek. "You're going to make us fall."

"You'll fall for me?" Kurt joked, but stiffened when he felt Blaine tense up beside him. "Anyway, I've been making my family and friends' birthday cakes for over ten years. It's become somewhat of a tradition." They stepped into the kitchen and hesitantly let go of each other as Kurt moved around the kitchen to gather the ingredients and dishes needed.

Blaine took a set on the bar stool next to the counter and watched as Kurt made his way around his kitchen. He set a container of flour on the counter and instructed Blaine to measure out two and a half cups before moving to the fridge to pull out a few eggs.

"What kind of cake are you making me?" Blaine asked curious as he dumped the first ingredient in the bowl in front of him.

"*We* are making a triple chocolate cake. Chocolate cake, chocolate icing, and chocolate shavings on top," Kurt replied. He sat a container of baking cocoa in front of Blaine and laughed when his eyes grew wider than Kurt thought was possible. "Do you like that idea?" Kurt smacked Blaine's hands away when he began drawing designs in the flour.

Frowning, Blaine stood up and walked to the other side of the counter where Kurt stood. His smile reappeared when he grabbed Kurt's ass and pulled him close. "I *love* that idea."

"*Blaine*," Kurt groaned. "Your hands are covered in flour."

"You're baking me a chocolate cake. A *triple* chocolate cake. I can't control what I do while in this state."

"*We*," Kurt emphasized again. "*We* are baking you a cake. And what kind of state are you in right now?"

"Well, for starters," Blaine moved in to kiss Kurt's neck, letting his tongue graze along his skin. "anything chocolate makes me happy, and you're just encouraging me to eat unhealthy." He moved up to kiss his jaw.

"*Blaine*," Kurt groaned. "We're supposed to be baking, and it's your birthday. I can make an exception with your horrific diet."

Blaine moved up to kiss Kurt's lips, still holding Kurt close as his hands made their way into the back pockets of his jeans. Kurt responded to the kiss by wrapping his arms around Blaine and pulling him just as tight against his body. All thoughts of Blaine's cake and the numerous desserts he was supposed to make for the night were lost when he felt Blaine's entire body press against him, his tongue making his way inside of his mouth and the unsteady rhythm of Blaine's heart beating against his own chest. They stood in the middle of the kitchen exploring one another until a forced cough came from the doorway. Blaine jumped back quickly and made his way back to the bar stool.

Kurt casually cracked an egg and placed it into the bowl as Burt and Carole made their way into the kitchen. "Hey, guys. Are you hungry? I can try to whip something up for breakfast."

"No, we're fine, sweetie," Carole kissed Kurt on the cheek as she passed and whispered into his ear, "You have a little flour on your butt." Kurt blushed and wiped the flour away. He glared at Blaine who was quietly chuckling to himself.

"What are you making, kiddo?" Burt made his way to the counter and kept his eyes on Blaine as he spoke.

"It's Blaine's birthday, so we're making him a birthday cake," Kurt said with a smile.

"Your birthday? Why didn't you say anything to us?" Carole returned to Kurt's side with a carton of orange juice and a couple glasses.

"Because Blaine didn't even tell me about it."

Blaine chose to ignore the conversation going on around him and casually stirred the starts of their cake batter. Kurt stilled his hand and forced Blaine to look up at him. Blaine sighed before speaking. "You know why I did it."

"That doesn't mean I like that you did. Why don't you put a forth of a cup of cocoa in there now." Kurt leaned over the counter to give him a peck on the lips before releasing his hand. "Are you sure you guys don't want anything to eat? I've got Blaine to help me out now."

Blaine paused halfway to the container of baking cocoa and his eyes grew wide. "I hope you're not expecting me to do much. I want to be able to eat this. Is that your plan? For it to be inedible so I won't ruin my body with such unhealthy food."

"You're admitting it's unhealthy. We're making progress here." Blaine rolled his eyes and measured out the cocoa. "Like I said, I can make you anything you'd like."

"We're fine. Carole's got orange juice and I'll just eat one of these muffins that Finn left the other day."

"Not the chocolate, dad. You can have the low-fat blueberry."

"You're killing me, Kurt."

"No, I'm helping to keep you alive and healthy."

Burt turned to Blaine and shook his head. "I don't know how you put up with him."

"It's easy. I just eat what I want anyway," Blaine laughed. Having Burt include him in his bickering with Kurt made him feel even more welcome. It made him feel like he was accepted into their tightly-knit family and he could suddenly imagine himself in that same kitchen ten years down the road as Kurt taught their daughter how to bake a cake. He'd sit at the table with their son on his lap eating candy and receive disapproving glares from the other two in the room.

"I'll be back in to help with the cooking in a little bit," Carole handed Burt a few muffins and drug him out of the kitchen.

Blaine watched them leave before turning back to Kurt. He stood up and leaned forward with a sly smile. "So, where were we?"

"You're crazy." Kurt flicked flour into his face.

"But you love me," Blaine blurted it out before he could stop himself. He didn't want to make things uncomfortable between them when things were so fantastic. Sure, hearing Kurt say those three words to him would be the perfect birthday present, but he didn't want it to be forced. He didn't want Kurt to feel like he had to tell Blaine he loved him. Blaine knew he loved Kurt, but that didn't mean Kurt felt the same about him.

Before Kurt had the chance to say anything, he spoke up again. "So, what's the next ingredient in this delicious dessert?" The smile on Kurt's face told him he hadn't screwed up. Things weren't going to be awkward and maybe, just maybe, Kurt really did feel the same way.

"Are you sure about this? I don't want to ruin your family dinner." Blaine jumped out of the car but made no effort to move closer to Kurt's grandparent's house.

Kurt took a step towards him and grabbed his hands. "You've been nervous since we left the house. Just calm down, okay? They're going to love you." *Because I love you.* He reached up to adjust Blaine's bow tie and kissed the nerves away.

"But, do they acc-"

"Blaine, just trust me, okay?" He gave Blaine an encouraging smile and squeezed his hands reassuringly.

"You guys ready?" Burt pulled the pan of turkey out of the back seat and Kurt reached in to pull Blaine's birthday cake out and handed it off. "Ready for your cake, Birthday Boy?"

"You didn't tell anyone else it was my birthday, did you?" Blaine hesitantly took the chocolate cake from Kurt.

"Of course not. That doesn't mean the cake won't give it away."

Blaine looked down to see "Happy Birthday, Blaine!" written in blue icing and groaned. "Kurt."

"What? You said we could celebrate."

"Yes. We. As in you and me."

Kurt linked their free hands and pulled him along behind Burt and Carole. "My family loves having reasons to celebrate. And you and I can have a little celebration later on if you want. We can lie in bed and eat cake and ice cream while we watch a movie."

"You'd really put all of that into your body?" Blaine gasped.

"It's a special occasion. I'd do it for you."

Burt faked a gag, receiving a slap on the arm from both Carole and Kurt; Blaine just smiled behind them. The front door opened in front of them and two older women—Kurt's grandmothers, Blaine assumed—appeared in front of them. They stepped aside and pulled Kurt into a hug as soon as he made his way across the threshold. Burt and Carole were quickly whisked away by a few kids before they even had a chance to say hello.

"Kurt, you look so grown up," one of them said.

"She's right. We don't see you enough," the other added.

"You can thank Blaine for that now," Kurt joked, but Blaine froze and glared at his boyfriend. The last thing he wanted was for his grandparents to think he was the reason Kurt never visited Ohio. "He makes New York a little better," Kurt added in an attempt to ease Blaine's nerves once again.

A timer in the kitchen started to go off and one of them excused themselves to check on it.

"So, you're Blaine," the remaining grandmother said.

"Yes, ma'am."

Kurt couldn't help but to giggle at Blaine's formality and impeccable posture. Although he was a businessman, Kurt had never seen him quite so rigid before.

"It's just grammy." She pulled Blaine into a hug, careful to avoid the cake in his hands, which he awkwardly returned. Apart from Kurt and Carla, he wasn't used to someone being so open and comfortable with physical contact.

"This is my mom's mom." Kurt looked between the two.

"Come on. I want to know all about you and how you guys are doing in New York. Everyday has got to be an adventure of some sort, isn't it?" She pulled both of them along to the kitchen. Feeling his grammy's immediate approval of Blaine brought his mom a little closer that day, and he felt as if everyone important in his life was under a single roof.

Thanksgiving dinner was delicious. The counters were crammed with numerous dishes containing casseroles, vegetables, rolls, fruit, and various other sides. It was more food than Blaine had ever seen at his own Thanksgiving dinners, and just one bite told him that cooking delicious food wasn't a skill that only Kurt possessed, but his entire family.

Kurt offered to do the dishes and Blaine agreed to help despite Kurt's protests. They fell into a routine as they had before—Blaine drying while Kurt washed. About halfway through the enormous pile of plates and silverware, Kurt broke out into song, screaming the lyrics to "Whataya Want From Me." Blaine chuckled to himself as Kurt belted out the chorus. Kurt nudged him in the arm. "Come on. Join in. It makes doing the dishes a lot more fun."

"I'll leave the, uh, entertainment to you. This is already very amusing." Blaine's sarcasm wasn't hard to pick up on.

"Just wait. When I do the laundry tonight, you're going to hear an encore."

"And what's the encore song?" Blaine took another plate from Kurt and began drying it.

"That's a surprised," he winked.

Kurt turned his head to notice his grandma standing in the doorway. "Oh, hi, Grammy."

She made her way into the kitchen. "Your grandpa's been waiting for you. He has something he wanted to talk to you about."

"Oh, well just let me finish up here, and then I'll-"

"It's fine. I can help Blaine finish up," she offered and grabbed the plate from Kurt's hands.

Blaine looked from Kurt to his grandma and felt his stomach tighten. "Will you be okay?" Kurt asked. He nodded slowly and Kurt kissed him on the cheek before leaving.

Blaine turned his full attention back to the job in front of him. He was scared to talk to Kurt's grandma. He needed her approval almost as much as he'd needed Burt's. In a way, her approval felt like the approval he'd never get from Kurt's mom. Besides Kurt, his grandparents were the closest Blaine would ever get to meeting the woman who raised Kurt to be the man he'd fallen in love with.

Grammy cleared her throat and finally spoke up. "So, are you enjoying your time in Ohio?"

Blaine shifted nervously beside her. "Y-yeah. It's great. Kurt's entire family is so kind. I love them."

"Well, we love you, too." When Blaine didn't make the slightest movement apart from wiping the town over the wet ceramic, she wrapped her arm around his waist. "Hey, loosen up, okay?"

"Sorry, I'm just a bit overwhelmed. There are so many people here who I've never met before and I'm afraid I'll mess something up. I want today to be perfect for Kurt." He sat the dried plate on the pile beside him and started drying a few forks.

"And what about you? It's your birthday, right? Shouldn't the day be perfect for you as well?"

"It already is. Kurt's here and he's all I need for it to be perfect."

Grammy studied the man standing next to her and smiled. She continued washing the remaining dishes, but her mind was elsewhere. "How did you get Kurt to sing just now?"

Blaine stopped drying and looked at her with confusion. "What do you mean?"

"He was singing when I walked in. How did you get him to?"

"I... he just did that on his own."

Grammy paused in the middle of rinsing a cup and sat it back into the soapy sink. "Blaine, he doesn't sing anymore. At all. Ever since he got turned down at NYADA, he's refused to. We've begged him for years with no success. He wouldn't sing 'Happy Birthday;' He wouldn't go Christmas caroling at the nursing home; He went with his grandfather and me to the children's unit in a hospital one year around Easter, but he refused to sing when they'd asked. He just sat there and read them stories or drew pictures along with them. He has a beautiful voice, but he's kept it locked away for so long, and I've always been afraid he'd never let it back out. But then you show up in his life and he brings you here. Singing in here... that's the first time I've heard him since he was seventeen."

Blaine began drying again so he'd at least have something to do. He listened to what she'd said, but he didn't know what to say in return. He hadn't forced Kurt to sing, had he? He gave him the option, and Kurt hadn't declined. He seemed hesitant, but agreed soon after. "I... I didn't do anything. We went to McKinley

yesterday and I asked him to sing something when we went to the auditorium. So he did. I didn't know it was something he refused to do."

Grammy went back to washing the dishes after noticing Blaine had finished drying what he had. "You know, the way you look at Kurt... I've only seen that look one other time."

"When?"

"When Burt looked at our Elizabeth." Blaine couldn't hold back the smile forming on his lips. "I knew from the moment I met him and saw the way he acted around her that they were going to get married someday. As scary as it was to admit that my little girl was in love, I had to. When they were together, nothing else mattered. He was completely focused on her, and she never stopped smiling when he was near. He brought out the best in her."

"I wish I could've met her."

"She would've loved you, Blaine. And I know it may be too early for me to say this, but I'm going to anyway because I don't know when I'll see you again. Don't let Kurt go, okay? Even if he gets scared and convinces himself he wants out, don't let him. Fight for him because until today, I hadn't seen two people truly in love since Elizabeth was alive." Blaine opened his mouth to interrupt, but she held up her hand. "I'm not asking if you're in love with him and I'm not telling you that he's in love with you. Only the two of you know what's in your hearts, but I know what I see. I can tell you that there's something special there and I want Kurt to be happy. After all he's been through in his life—losing his mom when he was so young, being threatened to be killed, attempting suicide, giving up on his dreams—he deserves to have someone who will show him what it's liked to be loved."

Blaine nearly dropped the plate in his hands when she'd mentioned suicide. His face paled and he felt his mouth go dry. "W-what... I mean... Kurt. What did you mean?"

"Hmm?" Grammy looked up, unaware that she'd said anything new.

"You said Kurt... he... what about attempting suicide?" The knots in Blaine's stomach just kept forming. He couldn't imagine Kurt, the man who always smiled and seemed so happy and grateful for his life, ever wanting to take that life away from himself. All he wanted to do was run to Kurt and hug him. He wanted to kiss him and hang onto him and never let him go.

"He didn't tell you about that?" She brought a hand to her mouth as if she regretted mentioning it. Blaine just shook his head. "Oh, honey, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said anything. Just... when the time is right, Kurt will tell you about it, okay? It's not easy for him to talk about. It was a bad part of his life, but things are better now. I guess I just assumed he'd told you."

"I-It's fine. Okay. He probably just didn't know how to bring it up." Blaine could feel his breathing becoming unsteady with each breath he took. He was having trouble getting an adequate amount of oxygen and his knuckles were turning white from where he was gripping the edge of the counter so hard.

"Well, I think we're done here. Why don't you go find Kurt, and I'll finish drying the dishes, okay?" Blaine nodded again. "It was nice talking to you, though. I hope you come back and see us soon."

"I do, too." He forced a smile on his face and went to find Kurt.

It was around 8:30 before they finally returned home, and Blaine was almost too tired to move. Between the massive amount of food he ate, the draining conversation he had with Kurt's grandma, and the young children pulling him around the house, he could barely keep his eyes open on the way home. Kurt had allowed him to rest his head in his lap as he played with curls on the top of his head. Burt and Carole hadn't missed the sweet interaction and the smiles remained on their faces the entire way home.

"I think we're going to bed, Dad." Blaine leaned into Kurt's side for support and nuzzled his face in Kurt's neck as he placed a few kisses to the warm skin. "Blaine, honey, let's go upstairs. You're tired." He rubbed Blaine's side and pulled him deeper into the house.

"If he passes out on you before you're ready to go to sleep, feel free to join us down here," Burt offered.

"Thanks, I'll keep that in mind." Kurt knew that even if Blaine did fall asleep before him, there was no way he would leave. He would be happy lying beside Blaine and cuddling into his side even if it meant letting his thoughts wander to places he couldn't control. He began helping a sleepy Blaine up the stairs. "Happy Thanksgiving, Dad."

"You too, kid. It's nice to have you home."

Kurt smiled at him and disappeared to the second story. "Blaine, where do you want to sleep tonight?" Blaine mumbled incoherently in reply. "Sweetie, you need to speak up. I can't understand you."

"By you." Blaine moved his head back to where it was buried in Kurt's neck and began biting at Kurt's skin.

"Blaine," Kurt yelped. "Stop. You're going to leave marks."

Blaine pulled away and smiled knowingly. "That's the point."

"Come on. You can sleep in my bed with me tonight. It's more comfortable."

"Are you taking pity on me because it's my birthday?"

"Maybe."

They made their way into the bedroom and Blaine managed to wake up long enough to change out of his nice clothes and into a pair of sweats. He didn't even make an effort to slip on a shirt before climbing under the covers of Kurt's bed. Sighing, Kurt abandoned his own shirt and joined him underneath the sheets. He instantly felt Blaine's warm arms wrap around him and their bare chests felt like they were made to be pressed against each other.

"Hey, Kurt?"

"Yeah?"

"Why didn't you tell me you never sing anymore. You know you didn't have to yesterday when I asked if you didn't want to."

Blaine felt Kurt stiffen in his arms. "How did you know about that?"

"Your Grandma talked to me while we were doing dishes. She said they've been trying to get you to sing for years, but you've always refused, yet you sang for me—in the auditorium as well as in your Grandparent's house. Why?"

"I... I just wanted to make you smile." Kurt propped himself up on his elbow. "Blaine, there are some things you know about me that no one else knows. I already told you that I've never shared those times

with my mom with anyone else. You're the very first person I told, so that makes you special. You mean a lot to me, and I trust you. When I'm around you, I feel like I can finally be myself. I don't have to hide who I want to be. It feels like that part of me that's been missing since my mom died is back again. Singing to you just feels *right*. Maybe it's because you *weren't* there in high school when everything was going on, but that shouldn't matter. I like singing for you. I like the smile that lights up your face when I do."

Blaine leaned forward to place a chaste kiss against his lips and he almost let those three little words slip out of his mouth. *I love you*. But he couldn't. He was still scared to tell Kurt something so big; something that would affect his life so dramatically. Saying "I love you" was a big thing to Blaine and he didn't want to toss those words around like they didn't mean anything. He wanted to make sure Kurt was ready to hear them. He wanted to make sure *he* was ready to *say* them.

"What else did you and my Grandma talk about?" Kurt asked curiously.

Blaine thought about the one thing she'd said that had been on his mind the entire night. The attempted suicide. He wanted to know the details, even if they were going to be painful to hear. He wanted to know how Kurt could feel so bad about himself that he'd felt like he had no other option and what kind of person could make him feel like crap. Who could look at the beautiful boy lying beside him and not see how incredible he was inside and out? Blaine wanted Kurt to share everything with him, but he wasn't ready to hear about it yet. Instead, he just said, "Not much."

"Well, she liked you." Kurt fell back into Blaine's arms.

"I liked her. I can see how you turned out the way you did. I'm sure your mom was just as amazing."

"She was. I know she would've liked you, too. She always told me about the kind of person she hoped I'd find. Looking back on those conversations, I realized she never said 'she' or 'her.' She never used any indication of gender. Maybe even back then, she knew who I'd be when I got older. I think she had an idea that I was gay even before I knew what that meant. She always did have a knack for knowing things no one else could figure out."

"At least you know you have her acceptance."

"Yeah, that's true." Kurt smiled.

"Hey, I thought you were going to do laundry tonight," Blaine pointed out.

"I was, but it can wait until tomorrow. I'd rather stay here with you." Kurt buried his face in Blaine's chest and sighed in contentment. "Happy Birthday, Blaine. I'm sorry we couldn't do as much to celebrate as I would have liked."

"It's okay. Like I told your grandma, you're the only thing I need for it to be perfect."

"You really told my grandma that?"

"Of course. Apparently she was doubting the effect you have on my happiness." Blaine ran a hand up and down Kurt's bare side, sending a rush of chills up Kurt's spine. "Hey, even if you aren't doing laundry tonight, do I still get an encore?"

"If you want." Kurt laughed. He watched as Blaine closed his eyes and began singing the song he'd heard Blaine singing the previous night.

"Wake up, wake up." Kurt repeatedly poked Blaine in the side to wake the sleeping man.

"W-what?" Blaine rolled over to face him and rubbed at his eyes. He noticed the room was still dark and the sun hadn't even begun to peek over the horizon. How was Kurt already so chipper? He reached for Kurt's arm to tug him back down, but Kurt didn't budge.

"Come on. Black Friday shopping." Kurt was smiling but frowned when Blaine closed his eyes again and buried his face into Kurt's lap.

"You didn't say anything about that," he mumbled, barely audible.

"No, because if I would've told you before right now, you would've said no."

Blaine turned his head out of Kurt's lap and looked up at his sparkling blue eyes. "You don't know that. I may have done it for you."

"It's 4:30 in the morning," Kurt stated.

"Yeah. I would've said 'hell no'." He turned his face back into Kurt's lap.

Kurt laughed and gently rubbed Blaine's back. "I thought so. But you're awake now, so get up! You can sleep in the car on the way there."

Blaine leaned up to kiss Kurt's stomach where his shirt had ridden up and wrapped his arms tightly around Kurt's waist. "I have better ideas as to how we could spend our morning. They include you coming back to bed."

Kurt removed Blaine's hands from his side and leaned away, pulling Blaine up along with him. "Nope. Not today, Blaine. Let's go. I already got your clothes out for you and everything. Do you want to shower?"

Blaine stood up, but his feet were planted on the ground. He glared at Kurt for a few seconds before he started grumbling. "Give me ten minutes to wash my hair. I take it you won't join me?"

Kurt was startled by Blaine's question. He opened his mouth to respond, but no words came out. They hadn't talked about anything as intimate as sharing a shower and the farthest they'd gone was making out. Sure, he'd wanted more with Blaine some day, but after how guarded he'd kept himself over the years, he wasn't sure he was ready for that next step quite yet.

Blaine's eyes grew wide and his face turned beat red. "I'm so sorry, Kurt. I-I didn't mean that. I just... you... I'm not completely in control with what I say this early."

Kurt took a few steps and closed the distance between them. He cupped Blaine's face and gave him a quick kiss. "It's okay. Go take a shower and join me downstairs in twenty minutes, okay? I'll be sure to find the unhealthiest breakfast down there for you."

"Still encouraging my unhealthy eating habits? It's not my birthday anymore. You're not obligated to do so."

Kurt shrugged. "You're on vacation. I'll let it slide." He handed Blaine the clothes he'd picked out and walked out of the room.

Blaine had the feeling that no matter how much Kurt complained about what he ate, he'd never have the heart to force him to eat healthier.

"What do you think about this color?" Kurt held a deep purple polo up to Blaine and nodded. He was obviously satisfied with his choice. It was nearing 3:00 in the afternoon, and most of the best Black Friday sales had already ended. However, Kurt wasn't done shopping just yet. He'd drug Blaine through the mall, stopping in every store that looked remotely interesting. By the time the clock approached 1:30, Blaine had stopped complaining. The truth was that despite his uncomfortable shoes, the tiredness in his eyes, and the heavy bags he was carrying, he enjoyed spending his time with Kurt. He trailed behind Kurt as he went through rack after rack of clothes, searching for the perfect outfits.

Kurt moved to a table lined with cardigans. "What about this?" He held a navy blue one up to a grey shirt. "I think this one would look great on you." He slung it over his shoulder and missed Blaine rolling his eyes.

"You don't have to buy me an entirely new wardrobe, Kurt. I'm fine with what I own." He liked what Kurt was picking out for him, but Kurt had refused to let him pay for anything on his own.

"Blaine, you own a button up shirt in every color, God knows how many business suits, and about fifteen pairs of sweatpants. Other than that, your wardrobe is seriously lacking." Kurt found a table with bow ties and carefully inspected each one before handing a few to Blaine. His eyes gazed around the empty department store before leaning down to kiss him. "If you really don't want me to do this, I won't, but I want to. I love any excuse to go shopping."

Blaine leaned up to kiss him again. "Thank you." He grabbed another bow tie from the table and smiled when Kurt looked satisfied. "Do you approve?"

"Very nicely done, Anderson."

"What can I say? I have an excellent fashion coach."

"Well, why don't we go check out and then I can buy you some ice cream."

"You spoil me." Blaine couldn't help it. He leaned in to kiss Kurt one more time, but this time they weren't alone.

"Who's this, Hummel?"

Kurt jumped back at the familiar voice. It was one he had rarely heard since he had graduated, but he would never forget it. "K-Karofsky. What are you doing here?"

"Taking advantage of these sales and updating my wardrobe. What about you?"

"Right," Kurt snorted. "As if you would wear anything that came from here."

"You don't know anything about me anymore."

"You're wearing the same thing you wore eight years ago."

"Well, m-my...." Dave trailed off and looked towards the ground.

"Your?" Kurt prodded. He looked to the side when an unfamiliar man walked up to them.

"Hey. I found some excellent sales over here and I will look amazing in this shirt." The man froze when he noticed Kurt and Blaine on the other side of the rack. "Oh. Hi. And who are you two?"

"Um, this is Kurt and..." Karofsky looked to Blaine.

"Blaine. My boyfriend." Kurt wrapped an arm around Blaine's waist and pulled him close to his side.

Karofsky didn't seem surprised that Kurt had found someone. After everything he'd put him through during high school, he knew Kurt deserved to find some kind of happiness. "Kurt, Blaine, this is my boyfriend Sebastian."

Kurt extended a hand which Sebastian hesitantly took. "Nice to meet you, Sebastian."

"We met at Scandals," Karofsky added.

"Scandals is the gay bar in West Lima," Kurt clarified.

"I know," Blaine looked to Kurt. "I went there once during my junior year."

"Wait, you were in Lima?" During one of their first dates, Blaine briefly mentioned attending Dalton during high school, but nothing more than was ever said. Kurt sensed high school wasn't the best time for Blaine either.

"Y-yeah. Have I not mentioned that before?"

"We could've seen each other and not even realized it."

"I doubt we would've. I'd remember you. Your eyes give you away."

Sebastian faked a gag and laughed into Karofsky's shoulder. "You two are worse than those chick flicks my sister used to make me suffer through when we were growing up."

Kurt didn't know whether to take that as a compliment, or an insult. He chose a compliment, though.

"Well, we better get going. I promised Blaine we'd get him some ice cream. He's been a trooper today."

"Oh. Well, it was nice seeing you again. I'm sorry about-"

"Yes, Dave, I know. I thought we agreed that you don't have to apologize every time you see me."

He blushed and grabbed Sebastian's hand. "Sorry, ah! Sorry. Um, we'll just let you two go. Maybe we could go get lunch sometime and catch up, though?"

"I'd love that, but we actually live in New York. I'm just here visiting for the holidays." Kurt almost thought he saw Dave's face fall. "Next time I'm here, I'll be sure to find you and we can get together, okay?"

"Okay. Cool." He gave one last smile in Blaine's direction before pulling Sebastian out of the store.

Kurt grabbed the bowtie from Blaine's hands and quickly went to the cashier to pay for his items before returning to Blaine's side.

"So.... Who was that?"

"Dave Karofsky." Kurt moved down the aisle without elaborating.

"What does he have to be so sorry about?" When Kurt didn't answer, Blaine spoke up again. "Kurt, I know about some of the things that happened in high school, and if this guy is the cause of some of them, I want to know."

Kurt stopped and turned around to face Blaine. "And what *things* are you talking about, Blaine?" He was clearly annoyed.

"The suicide attempt." Blaine shot back.

Kurt's entire face fell and Blaine heard something hit the ground. He looked down and realized one of the bags had slipped out of Kurt's hand. "H-how did you know about that."

Blaine reached down and picked up the bag. "Your grandma accidentally let it slip last night."

"You said you guys didn't talk about anything else," Kurt whispered.

Blaine grabbed his arm and gently pulled him along to a bench outside of the store. "Kurt, I'm not going to force you to talk about anything, but I just want you to know that I'm here and I'm not going anywhere. And judging from your reaction and the fact that you didn't deny it when I asked, I'm assuming that Dave guy *was* the cause of everything."

"I... He's changed, Blaine. He's not the same guy he was eight years ago, just like I'm not the same guy I was eight years ago."

"That's not what I'm asking." Blaine pulled Kurt to his side, not caring if they were in the middle of a crowded mall or not. He needed to comfort Kurt from the things that had happened in the past and that's all that mattered in that moment.

"I was seventeen." When Kurt began speaking, his voice was fragile and almost too quiet for Blaine to hear. "I was being bullied every single day. He threatened my life. I-I didn't want that to happen. I didn't want to lose my life because of him. I decided that if I was going to die, I wanted to take control and end my life on my own. No one seemed to care about what was going on anyway. All of my friends were getting into the schools they wanted, their relationships were getting progressively better, they were all moving on with their life. But me? I was alone. I didn't have anyone in my life to ease the pain. I was lonely and I didn't even have my friends anymore. All I had left was glee club, and that crumbled down on my when I got my rejection letter from NYADA. I felt like I didn't have any reason to live, so I did it. I tried to end my life, but Finn... h-he found me in time."

Blaine hadn't realized he was holding his breath until Kurt started sobbing into his chest. He let a few tears of his own slip out of his eyes and leave a wet trail down his cheek. "Kurt." He choked.

"Shhhh. Please. Just... don't say anything yet, okay? Just... I can't talk about it anymore." He heard Blaine say okay before his memories took him back to one of the worse times of his life.

Kurt looked up from his magazine when he heard a knock on the door. He saw Dave standing in the middle of the doorway with a bouquet of flowers in his hands. "Hey, can I come in?" Kurt froze, but nodded when he saw his dad asleep in the corner of the room. With Burt there and the hundreds of people in the hospital, there wasn't much Dave could do to him. He turned his attention back to the magazine when Karofsky stepped inside.

A chair creaked as it was drug across the linoleum floor and Dave positioned himself at the side of Kurt's hospital bed. Neither one of them said anything for the first ten minutes. The room was quiet apart from Kurt's steady heartbeat and the murmur of nurses coming from outside of the room. When Kurt finally reached the end of his magazine, he closed it and set it on the table beside him.

"Why are you here, Dave?"

Dave buried his face in his hands and Kurt was shocked when he heard him start to cry. "I'm so freaking sorry, Kurt." He looked up and took in Kurt's fragile body. There were just a few chords running up his arm, probably for the heart monitor, but that was it. Kurt was going to be okay.

"Sorry for what?" Kurt snapped. He didn't care that Karofsky made the effort to see him at the hospital. He was the primary reason Kurt was even there in the first place. Kurt didn't care if Karofsky was crying or said he was sorry. "For making my life a living hell? For treating me like crap? You've pushed me into the lockers every single day for the past two years. You've called me 'fag' and 'queer' when you're no different yourself. You made me feel like the most worthless person at that school. You threatened to kill me, Dave. Do you realize that? And while all of this was happening, no one even took a second look. No one knew the extent to which you were bullying me. I can't take it anymore. I can't go to that school and feel threatened for my life every time I step through the front doors. I don't know what the hell is wrong with you."

"I'm sorry," Karofsky repeated again, this time much quieter. He looked defeated. He knew everything Kurt was saying was the truth, but hearing it repeated back to him from the boy he'd bullied for so long sent him to his breaking point. He hated himself for what he'd done and he wished he were the one in the hospital bed, not Kurt.

"Do you not call me the same names that people would call you if they found out the truth? Do you not push me into the lockers because I'm confident enough to be who I am. I'm out and proud of who I am. I'm gay just

like you, but you don't seem to care. You think staying in the closet and bullying someone who could be there for you, someone who would understand what you're going through is better than befriending that person? Dave, I've been where you are. You're stuck in the closet because you're afraid if you come out, you'll lose everything. You don't want your parents to say they wish you were never born. You don't want your friends to look at you differently. You don't want people to think you're not as tough or can't be the amazing football player that you are." Kurt didn't know why he was doing it. Every voice in his head was screaming at him not to do it. This was the man who threatened your life. This was the man who sent you so far into depression that you tried to kill yourself. But he couldn't help it. Despite all the bad Dave had done, Kurt understood the battle going on in his head. So he reached out and grabbed his hand. "Dave, if you would've come to me in the beginning and told me the truth instead of screaming at me and bullying me so much, I could've been there for you. I could've been your friend. I could've been someone to offer you advice and help you through it. Like I said, I've been there."

"But we can't be that now?" Karofsky pulled his hand away, but Kurt kept his there.

"You threatened my life, Dave. That's going to take a little while to get over. And even if I were to forgive you, I don't think my dad's going to be as willing to let you into my life."

"But if we give this situation a little bit of time, do you think it could work out?"

Kurt smiled at Dave and looked towards his dad. "Yeah. I think it really could work out."

Eight years later and Kurt and Dave still hadn't quite figured out the friendship thing, but Kurt didn't want to give up. He knew that the potential was there for a great friendship one day.

"Do you want to go get ice cream now?" Blaine asked, probably with a little too much enthusiasm for the current mood.

Kurt didn't mind the playful side, though. He stood up and held out his hand. "Let's go."

"I can't believe it's our last full day here." Kurt felt a pair of arms wrap tightly around him from behind and leaned into Blaine's embrace.

"Do you mean you actually like Lima?" Kurt continued applying moisturizer to his face. He could see Blaine's smile in the bathroom mirror and it was one that was expressive of his every thought in that moment.

"I mean I *love* Lima." He hooked his chin over Kurt's shoulder and buried his face in his neck. "You smell amazing." He didn't miss the blush that filled Kurt's cheeks. "What are we doing today?"

Kurt put the lid back on the bottle of moisturizer and set it on the counter before turning around in Blaine's arms. "We're picking out our Christmas tree and then bringing it home to decorate. We always do it the Saturday after Thanksgiving. There's this little place outside of town where you can pick one out and cut it down on your own. My mom found it when I was three and we would go every year. She and I would wander around until we found the perfect one and then my dad would cut it down for us. It became a sort of tradition and after she died, we continued going there."

"We never had a real tree as I was growing up. My mom had this gorgeous pre-lit one with matching ornaments. It was never anything special to me or my brother. Coop and I would make ornaments in elementary school like all of the other kids, but we would bring them home and my mom would barely even take one look at them before throwing them away. I guess she was afraid they would ruin her tree."

"Oh, Blaine. Well, we should make ornaments then."

"What?"

"You heard me. We can get some plain ornaments and decorate them however we would like."

"I'm not seven anymore. You don't have to do this to make me feel any better."

"I'm not. You're never too old to celebrate Christmas, Blaine. Besides, we can take them back to New York with us and hang them on my Christmas tree, okay?" Kurt leaned forward until his lips met Blaine's and their smiles couldn't be controlled. Blaine lifted Kurt up onto the counter and held him tight before pulling their lips apart.

"Sometimes I wish I would've switched my flight sooner."

"All that matters is that you did." Kurt hopped down and grabbed his phone from the sink. "Are you ready to go?"

"Do I get to be Santa Claus?"

"You sure eat enough cookies to be him." Kurt tousled Blaine's hair—un-gelled to satisfy Kurt's wishes—and pulled him along to the car full of his waiting family.

Burt pulled into the Christmas tree farm twenty minutes later. Blaine had to admit, the place seemed cozy, and there were families everywhere he looked. Some were older with teenagers, and others with toddlers were no older than themselves. Kurt took his hand and followed Burt, Carole, Rachel, and Finn into the maze of trees.

"So, what qualifies as the perfect tree?" Blaine whispered into Kurt's ear.

"There isn't a list of criteria it has to meet," Kurt laughed. "You just pick which one is perfect to you. My dad likes the tall ones. I like the fat ones. Carole likes the pretty ones. Finn has never really cared one way or another, and Rachel, well, all Rachel cares about is putting the star on the top of the tree." He turned around to face Blaine and started walking backwards, hoping Blaine wouldn't let him run into anything. He grabbed both of Blaine's gloved hands in his own. "What do you like in a tree?"

Blaine took a minute to think before answering. "One that smells really good."

Kurt grinned. "Well, we'll just have to make sure the one we pick smells exactly how you want it to."

Blaine hugged him tight and turned him back around in his arms. "Do you know what kind of tree I'm going to have in my apartment?"

"What kind?" It was hard for Kurt to look up at Blaine from where he was standing in front of him, but he attempted to anyway.

"A Charlie Brown tree."

"You have a beautiful apartment that can hold a huge tree, but you're going to have tiny tree that can barely hold up a single ornament?"

"He's a loner. Nobody else wants the tiny trees, but I do."

"Yes. Great things can come in tiny packages." Kurt nudged Blaine in the side and giggled.

"Now the short jokes come."

"I'm sorry. It was just too easy. But just think. Now I have a way to ride the children's rides at amusement parks!" Kurt pulled away from Blaine and ran as soon as he saw the look on the shorter man's face.

"Kurt!" Blaine ran after him, but his shorter legs worked to his disadvantage once again.

"I'm sorry, Blaine. I've been dying to ride the tea cups and they just won't let me." Kurt shot past Burt and Carole who stood back and watched as the two of them zigzagged between trees. Blaine finally caught up and grabbed him from behind, startling Kurt and sending him to the ground. "Does that mean you won't ride them with me?"

"I know for a fact that *anyone* can ride the tea cups." Blaine kissed his cheek and pulled him up off the ground. "You have a little something on your ass." Kurt looked behind him as Blaine wiped the grass from his jeans.

"Hey. Think about it this way. At least now you're dating me so you have someone to reach the top shelf at the grocery store."

"I'm going to go find my Charlie Brown tree. It needs extra love right now."

"Yes, and since you can relate to it so well..." Kurt yelled after him. He watched Blaine walk away for a bit before joining him and the rest of his family. He decided that bringing Blaine to Lima was a great idea. Getting away from the stress of work and the busy city brought out an entirely new side of Blaine. It was a side that Kurt hoped would remain prominent once they returned to New York the next day.

He walked to Blaine's side and slipped their hands together as they went to find the perfect tree.

"There. It's perfect." Blaine placed his tree in a bowl and set it on the coffee table in front of him.

"I can't believe you actually bought that thing. Actually, I can't believe they *let* you buy it." Kurt stared at the two foot stick in front of him and plopped down onto the couch next to Blaine. He handed him a cup of cocoa and a Christmas cookie.

"Hey, don't be insulting Wilma. She has character."

"Wilma. You named the tree Wilma?" Kurt rolled his eyes and took a sip of his tea. He heard Burt laughing along as he placed their Christmas tree in the corner of the room.

"Kurt, every tree needs an identity. I told you. I'm making sure this tree gets extra love and I want it to feel like it's just as special as every other tree."

"Blaine, you're twenty-seven. Do you realize that?" Blaine stared at him with a blank expression. "Fine. Wilma can come home with us, but she's *your* carry-on. And you are just a tad crazy. I hope you know that."

"Wilma thanks you greatly."

"Hey, Kurt, do you and Blaine want to help string the lights or start making the popcorn garland?"

"We'll work on the popcorn garland in a bit."

"Can Wilma have a popcorn garland?" Blaine finished off his cookie and set his cup of cocoa on the table beside his tree.

"Blaine, a few pieces of popcorn on that tree will snap it in half."

"It will not! She's stronger than that!"

"Picture time." Rachel sang. She walked into the living room holding a camera and instantly snapped a few pictures of Kurt and Blaine.

"Rachel, can we at least have a little warning?" Kurt grumbled.

Blaine reached out and wrapped both arms around Kurt's shoulder, hugging him tight. He smashed their cheeks together and the smile on his face only made Kurt's even wider. "Ready, Rachel."

"Okay. Ready? One, two, three." She snapped the picture, but Blaine didn't pull away.

"Blaine, you need to let go of me at some point." Kurt turned his head to give him a quick kiss and Blaine finally pulled away. Kurt had to admit that he was quite happy with how comfortable Blaine felt around his family. There wasn't any awkwardness when they showed a little affection towards each other and their playful bickering was often encouraged by Burt and Finn. It made Kurt feel like he really could spend the rest of his life with Blaine. He could picture family gatherings years down the line. His kids would be decorating the tree with Burt as Blaine lifted them up to place the star on top—despite Rachel's protests that she had always been the one to do so. But that was crazy to think about, Kurt thought to himself. They'd only been together for a month. He hadn't even told Blaine he loved him yet.

Kurt looked over to the half decorated Christmas tree as Finn placed a cardboard Santa ornament he made in second grade on one of the branches. He rested his head on Blaine's shoulder and looked up at him. "Do you want to go with me to pop the popcorn, or would you like to stay and help my dad?"

"I'll go with you." Blaine picked his empty cocoa cup off of the coffee table and followed Kurt into the kitchen. He sat it in the sink and moved to the side to pull a big bowl out of the cabinet for the popcorn.

"How do you like decorating a real tree for a change? Is the smell everything you imagined it to be?" Kurt grabbed a bag of kernels from the cupboard.

"And more. This is nice, being with your family. At the office, we're allowed to decorate, but no one really does anymore. I still decorate mine, but lately I've felt like there wasn't a point. No one sees it. No one cares. When I was little, there would be lights and garlands everywhere you turned. People wore festive sweaters and all of the secretaries had mini trees on their desks."

"Like your Charlie Brown one?" Kurt joked.

"Not quite. They had a few more branches than Wilma." He chuckled. "The point is, I just miss those times. So here, with your family, it just feels right."

Right. It felt right. Blaine thought being with his family felt right. Kurt took a few seconds to grasp that concept. That Blaine may be thinking the exact same things that he had just been thinking about. Could they really be on the same page? "Well, you know you're welcome anytime. I just hope they aren't burning you out too much. You still have to help me decorate my apartment, you know."

"Oh, I'm counting on that," Blaine moved to the side to let Kurt in front of the stove.

"I'll even tangle you up in the lights."

"And we can bake Christmas cookies."

"And wear unflattering shirts with reindeer plastered on the front."

"And listen to cheesy Christmas music."

"And build a gingerbread house."

"And wrap presents."

"And watch The Grinch." Kurt leaned into Blaine and wrapped his arms around him. "I'm glad I won't be alone for Christmas this year. It's nice. I finally have someone to drag with me to the mall to go Christmas shopping."

"You really think I'd go with you again after yesterday?" Blaine faked a shock.

"Hey, Mr. Businessman, you enjoyed yourself. You're too uptight sometimes. I think that office is bad for you." Kurt moved away from him and began heating some oil on the stove. Once it reached the right temperature, he poured a cup of kernels into it and placed the lid on top. "Have you ever spent Christmas with anyone special?"

"Um, one year, yes." Blaine turned around and began to rinse out his cocoa mug, not offering any more information on the subject. "Do you want me to place this in the dishwasher or wash it by hand?"

"Uh, d-dishwasher's fine." Kurt stuttered. He didn't know why Blaine always avoided talking about his past. He never mentioned his past relationships and Kurt wasn't one to pry. When certain subjects came up, Blaine eased his way out of them with great care, leaving Kurt with little information. Kurt knew Blaine was hiding something, he just didn't know what that something was.

He walked up to Blaine and grabbed the mug out of his hands. He placed it back into the sink and pulled him into a hug. "Would you like to decorate our ornaments and string a popcorn garland in my room or in the living room with everyone else?"

"Can we do it in the living room? It's our last night here, and I... I kind of want to spend time with everyone else, if that's fine."

"Of course it's fine. Why don't you go in there and get everything out while I finish up with the popcorn, okay?" He kissed his cheek and guided him out of the kitchen.

Kurt wasn't ready to leave tomorrow. He wasn't ready to say goodbye to Burt or Carole again. He didn't want to leave his crazy best friend behind as he went back to New York. Kurt didn't want to part with his tiny niece, knowing that by the next time he would see her, she will have already grown so much. But most of all, Kurt didn't want to say goodbye to this side of Blaine. He didn't want Blaine to have to say goodbye to the family he'd never had. The only thing that kept the smile on his face as he joined everyone in the living room was knowing it would only be a few weeks before he could see Blaine and his family together again.

Chapter Nine

Kurt had just pulled the comforter up around him to block out the cool December air that had somehow made its way into his apartment when he heard a knock on the front door. He grumbled to himself as he picked up his phone from the nightstand and checked the time. 5:15. Who would be awake and out of their house before six in the morning? Who would be knocking on his *door* before six in the morning? He went through the list of people it could possibly be—a very short list considering he didn't know too many people in New York—and reluctantly pushed the covers off of him once again and got out of bed.

He slipped a pair of sweats over his boxers and rubbed his eyes, trying to get them to adjust to the light of the lamp he'd turned on before walking out of his room. The small living room / dining room area was only lit up by the moon shining through the tiny kitchen window, but it was enough light for him to make it to the door without stumbling into a table here or a chair there.

He ran a hand through his hair in an attempt to look half-way decent before moving his hand to the doorknob with the full intent of giving the person on the other side a piece of his mind. Thursday was one of his free days and he enjoyed being able to sleep in, completely uninterrupted by family or work. However, when he opened the door, the only thing he could allow himself to do was smile and forget about all of the anger he'd had just a few seconds earlier.

"Hey," the man standing in front of him said before sliding past Kurt and stepping inside. Blaine was completely dressed, sporting a nice pair of jeans and one of the shirts Kurt had picked out for him during their Black Friday adventures. Kurt was proud of himself because the outfit Blaine had on made him even sexier than Kurt had believed him to be before, if possible.

"What are you doing here?" Kurt said dryly, trying to seem upset but failing once the smile reappeared on his face. He decided to fake a yawn, but a real one came out instead which made Blaine yawn in return. "You look just as tired."

"On the contrary, actually," he said with a grin and bright eyes. "Grab your coat and let's go." Blaine looked around Kurt's apartment and spotted his coat lying on his armchair. He picked it up as well as the scarf draped on top and held it up for Kurt to slip his arms through.

"What if I don't want to go? What if I want to crawl back in bed?" Kurt knew he was being stubborn, but if Blaine really wanted him to go along with whatever crazy thing he had in mind, he was going to earn

Kurt's company. "Will you come back to bed with me? I promise to be the big spoon. I know how much you prefer that. I'll even make us breakfast in the morning."

"Nope," Blaine shook his head. "Not this morning. You're coming with me even if I have to carry you up there." He swung the coat in the air a few times before Kurt gave in and slipped his arms through the sleeves. When he took the scarf from Blaine and began wrapping it around his neck, Blaine disappeared into the bedroom, leaving Kurt alone and confused in the doorway.

"Blaine?" Kurt called out. He walked towards the bedroom door and poked his head inside to see what was going on, but Blaine had already grabbed a few blankets out of Kurt's closet and was heading back towards the living room.

When he reached Kurt, he zipped up the sleepy boy's coat and kissed him before holding out his hand, which Kurt gladly took. Kurt loved the way his hand felt in Blaine's. Blaine's hand was strong and his fingers always wrapped themselves snugly around his, their palms pressed firmly together. Holding hands with Blaine was yet another thing Kurt never knew he'd been missing out on until he had experienced it.

"Ready?" Blaine asked. He pulled Kurt towards the door and waited as Kurt locked up his apartment. They walked to the stairs, but when Kurt made a move to go down, Blaine pulled him the opposite direction and they began making their way towards the top of the building.

"Blaine, where are you taking me? If this is one of those murder mystery things where I get to know you and trust you before you kidnap me in the middle of the night and then kill me, I don't want to be a part of it and I'd prefer to just go right back down to my apartment and back to sleep."

"Will you calm down? I'm not going to murder you." Blaine brought their hands up and kissed the back of Kurt's reassuringly. "You'll like this, I promise." They'd reached the top of the stairs by then and Blaine pushed the heavy metal door open. They walked through and found themselves on the roof of Kurt's apartment building overlooking the entire city. Kurt moved away from Blaine, but their hands remained linked. He turned around in circles, attempting to take everything in, but there was so much to see. In the six years he'd lived there, not once had he thought to enjoy the city from this perspective. It was nice, different, something new.

Blaine pulled him along to a wall and spread one of Kurt's blankets out on the ground. He sat down, pulling Kurt along with him, and situated him between his legs. Kurt leaned back against Blaine and rested his head on his shoulder. "Are you ever going to tell me what we're doing up here so early in the morning?" Blaine reached over and Kurt was surprised to see him pick up a thermos and a few mugs. "What is that?" Without saying a word, Blaine removed the lid and poured the hot liquid into each mug, handing one to Kurt. "You brought coffee."

"I know how you can get without your morning dose." Blaine nuzzled into Kurt's neck and wrapped his arms tightly around the man in front of him, lacing his fingers together.

Kurt set his mug down beside them and placed his hands over Blaine's. "You planned this entire thing?"

"Of course. It's something I've had in mind for a while, I just wanted to wait until I had the day off and you didn't have a spur of the moment flight or something."

"This is nice. The view of the city. I've never been up here before, but there's so much to see. I've never even noticed that building over there." Kurt pointed to one of the shorter apartment buildings hidden in the midst of a few taller office buildings. "How did you know this view was so great?"

"When I first moved into my apartment, I used to go to the roof quite a bit. My neighbors at the time really enjoyed their heavy metal and the noise got to me sometimes. Rather than leaving to go to the library or a coffee shop or back to my office, I'd go up there with my laptop and briefcase and get some of my work done. It became a bit of a habit for awhile, but then they eventually moved and an older couple moved in. They seemed to respect the other residents' privacy a bit more." Blaine took a sip of his coffee and pulled the other blanket up around them. "Are you warm enough?"

"Yeah, thank you."

"Would you like to know what we're doing up here?"

"Now that I know you aren't going to kill me, I think I'm slightly more willing to wait to find out. Although, I *am* very curious."

"Well, I thought we could watch the sunrise together. New York City sunrises are beautiful. Have you ever watched one before?"

"N-no. That's another thing I never thought about."

"It's another thing I became aware of by sitting on the roof of my complex. One night, I had a deadline I was afraid I wasn't going to meet and I'd become so into the work I was doing that I didn't realize how late it had gotten. The next thing I knew, there was a ray of sun in my eyes and I looked up to see that it was actually morning. I closed my laptop and put my work away, but I stayed up there to watch it before heading back inside. It was so pretty that I'd actually gone back every morning the following week just to see it."

"Sunrises in Ohio can be pretty too. During the summer one time, my mom woke me up super early and told me to keep quiet so I didn't wake my dad. She ended up taking me to our park and we sat on the bench eating donuts and drinking chocolate milk while watching the sun rise. She said it was one of God's prettiest creations. She said the sky was God's giant canvas and the colors in the sunrise were streaks of his paint."

"It seems like your mom really had a way with words and creativity."

"She did. One of her greatest desires was to publish a book of poetry. She was an English professor before I was born, and a great one at that. My dad told me all about it and the students adored her. She took some time off while I was growing up and never made it back. I've always wondered what it would've been like if she'd gone back and I had taken one of her classes. I never got tired of hearing my mom talk about things she was passionate about. She would've made a wonderful first English professor."

"You have those memories, though. That's something that no one can ever take away from you, and those times you had with her are even more special since she *didn't* go back. You were one of the only ones to hear her like that. To see that passion in her."

"I guess you're right. That morning she took me to watch the sunrise is one of my favorite memories of her. I actually haven't gone out and intentionally watched a sunrise since then. I guess I just never had anyone who cared enough to go along with me."

"When I would go up to the roof to watch it, that's the one thing that had always been missing; someone there to watch it with me. Being alone can be peaceful, but I always felt the need for more. I wanted someone to do just this; just what we are doing right now. I wanted someone to bundle up with and hold. Someone who could enjoy the beauty of it as much as I could."

"You better watch out, Mr. Anderson. You're starting to sound like me," Kurt joked.

"Maybe it's not such a bad thing that you're rubbing off on me. You have such a positive, wonderful, unique view of life and I love that."

"Well, like I said before, I acquired that from my mom. I wish you could've met her. She'd make my opinions and views look dull compared to hers."

"I doubt that," Blaine kissed his temple. "But, you know, this feels like I'm getting to know her. I like being with you like this. Maybe one day, you'll be able to talk about her with more than just me. Maybe someday, other people can see how close you were and the impact she had on your life in such a short time."

"I hope that day comes too."

Blaine shifted so he could get a better look at Kurt. "So, tell me something about yourself. Tell me, what are Kurt Hummel's greatest desires?"

"My greatest desires," Kurt repeated, pondering the question.

"Yes. Something you've always wanted to do, but never have. Something not a lot of people know about you."

That was silly, Kurt thought. There was so much to him, so many layers of himself that he hadn't allowed anyone besides Blaine to see. It was bizarre when he thought about it. Even Rachel, his best friend in the entire world, was still clueless about the times he spent with his mom. Yet, there Blaine was. The same Blaine that he'd met only two months earlier, and he knew so much more than Kurt thought he'd ever be willing to say to anyone.

"To be in Time's Square when the ball drops on New Year's," he finally whispered. He didn't know why he kept something like that a secret. In the big scope of things, something like that shouldn't matter. A lot of people wanted to be there when the ball dropped. It was something everyone watched, whether it be in person, at an extravagant party, or from the comfort of their own home. Maybe where Kurt differed, what made his desire more of a *confession*, was in the fact that he wanted someone with him, despite everything he'd ever said. He'd always told his family and friends that he was fine spending New Year's Eve alone or surrounded by his closest friends. But deep down, he knew he'd been lying to himself. When the clock struck midnight, when the ball dropped on the TV and everyone around him toasted and celebrated, he

couldn't shake the feeling that something had been missing. He would look around at his friends, even Burt and Carole, and watch as they exchanged a kiss. They were all starting off the new year with someone who meant the world to them. Someone they wanted to keep in their life for the next year and years to come. But Kurt, he didn't have anyone. He didn't have someone to take him to Time's Square and share a kiss full of love and passion at midnight.

When Kurt finally looked up at Blaine, he noticed that the other man seemed a bit shocked. "You... never? I mean, you've lived here for six years, but haven't made it there?"

Kurt shook his head. "A few years I was in Ohio and the times I've been here, I stayed in my apartment and watched from my TV. It was better than being by myself in a crowd of people I didn't know and would never see again. Would you have been there?" Not that he would've seen Blaine in the midst of all the people, but it would be nice to think he could've had the chance to meet him years earlier.

"No, I wouldn't. I've always opted out and attended the annual office party. My dad likes me to at least make an appearance, but once I show up, I never seem to be able to leave." He took another sip of his coffee and finished it off. "So, is that all that's on your bucket list, or are you willing to share more with me?"

Kurt felt like asking Blaine what *his* greatest desires in life were, but decided to save that conversation for another time. "Well, I have a few things that I'm not so sure will ever happen. Would you like to hear those?"

"Of course. I'm interested in anything that makes you who you are."

"Okay, so the first one, I guess it's yet another thing that comes from my mom. She used to talk about how my grandparents took her to see the Northern Lights when she was about ten. They were beautiful, as she said, and she described it as watching these bright, colorful lights dancing on the ground, illuminating the snow with the colors. So, that's one thing I'd like to see." Kurt looked away, and felt his cheeks start to heat up. "I guess I sort of also got the idea while watching Phil of the Future."

Blaine couldn't help himself. The laugh that came out of his mouth was loud and echoed off of the walls around them. "Sorry," he apologized. "But, Phil of the Future?"

"Don't laugh. There was one episode in which Phil wanted-"

"To take Keely to see the Northern Lights," Blaine finished. "I know the episode. I did watch it a few times myself. Is there anything else Phil of the Future inspired you to do?"

"No, but I do want to go on an African safari sometime."

"Your dreams aren't impossible, Kurt. You could make them happen, you know."

"Yeah," he sighed. "I just need to find someone who's willing to go with me first. Maybe I'll wait until I find that one person who will do everything with me."

I'll be that person, Blaine wanted to say, but he didn't. It was too soon. He hadn't known Kurt long enough to offer to be that person. He didn't want to tell Kurt that he wanted to be the person who got to experience everything with him.

Kurt turned his head to the side and kissed Blaine sweetly. Blaine kissed back and they remained that way for a few minutes, with Kurt wrapped up in Blaine's arms, their lips pressed together.

Around 6:30, the sun started to peek above the horizon and they watched it together. Kurt had to admit, it was one of the prettiest sunrises he'd ever seen. He didn't know if it was the way the sun looked as it slowly began to appear above the city; the way it reflected off of the windows of the buildings all around him; the way the light made Blaine's face glow, making him even more stunning than Kurt had ever imagined he could be; or simply the fact that he was in the arms of the man he loved.

They sat together, neither one of them speaking, and occasionally shared a few kisses as the sun made its way above them. Around 7:15, they'd picked up the blankets and their empty coffee mugs and headed inside where they cuddled up together under the soft sheets of Kurt's bed and quickly fell asleep. It wasn't until Kurt had a nightmare about Blaine's plane going down, leaving no survivors, that he realized for once in his life, reality was much better than his dreams.

Kurt's phone started to ring a few hours later, startling him awake. He did his best not to wake Blaine up and slid out of his arms just enough to reach his phone on the nightstand, pressing send and placing it to his ear without checking the caller ID. "Hello?" he whispered, his voice hoarse.

"Kurt? You okay, Kiddo?"

Kurt glanced at his alarm clock—a quarter past ten—before saying anything. "Y-yeah. I'm fine."

"Are you sure? You don't usually sleep this late," Burt pointed out. *"And why are you whispering?"*

Kurt knew he was right. Even when he went home during his vacations, he was up and ready to go by 9:00 at the latest. "Um, Blaine is here with me. I... I didn't want to wake him up." Kurt felt himself blush at the confession.

"Oh." Burt grew silent after that, not quite sure what to say. *"Do you want me to let you go, or..."* he trailed off.

"No, it's fine. We woke up early to watch the sunrise and I guess we fell back asleep afterwards." Kurt looked down at the sleeping man and lightly brushed the back of his hand across Blaine's cheek. "Did you need something?"

"No, I just wanted to see how you've been. We haven't talked to you this week and I was wondering if you found out if you were going to be able to make it home for Christmas or not." Kurt could hear Burt moving around in the kitchen on the other line and hoped he was at least sticking with the diet Kurt had outlined and hung up on the refrigerator for him.

"I can, but only for Christmas Eve and Christmas day. I managed to get those two days off, but they want me to work the day after Christmas." Kurt kept his voice at a minimum and snuggled back into Blaine's side. "Blaine can come with me, if that's okay with you."

"Of course it's okay with me, Bud. He's your boyfriend, and if you ask me, I think he's good for you."

"Well, I'm glad y-"

"Is that Kurt?" Kurt heard Rachel's voice interrupt him on the other line.

"Uh, yeah, it is," he heard his dad say. And that was the *last* thing he heard his dad say. Rachel had ripped the phone from his hands and took over the phone call.

"Hello, Kurt. It's about time we talked to you. I mean, you ran out of here over Thanksgiving without giving me the chance to spend some quality time with my favorite gay."

Kurt laughed. He had to admit, he missed the sound of her dramatic voice. "You know, you could've just as easily called me."

"Kurt, I have a husband as well as a daughter, if you can remember, and they both require my undivided attention. I don't have time to call you and hope you'll be away from your man long enough to take my call."

Kurt felt Blaine stir beneath him and looked up just as he opened his eyes. "Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you."

"Is he there right now? Oh my gosh, Kurt. Are you finally getting some?"

"Rachel!" Kurt snapped. He hoped Blaine couldn't hear what she was saying.

"Kurt, you have to give me details, even the dirty ones. This is exciting."

"It's not like that Rachel."

Blaine began kissing his way up Kurt's shoulder, to his neck, eventually placing a quiet kiss against his lips. "I'm going to go make us some coffee and pancakes. With or without chocolate chips?"

Kurt held the phone away from his ear and covered the speaker as Rachel rambled on and on about how it was about time Kurt experienced these types of things whether he wanted to admit to them or not. "Mmm'ithout," he mumbled against Blaine's lips. "But with strawberries, please."

"Join me when you're off the phone?" Blaine pushed the covers back and stood up.

"Of course. Thank you, sweetie." After one final kiss, Blaine left the room, leaving Kurt alone with Rachel on the phone. "Okay, he's gone now, and we were *not* doing anything more than cuddling in my bed. I didn't even mean to fall asleep."

"Well, like I said before, I didn't get the chance to talk to you in person when you were here. At least not by ourselves."

Kurt fiddled with the hem of his sheets, trying to prepare himself for what was coming. He was fairly sure Rachel would approve of Blaine, but her opinion still meant everything to him. Rachel Berry-Hudson didn't tolerate just anyone. "What did you want to talk about?"

"I think you know what." When Kurt didn't say anything, she added, "Blaine."

"What about him?"

"He makes you happy. I can tell. I just... as your best friend, I want to make sure you're in this. I know how you can be. You get scared when things seem like they're too good and you run. Blaine... he doesn't deserve that, and neither do you. You deserve a little bit of happiness and I want to make sure you want this as much as I can see he does."

"Rachel, I love him." He was surprised at how easily those words flowed out of his mouth, but he liked saying them. Admitting his love for Blaine was something he knew he'd never get tired of.

"Does he know this?"

"No," Kurt admitted. "I'm not ready to tell him yet. Things are good, and I don't want to scare him away. I... I'm not good at this. I've always been scared to get close to someone and I'm afraid of doing just what you think I will. I'm afraid of hurting him and breaking his heart because of my own insecurities. I just... I want to take things slow, for both of us." He paused, unsure if he should continue, but decided to anyway. It was Rachel, after all, and he trusted her with anything. He needed her opinions and support, and in order to do so, she had to know everything that was on his mind. "I also think he's had a bit of a rough past as well. He hasn't talked about it, but I don't think he's ready to move that fast. This is better for both of us. I know it is."

"Just, don't take too long to tell him, okay? A lot can happen by keeping feelings like that to yourself."

"How would you know? You were in love with Finn from day one and he knew the entire time. You never hid your feelings."

"No, but I've watched my friends go through similar situations. Being honest is always best, and he could feel the same way as you." She paused briefly. "But, I think you'll be happy to know that I approve of him and he is a very nice man. You've done well with your first boyfriend."

Kurt laughed. "Thanks, Rach." He looked towards the door when he heard a few cabinets opening and closing. "Look, I'm going to go help Blaine with breakfast. He's gotten better at making pancakes, but I'm still slightly worried about letting him use my skillet."

"Okay, okay. Go be lovey with your boyfriend. I need to check on Elizabeth anyway."

"Give Lizzie a kiss for me."

"It's Elizabeth, Kurt."

"Yeah, yeah. Love you, Rach."

"Love you too."

He pressed end on his phone and threw it in the middle of the bed before heading to the kitchen to help Blaine.

"It's one of my rare days off. I can't believe I let you talk me into going shopping with you *again*," Blaine grumbled playfully as he and Kurt wandered through the Staten Island Mall later that day.

"You're doing it because being with me on your day off is better than sitting in your apartment by yourself, even if you *are* shopping with me. Besides, it's Christmas shopping. Don't you like buying things for other people?" Kurt picked up a nice sweater from a table at Delia's, free of any animals—since graduating high school, Kurt was able to convince Rachel to dress a little more age-appropriate—and inspected the size and price before draping it over his arm.

"Of course I do, but you won't let me buy anything for any member of your family." When he wasn't looking, Blaine picked up a scarf that matched the sweater Kurt had picked up for Rachel. He'd find a way to buy something for everyone, even if he had to distract Kurt for a few minutes to do so.

"I don't want you to feel like you have to buy them anything, Blaine. They won't mind and whatever I get can be from you as well."

"Do you not think I can pick out something they will like?" Blaine sounded disappointed.

"Of course not, honey." Kurt turned around and gave Blaine a kiss, not caring about the people surrounding them. That was the thing he loved about New York. He could be with Blaine in public—hold his hand, kiss him, nuzzle into his side—and no one seemed to care. It was liberating at times after

growing up somewhere as conservative as Lima. "Whatever you pick out, they'd love. I just don't want you spending money on my crazy family."

"But I want to," Blaine refuted. "Money isn't a problem, and I want to spend it on them. So please let me." He held up the scarf he'd been keeping down at his side. "This matches that sweater you're getting for Rachel, right?"

Kurt smiled back at him and nodded. "I think she'd love that." He kissed him again before handing the sweater to Blaine. "Here. I've already gotten her plenty of gifts. You should give her this complete outfit."

"Are you sure?" Blaine hesitantly took the sweater from Kurt.

"Absolutely." Kurt led Blaine to the counter and watched affectionately as Blaine purchased his first gift. He didn't know understand why it was so important that he bought gifts for everyone himself, but Kurt couldn't deny the smile that lit up Blaine's face when he added a nice necklace to his purchase and handed three twenties to the lady behind the counter.

"She really is going to love that, you know," Kurt assured him once they left the store.

"I hope so. I have a feeling Finn and your dad are going to be a little harder to shop for."

"Finn's easy. Get him anything relating to sports or food and he'll fall right into your arms. A gift card to any burger place would be fine by him."

"I don't want to settle for fine. He's your brother, and to be honest, I'm pretty sure he's the one I have to watch out for. If he doesn't approve of me, I don't have a shot at making it to our one year anniversary."

Kurt was happy to hear that Blaine was thinking about their future together as well. "Finn isn't going to disapprove of you just because you may not get him the world's greatest Christmas present, so relax. He likes you. Rachel's the one you have to watch out for."

"Why?" Blaine asked cautiously. "Did she say something this morning?"

"Just that she loves you and can't wait to see you again. If you can get her approval, I think you're meant to be a part of my crazy, wacky family."

"I have a question. About a present for Burt and Carole."

"Hmm? What's that?"

"Well, what if.... Do you think they might enjoy a night out? Just the two of them? I know this great place in Columbus from when I was living around there and I thought maybe I could get them a gift card and maybe tickets to a show playing or something. Maybe get Carole a new outfit or purse for it and your dad a nice watch or something?" Kurt didn't say anything, but slowed his pace and stared over at Blaine. "It's a bad idea, isn't it? Never mind. I'll think of something else." Blaine looked towards the ground.

"Hey, no. Look at me." They stopped walking and moved to the side to let the stream of people continue walking through. "I think it's the perfect idea, Blaine. They would *love* it, but I just think it's too much. I mean, I don't want you to spend that kind of money on them."

"I told you money wasn't a problem. I make more money than I know what to do with. I want to get them something great. They deserve it after raising someone as amazing as you."

"You just made this entire idea incredibly cheesy," Kurt grinned.

"Sorry. So you really think it's a good idea?" Blaine seemed hopeful.

"It's a fantastic idea."

"Good. Now I just need to find you and my dad something."

"No no no. Not me. You don't have to get me anything," Kurt argued.

"Are you getting me something?" Kurt was silent once again. "That's what I thought. We can split up later so I can get your present, okay?"

"Fine. But you better not spend more on me than you do anyone else," Kurt warned. He looked around at the stores surrounding them to find one that might be of some help to them. He grabbed Blaine's hand and pulled him along when he spotted the perfect one.

"Where are we going?" Blaine stumbled along behind Kurt.

"Build-a-Bear. I'm going to get Lizzie her first bear from here and she is going to *love* it." They stepped inside and politely denied the help offered from one of the employees before making their way to the wall of stuffed animals.

"Kurt, you already spend nearly \$200 on her at Baby's R Us, not to mention the personalized blanket you custom ordered online last week. She's only a few months old. She's not going to care."

"And like I said before, I want to spoil her rotten to insure that I am her favorite person."

Blaine rolled his eyes and hugged him from behind. "Like she could choose anyone over you. I like that one." He pointed to a fuzzy, light brown bear with a darker patch over one of its eyes.

"Hey, do you want to get her this instead?"

"I thought you wanted to be the one to give her the first Build-a-Bear bear." Blaine picked one of the unstuffed bears out of the bin beneath it and fluffed up its fur.

"I did, but you can if you want."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive. Now go stuff that bear." Blaine made his way to the stuffing and had the bear stuffed—the lady didn't make him dance around and make a wish, but he *did* have to kiss the small silk heart he put inside. Once the bear was stuffed, he'd picked out a simple pink shirt—one that would be safe for a little girl as young as Elizabeth—and checked out. He felt like he was finally accomplishing something. He had a present for Rachel and Elizabeth and an idea for Burt and Carole. All he had left to do was decide on something for Finn and buy Kurt's.

"Do you want to split up now, so I can go find your present and then meet up for dinner? There's an Applebee's located downstairs and I know how much you love their pasta."

"You know how to get to me, don't you?"

"Of course I do."

"I'll meet you there at 6:00?"

"Sounds good," Kurt confirmed. They kissed goodbye before going their separate ways.

"Can I help you with anything, sir?"

Blaine looked up to see Kurt grinning back at him, dressed in his uniform and holding a fresh thermos of hot coffee and a plate of cookies. Blaine gladly accepted the plate—he still received two cookies during every flight as Kurt had promised when they first met—and held up his empty mug for a refill. "Thank you, sir. Your cooking is delicious."

"Well, it's not my cooking, but thank you." They went through the same routine as well—Blaine thanking Kurt and Kurt admitting that he actually wasn't the reason for the delicious cookies Blaine always eagerly ate. It got old after awhile, but kept the other passengers from suspecting anything.

"And the coffee?"

"Came straight from the pot. I do know how to create the perfect ratio between water and grounds." He took the empty plate from Kurt, shaking his head at the speed in which Blaine always ate each cookie. "Would you like anything else?"

"No, thank you. I'm okay right now, but come back later and I'm *sure* there will be something else you can help me with," he winked.

Kurt rolled his eyes and had to stop himself from playfully running a hand through Blaine's curls. Ever since Kurt had admitted how much he loved his curls, Blaine had kept them free of gel whenever possible. He still wore his slacks, a button up shirt, and elegant tie, but often kept his jacket neatly folded in the empty seat next to him.

Not even ten minutes later, Kurt emerged from the back once again when he heard the door to the bathroom swing open and someone violently getting sick inside. His job entitled him to make sure each passenger was okay and to provide them with anything they needed to make their flight as comfortable as possible. That included taking care of someone if they were sick. He walked out into the aisle and peeked into the bathroom, not expecting the sight before him. It didn't even take him a full two seconds before he realized the man crouched on the floor was Blaine.

Kurt opened the door a little wider and stepped inside, allowing it to close behind him. Blaine didn't look up, but relaxed under Kurt's touch as soon as he began rubbing his back soothingly. Kurt knelt down next to Blaine and wiped a few loose curls from his forehead and noticed a few beads of sweat along the side of his face.

"Are you okay, sweetie."

"Kurt?" Blaine turned his head to look up at him, but quickly stuck it back into the seat when he felt another round making its way up into his mouth. Kurt turned his head away from the smell, but continued rubbing Blaine's back.

"You don't feel hot," Kurt stated after checking Blaine's forehead for a fever.

"I think it was the chicken in the pasta last night. I knew it didn't look don-"

Kurt's stomach twisted into knots each time he saw Blaine getting sick. He hated what he was going through. Kurt remembered the times he would get the flu or eat something that would upset his stomach. His mom would lay him in bed and bring him a glass of sprite to help settle his stomach. Kurt knew being thousands of feet in the air on a plane was not the place for Blaine to be while he wasn't feeling well.

He reached up to get a few paper towels from above him and motioned for Blaine to lean up. He wiped Blaine's mouth and threw the paper towels into the trashcan beside them.

"You should go," Blaine told him.

"I want to stay here and help you until you start to feel a little bit better."

"Kurt, your job is to make sure all of the other customers are okay."

"And that's exactly what I'm doing." Kurt tried to calm him down.

"Well, I don't want you in here. You're just giving people an excuse to suspect something."

"Blaine, this is my job. No one's going to suspect anything, so I'm going to stay in here until-"

"Just *go*, Kurt." Blaine started to raise his voice and got sick in the toilet once again.

"You'll tell me if you need anything at all? Please?"

"Yeah, I will." Kurt stood up, but didn't make it very far before he felt Blaine grabbing his wrist. "I... I'm sorry. I just don't want you to get in trouble."

"It's fine, sweetie. I just want you to feel better." He leaned back down and placed a kiss on the back of Blaine's neck before heading out into the cabin.

Chapter Ten

The next couple of weeks flew by. With the holidays came numerous people wanting to make sure their insurance was up to date before they traveled and the increasing number of airline tickets being sold meant Kurt had been called in to work extra flights. Blaine being busy at the office and Kurt flying out of town more than usual left little time for them to actually spend time together, so they were both equally as excited to finally be on a flight to Ohio, happy to escape the stress of their job for a couple of days.

Burt had picked them up at the airport, and they finally arrived home around 8:30 on Christmas Eve. It wasn't long before Blaine found himself in an apron, working alongside Kurt to make the perfect cutout Christmas cookies. They left them without icing—that could be done the following day once they were cool—and slowly made their way upstairs around 11:30. Kurt pulled Blaine straight into his room this time, leaving the guest room that Blaine had occupied over Thanksgiving untouched.

Blaine liked being back in Kurt's hometown and around his family. He enjoyed watching Kurt scold Burt every time he tried to eat something he wasn't supposed to and loved how much he seemed to care for his dad. Blaine loved the motherly charm that Carole seemed to possess, not only towards her own son, but even those she considered her children. He had known her for barely a month, but she had pulled him into a huge hug and kissed his cheek as soon as she'd seen him that night. When he was around Carole, he felt like he had already become a part of the Hudmel family. Blaine also liked the comments Kurt teasingly threw towards Finn, and he even enjoyed the dramatics of one Rachel Berry. In Ohio, everything seemed perfect. His world seemed untouchable.

He and Kurt quickly passed out on his bed after snuggling under the covers, and when Blaine woke up the next morning, the space beside him was unoccupied. He reached over, wishing Kurt was there for him to wrap his arms around, and noticed that the bed was still warm. *He hasn't been gone for too long, I guess*, Blaine thought to himself. He rolled out of bed and threw on a hoodie before making his way down the stairs.

"Hey there, sleepy head." Kurt stood up from where he was sitting by the tree and made his way towards Blaine. They wrapped their arms around each other and Blaine buried his face in Kurt's neck, taking in the smell of him—the sweet way Kurt always smelled, but this time it was mixed with a hint of pine. "Good morning." Kurt kissed the tip of his nose and joined their hands to pull Blaine along into the living room.

"Hey, dude. It's about time you woke up. We've been sitting here for over an hour," Finn complained from his spot on the couch.

"What?" Blaine looked confused.

"Kurt made us wait for you," Rachel explained.

"What?" He turned to Kurt. "Why? You could've woke me up."

"Finn survived the wait. I didn't want to wake you. I don't think you slept very well last night. You kept mumbling in your sleep and I think you woke up a few times. Were you having bad dreams or something?" Kurt squeezed his hand.

"Um... n-no. I guess it was just one of those nights." The truth was he *had* had a bad dream, more like a nightmare, but he shoved all thoughts of his plane crashing aside and forced a smile on his face. After all, it was Christmas, and being caught up in a dream about dying in a plane crash wasn't the ideal way to celebrate.

"Why don't you sit down, bud?" Burt motioned to the open seat on the couch.

Kurt sat down and pulled Blaine onto his lap; there wasn't much room with Rachel and Finn also on the couch. They spent the next forty five minutes taking turns opening their presents. Rachel nearly knocked Blaine off the couch when she all too excitedly threw her arms around his neck to thank him. Finn kept shoving cookies into his mouth the entire time. Carole and Burt thanked Blaine for his present, claiming he'd spend way too much, but Carole eagerly modeled her new dress for all of them to see. Kurt opened each of his presents and scolded Blaine when he opened the one from him to find out Blaine had spent entirely too much on him. He had purchased an entire outfit from a new line that Kurt has seen in a magazine at the beginning of the month, one that was close to \$1500 total. Kurt made a mental note to try to take a few things back, but had a feeling Blaine wouldn't let him. In return, Kurt gave Blaine his gift, an expensive leather briefcase he'd seen him eyeing in the mall which he had filled with gift cards to various unhealthy places such as the frozen yogurt place they had gone to on their first date and Blaine's favorite bakery in New York City.

Blaine enjoyed seeing the reactions to not only the presents he picked out, but the ones everyone else had purchased as well. Christmas morning with Kurt's family felt completely different from the mornings he

had growing up. The atmosphere was filled with love, gratitude, and genuine happiness. However he still couldn't shake away the unsettling feeling he had every time his dream made its way back into his thoughts.

Once the space beneath the tree was void of any presents, Blaine politely excused himself to go take a shower and Kurt followed him up. He gently closed the door behind them and finally gave Blaine the good morning kiss he'd wanted to give him for the past hour.

"Merry Christmas," he said against Blaine's lips.

"Mmm'erry Christmas yourself." Blaine kissed him back forcefully as a smile played on the corner of his lips.

"You shouldn't have spent that much money on me, Blaine. That was entirely too much and I can't accept it."

Blaine silenced him by placing a finger over his lips and kissing his forehead. "I actually have your real gift up here." Blaine walked to Kurt's dresser and opened the bottom drawer, moving aside some old t-shirts and pulling a present out. He handed it over to Kurt with a nervous smile on his face. "Well, open it." Blaine gestured to the package in Kurt's hands.

Kurt began undoing the tape and tearing the reindeer-printed wrapping paper away to reveal a book. *The Complete Shakespeare Collection*. Not exactly what he'd been expecting. "What... my real present is a book?" He tried to look enthusiastic, like he actually enjoyed reading Shakespeare. He didn't want to disappoint Blaine, especially when he'd seemed so excited to buy Kurt's present a few weeks earlier.

Blaine laughed and shook his head. "Not quite. I think I know you well enough to know you wouldn't willingly read anything by him. Open it up."

Kurt did as told, only to find out the book was actually hollowed out and found another small object wrapped in paper. He picked it up and ran it through his fingers before tearing it open as well, revealing a shiny, silver key. "W-what... what is this?"

Blaine moved forward so that he was just inches from Kurt. "I know it's cliché, but it's a key to my apartment, and something a little less tangible. My heart. I'm not saying you have to actually use it. I mean, you can if you want to, but it's a symbol. It's a promise. I want you to know that no matter what, I'm going to be here for you. Even if you feel like you don't have anywhere to go, I want you to know that you do." He sat down on the edge of the bed and patted the space next to him, motioning for Kurt to join him. "To be honest, I thought I would've run by now. I thought I would eventually get scared that I felt so much for you and run away before I risked hurting you, but I don't want to. I... I'm not scared because I'm happier than I've ever been in my life. I know that sounds stupid because we've only been together for a few months, but I just want you to know how real this is for me and I've never wanted anything more than this with you." Blaine finally gained enough courage to find Kurt's eyes and noticed that the other man was on the verge of crying, his beautiful eyes filled with unshed tears. He reached up to wipe them away before they could fall. "Why are you crying?" he asked sweetly.

Kurt only shook his head and smiled. "I just... no one has ever given me something that actually means something. It's usually just a gift card to go buy clothes or something." He looked down at the key in his hands and clenched it tight between his fingers. "Thank you, Blaine. You really have no idea how much this means to me." He leaned forward to give him a quick kiss. "Before you stepped onto that plane, before you slammed the bathroom door into me, I had little hope of ever finding someone I actually wanted to be with. It wasn't for me, and it wasn't something I wanted. Or at least I didn't think I did, but you changed all of that. I couldn't stop thinking about you, and maybe that was my first sign that deep down I wanted more. I wanted more than the few dates I had with random guys. I want this with you just as much as you want it, and I'm going to do everything in my power to make this work. I know it's hard. You can't tell your family because it'll threaten your job. I can't tell my co-workers because it would be frowned upon. But this is all worth it to me. Because one day, we *will* be able to tell people. There will be a day when you can walk onto that plane and I can give you a kiss before taking your seat and no one will care. No one will frown upon it or look at us with disgust. *That* is what I'm looking forward to."

They were unable to tell who made the first move when they met each other in the middle for another kiss, this one much more intimate than the first. Their lips remained together for a few minutes until Blaine pulled away, their breaths heavier and less steady.

"Kurt, I..." he paused, if trying to find the right words and the strength to continue. "I-"

They were suddenly interrupted by the sound of Kurt's phone. He quickly apologized before retrieving it and silencing it once he checked to make sure it wasn't important. "It's just a wrong number I think." He set it on the night stand and returned close to Blaine's side. "What were you saying?"

"It... it was nothing," Blaine sighed. The moment was gone. It was too late and was beginning to think that maybe he wasn't meant to tell Kurt how he felt after all.

A few hours later, after they had showered and Blaine had given enough time needed to get ready, Kurt took his head and led him down the stairs. He didn't tell Blaine where they were going and Blaine didn't ask. Somehow, deep down, Blaine just knew.

"Hey, Dad. Can we borrow your car for a few hours?"

Burt knew where he was going, but was honestly surprised by Kurt's use of the word "we." In the ten years he'd been going alone, he'd never taken anyone with him. Not Rachel. Not Finn. Not Carole. Not even Burt. "Sure, Buddy. Take your time. Keys are on the table by the door."

"Thanks, Dad."

It had only been a few months since Elizabeth left their lives. They didn't know how to act. Was it too early to smile? Was it okay for Kurt to have fun with his friends? Were they supposed to go to the movies without her or throw out the shampoo that she would never use. Burt tried to be the best dad for Kurt. He tried to show him that life still goes on and that it was okay to live his life as he had before anything happened, but sometimes that was harder than he wished it was.

It was Christmas day. Kurt had already opened his presents from Santa—he no longer believed, but he didn't have the heart to tell his dad that. The two of them sat in the living room together. Kurt pretended to enjoy putting together outfits for the paper dolls he'd asked his mom for back in September. "Maybe you can ask Santa to bring them to you for Christmas," she had said before slipping them into the cart when Kurt looked away.

"You okay, bud?" Burt closed the cover of his new sports book—something that his grandparents had helped Kurt pick out—and leaned forward in order to see Kurt a little better.

Kurt sat a paper dress down and folded his tiny hands in his lap. "Mommy told me she would help me put together the perfect outfits."

Burt's heart broke and he pulled Kurt into his arms. He contemplated helping Kurt out himself, but he didn't know a thing about fashion. He would probably put stripes with plaid and make things even worse for Kurt. He held onto his tiny son for a few minutes while Kurt began to slowly cry. Burt choked back his own tears. He wanted to be strong for Kurt. He wanted his first Christmas without his mom to be as normal as possible.

"Go grab your coat and gloves." Burt slid him off his lap and pointed him towards the front door.

"Why?" Kurt began to do as told and pulled his coat off the hook behind the door.

"We're going out for a bit."

And that's how they found themselves at his mom's grave for the first time since she was lowered into the ground. They'd tried to visit a few times before, even made it so far as the front gates, before Burt would turn around and take him out for ice cream instead.

"What are we doing here, daddy?" Kurt could see his mom's name on the stone in front of them. He recognized it from the notes she used to sign that gave him permission to go to Rachel's house after school. He recognized it from the labels on the boxes of her stuff that were in their attic. He recognized it from the notes she would leave for him in his lunchbox every day. He recognized it from the magazines she continued getting in the mail every month. The magazine subscriptions that Burt couldn't bring himself to cancel.

Burt knelt down onto the damp ground in front of the grave and motioned for Kurt to sit on his knee. The two of them sat there in silence for a few minutes before Burt was able to speak up. "I know this is hard for you, Kurt. I know you want your mom to be here with you, and I wish you could see her in person, but she's here. She's always going to be with you in here." He took Kurt's little hand in his and placed it over his heart. "Your mom is always going to look out for you, and I know this is the first time we've visited her, but I want you to know that whenever you need someone to talk to, whenever you have something to tell her, or whenever you're missing her, you can come here and talk to her. She's never going to stop being your mom." He paused and forced a smile, trying to make Kurt feel a little better. "I want you to promise me something. Next time

you're missing her, I want you to tell me. I don't care what I am doing or where we're at. If you want to see her, we will stop whatever we're doing and come visit her, okay? Can you promise me that?"

Kurt nodded and rested his head against Burt's chest. "Mommy?" Kurt looked from the headstone and up to Burt, waiting until his dad nodded before continuing. "Mommy, I miss you. Daddy's cooking isn't very good." Burt laughed and pulled Kurt tighter against him. "He made me macaroni the other day and almost forgot to put the cheese in. He doesn't know how to make the right cinnamon rolls either. The ones with extra icing." Kurt bit his lip and wrapped his arms around Burt's side. "But he gave me my paper dolls today! The ones that I told you I wanted. I guess he told Santa that he was getting them for me instead. I named one of the boys Carl and he's dating the other boy, Steven. They're going to get married like you and daddy are. That can happen, right? Two boys can get married, just like a boy and a girl? We talked about it one time, but I can't remember if you said it was okay."

Burt froze when he heard what Kurt was talking about. He'd never heard his son talk about marriage between a boy and a girl before, let alone a marriage between two boys. It wasn't until Kurt continued talking to his mom that he realize how little he really knew about Kurt. How little he had talked to him. He was never good with communication. That was Elizabeth's thing. Elizabeth was the one who would know how to deal with what Kurt said next, not him.

"Mommy, I think I'd rather date a boy. My friend Rachel says that's okay because she has two daddies and not a mommy. Her daddies are nice. I want to be a daddy with another boy."

Burt cleared his throat and attempted to change the subject, not because he wasn't comfortable with what Kurt was saying, but because he had no idea how to react to what he was saying. "Why don't you tell her about what Mrs. Collins said about your Christmas drawing you did in art class," he suggested.

Kurt did as told; talking about school, his friends, and the things he did at home. The two of them remained in the cemetery for almost an hour before they were finally ready to leave, but only after Burt promised they'd come back soon. And he kept his promise. On that cold Christmas afternoon, Burt hadn't thought that one day Kurt would be going without him, but not alone. He never would've expected that eighteen years later, his little boy would take the man he was in love with to meet Elizabeth for the very first time.

Kurt remained in the car and let the engine roar around him. The heater was blowing in his face, but he didn't seem to notice. It wasn't that he found it hard to visit his mom. Not anymore. For the first couple of years, he would barely make it out of the car before he started crying, but it had been eighteen years. He knew his mom wasn't coming back, but visiting her made him *feel* like she was there with him, and that's all he could ask for. What was keeping him from turning off the ignition and stepping out onto the snowy ground was the man staring at him from the passenger's seat. The man who would be meeting his mom for the first time. The only person Kurt had ever taken with him to see his mom, apart from his dad of course. Blaine was patient, though. He reached over to grab Kurt's hand and squeeze it tight, offering a warm smile.

After about ten minutes, Kurt pulled the key out and opened his car door, meeting Blaine on the other side. After taking a deep breath, he felt Blaine's arms wrap firmly around him and they made their way to his mom's gravesite.

The stone had started to show its age. The words were a little weathered, the corners were chipped, dirt filled the engravings, and there were a few cracks on the side. Kurt knelt down in front of it and Blaine didn't miss the way he strategically turned his head away as tears started to fill his beautiful blue eyes.

"Mommy," he said softly, pressing a hand over her name. "Merry Christmas, Mom." Blaine kept his distance, not wanting to intrude on the time Kurt had with her, but Kurt reached out and grabbed his hand to pull him closer. Blaine knelt down and rubbed Kurt's back, trying to resist the urge to kiss his pale lips. "Mom, I want you to meet someone. This.... This is my boyfriend Blaine." He leaned into Blaine's side and rested his head on his shoulder. "I know you would have loved him, mom. He's the best thing that's ever happened to me."

Blaine couldn't help it anymore. He leaned down and gently placed his lips against Kurt's in a sweet kiss. I love your son, he wanted to say. Instead, he said "Your son is the best thing that's ever happened to me as well, and I'm going to do everything in my power to give him everything he deserves. You did a wonderful job raising such an incredibly compassionate man." Blaine surprisingly liked talking to Kurt's mom, though he felt like the epitome of cheesiness. He continued talking because he knew it was the closest he would ever get to meeting her, and in a way, it felt like he really *was* meeting her. During the next half hour, he saw Kurt at his most vulnerable moment. A moment he rarely let anyone else see. A moment when he talked to his mom as if she were standing right in front of him. It was in that moment that Blaine promised to do whatever it took to make sure Kurt never experienced any more pain in his life.

"Hey, guys We're home." Kurt called out. Blaine threw Burt's keys on the table by the door; he had driven home to give Kurt a little time to think. It was nice, though. Kurt had rested his head on Blaine's shoulder and intertwined their hands during the ride home. Just the feeling of ease and belonging made Blaine happier than he'd ever been.

They walked into the living room, happy to see that Rachel, Finn, and Elizabeth were still there. "Hey, sweet girl." He leaned down to kiss Elizabeth's smiling face, finding it hard to believe she was already two months old. People weren't kidding when they said time flew by, and she wasn't even his daughter. He didn't know if he was ready for her to grow up that quick. He scooped her off of the blanket she'd been laying on and into his arms.

"It's actually time for her to be fed if you want me to go make her a bottle," Rachel suggested.

"I've got it," Blaine offered.

"Are you sure?" Kurt asked without taking his eyes off of Elizabeth.

"Positive. I used to babysit Carla when she was a baby." He kissed Kurt on the forehead and hurried to the kitchen to get Elizabeth's bottle ready.

Burt and Finn had gone outside to look at something on Finn's car and Carole had followed them, leaving Kurt alone with Rachel.

"Let's see, here." Rachel scooted over on the couch so she could rest her head against Kurt's shoulder. "You found a man who has a steady job with a great salary. He's kind to you. He lives in New York. He's gay. He knows how to take care of children. And he's completely in love with you. I told you it'd all work out at some point, didn't I? You just had to be patient."

"Rachel, I don't think he's in l-"

"Kurt, you have to be oblivious to not see how much that man adores you. Why else would he agree to come home with you to visit your wacky family when he could be with his own for Christmas?"

"He... he just likes it here better. He feels more welcome."

"Mhm." Rachel turned away and grabbed her new sweater from the coffee table. "Did you help him pick this out?"

"Just the sweater. He actually picked out the scarf and the necklace on his own. I was impressed." Kurt sighed. Blaine really did care about his family and sometimes, Kurt didn't think he took enough time to appreciate it. "I was actually going to put both of our names on everything I got, but he insisted on getting everyone something himself."

"He really is a great guy, Kurt. I'm glad you found him. You deserve it."

"He kind of bumped into me." Kurt looked in the direction of the kitchen. "I'm glad he did, though. It's hard sometimes. We can't see each other on weekends like normal couples, and he has to hide our relationship from his friends at work. He's scared that if his dad found out, he'd accuse him of being unprofessional and I don't want cause any problems between the two of them. "

"But you love him." It wasn't a question.

"Yeah, I do. A lot."

Blaine chose that moment to walk in, the warm bottle in one hand and a cookie in the other. He sat down on the edge of the couch next to Kurt. "Here you go. One fresh bottle for Miss Lizzie."

"Blaine," Rachel said sternly.

"Sorry. *Elizabeth*," he corrected.

"I see you got yourself something too." Kurt pulled Blaine in for a kiss; one that left a few of the cookie crumbs in the corner of Blaine's mouth on his own lips.

"Mhm. You wanna taste it?" Blaine leaned in and kissed Kurt again, teasing his tongue against Kurt's lips.

Kurt pushed him away. "Blaine, that's gross."

Rachel sat in silence, a look of clear disgust on her face. "I don't want to see that, and especially not in front of my daughter."

Blaine took another bite of his cookie. "You're just jealous because I took the last m&m cookie," he said with a full mouth.

"Blaine, honey. Chew with your mouth *closed*, please." Kurt wiped a crumb away from Blaine's chin and kissed the corner of his mouth.

Blaine leaned into Kurt and stared down at Elizabeth. "So, are you going to feed her, or what?" Blaine handed over the bottle and watched as Elizabeth started sucking the milk out of the little plastic nipple.

"I'm going to check on the others. Will you two be okay in here?"

"Of course. Go on." Kurt wrapped an arm around Blaine and pulled him close. Kurt held Elizabeth in one arm, while Blaine held the bottle up for her.

Rachel made her way out of the room but paused in the doorway. She looked in on the three of them—Kurt, Blaine, and Elizabeth—and couldn't shake the feeling that someday, she would be watching them feed their own little girl.

"Come on. Hurry, Blaine. Hurry Hurry Hurry." Kurt was practically bounc

ing up and down in the middle of Time's Square, waiting for Blaine to tie his shoe. "You're going to miss it!"

"Kurt, you still have three minutes," he laughed and stood up, taking his boyfriend's hand in his.

"I just can't believe this is actually happening. I'm in Time's Square on New Year's Eve. You're making this come true and I love you for it." Kurt practically launched himself into Blaine's arms. Everyone around them was packed like sardines. They were nearly unable to move, dozens of them were drunk, and the smell of sweat was starting to fill the air; but Kurt didn't care. He was finally going to be able to cross one thing off of his bucket list, and there wasn't anyone else he'd rather have there with.

"Are you happy?" Blaine pulled him away just enough to look into his eyes.

"Do you really have to ask that?" Kurt leaned forward for a kiss, which Blaine happily returned. They didn't care that there were thousands of people around them. It was New York, and all it took was a quick glance around to see that they weren't the only gay couple there.

"You aren't supposed to kiss me yet. It's not midnight," Blaine joked.

"Watch me." The quickly kissed again and pulled away when those around them started counting down. Kurt looked up at the enormous screen, seeing that there were only Fifty-three more seconds until the New Year. Fifty-three seconds left of the year in which he'd met the love of his life. Fifty-three seconds until he could start living the next year of his life with that same man by his side.

"Is this all you thought it would be?"

"Shhh. Why aren't you counting down? Thirty-eight seconds." Kurt felt Blaine's arms wrapping around him from behind, but it didn't stop him from jumping around.

"Twenty-six seconds until I can kiss you again," Blaine whispered in his ear, sending chills down Kurt's spine, "and this time everyone will be so wrapped up in their own kisses, that I can *really* kiss you."

"Nineteen seconds until I get to see the ball drop in person," Kurt squealed.

They continued counting down the seconds, finally reaching the final ten.

Ten.

Nine.

Eight.

Seven.

Six.

Blaine rested his chin on Kurt's shoulder and squeezed him tight. They looked up towards the sky as the ball began to sparkle.

Five.

Four.

Three.

Two.

One.

The ball fell and Blaine felt the smile on Kurt's face. He literally *felt* it. He felt the way Kurt's ears moved and the way his stomach tightened with excitement. He felt Kurt's sharp intake of breath as he watched the ball drop in front of him before turning the slightly taller boy around in his arms.

"Happy New Year," Blaine said with a grin."

"Happy New Ye-" There wasn't time for Kurt to finish his sentence before Blaine's lips were on his, his fingers buried in Kurt's no longer styled hair. Blaine pressed their bodies as close together as they would go and moaned into the kiss. "Blaine," Kurt tried to get out.

"Mmmm'o talking." Blaine slipped his tongue inside, but Kurt quickly pulled away. He reached up to grab Blaine's hand from where it was buried in the hair at the base of his neck and started weaving his way through the crowd. "Kurt, what are you doing?"

Kurt turned around to face Blaine. "We're going home because I have a couch that is much more comfortable for making out than this crowd of people." He kissed Blaine again, and that's all it took for Blaine to eagerly follow after him.

Chapter Eleven

It was a few weeks into the new year before things died down at work. Families were finally done traveling from one state to another, and they were less worried about whether or not their insurance plans were still in top shape. The first few weeks back didn't leave very much time for either one of them to see each other—Kurt had taken a few extra flights during the week, and even when Blaine left his office for the day, he would bring home a briefcase full of work.

Two Wednesdays after New Year's they were finally able to spend an entire night together without interruptions. "Hey," Kurt pulled Blaine through the front door of his apartment not even ten seconds after he had knocked, "I missed you last night."

"Yeah?" Blaine said playfully, kissing him as he wrapped his arms around Kurt. "I missed you all *week*."

"Yeah, I've had way too much take-out to eat, and my bed has been a little cold." Kurt pulled him to the couch so they could sit down.

"You know, heat would help with that." Blaine pulled Kurt into his arms.

"Or you there next to me."

"I think I spoil you too much. What normally happens during the weekend when I'm not here?"

"See, that's why I need to buy a dog. A big, fluffy dog with shaggy hair just like yours." Kurt ran his hand through Blaine's curls as if proving a point.

"Well, if it helps, I missed you, too." He kissed the side of Kurt's neck.

"What came up so last minute?"

"I... just work stuff. The office mainly. I-I had to go in and deal with a certain customer who's been giving a few of our staff members some trouble. It was nothing really." Blaine sat up and moved Kurt off of him.

"So, what's for dinner?"

"Um... I just took th-the lasagna out of the oven." He kept staring at Blaine. "Are you sure everything is okay?"

"Yes, it's fine, okay, Kurt? Now let's go eat." Blaine gave him a kiss on the forehead before disappearing into the kitchen.

Kurt took his time before joining him, trying to figure out what exactly was up with Blaine. As they ate, Kurt tried to make conversation, but once Blaine answered, that was it. The conversation was over and they moved on to another topic after a few more minutes of silence.

Blaine excused himself when he was finished and walked back into the kitchen to wash off his plate. Kurt sat on the couch finishing his lasagna and picked up Blaine's phone when it started to buzz on the table. Seeing that it was a text from Luke, he opened it up, thinking he'd say something snarky in reply. What he read wasn't anything like what he'd expected, though.

Hey. Nice date last night. Next time can I at least kiss you goodbye before you run out?

Kurt froze and stared at the text until Blaine walked in. He clutched the phone in his hand, turning his head to the side and willing the tears not to fall down his face.

Blaine moved towards him and held out his hand, completely clueless. "Are you done with your plate? I can take it into the kitchen for you."

"I think you should leave," Kurt whispered, barely audible.

"W-what?" Blaine froze for a few seconds, but finally sat down next to him and put a hand on his back, which Kurt quickly shrugged away.

"Please," he choked.

Blaine could tell he was crying, but didn't have a clue why. Kurt had been fine just five minutes earlier. "Kurt, what's wrong? Please talk to me."

"We jumped into this entire thing too fast, didn't we? We've only known each other for a couple months, yet we practically live at each other's apartments. We spend all of our free time together. You even met my family! It's just all too soon. You didn't have a chance to explore a relationship with anyone else, and

neither did I. I... maybe this isn't right. Maybe it isn't the right time. Maybe we just need some space to figure out what we want." He took a deep breath. "Just go, okay? This is me allowing you to meet other people. You aren't tied to me anymore."

"Kurt, where is this coming from?" Blaine tried once again to pull Kurt into his arms, but failed when Kurt turned around to face him, his tears finally visible.

Kurt shoved the phone in his hands and walked to the front door. "Go. Now." He said, opening the door.

"Kurt, you don't have to do this. I don't want anyone else," Blaine said weakly, on the verge of tears himself. When Kurt didn't budge, he stood up and walked to the door, kissing Kurt's temple and walking into the hallway. "I'll call you later, okay? I wish you'd talk to me." Blaine knew there wasn't any use standing in front of Kurt and waiting for him to talk. He didn't do that. Kurt kept to himself when something was wrong and the only thing Blaine could do was give him space. Just a few weeks earlier at the cemetery, he made a vow not to cause Kurt any pain, so if leaving was what he wanted, Blaine had to do so. His mind was screaming at him to stay and demand to know what was wrong, but he didn't. He loved Kurt, and as strange as it sounds, that love was what was forcing his body out into the hall instead of standing inside and fighting to stay.

To say Blaine was distraught would be an understatement. He still didn't have a clue what had happened with Kurt to make him react the way he did, and part of him didn't know why he was sitting in his cold apartment instead of laying in Kurt's warm arms. However, deep down, another part of him knew why he'd done what Kurt had said. He'd been in that situation before; a time when someone told him to leave because they no longer wanted him there. He had obeyed back then and he had obeyed when Kurt asked him as well. Blaine's past had broken a part of him, and it was only a matter of time before Kurt realized that and let him go; he just hadn't assumed it would be that quick.

Blaine laid in bed that night staring at the ceiling, remembering the time he and Kurt did the same thing back in Lima. He turned his head to the side, letting the tears fall when he didn't see the familiar blue eyes staring back at him or feel the soft hand tracing paths along his stomach. He forced his eyes shut, trying to fall asleep, but it was nearly impossible without Kurt.

He had thrown his phone on the nightstand as soon as he got home and ignored it each time it rang. It wasn't the special ringtone he had set for Kurt, so he didn't care. He didn't want to worry about his job or his friends or anything else in his life. All he wanted was Kurt, and that's the one thing he didn't have.

He grabbed the pillow next to him and clutched it against his chest, burying his face in the pillowcase and allowing Kurt's scent to fill his nose. It was that scent that finally allowed him to relax enough to fall asleep.

Kurt was thankful for the early flight he had the next morning. Thursdays were usually full of even more rude businessmen, but he needed the distraction. He wanted to forget about how Blaine lied to him, and how he had gone on a *date* with Luke instead of spending the night curled up on the couch with him as they watched a movie.

He went through the motions during the flight. He didn't care about being kind to each passenger or going out of his way to make sure they were comfortable. He did the minimal amount of work possible and hid behind the curtain for the majority of the flight while he let his tears fall. He didn't know if he could fly every week knowing that was where he met Blaine. That was where what he thought was the best part of his life had started, when in reality, it was only a small portion that led to him getting hurt.

Before he knew it, he was stepping off of the plane in New York, not so eager to get home. He debated catching the next plane to Ohio, but he wasn't ready to talk to his family about what had happened. What *had* happened? Everything had seemed fantastic between the two of them, and suddenly it wasn't.

He pulled off his hat and slowly trudged down the long hallway that led from the employee area into the airport. He didn't want to deal with the crowd of people or the busy parking lot. All he wanted to do was lie in bed and cry himself to sleep, as pathetic as that sounded.

He opened the door and nearly knocked into someone on his way out. "I'm sorry! I wasn't looking wh- Blaine."

"Kurt."

"You shouldn't be here." Kurt tried to push past him, but Blaine didn't budge.

"I'm not going anywhere. Not today." He fished around in his pocket and pulled out his phone, holding it up for Kurt to see. "Is this what all of this is really about?" He took Kurt's silence as confirmation. "I didn't check my phone until this morning. I didn't really have the best night without a certain flight attendant there next to me. I ignored everyone's calls because the one call I wanted never came. When I finally checked my messages this morning, I noticed I had a message from Luke that I hadn't read yet, but somehow it was open." Blaine pulled Kurt's chin up so he could look into his eyes. "Kurt, I don't know what you thought about that text, but it wasn't anything. I just want you to know that I would never cheat on you because there's absolutely no one in this world that makes me happier than you do. I really wish you would've told me what was going on last night so that I could've cleared things up right then and there. I gave you that key for a reason. That key was a promise to always be in your life until you tell me to leave. That's why I *did* leave last night. I can't stay around if you don't want me here, but I can't let you push me away because of a silly text."

Kurt looked down again and Blaine almost missed it when he spoke. "I don't want to push you away," He looked back up, "but why did you lie to me? Why did Luke say you went on a date?"

Blaine pulled Kurt out of the doorway to let a few employees through. He kept his hands on Kurt's elbow. "Kurt, Luke... he's an idiot. He's a jerk and I'm a little irritated with him at the moment. He... okay, well, you know he's gay. I honestly didn't think it was a big deal. Not until last night, that is. He's not my type and I'm not his. We've always been really close friends, and that's it. There has never been anything more on either side." Blaine waited for Kurt to pull away, but he didn't. "I didn't lie to you. I really did have to go to the office to deal with that customer. Luke was there as well and we went out to dinner to go over plans and stuff. When we were leaving, he.... I... he tried to kiss me, Kurt. But I didn't let him. God, I don't want to kiss anyone but you for the rest of my life. All I want is your lips on mine; your lips on every inch of my body and only yours. He started saying bad things about you. About how you were worthless to me and I could do so much better. Like him. And that's when I left. I wanted to come over to see you, but I couldn't. I needed to clear my head and I told myself that in a little over twelve hours, I could be at your apartment with your arms wrapped around me. Please tell me you believe me when I say nothing happened, and that it was strictly a business dinner until he tried to make it more."

Kurt nodded. "I believe you."

There was a minute of silence before Blaine spoke again. They just stood together, probably a little too close for two people who were supposed to just be friends, but they remained where they were. "What you said about us jumping into this too quick; do you really believe that?"

Kurt shook his head. "No. I like spending so much time with you, and I've never been happier to introduce my family to someone in my life. I don't want you to go anywhere. I don't want you to meet other people. I'm sorry I said those things."

"No, you don't get to apologize. This is completely my fault. I should've told you the truth, I just didn't know how."

"What if we ever break up for longer than twenty-four hours? I didn't know how I was going to survive another night without you," Kurt laughed.

"We just won't let that happen. Besides, I don't consider this a *breakup*. It was just a misunderstanding." Blaine pulled Kurt into a hug and buried his face in the collar of Kurt's uniform. "I want to kiss you right now, but I can't do that in the middle of the airport. Can we go home now?"

Kurt smiled. Home. "That sounds perfect."

Blaine walked into Kurt's bedroom the next morning with two fresh cups of coffee and sat them on the nightstand. "Good morning, beautiful." He kissed Kurt's forehead, hoping to wake the sleepy boy up a little.

"Mmm'I was wondering where you went." Kurt rolled over and buried his face in the pillow when Blaine crawled back onto the bed. "Wa'time is it?"

"Nine o'clock. You got a call saying the flights out of New York were cancelled today." Blaine laid down on top of the covers next to Kurt.

"W-why? Did something happen?"

Blaine pointed to the window. "Take a look outside." Kurt rolled to his other side and watched the snow falling outside of his window. Blaine wrapped his arms around Kurt and held him close. "Looks like we're snowed in today. What do you say to being lazy?"

"You know what? That sounds amazing."

Blaine leaned over to pick up one of the cups of coffee and handed it to Kurt. "I brought you a little something to help you wake up."

Kurt sniffed the sweet coffee and took a sip before offering it to Blaine, who eagerly took a drink. "So, what are we going to do first?" he asked, setting the cup on the table next to him.

"Well, I thought I could make us breakfast and then we could lie in bed and watch one of the new movies you bought the other day."

"You know, that sounds lovely," Kurt rolled over to face Blaine, "but I think I have a little something I'd like to do first." He leaned in and nibbled at Blaine's lip, kissing up his jaw until he reached his ear. He let his head fall on Blaine's chest and listened to the steady rhythm of the other man's heart. "Blaine, I lo-"

The timer in the kitchen went off, Blaine pulled away. "Hold that thought. I have to go flip the pancakes." He leaned back down on the bed to place a wet kiss against Kurt's lips.

Kurt buried his face in the pillows again and fell asleep. This time when Blaine returned, he didn't wake up the sleeping man. Instead, he crawled under the covers and wrapped an arm around Kurt's back before drifting off to sleep.

"I can't believe we slept until one thirty and then watched movies the rest of the afternoon. I haven't been this lazy since I was sick with strep throat in tenth grade."

"Well," Blaine started, "sometimes being lazy can be relaxing. It can de-stress you."

"I hear sex can do that as well, though I've never tested that theory."

Blaine chuckled. "I've heard that chocolate works as a great substitute." He raised Kurt's shirt up to reveal a little patch of skin and drew designs along his waistband.

"This is completely random, but I have an idea."

"What is that?" Blaine propped himself up on his elbow and snatched a grape from the bowl beside them.

"Well, you know how I'm a flight attendant?"

"Yeah, that may have come up a time or two."

Kurt ignored his sarcasm. "What if we take a trip this spring? Just the two of us. I've been dying to go to France for the longest time, but I've never had anyone to go with me. I thought maybe you might like a week or two away from the office as well. What better way to get rid of some of the stress in your life than by visiting one of the most romantic cities in the world?"

"France," Blaine repeated.

"I can get great deals on airline tickets. We'd end up paying next to nothing and I know of a couple great places to stay. I can speak the language fairly well, so you won't have to worry about language barriers, and their food is *amazing* Blaine. I've had to fly there a few times, but I never made it more than a few miles from the airport, of course." Kurt realized he was talking too much and slowed down. "I mean, you don't have to go if you don't want to. I can find someone else to go with, or just not go at all. I don't want you to feel forced to say yes by any means."

"It's not that. I'm just trying to figure out how I'm going to tell my dad I need a few weeks off to visit the most romantic city in the world." He placed a kiss on Kurt's collar bone. "With." His hands made their way under Kurt's shirt and pulled it up over his head. "My." Blaine kissed Kurt's stomach as he aimlessly threw the shirt into the corner of the room. "Beautiful." He shifted to straddle Kurt, kissing a trail up his chest, before finally reaching his lips. "Boyfriend." Blaine pressed his lips to Kurt's, letting his emotions take over him. It was as if his mind and his heart were no longer one, and his heart dominated. He wanted Kurt. He wanted all of him.

Kurt smiled beneath him, thrusting up to meet Blaine as their kisses got messy. "I take it you like my idea?" he asked in between kisses.

Blaine propped himself up, trying to control himself for a few seconds. "There wasn't even any convincing involved."

"Great. Now more kissing." Kurt pulled Blaine back down on top of him and groaned when the other man rolled off onto the empty space beside them. "Come back here." Kurt began to move, but Blaine put a hand to Kurt's chest to stop him.

"Can we just talk for a few more minutes?" Blaine had started to blush, but he hoped the quickly darkening room would hide the redness in his cheeks.

"Blaine, can I ask you a question? I... Are you ready for this? For *more* with us?" Kurt bit his lip, worried that he was going to screw something up. He'd never been in this situation before. There hadn't been a time in his life when he was ready to share himself with another man the way he wanted to share himself with Blaine.

Blaine was ready for everything with Kurt, but he wanted to make love to him. He didn't want to just have sex. He wanted Kurt to know how much he loved him as they shared themselves with each other. He wanted their first time together to be perfect in every way. Blaine didn't want there to be a single secret between them, and until he could say those things to Kurt, he didn't want to get carried away.

"I'm ready for everything with you, but that doesn't mean it's the right time."

"Let me guess. You're a romantic who believes there should be a thousand rose petals and dozens of candles surrounding us, correct?"

"Not quite," Blaine laughed. "There would only be two hundred rose petals at the most." They both looked away from each other bashfully. "No, I'm just kidding. I just want the timing to be right. I don't want it to be something that seems planned." *And I don't want to do it until I say I love you and I know you love me.*

"Then what do you want to talk about?" Kurt glanced at the clock on his nightstand. "It's 10:40. We still have an hour or two before we should go to sleep."

"Well, what's on your mind?" Blaine sat up against the headboard, but Kurt remained lying down.

"Well, um... a-are you a virgin, Blaine?" Kurt could feel the uncontrollable heat in his cheeks.

"No," Blaine murmured in response.

Kurt had been expecting a different answer from him. "You... no? I... um, I thought you said you didn't know what sex was like. When we first met or whatever." He *had* said that, right? Kurt hadn't imagined that conversation.

"I don't. Not really, anyway. I don't consider it making love, so much as letting all of our urges take over. You have no idea how much I wish I could go back in time and relive that part of my life over. I want to erase it all away, but that's not possible." He began fumbling with his thumbs to try to distract himself from Kurt's fixed gaze. "I'd been lying to myself the entire time. I thought I knew what love was, but I didn't. I had convinced myself I was in love with the person, but in reality, I didn't even like him all that much."

"It... it was with a guy, right? I mean, this wasn't some experiment of yours?"

"What? No way," Blaine laughed. "It was with a guy. We'd been together for a couple years by that time, but I was just too young. I had just graduated high school and I didn't really know who I was as a person at that time."

"Who was it?"

Blaine squeezed his eyes shut and turned away from Kurt. He was hoping Kurt wouldn't ask who the man was. He knew at some point, he had to explain everything to Kurt, but he had hoped it would come up later on. Kurt deserved to know and maybe Blaine should've been honest from the beginning, but he was scared of what Kurt would think. He didn't want his past to be a deal breaker in their relationship, and there wasn't an easy way to explain how you'd messed up your life because you were young and immature.

When he felt Kurt reach up and grab his hand, he squeezed back, a little too tight to be comfortable. "Hey, it's okay. You don't have to tell me if you don't want to. We can talk about something else."

"It was my ex-husband," Blaine blurted out. That was it. The truth was out, and there wasn't anything he could do to take it back. Blaine kept his eyes closed and waited for Kurt to tell him to leave, but he didn't. Instead, Kurt joined him against the headboard and turned Blaine's face to meet his. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you before," Blaine whispered. "I was afraid that once you found out you wouldn't want anything to do with me. I'm only twenty-seven. I'm not old enough to have already been married and divorced."

"Hey, nothing is going to make me leave you, okay? Especially not something that happened in your past. You're here with me now and that's all that matters. Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone has something in their past that they're not proud of and that they wish they could change, but it's how you deal with it that makes it all better. I don't know about the guy, but he was lucky to be married to you, even if it was just briefly. If he's the one that wanted the divorce, he's crazy, but as selfish as it sounds, I'm glad you did

get divorced. If you were still married, I wouldn't be able to do this." Kurt leaned forward to kiss him, and that one kiss is all it took to ease all of Blaine's worries. Everything would be fine. Somehow, Blaine had found one of the most understanding boyfriends he could've ever wished for.

Blaine started to speak again. "Our parents were always against our relationship. His family wasn't okay with him being gay and mine didn't think he was a very good influence on me. They kept trying to keep us from each other and used the excuse that we were underage and they could control us. Naturally, the more they kept us apart, the more we wanted to be together. I turned eighteen in November, but he didn't turn eighteen until May. His birthday was two days after graduation, so as a little celebration and rebellion, we packed up our stuff, took the little money we'd been saving for the past year, and left without telling them. They were furious of course. They were calling our phones so much that we turned them off and ignored them. We got the cheapest tickets available and flew to Vegas. He had booked a crappy little hotel, but it didn't matter because we were finally alone. We went for a walk through the city, and you'd be surprised at how easy it is for two underage boys to get alcohol in Vegas. We were drunk before midnight, and ended up heading to a little chapel on the edge of town. We were married by one in the morning. That's the reason I don't drink anymore. I'm terrified of what would happen if I did.

"Anyway, we eventually went back to Ohio, and the minute we stepped through his front door, his parents kicked him out. He didn't have anywhere to go, and we knew my parents would be furious that we just took off like we did, so we decided to rent an apartment. We didn't know where we were going to get the money, but we knew we had to. My parents didn't offer to help out a single bit. They said if I were to ever grow up and decide that the relationship I was in wasn't a healthy one, I could move back in and I would go to work for him at the insurance company."

"And you work there now," Kurt stated.

Blaine squeezed his hand again. "Yeah. Living with Elliott—that was his name, by the way—was okay at first. Of course we had sex, but we also went on a few dates. It wasn't until I got so much time alone with him that I realized he really wasn't the person I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. I didn't get the butterflies in my stomach that I should've had when he kissed me. I didn't want to spend all of my time with him and I found myself talking to the few other friends I had more than my own husband. I realized that despite what I had believed, I wasn't in love with him. I tried to sit him down and tell him that I didn't know how much longer things would work out because it wasn't fair to him, but he didn't want to talk. All it took was me saying I wasn't in love with him and for him to tell me to leave, and the next thing I knew, I was standing on my parent's porch waiting for them to open the front door.

"I did as they said. I moved back in, I went to work for my dad, I signed the divorce papers when they came a few months later, and that was it. He was out of my life completely. The strange thing is, I didn't miss him at all. Kurt, if I put together every single ounce of pain I felt when I broke up with him, it wouldn't even *begin* to compare with the pain I was dealing with when you told me to leave. Those butterflies I was talking about; I don't just get them when I kiss you. I get them every time you walk into the room." Blaine wrapped his arm around Kurt and stared into his eyes. He was sure he'd never seen anything more beautiful in his life. "Do you want to know why I feel that way whenever I'm with you? I fought with myself for so long. After Elliott, I began to doubt what love really was and I thought I'd never be able to fall in love with anyone. I think that's part of what kept me from being in a relationship with anyone else until you came along."

Kurt rested his head on Blaine's shoulder and squeezed him tight. "You deserve all of the love in the world, Blaine." Kurt turned his attention to the TV and listened as the menu screen played over and over. "What do you say to watching another movie? I feel like Home Alone is a little appropriate considering the weather we're having."

"Are you going to get up and put it in?"

Kurt groaned. "I take it back. I'll just go to sleep." He slid down and buried his face in his pillow. Blaine laughed and hopped out of bed long enough to slip in the DVD and turn out the lights.

He got back into bed and pulled Kurt into his arms. It didn't take long for the other man to fall asleep, leaving Blaine with nothing more than the movie in front of him and the sound of his own thoughts running through his head. "Do you want to know a little secret?" Blaine whispered. He knew he was talking to himself and that Kurt wouldn't hear anything he would say, but maybe that's why he had the nerve to say it. Blaine took a deep breath, completely aware of what he was about to do, but he didn't have any regrets. "I've fallen in love with you. God, Kurt, I love you so much." Blaine swallowed the lump in his throat before repeating himself, this time a little quieter. "I love you, Kurt. I know it may sound crazy, but I already know you're the man I want to spend the rest of my life with." He pressed a kiss to the top of Kurt's head and froze when a pair of blue eyes met his own hazel. "K-kurt, I thought you were asleep."

Kurt smiled and tenderly kissed him. "I love you, too," he whispered against Blaine's lips. Their eyes were just inches apart; their bodies as closed together as possible; their lips still on each other's. "Blaine, will you make love to me tonight?"

Kurt didn't have to ask again. Blaine began to kiss him again with more love and compassion than Kurt had ever imagined. It was only a few minutes before Kurt was lost in Blaine's tender touch.

Chapter Twelve

"Do you realize that we've fallen into a routine?" Kurt asked, taking a bite of his frozen yogurt. Despite the frigid February air, he'd still begged Blaine to take him to one of their favorite places—the frozen yogurt shop they'd visited on their first date.

"A routine?" Blaine repeated. He took a bite of his own frozen yogurt. He'd begun to venture out a bit, getting some of the more extreme flavors and a variety of toppings. Some of his combinations made Kurt want to gag at the thought, but Blaine always found them deliciously satisfying.

"Yeah. You know, you fly back on Sunday night; we spend Monday night through Thursday night together. We get up on Friday morning and drive to the airport and the cycle starts over."

"Are you complaining about our time together? Because you can hang out with your other friends, you know."

"What? No!" Kurt looped his arm through Blaine's as they walked down the street. It made eating a little more difficult, but he liked being so close to Blaine. The warmth of his body felt nice. "I like spending so much time with you, but I don't want you to feel like you have to come over every night or invite me over to your place all the time. I may not have any real friends in New York, but you do."

"They're just friends from the office," Blaine shrugged. Kurt reached up with his free hand to take Blaine's spoon and took a bite himself. "Do you like it?"

"It's a little better than the bubble gum/raspberry/m&m combo you tried the other day. *That* one was awful." He took his own spoon and held it up to Blaine's mouth; Blaine eagerly took the bite.

"Hey, now," he began through a full mouth, "that was actually pretty delicious."

"Blaine, you mixed bubble gum flavored yogurt with whole raspberries and peanut butter m&ms. There was nothing appetizing about that."

"Not to you, but to me, it was... what's the phrase I used? Sex in my mouth?"

"Now you have something to compare that to, don't you?" Kurt joked.

"I'd rather have your dick in my mouth than this frozen yogurt if that's what you're suggesting." Blaine threw his nearly empty cup in a trashcan as they passed. "Would you like to go home and try this idea out?" He looked at Kurt who had become speechless. "What? You don't expect me to have amazing sex with you and then not want it all the time, do you?" He hugged Kurt from behind which slowed their pace, but he didn't care. "Because you happen to be quite gorgeous with *and* without clothes."

"Too bad. You'll get sex when you get it. But for now," Kurt reached down and grabbed Blaine's hand, unwrapping himself from Blaine's arms, and pulled him into a store, "we are going to get you a new phone; one that will allow you to do more than make a call."

"I can text, too!"

"Yes, but with *this*," Kurt pointed to an iPhone, showing it off like one of the ladies on The Price is Right or something, "you can talk to me, text me, email me, skype me, *whatever* you want with me."

"*Whatever* I want?" Blaine asked with a grin, sliding closer to Kurt.

"Blaine, focus," Kurt scolded.

"Sorry. You were saying?"

"I'm saying that if you had this, you could skype me whenever you wanted."

"I can already skype you whenever I want. I have a webcam and a computer."

"What if you're at a restaurant and you don't have your computer or wifi. Or what if you're in the middle of a store?"

"Do you really want me to skype you in the middle of a business dinner? I mean, I guess I can sneak off to the bathroom, but-"

"*Blaine*," Kurt whined. He actually whined!

"I'm sorry! It's your fault for wearing these pants today. I can't think of anything else."

"You picked them out!"

"And there was a reason for that."

Kurt rolled his eyes. "Anyway, as I was saying, what if you're in the middle of a store and need my advice on a shirt or something?"

"A, I could send you a picture of it because my phone *does* have a camera. It's not that old-school. B, I don't go shopping without you anymore, so that's basically pointless."

"You aren't helping here. This phone would be great for your work. You can email from your phone, and we can even download apps that will let us play games against each other. That way when you're in LA, it'll feel like we're still together."

"You're always with me, Kurt, whether you know it or not."

"You're going to get cheesy on me if we're not careful." Kurt signaled a man over to where they were standing. "Hi, we would like to purchase this phone."

"Kurt," Blaine started, but instantly shut his mouth once Kurt gave him a look.

They purchased the phone, got it all set up for Blaine in the store, and made their way home. Kurt flopped down on the bed, stomach first, and didn't bother to move; not even when Blaine ran into the room and jumped on the bed beside him.

"May I just remind you that you are a twenty-seven-year-old man who just *jumped* on my bed," Kurt mumbled, barely audible.

"Kurt, this phone is amazing. Did you know that it takes *excellent* pictures? I got a few of your kitchen, a couple of the city from the living room window, and even a few of the hallway."

Kurt turned his head to the side, but only so his voice wouldn't be muffled when he let Blaine know he was insane. "Did you really take pictures of my *kitchen*?"

"What else am I supposed to take pictures of?" he shrugged.

"Um, you wait until there's something worth capturing for eternity."

"Not eternity. Just as long as I have this phone." He held his phone up and snapped a picture of Kurt's face.
"There. Beautiful. That will be my new background."

"Blaine, that is not background quality. That was me being annoyed by my crazy boyfriend."

"You love me though." He leaned down to give Kurt a quick kiss.

"That I do," Kurt sighed.

"Come here." Blaine motioned for him to sit up.

"What?"

"If that picture isn't good enough to be my background, I want a retake. So fix your hair how you'd like and smile for the camera."

"Can we take a picture together instead?"

Blaine moved to sit next to Kurt. "Of course." He raised the camera in the air and pointed it in their direction before snapping a picture.

"Perfect," Kurt approved.

"Great. Well, now that I was a good boy and took you to your favorite frozen yogurt shop and bought a new phone against my will and took the picture you wanted, can we...." he trailed off, but there was no question of what he was implying.

"Oh my gosh, I'll give you sex if you'll shut up."

"I don't know that I'll shut up because I know we can be quite loud, but I won't-"

"I love you so much," Kurt giggled. "Come here." Kurt pulled Blaine into his arms and began pulling off his shirt.

"What are you doing tomorrow?" Blaine asked. He ran a finger up Kurt's bare chest, mapping out the contours of his body for the hundredth time that night.

"Tomorrow is Tuesday," Kurt stated, not exactly answering the question.

"It's also Valentine's Day." Blaine placed a kiss to Kurt's shoulder.

"I know. I... I was trying to push that out of my mind. I mean, I didn't know when you were going to get off of work or if you'd be in the mood or even have time to go to dinner or anything afterwards, so I didn't plan on doing anything."

"Well, can I take you out anyway?"

"Of course you can, but I'd like to take *you* out as well."

"You can have next Valentine's Day. I... already have plans for tomorrow."

Kurt propped himself up on his elbow. "You made plans? Why didn't you mention anything before?"

"I didn't want to get your hopes up if I couldn't get out of work, but my secretary called me this morning and said she could cover for me that way my dad won't find out. Any normal day, I would be able to just ask off, but he might be kind of suspicious if he found out I wanted to take off for Valentine's Day."

"But you took off so you could be with me?"

"Of course I did. I didn't want to miss my first Valentine's day with my boyfriend."

"You are the best ever," Kurt giggled, rolling on top of Blaine and wrapping his arms around his neck.

"Kurt," Blaine groaned when their bare bodies were pressed together.

"Sorry," Kurt said in a way that hinted that he actually wasn't sorry. He kissed Blaine quickly and shifted to make himself a little more comfortable. "Round two?" he asked suggestively.

"Round two," Blaine eagerly nodded.

"Do you know that you've been getting ready for over *two hours* and you're just now working on your hair? I've been up for thirty minutes and I've already showered and finished getting ready."

"Blaine, looking good takes time. I don't know what we're doing today, so I want to make sure my hair can make it through anything."

"But it's hot when it's all messed up."

"That's what I think about your hair, but you insist on styling it a little."

"What if I ensure you that the most you'll have to deal with is maybe a little sweat or humidity?"

"Humidity in New York. In the middle of February."

"Is your camera still on the shelf in the closet?" Blaine asked, changing the subject and walking back out into the bedroom.

Kurt put the final touches on his hair before leaving the bathroom and sitting down on the edge of his bed. "It should be, but you'll have to get a new memory card from my desk. That one's full." He pulled one of his shoes on and laced them up. "Why do we need a camera. I thought you'd become quite fond of your new phone."

"The camera isn't for me; it's for you. I thought you might want to take pictures of your own."

"I have a camera on my phone, too."

Blaine began shuffling around inside of Kurt's closet. "Yeah," He stood on the tip of his toes so he could grab it off of the top shelf, "but this is a nicer camera."

Kurt stood up and met him in the doorway to the closet. "Are you still not going to tell me where we're going?"

"Nope. Are you ready to go?"

"Have you been into the living room yet?"

"No...." Blaine said curiously.

"Go on! Go!" Kurt pushed him along, closing the bedroom door behind him.

Blaine stopped when he spied the new display on the coffee table. "Kurt..."

"Do you like them?"

Blaine walked to the coffee table and picked up the bouquet of fresh lilies. "They're gorgeous."

"I'm glad you like them. I managed to sneak out to the local flower shop before you woke up. They were out of roses, but I think these are prettier anyway."

"They are. Thank you." Blaine placed his hands on each side of Kurt's face and pulled him in for a kiss. "I love you."

"I love you, too. Happy Valentine's Day." They kissed again, finally parting a few minutes later. "There's some of that fancy chocolate you love in the kitchen. You can have some when we get home."

"You spoil me."

"It's a special day." He gave Blaine's stomach a few pats before pulling away. "Come on. The cab is probably waiting by now."

"We have to make a stop at my apartment first if that's okay."

"Mhm." It wasn't until Kurt had allowed his head to make its way down to Blaine's chest that he realized how exhausted he actually was. His eyes began to close involuntarily, but he quickly opened them back up.

"Tired?" Blaine asked. He had his right arm wrapped around Kurt's body and the fingers on his right hand danced around on the open palm of Kurt's left.

Kurt lifted his head up just enough to look Blaine in the eyes. "I just didn't get much sleep last night."

"And that's because of me," he mentioned sheepishly. "I'm sorry. Maybe I shouldn't wear you out so much."

"I'll learn to live with the consequences."

Blaine held on tighter until they pulled up to the apartment building. "Are you going to stay here? I'll just be a minute."

"Sure." Blaine hopped out of the cab and returned not even five minutes later with a small duffle bag. "What is that," Kurt stared.

"That's for you to find out later." Blaine tossed it in the seat beside them and climbed back in. He handed a slip of paper to the cab driver and leaned back in the seat.

"Brooklyn?" the driver clarified.

Blaine nodded and the cab pulled away from the curb.

"We're here, Kurt." Blaine nudged him in the side as the cab pulled over to the Curb.

They hopped out of the cab and Kurt took note of the words etched into the massive stone entrance as Blaine paid the driver. Brooklyn Botanical Garden. "You brought me to a botanical garden? I thought they weren't even open in February. Nothing's blooming."

"They opened a little early this year," Blaine shrugged. "Have you been here before?" Kurt shook his head. "Good. You have never mentioned it before, so I didn't figure you had."

"I just spend all of my time in Central Park. I never really thought about going anywhere else, and even the few times I thought about it, I didn't want to go alone."

"You don't seem like one to care about being by yourself, especially since it's such a peaceful atmosphere."

"There's a difference between being by myself and being *alone*. Some things... I guess I just wanted there to be something new to do if I ever found someone."

"Well you don't have to be alone anymore. Neither one of us do." Blaine stopped in front of Kurt and pecked him on the lips. "I love you."

Kurt wrapped his arms tightly around Blaine. "You're perfect, do you know that?" Blaine laughed as Kurt pulled back slightly. "I love you, too. Sometimes I wonder what I did to deserve your love. Out of everyone in the world, you chose *me* to trust with your heart. You chose *me* to fall in love with."

"It wasn't so much a choice, Kurt, and that's what makes it feel so right. Now, come on. We can be serious later. I want you to enjoy yourself right now."

"Do you still have my camera?" Kurt asked, trailing behind Blaine as their fingers intertwined.

"It's in my bag."

They spent the next hour wandering through a few of the different gardens—Osborne Garden, Lilac Collection, Cranford Rose Garden. Although it was too early in the year and far too cold for the flowers to be blooming, Kurt still found the place beautiful. It wasn't as colorful as it would be during the summer, the trees were bare, and the vegetation was a combination of various browns, but Kurt was still able to find beauty behind all of it. He took pictures of the different landscapes, capturing the gardens at a time when not many people took the time to see them. Occasionally, he'd drag Blaine to a bench and talk animatedly about the things they'd seen before snapping a quick picture of the two of them—sometimes they made silly faces—and moving on to the next Garden. Though Kurt knew Blaine didn't particularly enjoy looking at a bunch of dead plants, he never said a word, not even when Kurt stopped to stare at a leaf-less tree for ten minutes, taking pictures from different angles and distances.

The Japanese Garden definitely went on the top of Kurt's list of favorite places, and he could only imagine the way it would look in the spring. He stopped to take a picture of each unique little statue, the benches that lined the paths, and the waterfall in the distance. Kurt pulled Blaine over to the pond where they sat and watched the ripples in the water and the few birds left in New York soar across the sky. He had to admit that he liked being there at that time of the year. The place was less crowded. He didn't have to put up with the massive amount of tourists or unhappy children. He could enjoy what was around him and take pictures without waiting for someone to get out of the way.

Actually, he hadn't seen a single person the entire morning. "Why is there not anyone else around?"

"It's probably too chilly for them," Blaine shrugged.

"It's actually quite warm today," Kurt pointed out.

"Maybe they had other plans. Hey, why don't we walk down this path?" Blaine turned to the right and headed towards a group of buildings.

Kurt hurried after him. "Why are you trying to change the subject? What aren't you telling me?"

Blaine paused, conflicted as to whether or not he should tell Kurt the truth. "I... it's nothing. Just be happy that you have the entire place to yourself."

"Are you sure we're completely alone? There's not an entire person in the park?" Kurt asked seductively and wrapped his arms around Blaine.

"No. Other than a few workers, we're the only ones here."

"Ha!" Kurt let go of Blaine and backed away, happy with himself. He'd tricked Blaine into admitting part of the truth. "Now tell me how you know that. Actually, tell me why we're here if no one else is."

Blaine looked away. "Because the park isn't technically open," he mumbled.

"Excuse me? I'm going to have to ask you to say that again."

Blaine turned back towards him. "The park isn't exactly open to the public yet."

"What... so we're breaking in or something?" Kurt looked panicked.

"Don't be silly. You saw me pay the guy at the gate." Blaine took Kurt in his arms.

"How do I know that's not one of your friends and he's helping us break the law."

"Do I look like a law breaker to you?"

"You don't *look* like you eat 4000 calories worth of sweets a day either. Looks can be deceiving."

"Kurt, come on."

"Just tell me how we're here then."

Blaine took a deep breath and let it out as he spoke. "We insured this place so I was able to pull a few strings and get it to open for us today."

"We... you got them to open this place for *us* and us alone?" Blaine nodded. "But, why?"

Blaine shrugged again. "I don't know. I thought you might enjoy being able to see things the way no one else does. You've always had a knack of finding something beautiful in something that other people generally think is ugly. When we were in central park the night we first kissed, isn't that what you told me your mom was able to do? She could make anything seem like a piece of art? I thought maybe you'd enjoy having the same opportunity. I mean, you don't have to think of it like that, but you could do this for her. It could be one more thing you could do to make her happy, because I know she's looking down on you and she's *so* proud of you, Kurt. *I'm* proud of the person you are."

Kurt hid his face in an attempt to prevent Blaine from seeing his tears. "You did this for me," he whispered.

"I'd do anything for you, Kurt. I just like to see you smile." Blaine reached out and wiped the tears from Kurt's cheek. "And now I'm making you cry."

"It's a good cry," Kurt smiled. "They're happy tears. I just feel so stupid now because I wanted to take you out for dinner tonight, but that's it. I didn't have any wonderful plans like this."

"Like I said, you can have Valentine's Day next year. Besides, I don't need you to come up with huge plans. All I want is you. I don't care where we are or what we do as long as you're there."

"You made plans, though."

"Yes, but it's our first Valentine's Day together and I want to make it absolutely perfect for you."

"It already is." Kurt took both of Blaine's hands in his and grinned.

"You know, they actually have weddings here." Blaine pointed to the Palm House they had stopped in front of. Kurt looked up to the glass building and noticed the rows of tables inside and his eyes grew wide, something Blaine didn't notice. "Oh, Kurt, I mean... I was just mentioning that. I read it on the website when I was looking this place up. I wasn't suggesting anything by any means..."

"You're cute when you're nervous." Kurt squeezed his hand a little tighter.

"Is... I mean... what if I wanted to marry you? Not now of course, but I mean... what if I told you I've thought of it before?" Blaine couldn't hide the nerves in his voice.

"We've only been together for four months," Kurt stated, trying to fight back the smile on his lips.

"Y-yeah. Sorry, I shouldn't have said anything."

Kurt pulled Blaine to a stop. "Hey, I didn't say it was a bad thing." He wrapped his arms around Blaine's neck and pulled him close. "You just... after what you told me, I guess I was just surprised to hear that you've thought about marriage again."

"I don't want to rush into anything, Kurt, but I feel like I already know you're it for me. I don't want to get married right now by any means, and I don't even want to get engaged so soon. I like taking things slow, but that doesn't mean I don't think about the way things could turn out in the future. I'm probably creeping you out."

"Blaine, I've thought those things too, you know. Probably even sooner than you did, so if anyone is creepy, it's me," he giggled. "I know what you mean, though. I don't want to rush into anything, especially since this is my first real relationship, but I love you. To me, that's all that matters right now. And my boyfriend brought me to one of my new favorite places in this city, so for that, I want to thank him."

"How are you going to do that?" Blaine cocked an eyebrow.

Kurt looked around, forgetting that he didn't need to, before pulling Blaine off of the path a little and stopped behind a tree. "Like this." Kurt began to kiss Blaine. Their lips moved against each other as if they were created to fit together.

Blaine began groaning into the kiss and dropped the small duffle bag he'd been carrying around to run his hands through Kurt's hair, something Kurt couldn't even begin to care about in the moment. "Kurt," Blaine

moaned and pulled him back in for another kiss. "I'm so in love with you. I don't want to overuse those three little words, but I *do* love you, and I never want to stop saying it."

"I love you. But, come on," Kurt grabbed his hand and pulled them back onto the path. "From what I hear, we've got a busy day ahead of ourselves."

"That we do. Are you finished here, or would you like to look around some more?"

"Can we go grab something to eat? It's almost 1:00 and we skipped breakfast."

"I don't know what you're talking about. I seemed to satisfy my hunger this morning," Blaine nearly growled.

"I'm leaving you now." Kurt let go of his hand and started walking away, making sure to flaunt his body in front of Blaine. Needless to say, it wasn't too long before he felt Blaine's hand slide into the back pocket of his jeans as they exited the park.

"This doesn't look like lunch." Kurt stared at the pond in front of him, well aware that they were in the middle of Central Park.

"It's Turtle Pond," Blaine clarified. He sat down on the grass and began unzipping his duffle, pulling a blanket out and spreading it across the ground. "Sit," he said, patting the spot next to him.

Kurt did as told but looked at Blaine questioningly. "I'm not following." Blaine leaned forward and quickly kissed him with a smile on his face. After giving up on Blaine telling him what was going on, he leaned back and made himself a little more comfortable. "You know, it's uncharacteristically warm for a February."

"Even New York has its heat waves."

"Ah, did you plan this?"

"Hoped for it actually. We," Blaine turned to his bag again and began pulling out a few containers, "are having a slightly-chilled, no cooking necessary lunch." He sat three different containers in between him

and Kurt and reached back in for the rest. "Pasta salad, carrots with dip, bread I picked up from one of my favorite bakeries, strawberries and pineapple chunks, and for dessert, triple chocolate cheesecake." Kurt stared at the cheesecake in front of him, wondering if Blaine had forgotten there was no way he would ever eat anything like that. "Okay, the triple chocolate is for me." He reached into his bag and pulled out the final container. "I got you a low-fat cherry cheesecake."

"That's better," Kurt laughed. "I can't believe you did all of this. I would've been fine going to a restaurant or something."

"Oh, that's for later tonight. I have reservations at one of the nicest restaurants in New York."

"I don't even know what to say to you right now. You're amazing." Kurt leaned forward and pressed his lips to Blaine's for a chaste kiss. "Thank you."

"You're welcome," Blaine smiled and kissed him again. "Okay, ready to eat?"

"Yes. I'm starving." They picked up the containers and started removing the lids before digging in. "When did you have time to prepare all of this food anyway?"

"Ah. That's my little secret. I'm not going to divulge such mysteries to you."

"You're right. Your mysterious charm is the only thing keeping me around."

"Ooooh, and now the truth comes out. You're just using me for my sex and bad boy reputation."

Kurt snorted. "Bad boy?"

"What? I can be pretty badass." Blaine picked up a baby carrot and dipped it in ranch dressing before popping it into his mouth.

"You're a businessman, sweetie. I hate to break it to you, but that profession is neither mysterious nor daring."

"Oh yeah? I hear I can be a little daring in bed."

Kurt felt a blush come up to his face. "That's not something everyone sees, though."

"Are you sure about that?" Blaine joked, but Kurt looked shocked. "Hey, you know I'm just joking." He grabbed Kurt's hand and squeezed it tight. "You're the only one I *willingly* spend time with outside of work." Blaine lifted a strawberry to Kurt's lips which he eagerly took a bite of. He wiped a bit of juice away from Kurt's chin before it dripped onto his shirt.

"You know, I had no idea you were such a man whore until recently." Blaine set the half-eaten strawberry back in the container and remained silent. "Blaine, you know I'm just kidding, right?"

"Yeah."

"Hey, what's wrong?" Kurt moved a little closer and forced Blaine to look up.

"I just... I don't want you to think badly of me. You... your opinion means the most to me. I may joke around about myself a lot, but I hope you don't honestly believe me."

"Is this about you loving sex with me? Because if it is, I can totally understand why. I mean, I'm amazing," Kurt laughed; Blaine didn't. "Blaine, I'm sorry. I... you are the best person I know and nothing is going to change my opinion about that."

"It's not just sex, Kurt. I mean, I love doing... those things with you because I trust you. I feel like we're one single entity and not two different people when we're making love. We're not Kurt *and* Blaine, we're KurtandBlaine. I just want you to realize that this isn't me having the mindset and hormones of a teenage boy. This is me being one hundred and ten percent, completely and ridiculously in love with you and I want to give you everything. I want to give you *myself*. I want to give you something that I never want to give to anyone else ever again."

"Blaine, stop."

"What, I'm sorry, I just-"

"Don't be sorry. I just want you to stop long enough for me to kiss you." He leaned forward and pressed their lips together, forcing them to lie back across the blanket. Blaine eagerly agreed to the kiss until Kurt threw his leg over Blaine's and pressed their hips together.

"Kurt, people-"

"I don't care, Blaine. I don't care." He shook his head. "It's Valentine's Day. I want to be able to kiss my boyfriend without having to worry about it." He kissed him again, this time licking along Blaine's lower lip and biting down a little.

"Fuck, Kurt," Blaine groaned.

"I think we should go back to my apartment so you can do that right now."

Blaine pulled away. "That's for tonight." He immediately missed the warmth of Kurt's lips on his, but he knew if he didn't stop at that moment, he wouldn't be able to at all. "Finish up, though. We can go see if there are any turtles in the water before moving on to the next thing on our list."

"Which is?"

"You'll see."

"Are you ever going to tell me while we're walking towards the river?" Kurt swung their joined hands back and forth and looked around. He took note of the other couples walking along the pier; they seemed just as happy as he and Blaine were.

"Is there anything else to do in the Hudson River than go kayaking?" Blaine asked. He felt Kurt's hand rip out of his when the other man planted his feet in the ground, making no effort to move any closer to the end of the pier.

"We are not getting in that water. Please tell me we aren't getting any closer." Kurt frantically shook his head and Blaine noticed his eyes widening with fear.

"Do you have a fear of water?" Blaine casually made his way back to Kurt. Kurt avoided eye contact and looked towards the water in panic. "You do, don't you?" He brought his hand to his mouth with regret.

"I..."

Blaine grabbed Kurt's hands and raised them to his lips to kiss them tenderly. "Hey, look. It's okay. We'll—we'll just go find something else to do until dinner."

"Are you sure?" Blaine leaned forward and pecked Kurt's lips. Kurt took that as a yes. "I'm sorry. I... water isn't something I like to do. Mr. Schue proposed to his wife, Emma my senior year. He asked the glee club to help out with the proposal, but he wanted it done by singing and synchronized swimming and I almost had a panic attack."

"May I ask you why you're so afraid of it?" Blaine cocked his head.

"I don't know. I guess I wasn't around it much when I was younger and never ended up learning how to swim. My pale skin didn't exactly get along with the sun too well, so while other kids would go to the community pool in the summer, I'd be inside watching musicals and having tea parties with my mom."

"That doesn't sound all that bad."

"No, but when you're twenty-six and don't know how to swim, that creates a bit of a problem, don't you think?" Kurt's voice lacked humor.

"You... oh." Blaine went silent once he realized what Kurt had meant.

"I know," Kurt moved to sit down at a bench at the edge of the walk, "what twenty-six year old can't even swim. I'm some kind of weird loser." His voice started to shake from embarrassment.

Blaine sat down next to him. "You want to know a secret?" He nudged Kurt with his shoulder. "I'm irrevocably in love with that weird loser."

Kurt's mouth formed a small smile and he turned his attention back towards the water. "We should do it."

"What?"

"Go kayaking. I mean, I have to conquer that fear at some point in my life, right? Who says today isn't that day. They have life jackets in case something were to happen and I know you wouldn't ever *let* anything happen."

"Kurt, I don't want you to do anything you're not comfortable with. You can take time to think about it first, okay? You can mentally prepare yourself. We can just take a walk through the park or something today."

"You wanted to do this, though."

"I wanted to do it with *you*, but I wanted you to enjoy it as well. We can come back as soon as you're ready. Deal?"

Kurt grabbed Blaine's hand and pulled the two of them up. "Deal. Thank you, Blaine."

"There's no need to thank me. I'm kind of excited that the next few hours of our lives will be spontaneous. When's the last time you lived in the moment?"

"Actually, I've been doing that all day," Kurt laughed.

He looked above as a few birds flew through the sky. He loved how free they were to do whatever they wanted. They were able to see the entire city from above, something Kurt could only do from the confines of a plane. Each bird, no matter the color or size, had to learn to fly with little help. Each baby bird was pushed from its nest and forced to spread its wings and fly, something Kurt was never able to do growing up. He had always kept to himself and never strayed away from what felt comfortable and safe. With Blaine, however, it felt like he *was* able to soar wherever he wanted. The wings that had always been pinned down were finally loosened. He had the courage to expand them and take flight. He was no longer afraid to try new things and the thought of *not* making plans and living a less-constructed life thrilled him.

Kurt turned his focus back to Blaine, only to find that he was staring at him the entire time. "Ready to go be impetuous in the park?"

"The park where all of this began. Our first date, our first kiss, when I realized I was in love with you, all of it. That seems like a much more appropriate place to spend our first Valentine's Day together than in a kayak on a smelly river, don't you think?"

"I can't believe you waited so long to tell me." Kurt leaned into Blaine's side.

"You weren't exactly forward with your feelings either." Blaine snaked his arm around Kurt's waist and pulled him closer. They began heading towards the street to grab a taxi. "Besides, I think I had some things I needed to deal with so that when the time was right, I could completely give myself to you."

"I wouldn't change a thing, you know. It allowed us to get to know one another better." Kurt squeezed Blaine's side and he felt Blaine squeeze back. "Hey, how is it that you even know how to go kayaking."

"I didn't have many friends the first couple of years I was in New York so I took lessons every summer. By the third summer, they were asking me to *teach* the lessons. I had to decline, of course. Can you imagine what my dad would have said if I told him I was going to add kayaking lessons to my work schedule?"

"Did you want to do it?" Kurt tilted his head to get a better look into Blaine's eyes.

"Not really, no. It would've been fun and a little less stressful than being in the office, but it didn't pay very well. It wouldn't have been worth the time. However, I did get some pretty nice arm muscles out of it." Blaine lifted his arm and flexed, causing Kurt to giggle.

"Is that what I have to look forward to? Finally getting rid of these spaghetti arms?"

"Your arms are *perfect*."

They finally reached the street and Blaine managed to flag down a taxi for the two to take to the park. Central Park was nauseatingly full of couples making loving eyes towards each other. He was sure most of them were from out of town and had come to New York for that one day, but for once, he didn't care about the tourists. He felt comfortable and content walking through the park with Blaine. He got to know a little more about what Blaine did when he first came to New York and in return, Kurt told him about the things he used to do to keep himself entertained when he was younger.

Before they knew it, they found themselves at a restaurant Kurt had never seen before for their seven o'clock reservation.

"What is this place?" Kurt whispered as he looked around at the fancy décor. Their server began leading them to a table.

"It's called One if By Land, Two if By Sea. The history nerd in me was suddenly intrigued by the name, so I hope you like it. I don't know what they offer or if it's any good, but at least it looks a little promising."

"It's beautiful. That's for sure." He noticed a portrait of Paul Revere along the back wall and the 1700-style chandeliers hanging from the ceiling above the bar—the candles were unlit, but the ambiance in the restaurant didn't suffer. A white tablecloth was draped over each table and a single candle was situated in the center; the server lit the candles when they approached the table.

Blaine pulled Kurt's chair out and smiled politely as the server handed each of them a menu. He poured each of them a glass of red wine and walked away. "Pick whatever you want. You get an appetizer, an entrée, and a dessert, so I hope you're hungry."

"I'm starving." Kurt looked down at his menu, instantly overwhelmed by the titles of the food. The menu was far from simplistic. He didn't have a clue what anything was other than the occasional "lobster" or "oyster" being mentioned. Nevertheless, he looked down at the menu and smiled, trying to hide his confusion. Blaine, however, picked up on it.

"You don't come to places like this very often, do you? I'm sorry. I tend to forget sometimes." He closed his own menu and leaned forward. "These are the kinds of places my dad likes to bring potential clients when they're searching for insurance for a big business or something. Apparently he thinks it will impress them." Blaine rolled his eyes. "I think it's a waste of money when they can go somewhere far more affordable, but it's the company's money. Is there anything that sounds good to you?"

"The appetizers seem more like meals if you ask me." Kurt looked back down at his menu with round eyes.

"If you don't finish everything, you can just take it home. Don't worry about it, okay?"

"The dessert sounds good."

"Oh, I think you should save your dessert for tomorrow. I had something a little different in mind for dessert."

Kurt couldn't tell what Blaine meant until he saw the blush filling Blaine's cheeks, causing his own to redden in response. "I..."

"It's still chocolate if that's what you're wondering," Blaine added with a wink.

"*Blaine*," Kurt groaned.

"Sorry. We can talk about that later. For now, let's look at the menu." Blaine picked his menu up again and read through the appetizers.

"Petite spring salad. That's something I recognize." Kurt made a mental note to go back to remember that item.

"Haricot verts?" Blaine's forehead furrowed in confusion.

"It's French for green beans," Kurt nonchalantly clarified.

"You know, I've never heard you speak French. You told me you did, but that was it." Blaine sounded impressed.

"Have I not spoken in French in the past four months?" Kurt took a sip of his wine to give his hands something to do other than pick at the corners of the menu.

"I don't believe you have."

"Ah. Well, oui, Je parle français."

"You're sexy when you speak another language." Blaine sat his menu down again and folded his hands on the table, turning his full attention to Kurt. "You should say some more."

Kurt mimicked Blaine and sat his own menu down in order to fold his hands. "Que veux-tu me dire?" Blaine didn't say anything; he just continued staring and Kurt laughed. "D'accord. Je t'aime et tu es l'amour de ma vie. Est-ce bonne?"

Blaine was so into Kurt's fluid speech that he hadn't noticed he had stopped speaking until his blue eyes were staring back into Blaine's hazel. "I have no idea what you just said, but it was wonderful."

"Je pense que *tu* es merveilleux."

"Was that a compliment?"

"Oui," Kurt took Blaine's hand. "At first, I said 'What do you want me to say?' Then I said 'I love you and you're the love of my life.'"

"You're mine," Blaine said affectionately.

"And that I think you're wonderful as well." Kurt looked away bashfully.

"Are you going to speak French for me again?"

"Si tu veux."

"Okay, enough French for now. I want to understand you tonight." Kurt tore his hands away from Blaine when their server arrived at the table and picked up his own menu to order. For their appetizer, they each went with a salad, deciding it was the safest thing on the menu.

For the next hour, they enjoyed their meal as well as each other's company. Kurt shared his chicken with Blaine and Blaine pretended not to notice when Kurt snatched a bite of his lobster. During their time inside the restaurant, they seemed to forget that anyone else existed. There weren't other couples sitting at surrounding tables. The servers were practically non-existent. Kurt didn't think about anything in his past that had previously led him to believe he'd never spend Valentine's Day with a man he loved. Blaine's thoughts didn't turn to his past marriage for a single second. He didn't worry about his father finding out about his relationship. The only think that mattered to him was making sure Kurt was happy, and in the moment, it seemed as if they were quite possibly not only the happiest two men in the world, but the luckiest as well.

"Daddy! Daddy! Look what I got today!" Kurt stepped off of the bus and waved a construction paper heart in the air as he ran to the front door. Burt enveloped him in a hug and led him inside the house.

"Why don't you go put your backpack and your coat in your room and then you can come into the kitchen and show me what it is while you eat your snack, okay?"

Kurt nodded with more excitement than Burt could have imagined one kid could have and ran up the stairs. He tripped once when his short leg didn't quite make it up to the next step, but he quickly stood up again and disappeared into his bedroom. Burt made his way into the kitchen to slather a few graham crackers with peanut butter. After Kurt's mom died, Burt made it his mission to maintain a sense of normalcy in his life. He made sure he was there every day when Kurt got home from school and always had snacks ready. They would sit down at the kitchen table with their juice boxes as Kurt enthusiastically told him about his day. Burt wanted to make sure Kurt knew he still had someone in his life that he could count on; someone he could talk to when he was still young as well as someone he could turn to for advice as he got older.

Kurt returned not even two minutes later with the same red, construction paper heart in his hands. Burt noticed a few words scribbled on it in crayon and a thin, white ribbon tied through a hole at the top. "Is this from the party you had today?"

"Yes. Miss Riley told us to choose a partner today. We got to make our partner an extra special card. The card was different. It wasn't like the ones we gave everybody else. I made one for Michael and he made one for me." Kurt held up the card and Burt saw Kurt's name written beside the word "to." There were a few other words that he couldn't quite make out. "Some of the kids in our class made fun of us. They said we were supposed to give our card to a girl. I didn't want to. None of the girls have pretty eyes like Michael."

Burt shifted in his chair. He would be lying if he said it didn't make him a little uncomfortable every time Kurt mentioned another boy in a way he had always hoped he'd talk about another girl. However, Burt didn't want to be that parent. He didn't want to be the parent that couldn't accept his child exactly the way he was. Elizabeth would have wanted him to love Kurt no matter what, and that included any chance that he may have a boyfriend when he got older, rather than a girlfriend. The only thing Burt would do was make sure Kurt never tried to change who he was because someone else though his son was less than perfect.

"Well, buddy, sometimes people say some mean things, but that's just because they don't know that you can be different. This is your chance to show them that you don't all have to be the same. If you want to give a boy your card, you can. He made you a very pretty card, too."

Kurt traced a finger above his name. "Miss Riley told us she was going to eat dinner with a boy tonight and that he made her happy. She said she hoped that one day we would all find someone that we loved too." He played with the ends of the ribbon where they began to fray. "Do you think that someone will love me one day, too?"

Burt smiled at his son. It was times like that when he realized just how young and naïve Kurt was. He wished Kurt could stay like that forever and never have to worry about the difficulties that came with growing up. "One day, you'll find a boy who will love you just as much as I do." Burt hadn't even noticed that he said "a boy" instead of "a girl" or "someone," but it didn't matter. It didn't matter because although Kurt wouldn't come out to him until he was in high school, he already knew. Burt already knew that one day Kurt would find a man who would treat him like a prince. He would find someone who would love him as much as Burt had loved Elizabeth. Deep down, Burt knew that with time, Kurt would find Blaine.

"Blaine, stop," Kurt squealed. "Ouch. Stop. We're going to break something." Kurt began backing through his apartment with Blaine's mouth attached to any free area of skin he could reach. Their clothes were already being shed, leaving a trail from the front door, through the living room, and into the bedroom.

"Why are you wearing clothes?" Blaine grumbled as he began to undo the belt of Kurt's jeans.

"You didn't seem to mind that too much earlier." Kurt moved his hands to unfasten Blaine's pants as well. It was a bit difficult for them to do it at the same time, but they managed. Blaine pressed kisses to Kurt's lips again before biting down on the skin at the base of his neck.

As they walked through the bedroom door, Blaine pushed Kurt's pants down to his ankles and lifted him out of the heap of clothes and into his arms. He carried him to the bed and gently set him down before removing his own pants and crawling in close. "You're still not naked."

"No, that part comes once you decide what exactly you want to do with my dick."

"You're very blunt tonight." Blaine kissed a trail from Kurt's mouth, down his neck, across his chest, and to his stomach, moving to straddle him as he went. "Are you sure you want to do this?"

"Since when do you ask?" Kurt chuckled and pulled Blaine down for another kiss.

"I just want tonight to be perfect for you." Blaine began rubbing his thighs, getting dangerously close to Kurt's hard on.

"It already is, Blaine. Didn't you say something earlier about wanting to share everything with each other? I want to do that, okay? I want to show you how much I want to be yours forever. I want you to feel how much I love you."

"Forever?" Blaine questioned.

"Only if you'll take me for that long."

Blaine kissed him again. "Forever wouldn't be long enough for me to show you how much I love you, Kurt Hummel, but I can start right now if you'll let me."

Kurt simply nodded, the last coherent thought leaving his mind for the rest of the night.

"Tell me again why there are *two* flight attendants and I'm on a larger plane than normal." Blaine looked around at the passengers of the plane, realizing that the majority of them were couples.

Kurt shrugged. "I don't know. I guess they're finally heading home after Valentine's day."

"It's Sunday. Valentine's day was last Tuesday," Blaine pointed out.

"Not everyone can get their secretary to get them out of work so they can spend the *actual* Valentine's Day with their partner." Kurt poured a cup of coffee and handed it off to Blaine.

"I'm just saying. It's going to make it hard to give you a blow job in the bathroom with all of these witnesses."

The small Styrofoam cup Kurt was holding almost slipped out of his hands and a bit of it splashed onto the cart. "*Blaine*, people can hear you," he scolded.

"No one's even listening." He took a sip of his coffee and grabbed a packet of sugar from the tray. "You didn't say no, though. I mean, the flight will be over soon, so if we're going to do anything, we better go now."

"I'm not saying anything. I'm doing my best to be *professional* right now."

Blaine picked up the last few packets of sugar from the tray and stuffed them into his pockets. "Oops. Looks like you're out of sugar. I think you should go get some more from the back."

"You're unbelievable." Kurt turned around and pulled the car along behind him. Blaine stood up and made his way into the aisle. "What are you doing?"

"I'm going to the bathroom. It happens to be back here as well."

"I'm not joining you."

"Contrary to what you believe, I really do need to go to the bathroom. Drinking four cups of coffee just to get you near me has its consequences."

Kurt stared at him, trying to decide if he was being serious or not. Finally, he turned back around and pulled the cart into the back. A few minutes later, he felt a pair of cool, damp hands covering his eyes. He spun around and found himself in Blaine's arms. Before he could say anything, Blaine was kissing him with a little more force than he would have liked.

"Blaine," he pushed him away. "We can't do this here. Someone could walk back here at any minute."

"So let them. I'm tired of hiding this, Kurt. How long are we going to do this? We're in a committed relationship. This isn't a one-night stand between a flight attendant and a passenger. This is *real*."

"I know," Kurt shot back. "I know it's real. That doesn't mean you're allowed back here or I can make out with you in the middle of the flight!" The overhead speakers began telling the passengers to fasten their seatbelts to prepare to land. "You should go back to your seat."

"What if I don't?"

"I have to force you to or call the in-flight security."

"You would really do that?"

"Blaine, please," Kurt said weakly.

"Do you want this to be real? Do you want your co-workers to know about us?"

"Why would you ask something like that? Of *course* I want this to be real. Have I not shown you that enough in the past four months. I just don't want to risk my job until I'm absolutely sure nothing is going to happen." The message came on the speakers again, but Kurt ignored it. He leaned in to kiss Blaine reassuringly. "Does that prove to you how real this is?" Blaine nodded once before Kurt kissed him again. "You really do need to go back out there," he rested their foreheads together.

"I'm sorry about overreacting to everything. I just want everyone to know you're mine."

"And they will when the right time comes."

As Blaine leaned in to kiss Kurt again, the door swung open and the other flight attendant stepped through. She paused when she looked up to see the two of them. "Kurt..."

Kurt quickly moved away from Blaine and pushed him out the door. "Go sit down." Once Blaine left, Kurt closed the door and turned to the flight attendant (he still hadn't gotten her name). "I... are you going to tell anyone about this?"

"Who is he? Some fuck buddy?"

"What? No. He... His name is Blaine. He's my boyfriend."

"And what? You decide an impromptu make-out session is more important than maintaining the safety of your passengers?"

"No! I... we were just talking. You walked in at the wrong moment. I was just telling him to go back out there and sit down."

"No one else is allowed back here, Kurt. Only *employees*," she stressed the last word.

"I know. I told him that! It won't happen again."

"And you consider yourself a professional."

"I *am* a professional! I've had nothing but excellent reviews ever since I started working here. I've always done the very best I can."

"Whatever. If I ever catch you again, I'm not keeping it a secret, do you hear me?" Kurt nodded. "We're landing in five. I'd get back out there if I were you." She turned around and slammed the door shut behind her.

The second the last passenger exited the cabin, Kurt cleaned up the aisles and did everything necessary before leaving. He didn't want to be near the other flight attendant anymore. He didn't want to think about what had happened; the problem was, he *had* to think about what would happen. A part of him didn't trust the lady enough to know she would keep her mouth shut. Kurt knew he would be in serious trouble if anyone found out what had happened, and he didn't want to put Blaine at risk either. Blaine had a steady job, and although he worked for his dad, Kurt was fairly sure he still ran the risk of getting fired if he was anything less than professional.

Kurt ran through the employee door as soon as he could and began making his way to his car. He didn't pay attention to the man following quickly behind him or the words coming from his mouth. Kurt didn't acknowledge Blaine at all; not until Blaine moved in front of him to slow him down.

"Blaine, please." Kurt choked back a few tears.

"Why are you running?" Blaine placed a hand on his arm to prevent him from moving.

"Isn't that what I do best? I run before I can get hurt? Well, guess what. It's too late. We're past that point. I'll get hurt no matter what."

"Kurt."

"No. We can't do this. I can't be a risk to you. I could never live with myself if *I* was the reason you lost your job or got into trouble or whatever."

"Kurt, it doesn't have to be like that. It's *my* fault. I'm the one who snuck back there and kissed you. I shouldn't have done it and it won't happen again."

Kurt moved around Blaine and headed out into the parking lot. He stopped at his car when he realized he was the one who drove Blaine to the airport on Friday and the one who was supposed to take him home today.

"Kurt, you can't just walk away from everything because some stupid flight attendant saw me kiss you. I know things are hard and I know every day we're together I'm putting my job at risk, but I don't care. Every single second I'm with you makes up for every wrong thing that happens in my life. I'm not going to let you walk away from us, from what we have. The love we have is so much stronger than anything that can try to tear us down. I don't care what my dad thinks anymore. He can tell me what I'm doing is wrong. I don't care. All I care about is how happy you make me and I'm not going to give up on the one single thing that has brought joy into my life and made it worth living." He moved towards Kurt and took him in his arms. "You know what I think? I think you're scared."

"Scared of what?" Kurt sniffed.

"You tell me."

Kurt pulled back and Blaine wiped a tear from his eye. "I run. That's what I've always done."

"Well, don't run from me, Kurt. Please. I don't want to know what it's like to be without you. I don't know what I ever did before I met you."

"It scared me. I know I'm the one who brought it up, but it terrified me when I actually thought about it."

"What did?"

"Forever." Kurt buried his face in Blaine's chest. "It's not that I don't want it with you, because I do, Blaine. I want an entire future with you. I just never imagined I could want it that much until you were laying there with me and telling me you wanted the same thing. My mom and dad were supposed to have their forever and then she was ripped away from him. I'm terrified that somehow that will happen to me, too, and I can't lose you like that, Blaine. I can't."

"Hey," Blaine began rubbing Kurt's back to help calm him down, "that's not going to happen. You didn't deserve to lose your mom and she didn't deserve to be separated from you, but you can't let that affect us. I mean it when I say I am here until you tell me to leave. I'm never going to go anywhere. I promise."

Kurt leaned back against the car door. "What's the point, Blaine? No one knows about us. It's like we're walking the opposite way on a conveyer belt. Everything we feel for each other is trying to push us forward, but then there's our jobs pulling us back. We're not going anywhere."

"You said you didn't want anyone to know. Just an hour ago you told me no one *could* know."

"I changed my mind. I just want to have a normal relationship with you. I don't want to have to hide from anyone."

"Okay. Tell anyone you want. I meant it when I said I didn't care what my dad thinks or if my job is at risk. I just want to be with you." Blaine pressed a kiss to Kurt's forehead. "Would you like to go home now?"

Kurt nodded and hopped into the car. He allowed Blaine to drive so he was alone with his thoughts. A future with Blaine. That is what he wanted, but he kept asking himself one question. How soon is *too* soon to start that future?

Blaine opened the front door of his apartment and let Kurt slip inside. Kurt flopped onto the couch and turned on the TV as Blaine shuffled through the mail he'd received Friday and Saturday. Blaine paused to look at Kurt as he turned on an older movie and propped his feet up on the coffee table. He liked how comfortable Kurt felt in his apartment. It was almost as if Blaine's apartment was Kurt's and Kurt's apartment was his. They shared everything. They didn't feel like a guest when they were with each other. They were just *them*.

Blaine turned his focus back to the envelopes in his hand and froze when he saw an envelope he recognized. It was similar to the official company stationary apart from his father's own logo and name in the upper left corner. This envelope wasn't one that went out to the entire company. It was one that his father sent out when he had something important to say; something that he couldn't wait for his secretary to send. This letter had been personally mailed by his dad. Blaine moved to the center of the room and sat down on the end of the couch near Kurt.

"What's that?" Kurt motioned to the envelope Blaine was studying.

"It's a letter... from my dad."

"And that is strange." Kurt stated.

"Yeah. The only time he ever mails something himself is when it's something urgent."

"Are you going to open it?"

"I-I have to." Blaine reached into his bag and pulled a letter opener out. He slowly began tearing the envelope open and pulled out the single leaf of paper. He carefully unfolded it and began reading, not sure he wanted to hear what was being said.

Kurt studied Blaine as he read, trying to find some kind clue as to what was in the letter. He couldn't tell if it was good or bad. Kurt didn't know if Blaine would be happy or mad. In fact, Blaine wasn't showing much emotion at all. "Well?" Kurt pressed.

"My dad is permanently transferring me to Los Angeles," Blaine whispered. "I start next Friday."

Chapter Thirteen

Kurt froze in place, unable to move an inch. After a long silence, he was finally able to mutter a single word. "What?"

"He's transferring me to LA, and I won't be flying back and forth anymore," Blaine said bitterly. He forcefully threw the letter onto the coffee table and ran his hands through his hair. "God, can't he just let me be *happy* for once? What is *so* bad about being in love?"

Kurt moved closer to Blaine and they fell into each other. "He couldn't have known about... not yet. It just happened."

"It's not about that. Apparently one of his good friends took his wife to the same restaurant we were at on Valentine's Day and he felt the need to inform my dad we were there."

"But, I mean, he doesn't know I'm the flight attendant. He doesn't know you and I met while you were technically working."

"That doesn't matter to him. What matters is that I'm *happy*. He'll do anything to make sure I don't leave the way my brother did. He's afraid I will no longer take my work seriously. I have no choice. I have to go. He won't give me another option." Blaine's frustration was growing with every word he muttered.

"Well, what if I go with you?" Kurt offered. He didn't want to think about a life without Blaine; one where he wouldn't be able to fall asleep in his arms and wake up beside him every morning.

"You can't. I can't ask you to do that."

"I already fly back and forth to L.A. I'll just switch some things around."

"My dad will find out. He has ways of finding everything out, and as soon as he finds out you're in L.A. with me, he'll ship me back to New York. There's no winning with him. He'll do anything to keep me away from you."

Kurt wanted to ask Blaine to quit. He wanted to tell him to leave the insurance company and move in with him. However, he knew he wouldn't be able to support both of them on his measly salary. "I don't want to live without you. I... I don't want to be away from you."

Blaine began rubbing Kurt's arm and pulled him as close as possible; it still wasn't close enough. "We'll figure something out, okay? I'm not going to leave you for good. Don't worry about that. I meant it when I said you're it for me. You're my forever."

A few tears finally made their way down Kurt and he quickly brushed them away. "I'm going to miss you so much."

"Back at ya." Blaine tried to lighten the mood.

"What... I mean, there will be other... you might..." Kurt trailed off.

"I might what?"

"What if you meet someone else? It would be easier for you to-"

"Don't," Blaine interrupted. "Don't, Kurt. I won't meet anyone else."

"You don't know th-"

"I do. I love you more than I've ever loved anyone else in this entire world. If it weren't for the fact that we've only been together for four months, I would ask you to marry me right now. I would find a way to stay in New York with you no matter what it cost me."

"Why does it matter how long we've known each other? Isn't the important thing that we love each other and want to spend the rest of our lives together?"

Blaine shifted on the couch. He knew he wanted to marry Kurt. Someday. He didn't want to make the same mistake he'd made when he was eighteen, though. He didn't want to run off and get married just because he could. Kurt deserved a real wedding, and that is what he would give him. "Kurt, you deserve a proper proposal. I want to do things right this time. I want to do something special for you and make it a moment you can remember for the rest of your life. I want you to *want* to tell our ki-family all about it one day. You

deserve more than a cheap wedding within the next few days, and that's what it would take for my dad to agree to let me stay here."

Kurt buried his face in Blaine's chest. "But you want to ask me one day?"

"That's such a silly question."

Kurt shook his head. "No it's not. There was a time when I never imagined I'd feel this way. I was content with my life. I never thought anyone would actually want to be with me."

"Although I don't understand how you remained single for so long, I'm glad you did. I'm glad *I'm* the lucky one who gets to call you mine," Blaine smiled.

They sat in silence for a few minutes and just enjoyed each other's warm presence. "Hey Blaine?"

"Hm?"

"Can we forget about everything tonight? I don't want to think about you moving or when I'll get to see you again. I just want to be with you tonight."

"Of course, Love." Blaine stood up and pulled Kurt into his arms. He placed light kisses to his lips as he carried them into Blaine's bedroom where they laid down. Kurt didn't need a passionate kiss or steamy sex. All he needed in that moment was Blaine.

"You know you don't have to help me pack." Blaine began placing a stack of books into a box. He and Kurt had spent the past four days together. When Blaine wasn't working, they would relax in one of their apartments and watch movies. They visited their favorite frozen yogurt place and Kurt led Blaine around Central park one last time. They made love in every way possible. Kurt noted the way Blaine smelled, the way his skin felt, the sounds he made, and the hushed "I love you's" that came from his lips. Kurt wanted to remember everything about Blaine that he possibly could. He wanted each detail to be engraved into his memory because by that time the next day, memories of Blaine's arms around him were all he would have.

"I know, but I'm not leaving your sight today, so I may as well make myself useful." Kurt folded a few of Blaine's shirts and set them in a box.

"You know, I'm going to have to shower at some point," Blaine pointed out.

"I know," Kurt smirked in reply. "So you said someone is going to drive everything to California for you?"

"Yeah. My dad told me to take whatever was necessary for tomorrow and Saturday. He managed to get me an apartment in one of the apartment buildings we insure and he paid someone to have it furnished by the time I got there."

Kurt closed the box and taped it up. He walked to the bed and sat down on the corner. "That seems like a waste of money if you ask me."

"Not really." Blaine set the last few books inside of the box and taped it shut as well before walking towards Kurt. "I'm holding out hope that he keeps this place while I'm away. When I come back, which will be as soon as I can figure out a plan, it will be as if I never left."

"I can't just forget about it, Blaine." Blaine moved himself so he was standing in-between Kurt's legs and rested his hands on his slumped shoulders. "Things are going to be really hard."

"I know they will. I'm going to miss you just as much as you'll miss me, though." Blaine gave Kurt's shoulder a comforting squeeze.

"Oh, I wasn't talking about how much we will miss each other. I was talking how inactive your sex life will be for the next few months. I mean, how will you survive without me?"

Blaine pushed Kurt backwards onto the bed and crawled on top of him. "Maybe we can try out that phone sex idea." His lips found Kurt's for a brief second.

"Not the same as the real thing." Another kiss.

"But it's worth a try, right?"

Blaine leaned in for another kiss, but Kurt turned his head. "I just want you here with me." Kurt's mood went from playful to somber.

"Well, I'm here now."

"Don't you have more packing to do?"

"I'm practically done with it. Come here." Blaine scooted towards the head of the bed and pulled Kurt up with him. "We can stay up all night cuddling and talking if that would make you happy."

"Can I visit you during the week? I can fly to LA and stay with you for a few days at a time."

"As much as I would love that, you know it's not worth it. When I'm in LA, I work from eight in the morning until I get off, and after that, I have business dinners to attend and even more paperwork to do at home. I *want* you there, but I'd never get to see you."

"Have I mentioned I'm going to miss you?" Kurt sighed.

"Not really." Blaine pulled him in for a kiss, and this time Kurt allowed it. The kiss was full of emotion and passion and a million different feelings that Kurt wasn't able to put into words. He let his hands wander up and down Blaine's side and fisted his shirt when he felt Blaine bite down on his lip and his tongue slowly enter his mouth. There wasn't anything demanding about the kiss, though. It wasn't forced or driven by their hormones. It was saturated with the love they had for each other, and the feeling was so intense that Kurt eventually had to pull away.

"Will you sing for me?" Blaine asked, and Kurt could feel Blaine's warm breath on his forehead and his soft lips pressed a kiss to the spot.

"Right now?" Blaine nodded. "I don't know what I would sing."

"Anything. I just want to hear your voice right now. It's the most beautiful sound I've ever heard."

Kurt shook his head, but couldn't hold back the smile that tugged on his lips. "You obviously haven't heard yourself." The room was silent for a minute as Kurt thought about what he could sing. "Will you sing to me first? I... I like hearing you sing." Kurt didn't have to ask again before Blaine began singing.

If you were here beside me

Instead of in New York

If the curve of you is curved on me

I'd tell you that I love you

"Too cliché," Kurt interrupted with a giggle.

"You do better at expressing your feelings through song, then." Blaine began tickling his side and Kurt squirmed out of his grasp.

"Okay, okay. I'll sing for you." He returned to Blaine's side.

Tell me what you think about maybe settling down

I wanna know how you feel about the words coming out of my mouth

Every time I look at you, I figure it out

What I wanted, what I needed, my reason for breathing

I remember the first time that you and I met

And the look in your eye was something that I could never forget

When you're with me baby, you never need to pretend

Tell me what do you need, I wanna be the reason you breath

"Why did you stop?" Blaine whispered. He was afraid his voice would give out and the tears in his eyes would become more apparent.

"Don't leave, Blaine. Stay here," Kurt begged. "You can quit your job. You can move in with me so you don't have to pay rent and I have enough food to feed us both. You don't have to do this."

"Kurt," Blaine's voice finally cracked.

Kurt was ashamed of asking Blaine just what he told himself he wouldn't, but with Blaine's arms around him on the last night they would be together for months, Kurt couldn't help it. "You practically live at my apartment anyway. We can make room for your stuff, and if you wanted to, you could find a small job somewhere so you wouldn't be so bored. I mean, you don't have to but-"

"Kurt," Blaine said a little more forcefully.

"I'm sorry." Kurt felt mortified. "I'm being selfish and silly."

"It's not silly," Blaine whispered, "but I can't quit my job. I don't want to be cut off from my family and that's what would happen."

"A family I haven't even met," Kurt muttered. "What if I met your dad? What if I told him I wouldn't get in the way of your work? He could see that I'm not bad for you."

Blaine shook his head again. "He won't listen. He's obstinate and he'll do whatever it takes to persuade everyone that he's right."

"There has to be another option. You're choosing your family over me." There it was again. Kurt was embarrassed by what he was saying, but the pain he was feeling blocked all connection between his brain and his mouth.

"I'm not, Kurt," Blaine choked. "I'm not. But you can't ask me to choose. It's not fair to me. I would never ask you to choose between your family and me."

Kurt sighed deeply, chagrined. "I don't want to fight. It's our last night together. Can we just go to sleep?"

"Yeah. Of course." Blaine pulled the covers up around them and hummed into Kurt's ear until he drifted off to sleep.

If Kurt thought the past week and the previous night was rough, nothing could have prepared him for what the next day would be like. He didn't speak to Blaine when he got up. They showered separately, took turns in the bathroom, and ate breakfast in silence. Blaine would occasionally mention something,

and Kurt would brush it off. It wasn't that he intentionally didn't want to talk with Blaine, but he couldn't think about anything but what would happen in a few hours.

Kurt looked at the clock on his nightstand and knew the time he had with Blaine was disappearing, but he still couldn't bring himself to say anything. He threw on his uniform jacket and picked his hat up off of his dresser before heading out into the living room. They packed Blaine's bags into the trunk of Kurt's car and drove to the airport. For once, the silence between them was awkward. Blaine didn't know what to do, so he reached over to grab Kurt's hand, hoping the warmth of his skin on Kurt's would calm the other man down. It didn't. Kurt didn't squeeze back, but he didn't pull away. He simply stared out at the road in front of him, his face expressionless, and continued driving.

Kurt pulled into the airport parking lot, but this time he drove past the employee parking and to the large parking lot towards the back. He wasn't going to be on the plane, but he didn't tell Blaine that. His uniform was just an excuse not to have to explain to Blaine why he had requested the day off.

Kurt pulled into a parking spot and removed his hand from Blaine's. When Blaine opened his mouth to say something, Kurt opened his door and stepped out.

"Kurt," Blaine called after him. He quickly jumped out of the car and ran to the driver's side. "Hey," he grabbed Kurt's wrist when he began to turn away, "Kurt, please."

"What?" Kurt's voice was hoarse, not the way Blaine wanted to remember it.

"You've barely said a word to me all morning. Please talk to me." He let go of Kurt's hand once he was sure he wasn't going to run away.

Kurt looked up into Blaine's eyes and noticed the hurt in them. He'd put that pain there by ignoring Blaine all morning. He'd singlehandedly wrecked the last little bit of time they would have together because he was afraid of what his life would be like without Blaine.

Kurt backed up against the car. He looked towards the ground and lifted his hands to his face, sobbing into them. Blaine didn't waste a second before throwing his arms around Kurt and letting his own tears fall.

"How are you okay with this?" Kurt blubbered.

"I'm not, Kurt. God, I'm going to miss you more than anything, but it's too soon. I can't think about it. I can't let myself imagine how things are going to be or the distance that will be between us. I just want to enjoy the last little bit of time I have with you without feeling like everything is about to change." He pulled back to look at Kurt. "Do you want to know what I'm thinking about?"

Kurt wiped a few tears from his cheek. "What?"

"I'm thinking about the skype calls we're going to make. I'm thinking about the endless amounts of phone calls we'll have. I'm thinking about all of the ways that our relationship can grow from this. If we can get through this, we can get through anything. I'm thinking about how amazing it's going to feel to be able to kiss you when I finally get to see you and how wonderful it will be to see you smiling back at me." Blaine wiped away the tears Kurt didn't get. "I promise I'll come back as soon as I can. It will only be a few months, okay? I need a few months to figure out what to do, but the second I find a way to move back to New York, I'll call you. I'll call you when I wake up in the morning. I'll call you on my lunch break. I'll call you when I get home. I'll call you when I get into bed at night. I'll call you when I see a sweater I know you'd like. I'll call you when I see something that reminds me of you. I'll call you when our favorite movies are on so we can watch them together. I'll call you every second I get the chance."

"Promise?"

"I promise," Blaine nodded. "Are you wishing you would've taken that job offer back when you had the chance? You could fly to Ohio and see your family instead of me."

"Hey, I thought we agreed not to bring that up again," Kurt smiled.

"There's that beautiful smile." Blaine cupped his face and Kurt leaned into the touch. "We should get going."

"Blaine?"

"Yeah?"

"Do I have to go into the airport with you? If I go in, I'm not going to be able to let you go."

"You have to go in, you know. You have work in a few minutes."

"I'm not going. I asked for the day off."

"It's our last flight together."

"I couldn't do it, Blaine. I wouldn't be able to step onto that plane knowing it was the last time I'd see you in that seat. It would be the last time I snuck an extra cookie to you or helped you with your luggage just to be near you. It would hurt too much."

"So, this is goodbye?" Blaine's eyes became glassy again.

Kurt enveloped Blaine in a tight hug. "I love you, Blaine. I love you so much. You're the best thing that's ever happened to me, do you know that?"

"The best thing I've ever done was fall in love with."

"This isn't goodbye. It's see you soon," Kurt smiled, almost hopefully. They shared one last kiss before Blaine grabbed his bags out of Kurt's trunk and made his way into the airport.

Kurt returned home and as he stepped out of his car, something caught his eye. He must have not paid much attention to the passenger's side on the way home, lost in the thought of what Blaine was doing in that very minute. He had imagined where he was, and by the time he got home, he knew Blaine's plane had just taken off. Kurt leaned over to get a closer look at the envelope sitting in the compartment in the door. He picked it up and found Blaine's handwriting scrawled across the front.

To the love of my life

His breath hitched and it felt like his heart stopped. It was as if he had one last piece of Blaine that he could touch, he could feel, he could see.

He shuffled up to his apartment and abandoned his hat, keys, and phone on the table and sat down on the couch. For once, he didn't notice the way it began to sink with age or the dingy look the fabric began to take on. He carelessly tore the envelope open, unfolded the piece of paper he was clutching in his hands,

and began reading, willing the tears to stay away. It was too soon to cry over Blaine's absence. He didn't want to break down yet.

Just as he read his name at the top of the page—which was almost too much for him to handle; he imagined Blaine saying his name while sitting right beside him—his phone buzzed from where he'd placed it on the coffee table. He considered ignoring it, but a small part of him held out hope that maybe it was Blaine. Maybe Blaine didn't go after all. Maybe he was waiting at the airport and needed Kurt to come pick him up.

Every ounce of hope for his happiness in the near future vanished when his dad's picture showed up on the screen. He picked up his phone and held it to his ear. "Hello?"

"Kurt, good, I'm glad I got you. Listen, Finn got tickets for amazing seats to one of the basketball games coming up and I remember Blaine saying something about wanting to go sometime. I thought maybe he and I could join Finn and have a little bonding time. I'd like to get to know him a little better and-"

"Blaine's gone, dad." Kurt stared down at the envelope in his hand. *The love of my life*. Kurt traced the words over with his finger and waited for the silence on the other line to break.

Burt didn't know what to say. As far as he knew, they had broken up, and now he felt horrible for bringing a situation like bonding time with his son's ex-boyfriend up. What he didn't understand was *why* they broke up. Every time he saw them, they looked at each other with nothing less than eyes full of adoration and love. Whenever he talked to Kurt on the phone—which was never often enough—Blaine was never more than a room away.

"His dad sent him to California. Permanently," Kurt finally added. "I just dropped him off at the airport and I don't know when he's coming back."

"Oh, so you didn't break up?" Burt signed in relief.

"Of course not, but that doesn't mean this isn't hard."

"Well, would you like to take this extra ticket and join us on Monday night? It could take your mind off of things for a bit."

"Thanks, but no thanks, Dad. It's not really my thing."

"It was worth a try. You know, you could still come visit us. We miss you. Carole keeps waiting for you to come home because she has a new dinner she wants to try out and she thought you might want to help."

"I'll try to come home soon." Kurt became aware of the letter in his hands once again. "Look, Dad, it was nice talking to you, but I have a few things that I need to get done."

"Are you going to be okay, bud?"

Kurt knew his father meant well, but the last thing he wanted was sympathy from others. He wanted to be the strong, independent person he was before he met Blaine, not the weak, vulnerable person he felt like he'd become. Later on, he knew he wouldn't feel that way. He would know he was neither weak nor vulnerable. He was in love and had to deal with the pain of distance as a result.

"I will be with time." He knew that was a lie, but he hoped it would be enough to convince his dad. "Thanks for offering the ticket. I'll call you soon, okay?" Kurt picked the corners of the envelope and watched as they began to thin between his fingers.

"A-alright," Burt stuttered.

"Bye, Dad."

"Bye, Kurt."

Kurt quickly pressed "end" and threw his phone back down onto the coffee table. He focused his attention back to the letter and began reading.

Dear Kurt,

I don't know when you'll find this, but I just wanted to surprise you. I really don't have anything I plan to say, but sometimes letters are nice. If you happen to find this as soon as you get back in the car, that's fine. If you don't notice it in the door for a few weeks or a few months, that's okay, too. I just wanted to let you know how much I love you.

I know I'm not physically there with you, but I'm not gone. I'll still call you every single day and we'll talk all the time. This isn't goodbye. I'm never saying goodbye because goodbye means leaving, and I don't want you to forget about me, Kurt.

Like the front of this envelope says, you're the love of my life. I'll never want to think about what would have happened if I had never switched my flight that day in October. My life unquestionably changed for the better that day. Sometimes I take a step back and look at everything that has happened these past few months. I try to put meaning behind all of these feelings, but it isn't possible. I've only known you for four months, but in four months, you've managed to become my entire world. Some people may say that's a bad thing, but to me, it's not. It means I have someone to lean on during the tough times. It means I have someone to turn to when I need help. It means I have someone to love me unconditionally no matter what. It means I have someone to love and pour my entire heart to.

Like you said before, it doesn't matter how long we've known each other. It matters how we feel, and in this moment, I feel nothing but love and desire for you. I desire your love. I desire your affection. I desire your laugh and the way your eyes crinkle when you smile. I desire the feel of your fingertips grazing along my back. I desire your lips on mine when we make love. I desire the feel of your warm skin against mine as we lay together. I desire the beautiful sound of your voice when you think I'm asleep and sing a few lines of a song. I desire every single thing about you, Kurt, because nothing in this life will ever compare to how you make me feel.

Sorry if this is too cheesy or sappy or cliché, but it's how I feel. I want to make things easier for you. I want you to know that I'm never going anywhere. We may be separated by an entire country, but you're here in my heart and I only hope I remain in yours. I can't wait until I can see you again. Just give it some time, okay? I love you, Kurt. I love you, I love you, I love you.

Blaine

Kurt began to cry halfway through the letter, but it wasn't a poignant cry. This time, they were cheerful tears. Everything Blaine said sent shivers through his body and straight into his heart. He had never felt more grateful for meeting someone in his life. In a way, he felt like Blaine had saved him. He brought him out of the slump he had convinced himself didn't exist. Blaine had taught him what it was like to love someone and be loved in return. Blaine was right. This wasn't goodbye, but simply the start of their future. It was the start of the long nights they would have without each other when Blaine had to work late. It was the beginning of the years they would spend together; they just had to get past the distance to fully appreciate each other's presence.

Kurt picked up his phone again and dialed Blaine's number. "Hey," he said when it automatically went to voicemail, "I know you're still on the plane and won't get this for a couple of hours, but I wanted to call

you anyway. I found your letter. It wasn't a very sneaky hiding place, I must say, but thank you. Thank you for everything Blaine. Not just this letter, but thank you for *you*. We can do this. I know we can. Your dad will see that even distance won't be able to tear us apart. Anyway, call me as soon as you land, okay? I love you so much."

He pressed end and slipped his phone into his pocket. After reading Blaine's letter, his life didn't seem so void of his boyfriend after all. In fact, he seemed strangely revived.

Kurt walked into the kitchen and placed the letter on the refrigerator with a magnet—somewhere he would see it every morning and every night when he came home from work. Maybe, just maybe, these next few months wouldn't be as bad as he had originally imagined.

Three weeks after his move to L.A., Blaine found himself beyond stressed and excessively worn out. He returned home after a particularly exhausting day at the office (there had been one too many unhappy customers), and he felt like the thing he needed that night was the one thing he couldn't have. He needed Kurt's arms around his, kneading their way into Blaine's shoulders and releasing some of the tension. He needed Kurt's relaxing kisses and just the presence of the other man. Blaine simply needed Kurt.

When he walked up to his apartment, he found a bouquet of yellow forget-me-nots on the ground in front of his door. He picked them up, searching for a card, but didn't find one. He took them inside and sat them on his kitchen counter as he called Kurt.

"*Hello?*" Kurt picked up after the first ring and sounded much more cheerful than usual.

"Hi. I, uh... did you..." Blaine didn't know what to say. He was afraid that the flowers were from someone else, and that would lead to a conversation with Kurt he didn't want to get into. Blaine didn't want the other man to feel threatened when there was nothing to be threatened by.

"*Did you receive something today?*" Kurt prodded.

Blaine sighed, "A lovely display of flowers was waiting for me when I got home. I thought you might have an idea of where they came from?"

"*Hmmm, nope. It's a mystery to me,*" Kurt joked.

"Thank you, Kurt."

"I wanted to do something to show you how much I missed you. They're forget-me-nots because I don't want you to forget me. These flowers are just a reminder of me."

"Do you really think I would forget you? I mean, I call you at least three times a day and Skype you every night."

"Just making sure." Blaine could almost hear Kurt smiling over the phone and it eased a little bit of the pain the distance caused to know that he wasn't completely miserable. *"Do you want to know why they're yellow?"*

"Is it because they remind you of how amazing I look in yellow?"

"Not quite, sweetie. I mean, you do look wonderful in yellow, but 'Blaine' means 'yellow,' and yellow reminds me of sunshine. You are my own personal ray of sun."

"And you claim I'm the sappy one."

"You must be rubbing off on me."

"Well, thank you again for the flowers. They are exactly what I needed today. I needed you, but this is the next best thing."

"What's wrong?" Kurt suddenly switched gears and sympathy started to fill his voice.

"It was just a rather strenuous day at work."

"Would you like to talk about it?"

"Well, you see..." Blaine continued talking to Kurt for over an hour, something that was typical of them. Once he finally got off of the phone, he sat down at on the couch and held the vase of flowers in his hands, gently running his fingers along the petals. *No*, Blaine thought, *long distance wasn't quite so bad after all.*

"Rachel!" Kurt launched himself into his best friend's arms, complete with a bone-crushing hug. He hadn't even given her time to step inside after opening his front door before she was giggling with her arms wrapped equally as tight around him.

She pulled back and studied him. "You're certainly chipper today." She finally made her way inside and set her suitcase near the couch. Upon Kurt's request, Finn had agreed to watch over Elizabeth for a few days not only to give Rachel some relaxing time away from changing diapers and preparing bottles, but also so that Kurt could spend some time with the sister-in-law whom he missed entirely too much.

"Blaine went into work a little later this morning, so he Skyped me when he woke up," Kurt blushed and twirled a bit.

"You are so in love." She pulled him to the couch and they sat down. "So, I have a question. You know this fabulous city much better than I do which is something I never thought I'd hear myself say. Although being a wife to Finn and a mother to Elizabeth is something I never would have pictured myself being, but it's been incredible and-"

"Rachel," Kurt cut her off, laughing. He missed her semi-incoherent rambling, "what is your point?"

"Oh, right. Well, I thought I could whip us up some dinner tonight and you could go to a local bakery to get some bread. I've come to perfect some recipes, and although they're vegan, Finn has actually taken quite well to them. I think you'll appreciate them to, and maybe you can make them for Blaine sometime. I don't know how-" Rachel's words were muffled when Kurt leaned forward and hugged her again. "What was that for?"

"I've just missed you," he smiled. "It's nice to see a familiar face in New York again."

Rachel sensed Kurt's mood start to sadden, so she change the subject. "Come on. You have to take me to all of your favorite places in New York. A lot has changed just in the past few years."

He knew arguing with her was pointless, so instead, he grabbed onto her hand and followed her out the door.

It was Kurt's birthday. He wasn't excited. He was another year older. He was twenty-seven. He didn't have anyone to celebrate with. April 7th was going to go down as the worst day he had spent apart from Blaine, or so he thought when he woke up. Little did he know what was to come throughout the day.

It started at 9:00 AM when he got the first text: *Hey, Birthday Boy. Happy Birthday. I wanted to call you when I woke up, but I was afraid you'd still be sleeping, so I'll save that for tonight.*

Another text at 9:02 AM: *Check on the top shelf of your closet. Behind the box that contains your high school memorabilia. Don't lie to me. I know what's in that box :p*

Kurt rolled off of his bed and shuffled towards his closet, doing as Blaine had said. He stood on the tip of his toes and pushed the box aside, noticing a small, blue box. Confused, he pulled it off the shelf and held it in his hands. On the top, in Blaine's handwriting, were the numbers "1," "2," and "3," each followed by a phrase.

1. I love the way you subconsciously wrap your arms around me in your sleep.

2. I love it when you brush the hair away from my face when I wake up.

3. I love when we're in the bathroom together each morning getting ready for work, even if we're not saying anything.

Kurt carefully removed the paper from around the box, making sure not to tear more than the edges, and pressed it flat. He walked to his nightstand, pulled a pair of scissors out of the drawer, and cut a square around Blaine's writing. When he was done, he went into the kitchen and placed it on the refrigerator next to Blaine's letter, which he hadn't moved since the day Blaine left over a month ago.

Content with what he had done, he opened the box to find a pin. Kurt knew it had to have been custom made as soon as he laid eyes on it. A small plane flew in front of a red heart and upon further examination, Kurt noticed the initials "KH & BA" etched into the metal of the plane. He unfolded the piece of paper that had fallen out of the box and began reading it.

When we were shopping a few months ago, I noticed you looking at every pin we passed, but you never ended up getting one. Well, I hope this is exactly what you've been looking for. It's a piece of us. Where we met and what you'll always have. My heart. Happy Birthday, Kurt. This is only the beginning.

Kurt rushed back into his bedroom and sent Blaine a quick text.

Thank you for the pin. It's beautiful, and I can't wait to wear it. I love you.

When Blaine texted him back not even a minute later, Kurt knew he had to be waiting by his phone, causing Kurt to laugh.

I'm glad you like it. There's more to come. I'll tell you where you're next present is located at 10:00.

There's more?

Of course. You didn't think a pin was all you were getting, did you? I'm going to spoil you rotten today. You can thank Rachel for helping me strategically place the presents around your apartment last week. We obviously picked great hiding spots. Places you don't look very often.

And the things written on the package?

Those are things I can't wait to have again once I'm with you.

And when will that be?

Soon, Kurt. Just hold on a little bit longer.

Kurt set his phone back down, deciding a shower sounded nice. By the time he finished up with his morning routine, he heard his phone beep again. It was 10:00.

Check under your bed. You should find something in the corner by the wall and your nightstand.

Kurt got down on his hands and knees and peeked underneath the bed skirt. Sure enough, he found another box wrapped in bright blue paper

4. I love how you always ask me to bake with you even though I end up burning the cookies or forgetting ingredients.

5. I love how we have plans even when we don't make them.

6. I love how you have a secret playlist on your iPod of songs that remind you of me. (Yes, I've seen it, and it's adorable.)

11:00 AM

7. I love how you have an extra toothbrush at my house.

8. I love it when we have lazy days where we lounge around in our pajamas and eat ice cream out of the tub.

9. I love how you don't judge me when I get extra excited and dance along to certain songs.

12:00 PM

10. I love our walks through the park. Your view on life is inspiring and infectious.

11. I love how we have our own special place: our frozen yogurt shop.

12. I love it when you reach out and grab my hand as we're walking down the street, even if people are staring or giving us disgusting looks.

1:00 PM

13. I love when you wear my clothes.

14. I love when you wrap your arm around my waste and our hands join together inside of my coat pocket.

15. I love how you came along when I least expected it.

2:00 PM

16. I love the way you freak out when I see you shirtless, even though we've had sex multiple times.

17. I love how adorable you look in your uniform.

18. I secretly love it when you mess up my hair.

3:00PM

19. I love when you pick out the clothes I buy, though I'd never admit that to you in person.

20. I love it when you let me give you a massage.

21. I love when we take a shower, not because it sometimes leads to sex, but because that's a time that no one else gets to see you and you're gorgeous, Kurt.

4:00 PM

22. I love how you wanted to keep the Christmas lights up after Christmas because "everyone needs a little more light in their life."

23. I love when you whisper in my ear.

24. I love when you wake up earlier than me and have coffee for me when I wake up.

At 5:03, Kurt didn't get a text from Blaine, but a call.

"Hello?" Kurt answered, realizing Blaine must have just gotten off of work.

"Hello, love. Happy birthday," Blaine sang.

"Thank you," Kurt smiled and blushed a bit.

"So, you have one last present."

"Oh really?" Kurt asked, intrigued.

"Yup. Look under the middle couch cushion."

Kurt began making his way from his bedroom into the living room. "Really, Blaine, how did you come up with so many places you knew I wouldn't look?"

"You forget how much time I've spent there. I know where you look on a daily basis and where you don't. I'll have to remember to thank Rachel again next time I see her."

"That must be why she wanted me out of the house the night she made dinner. She claimed she wanted special, fresh bread from a bakery."

"I know. I suggested that. I knew you really loved the bakery a few blocks away, so you'd be more than willing to go."

"You're evil."

"Is that so? Have you found your last present yet?"

"I'm working on it." Kurt lifted the cushion and found a thin object wrapped in the bright blue paper.

I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you, I LOVE YOU, KURT

Kurt began to giggle. "I love you, too, Blaine."

"You found it!" Blaine said with a little too much excitement. *"Open it!"*

"I swear. You are the most adorable man I have ever met."

"I don't hear any ripping of paper." Kurt imagined Blaine tapping his foot impatiently in his office, his car, his apartment, wherever he was in that moment.

"I'm opening it carefully so I can save what you've written on the front."

"Really?" Kurt heard a car door and assumed Blaine had just sat down to leave.

"Yes," Kurt replaced the cushion on the couch and sat down. "I've kept all of them so far. They mean more to me than you probably realize." He removed the paper from the last present, but froze when he saw what was inside. "Um, B-Blaine."

"Yes?" Blaine said with even more excitement than before.

"This, what is it?" Kurt's breath hitched as he stared down at the slip of paper in his hands.

"It's a copy of a plane ticket, silly. I figured you of all people would know what it was." Blaine turned the key in his ignition and shifted his car in gear.

"But, what's it for?"

"It's for my plane ticket to New York. I'll be there a week from Tuesday. I know you'll be in Ohio until Tuesday morning, but I wanted to be there as soon as you returned so we'd have all week together."

"You... you're coming here?" Kurt couldn't hold back the squeal that escaped his mouth.

"That's the plan. I figured I could ride back to L.A. on Sunday during your flight."

"But, I get to see you again? In person? I get to hold you in my arms and kiss you and hug you and see you?" Kurt squealed into Blaine's ear.

"It's about time, isn't it?" Blaine's voice didn't leave any doubt as to whether or not he was just as happy about his present to Kurt.

"Blaine! This is the best present you could have ever given me. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

"I'm glad you like it. I was going to find you something expensive like another outfit from that line that came out around Christmas, but then I thought about this idea. I told my dad I wanted to visit a few friends in New York for a week, and he agreed. I didn't clarify that it was you I was going to go see, because he assumed I meant Stacy, Jonah, and Luke."

"So, you lied," Kurt accused, not that he was upset with Blaine for doing so. Especially not when it meant Blaine would be with him in less than two weeks.

"No, I conveniently left some information out."

"I miss you. Phone calls and skype dates aren't up to par with having you here."

"Soon, baby. I'll be there before you know it." Kurt heard a few cars honking and the sound of numerous other automobiles in the background. *"I'd love to stay on the phone with you, especially since it's your*

birthday, but traffic is kind of congested right now. Can I call you when I get home? I promise to stay on the phone with you all night."

"Of course you can. Drive safely! I love you."

"I will. I love you, too. Goodbye, darling."

Kurt laughed at the new name; one Blaine hadn't used with him before. "Goodbye, Blaine." He pushed end, but kept his phone clutched in his right hand; the plane ticket was in the other. Kurt looked down at the ticket, wondering if it were possible for him to fall asleep and wake up a week and a half later in Blaine's arms.

It was the Monday before Kurt would be reunited with Blaine, and he was ecstatic. He'd eaten breakfast with Burt and Carole—more like scarfing down a few bites of pancakes while he eagerly talked about what he and Blaine would do during their week together—and neither one of them were able to do anything to calm their son down.

"How about I make dinner tonight?" He suggested, bringing his hands to his face in a pleading gesture. "It will be the last meal before I go back, and who knows when I'll get time off from work again."

"Kurt," Carole placed a hand on his arm, "you don't have to do that. It's your last night here. Why don't you go hang out with Rachel or one of your other friends?"

Kurt frowned. "I want to make the two of you dinner, though. With Blaine gone, it's pointless to make anything for myself. I end up with too many left overs than I can deal with."

"Carole, maybe we should let him." Burt nodded towards Kurt and gave him a reassuring smile.

"Dad, I'm not going to make anything less than healthy for you. Where do you think Carole found all of her low-cholesterol recipes?" He turned his attention back to his step-mom and ignored the grumbling coming from Burt.

"If you honestly want to make dinner that would be fine with us. It'll give me a chance to clean up the house a bit."

"Great!" Kurt's pitch was an entire octave higher. "I'm going to run to the store to pick up a few things I need. Keys are on the table, dad?"

Burt nodded. "You know, I wouldn't mind if you decided to make those peanut butter cookies you used to bake," he called after Kurt.

Kurt stuck his head back in the doorway. "Nice try, dad." His head disappeared again and the front door clicked shut. Burt stared at the empty place at the table where his son had been all morning, trying to remember a time when he'd looked so happy.

Kurt returned from the store an hour later with more bags than he could carry at once. He slipped into the kitchen, announcing his arrival in a sing-song voice, but froze in his tracks the second he stepped onto the wood floor. The atmosphere of the room felt different from when he left. He noticed Rachel sitting at the table with her face buried in her hands. Burt was in the same spot he'd been an hour ago, but his posture was much worse. Carole's smile no longer lit up her face; instead, it was replaced with red, puffy eyes as if she'd been crying.

Kurt quietly, but quickly, moved to the counter to set his brown paper sacks down and waited for someone to speak up. When no one did, he took the initiative himself. "Is everything okay? You guys look like you've seen a ghost."

"Kurt, why don't you sit down." Burt pulled out a chair and waited for Kurt to take his place. When he didn't, he spoke up again. "Kiddo, we have something we need to talk to you about."

"What's wrong? Something's wrong? What happened?" Kurt was starting to panic. He mentally went through the list of possibilities. His dad hadn't mentioned going to the doctor in a while, so he couldn't have found out any kind of bad news regarding his heart. Carole was healthy last time he checked. He recalled all of his relatives, trying to figure out which grandparent would be most likely to pass away.

"Sweetie, just sit and we'll explain everything to you, okay?" Carole patted the seat in between her and Burt and waited for Kurt to take his place. Once he sat down, she reached over to grab his hand.

Kurt knew something was wrong, and he knew that the anticipation was going to make the news even more difficult to accept. "Will you please just tell me what's wrong? Was it grandma or grandpa?"

"It's Blaine," Burt blurted out before he could stop himself. He reached over to grab Kurt's other hand and didn't miss the flash of panic that crossed over Kurt's face. "Rachel came over here to tell us about a plane crash she saw on the news about forty minutes ago. The flight from L.A. to Ohio went down this morning in Colorado. They don't know the cause, but as of right now, they haven't found a single survivor."

Kurt began to frantically shake his head, and he actually laughed. "No, Dad, you have it all wrong. Blaine is okay. He wasn't on that flight. He's taking the one to New York tomorrow morning, remember?" He gave the three people staring back at him a reassuring smile.

"Kurt," Rachel spoke up for the first time and Kurt noticed there wasn't much to her voice, as if she'd cried so much it had disappeared, "Blaine wanted to surprise you. We set up a little plan. I was supposed to ask Carole and Burt to babysit tonight so Finn and I could go out. You would have the house to yourself and he was going to surprise you." She choked back a sob, but somehow managed to continue. "I'm so sorry, Kurt. If I hadn't suggested it, he would still be in L.A. right now. He wouldn't be dead in the middle of Colorado because of a plane crash."

Burt and Carole both looked to Kurt, but Rachel kept her head down. They didn't see any kind of emotion showing across Kurt's face. Not hurt. Not anger. Not sadness. Nothing.

"Kurt, we're-"

"No!" Kurt instantly shouted, breaking through the soft whispers in the room. "No. He's not dead! He's in L.A. I don't care what you say. He wouldn't lie to me."

"Kurt, he didn't *lie* to you. It was going to be a surprise."

"No!" Kurt shouted again. He couldn't listen to anything his family was saying any more. Without another word, he pushed his chair back and ran to his room, slamming the door behind him. He collapsed onto his bed and sobbed into his pillow, willing the nightmare that was his life to end.

Chapter Fourteen

The air around Kurt was too chilly to be that of a typical Tuesday afternoon. He couldn't feel the heat of the sun burning into his skin or the wind blowing his mussed hair across his face. He couldn't feel the touch of his dad's fingers when they wrapped their way around Kurt's limp arm or Carole's loving hand rubbing his back soothingly. He couldn't feel the eyes of Blaine's family and friends on him as he stood in front of the closed casket. No. All he could feel in that moment, all he could feel as they lowered Blaine's empty casket into the ground was pain.

Kurt couldn't even have a proper goodbye. He couldn't walk up to the open casket during visitation and tell Blaine one more time just how much he loved him. There wasn't a body to be found. There was nothing left of the wreck. Maybe that was for the better, though. Maybe, Kurt thought, if he didn't say goodbye, Blaine would never leave. Maybe he would show up at his apartment one night and they could act as if nothing had happened. Maybe he and Blaine could have their forever together.

No. That wasn't possible, because Kurt watched as the casket disappeared beneath the ground. There were a few last words from those around him before they started to slowly disappear; one by one, they would make their way across the newly-green grass towards their cars. But Kurt couldn't leave. Kurt didn't want to leave. Leaving meant saying goodbye and they weren't supposed to say goodbye to each other. They were supposed to say "see you later."

Once the place had cleared—the only people remaining being Burt and Carole—Kurt knelt down in front of what would soon be covered in dirt. He looked into the ground at the casket. The shiny silver trim looked beautiful against the baby blue, but that's not what Kurt wanted to think about. There wasn't anything beautiful about his boyfriend being gone forever.

Kurt reached into his pocket and pulled out the small metal object he'd kept hidden away the entire morning. He uncurled his fingers and looked down at the small heart pin—the one Blaine had given him for his birthday. Without a second thought, he threw it down into the hole, a little more forcefully than he'd planned. He was angry. He was angry with Blaine for getting on a different flight. He was angry with himself for not coming up with a plan to get Blaine to New York quicker. He was angry with the pilot for allowing the plane to go down in the first place. He was angry with his dad for trying to comfort him when there was nothing that could ease the pain. He was mad at the entire world because another person had been ripped from his life.

Kurt curled up on the damp ground, not caring that the rainfall from the previous night would seep through his pants and most likely stain them. He couldn't bring himself to care about much, really. Who did he have to impress? Who did he have to make happy now? Who did he have to look good for?

He tried to let the tears fall, but it seemed as if there weren't any left. His eyes were void of emotion. He was neither frowning nor smiling. There wasn't anything to show his family if or when he would suddenly snap. The only thing Burt and Carole were able to do was slowly lift him into a standing position. They forced him to say goodbye one final time before walking him to the car and finally leaving Blaine behind.

Kurt woke up in a panic, shooting into a sitting position and violently pushing the covers away from his too-warm body. He dabbed the beads of sweat away from his forehead and tried to steady his breathing.

It was just a dream. A terrifying, miserable dream. He was going home today, and the thought of seeing Blaine later was more than enough to make him forget about his nightmares.

Kurt sighed in relief and made his way down the stairs, not bothering to change out of his pajama pants. He would have time to do that later, but for now, he wanted to enjoy his last few minutes with his family.

"I cannot *wait* to see Blaine today," he began as he turned the corner into the kitchen. "I am-" He stopped in his tracks when he saw Burt pouring a cup of coffee and extending it to Kurt. He noticed his dad's mournful expression and the sympathy in his eyes. Kurt reached out and grabbed the coffee cup on instinct, but didn't have any intention of drinking it. It was like he was hit by a brick wall the instant he looked into his dad's eyes. Carole made her way over with the same emotion pasted on her face.

"No," Kurt whispered. It was just a dream. It wasn't real. Blaine wasn't dead.

"Kurt," Burt began, but he was cut off when a deafening scream rang through the kitchen, echoing off of the walls and filling the room with anguish. The clash of Kurt's coffee cup hitting the hardwood floor and shattering all around them was nothing compared to Kurt's cries. His knees had given out and he fell to the ground, not reacting when the shards of ceramic cut their way into the palm of his skin. He couldn't feel the pain making its way through his hand as the blood began to flow out. He didn't feel the steaming coffee seeping through his jeans and burning his skin. He wasn't able to feel anything but numbness where his heart was supposed to be.

He didn't see a figure brushing away a few pieces of the broken coffee mug and kneeling down beside him. He didn't feel Burt's strong arms wrap around him and pull him close to his side. He didn't feel a single thing.

"Hey, kiddo," Burt eased the door to Kurt's room open and noticed his son huddled up at the head of his bed. His son who had always been so strong and so happy, despite all of the bad that had happened to him. The son who had been ecstatic about seeing his boyfriend for the first time in two months just twenty-four hours ago. Burt hated seeing Kurt so torn up over something he couldn't change. Burt understood what Kurt was going through because he had gone through the same thing eighteen years earlier, he just never imagined Kurt would have to experience the same kind of pain at such a young age. He cautiously took a step inside when he heard Kurt sniffle. "Carole and I were going to run to the store to get a few things for dinner. Do you want us to pick anything up for you?"

Kurt shook his head. "Right. Because life goes on," he mumbled.

"What?" Burt closed the door behind him.

"Nothing," Kurt grumbled.

"Kurt, I know that thi-"

"Do you, Dad? Do you know how hard this is for me? I get to sit here and watch you and Carole live your lives as if nothing happened. I get to watch her make dinner like she does every night while you watch whatever sports game happens to be on TV. I get to lay in my bed and cry because I spent *twenty-six years* trying to find Blaine and he was taken away from me because the pilot thought it would be okay to fly in that storm. You don't get how hard this is for me. No one does."

Burt moved closer to the bed. "Kurt, I do I understand. I lost your mom, and it tore me apart, but I had to stay strong for you. Look where it led me? I found Carole, and she's the best thing that's happened to me apart from you and your mom." He sat down on the end of Kurt's bed. "I don't want you to think that things won't get better."

"No. Don't compare Mom to Blaine. You know how hard I've fought for my right to love whoever I want. I know how hard *you've* fought. I found someone who loves me for everything I am. Someone who was

there for me from day one, and he's dead, Dad. Dead. You're in love again. You have Carole. Finn and Rachel have each other. I don't have anyone anymore."

Kurt's tears wouldn't stop falling out of his eyes as he screamed at his dad, and it broke Burt's heart to watch his son in so much pain. He wrapped Kurt in his arms and pulled him close, holding onto him like he had so much after his mom had died.

"Kurt, we're here for you. You know that. We love Blaine, too, buddy. This is hard for us, too." Burt rubbed his back to try to calm him down. As much as he needed to go to the store, he couldn't leave Kurt the way he was. "Shhhh. It'll be okay. It's hard, but it will eventually be okay."

"It's n-never going to be okay, dad. I don't even want to think about going back to New York. I-I can't think about seeing my apartment and the memories we had there. I don't w-want to go to Central Park without him. I'm *t-terrified* of flying now. I don't want to f-fly anymore."

"You don't have to go back yet, okay? You can stay here for as long as you need to. We can find you a new apartment without the memories, but, Kurt, I don't want to see you push those memories out of your life for good. You don't want to forget Blaine."

"I don't want to forget about him," Kurt whispered weakly. "I just want the pain to go away."

"It will never go away, Bud, but it *will* get better with time. You can't get mad at Carole for trying to keep things going the way they are. She just wants there to be one constant thing in your life. We all loved Blaine. We still do. Carole is trying to deal with this in the best way she can."

"I'm sorry." Kurt began to fidget with his hands.

"You don't have to be sorry; you just have to let us help you, okay?" Burt pulled him back and watched his twenty-seven year old son nod his head. "Do you want to come with us?"

Kurt shook his head. "No, I-I think I'm going to take a shower and relax a little bit. I asked Rachel to bring Elizabeth by later, and I don't think she'd want me dirty and tear-streaked."

"It's okay to cry, Kurt."

"I just want him here," he replied through a broken sob.

"I know you do, but he loved you. I've never seen someone look at you the way he did, and all you can do now is think about the memories you had. Don't dwell on the bad that happened. I want to see you smile again." Burt poked him in the side, eliciting a small grin from Kurt. "That's my boy." He moved off of the bed and headed towards the door. "Call us if you think of something you want."

Kurt nodded and watched his dad leave the room. Once he heard the front door close and the car start up, he walked into his bathroom and turned on the water, deciding a bath sounded much better than a shower. After turning the radio on, he shed his clothes and slid into the tub, immediately relaxing in the warmth of the water. The water was a place that allowed him to cry all he wanted and brush it off as nothing. He was able to let his mind wander wherever it wanted. He thought about the times he and Blaine had together, and he vowed to make those memories the prominent ones. Kurt wanted to push the image of the crashed plane out of his mind. He didn't want to think about Blaine's body crushed under the heavy metal. He wanted to remember Blaine as the beautiful boy he'd fallen in love with. The one who made him happier than he'd ever been.

Kurt was lost in his thoughts; so lost, that he didn't even hear the knock on the front door before it opened to let someone inside. It wasn't until there was a quiet knock on the bathroom door that he realized someone was home.

"I'm naked, Dad," Kurt said rather bluntly.

"Well, that's half of the advantage of finding you in the middle of the bath," a familiar voice said.

Kurt froze. He opened his eyes and stared towards the door, unable to process what he was seeing. He didn't want to allow himself to believe who was standing in his bathroom, dressed in Kurt's favorite jeans and one of the cardigan's he'd bought the day after Thanksgiving. Kurt knew it was impossible for Blaine to be standing there in front of him, unscratched, unbroken, whole and alive. He had to be hallucinating or having a dream. He was dreaming. He'd fallen asleep while taking a bath.

Blaine reached over and turned the music down a bit before sitting on the edge of the tub. "Are you going to say anything, or are you just going to stare at me, Love?"

"I..." Kurt squeezed his eyes shut and opened them again, half expecting Blaine to be gone. "You..."

Blaine leaned down and pressed a kiss to Kurt's lips, dipping his hand into the water to wrap his arms around him, not caring about getting wet. All Blaine cared about was that Kurt was finally in his arms again, after two months of Skype chats and scattered phone calls. "Surprise," he said, pulling away.

Kurt launched himself towards Blaine, forcing them to stand up and nearly knocking Blaine down in the process. He began kissing Blaine again, trying to convince himself that Blaine was real; that he was really there. He began unbuttoning Blaine's cardigan before deciding to rip it open in. Kurt would buy him a new one if he really had to. He didn't care about ruining anything, or that he was getting Blaine wet in the process. After removing his shirt, he held onto him, burying his face in Blaine's warm chest and taking in the familiar scent.

"Not that I have anything against this because you're absolutely gorgeous this way, but are you okay?" Blaine laughed, wrapping his arms just as tight around Kurt.

Kurt began to blush, realizing that he was actually still naked. "You... how are you here? Why... you were supposed to be on the plane. I called, but you didn't answer."

"I turned my phone off because I wanted to surprise you. I caught a flight to Ohio this morning, hoping I'd make it before you left for New York."

"But, you... New York. You didn't...."

"Hey." Blaine brushed the tears out of Kurt's eyes. "Why are you crying?"

"I thought you were dead."

"What? W-why?"

Kurt pulled back, studying Blaine for any sign that he was kidding, but found none. "You didn't hear about it?"

"Hear about what?"

Kurt grabbed his towel from the side of the tub and wrapped it around him. He pulled Blaine out of the bathroom, out of the bedroom, finally making his way down the stairs and into the living room. Kurt sat down on the couch, turned on the TV and flipped to the news channel. Blaine watched as the headlines appeared

and a plane was shown among fallen trees. As he took in what he saw, he sat down next to Kurt, unaware of the eyes that were on him until a hand was placed on his knee.

"Rachel said you were supposed to be on that plane," Kurt nearly whispered.

"Kurt." Blaine wrapped his arms around Kurt and leaned back, allowing their legs to tangle together. "I didn't know. I switched flight times at the last minute. I didn't think it would matter if I called her."

"I thought you were dead. I saw the news cast last night and I thought you were on the plane."

"Kurt, if I had known, I would've called you as soon as I found out. I never would've let you go through that." He kissed Kurt's temple and pulled the blanket over the back of the couch across them when Kurt began to shiver. "I'm here now, okay? I'm not going anywhere."

"Can we just lay here for a while? I think crying has kind of worn me out, and I've missed you so much. "

"Of course I'll lie with you."

Kurt's eyes flew open when the front door slammed shut downstairs. It was a dream. Blaine was still dead. When the sudden realization hit, his tears began to uncontrollably fall once again. He was left to deal with his nightmares alone, unlike when he was little and his mom would comfort him each time.

Kurt eventually stepped out of the tub and watched as the water swirled down the drain, on its way to a new place, one far away from the pain filtering through his house.

He pulled on sweats and one of Blaine's T-shirts he'd stolen from his apartment back in January, flipping on the TV as he made his way back to his bed. He knew he shouldn't look at the newscast, but he couldn't help it. The images of the crash were already burned into his mind, so what would a few more views hurt? Maybe seeing the heap of crushed metal would finally force him to accept the fact that Blaine wasn't coming back to him.

Nothing could prepare him for what he saw on the TV, though.

"Sources at the site of the accident have confirmed that the police have found two survivors as of 11:00 this morning. Both survivors have been slipping in and out of consciousness and are being flown to a hospital in Columbus, Ohio, their supposed home state. The identity of the two survivors will remain anonymous until

permission is given by their families. However, we are allowed to inform you of their genders—one male and one female. Back to you, Jordan."

"Thank you, Lynda."

Kurt watched as the camera switched from the too-serious reporter back to the wreck. An aerial view was being shown and the camera panned across the wreck. He noticed a few ambulances near the site, but there wasn't a rush to get anyone in or out of the mangled cabin.

But there were two survivors, one being a male whose home state was Ohio. Kurt didn't know what to think, but before he even knew what he was doing, he ran down the stairs screaming. This time, though, they were screams of excitement. They were screams of hope. They were optimistic screams that Blaine had survived.

"Dad! Dad! They found him!" Kurt ran into the kitchen out of breath and unable to stop himself. He ran directly into his Burt's arms and enveloped him in a bone-crushing hug. "Dad, Someone's alive. It could be Blaine, Dad. Th-they said he was from here. The survivor lived in Ohio at one time. We have to-"

"Kurt," Blaine interrupted and watched the small smile disappear from Kurt's face, "it was a flight to Ohio. Any passenger on that plane could have been from here. I don't want you to get your hopes up, Buddy. You saw the wreck. It... it's bad. Blaine... the chances that he made it out alive are-"

"No. Don't say it. I don't want to hear it!" Kurt pulled away. "Dad, please. They're flying him to the hospital in Ohio. I... I have to know," Kurt wept. "Please."

Burt could barely hear Kurt's voice, but he slowly shook his head. "Okay," he whispered. "Okay. I'll take you."

Kurt didn't say anything. He dragged himself to the front door, his body almost appearing life-less. He didn't say a word to Burt when the car roared to life and began speeding towards Columbus. Kurt didn't make an effort to turn on the radio or put on his seat belt. He stared out the window, and Burt tried to ignore the sobs he heard coming from the passenger's seat.

Nearly an hour and a half later—Burt was able to shed a little bit of time off of the drive, even if it meant breaking the law—they pulled into the hospital parking lot. Kurt didn't waste any time before he was out

of the car and running towards the door, ignoring Burt's attempts to get him to slow down. He did his best to catch up with his son, thanking the winding maze of hallways for slowing Kurt down.

"I don't know where to go," Kurt complained, running his hands through his hair with a frustrated sigh and frantically looking around the hallway at the different signs. "Where would they take someone who just got into a plane crash?"

"Calm down, okay?" Burt took a step towards him and placed a hand on Kurt's unsteady arm. "When did they bring him in?"

"I-I-I don't know. They s-said they found them around eleven, so I would assume they're not in the emergency room anymore. Oh, God, Dad. What if it's not even Blaine. What if we drove all the way here and he's still dead." Kurt moved towards the wall and let his knees give out, sending himself to the ground.

"Kurt, you don't know that, okay?" Burt knelt down next to him, ignoring the glances they were receiving from those who passed.

"I wasted your time and your gas; all because I had some twisted, unrealistic hope that Blaine would be here."

"Hey, you never know until you look. We drove all the way here and I'd do it all over again if it's what you wanted, but you can't let yourself walk away because you're scared of what you'll find."

Kurt sniffed a bit and wiped the tears from his eyes. "I don't think it's him, Dad. I just have this feeling inside of me, screaming at me to go home. It's urging me not to find that room because the disappointment will be much more painful than not knowing at all."

"Will it, though? Do you think you'll be able to sleep tonight not knowing who is in that room?"

"What if it's not Blaine, Dad? What if some other family gets to be happy and celebrate because the person they love is alive and has the rest of their life ahead of them while I'm at home mourning the loss of the man *I* love. How will I live with that thought in my mind? Why did someone else get to live when Blaine died?"

"Kurt, you can't try to put reasoning behind what happens. Think about all of the things you would have missed out on if you gave up on everything once your mom died."

"I've only known Blaine for six months, Dad. It's not supposed to hurt this much." Kurt buried his face in Burt's chest, soaking his jacket with tears. Burt held onto him the same way he did eighteen years earlier, in the same place, with the same outcome. He was furious, yet he didn't know who to blame. He had to watch his son go through the same heartbreak he'd gone through many years ago, and watching it wasn't any easier than the ache he'd felt himself.

After nearly five minutes of silence apart from the rushed nurses, numerous phone calls, and chatty guests, Burt spoke up. "Do you want to go see who the man in that room is, Kurt?" He pulled Kurt away enough to look into his eyes, trying to read the thoughts behind them.

Kurt nodded, "I think I need to."

Burt helped him up but didn't let him stray too far from his reach and walked them to the front desk. Kurt didn't say anything; instead, he chose to stare at the ground, noticing for the first time how dull his usually-shined shoes were.

"Excuse me," Burt got the attention of one of the nurses. "Can you tell me where someone might be taken after they leave the emergency room if they keep losing consciousness?"

"The ICU. Third floor, left wing," she said quickly before disappearing through a doorway.

Well, Burt thought, aren't you helpful.

He looked around the room, trying to find any indication of where the elevators might be located. It didn't take too long before he spotted a sign hanging from the ceiling with an arrow labeled "elevator." Kurt kept his arms crossed, but relaxed a little when Burt held onto his elbow and guided him down the hallway towards the little alcove in which the elevators were located.

They made their way up the elevator—thankfully they were alone—and stopped on the third floor. The two of them stepped out and took a left, making their way through the doors of the ICU. Kurt studied the letters on the door, suddenly aware of the gravity of the situation. Intensive Care Unit. Even if Blaine was alive, he was probably unconscious. He would have tubes puncturing his body, carrying fluids from sacks hanging on poles. There would be the (hopefully) steady sound of a heart monitor and the strong stench of antiseptic that seemed to disperse throughout the hospital. The Blaine lying in the bed wouldn't be the

same one Kurt knew. He wouldn't have perfectly-styled hair, a goofy grin on his face, or sparkly eyes. No, Blaine's eyes would be closed, his lips in a rigid line, his hair matted.

Burt pulled Kurt through the hallway, keeping an eye on every whiteboard outside of the room as they passed. He took a sharp intake of breath when they approached room 329. Kurt didn't seem to notice. His head was still down, his eyes burning into the floor. Burt squeezed his elbow a little tighter and nudged his arm. Kurt finally looked up and Burt didn't miss the pain in his eyes. He didn't miss the tears in the corner of his eyes, fighting their way out or how red his nose had become since their ride from Lima.

Burt also didn't miss the dash of hope that flickered on Kurt's face when he finally read the two words on the white board outside of room 329.

Blaine Anderson.

"It... no." Kurt quickly turned around and faced the wall opposite room 329. He wasn't able to look at the sloppy script written in cheap dry erase marker beside the closed door. He felt his lungs struggling to take in air and his knees started to shake so much Kurt was afraid they would go out again. He made his way to a cold, plastic chair a few feet away and sat down before burying his face in his hands and crying.

Burt wandered over next to him and knelt down, trying to pull Kurt's hands away, but when that failed, he squeezed his shoulder in an attempt to comfort him. "Kurt..."

"It can't be him, Dad. He can't be in there. He's supposed to be in L.A. He's supposed to be perfect, unharmed, not some mangled mess of remains."

"Kurt, he's alive. If that really is Blaine in that room, he survived the plane crash. You should be happy about that. Don't you want to take a look?"

"What if it's not him? What if they have it all wrong?"

"I think you're scared, Kurt. You're scared of what could have happened, and now you don't want to let yourself back into Blaine's life. You-"

"No!" Kurt shouted in the middle of the hallway, obtaining the attention of about a dozen different nurses. "No, you don't get to say that! You don't get to tell me what I'm trying to do because there is *nothing* keeping me out of Blaine's life, okay? I don't care what happens. I'm staying."

"Then you need to walk into that room and prove it. I don't want to push you if you need a few minutes, but I know you, Kurt. You're scared of what you'll see."

"Excuse me," a tall, slender nurse finally approached them. "Do you know the man inside this room?"

Kurt lifted his head up and leaped out of the chair. "Is he alright? How is he? What's wrong? Is he awake? Can I see him?" Kurt's words were a stream of high-pitched, never-ending questions which were unsurprisingly turned down.

"I'm sorry, I can't release that kind of information to anyone who is not family." She looked down at the folder in her hand, most likely Blaine's—or whoever was in the room—stats.

"I-I'm his dad," Burt spoke up and glanced between Kurt and the nurse. "Blaine Anderson? Hazel eyes? Dark curly hair?"

The nurse didn't look convinced, but she nudged the door open and stepped aside, allowing them to make their way into the room.

Kurt closed his eyes as Burt led him through the doorway. He could hear Blaine's—no, not Blaine's; the *man's*—heart beating and the steady breaths from what he assumed was an oxygen tank. He could smell the strong antiseptic and hear his shoes clicking against the slick, tile floor.

The room was rather large, but the bulky hospital bed, various machines, and extra seating created the illusion that it was actually quite small. The bed was only about five feet from the door, and before he knew it, Kurt's left leg brushed up against the cold plastic guard rail, causing him to jump and snap his eyes open.

Kurt's predictions were right. The man lying in the bed had cuts along his face and dried blood had stained one of his eyebrows. There were bruises running up and down his arms. His lips weren't forming a smile, but they were chapped and slit open. His hair was matted and sticking out in all kinds of different directions. The hospital gown was two sizes too big, his leg was in a cast, and three different needles attached to clear tubes punctured his arms—two in his left and one in his right. Kurt watched as one of the tubes carried what he assumed was blood from one of the little bags through the tube and into the man's body.

Before he could stop himself, he leaned against the guard rail and began to cry. He didn't cry because of the wreck. He didn't cry because Blaine was dead. He wasn't crying because of the memories of the two of him that he would be able to keep forever. No, he was crying because there was a pair of hazel eyes slowly beginning to open and look back at him.

Blaine's hazel eyes.

Chapter Fifteen

Burt stepped back to give Kurt a little bit of privacy, but didn't leave the room. He plopped down in one of uncomfortable hospital chairs in the corner of the room and picked up a magazine he found on the small, wooden table—a table that had seen one too many stressed families. The polish had begun to wear away and Burt absentmindedly picked at one of the battered corners.

He looked up a few times to make sure Kurt was okay, but for the most part, he didn't feel the need to be a part of what was going on. He didn't want to feel like an intrusion. Burt was simply there for Kurt when he needed support.

Neither Kurt nor Blaine moved for a solid two minutes as they stared at each other, almost as if they were afraid a blink of the eye would make the other disappear. Kurt braced himself against the edge of the bed and kept reminding himself to take deep, steady breaths.

"Hey," Blaine finally said and for the first time Kurt could hear how weak he was. His voice was rough and uneven, but the smile that tried to form wiped all of Kurt's worries away.

"You're awake," Kurt exhaled. He tried to hold back the tears that were begging to be released.

"I woke up on the ride to the hospital. There's nothing like waking up on a different plane and not knowing where you are," Blaine laughed, trying to lighten the mood.

Kurt looked away from Blaine's face and let his eyes wander across Blaine's body once again. "How are you?"

"Really? You see me again for the first time in two months and that's all you can think to ask? I've been good, but I've missed my boyfriend terribly."

"You know what I mean," Kurt said, broken.

"I'm alive," Blaine pointed out matter-of-factly.

"Blaine—"

"Hey, no. Don't do that." Blaine extended a shaky hand which Kurt gladly took hold of. "I'm alive, I'm going to be okay, and I'll recover. I want to focus on us because I've missed you so much."

"I've missed you, too." Blaine began to shift in the bed, and Kurt immediately reached out to still him. He was afraid the movement would only slow his recovery. "Stop, don't move! What do you need?"

"I *need* you in my bed right now." Kurt let go of Blaine's shoulders and noticed him relax. "I won't hurt myself if I move to the side a little bit."

"But... I mean," Kurt bit his lip and looked at the now-empty space in Blaine's bed, "will they let me... my dad told them you were his son."

"And what did you tell my nurse?"

"I... nothing," Kurt sighed in defeat.

"Good." Blaine pat the spot beside him and held his arms out for Kurt to slide into. "If anyone gives you any trouble, we'll figure out a way to deal with it, okay? As long as you want to be here, I won't let them make you leave."

"I don't want to leave until you do." Kurt breathed in the scent of Blaine, only it wasn't Blaine. It was the stereotypical hospital smell, not the sweet scent he was so attuned to.

"Well, I don't know how long I'll be here, but you have to go back to work at some point."

Kurt shook his head, "No, not yet. I think after what happened they can give me some time off." He turned his head to get a better look at Blaine. "I didn't know if you were the man in this room; I just knew I had to find out. The press isn't releasing any names or details, and I was so scared. I was scared that you weren't going to be in here."

"But I am." Blaine pulled Kurt tighter.

"How were you able to get out when no one else could?"

"Because I have you. I'm not just talking about your expertise on flying, though that did help. I don't remember much about what happened to be honest, but I do remember everything you've always told me

about the safety of the plane. I guess all of those excuses to talk to you on the flights by claiming I was interested in your job were beneficial.

"The girl sitting next to me couldn't have been older than nineteen, and all I could think about in that moment was that she probably hasn't even met her Kurt yet. She hadn't met the person who would make her really feel alive for the first time in her life. The man or woman who would teach her to be fearless was still out there somewhere. I made sure she did everything possible to help prepare herself for what was happening. I don't know how I even managed to stay calm enough to think of everything, but I did. The last thing I remember is telling her not to let go of my hand, and if she did that, I would get her out of there alive.

"That wasn't as important to me, though. The safety procedures, I mean. While they were helpful, they weren't my most prominent thoughts. I was thinking about you. I knew what was happening, and I told myself I had to do whatever it took to survive because I wanted to get back to you. I needed to see you again. I needed to spend my entire life with you and have our forever."

"Our forever?" Kurt smiled, and for the first time all day, it wasn't forced. He rested his head on Blaine's shoulder and felt Blaine's head rest on top of his. "I can't wait for that, you know."

"You still want to marry me? Even after seeing how wonderful life was without another man in the house?"

"That wasn't a life worth living. The only advantage was my clean bathroom and stocked refrigerator," Kurt joked. "I guess I saved a little money on condoms, though, since I didn't have your sex-crazed self in my apartment every night. You're quite demanding, you know."

Kurt and Blaine both jumped when they heard a choked yelp coming from the corner of the room. They had both forgot Burt was sitting in the corner, and based on his red face, wide eyes, and startled expression, he had been able to hear every word they had said.

"Dad! I-I forgot you were here." Kurt made to sit up, but Blaine pulled him back down. "Do you want to say hi to Blaine?"

"No, buddy, I'll..." Burt couldn't bring himself to look the two of them in the eyes when he rose to his feet. "I think I'm going to find a drink. Do either of you need anything?"

"I'm fine, but thank you," Blaine said politely, and Kurt just shook his head.

"I can't believe my dad heard me talking about our sex life," Kurt buried his face in Blaine's side.

"He has to know you have a sex life. How can he not? We're twenty-seven and I have a gorgeous boyfriend."

"That doesn't mean I want my dad knowing any of the details," Kurt groaned.

"I'm sure he'll do his best to forget you said anything." Blaine kissed Kurt's forehead and they fell into a peaceful silence. By the time Burt made it back to the room ten minutes later, both men were wrapped up in each other's arms, soft smiles on their faces, and fast asleep.

"Did you know that according to the 2003 Durex Global Sex Survey, the French are the people who have sex the most often in a year?" Kurt sat down on the edge of Blaine's bed and flipped through Eupedia's webpage.

It had been a couple of days since the plane crash, and during that time they had found out the extent of Blaine's injuries, which actually were fairly minor due to the circumstances. Kurt had refused to leave Blaine's side until Burt, with Blaine backing him up, had insisted Kurt go home to get some rest and take a shower. However, Kurt was with Blaine any minute he could be, and Burt was happy to help out in any way possible.

"Wow. I'm in the wrong country. I should move to Paris and take my super sexy boyfriend with me."

"You wouldn't survive in France, sweetie. English *is* the most common foreign language spoken according to this website, but you're too nice. You would want to talk to *everyone* and not everyone would be able to understand you."

"I could learn. You could teach me!" Blaine's face lit up and Kurt couldn't suppress a little giggle.

"Why don't we just focus on getting you completely healed first?" Kurt's focus drifted back to his phone.

"France has won the 4th most Summer Olympic medals in history. Only the Unites States, USSR, and the UK have won more."

Blaine's eyebrows rose, showing exactly how impressed he was. "You know, when I was little, I wanted to go to the Olympics one day. I never wanted to participate, but I always imagined myself watching gymnastics or swimming or ice skating or whatever. It didn't matter; I just wanted to be there. As I got older, I realized that wouldn't be the easiest thing to do, so I gave up on that dream."

"You can watch from the comfort of your own home with your boyfriend," Kurt suggested. "I love the Olympics."

"Hopefully by the time the Olympics come around again, you'll be my *husband*, or at least my fiancé."

"We'll see. You have to ask me first, and I might not even say yes. It just depends on how nice you are between now and then."

Blaine didn't pick up on Kurt's sarcasm. "Would you really say no?"

"No, silly." Kurt playfully ran his hands through Blaine's hair. "Oh my gosh. There are over *forty thousand* châteaux in France. We *have* to visit some of them when we go."

"Cha-what?"

"Châteaux. You know, castles, manors, palaces, places where those of royal importance usually stay."

"Oh, so your second family."

"I practically *belong* in a royal family, Blaine. I know more about England's history than the royal family themselves! These aren't all for royalty, though, and even the ones that do belong to a royal family most likely don't belong to *the* Royal Family."

"What makes one royal family superior to another?"

"Blaine. It's *the* Royal Family. *Everyone* knows who the king and queen of England are."

"Next fact," Blaine said quickly as if he were trying to change the subject. He poked Kurt in the side and flashed him a teasing smile.

"Oh, you'll like this next one. There are over 300 kinds of cheese made in France."

"Gouda's my favorite."

"Again with the movie references," Kurt shook his head at his ridiculously adorable boyfriend.

"I was alone before you, Kurt," Blaine drew out his words. "I didn't have anyone to entertain me. I had a two-on-one date with my couch and my TV. Ice cream out of the carton for dessert. Pizza delivered to my door for our entrée. Pop tart appetizers. It was grand."

"Okay, enough facts about France for now. You're starting to lose it."

"I'm just happy you're here."

"I'm happy I'm here, too." Kurt leaned in and pressed a chaste kiss to Blaine's lips.

"Um... am I interrupting something?" Burt walked in carrying a Burger King bag and a cup from Dairy Queen. "I brought what you asked for."

"Burt! My hero!" Blaine enthusiastically reached out for the food.

"Dad, why do you encourage this?" Kurt watched as Blaine tore into the bag and pulled out a greasy chicken sandwich and overcooked onion rings. "Blaine, if you eat those, you aren't kissing me for the rest of the day."

Blaine looked torn for a split second before extending the bag to Burt. "I can't take any chances. He can be stubborn sometimes."

"It wouldn't kill you to go a day without kissing me, you know." Kurt looked at the two other men, disapprovingly.

"Hey! Who just initiated our last kiss?" Blaine pointed out. He took a big bite of his chicken sandwich, and Kurt sighed as he wiped away a bit of mayonnaise that was left behind in the corner of Blaine's mouth.

"Anyway, moving on. Does your dad know you're in the hospital yet?"

"I'm not sure. He probably thinks I'm in New York visiting my friends."

"Are you going to call him and let him now?"

Blaine shook his head. "No, not yet. I can't talk to him yet. I.... I don't think I'm going back to work. Not for him, I mean."

Kurt sat up a little straighter. "What do you mean? Where are you going to go?"

Burt sat down in his usual spot in the corner of the room, but his full attention was on Blaine. Blaine looked up at Kurt again and set his sandwich aside. "I did a lot of thinking on the ride here and during the few times you haven't been with me. I love my mom and dad, but I'm tired of living my life the way they want me to. This plane crash was sort of a wake-up call. I don't know how long I'll live or what will happen in my lifetime, but I know that I want to make the most of it. It's too late for me to go back to school-"

"It's never too late, Blaine."

Blaine sat his hand on top of Kurt's and gently rubbed it with his thumb. "Yes, it is. For me, it is. I can't teach kids how to read at an elementary school or about the world's most famous poets in a high school classroom, but I can start my own preschool."

"A preschool?" Kurt thought back to the times he'd seen Blaine around kids. He was incredible with Carla and something about the way Blaine handled Elizabeth made his heart melt.

"Yeah, I love kids, and that's something I can do on my own. I can start small and build up credibility, and maybe I'll be able to open up an actual school one day. I could hire a few people to help run a day care if needed." Blaine noticed Kurt's supportive smile and knew he'd done something right. "So, do you think it's a good idea?" He hesitantly asked.

"I think it's a *wonderful* idea, Blaine. You'll be a fantastic teacher."

"Can I talk to you about something else?"

"You can talk to me about anything." Kurt laid his head on Blaine's shoulder and looped their arms together.

"I think you should quit your job. I'm not telling you to, but I want you to be happy, Kurt. I want you to have every opportunity that *you* want, and you may not think so now, but you might regret giving up on music years from now. I've heard you sing and you have a gift, Kurt. You have a voice unlike anything I've ever heard and it's *beautiful*."

"I can't, Blaine," Kurt whispered. "It's too late. NYADA turned me down, and now my chance is gone. I'm twenty-seven. I can't go back to school."

"Who said you can't? You're *only* twenty-seven, Kurt. If you try hard enough, you could get a degree by the time you're thirty-one. You still have half of your life to share your gift. You could audition for parts on Broadway if you wanted to. It's where you belong. I know that, and deep down, I know that you know that, too."

"We... I mean, what happens if we get married one day?"

"There isn't an 'if' about that. We *will* get married one day unless you change your mind."

"Never."

"Okay, good. Now tell me what you meant. If we get married, what will happen?"

"Do you... I mean... I don't really know how to bring it up because I don't know how you feel about it. I know what I've always wanted, but if you don't want to, that's okay. I understand, but-"

"Kurt," Blaine chuckled. "I'm a little lost."

"D-do you eventually want kids?"

"Oh." That's what this was about.

Kurt noticed Blaine go silent and immediately regretted bringing the subject up. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked. You don't want kids. That's fine, really. We can just get a dog or a fish, or even a plant would work. Kids aren't-"

"Kurt," Blaine kissed him quickly, "do you honestly think I don't want kids? I *love* kids."

"What about with me? Is that something you would want? Would you want to adopt a baby with *me*?"

"I wouldn't adopt a baby with anyone else in the entire world."

"Then I can't do Broadway."

"Why not?"

"I want to be there for my son or daughter the way my mom was always there for me. If I do Broadway, I'll never be home. I'll never get to see either of you."

"Well, how would you feel about doing something like your choir teacher. What was his name again?"

"Mr. Schue," Kurt supplied.

"Right. You told me how much he inspired you, and how much he cared about every member of glee club. You could be that person for another group of kids, each one as special as you are."

"You want me to teach?" Kurt hadn't even considered teaching before, but the more Blaine talked about it, the more he liked the idea. He imagined being a theater teacher, working at the same school as Blaine, sneaking off to have lunch in their classrooms together, and going home with each other at the end of the day. He imagined taking their son or daughter to school and watching them grow up. They would both have the summer off, so they could spend time together as a family. He had to admit, being a teacher was suddenly growing on him.

"You would be an excellent teacher, Kurt."

"So would you. You said it yourself! We could be done with school in four years if we try hard enough."

"That's what I would have wanted at one time, but now I like the idea of being there for kids from the beginning. I want my preschool to be a place where parents aren't afraid of taking their children. I want to be something for those kids who don't get the time and attention they should at home."

"So, you're not just giving up on school because you think it's too late?"

"No, I want to do this. I've never been more excited about my job before."

"So, when are you telling your dad you're quitting?"

Blaine took a deep breath. That wasn't something he was particularly looking forward to. "I'm not sure. I figured I could call him in a couple days and let him know I'm here. He won't be happy that I lied and went to Ohio to see *you* instead of New York to see my other friends, so I'd rather feel a little stronger before setting myself up for a fight."

"I wish he could see how happy you are."

"Me too. Maybe once I leave and he sees that I'm not going anywhere, he'll ease up a little bit."

"I hope so." Kurt leaned over to kiss Blaine's cheek. "You're all scratchy," he grumbled.

"You're not much better yourself."

"That's not true!" He scoffed. "You better eat your ice cream before it melts." Kurt motioned towards the Dairy Queen cup sitting on the table next to them.

"Oh! I forgot about it!" Blaine picked the cup up and took a gigantic bite of ice cream. "Thanks again, Mr. Hummel."

"It's dad," Burt corrected with a grin.

Blaine looked from Burt to Kurt, who just smiled and leaned closer into his side. "I actually have to leave for a few hours. I promised Rachel we would go out to lunch, and she won't let me get out of it." Kurt slid off of the bed. "Is that okay?"

"What? Yeah, of course! Go hang out with your friends and have fun. I'm not going anywhere."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course, baby. I'll be fine. I have my fast food and your dad. I couldn't be better."

"I'll make sure to take good care of him while you're gone," Burt assured him. Kurt looked to the side to see Burt walking to the bed.

"Okay, well, I'll see you tonight." Kurt leaned in to give Blaine a quick kiss. "I love you. Goodbye."

"I love you, too. Goodbye, sweetie."

Kurt began to leave, but paused when he reached the door. He slowly turned around and took one last look at the man he was in love with. Blaine was one of two survivors. *Yes mom*, he thought, *I do believe in miracles.*

"Okay, I found a necklace that is pretty and very much suits my personality. It's a little on the pricy side but still very much in our acceptable price range. Now, I've taken a picture so that you can give Finn a very detailed description of it next time you talk to him." Rachel kept babbling as she walked around the glass counter in the jewelry store, carefully maneuvering Elizabeth's stroller around the tight corners. Kurt had agreed to go with her to the mall (somehow she had managed to convince him to have their little lunch date in the food court) to look at potential anniversary gifts for Finn to purchase. When she finally approached Kurt, she grew silent and followed his gaze through the crystal-clean glass guarding the jewelry inside.

"What are you-"

"There." Kurt murmured, pointing to a piece of jewelry inside and not taking his eyes away.

"I didn't know you guys-"

"We aren't."

"Are you going to-"

"I don't know."

"You should probably talk to-"

"We have."

"Do you want to?"

"Yes," Kurt exhaled.

"Well, it's beautiful."

"It's *perfect*," Kurt emphasized. He continued looking into the counter. There was a variety of jewelry inside—necklaces, bracelets, earrings, pins, *rings*—but one piece stood out to him. It was a shiny silver ring. The edges lined with gold, an infinity symbol was etched onto the surface, and the word "forever" was engraved on the inside. A small diamond was placed in the center of the symbol and glistened as the bright lights reflected off of it.

Before he could spend too much time convincing himself to walk away, Kurt flagged down a member of the staff and asked to see the ring. He ran his fingers along the cool metal and slid it on his finger. He knew he and Blaine had roughly the same sized fingers. It slid on with great ease and Kurt couldn't help the smile that pulled on his lips. He could picture Blaine's hand sliding into his own like it had so many times before, only this time Kurt would feel the ring against his own finger. He would feel the proof that Blaine was his and no one else's. Nothing in his life had ever felt as right as being with Blaine, so he did something that terrified him as much as it thrilled him. He pulled out his debit card and purchased the ring.

"Do you think it's too early to propose to someone if you've only been dating them for six months?" Blaine blurted out. He held a small ring in between his fingers. It was a ring he'd found in L.A. a month earlier, and he knew it was perfect for Kurt. He'd purchased it and carried it around in his pocket ever since. The doctor had returned it to him a few days earlier when a nurse found it in the pants he was wearing the day of the wreck.

Burt sat his newspaper down and leaned forward in his chair (that chair might as well have his name on it by now). "Depends on the couple." He cocked his head to the side and studied Blaine. "Why do you ask?"

"No reason." Blaine took a sip of his water and gently set the cup back down on the table beside him. He tugged at the thin cotton sheet covering his legs and hesitantly looked towards Burt.

"Do you want to marry my son?" Burt stood up and made his way towards the bed in the center of the room.

"I... I love him, sir."

"I told you to call me dad. You know I already think of you as a son." When Blaine didn't say anything, Burt continued. "You didn't answer my question. Do you want to propose to Kurt?"

Blaine looked up with one of the most sincere expressions Burt had ever seen. "We've talked about marriage and our future together multiple times. I know it may seem crazy, but I love Kurt with all my heart, and I know this is the right thing. I know I want to marry him and be his husband. I want to spend the rest of my life with him, but I can't do that unless I know you're okay with it. I want your permission to ask him to marry me before I propose."

"You don't need my permission, Blaine. You guys are old enough to do what you want."

"But I want it," Blaine retorted. "I want to do things the right way this time."

"This time?" Burt prodded.

Blaine looked away, afraid he might screw things up with Burt if he found out the truth, but he knew he had to continue. He took a deep breath and began speaking. "I don't know how much Kurt has told you about me, but I doubt he's told you that I was married before." Blaine took Burt's shocked face as confirmation. "I don't want you to think any different of me because of it. I was eighteen and stupid. I wasn't in love like I thought I was, and I was rebellious. I regret it every single day, especially when I look at Kurt.

"Kurt is only the second boyfriend I've ever had, but he's everything I've ever wanted. He's intelligent. He's compassionate. He's determined. He has a wonderful outlook on life. He cares about everyone. He makes me laugh and smile and feel things I never thought I would ever feel. Kurt is the man who taught me what love is. I hate that the first time I had sex wasn't with him, but the first time I made love *was* with him. I'm sorry if that is awkward for you to think about, but I just want you to know that I'm not proud of what happened in my past, but it's a part of what made me who I am today. It's the reason I know that if Kurt and I were to get married today, we would be getting married for all of the right reasons.

"I've kept myself so guarded these past nine years. I was afraid to let anyone in, and I was afraid to open my heart up for someone to break. I didn't know what love really meant, and I was scared that I would never really know if I was in love with someone. But then... then Kurt showed up. I didn't go out looking for him, and I was at a time in my life when I was about to give up on love. I had a job that paid really well and a few close friends I could count on for anything. I wasn't looking for a boyfriend or even just a casual date. But the second I saw Kurt on that plane, something inside of me told me that I had to get to know that man better. So I did whatever I had to, and taking that flight when I met him was the best decision I've ever made.

"I don't want to think about what would have happened or where I would be right now if I hadn't met him. I certainly wouldn't be here in this hospital talking to a man who has treated me more like a son than my own father. I wouldn't be asking for permission to marry the most wonderful man I've ever met." Blaine took another deep breath.

"I'm sorry if I'm rambling, but I just want you to know how I feel. I need you to understand how much Kurt means to me and I will do everything in my power to make him happier than he's ever been. I'll treat him like a prince. I'll give him everything he deserves and more. I'll love him and take care of him for the rest of my life. So please, *please* don't think my failed marriage will even be a *fraction* of what my marriage with Kurt would be. I love Kurt more than I've ever loved anyone in my life, so this is me asking you for permission to marry your son."

Blaine didn't have time to react before Burt's arms were wrapped around him and the two men were hugging. It was an awkward hug, but something about it warmed Blaine's heart.

"I would be honored to have you marry my son. Of course you can propose to him." Burt sat back down in his chair and picked his newspaper up again. "You better get some rest. Something tells me you have something you need to do as soon as you're better."

Blaine smiled and placed the ring aside. He slid down in the bed and decided to take a nap until Kurt returned later that night.

Kurt opened the ring box and studied it some more. It really was the perfect ring for Blaine, and now he had to find the perfect time to ask the question that would undoubtedly change both of their lives.

Elizabeth started getting fussy, so Kurt unbuckled her from the stroller and lifted her onto his lap. She grabbed at the ring—she was entranced by anything shiny—but he moved it aside before she could place her chubby hand on it. "Not right now, Lizzie. That's for Uncle Blaine."

Rachel arrived at the table with a tray of cafeteria food—a salad for herself, a chicken sandwich for Kurt, and apple sauce and soft carrots for Elizabeth. "Will you put that thing away?" She looked from Kurt to the ring. "You can stress about what romantic gesture you're going to perform when you propose later. Right now you're supposed to have a stress-free day with your sister and the niece you claim to love so much."

"Sorry," he closed the ring box and slipped it into his bag. "I'm just excited. I want to marry him, Rachel. I really do."

"Well, that's good considering you just bought an *engagement* ring." She picked Elizabeth's food off of the table and placed it on the stroller's tray as Kurt strapped Elizabeth back in.

"So," Kurt began. He placed his sandwich on the table in front of him and took a sip of his coke. "Blaine is quitting his job. Well, I guess he will. I don't know how everything will play out because he's a co-owner, but he's not going back to L.A., and he's not flying back and forth either."

Rachel looked up, intrigued. "Really? And what does he plan to do? You know, I don't think you should marry an unstable man, Kurt. Blaine is great, he really is, but you need to—"

"Rachel, he has plans. Even if he didn't, I would still support him. That's what I'm *supposed* to do. I'm supposed to be there for him when he needs me to be."

"You're also supposed to make sure he doesn't make a huge mistake." Rachel began feeding Elizabeth, pausing every so often to take a bite of her salad.

"You think quitting his job is a mistake."

Rachel shrugged. "I don't know why Blaine doesn't like his job, but job stability is crucial. If he has a steady job that pays well, I don't see the point in leaving."

"What if he's unhappy? Isn't his happiness more important than money?" Kurt didn't want Rachel to be right, especially not when Blaine was so confident and determined to finally make something of his life.

"He still needs a decent job, Kurt. You and I both know that your salary can't support both of you for very long." Kurt looked away and drew silent. "What is going on, Kurt? What aren't you telling me?"

"He thinks I should quit my job, too."

"*What?*" Rachel exclaimed. "Kurt, you can't do that!"

"And why not? We both know exactly why I took this job. It's not what I want. It's never been what I want, but I was so unhappy and so scared to admit it to myself. I *convinced* myself that I was happy with my life, but I don't think I am. I don't want to fly to and from L.A. until I'm old and grey." Kurt sat up a little straighter. "Rachel, I sang for him. I've sung for Blaine multiple times. In Ohio over Thanksgiving, I sang for the first time in *years* and it felt incredible. I finally felt like I belonged again. Up on that stage... that's where I'm supposed to be, and I know that now. Blaine helped me see that."

"So you want to perform?"

"I don't know. That's what he suggested. He told me I should audition as many times as I needed to before I got a part on Broadway, but I don't know if I can do that. He wants kids, Rachel. He wants to adopt a baby with *me*. That is something I always thought I would have to do alone, but now that he's here with me, I just want to be there for that child. I want to raise him or her as you're raising Elizabeth. I don't want to be gone all day, every day."

Rachel reached across the table and grabbed his hand. "Kurt, you know I'll support you no matter what, but maybe Blaine is right. Maybe you *do* need this. NYADA was just one school. One school that didn't want you. You have a gift, and I don't think you should throw that away because you want to start a family."

"So you're saying my career is more important than my family?"

"No, what I'm saying is that you and Blaine have the rest of your lives to adopt. Even if you were to get married tomorrow, adopting a baby will take a long time. You have time to do what you want and do what will make you happy. Go after your dreams before you start a family, Kurt." She looked towards Elizabeth and gently ran her hand across her daughter's pale cheek. "I love Elizabeth more than anything in this world, but I had her before I got the chance to make something of myself. I settled down with Finn in Ohio

right after we got out of school, and I didn't make it to New York, at least not for good like you did. Go out and do what I wasn't able to do."

"You didn't give up on your dreams, Rachel. You just took a break."

"I took a break at the wrong time. I was getting audition after audition. Small parts were being offered to me. People in the business finally began to know who I was, but I left. I don't regret settling down with Finn, but sometimes I wish I would have stayed in New York."

"I don't know what to do," Kurt said quietly. He fumbled with his thumbs and abandoned his chicken sandwich. "I want to marry Blaine. That's the only thing I'm sure of."

"Okay, so marry him. Marrying Blaine doesn't mean you have to give up on your dreams or leave New York. It just means you have someone to support you through the rough times and celebrate with when you finally land the part of your dreams."

"He actually suggested I become a theater teacher. It sounded good at the time, but the more I think about it, the more I start to doubt if I'd even be happy doing that. He's going to be a preschool teacher, you know. He's wonderful with kids. You've seen the way he interacts with Elizabeth, and his friend has a daughter who adores him."

"Maybe by the time Elizabeth is ready for preschool Finn and I will be able to make it back to New York."

Kurt laughed. "Maybe. I have a feeling Blaine is going to spoil her so much she'll think she's better than the other kids."

"She will be, though. She has you and him for uncles."

"That's true," Kurt chuckled.

"So do you feel a little better now?"

"I guess. Do you really think we're doing the right thing by quitting our jobs?"

"I think it's risky, and personally I think you're crazy, but if it's what you want, you should do it."

He stood up from the table and bent down to give Rachel a hug. "Thank you, Rach."

"Are you ready to go? I thought we could hit a couple more stores before taking Elizabeth to see her Uncle Blaine. She misses him." Rachel tickled her stomach and Elizabeth giggled uncontrollably.

"Sounds perfect."

A few days later, Blaine braced himself for what he believed would be much more terrifying than the plane crash itself—his father. It wasn't that he didn't get along with his dad, or that his dad was a *horrible* person, but he didn't understand Blaine. That much was clear when he sent him across the entire country for simply taking his boyfriend out for Valentine's Day.

With Kurt by his side, Blaine closed his eyes and took a deep breath before squeezing Kurt's hand and saying, "come in."

The door cracked open a bit and for the first time, Kurt saw the man responsible for raising Blaine. It would only take an instant for one to realize where Blaine got his looks. The curly hair on top of the older man's head wasn't as thick—probably due to age—or dark, but there was definitely a resemblance to the mop on top of Blaine's head. His dad's eyes were the same dark honey color as Blaine's and his eyebrows even showed some resemblance. Everything about the man standing before him was a reminder of the slightly shorter, more fragile man lying next to him in the hospital bed.

"Blaine," the man, Blaine's father, said. He barely made his way into the room, but Kurt didn't miss the way he avoided eye contact.

"Dad." Blaine opened his eyes and squeezed Kurt's hand, trying to get rid of some of his nerves.

"What the hell were you thinking?" Okay, his dad definitely wasn't pleased to be there if his harsh tone and loud voice had anything to say about it. His voice was only laced with more and more vigor as he spoke. "You were *supposed* to go to New York. Do you realize that if you did what you had planned, you would be safe in a New York apartment with *friends* right now instead of in a hospital bed with some *guy*?"

"Don't be such an idiot. I wasn't going to New York for my friends! I was going to see Kurt!" Blaine shouted, and immediately leaned into Kurt's embrace. He hadn't decided how or when he would tell his

dad the real reason he'd taken off from work, but it definitely wasn't going to be in the middle of a fight or so *soon*.

"I sent you away from New York for a reason, Blaine! Now, as soon as you're out of here tomorrow, you will fly back to L.A. and catch up on the work you've missed, do you understand me?"

One glance at Kurt's comforting smile gave Blaine all the courage it took him to stand up to his dad. "I'm not going. I'm staying here, and you can't do anything about it."

"Blaine, you have a job to do, and you *will* do it." His dad made his way further into the room, but still kept his distance.

"Charles!" Blaine had only used his father's first name a few times in his life, but each time, it had the same impact—his dad's eyes widened and his lips were closed tightly. It was enough to allow him to speak without being interrupted. "I'm quitting. I'm tired of being your little errand boy. I'm tired of going to meeting after meeting, doing something I hate, being away from someone I *love* just so that you don't have to hire someone else to do the job. I'm supposed to be your *partner*, dad. I own half of that company, and I'm not going to sit in an office all day anymore. I'm not going to allow you to treat me like one of your minimum-wage employees who will cater to your every need just so that they're guaranteed job stability. That's not how this works, so I'm done. I'm not giving up my half of the company, but I'm not coming to work *for* you either. I'm going to work *with* you."

"Blaine, you're being—"

"I'll have my office cleared out within the next couple of days. You can find someone else to cover that position. I'll be at any of the mandatory legal meetings, but other than that, I'm through. I'm finally going to do something I *want* to do with my life, and you'll have to learn to get by without using me as your personal assistant."

"This is because of him, isn't it?" He gestured towards Kurt, his eyebrows creased with anger. "Blaine, you can't be a part of his family and be with *him*. You know we had a deal. You would—"

"I would put my happiness on hold so that your friends wouldn't frown upon you because your son turned out to be gay? Well, you know what, Dad? Maybe I was okay with that at one point because Elliott screwed

me up so much I didn't *want* anybody, but things aren't that way anymore. I want to be happy, and Kurt makes me happy."

"Blaine, you're being selfish."

"No, Dad. *You* are the one who is being selfish. Your friends would have to learn to accept who I am. I'm you *son*, Dad. *You* should accept who I am."

"Blaine, there is too much at risk. I can't have that drama and scandal-"

Blaine's laugh interrupted his dad, and Kurt was so shocked by Blaine's sudden change of demeanor that he almost laughed himself. "*Scandal?* Dad, this isn't a scandal. It's love, and if you can't see that, then I'm sorry."

"It's me or him, Blaine. Your family or some guy you barely know."

"Him," Blaine said with confidence, not even batting an eye or taking another breath before making his decision. "It will always be him."

At that point, Kurt really did laugh. His laughter was filled with joy, love, and about a thousand other emotions he couldn't put into words. For the first time since Blaine's dad walked into the room, Kurt spoke. "You can leave now. I want to kiss my boyfriend, and I'd hate to subject you to watching such a horrible act of compassion."

Charles left without another word, and Kurt leaned down to kiss Blaine one more time.

A little over a week after Blaine was checked into the hospital, he was set to be released. Kurt made sure to do everything possible at home before the day arrived, but nothing seemed to settle his nerves.

"Hey," Blaine grabbed onto Kurt's arm from his where he was seated in a wheelchair. They were waiting near the front desk while Burt checked him out and the doctor rambled off a few last minute precautions. "You've done everything you could to make sure I'm comfortable here, and going home with you won't be any different. I'll be okay, sweetheart. I love you."

"I love you too. And I know what you said is true, I'm just worried. I mean, what if something happens and it takes too long for us to get back to the hospital."

"You're forgetting that there are hospitals closer to Lima than Columbus. Nothing is going to happen, though. The doctor wouldn't release me if he wasn't positive I would be fine."

Kurt took a deep breath and planted a kiss to Blaine's cheek. "I'm glad you're coming home with me, you know. I've missed being able to cuddle in our bed."

"We've done that here."

"It's not the same. I know no one has said anything, but this is still Ohio. I still feel like they're judging us every time we kiss or you hold my hand or we say 'I love you.' At home, we don't have to worry about that."

"Well," Blaine craned his neck up to reach Kurt's lips, "they'll just have to get over that, won't they?"

Kurt pulled away from the kiss when his dad reached his side. "Well, your dad said he didn't want any part of this situation, so the nurse won't contact him to give an update on your progress." Burt gave Blaine's shoulder a tight squeeze. He knew how hard it had been for Blaine to tell his dad about his future career plans the previous day, and the only thing Burt wanted to do was make sure Blaine knew he'd always be there for him. "Maybe your dad will come around."

"Yeah, maybe." Blaine looked away. He knew his dad well enough to know that he'd made his decision, and nothing Blaine could do would change his mind. He didn't want to be a part of Blaine's life anymore. Blaine would be lying if he said it didn't hurt a little, but one look into Kurt's eyes and it was all worth it. He may not have his mom and dad anymore, but he had Kurt. Kurt's family felt like his own, and he made a pact with himself to focus on their future rather than dwell on the past. At least with his dad out of the way he felt free to finally build a relationship with Cooper again. "At least I'm still a co-owner of the company, even if it's only because he can't legally take it away from me. He just-"

"Let's go home," Kurt interrupted. "You don't need to worry about your dad anymore. I hear Carole made all of your favorite foods for dinner."

Blaine nodded and silently allowed Kurt to wheel him to the car. His thoughts were elsewhere until Kurt slid into the backseat and nuzzled into his side. Then, the only thing on his mind was the man who had stolen his heart.

"Blaine, stop. I'm trying to make you a nice dinner." Kurt strategically maneuvered away from Blaine's nuzzling face as he continued chopping an onion.

"You know I eat anything. You don't have to make a fancy meal for me."

"I'm not making anything fancy, but you need to eat something other than hospital food and takeout. Plus, I owe Carole for everything she's done to help make this house Blaine-safe."

"You make me feel like I'm a baby," Blaine pouted.

"Oh, sweetie, you act like it sometimes." Kurt yelped and jumped to the side when he felt Blaine's arm snaking around his waist. "Blaine, go sit at the table. Now."

"What if I don't?"

"The floor is lava. You'll burn and die," Kurt replied flatly.

Blaine's mouth fell open in disbelief. "Kurt, I'm twenty-seven, not three. I may be drugged up on pain killers, but I'm not *that* gullible."

Kurt set the knife down and slid the onions in a pan to sauté. "Please do as I say. I don't want you go get hurt. You *just* got out of the hospital *four* hours ago, okay? Now, if you go along with the lava theory and do as I say, I promise we can have fun later."

"How much fun?" Blaine raised an eyebrow and Kurt finally let his body fall into the shorter man's.

"I love you, do you know that?"

Blaine shrugged. "It's been mentioned a time or two."

Kurt kissed him quickly and turned out of his arms. "Go sit."

A few minutes passed without any trouble from Blaine. Kurt managed to cut up the rest of the vegetables and began marinating the chicken. However, the dessert had him too preoccupied to hear the gears turning inside of Blaine's head or notice the wooden dining chairs sliding across the hard wood floor; at least not until Kurt noticed Blaine moving out of the corner of his eye and turned to see him standing on one of the chairs.

"Blaine!" he scolded. "What are you doing?"

"You said the floor was lava. I found a loop hole." Blaine slid a chair around and climbed from one to the other, making his way closer to Kurt.

"You're going to hurt yourself! Are you not aware of the cast on your leg?"

"It doesn't hurt," Blaine grinned.

"Of course it doesn't right *now*. You've been resting and taking care of it. Your medicine isn't going to help if you make things worse. Get down."

"But the lava..." Blaine trailed off and fearfully looked around the kitchen floor.

"Blaine Anderson, listen to me." Kurt reached out for his arm and gently eased Blaine onto the floor.

"I just wanted a kiss," Blaine mumbled as he made his way towards the living room. Kurt didn't miss the small smile playing on his lips. Maybe a few kisses before dinner wouldn't be such a bad idea. With that thought, he stuck the chicken in the oven and joined Blaine in the living room.

Although Blaine was getting stronger and healthier with every passing minute, his stamina still hadn't caught up to what it was before the accident which is why Kurt and Blaine found themselves cuddling beneath the covers in Kurt's bed just a few hours after dinner. Kurt had his iPod in his hands as Blaine scrolled through the songs, making a playlist of what he considered the melodies of their life.

"Oh, that's a good one!" Blaine angled the phone towards him a little bit more causing Kurt to roll his eyes and bury his face in Blaine's neck.

"These are all *love* songs, Blaine."

"We're in love. They're fitting. At least I'm not picking any *Adele* songs. I don't foresee a breakup in our future."

"I've always believed that anyone could write a decent song about love or lack thereof. Love is a strong emotion. It has the power to take over us and control our every thought. Extracting that emotion and pouring it into music, scrawling lyrics onto paper and notes onto a staff, *that* comes easy when love is the motivation. Love is like a terminal illness. Once it becomes a part of your life, it's nearly impossible to get rid of, and it just grows and grows and grows until it eventually *owns* you."

"You're comparing love to a terminal illness? Is it really that bad?"

"Maybe that's not the best analogy, but it works. The point is that finding the place inside of you to pull emotions from in order to write a love song comes easy, at least it always has for me. Do you know what I'd like to see? I'd like to see someone write a song about the structure of a tree."

"There was a tree, a pretty tree, the prettiest tree, that you ever did see," Blaine sang

"Shut up." Kurt playfully punched Blaine.

"The tree in a hole, and the hole in the ground, and the green grass grows all around, all around, and the green grass grows all around."

"Blaine! You know what I mean. Apart from silly kids' songs about trees and bear hunts and stars, how often do you hear a song about something that is in no way related to love? What kind of emotion does it require to write a hit song about a car wash?"

"Are we talking Rose Royce or Christina Aguilera here?" Blaine inquired.

"Rose Royce of course."

"Ah. Of course," Blaine mumbled as if it was an answer he was supposed to know.

"You think this entire conversation is pointless, don't you?"

"Of course not. I mean, it's a little silly since the entire motivation behind what you're saying is because I chose a love song to put into a playlist describing our lives as a *couple*. I mean, correct me if I'm wrong, but I love you and you love me."

"No correcting necessary."

"Good." Blaine tilted his head and moved in to kiss Kurt, allowing his arm to snake its way around the other man's waist.

"Love songs aren't always bad," Kurt decided.

"No?" Blaine propped himself up, but immediately fell back onto the bed. "Fuck."

Kurt pulled away and examined the expression on Blaine's face. "What's wrong? What happened?"

"Nothing. M-my side just hurts. It's fine; I just can't twist that far."

"Are you sure you're okay?" Kurt gently placed his hand near Blaine's waist, careful to avoid the purple and yellow bruises he could see on Blaine's side.

"I'm fine. Just frustrated." Blaine turned away and started staring at the ceiling. "Why did I insist on surprising you in Ohio? If I would have just stuck with our plans, we would have been able to spend time in New York together. You wouldn't have been at the hospital with me for a week straight. You wouldn't have to take care of a cripple and I would be able to kiss you without wincing."

"Hey," Kurt placed a hand under Blaine's chin and turned his head to the side, "don't say that. There is nowhere else in the entire world that I would rather be."

"I was terrified, Kurt." A tear trailed down Blaine's face and Kurt felt it hit his bare shoulder. "I know I've acted like it wasn't scary, but it *was*. All I could think about was you. As soon as I realized what was happening, I was scared I would never see you again. I don't want to lose you, Kurt. Never."

"You aren't going to, sweetie." Kurt brushed away Blaine's tears before wiping his own. "I'm never going anywhere and neither are you." He intertwined their fingers and rested them between their chests near their hearts. "We're in this forever, right?"

Blaine nodded and a small smile appeared on his face. "Forever."

"This accident and this recovery, it will take a little bit of time to move on from, but we'll get there. No matter how fast or slow the process, I'm never leaving your side. We'll get through it together. All I care about is that you are alive and in my arms."

This time it was Blaine's turn to nuzzle into Kurt's chest. He hummed a few lines of the song playing from Kurt's iPod before falling asleep.

Epilogue

June (two months later)

Somewhere in between Blaine being released from the hospital, the joy surrounding him in Ohio, and the lack of desire to leave Kurt's family so soon, Blaine was able to convince Kurt—Burt and Carole were more than happy to back him up—to stay with his parents in Lima for the summer. No, Lima wasn't New York. They couldn't take daily trips to Central Park or spontaneous walks to get frozen yogurt, but Lima was where their family was. It didn't take much convincing once Kurt was reminded of just how much more time he would be able to spend around his quickly-growing niece. The only thing that was affected was their now nearly-nonexistent sex life.

Neither of them had any more obligations—Kurt had officially turned his uniform back into the airport shortly after he and Blaine made their way home from the hospital, and Blaine, as promised, had his office completely cleared out by the following Monday—which allowed them to be completely free for the summer. Blaine had enough money saved from his years working for the company that he didn't need to find a summer job to help them get by. He was able to provide for Kurt as well. For all he cared, Kurt could sit at home every day eating his fancy organic sandwiches and skip out on going back to work at all, but he knew Kurt wasn't one who would settle for that. Kurt deserved to be on Broadway, and Broadway is where he would be.

Being a co-owner of a rather popular insurance company resulted in the constant flow of money rolling into Blaine's bank account. They had officially started planning the trip to France that they had agreed on months earlier.

"Maybe we should wait to go to France for our honeymoon. Instead, we could travel across the country and finally start crossing frozen yogurt shops off of our places-to-eat-that-will-surely-make-us-gain-weight-but-that's-okay-because-we-love-each-other-just-the-way-we-are list," Kurt suggested one day as they sat on his bed and looked through various travel book such as the *Eyewitness Travel Guide: France*, *Graham Watson's Tour de France Travel Guide*, and *In Love in France: A Traveler's Guide to the Most Romantic Destinations in the Land of Amour*

"No," Blaine shook his head and tossed the book he'd just finished looking through to Kurt.

"Why not?"

"Because," rather than picking up another book, Blaine crawled across the bed towards Kurt and pushed him down into the array of carefully placed decorative pillows, "on our honeymoon, we'll be too busy having sex to enjoy the city." Blaine moved to bite at Kurt's neck as he gracefully crawled on top him.

"Blaine, we can't do this here."

"I beg to differ. Your parents went to dinner with Finn and Rachel. They won't be home for a few hours." Blaine shoved the books off of the side of the bed without a care where they landed and leaned in for another kiss.

July

"Are you sure you have everything?" Kurt peeked inside of the small bag Blaine was carrying and mentally crossed off his list. "You have your money, right?"

"Kurt," Burt stepped forward, "he doesn't need money. This entire day is on me."

"Yeah, I mean, it's cool that you're coming along, dude. It's like a guy's day at the field." Finn shoved a few chips into his mouth and Blaine chuckled. He wasn't sure he'd ever seen Finn go more than thirty minutes without eating something.

"Oh!" Kurt twirled around to face Blaine again. "What about sunscreen? You need that. I'll just run upstairs and-"

"Stop, love." Blaine reached his hand out to Kurt's elbow. "I don't burn. You can stop worrying about me, okay? I promise I have everything you told me to take."

"Okay. Well, have fun. I'll see you tonight." Kurt gave Blaine a quick kiss goodbye before ushering them out the front door and into the summer heat. "I love you!" he called out.

"I love you, too!" the three men yelled back in unison, causing Kurt to giggle a bit. Having three men in his life who he knew he could count on for anything made him feel like the luckiest man in the world.

"These seats are awesome!" Finn exclaimed.

"Yeah, you can practically see the players' freckles. Plus, number forty-seven has a nice ass," Blaine smirked and stuck a nacho into his mouth.

Burt snorted beside him as Finn's face flushed. "I... uh, yeah. Um, wanna pass me the drinks?"

Blaine decided not to embarrass Finn any further and did as asked.

"So do you know when you're going to do it yet?" Burt randomly asked.

It didn't take long for Blaine to catch on to what he was asking. Finn on the other hand, was completely clueless. "Do what?"

"I want the moment to be perfect. I've had the ring with me since the doctor gave it back, but the timing hasn't seemed right."

"You, um, haven't changed your mind, have you?" Burt asked with a mix of caution and curiosity.

"What? No way. If anything, I want to marry him more than I ever have. I just want it to be special. Something he'll remember and want to tell our kids someday."

"Wait, are you proposing, too?" Finn asked, still out of the loop.

"Wait, too?" Burt turned towards his son.

"Oh, um... nothing. Never mind." Finn turned away and focused his attention to where the players were beginning to practice.

"Finn," Burt drew out his name.

"Rachel would like, banish me to a tent in the back yard without food or something, dude, and Kurt would probably skin me alive."

"What is so bad that your own brother would kill you?" Blaine laughed to himself.

"You're dating him. You should know how he gets if something doesn't go as planned." Blaine shrugged in agreement.

"Finn, just tell us. Blaine wants to propose to Kurt, so if something is going on, I think he deserves to know."

"So he *is* proposing," Finn attempted to change the subject but once again failed.

"Finn, please just tell me," Blaine began to beg, and Finn suddenly understood Kurt's description of the puppy dog eyes.

"I don't want to ruin anything!" But Finn took one look at Bert's stern expression and continued. "Fine. Kurt didn't go shopping with Mom and Rachel today. The three of them are setting up a nice dinner for him and Blaine. Mom suggested that you take her to that fancy restaurant again, the one Blaine gave you gift certificates for, because Kurt wanted the house to himself tonight." Finn turned his attention to Blaine. "He... He was thinking about proposing to you tonight."

Blaine's eyes went wide and his mouth suddenly became dry. Kurt had never mentioned proposing before, only being proposed to. Although Blaine had thought of a million unoriginal, silly yet romantic ways to propose, he suddenly found himself looking forward to seeing all of the clichés Kurt was sure to put into his own proposal. The ring he'd been carrying around for weeks no longer seem important. Being proposed to was suddenly something Blaine wanted more than anything.

"Are you okay over there?" Finn questioned with a hint of worry.

Blaine shot out of his seat. "I need to go. I need to go see Kurt."

Burt grabbed hold of his arm and pulled Blaine back into the seat. "Whoa there, Bud. The game hasn't even started. Just wait until it's over and then we'll take you home to see him, okay?"

Blaine nodded hesitantly. "How did you not know about this? Kurt tells you everything."

"They were afraid he would let it slip. Kurt knows how close the two of you have become since your dad left the picture."

"I guess they didn't think about keeping you out of the loop as well," Blaine snorted. He turned his attention to the game that was beginning to start, but no matter what he did, he couldn't focus on anything but the thought of Kurt.

Blaine was more than anxious to get home once the game was over, and he barely gave Finn and Burt time to see the final score before rushing them to the car. Traffic would only slow them down, of course, so being one of the first to leave would be the best solution. Finn rolled his eyes at Burt, who just laughed and followed closely behind Blaine. Burt had to admit that he like Blaine's enthusiasm when it came to his son. It was all the more reason to believe the two would be linked for life, and that time didn't matter when it came to two people who were as in love as Kurt and Blaine.

Blaine couldn't keep still during the ride home. His leg was constantly moving up and down—at least until Burt placed a gentle hand on his knee to get him to calm down—his fingers were drumming along the window, and his eyes darted every which way possible.

After what seemed like hours to Blaine—really just a thirty-five minute car ride—Burt finally pulled the car into the driveway. Blaine didn't give Burt or Finn a chance to say anything before he darted to the door and swung it open (he had passed the point of knocking a few weeks into their summer vacation).

"Kurt?" he called out, searching in every room and peeking his head around every corner? "Kurt, are you in here?"

"Hey! Hey, I'm right here." Kurt rounded the corner from the kitchen, drying his hands with a towel and stepped in front of Blaine. He gave him a quick kiss before pulling away. "You guys are home early. How was the game?"

"Hi." Blaine captured Kurt's lips again. "I love you." Another kiss. "I missed you."

Kurt giggled. "Did something happen at the game? You didn't get put on the kiss cam with Finn did you?"

"Ha ha. Very funny. I'd rather kiss you."

"Well, no one's stopping you," Kurt smirked and allowed Blaine to pull him close and reattach their lips.

"Something smells good," Blaine mumbled.

"That's dinner. I hope you didn't fill up on concession stand food." Kurt turned away and began making his way into the kitchen with Blaine following close behind.

"I didn't eat much of anything, actually. I was too anxious."

Kurt raised an eyebrow. "Anxious about what?"

"Just... the game," Blaine fibbed.

"That's silly. You knew they were going to win."

"I know, but that doesn't make it any less stressful."

Kurt strolled over with a spoonful of something Blaine didn't recognize. "Open."

Blaine took spoon into his mouth and internally melted at the taste. "Oh my gosh, Kurt. That is delicious."

"Yeah?" Kurt grinned, happy to have Blaine's approval. "It's a recipe I've been meaning to try for awhile, and I decided tonight would be the perfect time. I wanted to have everything done and set up by the time you got home, but Rachel had to leave because Elizabeth was getting fussy, and Carole went with her to get ready for tonight."

"It's okay, sweetheart. I'll be happy to help. What can I do?"

"You can take the plates and silverware outside and set them on the table if you'd like." Blaine watched Kurt move around the kitchen for a few minutes, in awe of the flawless way he carried himself from one place to the next, before picking the plates up. Just before he made it to the back door, Kurt caught up to him with a tray of the pasta he'd been making and two wine glasses. "Okay, we're ready now."

Blaine leaned over to kiss his cheek before nudging the door open. Once he stepped outside and looked up, he nearly dropped everything in his hands. He knew Carole had recently renovated their backyard, but he'd never seen it lit up at night. There were candles lining the short stone path leading to a small patio and quiet music filled the yard. The large table was removed from the middle of the patio and replaced by a smaller table and two chairs, perfect for a dinner for two. The beauty of everything surrounding him—the freshly-cut grass, the vibrant green plants, and the romantic ambiance—only helped to make him more nervous for what he believed was to come later on.

Blaine didn't realize he'd zoned out until a warm body moved close to his side. "Do you like it?"

"Kurt, this... this is too much."

"Come on. Let's go sit before our food gets cold."

They made their way to the table where a bottle of wine sat chilling in an ice bath and Kurt lit the candle in the middle. Blaine didn't have the chance to pull his chair out before Kurt was there doing it for him.

"Why, thank you, sir," Blaine beamed.

"My pleasure." Kurt distributed some of the pasta on each plate and poured two glasses of wine before taking his own seat. "So," he began, leaning forward, "I have some important news to tell you."

"Really?" Blaine was intrigued. "Do tell."

"Well, you know how I sent an audition tape in to that new musical opening in the fall?"

"The one I helped you record last month?"

"Yes, that's the one. Well, I gave up on the part because I hadn't heard anything back from them, but they called me earlier today." Kurt bit his lip to hold back a smile and Blaine leaned forward. "They said that they loved how unique my voice was and as long as I can come audition in person, the part is mine!"

"Kurt, that's outstanding! I knew you could do it!" Blaine shot out of his seat to give Kurt a bone-crushing hug before turning back to his food.

"It's just a small part, but it's a start! I'll have one solo, and I'll be doing what I should have done years ago!"

"I'm beyond proud of you. I hope you know that." Blaine reached across the table to take Kurt's hand. It was a little difficult to cut their pasta like that, but neither one of them wanted to let go.

"I couldn't have done it without you. You never gave up on me."

"I never will."

They finished the rest of their meal and moved on to the dessert Kurt had stashed in the house (raspberry lemon cheesecake). Once finished, Kurt stood and pushed in his chair before extending his hand to Blaine.

"May I have this dance?"

"I'd be honored." Blaine stood and wrapped his arms around Kurt's waist, burying his face in Kurt's collar.

"Is it okay if I become sappy on you?"

"A little sap can be good."

"I just want to thank you for everything you've given me these past few months."

Blaine pulled back just enough to look at Kurt. "What do you mean?"

"You came into my life when I least expected it. I wasn't looking for a boyfriend. Someone to fall in love with. Someone to be goofy with. Someone who would make me feel like a teenager again. I'd convinced myself I was content. I had a steady job, and I kept in touch with my family. I was in *New York*, somewhere I'd been dreaming about for years. But then you came along, and you changed everything.

"You bumped into me that day, and it's like nothing else mattered anymore. You became my entire world, and as scary as that seems, I love it. You made me feel special and wanted. You were the one who taught me how love could feel, and what it's like to be able to see a future that includes more than just me. You were everything I never thought I wanted. You're intelligent and compassionate and romantic."

"I think you're the romantic one," Blaine interrupted and looked all around the backyard. "I mean, look at this. I could never compete with what you've done." The music was still playing softly in the background; it had changed to a new song, something Blaine didn't recognize, but it was still more romantic than anything he could have chosen.

"But you *did*, Blaine. You made my first Valentine's Day I shared with someone else something special. You made Valentine's Day what it is supposed to be. You showed me how much you loved me. You cared for me. You did everything possible to make sure I had a wonderful time, when all it really would have taken is snuggling up on the couch with you while we watched *Bewitched* reruns and ate takeout.

"Did you know that I still get butterflies every time I see you? I still feel shivers running through my entire body when you kiss me. I still uncontrollably smile when your name pops up on my phone. I feel like a love-sick teenager, but I don't care. Maybe that's how I know this is so right. You're everything to me.

"You are the banana to my split." Blaine's laugh cut Kurt off and they both took a few seconds to smile at one another. "You laugh now, but just wait. It's going to get a lot cheesier." Kurt wound his arm tighter around Blaine. "You are the stripes to my zebra. You're the sparkle in my eye and the light of my life. You're the stars in my night sky and the milk to my cookies, You're the harmony to my melody. You are the fire to my fly and the prince to my charming. Blaine, you are the beat of my heart," Kurt let out a shaky breath as he lowered himself on one knee in front of Blaine, "and the love of my life. You're my best friend, my lover, my soul mate. You're someone I never want to live without. I want to wake up next to you every single day for the rest of my life. I want that happily ever after with you, and I know it's possible. I want our forever, so, Blaine, will you make me the happiest man alive and become my husband? Will you marry me?"

Blaine nodded and barely got out a "yes" before tears started falling from his eyes, almost making his vision too blurry to see Kurt's wet cheeks, too. Blaine pulled him up for a kiss and felt Kurt sliding a ring on his finger. There were many ways he had imagined one could propose. There could be hidden rings or romantic restaurants; grand gestures or exotic locations. But what he had here with Kurt was far beyond any dream he could ever have for his own proposal. It didn't matter that they were at home; they didn't have a well-known chef cooking their meal; that the ring wasn't hidden in a glass of champagne or popping out of a flower. What mattered was the love that they shared and the intimacy of the moment. Apart from one thing, Blaine couldn't have asked for anything more in that moment.

Blaine pulled away, his lips instantly aching to reattach themselves to Kurt's. "I have one question for you."

"What is it?" Kurt's rubbed his thumb across Blaine's cheek and brushed away a few of the tears.

Blaine reached into his pocket and pulled out the ring he'd been carrying with him, holding it up for Kurt to see. "I found this ring in a little shop in L.A. and thought it was perfect for you. I've been carrying it around with me for months waiting for the right moment to ask you to accept it, but it looks like you beat me to it, and I wouldn't have it any other way." His eyes moved to the ring on his left hand. It was then that he noticed the small infinity symbol etched into the ring and chuckled. "Our forever?"

Kurt nodded. "Yes. I thought it was perfect."

"It is." Blaine held the ring he'd purchased for Kurt in the palm of his hand and Kurt gasped when he noticed the infinity symbol etched onto the one Blaine was holding. It was slightly different, but the resemblance was shocking. "I guess we had similar thoughts."

"I guess we did."

Kurt rested their foreheads together and they were so close he swore he could hear Blaine's heart beating through his chest. "Kurt, will you accept this ring so we can begin our forever?"

"I would love to." Blaine slid the ring onto Kurt's finger and smiled at how incredible it looked on him.

They continued dancing to the slow music in the background, occasionally sharing kisses, but mostly just enjoying being wrapped in each other's arms. They were content to feel their hearts beating against each other, somehow synchronized as if this new chapter of their life combined them, making them a single entity.

"You knew, didn't you?" Kurt broke the silence with a smile.

"Finn let it slip, but even if he hadn't, I still would have known. Deep down, this is what I've always wanted."

"Thank you for swinging that door open *and* dumping my coffee on me."

"Thank you for agreeing to go out with me after I swung the door open *and* dumped coffee on you."

"I don't think my heart let me have much of a choice."

"Tonight has been perfect, Kurt. Thank you for making this something special."

"It's not over yet. We have the house to ourselves tonight and there's a surprise waiting for us upstairs." Kurt grabbed Blaine's hand and slowly led him inside.

August

The weeks after their engagement went by entirely too quick and before they knew it, Kurt and Blaine found themselves back in New York. They'd ultimately decided to end the lease on Kurt's apartment—it was far too small to accommodate Kurt and his massive wardrobe, let alone Blaine and *his* many possessions—and upgrade Blaine's one-person apartment to a suite that was a bit larger but still in the same complex. It easily held the two of them, and the new apartment was a place they could see themselves beginning their lives as not two people, but a couple destined to be with one another for the rest of their lives.

"Blaine, you will do *fine*. The kids already love you." Kurt straightened his fiancé's bowtie and turned him around, nudging him towards the front door.

"What if that's not enough? What if I suck at being a teacher? What if I can't take care of the kids? What if one of them gets a bloody nose or a paper cut or they have some kind of crisis and breakdown? What if—"

Kurt placed a finger against Blaine's lips, effectively silencing him. "First of all, they're not fourteen, they're four. The biggest crisis they'll have is misplacing a toy or having to wait for snack time."

"Oh my gosh, I completely forgot about snacks!" Blaine shrieked.

"No, you didn't. We put goldfish and juice boxes in the cabinet the other day, remember?" Kurt had gone with Blaine the previous week to make the small space Blaine had rented out a bit more kid-friendly. Posters of cartoon characters were tacked onto the walls, tables and chairs were brought in, cubbies were lined along the wall, and school supplies were purchased for each student. Kurt thought getting everything settled in advance would ease Blaine's worries, but he'd clearly been wrong.

"Secondly, I've seen you with Carla. You don't have to worry about not knowing what to do. This is just your nerves speaking. So," Kurt leaned forward slightly, just enough to peck at Blaine's lips, "don't let some silly apprehension keep you from enjoying your first day as New York's newest, finest, best preschool teacher, okay?"

"I only have eight kids, and Carla is one of them."

"You aren't in it for the money or the attention, though. You're doing this because it's what you want to do."

"Will you come with me?"

"Sweetie, I would love to, but I have to be at practice in thirty minutes."

"Right. You're a big Broadway star now."

"Now quite. The show doesn't even open until next month. I'll be home for dinner, though, so be thinking about what you want me to make." Kurt began inching them towards the front door. "I love you, and just relax today, okay? You'll do wonderful."

"I love you, too." Blaine gave him one last kiss before descending the stairs of their apartment.

September

By the time Kurt's opening night rolled around, Blaine was a well-loved preschool teacher to an additional four students. According to the parents of his new students, he came highly recommended. Each of his original eight students loved their first day of preschool with Mr. Blaine so much they couldn't stop talking about him for days. So, when four more students asked to be a part of his class, Blaine knew it was better late than never.

Having twelve students, twelve little lives to watch after and take care of from eight to twelve every Monday through Friday, would have terrified Blaine at one time. However, he loved his job and couldn't imagine a better way to spend his mornings. He'd fallen in love with each child, and the joy they emitted when they learned something new was infectious. He loved their desire to learn and grow, and he saw a little bit of his younger self in each one of them.

Now wasn't the time to be thinking about the children or tomorrow's lesson plan or work at all because it was finally the night he would see his fiancé being the next hit Broadway Star.

"Excuse me, I need to see your pass before you're allowed backstage." A rather hefty body guard stepped in front of Blaine when he tried to walk through the set of double doors leading to the dressing rooms.

"My fiancé is in the show. I was just going to wish him good luck before it starts."

"No pass, no entry," the man said again, rather forcefully.

"He's with me, Robert." Kurt slipped out from behind a curtain and pulled Blaine past the bodyguard and into a dressing room about halfway down the hallway.

"Remind me to ask for a pass before we leave tonight." Blaine closed the door behind them and held up the small bouquet of Daisies for Kurt. "These are for you."

Kurt smiled down at the pure, white flowers in Blaine's hands and took hold of them. "You remembered my favorite flower."

"A few things stick."

"Thank you. They're beautiful and they'll look wonderful on my vanity." Kurt sat them down in front of his lit up mirror and turned back to Blaine. "I can even dry them and keep them here until they kick me out of the show."

"Or I can keep bringing you fresh flowers instead."

Kurt wrapped his arms around Blaine's neck. "Not if you can't get backstage," he winked.

"I think you can fix that."

Kurt swiveled around and rummaged through a drawer, pulling out a lanyard. "Ahah! I found it." He held it out for Blaine to take. "Next time Robert or anyone else gives you any trouble, just show them this. I meant to give it to you last night, but things have been a little hectic and I forgot."

"This would have been nice to have." Blaine slipped it around his neck. "Thank you."

"So, I would be happy to keep you back here with me, but you're a tad distracting, love. Would you mind taking your seat in the front row so I can finish getting ready?"

"Only if I can give you a good luck kiss first."

"That much is expected." Kurt captured Blaine's lips in his own and the two shared a passionate kiss, one that was a little too short for either one of them to be content, but necessary if Blaine ever planned on leaving Kurt's dressing room.

"Break a leg. You're going to do amazing tonight." Blaine began backing out into the hall.

"I love you!" Kurt called after him.

"Love you, too!" Blaine disappeared around the corner, leaving Kurt to get ready for the night that would surely change his life.

The Next Summer (July)

"Something smells fantastic!" Blaine wandered into the kitchen, rubbing his eyes as he shuffled towards the counter and poured himself a cup of fresh coffee.

"I thought you might enjoy a pre-travel breakfast." Kurt held a piece of bacon up to Blaine's mouth which he eagerly took a bite of.

"Are you sure your first priority wasn't for me to get turned on by the idea of you making me breakfast while wearing nothing but your underwear?" Blaine took a seat at the table and watched Kurt move around the kitchen as he finished up.

"Are you saying you're not the least bit turned on?"

"Quite the contrary, actually." Kurt sauntered over with a plate in his hands and set it down in front of Blaine. "French toast. How appropriate."

"Going to Paris for our honeymoon is so cliché," Kurt giggled. He took his place next to Blaine and they began sharing the stack of French toast on the table in front of them.

"We've already lived through so many clichés, so why not add a few more to the list. Plus, how many tourists are going to be able to say that their husband is fluent in the native language?"

"Aimes-tu quand je parle français?"

"Oui?" Blaine answered hesitantly.

Kurt laughed and took their plate to the sink once they were finished. "Are you ready go to, Mr. Anderson-Hummel?" He extended his hand for Blaine to take and carried their suitcases to the taxi.

They reached the airport in no time. Kurt hopped out and grabbed their suitcases from the trunk while Blaine paid the driver. They entered the all-too-familiar airport, but Kurt froze in place before he could make it too far inside.

"Are you sure you're okay? We don't have to do this," Blaine asked, concerned. Then, to lighten the mood, he added, "It's not too late to stow away on a cargo ship or something."

Kurt laughed, but nodded his head and gave Blaine a reassuring smile. Neither one of them had been on a plane since the plane crash; instead, they had decided to drive wherever they went which happened to be limited to Ohio and back. Up until now, driving hadn't been an issue. However, they couldn't very well drive across the ocean to France.

"I mean it, Kurt. We don't have to get on that plane if you're not ready."

"I should be the one asking you if *you* are ready. You're the one who almost..." Kurt couldn't bring himself to say the word, but Blaine knew what came next.

Blaine pulled Kurt's chin up so he could look him in the eyes. "The probability of that happening again is slim. I *am* ready for this, but I don't want to push you. I know what happened affected you just as much as it affected me. There's no rule that says we have to leave for our honeymoon the day after we get married. If finding a cruise to France would make you more comfortable, we'll do that."

Kurt took a deep breath and gave Blaine's free hand a squeeze. "Let's go."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely." Kurt grabbed hold of his suitcase again.

"Okay."

Kurt and Blaine checked their bags, went through security, and carried out all of the other shenanigans that came before one was able to board a plane. A few hours later they found themselves soaring over the Atlantic Ocean on their way to what was said to be the most romantic city in the world.

Blaine's arm was wrapped around Kurt and Kurt rested his head on Blaine's shoulder. They looked out at the vast, expanse of ocean before them, watching the last little bit of land disappear over the horizon.

"You okay?" Blaine asked nervously. He was surprised when Kurt actually smiled.

"I'm better than okay. I was just thinking."

"About what?"

Kurt nuzzled closer into Blaine's side. He was so close, Blaine could feel his warm breath against his neck when he spoke again. "This is kind of where it all began, you know. Almost two years ago, you bumped into me on a plane and I think that's where my life really began. Before you, I was just a body going through the motions of everyday life. It seems to all fit together like a puzzle, and this plane ride feels like the last piece that needed to be put into place. Our lives as two separate people are finally complete, and now we can begin our lives as husbands."

"I love you so much, Kurt Anderson-Hummel."

"I love you, too, Blaine Anderson-Hummel." They shared a short, yet passionate kiss before returning their focus to the ocean below them. There wasn't much to see, but the uneven water still held a beauty unlike anything Kurt had ever seen. Maybe everything was more beautiful when his husband was by his side.

Blaine's thoughts almost mirrored Kurt's, but he would never quite understand how Kurt was able to find everything so imperfectly perfect. Maybe it was something only he and his mom had shared; something he could pass on to their children. But Blaine *could* understand just how beautiful Kurt was.

It may have taken twenty-six years to find each other and past mistakes to understand what love was once they found it, but what they had couldn't even be compared to the happiest of fairytales.

Blaine held Kurt close and let his eyes shut as they finally began their lives together, as one.