



Klaine || AU || NC-17 overall

Kurt Hummel is a senior in college and he's tired of waiting to meet his soulmate. He decides to take matters into his own hands by placing an ad in the newspaper. The response he gets is more than he could have ever imagined.

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Chapter One

Kurt sat in the empty lecture hall, anxious for the other students to walk in. He held his hand over his chest, directly over his heart and the name that had been on his mind every day since he was 15. The name that had appeared on a rainy morning, confirming that yes, he was definitely gay, and, more importantly, there was someone out there meant for only him. According to the series of small numbers below the name, indicating date and time of birth, Kurt was a year older than his soulmate, which could have turned out much worse. Some people were marked with a soulmate several years – or more – younger or older than them. Kurt shuddered every time he remembered reading about an 82 year old woman who found her 26 year old soulmate only to spend 3 months with her before passing away.

Kurt was now 22, starting his last year of college and a real, adult life in New York City. He was also starting to lose patience.

He had been so lonely for so long, growing up without many friends and with only his imagination to keep him company. The boys at school thought he was too girly because of his voice and his penchant for throwing elaborate tea parties. They teased him, mocked him, and ripped his glittery drawings. He never wanted to be friends with them, anyway, or so he told himself every day they refused to play with him. The girls didn't mind him much, but most of their parents weren't too keen on the idea of a boy joining in on their slumber parties. They generally ignored him, sparing him the occasional sympathetic glance when the boys would start to taunt him.

Kurt had his family, but even that was broken when his mother died. Over time, his father became his best friend. In the aftermath of tragedy, they grew to be extremely close, and Kurt was thankful for that. Burt Hummel wasn't someone who would typically spend his evenings at the theatre, but he still took Kurt to shows. Burt helped him learn to use a sewing machine - technically, they learned together, but Kurt appreciated it nonetheless, and Burt was always there for him, no matter what. When he got his mark, Kurt hid it for just over a month, afraid that the bond between him and his father would weaken or break because his soulmate was a boy. Like with everything else, Burt remained supportive and nonjudgmental, and Kurt realized how lucky he really was.

Despite their closeness, Kurt always felt that there was something missing in his life. His relationship with his father was not the same as a connection with someone that he could relate to on a deeper level. Kurt wanted someone who could truly understand him and what he was going through during his school years.

Those were some of the worst years of his life. There were birthday parties with no friends to play with and the Friday night dinners for two, but it was through those experiences that Kurt learned a great deal about resiliency. Every time someone yelled “fag”, “lady boy”, or some other cutting remark, Kurt continued to march with his head held high, telling himself that it wouldn’t last forever and keeping his misery to himself. His father had enough to worry about already, and Kurt didn’t want to burden him with such juvenile problems. They didn’t have much in common, but they took care of each other in all the ways that mattered for a young boy and a single parent and, back then, it was enough.

When Kurt’s soulmate’s name appeared - *Blaine Anderson* - in loopy script, on the middle of his chest and slightly to the left, Kurt finally felt a small sense of belonging. He was a part of a world where a connection with another person was real, designed by fate, and a source of hope and comfort. Even when he was looking up at the sky from the inside of a dumpster, he could hold his hand over the name and know that someday, things would start to get better.

As he went through high school, Kurt didn’t lose that hope. He made some friends, real friends that accepted him and didn’t care that he sometimes wore kilts and women’s sweaters or that his voice was able to hit notes the girls were jealous of. Kurt even watched from the background as a couple of his friends found their soulmates, cheering for them while seething with envy. It was by pure coincidence that Mercedes met Sam when Sam’s father got a job in Lima, and Tina and Mike had *known* even before they woke up to each other’s names embedded into their skin. Kurt wanted to feel that same companionship, that deep, passionate love, but he was young, and it was Lima, Ohio.

While Kurt had generally remained optimistic for years, he struggled with some unavoidable moments of doubt. There was a constant, nagging fear that he would wake up one day and instead of a name, his chest would display a jagged black mark, indicating that his soulmate was no longer living, or worse, in love with someone else. The latter was extremely rare and just the idea of someone falling in love with a person who was not their designated soulmate was enough to make most people cringe. Rare, but possible, and Kurt woke up sweating and panicked more times than he’d liked, nightmares replaying behind his eyes of his soulmate - faceless, always faceless - happy and in love with another faceless stranger, laughing at him as if it was ridiculous that Kurt thought he would ever be enough.

Kurt’s worries revealed themselves further throughout high school. The overall experience wasn’t horrible, but the bullying he faced was. Some days were better than others, but when it was bad, Kurt had to fight the urge to give up completely. He felt vulnerable, trapped, and afraid, despite the show he put on for his father and friends. They always saw put-together-and-fabulous Kurt Hummel, the boy who didn’t

care what people thought. It was rare for him to show his true self to anyone and he avoided opening himself up like he avoided touching railings and mixing bold prints.

There was one particularly awful day that Kurt would never forget. He had run out of spare clothes after three separate slushie attacks, had been slammed into the lockers between every period, and was unexpectedly and unwelcomely kissed by the boy that always pushed him the hardest. It was days like these that would cause Kurt to shut down, laying curled up on his bed, tears falling rapidly and fingers trying to grab onto the letters on his chest, praying to a god that he didn't believe in for his soulmate, his **Blaine**, to come rescue him. He imagined someone holding him and telling him that everything would work out and that he would be truly happy someday. He would draw his blankets up around himself, pretending that it was Blaine's body wrapped around him instead of fluffy cotton, and if he thought about it hard enough, the rolls of fabric became strong, protective arms.

As soon as he graduated, Kurt moved to New York City, just as he had been planning on doing for years. He was accepted to Parsons' Bachelor of Fine Arts program for Fashion Design, which was not his first choice, but he was always passionate about fashion and he trained himself to think that, realistically, he would have a better future as a designer than a performer. So, he pushed aside his silly dream of seeing his name in lights across Times Square and put all his focus into designing clothes.

Kurt's first three years of college passed by quickly. He stood along the sidelines as his friends found their soulmates, and all he found was an increasing feeling of impending doom. It was at that point that he started to get antsy.

Burt kept telling him to be patient, but Kurt was admittedly stubborn and wasn't afraid to point out that his father, who found his soulmate at sixteen, couldn't possibly understand. Over time, the topic of their weekly phone calls was less everyday chit-chat, and more of Burt trying to talk Kurt down from the proverbial ledge.

"I'm going to end up alone – maybe I'll have a dozen cats – and I am going to knit doilies and be sad and pathetic forever. What if he lives in some remote village in the Amazon, or is doing research in Antarctica?" Kurt rambled on, his father chuckling quietly, "These are very real possibilities, and I don't think this situation is something to laugh at."

Kurt could hear Burt's sigh on the other end of the line.

*"Look, kid. I don't even know how many times I've had to tell you this, but you need to relax." Burt waited for Kurt to throw out some sort of retort, but when none came, he continued. "This soulmate stuff is easy. Imagine if you had to wonder **if** you would meet someone special. There are no **if's** here, buddy. It's just a matter of **when**."*

His father was right, as usual, but that didn't make the waiting any more bearable. It would have been nice to at least get some validation, but his father wasn't one to humor him when it was about something serious. Of course, that didn't stop Kurt from looking for signs of Blaine Anderson everywhere he went. He didn't want to spend his whole life waiting to meet the man he was supposed to spend that life with.

The first day of each new semester was Kurt's favorite. Outside of the classes he needed for his major, Kurt made sure to sign up for at least one elective every semester. Others called him an overachiever and a model student. What they didn't know was that Kurt was particularly good at hiding his motivations, and they were far from academic. On the first day of each new class, he would tune out everything but the voice of his instructor calling out the names of his fellow students, hoping that Blaine Anderson was one of them.

Kurt chewed on the nail of his thumb as the instructor entered the room and pulled out papers. It took him much too long to introduce himself and describe the course, but then, finally, he pulled out the class roster. Kurt held his breath and waited.

And like every other time, he was disappointed.

Chapter Two

As the semester reached its final weeks, Kurt found himself completely fed up with waiting. The small, rational voice inside his head kept telling himself to be patient, to let fate take its course, *blah, blah, blah*. That voice, however, didn't stop him from going crazy thinking about whether or not there was something he *could* do, even though he kept coming up short on ideas. It was frustrating, to say the least, but Kurt usually managed to talk himself down, or he would call his father for another pep talk. His breaking point finally came about a month before Christmas, when Rachel met her soulmate.

When Kurt moved into the loft with Rachel immediately after arriving in New York, the last thing he wanted to do was admit he was scared. It was a huge city that could suck them in and spit them out in the blink of an eye. There were so many things they needed to learn, and as much as they tried to hide it, being actual adults living on their own was more than a little disorienting. They had bills to pay, groceries to buy, appliances to fix, pipes that soundling like they would burst any time the temperature fell below freezing, and a list of never-ending responsibilities at school. It was both overwhelming and exciting, but through it all, they had each other to lean on.

Rachel was very similar to Kurt in some ways, which made it much easier to live with her than he would have thought. He helped her with her afternoon and evening vocal exercises and she allowed him to throw out most of her animal sweaters. He did waver and allowed her to keep one, a knit green cardigan embroidered with an arrangement of tan kittens that she continued to wear for special occasions. Rachel told him that the sweater reminded her of Sunday morning brunches with her dads, and Kurt couldn't argue with that. If someone had told his high school self that he would be spending his first years in New York living with Rachel Berry, he would have laughed until he cried. Yet somehow, they were able to make it work.

They made do with what little money they had, agreeing that necessities would come first, and when they finally made it big, when Rachel's Broadway career took off and Kurt's name was in the latest issue of Italian Vogue, they could splurge on luxuries. They also fought, which was to be expected. Kurt was never particularly good at sharing space, and Rachel's dramatics were exhausting at best, but their arguments were often short lived and followed by apologies and ice cream. There were also those times when Kurt was hit with wave after wave of jealousy toward Rachel, hidden under forced smiles every time Rachel announced a new accomplishment. It had been as much his dream to make it big on Broadway as it was Rachel's, and while the bitterness Kurt felt after his rejection to NYADA faded over the years to a dull roar in the back of his mind, it remained present, nonetheless.

The one thing that kept him from losing his mind sometimes was that Rachel may have had NYADA, but neither of them had found their soulmate yet. It was common ground between them. Rachel dated, which was not uncommon. She never had any long-term success in those relationships, though, which was expected by all parties involved, but Kurt was slightly ashamed of the satisfaction he felt when another one of her boyfriends called things off. Most of the time, they were lonely together, and that was better than being lonely and alone.

Rachel was always optimistic about finding her soulmate, a man named Cole Wagner, who was a couple years older based on her mark and devastatingly handsome based on her imagination. She never actively searched for him, but had made a few offhanded remarks over the years about how wonderful it will be when her name appears on billboards, out in the open for someone special to see. She wasn't featured on any billboards yet, but NYADA had a very strong marketing team, advertising their shows on posters throughout the city.

On the night of Rachel's end-of-semester critique, Kurt waited patiently by the stage door of NYADA's auditorium, an old movie theatre purchased by the school to host all of their events. It was a beautiful building, and Kurt thought of what it would be like to sing on its stage more than once. However, it was not the time for brooding. He could save that for the privacy of his bedroom, where only the walls were there to judge him.

He tapped his foot as the minutes went by and texted Rachel several times asking her what was taking so long. As the crowd around the door dissipated, Kurt continued to check his phone, not because he had a message, but because it made him look like he was too busy to notice that he was standing around by himself. After using up all his lives in Candy Crush, he decided to call it a night and let Rachel make it back to their apartment by herself. Of course, it was then that she finally appeared, walking out into the cold night air on the arm of someone that Kurt didn't recognize, a stocky, average looking man with unruly brown hair. He wasn't much taller than Rachel, and Kurt didn't think he was the type of guy that Rachel would at look twice. Their elbows were linked together as they walked in step with each other, heading toward the street. Rachel was about to walk right past him, in fact, when Kurt cleared his throat loudly.

"Kurt! I forgot you were here," Rachel said, only glancing at Kurt for a second before returning her gaze to the Mystery Guy.

"Kurt, this is Cole. He came to my show and," Rachel trailed off and looked back at Kurt, her eyes swimming with tears, "he's the one. He's my soulmate, Kurt, can you believe it? All this time, we didn't think this would happen to me, and it did! Isn't he dreamy?"

Kurt was stuck to the ground, dumbfounded, as the Mystery Guy – Cole – reached out to shake his hand.

"Hi Kurt, Rachie has told me all about you," Cole said. Rachel giggled at the nickname and Kurt started to feel ill. "I'm so glad you've been taking care of her all this time for me."

Kurt stared at Cole's offered hand for a moment before shaking it loosely. He swallowed hard and looked back at Rachel, who was clinging to Cole's arm like he would float away if she let go.

"So, I take it you won't be home this evening, Rachel?" Kurt asked, already knowing the answer.

Rachel blushed and dropped her gaze down, nuzzling into Cole's chest. That was all the response Kurt needed. He turned on his heel quickly and started to walk away, his insides churning and the beginnings of a headache throbbing behind his eyes..

"I'll see you tomorrow," Kurt called over his shoulder. Rachel was already heading in the other direction with Cole, and Kurt walked to the subway station as quickly as possible, rubbing at his eyes furiously and willing himself not to cry. Rachel may have met her soulmate, but that was no reason to become sad and pathetic. Except it was. Once again, Rachel had won.

Once on the subway car, Kurt dropped down onto a seat with a heavy sigh and closed his eyes, trying to fight off the irrational rage and hurt that was building up inside him. He took a deep breath and counted to ten a few times, then tried to distract himself by people watching. It was normally one of his favorite ways to pass time, and silently judging people's outfits while imagining their unlikely backstories usually made him feel a little better when he was down.

He was developing the saga of a young woman in an unflattering pantsuit - her best friend found her soulmate and kicked her out of their shared apartment without giving her any other clothes, *obviously* - when he was startled by a woman coughing loudly a few rows over from him. He shifted further away from her and felt something crinkle against his leg. He looked down to find the newspaper sitting next to him. Its owner was nowhere to be found, so Kurt started to flip through, continuing his mission to take his

mind off Rachel's newfound happiness. He was about two minutes from his stop when a particular section caught his eye.

Soul Seekers

Kurt stared at the page before nearly falling out of his seat as the subway car jerked to a stop. He quickly grabbed the newspaper and shoved it into his coat pocket, nearly knocking over several pedestrians as he speed walked home.

Once he got inside his and Rachel's apartment, he hung his keys up by the door and kicked off his shoes. He then pulled the newspaper out and shrugged off his coat, laying it over a kitchen chair. He sat down and unfolded the paper, opening it back up to the Soul Seekers section. Kurt couldn't believe he'd never noticed it before, but then again, he couldn't remember the last time he actually read through anything but the Arts section. Soul Seekers seemed to be just the thing he needed, a service that allowed people to try connecting with their soulmates. Kurt began to scan over the the ads.

Mary Beth, 45 years old, looking to meet Winston, 52 years old – Are we meant to be?

L. Landis seeking 61 year old T. Rogers – find me please.

Wendy Donaldson, 57, looking for Avery Richardson, 54

Kurt noticed that most of the ads were for people much older than him, and he took a moment to feel sad for them and a bit guilty. Those people had been waiting for so long with no luck, and he was still young. The thing was, he didn't want to be like them. He didn't want to wait until he was old and grey to find his soulmate.

Then he got an idea. It was a long shot, but he had to try.

Kurt went into his bedroom and sat down at his laptop. He pulled up the Soul Seekers website and read through the posting requirements and fees. With shaking hands, he bought an ad and began to type.

Kurt Hummel, 22, looking for Blaine Anderson, 21: Are you out there?

He clicked "send" to submit his ad and then all he could do was wait.

Chapter Three

Blaine Anderson was 14 when he was marked with his soulmate's name.

Kurt Hummel

He stared at the name for endless hours in the weeks that followed. He hid it from his parents for a long time, afraid of what would happen if they found out. They always went on and on about how they couldn't wait to learn his soulmate's name, what she looked like, or how many grandchildren they would have. Successful career, marriage, babies. That was the expectation for as long as Blaine could remember. Any deviations from the ideal life his parents wanted for him meant endless headaches and long arguments that Blaine barely ever won. He loved his parents and understood why they acted the way they did, and he was always the type that wanted to please others. He hated disappointing them, even after he realized that marrying a woman was not an option for him.

He came out to them on the same day that they found out about his mark. It happened by accident, which didn't allow him time to practice the speech he had been preparing.

Blaine was swimming in the pool on a scorching summer day, not expecting his parents to be home for hours. As he sunbathed on a raft, he heard his mom calling to him from the edge of the water.

"Blaine! We're home, come – Oh my goodness! You got it! Finally! Come over here so I can see what her name is!"

Blaine pretended not to hear at first, wondering if he could just feign sleep and float until both of his parents went away again. His mother continued to yell for him, and, reluctantly, he paddled over to the opposite side from where she was standing. He was not at all surprised when she ran over to him, preventing him from having a few more seconds to think about how he was going to keep her inevitable meltdown at bay.

As soon as she saw the name, the smile on her face disappeared.

"Blaine, is this some kind of a joke?" Rose Anderson furrowed her eyebrows and stared at the name. "I know we've been excited to find out your soulmate's name, but if you wanted us to tone it down, you could have just said so."

“Mom, it’s not a joke. I’m gay,” Blaine said quietly, unable to look at his mother’s face and the disappointment written all over it.

“I see,” Rose said. “Come inside and we can discuss this. We have to tell your father.”

As expected, telling his father didn’t go particularly well. First, his parents tried to rationalize that Kurt could be a woman’s name. Then, they decided that it had to be a mistake and the name wasn’t finished forming. Blaine sat on the living room couch, head ping-ponging between his parents as they argued about him like he wasn’t even there. The fight ended with his father storming off and his mother sighing deeply, muttering something about getting dinner ready while she walked away, leaving Blaine alone.

That night, Blaine stared at the ceiling while sleep evaded him, tracing his fingers over Kurt’s name, wondering how his parents could possibly think that what he and Kurt share - what they *will* share - as anything other than incredible.

Over time, Blaine’s parents learned to accept it for what it was. Blaine was a gay man, destined for a life of love and happiness with a man named Kurt Hummel. There was nothing they could do to change it, and while their relationship with Blaine was strained from that point on, it wasn’t as bad as it could have been. They supported Blaine’s decision to pursue music in college, which surprised Blaine, but he didn’t argue, especially since they were willing to help him pay for school.

Blaine was now in his junior year at Cornell. He had known since high school that he wanted a career in music, and he found great joy at sharing the art with others. He enjoyed performing, and continued to do so at coffee shops and small clubs during his free time, but he decided that teaching music was his passion. Music was a big part of Blaine’s life growing up, and he wanted to use it to help others express themselves and escape, just as he had done.

The college experience was good for Blaine. He loved the school and the surrounding area. Ithaca was relatively quiet, similar to his hometown of Westerville, Ohio, which made it easy for him acclimate to the campus. He had a favorite coffee spot, a sheet music store where he could find *anything*, and his favorite diner that served chocolate chip pancakes and Buffalo wings 24 hours a day.

Cornell was also close enough to Ohio that traveling home for holidays was normally easy, with direct flights from Ithaca to Columbus relatively inexpensive and convenient. Returning to school after Thanksgiving break, however, didn’t quite work out for Blaine in terms of travel.

Blaine was sitting impatiently on a hard, plastic seat in the middle of Newark Liberty International Airport. His flight had been cancelled, and his only other option was a layover in New Jersey. He had taken it, but it had definitely put a damper on his mood. Now he was waiting for his plane to board, restless and long since tired of playing games on his phone. He sighed heavily and looked around, and then he noticed a man two seats over reading a newspaper.

“Excuse me, sir? Do you mind if I borrow a section or two?” Blaine asked politely.

The man nodded and handed Blaine a couple sections, and Blaine began to flip through the pages looking for something interesting. The paper itself was from nearby New York City, and Blaine scanned through some local news before moving on to the next section, which had wedding announcements filling up the front page. Blaine smiled to himself and began to read through them. A romantic at heart even though he had no experience in the area, he enjoyed reading about other peoples’ successes in love. He went on to read through the Anniversaries section, and then he flipped the page and saw a section called “Soul Seekers”. He realized quickly that it was a collection of personal ads for people looking for their soulmates. There were similar ads in newspapers across the country, mainly in areas that were heavily populated.

He read down the list of ads, looking at the names and dates, and was near the end of the page when he felt his heart stop and every ounce of air leave his lungs.

Kurt Hummel, 22, looking for Blaine Anderson, 21: Are you out there?

“Flight 1429 to Ithaca, New York, now boarding at Gate 22.”

Blaine startled at the voice booming through the loudspeaker. That was his flight, which meant that he need to move, but he couldn’t seem to make his limbs work.

Blaine was completely stunned. Kurt Hummel, *his* Kurt Hummel, was looking for him. Kurt was a real person. He always was, of course, but with actual proof of his existence, Kurt was a solid figure somewhere in New York City instead of a figment of Blaine’s imagination. Blaine spent several minutes reading and rereading the line of print that had quickly become the only important thing in his life.

Reality crashed down when the second call for his flight was made. The newspaper was from New York City, but he currently lived in Ithaca, where he would be going in a few short moments. He looked toward

the window, pained by the fact that he was so close to the City and was not able to go straight there and search every borough and every street for Kurt.

Blaine looked over to the man who gave him the newspaper and was happy to see him engrossed in an article. Blaine quickly tore out the Soul Seekers section, folding it up and putting it in his jacket pocket as he dropped the rest of the paper in the seat next to the man with a mumbled “thanks.” Blaine felt like he was floating more than walking as he crossed the airport to the correct gate. He briefly considered a later flight, but he was already going to be back late and he had classes that he couldn’t miss, especially so close to the end of the semester.

Once Blaine arrived at the gate, he pulled out the ads and scanned them for any information on how to contact Kurt. The only phone number was for the Soul Seekers main office, with instructions for anyone who recognizes their name to call for more information, or to visit their website.

With a great deal of frustration mixed with optimism and elation, Blaine boarded the plane, wondering how long it would be before he found the real place where he belonged. A place filled with joy and certainty and Kurt, solid and real, by his side.

After a flight that felt much longer than usual and an even longer cab ride back to campus, Blaine stormed into his dorm, tossed his bag into a corner, and blatantly ignored his roommate’s greeting as he turned on his laptop. The flight itself had been a blur. All he remembered was that small section of newspaper that he held tightly in his hands, folding and unfolding it until the creases started to fade and rip.

Blaine quickly read through the posting requirements for Soul Seekers. The fees were slightly higher for those outside New York City, but he didn’t care. He loved the idea of the ads, and while he never thought himself good at romance, not that he had any opportunities to practice, he wanted to write back instead of calling or emailing a generic website. He wanted his first interaction with his soulmate to be special. Blaine needed to let Kurt know that he was there, even if it would be weeks or months until they could actually be together.

He frowned at the 100 character limit. There was so much he wanted to say.

Kurt Hummel, 22, this is Blaine Anderson, 21, and I would love to meet you if you are still interested in finding me –

Kurt Hummel, 22, if you are still looking for Blaine Anderson, 21, I am here and I am so happy to hear that you are alive and –

Blaine Anderson, 21, inquiring about Kurt Hummel, 22, who I saw was seeking out his soulmate, and I wanted to tell you that –

Blaine huffed and leaned back in his chair. His roommate, Sam, had been watching him, and he looked concerned. Blaine figured that he probably looked a little bit crazy with all of the furious typing and frustrated grunts escaping him.

“Dude, you alright?” Sam asked.

“I found him,” Blaine said quietly. “Well, he sort of found me, I guess. He was looking for me and I saw it.”

“That’s awesome,” Sam said. “Who are you talking about?”

Before Blaine could answer, it came to him. The perfect words that would express his happiness that Kurt had taken a chance on a silly newspaper ad.

Blaine always knew they would find each other someday, but he never felt the need to rush. However, seeing his name with Kurt’s, in print, changed his way of thinking drastically and Blaine never realized how badly he wanted to find Kurt until that moment. He wanted desperately to be able to talk to him and hold him and kiss him.

Blaine began to type, smile growing with each keystroke.

To Kurt Hummel, 22 - I've been looking for you forever – Blaine Anderson, 21

Chapter Four

Kurt sat in the living room and watched Rachel take inventory of her belongings. She was rambling on about who would keep the flatware, since they had bought it together, but Kurt wasn't paying much attention. Instead he was trying not to shove a spoon up her nose. They had been at it for hours, going over 'who gets what' and arguing about why the throw pillows should stay with Kurt, and it was all a reminder that Rachel was moving on, one step ahead and her soulmate by her side. Her relationship with Cole was progressing at lightning speed, and even though they only met a little over a week ago, she was already planning on moving in with him as soon as the semester ended. "It's going to happen sooner or later," she had said, "so why delay destiny?"

Kurt could feel his blood start to simmer, hurt and anger and envy swirling together and bubbling under his skin. Rachel flitted around the apartment with a clipboard, pausing every few minutes to smile to herself, like she was hiding glorious knowledge that Kurt couldn't possibly understand. Fortunately for Rachel, his phone buzzed before he blew a gasket.

(1) New Email

Kurt took a few deep breaths before unlocking his phone. He had spent the past few days nervously waiting for a phone call or email from Soul Seekers telling him that someone had responded to his ad.

Dear Mr. Hummel,

Congratulations! You have won a \$1000 gift card!

Kurt sighed and pressed the delete button.

"Kurt? Kurt, are even listening to me?" Rachel asked, tapping her nails on her clipboard impatiently. "We need to decide the proper division of our assets. I'm sure that Cole already has most furnishings accounted for, but I can't leave knowing I will be without essential items."

"I hardly think that you would fall into a hole of despair without the salad spinner," Kurt replied, trying to hide his annoyance. "Don't forget, poor little me has to stay here all by my lonesome."

"I know that. I just want everything at Cole's apartment to be perfect, just like him." Rachel smiled dreamily again, getting lost in her own thoughts.

Kurt rolled his eyes and stood up. Rachel was still staring off into space, hand over her heart, not noticing Kurt's annoyed look.

"Just let me know what you come up with." Kurt walked toward his bedroom, not really caring about whether Rachel needed his help or not. Once he was behind the closed door, he changed into his softest hoodie and pajama pants and turned on his laptop, content to spend the remainder of the day watching Netflix and sulking.

Kurt was trying his best to be happy for Rachel, but the little green monster inside of him could not be tamed. He was jumping every time he heard his phone buzz or beep and Rachel had even commented on his sudden attachment to his phone and laptop, but he told her that he was expecting an email from his advisor at school, and was relieved when she didn't push the issue. A part of him felt bad for keeping the ad a secret from Rachel. She was one of his best friends, despite her faults, but Kurt didn't want to seem pathetically desperate, especially to Rachel.

As he was waiting for his laptop to start up, Kurt realized that he needed some words of encouragement. He wanted someone to tell him that he wasn't crazy for poking at fate with a cow prod. Kurt wasn't entirely unhappy with his life, but if he could give certain aspects of it a kick-start, he didn't see anything wrong with that. If there was one person who could make him feel better, it was his father. Kurt checked his email – again – before pulling out his phone and dialing Burt's number.

Burt answered the phone after a couple rings. He sounded cheerful, which Kurt took as a good sign. Kurt wanted validation, not a stern talking to about patience.

"Hey buddy, how's it going?"

"I'm alright, keeping busy," Kurt said convincingly, even though his feelings were not as steady as his voice.

"Really? Because you sound like someone just burned your favorite scarf and made you watch."

Kurt couldn't help but smile a little. No matter how hard he tried, his father always knew when something was wrong.

"No, Dad, nothing that drastic," Kurt said, taking a deep breath before he continued. "Have you ever heard of people putting ads in newspapers to search for their soulmate?"

"You mean the personals? Yeah, I've heard of them. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I didn't know we had those here, in New York I mean, and when I found out that I could actually do something to find my soulmate, I thought it would be a good idea. So I bought one."

Burt huffed out a sigh. *Well, so much for a good mood*, Kurt thought to himself.

"You placed an ad in the paper?" Burt didn't wait for affirmation before he continued. "Kurt, that is out there for anybody to see. You live in New York City. Isn't that a little risky?"

"I didn't give out my address or phone number, Dad, if that's what you're worried about."

"That's good to know, but Kurt, anybody can respond to those things. How do you know that some random guy isn't going to see a young kid like you in the paper and try to dupe you?"

Kurt closed his eyes and swallowed, gripping his phone tightly. His safety had always been Burt's priority, especially after Kurt finally told him about the bullying he was going through back in high school. Kurt understood where he was coming from, but it still hurt that he wasn't as excited as Kurt was about the opportunity to find his soulmate.

"I don't want to wait anymore, Dad," Kurt said, continuing on at an increasing volume. "Rachel found her soulmate last week. Did I tell you that? Now she's moving out and I have to find a new job to pay the bills, on top of school and my internship next semester, and I just feel so *alone* in all of this."

"You didn't tell me about Rachel. I'm sorry about that, kid, but that's life. Her chances of finding her soulmate were the same as yours, and fate got to her first. There isn't much you can do about that."

"*I know*," Kurt said through gritted teeth. "I know that it takes time, and that you can't rush fate. I know all those stupid things that get drilled into everyone's heads from birth, but I don't care. I don't care that I'm young or that it's risky. I'm sick of playing it safe and I'm sick of being stuck in second place all the time!"

Kurt was pacing around his bedroom, tears burning in his eyes. He had been trying to keep his emotions in check, but they seemed to explode all at once, making him even more frustrated.

"Kurt, calm down. I didn't mean for you to get upset," Burt said gently. "If you want to post an ad, put up a giant billboard, or hire one of those sky-writing plane things, that's fine by me. I'll back you up and you know that. I want you to be happy. I just want you to be safe, too."

"I know, Dad." There was no point in arguing. "I read through all the fine print. If someone responds to my ad, the newspaper will call me with their email address. After that, any contact is on my own terms. I'll make sure not to give out any other info unless I'm sure it's him."

"That's all I ask," Burt said, sounding relieved. "Listen, I have to get back to work, but call me if anything happens. I hope you find him, okay? I mean that. Love you, kiddo."

"I will. Thanks. Love you, too."

Kurt hung up the phone feeling a mix of anger and relief. While he was expecting his father to be more excited about his new venture, it still felt good to talk about it openly with someone. Kurt had been holding in a lot of his feelings recently, and it was going to start making his skin break out from the stress. He glanced at his phone again to make sure he didn't miss any messages – he hadn't – before flopping onto his bed and burying his face into the pillows.

~^*^~

"Kurt? Are you awake?"

"Mmmffggs"

"Oh, good. Which of these plates do you want to keep? I am partial to the floral print, but I could make do with the orange ones, I suppose."

Kurt lifted his head to find Rachel standing in his doorway, a plate in each hand. He really didn't want to talk about plates or pitchers or toilet brushes at the moment, but Rachel's inability to shift focus off of her own needs would likely prevent her from leaving him alone until he answered.

"Just take the floral. I really don't care either way," Kurt answered, returning his face to the warm indent of his pillow.

"Is something wrong, Kurt? You've been acting a little distracted lately."

"I'm fine, Rachel," Kurt lied. "I'm just a little stressed from trying to find a job and getting my final project done. Nothing I can't handle."

"Oh, great!" Rachel's face lit up again. "Just so you know, Cole will be here tomorrow to help me pack. Will you be home?"

Kurt wracked his brain thinking of something – anything – that he could do to stay out of the house. Thankfully, he had a lot of school work to catch up on, so he would need to stay holed up in his room for most of the day. At least he wouldn't have to share the same immediate space as the nauseatingly cute couple.

"I'll be here."

~^*^~

The next day, Cole was at their apartment much earlier than expected, much to Rachel's delight and Kurt's chagrin. Kurt was able to spend the majority of the morning working on his final project for his upper level design class. He had to draw and put together a six-piece collection inspired by current trends, mixed with elements of nature. Living in the city didn't help him much with the nature part, but he spent a lot of time outside with his parents back in Ohio when he was a kid, and he drew from those memories. He sat in the middle of his bed surrounded by sketch books and colored pencils, finally able to take his mind off of things by designing a dress with his mother in mind, using soft lines with bursts of color, like the stargazer lilies she always called her favorite.

Eventually, his fingers started to cramp and his eyes grew tired, and Kurt decided that he needed a break and a cup of coffee. He moved his work to the side and reluctantly headed out to the kitchen. Rachel and Cole were sitting with their shoulders pressed together at the table, giggling as they packed Rachel's vast collection of ballerina figurines. Kurt remembered being horrified at how many she had when they first moved into the apartment, and the only reason he allowed her to keep them at all was the fact that they would be stored in a cabinet in the living room, hidden in the back corner.

Kurt started brewing a pot of coffee, offering some to the couple and rolling his eyes as they ignored him, too wrapped up in each other to pay him any mind. Kurt stared at the coffee pot, as if the heat from his eyes would make his coffee brew faster. Once there was enough in the pot for a cup, he poured it and trudged to the counter to where they kept the creamer and sugar.

Cole was handing Rachel pages from a newspaper as she wrapped up each figurine and placed it into the open box.

“Oh, look Rachie. Have you seen these before? It’s a bunch of personal ads for people trying to find their soulmates.”

Kurt nearly dropped his mug. He watched Cole out the corner of his eye as he showed Rachel the section.

“It’s mostly for older folks that haven’t had the best of luck. It’s pretty sad, actually, that not everyone can be as happy as we are,” Cole said, nuzzling his nose against Rachel’s and making Kurt’s head throb in annoyance.

“Look, there’s an 87 year old man looking for the love of his life. How sweet.” Rachel scanned over the ads, cooing and discussing the circumstances of each person with Cole.

Kurt finished mixing his coffee and threw his spoon into the sink with more force than necessary. He started walking back to his room when a loud shriek stopped him in his tracks and made some of his coffee slosh over the edge of the mug. He turned around to see Rachel running at him with a crazed look in her eyes.

“Kurt! Kurt! Look! Oh my god, look!” Rachel yelled, shoving the newspaper in his face.

“Rachel, what is wrong with you?” He pushed her newspaper-wielding arm away from his face.

“Kurt. Look!” Rachel pointed to one of the ads.

Kurt grabbed her arm to steady the paper before he could read it properly.

To Kurt Hummel, 22 - I've been looking for you forever – Blaine Anderson, 21

This time, Kurt did drop his mug.

Several minutes later, he found himself sitting on the living room couch, although he wasn’t exactly sure how he got there. The last thing Kurt remembered was Rachel bouncing around excitedly as he read that one line in the newspaper over and over, not quite processing what was happening. The letters became a

jumbled mess and the only words he could make out were his name and the name that had been etched into his skin years ago.

“Kurt, what are you going to do?” Rachel asked, suddenly looking worried. Cole was sitting on the couch on Rachel’s other side, and Kurt was still clutching the newspaper in his hand and staring at it in disbelief.

Blaine was looking for him. They were looking for *each other*. Kurt’s heart started to beat faster and he felt tears well up in his eyes. He let out a short laugh and pulled out his phone, ready to call Soul Seekers, when a small hand grabbed onto him.

“Kurt, are you sure about this? How do you know it’s really him? It could be a scam,” Rachel rambled. Kurt pulled himself away from her grip and stood up.

“It’s him, Rachel, I know it is,” Kurt said sternly. “Can’t you be happy for me instead of questioning it?”

“I’m sorry Kurt, but I only have your best interests in mind and the more I think about it – “

“Then stop thinking about it, since it has nothing to do with you,” Kurt snapped, backing out of the living room. “You are not going to ruin this for me. This is mine, and you can’t take it away.”

With that, Kurt turned on his heel and went back to his bedroom, closing and locking the door behind him. He leaned back against it and took a deep breath. A smile started to form on his lips, growing quickly until his face started to hurt. He leaped onto his bed, schoolwork be damned, and pulled a pillow to his face to muffle his excited squeals, kicking his feet against the mattress. He didn’t care that he was acting like a 12-year old girl. It was the day he had been waiting for. It was a confirmation, an absolute truth that could not be devalued or undone. Blaine was his soulmate, and they had found each other.

I’ve been looking for you forever

Excitement was bubbling through him, lifting him so high that not even Rachel’s self-centered whining could bring him down. He realized that he was still clutching his phone and scrambled to sit up, shaking fingers punching in the phone number to Soul Searchers, which he had committed to memory days ago.

The conversation with their office was quick. Kurt was surprised that he could speak with any sort of coherency, but he did manage to squeak out his email address for the receptionist so she could report a match and he was told that his information would be relayed to Blaine during the next business day.

Kurt ignored Rachel and Cole for the remainder of the day, keeping himself occupied with finishing up his project and rearranging his closet, giggles bursting through him every so often. His mind kept drifting off to thoughts of Blaine, what he might look like, or sound like, or even what he might smell like. He wondered if Blaine liked to sing, or if he enjoyed the theatre or fashion or trashy reality shows. There were so many unanswered questions racing through his mind, it was almost overwhelming.

He could barely sleep that night, still reeling from anticipation and excitement. He was happy he at least had classes to go to, as well as a job interview at a small, high-end boutique a few blocks from his apartment. Both created a much-needed distraction, or else he would have probably been hit by a car while walking around with his phone pressed to his face.

After his interview, Kurt was feeling good. He was fairly sure that he had nailed it by impressing the store owner with his extensive knowledge of both men's and women's fashion. When he returned home, he was relieved to find Rachel gone. He hadn't spoke to her since his freak-out the day before and while he did want to talk to her about it, he was still riding the high of a great day combined with the potential for meeting his soulmate in the very near future. Kurt did love Rachel and felt guilty for snapping at her when she had only repeated the same concerns his father had. In hindsight, he should have talked to her weeks ago about how he was feeling.

He changed into a comfortable pair of yoga pants and his old Hummel Tires & Lube t-shirt. Kurt's phone was practically glued to him, but there was no word yet from Blaine, and Kurt thought it best to keep himself occupied to avoid going completely crazy. He started making dinner, and once everything was prepared, he moved on to cleaning every surface of the apartment. He was debating moving around the furniture when he heard his phone buzz on the nearby end table.

Kurt stared at it for a minute before charging toward it, swearing loudly when he rammed his shin into the corner of the coffee table. Once he recovered, he picked up his phone and unlocked the screen.

(2) New Emails

Chapter Five

Blaine got the phone call on his way back to the dorms following his final class of the day. He had been shuffling through his sheet music for his end-of-semester performance, barely paying attention as he walked through the familiar paths of the Cornell campus. He didn't think much of it when his phone rang, not even noticing the out of town phone number as he continued along his usual route.

"Hello, is this Mr. Blaine Anderson?" The unfamiliar voice asked. Blaine confirmed that it was him, and the next words that came from the phone made him stop in his tracks.

"This is Amelia. I'm calling from Soul Seekers? In New York City? We received a response to your ad."

The remainder of the phone call consisted of the woman telling him the email address of Kurt Hummel, who had called the office the previous day to inquire about him. Blaine stumbled over to a nearby bench and sat down to avoid falling over from shock. The bench was cold and wet from the small amount of snow that had fallen that morning, but as he sat there, the state of his pants was the furthest thing from his mind. Once the phone call ended, Blaine jumped up, shoved all of his sheet music into his bag, and ran back to his dorm.

Faces blurred past him as he took the shortest route possible, over the snow covered lawn and behind the Student Center. Blaine's mind was spinning, his heart pounding, and his legs felt like jelly.

Kurt saw it. Kurt responded. KurtKurtKurt.

His soulmates' name played over and over in his head, flashing behind his eyes and dancing over his tongue, until he was molding it with his lips with every panting breath. Once he reached his building, his chest was on fire from exertion, but he didn't have the patience to wait for the elevator. Instead, he took the stairs, two at a time, until he was fumbling for his keys and plowing through the door.

By the time his computer loaded up, Blaine was a nervous wreck. He stared at the screen blankly until all of the words and images blended together into a giant wall of incomprehensible scribbles. Sam was still in class, which Blaine was grateful for. He was stressed out enough as it was, and one look at him would have Sam panicking. Blaine's usually neatly gelled hair was sticking up at odd angles from him frantically combing his fingers through it, at some point his jacket had started to unzip from the bottom up, and his bow tie was undone, hanging from his collar but still feeling like it was constricting his air supply.

Blaine wanted to make every word in his first email to Kurt count. He deleted countless words and sentences, yelling out at himself in frustration at his inability to write coherently, much less something worthy of such an important moment. It was going to be their first time communicating with each other and it had to be *perfect*.

He sat back in his chair and closed his eyes. He tried to think about what Kurt could possibly look like, just to find some inspiration. He knew nothing about him other than his name and birthday, but he's known those bits of information since he was 15. Blaine pictured someone tall, with dark hair and a slightly muscular frame. He imagined a clear, smooth voice whispering affirmations of love and want into his ear. Blaine shook his head to keep his thoughts from turning down a much racier path than they needed to. He placed his fingers on the keyboard and hovered over the keys for a few seconds, then he began to type.

Hi Kurt,

This is Blaine Anderson, and I am 21 years old. Thank you for responding to my ad. I would like to get to know you better, if you would like.

Sincerely,

Blaine

Blaine held the backspace key down angrily until every letter was gone and dropped his head to his desk with enough force to make him wince. He willed the right words to magically appear on the screen, because his brain was apparently incapable of producing a single sentence that conveyed how much Kurt already meant to him. He wanted Kurt to know how much he was looking forward to meeting him and how badly he wanted them to start their life together.

But first, he had to introduce himself, and that seemed to be the hardest part. Blaine lifted his head and started over.

Kurt,

I can't even begin to describe how happy I am right now. I've been waiting patiently for 21 years, and now that I've found you, everything seems so surreal, like I've been sleeping this whole time. You've woken me up, Kurt, and I can't wait to finally be able to call you mine. We know nothing about each other, and yet I feel like I could tell you anything.

My name is Blaine Anderson. I am 21 years old and I was born and raised in Westerville, Ohio. I'm currently in my third year at Cornell, and my dream is to become a music teacher. I prefer dogs to cats, since they seem to

be more interested in, well, everything. I only use spearmint toothpaste and I can't stand the sound people make when they eat bananas. I love to sing and perform, but I don't think I would like to do either professionally. I have an old stuffed rabbit from when I was little named Flip, and I still sleep with it on nights that I am feeling a little bit homesick.

I hope that's a good start. I can't wait to share more of my life with you.

Already yours,

Blaine

Blaine read through the message and after fixing a few typos, he clicked 'send'. All he could do after that was wait and hope for the best.

~^*^~

(2) New Emails

Kurt opened his inbox with a shaking finger. One of the new emails was from his advisor, asking him about his classes for the following semester. Kurt saved it for later before looking at the second email. He slowly walked to his room, staring at his phone and Blaine's name, listed as the sender. Kurt wanted to make sure he was able to read it properly, so with every ounce of self-control he had, he started up his laptop and logged into his email. His breath caught when he saw Blaine's name again and he realized that this was the beginning to his own happy ending.

Kurt nervously clicked on the email, biting his lower lip and bouncing his knees furiously.

As Kurt read through Blaine's message, he forgot how to breathe properly, his lungs suddenly unable to draw in enough oxygen to feed his rapidly beating heart. Blaine was *amazing*. It wasn't until Kurt had read the email for the tenth time that he realized his cheeks were wet, tears of happiness flowing freely. All of his expectations of his first contact with Blaine were blown apart. Instead of a brief, 'hey, we're soulmates, wanna meet?', Blaine shared a small bit of himself with Kurt. It wasn't much, but it was a wonderful start, full of hope and excitement. Kurt smiled broadly as he realized that fate and destiny really hadn't forgotten about him.

He read the email again a few more times before he was calm enough to start his response. He wiped his eyes, feeling giddy and energized in a way he wasn't used to. The only bit of disappointment he had was

due to Blaine being so far away. He was also shocked to see that they had grown up so close to each other. Kurt wondered if it was coincidence or just another sign that they were really meant to be together.

Kurt struggled for a moment as his fingers touched the keyboard, not sure where or how to begin, but once he began to type, the words came to him easily.

Dear Blaine,

You'll have to excuse me if I seem a bit out of sorts. I can't believe that this is really happening, to be honest. I had started to think that I would never find you, but yet, here you are. I was surprised to see that you are from Ohio. I grew up in Lima, so I guess we were never really that far from each other. It's funny how that happens. You can call it fate, destiny, or plain dumb luck, I suppose, but whatever it was that brought me to you, I will be forever grateful for. Since you told me a bit about yourself, it seems only fitting that I do the same.

I'm Kurt Hummel, senior at Parsons in New York City, fashion design major and compulsive shopper. I've had a standing subscription to Vogue since I was 11, and I still have every issue stored away in several boxes in my father's attic. I also love to sing and perform, but all of my big dreams to be on Broadway disappeared long ago. I only sleep on the left side of the bed and I have a quilt that my mother made me that I swear still smells like her. I keep it under my pillow even though it clashes horribly with the rest of my bedding. I will never turn down cheesecake and I have watched every season of The Bachelorette.

If I haven't scared you off yet, I am hoping that we can keep learning about each other. I know we haven't officially met yet, but I can already feel the connection between us. It's like I'm starting to feel whole for the first time in my life. Is that silly?

Always yours,

Kurt

Chapter Six

Kurt's alarm went off much too early after a long night of sending emails back and forth with Blaine. He stayed in bed for several extra minutes, absentmindedly running his fingers over his chest and tracing over Blaine's name like he had done millions of times before. The letters felt like *more* somehow, now that they had found each other, like they were heavier and more pronounced with the certainty of Blaine's existence and their connection.

In the days following their first email exchange, Kurt felt like a new man. Everything around him seemed bigger and brighter. The city itself was more alive and vibrant and full of realized dreams. He and Blaine sent emails to each other daily, sometimes a couple sentences, sometimes more. Kurt was thrilled when Blaine admitted that he had seen Kurt's ad first, especially after Blaine explained that he thought it would be more romantic to respond with an ad as well, even though romance was not his forte. Kurt strongly disagreed, of course.

Through their emails, they had revealed more about their pasts and what they hoped to achieve in the future, intermingled with little getting-to-know-you facts. The tidbits of new information made Kurt smile throughout even his busiest and most stressful days, parts of Blaine's emails so charming that Kurt knew them by heart.

I may have a small obsession with bow ties, and I organize them by color and pattern. My older cousin used to pick on me about it when we were younger, but when he would babysit me and take me to the park, guess who the ladies flocked to ;)

That's amazing that you know about cars. I worked on a car with my dad for a while a few years ago. His idea, not mine. He wanted to "bond", I guess, but it didn't work out so well. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if we'd taken up karaoke instead.

The ceiling of my dorm room has that tacky popcorn thing going on. When I can't sleep, I like to pretend that they're stars and make up my own constellations. Tonight, I'm going to find your name written in those stars.

Blaine was incredibly cheesy and sweet, and Kurt adored him for it. He felt only a little bit silly feeling so much for someone he hadn't met yet. He rationalized that it *was* his soulmate after all, so strong feelings were to be expected.

Kurt reached an arm out to the other side of the bed and wondered what it would be like to have Blaine there next to him instead of a cold pillow. He then tried to imagine what Blaine looked like based on the descriptions they had given each other the night before.

I'm about average height, with dark hair that is actually pretty curly if I don't gel it into submission, and I have hazel eyes. Wow, I don't sound too exciting at all, do I?

They agreed that while they could have easily sent each other pictures, they wanted to wait until they could actually meet face-to-face before seeing each other. Kurt had always dreamed about the moment that he would see his soulmate for the first time, crossing paths on a busy street and walking toward each other in slow motion, or bumping into each other at a coffee shop as they both reached for the same packet of sugar. Kurt didn't know what his first meeting with Blaine would be like, but he was sure it would be magical.

Kurt realized the time and quickly forced himself out of bed. He had class in a little over an hour, which was likely to be torture since he hadn't slept much. He showered quickly and put on his clothes, thankful for his own obsessive need to pick out his outfits for a week at a time. Kurt made his way into the kitchen to find Rachel sitting at the table with a notebook in front of her.

"Good morning," Kurt said cheerfully. He grabbed a mug and poured himself a cup of coffee. He sat down next to Rachel, noticing that she was not acting like her usual bubbly self. "Everything alright?"

Kurt had a feeling that Rachel's somber mood was caused by their fight. He felt a pang of guilt at that realization, since he really wasn't angry with her anymore even though this was the first time he'd spoken to her in the past couple days. He wasn't completely happy with her, either, but in a way, he did have her to thank, since she had been the one to spot Blaine's ad in the first place. He shook off a mild burst of annoyance and replaced it with gratitude as he nudged her shoulder, hoping to get her attention.

"I'm sorry, Kurt," Rachel said, staring down at her notebook. Kurt blinked a few times before he was able to respond.

"What are you sorry for?" Kurt asked, knowing the answer but wanting her to say it.

"I know that it's been hard for you, seeing how happy Cole and I are together, and I know that you may be harboring some jealousy." Rachel looked up at Kurt and placed her hand over his. "That is completely normal, and I forgive you for that."

"I thought you were the one apologizing here?" Kurt interjected, furrowing his eyebrows in confusion.

"Oh, yes! That's right. I'm sorry for waving my relationship with Cole in your face. It must have been hard for you to watch, and I understand that until you find your soulmate, we will have to try to keep our displays of love at a minimum so that you and I can preserve our friendship."

Kurt stared at Rachel for a moment to process what she said. Of course, Rachel was completely off-base, but at this point, Kurt was accustomed to it. She was at least making an effort, and, for Rachel, that was a big deal.

"Look Rachel, I appreciate the gesture, but that won't be necessary," Kurt said. "You will be officially moved out in a few days, and I don't want us to be fighting until then. Besides, I *have* found my soulmate. So, consider your apology accepted, and let's just forget about it, alright?"

"Kurt, I know that this guy says he's your soulmate, but what if he's a fraud?" Rachel asked hesitantly.

"He's not a fraud." Kurt felt his face heat up as he spoke. "Blaine is the real thing. Is it that hard for you to be happy for me?"

"I don't want you to get hurt," Rachel said, barely above a whisper. "I know that you've been lonely, Kurt, and I don't want you to jump into something like this just because you want what I have."

"It's not always about you, Rachel. I am thankful for your concern, but please don't pity me. I know what I'm doing."

Rachel looked at Kurt skeptically before smiling a bit and nodding.

"I know that we have our little spats sometimes, but you're still my best friend," Kurt continued, wanting to let her know that he wasn't angry or upset with her, even though he had, in fact, been jealous until now.

Rachel's smile grew and Kurt couldn't help but return it.

“Can I hug you now?” she asked.

Kurt laughed as he accepted Rachel’s embrace. She may not have truly understood him, but it didn’t matter anymore, because Kurt had finally found someone who did. Kurt placed his cup into the sink and grabbed his keys. He said goodbye to Rachel and grabbed his portfolio, making sure he gave her a small smile before shutting the door.

~^*^~

Dear Blaine,

I have some amazing news! I found out today that I got the job! I, Kurt Hummel, am now an official employee at a quaint little boutique within walking distance of my apartment. I am so excited. It’s not a huge deal or anything, but I will get to dress the mannequins for the storefront and assist misguided patrons in choosing clothes that flatter them instead of making them look like sad, old fashioned school teachers (no offense).

It feels really good to share these things with you, no matter how unimportant they are.

Always yours,

Kurt

Blaine smiled and did a small victory dance in his seat. Kurt told him about his job interview, explaining what they asked him and how he answered, looking for affirmation from Blaine that he didn’t sound like an idiot. Of course, Blaine had offered words of encouragement the best he could, and he was incredibly proud that Kurt got the job.

He was very pleasantly surprised at how easy it was for him to open up to Kurt and share even the most mundane things, like a new biscotti he had tried or a movie he had seen for the first time. Nothing was uncomfortable or off-limits, it seemed, and Blaine felt like things were finally falling into place.

They had exchanged phone numbers, but neither of them had taken that step yet. The emails had become a part of their daily routines, and it almost felt domestic to Blaine, like a married couple that left little notes in each other’s lunches. Every time Kurt wrote him, it was new discovery, no matter how small. Blaine wanted to keep that between them for now and he really didn’t want the first time he heard Kurt’s voice to be over the phone.

Blaine found that just having those small contacts with Kurt had already changed him, in a way. The annoying girl in his Music Theory class that asked personal questions and never understood assignments didn't bother him anymore. The new barista at his favorite coffee shop had screwed up his order twice in the past four days, and he just smiled and went on with his day. Blaine felt like he was walking on clouds already, and he hadn't even met Kurt yet.

That was the only downside to finding his soulmate. Blaine wanted to meet Kurt. He wanted to see him and look into his eyes and tell him how much he meant to him. He wanted to touch Kurt, to hold him and never let go, because he was the most amazing and interesting man he'd ever met. Unfortunately, he had another year at Cornell left, and it was 223 miles away from New York City. The silver lining was that the end of the fall semester was quickly approaching and final exams were in a couple of weeks. After that, Blaine planned on returning to Ohio to visit his family, but maybe he could sneak away to New York City for a few days, too.

As he sat in class later that day, Blaine started to wonder if he should ask Kurt whether he was also planning on traveling to Ohio for the upcoming break. Blaine didn't want to get his hopes up or assume anything, but Kurt told him enough about his family that Blaine could tell they were close. It would make sense that Kurt would want to spend the holidays with them. The possibility of meeting Kurt so soon was both exciting and terrifying. Blaine had a feeling his first face-to-face interaction with Kurt would involve a combination of pathetic stuttering and nervous giggles on his part.

Once he was done with classes for the day, Blaine returned to his dorm, intent on asking Kurt about his plans for winter break. When he made it back to his room, he found Sam sitting on his bed plucking at his guitar. His roommate knew all about Kurt, thanks to Blaine's incessant chatter about how wonderful he was and how each email was more adorable than the last.

"Hey, man. You're looking chipper," Sam said with a knowing smile. "Good day?"

"I'm going to ask Kurt to meet me," Blaine replied, the determination in his voice evident. "During winter break, when school's out. We both have family in Ohio, and if he's going there to visit, it would make sense to plan a date, or just a friendly get together, right?"

"Dude, he's your soulmate. Of course it makes sense to meet, and I'm sure it will be much more than friendly. That's the point, isn't it?" Sam set down his guitar and turned to face Blaine fully. "Why do I get the feeling you want me to convince you that it's a good idea?"

Blaine sat down on the edge of his bed, facing Sam, and started to play with the edges of his cardigan. He ducked his head and responded quietly.

“What if he doesn’t want to meet me?” Blaine asked. “Or what if he does want to meet and I just scare him off? I don’t even know what to do when I see him. You think I should I sing to him?”

“Blaine, you’re being ridiculous. Stop worrying and go get your cyber-flirt on.” Sam rolled his eyes at Blaine’s pout. “He’ll want to meet you because that’s what soulmates do. They meet and live happily ever after.”

Blaine smiled at that. He always did love fairy tales.

Chapter Seven

It was exactly eleven days after his first email from Blaine that Kurt decided to make the call. He felt giddy and like he was on the verge of hyperventilating, but after taking a few calming breaths, he was able to pick up his phone and dial. *Relax. It's going to be fine. Piece of cake*, he thought.

"Hey, kid. What's up?" Burt's voice was always soothing in a way that Kurt couldn't fully explain. It reminded him of warm hugs after falling off his bike for the hundredth time, laughter as he taught his father how to properly hold a teacup, and the smell of motor oil and black coffee. Kurt was thankful for the way it made some of his anxiety melt away.

"I have something to tell you, and I need you to not freak out," Kurt said slowly.

"You're not in trouble are you?"

"No, Dad. It's something good. Something amazing, actually."

Kurt had been taken completely by surprise when Blaine asked him to meet over the holidays. He had hoped for it, of course, since both he and Blaine had family in the same area, but he didn't want to make assumptions only to be disappointed when plans didn't pan out. Kurt was pretty sure he actually squeaked with joy when he read Blaine's email two days prior.

Hello Kurt,

I don't know if this is too soon, but I wanted to ask what your plans are for Christmas break. I will be in Ohio and if you're going there too, I don't think I can keep myself away from you. Fate didn't mark us without knowing that we are perfect for each other, and I feel like I need to see you as soon as possible.

I guess what I'm asking is, would you like to meet up over break? We can have coffee, or see a movie, or have dinner, maybe? I don't care what it is or where we go, as long as it's with you.

With Love,

Blaine

Kurt had responded immediately, letting Blaine know that yes - *YES, yesyesyes, a million times yes* - he would love to meet. If he'd had it his way, they would have met immediately after their first contact, responsibilities be damned. Kurt's winter break would be cut short, unfortunately, due to work and his upcoming final internship, which was set to start the week before the spring semester begins and will likely take up a ridiculous amount of his time. Regardless of that, though, there was no way that he and Blaine could be in the same state, in neighboring towns, no less, and not spend as much time together as possible. It was going to be perfect. Now, Kurt just had to tell his father to expect some extra company.

"I'm listening," Burt said, making it clear that he was still skeptical.

"I found my soulmate. I found Blaine. I didn't think it would ever happen and it *did* and he's, oh Dad, he's *incredible*. We've been talking a lot, just over email for now because we don't want to ruin the surprise, and I still haven't figured out what I'm going to wear when we do meet, because I need to look perfect, and -"

"Whoa, whoa, slow down, buddy." Burt cut off Kurt's rambling, which made Kurt realize that he wasn't breathing properly and was starting to feel a little lightheaded. "What do you mean you found him? A couple weeks ago, you were talking about putting an ad in the paper."

"*No*, I told you that I *did* place an ad in the paper," Kurt said slowly. "And it worked! Blaine saw it and he placed an ad, too. He lives in Ithaca now, but he's from Westerville. Can you believe it? He was so close the whole time."

"That's great, Kurt," Burt said, and Kurt could almost hear him smile through the static of the phone. "I'm real glad to hear that. If anyone deserves to be happy, it's you."

"Thanks, Dad." Kurt swallowed thickly to suppress the giant ball of emotions crawling up his throat.

"So, when do I get to meet this guy?" Burt asked.

"That's why I was calling, actually. Well, half of why I was calling," Kurt bit his lip, not quite believing that what he was about to say was real. "Dad, can Blaine come to our post-Christmas Friday Night Dinner?"

"Of course he can," Burt said, not hesitating for even a split second. "If he's your soulmate, then he's already family."

It was a huge relief to hear those words, and even more so to hear the slight crack in his father's voice. It was nice not to be the only emotional one in the family, though Burt was much better at hiding it. Kurt said thank you about a thousand times before hanging up, making Burt laugh good-naturedly at his enthusiasm.

Kurt didn't stop smiling for the rest of the day. He was pretty sure he wouldn't stop until winter break. He and Blaine were going to be in the same place at the same time and it was the most wonderful form of anticipation Kurt had ever experienced. They were actually *going to meet*, and from that point on, their lives would be permanently entangled. They would be able to touch and to look as much as possible before parting ways again for school. Kurt felt a brief wave of sadness at that, but he resolved to focus only on the positive.

Every minute would be precious, and Kurt couldn't wait.

~^*^~

Blaine couldn't get Kurt out of his head and it was seriously disturbing his sleep schedule. It was absolutely killing him that he was so close to his soulmate but couldn't do anything about it. He had arrived home for winter break a few days before Christmas. Kurt had to do some preparations for his upcoming internship before leaving New York, which meant that Blaine would have to wait until after the holiday - two whole days - to meet him.

The anticipation was eating him alive. He could feel himself vibrating with energy and his face was actually sore from smiling. His parents had even noticed. They were never outwardly cruel or cold to him by any means, but they also didn't know him well enough to pick up on shifts in his mood under normal circumstances. Therefore, Blaine must have been acting really ridiculously when, on Christmas Eve morning, his mother asked him if he was on drugs.

"What? Mom, no! Of course not." Blaine tried to look appalled, but his face was frozen in a permanent 'I am meeting Kurt in two days' grin. He supposed it didn't make him look very convincing as his mother stared at his eyes, probably checking to see how dilated his pupils were. "Seriously. I'm fine. I'm just... happy."

"Happy? Blaine, sweetheart, I have seen you happy. *This* is much more than happy," Rose responded, arms crossed against her chest and eyebrows raised, clearly expecting an explanation that Blaine wasn't quite ready to give.

He could feel the guilt rising and twisting inside his gut. He had yet to tell his parents that he had found Kurt. Blaine kept reflecting back to the day they found out that he was destined to spend his life with another man, and although they grew to accept it for what it was, there was still a good amount of underlying tension within their family. He just didn't want to make things even more awkward between them, especially before Christmas. They would have to meet Kurt eventually, but Blaine needed time to figure out how to introduce him to the family without it turning into a giant disaster.

"I had a really good turnout for my final performance of the semester." It wasn't a lie; it had been a great show. Blaine simply couldn't tell his mother the whole truth yet. "I guess I'm still riding the high. I promise you, everything is fine, Mom."

Rose looked skeptical, but she didn't push. Blaine's father seemed to know that something was going on as well, judging by the odd looks he'd been giving Blaine since he arrived home. However, Blaine and his father didn't have a relationship where feelings or personal matters were discussed and Blaine found that to be both a blessing and a source of lifelong disappointment. Kurt's father knew about their growing relationship, and from everything Kurt had told him, Mr. Hummel was thrilled they had found each other. Blaine wasn't foolish enough to expect the same from his father.

~^*^~

Later that night, Blaine's phone went off with a loud buzz against his nightstand. He smiled when he saw that it was a new email from Kurt. The clock read 3:16 am, but Blaine was wide awake. He hadn't been able to fall asleep, thoughts of the next day playing on a loop in his head. Christmas Day had been as lovely as ever, but for the first time in his life, Blaine was overjoyed that it was over.

Dear Blaine,

I know it's late and you are probably not going to get this until the morning, but I just wanted to write you and tell you, once again, that I cannot wait to see you tomorrow. It seems so surreal that this is happening. Would you believe that I planned my outfit a month ago? You probably would. Sometimes I think that you already know me better than people I've known for years. If that's any indication of what our upcoming relationship will be like, then I think we're going to be quite the pair.

Always yours,

Kurt

They had agreed to meet at noon at The Lima Bean, where they had both frequented during high school but yet somehow never managed to run into each other. They had both found it exciting and exasperating that they could have crossed paths so many times – glee club competitions, stores, restaurants – but fate had wanted them to wait until now.

Blaine closed his eyes and imagined every possible scenario he could think of for their meeting. Seeing Kurt in the parking lot and running toward him with open arms. Standing next to each other in line and accidentally bumping into each other. Maybe they'll both arrive and sit at different tables across the room from each other, not knowing the other is there until they both feel an unexplained urgent need to look up, and then their eyes would meet for the first time and they would stand up and walk toward each other slowly, like in some cheesy rom-com.

Wiggling his toes happily underneath his sheets, Blaine sent a quick reply to Kurt, letting him know that he was just as excited and a bit nervous. After setting his phone back down, he tossed and turned a bit more, but was eventually able to fall asleep with Kurt's name on his lips and a grin on his face.

Chapter Eight

Kurt gasped as a hand slid up his bare thigh, leaving small, raised bumps in its wake, short hairs reaching up, searching for more contact. He felt hot all over despite the cool air around him. Every touch was amplified and embedded into his skin, the sensations dizzying, freeing, and overwhelming.

He wanted so badly to touch. He needed to feel the warm skin of the man who was making him tremble and writhe. He met the man's hand as it wrapped around his cock, moaning as he ran his own fingers up the stranger's arm until his own hand was resting on a warm, muscular shoulder. Kurt's eyes were closed tight. Touch was the only sense that mattered. Every press of skin on skin was like a new current of electricity shocking him to life. The stranger touched him with reverence and adoration, as if he carefully calculated each movement so that it would have as much impact as the last.

Kurt realized then that it wasn't a stranger at all. It was Blaine, who knew exactly how to touch him, who was pressing him into a soft mattress covered with even softer sheets and pillows. Blaine, who was pressing his lips to Kurt's neck, peppering his most sensitive areas with soft kisses and small licks. The hand on his cock moved faster, making him groan and clutch at Blaine's arms. He could feel hot breath against his ear.

"That's it, Kurt. Come on," Blaine whispered in a voice that was low and smooth and saturated with lust. Kurt's limbs seized up and hips stuttered as he spilled out over Blaine's fist, saying his name over and over and over...

Kurt shot up in bed. His shirt was damp with sweat and twisted around his torso, and the front of his boxer briefs felt cool and sticky and wet. He was breathing heavily, his mind reeling from the intensity of his dream and how he could still feel Blaine's body next to him. Kurt rubbed his eyes and fell back onto his pillows with a groan.

The dreams started about a week before he traveled back to Lima for the break. They were all so vivid he wasn't sure where the dream ended and reality began. Some of them were fairly tame, where he and Blaine would hold each other in bed, listening to each other breathe. Others involved acts that Kurt had only seen briefly in movies that he would never confess to watching. The one thing that was always the same, however, was that he never saw Blaine's face. His eyes were either closed or the room was pitch black, or sometimes he would be blindfolded. Logically speaking, there was no way it could have been different, since he *didn't* know what Blaine looked like, but Kurt wished his brain had some kind of magical powers that allowed him to see the unknown.

He looked over at his clock and saw that he had about two hours to get ready before his date with Blaine. Kurt launched himself out of bed, wincing at the tacky mess in his underwear. He quickly showered and got dressed, debating changing his predetermined outfit repeatedly and styling and re-styling his hair more times than he would care to admit. Once he was happy with his appearance he headed downstairs to find his dad and stepmom in the kitchen. Kurt squeezed Burt's shoulder and kissed Carole's cheek before grabbing a mug and filling it with coffee.

"G'morning. Did you sleep okay?" Burt asked, which made a blush creep up Kurt's neck. He really hoped that he hadn't been moaning in his sleep, because that is not something his family should ever hear.

"Like a baby," Kurt replied, focusing intently on stirring milk into his coffee. Burt only hummed in response, but when Kurt turned around he could see the small smirk on his father's face.

"Have a seat, buddy," Burt gestured to the chair across from him. Kurt looked over at Carole, who gave him a knowing smile and stood up.

"I'll let you boys chat," she said. "I need to go make sure Finn is planning on getting out of bed sometime this morning."

Kurt sat down as Carole left the kitchen. He hoped that whatever his father wanted to talk about had nothing to do with his unconscious nocturnal activities.

"So, today's the big day, huh?" Burt asked. Kurt nodded, but he couldn't possibly stop the huge grin that grew on his face.

"Today's the big day." Kurt met Burt's eyes, seeing them crinkle at the corners just like his own did when he was really happy about something.

"Listen, I just wanted to talk to you about some stuff, and you might not feel comfortable hearing it." Burt gave Kurt a pointed look. "I think there are some things you should know about meeting your soul mate for the first time."

"Dad, I already know about that. They taught us all about it in school. You meet your soul mate and you feel all warm and happy inside and then you both ride off into the sunset on a white horse."

Burt huffed out a short laugh before continuing.

"That, too. But, there's a bit more to it. It changes you, Kurt. You'll see. When you meet Blaine your whole world will end as you know it, and you will feel like nobody on the planet could be as important as he is." Burt took a sip of his own coffee and Kurt sat quietly waiting for him to go on. "You also feel some things that may be new to you, and you will have some urges that you – "

"Ok then!" Kurt shouted, cutting off his father. "I appreciate what you're trying to do, but we had the sex talk years ago and I don't think either of us want to relive that trauma."

"How long have you been having the dreams?" Burt asked, ignoring Kurt's freak out and smiling again as Kurt sputtered.

"How did you know about that?" Kurt asked, honestly curious as well as extremely embarrassed.

"Because a lot of people have that particular problem. It's an anticipation thing. I know your situation is a little different since you and Blaine haven't officially met yet, but that connection is going to be just as strong as anyone else's."

"I don't see his face," Kurt said. Once again, he began to blush, but he trusted his father and was genuinely happy that they had such an open and honest relationship. "In my dreams, I mean. Things... happen, but I don't see what he looks like."

"That makes sense. Just try not to get too carried away. It's going to be tough, but you both have a long time for that kind of stuff, and if I remember correctly, Blaine still has some time left in school. So keep in mind that the closer you two get physically, the stronger the bond gets. It's pretty intense for the first few days, but after that it evens out and it won't be as hard to keep yourselves off each other."

Kurt blushed even harder at that. It was common for a lot of new soul mate couples to spend their first few days together locked up in a bedroom. He saw it happen most recently when Rachel didn't come back to the apartment for a full week after meeting Cole.

Kurt nodded again and looked at the clock, straightening up in his chair and biting his lip. It was time for him to leave and go meet up with Blaine. Burt apparently noticed that Kurt's attention had shifted.

"Alright, kiddo, get going." Burt jerked his head toward the door. "Good luck."

"Thanks, Dad," Kurt said as he got up from the table. He walked to where Burt was sitting to give him a hug. "For everything."

"You too, bud. Now *go*."

Kurt smiled, then grabbed his keys and ran out the door.

~^*^~

Blaine sat in his car watching the door to The Lima Bean. He was pretty sure he hadn't blinked for a solid ten minutes and he was still gripping the steering wheel tightly. As soon as the clock on his dashboard read 12:00, he willed his hands to let go of the wheel and unbuckled his seatbelt. He turned off the car, took a deep breath, and opened the door.

This is it, he thought, and then he took the first few steps toward the coffee shop.

~^*^~

Kurt arrived at the Lima Bean a few minutes early. He checked his hair, his teeth, and his outfit repeatedly, picking bits of lint from his coat and pants obsessively. Once it was time, he got out of his father's truck and checked his hair one last time in the side-view mirror, ignoring the way his fingers shook as he swept a stray hair back into place. Straightening his back and gathering up all of his courage, Kurt took one step forward, then another, until he was striding forward without feeling the ground beneath his feet, heading toward something amazing.

~^*^~

Blaine looked straight ahead as he walked, zoned in on the Lima Bean's entrance while hoping he wouldn't slip on a random patch of ice. He was completely oblivious to his surroundings; all he cared about was getting into the building. When he finally reached the door, he grabbed the large metal handle and was hit with a tidal wave of emotion as another hand grabbed the handle at the same time, smooth, pale fingers brushing over his.

~^*^~

Kurt gasped and his entire body froze. He stared at the hand touching his, then his gaze trailed up the arm attached to that hand until he was met with the most beautiful golden brown eyes he had ever seen. They

were like the honey that his mother used to stir into her tea, mixed with the dark browns and greens of his father's old flannel shirt, the one Kurt used to wear in lieu of coveralls when he helped out at the tire shop as a kid. They shined with hope and love and the promise of a new beginning.

"*Blaine*," Kurt breathed, knowing right away that it was him. All at once, everything around them faded away. The parking lot, the coffee shop, and even the curb they were standing on disappeared, until all that was left was the two of them. Kurt blinked, clearing away the beginnings of the tears that were threatening to blur his vision. He said the name again, because he could, "*Blaine*."

~^*^~

"Oh my god. You're gorgeous," Blaine whispered. It wasn't exactly what he'd been planning on saying first, but then he saw that he must have done something right, because Kurt's smile was *beautiful*. It was bright and warm and just a little bit playful, like Kurt was charmed and flattered, but also trying not to laugh.

They both lowered their hands from the door and tangled their fingers together as if they had done it a million times before. Kurt moved closer and Blaine held his breath as he brought his free hand up to Blaine's face, the tips of his fingers melting away the chill of the winter air. Blaine closed his eyes, breathing deeply and reveling in how much he was feeling, both emotionally and physically. The universe could have imploded right then and there and he would have died perfectly happy. Kurt's touch seeped directly into the core of his heart, and Blaine couldn't imagine ever going a day without it.

~^*^~

Kurt couldn't tear his eyes away from Blaine. It was too much and he could barely handle the joy that was swelling up inside him. He needed to be as close to Blaine as possible, so he took another small step forward, his smile growing impossibly wider as their fingers tightened around each others at their sides.

"Hey there," Kurt said, trying to keep himself from dissolving into nervous giggles. He was surprised he was able to even form words with Blaine staring at him with *those eyes*. "Shall we?"

Blaine bit his lip and nodded. He smiled shyly as Kurt opened the door for him, and that smile was so disarming that Kurt nearly tripped over his own feet as he followed him inside.

~^*^~

While they waited in line, Blaine couldn't stop *staring*. Kurt was nothing like he imagined and everything he wanted at the same time. He took in every detail he could, from the way that Kurt's hair was perfectly styled into the most adorable swoop imaginable, to the faint scar on his neck, and all the way down to the endearing way he tapped his foot as they waited for their coffee. Kurt was perfect, and Blaine was sure that he would embarrass himself if Kurt noticed him gawking, but he couldn't help it.

"Blaine? You still with me?"

Kurt's voice jolted Blaine back to reality. Apparently he wasn't very good at hiding his admiration. It appeared that Kurt was more amused than horrified, judging by the faint red tint along his cheeks and how he was trying to hide his smile by biting his lower lip.

"No! I mean, yes. Hi. Yes, I'm still here." As he spoke, Blaine saw that Kurt was holding out his cup of coffee, which he grabbed with an appreciative nod. They shared another look before walking over to an empty table and sitting down across from each other.

"So, it's pretty cold outside, huh?" Blaine said, not quite sure what else to talk about.

"I think we're beyond the small talk stage, don't you?" Kurt replied, still smiling.

Blaine played with the lid of his cup for a moment before trying to speak again. "I'm sorry. I'm not really good at this, am I?" He gasped as Kurt's cool fingers slid over his own, the touch immediately calming his nerves.

"That's okay. We can figure it out together."

Blaine turned his hand so that he could interlace his fingers with Kurt's. He was finding that touching Kurt was an incredible feeling and he couldn't get enough of it. Growing up, Blaine had read a lot of stories about soul mates meeting each other and how intense it was, but this was nothing like how his books described it.

They stayed at the Lima Bean for hours, talking about anything and everything they could come up with. Being with Kurt was comfortable and familiar and Blaine felt so at home it was making his head spin. He couldn't stop smiling as Kurt played with his fingers on the table, and while it was a small gesture, it was also so natural that Blaine was certain they had spent years together in past lives. There was no other explanation for it.

“Do you have any plans for the rest of the day?” Kurt asked later, sounding a bit hesitant. They had both been through at least three cups of coffee, switching to decaf after the first two. The last thing either of them needed was to be even more jittery than they already were.

“Do you have to go?” Blaine winced at the panic in his voice. “I don’t want to keep you if you have other plans. You probably want to spend time with your family and – “

“Blaine, stop,” Kurt said, cutting off Blaine’s nervous rant. “I was only asking because I wanted to invite you over to my house. Well, my dad’s house, actually. We have dinner together every Friday, and I thought that maybe... you would like to meet my family?”

Blaine stared at Kurt for a moment before he realized what he was asking. It seemed like such a big step to take already, but at the same time, it was a given that they would be together for the rest of their lives. He figured It wasn’t rushing if it was something inevitable.

“Of course I would,” Blaine answered, squeezing Kurt’s hand. “Do you think they would mind?”

“Absolutely not. My dad even started asking about you on a daily basis, so you have nothing to worry about. Besides, I already asked him,” Kurt said with a wink. “And maybe we can stop by your parents’ house sometime tomorrow?”

That definitely hit a nerve. Blaine had a gut feeling that his family’s reaction to meeting Kurt would be less than stellar. He didn’t think they would be outwardly rude - passive aggression was more their style - but he could be wrong. His family wasn’t nearly as close as Kurt’s family, based on the way Kurt described his relationships with his father, stepmother, and stepbrother. Blaine also had yet to tell his parents that he and Kurt found each other, and that was a task he was definitely not looking forward to.

“Yeah, okay. I’ll have to check to make sure they are going to be around first, but I’m sure we can figure something out.”

It wasn’t technically a lie. Blaine’s parents did spend a lot of time at parties and fancy dinners in the days following Christmas, so it was likely they would have plans. Blaine didn’t want to keep Kurt a secret, but he also didn’t want to ruin everything before it properly started. He was legitimately afraid that his family, especially his father, would scare Kurt away somehow, and that was a risk he wasn’t ready to take just yet.

“Sounds like a plan,” Kurt said. “How long are you in town for? I feel silly for not asking sooner.”

“Until a week from Monday, and then I have to get back to school to start preparing my composition for the Cornell Spring Music Series.”

“Oh,” Kurt said, obviously disappointed. “I have to go back next Friday. I start my internship with Christian Dior a week before the semester starts, so I have a ton of paperwork to do and I have to get my portfolio in order.”

“So we have a week together,” Blaine said, his grip on Kurt’s hand becoming painfully tight.

“It looks that way.”

“We’ll have to make the most of it, then.”

They both stared intently at their joined hands and Blaine admired how perfectly they fit together.

“We should get going,” Kurt said. He sounded cheerful, but Blaine could sense a bit of sadness underneath and he understood completely. A week isn’t that long, and then who knew when the next time they’d see each other would be. “Dinner will be ready soon, I’m sure, and I know Dad and Carole are dying to meet you.”

Blaine nodded and got up from the table. He went around to Kurt’s chair and grabbed Kurt’s coat so that he could hold it for him as he put it on. Kurt flushed and thanked him softly before leading the way back out into the cold.

Their upcoming separation loomed over them, and Blaine felt slightly ill thinking about it. He shook those thoughts away as best as he could and decided that if their time was limited, focusing on the negative would be a waste. He had better things to do, anyway.

Chapter Nine

Kurt was a nervous wreck by the time they reached his father's house. Blaine was absolutely stunning, and Kurt wasn't used to having something so wonderful and precious in his life outside of his immediate family. His fears lacked any logic, since he and Blaine were *soul mates* and soul mates were supposed to be together, but Kurt was still waiting for the other shoe to drop at any moment. Good things came few and far between for him, and Blaine was definitely a good thing.

He pulled into the driveway and gestured for Blaine to pull in behind him. He had been checking his rearview mirror more often than usual the entire drive, just to make sure Blaine was still following him, so it was a strange sort of relief when Blaine parked his car and turned the engine off. Blaine met him by his car door and they joined hands before heading up the walkway.

Kurt glanced over at Blaine before opening the door and noticed that his eyes were practically bulging out of his head and he was shaking. It wasn't just his hands, either. Blaine looked like he was going to drill a hole through the ground like a jackhammer.

"Hey, we don't have to do this if you don't want to," Kurt said, trying to tame his own anxiety. Bringing Blaine home to meet his family *was* a big deal, and while he was sure that everyone would get along wonderfully, there was still a chance that something could go wrong. "No pressure at all."

"I want to," Blaine said quickly. Kurt inhaled sharply when he felt Blaine's hands slide around his waist, leaving only a few inches between them. "I want everything with you, you know. That includes big, scary family dinners. I guess I'm just nervous. I want to make a good impression."

"And you will," Kurt reassured him, bringing his hands up to rest on Blaine's shoulders and giving them a gentle squeeze.

Blaine pulled Kurt closer to him. Kurt's mouth went dry and he could feel his skin warming up, especially on his chest where Blaine's name was written out in a solid promise of *forever*. They stood there for what felt like hours. Kurt licked his lips and wondered what Blaine was thinking. He was feeling so much all at once it was overwhelming and a little bit frightening. He had only started talking to Blaine a few short weeks ago, and just met him a few hours ago, but Kurt was absolutely positive that he had already fallen quite hard.

Kurt didn't expect it to happen so quickly even though, in hindsight, he should have. Soul mates were meant to be attracted to each other both physically and emotionally as soon as they met. The bond would only grow stronger, Kurt knew, but this was already so much more than any type of connection he had ever experienced with anyone else.

Blaine's eyes flickered from Kurt's eyes to his mouth and back, and Kurt felt his heart speed up. He could smell the coffee on Blaine's breath and see every burst of color in Blaine's eyes. Their chests were barely an inch from touching and the invisible string that bound them to each other was almost tangible, wrapping around them tightly to pull them closer together. The need for contact grew stronger by the minute and it made it hard for Kurt to breathe. He closed his eyes half a second before their lips *finally* met.

Kurt's mind went entirely blank. Nothing existed except for Blaine's arms and his scent, the heat between their chests growing more intense. All Kurt could hear was the rushing of blood in his ears and every sensation in his body was centered on Blaine's warm lips pressed firmly to his. Kurt always thought that his first kiss – the one that mattered, anyway – would be a little bit sloppy or awkward, but it was instinctive, their bond taking over and allowing them to move their lips in ways their bodies responded to the best.

They ended the kiss with a final short press of lips and pulled back so that their foreheads were still touching. Kurt wanted to dive back in and drown in the taste of Blaine's mouth, but they were outside of his father's front door and it was getting cold despite the warmth that was pulsing through him in waves.

"We should get inside," Kurt said, so softly it could barely be called speaking. He brought one hand up to rub at the back of Blaine's neck gently. "I'm sure my dad has been watching us, so the longer we stay out here, the more uncomfortable it's going to be in there."

Blaine laughed lightly and lifted his head so he could place a quick kiss to the tip of Kurt's nose, making Kurt giggle. They untangled themselves from each other, but Kurt was quick to slip his hand back into Blaine's, not wanting to break all contact just yet. He used his other hand to turn the door knob and led Blaine into the house.

As Kurt had expected, his father was sitting on the couch by the front window, which was incidentally the best seat in the house for spying on any goings-on outside. As soon as Kurt walked in with Blaine in tow, Burt stood up and approached them. If Kurt had any doubts that his father had been watching, they

dissolved very quickly when he saw the genuine smile on his father's face, combined with a slightly raised eyebrow.

"Dad, this is Blaine." Kurt gestured next to him, and then he turned his attention to Blaine. "Blaine, this is my father, Burt Hummel."

Blaine nonchalantly wiped the palm of his hand against his thigh before extending it to Burt. "It's great to finally meet you, sir. Kurt's told me a lot about you," Blaine said, and Kurt gave his other hand a reassuring squeeze.

Burt looked Blaine up and down as he grasped his hand in a firm handshake.

"Kurt's told me a lot about you, too," Burt said.

Kurt hoped that his father would skip the the intimidation act. Blaine was already nervous and Kurt felt bad enough for springing dinner on him so suddenly. He had been planning on emailing Blaine about it before they both headed out to Ohio, but he got so wrapped up in the excitement of actually meeting Blaine, it had slipped his mind.

"He has?" Blaine asked, clearly surprised.

"Of course I have, silly," Kurt said, rolling his eyes. "I wasn't kidding when I said my dad started to ask about you."

Burt didn't say anything, but then a wide grin took over the stern look he was trying to maintain. "Welcome to the family, kid." Burt patted Blaine on the shoulder and headed toward the dining room.

Kurt took Blaine's coat and hung it up in the hall closet with his own before following his father with Blaine close behind him, still holding onto his hand.

~^*^~

Blaine walked into the dining room and immediately found himself being drawn into a warm hug by a woman slightly shorter than him.

"Hi, sweetie. It's wonderful to finally meet you," she said as she pulled away. Blaine recognized right away that it was Carole. Kurt had described her journey in full detail, from unfortunate fashion victim in acid wash jeans to the classy woman that stood before him.

"You must be Mrs. Hummel. I'm very happy to meet you, too," Blaine said, shooting her a smile. "Something smells excellent."

"Oh, you're quite the charmer, aren't you?" Carole laughed. "And none of that 'Mrs. Hummel' business. Just call me Carole."

"Where's Finn?" Kurt asked.

"I sent him out to grab some cheesecake, but he should be home any minute," Carole replied. "Why don't you boys have a seat and I'll start bringing dinner out."

"Would you like some help?" Blaine asked, making sure he remembered his manners.

"Yes, actually," Carole said, smiling warmly at Blaine. She turned toward Burt, who, Blaine noticed, was eyeing the thumb that he was using to stroke across Kurt's knuckles, not that Blaine could bring himself to stop. The contact was vital to him. "Come on, honey. You can carry out the turkey."

Burt rolled his eyes - Blaine could definitely see where Kurt got it from - but he followed Carole to the kitchen, leaving Blaine alone with Kurt.

Blaine took a deep breath as he and Kurt sat down at the table next to each other. Kurt's family seemed extremely kind and Blaine was relieved that things were going well so far.

"That wasn't so bad, was it?" Kurt asked him with a smile, placing their hands casually on Blaine's thigh under the table. They hadn't let go of each other for more than a few seconds since they walked into the house and Blaine wondered how hard it would be to eat one-handed.

"No. You're parents are great," Blaine said. He felt a small burst of resentment toward his own family, but he pushed it aside.

Kurt flashed Blaine another gorgeous smile and it made Blaine want to kiss him again. Their kiss outside was breathtaking, and he hoped to have a few – or a hundred – more before the night was over. Unfortunately, as soon as Blaine started to lean forward, the front door opened and slammed shut.

“Mom! I got the dessert!”

Blaine heard heavy footsteps approaching, and then a very tall man walked into the dining room.

“Hey, you must be Blaine! I’m Finn, but you probably know that already,” he said while taking off his puffy down vest. “Thank god you’re here, dude. Kurt wouldn’t shut up about you.”

“Why don’t you put that cheesecake in the fridge?” Kurt said with more volume than necessary, an adorable exaggerated smile on his face.

“It’s nice to meet you too, Finn,” Blaine said. They shook hands briefly and Finn walked into the kitchen. Blaine then turned to Kurt.

“So you talk about me a lot, huh?” Blaine asked with a smirk.

“Shut up,” Kurt said, his cheeks turning a faint red.

Blaine laughed and brought Kurt’s hand up to kiss his knuckles, a gesture that increased the intensity of Kurt’s blush.

A few minutes later, everyone was seated and dishes were being passed around. Blaine found it very easy to talk to Kurt’s family. They were all laid back and friendly toward each other and to him, and they continued to sit at the table for a little while after everyone had finished eating, chatting amicably. It was very different from the stuffy family dinners he was used to.

“You boys are going to be on your own for a little while,” Carole said as she got up to start clearing the table. “Your father and I were invited for cocktails with the neighbors.”

“I’m actually heading out with some of the guys from the old glee club,” Finn chimed in before shoving the last bite of his second piece of cheesecake into his mouth.

“So it looks like it’s just going to be you two here. Alone,” Burt said, looking directly at Kurt and Blaine.

"We'll be fine," Kurt said, tilting his head to the side and narrowing his eyes. Blaine smiled to himself at how similar Kurt's mannerisms were to Burt's even though, on the surface, they had very little in common. "I learned to dial 911 a long time ago."

"I know that," Burt responded with a hint of irritation. "Just don't do anything stupid and remember that we could be back at any time."

"Okay, Dad. We'll keep that in mind."

"Any time at all."

"Got it."

"You'll never know when we're coming."

"Dad!"

Blaine watched the exchange but his mind had checked out of the conversation as soon as he heard that he and Kurt would be alone in the house. The thought made him even more nervous. He was very attracted to Kurt, which was expected, but they had yet to discuss the physical side of their relationship. Neither of them had any experience sexually, and Blaine didn't want to push anything. They would definitely need to talk about it before things got too *intense*.

Burt and Carole left shortly after dinner was cleaned up, and Finn followed soon after. Blaine wasn't quite sure what to do with himself, so he stood near the doorway where he had waved good bye to Kurt's family, waiting for Kurt to take the lead.

"Do you want to watch a movie? I have a pretty extensive collection," Kurt offered, and Blaine was relieved that Kurt seemed just as nervous as he was. "Or... I could show you my room?"

Blaine swallowed. He didn't want to assume anything, and he was pretty sure that Kurt didn't mean anything other than a genuine offer to show Blaine his bedroom, but there was still a crackling tension between them that was making Blaine's stomach flip.

"Okay," Blaine said quietly. Kurt nodded once and took Blaine's hand, showing him the way upstairs.

Chapter Ten

Kurt felt his body start to tremble as he and Blaine approached his bedroom door. When they reached the threshold, he gestured for Blaine to go first, needing to take several slow breaths to steady himself before passing through.

It was odd for Kurt to think of the space as anything but *his* bedroom and his parents hadn't changed it much since they started using it as a guest room. His room in New York was substantially smaller, both in size and character. Kurt hadn't taken much with him when he moved. He had a lot of wonderful memories of Lima mixed in with the bad ones, but leaving had been his chance at a new beginning. He had wanted to make new memories and he hadn't felt it necessary to bring old glee club trophies and other junk with him. What little he did bring, other than his clothing and a few necessities, was stored away in a box and tucked away in the very back of his closet, only seeing the light of day during nights when his homesickness got to be too much.

Kurt stood with his back leaning against his closed door, watching Blaine as he took in every small detail of the room. Blaine looked at every picture frame and knick knack with delight, his smile unfaltering and genuine. Kurt was allowing Blaine into the world he had left behind at the first possible opportunity and it made him squirm with vulnerability.

"So, this is it," Kurt said. "I wish I could tell you stories about growing up here, but we didn't move in until just before Dad and Carole got married."

Blaine slowly made his way around the perimeter of the room, his bare feet silent on the carpet. Kurt felt something coil up inside him as his eyes followed Blaine's movements, something much more profound than the fluttering of butterflies. It was a deep throbbing ache that set his body on fire from the inside and threatened to push its way out through his skin, destroying every wall that was holding him together.

Kurt slowly walked toward Blaine, who was looking at an old corkboard covered with pictures of Kurt's old friends from McKinley. Kurt stood behind him, watching the profile of Blaine's face, bright with adoration and amazement, and he just had to touch him. Kurt placed his hands on Blaine's small, solid waist, hearing Blaine's breath hitch when he slid them around to his stomach with a firm touch. He needed to feel Blaine's unyielding body beneath his fingertips, needed to have every form of contact possible.

Kurt took a small step forward, pressing his chest against Blaine's back and splaying a hand directly over his heart, the warmth seeping into his skin and sending sparks down his spine. He pushed into Blaine's skin over the spot that held his name, letting out a shuddering breath at the thought of actually seeing it written out.

Blaine dropped his head back onto Kurt's shoulder, both of his hands meeting Kurt's hand on his chest, clutching it and pressing it further in as if he wanted Kurt to penetrate straight into his heart. Kurt leaned his head forward, burying it into Blaine's exposed neck and just *breathed*, nothing but Blaine filling his lungs and giving him life. He pulled Blaine even closer, tightening his arms around him, but it still wasn't enough.

"Blaine," Kurt breathed out against Blaine's ear, feeling him shiver within the circle of his arms. "I just... I want..."

"I know," Blaine said, voice cracking slightly. Kurt loosened his hold just enough to allow Blaine to turn around. They stood there, foreheads touching and eyes half-lidded, sharing the same air and space and reveling in their closeness.

Kurt swallowed thickly, his mind and body buzzing with emotions he couldn't name. He brought a hand up to rest against the back of Blaine's neck, swallowing down a groan as he touched the warm, bare skin. He felt Blaine's fingers graze the side of his face and he couldn't hold back any longer. He closed the distance between them, waiting until the last possible second to close his eyes.

The soft press of Blaine's lips felt so amazing it was almost unbearable. Kurt could feel it everywhere and there was no doubt in his mind that this was what he had been waiting for. The kiss was so different from their last and still just as recognizable as something that only they could share. Kurt breathed out slowly through his nose, parting his lips slightly in an invitation that Blaine gladly accepted. The slide of Blaine's tongue against his nearly made Kurt's knees give out, and he probably would have fallen over if Blaine hadn't been there to hold him steady. He groaned as Blaine deepened the kiss further, his tongue more insistent, more desperate.

Without realizing it, Kurt had started to walk toward the bed, gently pushing Blaine backward. They continued to explore each other's mouths with the kind of passion that could only be found between lovers that were separated for ages and then suddenly reunited, with no other desire than to be together. Kurt felt Blaine jump as the back of his knees hit the bed. He resisted the urge to push Blaine back and

devour him with his mouth and hands, not wanting to move too quickly. If Blaine had asked him at that moment, Kurt would have gladly stripped himself bare and laid himself out with no hesitation, but he didn't want to assume that Blaine would do the same.

Blaine was the first to pull back, his eyes shining and his mouth swollen red. He grabbed onto the bottom of Kurt's shirt, looking at him for permission that was granted in the form of a breathless nod, and pulled it up just enough to allow him to slide his hands up Kurt's back.

Kurt's eyes fluttered closed and his breathing quickened. Blaine's hands on his bare skin were driving him insane. He dropped his head back as Blaine nosed at his jaw, coaxing his head to the side, and whimpered quietly when he felt the tip of Blaine's tongue trace the lines of his neck. Kurt's fingers were clutching at Blaine's shoulders and Blaine's fingertips were digging into his back in a way that could have been painful, but neither of them seemed to mind as long as it meant that they didn't have to stop touching. Kurt's hands eventually managed to find their way to the buttons of Blaine's shirt, pausing for barely a second before he started to work them open.

Blaine showed no signs of protest, continuing his assault on Kurt's neck, licking, sucking, *tasting*. Kurt whined when Blaine finally pulled away, but then he realized that all the buttons on Blaine's shirt were undone and he wasted no time sliding it down Blaine's arms, revealing more of Blaine's skin and feeling lightheaded at the sight of him. Kurt maintained eye contact with Blaine as he started to pull his own shirt up, tugging it over his head and tossing it to the side.

He had to fight back a sob when he saw his name - *his* name – etched into Blaine's chest. He traced the letters one by one with his fingertip, over and over again, memorizing every line and flourish. He felt Blaine's gaze on him, watching him intently as if he was also waiting for a rejection, like his whole world would cave in on itself if Kurt wasn't happy with what he saw. To have that kind of power over another person's heart was a daunting responsibility. Then again, giving that power to someone else was even more frightening.

Kurt could feel tears burning in his eyes, everything too much to handle all at once. This was the confirmation that he needed. For so long, he thought that he would never find somebody like Blaine, but then there he was.

He was pulled back to the present as Blaine's fingers, warm and radiating with stability and comfort, reached up and grazed over his chest. Blaine rubbed his thumb over the 'B' of his name and Kurt looked up in time to see a tear fall down Blaine's cheek.

"You're real. How are you real?" Blaine whispered, shaking his head in awe.

Kurt could feel his face flush, too hot under his already scorching skin. "I was just thinking the same thing," Kurt said, his voice thick with emotion.

Blaine pulled away slowly and sat on the bed behind him. He shifted back so he could lay his head on the pillows, and then held out his arms in silent invitation. Kurt moved onto the bed and settled on his side, facing Blaine, who immediately turned toward him. Kurt placed his hand on Blaine's shoulder, rubbing small circles into the smooth, firm skin with his thumb. Their legs were tangled together and Blaine laid his hand over Kurt's wrist, leaning forward to brush his nose against Kurt's.

"Hi," Blaine said softly, his warm smile making Kurt melt instantly.

"Hi," Kurt said back. He bit his lip, watching Blaine's eyes flicker down and darken.

Kurt wasn't sure who moved first, but within seconds their mouths were fused together, colliding and repelling, fast and hot and wet. Kurt ran his hands over Blaine's stomach, taking in the smoothness of his skin that gave way to coarse hair as he moved lower. He pushed Blaine back, rolling with him until he was settled between his legs. Kurt licked a line across Blaine's lower lip, and as Blaine opened his mouth in a gasp, he dipped his tongue inside. The urgency from before was returning and Kurt was overwhelmed with how strongly his body was responding to Blaine underneath him.

He shifted slightly, the pressure between them causing a whine to slip from Blaine's mouth. Kurt could feel Blaine's cock pressing against his own, and it made him light-headed knowing that Blaine was hard because of him.

Blaine's hips jerked up as Kurt moved his mouth lower, sucking on the skin along his jaw and sliding his tongue over the sharp line of his collarbone.

"Kurt, please..." Blaine said, his eyes half-lidded and lip trembling slightly. "Please. Need you."

Kurt wasn't entirely sure of what Blaine wanted him to do, so he continued to follow his instincts. He pressed a kiss in the center of Blaine's chest before moving back up and claiming his mouth. He couldn't stop the way his hips began to move, slowly grinding down into Blaine, who lifted his leg up to wrap around Kurt's waist, encouraging him to press down harder. Kurt reached down and squeezed at Blaine's thigh, rolling his hips in tight circles, the friction causing him to keen loudly into Blaine's slack mouth. A part of him thought that maybe things were too good and moving too quickly, but everything felt so *right* that Kurt couldn't bring himself to care.

Blaine's hands roamed up and down Kurt's back, dipping into the waistband of his pants and scratching lightly at his skin. Their lips continued to move together perfectly as the grinding of their hips began to quicken, both of them panting into each other's mouths and slowly moving closer toward the edge.

Kurt could feel waves of heat coursing through him and pooling at the base of his spine. He broke their kiss and opened his eyes. He needed to see Blaine, needed to know that Blaine was feeling everything that he was, because there was no way he could put it into words. Blaine's face was flushed and his mouth was wet and open. Blaine lifted a hand to Kurt's face, locking eyes with him and stroking his cheek with his thumb. Kurt kept his gaze on Blaine's face as he thrust down one more time, coming with an intensity he'd never felt before. The shock of his orgasm was tremendous, and Kurt collapsed onto Blaine, who didn't seem to mind the weight of Kurt's body pressing him down. He wrapped his arms around Kurt, holding onto him tightly as the stuttering movements of Kurt's aftershocks made him fall over the edge seconds later. He bit down on Kurt's shoulder as his entire body convulsed underneath him.

Neither of them moved for a long time. They were sweaty and struggling to catch their breath, the magnitude of what they had done too intense to process while in an orgasm-induced haze.

Kurt shifted so that he wasn't directly on top of Blaine but remained pressed to his side, his arms tight around Blaine's body, holding him close. He felt content in a way that was new and exciting, the happiness that he had been longing for his entire life seeping into his bones and filling him to the brim. Kurt's pants felt sticky and were starting to become uncomfortable, but it wasn't enough to make him want to move. He could hear Blaine's breath start to even out and only then did he allow himself to drift off, his heart bursting with affection toward the man in his arms.

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When Blaine woke up the next morning, the first thing he noticed was how warm he felt, both inside and out. He opened his eyes slowly, taking in his surroundings. He was confused for a moment at the unfamiliar room, but then he suddenly remembered everything. Kurt was still asleep and wrapped around him, and the sight of him made Blaine grin wildly to himself. Their first day together had been perfect, and they still had a few more to enjoy each other.

Blaine shifted a bit, immediately noticing the stickiness in his pants. He bit his lip to suppress a moan as he thought about their activities the previous night, the way Kurt looked he came making Blaine's cock twitch. He forced those thoughts away, even though the phantom pressure of Kurt's body on top of him remained very present.

He and Kurt should talk more about the physical side of their relationship, and soon. As wonderful as it had been, Blaine hadn't actually meant for any of it to happen. It had only been their first day together and there was still so much that they didn't know about each other. Still, the spark and desire and *need* had been undeniable. Blaine knew that many soulmates physically established their bonds shortly after meeting, but that didn't mean that they had to. Kurt hadn't seemed to be opposed to anything they had done, but Blaine made a mental note to bring it up later.

Blaine ran his fingers over Kurt's naked back, trying to memorize every line of muscle. He had felt the connection between him and Kurt instantly, and that feeling grew the longer he was around him. A few minutes later, Kurt shifted, and Blaine was soon staring into a pair of beautiful eyes that were so full of adoration it made Blaine's breath hitch.

"G'morning," Kurt said, yawning into Blaine's chest. Blaine threaded his fingers through Kurt's hair and scratched lightly at his scalp, making Kurt just about purr in enjoyment.

"Morning," Blaine replied. "How are you feeling?"

Kurt lifted his head and rested his chin on Blaine's chest so that he could look at him as he spoke.

"Happy. Glorious. Wonderful," Kurt said with a smile that faded as he moved slightly. "Absolutely disgusting. I really need to change my pants."

"Same here," Blaine chuckled before smiling at Kurt softly. "I still don't want to move, though. I want to stay here forever."

"Me too," Kurt agreed. He dropped a kiss to Blaine's chest, directly over his heart and scooted closer so that he was almost on top of Blaine. "Mmmm... you're really warm."

Blaine closed his eyes, taking in the firm weight of Kurt on top of him and the scent of his skin. He really did need to change his pants, but that meant going back to his parents' house. A sense of dread crept up on him along with the realization that he would also have to explain to them where he had been all night.

He then heard voices coming from outside the bedroom door, meaning that Kurt's family was already awake. Blaine groaned internally at the awkwardness that he would likely have to face once they finally got out of bed.

"I can hear you thinking," Kurt said suddenly, pulling Blaine from his thoughts. "What's on your mind?"

"Honestly? I was trying to figure out if it's worth the risk to climb out your window if it means avoiding your father."

Kurt laughed, the sound sweet and joyful, and Blaine wondered if it would be too weird if he asked Kurt to record a video of his laugh so he could hear it whenever he wanted and see how it made Kurt's entire face light up. Blaine was sure that Kurt's laugh was his new favorite thing, and he vowed to himself to make it happen as much as possible.

They lay there for a few more minutes before slowly getting up. Kurt tossed Blaine a pair of pajama pants and a t-shirt before grabbing some clothes for himself. Blaine went to the bathroom to change and get cleaned up, and then he came out to find Kurt already changed. He kissed Kurt lightly before their hands found each other's instinctively as they went to join Kurt's family.

When they walked into the kitchen, still hand-in-hand, Burt, Carole, and Finn were already finishing up their breakfast. Blaine smiled sheepishly when he met Carole's eyes, and purposely avoided looking in Burt's direction.

"Have a seat, boys," Carole said, waving her hand toward the two empty chairs at the table.

Blaine sat down and shifted his chair closer to Kurt, who gave his thigh a small squeeze before pouring both of them a cup of coffee. Blaine was proud of himself for not flailing when Kurt made his just the way he liked, clearly remembering from their coffee date the day before.

“So, did you two enjoy yourselves last night?” Burt said, casually flipping through the newspaper.

Blaine could feel his face heat up instantly. He dropped his spoon into his mug, swearing to himself as he splashed coffee onto his plate. He almost knocked over a carafe of orange juice when he reached for a napkin and managed to stick his forearm into the jelly he had spread on his toast. Once he had settled down and the universe decided to stop punishing him, he looked up to see everyone, including Kurt, staring at him in various degrees of amusement.

“Dude, if you’re trying to hide the fact that you two totally got it on, you’re kinda failing,” Finn said, causing Carole to snort into her own coffee.

“Well, we just, umm... I didn’t... “ Blaine wasn’t really sure what he should say, so he trailed off, relieved when Kurt spoke up.

“Dad, I hardly think you really want to know how our night went, and Finn, you’re not helping,” Kurt said as he buttered a piece of toast. “Now stop trying to embarrass my boyfriend and finish your food.”

Blaine felt his neck crack with how fast he turned toward Kurt. He saw that Kurt was completely calm, not even noticing Blaine staring at him. Kurt had called him his boyfriend. Blaine had a boyfriend. They were soulmates and *boyfriends*. Blaine bit his lip to keep from squealing. Kurt had said it so nonchalantly, like it was just common knowledge and there was no reason to question it. Blaine forgot all of the awkwardness that had just happened and leaned closer into Kurt, joining in on the conversations starting around him and feeling like a part of the family.

Chapter Eleven

It wasn't until a couple hours after breakfast with Kurt and his family that Blaine returned to his parents' house. If it was up to him, he wouldn't have left at all, but he needed a shower and a change of clothes, and he had every intention to go back to Kurt's as soon as possible. He slipped in through the front door quietly, not wanting to alert either of his parents to his return. Neither one of them had tried to contact him – he had checked his phone sporadically – and that didn't surprise Blaine, but he was sure that they would at least ask where he had been. He was almost at the top of the stairs leading to his bedroom when his mother's voice rang out, startling him.

"Care to tell me where you were all night?"

Blaine turned slowly to find his mother at the bottom of the stairs, arms crossed and eyebrow raised in question. She wasn't one to beat around the bush.

"I spent the night at K - at a friend's house." Blaine cleared his throat before continuing. "I spent the night at a friend's house."

"A friend?" Rose didn't look convinced.

Blaine realized that this was the perfect opportunity to tell her the truth. There was no reason for him to hide it anymore, now that he and Kurt had met and were *boyfriends*. Blaine wanted to tell his mother that Kurt was wonderful, stunning, and everything that a parent should want their child's soulmate to be.

"Yeah. Just a friend," Blaine lied, chickening out at the last second. "We were catching up and it got late, so I just crashed at his place."

Rose nodded once, appearing satisfied with his vague answer.

"Well, just try to remember to call next time," she said, giving Blaine a pointed look.

"Okay, Mom," Blaine said, forcing himself to smile before turning around and heading into the guest bedroom. Unlike Kurt's parents, Blaine's parents had opted to redecorate his old room completely when he moved out, boxing up his things and storing them in the basement. The room was cold and unfamiliar,

not like Kurt's room, which comfortable even though Kurt only lived there for a few weeks out of the year. It never really bothered Blaine until now.

Blaine jumped when he felt his phone buzz in his pocket. He pulled it out and smiled broadly when he saw that he had two text messages from Kurt.

Since we've made it official, I have decided that it's time to take the next step and start using your phone number.

I miss you already.

Blaine responded with nimble fingers before grabbing a new outfit and heading to the shower. He had changed back into his soiled pants before leaving Kurt's house despite Kurt's insistence that he could borrow the pajama pants Kurt gave him to wear. He did keep the t-shirt though, and he could smell the faint traces of Kurt's scent on it as he pulled it over his head. Blaine looked himself in the mirror and traced Kurt's name with his fingers. The letters seemed darker, more defined, and much heavier on his chest. His heart felt like it had grown a hundred sizes and was filled with more love than Blaine could ever have expected.

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"Have you talked to your parents about having dinner?" Kurt asked the next day.

Blaine had spent the night again, going back to Kurt's after a nearly silent meal with his parents. They had spent most of the evening spending time with Kurt's family, playing board games and enjoying each other's company. Blaine was amazed at how open and welcoming they were, already treating him like one of their own so soon after meeting him for the first time. Even Burt seemed to be warming up to him, although Kurt had assured him that the 'tough guy' routine was all an act.

"Yeah, they have a lot going on," Blaine responded, toeing the line between honesty and deceit. He avoided Kurt's gaze and pretended to be interested in a sweater hanging on the clothing rack between them. They had gone to the nearby shopping mall, Kurt eager to use the gift cards he had received for Christmas.

"Hopefully they will have a free night before we have to head back to school," Blaine added as an afterthought.

Blaine was extremely relieved when Kurt only nodded and returned to the array of clothing in front of him.

The next couple of days passed by much too quickly, in Blaine's opinion, and before he knew it, there were only two days left before Kurt had to return to New York. Blaine spent nearly every moment of each day with Kurt. They went back to the Lima Bean daily, cooked meals together that were too ambitious, watched trashy reality shows, sang together all over the house, and just enjoyed being around each other, even when all they did was cuddle or sleep. Blaine asked Kurt questions constantly in order to absorb as much information as he could. Their time together was quickly dwindling, the reality of their separation weighing heavily on their minds despite their best efforts at not thinking about it.

They were inseparable, much to the amusement of Kurt's family. Finn teased them the most, but it was always in good fun. Finn hadn't met his soulmate yet, but Blaine swore he would give him a hell of a time once he did. Burt had shocked Blaine completely on the Monday after he and Kurt had met, handing him a spare key to the house, saying that it was because he was sick of answering the door every morning, although the quirk of his lips indicated that it was much more than that.

Their physical relationship was also developing, although progress was much slower. They had talked about it, and they decided that they would allow things to happen naturally rather than expect anything sexual from each other. They also promised each other that they would speak up if the other did something that made them uncomfortable. They both needed each other so badly, but they didn't want to get too wrapped up in sex when they had such a limited time to learn about each other. Neither one of them regretted their actions of that first night, both admitting among deep blushes and stuttering words that it was one of the most intense moments of their young lives.

Blaine arrived at Kurt's on New Year's Eve buzzing with excitement. Burt and Carole had left earlier in the day with plans on spending the night at Carole's sister's house. Apparently Carole's family could throw a really good party.

Blaine and Kurt had been invited to spend the evening with Finn and some of Kurt's friends from high school, but Kurt had declined, much to Blaine's surprise. He was going to object, but then Kurt had whispered in his ear that he was looking forward to taking advantage of an empty house, and Blaine would have been a fool to object.

Blaine let himself in and walked to the kitchen, the smell of whatever Kurt was preparing making his mouth water instantly. He found Kurt standing at the stove, stirring whatever was in the pot, and looking immaculate. Blaine slowly walked toward him, wanting to surprise him. However, Kurt didn't even flinch when Blaine wrapped his arms around him.

"You heard me walk in," Blaine said, tightening his arms around Kurt and looking over his shoulder at the food simmering in the pot. Kurt shook his head.

"No. I felt you walk in," Kurt said simply, leaning back further into Blaine.

Blaine took the spoon Kurt was holding from him and set it down on the counter before turning Kurt around so he was facing him. He leaned forward to place a soft kiss on Kurt's warm lips. Blaine was sure that he could do nothing but kiss Kurt for the rest of his life and be completely happy. Kurt pulled back and wrapped his arms tightly around Blaine's shoulders.

"Dinner's almost ready. Pour the drinks?"

Blaine nodded and set out to find the some glasses. He had just finished pouring when Kurt joined him in the dining room with a steaming tray. Everything was delicious and Blaine expected no less. He enjoyed watching Kurt preen when he told him so, loving that he could make Kurt feel good about himself. Blaine had gotten the impression that Kurt had a difficult time when it came to self-confidence, as much as he tried to act otherwise. Kurt was always open and happy around him, but Blaine did notice that Kurt would be more subdued when out in public or when out with his other friends.

They had invited Kurt's old friend Mercedes out for lunch the day before, and while she seemed thrilled to see Kurt – and even more thrilled to meet Blaine – Kurt didn't seem to share the same amount of enthusiasm. Blaine didn't want to pry, but it was another topic that he filed away, wanting to bring it up when things weren't so new between them. Kurt hadn't been cold or cruel by any means, but he was definitely not the same Kurt that Blaine loved.

That was another topic that Blaine wanted to discuss. He and Kurt had been talking for weeks before meeting and if there was anything that Blaine knew as absolute truth it was that he had fallen completely and madly in love with Kurt. He just had to find the right time to say it.

After they finished dinner, Blaine allowed Kurt to pull him into the living room. They dropped down onto the couch, talking animatedly about nothing at all, their bodies drawn to each other like magnets. They were soon pressed up against each other, Blaine's cheek resting against Kurt's shoulder. The conversation had waned but the silence was not uncomfortable. Kurt started to hum quietly, a habit that Blaine noticed he did when he was content.

"Sing for me?" Blaine asked suddenly, not really sure where the question came from. He had heard Kurt sing before, in the car and in the house, and he was well aware of how wonderful Kurt sounded.

"What do you want to hear?" Kurt asked quietly, playing with Blaine's fingers in his lap. Blaine tilted his head up so that he could look directly into Kurt's eyes.

"Sing about something you love."

Kurt didn't say anything for a moment, staring at Blaine with shining eyes and a small smile that grew as he spoke. "I can't seem to think of any songs written about you. I could try to make one up, but I don't think it will do you justice."

Blaine couldn't help the way his breath hitched or his palms dampened. Kurt had indirectly said that he loved Blaine, and while he had been confident about Kurt's feelings, there was still that small sliver of doubt that dug into his skin periodically, reminding him of its presence and that things don't always go as planned.

Blaine breathed out the smallest of laughs and cupped Kurt's cheek. He leaned up and Kurt met him halfway in a sweet kiss. Kurt's lips were soft and pliable, giving and taking against his own, and it wasn't long before Blaine felt them part slightly, Kurt's tongue tracing his bottom lip tentatively. Blaine felt something stir inside of him, the desire that he had been trying to suppress finally growing tired of being shoved in a corner. What started out as something sweet and chaste soon became anything but, their desperation for each other no longer able to be restrained.

Kurt threaded his fingers through Blaine's belt loops, tugging them to pull Blaine in closer. Blaine instead swung his leg over Kurt, settling into his lap. Their mouths were insistent, sparks flying with every bit of contact. Kurt made quick work of Blaine's shirt, breaking their kiss to latch onto his neck and cover it with hard, wet presses of lips and tongue. Blaine brought a hand up to the back of Kurt's head, threading his

fingers through his hair and tugging gently in encouragement, the vibrations from Kurt's low moan heavenly against his skin.

Blaine gasped as Kurt moved lower, running the tip of his tongue along his collarbone, sucking gently at every spot that made him shudder. Blaine started to rock his hips slowly, feeling Kurt hard beneath him, scratching his blunt nails down Blaine's back. Kurt pulled away suddenly and looked up at Blaine through his eyelashes.

"We should go upstairs," Kurt said, his voice much lower and raspier than Blaine had ever heard it.

"Okay," Blaine said before yelping in shock as Kurt stood up with Blaine still wrapped around him, Kurt's hands supporting him by gripping firmly just below his ass. Blaine tightened his legs around Kurt's waist and clutched at his shoulders, burying his face into his neck. With strength that even Blaine hadn't known he possessed, Kurt quickly walked toward the stairs.

They were halfway up the stairs when Kurt turned and pressed Blaine against the wall, immediately covering his mouth with his own. Blaine opened his mouth instantly, welcoming Kurt's tongue and groaning as Kurt thrust his hips forward. After what seemed like hours, Kurt pulled back and gently lowered Blaine, still holding onto him tightly so he wouldn't lose his balance on the steps. As soon as his feet hit the steps, Blaine was yanking Kurt's shirt over his head, craving more contact.

Blaine gasped at how debauched Kurt already looked, his hair sticking up, cheeks flushed, eyes dark and heavy lidded. They quickly ran the rest of the way up the stairs, stopping again as Blaine pushed Kurt into his bedroom, followed by a loud bang as Blaine kicked the door shut behind him.

~^*^~

Kurt was sure he was going to burst out of his skin at any second. Once they were in his room, they practically jumped onto the bed, their hands touching anywhere they could and their mouths becoming increasingly sloppy and frantic. They only paused to toss all of the throw pillows off the bed, since they only got into the way. Blaine finally settled between Kurt's legs, their hips trying to find a rhythm. Kurt moaned as Blaine started to grind down faster, the pressure on his cock making him shudder. Kurt was sure that he could come at any second and he briefly considered it before deciding that this time, he needed more.

“B-Blaine, *ohgod*,” Kurt keened loudly as Blaine slid down his body and circled his tongue around Kurt’s nipple. “Pants. Need them off.”

Kurt felt Blaine stiffen above him. He was afraid that he had said the wrong thing or that maybe Blaine didn’t want to go any further. With a final flick of his tongue, Blaine sat back on his calves, breathing heavily as he looked down at Kurt. Blaine ran his palms up Kurt’s legs, kneading the firm muscles of his thighs.

“Are you sure?” Blaine asked, and rather than respond with words, Kurt slowly worked his own zipper down while keeping his gaze fixed on Blaine. Once his pants were undone, however, Kurt faltered. He wanted this. He wanted everything with Blaine, but he didn’t know where to start.

Blaine leaned down to place a soft kiss to Kurt’s chest, then trailed his lips up to his chin and mouth.

“You okay?” Blaine asked, rubbing soothing circles into the side of Kurt’s neck with his fingers.

“Yeah, I’m good. It’s just a lot, you know?” Kurt wondered if his voice sounded as small as it felt.

“It is,” Blaine said. “Do you want to stop?”

“I don’t think I *can* stop,” Kurt replied, placing his hand on the back of Blaine’s neck and pulling him down for another kiss.

“Then don’t,” Blaine murmured against Kurt’s lips. He pulled back a bit, his breath ghosting over Kurt’s face and making him shiver. “I don’t want to stop either.”

Spurred on by Blaine’s words, Kurt brought his hands up to Blaine’s chest, dragging them down through the coarse hair that dipped below Blaine’s waistband. With nimble fingers and a surge of confidence, Kurt popped open the button of Blaine’s pants and pulled the zipper down, making Blaine sigh in relief.

Kurt grabbed onto Blaine’s back and rolled them over so he was straddling Blaine’s hips. He shifted back to the end of the bed and stood up.

“Wait, where are you going?” Blaine asked, lifting himself up on his elbows and furrowing his eyebrows in confusion.

Kurt simply smiled at him, dropping his eyes as he hooked his thumbs into the waistband of his underwear and pulled them and his pants down in one quick tug. He stepped out of them and removed his socks before straightening up and looking at Blaine.

Blaine was staring at him with wide eyes, his lips slightly parted and his hands fisting the sheets. Kurt fought the urge to cover himself as Blaine looked him over, not from embarrassment, but from fear that Blaine wouldn't like what he saw. His fears were wiped away when Blaine scrambled to the end of the bed, sitting on the edge and grabbing onto Kurt's hips to pull him closer.

"You're beautiful," Blaine whispered, looking up at Kurt. He leaned forward to place small kisses along Kurt's stomach, seemingly ignoring the fact that Kurt's erection was hot and solid inches away from his face.

Kurt could feel his muscles twitch under Blaine's mouth, each press of lips moving lower until they stopped completely. Kurt looked down to see Blaine staring at him. He could feel Blaine breathing, short puffs of air against the swollen head of his cock making him impossibly harder. Kurt felt himself flush, hopelessly turned on and a little flustered at the hungry look in Blaine's eyes. Being touched and kissed and caressed felt so good already that Kurt couldn't fathom it getting any better.

Then it did.

Kurt let out an embarrassingly loud whine as Blaine licked a line up his length and back down again, ending with a kiss at the base of his cock. He brought a hand to Blaine's face, gently stroking his cheek, meaning to encourage but also needing an anchor. Blaine took Kurt's cock in his hand, looking at it in amazement as he started to stroke it lightly.

"Blaine," Kurt breathed out, dropping his head back as Blaine stilled his hand and kissed the head of his cock with a small amount of suction. "Feels so good."

When Blaine took the head into his mouth, Kurt almost blacked out, groaning loudly at the slick warmth all around him. Blaine swirled his tongue around it before dropping his mouth down further, taking in more, like he was starved for it. It took all of Kurt's strength not to thrust forward and bury himself completely in Blaine's throat.

“Oh god, *Blaine*.” Kurt buried both of his hands in Blaine’s hair, his fingers working themselves through the gel and tugging. Blaine moaned around him, the vibrations making Kurt’s hips jerk. Blaine didn’t seem to mind at all. He reached around and grabbed Kurt’s ass, squeezing hard and holding Kurt in place.

Blaine started to suck harder and faster, hollowing out his cheeks breathing heavily through his nose. He brought a other hand up to gently tug at Kurt’s balls, letting out a muffled whine when Kurt’s hands tightened in his hair.

“M’close, so good oh god,” Kurt gasped out, keening and groaning in a constant loop as Blaine continued to work him over. He could feel his orgasm building up quickly, his legs shaking and sweat starting to form on his skin.

Blaine took him as far into his mouth as he could manage, swirling his tongue around Kurt’s cock sloppily, and that was it. Kurt practically screamed as he came down Blaine’s throat, his eyes clenched tight and his body shaking. Blaine’s throat pulsed around him as he swallowed, wringing out every last drop, and if Kurt had the ability to get hard again so soon, he surely would have.

Kurt’s knees started to buckle as the aftershocks of his orgasm jolted through him. Blaine was there, though, holding onto him firmly, grounding him, just like he had been doing since they found each other. Kurt let out a shuddering sigh, releasing Blaine’s hair and leaning down to kiss Blaine’s forehead. He quickly remembered that Blaine was still hard, and Kurt just couldn’t have that.

Kurt covered Blaine’s mouth with his own, moaning softly when he tasted himself on Blaine’s tongue. He supposed that he should have found the act dirty, but instead it made his spent cock twitch, ambitiously trying to get hard. Kurt pushed back on Blaine’s shoulders, guiding him onto his back and encouraging him to shift backward until his head was back on the pillows. He tugged Blaine’s pants and underwear off in one swipe, only struggling for a moment with his socks, and tossed all of the offending items onto the floor.

Kurt thought that Blaine was gorgeous before, but seeing him completely naked was absolutely mind-blowing. He quickly positioned himself beside Blaine, kissing him with fervor as he trailed his hand down Blaine’s body. He traced the dips between his ribs and pressed his fingers into the soft flesh above his hip bones. Blaine whimpered with need as Kurt ghosted his hand over his hard cock.

Kurt pulled away from Blaine's mouth and kissed along his jaw and down his neck. He wrapped a hand around Blaine's cock, stroking up to gather the slickness that had gathered at the head. Blaine arched into the touch, thrusting up into Kurt's loose fist. Kurt had never touched another man before, but it wasn't as awkward as he thought it would be. Everything with Blaine felt so natural even though it was new to both of them.

In a moment of abandon, Kurt released Blaine and licked his palm a couple times, then went back to jerking Blaine off. The slide was easier and he began pumping Blaine faster, twisting over the head on each upstroke. He shifted back slightly so that he could watch, his eyes moving back and forth between Blaine's face and the cock that was leaking in his hand. Blaine was gripping the sheets so hard that his knuckles were white, a string of incoherent syllables and groans falling from his lips. Kurt's gaze traveled to Blaine's chest, where his name was twitching with the movement of Blaine's body.

Blaine was writhing against the mattress, his body tensing up and back arching, making Kurt's head spin because *he* was the one to make Blaine fall apart. Nobody ever had or ever would do that except for him. Kurt's arm was starting to ache, but he kept up the same steady rhythm, but that was all Blaine needed because after a few more strokes he was coming, shouting Kurt's name and raising his hips off the bed with the force of it. Kurt stared in amazement as Blaine spilled out over his hand and onto his stomach, his body trembling.

Kurt stroked him through it, only stopping when Blaine hissed and jerked away. He reached over Blaine's panting chest to grab a handful of tissues from his nightstand, which he used to wipe off his hand and Blaine's stomach quickly before tossing them in the direction of the garbage can. Kurt pulled up his extra blanket from the foot of the bed, covering them both, and then wrapped an arm around Blaine's waist to bring him closer. Blaine rolled toward Kurt and buried his face in Kurt's neck.

"Wow," Blaine said, his breath hot and soothing against Kurt's skin.

"Yeah. Wow." Kurt started to settle himself tighter around Blaine, but then he quickly sat up, looking toward the clock, startling a very sleepy and sated Blaine.

"Kurt, what the – "

"The ball drop! It's New Year's Eve, Blaine," Kurt said, squinting to read the numbers on the clock. "It's 22 minutes until the New Year. We're going to miss the ball drop."

Blaine reached out to grab at Kurt's arm and pull him back down, instantly wrapping himself around Kurt's naked body.

"Don't care. It's just a ball. I have you," Blaine said, his words slurred from drowsiness.

Kurt smiled and rubbed his hand over Blaine's bare back.

"I suppose I won't get my New Year's kiss then?" he teased. Blaine lifted his head up and puckered his lips. Kurt kissed him with a loud smack, chuckling at how adorable his soulmate was. Blaine grinned at him happily for a second, reaching up to brush a piece of hair off of Kurt's forehead. Kurt almost stopped breathing at how Blaine was looking at him.

"I love you," Kurt said, barely loud enough for Blaine to hear. He hadn't meant to say it then, but he had been wanting to since the day they met.

Blaine's breath hitched and even in the dark room, Kurt could see his eyes shine with emotion.

"I love you, too," Blaine whispered, leaning up to capture Kurt's mouth in a soft kiss, which Kurt happily returned.

Kurt stayed awake until he heard Blaine start to snore quietly. Only then did he allow himself to drift off, no longer caring about the holiday. He finally loved a man who loved him back, and that was much better than a lit up ball.

Chapter Twelve

Kurt woke up on New Year's Day feeling like he won the lottery and found out Alexander McQueen's death was a hoax all in the same day. He blinked his eyes open, his emotions swelling up inside him as he focused on Blaine's face, pressed against his chest, looking peaceful, content, and beautiful. Blaine's arms and legs were wrapped around him like an octopus and it made Kurt feel truly safe and protected for the first time in his life.

Kurt looked over at his clock to find that it was much later than he had anticipated. He shifted so that he could roll Blaine onto his back, which made him whine adorably in his sleep. Kurt smiled at Blaine's inability to look less than perfect even with his hair sticking up at odd angles and dried drool in the corner of his mouth. Kurt leaned down to press kisses to his forehead, his eyes, his nose, and every other precious spot on his face.

Blaine turned his head toward Kurt and smiled, his eyes fluttering open and meeting Kurt's right away.

"G'morning, beautiful," Blaine whispered and Kurt could feel his face get hot at the compliment.

"Good morning. Sleep well?" Kurt asked, smirking a bit as his mind wandered to thoughts of the previous – incredible, amazing, mind-blowing – night. Blaine only hummed in agreement and pulled Kurt down to kiss him. Kurt returned the kiss, but quickly moved away, scrunching up his nose.

"Okay, I love you, but you really need to brush your teeth," Kurt said, laughing when Blaine pulled him back down and buried his face in his neck.

"Say that again," Blaine breathed into Kurt's neck, barely audible. Kurt turned to allow his lips to graze Blaine's ear, suddenly feeling a new rush of emotion.

"Your breath stinks."

"Not that, silly."

"I love you?"

"That's the one. One more time?"

Kurt kissed below Blaine's ear softly. "I love you." A kiss to his cheek. "I love you." A kiss to his jaw.

"I don't think I'll ever get sick of hearing you say it," Blaine said, running his fingers through Kurt's hair.

"I don't think I'll ever get sick of saying it." Kurt kissed Blaine's forehead once. "Now, time to get out of bed. I don't think anyone is home yet and I want breakfast."

Blaine smiled brightly and sat up in bed, Kurt already up and looking for clothes to wear.

"Hey, Kurt?" Blaine called out just as Kurt started to head for the door. "I love you, too."

Kurt went into the bathroom and started the water for a shower. He couldn't stop smiling even if he tried, and if he wasn't sure that he would hurt himself, he would have done cartwheels in the bathroom.

He showered quickly and got dressed. He met Blaine in the kitchen, where a pot of coffee was already brewing and the smell of cinnamon French toast drifted through the air. They ate in a comfortable silence, occasionally exchanging shy glances and, not able to convey in words everything that they were feeling.

"I have a brilliant idea," Kurt said as he and Blaine washed the dishes. "How about you see if your parents can come over here tonight for New Year's dinner?"

"Oh, yeah, maybe," Blaine said, focusing intently on washing the cup in his hands. Kurt was aware that Blaine didn't have the closest relationship with his parents, but Blaine had been blatantly avoiding the topic since they met. "Hey, do you have a scrubbing sponge?"

Kurt frowned when Blaine didn't look at him, didn't say any more about the subject, and pretended that the question was never asked. Kurt didn't push even though he wanted to, trying to avoid a silly argument. However, he couldn't shake the unpleasant feeling in the pit of his stomach that told him there was something wrong.

They finished up the dishes and Blaine gathered his things, needing to get home since he ran out of clean clothes and insisted that Kurt shouldn't be doing his laundry yet. Kurt smiled and kissed him good-bye, but he didn't miss the way Blaine didn't look him in the eye when he said he would see him later.

Kurt tried not to think about it too much, and he was relatively successful until later in the day, when he was trying to get the table set for dinner. He still hadn't heard back from Blaine and didn't know how

many place settings were needed. He had called and texted Blaine several times, but each attempt went unanswered.

Kurt sighed to himself. All he wanted to do was to have a nice dinner with both of their families, and he didn't understand why Blaine was so against the idea. They were soul mates, and while that didn't mean that their families had to start having brunch together every Sunday, it would be great if they at least met. Kurt felt the sting of rejection start to burn under his skin, his mind going back to the same horrible thoughts.

What did I do wrong?

What did I miss?

Does he not want me anymore?

It made no sense but Kurt had learned long ago that logic had no place in his life. It was logical for both of his parents to be around, or for Kurt to get into his college of choice after a stellar audition, but he lost out then, too, and the longer he thought about it, the more negative his thoughts became.

Blaine had certainly seemed like he was happy with him. It had been obvious in the way that Blaine held him so tightly and the way that his eyes got so wide and bright when he looked at him. Their names, carefully scripted over their hearts by powers bigger than both of them, *meant* something. They were fused together, and Kurt felt that bond and embraced it, held it close and let it become a part of who he was. He could have tried relationships with other people, but he never wanted to. He wanted to save himself, emotionally and physically, until Blaine appeared. Except now, it seemed like Blaine was fading away and Kurt didn't know what to do.

He shook his head, knowing that it was silly to make such assumptions after only a few hours, but there was no reason he could think of for Blaine to suddenly ignore him. They had been in constant contact for weeks via email, often not going more than a couple hours without some kind of interaction.

Kurt continued to set the table with shaky breaths and stinging eyes, only setting down four plates instead of seven or even five. Once the last fork was aligned with the last spoon, he tried to call Blaine a final time, never thinking he could be as frustrated with the sound of Blaine's voice as he was when the voicemail picked up, again.

“Blaine, it’s me. I haven’t heard from you yet, and I swear this is the last time I’m calling and I don’t want to bother you, but I just want to make sure that you’re okay. Please, just call me, text me, anything. Please. If I don’t hear from you tonight, umm, I have to leave for my flight at 10:00 tomorrow morning, so hopefully I will see you before then? I just - I love you.”

Kurt clutched his phone to his chest and stood staring at the table in front of him without looking at anything in particular. He was so lost in his thoughts that he didn’t hear the footsteps behind him and jumped when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

“Is everything alright?” Burt asked, eyebrows furrowed in concern. He gave Kurt that same look when he and Carole returned home and found Kurt sitting alone in the living room. Kurt hadn’t even been all that worried then.

“He hasn’t called,” Kurt said simply. “He isn’t coming.”

“I’m sure he has a good reason, Kurt. He wouldn’t just leave you high and dry like that, especially since after tomorrow morning, who knows when you will see each other again.”

Kurt knew his father was trying to offer him some reassurance, trying to make him see that there was still some sun peeking through the thick grey storm that had been hovering over him all day.

“You barely know him, Dad,” Kurt muttered, feeling his voice shake. “I barely know him.”

“You know him well enough,” Burt said firmly. “I have waited a long time to see you happy, and I haven’t seen you smile so much since before your mom died. Don’t give up, Kurt. It’s only been a few hours. No sense getting worked up over nothing. Remember, this,” Burt pointed at Kurt’s chest, “it means something, okay?”

“He said he loved me. Last night, I told him that I loved him and he said he loved me back.”

Burt sighed and rubbed his hand over his face. He looked at Kurt for a moment before placing his hands on Kurt’s shoulders, tipping his head down so he could look him in the eye.

“Listen to me. It hasn’t even been a day. Don’t give up so easily, alright?”

Kurt sucked his lower lip between his teeth, chewing on it to stop himself from letting go of the sobs threatening to burst through him and shatter everything he had built up over the past few weeks. He wanted to believe that everything was fine, that Blaine was just running late, or that his phone fell into a well. He wanted to believe that Blaine wasn't abandoning him.

Kurt nodded at his father, earning him a small, heartening smile. Burt patted him on the shoulder and said something about going to help Carole finish dinner, but Kurt wasn't paying much attention.

In a daze, he walked up to his room and lay down on the bed, curled up in the same spot Blaine had occupied not even a full 12 hours earlier. He was worried, not just about whether he had done something to scare Blaine off, but also because it was so unlike Blaine to go off the grid like that. Then again, Kurt hasn't known Blaine for that long, so maybe his impressions of him were a bit skewed. In any case, it hurt.

He closed his eyes and breathed deeply, still able to smell Blaine's hair on his pillow, and finally let his tears fall.

Chapter Thirteen

When Blaine got home after breakfast with Kurt, he fully intended on telling his parents the truth. He had been skirting around it all week, telling them that he had been catching up with friends when they asked where he was spending so much time. The worst part of it was that he had also been avoiding the issue with Kurt.

Kurt didn't press him for information, didn't demand to meet his parents, or even to go to his house. However, Blaine could tell that Kurt was getting frustrated, even though he wasn't saying so out loud. It made Blaine love Kurt even more and like himself even less.

As he walked through the door, he could feel the tension building. It started brewing when he saw his father's car in the driveway and an air of formality - which was always present when his father was home - hit Blaine as soon as he stepped through the threshold.

Peter Anderson was very different from Burt Hummel, who was a little gruff but also warm, attentive, and caring toward those close to him. Peter, on the other hand, was distant, stern, and while he took care of his family financially, he wasn't the type to ever tuck Blaine in at night and read him bedtime stories. Blaine had been amazed with Burt from the moment they met, and that awe was mixed with equal parts envy and disappointment that his own father was nothing like him. Blaine knew that his father had certain expectations of him, and he was well aware that he hadn't met any of them.

Blaine tried to quickly retreat to the guestroom to pack some fresh clothes and sneak in a shower, but his mother stopped him before he could reach the stairs. She looked frazzled, which was a clear indication that there was something going on.

"Blaine, where have you been? Go get cleaned up quickly," Rose yelled at him, clearly irritated that he had spent another night out. "We're going to visit your aunt and uncle for the day, so you need to look your best."

Blaine groaned in frustration, which was obviously not the response that his mother had expected. She raised an eyebrow at him and crossed her arms across her chest.

"You have barely spent any time with the family since you've been home, so I don't want to hear it," Rose scolded. "Your friends will understand."

It wasn't that Blaine hated his family - most of them were alright in small doses - but going to visit them meant that he wouldn't be able to go to Kurt's for dinner. More importantly, he wouldn't be able to see Kurt at all for the rest of the day, and Kurt was *leaving* the next morning. Blaine couldn't help the slight panic he felt at the thought that he may not see Kurt again for months. He reached into his pocket for his phone so he could at least let Kurt know that he might not be there that evening, but he would absolutely be there to see him off in the morning.

He jumped in surprise when his mother snatched the phone away.

"None of that," she said, putting her hand on Blaine's back and pushing him toward the stairs. "Whatever it is can wait, and, frankly, you have been too attached to this thing all week. You'll be fine for one day."

"Mom, you can't take my phone! I need - "

"I assure you, as long as your father pays the bill, I *can* take it. You need to get ready. We're leaving in half an hour," Rose said as she spun on her heel and walked off, taking Blaine's phone with her.

Blaine wanted to cry and punch something at the same time. This wasn't happening. He couldn't be cut off from Kurt for an entire day, especially not this day. It was too important, and he was already dreading what Kurt might think. He hadn't brought his laptop home with him, so sending an email was not an option, and breaking into his father's office to use his computer was asking for much more trouble than Blaine was willing to deal with.

"Mom! Give me my phone!" Blaine yelled after her, not above begging if he had to.

"Blaine, you will not talk to your mother that way."

Blaine froze and turned his head to see his father standing a few feet away, clearly not amused by his outburst. If there was one thing that his father didn't tolerate, it was disrespect.

"Sorry, Dad," Blaine said, dejected and staring down at the floor. "It's just, I need to make a phone call, or send a text. It's important."

"I don't see what could be so important that it can't wait a few hours," Peter said, annoyed and looking at Blaine through narrowed eyes. "Care to enlighten me?"

This was his chance. It was the perfect opportunity for Blaine to tell both of his parents that he had met Kurt Hummel, his soulmate and the love of his life. Beautiful, compassionate, sweet, witty, and ridiculously wonderful Kurt, the person that was already so enmeshed in his life that he wasn't sure how he was going to cope with having to let him go, even temporarily.

"I have, umm," Blaine started, his nerves working against him and preventing the words from coming out.

"Well? For goodness sake, Blaine, just say it," Peter huffed out, his patience waning quickly. When Blaine didn't say anything - *couldn't* say anything - he rolled his eyes and looked over to his wife. "We're wasting time here, Rose. Make sure your son is ready to go in twenty minutes."

Blaine closed his eyes, willing away the tears that were making their presence very difficult to ignore. He could hear his father's footsteps retreating and his mother's exasperated sigh. Without a word, he ran up to his room, slamming the door hard enough to feel the floorboards shake. He briefly considered climbing out the window and making a run for it, and he would have gladly done it, but he was on the second floor with no tree branches close enough to grab onto and no bushes to break his fall.

Anger bubbled beneath his skin as he showered and got dressed, wearing the gaudiest bowtie he owned – a gag gift from a friend that actually lit up when he pushed a hidden button – with full knowledge that it would drive his parents crazy. Blaine was very much aware that he was acting like a petulant child, but he didn't care. He had to get to Kurt, needing his voice and his touch to give him the strength and courage to admit the truth to his parents.

Blaine internally kicked himself repeatedly for not telling them sooner. He didn't even have a good reason for being so scared. His parents knew his soulmate's name, that he was a man, and the fact that it was inevitable that they would be together. Blaine supposed that his paralyzing apprehension was due to his parents' reaction when they first found out, the way they looked at him with disdain even though they promised to continue to support him financially. Blaine didn't want to be the one to bite the hand that fed him, but at the same time, he needed more than money from his parents. He needed acceptance, and it didn't seem like that was something they were willing to give.

As the day went on, Blaine grew more and more irritated. His mother had clearly not appreciated their earlier conversation, so his phone remained back at the house while they left to go visit with his family. He remained polite, of course, but didn't make any effort to initiate conversations or pay any significant attention to anyone, much to the displeasure of his parents. It wasn't how they expected Blaine to act, but

he had already failed to live up to most of their expectations, so one more couldn't hurt. By the time the night ended and everyone was heading home, Blaine was incredibly on edge, wanting to scream at his mother for not hurrying up and for insisting on copying down yet another recipe that she would never use.

Blaine nearly sprinted up to the door when they arrived back at the house well after midnight, following his parents inside and looking at them expectantly once they were all settled.

"I spent time with the family. May I have my phone back, please?"

"Blaine, I don't know what has gotten into you, but you were rather rude today," Peter mused, sitting down in the living room, glass of scotch already poured and half empty. "I know you think we're hard on you sometimes, but your behavior was completely inappropriate."

"Yes, sir," Blaine said, balling up his fists so tight he wasn't sure that blood could even reach his fingertips. "It won't happen again."

"See that it doesn't. You're only hurting yourself. Your uncle has a lot of connections in this area. Think of your future. It's bad enough that you have a *man* for a soulmate, as if you – "

"His name is Kurt."

Blaine wasn't sure what part of his father's small rant set him off. It could have been the allusion to Blaine's own choice of career, the fact that his father assumed that he was destined to fail, or the blatantly dismissive way that he brought up Kurt. Regardless of the reason, Blaine was angrier in that moment than he had ever been in his life.

"I know what his name is, Blaine." Peter leaned forward in his chair. "How could I possibly forget the name that will ruin this family?"

"He won't ruin anything! He makes everything better!" Blaine yelled, throwing his arms in the air wildly, completely lost in the moment. "He makes me want to *be* better. He makes me feel things that I – "

"You haven't even met him!" Peter stood up, his drink sloshing over the edge of the glass. His face was a deep crimson and Blaine couldn't remember the last time his father was so angry. "For all you know, he's probably some money hungry – "

“Stop it! Don’t you dare talk about him like that!” Blaine shouted, rage pouring off of him in waves, consuming him completely. “I have met him, and he’s the best thing in my life!”

Blaine heard a gasp behind him, making him spin around to find his mother standing with his phone in her hand. Without another word, Blaine walked up to her, grabbed his phone, and ran up to his room, locking the door behind him.

27 text messages

8 voicemails

Blaine sat on the edge of his bed and read each message from Kurt, realizing that each unanswered text made Kurt more and more worried. Each voicemail was from Kurt as well, and those were even worse. Blaine could hear the desperation and agony in Kurt’s voice. He could feel it seeping into him, as if he was taking on each of Kurt’s emotions as his own. The last voicemail was the final straw. Kurt sounded like the world was caving in on him.

Blaine immediately called Kurt’s number, cursing under his breath when the voicemail picked up. He tried again several more times with the same result. He finally left a message before collapsing onto his bed, shaking with anger and resentment toward the two people that were supposed to be his main source of love and support. He couldn’t help but think that Kurt would be the one to fill that role, and he hoped with everything he had that their relationship wouldn’t be ruined by a single, horrible day.

Chapter Fourteen

Socks, boots, four scarves...

"Kurt? Are you awake?"

Toiletry bag, one, two, three pairs of jeans...

"Nevermind. I know you're awake. I can hear you."

iPod, headphones, should I bring a book?

"Open the door, Kurt."

Do I even have any books here?

"You can't stay in there forever. We have to leave in twenty minutes."

The new Vogue will have to do.

"You have company."

Kurt's head snapped to the side to look at the door. He was done packing, but since he hadn't slept much the night before, he needed to fill up his time somehow. Fortunately, double and triple-checking his belongings was a good enough distraction. He hadn't dared turn his phone back on yet. It was sitting on his desk, mocking him with its dark screen. He wanted to believe that he would have a message waiting for him, but it would hurt too much if he was wrong. For the sake of his own sanity, he decided to wait until he was back in New York, sitting in the dark of his empty apartment, alone and able to cry until his head throbbed and he passed out from exhaustion. First, however, he needed to get the hell out of Lima.

"Yeah, Dad. I hear you." Kurt called out, his voice sounding rough even to his own ears.

"Just come down, alright?"

Kurt dragged his suitcase and carry-on bag down the stairs, cursing himself for not taking into account all the Christmas gifts that he would have to bring back to New York with him. He really should have packed less before.

He didn't notice the two pairs of eyes watching him struggle down the last few steps or the heavy breaths coming from the other side of the room. It wasn't until Burt said his name that Kurt looked up.

"Yes, Dad, what is – Blaine," Kurt choked on the name, his eyes going impossibly wide as he took in the sight before him. At first, he wondered if his mind was playing tricks on him, conjuring up the image of Blaine sitting in the living room like some strange form of self torture. Kurt blinked slowly, not wanting to close his eyes for fear of Blaine not being real. There was no way he would recover if he wasn't real.

Blaine stood up, but he didn't move from his spot in front of the couch. He looked awful, hair frizzy and sticking up out of it's gel prison and dark circles under his eyes, his face heavily lined with exhaustion. He was wearing sweat pants that looked old and well-worn, his t-shirt inside out and just as tattered. Kurt's heart clenched at the sight of him.

"*Kurt*," Blaine breathed out, low and raspy, rocking back and forth on his feet as if he was fighting the urge to move closer, not sure whether it would be welcome or not.

Kurt made that decision for him. He crossed the room in long strides, his legs not moving fast enough for his own liking, and flung himself at Blaine. The force of it nearly knocked both of them over, but their bodies fought back against gravity by using each other to steady themselves. Kurt wrapped his arms around Blaine's neck and buried his face into his skin, the scent of it intoxicating and familiar. It had been less than 24 hours since the last time he heard Blaine say his name, but somehow it felt like it had been years.

Blaine immediately clutched at Kurt's back, his breath hot against Kurt's cheek. Kurt pulled back so he could look at Blaine, but kept his hands firmly in place on Blaine's chest. He wanted to know what happened, needed to know that it wasn't him, that he didn't do something wrong. He needed so much and he had so little time left. After all, he still had a flight to catch.

Kurt looked for answers in Blaine's eyes, the crinkle of his forehead, the twitch of his mouth, anything that could give him some kind of resolution. Talking seemed like it would be too much, mostly because Kurt

was afraid what talking would reveal. He hated feeling the lack of control and vulnerability he had spent his life avoiding.

The next few minutes were critical and precious, and he felt so tired from lack of sleep and the constant worry that had plagued him over the previous 24 hours. He didn't even know he had started to cry until a loud sob filled the room, and Kurt realized it came from him.

"Please, tell me that you still want me," Kurt whispered, desperately fisting the front of Blaine's shirt. "Please, Blaine, *tell me.*"

Kurt felt like he was falling, like a trapeze artist who had lost his grip as soon as he felt brave enough to fly without a net. Blaine hadn't moved, standing in the middle of the living room with Kurt latched onto him, sobbing and trembling. Kurt could feel Blaine's hands leave his back, and he was sure that was it. Blaine was going to pry his fingers from his shirt and leave again. Kurt could feel the weight of Blaine's name on his chest, a deep burning under his skin, and in that moment, he wondered if that was what it felt like when a person's name was blacked out.

Kurt closed his eyes and prepared for the worst.

The next thing he felt was a pair of shaking hands covering his own. He nearly fell to the floor from the emotion that stirred from the weight of them, and he tightened his grip as much as he could. If Blaine wanted him to let go, he wasn't going to make it easy for him. He waited for Blaine to try forcing his fingers open, but it didn't come. The warm press of Blaine's skin to his only shifted once to bring his hands together in the center of Blaine's chest, the material of Blaine's shirt pulled tight around Kurt's fingers.

"Is that... is that what you think?" Blaine asked, the question laced with disappointment. Kurt opened his eyes but couldn't bring himself to look anywhere but his hands, still trapped underneath Blaine's fingers and pressed into Blaine's chest. He could feel Blaine's heart pounding through skin and bone, the thudding echoing through him in time with his own racing pulse. He didn't trust himself to speak, only nodding slightly before Blaine continued.

"Kurt, of course I want you. I've always wanted you, even before I knew you," Blaine said, taking a step closer to Kurt and pinning their arms between them. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry for not calling, but I swear I wanted to, and, god *Kurt*, you really thought that I didn't want you anymore?"

Kurt finally looked up to meet Blaine's eyes, and he immediately wished that he hadn't. Blaine looked absolutely crushed at the realization that Kurt had so little faith in him and their bond, and Kurt could feel the guilt curl up inside his stomach. He had been ready to give up so easily, assuming the worst at the first sign of conflict.

"I was scared," Kurt admitted, feeling about as tall as the heel on his boot. He pulled his hands from Blaine's grip and brought them to Blaine's face, tilting his head up to look at him, tracing the soft curves of his cheeks with his thumbs. "I didn't know what happened to you, and I was terrified. I want this, I want *us*, so badly, and everything was so amazing. You're incredible, Blaine, and I'm just me. I thought that, maybe, you figured out that I'm not good enough."

"Stop," Blaine said with a renewed confidence. He grabbed Kurt's wrists and pulled them down from his face. "Put your hand over your heart."

"What are you – "

"Just like this." Blaine pressed Kurt's hand into his chest. "This right here? This means that you're mine."

"*Blaine*," Kurt whispered, Blaine's face blurring from the tears stinging in his eyes. He was feeling so much all at once and wasn't quite sure if he could handle it. He opened his mouth to speak, to say something, anything, to try to express how much he really did belong to Blaine, but he didn't get the chance before Blaine spoke again.

"And this," Blaine said fiercely, taking Kurt's other hand and bringing it to his own chest. "This means that I'm yours. No matter what happens, that won't change. Ever."

Blaine's words echoed in Kurt's mind, each syllable bouncing around aimlessly and making his head spin. Years of uncertainty and insecurity were finally starting to catch up to him, making him face his demons at the worst possible time. There were explanations and apologies to be had, but after a quick glance at the clock, Kurt realized they only had a couple minutes left.

They stood there, eyes fixed on each other, until Kurt couldn't possibly wait another second. He curled his hand around Blaine's shirt and yanked him forward, crashing their lips together. Blaine made a muffled noise in surprise before melting into Kurt, his body relaxing and his lips parting to invite him in. Kurt poured everything he had into the kiss, barely breathing to keep their mouths connected for as long as

possible. Kurt swallowed every whimper, every gasp that passed through Blaine's lips and slipped directly between his. The kiss was wet from both of their tears and incredibly desperate, but Kurt didn't want it to be anything less. He wanted to stay in that same place forever, with nothing but Blaine all around him.

The sound of a throat clearing made them both startle and break apart. Kurt could feel the back of his neck heat up when he realized that their entire display of affection was in full view of his father.

"I hate to do this to you boys, but Kurt, we gotta get moving," Burt said, smiling softly. "I'll take your stuff out to the car for you, but we need to head out in a minute."

"Okay, Dad," Kurt said, nodding but never looking away from Blaine. "We'll be right out."

Kurt felt the cold air rush in and quickly dissipate as his father walked out to the car, leaving him and Blaine alone for their final seconds together until one of them could get away from school or work long enough so they could meet again. Kurt's brief stay in Lima and his time with Blaine had passed unfairly quickly, and even though he knew that this moment was coming, it hurt so much more than he expected. The pure, unequivocal bliss that Kurt felt when he was near Blaine, his soulmate and the love of his life, was indescribable, and he wasn't ready to let it go.

"So I guess we should say goodbye," Blaine said, his words thick and harsh, digging into Kurt with purpose and letting him know how much he had been dreading this moment too. Kurt pulled Blaine back to him, enveloping him in his arms and breathing deeply as Blaine tucked his head into the crook of his neck. He started at his toes and worked his way up, memorizing every point of contact and how different each one felt. He needed to make sure that he wouldn't forget even though forgetting really wasn't an option. He couldn't forget Blaine if he tried, which he had absolutely no intention of doing. Kurt held him tighter and leaned down to graze his lips against Blaine's ear.

"It's not goodbye," Kurt said quietly, feeling Blaine shudder within the circle of his arms and squeeze harder around his waist. "I'll never say goodbye to you."

"I love you," Blaine said, slowly and deliberately. Kurt leaned up to press a kiss to Blaine's forehead before resting his own against it.

"I love you, too, so much," Kurt replied without any hesitation. He still didn't know what had happened the day before, or why Blaine looked like he had spent the night wandering the streets in his pajamas. They

would have to talk again soon, via email, phone, or Skype to work through it all. That could be left for later, though. Kurt kissed Blaine again, just the dry press of lips on lips, and Blaine breathed another 'I love you' into his mouth as he pulled away. It sounded like a promise.

"Walk me out?" Kurt asked, trying to keep himself together despite the cracks splitting his heart open.

Blaine nodded, and it was enough to nudge a tear from his eye. Kurt had to look away, grabbing Blaine's hand tightly and walking through the door.

As he and his father drove away, he held Blaine's gaze until they turned the corner, and then dissolved into silent tears

~^*^~

Blaine didn't remember driving home. He didn't remember taking off his shoes or climbing the stairs to his room. He didn't remember anything but the taste of Kurt's mouth and the smell of his hair, the feeling of his body, solid and warm, pressed against him, and the way their hands tangled together for their last few seconds together. Those were the things he held close, bracing himself and waiting for the pain of their separation to dig its heels in and hold him in place for the following weeks. Blaine sat on the edge of his bed, not sure what to do with himself. He was still going to be in Lima for a couple days, and with Kurt gone, there wasn't much left for him there.

There was a knock on his door and he looked up to see his mother step inside the room. Blaine wasn't in the mood for company, but he was too drained to fight any more. He would much rather pack his things and run away so he could wallow in private until it was time for his flight back to Ithaca.

His mother stood awkwardly in the doorway, wringing her hands and looking around the room. Blaine huffed and crossed his arms, straightening his shoulders and glaring at her. He didn't know what she could possibly want, but he was not about to let her see how much he was hurting.

"What is it?" Blaine asked, scowling as he broke the silence between them.

"Blaine, I am so sorry for what happened yesterday," Rose said. Blaine's eyebrows shot up to his hairline. He wasn't expecting that. "With your father, I mean. That argument was unnecessary, and I'm sure if you apologize properly, we could all put it behind us."

There it was. Blaine huffed out a laugh at the absurdity of his mother's words. Of course she wasn't there to be supportive or kind. She was just like his father. She was more concerned with preserving the image of a perfect family than she was about Blaine's actual happiness.

"I have *nothing* to apologize for," Blaine spit out, standing up and clenching his fists at his sides. "If you're here to try to guilt me into taking anything I said back, you're going to be horribly disappointed."

"This needs to stop! You can't just throw away your family for some boy!"

"In case you forgot, *Mother*, it's not just some boy," Blaine yelled, feeling the rage build up and consume him. "He's my soulmate, and whether you like it or not, he is the person I will spend my life with. You can either accept it, or you can get out and pretend I don't exist until I'm gone for good!"

Rose flinched at Blaine's words. She pursed her lips and folded her arms around herself. Blaine didn't usually snap at his mother. She wasn't incredibly supportive, but she was the one to convince his father to pay for his schooling, and that was worth something, at least. The fight drained from him as quickly as it came. He just felt so *tired*, so sick of fighting and having to prove to his parents that he wasn't a huge disappointment.

"I love him, Mom, and thanks to you and Dad, I couldn't spend his last day in town with him. Now he's gone back to New York, and I'm here, and it's *killing me*." Blaine dropped back to sit on the bed, the exhaustion from lack of sleep and the emotional roller coaster catching up with him.

"Blaine, you have to understand, this isn't the future we wanted for you. You were supposed to grow up, get a good job, marry your soulmate and have children."

"I can still do all of those things, Mom," Blaine argued. "I plan on getting a job that I love and marrying the love of my life, and there is no reason why I still can't have kids someday."

"It's not the same and you know it," Rose countered, but her voice wavered, like she was trying to convince herself more than anything.

Blaine shook his head. He was sick of the argument and he didn't have the energy to keep going, anyway. "Just leave me alone, alright?" he pleaded.

Rose nodded, turning away and placing her hand on the door knob. She looked back over her shoulder at Blaine, who still hadn't moved.

"You love him? Your soulmate?"

"Yeah, Mom. I really do."

She nodded once more and left, closing the door behind her. Blaine fell back onto his bed, rubbing over his face with his hands. It was definitely going to be a long couple days.

He closed his eyes and had started to doze off when the sound of his phone chirping made him spring back up. He reached into his pocket and pulled it out, smiling when he saw a new email notification.

Blaine,

I'm on the plane and the flight attendant is giving me a seriously fantastic bitch face for being on my phone, but I still have a few minutes before we pull onto the runway.

I miss you. I miss you so much it hurts, and I feel like I can't even breathe right now. Every part of me wants to run off this plane and back to you, and I'm running out of reasons not to.

We still have to talk soon. I think there are a lot of things that need to be said, a lot of things we haven't discussed yet. Most of all, I just want to hear your voice.

I'll call you when I get home. Scratch that. I'll call you when I get back to my apartment. Calling it home would mean that you were there, but you're not. Not yet, anyway. Someday it will be home. Our home.

Soon.

I love you,

Kurt

Blaine read the message several more times before closing his email and staring at the picture on the screen, a photo of the two of them with their faces mashed together and ridiculous grins on their faces. He smiled and set his phone down next to him, and then he closed his eyes and drifted off, Kurt's smile the only thing on his mind.

Chapter Fifteen

January 5, 2016

Kurt sipped his tea as his laptop started up. He was sitting on the couch, legs tucked under him and a blanket around his shoulders. It was nice being back in the city. As much as he loved visiting his family, he missed the noise and the energy of New York. He unpacked quickly once he returned to his apartment and did a couple loads of laundry, and now he was showered and relaxing, anxiously waiting to talk to Blaine.

The past couple days were a little tense. Blaine still hadn't told Kurt what happened with his family, since Blaine wanted to have that conversation face to face rather than over the phone. Skype was the closest they could get, unfortunately, and they had to wait until Blaine was back in his dorm. That left them with no choice but to avoid the topic, which caused some stilted conversations over text. They weren't angry with each other by any means, but Kurt was worried about their lack of communication over the holidays, and Blaine's reluctance to tell him the truth made him even more nervous.

Kurt logged on to Skype and was happy to see Blaine was already online. He missed Blaine fiercely, even though he was still hurt by what happened on New Year's Day. He quickly called Blaine and sat back, his laptop balancing on his uneven lap.

"Hey, you," Blaine said as soon as his face was visible on the screen. Even through a grainy webcam, he was gorgeous and Kurt's stomach flipped at the warm smile he was greeted with.

"Hey yourself."

There was an awkward silence then. They both knew what the point of their conversation was meant to be, so Kurt looked at Blaine expectantly. Fortunately, Blaine got the hint.

Kurt listened intently as Blaine explained everything, from his parents' initial reaction to his soulmate mark to his mother taking his phone away from him like he was still a kid that needed grounding for misbehaving. Kurt nodded and encouraged Blaine to keep going even when he could tell that Blaine was getting emotional or angry. He knew that Blaine's relationship with his parents wasn't the best, but to hear about the specifics made him want to reach through the screen and wrap Blaine in his arms.

He also felt a bit guilty for overreacting. Kurt had assumed the worst, and that hadn't been fair to Blaine. If they were going to be together for the rest of their lives, he couldn't think the worst every time something didn't go as planned. He had to learn to trust that Blaine was just as invested in their relationship as he was, and that things are not always his fault. It was a tough concept for Kurt to process. For so many years, he was made to feel like everything negative that happened to him was his fault, that because of who he was, he deserved to be treated like he was inferior.

Kurt learned to adapt, of course. He put up his layers of armor and developed a cutting wit that he used to shield himself, but his insecurities never went away. When he was rejected from NYADA, he made sure that nobody saw how crushed he was. He attended a celebratory party for Rachel and smiled and laughed and sang her praises along with everyone else, but afterward, when he was home and buried under his blanket in his dark bedroom, he went over his audition over and over, trying to figure out what he did wrong. He thought about how much he wanted to hate Rachel and how she was given the one thing he had been most passionate about, and by the time he drifted off to sleep, his pillow was wet with hours worth of tears.

As Blaine went on telling his side of what happened with his parents, Kurt realized that Blaine had insecurities, too.

"It's such a cliché, but I feel like nothing I do is good enough for them," Blaine explained. "And it's not that I don't want you to meet them. It's that I don't want them to make you feel like you're adding to the disappointment that I've caused them, because it's not about you at all. I did that all on my own."

Kurt wasn't sure of how to respond to a lot of what Blaine told him, so he listened instead. He couldn't entirely relate to Blaine's family issues, since his own family was the polar opposite of Blaine's, but he could definitely understand how feeling like others were disappointed in you could be draining.

As their conversation continued, Kurt started talking more. At first, he felt uncomfortable at allowing himself to be so vulnerable, but Blaine made it easy to let his guard down.

"Sometimes I get too lost in my own head, I think," Kurt said, playing with the edges of his blanket. "Things were going so well, and then you kind of disappeared, and - "

"I'm so, so sorry about that," Blaine said, cutting him off. The expression on his face was so earnest that Kurt couldn't bring himself to be mad about being interrupted.

"I know you are," Kurt reassured him. "And now I know why it happened. But at the time, it was hard for me not to blame myself." Kurt laughed humorlessly at himself. "I feel like an idiot for getting so worked up about it. It's not like you vanished for days. It was only a few hours, and that shouldn't be a big deal."

"No, but I promised you I would be there, and I wasn't, and that's my fault."

Kurt thought for a few seconds, trying to figure out how to say what he was thinking without sounding like he was scolding Blaine.

"It wasn't your fault, though - it *wasn't*, don't look at me like that. Anyway, I could stand to be more patient and not jump to conclusions. It's just hard when I feel like I already have to fight for everything."

By the time they finished talking, Kurt was sprawled out on his stomach across his bed after needing to carry the laptop back to his room to charge when the battery got low. He was a little exhausted, but he also felt lighter. He liked that he and Blaine were able to talk so openly, and he hoped that it would continue as they learned more about each other.

"It feels really good talking to you about this stuff," Blaine said, as if he was reading Kurt's mind. "I just wish you weren't so far away."

Kurt sighed and rested his head on his folded arms, looking up at Blaine through the camera. "Me too. I just want to hold you, you know?"

"Yeah, I know what you mean. I miss touching you."

"Oh really?" Kurt winked at Blaine, who chuckled and rolled his eyes.

"Not like that," Blaine said. When Kurt raised an eyebrow, he added, "Okay, a little like that."

"Forgive me, but I'm a little too tired for *that* at the moment, but maybe we could take full advantage of our Skype dates sometime?" Kurt could feel his face heating up and was proud of himself for being so bold.

"That is, if you're interested."

"I'm definitely interested."

January 14, 2016

From: Kurt

My favorite coffee shop had raspberry muffins this morning and the smell of them reminded me of you.

From: Blaine

That's really sweet. No pun intended.

From: Kurt

Dork. I miss your smell. It's one of my favorite things.

From: Blaine

I miss your smile. In fact, you should send me a pic ASAP.

From: Kurt

I'm on the subway. Not the best place for a selfie.

From: Blaine

Please? For me? And I'll try to find you some scratch and sniff stickers that smell like me.

From: Kurt

So thoughtful.

From: Kurt

Fine. You're lucky I love you.

From: Blaine

The luckiest <3

January 23, 2016

"Hey, Kurt."

"Hi, Dad"

"How's it going?"

"I've been better," Kurt confessed quietly, laying back on his bed and staring blankly at the ceiling. "When does it get easier?"

Burt sighed on the other end of the line and Kurt could picture him rubbing his head. The predictability of his father's mannerisms was always comforting when he felt a little out of control.

"I'm sorry, buddy. I know it's gotta be tough on you. On both of you. But you'll see him soon," Burt said. "There's not much you can do except wait it out."

"Dad, it *hurts*. I feel like I can't breathe sometimes," Kurt said, fighting the tears welling up in his eyes. "Did, um, did it feel like this, you know, when mom..."

"Yeah, but probably a million times worse."

"Oh," Kurt breathed. Those wounds may have healed, but his father still had the black scar etched across his chest, and that would stay with him for life, along with the mind-numbing sadness that came with losing his soulmate. Kurt didn't even want to think about what he would do if anything happened to Blaine.

"Just hang in there, alright?"

"Yeah, I will. Love you, Dad."

"Love you, too, Kurt."

January 26, 2016

Blaine, it's Mom. I know you're upset, but this is getting ridiculous. Your father is still paying for your education and it would do you well to show a little gratitude. You're obviously not changing your mind about your choices, but you can at least call us once in awhile. I – We miss you. I am trying to understand, really. Call me back. Please.

Blaine dropped the phone from his ear, annoyed and frustrated. His mother had called nearly every day since he returned to school, and he had ignored her each time without giving it much thought. She had even tried texting him, and he would have been amused by her attempts if he wasn't still so angry. His last couple of days at home had been tense, with polite conversation and uncomfortable silence during dinner being the only contact with his parents until it was time to catch his flight. He had been packed a day in advance, leaving the house without saying more than a quick 'goodbye' to whoever was within earshot. He hadn't particularly cared if his parents even heard him. He just wanted to get out.

The only thing keeping him sane, other than mountains of schoolwork, was Kurt. Blaine craved Kurt's presence, his touch, his voice whispering in his ear. There was so much that he wanted to do with him, places he wanted them to explore together. He hated that they had to wait and the next few months were hanging over him like a dark cloud. Even after the end of the school year, they would only have the summer before Blaine would have to go back, and then they would be apart for another year. It was beyond frustrating.

One of the first things Blaine wanted to do upon his return to Ithaca, after settling back in and surviving the first week of classes, was search for a way to get to New York City. He had offered to make the first trip, the plan being to see each other for at least one weekend a month. It wasn't nearly as often as they would have liked, but then again, they would be together every minute of every day if they could. Blaine had some money saved up from his monthly allowance – another act of kindness on the part of his father – but if he was going to keep his end of the deal, he was going to have to find the cheapest way to get there. Blaine almost wished he had asked his father if he could take the old Chevy they had rebuilt a few years back, but that would have meant another *thing* held over his head.

Blaine opened up his laptop and looked up plane tickets. Of course, they were much too expensive. After doing some more searching, he was able to find a bus ticket that was affordable, but the travel itself would greatly cut into his time with Kurt, giving them a precious 28 hours together.

Blaine didn't hesitate before confirming his purchase. He quickly wrote out an email to Kurt, not wanting to disturb him with several texts when he knew Kurt was at work.

Kurt,

Good news and bad news.

I have officially booked my first trip to the Big Apple! I am arriving on the 31st at 4pm. In case you are unaware, the 31st is THIS THURSDAY! Unfortunately, I will be due back at the bus station on the 1st at 8pm, which means that we will have just over a day together.

Now, I have two questions for you.

First, can you make sure that Rachel is occupied for the weekend? Seriously, she doesn't live with you anymore. Send her a memo.

Second, exactly how important is sleep to you? Because the way I see it, we won't be getting much of it. I'm sure you can use your imagination to come up with more important activities ;)

I love you. More than you could ever know.

Blaine

January 29, 2016

"What's wrong? You seem a little grumpy."

Kurt stared incredulously across the table. He met up with Rachel between school and work at their usual coffee shop, which was a decision he was starting to regret. She was looking at him expectantly, as if she had absolutely no clue why he would be upset. His lack of an actual response only served as an invitation for her to continue.

"I know you're sad because you and Blaine are tragically separated, and it is quite an inspiring story, but cheer up. At least you have my upcoming nuptials to keep you busy," Rachel chirped, giving his forearm a squeeze.

"Yes, Rachel. The greatest joy in my life is helping you plan your big day," Kurt said dryly. "How ever would I survive without you calling me constantly to discuss seating arrangements or what song you should sing while walking down the aisle?"

“It’s an important decision,” Rachel said. “It’s the song that I will be performing the first time Cole sees me in my dress, and I need that moment to be devastatingly perfect.”

“And you can’t be like everyone else and hire an organist?”

Rachel narrowed her eyes and Kurt sighed, giving her a small smile. “It will be perfect,” he said. “The whole thing will be perfect. Nauseatingly perfect. So perfect that everyone will be talking about its perfection for years to come.”

“That’s the spirit! Now, what’s your opinion on lilies for my bouquet? I was thinking that...”

Kurt glanced down at his phone. Once Rachel started spewing out her ideas about her wedding, which he had reluctantly agreed to help plan, she was likely to keep going for a while. Kurt’s coffee had long since gone cold, and he was thankful that he had to be at the boutique in just over an hour, if only because it gave him an excuse to do something other than be Rachel’s sounding board. She and Cole had gotten engaged over the Christmas break, which wasn’t at all surprising. Kurt was happy for her, of course, but it had been nearly a month since he had last seen Blaine in person, and any talk about potential marital bliss left him with a nagging want in his chest that he couldn’t shake.

Blaine had his own responsibilities, and Kurt kept extremely busy as well. In addition to his shifts at the store, he had classes as well as his internship. There were days when he barely had time to eat or sleep, and although he often welcomed the distractions, it also meant that his time for talking to Blaine was severely limited. They tried to call each other every day, but sometimes there were missed calls and unanswered texts. They made do, though, and it was just enough to get them by.

Kurt thought about the upcoming weekend as Rachel continued to go on about flowers and ice sculptures. Blaine was due to arrive that Saturday afternoon, and the wait was killing him. It was like an itch that wouldn’t go away, the need to be close to Blaine growing stronger every day. Kurt didn’t know how he would be able to make it another four months, even with their monthly visits. He had even considered putting off his last semester just so he could be closer to Blaine until he graduated. That thought was short-lived, however, the reality being that an internship at Dior was hard to come by, and there was no guarantee that either his internship or class openings would be waiting for him after a year and a half.

It was hard though, and the long nights gave Kurt way too much time to think. He felt like he couldn’t stop thinking unless he was immersed in work or school. When he was home, with nothing left to do but listen

to the sounds of the city outside his window and feel the cool sheets next to him, he thought mostly about Blaine. He wondered what he was doing, what he was wearing to bed, and what their future held. Blaine was one of the most amazing and beautiful people that Kurt had ever met. Yet, somehow, there was an unknown cosmic force that thought they should be together, and Kurt figured it was best not to argue.

"Kurt? Are you even listening to me?" Rachel asked, clearly annoyed and snapping Kurt back to attention. "I asked you a question."

"Whatever it is, the answer is no." Kurt got up from the table and gathered his bag. "Don't plan anything or do anything until I get full photographic or audio details."

"It's *my* wedding!"

"Exactly. I refuse to let you ruin it," Kurt said, the corner of his lip curling into a small smile. "I have to head to work, but I'll talk to you soon. Oh, and remember, my place is off limits this weekend."

"What if I'm hit with a strike of genius, and I come up with – "

"No. If I so much as see a swish of plaid skirt anywhere in the vicinity of my apartment, I'll see to it that you get married in a hen house with a bouquet of fern and feathers."

"Fine," Rachel huffed. "I better get to meet this Blaine of yours soon. As your best friend, I think that it is only right for me to give my patented Rachel Berry Gold Star of Approval."

"He doesn't need your approval," Kurt said as he started to walk away. "He already has mine."

Chapter Sixteen

January 31, 2016

Blaine stared out the window as his bus approached the station. He looked up at all the tall buildings of endless windows, the sky barely visible between them, and it hit him that he was in New York City for the first time since high school, when he went there for a band competition. His entire body was trembling with energy, as if it sensed that Kurt was close and it only had to wait a few more long minutes to feel him again. That sensation had been building up since he left Ithaca and grew as he got closer to his destination. Blaine already had his bag in his lap, ready to jump out of the seat as soon as possible.

Once the bus came to a stop, Blaine could barely feel his legs. He wove through the other passengers and down the steps, and then onto the platform, walking quickly with the breeze of thick city air and blurred faces around him.

When he finally spotted Kurt, who was craning his neck and looking for him, Blaine only paused for a second before he was running, shoving his way through the crowd with quick apologies, focused only on the love of his life. He was a step away when Kurt turned, his body shifting to face Blaine before their eyes even met, a magnetic pull that was as real as the connection between them.

As Blaine fell into Kurt's arms, he could finally breathe.

~^*^~

Kurt was completely lost in the moment. Blaine folding his arms around him, wrapping him up like he was something precious, was something he was sure he would remember forever, no matter how many times it happened. It was only their first visit of the year, and they would have more reunions and goodbyes to get through, but this one seemed to be just as important as the first time they met. He had a feeling they all would be.

His eyes were stinging from the elation he felt at being held again. Kurt was completely enveloped by Blaine while surrounded by waves of people passing by, all of them unnoticed by his conscious mind. Kurt could feel his bones relaxing as soon as they touched. It was their first embrace in New York, and it was fierce and filled with breathy murmurs of *I love you* and *I missed you*, barely audible as their lips pressed to each other's skin.

Before he knew it, Kurt was unlocking the door to his apartment one-handed, his other arm strictly under Blaine's possession with their fingers linked together tightly, palms sweaty. It was a big step for Kurt, showing Blaine where he lived, where he left his keys, where he scorched the countertop during a failed attempt at flambé, where he did his design work, and where he slept. It was even more intimate than Blaine going to his father's house, with all of its memories of family and old friends. Blaine had seen where Kurt had grown up, but now he was seeing more of who Kurt had grown up to be. It was terrifying, in a way, bringing Blaine into his space, and it made him feel naked in a whole new way.

Kurt led Blaine inside with their hands still connected and started to give him a brief tour. He pointed out the kitchen and the bathroom, noticing that Blaine was paying absolutely no attention but continuing anyway. Blaine was focused entirely on him, and it was making his stomach do cartwheels.

He showed Blaine Rachel's old bedroom, which he had turned into a makeshift studio, which was both a blessing and a curse since it gave him space to work but also had a way of sucking him in for endless hours at a time. Blaine was very interested in his work, flipping through Kurt's sketchbooks and commenting on some of his designs. Kurt put a lot of pride into them, and he when saw nothing but awe in Blaine's eyes it made his heart swell. He always told himself that he didn't need other people's approval to express himself, but coming from Blaine, it made him feel validated and confident.

It was strange, the transition from being apart to being together again. Kurt wasn't sure how to act, even though everything in him was screaming to hold Blaine close and never let go.

"This is, um, my room," Kurt said as they reached the last door of the short hallway. He opened the door and waved his hand, gesturing for Blaine to go inside. "It's not much, but it's livable."

"I think it's great." Blaine walked around slowly, just as he did in Kurt's bedroom back in Lima. He ran his fingers along the edge of the dresser, making his way along the wall and then back to where Kurt was standing. "I really missed you."

Kurt's breath hitched as Blaine moved closer, his arms moving of their own accord to wrap themselves around Blaine's shoulders and pulling him in. He felt the warmth of Blaine's arms around his waist and inhaled deeply, pressing his forehead to Blaine's and closing his eyes.

"I missed you, too," Kurt whispered, Blaine's breath tickling his lips. "I missed you so much."

Kurt felt Blaine nodding against him and then he was right there, his mouth and his tongue and his hand cupping his face like he didn't believe Kurt was even real, like he needed reassurance that Kurt was solid and tangible. Kurt felt the same way, the heat from Blaine's skin seeping through the fabric of his shirt and making his fingertips tingle. They stayed like that for what seemed like an eternity, their lips moving against each other, pressing and sliding, their hands clutching at clothes, willing the layers to disappear and leave nothing between them but air and skin.

Blaine pulled away first, creating enough space to pull his own shirt off. Kurt followed suit before grabbing the back of Blaine's neck and pulling him back in. He couldn't stand being away from him for more than a few seconds.

"Need you so bad," Blaine gasped out between hard kisses, his fingers fumbling with Kurt's belt. "Kurt, please."

Kurt pushed Blaine back until he fell onto the bed, pulling off his pants and reaching up to yank Blaine's off before climbing on top of him. He wanted to let Blaine take him, to join their bodies and to feel them become a single entity. Just the thought of it made him dizzy. The idea of it always made Kurt blush, the intimacy and trust needed seeming so out of reach for so long. They had been intimate before, of course, and it had been incredible, but *that* would be earth-shattering. Kurt was sure he wouldn't be able to handle the intensity of it, of Blaine actually being inside him, or vice versa, and then have to watch Blaine walk away again.

"We can't do that," Kurt said between soft moans, hoping that Blaine would understand what he meant without him having to say it out loud. Blaine licked up the side of his neck, stopping to nip at his earlobe. "We can't. It would hurt too much to let you go."

Blaine dropped his head back onto the pillow, looking up at Kurt with a confused expression. Kurt traced his fingers over Blaine's cheek and gave him a sad smile.

"Maybe we could just do what we've been doing?" Kurt suggested, moving his fingertips back down Blaine's neck and resting them against his chest, absently tracing over the letters of his name. "I don't want this to be any harder for us than it already is. I don't think I could survive that."

"I just...I need to *feel* you, however I can have you," Blaine pleaded softly, guiding Kurt back down by his shoulders. Kurt covered Blaine's mouth with his own, sliding his tongue along his lower lip and dipping

inside when he felt Blaine's lips part, teasing Blaine with light, warm touches before curling his tongue around Blaine's, drawing out the most delicious noises from deep within Blaine's chest. It was different than a few minutes prior, when they were both so desperate for each other. It had turned deeper, more powerful, and less frantic as they both tried to savor every taste and touch.

Kurt kissed and licked every inch of Blaine's neck, relearning what spots make him writhe and which ones made him gasp for air. He took his time working over Blaine's nipples with his tongue and teeth, tingling from the sensation of Blaine's fingers in his hair, not pulling, but rubbing at his scalp in a way that would have been soothing if it didn't turn him on so much. Kurt continued to drag his lips down Blaine's stomach, circling his navel and stopping just above the waistband of his briefs to nuzzle the softness of Blaine's belly. He dipped his fingertips under the elastic and pulled them down slightly, just enough for the head of Blaine's cock to peek out. Kurt took a deep breath and sucked at it gently, Blaine's hips jumping and his stomach muscles fluttering.

"That's so good," Blaine breathed, his grip on Kurt's hair tightening just the right amount to be encouraging instead of demanding.

Kurt wrapped his lips around the head, licking away the drops of pre-come that were starting to leak out. He slowly took Blaine further into his mouth, pulling Blaine's briefs down as he went. He hadn't done this before, not with Blaine or anyone else, but he *wanted to* so badly. He needed to taste and to feel the heat and weight of Blaine on his tongue, stretching his mouth open. Kurt's heart was pounding with nerves and lust, but he kept going, sucking harder and allowing Blaine to move his hips slightly, letting Kurt know how he wanted it.

Blaine was whimpering above him, his back arching up and his fingers flexing and relaxing against Kurt's scalp. Kurt loved every second of it. He wanted to make Blaine fall apart completely until he had nothing left to give, and then do it all over again. He needed to show Blaine how much he loved him, how important he was, and, above all else, that he was everything that Kurt ever wanted in a soulmate.

Kurt's jaw was getting sore and spit was dripping down his chin, but it didn't matter. He sped up, head bobbing and cheeks hollowing, chasing the taste of Blaine on his tongue.

"K-Kurt, oh god, c-close," Blaine groaned, his hips moving faster and trying to bury his cock deeper into Kurt's throat. For a split second, Kurt planned on making Blaine come as fast as possible, but then his

mind took over, and he realized that he wanted to drag it out a bit longer. He pulled his mouth off Blaine with a wet pop.

"Kurt, why did you stop, oh my god?"

Kurt took a few seconds to really look at Blaine, taking in his flushed skin and bitten-red lips. Kurt's eyes traveled down to his name, scripted out crystal clear across Blaine's heaving chest.

A low whine startled Kurt, and he looked further down Blaine's body to see him nudging his hips up. Kurt knew when to take a hint, so he slid his hands over Blaine's thighs and gripped his underwear, pulling them down and off the rest of the way quickly. He removed his own as fast as he could while trying to maintaining some sort of dignity as his foot got caught and he almost fell over trying to shake them off.

Strong legs wrapped around Kurt's waist when he lowered himself back down, covering Blaine's body with his own and kissing him almost too chastely for two people that were naked and very obviously aroused. Blaine canted his hips up as Kurt pressed down, their bodies connected at the hips, chest, and mouth. They moved against each other at a tortuously slow pace, each movement deliberate. Kurt shivered at the sensation of Blaine's fingertips ghosting up and down his back, gripping his ass and rolling them over so Blaine was straddling him. Kurt pressed his mouth into Blaine's neck and tried exceptionally hard to not stop breathing from the pure joy and overwhelming pleasure of it all.

They continued to rut against each other, Blaine pinning Kurt down by his wrists and grinding against him frantically until Kurt flipped them again, pulling Blaine up to sitting, winding his arms around his neck, and twisting his fingers in his hair. They continued their rhythm with Kurt settled in Blaine's lap, their chests pressed together so tightly that they couldn't tell where one name ended and the other began. Kurt saw a flash of *Kurt Anderson* behind his eyelids, making him keen and thrust his hips harder, faster, using every muscle in his thighs to chase after his release.

Kurt felt Blaine trace the line of his back down, down, until he pressed lightly at his entrance and that was all he needed. Kurt cried out and let the intensity of the closeness and love wash over him. The warm air and sweat between them was replaced with a sticky wetness, Blaine using it to slide against Kurt's stomach until he stilled, gasping for air and clutching at Kurt's shoulders. Somehow they ended up on one side of the bed, curled up around each other and giggling as Kurt gripped the edge of his comforter and rolled them again, wrapping them up tight. They were sweaty and messy, but much too in love to care.

~^*^~

Kurt had a plan for Blaine's first visit to New York. He was going to take him for dinner at his favorite diner where the coffee is almost as good as the food and then sit with him at his favorite spot at Central Park, people watching until the sky was a mix of reds and purples. He planned on spending the next morning making Blaine breakfast and then maybe taking in the Statue of Liberty or one of the other hundreds of tourist spots.

Instead, they ordered in and giggled through an argument over who would have to put on pants when the delivery person arrived. They ate ice cream in bed and laughed at old episodes of *Whose Line is it Anyway?* on Kurt's laptop, a show that Kurt had never watched before but Blaine insisted on.

They fell asleep late into the night after talking and touching and twisting up in the sheets for hours, with Blaine wrapped around Kurt's body while Kurt traced slow, indiscernible patterns into the damp skin of his back. In the morning, Blaine was the one to make breakfast, serving Kurt French toast and fruit on a tray that they balanced between them on the couch, wearing only their underwear and wrapped in a thin blanket. They ate in silence, sipping instant coffee while pressed together shoulder to shoulder. Afterward, they shared slow kisses that turned into lazy handjobs, sucking and licking across each other's skin as they sunk further into the couch.

They showered separately and Kurt helped Blaine button up his shirt when he was getting dressed because he didn't want to stop touching him yet. They took their time getting ready side by side in Kurt's tiny bathroom, styling their hair while their elbows bumped together.

Things may not have went as planned, but neither of them minded when they eventually took a cab back to the bus station, holding hands the entire way.

Blaine kissed him slowly before he got on the bus, and Kurt felt himself deflate when he pulled away.

"So, this is good – "

"Don't. Don't even say it. I told you, I'm not saying goodbye to you."

Blaine gave him a watery smile and nodded, squeezing Kurt's hand one last time before climbing up the steps to the bus. Kurt stood in place, watching with tears streaming down his face as Blaine looked out

from his seat and pressed his hand to his chest, and then to the window, mouthing *I love you* through the foggy glass.

Kurt watched the bus drive away, the familiar ache of being away from his soulmate settling in quickly and painfully. He wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and turned to head back to his apartment, the world around him seeming much duller without Blaine next to him.

February 6, 2016

Dear Blaine,

I am feeling rather pathetic at the moment. I had to let you go again not even a week ago, and I'm already thinking about what outfits to pack for my first trip to visit you. Good thing I still have a couple weeks before any final decisions need to be made. My enthusiasm may or may not be influenced by the ghastly amount of pink hearts and paper Cupids strung about everywhere I go. Valentine's Day has never been one of my favorite holidays, but the constant reminder that it's quickly approaching has me a little on edge.

In any case, all the Hallmark love around me is making me miss you something terrible. I know that I won't be able to make it out before V-Day, but hopefully I can figure something out for the week after? We can make up our own holiday. I may even make you a card with crayons and construction paper, if you're lucky.

I love you. I love you. I love you. I feel like I don't say it enough.

I love you,

Kurt

February 7, 2016

Kurt,

Don't be such a Valentine's Day Grinch! It's a beautiful holiday! It's the perfect time to express your undying love for another person. In my case, that person happens to be you, in case there was any confusion there. I

am open to the idea of our own holiday, though, and I can't wait to see what my card will look like. I'm imagining a lot of glitter.

I'm sorry this is a bit short. I'm between classes and I have to make sure that I have my sheet music straight. I will talk to you soon, and I will SEE YOU soon. You have no idea how badly I want to feel you again. Not, like, in a sexual way (maybe a little bit sexual), but in a super cheesy romantic way. You deserve all the cheesy romance.

Love you more,

Blaine

P.S. So, when are you coming? Not that I am getting impatient or anything. Nope. Not me.

February 14, 2016

If somebody asked Blaine how he was feeling, he would say he was giddy. Chipper, even. There was literally nothing that could ruin his mood. It was Valentine's Day, he was in love, and Kurt was coming to visit in a week. Granted, Blaine had only been able to talk to him a handful of times in the previous few days, but Kurt was busy. Blaine understood, since he was rather busy himself. His music professors were already hounding him about his piece for the Cornell Spring Music Series, a huge event held every year that showcased the seniors and a handful of juniors. Blaine was one of the juniors selected to compose a piano piece, and while he had a hard time getting it going, meeting Kurt had opened up a new world of inspiration.

Blaine wasn't surprised to find his roommate gone for the night, a hot date probably lined up for the holiday. It was all the better, since he and Kurt had a phone date scheduled. Blaine was hoping that they could at least Skype, but Kurt's computer at Dior had kicked the bucket, so his laptop had been a quick replacement until the company bothered to pay for repairs. Blaine had a feeling it would take a while, the inconvenience of an intern much less important than the multitude of preparations needed to make sure every show went smoothly during such a hectic time.

Freshly showered and in his favorite pajamas, Blaine settled onto his bed and waited for Kurt to call, some random show from his Netflix recommendations playing from his laptop. He wondered whether Kurt got

the flowers he had sent him, or the box of cherry cordials, or the edible bouquet. He hoped it wasn't too much. Blaine had received his Valentine's gift a couple days early. Kurt had gotten him a leather-bound notebook to write his music, embossed with his name on bottom corner of the inside cover. Blaine didn't miss that it was an exact replica of how his name was written on Kurt's chest. With the notebook came two roses, one red and one yellow, and a black bowtie with yellow birds on it. He wore the bowtie that whole day.

Finally, his phone lit up. "Hi," Blaine said, his voice much more breathy than he intended it to be.

"Hey there, handsome," Kurt said. "Happy Valentine's Day."

"You, too," Blaine replied, still kind of reeling from hearing Kurt on the other end of the line. It didn't matter how many times he heard it. Kurt's voice always gave him chills.

Kurt hummed an acknowledgement and Blaine could hear him moving around. He imagined Kurt sprawling out on his bed, stretching across the sheets, possibly naked.

Blaine shook his head, trying to rid his brain of all the extremely sexy but most definitely non-romantic images floating around in his mind.

"So, what does one do on a long distance Valentine's date?" Blaine asked, trying his best to not think about long legs and smooth skin. He really didn't know what had gotten into him, but he really needed to keep Little Blaine in check. It was barely a minute into his first actual conversation with Kurt in a couple of days, and he was already half hard.

"Well, I'm alone, and you're alone," Kurt offered, his words drawn out and his voice low and incredibly hot.

"Uh huh."

"Maybe we could, you know, mess around a little."

"Yeah."

"I was thinking you can let me hear you," Kurt continued, and Blaine gripped the phone tighter, swallowing to soothe his suddenly dry mouth. "You can tell me what you want me to do to you, and I can tell you what *I* want to do to you."

“Okay.”

“Blaine?”

“Hmm?”

“Get naked.”

February 19, 2016

Kurt was *tired*. He had been running around frantically, balancing classes, his internship, and his job for weeks, and he was desperately in need of some time to decompress. He was sorting through some paperwork at his tiny desk, tucked away in a far corner of the Dior office, needing to get everything organized before he was able to go home for the night. Kurt loved the internship most of the time. He was learning great deal and even got some positive feedback on a few designs he did for one of his classes, along with some very helpful constructive criticism. He lucked out in that his boss, Trina, who didn't pay him, but did sign off on his hours, was extremely knowledgeable in the field and seemed to be genuinely interested in seeing him succeed. She was also a firecracker, demanding respect from every angle, and Kurt kind of loved her. She allowed him to sit in on meetings, showed him glimpses of upcoming pieces and lines, and was more flexible than other supervisors he had heard about from other student interns.

He still needed to finish packing for his trip to Ithaca the following day, which was a Friday and he was extremely thankful that he was able to get the day off from the boutique. He still had to be at his internship in the morning, but he would have plenty of time to make it to the airport. Kurt was just finishing up when Trina walked up to him with a huge grin on her face.

“Tell me how amazing I am,” she said, sitting down on the edge of Kurt's desk.

“You're amazing?”

“Damn right, I am. Guess who is going to be spending the next 10 days balls deep in the hottest clothes and rubbing elbows with the hottest people?”

“Umm...”

"You, silly boy! I've pulled some strings, and we needed a few extra hands anyway - God only knows what's going to go wrong, it's tradition at this point - and we're going to take a couple interns to help with the grunt work."

"Wait, what?" Trina was talking so fast Kurt was having a hard time keeping up. She couldn't possibly mean what he thought she meant.

"Fashion Week! You know, runways, pretty clothes, flashy lights, even flashier parties... you're coming with us!"

"I'm going to Fashion Week?" Kurt asked, his heart starting to speed up. Fashion Week in New York City was the stuff of legend, and Kurt would kill to be a part of it, even if it meant hitching up dresses and taping boobs during last minute alterations. "Are you serious?"

"Deadly," Trina replied, and Kurt started to bounce in his seat. "Now, this means you'll need to put in some extra time. We have a final review of the schedule on Saturday at 9 am *sharp*, and you're expected to be there."

"Of course, yes, absolutely, thank you so much!"

"Don't thank me yet, honey. It's a long week." Trina winked and walked away as quickly as she came, leaving Kurt sitting at his desk, smiling and dazed. His phone buzzed suddenly, and he slowly picked it up and saw a new text from Blaine.

From: Blaine

Hi! Just wanted to make sure you know that I'll be at the airport at 2pm sharp, and we can stop at my dorm to drop off your stuff, and then go have some dinner. Sound good?

Kurt's stomach plummeted to the floor. He stood up and looked around the office for Trina, but she was nowhere to be found. He couldn't tell her that he wasn't coming in that weekend. That would mean that he could kiss Fashion Week goodbye, and it was such an amazing opportunity and he would learn *so much*.

He stared at his phone and tried to figure out what he was going to do. He could always switch his flight to another day, but if he proved himself helpful and competent during the fashion shows, it could mean a giant step forward in his career.

From: Kurt

I have to tell you something, and I hope you don't get mad.

From: Blaine

What's wrong? Do you not want to to stay in my dorm?

From: Kurt

It's not that. I just feel like a jerk right now.

From: Blaine

You could never be a big jerk. What's going on?

From: Kurt

I can't come tomorrow. I'm so sorry.

Kurt's knee bounced and he chewed on his thumb nail as he waited for Blaine's response. He hated the whole situation.

From: Blaine

Oh. Is everything alright?

From: Kurt

Yeah, fine. It's just that I was asked to help out during Fashion Week, and there's a big meeting on Saturday, and it's a really big deal, you know?

From: Kurt

You have every right to be mad at me and I can't apologize enough.

From: Kurt

Are you there?

From: Kurt

I love you.

Kurt waited a few more minutes, but still didn't get a text back. He packed up his things and left, clutching his phone in his hands and wanting to cry at the thought of upsetting Blaine, who was so incredibly

important to him. But, his career was important, too, and he never hated being an adult as much as he did in that moment. Making the responsible choice sucked.

It wasn't until he was sitting on the subway and nearly at his stop that his phone buzzed again, this time with a new email. As he read through it, he sighed in relief, incredibly thankful that he had the world's most wonderful soulmate.

Kurt,

It's okay, I understand. I don't blame you at all and I'm not mad at you. I'm sorry I didn't reply right away. I just miss you, and I needed a few minutes to think.

Just have fun and remember to breathe. It's Fashion Week! Get excited!

I'll see you for Spring Break, alright? A whole week together. I will have to do my best not to die from the anticipation.

I love you, so, so much.

Forever yours,

Blaine

Chapter Seventeen

February 26, 2014

Blaine understood, he really did. Both he and Kurt had lives before they met, and those lives obviously continued after. Kurt had a huge opportunity, and he took it. Blaine was happy for him, and it's not like he would have told Kurt that he couldn't do it. That wouldn't have been fair to Kurt and Blaine would have taken that kind of job immediately, too, if their roles were reversed. It still stung, though, more than Blaine wanted to admit.

Kurt was incredibly busy during Fashion Week, which was to be expected. Blaine received text updates sporadically, and they did talk on the phone once or twice, but there were also plenty of missed calls and unanswered texts and emails. That wasn't anything new, since it happens when two people have conflicting schedules and live miles apart, but it grated on Blaine in a way it hadn't before. He tried not to let it get to him, but even he had a breaking point.

Blaine's phone rang just as he was going to sleep, much to the annoyance of Sam, who threw a dirty t-shirt at him when he didn't answer right away.

"Hello?"

"Hi honey! Did I wake you up?" Kurt sounded excited and energized, the polar opposite of how Blaine was feeling.

"No, not sleeping. What's up?" Blaine got out of bed and put on a hoodie and his slippers as Kurt talked a mile a minute in his ear. He went out into the hallway and down to the common area so his conversation wouldn't disturb Sam, plopping down onto one of the couches. The area was empty, which Blaine was thankful for.

As he listened to Kurt's stories from that day, something started to twist inside him, like gnarled vines constricting his insides. He clenched his teeth while humming in agreement to what Kurt was saying or asking one word questions even though he was dangerously close to not caring about the answers.

At some point, he must have zoned out, because Kurt was suddenly louder, jolting him back to the present.

“Blaine? Are you still listening?”

“Yes, Kurt. I’m still listening.” It came out much harsher than Blaine intended. Kurt didn’t say anything, and the silence was pounding between Blaine’s ears. “Look, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to snap like that. I just, I miss you, okay? And I haven’t seen you in almost a month, and I won’t see you for another couple weeks.”

It was like the dam broke and everything that had been bothering him over the past few days poured out all at once, his volume growing and echoing through the sparse room.

“I barely get to talk to you as it is, and you’re so busy having the time of your life, which is fine, but I thought we were in this together, Kurt. I thought we both agreed to put effort in, but you can’t be bothered to even answer a text most of the time, and *god*, couldn’t you at least have said something before you decided to cancel on me instead of just springing it on me like an afterthought?”

“I thought you were happy for me. You even said - “

“I *am* happy for you. I just wish that you would have talked to me about it first.”

“Oh, so because we’re soulmates, I have to ask your permission before I do anything?” Kurt sounded angry, and that fueled Blaine’s fire even more. He jumped up from the couch and started pacing.

“Don’t put words in my mouth. I didn’t say you needed my permission, I just asked that maybe you tell me things when they’re going to impact my plans.”

“Your plans? I’m sorry, but I thought they were *our* plans, Blaine. It sucked for me too, you know.”

Blaine laughed humorlessly. “Yeah, I’m sure it really sucks spending time with models and going to fancy parties.”

“It’s work!”

“I *bet* it is.” Blaine was fuming and he furiously pushed down the guilt that was creeping up on him. When they did talk over the past few days, Kurt sounded exhausted more often than not, and Blaine knew he had been bouncing around like a maniac all week, running ridiculous errands for anyone that asked. Unfortunately, in that moment the irrational part of him was far more powerful than the logical part.

"I can't believe we're even arguing about this. You know what this week means to me, and I think you need to stop being so selfish."

That was the final straw. "Me? Selfish? Are you *kidding me*? I've done nothing but rearrange my life for you. I haven't talked to my *family* for weeks because of you. All I've been doing is figuring out ways to see you and get closer to you, and you don't even seem to care!"

"I do care! Don't tell me how I feel because you have no idea!"

"I would if you would answer the damn phone once in a while!" Blaine yelled, and someone from down the hall shouted for him to shut up.

"I feel like I'm in Crazy Town! I can't even talk to you right now. Not like this."

"Fine." Blaine hung up the phone and immediately turned it off. He stomped back to his room and fell back on his bed, blinking back tears. He hated fighting with Kurt. The anger was still simmering underneath his skin and it was a terrible feeling, but he wished he could redo their entire conversation.

"Everything okay?" Sam asked, and Blaine felt even worse for waking him up.

"Fine," Blaine said, turning to face the wall. The word echoed in his head and he hoped it wouldn't be the last word Kurt ever heard from him. "Fine."

Sam mumbled something and was soon sleeping, but Blaine couldn't turn his brain off. He stared at the wall and wondered if this is what it's like for all soulmates.

Growing up, he imagined finding his soulmate and then spending their lives together in constant, adoring, cheerful bliss. Nobody ever mentioned that just because they are perfect for each other, they won't be prone to disagreements. He never read about soulmates screaming and yelling at each other over stupid things, and he certainly didn't think it would be so hard to keep up a relationship where he loved somebody so much and simultaneously wanted to throttle them. Clearly, he needed to do better research in his next life.

March 1, 2016

“Call him, or I swear you’re fired.”

Kurt looked up from the dress display he’d been working on to find Marcy, the owner of the boutique, staring at him with narrowed eyes and her hands on her hips. It was a slow day, and he had about an hour left in his shift. He had been dragging all day, partly because of how run down he was after Fashion Week, but mostly because he hadn’t talked to Blaine since their big fight.

“Seriously, Kurt. You’ve been moping around here like someone stole all your neckerchiefs, and it’s bumming me out.”

“If he wanted to talk, he’d call me,” Kurt said, playing with the lacy edge of the dress he was holding.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake, man up. He’s pissed at you, you’re pissed at him, and you’re both being stubborn idiots.”

“You don’t know -”

“I’m gonna stop you right there before you stick your foot in your mouth.” Marcy sat crosslegged on the floor next to Kurt, her long skirt fanned out to cover her legs. “I met Nick when I was in college, and we’ve been married for fifteen years, so don’t tell me I don’t know what it’s like to argue. I happen to be an expert at it.”

“Why is it so hard? Soulmates are supposed to be perfectly compatible.”

“Soulmates are just two people, love. People fuck up all the time.” Marcy smiled at him and patted his leg. “You gotta suck it up and accept those fuck ups for what they are and move on. I’ve wanted to bury Nick alive on more than one occasion, but he’s still around, isn’t he?”

Kurt chuckled lightly. He’d seen Marcy and her husband in action, and they both give it as good as they get. Underneath it all though, he could tell that they love each other immensely.

“Get out of here and call your man. I’ll finish up here.”

Nodding, Kurt set down the dress and stood up, his bones cracking from sitting on the floor for a couple hours and from not sleeping comfortably for a few nights in a row.

"I don't want to see your face until you two kiss and make up," Marcy shouted after him as he left the boutique and headed home.

Once he was back in his apartment, Kurt grabbed some dinner and reorganized his sock drawer. He also rearranged his living room furniture and cleaned the kitchen.

He wasn't procrastinating at all.

Unfortunately, he eventually ran out of things to do. It was a Saturday night, and he could call Rachel or one of his friends from school or work to go out. None of those options sounded appealing, though. Not when he had a Blaine-sized raincloud following him around.

Kurt grabbed his phone and curled up on the couch. Taking a deep breath, he found Blaine in his contacts and hit the call button.

"Hey."

"Hey. I didn't think you'd answer," Kurt said nervously.

"I didn't think you'd call." Blaine's voice was small and defeated, and Kurt felt terrible for making him sound like that.

"I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to fight with you and I don't want to go on not talking to you." Kurt's eyes were welling up for the first time since Blaine hung up on him. "Can we please go back to loving each other?"

Blaine sighed deeply into the phone, and Kurt held his breath, waiting for a response.

"Of course we can, Kurt. I was mad, but I never stopped loving you. I don't think that's even possible."

Kurt exhaled and shut his eyes, making tears spill out over his cheeks.

"We do need to talk, though," Blaine continued. "I think not being able to actually be together is wearing on both of us, and we have to figure out how to deal with it better."

"Yeah, you're right," Kurt said, squeezing his phone tightly as if it was Blaine's hand and not hard plastic. "God, I missed your voice."

"Me, too. What do you say we meet up on Skype in ten? I want to see you."

"It's a date."

Later, after talking to Blaine for couple hours, Kurt buried himself in his pillows and blankets, exhausted but happy. He and Blaine made a deal to be open and honest with each other, even when it was hard to do so. They also talked about their personal responsibilities, both of them agreeing that until they were together in the same place for good, they would keep work and school priorities, but also keep each other in the loop.

It didn't take long for Kurt's eyes to drift shut, and he slept better than he had in days.

March 11, 2016

Hey, Mom. It's me, Blaine. I just wanted to let you know that I'll be in Ohio next week. I'm staying at Kurt's, but maybe I'll stop by, or maybe we can meet up or something. I don't know, I guess I'll talk to you later. I, um... okay, bye.

Blaine tossed his phone onto his bed and got back to his schoolwork. It had been weeks since he'd spoken to his mother, and she had stopped calling after he ignored her a couple dozen times. He didn't know why he bothered to make an effort now, but it was better than running into her accidentally while in Ohio. He could only imagine the drama that would be kicked up if she knew he was there and didn't at least visit once.

He dropped his pen and rubbed his hands over his face. The past month had been on the rough side. After Kurt cancelled his last visit, neither of them had the availability to visit each other to make up for it, leaving them both waiting for the week-long break from school to see each other again. The longing to be by Kurt's side was ever present and Blaine hated that he had to wait another few days before he was with him again.

Blaine focused back on the paper he was trying to write, hoping that time would fly by quickly.

March 16, 2016

“Kurt! Blaine! Breakfast is ready. Better get down here before Finn eats your pancakes!”

Kurt groaned and rolled himself up tighter in the blanket, burying his face into Blaine’s chest. There was no part of him that wanted to move. He was sleepy, warm and comfortably pressed against Blaine, who was still snoring softly beside him. Normally, he would already be up and showered, but he had to admit that he had no regrets about staying up so late the night before, or the two nights prior. Kurt had the whole week to spend with Blaine and he was damned if he wasn’t going to make the most of it.

It had been over a month since they had last seen each other, thanks to his horrendously intense schedule. Kurt still hated that he missed his first planned trip to visit Blaine, and he had vowed to himself and to Blaine that he would not allow it to happen again. It was hard enough being so far apart, and if they couldn’t have those small visits, Kurt was pretty sure he would go insane.

Kurt tried his best to keep up with their phone calls, Skype dates, and occasional emails, although their contact with each other decreased over the past few weeks. Blaine was just as busy as Kurt, working on his piece for his upcoming show, and of course going to classes. They continued to text, even when it would take them awhile to respond to each other.

Still, the happiness that Kurt felt when they finally did see each other far outweighed the struggle of the separation. Every time he saw Blaine in person, he felt like every worry he had was lifted from his shoulders. Holding Blaine, feeling him, kissing him, just being in his space, those were the things that really mattered during their visits. Kurt had been ecstatic when Blaine called him to say that his school’s Spring Break was the same week as Kurt’s, and even more so when he had been able to take the week off from both the boutique and his internship to go back to Lima. He had nearly knocked Blaine over when he came out of the gate at the airport, jumping into his arms before Blaine could put down his bag.

Blaine mumbled and turned into Kurt, pushing him back and throwing his leg over his hip. Kurt opened his mouth to say something, but his words disappeared when Blaine pressed against him, and Kurt could feel that at least one part of Blaine was an early riser.

"Blaine? You awake?" Kurt whispered, nudging Blaine's shoulder but not getting a response. It wasn't that he felt uncomfortable or embarrassed. They had spent a substantial amount of time over the past couple days exploring and learning more about each other, how to make each other gasp and moan, and what words to say to make the other fall apart at the seams. The problem was, however, that Kurt could hear his parents and Finn downstairs, and they made it an unspoken rule to keep things family friendly unless everyone was sleeping or out of the house.

"Mmm, *Kurt*," Blaine mumbled, rolling his hips and digging his fingers into Kurt's side, making Kurt swallow hard and hold his breath to listen for any movement outside his bedroom door. Carole had already called them down for breakfast, so chances were pretty good that someone would come up soon and - *oh*.

Kurt's mind fizzled as Blaine's mouth skidded along the line of his neck, dry, but warm with Blaine's breath. Blaine started to kiss and lick softly, and the rational side of Kurt's brain told him to push Blaine away to avoid starting something they couldn't finish, but that part of his brain was stupid, because what Blaine was doing felt amazing.

"Blaine, wake up, we can't..." Kurt trailed off, moaning quietly at Blaine's teeth grazing over his skin and his hand working its way down the front of Kurt's pajama pants. "Oh my god, you're not sleeping, are you?"

"Nope." Blaine shifted closer and Kurt's breath hitched as Blaine wrapped a hand around him, his cock now fully hard. "How long do we have?"

"A f-few minutes, maybe less," Kurt breathed, bucking his hips up into Blaine's fist. Blaine groaned against his neck, thrusting against Kurt's hip and speeding up his hand. "Yeah, like that."

It was almost unbearably hot under the blanket, but Kurt couldn't imagine stopping long enough to remove it. The threat of his father, or Carole, or - *ohgodno* - Finn walking in on them was niggling in the back of his mind, but the worry grew smaller and smaller with every swipe of Blaine's thumb against the slit of his cock. Blaine was rubbing hard and fast against his thigh, panting into Kurt's neck and pressing in impossibly closer as if he wanted to crawl inside Kurt and stay there forever.

"Kurt, oh *god*, I want you so bad," Blaine murmured, his fist tightening and sending sparks of pleasure up Kurt's spine and down again.

"I know, I know..." Kurt's words were cut off from a final hard thrust into Blaine's fist and he groaned loudly, with much more volume than he should have. He came hard, wave upon wave of pleasure crashing over him. Kurt felt Blaine shudder and still against him seconds later, shaking through the aftershocks of his orgasm.

Neither one of them moved right away, both of them panting with Kurt's hand resting against Blaine's chest, Blaine's heartbeat thumping from behind the letters of Kurt's name. They listened to each other breathe, and Kurt had another moment of disbelief that Blaine was his and his alone.

A knock on the door startled them and Blaine pulled his hand out of Kurt's pants rather quickly, making Kurt wince at the swipe of cool come against his skin. "Um, guys? Burt said to put your pants back on and come have breakfast before it gets cold."

Kurt could feel Blaine chuckling against his shoulder and he huffed out a laugh of his own, despite the heat he felt spreading over his face and neck.

"We really suck at being discreet," Kurt said, carding his fingers through Blaine's hair, breaking apart the gel that was always keeping it tightly styled.

"We really do."

Once they changed and washed up, they headed downstairs and sat down at the table, not waiting before digging in. Finn was the only other person still eating at that point, which wasn't too surprising. Burt was reading through the paper and Carole was finishing her coffee and working on the morning crossword.

"Looks like you boys know how to work up an appetite," Burt commented from behind the paper. Kurt nearly choked on his food, glaring at his father through watery eyes. Blaine just kept his eyes down as his ears turned bright red. "Any big plans for the day?"

"Yes, actually," Kurt answered, looking over at Blaine, who had seemed to recover from Burt's comment and had his eyebrows furrowed in question. Kurt hadn't talked to him about his plans yet, but he really hoped that Blaine wouldn't think it was strange. "Blaine and I are going on a small road trip."

"Anywhere exciting?" Carole asked, taking a sip of her coffee.

“Yeah, dude. Can I come? It’s boring around here,” Finn interjected, looking between Kurt and Blaine with hopeful eyes.

“Sorry, Finn. Not this time,” Kurt said, reaching next to him to squeeze Blaine’s leg. “But we won’t be gone too long, so maybe we can do something when we get back.”

“Whatever,” Finn mumbled, shoving another piece of bacon in his mouth.

Blaine leaned over to Kurt, close enough to whisper, “Are you going to tell me where we’re going?”

Kurt smiled at him softly, giving Blaine’s thigh another short squeeze. “You’ll see.”

They finished up their breakfast and showered, and within an hour they were on their way, singing along to the radio and smiling at each other when they thought the other wasn’t looking. Kurt held on tight to Blaine’s hand, gripping it a little more tightly as they got closer to their destination. Blaine was talking animatedly next to him, but it turned into a dull roar and then silence as they passed through the gates.

Kurt could hear Blaine’s breath hitch over the sound of the radio as Blaine figured out what their plans were.

“Is this alright?” Kurt asked, pulling over next to the tree he remembered seeing so many times before and could find regardless of the season. “I don’t want you to feel weird, but I thought maybe it would be nice, you know, for you to – “

Blaine reached across the seat to pull Kurt into a tight hug, cutting off Kurt’s rambling. Kurt could feel himself relax a bit, although he was still a bit worried that it was too odd for Blaine to be there with him.

“It’s not weird at all,” Blaine said softly, pressing a kiss to Kurt’s cheek. Kurt nodded at him as Blaine pulled away, and both of them got out of the car, Blaine meeting Kurt next to the edge of the lawn and taking his hand. “Lead the way.”

Kurt nodded again and walked forward with Blaine half a step behind, following him with their hands clasped together and swinging between them. They passed the rows of marble and stone in silence, Kurt looking at the familiar names of people he didn’t know, all of them in pairs. They reached the marker for the Taylors and made a quick left.

When he was younger, Kurt used to count the number of markers between the end and his destination, but after so many walks along the same grassy path, his barely had to think about it at all. After a few steps, they stopped in front of a large white marble stone. It was a double, just like all the others, with “Hummel” written in capitalized script across the top. Kurt barely noticed Blaine letting go of his hand, staring down at the name on the left hand side of the marker.

Lydia Elizabeth

“Hey, mom. Sorry it’s been so long,” Kurt started, leaning into Blaine, who had wrapped an arm around Kurt’s waist. “I want to tell you something kind of important.”

Kurt took a deep breath before continuing, almost laughing at himself for being so nervous. It wasn’t like his mom was really there, and Kurt didn’t believe in the afterlife, but there was still that connection between mind and body, and Kurt couldn’t help feeling like he was actually talking to her, introducing his soulmate and hoping for her approval. “This is Blaine. He’s, um... he’s my soulmate.”

Blaine cleared his throat, and Kurt saw that Blaine’s eyes were looking a bit glassy. “Hello, Mrs. Hummel. It’s an honor to meet you.”

“You don’t have to talk,” Kurt said quietly, still looking down. “It’s silly, I know. I guess it’s this *thing* that I do sometimes. I don’t want you to feel uncomfortable.”

Blaine shushed him, moving them even closer together. “It’s not silly.”

They stood there for a while, huddled close together, the sun not able to banish the chill in the air. Kurt talked to his mother a little more, telling her the story of how he and Blaine met, and Blaine stood next to him the entire time, rubbing circles into Kurt’s back and laughing along with him when Kurt’s storytelling got a bit animated. Once Kurt was ready to leave, he blew a kiss at the marker and whispered a ‘good-bye’. As he started to walk away, he saw Blaine touching the stone briefly with his gloved hand and whispering something so softly that Kurt couldn’t hear. As much as he wanted to ask Blaine what he said, he liked that Blaine and his mom had their own little secret.

March 18, 2016

Kurt and Blaine were huddled up together on the couch, wasting away the afternoon by watching movies with Burt and Carole, when Blaine's phone rang. Kurt watched Blaine pull it out of his pocket and he definitely noticed Blaine's face change from relaxed and content to tense and worried. Blaine excused himself to take the call and Kurt let him go, figuring that Blaine would tell him about it when he got back. He shared a look with his father and shrugged, trying to pay attention to the movie but unable to stop himself from watching the doorway to the kitchen.

After a few minutes, Blaine returned, clearly confused but not appearing to be upset.

"Who was that?" Kurt asked, lifting his arm up so Blaine could lean into him.

"It was my mom," Blaine replied. It sounded more like a question than a statement. "She wants to meet us for lunch tomorrow."

"Us?" Kurt couldn't help but be wary of the situation. He would freely admit that his impressions of Blaine's parents were not good, especially considering how harsh they had been when they had found out about his and Blaine's relationship. "As in, she wants to meet *me*?"

"Yeah," Blaine said, obviously in a state of disbelief. "She said that if you're going to be a part of my life, she would rather know you than lose contact with me. I think she knows that I'll always pick you."

"Oh."

"She didn't seem upset or anything," Blaine quickly added. "It was just weird, you know?"

Kurt did know, especially after what happened before. He wanted to believe that Blaine's mother was really interested, more for Blaine's sake than his own, but the apprehension still lingered.

"What did you tell her?" Kurt asked, noticing his father looking over at them from the other side of the room. Burt didn't know everything that had went down with Blaine's family, but he did know enough to have his own rather strong opinions about the Andersons.

"I said that I would let her know. I didn't want to assume that you would agree."

"Let's do it." Kurt placed his hand over Blaine's and gave a tight squeeze. It was a simple gesture, but it had become their way of showing support.

Blaine looked at him for a moment, and Kurt could see the love and gratitude shining from Blaine's eyes. Blaine squeezed Kurt's hand back and got up from the couch.

"Right. I'll call her back and let her know."

Kurt gave him a reassuring smile and watched him walk back into the kitchen. He looked back over to his father and stepmother, who were looking at him intently. Burt was obviously waiting for Kurt to say something, and judging by Carole's raised eyebrow, so was she.

"Blaine's mom wants to meet me."

"Yeah, I got that part," Burt deadpanned. "How do you think that's gonna go?"

Kurt shrugged and flicked a piece of fuzz from his pants. "Hopefully not as bad as I think might."

"It seems like she's trying, though, so that's something."

It's definitely something, Kurt thought. He just hoped it's something good.

Chapter Eighteen

March 18, 2016

The short trip to Breadstix was spent mostly in silence, with Kurt driving and Blaine bouncing his knee nervously in the passenger seat. It had been a rough night for both of them. Blaine tossed and turned for most of it. He had apologized profusely each time he woke Kurt up even though Kurt had told him he didn't mind. Blaine spent the rest of the night with his back pressed against Kurt's chest, with Kurt's fingers tracing patterns over his skin. It had been enough to soothe Blaine into a light sleep, but it was short lived as morning had come much quicker than either of them wanted.

Blaine looked around the restaurant furtively as soon as they walked in. "I don't see her. Maybe she changed her mind. We should just go."

Kurt caught Blaine as he started to turn around, spinning him back around to follow the hostess to their table with his hands firmly on his shoulders. "Stop that. You're amazing. *We* are amazing. It'll be fine."

They sat down, both on one side of the booth, and ordered their drinks. Blaine noticed that Kurt kept looking toward the door, even though Kurt had no idea what Blaine's mother looked like. After they received their water, Blaine could feel every muscle in his body tense up as he saw his mother approaching them.

"Hello, Blaine," Rose said, looking anywhere but at Kurt. Blaine stood up to give her a short hug. He did have manners, after all. "I'm sorry I'm a little late. I was expecting your father to leave for his trip earlier."

Blaine sat back down as his mother did the same. "He doesn't know, does he? That you're meeting me?"

"Of course not. I wanted to see you," Rose said, looking rather nervous. "I didn't want him to object."

Blaine scoffed at her words. "Right."

It really shouldn't have been a surprise, but the fact that his own mother had to keep such a ridiculous secret from his father stung. Kurt cleared his throat, getting Blaine's attention, and Blaine smiled at him awkwardly.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Rose said to Kurt, finally acknowledging him. Blaine braced himself for whatever borderline offensive comments his mother had up her sleeve. She was smiling, but Blaine knew her well enough to tell that it wasn't entirely sincere. He honestly couldn't remember the last time he had seen her smile and *mean* it. "You must be Blaine's friend."

"Soulmate," Blaine cut in quickly to correct her. "Mom, this is Kurt Hummel, the love of my life."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Anderson." Kurt held out his hand across the table, and Blaine was shocked to see her take it. Judging by the way his eyes widened, so was Kurt. However, Blaine definitely didn't miss how she winced slightly when he referred to Kurt as his soulmate.

"Likewise, and call me Rose, dear." She picked her menu back up and started to look through it. "Oh, the lasagna sounds nice."

Blaine let out an exasperated sigh and rolled his eyes. "Look, I get what you're trying to do, but if you came here to simply ignore the fact that I've found the person I want to spend the rest of my life with, we can just leave."

"Blaine, really, it's fine," Kurt said, placing a hand on Blaine's shoulder. Blaine could see his mother staring at the gesture, as if she was trying to will Kurt's hands off her son, and Blaine wanted nothing more than to grab Kurt and run. He was expecting his mother to be somewhat cold, but he couldn't continue to sit across from her if she was going to minimize his and Kurt's relationship. It was too precious to him. Kurt was his life, and Blaine hated that she couldn't seem to understand that.

Blaine closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "Why are you here, Mom? The truth."

Rose started to speak, but was interrupted by their server appearing to take their orders. Once they had went around making their selections and the server walked away, they all stared at each other for a few moments in awkward silence.

"Blaine, sweetheart, I told you what I wanted," Rose finally said, her words laced with desperation and her plastic smile faltering. "I miss you, and I wanted to meet this boy you've been talking about."

"Then tell me why you can barely look at him." Blaine could feel the anger bubbling under his skin. He couldn't stand the hypocrisy of it all. "Or why you have to hide where you were going from Dad. Maybe you can explain to me why you're even bothering when you don't actually seem to care that I'm happy."

For the first time since she arrived, Blaine could see his mother lose some of her steely exterior and reveal the true woman underneath. Not every memory that Blaine had of her was negative. There had been plenty of happy memories from his childhood, but once he had been marked, those memories became fewer and farther apart.

Rose dropped her gaze from Blaine and focused on the table, wringing her fingers nervously. It was clear that she didn't know how to answer Blaine's questions without making him more angry. Blaine wrapped his arms across his chest while Kurt's thumb kept rubbing small circles into his shoulder, centering him, making him stronger.

"I do want you to be happy," Rose said quietly. "I know that I haven't shown it, but it's true. When you were marked, I got so scared. I didn't know how to take it. I had plans, Blaine."

"Those were your plans, not mine."

"I know that... now." Rose paused, squaring her shoulders and gaining back some of her confidence. "I was so wrapped up in wanting to watch you get married someday, or spending time with my grandchildren." She held her hand up to stop Blaine from interrupting. "I understand that those things can still happen for you. For both of you. It's just going to take me some time to get used to it, and to convince your father that – "

"That's the problem!" Blaine cut her off, not caring if the people around them were starting to stare. "He shouldn't need convincing. He's my father and..." Blaine swallowed hard to keep his voice from cracking. "He's supposed to love me."

"He does love you, sweetheart."

Blaine scoffed again, trying to will away the burning in his eyes.

"I know it doesn't seem like it, especially since your... disagreement." Rose flinched at the word. "But I know your father, and he needs some time, too. He'll come around. Destiny is absolute, Blaine. He knows that he can't change what you and Kurt have, and it terrifies him just as much as it terrifies me."

"Mrs. Anderson – Rose – if I may?" Kurt didn't wait for her approval before continuing. Blaine was just thankful that Kurt hadn't excused himself and never come back considering what a mess Blaine's family

was. “With all due respect, you say that you want Blaine to be happy, but your actions are what are keeping him from *being* truly happy. What exactly are you so afraid of?”

“I don’t really know anymore,” Rose said, shaking her head slowly and meeting Blaine’s eyes. “It was a shock at first, to see that your soulmate was a boy. It’s not at all what we expected, and I didn’t want you to struggle just because your relationship wasn’t conventional. We were afraid for your safety and for your future.” Her face softened, and she gave Blaine a small smile. “I can’t promise that I will always understand your actions, and heaven knows that I wish you had decided on a different career, but I don’t want to lose you because I didn’t try.”

Blaine didn’t know how to respond to that. There were many things that needed to be said, years worth of disagreements to discuss, but Blaine was so tired of it all. He didn’t want to have to fight for his family to accept him or his choices. He knew what he wanted to do with his life, and who he wanted to spend that life with.

“I appreciate the effort, but if you want to be a part of my life...” Blaine trailed off and uncrossed his arms, reaching over to grab Kurt’s hand and squeezing it tightly. “I need you to understand that it’s *our* life now. Mine and Kurt’s. I’m still going to finish school and I’m still going to be a teacher. Kurt has nothing to do with those decisions and he completely supports me. I hope that you can do the same.”

At that moment, the server returned with their food. Blaine was happy for the distraction, and started to pick at his salad.

“I can, sweetheart, and I will,” Rose responded. “I’ll talk to your father, as well.” Blaine nodded at her, and her smile grew. “I really am happy that you two found each other, even though I haven’t done a very good job at showing it.”

“Thank you. I’m happy, too.” Blaine smiled at his mother briefly before returning his attention to his food. His family wasn’t going to be fixed overnight, but at least there was some progress.

The rest of their meal was filled with polite conversation, mostly involving Kurt answering Rose’s questions about his life and his goals. Kurt remained calm as he answered, never showing that he was annoyed or unsure of her intentions. After the food was gone and the bill was paid – Rose insisted, it was the least she could do – Blaine hugged his mother again, this time holding on for a few extra seconds.

As soon as Blaine and Kurt got into the car, Kurt let out a long breath and rested his head against the back of his seat.

“Well, that wasn’t as bad as I thought it would be,” Kurt said, turning his head to face Blaine. “I was sure I was going to have to restrain you from shoving a breadstick up her nose.”

Blaine laughed then, for the first time since they left the house. He leaned over the center console and lifted his hand to Kurt’s cheek. “You are amazing. Thank you so much for coming with me.”

“Anytime,” Kurt whispered, closing the distance between them and pressing their lips together for a slow, sweet kiss, humming softly against Blaine’s lips. Blaine broke the kiss first, tilting his head forward to rest his forehead against Kurt’s. They stayed like that for a few minutes, until Blaine could no longer ignore the hard plastic cupholder digging into his side.

They returned back to Kurt’s house to find everyone gone, and the rest of the day was spent wrapped up in warm blankets and each other.

~^*^~

March 22, 2016

Spring Break ended much faster than they would have liked, and before they knew it, it was time for both Kurt and Blaine to leave Lima and return to their regular lives. Blaine’s flight was later than Kurt’s, so he went with Kurt and Burt to the airport to see him off.

“Until next time?” Kurt asked.

Blaine wound his arms around Kurt’s back, underneath his coat, pressing his hands into Kurt’s skin until Kurt moved closer and they were standing chest-to-chest, Blaine’s face resting against Kurt’s shoulder.

“Until next time,” Blaine whispered, sniffing a bit. He was already counting the days until he would see Kurt again. “I love you so much.”

“I love you, too.” Kurt gave him a watery smile, and then kissed him. It was short and chaste – they were in an airport in Ohio, after all – but it was filled with the promise of a future where no kiss had to be the last.

Kurt's flight was called and they reluctantly pulled back from each other. Kurt kissed him once, twice more before letting go and walking over to where his father was standing and pretending not to watch them. Blaine smiled to himself as Kurt gave Burt a hug, happy that Kurt had a father that loved him unconditionally.

Blaine and Burt stood together and waved to Kurt as he walked through security and out of sight, his red-rimmed eyes and sad smile tugging at Blaine's heart and making his own tears fall down his cheeks before he even knew he was crying.

Burt put his hand on Blaine's shoulder and started to walk them to the exit. After his and Kurt's lunch date with his mother, Blaine had filled Burt in on what happened while Kurt ran a few errands with Carole. He found that Burt was easy to talk to and he could see where Kurt got his compassionate nature from.

"It's been nice having you around," Burt said casually. "You and Kurt, you're good for each other."

"Thanks, Burt. I think so, too."

~^*^~

April 22, 2016

Blaine,

TWO DAYS!!!!

I can't wait to see you!!!! And to hear you perform!!!!

I think I deserve some sort of citation for overuse of exclamation points but I!!!! DON'T!!!! CARE!!!! I want to exclaim a lot of things right now, mostly involving how badly I want the next 48 hours to hurry up so I can see my cutie ;)

FYI, you have reduced me to cheesy emoticons. Congratulations.

LOVE YOU!!!!!!!!!!

Kurt

~^*^~

Dear Mr. Hummel,

I regret to inform you that your blatant disregard of common grammar rules, combined with an accompanying “winky face”, will cost you several hugs and a multitude of kisses.

Further infractions may result in more severe punishments, including, but not limited to, activities of a risque nature.

I expect payment as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time,

Blaine Devon Anderson

Founder and President

Anderson’s Email Etiquette Council

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Dear Mr. Anderson,

I’M!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

SO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

SORRY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

LOVE YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

;) ;) ;)

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!,

KURT!!!!!!

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April 24, 2016

Blaine bounced on his heels in excitement. He was in the parking lot outside his dorm, and Kurt was on his way. Blaine had a class he couldn't miss that morning, so he wasn't able to meet Kurt at the airport, but Kurt had insisted that it was fine, that a cab would be sufficient, and that it would be more fun if he could just tackle Blaine where any of Blaine's friends could see. Sam had promised to make himself scarce for the weekend, having his own projects to work on, so Blaine was very much looking forward to some long overdue time with his soulmate.

They had worked out Kurt's visit to Ithaca so it fell on the same weekend as the Cornell Spring Music Series. It was a huge deal for Blaine, as one of the few featured juniors, because he was going to play an original piece that he had been working on for months and Kurt would actually be there to hear it. Blaine smiled to himself as he remembered the many times Kurt would beg to hear a bit of his composition over the phone or on Skype, but Blaine held his ground, wanting to keep it a surprise.

A cab finally appeared, pulling over in front of the dorm entrance, and the back door flew open before it came to a full stop. Kurt jumped out and ran for Blaine, nearly knocking him over in his enthusiasm. Blaine didn't mind one bit, too happy to have Kurt in his arms again to worry about falling over. They stood there, arms wrapped tightly around shoulders and waists, faces pressed against necks and cheeks, and Blaine took a deep breath, just the *smell* of Kurt enough to make his head spin with relief at having Kurt close to him again. Kurt pulled back to kiss Blaine, hard and off-center, and he tasted like coffee and cherry Chapstick.

The cab driver honked the horn impatiently, so Blaine helped Kurt grab his bags and carry them up to the dorm, teasing him about bringing so much for just one weekend.

Once they got to his room, Blaine unlocked the door with a shaky hand and led Kurt inside. He set Kurt's bag's down at the foot of his bed and kicked his shoes off while Kurt looked around. Kurt seemed

entranced by Blaine's side of the room and stopped to look closer at all the posters and pictures on the walls.

"I know it's not much, but it's enough," Blaine told him. "We share a bathroom with the room next door, but everyone is pretty much gone for the next couple days, so..."

Blaine trailed off, remembering that he had already told Kurt about his struggles with sharing a bathroom during one of their late night phone calls, when he wanted to strangle one of the guys next door because they kept using his hair gel and forgetting to put the top back on the bottle.

"I like it," Kurt said. "It's cute and compact, just like you."

"I'm not that compact." Blaine pouted, but then his heart sped up as Kurt walked toward him with a playful glint in his eyes.

"You're right. You're huge, actually," Kurt joked, trying to keep a straight face, but Blaine could see the corners of his mouth twitching. "Gargantuan, even."

"Shut up." Blaine was smiling so hard his were starting to hurt. "I missed you so much."

Kurt looked at Blaine with a kind of reverence that Blaine wasn't sure he deserved but was very much willing to take. He ran his hands up Blaine's back and rested them on his shoulders.

It took a fraction of a second for their lips to meet with kisses; hot, desperate and so deep Blaine could feel them everywhere. They stumbled to the bed, fingers pulling at buttons and zippers until there was nothing left between them. They fell down together, touching every inch of skin they could reach, tongues and hips moving in a steady rhythm. Blaine felt dizzy with the reality of Kurt actually being there and the feel of Kurt's body, hard and toned and excruciatingly beautiful underneath him.

"Love you, missed you so much," Blaine panted, his fingers restless against Kurt's skin, constantly moving to find a new place to hang onto. Kurt wrapped a leg around his waist and used it to urge him to move faster and harder. Blaine pressed Kurt down with the weight of his body, aching to be as close to him as possible.

It was over just as fast as it started, ending with Blaine draped over Kurt, trying to catch his breath and laughing into Kurt's chest at how their stamina was superbly out of shape. They exchanged lazy kisses and

soft touches for hours, dozing off and waking up with a need for more. They talked in whispers for no particular reason, learning even more about each other. Eventually they got up and showered, got dirty, then showered again. They watched a movie without paying any attention to the screen and Blaine was sure that it was the best day he had in weeks.

"So what's the game plan?" Kurt asked, twisting pieces of Blaine's gelled hair between his fingers. They were under Blaine's blanket, warm and content and very much naked, with music playing softly in the background.

Blaine lifted his head from Kurt's chest, humming when Kurt scratched his fingernails against his scalp. "The concert starts at six tomorrow, and then there's a big dinner for the performers the next day."

"I'm really excited to hear you play," Kurt said. "You've been suspiciously secretive about it."

"I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about," Blaine mumbled into the warmth of Kurt's skin. Kurt had been asking him to play his piece for him for ages, but Blaine wanted to wait until the show to let him hear it. His piece was special, personal, and strongly influenced by the events of recent months.

"Whatever you say. I'm on to you, Blaine Anderson."

Blaine raised his head to kiss Kurt softly. "I hope you like it," he said after leaving a trail of feather-light kisses down Kurt's jaw and over his chest, tracing his name with the tip of his tongue.

Kurt danced his fingers across Blaine's bare shoulders. "Of course I will."

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April 25, 2016

Kurt chewed absently on his thumbnail, his other hand tapping impatiently on the armrest. Another student was onstage and was playing a very complex violin piece, but as lovely as it was, Kurt couldn't wait for it to end. Blaine was due to perform next, according to the program, the edges of which were starting to tear from repeatedly twisting it between his sweaty palms. He tried to distract himself by

scanning the filled auditorium, wondering if any of Blaine's friends were there and if they were even half as nervous as he was.

A familiar face two rows back and to the left startled him. Blaine hadn't mentioned that his parents would be coming, but his mother was sitting straight-backed with her eyes on the stage, and next to her was a man that Kurt could only presume was Blaine's father. Kurt quickly looked away, hoping that Blaine's mother didn't see him. Their last meeting ended on a positive note, but with Blaine's father there, anything could happen. Kurt only hoped that nothing would take away from Blaine's moment.

This was a celebration of Blaine and his accomplishments, a night to remember how incredibly talented and brilliant he was, and with that, Kurt sat up a little straighter, not caring if Blaine's parents saw him. He was proud of Blaine and hiding it seemed so *pointless*.

After the show, he would throw his arms around Blaine and tell him how wonderful he was, and no amount of disdain from Blaine's father could take away that happiness.

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Blaine stood backstage and wiped his sweaty palms on his pants for the umpteenth time while watching his classmates perform. He was incredibly nervous, not only because he was going to play his own original work for a couple thousand people - which was terrifying in itself - but Kurt was there, and he really wanted to make Kurt proud.

His life had changed so much, it was a bit overwhelming. In just a few short months, not only did Blaine find and meet his soulmate, but he also managed to start rebuilding his relationship with his mother and continue succeeding in school. Sometimes he felt like he was struggling to catch up, but then other times he wished time would go faster. He definitely wouldn't mind speeding up the next year and a half so he could finally graduate and be with Kurt every day.

The applause of the audience signaled the end of the performance he was watching, and then it was Blaine's turn. The piano was wheeled out to the center of the stage by the crew, and while others had requested a small group to accompany them, Blaine had declined. He wanted his performance to be as intimate as possible, and despite the many faces who would be watching, he was only going to be playing for one.

Blaine walked across the stage and took his seat, his head held high as he took a few calming breaths. He tried to look out into the crowd to see if he could spot Kurt, but the lights were too bright. Blaine could feel him there, though, watching and listening, and that was enough. Taking a final deep breath, he placed his hands on the keys and began to play.

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As the first soft notes filled the room, Kurt felt his heart stutter and fall in time with the music, skipping a beat with a gentle pause, then diving back in, transporting him to another plane of existence where it was only him and Blaine. He watched Blaine's hands and his eyes, the twitch of his lips and the furrow of his eyebrows. He was always beautiful when he played, even through a pixelated computer screen, but *this* Blaine was in an entirely different world, lost to the music and his emotions. When they will be together in one place, finally able to share their lives completely, Kurt would make sure Blaine was playing *all the time*, because in his element, he was fearless and breathtaking.

Kurt listened to the quiet beginning and the build to something complex and earth-shattering, and he must have forgotten to breathe along the way, because his head felt light and his mind was reeling and he realized... it was them. It was their song, their journey, their love. They had been living separate lives, simple but not without promise or longing, and they were waiting, wondering when they would feel really and truly whole. Sliding to the edge of his seat, Kurt leaned forward and remembered when they met, the spark that shocked them both to the core, the moment when the world opened up and everything became possible.

He remembered their first kiss and the first time he felt Blaine's hand on his face. He shivered as he thought of the sound of Blaine whispering his name and the way he looked when they saw each other after weeks of separation. He thought of laughter and joy and need, his body straining to take in every treasured second they spent at each other's sides. Memories flashed through his mind one after another: he and Blaine wrapped in sheets in the early morning, watching Blaine throw a football around with Finn and his dad, having a spontaneous flour fight while baking cookies, holding each other after making love. It was hard to breathe sometimes, the weight of their bond surrounding them on all sides, and it would be suffocating if it wasn't the most incredible feeling in the world. Kurt never felt so safe, so loved, so cared for as he did when he was with Blaine.

It wasn't until the notes turned more gentle and steady that Kurt realized his cheeks were wet and his hands were cramping from gripping the armrests. Blaine was telling him so much in those short moments,

and as the song died down, Kurt could see his future with Blaine, the beautiful life they will have together soon, the certainty and security of it like a warm blanket after years of walking in the cold. It was so clear, Kurt could almost feel the press of Blaine's lips as they are married, the soft warmth of Blaine's hand as they sit out on the porch of their new house, and Blaine's strong arms comforting him when when life gets messy. He would be the same to Blaine, being there to keep him from falling and sharing in his triumphs. It was forever, the kind of forever that was so sure it was tangible and wrapped tight around them. Fate intended for their hearts and souls be entwined for eternity and Kurt couldn't imagine anything greater.

When Blaine finished playing, Kurt stood and applauded louder than anyone, the rest of the audience blurred and muted. It was just him and Blaine and a piano echoing the final note of a song that would play on endlessly. He wiped his eyes and watched Blaine bow and leave the stage, and he wanted to follow and find him, wrap his arms around him and hold him for hours. He wanted to thank Blaine for the song and the hope that came with it. If Kurt had any doubts that this - that Blaine - was it, was everything he could have possibly wanted, they were gone.

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Blaine waited nervously in the lobby, looking through the the crowd and trying to spot Kurt. The hour after he finished playing his composition felt like an eternity, and he was dying to know what Kurt thought. He had tried to pour all of himself, his love, his need, his adoration, into the song, and he hoped that Kurt understood that it was more than music.

"Blaine!"

Spinning around, Blaine finally saw Kurt running toward him. He took a couple steps forward when two bodies cut him off, making him stumble. He opened his mouth to apologize for almost knocking into them when he realized who they were.

"Hello, Blaine," his father said, an unreadable look on his face. The usual disappointment was missing from his eyes and it was more unsettling than reassuring. He was also smiling, as if he was actually happy to see Blaine. It was very strange.

"Hello, Dad. Mom." Blaine leaned in and kissed his mother's cheek, catching a glimpse of Kurt behind her, watching the exchange with wide eyes. He managed a small smile in Kurt's direction and nodded for him to come over. "I wasn't expecting you to be here."

"We weren't planning on it, but your mother can be rather persuasive," Peter said, laughing lightly.

Kurt sidled up next to Blaine and as much as he was thrumming with the need to be alone with him, Blaine settled for tangling his fingers with Kurt's and holding on tightly. He didn't miss the look of surprise on his parents' faces.

"Mom, you remember Kurt," Blaine said. He had no idea whether she told his father that she had met Kurt already, but he didn't particularly care.

"Nice to see you again, Mrs. Anderson," Kurt said. "Hello, Mr. Anderson."

Blaine held his breath waiting for his father to respond.

"It's nice to finally meet you, Kurt," Peter said, holding out his hand. "My wife tells me good things."

"Oh! Um, thank you. They're all true, I promise," Kurt said, shaking Peter's hand firmly and looking just as stunned as Blaine felt.

"Blaine, I was wondering if I could speak to you for a moment."

"Uh, yeah, sure." He turned to Kurt, "Wait for me by the entrance?"

"Don't worry, we'll be there," Rose said, taking Kurt by the arm and leading him away.

Blaine and Peter walked down a hallway away from the crowd and sat down on a bench next to an old trophy case. Peter leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees, his posture free from its usual stiffness. Blaine didn't know what to make of it.

"So that was Kurt, hmm?"

Blaine sat up straighter. "It was."

"Okay."

"Okay?"

“He seems like a nice young man. Your mother likes him, anyway.”

“Really?” Blaine looked at his father skeptically. “No jabs at how he’s a money hungry vulture trying to tear our family apart?”

“What do you want me to say, Blaine? He’s your soulmate. What’s done is done.”

“And you’re okay with it all of a sudden?” Blaine said in disbelief. “How does that even make sense?”

Peter sighed and sat back. “I know I’m not the easiest person to get along with, and I know I can be stubborn. But I also know when to back off,” he said, pausing like he was trying to choose his words carefully. “I wasn’t lying when I said we weren’t planning on coming, but then your mother and I saw Kurt during your performance, and I’m glad we did.”

Blaine gaped at his father, not sure what to say.

“Blaine, all we’ve ever wanted was for you to be happy - “

“That’s what mom said. You both have a strange way of showing it, don’t you think?”

“Let me finish, okay? Seeing you and Kurt together is a big adjustment for me, and I know that’s my fault,” Peter held up a hand to stop Blaine from interjecting. “But if he keeps looking at you like he did when you played, it’s definitely something I can get used to.”

“I... I’m sorry, Dad, but I feel like I’m in the Twilight Zone right now,” Blaine said, shaking his head and trying to process his emotional whiplash. “It’s just, you were so against everything. Not just Kurt, but everything I do seems like it’s not enough. You act like you can’t stand anything that I am.”

And there it was. The cause of so many years of tension, words that were always on the tip of Blaine’s tongue but he never had the courage to say, spilled out into the open.

“You think that?” Peter asked, slouching down on the bench. It made him so much smaller than the man Blaine was used to seeing.

“Of course I do! When have you ever told me anything different?” Blaine stood up and began to pace. “When I got into Cornell - which, by the way, is a really good school - you didn’t congratulate me. You told

me that it would be a waste of my time! And when I told you that I met Kurt, you said some really hurtful things.”

“Yes, I did,” Peter said calmly. “It was wrong of me.”

Blaine groaned in frustration. “Don’t do that, okay? You can’t just fix everything by being here today and acting like you understand. And where is this even coming from? Are you a pod person?”

Peter laughed and patted the bench next to him, and Blaine sat back down, stunned and confused. “I know this doesn’t fix everything, and I haven’t been as supportive as I should have been. I always wanted the best for you, but it took me a while to realize that what I want for you and what you want are two different things.”

“I thought you hated me,” Blaine said quietly, his head hanging and his eyes prickling with unshed tears.

“Blaine, you’re my son,” Peter said, placing his hand on Blaine’s shoulder. It was the most affection Blaine had been shown by his father in years. “I love you, and I’m so sorry that I made you think otherwise.”

They sat in silence for a couple minutes. Blaine was still skeptical, especially since his father had never been the type to speak so openly about his feelings. He didn’t think they would ever be as close as Kurt and Burt, but he supposed it was a start.

“There’s a dinner tomorrow, for everyone that participated in the show and their families,” Blaine said. “Kurt and I are going. Do you and Mom want to join us?”

“That would be great, son.”

They stood up and Blaine wiped at his eyes, catching a glimpse of Peter doing the same. Peter patted his back and nodded, and started to head back toward the auditorium, and Blaine followed behind, wondering if he was in some strange dream. As promised, Kurt and Rose were waiting by the entrance, and when Kurt saw him, he frowned in concern. Blaine shrugged and shook his head minutely, and Kurt seemed to understand, giving him a small smile and linking their fingers together again. They said their goodbyes to Blaine’s parents and made plans to meet before dinner the following day.

Chapter Nineteen

Once the door to his dorm was closed, Blaine let out a huge sigh of relief. The evening had turned out to be exceptionally weird, and he was happy to be back in a quiet space. His reprieve was made even better because Kurt was there with him.

Blaine's mind was still reeling from the conversation with his father, and while he did want to talk about it with Kurt and try to sort through his confusion, knowing that Kurt would listen and not judge him, he wanted to enjoy the rest of the night.

As if reading his mind, Kurt pinned him to his door as soon as their shoes were off, kissing Blaine's breath away. The conversation with his father was effectively erased from his mind and he allowed himself to get lost in the taste of Kurt's mouth and the feeling of his cool fingers weaving under his shirt, leaving trails of goosebumps across his sides and back. Blaine moaned as Kurt's thigh pressed between his legs.

"Kurt," Blaine gasped, scrambling to pull Kurt's jacket off. "Not that I'm complaining, but - "

Kurt shushed him, peppering kisses along the line of Blaine's jaw. "Need you. Right now, c'mon." With that, Kurt grabbed Blaine by the belt loops and tugged him to the bed, pulling Blaine down on top of him. Their arms and legs tangled together, their hips lined up just enough for Blaine to feel Kurt's length brushing against his own. It was exhilarating and dizzying, just as it always was.

It was Kurt who broke away first, staring down at Blaine with dark eyes and flushed cheeks. "I don't want to wait any more."

Blaine took a shuddering breath and rolled them over so they were facing each other. As much as he wanted to continue what they were doing, talking was more important, especially since he wasn't sure what Kurt was referring to. "You don't want to wait for what?"

"I want you. I want everything with you," Kurt whispered. "I want to try... something new."

"Oh. *Oh.*"

"Unless you don't want to, of course," Kurt said, slightly rushed. "I don't want to pressure you or anything, but, god, Blaine, that song... it made me feel so much and I..."

Blaine cupped Kurt's cheek, stroking his thumb along his cheekbone. Kurt leaned into his hand, closing his eyes and breathing deeply, like he would float away if Blaine's touch wasn't there to keep him anchored to reality.

It was a big deal. Despite all of the sex they had, there was still one thing they hadn't done. They didn't *have to*, and there was no law that said otherwise. They could go their entire lives without penetrative sex and be perfectly happy. However, the physical bond that would be created could not be denied. For Blaine, it was the ultimate act of trust and devotion. It meant that their bodies would be joined together fully, and it scared him as much as it excited him. The bond between them would be so much stronger, but the ache they both felt when they were so far apart would, in turn, be much worse.

"Are you sure?" Blaine asked softly, moving his hand to Kurt's neck and playing with his hair. Kurt shivered in his arms, then nodded.

"I'm sure, so, so sure," Kurt said, and then they were kissing again, gentle and lazy presses of lips that quickly turned hot and frenzied.

They stopped talking after that, anxious to get the rest of their clothes off as fast as possible. Blaine's pants ended up getting caught on his feet, making him fall face first into Kurt's stomach, and then Kurt elbowed Blaine in the neck while taking off his undershirt, which caused a new round of giggles. They fumbled and kissed and touched, until a small bottle of lube and a condom were on the bed next to them.

"How do... do you... um, who is..." Blaine stuttered, followed by an embarrassed laugh at his sudden inability to speak properly. They had never discussed the 'what goes where' before, and while Blaine was trying to figure out how to ask in the least crass way possible, Kurt was looking down at him with nothing but love and amusement.

"I think we should try it both ways," Kurt said. "See what we like. I've done some stuff, like, with myself, obviously, and I think I would enjoy... receiving."

"Yeah, yeah. Totally. Switching it up sounds good," Blaine said, relaxing into the smooth glide of Kurt's fingers along his shoulder and down his side, the up and down and side to side motion soothing his nerves. "Just maybe not in a row? I don't know if I have that much stamina."

Kurt laughed, that high, clear laugh that Blaine loved so much. “Deal. How do we decide who goes first? Rock, paper, scissors?”

“That is both ridiculous and diplomatic,” Blaine said, holding up his fist. “Winner, I guess, tops?”

Blaine threw scissors. Kurt threw paper.

The air was suddenly thicker, and Blaine watched Kurt’s throat flex as he swallowed. “Okay,” Kurt whispered, and then they were kissing again while Blaine reached for the lube.

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Kurt lay back and spread his legs, inviting Blaine to settle between them. The bed was narrow, barely big enough for the both of them, but in that moment it felt even smaller. The room itself seemed to cave in and all that was occupying the space was him and Blaine, pressed together, Blaine licking and nipping at Kurt’s collarbone and nipples, distracting him from the fingers sliding inside of him. They went on like that for what felt like hours, until Kurt was babbling nonsense into Blaine’s neck, open and ready for more.

When Blaine finally, *finally*, pushed inside of him, Kurt thought his heart would explode from the closeness, the love, the caring, and the unfathomable joy he felt all at once. The slight discomfort of the act itself faded quickly, overpowered by the intensity of the moment. The dull throbbing of Kurt’s soulmate mark created a steady beat, growing stronger as Blaine dropped onto his elbows, pressing their chests together. Kurt had grown accustomed to his mark making itself present, especially when he and Blaine were intimate, but this time it was different, like he could make out the strokes writing Blaine’s name across his heart over and over again. The repetition and security of it made Kurt feel alive.

Blaine started to move faster, almost pulling out completely before sinking back in each time, and Kurt responded to every thrust with a soft moan and a tighter hold on Blaine’s waist, shoulders, or wherever his restless hands had fallen. Kurt kept his eyes open, not wanting to miss anything, which proved to be more difficult than he could have imagined, especially when Blaine shifted and the following press of Blaine’s cock made him writhe and gasp for air. Blaine’s face was soft and relaxed, mouth dropped open and eyes wide, his forehead wrinkled at a particularly hard roll of his hips.

It was both thrilling and daunting, seeing Blaine like that, knowing that he will be the only person to witness the patterns of sweat at Blaine’s temples and the direction of the ripples along his ribs. Kurt was

overcome by the trust - the responsibility - that he was putting forth, allowing Blaine inside him, both physically and emotionally, and he was suddenly shaking, gripping onto Blaine's skin and falling into a slow, rocking rhythm. There was no space between them and barely any air in his lungs, and Kurt could only hold on, wrapping his legs around Blaine's waist and squeezing him tightly with his thighs.

The only sounds in the room came in the form of hushed whimpers and stuttered breaths, sweat-slick skin sticking and skidding, and the rush of blood in Kurt's ears. His voice was caught in his throat, only small, pleasure-addled noises escaping, growing louder as Blaine reached between them and grasped his cock, stroking him in time with the the push and pull of his hips. Kurt's skin felt too small and too hot, his chest aching with the weight of Blaine's body and the closeness of their marks.

Kurt fell over the edge, clinging to Blaine and sobbing into his neck. The hot, solid presence of Blaine around and inside him pulled him apart and put him back together again. Kurt trembled, nerves he didn't know he had sparking in all directions, as Blaine kept moving for a few more seconds and then stilled, buried to the hilt and gasping Kurt's name, repeating it until the word faded into silence.

In all of his fantasies, those born before he met Blaine and the ones he'd had since, Kurt never once pictured something so beautiful as Blaine's face looking down at him in that moment. He couldn't have prepared for the intensity of it or how it made him feel like he was the only person in the world that mattered. He was struck dumb with it, not able to look away or speak or even catch his breath.

"I love you so much," Blaine whispered, tracing patterns into Kurt's shoulder with his fingertips.

"I love you, too," Kurt said quietly. They cleaned up lazily and settled on top of the sheets, too warm to cover themselves with anything but each other. They traded slow kisses and lingering touches until Kurt rolled on top of Blaine, giggling and drunk on overwhelming and beautiful love, and then they started all over again.

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"We can cancel right?"

"Blaine, the point of the dinner is to celebrate all the performers from last night, so no, you cannot cancel."

Blaine huffed as Kurt adjusted his bow tie. He had been looking forward to this dinner for weeks. It was a great opportunity to meet people and network a little, and under any other circumstances, he'd be

extremely excited. However, he was *not* looking forward to dinner with his parents, and it was dulling his enthusiasm.

“There’s going to be a lot of people. They won’t notice if I’m not there.”

“Yes, they will. May I also point out that you were the one to invite your parents?” Kurt didn’t seem to be bothered at all by the inevitable awkwardness of sharing a meal with Blaine’s family. In fact, he looked a bit excited. Which, of course, was ridiculous, because Kurt had, on more than one occasion, expressed his disdain toward them.

“Just because I invited them, doesn’t mean I want them there.”

“That’s exactly what inviting someone means, actually.”

“How are you not freaked out about this? I’m not even sure those people are my real parents.” Blaine smoothed his hands over the front of his jacket and started pacing while Kurt surrounded his head with a cloud of hairspray. “They’re up to something. They have to be.”

“They’re your parents, not supervillains. Maybe they’re trying to keep that rift between you from getting bigger.”

“Unlikely,” Blaine scoffed. Kurt took his hand and pulled him closer until Blaine wrapped his arms around Kurt’s waist. Just being held against Kurt’s body had an amazing calming effect.

“I know you’re wary of them. I am too,” Kurt said, smiling warmly. “But maybe they’ll surprise you. And if they don’t, and you’re right about them, you’ll still have me to help you make your getaway.”

Kurt rubbed his hands over Blaine’s back, which felt incredible, and Blaine sighed deeply. It would be so much nicer to stay in the dorm, get back out of their clothes, and waste the evening being naked and watching reruns of awful reality tv shows. “Ok, fine. Let’s get this over with.”

The walk to the dining hall was spent in silence, but Blaine was so grateful for Kurt’s company and his hand clasped tightly in his own. Blaine spotted his parents outside of the building, and his body tensed up like a Pavlovian response.

“Blaine! You look so handsome!” Rose said as she greeted Blaine, kissing his cheek.

"Thanks, Mom." Blaine turned to his father. "Hey, Dad. Thanks for coming."

Peter nodded, looking back and forth from Kurt and Blaine, and while he didn't seem angry or disgusted, it made an uneasiness settle in Blaine's gut.

"Of course! Oh, Kurt dear, how are you?" Rose asked, and it was almost comical how wide Kurt's eyes got as she went in for a hug.

The four of them made their way inside, and as they looked around, Blaine was impressed with how the school was able to transform their simple dining hall into something much more elegant, complete with tables covered in linens and candle-lit centerpieces, china plates and real silverware, not like the usual plastic Blaine is used to. There were also tasteful decorations along the walls and hanging from the ceilings, and it was easy to see that the Student Government had put a lot of time and effort into it, and Blaine was proud to be among the honored guests.

"So, Kurt, I feel like I don't know a thing about you," Peter said once they were settled at their table. "Other than what my wife has told me, of course, which isn't much."

"Oh! Well, I'm from Ohio, but I live in New York now," Kurt said. "I'm going to school for fashion design, but like Blaine, I also have a passion for music."

"Ohio? Really? You a Buckeyes fan?" Peter asked, and Blaine clenched his teeth together.

"No, but my Dad is. I've never been a fan of sports."

"Sports build character. We tried signing Blaine up for different teams when he was young. He was pretty good, if I recall correctly. Too bad he never stuck with it." Peter laughed and Blaine felt Kurt grab his hand under the table.

"Kurt, what do your parents do for a living?" Rose chimed in, narrowing her eyes at her husband.

"My dad is a mechanic. He owns a tire store back home in Ohio," Kurt said.

"Oh. And what about your mother?" Rose asked. Blaine didn't miss the judgemental frown on his mother's face. It was almost unheard of for soulmates to separate or divorce, and when it did happen, it was met with disapproval from all sides.

“She died when I was a kid.” Kurt smiled tightly, obviously used to having to defend his parents and their relationship. “My dad remarried a few years ago, though.”

Both Rose and Peter nodded in understanding and relief, as if one of Kurt’s parents being dead was better than them being divorced. It made Blaine’s skin heat up in anger, not just at his own family, but at the many others who he’s sure had the same response throughout Kurt’s life.

They sat in awkward silence until the head of Cornell’s Music Department started with a speech and an introduction of all the performers from the previous night’s show. Blaine stood up when his name was called, and surprisingly, his parents cheered almost as much as Kurt did.

Once the food was served, Blaine watched and listened carefully as his parents continued to ask Kurt questions, waiting for the ball to drop. They were being *nice*, for the most part, if not a little tactless. Kurt was taking it all in stride, answering every question with a smile on his face. It made Blaine love him even more knowing that he was willing to sit through the most uncomfortable conversation in the history of the world and not go running for the hills.

As they finished their desserts, Blaine felt a hand on his shoulder. He looked up to see his department head, Mr. Wesley, looking down at him and his family.

“Mr. Wesley, hi! Um, these are my parents,” Blaine nervously waved in his parents’ direction, and his mother and father both said hello. “And this is my soulmate, Kurt.”

“Ah, of course, the muse himself,” Dr. Wesley said, smiling at a blushing Kurt. “Sorry to interrupt your dinner, folks, but I was wondering if I could borrow Blaine for a few minutes.”

The rest of the table nodded and Blaine stood up, confused. There were no performances scheduled for the evening, and Dr. Wesley didn’t interact much with students unless there was an issue with schedules or grades.

Blaine swallowed hard as he was led to another group, mostly consisting of his professors. There were a couple other faces he didn’t recognize. He wondered if they were from the college administration, there to tell him that his composition and his grades were no longer good enough, and that he would be out of the program effective immediately.

At least his parents would be happy.

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Kurt watched as Blaine walked away, leaving him with his parents. It was exactly what he needed.

"I wonder what's going on?" Rose said, craning her neck to see who Blaine was talking to.

"I'm sure it's fine. Probably just a formality," Peter told her. They went on to talk about an upcoming vacation they were planning together, and it seemed as though they had forgotten that Kurt was even there.

"Excuse me?" Kurt said loudly, smiling when he caught their attention. "I need to say something to both of you." He paused to take a deep breath, then continued, "I don't know what's going on here, but I do know that all Blaine wants is for you to accept him and love him without trying to change him."

"And that's what we're doing," Rose said, sitting up a little straighter.

"Is it? Because from what Blaine has told me, neither of you cared about him very much over the past few years. I need to know that you are really going to try now and that you're both serious about mending your relationships with him. Because if you're not, I am telling you now that it would *crush* him."

"Kurt, you seem like a nice kid, but I don't think that what we do within our own family is any of your business," Peter said.

"I think it is. Blaine is my soulmate. He is the love of my life," Kurt said firmly. "And I will do whatever I can to make him happy. That includes looking out for him when I feel like something isn't right."

Rose looked down at her empty plate while Peter stared at him appraisingly. Neither one of them said anything, so Kurt kept going.

"When I was little, my mom told me that things may not work out the way you want them to, but they always turn out the way they're supposed to," Kurt said. "No matter what Blaine does for a living or who he is with, you're supposed to support him, because that's what parents do. If you can do that, then I think we'll all get along just fine."

Peter looked in Blaine's direction, and Kurt followed his gaze to find Blaine still engaged in conversation. "I'm going to level with you here," Peter said once his eyes were back on Kurt. Rose looked back and forth between them, and Kurt noticed her wringing her hands on the table.

"Please do."

"Blaine is my son, and I love him too. I'm sorry that you've gotten the wrong impression of me. That's my fault." Peter paused and looked at his wife, who nodded in encouragement. "I'm sure Blaine told you about the big fight we had last Christmas. Afterward, I felt terrible. But I'm a stubborn man, Kurt. I don't like to admit I'm wrong any more than anyone else. It took a while for me to get over that, but I am going to try. I don't want to lose my son because things didn't turn out the way I expected."

Kurt nodded in response. He wasn't entirely convinced that everything was completely fine, but at least Blaine's parents were there and they seemed to be willing to make an effort. That's all he was asking for, after all, because Blaine was worth it.

Blaine reappeared, grinning from ear to ear, and sat back down next to Kurt, grabbing his hand as soon as he was settled. "Hey, sorry about that."

"No problem. Everything alright?" Kurt asked. There was something about Blaine's smile that piqued Kurt's curiosity. It was almost mischievous, like he was hiding something.

"Yeah, all good. Dr. Wesley just wanted to introduce me to some people. I guess they really liked my performance." Blaine blushed a bit, and it was adorable how humble he could be sometimes. Blaine was incredibly talented, and he did know it to an extent, but Kurt noticed months ago that a little bit of validation went a long way with him.

"Of course they did. You were amazing," Kurt told him, squeezing Blaine's hand and making him blush even harder.

"It was great, Blaine. We're very proud of you," Peter said, and Kurt couldn't help his grin at Blaine's surprised face. The realization that Blaine probably hadn't heard those words from either of his parents in years made Kurt's heart clench, but the joy that shone in Blaine's eyes at hearing them was one of the most beautiful things he'd ever seen.

“Thank you. I want you to be,” Blaine said thickly, locking eyes with Kurt, as if to include him in the sentiment, and Kurt leaned forward to kiss him softly because he needed to let Blaine know that he understood.

Rose cleared her throat, looking a little uneasy, but there was a ghost of a smile on her face, and Peter wasn't looking away in disgust either, so Kurt counted that as a win for Blaine and for their relationship.

The rest of the dinner went by quickly, and before Kurt knew it, he and Blaine were saying goodbye to Blaine's parents and walking back to the dorm. Blaine was quiet, but seemed happy, and Kurt was perfectly content in their silence, swinging their linked hands between them.

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Blaine collapsed face-first onto his bed as soon as they got back to his room, not bothering to take off his suit or shoes. Dinner with his parents and Kurt was awkward, but he had to admit that it wasn't entirely unpleasant. Through some good-natured banter, Blaine found out that his mother had a lot more to do with his father's change of heart than she would ever be given credit for. He was grateful for it, but one good night didn't erase years of strained conversations and half-hearted attempts at bonding.

Blaine felt a tug at his feet as Kurt pulled his shoes off for him. The bed dipped and Kurt's hands slid underneath him, managing to undo the buttons of his jacket and tug it off his arms, which felt like they weighed a ton each. He moaned as Kurt's fingers began to press into his shoulders, making deep circles that felt heavenly even through his shirt. Kurt kept rubbing, working out the tension in Blaine's neck and back and turning him into a certifiable puddle.

“I think I like your mom,” Kurt said after a few minutes. “She told me that she made your father sleep on the couch in his office for a week until he got his head out of his ass.”

Blaine laughed into the pillow mashed against his face, then turned his head to look in Kurt's direction. “She's more stubborn than he is sometimes.”

Kurt hummed his agreement and straddled Blaine. He used his thumbs to massage down along Blaine's spine, then focused on his lower back. Blaine felt completely relaxed and was certain that Kurt's hands were made of magic, telling him so and smiling at his warm laugh.

“Have you thought about what you're going to do this summer?” Kurt asked.

“Probably go back to Ohio. The dorms close over the summer unless you’re in classes, which I am not, thankfully.”

Kurt stopped rubbing, and Blaine wiggled a bit in case he forgot to keep going. He heard Kurt chuckle behind him, and then those amazing fingers were back.

“I was thinking, and please don’t feel obligated,” Kurt started. “Maybe you could spend the summer with me. In New York.”

Blaine turned his head so he could look at Kurt properly. “Are you serious?”

Kurt traced light, random patterns over Blaine’s back and smiled at him. “Absolutely. If you have other plans, I completely understand, but I think it would be fun seeing you every day, even if it’s temporary. Besides, after this weekend, I don’t know if I’ll be able to stand being away from you much longer.”

Blaine had to bite his lip to keep himself from arguing the ‘temporary’ part of it. That was something he wanted to keep to himself, at least for a little while. He squirmed his way onto his back with Kurt still sitting on him, and then grabbed Kurt’s arms to pull him down.

“I think it would be amazing to spend the summer with you.”

“Really?” Kurt asked quietly, sounding surprised for some strange reason. As if Blaine would even think of saying no.

“Yes.” Blaine leaned up to kiss Kurt, and he felt Kurt’s smile grow against his lips. “Of course, yes.”

Kurt pushed him back down and kissed him again, a slow slide of lips that never failed to make Blaine’s insides tremble. He sunk down further into his pillow, Kurt’s weight on top of him thrilling as if it was the first time. They kept kissing for the sake of kissing, because kissing was incredible and didn’t always have to be a means to an end.

“Alright, time for a shower, mister. Let’s go,” Kurt said, breathing heavily as he lifted himself off of Blaine.

Blaine let Kurt hoist him up and kissed again him before noticing that Kurt had grabbed two towels instead of one. “Together?”

Kurt winked and dragged him toward the bathroom.

They stayed up half the night before talking about plans and how wonderful it would be to wake up next to each other everyday. The next morning, Blaine helped Kurt load up his cab, and while their time was, as always, too short, they only had a little over a month to wait before Blaine would be packing up and moving to Kurt's apartment.

"Soon, right?" Blaine asked, holding Kurt close and tucking his face into the crook of his neck. "We'll see each other really soon."

"Yeah, soon." Kurt pulled back and kissed Blaine's forehead, and then his mouth. The kiss lingered, and Blaine wished he could freeze time for a few more seconds so Kurt didn't have to leave just yet.

"Love you," Blaine said, kissing Kurt one more time before Kurt got in his cab.

"I love you, too." Kurt waved to him through the open window as the cab started to pull away, leaving Blaine standing alone in front of his dorm.

His heart had started to ache as soon as the door to Kurt's cab closed, but the weeks ahead held the promise of an incredible summer, and maybe more, and Blaine could not wait for it to begin.

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April 29, 2016

Blaine rushed out of Dr. Wesley's office, a thick folder of forms and information clutched in his hands. He couldn't stop smiling and his heart was dangerously close to pounding out of his chest as he ran back to his dorm.

He opened his door with a loud bang, then kicked it shut. He set the folder down on his desk and sat in front of it, not bothering with his jacket. Blaine sorted through the paperwork, figuring out which forms he had to fill out now and what needed to be sent where, and then he grabbed a pen.

Sam came back from class just as Blaine was finishing up the last of the forms.

"Hey, what's up?" Sam asked, plopping down on his bed.

"If I tell you something, you have to promise me you won't tell Kurt."

"Um, considering I haven't met the guy yet, I don't think that will be a problem."

"Right. So. You know how we had that big concert last weekend?" Blaine waited for Sam to nod, then continued, "The next day at the celebration dinner, Dr. Wesley asked to speak with me, and then we went over to talk to some of the other faculty, and it turns out that next year, the music department is starting up a new program, and they asked me to be a part of it as a senior. I would be a teaching assistant and do some music tutoring at local schools, so I can get some experience."

"Wow, that sounds awesome!" Sam then furrowed his eyebrows and asked, "Why are you keeping that a secret?"

"*Because*, the program isn't here in Ithaca." Blaine held up one of the brochures, which had a very distinct skyline printed on it. When Sam still looked confused, Blaine rolled his eyes. "It's in New York City, Sam! I can finish my degree in New York!"

"And Kurt lives in New York, right?"

"Yes he does," Blaine said, setting down the brochure. "I want it to be a surprise though. I'm going to stay with him over the summer anyway, but I'm not going to tell him that I'm staying there permanently until I'm already there."

"You sure that's not going to backfire? Secrets can do that, you know."

"Of course not! This is what we've both been waiting for. What could possibly go wrong?"

"Famous last words," Sam mumbled, picking up his guitar and starting to strum some random chords.

Blaine ignored him and returned to the task at hand. The deadlines for the music program were quickly approaching, and he didn't want to miss them.

There was a nagging voice in the back of his head telling him that Kurt should probably know about his plans, but he shut those thoughts out. Surprises were much more fun, anyway.

Chapter Twenty

May 21, 2016

Graduating from college had always seemed so far away, until May rolled around and Kurt's final collection was due, his internship critique scheduled, and studying for finals had consumed what little spare time was left. He had even taken schoolwork to the boutique and made a small space for himself in a back corner where he would retreat when there were no customers to advise and no mannequins to dress. He was infinitely thankful to Marcy for being so understanding, even if she rolled her eyes and shooed him away every time he tried to tell her so.

With all of his responsibilities, Kurt had felt spread paper thin, barely able to hold himself together on some nights, collapsing on his bed in the early morning only to wake up two or three hours later and do it all again. He had barely any time to shower and eat, and he spent two weeks straight living as an overtired, overworked, and overwhelmed mess. It didn't help that since the weekend of Blaine's concert - more specifically, the night of Blaine's concert - Kurt had started to miss Blaine more than he could stand.

He *ached*, a physical, bone deep, and constant pain that was wearing him down to nothing. There were moments when he felt like a shadow of himself, going through the motions of his everyday routine while the world around him kept spinning in blurred streaks of color. Although, he was thankful for the predictability of it, especially since he could barely think about anything but how much he needed his soulmate with him.

He did it, though. Through sheer force of will, he made it through, outshining most of his classmates with his designs, all of which were executed to perfection, and after giving him a glowing assessment, Trina assured him that he would have a place at Dior if he wanted it. Once his final grades were up, he gave himself a whopping three minutes to celebrate before he faceplanted on his couch and slept for fourteen hours straight.

The crick in his neck the next day was worth it.

When Graduation Day came, Kurt was proud of the accomplishments he'd been working so hard to achieve. It was validating and empowering, especially after being rejected by his peers in high school and by NYADA. That wound never healed completely, but he was still doing something he loved and he knew he had a promising future ahead of him.

The auditorium was stifling. An unseasonably warm late Spring air was casting a haze that seemed to drift into the building, creating tacky surfaces and sticky skin. Kurt's graduation robes were just shy of unbearable and he could feel beads of sweat at the back of his neck as he waited for his name to be called.

When it was finally his turn to walk across the stage, a chorus of cheers erupted from the back of the auditorium. Kurt squinted against the bright lights glaring down onto the stage and even though he couldn't see them, he recognized his family and Rachel's voices as they overpowered the polite applause of the rest of the audience. He smiled in the direction of their cheers and waved, but there was someone missing, and that absence was eating away at him, bit by bit.

Due to his own horrendously busy schedule, Blaine wasn't able to be there for the ceremony. He had apologized profusely and even tried to reschedule his final exams so he could make it, but in the end, it didn't work out. Kurt had been disappointed, but he understood and appreciated the efforts Blaine made and the red and yellow roses he sent him.

After the ceremony, Burt took everyone out to dinner to celebrate, but despite how happy Kurt was to finally have his degree, he wasn't in the mood for a party. Across the table, Rachel was talking Carole's ear off about wedding plans and her new role in a Broadway revival of *Cats*. Cole had met up with them at the restaurant because it was nearly impossible for Rachel to go anywhere without him, and he watched Rachel talk with a goofy expression that would have been adorable if it didn't make Kurt so nauseated.

"You okay?"

Kurt looked next to him, where Burt was sitting with a concerned look on his face. "I'm fine. Just tired."

Burt raised an eyebrow at him. "You miss Blaine."

It wasn't a question. Even with his best show face on, there was no way he could hide his misery from his father. Kurt's eyes started to sting just from hearing Blaine's name. He nodded shakily, looking down at his plate. Burt's hand patted his shoulder in a small gesture of comfort that meant the world to Kurt since he was a kid. Having Burt there gave Kurt someone to lean on, and he was forever grateful for his relationship with his father, especially since it could have gone so much differently if Burt wasn't such an understanding and compassionate person.

"It sucks that he can't be here now, but you'll see him soon, buddy."

“A couple more weeks,” Kurt said, reaffirming it to himself more than to Burt.

Burt squeezed his shoulder again and smiled sadly at him, and then turned to say something to Finn.

Kurt could survive a little while longer, and then he would have three uninterrupted months with Blaine. As short-lived as their time of bliss would be, Kurt couldn't wait.

June 5, 2014

Blaine spent most of his day packing. He was due to leave the next morning, and while he was used to moving to and from the dorms at school, moving to New York was a much larger and more terrifying endeavor.

He had been staying with his parents since the semester ended. Thankfully, both of them were surprisingly easygoing about him moving away. He had expected a battle, but instead, they agreed that it would be great for both him and Kurt. They even offered to help him move by paying the shipping fees for all the things he wasn't taking with him on the plane, which he greatly appreciated.

As he folded and packed the last of his clothes, it hit him all at once that he was actually moving away for good. He would finally with Kurt, in the same city, without any more obstacles in their way.

Blaine's chest suddenly felt tight, like it always did when he thought about Kurt. He kept reflecting back on the night of his concert, about Kurt's skin and his mouth and how complete he felt as he slid inside of Kurt. When he had been the one lying back with his legs and arms spread wide, Kurt had been so, so careful as he stretched him open and filled him to the brim with every part of himself. Blaine had felt like his skin finally fit him properly, like his body had been lacking something and Kurt was the missing piece. Blaine wondered if maybe they were too wrapped up in the power and joy of the moment to think it through. Maybe they shouldn't have gone so far, because ever since it happened, it consumed Blaine's thoughts.

Blaine felt sick with how much he missed Kurt. Every time they spoke it was a dagger twisting into his heart, because Kurt's voice over the phone or his face on a computer screen was a tease. It wasn't flesh and muscle under his fingertips and warm breath tickling his skin. He needed the real thing, and the fact that he would be there in less than 24 hours made his hands shake as he rolled up socks and stuffed them into his suitcase.

There were also aspects of moving that made Blaine nervous in a decidedly unpleasant way. He would have to learn to navigate a new campus and city, and he would actually be working with kids, which was something he wanted to do, but had very little experience with. His senior year was shaping up to be hectic and challenging, and when it was over, he still had grad school to worry about. Blaine was scared of what was to come, but he was thrilled that he was able to pursue something that meant so much to him and combined the two things he'd always wanted, making art and helping people.

He still hadn't told Kurt about his school change, and he wasn't entirely sure when a good time would be. Blaine had the whole summer to think about it, but he dreaded what Kurt would do if he kept that big of a secret for much longer.

There was also the small chance that Kurt might not want to live with him. It was extremely unlikely, since Kurt had been the one to suggest that Blaine stay with him for the summer in the first place, but having a house guest for a couple months was much different than gaining a permanent roommate. Blaine liked to think that Kurt wouldn't mind, but he couldn't know for sure until he told him.

Blaine double checked his bags and changed into his pajamas, putting the clothes he had been wearing that day in a plastic bag and stuffing them in the corner of one of his suitcases. His travel outfit for the next day was draped over a chair, and there wasn't much left to do except try to get some sleep.

June 6, 2014

Kurt paced back and forth in front of the arrival gate, nervously going over the to-do list he'd had in his head all week and trying to figure out if he got everything done. The apartment was spotless, the fridge was stocked, and there were fresh sheets on the bed. In an astounding moment of generosity, Kurt donated some of his old clothes to make room in his closet and dresser drawers, and he had made sure to pick up extra toothpaste and towels. He and Blaine had also put together a list of all the places they would go, including the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty. When Kurt had first moved to the city, he'd been determined to become a "real" New Yorker, which, to him, meant avoiding all the typical tourist attractions and looking down on families walking slowly along the sidewalks. He never felt like he was missing out before, but with Blaine by his side, wearing a foam Liberty crown didn't seem so bad and Kurt was even looking forward to taking cheesy photos in Times Square and going on a tour at Radio City Music Hall.

All he needed was Blaine, who was due to arrive any minute and wouldn't be leaving for three glorious months. At least for the summer, Kurt could pretend that he and Blaine were sharing their lives instead of just matching them up once in a while.

As soon as people started coming through the gate, Kurt pushed his way to the front of the waiting crowd, bouncing on the balls of his feet.

When Blaine finally walked out, standing up on his toes to look over the heads of other passengers, all the air left Kurt's lungs. It was incredible how every time he saw Blaine, it was like he was meeting him for the first time all over again. Maybe it was because he didn't see Blaine every day, and maybe it would be different when he did, but Kurt's heart was pounding and his stomach was flipping.

Kurt waved his arms and shouted Blaine's name, and then their eyes met and Blaine ran toward him, dropping his carry on as he jumped into Kurt's waiting arms, laughing and kissing him with absolutely no finesse like something straight out of a cheesy rom-com. The smile on Blaine's face as Kurt lowered him back to the ground was worth the glares of passengers trying to maneuver around them.

"Welcome to New York," Kurt said, grinning so hard his cheeks hurt. Blaine let out a noise that was half laugh, half sob and hugged Kurt tightly. "Come on, I think we may actually get run over by an old lady with a luggage cart if we don't move."

They held hands as they picked up Blaine's bags and went outside to grab a cab, not letting go until they reached Kurt's building. Kurt led Blaine up the stairs and down the hall, and then through his door. The thud of Blaine's bags hitting the floor echoed loudly over the sounds of traffic and people outside. Kurt bit his lip as Blaine walked further inside, looking around the living room and kitchen like he was trying to memorize every detail.

"Wow, this is really great," Blaine finally said after a full lap around the open space.

"Yeah, it's not much, but it's mine," Kurt replied, approaching Blaine from behind and tucking his chin over his shoulder, his arms wrapping around Blaine's waist. "And for the next couple months, it's ours."

"I like the sound of that." There was something to Blaine's voice, something off, and Kurt couldn't pinpoint what it was. He shrugged it off, though, figuring it was probably due to Blaine being tired after traveling.

"Me too," Kurt whispered against Blaine's ear. He cleared his throat of the emotions bubbling up and moved to grab Blaine's bags. "Now let's get you settled and grab something to eat. Any requests for your first dinner in New York?"

Blaine took a bag from Kurt and laughed, "Would pizza and cheesecake be too cliché?"

"Absolutely," Kurt said. "I know just the place."

Kurt showed Blaine to his - *their* - bedroom and helped him put away his things. They chatted about Blaine's flight and where to put what, not minding the brief minutes of silence in between. Any other time, Kurt would have been tearing Blaine's clothes off first, but that urge wasn't as strong as before. Instead of pressing need, Kurt felt light, calm with the knowledge that Blaine wasn't leaving the next day or the day after. The hourglass was slowly filling, though, and after the summer was over, they would go back to long distance and the burning ache that came with it.

"I want to show you something," Kurt said, grabbing Blaine by the hand and walking him to Rachel's old bedroom. "I know you don't mind, but I still feel a little guilty that you're going to be sitting here alone while I'm at work, and I got something that might help you pass the time."

He opened the door and led Blaine inside. Rachel's dresser was still there, and so were a few boxes of things she wasn't sure she wanted to keep, but on one side stood a small piano.

"Kurt," Blaine said quietly, walking to the piano and playing a few notes.

"I had a friend of Rachel's tune it a few days ago. I hope it's okay."

"No, it's fine, thank you." Blaine ran his fingers over the dark, faded wood. "You bought this for me?"

"It's not a big deal. I found it on Craigslist and the price wasn't too steep." Kurt grinned as Blaine took two long strides toward him and hugged him tightly. "You like it?"

"I love it." Blaine pecked Kurt's cheek. "Although, you'll probably regret this when I serenade you at least twice a day."

"Tell me how that's a bad thing?" Kurt laughed. "I'll take as many songs as I can get before you have to leave again."

Blaine didn't say anything, burying his face into Kurt's neck instead. Kurt held him for a while, his head leaning against Blaine's, their bodies fitting together perfectly.

"How about we try her out?" Blaine eventually said, nodding in the direction of the piano. "Duet?"

"I thought you'd never ask."

July 17, 2016

Blaine wiped the condensation from the mirror and picked up his toothbrush. When he woke up that morning, the space next to him was empty since Kurt was already gone to work, so Blaine allowed himself to sleep in a little bit longer than usual. He then spent a few hours in his pajamas, alternating between cleaning, working on a new song, and lounging around on the couch watching TV. He felt a little useless sometimes, since he didn't have a job, but that would change once the next semester began and he started earning paychecks for music lessons and tutoring.

He had just turned off the water when he heard a loud, relentless pounding coming from the door, and Blaine, still quite drowsy, slowly shuffled toward it, holding his towel in place.

"Kurt! Kurt, open up!" Blaine winced at the shrill voice coming from behind the door and the booming knocks that followed. He opened it slowly, but jumped back when a blur of brown hair barged in.

"Kurt! This is an emergency – oh! Hello." A petite, young woman blinked in confusion at Blaine once she realized that it wasn't Kurt who had opened the door. All of a sudden, her eyes lit up and an exaggerated, broad smile grew on her face. "You're him! Blaine Anderson!"

She came at Blaine like a torpedo, engulfing him in a tight hug. Blaine patted her back while clutching the top of his towel with his other hand. "Kurt has told me all about you! I'm so glad we're finally meeting. I've been telling Kurt for *ages* that we all have to get together, but he's so difficult sometimes."

"You must be Rachel," Blaine said, prying himself away from her as gently as possible. Once there was a couple feet of distance between them, Rachel seemed to realize Blaine's state of undress, blushing bright red and averting her eyes. "If you'll excuse me for a moment, I'm going to throw some clothes on to avoid making this even more awkward."

Blaine hurried back to the bedroom and got dressed, then quickly returned to the bathroom to comb some gel through his hair. When he walked back into the living area, he found Rachel sitting at the table, leafing through the newspaper Kurt had left there that morning.

“Kurt should be home from work soon,” Blaine said, sitting down at the table with her. “I’m assuming that’s why you came. Some kind of emergency?”

“What? Oh! Yes!” Rachel sat up in her chair and looked at Blaine with a stern look. “I’m sure Kurt has told you that I’m getting married next month.”

“He mentioned it,” Blaine said as Rachel waved the diamond on her left hand in front of his face.

“Well, he’s been helping me with the planning, and while there is still some time left, I *cannot* wait any longer to figure out the seating chart.”

“Um, maybe I can help? At least until Kurt gets home?”

Rachel’s face lit up. “Are you sure you don’t mind?”

Before he could answer, Rachel was pulling a folded up paper from her bag. At first, Blaine thought it was a map of some sort, but then she opened it up to reveal a seating chart that spanned the entire table top, and Blaine wondered what exactly he’d just gotten himself into.

By the time he heard Kurt’s keys jingling as he opened the door, Blaine’s head was starting to throb. Rachel had invited everyone she’d ever known to her wedding, and Blaine was thoroughly confused as she explained to him who did and didn’t like each other and what tables were reserved for which groups of friends or families.

“Hey, sorry I’m a little late, I was - Rachel. Hello. What a surprise,” Kurt said sarcastically, tossing his keys on the counter and throwing a dangerous smile in her direction.

“Hello, Kurt! I’m so sorry, I forgot that you were working today and I needed some help with the seating arrangements,” Rachel said sweetly.

“Oh no, enough with the act. You know my work schedule. It’s programmed into your phone,” Kurt said, crossing his arms around his chest. “And we worked out the seating chart a month ago.”

"Okay, fine, but it's been *weeks* Kurt, and as your best friend, I'm shocked and insulted that you didn't introduce Blaine and I sooner."

"Wait, what?" Blaine was even more confused than before, but then he saw Rachel's embarrassed look and put two and two together. He had been bamboozled, but somehow he didn't mind it much. It was nice to have some company while Kurt was out, even if Rachel did talk too fast and was a bit self-centered. "You didn't actually need any help did you?"

"I did! A second look is always a good idea!" Rachel argued, and Kurt was glaring at her like he hoped lasers would shoot from his eyes and blast her into a million pieces.

"Hey, how about some tea!" Blaine looked between Kurt and Rachel, equally amused and worried that the next world war was about to start. He heard Kurt whisper something to Rachel loudly, but he couldn't make out what he said over the clink of mugs he pulled out of the cabinet.

Kurt joined him a few seconds later, kissing the corner of Blaine's mouth lightly. "I'm sorry about her."

"It's fine. She's kind of fun, actually."

"Yeah, she's a hoot." Kurt sighed and pulled out the sugar, adding it to the tray Blaine was putting together. "Don't get me wrong, I love her dearly, but I know she's a bit much sometimes. I didn't want her to scare you away from the get-go."

Blaine kissed his cheek and turned off the electric kettle. "Nothing could scare me away. You're stuck with me, I'm afraid."

Kurt bumped his hip against Blaine's and smiled, and then they both went to sit back down with Rachel.

"I have a brilliant idea!" Rachel said as soon as they poured their tea. "We should go out for karaoke!"

"What? Tonight? No," Kurt said immediately, and Blaine furrowed his eyebrows at him. Sure, they'd gone out to a few bars and clubs since he's been in the city, a couple times with Kurt's friends from work, but Blaine didn't see the harm in getting to know Rachel better and he hadn't done karaoke in ages.

"Come *on*, Kurt! You can't keep Blaine cooped up all the time!" Rachel argued.

"I do *not* keep him cooped up!"

Rachel ignored Kurt and turned to Blaine. "What do you say? Kurt told me you're quite a good singer, and I'm in desperate need for a new duet partner."

Blaine looked at Kurt, who shrugged as if to say, "your call". Rachel was giving him a hopeful smile that was borderline scary. "Sure! Why not! Sounds like fun!"

"Yay!" Rachel clapped her hands while Kurt rubbed his forehead.

Blaine knew how great of a singer Kurt was, but he also knew that Kurt never quite got over the fact that Rachel got accepted to NYADA and he didn't. He wondered if that had something to do with Kurt's reluctance to go out, but in the end, he agreed, and Blaine was very excited about their night. Reality shows were no match for the chance to perform.

~^*^~

"Isn't this place exclusively for NYADA students or something?" Kurt asked, eyeing the front door to Callbacks, a bar he was well acquainted with from hearing stories of Rachel's "wild nights" there. In reality, Kurt was sure a wild night to her probably consisted of doing three Barbra songs in a row, followed by at least one by Celine Dion.

"Oh, please, I'm like, NYADA royalty, and you guys are my friends," Rachel said, nodding curtly at the doorman as they were allowed to go in. Kurt clenched his jaw and took a deep breath through his nose. The residual ache from being rejected by NYADA was starting to bubble up inside him, and as much as he was thrilled with where his career was heading, the *what if* still lingered in the back of his mind.

As if he could read Kurt's mind, Blaine grabbed his hand and squeezed, and Kurt was immensely thankful that Blaine was there with him.

They were lucky enough to snag a table right away, and Blaine offered to grab the first round. That left Rachel alone with Kurt for the first time since he came home that evening. He watched the current performer on stage, a nervous looking girl who was butchering *On My Own*.

"So, Blaine seems nice."

Kurt looked at Rachel out the corner of his eye. "He is nice."

"I think he's good for you. You've been so mopey lately."

"I was mopey because I was barely sleeping, remember?"

"No, it was a different mopey. Not the tired kind, but the miserable kind."

"Well, not everyone is fortunate enough to find their soulmate in their own city." Kurt fixed his gaze on the stage, which was blessedly empty as the next performer flipped through the book of songs.

"I'm sorry for rubbing it in. I realize that it must have been hard on you." Rachel sounded genuinely remorseful, but Kurt wasn't angry with her about it anymore and hadn't been for some time.

"We've been through this, Rach. It's fine." Kurt doesn't want to talk about it. He wants to enjoy the night out with his soulmate and his best friend. "Where is your less talented half, anyway?"

"He's at work," Rachel said. "He works a lot."

Kurt finally turned toward her, no longer avoiding another argument. Rachel smiled at him dejectedly and shrugged, and he understood.

"Looks like both of our soulmates are giving us a run for our money," Kurt joked. He was always so wrapped up in the idea of a happy ending that he didn't think about all the bumps in the road that had to be overcome first. With him and Blaine, it was the distance, with Rachel and Cole, it was work and ambition. Every relationship had its challenges, and Kurt thought that maybe that was the genius of it all. Yes, there was a soulmate out there for everyone, but the work and growth needed to make those relationships flourish on more than just fate was up to them.

Rachel nudged Kurt's shoulder, and it was like a new level of understanding between them had formed. They had their differences over the years, but - and Kurt would vehemently deny it if asked - they weren't much different from each other.

Blaine returned quickly with their drinks and settled in his stool at Kurt's side, their thighs pressed together under the table. It felt like a current of electricity was opened up every time they touched, and

Kurt embraced it and leaned into Blaine as the three of them chatted while the volume inside the bar got louder as the crowd grew.

Two drinks later, Kurt was feeling amazing. He wasn't drunk by any means, but he was pleasantly tipsy and it was just enough to make him smile a little wider and dance in his stool.

"Okay, boys, no more stalling. It's time for you two to hit that stage," Rachel announced, like it had been part of her plan all along. It took Kurt a minute to catch up. He was too busy focusing on Blaine's fingertips tracing the inside of his thigh.

"Yes! Come on, Kurt, sing with me!" Suddenly, the hand on his thigh was gone, and before he knew what was happening, Blaine was dragging him toward the stage. "What song do you want to do?" Blaine asked, squinting down at the pages of titles. "I'm thinking something from the 80's... Kurt?"

The room was starting to blur, but it wasn't from the alcohol. Kurt was beginning to panic. The last time he performed in front of an audience was back in high school, and while he had done numerous duets with Blaine before, it was always just the two of them. Callbacks wasn't Radio City Music Hall or anything, but there were at least a couple hundred people there, and most of them were NYADA students, which made them better than him.

"I don't know if I can do this," Kurt said, mouth dry and palms clammy. Blaine seemed to understand right away and set the song list down to take both of Kurt's sweaty hands in his own.

"We don't have to if you don't want to," Blaine said. "But for the record, you're much better than that last guy could ever be."

Kurt huffed out a laugh and while his nerves were still on edge, he nodded and grabbed the song list. He was with Blaine, and with Blaine, he was safe. Nobody could touch them or what they had, and no silly duet would change that. Kurt read down the list and picked out their song.

"Alright, Anderson, let's do this." Kurt kissed Blaine soundly and pulled him up on stage as their music started.

Kurt had forgotten what it was like to perform. It had been a release for him when he was growing up, a way to push away all the negativity surrounding him and let himself be free and happy.

Singing with Blaine in front of a small crowd brought Kurt back to that time, when nothing mattered but his voice and the music. He and Blaine danced around each other, trading verses seamlessly, putting on a show that had everyone on their feet and clapping along. It was exhilarating, and Kurt felt that same sense of weightlessness that he felt back in high school, singing with his friends during competitions and even in front of an empty auditorium.

If Blaine hadn't been there, Kurt didn't know if he would have been brave enough to get up on that stage, not after his failed NYADA audition and the awful realization that he wasn't good enough, and he was forever grateful for the courage that Blaine brought out in him.

Kurt took Blaine's hand as their song ended and they took a bow, laughing and smiling as they rejoined Rachel at their table while the rest of the bar cheered for them.

"You guys were amazing!" Rachel gushed, hugging Kurt tightly before he had a chance to sit down.

"Don't sound so shocked," Kurt told her with a smirk. "I've always been the more talented one in our friendship."

Kurt winked at Blaine and settled back onto his stool at Blaine's side, resting his head on his shoulder and unable to stop grinning for the rest of the night.

~^*^~

After they left the bar and made it back to Kurt's apartment building, Blaine felt amazing, the alcohol he had consumed a couple hours ago mostly out of his system, leaving a warm, pleasantly tingly feeling behind. He couldn't stop smiling, and Kurt held him from behind as they walked down the hallway, Kurt's chest pressed against his back and his arms tight around his waist. They almost tripped twice, but by the time they reached the apartment door, they didn't care one bit.

They stumbled together as they took off their shoes and their shirts, and then they collapsed onto the couch, complaining about how hot it was and arguing about who would get back up to turn on the AC. Kurt won, and Blaine hoisted himself up and trudged over the the window unit, turning it on and and standing in front of it for a few extra seconds as the cold air blew across his torso. When he returned to the couch, he yelped as Kurt pulled him down on top of him.

"I love you so much," Kurt said, and then he was kissing Blaine with a fierce passion right from the start, his hands gripping Blaine's ass almost immediately, and all Blaine could do was take it. Not that he minded. Since he'd gotten to New York, it was hard for him to keep his hands off Kurt, and he always found himself touching him whenever possible. Their sex life had turned into a cycle of insatiable need, every night ending in mind-numbing orgasms regardless of how rough or gentle they were.

"These need to go, like, now," Kurt panted against Blaine's mouth, tugging at his belt, and Blaine lifted up onto his knees to undo it while Kurt worked on his own. Sometimes, they took their time, undressing each other slowly and reverently, mapping out every piece of skin as it was revealed and exchanging lazy kisses as they worked each other up until they couldn't stand it any more.

This wasn't one of those times. It was pure, unadulterated lust, laced with a love fueled by passion and want. Blaine's pants were barely kicked from his ankle before Kurt was yanking him down again, moaning against his mouth as he wrapped a hand around both of their erections. Blaine latched on to Kurt's neck, nipping and licking at every spot he knew drove Kurt crazy, working his hips up into Kurt's fist. The drag of his cock against Kurt's was too dry and too slow, and it was maddening.

"Jesus, Kurt, come on," Blaine groaned, covering Kurt's hand with his and squeezing them harder together, creating a tight channel between their hands that was growing wet from the slickness leaking from both of them. Kurt used his other hand to alternate between grabbing at Blaine's ass and playing with his nipples, and Blaine couldn't tell which he enjoyed more, not when his body was tightening up like a spring coiled into submission.

"That's it, like that, oh god, *Blaine*," Kurt whined, his hips lifting them both up as he thrust into the tightness of their joined hands and came, mouth dropped open in a soundless scream and fingers pinching Blaine's nipple hard enough to hurt in the best way. Kurt's come slid down their hands and created an even easier slide, and Blaine couldn't hold it in any longer, shouting Kurt's name as he spurted out over their knuckles and Kurt's stomach. Blaine felt completely winded, the last twitches of aftershocks buzzing through him in pulses as he tried to breathe properly.

"We... are really good at that," Kurt said, and Blaine laughed into his chest, kissing the spot over his name and Kurt's heart, lips lingering just to feel the steady thumping underneath.

Blaine reached over to the coffee table to grab a few tissues to clean them up. They would need a shower, but Blaine was way too content slumped against Kurt's body to be in any kind of rush.

"I want pizza," Kurt declared suddenly, and Blaine burst into another fit of giggles, because they were still naked and breathing heavily and pretty gross, and the first thing Kurt thought of was food.

Kurt walked on wobbly legs to the fridge - the view was exquisite, Kurt's ass was truly a thing of beauty - and pulled out a pizza box from the day before, then carried it back to the living room and set it on the couch between them. He opened the box up and grabbed a slice, and then wasted no time taking a huge bite. With Kurt's mouth full and his eyes bright, the fierce love Blaine felt for him grew tenfold, which Blaine didn't think was even possible. Kurt was just so *Kurt*. He was strong and unashamed to be who he was, and he had this ability to make everything an adventure. Blaine couldn't have asked for a more perfect person to share his life with.

"This is going to be our home soon," Kurt said thoughtfully between bites. "Then we can have naked pizza parties anytime we want. We just have to make it through one more stupid year."

"Yeah." Blaine grabbed a slice and swallowed down a mouthful, and maybe they should have warmed it up a little bit, because it felt heavier in his stomach than one bite of pizza should.

"Our home, our forever, our everything." Kurt giggled and then sighed, shaking his head like he couldn't believe he said something that cheesy. It was kind of adorable. "This feels like forever, doesn't it? Right now, sitting here in a naked heap of bodily fluids and pepperoni. This is real."

"Of course it's real," Blaine said, and he leaned over the pizza box to kiss Kurt's shoulder because sitting up higher to reach his mouth sounded exhausting. "Our forever is *really* real."

Kurt laughed again, then set the crust of his slice down and scooted even closer to Blaine, moving the pizza box onto the coffee table. He wrapped his arms around Blaine's waist and tugged until Blaine's back was plastered to his front, and Kurt leaned against the back of the couch.

Blaine tossed the rest of his pizza back in the box and sank back against Kurt's warm body. He was definitely sleepy, his eyes heavy after a long night. Kurt then started to scratch lightly along his arms, and he felt himself start to doze off.

They should have moved to the bed. Kurt would surely complain of a sore neck and back in the morning, and Blaine's feet would be ice cold, but with Kurt's arms around him, a more perfect place didn't exist.

August 2, 2016

Kurt was freaking out. While Rachel relaxed in her dress, sipping tea with lemon and honey to prepare for her walk down the aisle, he was running around the park like a maniac trying to make sure everything was in place. *Of course Rachel had to have an outdoor wedding in the summer*, Kurt thought as he sneezed for the millionth time as dandelion seeds swarmed around him like locusts. He had tried to talk her out of it, but that was one thing she wouldn't budge on. Thankfully, the reception would be in a nice, air conditioned building.

The back of his neck and his temples were damp, and he was looking for the florist to complain that the centerpieces still hadn't arrived for the reception, vowing to never again plan any wedding unless it was his own.

The horrendously hot and sunny weather aside, things were going about as smoothly as they could. It was also nice to see their old friends, or at least the few that were able to make it. Kurt was thrilled to see Mercedes, especially after losing touch with her over the past couple years. They chatted throughout the rehearsal dinner the night before, while Blaine and Mercedes' soulmate, Sam, kept each other company. Apparently, Sam was Blaine's old roommate, which proved what a small world it really was.

Tina and Mike were there as well, and so were Puck and Quinn. Santana even showed up, and as much as she participated in bullying him in high school, he found that he had missed her fierce wit. It was like a mini reunion, and Kurt wished that Finn could have made it as well, even though that may have been a little weird after his and Rachel's doomed-from-the-start romance during sophomore year.

"You ready for this?" Kurt asked Rachel as the last guests were seated.

"I was born ready," Rachel said, and the music started up, signalling their cue.

The ceremony went off without a hitch, and Kurt even found himself getting choked up as Rachel and Cole said their vows. He kept looking down at Blaine, who was sitting with the rest of the attendees while Kurt stood next to Rachel, holding her bouquet. He wondered when it would be their turn to get married, which was inevitable but seemed so far away. They talked about it, but it was never serious, and seeing Rachel get married was making that want float back up to the surface.

Before he knew it, Cole was breaking the glass, which meant that the ceremony was over and it was time to take pictures. It also meant that by the time they got to the reception hall, Kurt's feet felt like they were going to fall off and he still had a full night of dancing in front of him.

It wasn't until much later that he was able to relax, sitting at the table and picking at a slice of cake. Blaine had meshed perfectly with his small group of friends and seemed to be having a great time dancing with Rachel's 7 year old cousin. It was sweet how Blaine bowed when he asked her to dance, and he was twirling her around as she giggled happily. Kurt wasn't sure if they would have kids someday - they were nowhere near having that discussion - but something told him that Blaine would make an amazing father.

"Hey you," Blaine said as he plopped down next to Kurt once the song ended. He intertwined his fingers with Kurt's right away, and Kurt slid down in his seat so he could lean his head against Blaine's shoulder comfortably. "You did an amazing job with the wedding."

"Thanks, but as much as it pains me to say it, Rachel did do a lot of the work, too."

"That's very generous of you."

Kurt hummed in agreement, watching as Cole spun Rachel around the dance floor. The poor guy had virtually no rhythm, but the way they looked at each other told Kurt that neither of them cared.

"That's gonna be us," Blaine said, pointing to the newlyweds with his and Kurt's joined hands. "Soon."

"How soon are we talking here?" Kurt asked, raising an eyebrow at Blaine. "Because if I recall correctly, no proposals have been made yet."

"Stop it, you know we're going to end up an old married couple," Blaine laughed, resting his head on top of Kurt's.

"A *fabulous* old married couple."

"Of course." Blaine rubbed slow circles over the top of Kurt's hand. "Come on, let's dance."

Kurt allowed himself to be led to the dance floor and he wrapped his arms around Blaine's shoulders, holding him close as they danced in slow circles.

"Just so you know," Blaine whispered next to Kurt's ear. "When I do propose, it's going to be big."

"Who says I won't beat you to it?" Kurt said, smiling against Blaine's cheek. "You just have to move here for good, then all bets are off."

"We'll see." Blaine tightened his arms around Kurt's waist. "All I know is, I'm going to spend the rest of my life loving you."

"Me too," Kurt said softly, and they kept dancing until the last song of the night ended.

August 19, 2016

"I realized something today," Kurt said, finishing up the last bit of his dinner. Blaine was starting to clean up, and soon they would be cuddled up on the couch watching some awful and amazing reality show reruns. It was shaping up to be a fantastic Thursday night. "You've been here for almost two months, and you've never told me when you're going back to Ithaca. Isn't the semester starting soon?"

Blaine frowned down at the dishes in the sink. He shouldn't have let this go on for so long without telling Kurt the truth. There had been plenty of chances - Rachel's wedding would have been a perfect time and he was still kicking himself for not taking that opportunity - and yet Blaine was still keeping something big from him. The guilt was leaving an awful taste in his mouth that their delicious dinner couldn't mask.

"Yeah, the semester starts next week." Saying it out loud, Blaine realized that he was actually waiting until the last minute, and if Kurt wasn't ready to live with him permanently, he would have very little time to try securing a dorm on campus.

"Next week?" Kurt's face fell and Blaine winced. "That means you're leaving soon, and *why didn't you tell me this before?*"

Blaine had a hard time meeting Kurt's eyes, which were fixed on him and glassy with tears. He took a deep breath and sat back down at the table next to Kurt, and when he took his hand, Kurt tensed up as if he was thinking about pulling away, and that hurt more than anything else.

"What if I wasn't going back?" Blaine held his breath, watching Kurt's face relax for a second and then twist in confusion. "What if I could stay here, for good?"

"I don't understand," Kurt said, shaking his head. He then gasped and started speaking quickly, "Please don't tell me you dropped out of school. You only have a year left, and you can't do that to yourself after you've come so far."

"Kurt, *Kurt*, no, I didn't drop out."

"Then what are you telling me?"

Blaine took a deep breath and closed his eyes. "I'm staying. Here, in New York. I'm finishing my senior year here, and I'm going to grad school here, and it's not because of you - well, you are a big part of the reason why I said yes - but it was a really great opportunity and I took it, and I wanted to tell you sooner, but it just never seemed like the right time, so I'm telling you now."

He cracked an eye open and Kurt was looking at him with an expression he couldn't read. Kurt's hand was slack in his, and that scared him. Blaine waited for Kurt to say something and the nervous tension between them was palpable. The way he figured it, Kurt's reaction could go one of two ways. Either he would be angry and kick Blaine out, or he would be happy about the surprise. Blaine really hoped it was the latter.

"How long have you known?" Kurt asked. When Blaine hesitated, he asked again. "*Blaine*. How long?"

"Since the end of last semester," Blaine confessed, hanging his head. "After my concert, I was asked to be part of a music program here. Everything was finalized a week after."

"So you've been lying to me this whole time." Kurt wasn't asking, and then he pulled his hand away, which was the last thing Blaine wanted because Kurt's touch was the only thing keeping him from dropping to his knees and begging him to not be angry and forgive him.

Blaine nodded, afraid of speaking when anything he said would probably make the situation worse. Kurt stood up and started pacing around the kitchen, not looking at Blaine at all, not looking at anything, really, like he was completely lost and didn't know what to do with himself.

Blaine got up and walked in front of him, hating himself for making Kurt upset. "I'm so sorry, Kurt. I should have told you, I know that. I was just so wrapped up in being here with you, and I didn't know if you would

want me here after the summer, and *god*, I've made such a mess of this. I don't blame you if you want me to leave."

Kurt stopped pacing, and Blaine could see a tear on his cheek. "You're not leaving, and you've known... Blaine, you *idiot*."

Blaine nearly fell backwards with the force of Kurt flinging his arms around his neck and kissing him, hard and off center and slightly salty. He almost started to sob against Kurt's mouth, clutching the back of his shirt like a lifeline.

"I can't believe you," Kurt said, pressing his forehead to Blaine's with his eyes still closed. "Of course I want you here, are you kidding me?"

Then Kurt kissed him again, his hands cradling Blaine's face, and Blaine felt like his knees were going to give out because it was as if Kurt was pouring his soul into it.

"So, you're not mad?" Blaine asked, panting against Kurt's lips and still holding onto him like he would disappear if he let go.

"Of course I'm mad, you big jerk!" Kurt said, laughing and shaking his head in disbelief. "I hate that you kept that from me, but I can't show it now because I'm so happy that you're staying. It's very confusing."

"I'm so sorry," Blaine said, tucking his face in against Kurt's neck.

"It's okay." Kurt kissed his temple and rubbed his hands over his back. "We'll have to talk about this later. Right now, though, I just want to be close to you."

They stood in the middle of the kitchen for a few minutes, swaying back and forth in a slow dance with no music.

"You're staying," Kurt finally said, breathing the words out in a whisper. "You're home."

"I am," Blaine said, and then he kissed him, soft and sure. "Forever."

Epilogue

June 30, 2036

Kurt tossed his keys onto the kitchen counter and slumped down onto a stool. Running his own clothing line had always been a challenge, but he remembers it being easier when he was still in his late twenties and could function perfectly well on two cups of coffee and three hours of sleep. At 42, he was exhausted, despite still being in good shape.

Something in the kitchen smelled amazing, and Kurt was trying to figure out what was in the oven by its scent when Blaine came in, wearing a ratty old apron with a puppy in a chef's hat on it, a gift from their daughter several years ago. It looked ridiculous on him, but Blaine wore it with pride, along with the small creases around his eyes and the flecks of grey and white along his hairline. Even after being together for 21 years, Blaine was still the most gorgeous man Kurt had ever seen.

"You look terrible," Blaine said, smiling as he kissed Kurt's cheek. "Bad day?"

"Bad month," Kurt groaned. He grabbed the sides of Blaine's apron and pulled him closer. "Happy to be home though. I missed you."

Blaine hummed against Kurt's mouth as they kissed, and Kurt could feel the tension in his body melt away. He loved that Blaine still had that impact on him, like no matter how run down he felt, being with his soulmate breathed new life into him.

"Dad! Daddy! Guess what! I - oh, see, now that's just gross."

Kurt pulled away from Blaine with a laugh, turning to their 16 year old daughter, Aubrey, who was covering her eyes and scowling in their general direction.

"We're decent, Aub. What's up?" Blaine asked, winking at Kurt and walking to the stove to stir whatever was bubbling in the pot.

"Well," Aubrey said, drawing it out to build suspense. Blaine always joked that her flair for the dramatic came from Kurt, and it was moments like this that made Kurt forget that she wasn't biologically theirs.

Aubrey suddenly pulled down the neck of her t-shirt, revealing small black script across her chest. "I got my soulmate mark!"

Kurt jumped up from the stool so fast it fell over and flew at Aubrey with his arms open. He hugged her tightly as Blaine joined them, all three of them laughing and grinning at each other.

"Wait, wait, okay, let's see it again," Blaine said. Kurt bit his lip, anxious to see the name of his future son-in-law. Or maybe it'll be a daughter-in-law. He wasn't particularly picky.

"Tatum Girardi, and a couple years older than you." Blaine read. "Huh."

"That's a boy's name, right?" Aubrey asked.

"Well, there's Tatum O'Neal, and she was a girl," Kurt told her. They hadn't discussed Aubrey's sexuality before. They barely got through a basic sex talk with her, all three of them coming out of that one scarred. Kurt still shuddered at the memory of talking to a horrified Aubrey about periods and bra sizes and what anatomical parts went where. Blaine had even tried to draw a picture, but that didn't turn out particularly well.

Aubrey's preferences didn't matter then, and they didn't matter now, either. Kurt figured she would come to them when she was ready.

"Does it matter that I don't care which one it is?" Aubrey asked, looking nervous. It took Kurt a second, but then it dawned on him that this was her way of telling them about who she is.

"What do you - oh!" Blaine seemed to make the same realization as Kurt. "Of course it doesn't matter."

"Not at all. You know we love you no matter what," Kurt reassured her, hugging her again.

"Right. Good," Aubrey said, visibly relieved. Kurt knew her well enough to understand that she needed some time to herself to process. There was still a lot to talk about, but it could wait.

"I think a milestone like this calls for ice cream!" Blaine said, pulling a pan out of the oven and setting it on top of the stove to cool. "What do you say, Aubbie? Ice cream for dinner?"

Aubrey rolled her eyes at the nickname, like she always did, but she was smiling. “Dad, you’ve been cooking all day.”

“And I’ll put it away and save it for tomorrow.” Blaine took off his apron and threw it at Kurt, and then picked up Kurt’s keys from the table. “Let’s go!”

Aubrey rolled her eyes again and ran upstairs, shouting down that she needed a minute to look “presentable to the general public”. Kurt stood in the middle of the kitchen and watched her disappear up the stairs, and that’s when it hit him.

“She’s growing up so fast,” Kurt said to himself. Blaine must have heard him, though, because seconds later Kurt was wrapped in two familiar arms, with Blaine’s chin hooked over his shoulder. He relaxed back into Blaine’s chest, feeling warm and content, if not a little bit nostalgic.

“You think she’ll be as happy as we are?” Blaine asked quietly, squeezing tightly around Kurt’s waist.

“Well, whatever magical force it is that selects soulmates seems to know what it’s doing, so I think she’ll be alright.”

“That’s true.” Blaine lightly kissed the side of Kurt’s neck, and the intimacy of it still settled bright and warm against Kurt’s skin, something he’d been accustomed to for years but never got tired of. “Although, I think we won the soulmate lottery.”

Kurt laughed, “There’s no such thing.”

“Yes there is, and we won it,” Blaine said, taking on the authoritative tone he usually saved for his students and Aubrey. Kurt giggled and turned to kiss his temple, because yeah, they really did win.

Aubrey came back down the stairs and pulled a face when she saw them hugging. “Are we still getting ice cream? Because I’m starting to lose my appetite.”

“You’re hilarious, little girl.” Kurt grabbed Blaine’s hand and followed Aubrey to the door.