

The Boy From Oz Trilogy

by

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Kurt/Blaine || AU || NC-17

Summary (for Part 1): Murder mystery novelist Blaine Anderson finds himself becoming increasingly obsessed with introverted high school drop-out Kurt as a murderous psychopath stalks the rainy streets of Seattle.

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Contents

The Boy With the Unicorn Tattoo	- 3 -
The Boy With the Thorn in His Side	- 76 -
The Boy Who Wanted to Fly	- 182 -

The Boy With the Unicorn Tattoo

Warnings: *Death (not of any main characters), gore, violence of a physical and sexual nature, non-con, mentions of body mutilation, self-mutilation, explicit sexual activity with a minor, age difference, infidelity, serial killings, and a whole lot of other fucked up stuff.*

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It was a dark and stormy night when Blaine Anderson first met and became intrigued by one Kurt Hummel.

October 4th. A Thursday. The rain poured thick and heavy along the streets of Seattle, effectively ending the unnaturally long dry spell that the city had been enduring. The citizens of Seattle looked to the sky with a mixture of dread, amusement, and resignation, zipping up their light jackets as they mentally vowed to take their rain jackets out of the backs of their closets, secretly anticipating scoffing at those who would use umbrellas as they bustled about downtown because they were clearly tourists.

Northwest of downtown, past Queen Anne Hill and Lake Union, snuggled firmly between Phinney Ridge and Puget Sound was the neighborhood of Ballard where the two happened to coincide at precisely 9:06 pm.

Blaine Anderson had been sitting in Miro Tea Shop, distractedly sipping a cup of straight earl grey tea and trying not to cringe—his editor had insisted that he kick his coffee addiction so now he was on the leaf juice as he spitefully referred to it—while he stared at his blank open document, willing his mind to fill in the space with inky black words. The endless plethora of inspiration that his mind continuously created was rendered moot by the fact that he could never think of a place to start, middle, or end.

Writer's Block, they called it. It seemed so trivial and banal to him compared to what he was feeling. Just so...ordinary.

A sopping wet shoulder bag slammed down onto his table, knocking over his glass pot of tea onto his laptop keys, dousing them with liquid as the pot shattered. He spluttered, yanking up his laptop and tipping it to the side to prevent any tea from seeping in. Blaine looked up at the interloper of his table just as the clock over the crepe-maker ticked over to 9:06 pm.

“What the hell?”

Blaine found himself being ignored by a drenched teenager with a ducked head who was cramming a multitude of lemon poppyseed scones into his wet bag as well as what looked like one of the chocolate chunk cookies. The teenager arranged the food before zipping the bag back up and slinging it over his shoulder.

He was very interesting to look at, Blaine noted. He wore long pastel blue overalls over a billowy white shirt that was glued to his body because of the rain. His short chin-length brown hair was pulled into two little nubby pigtails behind either ear except for a few locks that fell into his face, strung up with glass beads.

“Hey Kurt, here’s your order,” Quinn called from behind the counter, holding out a drink and a hot panini.

“Kurt” turned and walked over to her, taking the items smoothly before stalking out the door.

Blaine stared after him in bewilderment before shaking his laptop out lightly, flinging amber droplets of incredibly bitter bergamot tea over his desk and table before setting it down and angrily stalking over to the front counter. “Who the hell was that and what was his problem?” he said angrily.

Quinn watched his vicious abuse of the napkin dispenser with amusement before answering coolly, “Oh, that’s just Kurt. And I think he’s had a pretty bad week.”

“You know him?” Blaine asked, patting himself down with the napkins before sending his laptop and longing and despairing look.

Quinn smiled enigmatically. “We have a history.”

Blaine arched an eyebrow but she wouldn’t elaborate. “What was he drinking?” he found himself asking.

“London Fog tea latte.”

Two nights later with a brand new laptop, Blaine Anderson found himself curled up in the sitting room of his lofty north Capitol Hill house as he started typing, the crackling of Mahler on the record player and the howling wind outside the only soundtrack to the mire of his thoughts.

It was London, 1984. Amidst the thick lush fog of the night that never seemed to let up, there was a killer on the streets.

Blaine stared at the sentence. It was wrong of course, but it was a start. He’d worry about style later. The barest semblance of a plot started to form in his head as he smiled and continued typing.

The next day he saw Kurt Hummel again.

Each Friday he ventured to the Pike Place Market for a new bouquet of flowers to spruce up his apartment. After walking down the length of flower vendors, he doubled back to choose a favorite or two (or three—one for his bathroom would be nice) when he stumbled into another person.

“Excuse me,” he said, clasping the person’s shoulders as he regain his footing.

A large pair of blue eyes were blinking back at him.

“Kurt!” He held him at arm’s length, looking at him in shock.

Kurt stood there, looking surprisingly different when he was dry. His hair was fluffy and high and in a coiffed nearly mohawk-esque fashion, the pigtails gone in favor of a small ponytail. The sweet farm boy look was gone as well, in favor of a black sleeveless turtle neck, skinny jeans, and white lace-up boots. He held a lemon tart in one hand and a large box of french pastries in the other. He took a large bite of the tart.

“Uh, I know Quinn, from Miro Tea, and you stopped by last night?” Blaine tried as a method of explanation.

“Have you ever had any of the pastries from Le Panier?” Kurt asked, staring at him.

Blaine opened his mouth. “I—”

“Because they’re really very good,” Kurt said. “Here, try.” He jammed the rest of the lemon tart into Blaine’s mouth, who choked around the citrusy explosion.

“Delicious, isn’t it?” Kurt said in the same monotonous tone, before brushing past Blaine.

Blaine chewed furiously, gulping down the dessert before taking off after Kurt, weaving through the midday throngs of people at the market. Past the flying fish and Rachel the pig and the donut stand, Blaine finally caught back up to Kurt. “Why aren’t you in school?”

Kurt ignored him.

“It’s just past noon and it’s Friday,” Blaine tried again. “Don’t you have high school?”

“I don’t go to school,” Kurt said in a clipped voice. “It’s not really the thing for me.”

“But you’re...” Blaine frowned. “How old are you exactly?”

Kurt turned suddenly and stared him down with his large blue eyes. “I’ve lived a thousand horrific lives by now, each more terrifying than the rest and this one is but a mere respite, the eye of the storm before I let oblivion take me again.”

Blaine stared.

Kurt sighed. "I'm sixteen. Honestly. Adults have no concept of humor nowadays." He turned to the massive magazine stand and started plucking up volumes. "And this is all I need to learn, right here." He piled his arms high with various Vogues and Ws and GQs and Elles.

"Isn't it the law that you have to go to school?" Blaine protested.

Kurt shifted the magazines to one arm and reached up to tap Blaine's nose. "Ah yes, but therein lies the problem." He leaned forward, his breath ghosting across Blaine's ear. "I can't go to school because I don't exist."

Blaine blinked as Kurt leaned back, a sudden achingly sweet ghost of a smile on his lips.

"Thanks for paying for my education, Mr. Earl Grey."

And then he turned and left, blending in seamlessly with the crowd.

Leaving Blaine to pay forty-seven dollars for the magazines.

He went to Miro Tea everyday under the pretense of writing, when really he was searching for Kurt. He probed Quinn endlessly but she kept her mouth shut.

"Look, don't go messing around with Kurt!" Quinn finally snapped one Wednesday. "He's been through enough bullshit without some lonely writer poking and prodding at him?"

"Like what though?" Blaine leaned forward. "Come on, Quinn. You have to give me at least something."

She crossed her arms. "Don't you have other obligations, Mr. Anderson?"

Blaine's jaw clenched before he nodded and went back to his seat, typing once more.

Blaine created an outline for his story—80s in London. A killer on the loose.

And then he changed it again. Swinging 60s in London. A killer on the loose.

And then...again. 40s in London. Amid the sirens of wartime, a killer on the loose.

After a week of his story flipping decades, he leaned back in his wooden seat and glared at his laptop screen. They were all good ideas but he just couldn't think of stories for each of them. He needed something new, a different angle from the "it's the person you least suspect" route he always went.

"Why don't you just set it in Victorian times?"

Blaine jumped, his chair nearly tipping all the way back before he latched onto the table ledge and propelled himself forward.

Kurt was standing behind him, style once again shifted to a cashmere lavender off-the-shoulder sweater and white corduroys and black ballet flats. His hair was floppy and soft looking and all down, hanging in uneven sort-of waves around his face.

Blaine blinked. "What?"

"Then you could make parallels with Jack the Ripper as well as the killings that have been going on in Seattle," Kurt said monotonously before turning to go to the front counter.

Blaine pushed out of his chair after him and followed him to the front counter. He noticed what looked like a few black dots on Kurt's back, revealed by the low dip of the sweater. "What do you mean?" Blaine asked.

"A London Fog and a poppyseed scone, Quinn," Kurt ordered. He produced a card from his pocket to pay.

“Kurt,” Blaine tried again. “What do you mean?”

“The Victorian era is a great source for fucked up horror stories,” Kurt shrugged, pressing the card to Blaine’s chest. “Thanks for the tea, by the way.”

Blaine glanced at the card, realizing it was his. “You—”

“Oh, and my food, clothes, and magazines for the past week,” Kurt shrugged. He rubbed his cheek aimlessly against his shoulder. “I’ve never been able to afford cashmere before.”

“You stole—”

“Only what you could easily pay for,” he said curtly, sitting in Blaine’s chair and munching on the poppyseed scone as he peered over Blaine’s work.

Blaine stared at him incredulously. “Kurt.”

Kurt just clicked down the scant few pages that Blaine had managed to type up, eyes starting as he crammed more of the scone into his mouth.

“Kurt!”

Kurt looked over at him in surprise. “What?”

A thousand questions popped into Blaine’s mind like “What the hell are you doing?” or “Do you really think I won’t call the police?” or “Why are you wearing girl’s clothes?”

But the question he ended up asking was, “What did you mean, the killings in Seattle?”

Kurt held his gaze as he crammed the last of the scone in his mouth and swallowed. “In the Central District, the past couple of weeks, two girls have been found gagged, raped, and strung up against a wall in a weird a twisted version of a crucifixion with their bellies slit open and burlap sacks placed over their bashed-in heads.”

Blaine felt his mouth go dry. “Are...are you serious?”

“Completely,” Kurt said monotonously. “So that should make a good story, right? That’s what authors do: reinvent the truth so they can tell a story. You’ve got an incredibly creepy killer of females on the loose, throw him in with lots of Victorian fog and the cold streets of London, add a few corsets with a dash of scandal and voila, you have a national best seller.”

Blaine scoffed, but the idea was tickling the back of his mind. “Victorian era?”

“Try the 1880s,” Kurt mused, accepting his tea from Quinn with a half-smile. “They were pretty fucked-up.”

Blaine rolled his eyes but found his fingers typing.

They met up everyday at Miro Tea, just after five. Kurt came everyday to take the bus home with Quinn, sometimes accompanied by a hard-looking guy with a mohawk who Blaine quickly learned was Quinn’s boyfriend and the father of her baby bump.

They didn’t even talk much—Blaine would be typing away on his laptop while Kurt would be sketching in his notebook, but the occasional comment that Kurt would make, or a Victorian lace design that he’d come up with and show Blaine would spark a new frenzy in the story as a cohesive plot began to come together.

“Here’s your main character,” Kurt said one day in mid October, holding up an incredibly detailed sketch of a man in an elaborate waistcoat and breeches.

Blaine stared. “But that’s you. Victorian-ized.”

“And here’s his sidekick,” Kurt continued, flipping to the next page.

Blaine frowned. “Wait, why am I the sidekick?”

“Because I’m the one who comes up with all the good ideas,” Kurt said nonchalantly, going back to sketching.

Blaine arched an eyebrow. “Is that so?”

“I came up with characters, setting, main plot so...yes, it is so.”

Blaine folded his arms and tilted back in his chair. “Okay, so what’s this main character’s name?”

“Bergamot,” Kurt said as he took a sip of his London Fog. “Alexander Bergamot.”

Blaine felt a twinge of annoyance because it actually wasn’t a bad name. “And the sidekick?”

“The earl, his financier,” Kurt nodded. “Elliot Grey.” A smile twisted his lips.

Blaine frowned, taking a sip of his tea before spluttering with laughter. “Seriously, Kurt? Earl Grey?”

Kurt just hid his smile behind his tea latte.

In the attic of his house, the characters flourished.

Blaine was still trying to find a good enough title—that was always the hardest part for him: either a title came immediately or did not make itself known until the end of the tale—but Alexander Bergamot and Earl Elliot Grey were becoming more and more well-developed as the leaves outside the large glass window turned from green to yellow to red to russet.

Alexander. Age 19. A Sherlock Holmes-esque youth with a bit too big of a heart (wishful thinking on Blaine’s part?) who was hunting down a killer of women through the streets of London.

Elliot. Age 24. His patron who finances his investigations because he got the Earl’s elder troublesome brother out of the way so that Elliot could achieve the earldom.

Okay, so maybe Blaine wasn't quite as subtle as he thought.

But he already had lots of undercover subplots laid out, from the stint at the opium den to the ruse pulled off at Lady Edith's masquerade.

The killer on the other hand...

Blaine sighed, pen doodling idly on the page.

Something to do with burlap sacks. Burlap had to give him edge to the villain...

But what?

Blaine read about the third murder on the eighth page of the Seattle Times. Suzy Pepper, age 14, murdered on her way home from after school activities. Beaten, raped, gagged, trussed up, belly slit, bashed-in head, burlap sack.

Something tickled the back of Blaine's neck and he didn't know what it was. He called in a favor—Carl Howell, one of the detectives at the precinct. He'd set him up with one of his colleagues, Holly Holiday at a charity function at Benaroya Hall three years ago. Though their relationship hadn't lasted, Carl and Blaine's did and Blaine had carried the favor around for the right moment.

And now he was going to use it because he was almost certain that he knew Suzy Pepper from somewhere.

Also, he needed to talk to Kurt about this most recent development and what it would mean for the villain.

He went to Miro Tea, but Kurt wasn't there.

The whole week, Kurt wasn't there.

Finally, after nine days, Quinn's boyfriend Puck tapped Blaine's shoulder as Quinn was closing up. "Dude, you need to find Kurt," he muttered.

Blaine sat up straighter, putting away his laptop. "What are you talking about?"

Puck sighed, looking around. "I think he's in trouble. He was supposed to keep in touch but...knowing him...he's probably gotten himself in way too deep again."

Blaine stared at him. "Puck, what's wrong with Kurt?"

Puck licked his lips. "Look, you know where Underground Seattle is? In Pioneer Square?"

Blaine nodded.

"Go around back by the alleyway next to it after midnight tonight. And dude? Make sure he's okay."

The rain was pouring down heavily in sheets as Blaine parked his car on Occidental Avenue and continued on foot, his collar turned up against the harsh elements.

He wasn't going to lie—the idea of this late night clandestine rendez vous with fate and potential danger thrilled and intrigued him. Though admittedly, most-of-all he wished to learn how Kurt was somehow spun up in the middle of this tangled spider web of intrigue.

Pioneer Square. During the day it was a charming little tourist location full of information about Seattle in its early days and pubs and museums and art galleries and jazz joints and only a couple of blocks from the waterfront.

Except for Bell Town, it was probably the worst place you could be downtown at night.

Blaine slipped around by the entrance to Underground Seattle and crept along the slick brick walls to the spacious back alleyway of fire escapes, hidden nooks, suspicious doors, and dumpsters. He saw a small group of people about halfway down and pressed himself into a small alcove with a door, shrinking down to hide in the shadows as the voices drew nearer.

“...if Motta won’t greenlight it.”

“He’s grown...keeps...damn daughter of his.”

“Just tell...owes...the rest of the night.”

“Yeah, well tell Porcelain that...still has to pay me for...the days...spent who knows where and I had to cover...”

“Porcelain’s already in trouble with Goolsby and—”

“Just find...and get the money!”

The group passed into one of the other doors farther down the alley and Blaine breathed a sigh of relief. He counted to three before moving from his hiding spot.

The rain was coming down even harder as Blaine trudged around dumpsters. A hand reached out and tapped his shoulder and he turned to find a pretty redhead smiling at him.

“Hey honey,” she smiled. “Looking for company? Why don’t you come in? It’s dreadful out.”

“Can’t do,” he smiled apologetically. “I’m taken. But I’m looking for someone, if you can help?” He offered a fifty.

She took it with a smile. “Who are you looking for?”

“Kurt.”

She laughed. “We don’t have names here.”

“Um...” Blaine frowned. “Brown sort of curly hair? Big blue eyes? Uh—”

“The boy with the unicorn tattoo?” She sighed.

Blaine blinked. “What?”

“You’re looking for Porcelain,” she rolled her eyes. “As are half the clients. He’s with the boss’ daughter right now. End of the alley on your right. Gaudy neon door, can’t miss it.”

“Many thanks,” Blaine nodded and hurried down the alley past various doors until the one at the end with bright pink neon hearts. He tried the nob, pleased to find it unlocked, and opened the door carefully. There was just a small entryway and stairs that led up to the second floor. The air was tinted pink from the hearts in the window and there was a distinct smell of cinnamon and ginger in the air. Silently, Blaine crept up the stairs.

He was met with a hall of doors, but one was ajar at the very end, voices floating from within.

“...come on, it’ll be alright in the end though.”

“I don’t know...you’re not looking that great.”

“Oh come on, I just need some soup and I’ll be a—a—achoo!”

“Come on, Kurt, I’ll just tell daddy—”

“No! You know it’ll only cause trouble for you, Sugar.”

Blaine pushed open the door and blinked at all the bright pink he was immediately met with before focusing on Kurt who was sitting half-naked on a large canopy bed with a girl who was holding his leg. His hair was all fluffed around his head and his bangs were side-swept over his left eye making him look incredibly feminine—as did the black eyeliner and golden gloss on his lips. He wore nothing but a pair of puffy golden-scarlet capris that tied at his knees and looked incredibly like persimmons.

“Blaine!” Kurt jumped, grabbing a feathery pink blanket and holding it over himself. “What are you doing here?”

“Puck sent me,” Blaine said, his eyes jumping around the room. “He said he thought that you might be in trouble.”

Kurt’s shoulders slumped. “I’m fine—”

“He’s not,” the girl—Sugar?—interrupted, yanking his leg. Kurt hissed. “Look.”

Large hand-shaped bruises blossomed up his calf.

Kurt yanked his leg back, rolling his eyes. “I’ve had way worse, Sugar, and you know it. This is barely anything.”

“This was Goolsby saying hello!” Sugar snapped. “But this new guy...they have a new customer in town and he’s...he scares me, Kurt, and Goolsby wants to send you to him tonight and I can’t—”

“It’s not your choice, Sugar,” Kurt said with finality. “It’s mine. And if I run, Goolsby will find me. He always finds me when I’m on the streets and I can’t hide out in pee-patches forever, especially since the rainy season’s started back up.”

“What if you weren’t on the streets?”

Kurt turned to face Blaine. “What?”

“You need a place to stay, right? Out of harm’s way?” Blaine stepped forward, touching Kurt’s arm.

Kurt shook his head. “Blaine, I can’t—”

There was a knock on the downstairs door.

The three froze.

“Porcelain!”

“He’s not supposed to be here for another hour,” Kurt muttered.

“Porcelain, you’ve got a customer!”

“Kurt, go!” Sugar urged, shoving him towards the window. “Go with—” she glanced at Blaine briefly. “—Mr. Trenchcoat here and get as far away from Pioneer Square as possible!”

“Sugar—”

The door unlocked.

“Go!”

She shoved Kurt out onto the fire escape and Blaine followed. The window was slammed shut behind them. Blaine grabbed Kurt’s hand and they hurried down the rickety metal stairs.

“Porcelain!”

The voice was above them and Blaine shoved Kurt over the last railing, two feet down onto a garbage bin before jumping over himself. They hopped down from there and raced around the corner.

Kurt latched onto Blaine’s arm and pulled him around another building before racing across an open square full of totem poles. Voices could still be heard far off behind them, but Kurt expertly weaved them through foliage and over a stone wall until they were by a series of metal chairs and tables, the sound of running water surrounding them.

Blaine breathed heavily in the dim gray-blue light as he leaned back against a moss ledge. Kurt curled up next to him, shivering slightly.

“Here,” Blaine murmured, taking off his trenchcoat and draping it around Kurt’s shoulders.

Kurt blinked in surprise. “Thank you,” he whispered. “We should wait here for half an hour, just to make sure that the coast is clear.”

“Okay,” Blaine nodded. “Where...exactly is here?”

“The waterfall park,” Kurt said quietly. “Just a small little hidden nook.”

“Huh,” Blaine said, looking around. He’d never even known such a place existed.

The next twenty-seven minutes were filled with the sounds of bubbling creeks and water rushing over rocks before Kurt silently stood and asked where Blaine’s car was parked. They took an out of the way route to get to it, but within ten minutes they were speeding through downtown, heading to Capitol Hill.

Blaine cranked the heat and cleared his throat. “Do you wanna...I don’t know, talk?”

“No.”

“Okay.”

Blaine clicked on the radio and the music washed over their silence.

You sit there in your heartache

Waiting on some beautiful boy to

To save you from your old ways

You play forgiveness watch him now here he comes

He doesn’t look a thing like Jesus

But he talks like a gentleman

Like you imagined when you were young...

“Well, here we are.” Blaine cut the ignition in front of his three story tier house. “Chez Anderson.”

Kurt nodded and left the car without another word. He didn’t speak as they walked into Blaine’s house, didn’t comment on the architecture, didn’t look around in wonder, didn’t utter a single sound.

“Um, I guess you can stay here,” Blaine said awkwardly, opening the door to the guest room that was closest to his. He walked over to the bedside table and turned on the lamp, filling the pale green room with a soft glow. “You have your own bathroom and I guess we can get you your own clothes tomorrow—”

“Sugar has my things and she’ll give them to Mercedes who’ll give them to Quinn who’ll give them to me,” Kurt said quietly.

“Right,” Blaine nodded. “I’ll um, get you a towel.” He walked across the hall to his room, grabbing one of the fluffy beige towels from his bathroom and heading back to Kurt’s. “Here—”

He broke off when he entered. Kurt had placed Blaine’s trenchcoat over the chair in the corner and was currently looking out the window. In the soft golden lamplight of the room, Blaine could make out the stark black ink on the skin of Kurt’s back, swirling in various patterns to create a...unicorn.

Kurt turned, arms crossed over his pale chest as he walked forward and accepted the towel with a curt nod.

Blaine looked at him, so young and sad and damp and cold.

And there was a moment: when Kurt looked up at him and the golden lamp glinted in his blue eyes that were streaked with smeared eyeliner and his skin seemed entirely free of blemishes and his lips glittered like the sunset and Blaine reached his hand out to crush Kurt to his body—

He patted Kurt's shoulder. "I'll see you in the morning."

Life...continued.

Blaine worked on his novel relentlessly everyday, hardly leaving the house. Kurt would sometimes pop up in the kitchen with a mug of tea, or out on the old rickety swing in the backyard or leaning against the attic window, but he mainly confined himself to his room, sitting in a corner surrounded by stacks of fashion magazines and sketching. He'd already given Blaine twelve different character designs for the killer but none seemed to fit. Blaine could sense Kurt growing increasingly frustrated and did his best to make sure they got out every couple of nights to Miro Tea to visit Quinn and Puck—both of whom were relieved to find Kurt alive and well.

Kurt didn't talk much. He didn't eat much. And he certainly didn't sleep much. And on the nights he did sleep...

Blaine's eyes snapped open as the blood-curdling scream ripped through the third floor. He stumbled out of bed, rubbing his eyes and headed to the room across from his. As per usual, Kurt was thrashing in his bed, knuckles white as they gripped his pillow and he cried and begged someone not to hurt him.

Blaine crawled over the covers and ran a hand down Kurt's back. Kurt went limp, just uttering quiet little whimpers and sniffles. Blaine wrapped his arms around him tightly and started softly singing *Somewhere Over The Rainbow* into his hair. By the end of the song, Kurt was in a deep calm sleep.

A few days later, Blaine heard back from Carl.

“Listen, this can’t get out to the public.”

“I understand,” Blaine said calmly. “This is purely for research purposes only.”

Carl sighed on the other line. “Well, there is a clear connection between the three girls. They all went to Garfield High School, and they’re all from the same group home.”

“Really? Have you talked to their supervisor—”

“That’s the thing. Suzy, the third girl, was found by their supervisor, a Miss Emma Pillsbury, 32. Miss Pillsbury went over the edge and she’s currently in the psychiatric ward of Virginia Mason.”

“Oh god,” Blaine muttered.

“Yeah. There’s one more thing. All three girls were last seen with the same person, blocks from the school, but we can’t seem to figure out who he is. There’s no record of him at the group home, but Emma had a picture of him in her wallet. I’ll send it to you now...”

Blaine waited for the little picture text to pop up and he gave it a once-over, his insides freezing up.

“Carl, I’m going to have to call you back.”

Kurt was in the kitchen, pouring chocolate rice milk over a large bowl of Honey Bunches of Oats with Almonds. He was dressed down, light gray jeans and this asymmetrical flowing dark blue blouse thing that dipped off one shoulder slightly, his hair back in its little nubby ponytail. He took a large bite of the cereal, humming as he crunched on the flakes. He turned around and jumped.

Blaine was standing in the doorway of the kitchen, half in shadow.

Kurt wiped his mouth where chocolate rice milk had started to leak out. “You scared me,” he said through a full mouth.

“Is that so?” Blaine’s voice was quiet and with his face completely blacked out it was incredibly eery.

“Yeah,” Kurt muttered, tucking one of his beaded locks behind his ear. He glanced back down at his cereal, idly stirring it.

Blaine didn’t say anything.

Kurt continued eating, the silence growing heavier and heavier between them until he finished, putting his bowl into the sink.

Blaine was still staring at him.

Unnerved, Kurt tried to walk past him to go back to his room, but Blaine grabbed his arm. His grip was tight.

“Blaine, let go of me!” Kurt protested, attempting to pry his hand off.

Blaine dragged him back into the kitchen, his voice unusually calm and quiet. “You know, I can’t believe how long you had me fooled, Kurt.”

Panic set in, but Kurt beat it down. “What are you talking about?”

Blaine gave him a hard look. “Oh, I think you know. The police are on their way.”

The blood drained from Kurt’s face. “No...”

“Yes.”

“No Blaine, please let me explain—”

“I think it’s pretty damn clear, Kurt!”

“Listen,” Kurt said desperately, prying at his arm. “Blaine, you have to let me go, just please let me go!”

“I don’t think so, Kurt,” Blaine snapped, grabbing his other arm. “You made your bed, and now you have to lie in it!”

“No!” Kurt screamed, thrashing wildly against Blaine. “No! I’m not going back! You can’t make me! I won’t I won’t I won’t I won’t I won’t!” He managed to get his head under Blaine’s chin and thrust it upwards, causing Blaine’s head to snap back and his grip to loosen.

Kurt wriggled out of Blaine’s arms and tore towards the doorway. Blaine raced around the island and managed to get his back against the door, slamming it shut. Kurt backed away before scrambling onto the counter and pushing the window open. Blaine grabbed his foot with one and, dragging him back as his other hand scrambled at Kurt’s shirt, his nails dragging down the length of Kurt’s back.

Kurt went rigid, halfway off the sink as Blaine reached over him to snap the window shut, breathing heavily. Kurt’s hand shot across the counter, grabbing something, before he turned around, eyes wide, pushing against Blaine.

There was a noise, almost like a sick squishy cutting sound.

Blaine stared down at Kurt, who’s blue eyes were nearly manic before they blinked a couple of times and went wide. Blaine breathed in, feeling the sharp aching feeling in his stomach. He looked down at the knife in Kurt’s hand.

The one that was pressed hilt-deep into Blaine’s stomach.

Kurt gasped, backing away from him as dark red blood began to flow out of Blaine’s shirt.

Blaine looked back up at Kurt, feeling his vision growing fuzzy around the edges. “Kur—”

And then everything was black.

Beeping.

Then white.

Then nurses.

Then doctors.

Then maybe surgery.

Then more beeping.

Then doctors telling police officers that they'd have to interview him later.

Then the beeping went away.

Then darkness but he was still awake.

Then silence.

Then the door creaked open.

The darkness pressed in against Blaine's eyes, making it nearly impossible to see, but he could make out the dark figure that walked around his bed then leaned over to turn on the lamp.

He blinked against the sudden light but his eyes quickly adjusted.

It was a girl. A very pretty girl at that, with long dark reddish brown hair in two neat french braids over her shoulders. She wore a checkered blue dress that flared out to her knees with a white blouse underneath it, white knee socks, and black mary jane shoes.

“Hello Blaine.”

Blaine’s eyes snapped up to her face as the familiar voice washed over him. Her blue eyes were sad.

“Kurt...”

With a sigh, Kurt sat down in the chair next to him, grabbing Blaine’s hand when it reached over for the panic button. “Ah ah,” Kurt admonished, his touch gentle but grip firm. “Don’t worry, no more knives. I just came...to apologize. I didn’t mean to stab you. It was just...instinct.”

“Instinct,” Blaine bit out. “Well your ‘instinct’ caused me to need surgery!”

“I know I’m sorry,” Kurt sighed. “I panicked. But you wouldn’t let me explain and—”

“I think your actions pretty much spoke for themselves.” Blaine gave up on trying to twist his hands out of Kurt’s—he was too weak at the moment—and huffed back against his bed. “So what now? Bashed-in head? Slit belly? Burlap sack? Or do you only do that to little girls?”

A blink. Then brows furrowing. “What?”

“Marley, Kitty, Suzy—do I really need to go on?”

Kurt stared at him, looking utterly confused. “Wait, you think I killed them?”

“Of course. Why else would I have called the police?”

Kurt’s expression cleared as he looked at Blaine in surprise and—it seemed—relief. “Blaine, I didn’t kill them.”

"You were the last person seen with all three of them and your picture is in Emma Pillsbury's wallet." Blaine shot off.

An almost-smile crept onto Kurt's face. "Emma has a picture of me in her wallet?"

"Yes. I had a detective look into the investigation for more novel research."

Kurt licked his lips, seeming to be weighing something in his mind. "Blaine, I'm going to let go of your hands now. But—you have to promise to hear me out. I'll explain everything. And, afterward, if you want to press the panic button, I won't stop you."

Blaine stared at him hard. "You'll answer my questions?"

"I'll answer your questions," Kurt nodded. "Okay, I'm letting go now." He lifted his hands from Blaine's letting out a breath when Blaine laid still.

"I'm listening," Blaine said calmly.

Kurt sat back in his chair, crossing his legs neatly and folding his hands in his lap. "What would you like to know?"

"Why are you dressed like a girl?"

Kurt rolled his eyes. "The police are looking for a young man named Kurt who stabbed esteemed novelist Blaine Anderson and who may also be connected to the killings around town. Why do you think I'm dressed like a girl?"

"Fair enough," Blaine nodded. "When I told you that I called the police why did you panic if you were innocent?"

Kurt looked to the side. "I thought you meant...something else. I have a...lengthy history."

"You're sixteen."

"Everyone has a has a story."

"What's your story then?" Blaine demanded in a low voice.

Kurt gave him a wry smile. "There was a boy."

An arched eyebrow. "Really?"

"There's always a boy."

"I thought there was always a girl."

Kurt smirked. "Well clearly someone's stuck in the twentieth century."

"Cute," Blaine snarked. "But I'll need a bit more of a substantial answer than 'there was a boy'."

Kurt sighed, recrossing his legs. "I..." he began slowly. "My past isn't important but...I'm not from around here. I came to Seattle seven months ago and...I was living on the streets. There was a lot of messed up stuff from before and I ended up in Pioneer Square for a little over a month before Emma found me. She took me in." He licked his lips lightly. "She runs a halfway house called McKinley Home, for kids who don't have anywhere to go. Quinn and Puck lived there too. Quinn had really strict parents who threw her out after they found out she was pregnant with Puck's baby and Puck's mom kicked him out for dishonoring his family by not staying with the faith or something..." Kurt sighed, rubbing his temples. "And we were close. All of us. We'd all walk each other to school and from work just to stay safe. But then, Marley died... And Kitty after her..."

Kurt dropped his bag off in his room, avoiding the chatter of the others in the common room down the hall and ran his fingers along the walls as he entered Emma's office without warning.

"Kurt!" she exclaimed, her doe eyes going wide. "What are you doing here?"

He stood in the doorway. "I heard about Kitty."

Emma's expression dropped as she leaned heavily over her desk. "Yes," she said quietly.

"And..." Kurt licked his lips. "It was the same as Marley?"

"The same," Emma nodded. "Look, Kurt—"

"I'll go to Miro more, keep an eye on Quinn and take the bus home with her," he muttered. "And I'll pick up Tina and Suzy from school and if—"

"Kurt," Emma interrupted and Kurt closed his mouth. "Thank you. But I want you to be sure that you stay safe as well."

Kurt nodded before shutting the door. He rounded the corner, knocking into Ken Tanaka, but he ignored him and kept going.

"Hey."

He glanced up and Puck was leaning against the hall. Kurt just blinked in acknowledgement.

"You heard about Kitty?" Puck asked grimly.

Kurt licked his lips. "How's Jake?"

"Not too good," Puck sighed. "First Marley now—" He raked his fingers through his mohawk in frustration. "Look, usually I'd ask him to but I have an extra shift tonight so—"

"I'll get Quinn," Kurt nodded.

Puck gave him a half smile. "Thanks dude. I'll pay you back."

Kurt rolled his eyes as he went to grab a sweater. "No you won't."

“And we tried to stay strong, all of us...” Kurt blinked back tears. “But then Suzy and Emma...”

Kurt walked into the McKinley Home in the early morning, cramming the last of a cherry danish into his mouth as he walked down the hall, nodding to Mike and Tina in turn. He headed back to Emma’s office and swung the door open.

The man at the table definitely wasn’t Emma. He had curly hair and a sweater vest and a smooth smile.

Kurt froze. “Who are you?”

“Hello!” The man smiled, walking around the desk and offering his hand. “Kurt, right? We’ve met before. I’m Will, remember?”

A couple of memories stirred up in Kurt’s brain from the past six months of Emma’s new boyfriend Will that had hung around McKinley, but to whom Kurt had never spoken more than two words. “What are you doing here?” Kurt asked, hand tensing on his bag strap. “Where’s Emma?”

Will’s face softened. “Kurt...Emma’s in the hospital.”

Kurt blinked. “What? Why?”

Will sighed, raking a hand through his hair. “Well, you know about the past couple of weeks, correct? With...Marley’s...and Kitty’s...”

Kurt flinched, but nodded.

Will’s mouth set into a grim line. “Well, last night...Suzy...”

“Suzy Pepper?” Kurt blurted out.

Will nodded.

Kurt's mind reeled. He was going to walk her home yesterday but he'd forgotten...

"Emma found her and...she lost it, Kurt. She's in the psychiatric ward."

Kurt slumped against the doorframe. Will put a hand on his shoulder, but he flinched away.

"I'm here to help, Kurt," Will reassured. "I want to find whatever psycho is doing this and avenge the girls, and Emma. I'm keeping an eye on everyone here. But..." He walked back to Emma's desk and sat down. "McKinley Home will have to be closed, partially."

"What?" Kurt choked out.

"To prevent any further danger," Will explained. "This is a rough neighborhood—"

"So you're just going to abandon kids on the streets?" Kurt snapped.

"No," Will said firmly. "We're finding homes for everyone. For those who we can't find homes, they'll still stay here, but otherwise we're trying to minimize the risk of letting a killer in through the doors."

Kurt shifted. "So..."

"So we'll be putting children into homes unless they really can't—"

"I really can't," Kurt cut across. "Stay with a family. I can't."

Will sighed. "Well Kurt, you can't stay here."

"Why not?" Kurt folded his arms. "You just said that those you can't find families for—"

"I meant kids who were in school," Will said, giving him a hard stare. "And who have some form of identification."

Kurt looked to the side.

Will leaned forward. "Come on, Kurt. At least a last name—"

"No."

Will ran a hand through his hair. "Then I'm sorry, but you can't stay here anymore."

Kurt took in a deep breath. "If Emma were here, I could stay."

"But she's not here," Will said evenly. "And I have to look out for the good of everyone."

Kurt swallowed dryly. "How..."

"You have a day to pack up your stuff if you won't cooperate."

Kurt felt his heart pounding in his ears, but he nodded sharply and turned to leave.

"Kurt?"

His hand paused on the door knob.

"Sorry—I've just been a bit scatterbrained when I've been trying to organize everyone from Emma's files but...there's someone mentioned here—a Dorothy P.? Do you know which room she's in?"

Kurt blinked at the door. "Dorothy hasn't lived here for a very long time."

Will started to say something else, but Kurt was out of the door, closing it tightly behind him. He shoved into his room and pulled his clothing into his duffelbag, cramming as many magazines as he could into his back pack and latching both onto his back before slamming the door shut behind him.

"Kurt!"

He turned and Tina ran up to him, throwing her arms around him. "Kurt, tell me you're not going."

"I have to, Tina," he said quietly, nodding to Mike over her shoulder. He pushed her back, hands gripping her shoulders hard. "Listen to me. Don't go anywhere alone."

"Oh believe me, she won't," Mike said, wrapping an arm around her waist. "We're all pairing up with buddies. Jake's keeping an eye on Rory, Puck's looking after Quinn—"

"Do you all have places to stay?" Kurt asked.

Mike nodded. "Tina and I are staying here with Rory. The Jones family are saints and they're taking in Quinn and Puck and Jake because they want to help out with the baby."

"Okay," Kurt nodded. "So you're all taken care of."

"What about you?" Tina protested. "Kurt, you can't just go out there on your own!"

"I'll be fine, Tina," he smiled. "I always am."

"But—"

He pressed a finger to her lips. "Come on. You know I've been through worse."

She sighed, pressing a quick kiss to his finger. "Be careful."

"And hey, we're saving up," Mike said. "In a couple of months, we can afford an apartment, and the second that happens, you're coming to live with us."

"Thanks," Kurt nodded. "But I'll be okay. You two stay safe, and make sure that everyone else does."

"We will."

Kurt gave them a half smile before turning to leave.

"Going so soon?"

Kurt turned to raise an eyebrow at Ken Tanaka who was standing by the door, chewing gum. "Yes, I'd rather leave while it's still light. Apparently there's a killer on the loose."

Ken nodded, an odd smile on his face. "Yes, there is." He held the door open to the downpour. "Stay safe, Kurt."

He ducked his head and walked out into the rain.

Kurtsniffed, looking away. "I ended back up in Pioneer Square, and you found me."

Blaine looked down at his hands. "You were walking them home. The three girls—you were walking all of them home from school to make sure they'd stay safe."

"Yes."

"Why isn't there any record of you at McKinley?"

Kurt laughed. "Don't you remember what I told you back when we first spoke? I don't exist, Blaine. There's...I don't have a record. Well, one you can trace. No identification. Nothing."

"Okay," Blaine nodded, processing everything. It all seemed plausible and Kurt didn't exactly look like a killer, especially in his odd 1930s farm girl outfit he seemed to be sporting.

Kurt looked up at him suddenly. "Wait, I'm the last person seen with all three of the girls?"

"That's what the detective said, yes," Blaine nodded.

"But..." Kurt licked his lips. "I wasn't the last person seen with Suzy. I mean, I'd walked Kitty and Marley back to our neighborhood before catching the 48 going north and then they died, but Suzy...I'd walked her back the day before, but that was the last time I'd seen her because on the day she died, I got stuck in traffic so I couldn't walk her home."

Blaine frowned. "According to the police, she wasn't at school that day."

"But she'd told me that morning that she was heading to school and asked me to pick her up later," Kurt stared. "I stayed out with a friend all that night and when I got back the next morning, she was dead and Emma was in the hospital."

The two stared at each other as the same question mulled over in their minds:

What had really happened to Suzy Pepper?

Two days, one faking of amnesia to the police, a front page article about Blaine getting shot with a picture of him and Kurt dressed as a girl walking out of Swedish Hospital sporting large shades, one small interview for the Stranger newspaper—"Who shot you?" "Don't remember." "Who was the girl?" "Ellie Grey, my cousin." "How's the novel coming along?" "Swimmingly."—and an obscene amount of painkillers later, Kurt and Blaine were in the Virginia Mason hospital elevator, heading up to the seventh floor.

They'd worked out their differences—Blaine had left a bold of blue-violet silk in front of Kurt's door with a card stating, "I'm sorry I thought you were a serial killer" and Kurt had replied with a bouquet of red and yellow roses with a card saying, "I'm sorry I stabbed you"—but Kurt was still grumbly because he had to be seen publicly as "Ellie Grey".

"Seriously, Blaine?"

"What? I panicked and it was the first name that popped into my head!"

"You named me after a character that I named after you after the tea you drink?"

"...yes?"

He fiddled with the curls of his auburn wig in a disgruntled manner before the doors slid open and he and Blaine headed to Room 716. They slid in quietly and Kurt yanked the wig off of his head, stuffing it into his backpack. "I hate that thing."

"I know," Blaine sighed. "But come on, liven up."

Kurt shot a glare over to him before walking further into the room.

Emma was sitting in a white chair, wearing a white hospital gown, gazing out over the overcast city that was slowly declining into night.

"Emma?" Kurt said gently, walking around to kneel next to her. She kept looking out the window.

"Emma? Are you there?" He touched her hand.

She yanked it back, looking at him in surprise. "Dorothy?"

"No, Emma," Kurt shook his head. "It's me. Kurt. Dorothy's gone, remember?"

"Dorothy, what are you doing here?" Emma asked, cupping Kurt's cheek. "Shouldn't you be in school?"

Kurt swallowed, touching her hand gently. "I'm here to ask you what happened to Suzy Pepper."

"Suzy Pepper..." Emma's eyes went in and out of focus. "She's so sweet and smart. Did you know she has a crush on my boyfriend? It's so cute...But most of the girls did as well. Will's so nice. I don't understand why Ken doesn't like him though. Ken's been awfully moody lately, don't you think?"

"Emma," Kurt said more clearly. "What happened when Suzy died?"

"Suzy..." her lip trembled. "Died?"

"Yes," Kurt nodded. "You found her dead body, remember?"

Emma looked back out the window, her eyes far-off.

"Em—"

“There was blood.” Her voice came out as a whisper as she wrapped her arms around herself. “So much blood and Suzy was... and then there was more blood and the scarecrow—” Her eyes went wide. “The scarecrow. Oh god, the scarecrow.” Her nails started dragging along her arms back and forth back and forth until they were suddenly digging in leaving rivers of blood. “The scarecrow the scarecrow the—”

Kurt grabbed her wrists as she started thrashing back in forth screaming, “Scarecrow! Scarecrow!”, trying to yell over her and calm her back down as Blaine ran out into the hall to get a doctor.

“Emma please!” Kurt begged, losing his grip on her blood-slicked arms. “Please, you have to calm down!”

“Scarecrow!”

Three doctors ran into the room and grabbed her arms, restraining her. One shot something into her neck.

Shaking, Kurt stared at her slumped form in horror until Blaine grabbed his arm and pulled him out of the room.

Kurt tore off all of his clothes as soon as he had his bedroom door slammed shut behind him. He went into the bathroom and yanked the shower on to scalding and climbed in, furiously scrubbing the blood off his arms. Stepping out of the shower, he felt raw and pink and he ached. He avoided his reflection in the mirror and pulled on his gray cotton pajama pants and short rich blue kimono. He ran a towel through his hair before snapping it back in a ponytail and padding back into his room. He turned off the light and curled up on top of the comforter. Sleep took him.

It was midnight when the screams came. Blaine hadn't even realized that Kurt had gone to bed, and he was still downstairs by the fireplace working. Racing up two flights of stairs, he found Kurt sitting up in bed, having woken himself up and looking around in confusion.

"Kurt?" Blaine said gently, touching his shoulder. "Are you alright?"

A pink tongue snuck out, licking lips before Kurt looked up at him with wet eyes and shook his head.

Wordlessly, Blaine scooped him up and carried him across the hall into his own room, setting him on his large fluffy bed. Kurt rolled over, sitting crisscross applesauce in front of the window, looking out at the cold autumn night. "Blood," he whispered quietly. "I had a nightmare about blood."

There was a brief silence.

"About what Emma was talking about?" Blaine asked gently.

Kurt shook his head. He untied the kimono, shrugging out of the material as it fell onto the comforter around him. Then he leaned over and turned on the bedside lamp.

On his back was the black unicorn, but unlike when he'd seen it when Kurt had first come to his home, he could make out the details much more clearly at such close proximity.

He could also make out what the tattoo was hiding.

The skin of Kurt's back was covered with scars. Thick, ropey, horizontal lash marks littered the expanse, from the top of Kurt's spine down to his hips.

"Kurt," Blaine muttered, crawling over the bed to press his hand gently against Kurt's skin. "Kurt, what—" His fingers traced the shiny ridges. "Kurt are these...whip marks?"

Kurt's back arched out of his touch as he pulled the kimono back over his shoulders. "Just memories from before," he murmured, knotting the robe securely. "They don't matter."

“Of course they matter,” Blaine held his wrist lightly.

Kurt looked over at him, brows furrowed.

“I really...really care about you, Kurt,” Blaine said quietly. “And I hate the thought of something like that happening to you.”

Kurt blinked before he leaned forward, pressing his lips to Blaine’s.

Blaine froze as Kurt pushed him back on the bed, straddling him as he kissed and nipped down Blaine’s neck. A thousand reasons for why this was a bad idea raced through Blaine’s mind—one glaring particularly bright—but then Kurt was popping the buttons of his shirt open and sucking on a collarbone and suddenly Blaine just didn’t care. His fingers joined Kurt’s in ridding himself of his shirt, his jeans quickly following. Blaine reached up for the knot of Kurt’s kimono, but Kurt batted his hands away. He leaned over and opened Blaine’s bedside drawer, grabbing lube and a condom before yanking the plug out of the wall to turn off the lamp.

Darkness filled Blaine’s room as Kurt stretched over him, a hulking shadow that leaned forward and gripped his face as he kissed him again. Blaine broke away to kiss down Kurt’s neck, his hands diving between cloth to stroke at Kurt’s sides.

Kurt’s breath hitched as he let out a soft moan against Blaine’s ear and suddenly there was a sense of urgency and Blaine tightened his grip on Kurt’s waist, thrusting his erection into Kurt’s thigh.

Kurt sat up, pushing Blaine down against the comforter and moving Blaine’s hands above his head and resting them against the headboard. “Don’t let go,” he murmured.

“I won’t,” Blaine said roughly, shivering against the comforter.

Kurt gave him a hard stare. “I mean it. If you let go, I’ll leave.”

Taken aback by his seriousness, Blaine merely nodded and settled back into his pillows.

Satisfied, Kurt went back to kissing down his chest, grabbing the lube and coating his fingers while his mouth worked on Blaine's nipples. He reached back into his pajama pants and started grunting and groaning as his teeth caught on Blaine's skin and Blaine would give anything to let go of the bars and press his fingers back with Kurt's. Once Kurt was panting against his chest, face tilted so that Blaine's nipple was digging into his cheekbone, he took his hand out of his pants and yanked Blaine's boxers down, throwing them across the room.

Kurt turned, sliding his pajama pants down to just under his ass, most of it covered by his kimono. He rolled a condom down on Blaine's cock and slicked it up with lube before gripping the base tightly so he could sink down onto it.

"Kurt..." Blaine gasped, his toes curling and popping. "I—"

"Shhh." Kurt panted, his legs settling on either side of Blaine's. "It's...been a while. Just...just wait a second."

Blaine tilted his head back and stared at the canopy, nerves sparking down his spine as Kurt gasped and adjusted and twisted on top of him.

"Okay," Kurt sighed. He splayed his hands on Blaine's legs before raising himself up then sinking back down.

Blaine's hands gripped the bars of his headboard tighter as he watched Kurt gasp and moan. Then Kurt shifted, one of his hands moving back and pressing into the comforter as his back arched, his kimono slipping down his shoulders. Blaine watched as the unicorn on his back undulated and rippled and looked almost as if it were galloping.

Kurt started gasping out Blaine's name and then he was clenching down and Blaine was done. His hips thrust up sharply into Kurt as he came in the condom, bright lights shooting in his eyelids as he was overtaken by the searing heat.

And then the warmth was gone as Kurt pulled off him, pulling his pajama pants back up as he pulled the condom off of Blaine and chucked it into the garbage. He pushed his kimono off all the way and climbed onto the other side of the bed, facing away from Blaine.

“Kurt?” Blaine tried. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.”

Blaine blinked in confusion. “Did you even...do you want to clean up?”

“I don’t need to,” came the muffled reply.

Blaine stared at the hunched back. “Kurt—”

“Blaine.” Kurt turned around, looking peeved. “Did you just enjoy the intercourse that we partook in?”

“I—yes, but—”

“Then please stop pestering me,” Kurt snapped, rolling back over. “I’m tired.”

“Okay,” Blaine said quietly. He reached out before changing his mind and leaned over on the bed, kissing the top of Kurt’s shoulder gently. “Sweet dreams, Kurt.”

There was no reply.

Blaine rolled back over and closed his eyes, drifting off to sleep, missing the light snuffle of his bed companion.

As a rainy fog settled in over the city in the early hours of the morning, Blaine was the first to wake.

He turned on his side to look at Kurt. He looked so peaceful on the bed, his expression smooth and hair fanned out around his face and curling slightly at the ends and his lips parted and soft and he just looked so young.

Blaine leaned forward and gently pressed his lips against Kurt's, kissing them lightly, then the corner of his mouth, then his chin, then jaw, then crook of his neck.

Kurt sighed in his sleep and curled towards Blaine, a low moan in the back of his throat.

Blaine smiled against his soft skin as he pulled Kurt closer, trailing his hand down the side of his waist. Kurt had been so adamant last night about giving Blaine pleasure, and now Blaine wanted to return the favor. He stroked the soft skin of Kurt's belly gently, surprised to feel a belly button piercing that he hadn't noticed earlier, before trailing his hand farther down, cupping the front of his pajama pants.

Suddenly his hand was grabbed and he was flung onto his back as a wild-eyed Kurt pressed his forearm into Blaine's throat.

Blaine's hands shot up to pry Kurt's arm off but Kurt had already pushed himself back off of the bed, looking around wide-eyed before storming out, slamming the door sharply behind him.

Blaine breathed heavily, air flooding back into his lungs before he whipped his covers off, grabbing a pair of pajama pants and taking off after Kurt.

He was right where Blaine knew he'd be—in the attic by the window, sitting crosslegged as he looked out over the hill. Blaine sighed and went over to sit next to him, adopting the same style.

"It's okay, Kurt."

Silence.

Blaine looked out over the rain. "Look, I've known a few trans folk—"

"I'm not trans," Kurt said in a flat voice.

Blaine blinked in surprise. “Then...”

Kurt turned to him with a smile. It wasn’t happy or sad but a tad...malicious, almost. “Oh, Mr. Earl Grey. I can already see the cogs moving around in your head. Trying to fit and place me into a category. You’re wondering about my age and odd voice and style that seems to fit neither men nor women. The only thing you have to go off of is a name—Kurt. And considering that I’m a homeless runaway high school dropout, you can’t even trust in that. So you wonder—am I a flat-chested girl who’s lied about her gender this whole time or merely a very pretty boy with a high pitched voice who just so happens to not have a cock.”

Blaine tilted his head to look at Kurt full on, his hand flexing, the phantom memory of what he thought would be there when he’d cupped between Kurt’s legs only to find...nothing.

Kurt’s smile widened as he reached a finger up to tap Blaine’s nose. “You’ve already thought of a thousand stories, haven’t you? You writers always jump to fifty conclusions at once.”

Blaine licked his lips. “Is your real name Kurt?”

Kurt raised an eyebrow. “Yes.”

Blaine didn’t blink. “Is your legal name Kurt?”

Kurt’s eyelashes fluttered slightly and he glanced back out the window. “No.”

Blaine nodded. “So what were you born as?”

“A boy,” Kurt shrugged. “Externally and internally.” He gave a humorless laugh. “Not quite sure what I am now though...”

A sudden chill came over Blaine as his mind offered up fresh new possibilities. “Kurt...you weren’t the one to do that to yourself, were you?” It wasn’t a question.

Kurt wrapped his arms tighter around his knees, his back flexing, causing the unicorn to ripple. “I was nine,” he said quietly. Kurt opened his left hand, palm up, smooth and flat, before bringing his

right hand down hard, sideways, in a chopping motion. He gave a weak chuckle. "All I remember is that it took me five minutes to realize that the horrible piercing screams were coming from my mouth." His hand reached behind him and started rubbing unconsciously at one of the lower scars on his back.

Blaine wrapped his arm around Kurt's back, pulling him close and resting his lips against his hair. Kurt curled his head into the crook of Blaine's neck and the pair rested there, looking at the rain.

Four days later found the two in a rowboat on Lake Union.

"Well this is kinky."

Blaine sighed, letting go of the oars as he adjusted his cravat. "It was your idea!"

"I didn't know we'd be in a damp rowboat," Kurt sniffed, crossing his legs daintily under his lacy petticoat. "And it was just to help us get in character."

Blaine shot him a look. "I'm pretty sure that Alexander Bergamot never wore...that."

Kurt was reclining in the other end of the rowboat an innocent smile on his face. He was wearing a curly red wig with a large blue ribbon in his hair, as well as a pale blue corset, fluffy white petticoats, and a thin lacy shawl.

"Yes he did," Kurt argued. "In the opium den, when he goes undercover as a harlot and seduces the earl mischievously to play on his emotions so he'll react in the proper way when the police arrive, but the killer is actually there and he mistakes Alex for a woman and sets his sights on killing her next."

Blaine stared. "But none of that's in the book."

"It is now," Kurt grinned, leaning his head back against the edge of the boat. "Speaking of the killer..."

“Which one?”

“Both.” With a sigh, Kurt sat up. “Now, Emma called the killer here ‘The Scarecrow’.”

“Which could mean any number of things,” Blaine nodded. “Most likely about the burlap sacks. He places them over his victim’s heads before stringing them up not in a biblical manner, like we priorly thought with crucifixion—”

“—but like a scarecrow in the fields,” Kurt nodded. “So is there any basis? Any killer scarecrows?”

“One I can think of,” Blaine bit his lip. “Fictional. Jonathan Crane from the Batman comics. His alter ego was The Scarecrow. He’d shoot everyone up with fear toxins and...yeah.”

A smile quirked Kurt’s lips. “You are such a nerd.”

“Shut up,” Blaine rolled his eyes. “Anyways, it doesn’t entirely add up but it’s the best lead we’ve got.”

“So the thing that all three murders have in common is McKinley Home,” Kurt sighed. “But that doesn’t really help.”

“Did Emma have enemies or anything? Anyone who’d want to harm the girls?” Blaine frowned.

Kurt racked his brains. “Not really. I mean, she got into a bunch of spats with Figgins, one of the guys on board for children’s welfare or something...but I’m pretty sure that Kitty at least could definitely take him and he doesn’t really seem like the psychotic rapist murderer type.”

“Few seldom do,” Blaine argued.

“Plus I’m pretty sure that he’s at some conference in Portland right now, so he has an alibi,” Kurt sighed.

“Okay. Anyone else?”

"I mean...everyone pretty much loved Emma," Kurt shrugged. "Like, she was pretty much perfect. Sweet, pretty, helpful, gave great advice, loved kids, selfless, the whole package."

"That's a dead end then," Blaine sighed. "Pun intended. We'll just have to keep digging."

"Alright," Kurt lolled back against the side. "Now back to the kinky part..."

"Any kinkiness found is your fault."

"Says the thirty year old who's with an underage boy in a corset alone on a lake."

"Twenty-eight," Blaine grumbled.

"Semantics," Kurt shrugged. He spread his legs. "Is that why you dragged me out on the lake? To reenact some deranged fantasy? Am I the Alice Liddell to your Lewis Carroll?"

"Oh shut up," Blaine rolled his eyes, leaning over for a kiss.

After Blaine dropped Kurt off downtown—

"I have errands, Blaine. Not everything I do revolves around your book."

"You're going to run errands...in a corset?"

"Yes."

—he returned home to do more storyboarding.

They had a killer—tentatively calling him the Scarecrow, though Blaine knew he'd change it.

(Which was a pity, because Scarecrow really was a good name but it'd been used before so he couldn't. Oh the woes of copyright.)

The killer killed women and Bergamot and Grey investigated. While undercover, the killer became interested in one of Bergamot's disguises and fixed him as a target, not knowing that he was in fact male.

But who was the killer?

Both in the story and in real life, the question plagued Blaine. He couldn't pin down who it was in his story because he couldn't pin down who it was in real life.

The doorbell rang.

He came down from the attic, surprised to realize that it was already starting to get dark, and opened the door, expecting that Kurt had forgotten his keys again.

It wasn't Kurt. It was a man with wavy hair and a cozy brown sweater vest, with an odd expression that was a mixture of imperiousness and stupidity.

"Hi," he said, holding out his hand. "My name is Will Schuester. I run the McKinley Home."

"Oh, hello." Blaine shook his hand, inviting him in. They went into the sitting room and Blaine turned down the CD player that was always blaring music through the downstairs. "Would you like a drink or...?"

"No thank you," Will waved his hand. "This is a short visit. But...I was talking to some of the kids, and they were telling me that you were the guy that Kurt was staying with."

"I'm sorry," Blaine frowned. "But how did you find me?"

"Well your picture was in the paper," Will explained. "Then Quinn said that she'd dropped off some of Kurt's clothes, so I just wanted to check in and make sure that he was okay."

"Yeah," Blaine nodded. "Yeah, he's great."

"That's good," Will smiled. "He can be stubborn, but it's nice that he's found someone that he can get along with. Plus there are others his age living here...?"

Blaine blinked. "What?"

"Your cousin, correct?" Will raised his eyebrows. "We were all reading the article after you were in that mysterious accident—I'm glad you recovered, by the way—but don't you have a cousin staying here as well? Or is it just...you and Kurt alone?"

"No, I mean yeah, uh..." Blaine floundered. "She stops in a lot but she's always busy around the city."

"Huh," Will stared at him. "I thought she looked a little familiar."

You have no idea. "She volunteers a lot," Blaine supplied unhelpfully. "And uh, she's a tutor at Garfield High. That's...probably where you've seen her. I mean, I've heard that a lot of your kids go to Garfield."

"Really? Here." Will dug around in his pocket, producing a card. "Give her my number, the kids could really use some extra tutoring. Jake and Rory in particular have been struggling a lot."

"Sure thing," Blaine promised, lying through his teeth.

"Well, I'd better be off," Will sighed, standing. "I just wanted to check..." He turned towards the stereo. "Is this Barbra's version of Ding Dong The Witch Is Dead?"

"Yes," Blaine said, eyes raised. "Yes, it is."

Will sighed happily, a smile on his face. "I just love this musical so much. See, I wish I could teach the kids about music, but all their schedules..." He sighed. "Well, it was nice to meet you, Blaine. Tell Kurt I said hi, and your cousin to give me a call if she wants to get some volunteer hours tutoring."

“Will do,” Blaine nodded with a smile as he saw him out. Will was halfway down the walk when Blaine remembered something. “Hey Will!”

Will turned.

Blaine bit his lip. “Does anyone at the McKinley Home like Batman comics?”

Will raised his eyebrows. “Batman comics?”

“Uh yeah, I...I have a bunch of old ones that I was going to donate to Goodwill, but if you know of anyone...”

Will paused for a moment, thinking. “Well, I know that the Puckerman brothers love comics, but they mostly like Marvel...”

“Oh,” Blaine nodded. “Okay.”

“Or Ken.”

Blaine blinked. “Who?”

“Ken Tanaka. He’s one of the staff. I know he likes Batman comics.”

Blaine closed the door firmly shut behind him. They had a suspect...no, too much circumstantial evidence. It was probably just a coincidence. He’d have to ask Kurt—

The sky outside was already dark and Kurt still wasn’t home.

Wake up, the wicked witch is dead!

She’s gone where the goblins go

Below below below yo ho

Blaine settled uncomfortably in his armchair and turned on the TV, channel surfing.

He ended up on the news which was reporting something that had happened at the waterfront. A body was found on the rocks towards the south end of downtown.

Blaine leaned forward as the reporter confirmed that it was in the same vein of the prior three killings.

The ones from the McKinley Home.

The camera zoomed in.

Why everyone's glad she took such a crowning

Being hit by a house is even worse than drowning!

The remote dropped from Blaine's hand as he saw the pale blue corset on the body and the curly red hair spilling from the bloody burlap sack.

It was a long and dark night.

The first thing Blaine did was grab his phone before he remembered that Kurt didn't have a cell phone. But he called Miro and asked Quinn if she'd seen him. She hadn't, and neither had Puck or Jake. They called more of their friends, but no one seemed to know anything.

The news didn't report more about the body and Blaine was stuck pacing back and forth on the bottom floor of his house, waiting, hoping, pleading, praying...

Kurt didn't come back.

Blaine ended up throwing one of his chairs against the wall and breaking down crying in front of the fireplace.

At two in the morning, he grabbed his keys.

He drove all through downtown—Bell Town, the Seattle Center, lower Queen Anne, the waterfront, Pike Place, Westlake, around the Paramount, Pioneer Square, the stadiums, the international district, the train station. Then through the central district, crossing over Rainer, Washington Middle School, 23rd and Jackson, MLK, Garfield High, Union, Madison, back over to Capitol Hill, Broadway, Lowell, the botanical gardens, the cemetery.

He tried not to let his mind stray, but images of Kurt being stalked through an alleyway and then beaten and raped and what the Scarecrow would do to Kurt when he found out that he wasn't a girl and then his stomach being slit open and his head bashed in and that horrid sack being placed over his head as the lights left his eyes—

Over and over and over and over he kept looping around, searching, shouting, crying, begging.

At 4:06 am, a dejected Blaine Anderson returned home, worn out and feeling like a raw nerve ending as he stumbled through his front door.

“Where have you been?”

His head snapped up and there was Kurt, curled up by the fireplace with a mug of cocoa in his hands. He was wearing his pajama pants and a snuggling dark gray sweater with shoulder zippers, his hair mussed as he looked up at him with wide eyes.

“You look terrible,” Kurt frowned, standing. “Why were you out so late?”

Blaine staggered forward, taking Kurt's face in his hand. “It's you...it's really you.”

“Um...yes.” Kurt laughed nervously. “What's the matter with you.”

The shock fled from Blaine and was quickly replaced with anger. "Where the hell have you been?" he yelled.

Kurt took a step back, staring at him like he was a lunatic. "What are you talking about?"

"Where the hell have you been the past ten hours?" Blaine demanded, breathing heavily.

Kurt blinked. "Upstairs. Asleep."

Blaine stared at him. "But...I didn't see you come in..."

"You were upstairs," Kurt said, still wary. "I heard you working and I didn't want to disturb you so I just unloaded my stuff and decided to take a nap. But I guess I was a bit sleepier than I thought because I woke up around three because there was a crash downstairs. I came down and you were pulling out of the driveway and you took off. I've been waiting up for you."

Blaine sagged against the side of the fireplace, tears spilling over his cheeks.

Kurt walked over to him, placing a cautious hand on his shoulder. "Blaine...what's wrong?"

"There was..." he cleared his throat. "There was another killing tonight."

"Another from McKinley?" Kurt's shoulders dropped.

"No," Blaine shook his head. "I mean, I don't know who it was. But...she had red hair. And she was wearing your corset..."

Kurt closed his eyes and his shoulders slumped and his eyebrows drew up. "Virginia."

"What?"

"Virginia Wolf. Or at least, that's what she always called herself. I didn't know her real name. She's one of the girls down in Pioneer Square..."

A memory suddenly flashed through Blaine's mind.

The rain was coming down even harder as Blaine trudged around dumpsters. A hand reached out and tapped his shoulder and he turned to find a pretty redhead smiling at him.

"Hey honey," she smiled. "Looking for company? Why don't you come in? It's dreadful out."

"...and it'd been her corset that I'd..."borrowed" once so I returned it to her today before running my errands."

Blaine just kept looking at him, breathing heavily.

Kurt sighed. "You...you thought—"

Blaine grabbed his face, kissing him deeply as he held him as close as possible, wrapping one of his arms tightly around his waist. "I thought you were dead," he whispered raggedly as he tore his lips away to kiss down Kurt's neck. "I thought that psychopath had gotten to you and I thought that was your body broken on the waterfront rocks and—" His breath hitched and he shut his eyes tightly, trying to block out the horrific images that had been playing on the front of his mind for the past ten hours.

"I'm here." Kurt pulled Blaine's face back, littering it with kisses. "I'm here." Blaine reached up to Kurt's zippers, pulling both of them down his arms. "I'm here." Kurt pushed Blaine's jacket off his shoulders and then his shirt. Blaine yanked Kurt's sweater off.

They somehow found themselves on the floor in front of the fireplace, Kurt gasping loudly as Blaine raked his lips all across his body. He fumbled with the drawstrings of his pajama pants but Kurt stopped him, a flash of fear shooting across his face. He tried to turn over, but Blaine held his hips down. "No," he whispered. "I want to see you. All of you. If you want."

Kurt bit his lip but laid back on his arms, watching Blaine ambivalently.

Blaine kissed down Kurt's chest, paying special attention to the details of each scar his tongue came across, pausing briefly at his bellybutton to swirl the little ruby piercing inside before undoing the drawstrings of Kurt's pants and pulling them down off his hips.

Kurt tensed beneath him, but Blaine just kissed down the smooth hairless skin, lazily dragging his tongue across the slightly shiny pink scars. He heard Kurt gasp above him and glanced up briefly to see Kurt's head thrown back, his hand holding onto his neck as his blush spread to his chest. Blaine moved his lips to the crease of Kurt's thigh, nuzzling and licking and sucking and sucking and sucking and then biting sharply.

A hand shot down and yanked on Blaine's curls, but it didn't shove away, it pushed his face *further* into Kurt's thigh. Grinning, Blaine grabbed both of Kurt's legs and hooked them over his shoulders, licking and dragging his teeth down across Kurt's skin until he reached his hole, his hands smoothing the globes of his ass out so that he could lick across it, burying his face in.

Kurt's feet kicked and scrambled all over Blaine's back as his other hand came down to Blaine's hair as well, tightening as Blaine went to town.

He had no idea how long it lasted. Forty minutes. An hour. Two. Kurt was sweating and moaning and writhing on the floor, his entire body in a rich pink flush as Blaine lazily withdrew his tongue. He'd already come rubbing off against the soft carpet sometime back after a particularly throaty "Oh god, *Blaine!*" from Kurt and he dragged himself up next to him, pulling Kurt into his arms as Kurt shivered and flexed, his eyelashes tickling the crook of Blaine's neck. The fire was still crackling as they drifted off to sleep.

"Is it..." Blaine traced his fingers along Kurt's back, hopping from one scar to the next. "What's sex like for you?"

It was late morning. They'd woken up in front of embers before grabbing a container of blackberries from the fridge and dragging a comforter out of the closet and resuming their cuddling on the rug in front of the fire.

Kurt shrugged lightly, popping a blackberry in his mouth. "Sex is sex. It depends on who I'm having it with. But it's not as...urgent for me, I guess. There's not really an end point. Everything just tends to feel really good and then after a while I get sore and have to stop. Well, that's with good sex. With bad sex it's just uncomfortable and boring."

Blaine idly spiraled his finger along the horn of the unicorn. "And...tonight? How was it?"

Kurt smiled lazily, leaning over to kiss him. "It was the best. Thank you."

Blaine wrapped his arms around him, pulling him close as their lips moved slowly together. Suddenly he pulled back. "How do you pee?"

Kurt stared at him in disbelief before dissolving into giggles, pressing his face against the crook of Blaine's neck.

"Sorry," Blaine blushed. "It's actually been bugging me for a few days."

Kurt covered his mouth, like he always did when he full-on laughed and rolled onto his back, wiping tears from his eyes. "There was a tube at first that stayed in, but after a couple years it wasn't really needed anymore."

"Oh," Blaine frowned. "That's...actually a lot simpler than I thought."

"Remember, eunuchs have been around for thousands of years," Kurt smirked, clambering on top of Blaine's chest. "Lots of science has been put into the matter."

"Okay, okay," Blaine muttered, resting his arms around Kurt's waist. "I was just wondering."

"I know," Kurt smiled, tapping his nose against Blaine's. "Mr. Earl Grey, always so curious with his writers' mind."

"Yes, my mind's the organ that's curious," Blaine said dryly as he rolled his hips up into the crook of Kurt's thigh, before rolling them over into the thick Persian carpet.

Late afternoon. The fire was built up again and the rain was hammering on the windows.

Blaine had a fountain pen and a bottle of ink and was busy writing all over Kurt's back.

"What are you writing?" Kurt asked for the fiftieth time. "Come on, you have to tell me something.

Blaine looked at the written word wings he'd added to Kurt's unicorn. "Blackbird singing in the dead of night. Take these broken wings and learn to fly. All your life you were only waiting for this moment to arise."

Kurt rolled his eyes, trying to hide his smile. "Seriously?"

"It's a special charm," Blaine said wisely. "Scarecrows don't like blackbirds, so this will keep you safe."

"Aw, my sweet magician, giving me charms and spells." Kurt smiled, resting his head on his arms. "Proceed."

Eventually the inky dried and Blaine rolled Kurt around, writing all down his arms and legs and chest.

"There's no place like home," Blaine smiled as he wrote the words in a spiral around Kurt's bellybutton. He smiled at the little ruby in Kurt's bellybutton. "Just say that three times and tap your ruby piercing and you'll be home."

Kurt snorted, giggling lightly as Blaine finished the last "e" with a flourish. "Seriously Blaine?"

Blaine shrugged. "The Wizard of Oz was my favorite movie as a kid."

"You're a goofy old man."

“And you’re a silly boy,” Blaine shot back with a smirk before blowing over Kurt’s bellybutton to dry the ink, and sealing it with a kiss. “There’s no place like home.”

Kurt took Blaine’s face in his hands and pulled it up his body, landing it on his lips. “Home is whenever I’m with you,” he sang softly along with the song playing, a gentle smile on his lips as he pressed them to Blaine’s again.

Nearly midnight.

Blaine was sitting cross-legged by the fire and Kurt was straddling his lap, gasping as Blaine’s hands gripped his hips tightly and swiveled them this way and that so he could grind against Kurt’s prostate. Kurt gripped his shoulders tightly, uttering Blaine’s name with every pant and gasp and groan and Blaine wrapped an arm around his waist, trying to keep them as physically close as possible.

Three in the morning.

The two lay passed out in the tangled comforters, equally content smiles on their faces.

The Scarecrow stood over the couple, gazing at them impassively.

Then he turned, walking silently through the house. He went upstairs, checking every room in the house. He found something in Kurt’s room and took it. He went back downstairs to the sitting room and took something from there as well, on impulse.

He stood in front of the couple again, considering. In the end he decided no. He didn’t have the time and it wouldn’t be nearly as fun. But when he had the time, he knew of a very particular way to make both of them scream. But not today. He didn’t want to sully his pallet.

He already had Tina to look forward to later today.

And so he left the house, as silently as he'd come.

"Seriously?" Kurt nudged the device with his index finger, scoffing at it.

It was the next afternoon, late lunch. Blaine had eggs and fruit salad. Kurt had iPhone a la mode.

"You need a cellphone, Kurt," Blaine rolled his eyes. You're not going to freak me out like that again, understand? Always let me know that you're okay."

"Okay," Kurt assented, entering all his friends' numbers into the phone and sending them a mass text letting them know that they had a number under which they could contact him.

"So there was another death," Blaine sighed. "But this one broke the norm. Virginia Wolf wasn't a member of McKinley Home."

"Not true," Kurt countered. "She was several months ago before she left to work for Goolsby."

"Oh." Blaine blinked. "Okay, so she does fit the mold. And Will dropped by yesterday—"

"Really?"

"Yeah, while you were asleep upstairs. And he mentioned that someone named Ken Ten..."

"Ken Tanaka?"

"Yes! Ken Tanaka apparently likes Batman comics."

Kurt stared. "So...he could potentially be the Scarecrow."

"Except there's no motive," Blaine sighed.

Kurt fiddled his fingers, looking up at Blaine. "Actually...there might be."

“What?”

“Look, this is all hypothetical,” Kurt said hurriedly. “But...Ken liked Emma. Like, he really liked Emma. I’m pretty sure that she’s the only reason he volunteers at McKinley. And he was always asking her out but she was always declining, saying that her focus was on the kids. Then, about six months ago, she started dating Will and Ken got like, really pissed off. He disappeared for a couple months then came back really sullen. And...he’d like, snap at anyone for speaking highly of Will and...” he squirmed uncomfortably.

Blaine frowned. “Well, it’s a s—”

He was cut off by Kurt’s new phone ringing. Kurt glanced at it in surprise: Quinn was calling. He picked up the phone. “Hello?”

“Kurt?”

“Yes?”

“Kurt! You have to get to Virginia Mason, now!”

“Oh my god,” he stood up from the counter. “Is the baby coming?”

“No! It’s Tina! She was attacked!”

Kurt burst into the hospital room, chestnut curls bouncing around his shoulders as he ran over to Tina’s bed. She was badly bruised and looked like she’d just survived a stampede, but she was mercifully alive. Puck, Jake, Quinn, Joe, Rory, Mercedes, and Mike were all there.

“Tina,” Kurt sighed in relief, giving her an awkward pat. “How are you? What happened?”

“Dude, I always forget how hot you are as a girl,” Puck stared. Jake nodded.

(Quinn whacked Puck, Kurt whacked Jake.)

“I was walking home from school,” Tina said quietly, her voice weak. “It was the middle of the day and Mike had work, so I thought I’d be fine...”

“I had a break though,” Mike added, his voice hard. “So I texted her that I’d just meet up with her halfway.” He looked off to the side. “I should have come faster, I—”

“Shhh,” Tina rasped. “You did fine.” She took a deep breath. “I was just a few blocks from Union when someone grabbed me and pulled me into a dark alleyway. He was wearing a burlap sack and he grabbed my neck and just started hitting me and hitting me and then bashing my head against the brick wall—” She broke off, squeezing her eyes shut as a tear leaked out. Mike leaned forward with a tissue, his expression pained.

Tina gasped out a breath before continuing. “And I kept screaming but then he covered my mouth and started tearing at my clothes. But then Mike came and he fought him off and the man ran and Mike stayed to make sure that I was alright and he called 911.”

“I got him though,” Mike said grimly, softly stroking Tina’s cheek. “I picked up one of the bricks and bashed him on the side of the head.”

“Badass,” Puck nodded with respect, gently rubbing one of Tina’s feet. “You were too, Tina.”

“We need to up the buddy system,” Quinn sighed, rubbing her stomach. “I mean, if this asshole is just going to try and pick us off during the daytime...”

“My mom says you can all stay with us,” Mercedes added. “We’ll make room. You can come too, Kurt.”

“No,” Kurt shook his head. “I’m fine where I am and I’m safe.” He squeezed Blaine’s hand briefly.

Blaine left the group of friends after an hour to make a call.

“This is Howell.”

“It’s Anderson. I’m going to need you to stretch that favor...”

“Hey, there’s something I have to go do,” Blaine whispered against Kurt’s temple, giving it a soft peck. “But I’ll be back in a couple of hours, okay?”

“Okay,” Kurt nodded sending him a smile.

Kurt waited ten minutes after Blaine had left before excusing himself and heading outside, heading to the nearest bus station.

He had to know. He’d just take a quick step into McKinley Home, just to see Ken Tanaka, to see if he had a bruise on the side of his head.

He sat on the back of the #4 bus, legs crossed neatly as he waited for the ten odd stops it would take before he got close enough to walk.

A nagging guilt tugged at the back of his mind and he rolled his eyes, taking out his phone before sending a text to Blaine.

I’m headed to McKinley to see if Ken has a mark on the side of his head. Don’t worry, I’m being safe.

Blaine walked into the precinct, Carl waving him through. “We’ve got him,” Carl nodded. “He’s in interrogation now.”

“Thanks,” Blaine sighed in relief.

“No, thank you,” Carl pushed open his office door. “You’ve cracked more on this case than any officer here.”

“Well...” Blaine shrugged. “I’ve had help.”

“Ah, yes,” Carl smirked. “This mysterious Kurt.”

“Will the charges against him for these murders be dropped if we can prove it’s Ken?”

“Yes,” Carl nodded. “Not too sure about the ones of him stabbing you.”

“I don’t remember being stabbed,” Blaine said in monotone.

Carl laughed. “You know, for a writer you’re a horrible liar. But yes, that one will be dropped too which will make things much easier since we can’t even find a record on the kid.”

Blaine nodded and his phone buzzed. He glanced at the next from Kurt before replying.

Kurt, that’s the opposite of safe. But come back, I’m at the precinct and we’ve got Ken.

Then he reread Kurt’s text.

“Carl,” he said suddenly. “Check to see if he’s got a bruise or a bash mark on the side of his head.”

Kurt knocked on the door of McKinley Home, waiting, poised.

“About time—oh. Hello.”

It was Will, his eyebrows shot up in surprise.

“Sorry, I thought you were Ken, one of my colleagues. He’s been taking way too long on his break. But you’re Ellie, right?”

Kurt blinked before he remembered the wig. “I—yes.”

“Blaine Anderson’s cousin? The one who wants to help out and tutor?”

“Yes!” Kurt said, having no idea what kind of lies Blaine had spun for Will. But he needed to buy some time until Ken returned and Will seemed to like Ellie more than Kurt so he stuck to her. “That’s right! I know it’s kind of late, but I was hoping to fill out an application before I went home?”

“Oh, of course, sure,” Will nodded, waving him in. “There in my office. Would you like tea or coffee or something?”

“I’m fine, thank you,” Kurt smiled, following him down the familiar hallway to Emma’s office. He sat down in the plush armchair and waited for Will to grab the documents.

“Here you are,” Will smiled as he handed over the two forms.

Kurt took a clipboard and started filling them out, praying that Ken returned soon because he really didn’t want to make smalltalk with Will.

Follow follow follow follow follow the yellow brick road!

Well, it was one way to stall.

“I love this soundtrack,” Kurt gushed. “Ever since I was little.”

“Ah, me too,” Will grinned. “It’s the best, isn’t it? And the next song is my favorite. So good.”

Kurt nodded, slowly checking one of the boxes.

“He doesn’t,” Carl shook his head, getting off the phone.

“Really?” Blaine asked, surprised. “Well fuck. Everything’s confusing.”

“This whole thing has been messed up,” Carl sighed, rubbing his temples. “Seattle’s known for its suicides, not its serial killers. And this guy’s just bizarre.”

“Targeting only young girls from a group home?”

“Not only that,” Carl frowned. “Just the method of killing. It’s sloppy. Spilling the girls’ innards everywhere? That’d be a bitch to clean up and based off the blood splatters, the killer definitely got blood all over himself. And the whole thing just seems senseless, like the guy doesn’t even have a brain.” He sighed, rubbing his eyes. “But Tanaka still has overwhelming evidence against him. And if we can link him with the Sedan, we’ve struck gold.”

“Sedan?” Blaine frowned. “What Sedan?”

“Oh, right,” Carl dug through his files. “I ran with your tip about Suzy Pepper. Turns out, Kurt wasn’t the last person she was seen with and she did go to school the day she was killed—just not class. She went to after school activities and stepped into a blue Sedan.” He pulled out the picture and showed it to Blaine. “Now, we can’t make out the license plate, but if we can—”

“I know that car,” Blaine breathed.

Carl blinked. “What?”

And suddenly things clicked into place.

“...messy...”

“...sloppy...”

“...like the guy doesn’t even have a brain...”

“So...” Kurt sighed, searching for a topic. “I heard that you came to my cousin’s house two days ago?”

“Yes,” Will nodded. “I went to ask about one of the kids who used to live here, Kurt? I believe you’ve met him?”

“Oh, yes!” Kurt said, pitching his voice slightly higher out of paranoia. “He’s nice. A bit quiet though.”

“Yes,” Will smiled. “And your cousin is a really great guy—he actually loaned me this record and a couple of others.” He gestured over to the record player where a handful of records were laid out on the table. “Oh! That reminds me...” He pulled something out of his drawer, leaning over the desk to hand it to Kurt. “I think I accidentally came home with this. It was probably stuck next to one of the records.”

Kurt took the soft coral scarf from him. It was his. But...he’d bought it two days ago, when he’d been running errands downtown. Then he’d come straight home and gone to bed. Schuester had come over while he slept but...the scarf had stayed on Kurt’s bed. It hadn’t gone anywhere near the records.

And come to think of it...

Kurt glanced over at the records on the table. Cyndi Lauper. The Beatles. The Mamas and the Papas. Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros.

And The Wizard of Oz.

I could wile away the hours

Conferring with the flowers

Consulting with the rain...

There was no way Blaine could have loaned those records to Will two days ago because they had been playing all day yesterday while they'd lounged on the sitting room floor.

Kurt turned back to look at Will, who, in the act of giving Kurt his scarf, had leaned forward out of the shadows. A dry swallow. Then Kurt opened his mouth, begging his voice not to waver.

"Why...that looks like a really painful bruise. Where did you get it?"

And my head I'd be scratching

While my thoughts were busy hatching

If I only had a brain.

"Kurt pick up your phone!" Blaine yelled as he texted Kurt for the thirtieth time before trying to call him again as he raced to the central district. "Kurt pick up Kurt pick up Kurt pick up."

"Oh this?" Will laughed. "Come now Ellie. I think you know exactly where I got it from." He leaned forward on his folded hands. "Or should I call you Dorothy?"

Kurt bolted. He ran to the door, trying to wrench it open but it was locked. He fumbled with the locks before a hand slammed on the door. Kurt felt his phone buzzing and he blindly pressed talk.

"Kurt it's Will—"

"Blaine help me, please—!"

Will ripped the phone from his hand and threw it down on the ground hard.

Kurt shoved against him but cold metal pressed against his throat.

Will smiled at him. "Come on, Dorothy. We should have a nice little chat."

Breathing shallowly, Kurt allowed Will to steer him back into his chair. Will sat on the edge of the desk, knife pointed directly at him. "I wouldn't make any sudden movements if I were you. You know how well I can use this."

Kurt sat petrified in his chair. His best hope was to keep him talking. "Why are you doing this?"

"For you, Dorothy," Will said, as if it were obvious. "Because you gave me hope again."

"What are you talking about?"

Will sighed. "Did you know that I was a director?"

Kurt shook his head.

"A good one too. On Broadway. Schuester's shows. Everyone wanted to see them...But then there was an actress. A singer. Voice like an angel." Schuester sighed. "She wanted to become a star. I wanted to help her. I fell in love with her. We both liked The Wizard of Oz. I thought it was fate. Until eight months ago, she told me she was getting married.

"I tried to convince her not to, but her mind was made up. She told me that she didn't love me. After all I'd given to her... I lost everything. I had to cut myself out of the musical theater world. From her world. I moved to Seattle the next week. Started volunteer work. I didn't want to know what was going on in New York. I didn't want to know about what roles she was playing. I didn't even want to know who her intended husband was." He looked down at Kurt, his eyes full of sadness. "Because if I heard anything about her...about my Rachel Berry again...I'd have to wring her pretty little neck."

Kurt shivered, trying to keep his panic internal.

“And I loved her too much,” Will sighed. “So I had to cut myself off to keep sane. It was so dull and boring and monotonous...and then I met you. You remember, don’t you? You were singing Somewhere Over The Rainbow...”

Kurt didn’t remember, not really. His first month at McKinley Home was hazing because he was half out of his mind and had been “Dorothy Porcelain” the whole time as a coping method. His first true clear memory was taking a pair of shears to his hair and cutting it off. The second, wandering around Capitol Hill alone at night until he’d stumbled into a tattoo parlor and walked out the next morning with a unicorn on his back.

But his time as Dorothy...it was fuzzy at best.

“...and we talked about The Wizard of Oz.” Will chuckled. “You told me how much you adored the scarecrow and how much you’d like a fellow like him. I came here and volunteered every weekend. Emma thought I was so dedicated to the kids when I really couldn’t care less about them. I only wanted to see you...” He looked at Kurt, his expression livid. “But then you left. Without a trace.”

Well...no, he’d just snapped out of the fucked-up mental state he’d been in for years and finally went down the path to self-discovery. Or something like that.

“And then I started dating Emma,” Will sighed. “I needed to know more about McKinley Home. About its occupants. Dorothy P.’s files were locked, but I still managed to pilfer some of Emma’s notes. She’d written that you’d bonded a lot with your female roommates. So I killed Marley.”

It felt like a punch to the stomach and the panic fully set in. “That’s why you killed Marley?”

“It wasn’t hard,” Will shrugged. “Kurt was walking her back to the neighborhood, but as soon as he left I was able to convince her to get in the car with me so I could drive her home. And then Kitty. And then Suzy.”

“Why?” Kurt yelled. “What in god’s name would possess you to do that?”

"I needed your attention," Will said. "And you told me how much you liked scarecrows, so I made a bunch of them out of your little friends."

Kurt's breath started coming out quicker. "What did you do to Emma?"

Will smiled. "She found me...arranging Suzy's body. So I put on my mask and poured Suzy's blood over her. I knew it would trigger her OCD."

Kurt stared at him. "You're psychotic."

"And then I heard that you were back working in Pioneer Square so I booked you. But when I came to your room, you were gone..."

Kurt remembered that night, Sugar shoving him and Blaine out of the window.

"And then you were on the front page. On the arm of Blaine Anderson."

When Kurt had to dress as a girl to avoid the public eye.

Will smiled grimly at him. "I didn't even know about the guy, but then Quinn told me that Kurt was living with him and I realized that Blaine was probably taking in pretty young things from around the city. I saw you alone downtown and followed you to Pioneer Square. But then I mistook one of the girls you worked with for you—"

Virginia.

"—and then she had to go. And after that I went to Blaine's house. He lied through his teeth, talking about how you were some school tutor and I encouraged him to give you my number. I can't believe he actually did."

He didn't.

“And then I broke into his house again. Last night. He was tangled up with Kurt on the carpet.” He laughed, glancing at Kurt, as if that was supposed to hurt him in some way. “I found your room, got your scarf, took the records...then, to get your attention, I attacked Tina.”

“But it didn’t work,” Kurt muttered. “Mike got there.”

“It worked perfectly,” Will smiled. “You’re here. And now we can be together.”

Kurt sat frozen in his chair as Will leaned forward to kiss him. He panicked, body seizing up before he forced himself to relax. Then he was kissing him back, clinging to his shoulders desperately. “Yes, Will,” he gasped, trying to stall. “Thank you. You did perfectly, Scarecrow.” He pushed Will back against the desk and Will cupped his ass, pulling him up against him as he stuck his tongue down his throat. Will’s hands were roaming around his legs. Kurt raked his hands down Will’s back, reaching behind him. He grabbed a pencil and shoved the pointy end into the wound on the side of his head.

Will screamed, shoving Kurt aside, who bolted for the door. Will was right behind him and he swiped with his knife, missing Kurt by an inch. Kurt dodged, racing around his desk, trying to find some sort of weapon to use when Will came at him, shoving the desk until it tipped over on its side, leaving nowhere to run. Kurt backed up against the record player and grabbed one of the vinyl records.

“Dorothy—”

Kurt brought it down hard over Will’s head, feeling it shatter in his hands. He screamed as Will grabbed him, bringing his hands forward and there was a sickening slicing noise.

They stared at each other in shock, Will’s head wound oozing blood from the pencil jab and there was a clatter as the knife dropped.

Kurt pulled his hands down, dislodging the shard of vinyl from the back of Will’s head.

Will stumbled backwards, blood dripping around his collar as he stared at Kurt with the same wide-eyed expression. He moved loose-limbed around the room, like he was made of water.

Or straw.

Until finally he collapsed in a heap on the ground.

Kurt breathed heavily, trying to get enough air in as he looked down at the large bloody shard in his hand. It was hard to make out, but there was one song that was clearly listed along the circular middle.

Blackbird.

At that moment, the door was crashed open and Blaine walked in, eyes wide as he took in the situation. "Kurt," he breathed in relief. "Kurt, are you okay?"

Kurt shook his head as his body started trembling.

"We have to get you out of here," Blaine mumbled, pulling on Kurt's arm. "Kurt, come on!"

"Wait," Kurt said distractedly. He got out his scarf and started wiping off all the surfaces he touched, erasing his fingerprints. "Okay, let's go."

Thank god for Carl.

The official story was that Will Schuester was spilling his plans to a victim and Blaine heard at the door. By the time he got into the room, a scuffle had broken out and Will Schuester was left for dead, the female nowhere to be found.

(Kurt just made sure that Blaine knew Schuester's plan backwards and forwards before giving his official statement to the police)

Ken Tanaka was released, but he didn't resume his job at McKinley. Carl started volunteering there to help out with repairs and also started visiting Emma to check up on her.

(And okay, he may have formed a slight crush.)

Kurt didn't talk to Blaine for a day.

And then he talked to Blaine for a whole day.

And then they drove out to Alki in West Seattle so they could watch the sunset because it was an oddly clear night.

"I can't believe we went through all of that," Blaine muttered as he traced idle patterns into Kurt's palm. They'd been sitting there for two hours, long after the sun set.

"I thought it'd be different here," Kurt said, looking out over the water. "I thought that I could just run away and escape from the monsters."

Blaine leaned over and cupped Kurt's face, turning it towards him. "I wish I could hide you from all the monsters," he murmured. "I wish...I wish I could help take away some of the pain of all those scars you carry."

Kurt gave him a teary smile, wrapping his fingers around Blaine's wrists. "Don't you see? You already have."

Blaine leaned down and kissed him, the harvest moon hanging heavy in the sky.

"Two weeks?" Kurt complained, sticking his bottom lip out in a pout.

“Just for some dumb conference I have to attend,” Blaine laughed, kissing Kurt’s bottom lip. “I’ll be back before you know it and then we can actually sit down and finish this monstrosity together in peace.”

“Peace,” Kurt smiled. “That sounds nice.” He sighed, flopping back on Blaine’s bed. “I know!” he said excitedly. “You could take me with you! I’ve always wanted to see New York!”

Blaine paused before quirking an eyebrow. “And how am I supposed to get you on an airplane when you don’t even have any identification?”

“Urgh,” Kurt’s arms spread out in defeat. “Point taken. Just two weeks?”

“Just two weeks,” Blaine promised. He sealed it with a kiss.

“Howell, the prints came back.”

“Thanks, Bryan,” Carl nodded as he looked over the packets. There were Anderson’s, Schuester’s, the smudged ones that he knew had to be Kurt covering his tracks, and...a fourth one. One that definitely didn’t belong there with the others.

It was just one tiny little thumbprint that had been lifted—obviously whoever had gone through had been thorough. But that one little thumbprint had registered in the database.

Carl stared at the report, glancing back up at Bryan. “Are these correct?”

“Yeah,” Bryan nodded. “Double checked them myself. You remember that one, right?”

“Last Christmas,” Carl nodded. “Everyone here heard about it even though it got virtually no media coverage.”

“But hasn’t she been MIA?” Bryan frowned. “And why would she show up here? At this specific case and how did she get there before us? It doesn’t even make sense.”

Carl glanced down at the black printed name of Katy Karofsky. He felt like something much bigger was going on and he had a feeling that the mysterious “Kurt” was somehow tied up in everything.

So he started digging.

Kurt walked into the rickety little shop, accidentally brushing against the wind chime. He frowned at the tops of his long bangs. He’d have to cut them again, this was just getting ridiculous.

“Unicorn!”

A small smile quirked his lips as he caught an armful of blonde. “Hi Britt,” he said, muffled against her hair.

She pulled back, whipping a piece of hair behind her ear before tucking her hands into her apron. “So why are you here?”

He ran a hand through the hairs at the back of his neck. “I...I need another tattoo done. Look, I know that you’re not supposed to—”

“I’ll do it,” Brittany said simply.

Kurt blinked in surprise. “Really?”

“Of course,” she smiled. “Anything for my little unicorn.”

Fifteen minutes later found Kurt stretched out on the comfortable leather table, head rested in his arms.

“So do you have anything in mind?” Brittany asked as she tied her hair up. “Or do you want me to just go at it again?”

"I have something, but feel free to elaborate," Kurt said into his arms. "Um...a couple of roses? On my left side, sort of underneath the unicorn's hooves?"

"Roses?" Brittany asked. Then her face split into a grin. "Wait, have you found another unicorn?" Kurt buried his head in his hands, blushing. "Kurt, you have! Look at you, my happy little unicorn! Is he cute?"

Kurt smiled against his arms, his cheeks flaming. "The cutest."

"Oh goody!" Brittany clapped her hands. "So, roses? Just black again?"

"Actually..." Kurt bit his lip. "Could you make the blooms red...and yellow?"

"Sure!" Brittany took out a sketch pad and started drawing. "We'll just do the black outline today and then we'll have you come in for the colors tomorrow, okay?"

"Okay."

"What's his name?"

"Blaine...his name is Blaine."

Kurt winced as he sat down on the plush chaise in their sitting room, pulling the New York Times off the coffee table—Kurt still wasn't sure why Blaine even got it at all—for lack of anything better to read. He really did need to buy another Vogue soon. He stretched out and started flipping vaguely through the pages. To be honest, he never really understood newspapers all that much, so he flipped to the entertainment section, reading various movie reviews then traversing over into musical theater, remembering wryly when Blaine had taken him to see Wicked at the Paramount Theater the night before he'd left as a goodbye present.

He flipped the page and there was an article about the new Elphaba at the Gershwins Theatre. He almost turned the page until her name caught his eye.

Rachel Berry.

He blinked. It was her. The woman Will had obsessed over until... He found himself reading the article. And the further along he read, the more annoyed he got. Rachel Berry sounded pretentious at best and clearly had a high opinion of herself. He quite frankly failed to see what similarity could be drawn between the two of them besides the fact that they both liked Wizard of Oz-related things, and he was ready to throw the whole newspaper into the fire when something in the last paragraph caught his eye. Frowning, he leaned forward and read the end of the article.

Kurt sat very still for a long period of time. Outside, a raindrop hit the bay window. Then another. And another. And then it was pouring, whole torrents of rain falling from the sky in a downpour.

Inside, Kurt got up from the chaise and went upstairs. He gathered all of his clothes and personal belongings into a bag and grabbed the rain jacket Blaine had bought him, zipping it up all the way. He went back downstairs and left his key on the dining room table before heading over to the door and locking the handle, closing it firmly shut behind him as he left Blaine Anderson's house with no intent of ever returning.

The New York Times' entertainment section lay open still on the coffee table, those last few lines of the Rachel Berry interview still exposed.

...and Ms. Berry is extremely confident about her upcoming debut on the Gershwin stage. But what of her personal life? "My husband and I are very happy," Berry smiles, idly stirring her iced coffee. "Blaine is in Seattle right now writing a novel but he's promised to fly out to see opening night." The couple will celebrate their first wedding anniversary this April.

The Boy With the Thorn in His Side

Warnings: *Gore, decapitation, mentions of prior non-con, dub-con, pretty much all the cons, sex with a minor, cross-dressing, enforced gender roles, fucked up psychological stuff, psychosis, uh...all the ones from the one before, but the gore is a lot more explicit in this one.*

--

Kurt ran down the dirt path, looking around wildly. "Toto! Toto!"

The sky overhead stirred ominously.

Kurt wiped tears from his eyes as he kept running down the road, towards the large house surrounded by cornfields. "Toto!"

There was a sad whining noise.

With a gasp, Kurt clapped his hands over his mouth as he saw Blaine tied up to a post, his tag wagging sadly through his dirty jeans and his fluffy black ears drooping over his curly hair. "Toto!" he cried, running over to him, falling to his knees as he worked furiously on the knots, not caring about his dress getting dirty. "Toto, are you alright?"

Blaine whimpered and looked up at him with his big hazel eyes. "Dorothy?"

"She didn't hurt you, did she?" Kurt cupped Blaine's cheeks in his hands, inspecting him for damage. "Oh, I hate Miss Gulch! She's nothing but a wicked witch!" He tore through the rest of the ropes and Blaine threw his arms around his waist, nuzzling his face into Kurt's stomach.

"I was scared, Dorothy," he whimpered. "I was scared I wouldn't see you again!"

"It's okay," Kurt hushed, running his hands through his hair. "It's okay, we'll run away Toto! We'll run away and we won't look back, okay?"

"Okay," Blaine whispered, getting to his feet.

Kurt took his hand, lacing their fingers together as they started running down the road. But then the wind started picking up and dust flew everywhere. Blaine whined then growled defensively, wrapping his arms around Kurt.

“Come on, Toto!” Kurt howled over the wind, shielding his eyes as his auburn hair whipped out of its braids. “We have to get to the cellar!”

They clung to each other as they staggered back to Auntie Emma and Uncle Carl’s house, dodging fence posts and even an old bicycle that flew at them. Suddenly Blaine’s arms weren’t around Kurt anymore and he spun around. “Toto!”

“Dorothy!”

“Toto, where are you?” Kurt screamed into the howling dust and wind.

“Dorothy!”

“Toto!”

A large wooden door appeared out of nowhere and flung at Kurt, hitting him on the head and then everything was black.

He awoke sometime later. A sharp pain in his head was the first thing that registered. Kurt hissed lightly as he drowsily rolled his head against his chest. He tried to raise his hand up to rub at his eyes.

He couldn’t.

Panic started to creep in as he woke up fully, blinking his eyes open.

He was sitting in front of a large haphazard table, full of colorful stained tea pots and chipped half-full tea cups scattered across it. Plates piled full of moldy muffins and cake bites were interspersed among the dirty cutlery as well as a creamer full of spoiled milk and a sugar bowl with ants crawling in it.

Kurt tried to move but his head was locked in place against the back of his chair with a metal strap around his forehead. And another one around his mouth so he couldn't speak. And more around his wrists, arms, chest, waist, thighs, calves, and ankles.

He was completely bound to his metal chair.

"Don't you like your tea party, Alice?" a musical voice laughed from behind him.

Kurt started trembling in his chair, trying to make a sound, but the metal strap completely muffled him.

"Mad Hatter made it just for you. Don't you think it's pretty?"

"Alice, I'm sorry." Kurt looked down the table and saw the Mad Hatter looking at him with wide eyes. "I didn't mean to drag you into this story. I know you don't belong here—"

"Silence!"

The voice behind him echoed through the space.

"Awfully stuck-up of you, Alice. Not telling Hatter how nice the party is after he went through so much trouble to make it."

Kurt's breath came out jerky and fast against the metal strap as his heart started pounding.

"Why are you so quiet, Alice? You're always watching but you never say a word. You're so impolite!"

Kurt tried to say something again, but no sound was escaping the strap.

"Well, if you're not going to say anything, you probably don't need your mouth," the voice giggled. "And you probably don't need your head either, right?"

Kurt started struggling against his bonds but he couldn't move more than a centimeter.

"Off with her head!"

Harmony huffed as she slammed her apartment door shut. "I'm Rachel Berry and I'm just so fucking perfect at everything because I'm Elphaba isn't that just fucking spectacular?" she mimicked as she rolled her eyes and dropped off her shopping bags. Pumps off and then heavy earrings and then beret. She padded through her apartment, stretching her arms high. "Oh but she'll scream with envy when she sees which shoes I've placed on hold for the party."

"Will she now?"

Harmony stifled a scream as her living room lamp clicked on and she saw someone sitting in her armchair. Her heart rate slowed as she realized who it was. "What are *you* doing here?" she frowned. "And how did you get in?"

Her visitor stood, tucking a lock of their hair behind their ear. "I just came to tell you that you were wonderful tonight. Your Nessa Rose could win a Tony."

Harmony snorted. "Yeah, sure. Over who's dead body, right?"

Her visitor giggled and it was...extremely unnerving. "Well...I wouldn't count that one out."

A cold chill settled in the back of Harmony's spine as she cleared her throat, trying not to let her voice waver. "So will that be all? I'm tired and we have another show tomorrow."

"Of course, of course. I just wanted to tell you that Nessa's scene with Elphaba and Boq was my favorite. When Boq turned into the Tinman?"

"Oh!" Harmony nodded uncertainly. "That was my favorite too. I love singing 'Wicked Witch of the East' even though it's not on the formal soundtrack."

“Though...” The visitor cocked their head slightly to the side. “I didn’t think it was fair for Nessa to place the blame on Elphaba for turning Boq into Tinman. She’d been the one to shrink his heart in the first place.”

“Well yeah,” Harmony shrugged. “But that was the point of the story. Elphaba had to be blamed for the sake of the plot.”

“Still...” her visitor walked forward, a smile slipping onto their face as their tone deepened. “It was all Nessa’s fault. She should have been punished.”

“Well...she did have a house dropped on her,” Harmony laughed nervously.

“No,” the visitor laughed. “I mean by Tinman.”

“What are you—oh my god what—no stop STOP PLEASE AHHHHHH!”

“AHHHHHH!”

“Oh god please no,” Blaine groaned into his hands.

“BLAINE!”

“Goddammit,” he moaned, draining half of his mug of tea.

The kitchen door slammed open as Rachel stormed in, her hair back in a severe bun, her face covered in green face mask, and clad in a black silk dressing robe and...black heels.

“Were the heels really necessary for skincare?” Blaine muttered, quirking an eyebrow.

“What were you doing yesterday?” she yelled, her hands on her hips.

Blaine tipped the rest of his teadown his throat. "Writing. And then I saw your premiere, remember?"

"That's all you did yesterday? Writing?"

"Well yeah," Blaine shrugged. "You know, it's kind of my livelihood."

"So even though I explicitly told you put those Oscar De La Renta heels from the Collection on hold for me so I could wear them to the party on Saturday, you couldn't remember that one little thing and you spent the entire day *writing*?"

"Oh," Blaine frowned. "Oops."

"All you have to say is oops?" Rachel marched straight up to him, her black heels clicking wickedly on the white tile. "Blaine, I asked you for one thing!"

"Just put them on hold now," Blaine sighed, rubbing his eyes.

"Well I *can't* because *Harmony* put them on hold!" she exploded.

"And here we go," Blaine muttered.

"She's always been jealous because I got the lead of Elphaba over her and she just got the role of stupid Nessa Rose—"

"Well I liked her version of 'Wicked Witch of the East'. I thought it was very rousing."

"—and she knew that I wanted those shoes because I was telling her about how I was going to wear them for the party on Saturday when she was only wearing the L.A.M.B. ones—"

"Maybe you should have made sure that they were on hold before gloating, honey," Blaine said dryly as he unfolded the New York Times.

"—and now *she's* snatched them up!"

“Wait,” Blaine frowned. “Harmony you said?”

“Yes! Weren’t you listening at all?”

Blaine sighed. “Well you should have no trouble in getting your heels, Rach.”

“And why’s that?”

He flipped the newspaper towards her, showing her the front page. “Because she’s dead.”

“Hey Kurt! It’s me. Sorry, I know you called me last night but I was in the middle of something. Oh, speaking of, there was a murder last night. It’s...really messed up. Not like the Scarecrow, but it’s definitely strange. It was a girl in Wicked—remember when we saw it together?—who played Nessa Rose and she had her head chopped off. The police are saying by a machete or an axe. Anyways, it looked pretty gruesome. Harmony...her...her heart was ripped out of her body. No one can seem to find it either. So...yeah.

“Oh! But to answer your question, yes. I’d love it if you did. But I have to go now, I’m meeting someone for breakfast. Talk to you later.”

“Well well well, if it isn’t Lord Byron.”

Blaine rolled his eyes, nodding to Jesse before he sat down.

“Cappuccino and a non-fat pumpkin scone,” Jesse said to the waitress.

“Uh...Earl Grey tea and a lemon poppyseed muffin,” Blaine smiled.

The waitress nodded, walking off, and Blaine turned back to Jesse who had an eyebrow raised at him.

“What?” Blaine asked.

“Earl Grey tea? Lemon poppyseed?” Jesse arched his eyebrow disdainfully. “Jesus, you spend three months in the suicide capitol of the country and you become some emo hipster British man.”

Blaine rolled his eyes. “Sam told me to lay off of coffee, that’s all. But are you like...okay?”

“What do you mean?” Jesse murmured, unfolding his napkin.

“Well...” Blaine frowned. “One of your costars did just die last night.”

Jesse snorted. “Is Rachel torn up about it?”

“Of course,” Blaine nodded evenly.

Jesse stared at him disdainfully. “She went on a rant about Harmony stealing her spotlight with her death, didn’t she?”

Blaine sighed, rubbing his hand over his stubbled jaw. He really did have to shave again soon.

“Well...I keep trying to explain this thing called tact to her, but I’m not quite sure it’s sticking.”

“It’s Rachel,” Jesse smirked. “Honestly, you had to know what you were getting into when you married her. Though I guess—”

“Enough, Jesse,” Blaine groaned.

“I still don’t get how you can just be so...impassive about the whole thing.”

“And I don’t get how you can just completely dismiss the fact that one of your coworkers was brutally murdered in her own home,” Blaine shot backexasperatedly.

Jesse rolled his eyes. “Harmony was a bitch. She lorded her power over everyone—save your tempestuous wife of course—and no one liked her. Honestly, they don’t like her even more

now because we have to shuffle around her understudies since they're all spooked. Only Sunshine is willing to sing tonight. Harmony was a wicked witch and pretty much everyone's glad she's dead."

"Still pretty harsh," Blaine murmured, smiling briefly at the waitress when she brought them their orders.

Jesse shrugged, taking a savage bite of his scone. "That's Broadway."

"What's wrong with him?"

Kurt curled up further in the corner, tracing the little jewels of the music box.

"Don't look at him," his brother murmured. "He's been naughty so he has to sit in the corner."

His brother's friend snorted. "He? I thought it was a girl."

"No, it's Kurt. He's kinda weird."

"I'll say. Hey! Hey you!"

"Jesse! We're not supposed to talk to him!"

"Who cares? Hey you!"

Kurt raised his head and looked over at the other two boys sitting on the couch.

The boy grinned at him, but it didn't seem like a nice grin. "What are you? A girl or a boy?"

Kurt glanced back down, idly tracing his finger around the cover of the music box. "I'm a boy," he whispered.

"What?" the other boy laughed. "Speak up, I can't hear you."

Kurt cleared his throat. "I'm a boy."

"What?"

Kurt raised his voice "I'm a boy!"

"Kurt!"

Kurt shrank back into the wall as his mother came out, a livid expression on her stern face. "Kurt, what have I told you time and time again!"

Kurt ducked his head, fiddling with his fingers.

There was a stinging slap as he was struck across the face. "Kurt!"

"Children are meant to be seen," he said in a whisper, trying not to cry. "Not heard."

"Then why were you raising your voice?"

Kurt shook violently. "Because...because he was asking me a question and he couldn't hear me." He pointed over to the boy, his brother's friend.

His mother turned to the other boy. "Is this true?"

*The boy shook his head back and forth. "No, we were just playing quietly and talking to ourselves. **He** wanted to butt in."*

His mother turned back to him and Kurt shrank down into the wall. She grabbed his arm and yanked him up. "Come on, Kurt. Your father will deal with you when he gets home."

Blaine licked his lips lightly, nipping at the flesh before bringing his foil up to tap his helmet, his arm extended, waiting...

His opponent attacked—he always had been one for the offensive. Blaine blocked his blows, his eyes darting back and forth wildly as his feet danced across the floor, his arm wielding his weapon with ease. His opponent tried to swipe widely, but Blaine used his off-balance body to disarm him.

“Dammit!”

Blaine grinned, taking off his helmet. “Not bad, Smythe. You’re getting better. One day you might actually be able to land a blow.”

“Ha ha, Anderson,” Sebastian groaned, taking off his helmet as well, twisting his wrist around. “It’s not my fault you have a six year advantage.”

“Excuses excuses,” Blaine shrugged. “You could just admit that I’m better than you. Also lay off the horizontal blows. You have a tendency to do wide sweeps. If you try adding some vertical hits in there, you’d fare much better.”

Sebastian rolled his eyes, offering a gloved hand. “Good match.”

“You too,” Blaine nodded, shaking it.

“So how’s the missus doing?”

Blaine sighed, taking off his gloves. “Rachel’s fine. I mean, there was the whole mess with Harmony dying last night.”

“Oh yeah,” Sebastian nodded. “Chandler told me. He said that she was killed in her apartment?”

“Yep,” Blaine nodded, taking a drink of water. “They won’t say how though. The police are keeping this one closed tight. No one can get any information at all.”

“Odd...” Sebastian frowned. “Kinda freaky, don’t you think?”

“Well...” Blaine grimaced lightly. “I’ve seen worse...” He shook his head to rid it of memories of burlap sacks and a young boy covered in blood and holding a shard of record. “But uh...how are your parents doing? I know that my parents are dying to have another garden party with them or something.”

Sebastian laughed, unpacking his lunch. “They’re fine, thanks. They’re glad that you and I are friends, at least. Someone who’s from a ‘respectable family with good traditional values’. They’re afraid that the big city will ‘ruin’ me or something equally fucked-up like that.” He offered Blaine half of his sandwich.

Blaine smiled sympathetically, declining the offer of food. “They’re still in denial?”

Sebastian rolled his eyes, taking a bite and chewing thoughtfully. “I straight up told my dad that I like cock over Christmas. He asked me to pass the gravy. I’m pretty sure there’s a joke in there somewhere.”

Blaine laughed, taking another swig of water. “And you and Chandler are fine and everything?”

“Well, you know what it’s like being with a Broadway star,” Sebastian groaned. “Never a moment without drama.”

“True, true,” Blaine nodded. He looked at his watch and groaned. “Speaking of which, I have to pick up Rachel in half an hour and then I’m supposed to have dinner with Hudson.”

“Good luck,” Sebastian snorted derisively. “I mean, it is Hudson.”

“Yeah yeah,” Blaine sighed. “I’ll see you next week.”

“See you, Blaine.”

Kurt's heart was pounding as he ran down to the basement, music box clutched tightly to his chest. He climbed over the washing machine and back into the storage area, worming his way through boxes until he found a large dresser and hid behind it. He curled into a tight little ball as the voices above screamed his name.

He sat there... waiting...

“Finn! How are you?”

“Great!” Finn shook his hand firmly with a grin. They were at Il Mulino, one of Blaine’s favorite places to go when he wanted to feel pretentious.

Being with Finn just made him feel pretentious.

“How’s Rachel?”

“She’s fine,” Blaine nodded. “Just fine. How are you and the other managers doing? I mean, the loss of Harmony...”

“It’s a blow,” Finn nodded. “It’s a blow. Thank god for Sunshine stepping up to fill in. Otherwise we’d be screwed.”

Blaine nodded again as they sat. Finn ordered some expensive brand of red wine that Blaine was sure he couldn’t even pronounce. Blaine found a pasta he could pronounce. A cheese platter was brought out. Friendly banter. Praise of the food. Commenting on politics.

Blaine was bored out of his mind.

He kept rewriting their conversations in his head to make them more interesting. Their discussion about the mayor turned into a commentary on the practicality of wearing one of those Russian fur hats during sex in his head. Finn’s praise of the steak—why he’d ordered steak at an Italian restaurant was still a mystery to him, though it was something along the lines of his proud

all-American quarterback heritage—quickly became a discussion of the Bronte sisters and which one embodied Gothic Romanticism the most through their novels.

“So will you be in the city long?”

Blaine blinked away his longing for pumpkin pancakes to focus back in on Finn. “Uh, no. I’ll just be here the next few days for the gala. I’m flying back to Seattle on Sunday.”

“Talk about dedicated to your work,” Finn frowned. “I don’t think anything could take me away from New York. Especially if I had a wife.”

“Yeah...” Blaine muttered, glancing down at his phone. He sent another text to Kurt, the fourth one today.

Kurt hadn’t contacted him in over twenty-four hours now.

He clicked on Kurt’s name, his picture popping up. It was from that entire day and night they’d spent in front of his fire. Kurt had his hands over his face, blushing with embarrassment and Blaine’s calligraphy all over his flushed chest. Blaine had managed to snap the photo before Kurt had pulled him back down to the carpet.

“Blaine?”

Blaine clicked off his phone, looking back up at Finn. “Yes?”

Finn smiled. “I was wondering if you wanted to maybe...accompany me to a club tonight?”

Blaine tried not to cringe. Finn had this thing where he’d try to get Blaine to go out to a strip club with him every time they went out to eat. It probably was just his way of trying to repay Blaine for that time Blaine had walked in on him and Rachel in their bed. “That’s fine, Finn. I actually have a lot of writing to do because I have to meet up with Sam tomorrow.”

“Sure, dude,” Finn nodded. “Your loss, man.”

Blaine inclined his head with a shrug.

Kurt cried quietly into his pillow, his back on fire. There was a knock on his door.

“Kurt?”

Kurt hugged his pillow harder, rubbing his face into it.

The door quietly cracked open and there was his brother, arms crossed as he walked over to Kurt’s bed, sitting next to him. “Kurt, are you okay?”

Kurt sniffled into the cotton, shaking his head minutely.

He put his hand over Kurt’s bare side but yanked it back when Kurt cried out, a whole new wave of tears taking over. “I’m sorry,” he murmured before leaning over and pressing a soft kiss to the edge of Kurt’s shoulder. “I’m sorry.”

Kurt gripped his pillow tighter. “Go away.”

“But I—”

“Please go away.”

There was a sigh and he left. Kurt bit his pillow hard, trying to keep the tears at bay as his back continued to burn painfully.

“You’re what?”

Blaine took a bite of his panini and swallowed. “I’m going back to Seattle on Sunday. I still have a lot more writing to do.”

Sam stared at him. He was wearing a black suit with a dark blue shirt, neck bare. He must be going out on a date tonight. He contrasted nicely with the gray sky in the background, just outside of Blaine's window.

"Seattle? The other side of the country?"

Blaine shrugged. "It's been helping with writing. And I like the city."

"You hate the west," Sam protested. "You have ever since coming back from Hollywood three years ago, claiming that it was eating your soul."

"Hollywood was eating my soul. But I was being unfair. The west coast is three states, not one, and I just steer clear of California. Seattle is nice. Calm."

"Yeah, it's only the suicide capitol of the country. And wasn't there some serial killer out there who was just caught a couple of weeks ago?"

Yes. "Speculation. But the city has been helping."

Sam sighed, sitting down at Blaine's pristine marble counter. "Well, can I at least get a title of this epic masterpiece?"

Blaine averted his eyes, playing with his cup of tea.

"There's not even a title yet?" Sam groaned.

"I'm working on it!"

"You always have a title. It's what you're good at. You always come up with a title first."

"I know, I know, but this time I came up with the story first," Blaine sighed. "Can I at least pitch it to you?"

Sam waved his hand, settling back into his chair.

Blaine dove in, going into detail about the detective Alexander Bergamot and his financier, the rich Earl Elliott Grey, and the mass-murderer they were trying to expose through the streets of Victorian London. Lies, secrets, intrigue, young girls being murdered, even a dash of cross-dressing, and a whole lot of witty banter.

Sam drummed his fingers against the table thoughtfully, considering. "I mean, it is a good idea."

Blaine grinned.

"We'd have to market it like crazy though."

"I know," Blaine nodded. "I just need more writing time though. And some peace. It's hard to get it in the city that never sleeps."

Sam licked his large lips before nodding in assent. "Okay. You have until Thanksgiving for the first draft."

"Valentine's Day."

"Christmas," Sam countered. "And not a day later. We need to get this on the road."

"Alright," Blaine nodded. "Christmas, I can do that."

"Okay," Sam clapped him on the shoulder. "I'll see you at the gala tomorrow night. And who knows. I might even come out to the Emerald City and visit you."

"You'd like it," Blaine smirked. "Lots of coffee."

Sam rolled his eyes and headed out.

Before going to bed that night, Blaine attempted to call Kurt. No reply.

An uneasy feeling settled in the pit of his stomach and he tried to ignore the small part of his brain that was replaying that one night when Blaine had been convinced that Kurt was dead.

He shook his head, telling himself that everything was fine. He'd be back in Seattle within forty-eight hours and then he find everything out for himself.

Blaine woke up the next morning feeling uncomfortable. He could sort of vaguely remember his dream—something to do with roses and pinpricks and his heart racing and just red everywhere—but it was slipping away with each raindrop that tapped lightly on his window.

He looked around his room. Gray. Gray. Light gray. Dark gray. Fifty Shades of Gray.

He blinked at the book on top of his bookshelf and grabbed it with a sigh.

Rachel was reclining at the dining room table, reading the entertainment section of the New York Times and drinking a smoothie of something gunky and sickly green.

"Rachel," Blaine sighed. He held up the book. "What is this?"

Rachel looked over at him and blinked in surprise. "It's a book, Blaine. You know, one of those things that you make a livelihood off of?"

Blaine rolled his eyes. "No, I mean why the hell are you reading this? We have Austen and Faulkner on the shelf."

Rachel shrugged. "It's interesting. And fun. And sexy."

"It's about a misogynistic asshole who's manipulative and cruel."

Rachel sighed. "Blaine, why do you even care?"

"I just think it's funny that you'll read this but you won't read a single one of my books."

“Murder mysteries are boring,” Rachel groaned, setting her paper down. “And I’ve asked you to write romance a thousand times but you refuse!”

“I don’t do romance!” Blaine snapped. He knew he shouldn’t—it was an old argument and it was better left out of sight out of mind.

“Really?” Rachel retorted sarcastically. “Wow, I never would have guessed that!”

“And here we go!” Blaine grinned savagely. “Go ahead, Rachel. Lay it on me. What will it be this time? Complaining that I *only* took you to the Alps for our honeymoon instead of ‘civilization’? Snapping at me because I didn’t know you liked red wine over white wine? Bitching me out for forgetting the anniversary of the first time we went to Sardi’s?”

“Oh, fuck you Blaine Anderson!” Rachel yelled.

“Funny!” Blaine laughed back. “Because it seems like I’m the only person on this island who you won’t!”

A sharp smack cracked through the apartment. Blaine stared at the generic black rectangular magnets on their refrigerator as he felt his cheek smart and slowly turn red. He turned his head slowly back to Rachel who was standing in front of him, red and furious and with tears in her eyes, quivering with anger.

It was almost laughable.

“Did that make you feel any better, sweetheart?” he asked her dryly, lips turning up in a half-smile.

She put her hand down and turned, stomping off back to her room.

But a quarter of eight, they were stepping into their town car, Blaine giving Beiste, their driver, directions. They didn’t speak on the ride downtown, Blaine looking out his window and Rachel

fiddling with her phone. She'd found some black Valentinos to make up for the ruby Oscar De La Rentas that she'd been unable to claim after Harmony's passing—they'd vanished from her apartment. She was still unhappy, but satisfied that no one else would wear them. Her hair was down in waves around her ruffly black dress that fell to her knees and she wore a spectacular pair of emerald earrings that had been a gift from Blaine's mother upon their engagement.

Blaine had gone simple—all black. He wasn't in the mood for much else.

The gala was in full swing, set to honor the new cast of *Wicked*. He stepped out of the car and pulled Rachel out onto the thick yellow carpet—some homage to the Yellow Brick Road no doubt. Camera lights flash and he had to refrain from rolling his eyes as they posed every few feet, looking every bit the happy couple everyone thought they were.

"Blaine!"

Blaine sighed in relief as he spotted Jesse, leaving Rachel next to Sunshine, the new Nessa Rose.

"Hey. No date?"

"No one good enough," Jesse sighed.

Blaine grinned. "It's nice to see you so modest."

"You know me," Jesse said dryly. "I actually have standards. Unlike your wife."

"Don't you have something else to prattle on about?" Blaine groaned.

Jesse smirked. "I'm just saying that she and Brody have been...well..."

Blaine frowned, thinking back. "Wait, the dance instructor?"

"The one and only," Jesse nodded, looking pointedly over Blaine's shoulder.

Blaine turned and saw Rachel laughing as she kissed Brody on the cheek. "Huh. Weird."

“Seriously,” Jesse stared. “That’s all you have to say?”

Blaine shrugged. “It’s her life.”

Jesse snorted. “That’s kind of cold of you, Anderson.”

“Ooh, why is Blaine being cold?”

“And with the appearance of the munchkin, I take my leave,” Jesse groaned, walking over to Rachel for a Fiyero/Elphaba picture.

Chandler rolled his eyes. “He’s such an ass, I don’t know why you’re friends with him.”

“Your boyfriend’s an ass and I’m friends with *him*,” Blaine shrugged. “As is Finn. And you know, most of the people in this circle.”

“True,” Chandler sighed. “Though Jesse can just be plain nasty. But it does help a lot with our stage chemistry.”

Blaine gave him a half smile. “Sure thing, Boq.”

“So I hear you’re leaving us tomorrow for the rainy city,” Chandler crossed his arms. “You’ve only been here two weeks!”

“I know, I know,” Blaine sighed. “I haven’t even seen everyone that I’ve meant to, not even my brother.”

Chandler frowned, staring over his shoulder. “Wait...isn’t that your brother right there?”

Blaine turned to see Cooper stepping out of a car with his date, flashing his big shiny teeth to the cameras.

“Oh great,” Blaine groaned quietly. He should have known that there was a possibility of Cooper showing up—he never could resist any carpet of any sort and he got a freebee being the brother-

in-law of Rachel Berry. He rubbed his fingers over his eyes and then suddenly Rachel was in front of him.

“Why is she wearing those shoes!” she demanded, pointing in Cooper’s direction.

Blaine frowned, looking over.

Cooper’s date was indeed wearing the dark red Oscar De La Renta shoes. They went very fetchingly with her swirly blue and white taffeta dress that ruffled and flared around her body as well as the dark red and yellow roses woven into her styled reddish brown hair. She sent a closed-mouth smile to the cameras, her red lips curling mysteriously as she rested her gloved hand on the arm of Cooper’s sharp black tux.

Blaine’s heart leapt into his throat. He’d know that fake auburn hair anywhere.

“Oh Dorothy,” he whispered. “I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore.”

Kurt waited until the house was very quiet before shuffling off his bed, climbing underneath it. He sniffled his nose and tucked his legs under his body. Opening up his music box, he smiled when Somewhere Over The Rainbow started to tinkle out quietly. He traced his fingers idly around the pretty box because it was a promise. A promise that he’d find home someday. He smiled sweetly into the darkness, closing his eyes and drifting off to sleep as the melody played on.

“Blainey!”

Blaine blinked and suddenly Cooper was in front of him, Kurt on his arm. He weakly returned the hug that Cooper gave him and went back to staring at Kurt. “Hey Coop. What...what are you doing here?”

“I came to see you, baby brother!” Cooper smiled. “And the ravishing Rachel.”

“Hello Cooper,” she said sweetly, presenting her face for kisses. She turned to Kurt, face friendly but inflection icy. “And who’s this...pretty thing?”

Blaine swiped a flute of champagne from a passing waiter, taking a long drink.

Cooper grinned. “Isn’t she great? This is lovely Alexandra Bergamot.”

Blaine choked on his champagne which he somehow managed to turn into a cough.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Kurt said, his voice higher and breathier than usual. He turned to look straight at Blaine. “Mr. and Mrs. Berry.”

Shit.

“Alexandra, I love your shoes!” Rachel said with a smile that could kill. “Where did you get them?”

“Oh I just had them lying around,” Kurt laughed, tucking an auburn curl behind his ear.

He looked stunning, even as a girl. His dress bunched and flared around him to draw the eyes to the shiny blue fabric and away from the fact that its wearer had relatively no chest to speak of. The back of his dress dipped down low, revealing his unicorn tattoo and what looked like another one, on his left side that hadn’t been there when Blaine had last seen him.

Kurt turned his lips up in a smile as he looked up at Cooper. “Could we maybe go inside? It’s getting a bit chilly out here for me.”

“Of course!” Cooper said, ushering them in. They pressed into the throng that was immediately inside the doors and Blaine quickly lost sight of his brother and Kurt. He craned his neck, but Rachel was pulling him in the opposite direction, to meet with friends.

The event room was filled with an eerie dark green light and the band was already halfway through their set. Blaine smiled and nodded at all the patrons and other Broadway stars that he only vaguely knew through Rachel, all the while keeping his eyes peeled for a blue and white dress.

A singer stepped onstage and started crooning as couples took to the dance floor.

He left no time to regret

Kept his dick wet

With his same old safe bet...

He spotted Cooper over by the bar and steered himself and Rachel over there, muttering to her, "Cooper said he wanted to dance with you earlier?"

"Really?" she raised her eyebrows. "Well it's hardly a surprise. We slow dance excellently." She cut over to Cooper smoothly, sending him a charming smile as she asked him to dance.

"Why of course, Rachel," Cooper grinned flawlessly. He offered his arm and she took it. "Blaine, you wouldn't mind looking after Alexandra, would you?"

"It would be my pleasure," Blaine said easily before turning to Kurt. "Shall we?" He offered his arm.

Kurt stared at him before taking it silently.

Me and my head high

And my tears dry

Get on without my guy

Blaine led him a safe distance from Cooper and Rachel before holding out his arms and Kurt sighed, placing his arms in them as they slowly started to dance. "Hello Kurt," Blaine said quietly.

"Hello, Blaine," Kurt replied.

You went back to what you knew

So far removed

From all that we went through...

“Kurt, what are you doing here?”

Kurt arched an eyebrow. “I’m attending my wife’s premiere. What does it look like?”

Blaine closed his eyes. “Look, I—”

“You lied to me.”

Blaine looked at him hard. “I never told you I wasn’t married.” He felt Kurt tense in his arms but he just held him closer.

“You lied to me because you let me believe that you weren’t,” Kurt whispered.

And I tread a troubled track

My odds are stacked

I’ll go back to black

Blaine glanced to the side.

Kurt let out a soft breath. “And you don’t even care.”

“Kurt—”

“Save it, Blaine. I get it. I understand or whatever. I just wanted to see it for myself.” Kurt’s blue eyes flicked up and down him. “And it’s a whole lot more disappointing in person, I must say.” He slipped his arm from Blaine’s grasp and backed away, dissolving into the other dancers.

We only said goodbye with words

I died a hundred times

You go back to her and I go back to...

I go back to...

Crack.

Kurt jumped, biting down on his pillow as the skin of his back broke. His hands laid uselessly beside him. He knew what happened if he tried to use his hands.

“What’s the rule, Kurt?”

Kurt’s teeth clenched down on the soft white pillow fabric one more time, the saliva-slicked cotton somehow tasting simultaneously comforting and uncomfortable at the same time, before letting it go, a string of spit connecting the soaked fabric to his lip. “Children should be seen and not heard,” he rasped.

Crack.

The scream choked in his throat as his torso jerked violently on the table.

“Kurt?”

“Children are—”

Crack.

“Kurt.”

Silence.

Crack. Crack. Crack.

"Stop please!"

"Kurt! What did I just say!"

"That children are—"

Crack.

"Stop!"

Crack. Crack. Crack.

Crack.

Kurt ordered a gin from the bar, cringing slightly at the green glass it was served in before downing it in one go, shivering slightly. His eyes flitted around the room full of glamorous celebrities laughing obnoxiously at each other while they waited for their turn to speak. He stared moodily at the sickening happiness, the alcohol streaking coals through his stomach as someone slid next to him.

"You might want to be careful. Drinking like that can ruin your liver."

Kurt smiled wryly. "Oh you're hardly one to lecture me."

His visitor ordered a vodka on the rocks and they observed the masses together.

"Thanks for getting me out here," Kurt said quietly.

"Well, I owed you one. Half of this is my fault."

A smile quirked Kurt's mouth. "True..."

A snort next to him. "Well I can't take full credit."

Kurt's smile dropped. "No. You really can't."

There was a silence.

"So...you and Anderson."

Kurt sighed, staring down into his glass and wishing he hadn't drained it so quickly.

"And here I was thinking that you just came out here to see me."

"That's likely," Kurt muttered. Then his shoulders slumped. "Yes. Me and Blaine."

"How the hell did that happen?"

"We met at a tea shop. I started helping him out with his novel."

"How quaint."

"There was a psychopathic murderer as well."

"Ah, that sounds a bit more like you."

Kurt smiled, fiddling with his gloves. "Thanks for the dress too. But where did you get these shoes?"

His visitor sighed. "They...showed up at my apartment. I don't know who sent them but they're from Harmony."

Kurt stared at him. "The girl who died? You mentioned her in your phone call..."

He nodded. "Yes."

"How..." Kurt swallowed nervously. "Her head was chopped off, right?"

"That's not all. Rumor has it that they aren't releasing what really happened to the public."

"Could you get me the report?"

He shook his head. "I can't. But I know someone who can. Sam Evans. He has a friend in the office. You'll need to get close to him."

Kurt sighed. "What does he like? Boys or girls?"

"That's not what I meant," his visitor laughed. "He's not like that. He's an editor. You should probably get close to his best client."

"Let me guess," Kurt groaned. "Toto over there."

"An apt nickname. And eerily accurate to boot..."

Kurt rolled his eyes. "You're supposed to be sending me back to home, not on a quest with Toto."

"Well first you have to get him out of the hands of the Wicked Witch of the West." He nodded towards Blaine who was standing arm in arm with Rachel.

Kurt rubbed his temples. "This isn't what I signed up for."

"Oh Kurt, it's not that hard. You're used to screwing married men."

"Fuck you."

"Okay."

"Gross," Kurt muttered. "And never."

“I know, I’m not married.”

Kurt convinced himself that murdering his current source of income wouldn’t be in his best interest. “Why do you even care about the murderer?”

A pause. “I...I just want to make sure that this is an isolated incident. Because if it isn’t...I have a good idea who a future target might be.”

Kurt glanced sideways at his companion before sighing. “Fine. One more week.”

“A month.”

“Two weeks. But if I can’t turn up anything, then you’ll send me back to Seattle?”

“You have my word.”

Kurt gave an unamused laugh. “And what’s that worth?”

He didn’t wait for a reply before heading into the crowd.

“Kurt.”

Kurt took a deep breath and turned to Blaine. He tried not to think about how good he looked in his all-black suit or how much his chest was hurting each second he was in his presence. Instead he just crossed his arms and arched an eyebrow. “Blaine.”

“Listen Kurt—”

“I’m in town for a few weeks,” Kurt said quickly. “Staying with a friend. If you want to meet and work on the novel some more, I suppose I’m fine with that.”

Blaine blinked at him in shock. “Really? Because I—”

“Plotting the novel,” Kurt said evenly. “That’s it. Those are my terms. We meet when I want to meet. We talk about the novel. That’s it. Nothing else.” He stuck out his hand. “Deal?”

Blaine licked his lips. “Kurt—”

“Do we have a deal?”

Blaine sighed, but shook his hand. “Deal.”

“Good. I’ll see you tomorrow at nine.”

“There’s a nice little cafe in the Village,” Blaine shrugged. “I’ll text you directions if...you’re taking my calls now?”

“Fine,” Kurt nodded stiffly. “Breakfast and then we can talk. Tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow.”

Blaine arrived at the small steamy cafe an hour early. He strategically arranged himself at the tiny window nook table and ordered an Earl Grey tea, sipping it while he read a book.

He then realized that he still had a good fifty minutes until Kurt arrived and that this plan was probably dumb.

So he took out his laptop and attempted to type up his messy notes. He got through three pages before he remembered that Kurt was one of the few people who could actually read his scrawly handwriting.

He sighed, leaning back in his chair and put his headphones in, listening to Adele.

I heard that you settled down

That you found a girl and you're married now

I heard that your dreams came true

Guess she gave you things I didn't give to you

Skip.

When will I see you again?

You left with no goodbye—not a single word was said

Skip

She—she ain't real

She ain't gonna be able to love you like I will

She is a stranger

You and I have history or don't you remember

Skip

Okay on second thought, maybe Adele wasn't the best idea.

He grumbled, taking his headphones out.

"You know, if you frown too much you'll get lines, old man."

His eyes shot up and there was Kurt standing in front of him. His arms were crossed and he was wearing his warm zip-up-the-arms gray sweater with dark skinny jeans and battered maroon converse, his hair pulled into two tufty little pigtails on either side of his head.

Blaine felt a smile quirk his lips.

“What?” Kurt muttered, hugging his arms around himself tighter.

“I was just reminded of the first time we met,” Blaine grinned. “At Miro? Your hair was in pigtails then.”

“Oh yeah,” Kurt frowned, thinking back. “You were really loud.”

“You’d just ruined my laptop.”

Kurt rolled his eyes. “Didn’t you buy a new one the next day?”

“That’s beside the point.”

“That is the point.”

Kurt dropped his shoulder bag over the arm of his chair before going up to the front counter to order. Blaine mentally congratulated himself on the easy contact before prepping his mind for when Kurt returned. He had a lot of questions.

Kurt returned with a chocolate chunk cupcake, two rhubarb tarts, a slice of pumpkin loaf, and a grande non-fat mocha.

Blaine raised his eyebrows. “No London Fog latte?”

Kurt half-shrugged. “When in Rome.”

Blaine stared. “But isn’t Seattle supposed to be like, coffee Meca? I mean, that’s where Starbucks was invented and—”

“Blaine. Shut up.” He leaned over and crammed a large chunk of the cupcake into his mouth.

Blaine rolled his eyes and chewed it, swallowing roughly. “How did you get to New—”

“No,” Kurt shook his head. “I’m only here to help with the novel.”

“Kurt, come on—”

“No.”

Blaine folded his arms and leaned back.

Kurt glared. “One minute of asking questions and I reserve the right to decline.”

“Deal.”

“Go.”

“Are you mad at me?”

“Not as mad as I’d like to be.”

“Why not?”

“Because then I’d be a hypocrite.”

“What?”

“Move on.”

“How did you get to New York?”

“Private airplane.”

“Who?”

“A friend,” Kurt said shortly. “Move on.”

“Where are you staying?”

“A friend,” Kurt repeated. “Move on.”

“Why do you care so much about helping with this novel?”

“It’s my only way of getting my own creativity out into the world since I’m kind of lacking in the area of identification.”

“My brother? Really?”

Kurt arched an eyebrow. “It was convenient.”

A glare. “It was a low blow.”

A shrug. “Semantics.”

“How did you meet him anyways?”

“A mutual friend.”

“The same one who got you out here and who you’re staying with?”

A smile. “Yes.”

“What’s the other reason you’re out here?”

“To find out who murdered Harmony.”

There was a ringing silence between them.

“Ah,” Blaine said quietly. “I should have guessed as much.”

Kurt sighed, itching at the side of his head. "It's...complicated. I just...something about that murder is bugging me and I don't know why."

"And you think you can just...solve it?"

"I did last time."

"You almost died last time."

Kurt rolled his eyes. "Stop being so melodramatic."

"I'm being realistic."

"Blaine, I'm not going to go running after the killer this time. I just need to find out what's going on. And...I need your help."

Blaine leaned back, folding his arms. "Really?"

Kurt shrugged. "Your wife worked with the victim."

"Yeah, and they hated each other as I'm pretty sure someone told you yesterday. Now why else do you need me?"

Kurt licked his lips. "Well, my sources tell me that your editor has connections in the police department and can get me the report."

Blaine nodded evenly. "True. I can call Sam later. On one condition."

Kurt tensed. "And what's that?"

"Stay with me while you're here."

Kurt tensed. "No."

“Do you want the police reports?”

“I’m not going to sleep with you for them.”

Blaine rubbed his eyes. “I didn’t ask for that. I just want to keep an eye on you. Make sure you’re alright. I won’t touch you, don’t worry.”

“That’s not what I’m worried about,” Kurt muttered. He sighed wearily. “So you just want me to move in with you and the missus? That’ll be fun I’m sure.”

Blaine rolled his eyes. “I have an apartment here in the Village that I use for writing. But that’s my offer. Take it or leave it.”

Kurt stared at him for nearly a minute before nodding. “Fine. Give me the address and I’ll bring my stuff.”

“You can use my town car—”

“I’m fine with the subway.”

Blaine nodded. “Meet at the apartment in two hours?”

Kurt gave a quick nod before grabbing his coffee and baked goods and briskly leaving the shop.

“Lopez speaking.”

“Hey! Santana! It’s me.”

“Urgh, what do you want, Sam?”

“You know the murder of Harmony East?”

“Obviously.” He could practically hear the eye roll. “The station’s sort of preoccupied with it right now.”

“Well...could you maybe send me a copy of the report?”

“First off, that’s illegal. Second, I’m an intern, not a cop.”

“Yeah, but you can get them, right?”

“And why would I want to do that?”

“Well...you do owe me one for paying all of your law school bills,” he wheedled.

“Nice try, Lips. But you already owed me for taking care of your siblings when we were little.”

“Okay fine. But look, I really really need this, okay? It’s not for anything illegal, I swear.”

“ ... ”

“Santana?”

“Fine, okay? But you’re taking me out to dinner tonight for this.”

“Awesome! See you at seven.”

“I expect Italian!” she managed to get in before the line was cut off.

Kurt sat in the corner of his room, his little music box open as he sang along with it.

“Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high, there’s a land that I heard of once in a lullaby. Somewhere over the rainbow, skies are blue. And the things that you dare to dream really do come true...”

He closed his eyes and imagined what he really wanted. A mother and father who were nice to him and a big older brother who would sing and play with him and teach him how to ride the bike and stuff.

He started tracing the music box, tapping the little ruby on top of it, muttering the words that had been told to him when he'd received the box.

"There's no place like home... there's no place like home... there's no place—"

He heard footsteps coming up the stairs and he shut his music box, shoving it under his bed before getting to his feet and looking at the ground.

His door opened. "Kurt."

Kurt nodded.

"I was told that you broke the vase downstairs. Is that true?"

It wasn't, but Kurt nodded anyways. He'd learned by now.

His mother sighed. "I don't know why you do such horrid things when we're letting you stay here out of the goodness of our hearts."

Kurt remained silent, staring at the floor.

She walked over and yanked him by the arm and they were going downstairs, past his brother who was in his room, past the kitchen and then den, and into the back room with the pillow on the table.

He resignedly took off his shirt and climbed on top of it, facedown on the pillow and waited an hour before his father came home.

He was asked over and over again what children were meant to do, but he didn't answer. It made it worse if he did.

Because children were meant to be seen and not heard.

CRACK.

Kurt jolted awake, his hand flying to his back and his heart pounding in his chest. Lightning flashed outside and rain hammered on the window. He leaned forward, elbows on his knees and head in his hands as he breathed deeply, counting down from ten. He reached down and flicked his little ruby piercing with his finger.

“There’s no place like home... there’s no place like home... there’s no place like home...”

He straightened up, cracking his back before getting out of bed. He padded out of his little green room and into Blaine’s kitchen, flicking on the lights.

Blaine’s Greenwich Village apartment wasn’t particularly large, but it was cozy and warm and had a fire escape so Kurt felt at ease. He meandered around the half-brick kitchen, making a cup of cocoa and nabbing a bag of frozen potstickers from the freezer before putting the steamer on.

“Midnight munchies?”

He turned and there was Blaine, in his usual pajama ensemble of soft cotton pants and nothing else, an fashion choice that Kurt was currently echoing.

“You shouldn’t creep up behind me in kitchens,” Kurt said dryly. “Last time that happened, you ended up in the hospital for a week and I was wanted for attempted murder.”

“Ah, the good old days,” Blaine smiled.

Kurt smiled back before he realized that he was smiling at a memory of stabbing Blaine and that was probably wrong on some level so he went back to stirring his cocoa.

“Care to share?”

Kurt wordlessly poured more milk into the pot and another spoonful of nutella and turned up the heat. Blaine went to grab another mug and took out a cast iron skillet, starting to fry the potstickers. They stood next to each other silently, but it wasn't awkward. It was peaceful and calm and oddly domestic.

Kurt hated it.

"So..." Blaine said, swirling the potstickers around with his tongs. "You got another tattoo?"

"Yeah."

"It's very pretty."

"Uh huh."

"Why'd you get it?"

A pause.

"To remind myself that every rose has a thorn."

"Cool. Now why'd you really get it?"

"...move on."

Blaine sighed, glancing over at the unicorn and roses. He felt a strong impulse to reach over and trace the black lines but he ignored it.

"So Sam's coming over tomorrow and he's bringing the police report."

"That's good."

"Yeah."

The silence resumed, but it was no longer easy.

Blaine pulled up a stool at the kitchen counter to eat whereas Kurt just climbed on top, sitting cross-legged as he bit into the hot potstickers and sipped his cocoa.

“I was supposed to fly back to Seattle today,” Blaine mused.

Kurt nodded. “Would you have told me when you’d gotten back?”

Blaine shrugged. “No, probably not.”

Kurt nodded. A silence followed.

“Do you love her?”

“No.”

“Okay.”

Blaine blinked. “Wait seriously? That’s it?”

Kurt shrugged. “Well I’m not exactly happy with you, but if I get mad at you then I’m sort of a hypocrite so...”

Blaine raised his eyebrows. “Wait, you’ve cheated on someone before?”

Kurt shifted uncomfortably, looking to the side. “In a manner of speaking.”

“When did—”

“Look,” Kurt sighed. “I told you that I have a past. But...I just want to work on the story this week and then I’m going back to Seattle, okay?”

“I’ll be going back at the end of this week as well,” Blaine said quietly.

Kurt glanced at his hands. "I won't be at your house. McKinley's opening again in two weeks and Mercedes' parents have given me permission to stay there until it does."

Blaine nodded slowly. "Will I still see you around though? At Miro at least?"

Kurt looked at him sadly. "I...I don't think so, Blaine."

"Oh," Blaine said softly. "So...one more week?"

"One more week."

"Hey," Carl sighed, walking into the precinct. "Sorry I'm late."

"Spending time at Virginia Mason, were you?" Bryan grinned.

Carl flushed. "I'm just making sure that she's okay. I mean, she has gone through an ordeal with her boyfriend being a mass murderer—"

"And you have a little crush on her," Bryan said in a sing-song voice.

Carl rolled his eyes. "Maybe. Anyway, did you get the Karofsky file?"

"No and that's the weird thing," Bryan sighed. "I can't. It's sealed."

"But...why?" Carl frowned. "That doesn't make sense. It was all over the news!"

"Well, I'm making inquiries, but the whole thing is hush hush," Bryan shrugged.

Carl sighed, collapsing in his chair. "Okay, so here's what we know—Chelsea and Paul Karofsky were murdered last Christmas Eve and their house was burned to the ground. Their son, David, was visiting for Christmas and he survived along with his younger sister, Katherine, or

Katy. David stayed to clean up the mess with his sister and then...sent her off to boarding school, right?"

"Something like that," Bryan nodded. "Anyways, the whole thing was weird because everyone heard about it but no one really talked about the case. And there were at least four eye-witnesses saying that they swore they saw a boy there as well, but no one was questioned about it."

Carl felt his stomach sinking because he had a feeling who that boy might be.

If Blaine's Kurt had something to do with the Karofsky murders... he could see why Katy Karofsky would ditch boarding school to try and find him.

"Kurt," he muttered, rubbing his eyes. "Looks like you might have another murderer on your trail."

Sam knocked on the door. "Blaine, open the fuck up, I'm freezing my nuts off out here."

The door opened, Lady Gaga's Bad Romance blaring through the doorway, blocked only by some teenage...well, he was pretty sure it was a boy. He had messy fluffy brown hair, purple tights, black shorts, and a gray and purple striped sweater on, regarding Sam with an arched eyebrow that looked like it had had a piercing in it at some point.

"Sam?"

"Uh..." Sam blinked. "Yeah, I'm Sam."

"Cool." The (boy?) left the door open and turned on his heel.

Sam cautiously followed him into the apartment, closing the door with his foot. The boy was sitting on the kitchen counter, drawing something in a sketch pad. He looked back up at Sam and blew his bangs out of his face, holding out a hand. "Oh, I'm Kurt by the way."

“Hi,” Sam nodded, shaking it. “Uh...where’s Blaine?”

“The shower.” He went back to drawing.

Sam just stood there awkwardly for a few minutes.

“So...how do you know Blaine?”

Kurt paused. “It’s...sort of a long story.”

Sam snorted. “I’m Blaine’s editor. I get plenty of those. Try me.”

Kurt tapped his pencil against his chin thoughtfully. “Well first I broke his laptop. Then he stalked me for a while. Then we were writing buddies. Then he found me working in an alleyway. Then I lived with him. Then I stabbed him and he had to get surgery. Then we started sleeping together. Then he thought I was dead but I wasn’t so we had great carpet sex. Then I almost died again and that sucked but we caught a serial killer together. And...yeah, that’s pretty much it.”

Sam stared.

Kurt shrugged. “Seattle’s a weird place.”

Just then, Blaine appeared from his room, hair wet and clothes crisp. “Sam! Hey, thanks for coming over, man.”

“You’re welcome. I...” he glanced back at Kurt before sending a pointed look to Blaine.

Blaine frowned. “Kurt, you didn’t introduce yourself?”

“I did. And I was polite.”

“He was,” Sam nodded. “I just—Blaine, can I talk to you for a minute?” He grabbed Blaine’s arm and steered him back into Blaine’s bedroom.

“What’s up?” Blaine said as Sam closed the door firmly shut.

“Blaine, do you want to tell me why you have a teenage boy on your counter who’s apparently from Seattle?”

“Oh that’s Kurt,” Blaine shrugged. “He’s sort of my creative assistant. He’s drawing up all the characters and helping me from a fashion aspect for the story.”

“And he...stabbed you? Wait, is he the reason you were in the hospital a couple of weeks ago?”

“Well...yeah, but that was just a misunderstanding.”

“Blaine...you’re an international best-selling author who’s married and has a piece of jailbait in his kitchen. Please tell me you see what’s wrong with this picture.”

Blaine rolled his eyes. “He’s only here for a week.”

“That’s not the...” Sam sighed, rubbing his eyes. “Oh god, this is going to blow up in our faces.”

“Did you get the report?” Blaine cut across him.

Sam took the packet out of his briefcase and handed it to Blaine. “Remember, don’t show it to anyone.”

“Okay,” Blaine nodded.

Sam hesitated. “And...don’t read it on a full stomach. It’s sort of...yeah.”

Blaine glanced down at the packet and back up, nodding.

Sam clicked his suitcase shut and straightened his suit. “So I take it that you’ll be in town for at least one more week?”

Blaine nodded.

Sam groaned. "I am so getting a raise for this."

"Uh...Kurt?"

Kurt glanced up from his sketchbook and Blaine was staring at him wide-eyed, the police report in his hand. Kurt leaned over to turn the music down. "Yes?"

"You...haven't eaten recently, right?"

Kurt frowned. "No."

"Okay good. Come on, I need some fresh air."

Kurt pulled boots and a scarf on before they left the building, walking out onto the slanted streets of the Village, feet crunching in the leaves. They walked for a couple of blocks, past a sculpture garden and an odd little shop covered in keys before Blaine spoke.

"Harmony was killed...slowly."

Kurt glanced over at him in surprise.

"The killer knocked her out first then handcuffed her to her dining room table. Then they waited for her to wake up before cutting tiny little heart shapes all over her body, peeling off the skin. And then...it looks like they poured bleach over one limb at a time before chopping it off, finally chopping off her head at the end. Then, lastly, taking her...heart."

Kurt looked at him with wide eyes.

Blaine licked his lips. The...the heart still hasn't been recovered."

"Oh my god," Kurt said quietly.

They both stood in the middle of the sidewalk, orange leaves floating slowly down around them in the incredible stillness.

"Kurt."

Kurt snuggled deeper into his bed, chasing the warmth.

"Hey Kurt."

His covers were rolled back and there was his brother leaning over him. Kurt just blinked up at him.

His brother licked his lips. "Mom and dad are going out of town tomorrow."

Another blink. He didn't really talk anymore.

His brother leaned in closer. "So you could go away if you wanted. I know you want to."

Kurt stared at him, his mind going around.

Until, very slowly, he nodded.

His brother grinned. "Great! Tomorrow night, okay?"

"Okay," Kurt whispered quietly.

The covers were pulled back over him and his door shut quietly.

Kurt smiled into his pillows. Tomorrow he would go home.

It was all over the front page the next morning.

Cassandra July, 34, was found in her apartment with her head chopped off.

Kurt was reading the article over Blaine's shoulder when his phone buzzed with a text.

You'd better hurry, Kurt.

Kurt sighed and rolled up his sleeves. They had a long week ahead of them.

"Okay, let's go over this while we wait for Sam to get the police report."

Kurt sighed, flopping back onto the couch, his silky gray parachute pants puffing out as he tapped his fingers on the high-necked black vest he was wearing. "Proceed."

Blaine was drawing arrows and pictures all over the whiteboard in various different color combinations. It looked like a Picasso and not in a good way.

"So we have the killer of our novel over here—" He pointed to the little sectioned off corner. "—and he's still a killer of women but he's no longer named the Scarecrow because of bad memories."

"Correct."

Then over here..." Blaine pointed to the ominous white circle in the middle of the scrawls. "...is our new current killer who we know next to nothing about. Except one thing."

"They're somehow connected with the Wicked cast," Kurt nodded.

"Exactly. Now, here are the cast members who dealt the most with the two members. Well, everyone dealt with Cassandra because she was the female dance instructor as well as Galinda, but those she worked the closest with: Brody Weston, the male dance instructor. Harmony East, deceased. Sunshine Corazon, the current Nessa Rose. Rachel Berry, Elphaba. Jesse St. James,

Fiyero. Chandler Kiehl, Boq. April Rhodes, Madame Morrible. Wes Montgomery, the Wizard. Artie Abrahams, director. Finn Hudson, manager—”

Kurt’s head snapped up. “What? Did you say Finn Hudson?”

“Yeah,” Blaine blinked. “Why?”

“I...” Kurt glanced back down. “Nothing. Never mind.”

“Okay,” Blaine muttered, frowning. “And Harmony worked closely with Brody, Cassandra, Rachel, and Chandler.”

“Alright,” Kurt nodded. “Now we need a motive.”

“Well they all hate each other,” Blaine shrugged. “It’s not totally inconceivable that one might off another to get a leg up. The method they did it was...odd though.”

“If by odd you mean psychotic.”

“Yeah, pretty much.”

Kurt tapped his chin. “Well...huh.”

“Yeah,” Blaine sighed. “And is there like...anything in history about a killer who chops off girls heads and does freaky stuff like this?”

At that, Kurt rolled his eyes, staring at Blaine. “Seriously? You’re an author and you’re asking me this one?”

Blaine frowned. “What are you talking about?”

“Queen of Hearts,” Kurt shrugged. “You know, psychotic. Unstable. Off with her head. All that stuff.”

Blaine blinked. "Oh...right. Duh. So you think...this could maybe be a female killer?"

"Well who benefits from this? Who's Cassandra's understudy?"

Blaine frowned. "I think it's Sunshine. Then Andrea Cohen will step up and play Nessa Rose."

"So...our killer could be Sunshine," Kurt shrugged.

Blaine bit his lip. "See, if you suggested anyone else in the cast, I'd say yes in a heartbeat, but Sunshine's notorious for actually being a good person."

"Sinner in saint's clothing?" Kurt shrugged.

"Maybe...but we probably shouldn't go with our first instinct on this. Remember what happened last time?"

Kurt cringed. "Yeah, okay. But Blaine?"

Blaine raised his eyebrows.

Kurt fiddled with his fingers. "Are you sure it wasn't Mrs. Anderson? Taking out the competition?"

Blaine smiled wryly. "No, it wasn't Rachel."

Kurt crossed his arms. "How can you be sure?"

"I just know," Blaine shrugged. "It wasn't her."

Over the next couple days, they managed to narrow the list down. Wes had an alibi on both nights. April was seen at a bar the night of Harmony's death. Most of the rest of the cast had family that accounted for them.

Sam got them the police report and they discovered that the killing method had been the exact same as Harmony's: knocked out, handcuffed to table, hearts cut and peeled off, bleach, limbs chopped off, head chopped off, heart taken, heart still missing.

Kurt couldn't stop shaking the feeling that the Queen of Hearts was Rachel, but Blaine wouldn't even discuss the matter with him.

The atmosphere around them was...not tense, but different. Blaine was much more cut off than he had been in Seattle, even in those early days before Kurt had started to live with him. He seemed like almost a different person and it unsettled Kurt, and made him grateful that he was leaving at the end of the week.

There was some party that the Wicked cast was throwing in the honor of Harmony and Cassandra at the end of the week. A masquerade. Kurt had received a text on Wednesday with a simple **We're going together fyi** and rolled his eyes.

The next day, he cracked.

Kurt walked into the building, flashing a smile at the doorman and trying to look like he actually belonged here. The wig and make-up helped, especially if he needed to make a quick escape. Switching genders mid-chase was actually incredibly convenient.

He glanced down at the slip of paper where he'd copied the information from Blaine's ID and called the elevator, pressing the button for the twenty-second floor.

The apartment was empty, thank god. He tore off his itchy wig and stowed it in his bag, fluffing up his hair.

The Berry-Anderson residence.

He checked the rooms first. There were six. Two appeared to be guest rooms. One looked like a writing studio turned storage space. One had a bunch of stands and sheet music. There was a cozy bedroom that looked too used to be a guest bedroom, and then, at the end of the hall, the master bedroom.

There was a dark bamboo floor and pale gray walls with large Broadway posters of different productions that no doubt Mrs. Rachel Berry had been in.

Kurt crept in quietly, rolling his eyes at the fluffy white canopy king-sized bed and started looking around. Through the vanity and closet, being careful to put everything back precisely where it had been.

Minutes passed and he grew frustrated. There was pretty much nothing in the room. He didn't know why he was expecting to find a bloody axe or a lifetime supply of bleach, but now he was just really—

Heels clicked down the hall.

Kurt's eyes widened as he stumbled to his feet, pushing the bottom drawer on the dresser back in and wheeling around just as the door opened.

Rachel walked in, dropping her purse off in a chair before her eyes met Kurt and she froze. "What are you doing?"

"I..." Kurt glanced around. He caught his reflection in the vanity mirror: flats, gray tights, black skirt, black cardigan, gray blouse, a weird black bow tie of Blaine's that he'd swiped for a necklace, makeup, and fluffy hair.

Girl then.

"I...my name is Ellie Grey," he said, pitching his voice slightly higher. "I'm a cousin of Blaine's? I was at the wedding? Well, I had to leave early..."

“Oh,” a relieved smile lit up Rachel’s face.

“I’m sorry,” Kurt said hurriedly. “I was just looking for Blaine and—”

“It’s fine,” Rachel waved her hand. “You’re family. I was just worried that you were a spy trying to find out my darkest secrets or something.”

“Don’t be silly,” Kurt laughed, a sweat breaking out on the back of his neck.

Rachel smiled, walking further into the room and shutting the door behind her. Kurt gulped. “So Ellie. Where are you from again?”

“Seattle,” Kurt said, twisting his fingers. “Blaine came to visit a few times. But I’m out here for a uh...a show choir competition and I heard that Blaine was still in town so I wanted to visit—”

“Show choir?” Rachel grinned. “Oh I loved show choir in high school! Glee club was my favorite time of day! When are you competing?”

“Um, Saturday night.” When the masquerade was.

Rachel pouted. “Well Blaine and I have a prior engagement that night, but we could maybe skip out early to come watch you perform.”

“No,” Kurt said hurriedly, confused. This didn’t really seem like a cold-blooded killer. “No, it’s fine. I just wanted to visit.”

“First time in the big apple?” Rachel sat down in her vanity, combing her fingers through her hair.

“Yeah,” Kurt nodded. “Though I haven’t really seen much of it.”

“Oh it takes about ten visits to New York to actually cover even half of it,” Rachel laughed. “But only one visit to fall in love.”

Kurt smiled slightly, nodding. But then he bit his lip slightly. "Um...has Blaine been...sort of...weird lately?"

Rachel raised an eyebrow at him.

"It's just um, when he visited me in Seattle, he just seemed kind of...uh, cold?" Kurt finished lamely.

Rachel snorted. "That's just Blaine. You should know that."

"I mean," Kurt shifted awkwardly. "I don't know him that well because I haven't really ever left the west coast and he just seemed so nice and open and warm at the wedding..."

Rachel smiled grimly. "Well, you're family so...Blaine's just not really a nice guy. He's interested in one thing: writing. Anything else? Not really. Not even me."

"Oh," Kurt said quietly. "Have you...never mind."

"What?"

Kurt bit his lip. "Have you ever thought that maybe he's...gay?"

Rachel laughed. "Oh, that's the first thing I thought. So I sat him down to have to talk about a 'convenient marriage' but it wasn't even that. He just...doesn't like anyone. He doesn't *care* about anyone."

"Is that so?" Kurt asked quietly.

"Mhmm," Rachel smacked her lips together as she reapplied her lipstick. "And he's always just so cold. Honestly, it's like he doesn't even have a heart."

Kurt stood there as something went off in the back of his mind. "So why did you marry him?"

Rachel smiled sadly at her mirror. "Well, he was the only guy I knew who treated me like everyone else and I liked that. But in hindsight...maybe I should have married one of the guys who thought I was everything." She leaned back in her chair, arms crossed. "I thought we'd balance each other out eventually but..." she sighed. "It doesn't look like it. I thought I'd marry so many of my boyfriends. Even my first one." She opened her vanity drawer and took out a picture. "See? This was us in high school. We were Janet and Brad in Rocky Horror."

Kurt stared at the picture, unblinking.

Rachel sighed. "He was just the first of many. But I ended up marrying the one I never thought I would."

"I have to go."

Rachel looked up at him in surprise. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah," Kurt nodded distractedly. "I just remembered that there's um...show choir practice that I have to attend. To go over the setlist."

Rachel nodded. "Okay. If you're sure."

"I am," Kurt nodded, backing out of the room. He hurried out of the apartment building and back to the Village, realizing how incredibly wrong he'd been.

Blaine walked into the apartment late that night, running his fingers through his hair. It was dark. Frowning, he turned on the lights and there was Kurt in the kitchen, legs dangling off the edge of the counter and the knife block next to him.

"Kurt?"

"I went to your apartment today. The one on the upper west side."

Blaine gaped. “Kurt, why would—”

“I was in disguise. I thought Rachel might still be the killer so I went to investigate. See if I was right. But I couldn’t find anything and then Rachel showed up.”

Blaine stared at him. “Did she—”

“She thought I was a girl. I told her that I was Ellie Grey, your cousin coming to visit because my show choir was in town. We chatted. I don’t think she’s the killer.”

Blaine sighed. “I told you—”

“I think you are.”

Blaine took a step back as Kurt rested his fingers on top of the knife block. “Kurt...”

“You know,” Kurt said quietly, his voice eerily calm. “As soon as we brought up the Queen of Hearts, I automatically assumed that the killer was female.”

“Kurt...”

“And it always ends up being the person that I least expect...”

Blaine licked his lips. “You think I’m the Queen of Hearts?”

“No,” Kurt shook his head. “No, I think your wife is probably for all intents and purposes the closest thing to the Queen of Hearts that this city has ever seen.”

“But you just said—”

“I don’t think that the killer is the Queen of Hearts.”

Blaine blinked. “What?”

Kurt stared impassively at him until tears started to bead in his eyes. "Someone who uses an axe to chop. Someone who's just so cold and uncaring that it's like they don't even have a heart. Someone who's obsessed with finding one..."

Blaine's expression cleared.

"I don't think you're the Queen of Hearts," Kurt whispered. "I think you're the Tinman."

"Someday I'll wish upon a star and wake up where the clouds are far behind me," Kurt sang quietly as he looked out his window. "Where trouble melts like lemon drops and way above the chimney tops that's where you'll find me..."

Tonight was the night. He was ready. He was prepared. He was excited almost.

His door opened and he stopped singing. His brother was there in the doorway.

Kurt smiled, picking up his music box and hopping down from the windowsill. "Is it time to leave? Can we go now?"

His brother picked up his music box. "You really like this thing, don't you?"

Kurt nodded. "My most favorite person ever gave it to me!"

His brother smiled at him before throwing the music box down on the ground as hard as he could.

Kurt jumped back in surprise as glass and metal shards flew everywhere, on cutting the back of his hand.

"Ow! What—"

He broke off as he looked at his brother, who was smiling at him. Kurt started to back away slowly but his brother's arm shot out and he grabbed his wrist.

"Let's have a bit of fun while mom and dad are gone, Kurt."

Blaine stared at him. "Kurt, I didn't kill them."

"And why should I believe you?" Kurt said, his hand gripping one of the fish knives.

Blaine's eyes darted back and forth before he swallowed nervously. "Because I believed you when you told me that you weren't the killer in Seattle."

"You called the police on me!" Kurt snapped.

"Well...you stabbed me!" Blaine fired back.

"After you wouldn't let me go!"

"And I did listen to you!"

"After you were recovering from surgery and too weak to fight me off when I forced you to listen!"

"Then listen to me now! I didn't kill them!"

"I don't believe you!" Kurt screamed.

Blaine raked his hands through his hair in frustration. "And why not?"

"Because everything you've told me was a lie! I thought I could trust you but I can't!"

"Yes you can, Kurt!"

"Why didn't you tell me you were married? Why did you let me think that you *cared* about me?"

"Because I *do* care about you, Kurt!" Blaine yelled, crossing the room to stand in front of him, grabbing his shoulders. "And that scares the hell out of me, okay? My entire life, I haven't cared about anyone, no matter how hard I've tried to. I cried when my bird died but I couldn't shed a single tear at my grandfather's funeral. I just don't care about people and then you showed up and suddenly you were everything to me and I was just so fucking scared that I'd lose you so I'm sorry, okay? Yes, it was cowardly but *I'm sorry*. I'm sorry I lied and I know I fucked up. I'm sorry Kurt."

He felt a pressure on the left side of his chest.

He smiled grimly. "Are you going to stab me again, Kurt?"

Kurt stared at him, wide-eyed and crying, his hands shaking.

"Go ahead," Blaine whispered. "My heart hurts so much it'd be better off if I didn't have it at all."

"Oh shut up you stupid, heartless coward," Kurt whispered, dropping the knife and grabbing Blaine by the collar, kissing him hard.

After his week of uncertainty and not knowing and worrying, Blaine's lips felt like home. Kurt twined his arms tightly around Blaine's shoulders and wrapped his legs around his waist, locking them as he tried to get even closer, his lips mashing against Blaine's.

"Oh god, Kurt," Blaine gasped, raking his fingers down Kurt's sides. "Kurt... Kurt... Kurt, why are you dressed like a Gothic schoolgirl?"

"Blaine?"

"What?"

"Shut up," Kurt moaned, grabbing Blaine's face and slotting their mouths together.

Blaine dragged the back of Kurt's cardigan out of his skirt so he could splay his hand over his back. He hooked his other hand under Kurt's ass and lifted him off the counter, staggering slightly under his weight as they half stumbled, half crashed-into-walls to Blaine's bedroom.

A loud huff left Kurt when he was dropped onto Blaine's bed and he immediately grabbed at his blouse and cardigan, yanking them off his body. He then tugged Blaine back down by his turtleneck, pulling it off.

"Do you like these tights?" Blaine asked, nudging at Kurt's legs while Kurt pulled his skirt up and off via his shoulders.

"Uh..." Kurt blinked, trying to clear his mind. "Not particularly?"

"I'll buy you new ones," Blaine muttered as he ripped them open.

Kurt rolled his eyes, laughing as Blaine tripped over his pants to get to his bedstand. "Wait, you have lube and condoms here but not at your own house?"

Blaine arched an eyebrow. "Were you...snooping in my bedside table?"

Kurt shrugged. "You never know where a bloody axe might be hidden."

Blaine rolled his eyes before kissing him again. Scraps of stockings and remaining underwear was shed until Blaine was biting down very insistently on Kurt's neck while twisting three of his fingers inside of him.

"Oh hurry up," Kurt panted, scratching his nails up and down Blaine's back.

"You young men," Blaine laughed against his neck. "Always so impatient."

"And you old men," Kurt snapped back. "Always so slow."

Blaine shot him a look before ripping open the condom wrapper and rolling it on himself. Kurt grabbed the lube and slicked him up before wrapping his legs around him impatiently.

“Patience is a virtue,” Blaine clucked as he lined himself up.

Kurt stared at him incredulously. “You’re seriously bringing up virtue now? *Now?*”

Blaine grinned, leaning down to kiss him sweetly before snapping his hips forward.

“Oh god, *Blaine.*”

Blaine grabbed Kurt’s legs and brought them up over his shoulders, twisting him into a pretzel as he thrust his hips harder and harder, their legs smacking together sharply and eliciting a series of “uh uh uh”s from Kurt as the bed rocked into the brick wall.

Blaine pressed his forehead against Kurt’s collarbone as he panted against his chest, pounding into him over and over and over until he lost the rhythm and his sight and everything until he could only hear Kurt’s “Ah!”s and feel his slick hot heat and smell that odd bergamot and lavender and laundry detergent scent that was just so Kurt.

There was a sharp snap as the wood headboard cracked against the brick wall and Blaine stretched his head up until he was over Kurt’s throat, licking across his Adam’s apple before biting down hard.

Kurt let out a strangled cry as his back arched up and body clenched down. Blaine managed to snake an arm under Kurt’s back and pull him up close, bending him completely in half as Blaine came, clutching as much of Kurt’s body to him as he could. They shivered and held that position, breathing heavily until Blaine felt his arms starting to cramp and Kurt’s legs twitched against his shoulders and they steadily unfolded each other. The cleanup process was short and simple and silent. Kurt came back from the bathroom and stood awkwardly at the foot of Blaine’s bed, staring at his toes. Blaine opened his arms and Kurt was immediately in them. They curled around each other as they drifted off to sleep.

Five o'clock in the morning found the two in Blaine's kitchen. Kurt, completely naked, was stretched out on top of Blaine's counter while Blaine, in only an apron, was frying potstickers. Kurt stared at the light brown ceiling, resting his cocoa mug over his solar plexus and ignoring the burning sensation on his chest. "We should probably talk."

"Yeah," Blaine nodded. "That seems like a good idea."

"Mmm," Kurt assented, tipping his head up enough to take a sip of cocoa before clunking it back down on the counter. "Honesty time?"

"Honesty time. Fire away."

"So...are you gay or straight or bi..."

Blaine laughed slightly and Kurt appreciated the way it made his back contort. "Uh, none of them? I mean, I was never really interested in anyone growing up. I never felt attracted to anyone in particular and it always annoyed me that people tried to label one way or the other." He gave a half shrug. "I used to just think I was asexual."

"Used to?" Kurt raised an eyebrow.

Blaine shot him a look over his shoulder. "Well, due to recent events, I think I'm leaning more towards Kurtsexual."

Kurt tried to hide his smugness by taking another sip of cocoa. "Is that so?"

"Indeed, it is," Blaine smiled, bringing a platter of freshly cooked potstickers over to the counter and resting it on Kurt's belly.

Kurt plucked up one of them and smiled as he bit into it. "Yay. Food."

"Yes," Blaine hummed into his cocoa mug. "I have quite the feast laid out before me."

Kurt rolled his eyes. "You'd think a writer would have better lines."

"I'm sleepy and sated. Cut me some slack."

Kurt smiled at the ceiling, eating another potsticker.

"Who's your friend in the city?"

Kurt bit his lip. "I can't tell you yet."

"Kurt—"

"But you'll see tomorrow. He's my date to that masquerade party...thing."

Blaine pouted. "But I thought I was your date."

"I'm pretty sure you have to take your wife to that, Blaine."

"Oh yeah," Blaine muttered, popping another potsticker into his mouth.

"So tell me about Rachel," Kurt said quietly, sipping his cocoa.

Blaine shrugged. "I don't know. I dated a lot out of college, trying to find someone and that didn't really work. Rachel was fun. A bit crazy but she wasn't all bad. I kept getting not-so-subtle hints from my parents about how she was a nice girl and how I could maybe start writing for Broadway and I pretty much married her to shut them up. Oh, and because she actually did want to marry me and we were good friends."

He sighed, resting his head against Kurt's ribcage. "But...it fell apart almost immediately. Rachel married me because she liked that I didn't worship her but...she still wanted to be worshiped. And we finally sat down and talked everything out and I think she got mad because she couldn't figure out a reason why I wasn't attracted to her. It wasn't because I was gay, it wasn't because she had some sort of deformity. I didn't think she was ugly and I wasn't in love with someone else. And she was just so upset because she needed a reason for me to not want her in order to accept it, but I couldn't give her one. Then she started fooling around with other guys to make me

jealous and that didn't work. So then she started messing with other guys because she was lonely." He rubbed his hands over his face. "We actually used to be good friends."

"Until you got married and everything went south," Kurt said dryly.

"Pretty much," Blaine sighed. "And it's awful because I should care but I just...don't. I just never really cared much about anyone. Ever. Well...there was an exception but that lasted about five minutes. And I don't know. My family was just never particularly warm, and I never made any really good friends in high school or college..."

"But then some annoying little high school drop-out just had to go and ruin your laptop..."

Blaine smiled, leaning over to peck Kurt on the cheek. "Best bad thing to ever happen to me, hands down."

Kurt giggled, wriggling against the counter comfortably.

"What's your happiest memory?"

Kurt looked over at Blaine in surprise.

"From...before," Blaine elaborated. "I know a lot of bad stuff happened that you probably don't want to talk about, but I was wondering about the good..."

Kurt settled his head back into the counter and tapped on his bellybutton. "This."

Blaine's eyebrows raised in surprise. "Getting your bellybutton pierced?"

Kurt shook his head. "No. And these two." He fingered the four glass beads, two white two black, that he always had in his hair. "When..." he cleared his throat. "When I was five, I was given a music box by my favorite person in the world. It was a Wizard of Oz music box and it played Somewhere Over The Rainbow. And I was told that if I tapped on the ruby on top of the box three times while whispering 'There's no place like home... there's no place like home... there's no

place like home...’ then I’d be able to find my way home.” He smiled wryly. “That didn’t really work, but it’s still a nice memory. And these are all I have left of the music box.”

“What happened to it?” Blaine murmured.

Kurt’s expression grew dark. “Someone broke it.”

“I’m sorry,” Blaine sighed, pushing the plate off of Kurt’s stomach and leaning over to kiss his bellybutton. Kurt’s stomach fluttered in laughter and Blaine smiled before dragging his lips further down, kissing the scarred skin. “Om nom nom...”

“Blaine!” Kurt laughed, tugging on his hair to bring his face up. “You’re so ridiculous.”

“No, I just love your body,” Blaine groaned, mouthing along the side of Kurt’s hip. “And here it is, laid out before me like a feast.” He kissed along the side of his ribs until he encountered the rose tattoo, tracing the black ink with his tongue. On impulse, he stretched Kurt’s arm up above his head and started diving in along his tattoo, sucking and biting and steadily climbing higher and higher up his ribs.

“Blaine, that tick—oh *fuck!*”

Kurt’s heels dragged up the counter as Blaine burrowed into the skin just below his underarm, biting and digging in with his teeth as he scraped his fingers across Kurt’s nipples. He moved his lips over to the soft underside of Kurt’s arm and started worrying a hickey into the white skin.

“God, you would be the one to have some sort of weird side-fetish,” Kurt gasped.

Blaine stepped up onto the stool so he could climb onto the counter. “I’m pretty sure I just have a Kurt fetish.”

Kurt grinned, grabbing his shoulders and managing to reverse their positions so that he was straddling Blaine’s hips. “Well then by all means, Mr. Anderson. Indulge.”

Blaine propped himself up onto his elbows before pulling Kurt back down for a kiss.

The vast majority of Friday was spent attempting to talk with one another and mostly just ending up having sex all over the apartment. Blaine discovered that he did indeed have a thing for Kurt's side. Kurt found out that he was particularly attracted to the V of Blaine's hips.

They also ran out of potstickers and chocolate and eventually had to order take-out.

Friday night, they didn't have sex. They were curled up on Blaine's couch, take-out boxes surrounding them and wrapped up in a comforter as they watched The Wizard of Oz, singing along and quoting every second. Kurt ended up nuzzled in the crook of Blaine's neck, his eyes growing heavy as Dorothy tearfully kissed everyone goodbye before clicking her pretty red slippers together.

"There's no place like home..." Kurt murmured sleepily into Blaine's neck before drifting off.

A thick fog settled over the island of Manhattan and a lone couple were reclining in a boat in Central Park.

"Why is it that after taking a new step in our sexual relationship, we always end up in a rowboat together?"

Blaine snorted, letting the oars settle in the boat. "I think the real question is why do you always end up in a corset?"

Kurt rolled his eyes, playing with his fake auburn curls. "It's for the dress I have to wear tonight. And last time it was to get us in a creative mood."

"And we ended up having sex in the middle of Lake Union. You know, the lake that's bordered by downtown, Queen Anne, Capitol and just about every other vastly populated areas of Seattle."

“Like you were complaining,” Kurt smirked. “But no tomfoolery today. My hair has to stay pristine for the ball tonight.”

“And you still won’t tell me who your date is,” Blaine groaned.

“You’ll see,” Kurt chided. “And you only have to wait like...three hours.”

“True,” Blaine sighed. “So we’ve ruled me and Rachel out on the list of killers.”

“Yeah,” Kurt nodded. “And the Tinman or Queen of Hearts has to be someone linked to the cast.”

Blaine nodded, staring up at the sky thoughtfully. Then he sat up. “We’ve missed something.”

Kurt sat up straighter. “What?”

“Harmony and Cassandra. There’s another link between them.” He looked back at Kurt. “They live in the same apartment building.”

Kurt stared at him. “Is there anyone else in the cast who also lives there? Because they could be the next victim—”

“Or our killer,” Blaine stared. “My thoughts exactly.”

Kurt licked his lips. “Okay, you need to find out who while I go meet my date. Get Rachel, bring her to the party and I’ll show up as well and we can figure this whole thing out together.”

“Alright,” Blaine nodded.

The fog grew denser.

“Hey, it’s Kurt.”

“Hey. Are you on your way?”

“Just a few blocks away. You have a dress for me, I hear?”

“I have a dress for Alexandra Bergamot.”

“Excellent. Thanks again, Jesse.”

“See you soon, Kurt.”

Jesse smiled lightly, clicking off his phone as he sat on the edge of the Gershwin stage, looking out over the blue seats.

Kurt’s eyes were widened and leaking tears against the wooden table. His nose was pressed uncomfortably against the surface and it mashed harder and harder into the wood with each jolt of his body. His ankles and wrists were handcuffed to the table legs and he was naked. He’d wet himself half an hour ago and it had been ten minutes since he’d lost his voice to screaming.

That didn’t stop his voice from trying every time the whip came down hard on his back.

He started to lose himself to the fuzzy black spots that kept appearing when a voice rang through the room.

“What the hell?”

“Oh, hey Jesse! Isn’t it awesome?”

“What are you doing?”

“He was trying to run away. This is to teach him a lesson.”

“I don’t know man, this seems—”

"Come on! I'll show you."

Crack.

Kurt jolted on the table.

"Stop!"

Kurt blinked, realizing that the words hadn't come from him.

"He's been bad. He deserves it. Why don't you give it a shot?"

"I don't think I want to..."

"Well watch this..." He leaned down over Kurt with a smile. "Kurt? Are you stupid?"

Kurt nodded.

"Are you an idiot?"

Kurt nodded.

"Do you deserve this?"

Kurt nodded.

"See? It's awesome. He responds however I want him to, like a puppy."

"Dude, this is not cool."

"Sure it is, just give it a shot. Ask him if he's a little bitch."

"I—"

"Jesse."

Jesse leaned down in front of him, staring at him with wide eyes.

Kurt tilted his head up slowly, breath raspy and eyes blinking against the light.

Jesse opened his mouth. "Do you have any idea why a raven is like a writing desk?"

Kurt's brow furrowed before he shakily shook his head.

Jesse kept staring at him. "Can you name me three things beginning with the letter M?"

Kurt licked his lips before rasping out, "M-marigold."

Jesse nodded. "Yes, good."

"M-m-marmalade."

"You're doing great. Just one more."

Kurt's eyes glanced up at his brother. "M-monster."

Jesse closed his eyes in an effort to blink back the memories as imaginary music started flowing through his ears.

"Well there are some nights I hold on to every note I ever wrote

Some nights, I say fuck it all and stare at the calendar

Waiting for catastrophes, imagine when they scare me

Into changing whatever it is I am changing into..."

He backed away from the audience, looking down at himself before looking back up, a devilish grin cracking onto his face.

"And you have every right to be scared.

Cause there are some nights I hold you close, pushing you to hold me

Or begging you to lock me up and never let me see the world

Some nights I live in horror of the people on the radio

Tea parties and twitter. I've never been so bitter and..."

He started to sway back and forth.

"You, why you wanna stay?

Oh my god! Have you listened to me lately?

Lately, I've been going crazy

And you, why you wanna stay?

Oh my god! Have you listened to me lately?

Lately, I've been fucking crazy..."

He ran to the front of the stage.

"There are some nights I wait for someone to save us

But I never look inward, I try not to look upward

And some nights I pray a sign is gonna come to me

But usually... I'm just trying to get some sleep."

He sighed, looking at the ground before looking back up into the stage lights.

"Some nights!"

He breathed heavily, looking out over the empty audience.

A clap came from behind him and he turned, spotting Kurt walk out from by the curtains. He was wearing a white corset and matching slip, a gray trenchcoat over one arm.

"Impressive," Kurt smiled, walking over to him. "Then again, you always were."

"True," Jesse shrugged before a smile broke out on his face as well. "You're doing okay, Kurt? Blaine's not being a dick?"

Kurt shook his head. "No. And the investigation is becoming...interesting."

"Really?" Jesse arched an eyebrow.

Kurt nodded, filling him in on what they'd discovered.

Jesse rolled his eyes. "I could've told you that Rachel wasn't the killer."

"Ah," Kurt said with a smile.

Jesse blinked. "What?"

"So that's why you're doing this. I always wondered..." Kurt smirked.

"Oh shut up," Jesse groaned.

"You like a married woman," Kurt giggled.

"You like a married man," Jesse shot back.

"Touche."

Jesse smiled. "Well, we'd better mask up and go meet our married couple."

Kurt stared at him oddly. "Jesse, are you okay? I mean, you're acting kind of weird..."

Jesse looked at him hard, before suddenly hugging him.

Kurt blinked in surprise. "Jesse...?"

"I just have this really bad feeling that something terrible is going to happen tonight," he said quietly. "And Kurt...I'm so sorry about everything that happened before."

"It's okay," Kurt whispered. "It's over now."

"That's the thing..." Jesse said, his voice barely a whisper. "I'm scared that it isn't."

They pulled back and looked at each other, fear in both of their eyes.

"We just have to get through tonight, right?" Kurt said, licking his lips. "Let's just get through tonight. You look after Rachel and I'll look after Blaine."

"Okay," Jesse nodded. "But Kurt? Look after yourself as well. I worry about you."

Kurt let out a shaky laugh. "Wow, you must be really freaked out if you're admitting that."

Jesse smiled humorlessly. "Oh, you have no idea."

Even with the bright lights of Manhattan, it was hard to see scarcely ten feet in front of you with the dense fog that had somehow captured the city.

Beiste finally got Blaine and Rachel onto the block of the party, the traffic five times worse than usual due to the minimal visibility.

“Well, at least we’re fashionably late,” Rachel sighed, tucking her phone into her clutch and arranging her gold dress around herself artfully.

Blaine looked over at her and gave a half smile. “You look beautiful tonight.”

She glanced at him in surprise before straightening her spine. “Thank you. You look very debonair yourself.”

He sighed. “Rachel—”

“Blaine, I’d rather not get into an argument right before we have to make a public appearance—”

“—I’m sorry.”

She froze before arching an eyebrow. “Oh?”

“I’m sorry for how this marriage has gone,” he rubbed his eyes wearily. “And I’m sorry because I know that this isn’t what you wanted from a husband.”

She stared at him for a long while before releasing a sigh. “It takes two to tango, Blaine,” she said quietly, looking out her window. “My dad always told me that I should marry someone who loved me more than I loved them. They said that that’s what I needed, but I never listened.” She looked down at her lap. “I just thought that we’d end up...”

“Balancing each other out?”

“Yeah,” she smiled. “My mania would mesh with your stoicism.”

“And it did,” Blaine shrugged. “I mean, we were good friends. We’re just not good...”

“Spouses.”

They sat in silence as they inched closer to their destination.

“I’m sorry I had sex with Finn in our bed.”

“It’s okay.”

“No it’s not,” Rachel shook her head. “I knew that those were your favorite sheets and I did it anyways.”

“I did love them dearly,” Blaine nodded sadly.

Silence. And then they burst out laughing.

“Oh god,” Rachel wheezed, hand pressed to her chest. “I’ve missed this.”

“Me too,” Blaine laughed. “Actually, that’s my least favorite thing about our marriage. That it ruined our friendship.”

“Yeah,” Rachel snorted. “Marriages tend to do that. Remember when we watched Jerry McGuire together?”

“Oh yeah,” Blaine nodded. He looked at Rachel and they pointed at each other, yelling, “Show me the money!” together before dissolving into giggles again.

“Can we get this back?” Rachel asked with a smile. “I mean, our marriage is clearly going nowhere, but can we at least be friends again?”

Blaine smiled back. “I’d like that. And there is something I’d like to talk to you about after tonight. Some...things have come up.”

“I know.”

“Really?”

Rachel nodded. "You've been different since coming back from Seattle. I mean, sort of heartless at times, but much more...active. You used to just sit there writing and now you're all over the city, always busy. But we'll talk after the party?"

"After the party," Blaine nodded as they pulled up in front of the station. "But for now, I have to escort the belle of the ball to her masquerade."

Rachel smiled as they pulled on their masks and Blaine helped her out of the car.

The party was already under full swing when Blaine and Rachel walked in. Masqueraders in a variety of costumes were flitting about the place, showing off their costumes. Blaine and Rachel did the rounds, greeting Artie, giving their regards to Chandler and Sebastian, having a very brief conversation with Finn, chitchat with Wes, before finally settling with Sam and his date Santana.

"She's my friend from the precinct," Sam said pointedly.

"I'm just an intern," she rolled her eyes. She was dressed as a phoenix, all red and scarlet and orange. "I'm still making my way through law school."

"And doing fabulously," Sam grinned. He was dressed as a knight. "She wins every argument we have!"

"That's not exactly hard, Sam," Blaine said dryly.

"Come on," Santana said, pulling Sam away. "I came here to dance, Lips."

"Well well well."

Blaine rolled his eyes before turning around to face Jesse dressed all in black as well with...Kurt. On his arm.

Blaine tried not to stare.

"Jesse," Rachel smiled, kissing his cheeks. "Always a pleasure. And..." her expression hardened slightly as she saw Kurt. "Alexandra, right?"

"Yes," Kurt said sweetly, shaking her hand. "Rachel, correct? I love your gown. Is that a new Marchesa?"

Rachel looked taken aback at the sudden compliment before preening. "Yes, it is."

"And who are you supposed to be?" Jesse gave Blaine's black outfit a once over. "Edgar Allen Poe?"

"Hades," Blaine rolled his eyes. "And you're...?"

"The Dread Pirate Roberts, of course."

"With..." Blaine's eyes raked up and down Kurt's dress. It was a silvery gray with some sort of iridescent rainbow thread that had a large unicorn embroidered onto it, its horn reaching up to Kurt's left shoulder, his auburn hair falling down into cascade waves and a spiderweb-esque mask across his face. "...the Last Unicorn?"

"Correct!" Kurt smiled.

"And I'm Queen Midas," Rachel said, dusting off her large metallic skirt.

"Ah," Jesse grinned. "The perfect bounty for a scurrilous pirate. May I have the next dance, your majesty?"

A smile lit Rachel's face as she took Jesse's arm. "You may."

Kurt and Blaine watched the two walk off with amusement.

"Well that was incredibly blatant," Kurt muttered.

“Well, this is Jesse and Rachel we’re talking about,” Blaine shrugged. “Speaking of which, may I have this dance?” He offered his arm to Kurt who smiled and took it. They started dancing, blending into the sea of masks.

“So how do you know Jesse?” Blaine asked.

“We go way back,” Kurt smiled. “Like...really far back.”

“Is that so?” Blaine said curtly, looking out over the masqueraders.

Kurt blinked in surprise before a slow smile crept on his face. “Blaine Anderson...do I detect a hint of jealousy?”

“No,” Blaine scoffed. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Oh my god!” Kurt laughed. “You’re jealous!”

“So?” Blaine grumbled.

“So? I thought you didn’t get jealous!”

“There’s a first time for everything,” Blaine sighed. “But there are more pressing matters.”

“Right,” Kurt nodded, suddenly somber. “Well, you can definitely cross Jesse off your suspect list. He was the one who talked me into staying here to check out the murders. I think he wanted to make sure that Rachel wouldn’t become a victim.”

“Okay,” Blaine nodded. “So that leaves...three suspects, I think? Finn Hudson, though that doesn’t seem likely—”

Kurt glanced to the side.

“—Sunshine Corazon just because she has the most motive, and Chandler Kiehl.”

Kurt frowned. "Chandler? Why him?"

"Oh, because he lives in the same apartment building as Harmony and Cassandra did."

"Oh," Kurt whispered, biting his lip. "I guess I'm still just confused because of motive—"

"Blaine!"

They cut off as Rachel and Jesse appeared next to them, dancing.

Kurt and Blaine glanced at each other before easily switching partners. Jesse and Kurt waltzed further into the dance floor, trying to get a safe distance.

"Any more news?" Jesse murmured.

"We're down to three suspects," Kurt said quietly. "But we still can't think of motive."

"Okay," Jesse nodded. "But stick close, okay? I still have a feeling that something's about to go horribly wrong."

Kurt nodded and they kept dancing. Jesse spun him out at one point and he accidentally let go. Kurt grasped for a hand until another one pulled him back from a twirl and he was in someone else's arms.

"Oh! Excuse me," Kurt blushed before making his way back to the edge of the dance floor, dancing with random partners to make his way back as smoothly as possible.

He was plucked up in another man's arms and he glanced over his shoulder, standing on his tiptoes to try and see if he could spot Jesse or Blaine.

The arm around him suddenly tightened and a gloved hand traced down his back. Kurt was about to shove back when a voice started to sing softly in his ear.

"If a man's an empty kettle, he should be on his mettle..."

His fingers suddenly dug into the scars on Kurt's back.

"And yet I'm torn apart..."

He cupped Kurt's face and leaned back so he could look at him through his cold metallic mask.

"Just because I'm presumin' that I could be a human..." His grin turned feral. *"If I only had a heart."*

Kurt froze, his eyes wide as he stared at the Tinman. "You..." he whispered. "It's you."

The Tinman smiled. "Hello, Kurt."

"I should have known it was you," Kurt said, horror filling every inch of his body. "Oh god, how could I have not realized it sooner?"

"Well, you never were the brightest," Tinman shrugged with a laugh. "Though I must say, you do clean up nicely." He eyed Kurt's body and Kurt felt his stomach churn. "And didn't I always say that you'd make a better girl than boy?"

"Why are you doing this?" Kurt whispered. "I still don't understand your motive. Why?"

"Because..." he leaned in close to Kurt's ear. "It's fun."

Kurt shook his head. "There's something else. There's always something else with you."

A smile. "True. I have something else right now."

Kurt didn't want to ask. He did. "What?"

The Tinman pulled him closer so he could sing in his ear. "I've got a pocket, got a pocket full of sunshine..."

Kurt looked at him confused and the Tinman rolled his eyes. He grabbed Kurt's hand and put it into his suit pocket. Kurt frowned, feeling around until he grabbed something and he froze, looking back up at the Tinman.

He was grinning.

Kurt opened his mouth but the Tinman was too fast, clapping a hand over it before Kurt could scream.

"Now now, Kurt," he hushed. "I shared my little secret with you. You wouldn't want to go blabbing it to everyone else now would you?" He leaned in close until their noses were touching. "Or do you want me to chop off something else of yours?"

Kurt shook his head quietly and the Tinman took his hand off his mouth.

"Good boy. Or girl. It's always so hard to tell with you."

"Sunshine..." Kurt whispered, shaking. "That...that was her..."

"Heart, yes," Tinman shrugged. He pulled the little corner of the ziplock bag that held the Broadway star's organ in his pocket. "Nothing like a pre-masquerade killing to get a party really starting."

Kurt blinked back tears. "You're a monster."

"I know, dear," Tinman smiled. "You've told me before."

"I'll go to the police," Kurt said dazedly.

"How well did that work out last time? Oh, but even if you try," he leaned down close, grin inches from Kurt's lips. "I'll skewer Blaine."

What color was left in Kurt's face disappeared. "No."

“Yes. Slowly. Painfully. And you can rest assured that I’ll make. You. Watch.”

“Name your price.”

Tinman blinked in surprise. “What?”

“Your price,” Kurt rasped. “You have one. You always have. I know you and I know where this is going so just name your price.”

Tinman grinned. “You. My apartment. Midnight. Too hard?”

“No,” Kurt said. “I’ll be there.”

“Good. And remember that if there’s anyone else involved, I’ll handcuff Blaine to his dining room table and skin him alive.” He slipped one of his business cards down the front of Kurt’s dress. “Midnight, Kurt. We have a lot of catching up to do.”

A loud scream pierced the room.

“And that’s my cue,” Tinman grinned. “I think they just found Sunshine’s body upstairs. Time to move with the masses.

He left Kurt standing in the middle of the floor as all the other dancers halted, wondering what the commotion was about.

Within a minute, the hall was full-blown panicked. People were running everywhere and screaming murder. Blaine clamped onto Rachel’s hand tightly and suddenly Jesse was at his side as well. “Where’s Kurt?” Blaine yelled over the shouts and screams, all pretenses lost.

“I don’t know!” Jesse yelled back. “He disappeared—”

"I'm right here!" Through a couple dressed as Anthony and Cleopatra, Kurt managed to emerge, holding half of his gown up.

"Jesse, take them home!" Blaine urged, pushing them together. "I'm going to go and help.

"Blaine!" Rachel yelled.

"Just go with Jesse!" he shouted back. He turned to Kurt. "I'll text you!"

Kurt nodded and Blaine ran off into the crowd.

"Come on," Jesse muttered, grabbing Kurt's arm and dragging him and Rachel out of the fray. They made it outside into the thick fog relatively safe.

"Jesse," Kurt hissed into his ear. "Take Rachel home. I'm going to stay here and make sure Blaine is okay."

"But Kurt—"

"Remember? You said you'd look after Rachel and I said I'd look after Blaine, okay?"

Jesse bit his lip. "Okay. But make sure to look after yourself in return. Alright?"

"Alright," Kurt nodded. He waited until Jesse got into his car with Rachel before finding a taxi.

He went back to the apartment, losing his dress and wig and rubbing a towel over his face. He dressed simply. A pair of jeans. An old tee shirt. Converse. Jacket. Then he opened his sketchbook and started writing.

Blaine received the text an hour after he'd last seen Kurt.

I'm at the apartment. I'm safe.

He nodded and listened more to the police report. Sunshine was killed earlier this evening, just before the party had started, upstairs.

Blaine frowned. It didn't fit the other profiles and didn't really make sense either. But it was the same killer. Same technique. Heart still missing.

He sighed, walking away from the small mob that was crowded around the policeman and ran into Chandler Kiehl.

"Whoops," Chandler laughed. "Sorry, Blaine."

"Chandler," Blaine said, hand gripping his arm. "What were you doing tonight before the party?"

Chandler frowned at him, confused. "I was getting drinks with Jeff and Nick."

"Really?" Blaine smiled tightly. "And what did you do afterwards?"

Chandler stared at him. "I came to the party with them and we met up with all our dates and danced together."

Blaine floundered momentarily. "Well, you live in the same apartment as Harmony and Cassandra did, don't you?"

"Yeah."

"Well, what were you doing on the nights of their murders?"

Chandler blinked. "Well, during Harmony's murder I was out with Wes and David, and during Cassandra's, I was at your place."

Blaine stared. "What?"

"Rachel invited me and Artie over for a Streisand night," Chandler shrugged. "Since we all love her."

“Oh,” Blaine muttered, letting him go. “Okay then.”

Chandler had an alibi. Plus Sunshine didn’t live in his building, so that basis was completely out.

Then who the hell was Tinman?

Blaine went back to his apartment an hour later. “Kurt?”

All the lights were off.

Blaine walked back to Kurt’s room and clicked on the light. No one. His room. No one. Any of the rooms.

No one.

Blaine grabbed his phone and dialed Kurt’s number.

There was a buzzing noise on the kitchen counter.

Blaine walked over to it and there was Kurt’s phone. Along with the four glass beads from his hair, his bellybutton piercing, and his sketchbook, with a couple of handwritten pages torn out on top. Blaine picked up the pages and read.

Blaine—

I’m sorry, but I have to stop him. I know who Tinman is. I think I’ve known all along deep down but I didn’t want to admit it to myself because I didn’t want to face my fears.

(And he scares me, Blaine. He’s the second most terrifying person I know. No, not a person. God, he’s a monster. He always has been.)

But I can't tell you who because I don't want you to come after me. I have to do this on my own. If you got hurt along the way...

You wanted the truth, right? Well here it is:

My name is Kurt Hummel. I was born in Lima, Ohio. My parents were Burt and Alice Hummel. We got in a car crash when I was five. My mother died instantly. My father survived, but he slipped into a coma. I was placed in an orphanage but no one wanted me so I was put into foster care. The family I ended up with... It was terrible, Blaine. It was horrific. It's the reason my back is the way it is and also the...condition between my legs.

Because I was the gay kid adopted by the homophobic couple who believed that...lashing a child would take the wickedness out of them.

I was beaten for everything: singing, talking, not pushing in my chair at the table, eating too much, hugging their son, and, eventually, being gay.

Mom and Dad were bad but my brother...

Blaine, he was...terrifying.

It got a whole lot worse which ended with me leaving and well...that was messy. I was half crazed out of my mind and I hitchhiked west. As far west as I could go. And I ended up on the streets of a rainy little city, found by Emma and calling myself Dorothy.

There's a whole lot more to the story, but it's not important. There are other matters at hand.

I have to stop my brother, Blaine. At any cost. Even if that cost is me. Because I know what will happen if I don't.

And you can't follow me. That's why I've refrained from using names. You can't get hurt, Blaine. You're too precious, too wonderful, too beautiful, too...you. If anything happened to you, I would never ever be able to forgive myself.

Because—god, if I’m going to get my heart ripped out of my chest, I may as well do it thoroughly—the thing is...

I love you, Blaine Anderson.

Do you want to know when I realized? It wasn’t when we first met, or our first time, or when you were writing words on my back and tapping my bellybutton piercing and proclaiming that there was no place like home, or when you dragged me out of Will’s office, or when I’d found out that you weren’t truly mine. It wasn’t one of those significant moments that defined our relationship.

No, it was Lake Union. Remember Lake Union? We were in a rowboat and I’d dressed us up in quasi-Victorian alternative chic clothes to help us brainstorm who the Scarecrow was in real life and his storyline in the book. And then I made some comment about being the Alice Liddel to your Lewis Carroll and you suddenly got horny—and I was planning on using that inappropriate fantasy of yours against you one day—and we ended up messing around rightthere in the rowboat?

Yeah, that was it. Being on my back in the bottom of that boat, giggling with you as we tried not to tip over. That’s when I realized that I was in love with you.

Because what other crazy ass force in the universe would have me in a corset in the middle of a lake in October fooling around with some guy who was nearly twice my age? Love works in mysterious ways...

See? I made you smile. I know this is probably depressing you (oh you silly writers, always getting so goddamn emotional) so I wanted to inject a little humor in there. But it is one hundred percent true.

And I’m so, so sorry for how all of this turned out. But know that I love you. And please, if you feel even an inkling of what I do for you, don’t come looking for me. I couldn’t bear it if you were hurt.

I’ll see you around, Mr. Earl Grey.

Well actually...I guess I won’t.

I love you. I'm sorry.

Kurt

P.S. If the murders continue, find Jesse. He's mad as a hatter, but he'll know how to stop him.

Blaine stared at the note. He reread it. And then again.

"No."

He looked wildly around the cold empty apartment and ran his fingers through his hair.

"No!"

He shoved all the appliances off of the counter.

"NO!"

He called Jesse.

"Hey, this is St. James. Leave a message."

"Jesse pick up your fucking phone! It's an emergency call me back!"

He called him again.

Then he called Carl.

"Detective Howell. I'm not at my desk right now. Please leave your name and number."

"Carl! It's Blaine. You have to look up records for Lima, Ohio and tell me everything there is to know about Kurt Hummel!"

He hung up and dropped his cell phone on the table, collapsing in a chair as he looked around wildly, trying not to panic.

“Come on,” he muttered. “Come on, who is it?” If Kurt had figured it out, it had to be someone they both knew. But Blaine didn’t know who Kurt knew... “Come on!”

Nothing. He was pulling a blank.

He shoved away from the table, going back over to the file that had all the newspaper clippings from the paper. Harmony and Cassandra. Now Sunshine. Chopped off heads. Cut out hearts. Little hearts cut all over their bodies and peeled away. Arms and feet locked in handcuffs. What was he missing? What was the key?

Tinman. Who would want to be Tinman? Tinman didn’t have a heart...

He groaned, sitting down on the ground cross-legged, mind firing back and forth. He needed a motive. Motive. Motive...

But there wasn’t one! Why would he kill girls off from the cast unless... Unless...

Blaine slid his hands off his face slowly, staring at his wall, his mind racing.

It was someone Kurt knew. His...brother?...apparently. But Kurt had never mentioned having a brother, he’d never mentioned anything about his family. So who...who...

A memory flickered in the back of Blaine’s mind and he grabbed the letter and the reports and Kurt’s cellphone and headed out.

He slid into his car and told Beiste to take him to SoHo.

He raced up to the fifth floor and knocked on the apartment.

No reply.

He backed up, ready to kick the door down when it opened and Finn Hudson stuck his head out.

“Where is he,” Blaine demanded.

Finn blinked. “Who? Blaine, can this wait until morning? I’m kind of busy...”

“Oh really?” Blaine snorted. “With what?” He shoved past Finn, into his apartment and immediately covered his eyes as high-pitched squeals filled the air. “Wow, I really didn’t need to see that.”

Finn dragged him out into the hallway, closing the door shut. “Dude, what the hell?”

“Why do you have blonde twins in there doing...*that* to hotdogs?” Blaine murmured woozily.

“Why are you at my place just barging in!” Finn raised his voice.

Blaine snapped out of it. “Where’s Kurt?”

Finn frowned. “Who?”

“Kurt Hummel. Your brother.”

Finn stared at him. “Dude, I don’t have a brother. My dad died when I was a kid and my mom raised me.”

“Yeah but—”

Blaine frowned. Kurt had written parents, not parent.

Finn tilted his head down at him. “Are you okay, man?”

“No,” Blaine shook his head. “No, I have to go...”

He was out of ideas. He slid back into his car and just told Beiste to drive around because he had no idea where else to look. His one other suspect had been Sunshine, and she was currently in six separate pieces.

Blaine hopelessly sifted through the reports again, trying to go over the information that he knew so well in his mind...

It was someone from Kurt's past, someone who knew him, his brother, a tormentor...Kurt had lash marks on his back.

He looked over the reports again, reading everything he already knew. Female was knocked out. Handcuffed. Heart shapes were cut out and peeled off. Bleach. Limbs chopped off with a strong sideways blow.

Blaine blinked. Kurt had lash marks on his back. From being whipped. But...

He grabbed one of the photos—the one of Cassandra and looked at it. Her head, arms, and legs had all been chopped off by extremely strong single blows with an axe. And Kurt...his back was covered in lash marks, but not the usual kind. They weren't vertical, they were horizontal. Like someone had a very strong sideways swing—

The photos in his hand fluttered to the floor as Blaine stared out the window in shock.

"Beiste, get me to Tribeca NOW."

He knew exactly who the Tinman was.

"Kurt! I almost didn't recognize you! You are wearing boy clothes for once!"

Kurt froze, his heart suddenly up in his ears as he turned around to face the Tinman. He licked his lips and attempted to swallow.

“Hello Sebastian.”

“Blaine? Pick up your phone. Anyways, Detective Ryan is pulling the Kurt Hummel files. Call me back when you have a free minute.”

Sebastian smiled, taking off his suit jacket. “It’s been a long time, hasn’t it Kurt?”

Kurt just stood silently, eyes wary.

Sebastian sighed. “Still the hesitance? I mean, we are brothers after all.”

“Foster brothers.”

“True,” Sebastian shrugged. “Still, we had some good times, right?”

Silence.

“So it’s come to that?” Sebastian asked quietly. He took a step forward and Kurt tried to run.

Sebastian hooked an arm around his waist and used the momentum to slam him into the wall. Kurt cried out as his head cracked painfully against it. Sebastian kned him in the stomach and he doubled over before feeling the cold click around his wrist.

“No!” he screamed as he tried to yank his hand free from the handcuff, but Sebastian just dragged him over to his desk. “No please! Stop! No! No!”

Blaine’s phone rang. “Hello?”

“Blaine? It’s Jesse. What happened?”

“What the hell?” Blaine exploded. “I told you to take Kurt home and make sure he was safe!”

“He told me that he was going to stay with you!” Jesse yelled back. “Oh god, what’s wrong?”

“He went after the killer!” Blaine said desperately. “And I figured it out, it’s Chandler’s boyfriend—”

“Chandler has a boyfriend?”

“—Sebastian.”

There was a silence on the other end of the phone.

“Blaine...” Jesse said quietly. “Are you talking about Sebastian Smythe?”

“Yes!”

“Blaine, where’s Kurt?”

“Probably at Sebastian’s already, he had an hour head start—”

“No Blaine listen to me. You have to get him out of there!”

“I know—”

“No, you don’t know! Sebastian’s a monster, and Kurt was never able to fight him off!”

“What are you talking about?”

“I was his best friend throughout middle school until one day I went over to his house and he had Kurt tied up in the basement.”

“What?”

“I mean...I always new that his parents would hit Kurt and I suspected some other stuff that was a lot worse, but I didn’t care because I was just a dumb kid. But then Sebastian... His parents were out of town one weekend and I came over and he just...wouldn’t let up. He whipped Kurt’s back until it was a bloody pulp. That’s where most of his scars come from.”

“You didn’t tell the police?”

“That’s the thing, Blaine. Sebastian’s manipulative. And his dad’s the district attorney. I told the second time—”

“The second time?”

“...I came over to try and reconcile and Sebastian...had an axe.”

Blaine stared out the window as the cars rolled by. “You mean...”

“I called 911. Kurt wouldn’t stop bleeding and screaming...”

“Oh my god.”

“How close are you?”

“Five minutes.”

“Okay, listen to me, Blaine,” Jesse said urgently. “Be careful. Be very very careful with Sebastian. He fights dirty.”

“Trust me,” Blaine growled as they entered Tribeca. “I know exactly how he fights.”

CRACK.

“Blaine was right. Vertical is much better,” Sebastian sighed. “I can’t believe you tried to cover up my work with ugly black ink.”

Kurt laid handcuffed to the wooden desk, trembling weakly. Sebastian had just gone right at it, grabbing a whip from...somewhere and beating Kurt’s back, not even bothering to take off his shirt so that strips of cloth were being imbedded into the bloody ridges in his back.

He didn’t even want to think about what his tattoo looked like at this point.

Sebastian came up behind him, casually digging his finger into one of the bloody wounds, sliding the cloth around.

Kurt’s scream hurt his own ears, even muffled against the desk as it was.

“Oh! I never got to finish that song, did I?” Sebastian mused. “Where was I at? Ah yes...” He caressed Kurt’s back. “I’d be tender, I’d be gentle. And aw—” CRACK. “—ful sentimental regarding love and art. I’d be friends with the sparrows and the boy who shoots” CRACK. “the arrows if I only had a heart.”

“Please,” Kurt cried. “Please stop.”

“Picture me: A balcony. Above a voice sings low...” He grabbed a handful of Kurt’s hair. “Kurt, that’s your part.”

“W-wherefore art thou R-Romeo,” Kurt cried and Sebastian released his hair, causing his head to hit the table hard.

“Hear the beat?”

CRACK. CRACK.

“AAUGH!”

Sebastian sighed dreamily. “Ah, so sweet.”

“Please, Sebastian—”

“Just to register emotion.” CRACK. “Jealousy.” CRACK. “Devotion.” CRACK. “And really” CRACK. “feel the part.” CRACK CRACK. “I could stay young and chipper.” CRACK. “And I’d lock it with a zipper.” CRACK. “If I only had a heart.” CRACK.

Kurt’s body was just convulsing violently on the table at this point.

“I think I’m singing too much, don’t you?” Sebastian frowned. “I know, you should do some! Ooh, I have the perfect song too and it’s Top 40 so I know you’ll know it.” He leaned down and whispered the tittle into Kurt’s ear.

“No,” Kurt moaned, shaking his head.

“Yes.”

“No!”

“Yes!” CRACK. “Yes!” CRACK. “Yes!” CRACK.

Kurt shuddered, breath coming in ragged as his voice cracked.

“Kurt Kurt Kurt,” Sebastian murmured, leaning over to kiss him on the cheek. “If you don’t do it, it’ll be so much worse for you. And then I might have to involve Blaine—”

“Fine.”

“Yay,” Sebastian smiled, patting his back roughly, his palm driving into the sticky blood.

Kurt licked his dry cracked lips. “F-feels so good being bad... There’s no way I’m going back...” He coughed, tasting metallic on his tongue. “N-now the pain i-is my p-p-pleasure ‘cause nothing can m-measure...” He broke down into sobs until Sebastian cracked the whip over his back again.

“Keep singing.”

He tried to stop crying, but it was impossible. “L-love is great love is fine out the box out of line the affliction of the feel leaves me oh god Sebastian please stop please!”

CRACK.

“Keep. Singing.”

“C-cause I may be bad but I-I’m perfectly g-good at it. S-s-sex in the air I don’t c-care I love the smell of it. S-sticks and s-stones may b-break my b-bones but chains and w-whips ex—”

CRACK CRACK CRACK CRACK CRACK CRACK

“STOP PLEASE SEBASTIAN PLEASE—”

“STOP!”

Kurt and Sebastian’s heads snapped over to the doorway where Blaine Anderson was standing, looking like he was about to destroy a planet.

He also had a gun in his hand.

“Blaine,” Sebastian said coolly, straightening up. “How nice of you to join.”

“Drop the whip. Let him go,” Blaine said quietly, his voice that scary-calm it would get when he was really angry.

“I don’t think—”

“Drop the whip and let him go or I’ll blow your fucking brains out and then do it myself,” Blaine said calmly.

Sebastian shot him a look before the whip fell from his hand to the ground with a clatter.

“Good,” Blaine smiled coldly. “Now unlock his handcuffs and if you even move funny then this trigger gets pulled.”

Sebastian sighed and reached over to unlock the handcuffs. Kurt tried to raise himself up but his arms shook to badly and gave out.

“He’s pretty weak,” Sebastian shrugged. “Maybe you should put your gun down and help him—”

“Sure! Let me just put a bullet through your skull first!” Blaine snapped, cocking the gun.

Sebastian raised his hands and backed off.

Kurt managed to slide off the table and stagger a couple of feet. Blaine walked over to him, eyes still glued on Sebastian, and offered him his arm.

“How did you find me?” Kurt whispered.

“Yes, I’m curious as to that as well,” Sebastian droned. “Assuming that little Kurt here didn’t tell you.”

Blaine shot Sebastian a look. “Your scars, Kurt. They’re horizontal. Just like the way the girls were cut up. Someone who favors swinging horizontally. And after years of fencing practice with Sebastian...”

“Ah,” Sebastian smiled. “Quite clever of you, really.”

“And from there it was simple. Sebastian had motivation through you but also through his boyfriend, Chandler, who plays Boq in Wicked aka the Tinman. He killed Cassandra and Harmony and then hid in Chandler’s empty apartment. Also, Chandler had alibis for all three murders, but he wasn’t with his boyfriend for any of them. Then Jesse filled me in on the rest.”

“St. James,” Sebastian groaned. “Of course. Typical. I’ll have to deal with him next.”

"You won't be dealing with anyone from prison, Sebastian," Blaine glared. "The police are already on there way."

Sebastian crossed his arms, glaring. "Oh, and Kurt's going to stick around for the arrest? Because he and the police mix so well..."

"He's right, Blaine," Kurt whispered. "I can't be here."

"That's fine," Blaine said quietly. "Beiste is right outside. She'll take you back to the apartment, okay?"

Kurt bit his lip before smiling softly. "Okay."

"Can you get downstairs by yourself?"

Kurt nodded. "Yeah. The elevator's just outside the door. I'll be okay." He looked back at Sebastian. "Just make sure that...he doesn't get away."

"I won't," Blaine promised. The he leaned down and kissed him briefly on the lips. "I'll see you later."

"See you later," Kurt smiled, wiping his nose as he took the warm trench coat that Blaine offered him and limped slightly out.

Blaine turned back to Sebastian, expression sour. "I think you and I need a little chat."

Kurt limped out of the building, shuddering at the thick dense pale gray coming in from all sides. He looked both ways in the fog, jumpy as he made his way over to the familiar black car. "Beiste?" he tapped on the window and the door unlocked. He slid in gratefully, glad to be out of the ominous fog as the car pulled away from the curb. He sent a text to Blaine before settling against the door, drifting off.

Blaine's phone buzzed.

Got in the car. Tired. See you later. Let me know how it goes.

"Alright then," Blaine nodded before looking back up at Sebastian. "What was the point of this?" he asked incredulously. "What was the point of any of it? I don't get it."

"A show," Sebastian grinned. "See, I saw darling little Kurt with you online in that Seattle Times article and I knew where he was. So I got in touch with some people and then this happened to lure him out here. We knew he'd probably follow you around like a lost puppy. But he had to come back on our turf."

"Who's we?"

Sebastian shrugged.

"The police are on their way, Sebastian. You'd better start talking!" Blaine snapped.

"No, I really don't because you're going to let me make an escape," Sebastian said calmly.

"And why would I do that?" Blaine sneered.

"Because I'm the only one who knows where Kurt is," Sebastian smiled.

Blaine blinked. "He's in my car on the way back to my apartment."

Sebastian cocked his head to the side. "Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"You're not going to call him just to be absolutely certain?"

Blaine rolled his eyes before dialing Kurt's number, holding his phone up to his ear.

It rang. And rang. And rang. And then went to voicemail.

"Kurt, call me back," Blaine said.

Sebastian smiled. "No reply."

Blaine shot him a look before dialing Beiste's number.

"Yes, Mr. Anderson?"

"I just wanted to make sure you were en route back to my apartment."

"Aren't I supposed to wait for your friend?"

Blaine felt his stomach drop. "He didn't go straight into your car after leaving the building?"

"No, the building tenants told me that I had to park further down the street because of the fog, but I haven't seen anyone."

Blaine took his phone steadily down from his ear.

Sebastian grinned. "Oops."

Kurt sniffed, rubbing his eyes as he woke up from dozing off. He glanced outside at the...suburbs?

"Beiste?" he murmured, sitting up and stretching. "Beiste, where are we going?"

He glanced at the reflection looking back at him in the driver's mirror and he jolted up.

"You," he breathed, eyes going wide.

The driver pressed a cloth to his own mouth before spraying something in the back. Kurt recognized the scent immediately and tried to hold his breath but it was already in his lungs, making him woozy. His head grew sluggish and he seemed to fall sideways onto the seat in slow motion, the driver's voice echoing in his ears.

"Poppies. Poppies will put you to sleep..."

"Okay, this is weird," Bryan frowned as he read the documents.

Carl raised his eyebrows. "Weirder than this whole thing's already been?"

"Yeah. You know Katy Karofsky?" A nod. "Well we were wrong. Not a sister."

"What are you talking about?" Carl frowned.

Bryan flipped the page over, showing him. "Chelsea Karofsky only gave birth once. No, Katy is a Karofsky by marriage."

"You mean Paul got remarried?"

"No. David got married. Must have been one of those out of high school things."

"Okay," Carl nodded, looking at the burly son next to the pretty blonde not-daughter. "Well I guess that explains why they don't look a thing alike. And what did we get on Kurt Hummel?"

"He and young Katherine apparently grew up in the same orphanage," Bryan said, handing the records.

Carl frowned. "Hang on, can I see that picture of Kurt?"

Bryan handed it to him and Carl looked at it, frowning. His eyes widened.

“Oh no.”

“Where’s Kurt?” Blaine demanded.

“Let me go,” Sebastian shrugged.

“Not until you tell me where Kurt is!”

Sebastian sighed. “It’s simple, really. I just sent him home.”

“To your parents’ house?” Blaine gripped the gun tighter.

Sebastian snorted. “No way, that was his foster home.”

“Yeah, where he grew up after his parents got in a car crash.”

“Wait...” Sebastian’s eyes glinted. “You mean you don’t know the whole story?”

Blaine held the gun at level with Sebastian’s head. “Tell me.”

Sebastian smiled. “Well, mommy and daddy adopted Kurt. He was bad though, so they beat him so he’d been good. He talked too much and was just too odd and strange. And, well, gay. They didn’t like that he was gay at first.”

“At first?”

“Well, then they figured out that their real son was gay so they thought that maybe Kurt could be the lesser of two evils. Maybe if they made Kurt girly then I’d like him and eventually I’d like girls. It didn’t really work out. I liked real men and Kurt was just a pathetic wimpy little boy who cried too often whenever he’d get beaten.

“And he was pretty much already a girl so one weekend when mommy and daddy were out of town, I just took away that little bit that made him a boy,” Sebastian giggled. “Daddy wasn’t too happy about that. We almost got caught by the police. But then Kurt was useless. There was no way in hell that I’d want him and he just became a stupid broken little doll. Until fourteen happened.”

Blaine stared at him hard. “What’s fourteen?”

“Kurt’s fourteenth birthday,” Sebastian grinned. “When daddy found someone who wanted a broken doll.”

The color drained from Blaine’s face.

“Oh Blaine,” Sebastian crooned. “Why else do you think I brought Kurt here tonight? He needed to be broken in again before going back home.”

A sharp pain in his head was the first thing that registered. Kurt hissed lightly as he drowsily rolled his head against his chest. He tried to raise his hand up to rub at his eyes.

He couldn’t.

Panic started to creep in as he woke up fully, blinking his eyes open.

He was sitting in front of a girl with long blonde hair and a powder blue dress. Her blue eyes were wide and slightly hazy and her wrists and ankles were handcuffed to the arms and legs of her chair.

Suddenly, a figure appeared behind the girl.

Dave Karofsky.

Kurt panicked, pushing himself backwards in his chair, trying to get away from him. His chair tipped back but hit something, causing it to pause.

And Kurt found himself looking up into Dave Karofsky's eyes.

The chair was pushed back down and Kurt realized that he was sitting in front of a mirror. He watched as Dave leaned over to whisper in his ear, pressing a needle against his neck. He tried to scream, but the drugs were too quick and he passed out, those three whispered words still ringing through his head.

“Welcome home Katy.”

The Boy Who Wanted to Fly

Warnings: *Non-con, dub-con, torture, implied suicide, domestic abuse, forced drugging, forced gender roles, gore, murder, general disturbed...ness, yeah everything. Like seriously, things get graphic.*

--

Once upon a time, there was a boy with a unicorn tattoo who wanted to fly. He searched around for brains, heart, and courage. But there was a thorn in his side that weakened him and though he tried to fly, he—

Blaine stared at the black letters printed with digital precision on his laptop. He averted his eyes, searching desperately until he found the bottle of Jack Daniels that had ended up wedged between the desk and the hotel bed. His hand shook as he unscrewed the cap, frantically gulping down a quater of it. He knew that the trial was tomorrow and Santana had told him to stay sober, but he couldn't take it anymore.

Tears welled up in Blaine's eyes as he took another burning gulp, half-placing half-slamming the bottle down on the desk so hard it nearly broke. His body shivered all over and an empty warmth filled him as his shaky hands went back to his keyboard.

This is the story about a boy. No, a man. The man that I loved.

Blaine looked above his laptop at his plain gray wall, unable to stop the tears that were now streaming down his face.

"Goodbye Mr. Earl Grey."

The man I loved is...

There was a knock at his door.

“Anderson?”

Blaine hid his head further under his pillow, an intense throbbing overtaking his whole body.

“Anderson, open the damn door.”

Blaine gripped his messy curls tightly before rolling out of bed and wrenching the hotel room door open.

Santana stood outside, arms crossed, heels clicking on the ground in impatience. Her nostrils flared as she took in his appearance. “Seriously?”

“Shut up,” Blaine groaned, rubbing a hand over his scruff.

“We need you sober and articulate, Anderson,” she snapped. “This’ll hardly work if you’re too busy being Count Boozy Von Drunk-A-Ton.”

“I’m fine, Santana,” he said harshly, though the slight slur in his voice took some of the edge off. “I write better when I’m drunk anyways.”

“Let’s just hope that you testify better as well,” she rolled her eyes. “Also that the jury has some sort of sinus disorder because you smell like lighter fluid.”

Blaine shot her a look before reaching over to his bedside table, pawing for the bottle.

Santana marched over and smartly slapped his hand, grabbing his wrist in a vice grip and pulling him up sharply. “Up! Up!”

“No,” Blaine said, wrenching his arm back. “Just leave me here.”

Santana glared down at him, hands on her hips. “Do you really want this psychopath to walk?”

Blaine stared at the close-up fine threads of his cotton pillowcase, noting the odd way in which they crisscrossed back and forth and back and forth and back and forth and—

“Blaine!”

“I’m up.” He pushed himself up from the covers, swinging his legs over the end. “Why do I even have to go today? I don’t testify until tomorrow.”

“You need to meet the team,” Santana said curtly. “And watch the trial today so you’ll know what’s acceptable behavior and what isn’t.”

Blaine’s eyes clenched shut briefly before he sighed, shoulders slumping. “How long do I have?”

“Fifteen minutes, dress nicely.” Her nose wrinkled. “And for god’s sake, Anderson. Take a shower.”

Three months.

It had been three months since the night of the masquerade ball in New York.

It had been a long three months.

Blaine toweled his hair dry and blinked blearily at his stubble in the mirror before deciding that it really wasn’t worth it to shave. Instead, he just pulled a standard black turtleneck over his head and tripped into black slacks and a black blazer. After a thought, he grabbed his much-more-frequently-than-priorly-used glasses and slid them up his nose, toeing his feet into a pair of black oxfords. He grabbed his shoulder bag along with a fresh pen and left his dreary hotel room.

The sunlight irked him and he slouched down as he was driven to the Westerville Courthouse, the flashes of paparazzi outside of the giant marble building not improving his mood in the slightest.

He slid out of his car, keeping his head down and trying to ignore the various questions screamed at him.

“Why are you testifying?”

“What was your relationship with Kurt Hummel?”

“When is your next book coming out?”

Blaine cut through the reporters and through the glass front doors with a sigh. The eery stillness of the courthouse in comparison to the steps outside unnerved him, but he carried on, pressing through door 215.

“Look what the cat dragged in.”

“Ha ha,” he shot back at Santana.

She arched an eyebrow at him. “Seriously, Blaine? You’re going with the poor writer hipster look?”

“I’ll clean up tomorrow,” he sighed, giving her a once over. “You look nice.”

She did, with her hair pulled back in a high ponytail, a sleek black dress suit on with mile-high black pumps.

“You look like hell,” she said dryly in response.

“Come on, Santana, be nice,” a deep voice behind her chided. “He is our key testifier after all.”

A tall black man in a sharply lined suit stepped around Santana and offered a hand. “You must be Blaine Anderson. I’m David Thompson, the head prosecutor.”

“Nice to meet you,” Blaine nodded, shaking his hand.

"You too. Don't worry. We'll nail this guy. He doesn't have a chance of escaping," David said confidently.

"I hope so," Blaine muttered, an odd chill overtaking him. "He'll fight dirty."

"I've got it covered, trust me," David nodded. "And I know how his attorney likes to play, so I'm pretty confident."

"Clarington?" Santana rolled her eyes. "What a melodramatic asshat. Yeah, we've definitely got this one." She nodded her head at Blaine, over towards the small group of people across the room. "Come on. Meet the team."

They walked over to the group and there was a lot of hand shaking and Santana talking over everyone.

"This is Trent, our researcher—" Blaine shook the hand of a young man with a high coif in his hair dressed in a smart navy suit with a rich plum shirt. "—and Judy, our notetaker—" He shook the hand of disinterested girl with a short dark brown bob cut and a long draping sweater dress that made her look like she belonged in a library—which, Blaine realized, might have been exactly where they'd found her. "—and Dottie, our analyzer." He shook the hand of a smily Japanese girl who honestly couldn't be older than eighteen, with some sort of butterfly bow tie at her neck.

Then there were the others that he did know—Mercedes and Carl from Seattle, who he greeted as warmly as he could with handshakes and shoulder pats. Sam who shared his grim look. And...Rachel.

His wife was sitting on the end of a table, her long hair pulled back in an elegant twist, a flattering white blouse and a gray knit pencil skirt hugging her frame while long tan stockings and studded black pumps completed the outfit. His lips quirked as he saw her eyeing Santana's heels with envy before her eyes fluttered over to him. "Blaine," she smiled tightly, sliding down off the table.

"Hello, Rachel," he murmured, leaning over to kiss the side of her cheek.

Her nose wrinkled. “Urgh. Whiskers.”

He let out a brief singular chuckle before pulling back. “Are you ready for this?”

Rachel rolled her eyes. “Blaine, I am always ready.”

The small smile that tugged at Blaine’s lips actually managed to be genuine. “That’s my girl.”

A discreet cough behind him made him turn. “Your girl, Anderson?”

Blaine shrugged, turning to face Jesse. “Well, she is my wife, St. James.”

“Now now, boys,” Rachel said. “No need to fight over me.”

“She says, as she sits there and leans back and does nothing,” Jesse said bitingly, though his usual snark was lost due to the fond streak in his tone.

“Well, I wouldn’t want to get in the way,” Rachel shrugged.

“You’ll never be in the way, Rachel,” Chandler smiled as he popped up from her other elbow.

Jesse rolled his eyes. “Did anyone ask you, munchkin?”

“Jesse, play nice,” Blaine rolled his eyes before turning to Chandler. “How are you holding up?”

Chandler shrugged, itching his arm nervously. “I mean...I’m okay. It’s all just kind of a shock, you know? These past three months have felt like a dream...”

“I know,” Blaine sighed, clapping his shoulder. “We’ve just got to get through this trial, okay?”

Chandler nodded before moving on glumly.

Blaine sighed. He almost felt as bad for him as he did for himself.

He blanked out a lot of the talking, only catching snippets. The way it was looking time wise, half of them would testify today and the other half would tomorrow. Blaine was to be last, right before Sebastian, to make their case stronger.

Blaine just twirled his pen around in his fingers, trying to think of something, anything to write.

Nothing came to mind.

At eleven am they were all seated in the court, waiting. Blaine was wedged between Trent and Judy and his eyes kept wandering up to trace patterns in the ceiling.

He apparently missed the announcement of Judge Sylvester because everyone was standing suddenly and Judy was nudging him and he blinked, standing as the tall imposing woman took her seat, eyeing over everyone.

Blaine started tracing patterns into the grainy wood of the bench in front of him, blocking out the sound until a name broke through it.

“—the accused, Sebastian Smythe—”

Blaine’s eyes shot over to the defendant box and saw Sebastian looking at him, a smirk curling his lip. Heat rushed through Blaine as he remembered that night, three months ago...

Blaine stared at him hard. “What’s fourteen?”

“Kurt’s fourteenth birthday,” Sebastian grinned. “When daddy found someone who wanted a broken doll.”

The color drained from Blaine’s face.

"Oh Blaine," Sebastian crooned. "Why else do you think I brought Kurt here tonight? He needed to be broken in again before going back home."

"Where is he?" Blaine said, gripping his gun tighter.

Sebastian smiled, leaning on one hand. "I think the more appropriate question is...where is she?"

Blaine stared.

"Because Kurt—or should I say Katy—has gone home to her husband."

A cool chill settled over Blaine. "And where exactly is that?"

Sebastian smirked. "Let me go first."

"No."

"Fine. You'll never see Kurt again."

Blaine gritted his teeth before lowering his gun. "Where?" he repeated.

Sebastian smiled at him before suddenly throwing a glass paperweight at his head.

Blaine held his arm up to block it before aiming his gun but Sebastian was too fast. He knocked Blaine's arm out of the way before tackling him, wrestling the gun from his hand and hitting him sharply over the head with it.

Darkness crept at Blaine's vision before Sebastian leaned down close to his ear. "Just go home, Blaine."

And then everything went black.

“—on the multiple charges of kidnapping, assault, and murder. How does the defendant plead?”

Blaine held Sebastian’s stare while the defense attorney, Hunter Clarington, leaned forward.

“Not guilty.”

Blaine quickly realized that there was a reason that he’d never written past the solving of a mystery in his novels—trials were actually incredibly clinical and, well, boring. Despite everything that was at stake, all the formalities that had to be observed and practiced drew the whole thing out. He just wanted everyone to say their piece and be done with it.

But the thing that disturbed Blaine the most was how many questions were being asked about Kurt.

And how few answers were able to be given.

Mercedes was on the stand first. David had questioned her and she’d given a very clinical yet favorable impression of Kurt and her relationship with him. And she remained calm, which Blaine was eternally grateful for. Looking down the aisle at some of the others, he couldn’t be so sure that it’d be the same for everyone else.

“The prosecution rests.”

Blaine turned his attention back to the trial as Hunter got up, buttoning his suit as he walked over to Mercedes. Blaine saw Santana’s jaw tighten infinitesimally as he leaned close to the teenager—and, oddly enough, Sam’s as well.

“Miss Jones,” Hunter said. “How old are you?”

“Eighteen.”

Hunter nodded. “And so you’re very protective of Mr. Hummel, from what I gather?”

Mercedes blinked. “We’re friends, yes. As with all the McKinley kids.”

“But you never offered up your home to him, did you? At least, there are no records of it.”

“We did, and he did stay with us for a couple of weeks.”

Hunter’s eyebrows shot up. “Oh? And why was there no record of this?”

“Because...” Mercedes paused briefly. “Because Kurt wasn’t on file at McKinley Home.”

“He wasn’t?”

“Not when he was himself, no.”

“Elaborate for the court, please.”

“He...” Mercedes glanced briefly at someone from their group—Blaine guessed Santana—before continuing. “When he first came to Seattle, when I first met him, he was a girl named Dorothy. Or at least, that’s what we all thought. Kurt went through a lot before coming to Seattle and so that was his way of coping, I guess. But then one day he just sort of...snapped out of it and told everyone that his real name was Kurt. And we became friends after that.”

“And that didn’t seem odd to you at all?” Hunter raised an eyebrow.

Mercedes shrugged. “I’ve seen a lot stranger things in Seattle. And I’m used to seeing young boys and girls being used and abused to those far more privileged than they.”

Blaine saw a slight smile turn up the corner of Santana’s mouth.

Hunter’s jaw clenched slightly. “But you were saying? Kurt stayed with you?”

Mercedes nodded. “A couple of weeks in September. Emma—the head of McKinley Home—wanted him to try out one of the cycle homes that’s a part of their program and so she asked my parents if they’d be willing to take in Kurt for a trial run.”

“And how did that turn out?”

“I—not well,” Mercedes admitted. “He didn’t like being in such close proximity with so many others and he really didn’t like having to share a room. And something about the traditional house setting just...set him off, I guess.”

“Did he attack anyone?” Hunter asked easily.

“No!” Mercedes said vehemently. “No, he didn’t!”

“Kurt?”

The whimpering had woken Mercedes up and she went into his room where she found him huddled in the corner, rocking back and forth.

She knelt down next to him and put a hand on his shoulder. “Kurt, are you alright?”

At her touch his head snapped up, his eyes wild like an animal’s as he tackled her to the ground, yelling things at her that she didn’t understand while Mercedes cried out, trying to push him off.

Her brother had burst through the door and dragged Kurt back, but not before he’d managed to drag his nails sharply down her left arm, drawing blood.

Hunter stared her down. “Are you quite sure?”

“Positive,” she said straight face. “Kurt never attacked anybody.”

Hunter stared at her for a long while before asking, “Did Kurt ever mention his life before Seattle while living with you?”

“No.”

“Nothing about Sebastian Smythe?”

“No.”

“When was the first time you heard Sebastian Smythe’s name?”

“From Samuel Evans, about two months ago.”

“The defense rests.”

Hunter walked back to his box with clipped movements.

Mercedes looked momentarily bewildered before exiting the stand so that Carl could take her place.

David got up, taking the file that Dottie handed him before approaching the stand. “Please state your name for the court.”

“Carl Howell.”

“What is your occupation, Mr. Howell?”

“I’m a detective who works with the Seattle Police Department.”

“When was the first that you heard of the accused, Sebastian Smythe?”

“About...three months ago. I got a call from Blaine. Blaine Anderson. He’d given me a tip-off about Kurt Hummel and I was digging through files when he called me again and asked for information on the prior Westerville address of Sebastian Smythe.”

“And why had Mr. Anderson asked you about Mr. Smythe?”

“Well, he later explained that there’d been an altercation between Mr. Hummel and Mr. Smythe and that Mr. Smythe had beaten him and then had him kidnapped by a Mr. Karofsky, whom I’d already been investigating.”

“Could you clarify ‘beaten’, Mr. Howell?” David said, stressing the word with relish.

“Yes,” Carl nodded. “Mr. Anderson had said that Mr. Smythe had whipped Mr. Hummel repeatedly on the back while Mr. Hummel had laid prone, handcuffed to a desk.”

A murmur rippled through the court as everyone shifted in unease. Judge Sylvester cracked her gavel sharply and silence reigned once more.

“What did you discover after you looked up Kurt Hummel’s file?” David continued.

“Several things,” Carl said evenly. “One being that he was the exact likeness of Katherine Karofsky, who I’d already been investigating. After some more digging I started piecing the story together. Kurt Hummel was put into the foster care system at the age of five and ended up with the Smythe family. But, for some odd reason his file was apparently destroyed sometime after and he never left the Smythe family until the age of fourteen when he was both adopted and married into the Karofsky family. His legal name was changed to Katherine Karofsky and he was Dave Karofsky’s wife.”

It wasn’t anything new to Blaine’s ears, but hearing it laid out so clinically made his stomach turn.

“A year ago this past Christmas was the infamous fire that killed Paul and Chelsea Karofsky, and that’s the last record of Katherine Karofsky. It was said that her ‘brother’ Dave sent her off to boarding school as he was her legal guardian, but then Kurt popped up in Seattle last April.”

David nodded, picking up a zip-locked bag with a large stack of papers in it. “The jury will note Exhibit A which is the legal report and studies that Mr Howell has done in research of Kurt Hummel, all proven to be correct.” He set the packet back down heavily. “The prosecution rests.”

Blaine’s eyes slid uneasily over to Hunter who approached Carl calmly.

“Mr. Howell...when did you first hear about Mr. Hummel?”

Carl blinked. “I...well, I didn’t know he was Mr. Hummel back then, but I first heard of Kurt last October.”

“How did you hear about him?”

“Blaine told me. He—the two of them were looking into the Scarecrow killings.”

Hunter smiled slightly. “The Scarecrow killings? Would you please elaborate for the court?”

“There were a string of killings of young teenage girls who lived, or had priorly lived in one case, at McKinley Home. They were all made to look somewhat like a scarecrow.”

Hunter nodded. “And was the Scarecrow killer ever caught?”

“Yes,” Carl nodded. “Well...he—William Schuester—died...was killed.”

“Killed?” Hunter raised an eyebrow. “By who?”

“Unknown,” Carl said quickly.

Hunter’s eyebrow arched even higher. “Well who were the last people to have seen Mr. Schuester?”

Carl sent Blaine an apologetic glance and Blaine just sighed.

“Mr. Anderson and Mr. Hummel.”

Hunter smiled broadly. “Mr. Howell, did you ever meet Kurt Hummel?”

“No.”

“So your only knowledge of him was based of hearsay, correct?”

“Well I—”

“It’s a simple yes or no question,” Hunter cut across.

Carl sighed. “Yes, all my knowledge of him was based off hearsay.”

“Did you ever meet Mr. Smythe before today, Mr. Howell?”

“No.”

“So everything you’ve heard about him has been hearsay, correct?”

“Yes, but also—”

“The defense rests, you honor.”

“Damn,” Trent muttered under his breath next to Blaine. “Clarrington’s pulling out all the stops today. But that means that he’ll just be twice as nasty tomorrow.”

“I don’t like where they’re going with this,” Judy whispered quietly, her voice barely distinguishable over the commotion of Carl leaving the stand for Sam. “He’s trying to come at this at an angle but I can’t figure out what.”

“At least Carl kept his cool for most of the time,” Blaine sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. “He’s been a massive help throughout this whole thing. I mean, he was the one who found Brittany...”

Carl pounded his fist against the door a fifth time before it opened, revealing a wide-eyed blonde.

“Yes?”

“Hi,” Carl said, blinking at her through the rain. “Are you Brittany Pierce? The owner of Brittany Pierces and Tattoos?”

Brittany nodded, a smile curling her pierced lips as she rolled her tattooed arms proudly. "Yep, that's me."

"Could I come in for a chat?"

"Sure," she smiled. "Would you like some tea?"

"No thank you," he sighed, waving his hand.

"Good thing," Brittany nodded. "I'm pretty sure that Lord Tubbington's been slipping drugs into it again."

Carl blinked. "O...kay. I came here to talk about Kurt Hummel."

Brittany cocked her head to the side. "Who?"

Carl clicked his phone on and showed her the photo of Kurt that Blaine had sent to him before hopping on the first flight out to Seattle. It was of Kurt, lying on a carpet and giggling, his back on display. "Kurt. You gave him this tattoo? I only recognized it because you used some of the same patterns on my ex-girlfriend's tattoo of a starfish. Holly Holiday?"

Brittany nodded silently as she stared at the photo. "Unicorn," she muttered. "He...he was supposed to come back to get his roses colored in a week ago, but he never showed up."

"He was kidnapped, Brittany," Carl said gently. "And if there's any information you can give about him to the police that would be great and...we'd also overlook the fact that you gave a tattoo to a minor."

Brittany tucked a long lock of hair behind her ear. "He...he came in several months ago because he wanted a tattoo to cover the scars on his back and...I agreed. So I gave him the unicorn because he reminded me of a unicorn."

"Did he say anything about the scars on his back?" Carl frowned. "Or about where he was from, maybe?"

Brittany frowned. "He said...he wanted to forget about everything from before and that...he could never go back home because home was gone. I'm sorry, that's all I know."

"That's fine," Carl nodded. "Thanks for your cooperation, Brittany."

"Samuel Evans," Sam enunciated clearly. He was leaning slightly to the side and looked extremely serious and Blaine was instantly convinced that he'd watched about fifty trial movies in preparation for this exact moment.

"Mr. Evans," David said smoothly. "What was your relationship with the accused, Mr. Smythe?"

"Not much of one," Sam admitted. "He was a friend of Blaine's—Mr. Anderson's—who's my client, so I heard a lot about him and I saw him every now and then at galas and parties."

"Mr. Evans, when was the first you heard of the serial killer that is referred to as the Tinman?"

"After his first murder. The whole island heard about it."

"Did you have any suspects as to who performed the murders?"

"Not really, no. I always assumed it was someone connected to the Wicked Cast since the only victims were singers in that company."

"Was Mr. Smythe at all connected to the cast?"

"Why yes..." Sam leaned forward to draw out the tension and Blaine almost beamed with pride at the cheesiness. "His boyfriend, Chandler Kiehl, was in the company."

"And what role did Mr. Kiehl play?"

"Boq," Sam said with quiet seriousness. "Who later becomes the Tinman."

"The prosecution rests."

Sam adjusted his position as he waited for Hunter to approach him.

"Mr. Evans," Hunter began. "When was the first time that you met Kurt Hummel?"

Sam blinked. "At Blaine's apartment in Greenwich Village early last November."

"And you didn't think it...strange at all that your client, and I'm assuming friend, Mr. Anderson had a sixteen year old boy staying at his apartment?"

Sam shrugged. "Yeah, at first, but then I talked to both of them and they were just working on Blaine's new novel together."

"Really? In what way?"

"Well, Kurt would sketch and do the fashion for the characters, I guess, and help Blaine outline. Stuff like that."

Hunter nodded, pacing back and forth a little. "Mr. Evans, Miss Jones said that you were the first to tell her of Sebastian Smythe."

Sam nodded. "That's true..."

Sam ran a wet hand through his hair as he knocked on the door again, cursing the fact that he hadn't packed a rain jacket. He'd have to buy one later.

The door opened and there was a teenage black girl in red pajamas staring back at him in confusion as she rubbed the sleep from her eyes. "Yes?"

"Are you Mercedes?"

She nodded. "If this is about Puck, then he's not here."

"No," Sam shook his head. "I'm here about Blaine Anderson? And Kurt Hummel?"

She blinked, a frown creasing her brow. "Kurt from McKinley Home?"

Sam nodded. "Can I come in?"

Wordlessly, she opened the door wider and waved him into her sitting room, disappearing down the hall briefly. Sam sat precariously on the couch as Mercedes reappeared, offering him a towel.

"Thanks," he muttered.

"What's wrong with Kurt and Blaine?" she asked, sitting. "Kurt was supposed to come back from his trip two days ago, but he never showed..."

"Kurt was kidnapped," Sam said quietly. "In connection to a man named Sebastian Smythe who used to be his old foster brother. And now we're all here in Seattle trying to figure out where. So...if there's any information you have about Kurt's past...?"

"I..." she blinked, running her hands over her face. "I don't know. Kurt didn't like to talk about it."

"I know, Mercedes, but I mean, if there's anything, anything at all."

"He..." she bit her lip. "He didn't like houses. Like...the standard house with a family and two point nine kids. Like...it made him really uncomfortable?"

"Okay," Sam nodded. "That's good, that's good."

She raised her eyebrows. "Really?"

"Well...not to me, but I'm sure that Blaine or our attorney could make something of it. Is there anything else?"

She closed her eyes in frustration, thinking. "Nursery rhymes?"

Sam stared. "What, like Mary Had A Little Lamb?"

"Yeah," Mercedes nodded uncertainly. "When he first came here...and he was Dorothy, he kept singing all these different nursery rhymes. And when he stayed with me, he kept whistling that one song um..." She attempted to whistle it.

Sam raised his eyebrows. "Baa Baa Black Sheep?"

"Yes! Exactly. He was always whistling it..."

"Okay," Sam nodded. "Well, thank you for your help, Mercedes."

"Wait!" She grabbed a piece of paper and scrawled down her number. "Please call me if you hear anything or if there's anything else I can do."

He smiled, taking the paper. "I will."

"Would you care to elaborate on the talk that you had?"

"I told her that we were looking for Kurt, who'd been kidnapped, and I asked her if she knew any information about his past?"

"And what did she tell you?"

"That Kurt didn't like traditional family homes—that they made him uneasy—and that he used to sing nursery rhymes a lot, Baa Baa Black Sheep in particular."

"And what did you make of this information when she first gave it to you?"

Sam shrugged. "I didn't think much of it. I assumed that the others might be able to."

“Really?” Hunter laced his fingers together. “Let’s say as an editor. You didn’t even maybe think that, perhaps, this might make a good story or novel for you to represent?”

Sam looked thrown, completely confused. “I...guess?”

Hunter smiled. “The defense rests.”

“Okay, what the hell is going on?” Sam demanded in the side run during the brief recess.

“Clarrington’s trying to spin it a certain direction,” Santana sighed. “The problem is, we can’t actually figure out which way.”

“And he’s asking an awful lot of questions about Kurt and Blaine as opposed to defending the claims made against his client,” Trent muttered.

“That’ll be tomorrow, after we grill Sebastian,” David sighed. “It looks like he wants to wear us out first. But our best hope is that we end on a strong note tonight. Rachel.” He turned to her. “You’re the last person on the stand for today. Think you can manage?”

Rachel smiled, jutting her chin out. “Of course.”

“Please state your name for the court.”

“Rachel Barbra Berry.”

“Ms. Berry,” David started. “How long have you known the accused, Mr. Smythe?”

“A little over a year now,” Rachel answered clearly. “He was an old friend of my husband’s and he came to our wedding. But I knew him better when he started dating Chandler since the two of us were in a show together.”

“And what was your...impression of Mr. Smythe?”

“He always made me uneasy,” Rachel said with skilled trepidation. No wonder she was up for the Tony this year. “I spent a lot of time with Chandler and I could always tell that he was a bit nervous around his boyfriend.”

David nodded. “And you knew the famed Scarecrow killer, Mr. Schuester, correct?”

“I did,” Rachel nodded. “He was one of my first directors on Broadway. But...he was extremely possessive and it scared me. Half of the reason I agreed to marry Blaine was to get away from him.” A well-placed shudder. “When he disappeared, I thought he’d be out of my life for good. But now...” She trailed off with her eyebrows arched imploringly in a haunted expression.

Blaine nearly had to wipe a tear from his eye.

“The prosecution rests.”

Hunter approached the stand, smoothing his suit.

“Ms. Berry. When was the first time you met Kurt Hummel?”

“I—” She blinked, thinking back. “—guess it was at the Wicked Gala when he went as Cooper’s date.”

“You guess?”

“I mean...it was the first time that I met Kurt, but I didn’t know him as Kurt back then.”

“Really? Who was he?”

“Um, Alexandra Bergamot. Well, that was the name he used.”

“He was dressed as a female.” It wasn’t a question.

Rachel nodded. “Yes. And...later as Blaine’s cousin. Ellie Grey.”

“So you didn’t know that your husband had a sixteen year old boy living with him?”

Rachel barely tensed, but Blaine spotted it. “No, I didn’t.”

“And you didn’t think it strange that this boy was impersonating various women including your cousin-in-law? Didn’t you think that this person might be a bit unstable?”

“Well, no,” Rachel shook her head. “Blaine explained everything to me afterwards. Kurt had to hide his identity because the police were after him since he stabbed Blaine but—” She cut herself off, her eyes widening. “I mean—”

Blaine’s heart sank in his chest.

“Did you just say that Mr. Hummel stabbed Mr. Anderson?” Hunter smiled, raising his eyebrows.

“I—” Rachel shot Blaine a brief panicked look. “It was all a misunderstanding—”

“The defense rests.”

Shit.

Court was adjourned for the day after Rachel’s testimony and somehow everyone woundup back in Blaine’s hotel room, Santana ripping Rachel a new one, Rachel yelling back just as loud and giving Blaine a headache, Jesse joining in the fight, Mercedes trying to calm everyone, Chandler watching wide-eyed in the corner, and Sam trying to drown himself in alcohol.

Carl and David managed to pull everyone off of each other and reprimands went around.

Blaine honestly couldn’t even bring himself to care and he just laid on his bed, laptop open on his stomach as he tapped his fingers thoughtfully against the keyboard.

“Well this has been way too much excitement,” Sam sighed as he slid into bed next to Blaine, not before kicking his shoes off.

“And to think that I thought it’d be a boring trial this morning,” Blaine murmured as he deleted a couple of words and tried a different combination.

Sam frowned. “Blaine, are you still working on this?”

“I...I have to Sam.”

“No, you don’t.”

“Yes,” Blaine said emphatically. “I do. Please don’t argue with me about this.”

Sam sighed, resting his head back on the pillow. “How did we end up in this situation?”

“Both accidentally falling for teenagers?”

Sam looked over at him sharply. “What?”

“I may be out of it, Sam, but I’m not checked out,” Blaine rolled his eyes, still staring at the screen.

“I saw you two in Seattle and I saw how pissed you got at Clarrington when she was on the stand.”

“Shut up,” Sam murmured, turning his back to Blaine.

“Ah, the stage of denial. I remember it well.” He winced. “Quite vividly, actually.”

“Blaine.” He turned to see Rachel staring at him from the foot of his bed. “Blaine, I’m really so sorry—”

“It’s fine, Rachel,” he waved his hand. “It probably would’ve come out anyways. I’ll just make sure to be really thorough with my testimony.”

Santana and David quietly exited the boisterous room into the hallway, firmly shutting the door behind him. "Do you think it'll work?" Santana whispered.

"Well, if Smythe's ego is anything to go on, it hopefully will," David muttered.

"But are you sure we shouldn't just tell Blaine the whole plan?" Santana asked. "It seems...I don't know, kind of cruel to do it this way, send him in blind when he doesn't know what'll happen."

"But we'll get the best testimony from him if he doesn't know," David stressed. "And that's what's important."

"But—"

"Santana, do you want to put Smythe away for good or not?"

Santana sighed. "Yeah. I do. More than anything."

She had made Kurt the promise all those years ago after all.

"Good," David nodded, turning to open the door.

"One more thing."

David turned, eyebrows raised.

Santana bit her lip. "Do you think we should ask Sebastian about Eli C.?"

David averted his eyes, thinking hard. "Well...it's a gamble. Because if he's familiar with the name, he'd know we were onto him. If the name's just familiar, he could do his own digging..."

"...but if he doesn't know the name at all, then we'll definitely know that we're dealing with something else entirely," Santana finished.

David nodded. "What do you think?"

Santana folded her arms. "I think we should take the gamble."

"Okay. We'll ask him about Eli."

By eleven, Blaine was left alone in his hotel room once more, alcohol bottles confiscated by Sam and Santana.

He stared at his screen, trying to write more but nothing was coming to mind and he closed his eyes, drifting off to sleep...

Ring and round the rosie

A pocket full of posies

Ashes

Ashes

We all fall down

Blaine sat up, drenched in sweat as the colors still played out in front of his eyes. Everything was blurry and he reached up, wiping the tears from his eyes. He looked around the room, feeling extremely lost before he just curled in on himself and started crying.

He cried for a very long time, until he felt tired and weary and a silvery golden light started creeping in through his window. At that point, he swung his legs over the edge of his bed and stood, going to the shower.

The boiling hot water felt oddly comforting against his skin as he breathed the steam deep into his lungs. Then he completely scrubbed himself down with the generic white soap until his skin felt slightly stinging. He dried himself off after the shower and shaved his face completely until it was smooth. He combed his hair back with gel and even added a dot of cologne. Then he pulled

on his black slacks and olive dress shirt and bronze tie that Santana had picked out for him, buttoning everything up so that he looked proper and respectable. He pulled on his black jacket and nearly laughed at his reflection.

He looked like he did in high school.

He put his handkerchief in his pocket which held the four beads Kurt used to wear in his hair along with the ruby belly button piercing.

Well...Blaine knew what they really were now.

He grabbed his bag and headed out to the courthouse.

Blaine sat in the prosecutor's box this time around, along with Chandler, Santana, and Jesse, since the four of them were all testifying today before Sebastian, and along with David, Trent, Judy, and Dottie, the area was a tad cramped.

Judy, Blaine, Chandler, Santana and Jesse were all jammed together on the bench while Trent and David got to sit at the table. Dottie had her own chair while she flipped through files.

Jesse was up first.

"Mr. St. James," David said. "When did you first meet the accused, Mr. Smythe?"

"When we were kids," Jesse said evenly. "At the age of...nine, I think. We went to school together. When we started middle school, we became best friends."

"But this friendship didn't last?"

"No," Sebastian shook his head. "Sebastian had...a brother. He told me he was adopted so I never even guessed that he was a foster child until Carl showed us the evidence later. But Sebastian had a little brother that he'd...well...we'd tease him and get him in trouble. I knew that Mr. and Mrs.

Smythe would hit him, but I was just a stupid preteen and—” Jesse broke off and sighed into his hands. He looked back up at the court, more determined than ever. “But that all changed when we were thirteen.”

“What happened then?”

“I dropped by Sebastian’s house to hang out and I heard screams from down in the basement and I went down and he was...torturing Kurt.”

“How so?”

“With a whip,” Jesse said evenly. “He was beating him and humiliating him and degrading him. It was horrifying.”

“What happened then?”

“He...he didn’t even try to hide it,” Jesse said quietly, the silent court hanging off his every last word. “He just grinned at me and asked me to join in. Wanted me to help.”

“What did you do?”

“I asked Kurt if he was alright then...I ran. I was so freaked out.”

“You didn’t think to go to the police?” David raised his eyebrows in mock surprise.

“No, definitely not,” Jesse shook his head. “His father was the district attorney.”

“But you did go to the police later, correct?” David asked. “The next year.”

“Yes,” Jesse nodded. “I heard that the Smythes were out of town and the last time that had happened was when I’d walked in on Sebastian and Kurt, so I returned that night just to make sure that nothing bad would happen.” He hung his head. “I was too late.”

“Why?”

"I went inside using the spare key and...there were screams and the sounds of a struggle and I was running towards the back room when I heard a sharp cutting noise. I...I walked back and saw Sebastian standing over Kurt and laughing. He had an axe in his hand and...and blood was everywhere. He'd cut off Kurt's genitals."

The silence in the courtroom was deafening.

"What did you do then?" David asked quietly.

"I grabbed a vase," Jesse said. "I didn't think it through all the way. I mean, it still had water and poppies in it and everything, but I smashed it into the back of Sebastian's head and he went out cold. I grabbed a blanket and tried to stop the blood coming from Kurt but he just kept screaming and the blood kept coming and—" He broke off, swallowing heavily. "I called the police and 911."

David nodded. "And what was your relationship with Mr. Smythe like after that incident?"

"Non existent. He moved away so I never saw him again until recently. Kurt, on the other hand, got in contact with me the Christmas before last because he said he was in trouble and needed money. I was home for the holidays so I offered my services and gave him all that I could before sending him off."

"What was Mr. Hummel like when you saw him then?"

"Different. Dressed as a girl. I didn't have the heart to ask why or what had become of Sebastian. I honestly just wanted to leave Ohio behind me and get back to my life in New York."

"And when was the next time you made contact with Mr. Hummel?"

"Late last October. He called me and asked if he could stay at my place for a little while and I sent my uncle's private jet out to get him. He stayed in the city with me for a little while before staying with Blaine, who I learned he was friends with—"

Nice one there, Jesse, Blaine smiled wryly.

“—and we attended a masquerade ball later that week, where Sunshine Corazon was murdered.”

“And that was the last you saw of Mr. Hummel?” David asked.

“Correct. We were separated afterwards and Blaine called me to tell me that he went after Sebastian. I hadn’t realized that Sebastian was in the city, let alone dating one of my coworkers, but I knew immediately that Kurt was in danger. I told Blaine as such. Blaine arrived on the scene while I called the police, but by the time the police arrived, Blaine was knocked out cold, Sebastian had fled, and Kurt was nowhere to be found.”

“The prosecution rests.”

Blaine shot Jesse a grateful smile before Hunter walked up to the stand.

“Mr. St. James, did Mr. Hummel have anything that he particularly cherished?”

Jesse looked momentarily thrown. “Um, I believe that he had a music box that he loved a lot.”

“What song did the music box play?”

“Uh, it was Somewhere Over The Rainbow.”

“I see,” Hunter nodded. “And it was said earlier that Kurt Hummel was fond of nursery rhymes and riddles when he was younger. Do you remember him singing any?”

Jesse stared, bewildered. “Um...Baa Baa Black Sheep...Mary Mary, Quite Contrary...I don’t know, all the usual ones?”

“Did you ever say anything odd to Mr. Hummel? Like...a riddle or anything?”

Jesse blinked. “I...no, not really?”

“You never told him a nursery rhyme? Or an odd quote?”

"I mean..." Jesse frowned. "Once I quoted like, the Mad Hatter at him."

"Really? What was the quote?"

"I asked him why a raven is like a writing desk and to name me things beginning with the letter M."

Hunter nodded. "The defense rests."

Jesse went back to the bench, sharing a bewildered look with Santana before she moved up to take the stand.

"What the hell was that about?" Blaine muttered.

"Who knows?" Chandler shrugged.

"I think that Hunter's finding his angle," Judy whispered.

"But what is it?" Blaine frowned. "Fairy tales? Nursery rhymes? This doesn't make any sense..."

They quieted back down as David stood in front of Santana.

"Miss Lopez, when was the first time you met Kurt Hummel?"

"When I was twenty-two," she answered evenly. "One of the summer jobs I took was cleaning houses to help pay for law school. One of those houses included the Smythe residence."

"And what was your experience at the Smythe residence?"

"Well, I met Kurt, who was thirteen and didn't talk very much, so I never really interacted with him. Until I accidentally walked in on him changing one day and saw his anatomy."

"What happened?"

"I got him to tell me what had happened and I was appalled by the story."

"What did you do then?"

"I went to the police, but I was ignored. I was also fired from the cleaning company. But before I left, I made Kurt a promise to get him out of there."

"But you never heard from him after?"

"No. I went back the next summer to look for him, but he didn't live there anymore."

"When was the next time you heard of him?"

"In New York, this past November. Sam—Mr. Evans—and I have been close friends since childhood and we'd been talking about the Tinman killings. He called me and told me something about Sebastian Smythe being the killer and a boy named Kurt being involved and I snapped into action, calling in favors across the board, even with my old professor." She nodded towards David. "There was no Karofsky residence, so we couldn't do a raid there, but we searched through Mr. Karofsky's Chicago apartment, which revealed nothing. Then raids on all of the Smythe households, but again nothing, so we were back to square one. We interviewed all of Kurt's past associates in Seattle to try and find a lead..."

Santana blinked. "What?"

"Dragon lady!" Brittany grinned at her. "You're fierce and hot and protective."

Santana stared. "O...kay?"

Brittany smiled. "I know you'll find my unicorn."

Santana smiled grimly. "Well, that's what I'm trying to do. Any chance that there's something else you've remembered? Anything Kurt mentioned at all?"

Brittany shrugged. "I don't know. Not really. Can I give you a tattoo?"

"What?" Santana squawked.

Brittany shrugged. "Working helps to clear my head and makes it easier to think. Plus I just really really want to give you a tattoo."

"No!"

Three days later found Santana lying on the table in Brittany's parlor, grouchily staring at the designs on the wall.

"If this doesn't help you to remember something, I'm suing you."

Brittany just giggled as she drew a design from the side of Santana's right breast to the bottom of her right hip bone.

Santana gritted her teeth as Brittany started working along her side, wincing occasionally at the pain.

"Poppies."

Santana looked over at Brittany who was staring at her with wide eyes.

"What?"

"Poppies. He...he said that he didn't like poppies because they were everywhere..."

"Poppies?" Santana frowned, biting her lip as she stared back at her ceiling.

The Smythe household didn't have poppies in front of it when she'd cleaned it. And the Karofsky household had been covered in hydrangeas, not poppies... So what could Kurt be talking about?

Long after Brittany had finished the tattoo, Santana laid on the table, wondering.

"Would you like to see?"

Santana glanced over at the mirror that was held next to her body and she smiled at the patterned dragon that Brittany had tattooed, languorous and coiling down her side.

"For the dragon lady," Brittany smiled. "If you find unicorn, you don't have to pay for it."

Santana smiled. "Deal."

"...and we got a lead, which Blaine ended up recognizing before anyone else and that's how we found Kurt."

"The prosecution rests."

Hunter approached.

"Miss Lopez, what was the tip that you received which helped you find Mr. Hummel's location?"

"Poppies."

"Poppies?" Hunter repeated. "That was it? And Mr. Anderson was able to find Mr. Hummel from that one tip?"

"Yes."

"The defense rests."

Blaine exchanged a glance with Jesse as a sinking feeling in his stomach began to take hold. He was starting to get a vague inclination as to where Hunter was headed with all of this and he didn't like it one bit.

Chandler shuffled past Blaine, looking absolutely terrified on his way up to the stand.

Blaine didn't blame him. He'd probably be just as nervous too if he had to testify against his boyfriend.

"State your name for the court, please."

"Chandler Kiehl."

"Mr. Kiehl," David began. "How long were you in a relationship with the accused, Sebastian Smythe?"

Chandler twitched nervously. "Um, we started dating last May, then it ended last November because he disappeared."

"Were you with him at the times of the three Tinman murders, or when he was allegedly with Mr. Hummel in his apartment?"

"No, I wasn't."

"Did he tell you he was with anyone in particular during those times?"

"No, he didn't."

"So he gave you no alibi whatsoever?"

"No."

"The prosecution rests."

Chandler looked relieved before he realized that he still had to deal with Hunter.

"Mr. Kiehl," Hunter smiled. "Did you ever meet Kurt Hummel?"

Chandler broke out into a sweat and Blaine could hear Jesse groan lightly down the row.

“Um, well, we met briefly at the Wicked gala, back when he was Alexandra Bergamot.”

“But you never really ever talked to him as Kurt? Everything you know about him is just hearsay?”

“I...” Chandler looked at their group. “I guess so?”

“The defense rests.”

Blaine could practically feel Jesse’s eye roll.

Then he realized that it was his turn.

It was odd, standing up and moving down the row and out of the box, exchanging an awkward smile with Chandler as he walked back in, receiving an encouraging smile from Santana and a gentle pat from Judy as he walked over to the high seat that he had to take. His ears seemed oddly muffled as the words to swear him in were stated with his hand on a bible and suddenly David was right there in front of him.

“Please state your name for the court.”

Blaine cleared his throat. “Blaine Anderson.”

“Mr. Anderson, how long have you known the accused, Sebastian Smythe?”

“Um, about thirteen years roughly. Our parents knew each other quite well.”

“So you knew him for quite a long time?”

“Yes.”

“What was your impression of him when you were younger?”

“That he was a terrible fencer.”

There was a brief titter in the courtroom.

“Tell us in your own words what happened after you met Kurt Hummel in Seattle.”

Blaine glossed over a lot, like the fact that he’d had a sexual relationship with an underage runaway and some of the more...er...risque parts and his marital situation with Rachel. But he went over everything else—the McKinley Home killings, figuring out that the culprit was Will Schuester, on to New York and the Tinma killings—again with tons of glossing—curving sharply around to the letter that Kurt had left him. And then the confrontation with Sebastian and losing Kurt again.

“So you went to Seattle with Miss Lopez, Mr. Evans, and Mr. St. James?”

“Correct,” Blaine nodded. “We researched everything to death, sending teams to tear apart both Smythe and Karofsky residences to try and find Kurt but we couldn’t find a trace of him, or Smythe or Karofsky.”

“But this changed, obviously?”

Blaine nodded. “Miss Lopez got a lead from one of Kurt’s friends who said that he didn’t like poppies because they had ‘been everywhere’ and I figured out what he meant...”

“Blaine, calm down,” Sam sighed, rubbing his hands over his face.

“How can I be calm?” Blaine raged, furiously going through all the documents for the thousandth time. “We literally have no idea where he is or what he could be doing. He’s in the hands of two psychopaths and we have no leads!” He shoved all of the pages off of the table.

“Blaine, calm the fuck down!” Jesse snapped. “You’re not the only one who cares about Kurt and you’re not the only one who wants to see him safe and sound!”

“Shut up Jesse—”

"Hey!" Santana shouted as she slammed the door to Carl's office open, holding her right arm at an odd angle. "Everyone chill. We have a lead."

"Really?" Blaine stood, along with the others in the room.

Santana nodded. "Brittany remembered something else. Something about poppies? And Kurt not liking them because they were everywhere?"

"What the fuck does that even mean?" Sam groaned as he collapsed back in his spinny chair and then started spinning.

"Poppies?" Jesse muttered. "The Smythes didn't have poppies."

"And neither did the Karofsky's," Santana sighed, sitting down. "If we could just find out where he is. Maybe a poppy farm or—"

Blaine stumbled back, his hand over his mouth and Sebastian's whispered last words echoing through his head.

"Go home, Blaine."

Sebastian had told him where Kurt was.

He just hadn't realized it.

"...I realized that when Kurt said "poppies", he meant poppy wallpaper. A very specific wallpaper as well. One that both Sebastian and I had seen for four consecutive years of our lives—the bottom of the wallpaper at Dalton Academy in Westerville Ohio."

"What did you do then?"

“I didn’t tell any of them. I’m...not entirely sure why. But I ran. I got on the first flight to Ohio. I don’t know, I just had to save him. I had to make sure he was alright...”

Had to tell him the one thing he hadn’t managed to tell him yet.

“But then I got to Ohio and realized that I had to have a plan. I couldn’t just go bursting into the school lest I tip off Karofsky and then I’d be back at square one, unable to find Kurt. Luckily there was a banquet that night...”

Blaine hung around the Dalton campus and felt extremely creepy about it, but that feeling was vastly eclipsed by his all-consuming need to find Kurt.

“There’s a boarding option at Dalton, and the three nicest rooms that could be boarded out was the Fountain Suite, the Sycamore Suite, and the Poppy Suite. I knew that Sebastian had lived in the Poppy Suite while he’d gone to Dalton—his parents had told me as much. I waited outside the door...”

Blaine tried the door but it was locked. Cursing, he went down the hall by one of the tapestries and waited impatiently.

Hours passed. The sun slowly sank from sight.

And still Blaine was waiting.

Finally, sometime after eight, the door opened and Dave Karofsky exited—or at least, Blaine assumed it was him from the photos he’d seen from Carl’s report—along with his blonde date that was leaning on his arm. He firmly locked the door behind him before they went down the hall, heading for the stairs.

Blaine waited for them to be out of sight before making his way swiftly to the door. Locked. Frustrated, he kicked it lightly, but that didn't make any difference. He gnawed on his lip, thinking, before he went over to the Fountain Suite—the room he'd boarded in while attending Dalton—and reached along the edge. There'd always been that hidden latch that if he pressed just right...

The door swung open.

He grinned, closing it firmly shut behind him.

A regular student lived in the Fountain Suite, his pictures posted with other friends and family members on his wall, along with a collage with his name in the middle, Thad.

Blaine walked around the room, looking for something, anything that could get him into the room across the hall. Nothing really. No spare keys lying around, no screwdrivers, no battering rams...

A navy blue flyer on Thad's desk caught his eye and he leaned over and read it.

Dalton Academy Warblers Present

A Winter Wonderland

The annual winter Warbler fundraiser was tonight. He remembered hosting it four years in a row.

A plan formed in his head. An incredibly stupid plan, but honestly it was the only one he had. With a sigh, he wrenched open Thad's closet, praying that he was at least somewhat close to his size.

"I followed Karofsky down to the party in hopes of lifting his key off of him, but I found something else instead..."

The dining hall of Dalton Academy was decorated in long silky white drapes, sparkling crystal chandeliers, and soft slim white candles everywhere. The trilling of the a cappella Warblers floated through the air softly as various parents and patrons moved about in expensive finery, clinking glasses of white wine with one another as superficial sycophantic conversation added to the pleasant buzz of the room.

Blaine smoothed a hand over his jaw—making sure it was completely hairless—and patted his gelled hair. It was a stretch, but he at least looked like an old senior. Maybe he could say he was held back a year if push really came to shove.

He walked through the crowds, offering charming smiles and warm “Happy Holiday”s and firm handshakes. Glancing around the room, he kept his eye out for a tall bulky frame.

Instead, he spotted a tall lanky frame and quickly turned his back, hastily grabbing a plate and filling it with mini cheesecakes as Sebastian walked by.

Blaine ducked his head, taking a large bite and watching Sebastian slowly walk away out of the corner of his eye. Karofsky might or might not know what he looked like, but he probably didn’t know what he looked like fully shaven and hair slicked back. Sebastian, on the other hand, most certainly did.

He slid around the edge of the banquet table to sit at one of the smaller ones, watching people on the dance floor while the Warblers sang White Christmas.

There was a soft humming next to him and Blaine looked over, eyebrows raising when he saw Karofsky’s date, sitting in a ruffly white dress hugging her slim frame, a stylish white collar necklace, and pale hair piled high. He gave a small nod and a smile to her before looking around the nearby areas to see if her date was close.

Then his eyes widened and he looked back at the girl.

Even with wispy blonde hair and a ruffly dress, he’d know those blue eyes anywhere.

"Kurt," he breathed, lurching forward before remembering himself, casting a wary eye around.
"Kurt, are you okay?"

Kurt just turned to look at him slowly, eyes heavy-lidded and corners of his red painted lips turning up slightly. He looked drugged out of his mind.

Blaine scooted around to the other end of the small round table, grasping Kurt's shoulder lightly, giving him a slight shake.

Kurt jerked a little, sliding his hazy blue eyes over to Blaine. His eyebrows drew together in confusion as he opened his mouth, lips trying to form words but no sound came out.

"Kurt..." Blaine put his hand on Kurt's cheek and Kurt's eyes fluttered close as he nuzzled his head lazily into Blaine's palm.

Blaine stood, pulling Kurt up from his chair. "I'm getting you out of here."

They moved haphazardly around the banquet table, Blaine trying to hurry and Kurt sluggishly stumbling along. "Come on, just one—"

"What do you think you're doing with my date?"

Blaine froze and in that moment he literally hated himself for not telling Santana where he was going. But then he took a deep breath and turned, plastering on a charming smile for Dave Karofsky.
"Oh! Is she your date? I'd just asked her to dance and she nodded..."

Dave raised his eyebrows in surprise. "And you are...?"

Shit. "Elliott...Elliot Grey."

Well...he tried.

"Sorry, I didn't know she was taken. I just thought I'd ask for a dance..."

Dave flickered his eyes “Is that so, Katy?”

Kurt’s eyes flickered lazily as he slowly nodded.

Dave frowned lightly before shrugging nonchalantly. “Only one dance,” he said jokingly with a wink. “I’m a jealous man.”

Blaine laughed along with him, nodding, internally freaking out as he led Kurt onto the dance floor. The notes in the air changed as the Warblers started a soft jazzy version of Moonlight Serenade.

Arms wrapped around each other as Blaine pulled Kurt close, staring into his wide out-of-focus eyes. “Kurt,” he whispered. “Kurt please, say something.”

Kurt blinked hazily, leaning forward to touch his nose to Blaine’s as Blaine hastily turned his back to Karofsky so that they couldn’t be easily observed.

“Kurt please,” Blaine whispered. “Please, you have to snap out of it. We have to get out of here.”

Kurt let out a soft whimper as he dragged his hand over Blaine’s shoulder to the back of his neck, fingers curling in the gelled locks.

“Come on,” Blaine urged desperately. He dragged his finger down Kurt’s abdomen and pressed it sharply into his bellybutton. “There’s no place like home, remember? There’s no place like home, there’s no place like home, there’s no place like—”

“Anderson.”

Suddenly he was yanked back from Kurt, Sebastian holding his arm in a vice grip as Dave yanked Kurt in the opposite direction.

“I thought I smelled earl grey tea and convoluted plot lines,” Sebastian smirked, his breath overbearingly hot on Blaine’s ear. “Now why don’t we take this somewhere a little less public?”

“Come on, Katy,” Dave muttered, pulling Kurt away.

But Kurt was blinking, his eyes becoming a shade less hazy as he looked back up at Sebastian and Blaine.

‘Blaine?’ he mouthed, his lips forming around the word, but no sound coming out.

It was one of those snap decisions that a person doesn’t really think through and later they usually realize that it was actually an incredibly stupid plan, but Blaine decided in that moment to let out a high pitched screech.

The scream cut through the dining hall and caused everyone to freeze, but it did manage to make Sebastian loosen his grip in shock and Blaine shoved away from him, running full out for the door.

He reached it and shoved both of his hands down the multitude of light switches, bathing the room in darkness save for the softly glowing candles.

There were screams of panic and bustling about and—thankfully—a lot of blazer-clad boys for Blaine to get caught up in the mix with.

He searched through the soft glow of light, avoiding getting trampled as he looked for a bright white dress. Something caught on his foot and he went sprawling, twisting around to realize that he’d tripped over Kurt, who was sweating profusely on the ground.

Blaine snapped to action, grabbing his arm and pulling him up with the crowd as he rushed to get through the door and outside.

They skidded to a stop when he spotted Sebastian at the door, grabbing each blazer boy that passed him and looking at them hard before shoving them away.

“Come on,” Blaine muttered, taking a sharp turn to the left to the door with the staircase. They climbed upwards, up to the fourth floor where all the suites were. Blaine dragged his fingers along the door frame of the Fountain Suite before pushing the latch and shoving the door open, hauling Kurt inside and locking it firmly behind them.

“And I discovered why Kurt hadn’t said anything...”

“Kurt,” Blaine breathed, walking over to cup Kurt’s face between his hands. “Kurt, are you alright?”

Kurt brought his hands up to rest on top of Blaine’s wrists, squeezing them lightly as he licked his lips and opened his mouth at Blaine.

“What is it?” Blaine murmured. “What’s wrong? Kurt, please tell me what’s wrong.”

Kurt squeezed Blaine’s wrists tighter before letting go of one to grasp at his white necklace collar.

Blaine’s eyebrows furrowed as he untied the white ribbons that held it together at the back. The necklace fell to reveal a thick metal band that was latched tightly around the circumference of Kurt’s neck, constricting it.

*“Oh my **god**.” The necklace fell from Blaine’s hands in shock as he moved hastily around Kurt, fingers dragging along the metal, trying to find a catch or a cinch, anything. There was a tiny latch at the back that Kurt’s fingers were pawing at uselessly and Blaine quickly batted them away. He twisted the little screw and Kurt’s body jerked, fingers clawing at Blaine’s fingers.*

“Sorry, I’m sorry,” Blaine whispered hastily as he turned the screw the other way and the metal collar slowly loosened. He did his best to ignore the cold metal loop attached to the back that looked well-used and the implications that afforded. After about twenty seconds, the collar gave way and half of it popped off, Kurt taking a step away as he started gulping down breaths, coughing and clutching at his rubbed-raw neck.

“Thank you,” he rasped. Then he stumbled forward, tripping over his heels and falling to the ground.

“Kurt—!”

Kurt held up a hand and got back to his feet, stumbling to the bathroom to throw up in the toilet. Blaine hurried in after him, clicking on the light as Kurt clutched the toilet bowl tightly, retching over and over and over into it, his blonde hair falling in his face and catching in his mouth.

Blaine gently pulled the wig off of Kurt's head, throwing it into the bathtub before stroking Kurt's back, murmuring utter nonsense like, "It's okay. It's alright. It's fine." when everything was so clearly not.

After a couple of minutes, Kurt rested his cheek on the cold porcelain ledge and Blaine grabbed a wad of toilet paper and wetted it in the tub before gently cleaning Kurt's lips and mouth and neck and cheeks. He threw the wad into the toilet and flushed it, gently coaxing Kurt off the edge. "Kurt?" He wiped at Kurt's teary cheeks.

Kurt turned his head slowly to look up at him. "Blaine?"

Blaine nodded, trying to blink back tears.

Kurt's arms loosely wound around Blaine as he slid slowly into his lap. "Blaine," he cried quietly. "Blaine."

"I'm here," Blaine whispered into Kurt's neck, pressing a soft kiss to the raw skin. "I'm here. I'm sorry it took me so long."

Kurt just cried quietly into Blaine's neck and the two just sat in a sordid pile of navy blazer and white taffeta.

"After Kurt fell asleep, I called Santana. She was furious, but relieved that we were both okay. She and Carl hopped on the first flight out to Ohio and told us to hang tight because they'd called local authorities and they'd get us in the morning."

Blaine licked his lips. This was as far as David had told him to tell and he knew the reasons why he wasn't supposed to go on, but he didn't agree with them at all. So he took a deep breath and continued.

"But then in the morning—"

"The prosecution rests," David said firmly, giving Blaine a look.

Blaine wilted slightly as David went back to the prosecutor's box and Hunter approached him with a sickly smile.

"Mr. Anderson. Mr. Hummel told you his account of William Schuester's manic behavior, correct?"

"Yes," Blaine said clearly.

"But did you hear Mr. Schuester confess any of his plans to Mr. Hummel personally?"

"No," Blaine frowned.

"I see," Hunter nodded. "And did you see the accused, Sebastian Smythe, whip Mr. Hummel?"

"I—" Blaine paused. "I heard it—"

"I believe that you said that you heard whipping noises, Mr. Hummel screaming, and then you walked in."

"Well I surmised from the sounds and the fact that Kurt was handcuffed to a table with blood dripping down his back and Sebastian was standing over him with a whip in his hand that was covered in Kurt's blood that he'd been abusing him!" Blaine snapped back.

"Just answer the question, Mr. Anderson," Hunter said dryly. "Did you or did you not see Mr. Smythe whipping Mr. Hummel?"

Blaine gritted his teeth together. "No."

“And...Ms. Berry said earlier that Kurt Hummel stabbed you? Would you care to elaborate on that?”

Blaine clenched his jaw. “I accused him of being the killer in Seattle and told him I’d called the police. We had an altercation because he thought I’d figured out about his past and so we...struggled and he accidentally stabbed me.”

“Is that so?” Hunter said. “And were there any other times that he pulled a knife on you?”

“No.”

“Really? He didn’t pull a knife on you after he thought that you were the Tinman killer?”

Blaine’s eyes widened because how the hell could he possibly know that? He hadn’t told anyone except for Santana and David...

Blaine’s eyes flickered over to the two faces in the prosecutor’s box.

They had a mole.

“Mr. Anderson? Please answer the question.”

“Yes,” Blaine sighed. “He thought I was a serial killer, so he pulled a knife on me.”

Hunter smiled. “The defense rests.”

Blaine walked down from the stand and squeezed back in next to Chandler and Judy, all of them facing forward and attentive as a handcuffed Sebastian Smythe took the stand.

There was a hot rushing in Blaine’s ears as he stared down Sebastian, wanting nothing more than to shove the door of the prosecutor’s box open and walk up to the stand and wring his lanky neck and that actually sounded like a really good idea—

Judy suddenly put her hand on his leg. “Blaine, calm down,” she whispered.

“Seriously,” Chandler breathed, gripping the edge of the bench with white knuckles. “You’re scaring me, man.”

Blaine shut his eyes and breathed slowly in through his nostrils, counting down from ten.

“Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?”

“I do.”

“You may be seated.”

Blaine’s eyes opened again as David walked in front of Sebastian.

“Mr. Smythe. Where were you on the nights of the murders of Harmony East, Cassandra July, and Sunshine Corazon?”

“I was at my apartment for the former two. I’d originally had plans with my boyfriend but he’d cancelled on me so I just spent the night in.”

Chandler started shaking and Blaine put a hand on his wrist to calm him down.

“And for the latter, I was at masquerade ball, along with most of the other witnesses.”

“Have you ever wielded an axe, Mr. Smythe?”

“I have not.”

“Despite the eyewitness account from Mr. St. James?”

“Jesse partied a lot. I’m pretty sure he was under the influence of some drug at the time that he crashed into my house. I don’t blame him for seeing things.”

“And have you ever struck a person with a whip?”

“No.”

“Despite both Mr. St. James and Mr. Anderson claiming to have seen you with one?”

“I can only speak the truth. I never have.”

Blaine felt like lighting something on fire. Preferably Sebastian.

“Mr. Smythe, do you know anyone by the name or alias of Eli C.?”

That seemed to throw Sebastian momentarily and he looked briefly baffled before answering slowly, “...no. I don’t know any person by that name or alias.”

David nodded. “The prosecution rests.”

“What?” Blaine whispered, looking from Sebastian to David. “No way, that can’t be all that he’s asking.”

“Maybe he’s saving everything for the cross examination?” Chandler guessed with a shrug.

“It’d make sense,” Jesse murmured. “Let Hunter fire all of his shots and then work on derailing them.”

Blaine nodded, leaning back against his seat, but he still couldn’t shake the feeling that something was going horribly wrong with this trial.

“Mr. Smythe,” Hunter smiled. “When did you first meet Kurt Hummel, also known as Katherine Karofsky?”

“When I was eleven,” Sebastian answered succinctly. “He was taken into my home as a foster child.”

“And what was your impression of the young Mr. Hummel?”

"I thought he was a...spirited child. Wild imagination of course, but not too odd. He had a thing for nursery rhymes and the Wizard of Oz and Alice in Wonderland. Stories like that."

"Was Kurt ever abused at your home?"

"He was...disciplined," Sebastian sighed, rubbing a hand dramatically over the back of his neck. "He was very fond of telling small lies, so my parents would sometimes slap the back of his hand but then he'd go screaming through the house about how they'd abused him and...over the years it just got worse and worse so we ended up sending him to Dr. Karofsky—"

"You sent him to Dr. Paul Karofsky?" Hunter clarified. "Why?"

Sebastian blinked. "Because Kurt was delusional. He'd go around assigning fairytale names to everyone from stories he'd read and then make his assumptions based on those. He'd...he'd hurt himself. He'd always say that there were jitterbugs under his skin and he'd scratch himself a lot, especially across his back, just from side to side, side to side..." He trailed off. "And then...one night I found him in the kitchen with a chopping block knife and...he was just smiling. Smiling up at me with the blood pooling around him, not even screaming in pain despite how he'd mutilated himself."

"You have got to be fucking kidding me," Blaine whispered.

"So we sent him to get help," Sebastian sighed. "Dr. Karofsky diagnosed Kurt with an acute form of schizophrenia. The information for which is compiled in that report on the evidence table."

Hunter held the packet up for the court to see.

"He has to be lying," Blaine muttered.

"He's not," Santana breathed. "We checked it out. Paul Karofsky got other psychiatrists to verify. Kurt Hummel did have a rare but very real form of schizophrenia."

“What?” Blaine whispered, turning back to watch the trial. And then a very dangerous feeling started to creep up on him.

Doubt.

“We couldn’t keep him anymore eventually,” Sebastian sighed. “No other foster family wanted him so we let him stay as long as he could, but we just couldn’t help him the way that he needed to be helped. And Dr. Karofsky said that we could help treat him better if he took him into his family so...” Sebastian broke off with a shudder. “Plus Kurt had been sort of creeping us out with all the nursery rhymes he’d sing.”

“Creeping you out in what way?”

“Well,” Sebastian cringed. “He kept singing Lizzie Borden.”

“Would you please say the lyrics of the song for the court?”

“Lizzie Borden took an axe and gave her father forty whacks. When she’d realized what she’d done, she gave her mother forty-one.”

“Would you mind telling the court Kurt Hummel’s middle name?”

Sebastian sighed. “Elizabeth. We assumed he was talking about himself.”

“So you were fearful for your lives?”

“Yes,” Sebastian stressed. “It’s...it’s just so difficult with Kurt. He seems like such a sweet boy, but then he gets under your skin and starts accusing and doing all of these malicious things...and I’ve had to watch it over and over again.”

“You mean with the recent events,” Hunter said gently.

“Yes. The fire at the Karofsky house...killing Paul and Chelsea...I knew it had to be Kurt when I first heard. And the fact that he went missing after that. After hearing the full story of the

Scarecrow killings as well, and how Blaine's account of William Schuester came from Kurt...I knew something was wrong. Such a fanciful story of coincidence and luck and realization at the precise right time...it reminded me of all those set-ups that Kurt had done when we were younger."

"Do you mean to say...that you think Kurt was the Scarecrow killer?"

"Exactly!" Sebastian looked at the court desperately. "He's a lunatic, the report says so! Half of these stories are based just off his word and he's had a chronic history of an imagination gone wild and lying his face off! I mean, he killed Dave Karofsky!"

Sebastian turned his gaze to Blaine, an almost-smile tugging on his lips as he belted out his last blow. "And then he killed himself for god's sake!"

Blaine blinked his eyes open slowly, feeling warm breath on his neck. He took in the cream colored bathroom, frowning because it was both extremely familiar and like a long forgotten dream and why was he in his old high school bathroom? Had everything been a dream? Was he really just still at Dalton, waiting to take his European history exam?

Then there was a soft moan by his ear and everything snapped back into place.

He looked down at Kurt who's eyelashes still had thick mascara on them and there was silver eyeshadow around his eyes and the deep red lipstick had smudged from wiping his mouth last night and his neck was red and sore from where the metal collar had been and his hair oddly matted from being under the wig and the white taffeta dress was all crumpled around him and he had Blaine's stolen blazer draped over him which Blaine had done sometime late last night and he was holding onto Blaine's tie to keep him close or something and he honestly just looked like complete and utter perfection.

Because he was here, in Blaine's arms, after over a month of searching.

"Kurt," Blaine murmured gently, stroking Kurt's cheek. "Kurt, wake up."

Kurt nuzzled his nose against the end of Blaine's collarbone, moaning a little in the back of his throat.

"Come on, Kurt. Come on, you've gotta wake up. Come on, come on..."

Kurt crinkled his nose before opening his eyes slowly, blinking widely. "Blaine?" he rasped.

Blaine nodded, smiling.

Kurt sat up suddenly, putting a hand to his head like he had a brief headache before he stared at Blaine, bringing his hand up to touch his cheek softly. "It's...it's you."

"It's me," Blaine said, bringing his hand up to lightly rest on Kurt's wrist.

Kurt just continued to stare at him incredulously, the silvery morning sunlight shining across his eyes and making them glow. "You're real..."

"Of course I'm real," Blaine smiled. "Why wouldn't I be?"

Suddenly, Kurt was lurching into Blaine's arms, wrapping his arms tightly around his neck. "Oh thank god!" he sobbed, pulling Blaine as close to him as possible. "I thought—I thought you'd disappear. You always do in the morning."

"I'm here," Blaine murmured soothingly, rubbing his hands down Kurt's back. "I'm here. It's okay."

"I thought I was losing my mind," Kurt cried, burrowing into Blaine's shoulder. "I thought I'd never see you again."

"I'll always find you, Kurt," Blaine smiled. "Trust me, I've gotten this far."

Kurt pulled back, looking into Blaine's eyes like he was seeing them for the first time before leaning forward for a kiss.

Even though they were on an uncomfortable marble floor and in crinkly clothes and Kurt's mouth still tasted vaguely like vomit, Blaine literally couldn't have given less of a fuck because Kurt was here and safe and in his arms and they were going to be okay for once.

"Kurt," he breathed, pulling back to look at his face and commit it to memory. "Kurt...oh Kurt."

Kurt pushed their foreheads together, sighing gently.

"We have to leave soon," Blaine murmured. "The police will arrive."

"Police?" Kurt pulled back, looking at Blaine, frightened.

"No!" Blaine said quickly, rubbing his hand across Kurt's back. "No no no, sweetheart. They're here to arrest Sebastian and Karofsky. Then they're going to take us to a safe place, okay?"

"Safe?" Kurt whispered.

"Safe," Blaine nodded with a smile. "We're going to be okay, Kurt. This nightmare is over."

Kurt nodded, a small smile creeping on his lips. "We're going to be okay..."

"Yes."

His smile grew into a full-blown grin. "Oh my god, we're going to be okay, Blaine!" He laughed, hugging Blaine tightly. "Thank you thank you thank you..."

"We will. Those two monsters will be put away for good."

"What about the other guy?"

Blaine frowned before pulling back. "What?"

Kurt's brows furrowed. "The guy who'd come in to do my makeup?"

"Um..." Blaine shrugged. "I guess if they find a third guy, they'll put him away too for association."

"Okay," Kurt nodded, snuggling back into Blaine.

They stayed that way for some time before Blaine managed to coax Kurt up and off of the floor. They took a shower together to wash the vomit off of them, Kurt giggling when Blaine started kissing under his neck, loofah pressed between them. Blaine winced when he washed Kurt's back, gently running his hands down the newer scars that had marred his tattoos. A handful of the wounds looked incredibly recent and Kurt hissed as the soap oozed into the nearly-bloody ridges. Then they both washed each other's hair, just staring one another in the eye as they used up the rest of Thad's shampoo.

They got dressed in two of the Dalton uniforms in Thad's closet. Kurt reassured Blaine that winter break at Dalton had started the day before so they were in the clear as far as being walked in on went. Blaine just nodded, slack-jawed as he stared at Kurt in the blazer, his wet hair combed neatly down.

Kurt blinked. "What?"

"You look hot," Blaine blurted out, walking forward to fix Kurt's collar.

A surprised smile curled Kurt's lips. "Oh really?"

"Uh...yeah," Blaine nodded. "I mean, with your hair and...shoulders...yeah."

Kurt tried to hold back his grin as he straightened Blaine's tie. "Well, I must say, though I love your messy hair and stubbly cheeks, this whole gel and clean-shaven look is very debonair on you."

"Oh really?" Blaine echoed teasingly.

"Really," Kurt grinned as he leaned forward for a sweet kiss. He pulled back, licking his lips. "Okay, let's go."

Blaine grinned goofily at him as they went over to the door, unlocking it.

"Blaine?"

Blaine turned back to Kurt who was biting his lip nervously.

"Um...just in case you didn't read that letter I left you, um...well, I—"

"You love me."

Kurt looked up at him apprehensively, a blush staining his cheeks. "Um...well, yes."

Blaine smiled. "Well...I guess this is as good a time as any."

Kurt's eyes lit up as Blaine took his hand.

"Kurt Hummel. I—"

The door slammed open, hitting Blaine hard on the side of the head and he hit the ground. His brain throbbed and the world tilted at an odd angle and he heard someone scream his name.

"Blaine!"

He blinked, his eyelashes dragging against the grainy hardwood as his head throbbed.

"Blaine! Blaine please Blaine!"

Blaine slowly pressed his palm against the ground, pushing himself up shakily before a foot came out of nowhere and cracked his nose, causing him to collapse to the floor again.

The screaming of his name seemed a whole lot more far off now...

The second kick to his ribs snapped everything into clarity and he raised his arms over his head in time to block the next kick to his face.

"Stop it! Please, you're hurting him!"

"Uh, that's kind of the point? Jesus, Dave, can't you control your little...well whatever he/she is at this point?"

"Blaine!"

Blaine looked up to see Kurt wrestling with Karofsky, who was trying to pull him backwards into the hall.

"Stop! Let go of me! Let g—" Karofsky clamped a hand around Kurt's mouth, wrapping the other around his waist as he forcibly hauled him out of the room. Kurt grabbed onto the doorframe desperately.

Sebastian smirked before slamming the door hard over Kurt's fingers.

The resulting cracks and screams broke Blaine out of the remaining fog as Kurt's fingers let go of the door and Sebastian closed it firmly shut.

"Ah ah ah," Sebastian crooned as he pressed his heel very firmly down on Blaine's chest when he tried to get up, pulling out a gun. "Remember this?"

Blaine did. It was the gun that Sebastian had taken from him the same night he'd taken Kurt.

Sebastian kneeled down, pressing his knees deep into Blaine's chest as he leaned his full weight over his body, a wide malicious grin on his face. "You know, Blaine? I was supposed to let you go. To take it easy on you. That was the real reason that Kurt came to me that night, to take the fall so you wouldn't have to take his place. But—" He grabbed a handful of Blaine's hair and yanked his head sharply up so that their eyes were inches away. "You had to go and play the hero. Try and rescue Kurt. My plaything." His hand tightened and Blaine hissed. "I don't do well when others try to take my playthings, Blaine. Don't you remember?"

The floors rattled as Sebastian slammed Blaine's head down into them.

“Remember when I was thirteen and you beat me at fencing during that soiree that your parents were holding at the country club so you got the medal? Yeah, I went home that night and whipped Kurt’s back raw. And the next time. And the time after that. When I didn’t get the lead Warbler position my sophomore year, I came up to that room across the hall and whipped Kurt while drinking lemonade. And then I poured the rest down his back. Apparently there’s some truth to squeezing lemon juice over a cut...”

“Stop it,” Blaine whispered, shoving at the arm over his throat, trying to block out the testimony that Sebastian was giving him.

“Not as bad as the time I did body shots off Kurt’s bleeding back. Well, it was more just squeezing lime juice and mixing it with salt and tequila then pouring all that over Kurt’s back.”

Blaine shoved against the arm, squirming his body but Sebastian crouched up on his knees so that he was trapped.

“But the time I nearly killed him. That was my favorite. Holding his head in the bathtub...” He licked his teeth as he leaned closer to Blaine, eyes twinkling. “His arms were flailing. Splashing around. He got my blazer wet. I knew I couldn’t really kill him but I honestly didn’t even care...”

“You’re so fucking sick,” Blaine burst out, rage filling him. “I swear to god if you touch one more hair on his head—”

*“You’ll what?” Sebastian laughed. “Didn’t you promise him safety back in New York? And look what happened then: as soon as I met back up with darling Kurt and his charmless husband, I had the opportunity to spend hours with Kurt. And I pushed my limits, Blaine. I really did. I spent **days**.”*

*He leaned in even closer so that their noses were touching. “So you know what we’re going to do now, Blaine? You and I are going to have a little fun.” He let go of Blaine’s hair to reach back into his pocket and pulled out a pair of silver handcuffs. “I’m going to handcuff you to that bed and work on your back until you’re **begging** me to stop. And then—and only then—will I drag you by your hair across the hall so we can watch Davey go at Little Miss Muffet over there.*

The door opened slowly behind Sebastian and a clothes-torn blood-covered Kurt walked in slowly, eyes wide.

*“And god, if you think **I’m** bad you should see Davey,” Sebastian laughed. “It’s practically hysterical. Little Kurt crying and begging and pleading but Davey just shoves his head further into the pillow.”*

Blaine’s eyes flickered over to Kurt’s and Kurt gingerly picked up a vase with his palms and thumbs, his broken fingers useless as they stuck out at odd angles.

“Seriously, Blaine?” Sebastian rolled his eyes. “You’re doing the whole ‘Watch Out There’s Something Behind You’ routine?”

“Well there is,” Kurt said coldly before bringing the vase down hard over Sebastian’s head.

Blaine knocked the gun out of the way and used Sebastian as a shield from falling shards before shoving him off, leaping to his feet and grabbing Kurt’s arm as they closed the door shut.

“Karofsky?”

“I...” Kurt shuddered. “He’s dead. I—I—”

“It’s okay,” Blaine said. “It’s okay, we just have to get out of here. The police are on their way, remember?”

Kurt hesitated before nodding. “Right. And they’ll take us to a safe place?”

“And they’ll take us to a safe place,” Blaine echoed. “Come on.” He tried to take Kurt’s hand but Kurt hissed, his fingers still broken. “Sorry,” Blaine muttered, taking his arm instead as they hurried down the hall.

A door opened behind them and a shot rang out, shattering the vase that was inches from Kurt.

They both spun around to see Sebastian, gun raised and livid.

“Run!”

Another shot missed Blaine by inches.

The staircase was still fifty feet away.

“This way!”

Blaine dragged Kurt sharply to the left, through the door and the stairs that led up to the roof.

Another shot on the staircase.

They burst out of the door and onto the Dalton roof. Blaine paused and turned around.

“Blaine!” Kurt said incredulously. “What are you doing?”

As soon as Sebastian opened the door, Blaine punched him. The two grappled as Blaine tried to wrestle the gun from him and another shot was fired into the air.

Sebastian managed to get the handcuffs out and handcuffed one of Blaine’s hands, trying to reach around and do the other. Blaine slammed them both against the stairwell brick wall and another shot hit the roof.

Kurt grabbed the back of Sebastian’s hair and as another shot fired and it caused enough distraction for Blaine to grapple with the other end of the handcuff, which had snaked behind a pipe on the wall, and close it around Sebastian’s wrist.

Sebastian yanked his head away from Kurt’s hand to stare at their predicament. Both of them were chained together but neither could get free from the wall because the small metal chain was behind a rather large and sturdy pipe.

The sound of sirens filled the air.

“Give it up, Sebastian,” Blaine said, trying to keep gloating to a minimum. “The police are here.”

Sebastian stared at him before pointing the gun at Kurt.

"No!" Blaine yelled.

"On second thought..." Sebastian considered thoughtfully. He yanked his end of the chain so that Blaine's arm was forced up, stretching taut as Sebastian put the gun against his ribs. "Much better. Direct shot this way."

"No!" Kurt screamed, stepping forward.

"Ah ah ah," Sebastian tutted. "One more step and I pull the trigger."

Kurt froze, looking between Blaine and Sebastian, tears filling his eyes. "What do you want? Immunity? Us to let you go?"

Sebastian smiled almost fondly. "No no, Kurt. I want what I've always wanted. To see you in pain. And I think a bullet in Blaine would make you devastated for life."

"Please," Kurt pleaded. "Please, anything else, please!"

"Shh," Sebastian said gently. "You know I always offer you an alternative—though admittedly it was usually the whip or the axe...But the same goes for here. I'll let Blaine go...if you jump off the roof."

"No," Blaine said immediately. "No, Kurt you can't!"

Kurt started crying as he stumbled backwards towards the edge of the roof. He stepped up onto the ledge.

"Kurt, I swear to god if you take one more step back—"

"Blaine, just shut up!" Kurt yelled, wiping his eyes. "Shut up, please just shut. Up!"

"No!" Blaine yelled. "I will not shut up, I'm never going to shut up because you aren't going to do this!"

*"I have to!" Kurt cried desperately. "Jesus, Blaine. Don't you know what you mean to me? You're the first person to ever, **ever** see me for who I am and not just some stupid pawn and—" He broke off, wiping his eyes against his sleeve. "You're too good, Blaine. You're too good, and I love you and I'm not going to let him hurt you!"*

"Well what about me?" Blaine demanded, tears running down his face. "What about me, Kurt? I don't get to say if he hurts you or not? You already sacrificed yourself for me once. I'm not going to let you do it again!"

"And why not?"

*"Because I love you, you stupid petulant imperfect wonderful idiot!" Blaine exploded. "I love you, Kurt and I've watched you hurt too many times and cry too many times and be in pain too many times and not been able to help you! All I've **ever** wanted to do was help you! That's the only thing I've been sure about since I was seventeen!"*

Kurt stared at him. "What are you talking about?"

Blaine sagged against his handcuff. "You told me. The happiest memory from before was your music box, right? The one that played Somewhere Over The Rainbow that you'd gotten from your favorite person in the world. The one that broke and so you kept the four pieces of it that you could find—two white and two black beads that you started wearing in your hair later on, and a large ruby that you had made into a belly button piercing."

Kurt blinked back tears as his mouth fell open. "How could you possibly know that?"

Blaine sighed sadly. "Because that box had been my grandmother's."

"It just reminds me of him too much," Nana said, handing the box over to Blaine.

His mother was wiping tears from her eyes as she petted her new string of pearls. His father looked mournful with his cigar cutter. Cooper looked devastated with his tie clip.

Blaine was honestly trying to feel sad or something, but he was pulling a blank.

Pop's funeral had been earlier that morning and now Nana was pawning off all of her items that she'd kept in the joint hospital room with the two of them—all of her treasures.

Blaine felt like this should be one of the great moving moments of his life, but all he could think about was the quiz on Thursday and the new Warbler routine that they had to practice.

So he held the music box awkwardly in his lap as his family members each started crying and then it just got awkward so he left the hospital room and wandered the halls.

After a few minutes, he realized that he probably looked ridiculous—high school student in full funeral garb, wandering around a hospital with an antique music box in his hands. So he decided to head back the scenic route which took him down a different ward.

He frowned, glancing around. He didn't want to say he was lost, but...

There was someone sitting in a chair outside of a room and he walked over with the intent of asking directions. But as he got closer, he realized that it was a young child. Who was...crying.

Blaine paused, suddenly feeling anxious. He wasn't very good around children, especially crying ones. He shuffled from foot to foot awkwardly as the little boy kept crying. He couldn't have been more than six and his arm was in a cast and he was trying to wipe away all of his tears with one tiny little chubby hand.

Blaine felt an odd pounding in his head and suddenly he was bent at the waist in front of the boy, holding out his black silk handkerchief for him.

The little boy looked up in surprise, his big wet blue eyes widening.

“Are you okay?” Blaine asked gently.

The boy’s mouth turned down in a frown and his lips quivered as he shook his head.

“I’m sorry to hear that.” And the odd thing was...he wasn’t lying. “My name’s Blaine. What’s yours?”

The little boy licked his lips before answering. “Kurt.”

“Kurt,” Blaine smiled. “That’s a nice name. What’s wrong, Kurt?”

Kurt’s little face crinkled up. “The doctors said that...that mommy was gone and that daddy might never wake up!”

“That’s awful,” Blaine said, kneeling down next to his chair. He put the handkerchief in Kurt’s hand and Kurt wiped his eyes with it, huffing quietly as he looked over at the small aquarium.

“And...” he sniffed. “And they said that if Daddy didn’t wake up, I’d have to find a new home. And I don’t want a new home, I want to go to my home!”

Blaine made a snap decision. He slid into the seat next to Kurt. “Have you ever seen The Wizard of Oz?”

Kurt looked up at him and nodded slowly. “It’s my favorite movie.”

“Mine too,” Blaine agreed with a grin. “And I’ll tell you what. I have a magic box here.”

Kurt’s eyes widened. “Really?”

“Really,” Blaine nodded. “Listen.” He opened the small box and Somewhere Over The Rainbow tinkled out sweetly.

Kurt sat, staring at the box with wide eyes as the song played. His fingers reached out and started tracing the designs back and forth, back and forth...

"See?" Blaine said, closing the box as the song ended. "Magical. Remember the ruby slippers?" A faithful nod. Blaine pointed to the ruby on top of the box amidst the black and white beads. "This is a real ruby right here. If you tap it three times with your finger and whisper 'There's no place like home, there's no place like home, there's no place like home', then you'll eventually find home one day."

"You will?" Kurt asked quietly.

"You will," Blaine reassured with a smile. "Which is why I want you to keep it."

Kurt's mouth fell open as Blaine slid the ornate box into his lap. "Thank you," he whispered, awestruck.

"Sure thing," Blaine smiled and he felt oddly...happy. He didn't know why but his chest felt all warm and light.

Suddenly, Kurt's face was very near his and he was pecked gently on the cheek before Kurt sat back down in his chair, criss cross applesauce.

Kurt blushed and leaned forward, cupping his hand over his mouth as he whispered to Blaine, "That was my first kiss."

Blaine smiled, charmed, as he cupped his hand over his mouth and whispered, "Mine too." And he wasn't lying. It was the first one he cared about.

So it was the one that counted.

He tried not to groan in annoyance when his phone buzzed and he knew it was Cooper calling, meaning that visiting time was over, so he stood up and bowed low to Kurt. "Farewell, Mr. Kurt. I have to go back to my family."

Kurt giggled at his extravagant bow and offered a hand instead, looking determined.
“Goodbye, Blaine.”

Blaine smiled as he shook his hand. He turned and walked back down the hall.

“Blaine!”

Blaine turned around to see a nervous Kurt gnawing on his lip. “Will I ever see you again?”

Blaine grinned. “I don’t doubt it.”

Kurt stared at him, frozen on the ledge. “That was you.”

“Yes,” Blaine said desperately.

“You were the boy who gave me the music box all those years ago.”

“Yes.”

“How long have you known?”

“Since you wrote the note the night you went to Sebastian’s house,” Blaine said. “You put your hair beads and piercing all in a pile next to the letter, and seeing all of them together...it just clicked into place.”

“Fuck!” Kurt yelled into his hands. “Fuck fuck fuck fuck why the fuck did everything become so complicated?”

“As touching as this has been,” Sebastian cut through, nudging his gun into Blaine’s ribs. “Oh wait. It hasn’t. Get on with it Kurt, unless you want to see Blainey boy’s blood all over the roof.”

Kurt blinked, not even trying to stop the tears anymore as he turned around on the ledge.

"Kurt, don't you dare! Get down from that ledge now!"

"Some...where...over the rainbow..."

"Kurt, stop!"

There was a scream from below and the sound of a megaphone. The police must have noticed someone on the roof. Shouts mounted from the ground, someone screamed something that sounded like "East three and four!" and another voice yelling at Kurt to get down from the roof.

"Black...birds...fly..."

"Kurt I swear to god—"

"Birds...fly...over the rainbow..."

Kurt spread his arms. His torn Dalton shirt split at his back and ruffled in the breeze. For a second, Blaine thought that he saw wings.

*"Kurt, please, **please!**"*

"Why then...oh why can't I?"

"Please, I love you, don't do this!"

"If happy little blackbirds fly beyond the rainbow..."

"I'm begging you, Kurt!" Blaine sobbed. "Please, please don't do this! Just come down, please come down I'll do anything you want, just please come down, please!"

"Why oh why can't I?"

"Kurt!"

Kurt turned back to look at Blaine, his eyes full of tears.

“Goodbye Mr. Earl Grey.”

He stepped off the roof.

“KURT!”

Kurt Hummel stood on a wall.

Kurt Hummel had a great fall.

All the king’s horses and all the king’s men

Could not put Kurt back together again.

Blaine had screamed for a minute straight.

“Seriously,” Sebastian rolled his eyes after Blaine had finally stopped. “So dramatic.”

And in that moment, there was nothing that Blaine wanted more than for Sebastian Smythe to die.

He grabbed the gun from him and pointed it at his head.

Sebastian raised an eyebrow. “You wouldn’t. You don’t have the guts.”

“Wanna bet?” Blaine said, voice free of emotion or inflection. He was done, just completely done with everything.

He pulled the trigger.

Click.

He stared at the gun, cocking it again and pulling the trigger.

Click.

Sebastian smiled. "Oops."

"You..." Blaine stared at him. "You.."

"It's your gun," Sebastian shrugged. "It only holds six rounds. Not my fault that you two can't count."

"You—you—"

Blaine snapped.

He grabbed the end of the gun and started hitting Sebastian in the face as hard as he could. "You psychotic fucked-up son of a bitch!"

Sebastian managed to grab his arm and pull, bringing his knee up sharply.

A loud crack filled the air as Blaine's arm broke.

"Fuck!"

"Also...it's not my fault that now both of our prints are on that gun."

The police managed to extract them an hour later. Blaine had run to the edge of the roof, but the cement below was already being hosed down, leaving no trace behind.

Blaine blinked, and realized that Sebastian was still talking.

“He’s completely delusional and highly dangerous! And the worst part is that he feeds off of the ideas of others. Being in such close proximity with Mr. St. James when we were younger was terrible for him because he was always so dramatic and showing him musicals which just added to his paranoia. And then being in such close quarters with Mr. Anderson...” Sebastian shook his head. “Not to mention the allegations of the nature of their relationship...I fear it made him take a turn for the worse. Yes, I think he killed those people in Seattle. And in New York. And Dave Karofsky in Westerville. Just like he killed the Karofsky’s in Lima the Christmas before last.”

“And what of the allegations that you killed Mr. Hummel?” Hunter asked. “That you threatened him with this gun here?” He pointed to the bagged weapon on the evidence table.

“Untrue!” Sebastian protested. “Blaine had the gun and I grappled with him for it. Though...I do admit that my intent was to shoot Kurt.”

“Really?” Hunter raised his eyebrows, looking unsurprised.

Sebastian nodded. “But not to kill him! He was walking towards the ledge and I just wanted to take out a kneecap so we could wait for the police to make it up to the roof. But I couldn’t before...” He broke off, a grief-stricken look on his face. “Look, there’s simply no motive for this crime,” Sebastian sighed dramatically, making Blaine want to punch him. “Kurt was a friend of mine. He was my brother. I loved him even though he was delusional. Why on earth would I voluntarily hurt him?”

Hunter smiled. “The defense rests.”

Blaine felt dead inside.

“Okay then,” Judy breathed out quietly. “Let’s bury this horse in the ground.”

“What?” Blaine frowned.

David stood in front of the court, causing a momentary stir to ripple through everyone. Hunter looked at him, politely incredulous.

David cleared his throat. "Your honor, with your permission, I'd like to call just one more witness to the stand."

Judge Sylvester turned a peering eye over to Hunter. He shrugged. "Go ahead."

Sylvester nodded. "Proceed."

Santana gave David a nod and he took a deep breath, straightened his shoulders, and looked levelly out over the court. "The prosecution would like to call Kurt Hummel to the stand."

"Objection!" Hunter interjected, rising. "You can't call a deceased witness to the stand. Kurt Hummel is dead."

Judy snorted next to Blaine. "Like hell I am."

Blaine's head snapped to the left as Judy stood and ripped off her wig, raking her fingers through choppy chestnut hair.

Kurt smoothly exited the prosecutor's box, ignoring the commotion of the courtroom, and walked over to the stand, swearing himself in.

"I do," Kurt said confidently, trying to ignore his heart pounding in his throat as he settled into his seat. David approached him calmly, an easy smile on his face.

"Please state your name for the court."

"Kurt Elizabeth Hummel," Kurt replied clearly. "Also sometimes referred to as Katherine Alice Karofsky."

“Mr. Hummel. Would you please explain in detail for the court your relationships with both the accused Sebastian Smythe and the recently deceased Dave Karofsky?”

Kurt took a deep breath. “When I was five years old, I got into a car crash with my parents. My mother died instantly and my father slipped into a coma. The doctors told me that it was extremely unlikely that he would make it, so I was placed in the foster care system. I ended up with the Smythe family...

“It wasn’t ideal. They were very strict but I was a generally well-mannered child. It wasn’t until I broke a glass on accident that everything changed.”

Kurt reached up to push his dirty plate up on the counter above the dishwasher, his hand accidentally nudging the wineglass next to it. It fell off the counter and smashed on the ground, causing Kurt to jump.

He pushed his plate up onto the counter all the way before bending over, picking up a large shard of glass gingerly with his fingers.

“What is going on?” a voice snapped.

He looked up at his mother who was standing in the doorway to the kitchen, her hands on her hips and looking vivid.

“I dropped the glass,” he murmured. “I’m sorry, I was trying to put my plate up on the counter—”

She walked briskly over to him and struck him across the face, causing him to overbalance and fall into the glass shards.

“I was beaten on a fairly regular occasion. It wasn’t until about a year later and my...sexual preference became obvious that they took it to new levels. Mr. Smythe, my foster father, thought

that whipping me would absolve me of the wrong things I was doing against God, and Mrs. Smythe, my foster mother, was of the firm opinion that children were meant to be seen and not heard.

“My foster brother Sebastian on the other hand mainly left me alone, other than the average sibling teasing...”

“Baa baa black sheep, have you any wool?” Kurt sang as he sat in the corner of his room, playing with the little wooden lamb figurine that he’d found in a cupboard. “Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full. One for the master, one for the dame, one for...” His brows furrowed. He could never remember the last line. “The...boy...who’s...name was Blaine.” He smiled and shrugged. Close enough. “Baa baa black sheep—”

“What’s that?”

Kurt looked up to see Sebastian staring into his room from out in the hall.

Kurt smiled toothily, holding up the lamb in both hands. “Look ‘Bastian! It’s a sheep!”

“That’s a lamb, dummy,” Sebastian rolled his eyes as he walked in.

Kurt just went back to moving it across the floor and making it graze on the occasional splinter.

Suddenly it was gone. Kurt looked up, wide-eyed to see Sebastian holding it above his head.

“‘Bastian!” Kurt scrambled to his feet. “Give it back!”

“No.”

“It’s mine!”

“It’s from my house so that means it’s mine.”

"No!" Kurt chased Sebastian down the hall, wiping the tears from his eyes. "Bastian, it's mine!"

Sebastian slammed his door shut and Kurt started pounding on it.

"Kurt!"

Uh oh. His father was home.

"But when I was about seven and he was thirteen, his parents went away for the weekend and he told me that we could run away together. Instead, he strapped me to the table down in the basement and whipped my back for hours. I was always scared of my foster parents, but Sebastian made me trust him before he broke that trust along with most of the skin on my back.

"He didn't do it very often because he didn't want his parents finding out. But whenever they were out of town, he'd drag me down to the basement for his own fun, I guess. Jesse stopped coming around because he'd seen what had happened the first time and it freaked him out. But the next year, when I was nine and Sebastian was about to head off to Dalton Academy for the first time..."

Kurt crept slowly down the stairs, doing his best not to make them creak. He had a bag of clothes over his shoulder and a couple of beads from his broken music box as well as the pretty red stone on top in his pocket.

He didn't really know where he'd go, but he knew that Jesse lived a couple of blocks away so maybe he'd try to find his house.

He reached up and turned the deadbolt slowly, wincing when it made a loud snick noise. Then came the handle lock which was much quieter, to his relief. He took a deep breath and opened the door.

A hand slammed it shut.

He looked up in horror to see Sebastian standing over him, an unpleasant grin on his face. "Where are you going, Kurt?"

"I..." Kurt whispered, voice hoarse. "I..."

Sebastian grabbed his arm and dragged him through the living room and dining room and kitchen down to the basement, Kurt kicking and screaming the whole way.

Kurt saw the table and dragged his feet, before panicking and sinking his teeth into Sebastian's wrist.

"Fuck!"

Kurt yanked his hand away and raced back up the stairs, shoving the door open.

There was a loud sharp noise and Kurt looked back to see Sebastian pulling an axe blade out of the door, where his head had been only moments before.

Sebastian grinned at him. "Come here, Kurtie. 'Bastian wants to play."

Kurt ran.

Dining room, living room, tried again for the front door but the axe almost took off his hand that time. He looked under Sebastian's arm and ran back to the den. Sebastian hit him on the side of the head with the flat of the blade and Kurt fell to the ground, disoriented.

"Come on, Kurtie," Sebastian grinned, kneeling on top of his chest and making him feel like he had to cough. "You're going to run away?"

"Stop, please!" Kurt whimpered, shoving at Sebastian's knees as tears welled in his eyes.

Sebastian laughed. "God, you're such a girl. Always singing in your dumb voice and sitting quietly and crying. You're basically a girl already."

“Bastian please!” he cried, pushing at his knees. “Please, you’re hurting me!”

“Might as well make you a girl.”

Sebastian reached back and started pulling at Kurt’s corduroys.

“Stop!”

Sebastian laughed as he pushed Kurt’s pants and boxers down, taking him in hand and stroking him.

“Stop!” Kurt kicked his legs. “Stop! I don’t like it! Please stop!”

“Okay,” Sebastian grinned. He slid down Kurt’s body and raised the axe.

“NO!”

Screaming.

Blood.

So much blood.

Laughter.

Screaming.

Pain.

Black.

Jesse...?

Kurt went in and out of consciousness.

A white hospital room.

Jesse's worried face.

Some talk about his nerve endings...?

Dr. ...Kar...of...?

Darkness.

“My hormones went all over the place after that. Part of my growth was regressed. I had a bunch of damaged nerve endings around my pelvis. My foster parents came home early and it was the first time I ever remembered them yelling at Sebastian. Then there was talk about him leaving and me as well. It didn’t make a whole lot of sense to me back then because I was on painkillers, but I later learned their meaning.

“Mr. and Mrs. Smythe were upset that they had a gay son—Sebastian. They figured that, since I was very feminine as well as masculine as a child—and obviously towards a similar inclination as their son—that he might cotton on to me and I could be a close enough substitute to a real girl.

“Sebastian had no such intention. He made his dislike and disdain towards me perfectly clear, but he seized the opportunity after my surgery to convince his parents that maybe if he were allowed to spend more time with me, then maybe he might start to like me.

“The two of us knew that there was no chance of that happening, but his parents latched on to the idea and sent me off to Dalton with him. I’m not entirely sure how that was allowed, but I guess that money will pave the way with anything at that school.

"I lived with Sebastian during his duration at Dalton and it was...hell."

"Wakey wakey..."

Kurt gasped as the ice cold water hit his face at full blast, shooting up his nostrils and down his throat. He sat up coughing and blowing his nose out, choking on the water.

Sebastian made him sleep in the bathtub, which had faucets at both ends, so no matter which way Kurt tried to sleep, he was always woken up with a face-full of water, either freezing cold or scalding hot.

"Come on, Kurtie. Let's have fun..."

Kurt coughed around the gag, saliva dripping down his chin as he was jolted up the bed by the force of Sebastian's strike. He winced as his head cracked on the headboard and he started crying quietly.

"There there, Kurt," Sebastian soothed. "It's alright. You chose this, remember? It's what you wanted."

He'd been given the choice of Sebastian using the whip or the axe, and he'd chosen the whip. He always chose the whip.

Never the axe again.

CRACK.

"Kurt Kurt Kurt Kurt Kurt," Sebastian slurred, giggling when he sat down next to the bed.

Kurt hated when he was like this the worst. Drunk Sebastian was unpredictable and that usually led to nasty surprises.

Kurt turned his head the other way to look at the poppy wallpaper by the door. The flowers always reminded him of blood.

“Look at me!” Sebastian hissed, wrenching his face back the other way. With a gulp, Kurt slide his eyes back to Sebastian’s slightly out of focus ones.

Rancid breath that smelled like rubbing alcohol washed over as Sebastian leaned in with a lazy grin. “Have you ever done body shots, Kurt?”

Kurt froze against the pillow before slowly shaking his head.

Sebastian frowned. “Why not?”

Silence.

Sebastian slapped him. “Hey, I asked you a question. Why not?”

Kurt shook before mumbling something around the gag in his mouth.

Sebastian rolled his eyes before unstrapping it from the back of his head and pulling it out. “What?”

“I...” Kurt rasped, trying to get used to talking again. “Because I’m...only eleven?”

A blink. Then Sebastian burst out laughing. “That’s right!” he wheezed. “I always forget how old you really are. But that’s no excuse, Kurtie. I had my first vodka when I was nine. It was at the Anderson house. Good party. Our parents were all passed out and we took over the pool house. Talk about old times,” he sighed. “But anyways. Body shots. They’re literally my favorite. Here, I’ll teach you...”

He took out a big container of salt, one of the ones with the little metal spiel to pour it out of, and he poured a thick line of Kurt’s back.

Kurt wondered why he'd use his back as it had blood all over it and he was pretty sure that Sebastian wouldn't want to make a drink with his blood, but then he leaned over and his intent was perfectly clear.

Kurt screamed, his sound echoing around the room as Sebastian licked the salt deep into the bloody ridges of his back.

"Hush," Sebastian slurred petulantly, patting Kurt's back and driving the salt in deeper. "That's just the first part. Then there's the limes..."

He took out several lime wedges and started squeezing them all over Kurt's back as well, taking a finger and swirling the juice around with the gritty salt and dragging it deep into the bloody ridges. He popped the last wedge into his mouth and bit on it sharply, wincing around the sour flavor as Kurt screamed himself hoarse.

"Then," Sebastian coughed. "Then the tequila. This is my favorite part." He brought up a bottle and swallowed a swig, making a face before smiling lazily, and tipping the bottle over on Kurt's back.

Kurt thrashed against his hand and feet cuffs violently, back arching off the bed trying to find some, any form of respite from the searing burn.

"And that's a body shot," Sebastian giggled. "Fun, right?"

Kurt was warm. Very warm. It felt pleasant. And there was someone smiling down at him with slicked back hair and...why couldn't he make out his face? What was his name again? Cain...?

And what was that rushing—

Kurt's eyes opened as he realized that the bathtub was slowly being filled up and he was floating in it.

Sebastian leaned over him with a smile. "Nighty night, Kurtie."

Kurt frowned. Wasn't it morning—?

Sebastian grabbed him by the hair and pushed him under the water.

Kurt clawed at his hand, trying to simultaneously breathe and hold his breath as the water washed over him. He fought his way up to the surface for a quick splutter before Sebastian pushed his chest down again and he was submerged.

He fought and struggled and splashed, but the more he moved, the more out of breath he became and his mouth opened, letting the last vestiges of air leave his lungs as he sank to the bottom of the tub and darkness spotted his vision.

'Kurt,' a voice whispered in his ear. There was a figure in all black who smelled like coffee and raspberries and cinnamon and who had a heavy hand on his shoulder. 'There's no place like home,' he whispered. 'There's no place like home, there's no place like home.'

Then the heavy hand on his shoulder was gripping him tight and he found himself over the edge of the tub, coughing water violently out of his lungs, throwing it up and sobbing as he tried to choke down a breath.

"When I was twelve, Sebastian graduated from Dalton Academy and told his parents a very definite 'no' that he didn't want me in any way shape or form except as a...stress reliever. He went off to college and I moved back in with the Smythes. It wasn't...as bad comparatively as living with Sebastian, mainly because I was left alone until they could find something that I'd done wrong.

"The next summer, I met Santana Lopez for the first time. She was the first woman that I'd met other than Mrs. Smythe since living with them and we became...friends. She promised that she would get me out, but she never got the chance.

"I was useless to Mr. and Mrs. Smythe because I'd been primarily taken in for their son. So instead, they offered—"

Kurt broke off, feeling temporary fear fill his body before he closed his eyes and wrung his fingers. 'He's dead, Kurt,' he told himself mentally. 'He's dead, he's dead, he's dead—'

"Mr. Hummel?"

Kurt looked back up at the court, eyes bright. "Sorry. They...there was another family in a similar predicament to theirs. A friend of Mr. Smythe's—Paul Karofsky, the doctor who had treated me after my accident with Sebastian—had a son. Dave. Who he and his wife were...worried because he'd just graduated from OSU and they didn't want him running off to the big city to a place where he could be more...liberal with his sexuality, so the Smythes proposed that they try with Dave what had failed with Sebastian and they...offered me.

"Dave...Dave agreed and I went through a transformation. My hair grew out and it curled. Ever since the...incident, I never really grew body hair, so I never had to worry about shaving my face. They had my gender and name legally changed so I became Katherine—or Katy—Alice Smythe. Then, the Smythes, my legal guardians, gave their consent for me to marry Dave Karofsky when I was only fourteen. He was twenty-two."

"There there, dearie," Chelsea smiled as she untied the back of Kurt's fluffy white dress. "Everyone has jitters on their wedding night."

Kurt was pretty sure that this was the opposite of what she was talking about.

She nudged him so that he stepped out of the dress and stood there in his sheer white slip, shivering. It had nothing to do with the cold.

Chelsea smiled brightly at him. "I'll see you in the morning, dearie."

The door closed with a click.

Kurt glanced around, looking anywhere except for the large bed in the middle of the room.

He had no idea what he was supposed to do or who he was supposed to door what was expected of him. Chelsea had just told him that he was going to live with them now—which was a step up from the Smythes, he supposed—but now he was...Katy? And married to their son Dave? And...he was expected to obey him.

Kurt wrapped his arms around himself as the door creaked open again and Dave walked in. He closed the door firmly shut behind him.

Averting his eyes, Kurt glanced down and stared at his bare toes against the carpet. Soon, a pair of black dress shoes stood at the end of his toes. A warm and slightly clammy hand gripped his chin and forced him to look up and he shuddered slightly, staring at Dave's face.

Dave leaned in for a kiss and Kurt closed his eyes, keeping his mouth firmly shut as he started shaking. It was kind of hot and uncomfortable and Dave's breath smelled like steak and all of the sudden his hands were moving to Kurt's shoulders and Kurt just kept gripping the sides of his slip because he just wanted it all to stop.

Kurt opened his eyes, feeling the tears stinging in them as Dave started to kiss down his neck and he shivered.

Dave must have taken his shiver as a green light because he tried to kiss him on the mouth again but Kurt leaned back.

A hand gripped the back of his hair tightly and forced his head forward and he hissed in pain as fingers caught in his curls and suddenly there was a thick tongue in his mouth. Kurt tried to pull away but the heavy hand just pressed him forward more until he was molded against Dave's body and something was poking into his hip. He started to cry.

"Lay down on the bed," came a raspy whisper.

“No,” Kurt whimpered. “No, please, just...just not tonight, please, no—”

He found himself pushed facedown onto the bed, the back end of his slip pushed up against his back. He tried to get up but a hand shoved him back down into the mattress. The sound of a zipper filled the quiet room and he cried quietly into the pillow as something cold spread around his hole and then a gross smacking sound before a blunt pressure.

And then there was just pain.

Kurt bit into the pillow, screaming as he thrashed on the bed, trying to get away but Dave pinned both of his arms and legs down with his own, leaning heavily on Kurt’s back so it pressed firmly into the mattress. Kurt panicked, being completely immobilized as their hips started moving and the pain intensified, everything feeling raw and dragged and aching.

“Stop...” he begged weakly, sobbing. “Stop, please, it hurts!”

His cries went unanswered as hot breath huffed over his ear in heavy pants and he felt like he couldn’t breathe because of the pressure enclosing him from all angles.

“That’s...it...” Dave panted in his ear, reaching his hand down to grab one of the cheeks of Kurt’s ass to spread him wider. “That’s...a...good...girl...”

Kurt didn’t know how much time had passed. It felt like days. But finally Dave’s hips stuttered and there was a hot feeling that burned inside of him and he gave a weak cry as Dave collapsed on top of him.

Kurt stared at the pillow that was only a centimeter away from his eyes as he waited.

Dave finally got off of him and went to the bathroom, the sound of running water splitting the dead silence.

Kurt pulled his slip back down around himself and curled up in a ball, crying himself to sleep.

"I don't know how I got it into my head that living with the Karofskys would be any better than living with the Smythes, but I was in for a very rude awakening. Every hour of the day I was with Chelsea. She wanted to mold me into the perfect housewife, I guess, while Dave was away being the assistant coach at the local high school. But I kept trying to run away. There were locks on every door and I didn't have a key so...one night I tried to kill myself.

"Paul was a doctor and had a giant medicine cabinet that was in the bathroom. One night I swallowed everything I could find, but my body ended up throwing it all back up and that's when Paul started...experimenting...

"He'd put me on certain prescriptions, trying to make me more docile. After some trial and error, he found an opiate that did the trick, but it had to be injected into my neck..." Kurt ran his fingers delicately against the right side of his neck where the little well-used hole was.

"I became...sluggish. Everything felt like I was moving through molasses which made it scarier when others would move around me because it was like they were moving at superhuman speed. It didn't make me docile but it at least slowed me down enough..."

"We're going to make chocolate butterscotch bars tonight," Chelsea smiled, stirring the melted chocolate in the double broiler. "Davey's favorite. Now we just need to chop up the butterscotch..."

Kurt nodded sluggishly as he picked up the knife, smiling at it lightly before turning it and pressing the tip against his neck.

"Oh! No no, dearie," Chelsea admonished, taking the knife from his grasp as he leaned heavily against the counter. "Now now, Katy. What have we said about all this?"

Kurt giggled, loud and uncontrollably. "Gay go up and gay go down to ring the bells of London town!"

"Katy!" Chelsea snapped, but Kurt was already running his hands over everything on the counter.

"Oranges and lemons say the bells of St. Clements! Pancakes and fritters say the bells of St. Peter's! Kettle and pans say the bells of St. Ann's!"

"Katy, stop this!" Chelsea grabbed Kurt sharply down the hall to his and Dave's bedroom.

"Here comes the candle to light you to bed! Here comes the chopper to chop off your head!"

Kurt collapsed on his bed giggling. "Chop chop chop chop, the last man's dead!"

Kurt slowly prepared a chip plate with Chelsea in the kitchen. One of Dave's OSU friends was over and they were watching the big game.

Chelsea patted his back and Kurt picked up the plate, blinking slowly as he walked to the living room, feeling like he was in a pleasant haze. He set the chip plate down in front of the two men, smiling politely. He especially liked the friend. He was cute and tall.

"Thanks!" the friend grinned. "Dude, you didn't tell me you had a sister!"

"I—she's adopted," Dave said hurriedly.

"I'm Finn," Finn grinned, offering his hand.

Kurt blinked in surprise before shaking it gingerly, trying to hide his blush. "I'm Katy."

Finn's smile widened. "Nice to meet you, Katy."

Kurt just nodded and turned around, heading back to the kitchen, his cheeks inflamed.

"So I hear you're headed to the big apple?"

"Yeah, got a management job out there."

"You mean you're chasing Rachel."

"Whatever..."

"Dave himself was a different type of evil than Sebastian, but he terrified me probably even more."

"Ah—that's it...such a...good girl..."

Kurt stared at his pillow. The drug always wore off by nighttime because it was just to "help Chelsea out while none of the men were home". Because the men could handle a little fifteen year old girl without the use of drugs.

"Say it."

Kurt bit his tongue as his body jolted violently up and down the bed.

Nails dug into his hips and suddenly the thrust became sharper and a hand gripped the back of his neck tightly.

"Say it!"

Tears filled Kurt's eyes as he opened his mouth. "I...I love you, Dave."

"Uh...yeah...go on..."

"I'm...so glad that you're my husband."

"Mmhmm."

"And...I...I love it when you use me like this."

"God," Dave groaned into his ear. "I love it too, sweet girl." He dragged his fingers through Kurt's curls, which were past his shoulders now.

Kurt just laid motionless.

"Say the rest."

He pushed his head into the pillow, willing himself not to.

Dave's fingers yanked on his hair, forcing his head up. "Say. The. Rest."

Kurt clenched his eyes shut and gritted his teeth. "F-f-fuck me harder."

"Good girl."

Dave shoved him up and pushed his face into the headboard as he started thrusting in roughly, like a wild animal.

"And, of course, everything sort of...collapsed on Christmas, just after I turned sixteen. It'd been a usual and slightly boring affair. I was kind of out of it so I don't entirely remember all the nit-picky details. But I remember that Dave got me a collar for Christmas. And I remember him putting it on me in private and not being able to make a sound because it was too tight. And he...he tied a chain from it to the bedpost.

"Later that night, I woke up and there was smoke everywhere. I grabbed my things and tried to run but the collar..."

Kurt broke out of his reverie, telling his heart to calm down, that he wasn't choking. Unbidden, his eyes slid over to Blaine who was staring up at him in disbelief. He quickly looked away.

“The collar wouldn’t come off and I couldn’t get away from the bed. The flames moved up the house and I couldn’t scream to anybody for help because I couldn’t talk and it was getting harder and harder to breathe...

“The latch finally broke as the flames reached the door and I had to jump out of the window. I landed in a hydrangea bush and ran in my nightgown, ignoring all the neighbors. The only place I knew definitively in Lima was the Smythe’s old house, but I knew that Jesse’s family lived nearby and he should be home for Christmas so I headed that way for help.

“I stopped by the old Smythe house first because they still owned it even though they’d moved to Westerville so I knew it’d be a safe place to stop to see if I could find an address book or something.”

Kurt grabbed the spare key from under the back doormat and unlocked the door. He’d already walked around the house to make sure that no one was home before he slid inside. He studiously ignored the stairs down to the basement and the back den area as well, instead heading straight for the kitchen.

He pulled open the pantry by the phone and searched around, dismayed to find a lack of address books, but pulling out the phonebook instead, looking under “S”. He smiled as he found the telephone number and wrote it down.

“I knew you’d be here.”

Kurt jumped, wheeling around to find a very sooty Dave staring at him from the kitchen doorway.

“It’s the only place you know.”

Kurt backed against the counter, clutching the note in his hand.

“Mom and dad are dead,” Dave said conversationally. “Which makes me your legal guardian.”

Kurt's heart pounded as he scoped out the exits. Dave was standing in the main one.

Dave walked towards him. "Come on, Katy."

Kurt stumbled back and Dave lunged, grabbing his arm and wrapping his arms firmly around him so that he couldn't move.

Kurt struggled, trying to stomp Dave's feet. He managed to get his head under Dave's chin and thrust it upwards, causing his head to snap back and his grip to loosen.

Kurt wriggled out of Dave's arms and tore towards the doorway. Dave raced around the island and managed to get his back against the door, slamming it shut. Kurt backed away before scrambling onto the counter and pushing the window open. Dave grabbed his foot with one and, dragging him back as his other hand scrambled at Kurt's nightgown, his nails dragging down the length of Kurt's back.

Kurt went rigid, halfway off the sink as Dave reached over him to snap the window shut, breathing heavily. Kurt's hand shot across the counter, grabbing a knife, before he turned around, eyes wide, pushing against Dave.

"What happened to my sweet girl?" Dave snarled, crushing Kurt's shoulders.

Kurt plunged the knife into Dave's stomach.

"SHE'S GONE!"

He ripped the knife back out, staring at the blood before everything he'd just done caught up with him and he dropped the knife in shock, staring back at Dave.

Dave had his hands over his stomach where crimson blood was spilling over and he stumbled back against the counter.

Kurt looked down at his hands and nightgown that were covered in blood and then back at the body that was slowly dying in front of him.

"Go ahead," Dave rasped. "Leave me here to die, then."

Kurt stared back and forth between his hands and Dave before running over to the phone and dialing 911.

"I knew it," Dave laughed, pawing at his belly. "You can't kill me. You don't have the nerve."

Kurt looked back at him worriedly as he frantically told the woman over the phone that someone had been stabbed and he told the address. Then he hung up and tore the sheet of paper out of the phonebook, determined to just go straight to Jesse's house rather than attempting a call now with the police on their way.

Kurt looked back at Dave lying on the kitchen floor, watching him with an eerie smile. "Goodbye, Katy. Don't worry. I'll find you."

Kurt sighed. "I got some money from Jesse and made my way west. It was the only thing I could think to do."

The courtroom was dead silent.

"The prosecution rests," David said quietly, returning to his seat.

Kurt sighed and straightened his shoulders. This was his last part that he had to do. The defense. Then it would all be over. So he steeled his eyes and waited for Hunter Clarington to approach him.

"Mrs. Karofsky," Hunter started out, staring at him hard.

Kurt stared him down. "I prefer Mr. Hummel, if you don't mind."

"I was just merely using your legal name."

“Well considering that you’ve called me Mr. Hummel during the rest of this trial when you thought I was dead, I’d prefer Mr. Hummel.”

Hunter gave him a twitching smile. “Speaking of which, would you care to tell the court how you survived that fall off the top of the Dalton Academy roof?”

Kurt nodded. “Quite simple, really. While Sebastian was threatening Blaine with a gun in case I didn’t jump, I looked down and noticed that the police force had opened the windows the two stories below on the third and fourth floors and there were two men in each to catch me on my way down. It was hastily made, but effective. I jumped and the first pair slowed me down and the second pair caught me entirely, dragging me back into the window. I was met with Santana, who I hadn’t seen since I was thirteen and she told me that this provided a rare window of opportunity—if my death was faked so that I could testify in this very trial without having to worry about being found out or sabotaged. I assented and they waited a good half hour to make it looked like a body had been rolled away, i.e. washing down the pavement, filling out reports, etc, before getting Blaine and Sebastian off the roof, both of whom had been handcuffed to a pipe so neither saw what had happened.”

Hunter nodded. “Very succinct. And what have you to say about the allegations that you’re schizophrenic?”

Kurt shrugged. “Well, they’re true. I could have told you that when I was five. My parents had me tested when I was little and it became part of my everyday life.”

“Kurt?”

Kurt licked the strawberry batter off the beater, blinking up at his mother. “Yes mama?”

She smiled, leaning over him as she ran a loving hand through his hair. “Do you remember the word?”

"Skits-Oh-Friend-Ick?"

"Close enough," she laughed, kissing his forehead. "It just means that your brain works a little differently, darling. But you're no less important and no less special. You're still my darling boy."

"Okay," Kurt nodded. "Can we make frosting now?"

"It was such a rare form and it didn't impact my life that the doctors said it could remain untreated. There was no harm. I just sometimes saw people a little differently than normal, which is why I'd sometimes assign characters from books that I'd read to people that I knew. It wasn't until I was re-diagnosed by Paul Karofsky that everything changed. It was the same diagnosis from before, but he said that I should be treated otherwise I could become dangerous. It was really an excuse to use his hospital's resources to create a concoction to make me docile. My disorder had nothing to do with it. In fact, I grew worse.

"The opiate that I was forced to take on a daily basis triggered some part of my schizophrenia and caused hallucinations. It grew far worse after I got away from the Karofskys and went to Seattle. My body went through withdrawal and I had a complete mental break from reality and thought I was a girl, giving myself the persona of Dorothy Porcelain.

"I don't remember a great deal of what happened those first four to six months in Seattle and most of it came through the mouths of others. It was at that time that I first met William Schuester, later to be known as the Scarecrow killer. I also met Emma Pillsbury, who took me in after I'd been living on the streets and helped me work through my issues. Last fall I was able to become...me. Something I hadn't been in a very long time."

"And that's when you met Mr. Anderson?"

"Yes. We met at a tea shop that one of the other youths from McKinley Home worked at and we started a friendship over talking about stories."

“But you didn’t tell Mr. Anderson about your past?” Hunter raised an eyebrow.

“It’s not really the sort of thing that you just dump on a person all at once,” Kurt said defensively. “He learned more as we knew each other longer.”

“And you started to live with him.”

“Yes,” Kurt said in a clipped tone. “I was kicked out of McKinley Home by Will Schuester because he’d taken over for Emma and I couldn’t produce proper identification, so Blaine was gracious enough to take me in. We started collaborating together on his new novel.”

“And how did your relationship progress from there?”

Kurt shrugged. “Easily? We worked on the novel. The events with the Scarecrow killings happened, just as Mr. Anderson said. I went to New York because Jesse paid my way. The Tinman killings happened out there. Sebastian revealed himself to me and then made me the deal of either going to his apartment or he could skin Blaine alive, so I went to his apartment where a repeat of our time at Dalton happened. Blaine showed up with a gun and sent me to his car. In actuality, the entire thing had been a diversion and it was Karofsky in the car and he knocked me out before taking me to Dalton, where he’d been working as a wrestling coach and he kept me on a high concentration of the opiate that his father created.

“But it was much more potent which again triggered my schizophrenia. The hallucinations became much more real. He’d gotten another metal collar which he kept on me at all times so that I couldn’t scream—save for the mornings when he’d give me the one bit of food I’d have for the rest of the day: poppyseed muffins that had been drugged with the opiate.”

Kurt hungrily devoured the muffin like an animal, his hands handcuffed behind his back as he ate from Dave’s hand. Dave held up a glass of water for him and he gulped it down eagerly before the collar was snapped back into place. A chain was tied to the vanity as Kurt’s vision started to fade...

"Make-up will be here soon, sweet girl. Make sure you're ready for tonight."

Kurt's head was feeling so heavy...

He blinked. He was alone and staring into his mirror.

No, he wasn't alone. Someone was standing right behind him.

"Kurt..."

"No," Kurt shook his head. "Stop."

"Dorothy..."

"Stop," Kurt slurred. "You're dead."

The Scarecrow grinned behind, running a finger along Kurt's neck. "I can't die, Kurt. I'm made of straw. And you stabbed me in the head. Why would I die if I haven't got a brain?"

"Go away..."

"Come now Kurt," a different voice laughed over his other shoulder and he slid his eyes to the Tinman who was grinning down at him. "You didn't even try to kill me. You just left Toto to do the job and I'm still around."

"Not here," Kurt mumbled. "Leave..."

"We know, we know," they chanted. "You have to spend quality time with the Cowardly Lion. But don't forget us dear!"

"Sebastian showed up a few times, mostly to "put me in my place". Other times to watch while Dave did..."

“Get out!” Dave snapped while he continued fucking Kurt, holding his head down against the pillow.

“Oh relax,” Sebastian rolled his eyes. “Trust me, there’s nothing appealing about this picture to me.” He cringed. “Urgh, just look at the two of you. It’s like when you click on a bad porn link but you can’t stop watching for some odd reason.”

Dave’s frustrations were translated into his movements over Kurt’s body and Kurt yanked at his handcuffs, trying to get loose because he couldn’t breathe. Darkness crept up on him and he passed out.

“It was half a haze, half a nightmare. Just an endless whirlwind of Dave, Sebastian, and whoever they brought in to do my makeup...”

Kurt looked at the card his makeup artist had left him. It was a heart, and on the inside was

K.H.

+

Eli C.

Kurt slid the card into the bottom drawer of his vanity, along with the dozens of others that were left him after his makeup and hair were finished.

“Until the night of the Warbler benefit. Blaine found me and was able to create a diversion and get me up to a different room. He called the police and we were going to wait it out until the morning. We got prepared to leave when Sebastian and Dave ambushed us...”

“Stop!” Kurt screamed as Dave dragged him back into the Poppy room, throwing him on the bed. Kurt hissed at his broken fingers, holding them against his chest.

“Listen, Katy,” he breathed heavily, face enraged. “You are going to pack your bag and—”

“No!” Kurt yelled. “I don’t have to listen to you anymore!”

“I’m your legal guardian—”

“You’re a monster!” Kurt screamed.

He was answered with a heavy punch to the stomach.

His back hit the window as he coughed, hunched over. “You know,” he wheezed. “You’re real brave with your fists, but you’re a coward when it comes to the truth.”

“Is that right?” Dave snapped.

*Kurt looked up at him, glaring. “Georgie Porgie, pudding and pie, kissed the girls and made them cry. When the **boys** came out to play, Georgie Porgie ran away.”*

“Shut up.”

“You’re gay, Dave. Get over yourself and stop making my life a fucking misery because of it!”

“I’m not gay!” Dave snapped, slamming him against the window so hard that it cracked.

"Oh really?" Kurt laughed. "Then why is it that this is the most turned-on I've seen you outside of me being unable to speak and handcuffed to the bed? Could it be the schoolboy uniform I'm wearing."

That earned him a punch to the face.

"You're sick alright," Kurt laughed. It seemed like he'd finally cracked and couldn't stop talking. "But not in the way your mother thought."

"Shut up!"

"Is that why you killed her?"

Dave froze, his fist inches from Kurt's face.

Kurt sighed. "It took me a while to figure out. Everyone just assumed that I...well, that Katherine set the fire. But I'd been tied to the bed with my brand new Christmas present. Your parents didn't do it because there's no motive and it was too deliberate to be an accident. The house went up way too fast. You lit your father's den on fire first, didn't you? All those medical papers, so flammable. But you didn't realize that the stairs would catch after that so you had to go out the back door, leaving me to burn. And I was the reason you set the house on fire, wasn't I?"

Dave's hands shook as he gripped Kurt's collar.

Kurt smiled coldly. "Mommy and daddy were getting a bit too restrictive, right? Especially mommy. She didn't like that collar you got me and she was going to tell daddy to make you take it back. And you didn't like that daddy couldn't control his wife anymore, right? Especially since she was going to take away your right to control yours? So you set the house on fire."

Dave tore Kurt's collar open, clamping his hand over his mouth as he shoved him to the bed. Kurt kicked him as hard as he could in the stomach and scrambled off the bed, making for the door. Dave grabbed the back of his collar and threw him into the vanity. Kurt screamed as the mirror shattered on his back and he fell with the shards to the ground.

Grabbing a handful of hair, Dave pulled him up off of the ground, giving Kurt enough time to ram a large shard of glass into his stomach.

Dave stared at him, wide-eyed as Kurt's hand shook, fingers screaming as he gripped the shard and it cut into his skin.

"Are you going to call 911 again Kurt?" Dave choked out as hot blood poured over Kurt's hand. "Get cold feet again and try and save me?"

"No," Kurt whispered. "I won't make the same mistake as last time."

"Yes you will," Dave laughed weakly. "Because...no matter...how hard you try, you're still just the goody good brown hair blue eyes girl next door."

*Kurt's eyes hardened as he shoved the shard in deeper, punctuating each nudge with a word. "I am not. The. **Boy**. Next. Door."*

He let go of the shard and Dave fell backwards. Scrambling out of the room, he headed across the hall to go and get Blaine...

"Blaine and I ran to the roof with Sebastian shooting after us. Blaine and Sebastian ended up handcuffed to the pipe and Sebastian pulled the gun on Blaine, saying that he wouldn't shoot him if I jumped off the roof. You all know the rest of the story."

Hunter nodded, a look of deep contemplation on his face.

"Did you have a sexual relationship with Mr. Anderson?"

"Objection!" David stood. "The nature of Mr. Hummel and Mr. Anderson's relationship with each other has nothing to do with the situation at hand."

"I disagree," Hunter shrugged. "I think a relationship with a minor has everything to do with—"

“Clarington!” Kurt said suddenly, his eyes widening as he stared at Hunter. “Hunter Clarington!”

Hunter looked taken aback. “Yes?”

“That’s how I remember you! You were Sebastian’s floor mate at Dalton. You lived over in the Sycamore Suite. Hey, Sebastian. Wasn’t this the guy you once told me would loan out money to certain poorer students but would only absolve them of debt if he could spend a night with their middle school-aged sisters?” Kurt raised his eyebrows. “Seems like you know all about having relations with minors.”

Hunter lunged.

Kurt was used enough to men lunging at him with the intent of murder to be able to drop down and roll out of the way while the security guards grabbed Hunter and forced him out. Kurt was escorted to a side door and he took one last look over at the court, at Blaine, before the door shut firmly behind him.

“We find Sebastian Smythe guilty of all charges put against him and sentence him to life imprisonment in a state penitentiary.”

Blaine moved with the prosecution party to the back room where Kurt was being held. There were cheers and hugs and a whole lot of movement that Blaine just generally wasn’t paying attention to whatsoever.

Santana hugged Kurt first and he kissed her cheeks but then he was pulled away by Jesse who enveloped him in a bear hug. The rounds were made and Blaine stood off to the side, waiting.

Santana got the message. “Hey everyone! Party in Blaine’s hotel room! Let’s go!”

Blaine rolled his eyes as everyone cheered and started filing out.

Mercedes was giving Kurt a long hug before Sam finally pulled her away and they left.

“Kurt?”

Both Kurt and Blaine blinked in surprise as Rachel stood in front of him, her hands on her hips.

“I’m sorry.”

Kurt raised his eyebrows. “Really?”

“Yes. For Will Schuester. It was only because he was so obsessed with me that he latched onto your alter ego Dorothy Porcelain in the first place. So...I’m sorry.”

Kurt nodded. “Okay. Well, I’m sorry for sleeping with your husband. Granted, I didn’t know he was married at the time...well, the first time. First few times. First eight...teen.”

She settled him with an impatient stare before rolling her eyes. “Whatever. At least I can know for sure that he is attracted to things—”

“And not some weird lifeless robot?” Kurt nodded. “Yeah.”

Rachel straightened her shoulders and nodded. “Goodbye, Kurt.”

“Goodbye, Rachel.”

She left the room, leaving only Kurt and Blaine behind.

Blaine let his eyes take in Kurt, almost starving to do so. He’d changed his clothes since they’d taken him away a half hour ago. Gone were Judy’s long draped sweater dresses paired with long skirts and in their place were maroon slacks, a black short-sleeved dress shirt and a silvery gray vest that hugged his waist. Kurt’s hair was messy but tucked behind his ears. He looked...perfect.

“Judy, huh?” Blaine said quietly. “Should have seen it before. Was her last name Garland?”

A small smile tugged at Kurt's lips. "Well, she was Judy G. Undetermined last name. And to be fair, I look quite different with dark brown hair."

"You don't say," Blaine muttered, sitting down.

"Uh...yeah," Kurt frowned, looking confused. "Blaine...are you okay?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Well I mean..." Kurt bit his lip. "Um, I'm alive? Yay?"

"Yay," Blaine echoed. He turned his eyes up to Kurt's. "Two months."

Kurt blinked. "What?"

"For nearly two months, I've thought you were dead. They told me they cremated you."

"Yeah," Kurt nodded. "That was apart of Santana's plan, to make it look authentic."

"Right," Blaine muttered darkly.

Kurt wrung his hands. "Blaine are you...are you mad at me?"

"Do you remember what I told you that night Virginia died and I got back home and you'd been there all along?"

"You...you said that you'd thought that I died."

"Yeah," Blaine said hoarsely. "And do you remember what I said after that?"

"I..." Kurt licked his lips. "You told me to always let you know if I was okay."

Blaine stared at him. "And you were. For two months I was half-dead drinking myself out of my mind because of that morning on Dalton's roof."

“But I’m fine—”

“Exactly. You’re fine and in the past two months it never even occurred that maybe you should call me and tell me that?”

“I wanted to tell you!” Kurt said desperately. “But Santana said it would be better for the case—”

“Right,” Blaine said with a humorless laugh. “And what about Judy? You’ve been sitting next to me for the past two days and you never thought to maybe give me at least some sort of hint?”

“I’m sorry! I was just doing what Santana and David told me to!”

“Oh, and what’s your excuse for the rooftop? You laid it on there pretty thick before you stepped off the roof!”

“Blaine—”

“Especially knowing that you were going to be alright! Singing and your arms spread out and telling me goodbye. Did you know that it was your goodbye that made me realize that you were really gone? Because in all my time that I’ve known you, you’ve never once said goodbye to me except for up on the Dalton roof! And it was all for show? Jesus, Sebastian was right, you are fucking insane!”

Kurt looked at him like he’d been slapped.

Blaine sighed. “Kurt, I—”

“You don’t get it, do you?” Kurt said quietly. Then his voice raised. “Dammit Blaine, I’ve been trying to knock it through your head but you still don’t realize that I’m a boy!”

Blaine’s lips parted. “Kurt, I know you’re not a girl—”

“No. That’s not what I meant!” Kurt wiped his eyes furiously. “I know that you don’t think of me as a girl, but what you don’t get is that I’m not a man! I’m...I’m just a boy, Blaine. I may be

seventeen now, but the fact still stands that I have no legal guardian, no identification, no schooling, no home, nothing! I have nothing, Blaine! So if two adults come to me and tell me that they're going to help lock up my monsters, I'm going to listen to them. I'm going to do what they say. I'm not—" He broke off, looking to the side. "You've always treated me like an adult, and I've loved that but you need to realize that I'm not, Blaine. I'm a kid." He breathed out heavily, not even bothering to wipe his eyes anymore. "And I thought you'd understand that."

The silence rang between them before there was a knock on the door. An unfamiliar woman stuck her head in with a smile. "Kurt, five minutes, okay?"

Kurt nodded. "Don't worry, I'll be right out."

The door closed quietly.

"I have to go into witness protection," Kurt said quietly. "They're working on getting my birth certificate back into order and setting up a permanent residence so I can get an ID."

"Good luck," Blaine said quietly.

Kurt stared at him. "Don't you even want to know where I'm going?"

Blaine was still before slowly shaking his head.

Kurt wrapped his arms around himself. "Well...I guess I'll go and paint my roses red by myself."

He paused as he passed Blaine, looking over at him before he left the room.

Twenty minutes later, Blaine was back at his hotel room, wrenching the door open to the loud celebration going on inside.

"Blaine!" Sam grinned, glass in hand. "Isn't this great? We all got—"

“Get out.”

Sam frowned. “Wha...?”

“Get. OUT!” Blaine yelled. “All of you! Get out!”

The group stared at him in shock before each of them filed out, one by one.

“Santana, out!” he snapped when she was the last one in the room, legs crossed in his chair.

“I don’t think so,” she shrugged, sipping her gin. “You didn’t say please.”

“Please get the fuck out,” Blaine snarled, raking a hand through his gelled hair and messing it up.”

“So touchy,” Santana rolled her eyes. “I thought you’d be in hog heaven considering that Kurt’s safe and sound.”

“About that,” he turned on her. “Where the hell do you get off on letting me think that he’s dead for nearly two months before springing this whole thing on me today? Did it ever occur to you that maybe the best way to get me to sober up would have been to say ‘Hey Blaine! Guess what? Kurt’s alive after all!’ or that maybe you could have at least—”

“It was for his own safety!” Santana snapped, standing. “I’ll admit, I had my reservations but David thought it was for the best! And everything worked out fine between you and Kurt—”

“Everything didn’t work out fine, Santana!” he yelled. “Because when you do stuff like this, when you have all these ulterior motives, it makes everything else go to shit!”

She stared at him hard. “You yelled at him, didn’t you?”

“That’s beside the point—”

"No, that is the point. Blaine do you have any idea how torn up about all of this he was? He begged us everyday to call you and tell you that he was alright. Last night he cried for hours because he'd sat next to you all day and hadn't been able to say anything. And you yelled at him?"

"He lied to me—"

"He's given up so much for you, Blaine! Hell, he jumped off a fucking roof for you!"

"He knew he would survive!"

"No he didn't!"

Blaine froze. "What?"

"We just told the courts that so it seemed like we had everything under control," Santana yelled. "But really, the guys who were sent up to the fourth floor barely had the window open before Kurt jumped and they dropped him. He fell to the guys on the third floor and they dropped him as well. His fingers caught on a second floor window, but they'd been broken so he fell to the ground and broke his legs and four ribs. We managed to get him into a squad car and drive him to the hospital before any eyewitnesses could see that he survived.

She breathed heavily, whipping an escaped lock of hair behind her ear. "He didn't know there'd be someone there to catch him when he jumped. He honestly thought he was dying to save you."

Blaine's mouth opened slightly as his breath left him. "Where...where are they taking him?"

"What?" Santana snapped, folding her arms.

"Witness protection. Where are they taking him? I have to talk to him."

"I don't know," Santana said coldly. "That's sort of the whole point of witness protection. He said he'd call me in a month or two so he could settle down first and get his bearings."

Blaine sat down on the edge of his bed, his head in his hands. "Fuck..."

"But probably somewhere relaxing for his father."

Blaine's head snapped up. "What?"

"What do you think he's been doing the past two months? They've spent the past twelve years apart."

"But...Kurt told me that his parents died..." Blaine whispered.

"His mother did," Santana shrugged. "His father slipped into a coma but woke up a month later, after Kurt was already in the system. He had amnesia so he was taken into a home to be rehabilitated. He gets flashes every now and then, but he's doing better. Got a job. Works in a garage. We were able to reunite them but...he doesn't remember Kurt. So Kurt just started helping out at his garage, posing as a worker. They're going to both be moved together."

Blaine traced patterns in the carpet with his eyes as he took all of the information in, his mind reeling. "I fucked up," he muttered. "Like...I really fucked it up this time."

"Yeah, you fucked up pretty bad," Santana snapped, walking to the door.

"Who's Eli C.?"

Santana paused at the door, turning back. "What?"

"Eli C. You mentioned him during the trial and Sebastian didn't know who he was."

Santana crossed her arms. "We think...we think he was the person who did Kurt's make-up and hair at Dalton after the Tinman killings. He left...a bunch of cards and love notes for Kurt."

"Love notes?" Blaine's brow furrowed.

Santana shifted uncomfortably. "Well, they were all hearts and they all said K.H. + Eli C. on them. He received...quite a few considering he was held captive for just over a month and it's rather...disconcerting to see them all together."

Blaine nodded. “Did Kurt saw what he looked like?”

Santana shook her head sadly. “No, he was so drugged up that he just said that he looked blurry.”

“Okay.”

Santana left.

Blaine sat on his bed for what seemed like hours but was probably only ten minutes before he unbuttoned his suit jacket and took it off, laying it next to him. He looked over at the breast pocket and there was the handkerchief. The black one that he’d had for over ten years. The one he’d wiped Kurt’s face with back when he was five.

Blaine slid it out of the pocket and unfolded it, looking at the four beads and little ruby belly button piercing.

He sighed and fell back onto his bed.

There was a crooked man and he walked a crooked mile

He found a crooked sixpence upon a crooked stile

He bought a crooked cat and it caught a crooked mouse

And they all lived together in a little crooked house.

A week passed.

Most of the witnesses had gone back to their respective homes with the exception of Sam—who went to Seattle for “vacation”, Chandler—who was still getting his testimony in formal writing for

court records, Santana—who was sticking around to help out David, and Blaine—who honestly didn't know why he was still in Lima.

He figured it was because it was the last place that he'd seen a certain somebody, but he didn't want to face that possibility quite at the moment.

And then Thursday happened.

Blaine woke up late Thursday morning, groaning at his hangover and stumbling to the bathroom to pee. On his way back, he noticed that a note had been slipped under his door.

Frowning, he opened it.

Thanks for letting me know that Katy is alive. We'll have a lot of fun when I get to her tonight. Let's hope the little kitty still has her claws.

"Where is he?" Blaine burst into Santana's office.

She looked up in shock as she was writing down Chandler's testimony. "Blaine, what—"

Blaine tossed the note on her desk and folded his arms, waiting.

Santana read it, her eyes going wide as she grabbed her cellphone, dialing. It was a short call and she looked back at them, eyes fearful.

"Sebastian escaped."

"What?" Blaine yelled.

"No," Chandler whispered.

“Where’s Kurt?” Blaine demanded.

“I don’t know!” Santana said agitatedly. “He hasn’t called me yet! I have no idea where he is!”

“So we just have to sit here and wait for that psychopath to get to him?” Blaine yelled.

“Chandler,” Santana sighed. “Do you know where Sebastian might go? Or how he might have found out? Or how he got out of his holding cell in the first place?”

“Um...” Chandler shifted his eyes back and forth between them nervously. “I mean, he has connections literally everywhere.”

“Fuck!” Blaine kicked the trashcan, sitting down. He looked up at Santana. “Did Kurt get to choose where he went?”

“Yeah,” she nodded. “That was part of the deal.”

Blaine sighed. “Then he’s on the west coast, definitely. It’s where he feels the most safe, away from all of this. But I doubt he’d go to Seattle again since everyone knows he has connections there...” He ran his hands through his hair. “And his dad’s with him so I doubt they’d go to somewhere like LA...”

“He could be in any small town,” Santana suggested.

“No,” Blaine shook his head. “He likes big cities because there are more places for him to hide if he needs to.” He groaned, putting his head in his hand. “He told me a clue. I just don’t know what it is...”

“A clue?” Chandler frowned.

“He always leaves some sort of clue for me to find him no matter what,” Blaine groaned. “What did he tell me what did he tell me what did he tell me—”

“Well...I guess I’ll go and paint my roses red by myself.”

Blaine's head snapped up. "Give me your laptop."

He grabbed Santana's laptop and typed two words into Google, eyes scanning the results. "I know where he is."

"Where?"

He turned the laptop. "The Rose City. Portland."

"Sebastian has a house in Portland," Chandler said suddenly.

"Really?" Santana frowned, looking at her papers. "It's not on the list."

"That's because he acquired it in...less than legal manners," Chandler said delicately. "But he definitely has one, I just can't remember the exact address...If I could just get to Portland, I'd know where to go..."

"Fine," Blaine nodded. "You're coming with me."

"What?" Chandler's eyes widened. "Go up against Sebastian?"

"It'll be three against one if we can get to Kurt first," Blaine said urgently.

"I—okay," Chandler nodded. "I'll do it."

"Make sure he's okay," Santana said firmly. "I have to stay here and work out the legal business with David over Sebastian going missing, but I'll keep you updated, alright?"

"Alright," Blaine nodded.

They arrived in downtown Portland just as the sun was setting. They checked all the French bakeries first, then the tea shops, then the art stores.

No sign of Kurt.

Santana had already called ahead with witness protection, but she'd been unable to get an address.

"Where the hell could he be?" Chandler sighed as they drove around.

"Hopefully not with Sebastian already," Blaine mumbled. "Did you figure out which street he's on?"

"I definitely know it when I see it," Chandler said distractedly, looking out the window.

Blaine took a sharp left.

"What the hell?" Chandler snapped.

"I...I think I know where Kurt might be."

Chandler frowned as they lurched to a stop. "Powell's Books...?"

"He...he has this thing for fashion magazines," Blaine said distractedly. "And this is the biggest bookstore on the West Coast, maybe even the country, I don't know."

It was fairly large, the multiple story building taking up an entire city block, filled to the brim with books.

"Wait here," Blaine said, handing Chandler the keys. "I'm going to get Kurt and then we're going to get the hell out of here. Got it?"

"Got it," Chandler nodded, taking them.

Blaine slid out of the car and into the bookstore.

It was surprisingly empty inside, considering it was supposed to be one of the busiest sections.
“Uh...hello?”

“Hello?” A young early-twenty-something walked out of the back, smiling as he brushed his shaggy brown hair out of his eyes. “Is there something I can help you with?”

“Sure...” Blaine glanced down at his name tag which said E. Carson. “...uh. You. I was wondering if you’d seen a teenage boy? Um, sort of short choppy chestnut hair—”

“Dreamy blue eyes?” the worker smiled. “Yeah, he’s over by the magazines, opposite end of the store.”

“Thanks,” Blaine smiled as he walked through the different colored sections, unease creeping over him at the sheer silence of the place. The handful of times he’d been to Powell’s before it had always been bustling and full of people and now it was dead quiet.

His feet echoed as he made his way over to the magazine section. “Kurt?”

The lights shut off completely.

Blaine blinked, his heart rate picking up as fear crept into his veins. “Kurt? Are you there?”

“Blaine?”

Blaine breathed out in relief as he moved through the stacks to find Kurt crouching down slightly next to the gardening section. “Kurt...” he grabbed him and held him tight, his nose digging into Kurt’s neck. “Oh, thank god.”

“Blaine, what are you doing here?” Kurt whispered. “What’s going on?”

“Sebastian broke out of his cell,” Blaine quickly explained. “I don’t know how, but he figured out where you were and he’s coming after you tonight and...” He glanced up at the cut lights. “It looks like he might already be here.”

“But none of that makes sense,” Kurt frowned. “How on earth did he find me—”

Blaine clapped his hand over Kurt’s mouth because someone was walking there way. Their hands shook together as the steps echoed through the small section, each sounding fifty times louder in the dark.

The footsteps gradually started to walk away and they both breathed out, moving quietly through the stacks into the blue section.

“I don’t get it though,” Kurt frowned as they snaked around, trying to get back to the rose section. “This doesn’t seem like Sebastian at all. I mean, why would he cut the lights? It would just set me on edge and make it easier for me to hide from him, that’s not something he would do—ARGH!”

Kurt screamed as he tripped over a display and fell hard on his back, a heavy book falling onto his stomach.

“Shhh!” Blaine hushed, breaking out into a sweat. “Kurt come on, get up!”

But Kurt was staring up at the ceiling, eyes wide. Then he looked back down at the book on his chest. It was a large and heavy book of medicine.

Suddenly he was on his feet. “We have to get out of here. Now.”

“Kurt, what—”

“It’s not Sebastian,” he whispered. “He didn’t cut the lights. He cut the power so those wouldn’t work.” He pointed upwards to the sprinklers and fire alarms. “Blaine, we’re in the biggest supply of kindling in the city, we have to get out of here, now!”

“But I don’t understand!” Blaine said as they headed back through blue. “Who is it?”

The answer was waiting for them under the next archway.

Dave Karofsky.

“Hello Katy.”

They thought about running.

Instead, Kurt touched Blaine’s hand with his and Blaine linked their fingers together.

Kurt squared his shoulders. “Hello, Dave. You survived.”

Dave smiled. “Yes. I did.”

“How did you know where to look?”

“I didn’t.” He sent a smirk over to Blaine.

“Oh,” Blaine whispered.

“What?” Kurt frowned.

“The letter,” Blaine swallowed. “The one that was slid under my door. It was a bluff, wasn’t it? You had no idea where Kurt was so you sent me in a panic so that I’d lead you right to him.”

Dave shrugged. “You were the one who fell for it. And now I think it’s time for us to go home, Katy.”

“My name is Kurt and I am home,” Kurt countered. “You’re not my legal guardian anymore, Dave. Even if you were, there’d be no chance in hell that I’d go back with you.”

“I had a feeling you might say that.”

Dave took out a lighter and clicked it, holding it near the bookshelf.

Blaine pulled out a gun.

“Drop the lighter.”

“No.”

“I’ll pull the trigger.”

“No you won’t.”

Dave put the lighter under a book.

Blaine pulled the trigger.

Kurt jumped at the loud shot, his eyes widening in horror as Dave Karofsky’s body fell to the ground with a thud.

Blaine put his gun down, eyes staring forward and unseeing.

“Blaine,” Kurt whispered, trying to turn Blaine’s face towards him. “Blaine, look at me, please, Blaine...”

Blaine turned his head slowly to look at Kurt. “Kurt, I—”

Kurt wrapped his hands tightly around him. “It’s over,” he murmured.

“It is,” Blaine whispered. “I’m sorry. If I’d just pulled the trigger last time, maybe—you wouldn’t have been taken away for a month—”

“It doesn’t matter,” Kurt whispered.

“I...I just killed someone.”

“I thought I’d killed him twice already,” Kurt mumbled. “And he was going to kill all of us.”

Blaine wrapped his arms fully around Kurt as they both shook in their shoes, clinging to each other.

"I thought...I thought something else would happen," Kurt murmured. "That it'd be longer or that he'd chase us around."

"I was tired of running."

"Me too."

Blaine's cellphone buzzed. It was Santana.

"Blaine! It's not Sebastian—"

"I know," Blaine sighed. "It was Dave Karofsky."

"Karofsky?" Santana seemed surprised. *"He's...alive?"*

"Not anymore."

"Oh. Well, neither is Sebastian."

Blaine frowned. "What?"

"He was found dead in the old Smythe house in Lima, the one Kurt grew up in. He was murdered."

"Do we know by who?"

"Actually...yes. Let me send you a picture."

Blaine held his phone back, glancing briefly at the photo, cogs working in his mind. "Santana, I'm going to have to call you back."

"What's going on?" Kurt frowned, but Blaine ignored him.

"Chandler? Get over to the corner of Powell's by the cafe. I'm going to send Kurt out to you. Call me back when he reaches the car."

“Blaine?” Kurt frowned.

“Listen,” Blaine said urgently. “You are honestly going to have to trust me on this one. Go out to the car with Chandler.”

“Remember the last time you sent me out to a car?” Kurt asked wryly. “How do you know that Sebastian isn’t just waiting out there for me?”

“Because he’s dead,” Blaine sighed. “And...I’m pretty sure that the culprit is in this building.”

Kurt’s eyes widened. “Sebastian’s dead?”

“Kurt, just go! Get in the car and make sure that Chandler calls me!”

Kurt nodded, heading off and Blaine looked back down at his phone. At the picture that Santana sent him.

Sebastian Smythe’s mangled body was strewn in pieces all over the den, looking like he’d been torn apart by a wild animal. On the wall, written dozens of times in Sebastian’s blood were large grotesque hearts all bearing the same message:

K.H.

+

Eli C.

It was like some bizarrely morbid valentine.

And, come to think of it, it was February 14th.

His phone rang and he picked up.

“Blaine?”

“Hey, Chandler. You got Kurt?”

“Yeah, he’s here.”

“Prove it.”

“One sec...”

“Blaine, are you alright?”

“I’m fine. Give the phone back to Chandler.”

“Okay...”

“What do you want us to do?”

“Hang tight and lock the doors. I’ll be out in five minutes.”

“Will do.”

Blaine hung up his phone and put it in his pocket.

Eli C.

He walked back over to the entrance where Chandler had originally dropped him off, just as all the lights in the building went back on.

E. Carson was at the register, dusting off his fingers. He glanced up as he saw Blaine approach.

“Hey! I thought I heard a shot or something. The power went out, so I didn’t know—”

Blaine held up the gun.

His eyes widened. “Woah dude, what—”

"You were working with Karofsky, weren't you?" Blaine glared. "I was wondering how this place got so empty and also how the lights just went out all of the sudden."

"Dude, I have no idea what you're talking about!"

"What's your name?" Blaine demanded.

"What?"

Blaine cocked the gun. "Your. Name."

"Evan! Evan Green!"

Blaine blinked. "But...your name tag. It says E. Carson."

"Yeah. Evan Carson Green," he nodded, eyes still fixated on Blaine's gun. "I go by Carson, my middle name."

Blaine frowned. "Do you ever call yourself Eli?"

"What?" Carson looked baffled. "Dude, no. I'm not the guy you're looking for, you have a mix-up."

Blaine stared at him as his words echoed in his head.

"You have a mix-up."

His eyes widened as he lowered his gun and looked back at the picture on his phone. A mix-up. He stared for a solid minute before everything clicked into place.

He almost dropped his phone.

Instead, he dialed Santana's number as he headed back into the store.

"Yes?"

“Santana...hypothetically speaking, what sort of frame of mind is this Eli C. person?”

“Um...I don’t know? He seems borderline psychopathic but it’s such an extreme case that one of the analysts here is suggesting dual personality. He’s definitely got a serious obsession complex.”

“So...if he finally got Kurt with no obstacles in the way, what would he do?”

“Honestly? Probably kill him. As with most obsession, he’s sort of built up Kurt in his head so when the real Kurt will clash with his obsessions, he’ll try to...correct him.”

Blaine’s heart raced as he moved quickly. “Santana, I fucked up.”

“What are you talking about?”

“We were looking at this from the wrong angle. His name isn’t actually Eli because he’s a coward. If Sebastian or Karofsky ever found out about his obsession with Kurt, he’d be booted off so he created a different name in case his love letters were ever found.”

“How on earth do you know that?”

“Because K.H. and Eli C. It’s a declaration of love or obsession or whatever, but it’s also an anagram—the letters are all mixed up. If you rearrange K.H. and Eli C., it becomes C. Kiehl.”

“You mean—”

“Chandler,” Blaine whispered as he pushed open the cafe door to the empty street. “The killer is Chandler. And he has Kurt.”

“Where are we going?” Kurt frowned.

“The rose gardens,” Chandler replied with a smile. “Blaine said to wait there for him while he deals with whatever is going on at Powell’s and he’ll meet us when he’s done.”

“Why the rose gardens?” Kurt queried.

“They’re open until midnight,” Chandler shrugged. “So they’re kind of ideal. I dunno, I think it’s kind of romantic. Blaine, coming to you through a rose garden so you two can run off into the sunset.”

Kurt rolled his eyes, giggling, but he still moved his right hand over to feel his left side, where the rose tattoos were and he smiled a little.

They pulled in to the Peninsula Park Rose Garden, on the north end of the city. Most of the flowers were closed due to the time of year and time of night, but there were a couple of varieties that were still open and red, white, and pink lights were strung up everywhere.

“Wow...” Kurt whispered. “It’s...it’s beautiful...”

“That’s right,” Chandler murmured. “We were so busy with everything that I forgot it’s Valentine’s Day.” He sighed. “No one to celebrate it with this year, I guess.”

Kurt bit his lip. He hadn’t had the heart to tell Chandler that Sebastian was dead. “Well...you at least have me until Blaine shows up,” he said warmly with a soft smile, offering a hand. “Come on, let’s go look at the roses...”

The walk was pleasant enough, if a bit nippy. Chandler was prattling on about this or that and Kurt was nodding at all the appropriate moments.

“You know, I really admire you, Kurt.”

Kurt looked over at Chandler in surprise, his eyebrows raising. “Really?”

“Yeah,” Chandler nodded. “I mean, you went through all of this horrible and terrible stuff and you’re only seventeen. Like...you’re so brave. I don’t know, I always get sort of nervous when stuff like this happens and I tend to clam up. It’s stupid, but—”

"No," Kurt shook his head. "It's not. You just have a strong sense of self-preservation, and that's nothing to be ashamed of."

Chandler smiled. "Thanks, Kurt." He tucked a lock of flaxen hair behind his ear. Then he leaned over and kissed Kurt.

Kurt pulled back in surprise, his eyebrows shooting up. "Um...Chandler? What are you doing?"

"It's Valentine's Day," Chandler shrugged. "And we're in a rose garden and the lights are out. Come on..."

"No!" Kurt said, pushing him away. "We're just waiting for Blaine. That's it."

"Blaine's not coming," Chandler rolled his eyes.

Kurt froze. "What do you mean, Blaine's not coming?"

"I mean he doesn't know where we are," Chandler mumbled, pulling at Kurt's arm. "Just come on, Kurt—"

"No, stop—Blaine!"

"Shut up! Why do you even like Blaine, anyways? Didn't he yell at you last week after the trial?"

"Chandler, let go of me!"

But Chandler seemed beyond words. "I was the one who helped you when you needed me and gave you cards and valentines!"

Kurt stopped struggling, his eyes going wide. "What?"

"Every day," Chandler said reverently, stroking Kurt's face. "Every day I'd come to do your hair and makeup and even though you were out of it I'd try to make you feel cherished. What's Blaine ever done for you?"

“Where is he,” Kurt demanded.

“Probably back at the bookstore.”

“Actually, right behind you.”

The boy turned to see Blaine standing by a pink cabbage rose bush, gun cocked.

“Blaine!” Kurt’s face broke out into a grin that quickly resolved when Chandler grabbed him, pushing him in front of him. Kurt clawed at the arm around his neck but it was no use.

“Let him go, Chandler,” Blaine snapped. “It’s over. The police are already on their way.”

Chandler looked around, panicked, gradually backing away with Kurt.

“How long, Chandler?” Blaine sighed. “Were you in cahoots with Sebastian during the Tinman killings?”

“No!” Chandler shook his head. “I went over to his apartment after the masquerade and he had Kurt tied up on the table. I hid and watched.”

“You mean you cowered with fear,” Blaine said dryly.

Chandler glared at him. “See? That’s what it’s been like my whole life. Everyone calling me a coward or saying that I don’t have the nerve or that I’m just some dandy! Hell, Jesse loves it! And my whole life I’ve only ever wanted to be courageous until that night with Sebastian. And I realized that power was the key. If you had power, no one would ever call you a coward.”

“So you agreed to help Sebastian afterward,” Blaine said, keeping his gun aimed. “You’d make sure that Kurt looked pretty and put together just so you could spend time with him.”

“You wouldn’t believe the high,” Chandler breathed. “He was completely drugged up and I had complete control over everything that happened to him. That’s power.”

“But you were obviously too much of a coward to make your intentions known, so you hid under the pseudonym of Eli C. in case your little love letters were ever discovered.”

“Shut up.”

“And you just became more and more obsessed with Kurt which is why you ended up killing Sebastian, right? He doesn’t have a house here, that was just a ruse to find out where Kurt was. You helped Sebastian escape and then you killed him, like an animal.”

Chandler smiled coldly. “Did you know that he does have a heart? Everyone thinks he doesn’t, but I held it in my hand and squeezed it long after the light had left his eyes.”

Kurt was feeling woozy.

“And it was to make sure that Kurt would stay safe. What did you do to make sure Kurt stayed safe from Sebastian? That’s right. You let him go.”

“I’m pretty sure that Kurt needs to stay safe from you,” Blaine said.

“Hardly.”

“You’re hurting him.”

“I’m protecting him!” Chandler snapped taking another step back and failing to notice the steep drop-off behind him.

Blaine’s eyes flickered to the edge. “Just...just let him go, Chandler.” He took a step forward.

“No!”

“Chandler!”

Blaine dropped his gun and raced forward as Chandler took another step back into thin air and started to fall, taking Kurt with him.

Blaine grabbed Kurt's arm, pulling him back into his arms as they looked down, six feet below.

Chandler had fallen into a white rose bush. The five metal spikes arranged in a circle to help influence the shape of the plant were sticking out of his chest and dark crimson blood was steadily dripping onto the roses, staining them red.

Ring around the rosie

A pocket full of posies

Ashes

Ashes

We all fall down.

The hotel was brick and covered in ivy. Kurt just stared ahead blankly as Blaine bought them a room and he followed him up the stairs in a haze. The room was cozy and snug. Kurt couldn't care less. He stripped off his clothes slowly and headed towards the bathroom, closing it firmly behind him. He didn't look in the mirror as he turned the shower on and stepped under the spray.

Five minutes later, he was curled up in the corner of the shower and Blaine was pulling back the curtain, stepping in fully clothed and sitting next to him, pulling him into his lap.

Kurt clutched Blaine's shirt, curling against him as he sobbed into his neck.

"I called the authorities," Blaine murmured. "They're taking care of both of the bodies."

Kurt nodded against his neck, unable to stop the next wave of sobs that racked his body. "How—" he hiccuped. "How did you find me?"

"I figured out that Chandler was Eli and I thought of the one romantic place he might want to take you that would still be open. I—I'm sorry for losing you again. I keep doing that."

"But you also keep finding me," Kurt whispered. "And that's what's important."

"I'll always find you," Blaine murmured, pressing a sweet gentle kiss to the crook of Kurt's neck.

"As long as you need to be found."

Kurt sighed, melting into him as the hot spray washed over them, molding their bodies together.

"Could you...could you talk about something else?"

Blaine nodded. "A lot happened while you were...away."

"Really?"

"Sam and Mercedes are apparently a thing now."

Blaine could feel the smile against his neck.

"Santana got a tattoo from Brittany."

"I saw. It's very fitting."

"It is. Oh, and Quinn had the baby."

Kurt pulled back, his eyes alight.

"She was a healthy baby girl," Blaine said quietly. "They named her after you."

"Really?"

"Yeah. Elizabeth. They call her Beth for short."

Kurt smiled. "That's nice."

"It is," Blaine nodded. "And...I heard that you found your dad again?"

Kurt's shoulders hunched. "He's not...he's not my dad. I mean, he is, but he doesn't remember me. So...he's just Burt. Burt and Kurt."

"Is there any chance?" Blaine murmured.

Kurt nodded. "He remembers my mother now and he didn't before. He just...he thinks that I'm a distant nephew that he's forgotten and..." He shrugged. "That's just how we're working for now."

"Okay," Blaine nodded.

"Yeah," Kurt sighed, leaning back in to tuck his head in the crook of Blaine's neck.

"I love you," Blaine whispered.

"I love you too," Kurt whispered back.

The bed was large and white and strewn with rose petals for the holiday.

Blaine rolled his eyes and pulled off the top sheet, scattering the petals onto the floor and instead just grabbed the comforter off the foot of the bed and pulled it up. His clothes were still wet so he was just naked for now.

An equally naked Kurt wandered out of the bathroom, running a hand through his wet hair.

"Come here," Blaine smiled, taking something out of his bag as Kurt crawled up onto the bed.

Blaine produced the black handkerchief and opened it.

Kurt smiled as he took out the four beads, fixing them into his hair and then sliding the piercing back into his bellybutton. "Yay."

Chuckling, Blaine pulled back the comforter.

Kurt hesitated.

"I'm not asking for anything, Kurt," Blaine said gently. "I just...I want to hold you. That's all."

Kurt nodded and slid under the covers with him, curling into Blaine's chest.

"So now what?" he whispered.

Blaine licked his lips. "We...we go our separate ways?"

Kurt held onto his middle tighter. "I don't want that."

Blaine squeezed him as his eyes misted up. "I don't either."

"But..." Kurt cleared his throat. "But I do think that we should...take a break, maybe."

"I hate the sound of that," Blaine said petulantly.

"I know," Kurt laughed softly. "But the fact is...I'm still just a kid, Blaine. And after all this mess...I think I need time to grow up."

"No you don't," Blaine whispered into his hair. "You grew up way too fast. You still need time to be a kid."

Kurt smiled against his chest. "Stop being right."

They laid in silence.

"I'm sorry."

Kurt tilted his head up. "For what?"

"For yelling at you after the trial. I'd just felt so guilty. All that time...I blamed myself for being the reason that you'd died."

"Oh no Blaine," Kurt whispered, sitting up. "Don't you see? You're the reason I lived."

Blaine's breath left him as he leaned forward and kissed Kurt, cupping his cheek. "I want you to have my house," he whispered.

Kurt pulled back. "What?"

"You're going to have to move again, aren't you? I want you and your dad to take my house in Seattle."

"Blaine, we can't—"

Blaine pressed a finger to his lips. "Please. You'll be close to your friends and I won't worry as much."

Kurt frowned. "Where will you be?"

"New York. The apartment in the Village."

"Blaine—"

"Kurt, please. Just...after everything I've done, please just let me do this one thing."

Kurt ran his fingers through his hair. "After everything you've done, I shouldn't let you because it's too much."

"Please."

"I...alright. If da—if Burt approves."

Blaine smiled, wrapping his arms around Kurt again.

“I’ll come back one day.”

“How will I know when?”

“Oh trust me. You’ll know. There’ll be a sign.”

Kurt smiled as he closed his eyes.

“I’m scared though,” Blaine whispered. “Because this feels like goodbye.”

“Oh Mr. Earl Grey,” Kurt slurred as he tipped off into sleep. “I’ll never say goodbye to you again.

In the morning, Kurt was gone.

And as the world comes to an end

I’ll be here to hold your hand

Because you’re my king and I’m your lionheart.

Two years later.

“Kur’! Kur’!” Beth grinned as she toddled over to the kids section of Elliott Bay Bookstore.

Kurt grinned as he watched her plop right down on the hardwood floor and started flipping through a cardboard picture book.

“She’s a real handful, ain’t she?”

Kurt smiled over at Burt, nodding. “Yeah. Thanks again for helping me take care of her today.”

“No problem,” Burt smiled. “It’s nice to get out of the garage and I know that kids can be a handful.”

“Oh really?” Kurt teased. “And how would you know?”

Burt frowned for a moment, considering. “I...I don’t...”

“It’s okay,” Kurt smiled, rubbing his shoulder as pain shot through his chest. “Come on, let’s get little miss princess over here and then we can grab some ice cream at Molly Moon’s.”

“Sure thing, kiddo.”

Kurt blinked, staring at him.

“Sorry,” Burt said distractedly. “Sorry, I don’t know why I called you that.”

“It’s fine,” Kurt said hurriedly. “I like it.”

Burt smiled and nodded and Kurt was so caught up in the hope creeping into his chest that he accidentally walked into one of the best seller displays, crashing to the ground.

“Kurt, are you okay?”

“Fine,” Kurt blushed. “Just humiliated.” He picked up the opened book and froze when he read a sentence

“Don’t blather about, Grey,” Alexander admonished the earl with a condescending look. “We must get to the opium den before...”

Kurt looked at the cover of the book. “Tea Cups and Biscuits and Murders, Oh My” written by Blaine Anderson and Judy Porcelain.

“No way,” Kurt muttered, flipping to the back flap. Blaine’s eyes stared out at him in an intense black and white photo with a mini bio listing his accomplishments. Below was the bio for Judy Porcelain:

Judy is the single greatest person that I’ve ever had the pleasure of meeting, and who wishes to stay anonymous for this book (though perhaps we can persuade them to cowrite our next work more publicly). The creator of both Elliott and Alexander, Judy was a crucial part to the creation of this book and for that, I would like to give my utmost thanks.

Kurt smiled as he flipped to the front of the book, smiling at the title page until he reached the dedication:

To the boy from Oz, who’s arms will always be home for me.

That night, Kurt found himself at Unicorn, one of the bars on Capitol Hill, enjoying a White Russian. His hair was slicked back for once and he was wearing a backless black shirt that tied around his neck and hips.

“Nice tats.”

Kurt smiled into his drink as he swiveled on his stool. “Why thank you, Blaine.”

Blaine smiled, looking the same as ever in all black with his stubbly face and messy hair.

“You got old,” Kurt sighed.

“Hey,” Blaine admonished. “I’m only thirty. What about you, Mr. Nineteen? Speaking of which, how are you even here?”

“Puck made me a fake ID for all the times I’ve babysat Beth,” Kurt shrugged.

“Ah,” Blaine nodded.

Kurt smiled as he hopped off the stool. “I got your sign.”

“Really?” Blaine smiled back.

Kurt arched his eyebrows. “Judy?”

Blaine shrugged. “You were the one to come up with the name.”

Kurt laughed. “I guess so. Come on, let’s go for a walk.”

They left the bar and walked west, towards downtown. It was April and slightly warm but still with a chance of rain. Unbidden, their hands crept towards each other and ended up linking as they walked in silence, not even needing to say anything. They could feel the bonds between them stitching and mending as they merely soaked up being in one another’s presence.

“Well how about that?” Blaine muttered.

“No way,” Kurt smiled.

The Egyptian Theater—famous for its midnight shows of random pieces of cinematic history—was showing the Wizard of Oz.

It seemed like a terrible idea, but they bought tickets and huddled together in the front row with their popcorn in the empty movie theater.

“I’m glad you’re back,” Kurt whispered as the introduction started playing. “I...I missed you.”

"I missed you too," Blaine whispered. "Can we not...do this? Like, ever again?"

Kurt smiled. "I'd like that.

The movie went better than they expected. Kurt had to hide his face in Blaine's shoulder during the Tinman's song, and they both remained incredibly stoic when the Cowardly Lion started singing...

"It's sad, believe me, missy, when you're born to be a sissy without the vim and verve. But I could show my prowess, be a lion not a mouse if I only had the nerve...I'm afraid there's no denying, I'm just a dandy-lion. A fate I don't deserve..."

But they got into the story that they'd both fallen in love with growing up despite the current context it had given them.

And by the end of the movie, they found themselves smiling at the screen, Kurt's head on Blaine's shoulder and Blaine's head on top of Kurt's.

"Me too," Kurt said quietly.

"What?" Blaine whispered.

Kurt tilted his head to look over at Blaine. "Your arms are home for me too."

Blaine smiled at him as he wrapped his arm around Kurt's shoulder and pulled him in close.

"Oh Blaine..." Kurt said quietly, blinking back tears as his face broke into a smile. "There's no place like home."

The end...?

Epilogue: *October. Again.*

“Okay seriously though. How the hell does this keep happening?”

Blaine snorted, steering the gondola so they didn’t run into a bridge.

“Every damn time,” Kurt sighed. “We do something new or kinky with sex and the we end up in a boat.

It was a year and a half after Blaine had returned to Seattle. They’d clicked into place almost immediately and it was like Blaine had always been there.

Eight months ago, Burt had regained most of his memories about Kurt and there’d been lots of crying and family therapy and hugs and general love all around.

(Well...after a whole lot of threatening because as soon as Burt had had his epiphany, he’d run straight to Kurt’s room where Kurt had been...busy with Blaine in a nude manner.)

And now, as an earlier birthday present, Blaine gave Kurt a trip to Italy because he apparently needed to do some research for his next book and refused to go without Kurt.

“Seriously, you’re not even working,” Kurt rolled his eyes as he sketched on his notepad. “At least I’m being productive.”

“I’m steering!”

“Excuses,” Kurt rolled his eyes. “What about last night when you had six straight hours to write?”

“You were naked. I’d much rather do you than my work.”

Kurt snorted. “Well, I personally won’t be blindsided by the beauty of your nude form because nothing will stop me turning in this portfolio to Parsons and getting a full scholarship and then

getting K. E. Hummel Designs underway. With a generous donation from my benefactor, of course.”

“Benefactor,” Blaine muttered darkly. “That just sounds so seedy.”

“Boyfriend, whatever.”

“Much better,” Blaine grinned dopily.

“You’re such a child.”

“I’m thirty-two! You’re the one who can’t drink yet!”

“Only two more months, and only in America,” Kurt grumbled. “Now hush, or I won’t design you any more clothes.”

“Please don’t put me in a cardigan again.”

“Need I remind you? K.E. Hummel: Fashion has no gender. The male population needs to know how comfortable tights are.”

Blaine smiled wryly as they turned the corner and he sat down as the current took them along. “I remember, darling,” he smiled, leaning over for a kiss. “And look, I’m being productive now and working on my novel.”

Kurt smiled as he nestled back into the crook of the boat. “I’m so proud. Oh, and if you need inspiration, did you know that there’s an alternate version to Little Miss Muffet?”

Blaine raised an eyebrow. “No, I did not know that.”

Kurt grinned. “I identify with it a lot more, I think. It was written by Peter Doyle about his alleged homosexual relationship with Walt Whitman.”

“Oh?” Blaine smirked. “Do tell?”

Kurt licked his lips and recited, "Little Miss Man/Had a great plan/To get her man to love/Along came the writer/Who sat down beside her/And said, 'You fit like a glove'."

Blaine's lips broadened. "I can see how that could apply."

Kurt giggled and leaned back again, going back to his sketches.

Blaine took out his pen and notebook, nervous as they neared the main canal because he knew what was about to come and he felt so frightened and excited that he could hardly wait.

But he took a deep breath and started writing to distract himself from the gold band in the box in his pocket.

Once upon a time, there was a boy from Oz

Kurt slammed his bag down on the tea shop table, spilling water all over the stranger who was sitting there.

Who had a unicorn on his back

Kurt rubbed his hand across his lower back as he leaned against Blaine in the attic, looking over the heavy gray fog of Seattle, the confessed words still hanging between them.

A thorn in his side

He smiled against the leather on Brittany's table as she filled in the color of the roses after she'd fixed his tattoos from the lashings that he'd gotten, adding wings to the unicorn to hide the new scars.

And wanted to fly

Kurt clenched his eyes shut as he stepped up to the edge of the roof, tears streaming down his face.

He wandered around lost

He grabbed Blaine's hand and pulled him through the rain of Pioneer Square, trying to find a hiding place.

Searching for wisdom

He backed away slowly from Will.

Love

His heart clenched as Sebastian took him in his arms during the masquerade ball.

And courage

He tried to block the images of Dave and Chandler's dead bodies from his mind but they'd still creep up in the dead of night.

So that he could go home.

He sniffed as he looked up and a tall stranger offered him a black handkerchief and a music box.

But little did he know that he only had to look inside himself to realize that he had the power within him all along

Kurt giggled as Blaine attacked his belly button, licking the piercing and smudging ink all over the both of them.

And that home was right next to him

Blaine awkwardly got down on one knee in front of Kurt and the words weren't even out of his mouth before Kurt was tackling him and the gold band with rubies and emeralds ended up on his finger.

Offering a hand.