

Life, Love, and Babysitting

by

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Klaine || AU || T

Kurt begins babysitting Blaine, his 6 year old neighbor, when he's 13 years old. What happens when the boys meet again 12 years later, and there is an undeniable attraction?

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Chapter One

Kurt Hummel first started babysitting for the Andersons when he was 13 years old. Burt and his neighbors, Charlotte and Bill Anderson figured the teenager would be responsible enough to handle a 6 year old at that age.

The Hummels and the Andersons had been next door neighbors in Lima, Ohio for as long as they could remember. Burt, Elizabeth, and their son, Kurt, were there the day the Andersons moved in. Kurt's mother, Elizabeth, passed away shortly after that, and the two families quickly became closer than ever, with the Andersons stopping by to bring dinner to the Hummels as often as they could.

When Kurt turned 13, the adults finally decided that it would be okay for him to watch after their son, Blaine. Blaine was seven years younger than Kurt, and had always stayed at day-cares while his parents worked. It's not that his parents didn't care about him or didn't want to be around him- they just had extremely important jobs that took a lot of time, so they couldn't always be there when they wanted to be.

Kurt happily agreed to the job, knowing that this daily babysitting job on week days would mean bigger shopping trips on weekends, with the help of this new extra cash income. Besides, how much of a handful could Blaine be? He'd seen Blaine playing in the front yard for years, and the Hummels had had the Andersons over for dinner more times than they could count, and Blaine always seemed so well-behaved. Well, even more than that, the kid seemed dapper, if that was even possible for a 6 year old.

Blaine Anderson always wore bow ties and little capri pants, with his hair carefully gelled back. Kurt had to give him props for his style, even if he did go a little over the top sometimes. But, well, Kurt could hardly judge, seeing as he was known for going over the top with his fashion taste sometimes, too. Maybe he and Blaine could bond over their shared knowledge in fashion.

Apart from that, though... Kurt didn't really know much about taking care of kids. He was an only child and had grown up with just him and his dad. And Kurt honestly didn't know much about Blaine either. Everything he knew about him was just based on observations.

But, regardless, he now had a job picking Blaine up from the bus stop when he got home from school, and staying with the young boy until his mother got home from work.

Okay... he could do this.

"Hi Blaine," Kurt greeted the young boy timidly as he hopped off the bus with his fellow kindergarteners. Today was Kurt's first day on the job, and he was kind of nervous that he wouldn't be able to win the young boy over. He hoped Blaine would like him and it would all work out, because he was going to be his babysitter for a long time, so he wanted to start off on good terms.

"Kurt! Hi! You're my babysitter now! That's so awesome! We're going to have so much fun! Come on!" Blaine babbled, grabbing onto Kurt's hand and dragging him toward his house.

Oh... okay. Guess Kurt was worried for nothing.

When they got inside, Kurt was about to ask Blaine what he wanted to do first, when the young boy began to pull him over to a small play table. Kurt noticed the small tea set that was sitting on top of it.

"Please, won't you have a seat," Blaine asked, putting on his most dapper voice, remembering to use his manners like his mommy had taught him.

Kurt looked at the boy in shock for a minute before nodding and sitting down in the chair Blaine had pulled out for him. Kurt had never seen a kid like Blaine before... well, apart from himself. But Kurt had always thought he was kind of an odd-child. He had never met any other young boys like himself before. If only he had just looked across the street and paid better attention, he would have seen that he wasn't alone.

"You like tea parties, Blaine?" Kurt asked incredulously.

"Why yes, my good sir! They're my favorite!" Blaine replied, sitting down across from Kurt and pretending to pour them tea.

"Well now, aren't you dapper, Blaine," Kurt replied, suppressing a laugh at how adorable the young boy sitting across from him was.

Blaine's only response was lifting his pinky up in the air while he pretending to sip on tea, grinning goofily across the table at his babysitter.

"Do you like playing with action figures or playing tag?" Kurt had to ask. He just couldn't get over his surprise that he wasn't the only boy who had enjoyed playing tea party while growing up.

"Yuck. No. You can't dress up action figures. And tag messes up my clothes and my hair," Blaine replied. "Kurt! Do you know how to properly set a table? Here! Let me show you!"

Kurt chuckled at how all over the place Blaine was. But he had to admit, the kid was adorable. In fact, he was practically a puppy. And Kurt couldn't get over how much the young boy was like himself when he was growing up. He couldn't help but wonder... no. No. He wouldn't think about that right now. He refused to think about that. It was wrong.

Kurt was distracted from his thoughts as Blaine started yelling for his attention some more, making sure he was paying careful attention to which side of the plate the fork was supposed to go.

As the weeks went by, Kurt learned a lot more about Blaine. For example, his favorite Disney princess was Ariel, he loved tea parties and playing dress-up, he knew every word to every single Broadway and Britney Spears song ever, and he loved to fight evil dragons in order to keep Kurt, his prince, safe.

And as the weeks went by, Kurt grew more and more attached to the young boy. He was a sweet, well-behaved, and all around adorable little boy, and Kurt always looked forward to their afternoons together. That is, until one day, when Kurt nonchalantly asked Blaine if he had his eye on any girls in his kindergarten class.

"Yuck! Girls are icky! I don't like girls," Blaine exclaimed, looking sick to his stomach.

"Oh, right," Kurt laughed. "You're supposed to think that. I suppose you're still too young for girls."

"No! That's not it. Girls are gross. I like boys. Especially you! You're the prettiest boy I've ever seen," Blaine exclaimed, blushing slightly and looking away from Kurt with a smile on his face.

Well shit. Kurt was afraid of that.

Chapter Two

After the instant where Blaine unknowingly came out to him, Kurt avoided the topic like the plague. He hoped it was just a phase or Blaine being silly or something he would grow out of... but, unfortunately, two years later and nothing had changed- for either of them.

Yep. You heard right. Kurt Hummel was gay. He had finally admitted it to himself. He had tried to deny it for years, but, eventually, he just couldn't avoid the truth anymore. The reason Kurt finally admitted the truth to himself was because of one Finn Hudson, who he was convinced he was in love with.

By now, Kurt was 15 years old, a sophomore in high school, and a member of the McKinley High glee club. And he was gay, but he wasn't about to tell anyone else that. Along with all of these things, he was still babysitting Blaine, who was now 8 years old, and still as adorable as ever.

"Hey Blaine. What are we gonna do today? Sing some more?" Kurt asked one day after school as he picked the younger boy up from the bus stop.

"Kurt... why is your hair wet?" Blaine asked, ignoring Kurt's question all-together.

Oh, that's right. Kurt had been slushied today. Sure, he hadn't exactly come out yet, but people still had their suspicions. Plus, he was a member of the glee club, the lowest of low on the totem pole. But he didn't want to tell Blaine about his bullying. There was no reason for the younger boy to have to worry about him.

"Ummm... well, I... was trying to swim across the mote to save the princess and so my hair got all wet..." Kurt smoothly lied, hoping the younger boy would buy his answer. Blaine might be a bit older now, but he still loved to play pretend.

"...Okay..." Blaine looked at Kurt questioningly. "Umm... does this mean we get to play pretend today?"

Phew. Blaine didn't exactly buy Kurt's answer as the truth, but he wasn't going to question him, and that's all that mattered.

"Yeah, sure, Blaine. If that's what you want to do," Kurt replied with a smile.

"Sweet! You'll be the prince again and I'll be your knight in shining armor!" Blaine started jumping up and down, walking faster to get back to his house so they could begin their game.

Slushies weren't the only way Kurt was bullied. Sure, that's how it all began, but soon after he came home from school to get Blaine with wet hair, the bullying became much worse. The football team began pushing Kurt into lockers and tossing him into dumpsters, ruining his designer clothes and leaving him with bruises. "Fag" was a common slur yelled at him in the halls, too. How did they even know, Kurt couldn't help but wonder. Did he really seem so stereotypically gay? Was he even going to need to come out at all? Did everyone already know? It just wasn't fair! He didn't even have a chance.

One day, after a particularly rough landing in the dumpster- they had just taken out all the trash, so he landed on hard metal in the empty dumpster- Kurt held Blaine's hand as he slowly limped back to Blaine's house.

"What happened Kurt? Why are you hurt?" Blaine asked, concern in his eyes.

"It's nothing, Blaine. Don't worry about it. But how about we just play with your dolls today, okay? I want to sit down for a little while," Kurt suggested, knowing he needed to rest his sore and bruised back.

"Oh! Good! We can plan Ken's wedding!" Blaine smiled.

"Well that sounds fun! Who will he be marrying?" Kurt asked, falling easily into conversation with Blaine. After spending every day with the kid for the past 2 years, conversation was always easy, and Kurt could always keep up. Blaine almost felt like a little brother, or a cousin, or something.

"He's marrying Steven!" Blaine announced proudly. Kurt froze.

"...Blaine. Ar- are you sure about that?"

This wasn't the first time Blaine had hinted at his sexuality to Kurt. Kurt always knew that many parents claimed they could tell if their child was gay from a young age, but Kurt just didn't want to believe it. He didn't want the same life for Blaine that he had had to deal with. He didn't want Blaine to be slushied or bullied or beaten. He wanted a normal life for Blaine. He prayed that this was just a misunderstanding.

"Of course! They're in love!" Blaine exclaimed, like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

By this point they were inside Blaine's house and Blaine was running over to his toy chest to grab his dolls. When he settled down on the floor in front of Kurt, who was sitting up on the couch, Kurt decided he would get to the bottom of this.

"Blaine... I have an important question for you..." Kurt started, a little nervous.

"Yes, Kurt?" Blaine asked, not looking away from his dolls.

"Do you like boys?"

"Kurt, I've told you before, remember? Yes! Girls are icky. Plus, you're really pretty. Why wouldn't I like you?" Blaine said, blushing again, just like he had when he was 6 years old.

And then Kurt did the last thing he expected. Kurt started to cry.

"Kurt! What's wrong, Kurt? Why are you crying?" Blaine asked, quickly throwing his dolls aside and hopping up onto the couch into Kurt's lap.

"I... I'm-" Kurt started, but choked on a sob, unable to continue.

"Is this about why you came home wet the other day? And why you're limping today? Or did I do something wrong? Are you crying about what I said?" Blaine asked, concerned about why his babysitter was so upset, and a little bit afraid he was going to be in trouble.

"Ummm... a little bit of both, I guess," Kurt shrugged, trying to get his emotions under control. "Blaine... I have a secret for you."

Blaine's eyes widened and his mouth opened into a little 'o' shape. "I've never been told a secret before," Blaine whispered. "I won't tell anyone. I promise!"

"Okay... Ummm, well... I like boys, too," Kurt whispered.

Blaine's eyes widened even more. "Really?"

"Yep. And I've never told anyone before. But everyone has seemed to figure it out anyway. And... well, they don't like it. They aren't very nice to me because of it, so I try to keep it a secret," Kurt explained.

"Should I keep it a secret, too? I mean, that *I* like boys," Blaine wondered out loud.

Kurt hesitated before he answered. "I don't want you to have to. Only keep it a secret if *you* want to, Blaine. I just want you to be happy and never let anyone hurt you, okay?"

"I'm not scared!" Blaine exclaimed, puffing out his chest proudly.

And Kurt knew Blaine wouldn't be scared. He knew Blaine would be proud of the fact that he was different. And that's what scared him about the boy the most.

"I'm glad you're not scared. You are my knight in shining armor, after all. I expected nothing less."

Blaine blushed and looked away. "Do you think you could like me one day, Kurt?" He asked shyly.

Kurt smiled fondly at the young boy. He really was adorable. Kurt decided to play along. "Of course! What kind of prince would I be if I didn't fall for my knight?"

Blaine smiled his goofy smile at Kurt, beaming at the older boy.

"Don't worry, Kurt. I'll keep you safe from all the bad guys. They're stupid not to like you. You're the greatest boy in the whole wide world!"

Later that night, after Kurt came home from babysitting, he was in his room running through his skin care routine and thinking about what Blaine had said.

Blaine... the young boy he had watched grow up over the past few years... he was so brave. Kurt couldn't believe how much courage the younger boy possessed. He was the strongest boy Kurt had ever met, and he gave him so much hope. He gave him the courage he needed to accept himself, and had made Kurt strong enough to come out for the first time- even if it was just to an 8 year old kid. But still... Kurt kept thinking back to what Blaine had said to him- "they're stupid not to like you. You're the greatest boy in the whole wide world." He didn't know why, but that statement made him feel so special. It made him smile. It

made him happy that someone, anyone, could see something good in him, when the rest of the world only felt hate.

Blaine was such a good kid, and he deserved the best in life, and Kurt hated to think that life would be hard on him. Blaine would more likely than not be the only gay kid his own age in Lima. He would go to school in a town that hadn't been exposed to others like him, and people would beat him down for it. Kurt hated to think that people might beat the light and the love and joy out of that young boy.

And that's when Kurt realized it- he could pave the path for Blaine. He could come out. He could expose Lima to the LGBT community and make things better for Blaine as he grew up. He could make sure everything was okay for this young boy who deserved only the best in life.

His thoughts were interrupted as his dad walked into his room to tell him good-night.

"Night, Kurt. I'll see you in the morning," Burt said, then started to turn to leave.

"Hey dad!" Kurt shouted, standing up and walking toward his dad, and then said, without any hesitation, "I'm gay."

Chapter Three

Life became a living hell for Kurt after he came out. If he thought the bullies were bad before, they were nothing compared to now. Locker shoves were a daily occurrence now, as were slushies. Slurs became more frequent, and Kurt was told on a regular basis that he should just kill himself already.

Kurt would be lying if he said it hadn't crossed his mind- to kill himself, that is- but he just couldn't do it. He had glee club, and his dad, and little Blaine.

Blaine... that little boy was the one thing in Kurt's life that really helped him through. Yeah, his dad was always there for him, even if Kurt didn't always tell him what was wrong, and glee club was his way of releasing all of his pent up emotions and just letting go every now and then, but Blaine... Blaine was the one who distracted him from the troubles and tribulations every day for hours after school. Blaine was the one who constantly reminded Kurt that he was the prettiest and smartest and funnest boy he'd ever met. Blaine was the reason Kurt came out in the first place. Blaine was the one who would hopefully get a better life because of everything Kurt was doing. Blaine was always there to protect him from the "bad guys" after school, so Kurt knew he was doing the right thing in returning the favor.

So Kurt pushed through. Every day he struggled to get through school and be strong for Blaine- make a difference for Blaine. And senior year of high school, he was finally able to do it. Things were finally looking up.

Kurt had a step-mom and step-brother now, Carole and Finn, who he had introduced to his dad in junior year, under the misguided attempt to win over Finn (No worries- he was over his crush on the taller boy months before the marriage happened).

And by gaining a step-brother, Kurt also gained a friend. Finn helped Kurt out, as he believed his duties should be as his step-brother, and kept an eye on him. He made sure football players weren't mean to him, or he'd have them benched for the rest of the season (Oh yeah. Finn was quarterback of the McKinley High football team). He stood up for Kurt, and was one of the first people at McKinley to change his opinions on gays, realizing that there was nothing wrong with it, and worked hard to teach all of his friends the same thing.

Carole helped Kurt take care of his dad when Burt had his heart attack junior year, which meant Kurt was able to keep taking care of Blaine without worrying that his dad would be alone or hurting. Carole was

also a mom-figure for Kurt, someone he could go to and talk or gossip with when he needed to vent, or just talk boys.

And then, senior year, Kurt befriended the other star of glee club, Rachel Berry, who helped him run his campaign for class president, which he won, and then, consequently, started a PFLAG group at the school. This club helped educate his peers on the LGBT community, and helped eliminate a lot of prejudice at the school.

Of course, Kurt's bullies didn't completely go away. He still had some days that were worse than others, such as the day he won prom queen...yeah, that day sucked pretty bad. But still, things were looking up for Kurt Hummel.

The best thing of all that had happened was Kurt's acceptance to Parsons in New York City. He was so excited to finally be getting out of Lima, Ohio and moving on with his life, moving to a city that would accept him more readily and be easier on him- a place where he belonged. The only thing he was sad to leave behind was little Blaine.

"Blaine..." Kurt began, hesitantly, one day after school.

"Yes, Kurt?" Blaine replied, looking up from his favorite Harry Potter book.

Blaine still dressed with a style beyond his years. Bow ties and capri pants were a staple in his wardrobe, and the amount of gel used to slick his hair back had doubled, much to Kurt's chagrin. Blaine had shed most of his baby fat, and had eventually stopped playing pretend, choosing instead to use his imagination in a different way- by reading books.

Kurt had loved being able to watch Blaine grow up these past few years. He was still as courageous and wise as ever, and Kurt could only imagine that Blaine would continue to grow up into an extremely nice man.

"I have something to tell you," Kurt trailed off. Blaine waited in silence, full attention turned toward Kurt. "In another month, I'm not going to be your babysitter anymore."

Kurt waited for Blaine to get angry, or be crushed, or, Kurt feared, relieved. What he didn't expect was, "Well, duh."

"Wait... what? How did you know?" Kurt questioned, puzzled at Blaine's uninterested response.

"Kurt. I'm 11 years old now. I'm going into middle school in the fall. I don't need a babysitter anymore. I'm all grown up!"

Oh.. well. Kurt supposed he should have seen that coming. Blaine had a very valid point, after all.

"Oh... right. Well, what I meant, Blaine, is that I'm moving. To New York City. I got accepted to Parson's school of design," Kurt explained.

"Oh! Kurt, that's so fantastic!" Blaine squealed, jumping up and running over to Kurt to give him a huge hug. "I'm so happy for you, Kurt!"

"Thank you, Blaine," Kurt replied, a smile on his face, reciprocating the hug. "You know, I'm really going to miss you..."

Kurt felt the arms around him tighten, and Blaine buried his head in Kurt's stomach (Yeah, there was quite a bit of a height difference between the two). "I'm gonna miss you, too, Kurt. But I'm so happy for you. You deserve this. I'll think of you every day while you're gone, and I'm sure we'll see each other again in no time."

And when Kurt got on the plane a month later, after saying goodbye to his family and friends, he wasn't surprised that it was little Blaine who was on his mind as he took off from the ground. He only hoped that he had done enough for the boy while he could, and that Blaine would be okay on his own.

Chapter Four

7 years later...

"Hey kiddo! Just wanted to check and make sure you were still coming home to visit this weekend," Burt greeted his son through the telephone. Ever since Kurt moved away seven years ago, Burt made sure to call him at least once a week. Kurt used to come home during winter and summer break when he was still enrolled at Parsons, but, when he graduated and got a job, his visits home were narrowed down to just winter. But, Kurt was finally taking some time off from his job and would be able to come home and visit again.

"Hey dad! Yep, I'm still coming home. Looking forward to seeing you," Kurt replied. And he really was. He loved his life in New York City, and he didn't really miss Lima at all, but he missed his dad, and felt bad he couldn't come home more often. And he deserved this time off. He worked his ass off, and this was a much-earned vacation. So he booked himself a flight for the weekend since he had the next week off and was coming home tomorrow.

"Me too! Oh, and there has been a slight change in plans. The Andersons have asked if we wanted to get together while you're home. Blaine will be home for the first time since he moved away, as well, and they were hoping we could all catch up. You haven't even seen Blaine since you moved to New York seven years ago, have you?" Burt questioned.

"Nope, don't think I have. But yeah, that sounds fine, dad. I'm looking forward to it."

Kurt felt bad that he hadn't seen Blaine in seven years, but he honestly just figured Blaine would have forgotten about him. I mean, Blaine was a teenager now. What would he want with a 25 year old guy? And besides, Kurt's visits home were always so short and he always had so many people to see when he was home, he just never had to time to go over and see little Blaine. But, he had to admit, he was happy to get to see the young boy now. It had been far too long and he was curious to see if he was still as adorable as he used to be.

"You know, Blaine moved to New York City a few months ago. Did I tell you that? He's pursuing music up there," Burt informed his son.

"Wait, really? That's so good to hear. Maybe after I see him this weekend we can find some way to meet up when we both get back to the city, if he wants."

"I'm sure he'd love that Kurt. I imagine he doesn't know many people up there yet. Anyway, I need to get back to the shop, but I'll see you when you get home. Love you, kid."

"Love you too, dad."

Kurt hung up the phone and went back to packing for his trip home. Kurt lived on his own in New York, in a nice pent house that he could easily afford now that he was designing clothes that are most commonly featured on grade A celebrities and in magazines such as GQ and Vogue. Kurt started out in New York sharing a small apartment with Rachel, who was going to school at NYADA. However, by the time the two stars graduated college 4 years ago, Rachel had already snagged her first lead role on Broadway and Kurt was interning for his favorite fashion designer, well on his way to where he is now. So, eventually, the two friends parted ways and decided to splurge for their own luxurious apartments, and their much-needed space. But the friends still hung out every opportunity they could.

Kurt looked around his apartment, just to make sure he hadn't missed anything he would need while he was home. Designer clothes- check. Skin care products- check. Plane ticket- check. Everything was in order. Well, it looked like Kurt Hummel was ready to go back to Lima, Ohio.

"Hey mom!" Blaine greeted his mother through the telephone.

"Blaine! Sweetie! Are you about to start your drive home?" His mother, Charlotte, asked. It was finally the weekend and Charlotte was going to get to see her son for the first time in months. Of course, she was happy he could finally move to an accepting city- she had secretly hoped for this ever since he came out when he was 13, because she wanted the best for him, but she desperately missed her son and was happy he was coming home for a visit.

"Yeah, I'm getting in the car as we speak. But I was watching the news and there looks like there's a bit of traffic between here and Lima, so I might be a little late for the dinner with the Hummels tonight. Please tell them I'm sorry, but I'll get there as soon as I can."

"Oh, of course. Just drive safe, sweetie, and we'll see you when you get home."

"Will do. Love you, mom, and I'll see you soon!" Blaine said, hanging up the phone and turning on the ignition in his car, pulling out onto the busy road.

And with that, he began the long drive from New York City to Lima, Ohio. He left early in the morning so he would be able to make it back in time for the dinner with his neighbors. Blaine looked out of his rear-view mirror and bid the city a silent goodbye.

Blaine *loved* New York City. It was the perfect place for him. He had secretly dreamed of moving there ever since Kurt had announced, seven years ago, that that's where he had been going. Of course, his original motive, at the young age of eleven, was to go to the city to reunite with his babysitter/mentor. But, as he grew older, he realized that he wanted to move to New York simply to be in New York. Blaine had loved singing as a child, and that love only grew stronger as he got older. He was the lead singer of the Warblers at Dalton Academy all throughout high school, and, by the time he graduated, he decided he wanted to skip out on college and just go to New York City to pursue music as soon as possible.

So, for the past few months, Blaine has been playing any gig in the city that he could book. He mainly stuck to small bars and cafes, so nothing too glamorous, but it pays the bills for his small, yet quaint, apartment that he lives in by himself.

Because Blaine booked his gigs on a day to day basis, his schedule was extremely relaxed, so, when he heard word from his parents that Kurt would be going home for a visit, he decided he wanted to drop by as well. It had been *years* since he had last seen the older man, and he really missed him. He constantly wondered what Kurt was up to now. He heard snippets from his parents, who were still close friends with Burt and Carole, but Blaine was ready to see Kurt in person and hear it all from him. He wanted to see if Kurt was as great as he remembered him being. And who knows, maybe they could be friends now, too.

So Blaine had suggested to his parents that they meet up with the Hummel-Hudsons when Kurt came home, and the rest is history. So now, Blaine is on a 10 hour drive at 5 in the morning so he can make it home in time for dinner with the old family friends. And he is so excited he can barely contain it.

"Carole, can you please make dad and Finn clean off all the grease on their hands and clothes from the shop. The Andersons will be over any minute!" Kurt cried desperately from the kitchen, where he was working on had only been home one day and he already wondered how his family survived without him

there. It didn't help that Finn still lived in Lima, in an apartment complex just 5 minutes from his family, and worked with Burt at Hummel's Lube and Tires, so he was constantly over at the Hummel-Hudson's house, eating all of their food, and distracting Burt with football games on TV, so that neither men were clean or ready for guests.

"I'm on it, honey. You just keep on cooking. It smells delicious, by the way," Carole replied, making her way through the kitchen to drag the men off the couch in the living room and into the bathroom so that they would be ready when the Andersons arrived.

"Thanks. I'm not sure if it will be ready by the time they get here, though. You might have to entertain them for a few minutes before dinner is served. Sorry!" Kurt called out, hoping Carole could still hear him as she walked through the house.

"Oh, it's not a problem. And I'm sure they won't mind," Carole shouted back.

Sure enough, fifteen minutes later, Charlotte and Bill Anderson arrived at the front door, and Kurt was still putting the finishing touches on his sauce for his special, secret-recipe homemade pasta.

"Bill! Charlotte! I'm so glad you could make it. Where's Blaine?" Burt greeted his neighbors at the door, noticing that their son wasn't with them.

"Hey, Burt. Traffic was pretty heavy today so Blaine called to say he would be a few minutes late. He sends his apologies. I told him when he gets home to just head on over to your house," Bill explained, taking off his coat and moving toward the living room so they could sit and visit until dinner was ready.

"That works out perfectly, then, because I believe Kurt is still working in the kitchen. Let me go tell him what's going on," Carole said with a smile, excusing herself from the room while Burt and Finn caught up with their neighbors.

"Hey, Kurt?" Carole called as she walked into the kitchen.

"Yeah?" Kurt questioned, not even turning around, afraid that the second he took his eyes off his sauce it would burn.

"Bill and Charlotte are here and they said Blaine is running a little late, so no rush."

"Oh, okay. Thanks! It should probably be ready in the next twenty minutes."

"Sounds good! I'll let them know," Carole said as she excused herself from the kitchen and went back to attend to her company.

"Hi Charlotte! Hi Bill!" Kurt called from the kitchen, just to make his presence known. "I'm so glad you could make it over for dinner tonight!"

"Hi, Kurt!" The couple called back from the living room.

Kurt couldn't see the front door or the living room from his spot in the kitchen, especially with his back facing the door while he tended to dinner on the stove, which is why, fifteen minutes later, he didn't see Blaine when he entered his home.

Kurt was, however, the one to hear the knock on the front door.

"Hey dad! I think Blaine's here. Can you let him in?" Kurt called from the kitchen, putting the finishing touches on dinner. It looked like Blaine was right on time.

"Sure thing, kiddo!" Burt called back and went to open the door.

Kurt could hear the whole exchange from the kitchen, but couldn't actually see what was going on.

"Blaine! Wow! Look at you! You look so handsome!" Carole greeted.

"Thank you, Mrs. Hudson," Kurt heard a deep, smooth voice reply. Huh... that's different from the small, higher-pitched voice Kurt remembered. But then again, Kurt supposed Blaine must have hit puberty quite a few years ago. The boy was 18 now, if Kurt had done his math correctly.

"It's good to see you, Blaine. You're just in time. Kurt is finishing dinner up in the kitchen," Burt said.

"Good to see you too, Mr. Hummel," Blaine replied.

And then Kurt heard everyone moving back into the living room, so he continued carefully setting up the garnish on all the plates. He was focusing deeply on the meal, so he didn't hear the footsteps approaching

the kitchen behind him. Kurt nearly jumped out of his skin when he heard the same deep, silky voice from before say a quiet, "Hi, Kurt," behind him.

Kurt turned around quickly to greet the young boy, but stopped short when he saw exactly who was standing in the doorway.

Holy shit.

Chapter Five

Holy Shit.

Little Blaine was *hot*. And not so little anymore. Well, he was still kind of short.

But still, Kurt couldn't believe that *this* was his little Blaine!

"Hey, Blaine. W-wow... look at you! You're all grown up!" Kurt stumbled a bit over his words, but was proud of himself for even being able to speak at all in the presence of this super attractive man. He couldn't help but wonder if Blaine was still gay...

No. He shouldn't be thinking about things like that. This was *little Blaine*! This was the boy from across the street he used to babysit. This was wrong on soooo many levels. Kurt shook his head to get rid of all of these inappropriate thoughts, then walked forward to Blaine to pull him into a hug, which Blaine eagerly returned.

"Yep!" Blaine said when he pulled back from the hug, still holding Kurt by the waist at arms length. "It's been a while, hasn't it? How have you been?"

"Great! Busy, but wonderful. How about you? How was life in Lima after I left?" Kurt asked, tone joking, but he quickly turned serious when he saw a flash of emotion in Blaine's eyes right after he asked the question- what was that... sadness? Grief? Anger, even? But it was gone before Kurt could figure it out, and was replaced with a bright shine in Blaine's eyes and a broad smile.

"Life's been great! I'm loving New York City. Did you know I'm living up there? I figured you still lived there since you moved. Correct me if I'm wrong, though."

"Yeah! Yeah, I still live up there. Could leave once I was there. There's just something about the city. It's great, right?"

"It definitely is. I only moved out there a few months ago, but I can already tell that it's a perfect fit for me, you know? Sometimes, you just know these things," Blaine smiled, looking into Kurt's eyes. And wow, he was instantly entranced, and Kurt wasn't looking away either, so Blaine guessed it was okay to keep staring for a second. Just, wow... seven years and it was like no time has passed at all. He still found it so

easy to talk to Kurt- his mentor. And was Kurt hot now or what? Blaine had always had a bit of a crush on Kurt, but DAMN. He was even better looking than he remembered. And he had the kindest eyes Blaine had ever seen. Blaine was instantly smitten all over again. His body was practically tingling from when they had hugged just a minute before.

The two boys startled and quickly broke eye contact and took a few steps away from each other when they heard Burt clear his throat in the doorway.

"Blaine, I see you found Kurt. Bet it's nice to see him again after all these years," Burt smiled, completely oblivious to the staring contest the two men had currently been engaged in.

"It sure is, Mr. Hummel," Blaine replied, smiling broadly. Kurt smiled at the young boy, still finding his manners and smile absolutely adorable.

"Kurt, is dinner ready yet? Our guests are bound to be hungry by now," Burt questioned.

"Yeah, dad. I'll bring it out right now," Kurt replied. Burt nodded then walked out of the kitchen to lead his guests to the dining room.

"Here, let me help you with that," Blaine offered, reaching out to take some dishes from Kurt.

Kurt smiled at him. "Wow, seven years later and you're still polite as ever."

Blaine simply beamed at Kurt, then walked out of the room, carrying the food to the dining room, Kurt following directly behind him. 'Don't look at his ass, don't look at his ass,' Kurt thought on repeat as he followed.

"So, Blaine," Burt began as everyone sat at the table. "How are you liking New York? What are you doing up there?"

"I love it!" Blaine replied enthusiastically. "I'm pursuing music, hoping to get noticed by someone eventually, so I'm just playing as many gigs as I can get."

"That sounds wonderful, Blaine," Carole said, smiling.

"It is. How about you, Kurt? What have you been doing in New York?" Blaine asked with a wink.

Kurt looked away, hiding his blush. "Ummmm... you know... just, uh, fashion," Kurt stuttered.

"Kurt, you're being modest! Burt and Carole have been filling us in on everything you've been up to," Charlotte interrupted. "I hear you're designing clothes that are featured in Vogue!"

"Yes, ma'am," Kurt replied.

"Kurt, that's so fantastic! I bet you get to meet all kinds of awesome, famous people doing that," Blaine interjected. "Your girlfriend must be so proud of you."

Kurt gaped at Blaine with an open mouth, while Burt and Carole choked on their food, trying to cover up their shock at Blaine's statement. Kurt couldn't believe it... first of all, did Blaine seriously believe that Kurt was straight? I mean, he didn't like to believe that he fit the stereotypes, but still... he thought it was pretty obvious. And second of all, the way Blaine had just said that. Was that a hint of jealousy? And it sounded like Blaine was flirting with him, too. Was little Blaine seriously coming on to him? What the hell?

"Ummmm... I don't have a girlfriend..." Kurt said, shyly. "I'm gay, actually."

Blaine's face lit up. "Oh! Cool! Me too!"

And with that, Kurt burst into hysterical laughter, while everyone else in the room looked on in confusion, Blaine looking a little more hurt than confused.

"Ummmm... Kurt?" Blaine finally asked, once the older man seemed to have finally gotten control of himself again.

"Oh, Blaine! I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I wasn't trying to be rude. It's just, I know," Kurt explained, pausing to catch his breath as he continued to have random bursts of laughter.

"You know what?" Blaine asked, still completely confused.

"I already knew that you were gay. You came out to me when you were six years old!" Kurt exclaimed, causing the other adults at the table to gaze at the two young men with amused expressions on their faces, while Blaine looked down at his dinner, blushing.

"Oh..."

"Oh, Blaine. Don't be embarrassed. It was adorable, really!" Kurt reassured the younger boy. "You told me girls were icky, and when I brushed it off on you just being young, you were adamant that you weren't too young for love- you just only liked boys. And then you proceeded to throw a wedding for Ken and Steven, your two favorite dolls."

"Oh god... kill me now," Blaine groaned, burying his head in his arms, which were resting on the table.

"No, no. It was cute, I swear."

And that got Blaine to look up again. He looked across the table at Kurt, adoration apparent in his eyes. In fact, Blaine's gaze was so intense that Kurt had to look away. He just couldn't get over how much Blaine had grown. He was almost a completely different person now. Of course, his eyes were still the same and held that same child-like innocence in them, and his hair was still slicked back, and he was adorned with a bow tie, just like he used to, but there was still something different about Blaine. But no, Kurt shouldn't think about that. Blaine was 18. He was still practically a child. So Kurt cleared his mind and went back to his dinner while the adults continued chatting at the table around him. But Kurt couldn't help but notice every time he looked up that Blaine still had his gaze set on him, unashamedly.

Finally, as dinner was wrapping up and Kurt was standing to clear the table, Blaine spoke up again.

"Hey Kurt. Could I get your number? Umm... I mean... I'd love for us to be able to catch up some more back home- in New York, I mean. I just... I don't really know that many people out there yet, so I'd love to be able to meet up with a fri-"

"Say no more, Blaine," Kurt interrupted. "I'd love to get together with you."

"Oh, good, because I've really enjoyed seeing you again tonight," Blaine replied, smiling bashfully.

"Anything for my little Blaine," Kurt said, smiling fondly, as he typed his number into Blaine's phone. Since he was looking down, he missed the frown that suddenly appeared on Blaine's face.

"Blaine, are you ready to go?" Bill asked his son, as he and his wife walked into the living room to grab their coats.

Blaine quickly took his phone back from Kurt, then turned to reply to his dad. "Yeah, just a second," he yelled to his father. "Thanks again, Kurt. I really look forward to seeing you again," he said with a wink.

"Yeah, same to you, Blaine. Have a good evening and safe drive home on Monday. I'll see you soon."

And with that, the Andersons were gone and Kurt was left alone in his house with his father, step-mom, and step-brother.

"Can you believe how big Blaine is now, Kurt?" Burt asked his son as he helped him clean up in the kitchen.

"I know, right? It's so weird. But, you know, I'll always think of him as little Blaine from down the street," Kurt replied, shrugging.

He missed the look But gave him out of the corner of his eye. Just like Burt assumed Kurt had missed the way Blaine had been staring at his son all night. Burt knew Kurt might still think of Blaine that way now, but if the way Blaine was staring at Kurt like he was in love with him was any indication, things might soon be changing.

Chapter Six

Kurt had been back in New York City for literally 15 minutes when he got the phone call from Blaine.

"Hey, Kurt!"

"Hey, Blaine. What are you up to?" Kurt asked, continuing to unpack his suitcase while he spoke to the younger man on the phone.

"Oh, you know, just driving back to New York. Was kind of bored on the road and thought I would call you."

"Blaine, you shouldn't drive and talk on the phone at the same time. It's dangerous. You could get hurt," Kurt scolded.

"Awwwww, you care about my well-being!" Blaine practically cooed.

Kurt just sighed. There Blaine was flirting... again.

"Anyway, I was wondering... I'll be back in the city in about two hours. Are you free to get some coffee with me? I know you're off for the rest of the week, so I figured I would take advantage of it,"

"Ummm, yeah. Sure, Blaine. Coffee in two hours."

"Really? Oh! Great! Okay, ummmm... I know this place that's about 5 minutes from my apartment. It's called Starbucks," Blaine said, sounding out the word 'starbucks' like it was the most exotic place he had ever heard of.

Kurt literally stared at his phone. "Really, Blaine? Really?"

"Okay, kidding, kidding. There's actually a really cool local-owned coffee shop that is *also* 5 minutes from my apartment. I'll text you directions."

"Sounds perfect. I'll see you in two hours."

It wasn't until Kurt hung up that he realized Blaine would now be texting and driving. He would have to give that kid a stern talking to. But then again, he supposed Blaine wasn't a kid anymore. He had realized that with a giant slap to the face this weekend. Blaine was all grown up. Huh... weird.

A few minutes later, Kurt received the directions to the coffee shop. He recognized the address as his regular coffee shop, The Drowsy Poet, which was literally 2 minutes away from his apartment. But hadn't Blaine said the coffee shop was 5 minutes from his? Well, that meant Kurt and Blaine had lived only a few minutes from each other for the past few months, and they had never run into each other. Kurt couldn't help but laugh at the absurdity of the situation.

"Blaine! Over here," Kurt called out from his regular table at the back of the cafe as he saw Blaine walk in.

"Hey! How did you know to sit at my table?" Blaine asked, taking the seat across from Kurt.

"What do you mean? This is my regular table. I come here all the time, actually," Kurt trailed off.

"No way! This is *my* regular table, too," Blaine said, smiling at Kurt.

Kurt was momentarily distracted by a funny feeling in his stomach. What was that? It felt like a fluttering feeling deep in the pit of- ugh, never mind. He ignored the feeling and turned his attention back to Blaine.

"So how was your drive? I see you made it here alive despite texting and driving," Kurt said, a hint of amusement in his voice.

"Yes, yes, I'm alive. It's a miracle. But yeah, it was good. Boring, for the most part. Glad to be back home."

"Speaking of home, did you know you only live a few blocks from my house, I'm assuming? You said this coffee shop was only 5 minutes from your house, and it's only 3 from mine."

"Again, no way!" Blaine exclaimed. "What a small, crazy world we live in, huh?"

"Indeed," Kurt smiled. "It will make it easier for us to hang out more, that's for sure."

Blaine simply smiled in response. Kurt couldn't believe how much he had missed that smile.

"So, I would ask you how you've been or what you've been up to, but I believe we covered all the formalities at dinner, so we'll just skip right over that and get to the good stuff," Blaine said, a sly smile on his face.

"The good stuff?" Kurt asked, confused.

"Tell me, Kurt Hummel, what was your favorite college experience? And then tell me about your favorite post-graduation experience. And then your favorite color, just because," Blaine said with a goofy smile and a twinkle in his eye.

Kurt let out a laugh, and began his stories. "Well, my favorite college experience would have to be the time I got the lead in the school play, and beat out the biggest tool. He was so pissed, but, let's face it, I'm simply the best and there's no argument to be had about it," Kurt teased.

And from there, conversation was easy. It was like they had been hanging out for years, which, Kurt supposed they technically had, despite the seven year break in their odd relationship. Hanging out with Blaine kind of felt like coming home.

"Wait, so you're telling me you spent hours laboring over this gorgeous dress made out of only the finest silk, and then the model went and spilled a McDonald's milkshake on it? Oh my god!" Blaine laughed.

"It took all of my power not to slap her. I was devastated, and pissed beyond belief," Kurt replied, wiping the tears of laughter out of his eyes.

He had been talking to Blaine in the coffee shop for two hours now, and it was the most fun he had had and the most relaxed he had been in years.

"I have no doubt that you handled it like a professional. You always were strong when the situations were tough," Blaine commented, a serious gleam in his eye.

Kurt sat in silence for a moment, contemplating what Blaine could have meant by that. Was it possible that he remembered? Remembered all that Kurt had dealt with when he used to babysit Blaine, and all the moments Blaine had comforted him?

"No way, Blaine. *You* were always the strong one, growing up. You know, it was because of you and your courage that I came out when I was 15 years old. I mean, technically, you were the first person I ever came out to. I'm not surprised you didn't remember, though. You were really young," Kurt said, trying to remain nonchalant.

"That sounds like it was *your* courage, Kurt, not mine. But I'm glad I was able to be of help," Blaine smiled. "You helped me, too, Kurt. You were the reason I came out, too, when I was 13," Blaine said shyly.

Kurt froze. No way. There was no way he had left that big of an impact. There was no way Blaine had remembered, after all. He had so many questions.

"Wait, are you serious? Are you saying you *did* remember me coming out? And how did I help? I wasn't even in Lima when you were 13."

"I know... I just... you know how at dinner I asked about your girlfriend...?" Blaine questioned, looking nervous.

"Yeah...?"

"Well, I already knew you were gay. Or, at least, I thought I knew. I remembered you telling me you were like me when I was younger... I think I was 8 or so at the time. I told you I liked boys, and you said you did, too. And I clung to that. I convinced myself that if someone as wonderful as you was gay, then it must be okay for me to be gay, too. So, when I was 13, I finally came out to my family and friends," Blaine shrugged. "But I was so scared I had just made up that memory of you telling me you liked boys, too. I was scared that I had wished myself into believing you were like me because I looked up to you so much, and I didn't want to be alone in this. So that's why I asked you that question at dinner."

Kurt looked carefully at Blaine. The same young boy he knew was buried deep down in there, but, at the moment, all Kurt could see in Blaine's eyes was hurt and fear.

"Blaine... what happened to you?" Kurt asked, concern in his voice. Blaine shrugged it off and went back to his coffee. "Anyway, where to next?" He asked, standing up from his seat and making his way toward the door.

"Umm... I guess we could go for a walk at the park around the corner?" Kurt suggested.

"Sounds perfect," Blaine said, his regular smile shining through his eyes once again.

The two men walked down the street in silence, both trying to think of a new topic of conversation, but Kurt wasn't quite ready to move on yet. He still had so many questions and so many things he wanted to say to Blaine. He decided he would at least say one more thing before the topic was gone for good.

"Blaine... I was just wanted to say, I came out when I was 15 so I could help you. I wanted to make life better for you. I just... I don't know what happened in your past, but I hope things weren't too bad for you. I hope I was able to make life at least a little more bearable for you," Kurt shrugged.

Blaine looked at Kurt in awe for a second, touched that the older man had looked out for him so much throughout the years, and that he had been willing to risk his safety and be beat down in order to help him out. And in that moment, he had never liked Kurt more. "Oh... you definitely did," Blaine replied with a wink, a slight smirk gracing his face.

And suddenly, Kurt realized that he no longer needed to be a mentor to Blaine. He had done that, and it had worked out all right for both of them. Now, he could focus on being Blaine's friend. And he was really looking forward to it.

Chapter Seven

"Hello?"

"Hey, Kurt! It's me, Blaine," Blaine greeted Kurt over the phone not even a full 24 hours after they hung out at the coffee shop.

"Yes, Blaine. I do have caller i.d., you know," Kurt teased.

"Oh, right. Sorry. Anyway, I know you have the week off, and I'm sure you have plenty of other things you want to do and people you want to see and actually now that I'm saying all of this out loud I feel like an idiot for calling in the first place because no way would you want to hang out with me when you probably have a hundred other friends you'd rather-"

"Blaine," Kurt interrupted.

"Yeah?"

"Shut up. I'd love to hang out. Text me your address and I'll pick you up in 15 minutes. There's a Thai restaurant I've been dying to try out and you're coming with me."

"Oh! Okay. Um, yeah. That sounds great!" Blaine exclaimed. "I'll... uhhh... I'll see you soon."

"So, it's only been one day and you missed me already?" Kurt teased as they sat down at the restaurant.

"What can I say? You're a super likeable person. And like I said yesterday, I don't really know that many people in the city yet. I've bonded with a few people who are regulars at my gigs, but no super strong relationships have yet been formed."

"Well, now you've got me," Kurt smiled.

"Now I've got you," Blaine echoed. "I'm glad you have this week off so we can hang out some before your life becomes busy again."

"Yeah, life can get pretty hectic while I'm working. I definitely needed this break. I was just tired of the drama and I'm always taking work home with me and constantly having to doodle little designs wherever I am. To be honest, my friends are all getting pretty sick of it. The only one who is really sticking with me is Rachel," Kurt sighed.

"Rachel?" Blaine asked.

"Oh, right. You don't know her. Rachel's my best friend. She's from Lima, too. We moved out here together seven years ago and lived together for a while. But she's on her own now, just like me. But she's still my main girl."

"Oh, cool! Maybe I can meet her some time. And that's lame no one will stick with you. But just know that I won't mind if you pull out a sketchbook and start doodling while we hang out. I would totally still stick with you. In fact, I think it'd be pretty cool to see you at work," Blaine commented, then was silent for a few seconds so he could look over the menu to figure out what he wanted to order.

"See anything you want?" Kurt asked, while he also looked over the menu.

"Yeah! Everything here looks amazing!" Blaine smiled at Kurt over the top of his menu. "I'm really big on Thai food. And Chinese. And basically anything you can eat out of a take-out box."

"Can I tell you a secret?" Kurt stage whispered. "I love it, too. Of course, I'll always stick with salads and only order the lowest calorie servings available, but still, take-out Thai and the like are my guilty pleasure."

"Well then, Kurt Hummel, looks like we have something else in common."

"Something else?" Kurt asked.

"We both have the same favorite color- purple, we both love coffee, we're both gay, we both live in New York City, we both have a profound love for musicals, we both love Thai food... need I go on?" Blaine smirked.

"Hmmm..." Kurt hummed. "Well, I like sunny, winter days, just like today, because it's the best weather for me to wear scarves, and I am secretly in love with Marlon Brando. Any similarities there?"

"Both of those things sound wonderful to me! Let's see... something else... I love puppies! And a lot of people tell me I sometimes resemble one, and I've wanted to be a musician for as long as I can remember," Blaine added on.

"Oh, yikes. We've got a difference. I'm so *not* a dog person. They get fur everywhere. But I hear you on wanting to be a musician. I always wanted to be on Broadway, but I realized senior year of high school that I would much rather make my own creations than play the part of someone else's. So I started designing, for theatre, originally, then branched out into my own designer labels."

"I totally feel you on that. Like, I honestly don't care if I don't get discovered by some big music label while I perform at coffee shops. I just want to create my own music and perform and make one person smile. If I've made one person smile, then I've done my job for the day," Blaine stated.

Kurt paused at that and just looked at the young man sitting across from him. "You know..." Kurt finally began, "you haven't changed one bit since you were a little boy."

"Is that a good thing or a bad thing?" Blaine asked, unsure of what Kurt was trying to say.

"A good thing," Kurt reassured with a smile. "Definitely a good thing."

Hey Kurt. New movie I've been dying to see just came out. You free tonight? -B

Kurt smiled down at his phone when it beeped with a text message. He and Blaine had hung out at least three times during the past week, and Kurt was now back at work and busy as ever. But, he didn't have any plans yet, so he figured he could put away the sketchbooks and turn off his phone for one night, and a movie with Blaine sounded like the perfect way to unwind.

Sounds great. Pick me up from my place and we'll walk there together -K

Yay! See you at 7 :) -B

"That movie sucked," Kurt moaned as the pair exited the theater later that night.

"What? I'm sorry, were you not just in the same movie theater as me, because that movie was awesome!" Blaine exclaimed, an affronted expression on his face.

"There was no real storyline, way too much gore, and not one cute actor. I give it a F," Kurt said noncommittally, inspecting his nails with a bored look on his face.

Blaine laughed, looking at Kurt incredulously.

"Okay, so what kind of movies do you like, so I'll know for future reference?"

"Let's see... musicals, for sure. And rom-coms are an essential."

"Well, technically those are date movies. I wouldn't feel right taking you to see one of those unless it was a date," Blaine said, hoping Kurt would take the bait and realize what he was suggesting.

"I'll make an exception for you," Kurt simply replied, missing the mark completely.

"Deal," Blaine finally replied, quickly hiding his disappointed expression. "But, for now, let me make it up to you and buy you dinner."

"Oh, no! You don't have to do that! You paid for the movie, I'll get dinner," Kurt argued.

"Nope. You hated the movie. It's the least I can do," Blaine said, crossing his arms, showing that he refused to be swayed.

"Okay, fine..." Kurt sighed. He glanced over at Blaine out of the corner of his eye as they began walking down the street together. They had been hanging out pretty regularly since they had gotten back to New York just over a week ago, and Kurt already felt so comfortable with the younger man. Everything just came so naturally for them. They were quickly becoming best friends. Blaine was just so nice and gentlemanly, exactly as he had been when he was a young boy. Kurt really enjoyed hanging out with him and was really looking forward to a future with Blaine in it.

"So, I guess I should take you to a movie with Marlon Brando in it next time," Blaine teased as he and Kurt walked out of the restaurant and began walking down the street in the direction of Kurt's apartment.

"You know me so well," Kurt laughed.

"Well, that's the thing. I feel like I still *don't* know you. We've been talking so much this past week, but I still want to know more. Like, what's your favorite movie?"

"The Sound of Music, because it's the movie my mother named me after. What's yours?" Kurt asked, in reply.

"Harry Potter," Blaine replied instantly.

"Oh my god! Still?" Kurt exclaimed.

"Still?" Blaine echoed.

"Yes, still. You were obsessed with those books when you were a kid. It was so adorable, but oh my god, you're still obsessed. That's just sad," Kurt teased.

"Oh, hush. You can't use my childhood against me. That's not fair!" Blaine whined. "How about... who is your favorite musician?"

"Barbra Streisand. Easy! How about you?"

"Katy Perry."

Kurt started laughing again.

"And what is so funny this time, might I ask?" Blaine asked, both irritated and amused by Kurt's laughter.

"You moved on from Britney Spears to Katy Perry. You used to run around the house jamming out to Oops I Did It Again while singing into hairbrushes and bottles of hair gel. Oh my god, I bet you still do that, but to I Kissed A Girl, while loving the irony of it all."

At that, Blaine began blushing and turned his head to hide his embarrassment from Kurt. They were now standing in front of Kurt's front door, and Blaine was fighting the temptation to just run away, not that he would ever want to leave Kurt earlier than he had to, regardless of how much the older man was poking fun.

"Oh my god, you totally do!" Kurt doubled over in laughter, holding on to Blaine to keep up right. "Let's see, what other adorable things did you used to do as a child that you might still do now. Oh! I know! Tea parties! Do you still do tea parties? And dress-up! Oh god, if you still have that dress-up box, I might actually die! And you used to do this thing where- mmph."

Blaine had had enough of his teasing, so he did the only thing he could think of to shut Kurt up. He grabbed him by the face and he kissed him.

Kurt froze, shocked by the sudden warmth of Blaine's lips, moving softly, massaging his own.

Kurt's thoughts were moving a mile a minute. What in the world was happening? Why was Blaine kissing him? What was going on? And why did it feel so good? Kurt began to respond, applying just the smallest bit of pressure to Blaine's lips with his own, when he fully came to his senses. WHOA. *Blaine* was kissing him. Little Blaine, who he used to babysit, was currently kissing him. No! This was wrong. This was all wrong. He pulled away with a gasp, right when Blaine began to pull away as well, a content smile on his face and eyes still closed.

"I've wanted to do that since I was eight. I always did have a crush on you," Blaine whispered, lips still less than an inch from Kurt's.

"That's kind of creepy..." Kurt couldn't help but joke. He didn't really know what else to do in this situation, and his brain hadn't fully caught up to what had just happened.

"I was going for adorable," Blaine said, resting his forehead against Kurt's. That is, until Kurt pulled away.

"Blaine... we can't. You're just a kid," Kurt sighed.

"God, Kurt... I'm not a kid anymore!" Blaine exclaimed, jerking back, stepping away from Kurt. "By the way, stop calling me 'little Blaine'. And in case you haven't noticed... I'm attractive, single, and gay. So why exactly can't we do this?"

"I did notice. And I can't say that you're not attractive... I just... we shouldn't be doing this. You're like my younger brother. I watched you grow up, Blaine. I took care of you. I'm sorry, but I can't do this."

Blaine frowned and sighed, but still nodded his head in understanding.

"Still friends?" Kurt asked, worried that their new friendship would be messed up. He liked Blaine, he really did, but he just couldn't do this. But that didn't mean he wanted Blaine out of his life.

"Still friends," Blaine agreed, only after slight hesitation. But regardless of his personal feelings, he was willing to take anything he could get. He would prove to Kurt that he's all grown up. He'd give Kurt the time he needed to come to the realization that they could be more. He's not going to give up.

Chapter Eight

"Hey Kurt, I'm outside. Which office is yours?" Blaine asked over the phone one afternoon, about a week after their last night out together, when he had kissed Kurt.

"You're what?" Kurt asked, hurriedly finishing up a design, glancing over at the clock on his desk. He still had tons of work left to do today, and it looked like he wasn't going to have time for a lunch break. Again.

"I'm outside- well, now I'm actually inside of your workplace. But I don't know which office is yours. Or floor, even. So where are you?" Blaine asked, wandering around the lobby of the 40 story building that hosted dozens of different offices, ranging from fashion designers to newspaper offices to a small recording studio.

"I'm the 27th floor. Once you get there, ask the receptionist for me and she'll send you to my office. But what are yo-" Kurt was cut off as Blaine hung up his phone.

Kurt sighed and set his phone down. That boy... er, man- he just didn't get him. Showing up at his workplace for unknown reasons, kissing him to shut him up... he was always just full of surprises. And Kurt hated surprises. But he still couldn't help the small butterflies he felt in his stomach at the thought of seeing Blaine soon, even though he would probably just have to send him on his way after a few minutes, because he just had too much work to do today.

"Knock, knock," Blaine said, tapping gently on Kurt's door, interrupting Kurt's thoughts and making him jump a bit in surprise.

"Who's there?" Kurt joked, smiling as the younger man entered the room, holding a plastic bag behind his back, in an attempt to hide it from his ex-babysitter.

"Your favorite person in the whole wide world, who has also brought you lunch in hopes that we could spend some time together," Blaine replied, pulling the bag from around his back and presenting it proudly to Kurt.

Kurt stared at Blaine in shock.

"You brought me lunch?"

"Yep!" Blaine replied, simply, pulling food out of the bag and placing it on Kurt's desk.

"Thai food?" Kurt asked again, once he got a better look at what Blaine was setting on his desk.

"Yep!" Blaine repeated, sitting down and digging into the meal.

"Wait! Wait!" Kurt squealed. "Let me shut the blinds first!"

Blaine gave Kurt a curious look, before he remembered. "Right, guilty pleasure. Can't let your co-workers know that you actually indulge in real food sometimes," he joked. Kurt just rolled his eyes playfully in response.

"So how has your day been? Or week, actually. I know you've been really busy, but I've missed you," Blaine said as Kurt sat down next to him and began eating.

"You basically just summed it up. It's been busy, like always. I didn't think I was going to have time to eat today, actually. So thank you so much! You are too sweet for doing this," Kurt answered.

"You're welcome. But it's not a problem. Besides, I get something out of it, too. I get to see you *and* eat awesome Thai food," Blaine said, smirking. Kurt turned his head to hide his blush. When did little Blaine get so good at flirting? And that smirk. Ughhh.

"How about you? What have you been up to, Blaine?" Kurt asked, once he was sure the red creeping up his neck had died down a bit.

"You know, just doing this and that. Played a gig on Tuesday night, and I'm playing another one next week. But I mostly just have this week off. I've been writing a lot. Inspiration hit me when I was home in Ohio, and it's only been getting stronger," Blaine answered with a wink.

"I'm so jealous you have all of this free time," Kurt moaned, slumping down into his seat. I've only been back at work for two weeks and I already am in need of another vacation.

"Don't you like your job, though?" Blaine asked.

"Of course! I wouldn't trade it for the world! There's just so much to do, and I'm only one person, you know. And I miss stuff like this. I miss having lunch with friends and just having nice conversation that doesn't involve yelling at my incompetent staff."

"Well, you can always count on me to give you a break from all of this. Any time you need to just vent or hang out, you have my number. I love spending time with you, so seriously, call me anytime," Blaine insisted, staring into Kurt's eyes, conveying his sincerity with the deep look he was giving Kurt.

Kurt knew it was probably a bad idea to give in, considering he knew Blaine had *some* sort of feelings for him that Kurt just couldn't return, which he had made clear when Blaine kissed him last week. But the idea of hanging out with someone and having a best friend he could always call and vent to, and someone to bring him lunch like this, was just too appealing to turn down. Especially if this best friend was Blaine.

"Well then, what are you doing tomorrow night? It's a Friday, so I've got the whole weekend. Of course, I'll have to work a bit from home, but I think I could spare a few hours to hang out," Kurt said, a smile on his face.

"I'll come over and we can watch a movie. You picked last time, so I get to choose!" Blaine replied, eyes lighting up with joy.

"That sounds great. I'll cook us some dinner, too."

"You don't have to do that," Blaine insisted, feeling bad that Kurt would have to work all day, just to come home and cook dinner.

"I want to. You haven't tasted my cooking yet, so it's about time I spoil you!"

"Well, if you insist," Blaine replied, a huge smile on his face.

"Anyway, thanks for bringing lunch. This was so sweet of you to do," Kurt said as he took the last bite and stood to clear the empty cartons off his desk so he could get back to work.

He turned back around to face his desk after throwing away the empty food cartons and saw Blaine staring down at some of his latest designs that were scattered all around.

"Kurt," Blaine gasped. "These are good! Like, *really* good."

"Oh, stop. You're just saying th-"

"No, I'm not!" Blaine interrupted. "These are seriously amazing. I had no idea."

Kurt blushed again. God, what was this? Like, the third time he had blushed because of Blaine in the span of thirty minutes? *Seriously?*

"Thank you," Kurt whispered in reply, unable to find his voice. He had no idea why the fact that Blaine liked his designs meant so much to him. I mean, this was just Blaine. Kurt shook it off and tried his best to regain his stature. "Thank you," he said again, after clearing his throat, this time with a much stronger voice.

"Of course," Blaine returned. "Anyway, I'll head out and let you finish up your work. Try not to get too stressed. And I look forward to seeing you tomorrow."

And with that, Blaine was out the door, and Kurt was sitting at his desk, stunned at what had just happened.

Blaine was so excited for his date with Kurt that night.

Well, not a date. It wasn't a date. As much as he wanted it to be, it just wasn't. Kurt didn't like him that way- *yet*.

But still, it was *finally* Friday (it had only been 24 hours since the plans had been made, but it was the longest 24 hours of Blaine's life), and Blaine had a plan. He had about an hour left before he had to be at Kurt's for his movie night, and he had been getting ready for the past two hours already.

He had seen Kurt blush in his office yesterday when he had complimented at him. Kurt had tried to hide it, but he still saw. He knew he was getting to Kurt. Kurt might not have realized it yet, himself, but he still had an affect on him, and that meant something, right?

So Blaine was still determined to not give up on trying to win over Kurt. He was going to look his best for Kurt. Maybe the problem was that Kurt still saw him physically as a little boy. It was obvious Kurt liked his personality, so maybe it was just that he didn't like Blaine's appearance.

So Blaine was currently wearing the tightest pair of skinny jeans he owned, a lean black polo, and his favorite bow tie. His hair was not as gelled back as usual, but he used his gel to style his curls instead, so that his hair was soft and easy to run his fingers through. He had moisturized his face and put on chapstick so that his skin would look soft and his lips would look kissable.

He looked pretty damn good, if he did say so himself.

And now it was time to go to Kurt's. He picked out Moulin Rouge and Rent to bring with him for them to watch. He figured watching romantic movies with a bit of tragedy would be his best chance at getting some cuddles out of Kurt.

It's not that Blaine was manipulating Kurt, because he definitely wasn't. He was still being himself. He wanted to bring Kurt lunch. He wanted to flirt with Kurt. He wanted to look good for Kurt. He wanted to watch musicals and cuddle with Kurt. But he refused to push Kurt. He would let Kurt figure it out on his own time and in his own way. And until then, Blaine would still enjoy every second he got to spend with the older man. Because being friends with Kurt was easily the best thing that had happened to him in years.

Kurt was frantically running around his apartment. He had gotten off of work a little late, so he was scurrying around, trying to finish getting ready and cooking for Blaine, when Blaine knocked on his front door on Friday night.

"Come in!" Kurt shouted. "I'm in the kitchen," he continued to call out as he heard Blaine enter his apartment.

"You look handsome," Kurt commented as Blaine entered the kitchen. Blaine tried not to let his disappointment show at Kurt's plain compliment.

"Uh, thanks. You too," Blaine smiled. "Do you need help with anything?"

"Nope! I'm just finishing up. Go sit down and I'll bring it to the table."

The two men enjoyed the nice meal together as they swapped stories about their week, just enjoying each other's company, conversation coming naturally to them, as if they had been friends their whole lives, which, technically, they had been, despite their slight break in their relationship.

"I have a show on Tuesday night again this week. Think you might want to come?" Blaine asked as he helped Kurt clean up the table, then moved into the living room to settle onto the couch next to Kurt in order to watch the movies he had brought.

"I definitely think I could swing that," Kurt smiled, snuggling into the cushions next to the younger man.

"Good," Blaine grinned back, then subtly scooted closer to Kurt.

By the end of Rent, Kurt was curled up against Blaine's side, leaning his head against Blaine's shoulder, trying to inconspicuously rub the tears from his eyes with Blaine noticing.

But, of course, Blaine noticed, and responded by wrapping his arms around Kurt and pulling the older man even tighter against him.

"Blaine, you'll have to let go of me eventually if you want me to put in Moulin Rouge," Kurt teased, but made no move to get up. He was just too comfortable.

"Fine, fine. I'm just so comfortable," Blaine laughed, then reluctantly released his hold on Kurt.

Kurt stood and replaced the movie with the new one, then hurried right back to the couch and settled back into the same position he had previously been in, much to Blaine's surprised delight.

Blaine wrapped his arms back around Kurt, and, in a matter of minutes, both men were sound asleep, wrapped around each other.

Kurt woke up first the next morning. It took him a minute to realize where he was and who he was with, until the night before came rushing back to him.

Blaine had come over. Blaine, his newest best friend, had dinner with him and they watched movies and fell asleep... in each other's arms.

Kurt knew he should feel wrong about this, but, at the moment, all he could do was stare at the sleeping man whose head was currently resting on Kurt's chest. At some point in their slumber, they had shifted to a laying down position, with their legs tangled together and Blaine slightly on top of Kurt, his head slowly rising and falling with each breath Kurt took.

He looked beautiful and peaceful in his sleep. But then again, he looked beautiful all the time.

Oh yes- Kurt had definitely noticed how wonderful Blaine looked last night when he arrived at his apartment. He was extremely attractive in his skinny jeans and black polo. But Kurt had kept his cool and didn't let it show. He was kind of used to trying to act cool around Blaine by now, because Blaine always looked so damn dapper and handsome, and Kurt couldn't help but automatically feel flushed when the younger man walked into a room.

But now that Blaine was asleep, Kurt allowed himself to just look and take the younger man in.

He looked... older. Kurt noticed how much his face had filled out. He looked mature and strong, with a firm jaw, and a bit of stubble scattered over his chin.

They hadn't fallen asleep with any blankets over them, and Blaine's shirt had ridden up a little as he slept, so Kurt couldn't help but look down and notice that Blaine had a body to kill for. Like, seriously... when had he gotten that six-pack? And the dusting of hair scattered about his belly, that led lower to-

"Ahem."

Kurt startled at the sound of Blaine clearing his throat. He instantly jerked his head up to look at Blaine's face, and noticed that the younger man was now fully awake and looking up at Kurt through his long, dark eyelashes.

"Enjoying the view?" Blaine smirked.

Kurt blushed, embarrassed at having been caught. "Ummm... I wasn't... I mean..."

"Kurt-"

"I'm sorry. I was just... I don't know what I... I didn't..."

"Kurt-"

"It's just you look so different and I wasn't thinking and..."

"Kurt! Shut up!" Blaine raised his voice over Kurt's to be heard.

Kurt quickly shut his mouth and looked down bashfully, trying his best to avoid Blaine's gentle gaze.

"It's fine. No worries. You don't have to explain yourself. In fact, we can just forget about it, if you'd like," Blaine suggested. Of course, there was no way *he* would ever forget that Kurt had been admiring him while he slept, but he figured the least he could do was not tease Kurt about it, even though he desperately wanted to. But he could see that Kurt was embarrassed and confused about what had just happened, so he would give the older man some more time to figure things out. At least this was some progress.

"Thank you," Kurt whispered, then struggled to get out from underneath Blaine so he could get ready for the day.

"Sorry to fall asleep on you last night. Literally," Blaine joked, trying to ease the tension.

"Oh, it's fine. I mean, it was both of our faults. I fell asleep, too. I just hope I was comfy enough," Kurt teased back, finally regaining his usual sass.

"You are plenty comfy," Blaine replied, smiling goofily at Kurt.

"Good. Now, give me an hour to get ready for the day and we'll go grab a cup of coffee, on me," Kurt suggested.

"Sounds wonderful," Blaine said. But he had no intention of letting Kurt pay for his coffee. He still had to woo the man, after all.

When Kurt got back to his apartment that night, alone, after spending the whole day out and about with Blaine, he noticed he had a missed call on his phone. Oh right, it was Saturday, which meant he had his weekly phone call with Burt. It was a tradition that they had started years ago when Kurt moved away,

and currently, Kurt had never been more grateful for it, because he really needed to talk to his dad about everything that was going on in his life lately, and, most importantly, about Blaine.

Kurt scrolled through his contacts on his phone and hit the call button when he reached 'dad.'

"Hey, kiddo," Burt greeted on the other side of the line.

"Hey dad! Sorry I missed your call earlier. I was out with Blaine all day and didn't hear the phone ring."

"You were hanging out with Blaine again? You two have been getting together a lot lately," Burt commented.

"Yeah. Like I told you before, we decided to hang out shortly after we got back to New York and we've gotten pretty close since then," Kurt shrugged, even though his dad couldn't see the action.

"Well that's great! You need someone else up there, Kurt. Your other friends can't seem to put up with your busy schedule and you're always locked up in that office of yours, so maybe Blaine can help you out with that."

"Yeah..." Kurt trailed off.

"Something bothering you, Kurt?" Burt asked after a second. After raising Kurt for his whole life, he was always able to tell when something was upsetting him. It was just a part of his fatherly intuition.

"Dad, can I tell you something?" Kurt started.

"You know you can always talk to me about anything, kiddo."

"Well, the thing is... Blaine... he... he kissed me, dad."

"Whoa. Already? I thought it would take way longer for you two to figure it all out. But a month... wow. Can't say I'm not surprised, though."

"Wait, dad, what are you talking about?"

"I knew you guys would get together. I could tell there was something there just from the way he was looking at you at that dinner we had. But I didn't think it would happen so fast. But good for you, kiddo."

"No, dad. Wait. We're not- we're not together. Blaine's still practically a kid. I mean, I watched him grow up. I played dress up and pretend with him when he was six."

"Well, that may be so, but I think you'll find that he's *not* a kid anymore."

"That's what he said..."

"Well, it's true. He's not still playing dress up and pretend. Or, at least, I hope he's not... But regardless, I know you have this perceived image of him in your head, but you need to look past that. I'm not saying forget your memories with Blaine as a child, because I know those were some good memories. Just, make sure you don't miss what's right in front of you now."

"Yeah... I guess you're right."

"So, if you take away the fact that Blaine is younger than you and you've seen him grow up, how do you feel about him? How did you feel when he kissed you?" Burt asked.

"I... I don't know, dad. I mean, I felt shock when he kissed me. It was kind of out of nowhere. And then I pulled away pretty fast because... I mean... it was *Blaine*. But he's great. I love having him back in my life. But I just... I don't know..." Kurt rambled.

"Sounds like you've got some things to figure out. Just, keep an open mind, Kurt. He's a good man. And he's gotta be smart if he likes you. But take your time, too. Don't feel like you have to rush into anything. And don't let him rush you into anything, either."

"I won't dad. Thanks for letting me vent. I just needed a second opinion, I guess."

"Anytime, kiddo. That's what I'm here for."

Chapter Nine, Part 1

On Tuesday, Blaine stopped by Kurt's work again, this time just to bring coffee.

"To help you survive until my show tonight. So, technically, I'm being entirely selfish by bringing you this cup of coffee," Blaine joked as he handed Kurt his grande non-fat mocha.

"You're incorrigible," Kurt teased back. "Really, I don't know what I'm going to do with you. Why can't you be more selfless?"

"I'm a lost cause," Blaine continued, smirking at Kurt playfully, who was grinning back in return.

"But in all honesty, thank you, Blaine. You're too good to me. I really appreciate this."

"It's nothing. Besides, I'm a little nervous about my show tonight, so I thought seeing you might calm me down a bit," Blaine explained.

"Did it work?" Kurt questioned.

"A little," Blaine replied. Honestly, seeing Kurt had only made his heart speed up some more, but, at the same time, he felt happy and content with his life when he was around Kurt. Which is exactly why he was singing the song he chose tonight, knowing that Kurt would be there to hear it. "I guess I'll let you get back to work. I just wanted to bring this by. I'll see you later tonight, though."

"Sounds good. Want to hang out at my place after?" Kurt asked, surprising himself. He didn't know where the question came from. All he knew was that he loved seeing Blaine- especially these little surprise visits, and he wanted more... despite the fact that he was already seeing Blaine at least three times a week as it was.

"I would love that," Blaine smiled, then departed from the office.

When Kurt got home that afternoon, he had another surprise waiting. And even though Kurt had always hated surprises before, he was finding the he was beginning to love them, especially when they came from

Blaine, because when he approached his front door step that afternoon, there was a bouquet of flowers waiting for him on his stoop.

Kurt picked up the flowers and shuffled indoors before reading the card that was attached.

To Kurt. Thank you for coming to my show tonight. Love, Blaine :)

Kurt smiled to himself, set the flowers down on his table, then hurried to his bedroom to get ready for the show in a few hours. He had to look his best, after all. Because it was going to be in a public venue... not because of Blaine or anything, Kurt convinced himself.

When Kurt arrived at the small cafe a few hours later, Blaine was hanging about just inside the front door, waiting for him.

"Kurt!" Blaine called out when he saw the taller man enter, then quickly rushed over to him and grabbed him into a brief hug. "You made it!"

"Scared I was going to bail?" Kurt teased.

"Yeah, actually. No one I know has ever come to see me play before. It's pretty exciting that you're here!"

"Well, I'm glad I could be the first. And I'm sure you'll be fantastic. You used to be a wonderful singer when you were younger, so I'm sure you've only gotten better with age," Kurt was quick to assure the younger man.

"Thank you," Blaine smiled, reaching out to gently squeeze Kurt's arm.

"And thank *you* for the lovely flowers. Aren't I supposed to bring *you* flowers? I mean, you're the one performing after all."

"Well, I just wanted to show how grateful I am for you. Not just for coming to my show tonight, but for being my friend. I've been so happy this past month. I'm so happy to have you back in my life," Blaine declared, sincerely.

Kurt just smiled in return, not knowing what else to say. Blaine had summed it all up for him.

Blaine was going to be playing soon, so he excused himself to go backstage, and Kurt wandered around the cafe, looking for a good seat. He ended up at a table a few feet from the small, intimate stage, just off to the side. He didn't want to be right in Blaine's face, but he wanted to make sure his friend could see him, to know that he was there for him.

Kurt applauded loudly when Blaine finally appeared on the stage. A few other regulars also contributed small applause, and Blaine beamed back at them.

"Hey guys! Good to see you all tonight. For those of you who don't know, my name is Blaine Anderson, and I'm going to sing a few songs for you tonight, so I hope you enjoy."

Blaine started off the evening with a slow rendition of Teenage Dream, which Kurt smirked at, since he knew all too well about Blaine's latest obsession with Katy Perry. Blaine then moved on to Somewhere Only We Know and transitioned from that into Hey, Soul Sister. He played a few more songs that Kurt recognized as popular pop songs, but Blaine made them his own, and he sang them beautifully.

"All right, guys. I've got one more song for you all tonight. This song is called Not Alone, and I just wrote it a few weeks ago for my inspiration and my best friend, and I'm happy to have him here with me tonight," Blaine said, pointedly looking at Kurt, who could feel his face heating up under the gaze of his friend.

"I've been alone

Surrounded by darkness

And I've seen how heartless

The world can be,"

Kurt was absolutely mesmerized by Blaine's voice. It was nothing like the little boy he remembered. It was deeper and more soulful. He could hear all of Blaine's emotions shaking in his voice, and could see the passion in his eyes.

It was then, right in the middle of Blaine's song, that Kurt realized that Blaine had grown up. Blaine had been through a lot, even though Kurt didn't exactly know the extent of it yet, but he could see plain as day that Blaine had matured into a passionate, caring person, and it was also reflected in his song lyrics. He

had lived, and he had learned from his experiences, and he was a man now, who had his own set of problems and struggles, just like Kurt had.

"Baby, you're not alone,

Cause you're here with me.

And nothing's ever gonna bring us down-"

Blaine was no longer "little Blaine." He was just Blaine, Kurt's newest best friend. He was Blaine Anderson, an 18-year-old musician struggling to make his way in New York City. Kurt's eyes had been opened. He still wasn't sure if he returned Blaine's feelings yet, but he *did* know that there was definitely something there. Something that Kurt hadn't seen in Blaine or felt for him before.

"Our love is all we need to make it through..."

"Thank you," Blaine finished, still looking at Kurt.

Chapter Nine, Part 2

"You were wonderful tonight, Blaine," Kurt commented once the two men were seated, facing one another, on the couch in Kurt's apartment later that night, both sipping on a glass of wine."

"Thank you," Blaine sighed. "And thank you, again, for coming tonight. It meant the world to me."

"I got that vibe," Kurt teased. "So... I'm your inspiration?" he asked, shyly.

"You are," Blaine said, taking another sip of his wine.

Kurt simply smiled in response, then paused before asking his next question. It was a question that had been bugging him for a while now, and Blaine's song had been the last straw. He just had to find out.

"What happened to you once I was gone, Blaine? What happened once I had left for New York? Why did you write that song? 'I've been alone, surrounded by darkness?' Just... what happened?" Kurt asked. He knew he was probably overstepping some boundaries by digging into Blaine's personal life, but they had been friends for a while now, and Kurt just wanted to know what had happened in Blaine's past. He wanted to know if he had been able to make a difference by coming out, after all.

Blaine sighed, then gently set his glass of wine on the table next to the couch, and Kurt followed his lead, setting his glass aside as well. Blaine rubbed the back of his neck, uncomfortably, before he started into his story.

"Kurt..." Blaine started, then broke off with another sigh. "Kurt... when I was 13, I came out. I knew I had been gay for like, my whole life. Which, of course, you are well aware of, considering my childhood crush on you. You saw the signs first-hand. And, as you already know, it was because of you and your courage that I came out at all."

Blaine paused again, and shifted a bit in his seat. This is where the story got bad, and he wished he could spare Kurt the details.

Kurt saw Blaine's hesitation and reached out to place a reassuring hand on Blaine's leg.

"It's okay, Blaine. You don't have to tell me if you don't want to. But... I'd really like it if you *would* tell me."

"No, no. It's just... it happened forever ago, obviously. But it's still hard to revisit," Blaine explained. "I... the year I came out, when I was still in middle school, there was a small dance the school was hosting. I took my best friend, Wes, as a date. We weren't even together. He's not even gay. But he was my friend and he didn't want me to go alone, so he offered to go with me. And... well... even at the young age of 13, the others kids didn't want me flaunting my homosexuality in their faces. So, as we were leaving, a group of guys, and some of their older brothers, as well, stopped us in the parking lot. They ordered Wes to leave or they would kill him, so he ran. And then... they beat the living shit out of me."

"Oh, Blaine," Kurt gasped, shock and horror clear in his voice. "I am *so* sorry."

Kurt had tears in his eyes that were threatening to overflow, but he refused to cry in front of Blaine. He had to be strong for him, just like he always had. He had to show Blaine that he was here for him. But this story was seriously breaking his heart.

"No!" Blaine interrupted. "No. Don't blame yourself, and don't feel sorry for me. I know you probably put up with shit as well, so you know first-hand what it's like, so *please* don't feel sorry for me. Just... let me get this off my chest," Blaine paused, and Kurt nodded for him to continue.

"I was unconscious for two days, and in the hospital for a week after the incident. I finished up middle school from home, and then I went to your old high school for about a month, but I could just see the kids staring at me in the halls and I was scared and traumatized. I flinched at just the smallest noises. So I ran. I transferred to a private school- Dalton Academy- where I lived in a giant bubble... I was the most popular kid and lead of the Warblers and never had to fear for my life. But, to this day, I still regret running."

"Blaine, it wasn't running. It was protecting yourself. You did the right thing. I just... god, I wish you didn't have to escape from that. I tried so hard to make things better for you. That's why I came out in the first place. I just wanted to make things better for you. I wanted to make a difference. I tried so hard. I thought that by me taking the blunt of it, things would be easier for you. Dammit!" Kurt exclaimed, frustrated that all of his attempts to help were for naught.

"No, Kurt. Stop! You *did* make a difference for me. You gave me hope and you gave me courage and you made me proud to be who I am. Not a day went by after you left that I didn't think of you. I carried on every day *because* of you," Blaine reassured, taking both of Kurt's hands in his own.

"Same..." Kurt said, hesitantly.

"I... what?" Blaine asked, confused as to what Kurt meant.

"Same for me. You were... well, are... the reason I'm still alive," Kurt whispered.

"Kurt!" Blaine gasped, scooting closer to Kurt on the couch, their knees now touching. "Please tell me that doesn't mean what I think it means."

"I never actually *tried* to kill myself. I just... thought about it, you know?" Kurt whispered, shame and embarrassment rushing over him. Blaine pulled Kurt into his arms, attempting to comfort the man any way he knew how.

"I was bullied a lot when I was younger, too. I came out when I was 15, as you already know, and I knew it was going to be bad. But, honestly. I probably didn't even *need* to come out at all. People already knew. It was going to be bad for me no matter what. Bullies would throw slushies in my face and throw me into dumpsters and ruin my clothes and shove me into lockers. I could handle it at first, but it gradually began to tear me down."

Kurt paused, and Blaine just held onto him even tighter, waiting in silence, giving Kurt the time he needed before he continued with his story.

"Ummm... one day, when I was 16... I was attacked by my biggest bully- Dave Karofsky. He cornered me in the locker room and... and he forced himself on me. He didn't... he didn't rape me, but he would have taken it further if I hadn't shoved him off of me and run for it. That was the day I seriously considered ending it all," Kurt explained, voice shaking.

"I'm so grateful that you didn't. God, I couldn't even imagine my life without you in it," Blaine paused to regain his composure, willing the shaking in his hands to stop. "What... what helped you through all of this?" Blaine finally questioned, allowing Kurt to rest his head on his shoulder, gently brushing his fingers through the older man's soft hair.

"You. Every day, after all this shit happened, I would pick you up from the bus stop and spend the afternoon with you. And you made me smile. You made me realize that I was going through all of this for reason. You helped me remember that if I could just make it through one more day, I could make things better for you. I had a purpose on this earth, and it was to help make you happy and feel accepted."

And there. Right at that moment. That was when Blaine realized he didn't just *like* Kurt. He was in *love* with him. He was so far gone. Completely, head over heels, loopy in love with Kurt Hummel. And damn did it feel good.

"You did," Blaine said, simply.

"What?" Kurt asked, lifting his head off of Blaine's shoulder to peer into the younger man's eyes questioningly.

"You succeeded in making me happy. You're *still* making me happy."

Kurt smiled up at Blaine, and Blaine could feel his heart beating through his chest, and there were butterflies fluttering around in his stomach like crazy, and he just couldn't stop himself.

He gently cupped Kurt's cheeks in his hands, and searched the older man's eyes for protest. When all he saw was wonder and happiness looking back at him, he slowly moved in and gave Kurt a small, short kiss on the lips. It didn't last for more than two seconds, and was just a small peck, but Blaine swore he saw fireworks.

"Good night... Kurt," Blaine whispered as he pulled away, then he stood and walked out the front door, leaving a dumbstruck Kurt sitting alone on the couch.

Chapter Ten

Kurt was freaking out.

It had been an hour since Blaine just up and kissed him, then *LEFT*, and Kurt couldn't stop pacing back and forth through his living room.

What *was* that? Well, he knew it was a goodbye kiss, obviously, but *why* was the real question, he supposed.

Kurt didn't know whether to be fuming or jumping up and down out of excitement or disgusted or *what*, so he paced.

"Okay," Kurt said out loud to himself. "Let's just think through this rationally."

Kurt moved to sit back down on the couch, before remembering that that's where the kiss had taken place, so he moved to his bedroom instead, and sank down into the lounge chair he had placed in there.

"Okay. Blaine kissed me. Blaine *kissed* me. *Blaine* kissed *me!* Again..." Kurt said to himself, trying to sort it out and come to terms with what was happening. So he thought through what he already knew.

He and Blaine had kissed- twice, now. And sure, he had realized that Blaine wasn't a kid anymore... but he had just come to this conclusion a few *hours* ago. This was all too much too soon. He might have realized that Blaine isn't a kid anymore, but where did that put him now? Just because he realized Blaine wasn't a kid didn't mean he had to *like* him, necessarily.

But, then again, after that story Blaine had just told him, he had realized that Blaine had been through so much in his lifetime. He was so strong. He had grown and matured and dealt with so many horrible things, and he came out stronger because of it. He had grown into a wonderful, strong, passionate young man.

And then he had comforted Kurt, saying all of those wonderful things and he was just so nice and considerate and cute and *whoa*, now Kurt was physically attracted to him all of a sudden? How and when had that happened?

Well, he supposed he had *some* clue that he found Blaine attractive, but he had never given it a second thought before... ah, fuck it. Who was he kidding. He had been attracted to Blaine since he walked through the kitchen door a few months ago in Lima. He had just been lying to himself these past months so he wouldn't have to admit that he was super attracted to Blaine Anderson, and now he just wanted to bend him over and fu- NO! Shit.

What had he gotten himself into? This was *Blaine*, for Christ's sake.

But then he thought back to what his dad had said to him on phone- don't miss what's right in front of you *now*. He had felt nothing the first time Blaine had kissed him, and that first kiss had definitely been way more passionate. But the kiss that had just happened, even though it was literally only a second long peck, had sent him reeling.

So, obviously, something had changed between then and now. Just... *what*? His dad told him not to miss what was right in front of him now, but Kurt wasn't sure what that was. He didn't know what to look for.

Even though he didn't see Blaine as a kid anymore, it didn't mean he had to see him as anything else besides a friend, right? I mean, they worked well together as friends. Blaine was easily the best friend Kurt had had, after only a few months of being reunited.

Kurt left out a sigh and sunk further down into the chair. His heart was still pounding. It had been an hour and his heart was still fucking pounding.

So he decided to go to bed. He would sleep on it and figure things out in the morning.

Only problem: he couldn't sleep. His mind was reeling and his heart was about to beat out of his chest.

So he got out of bed and made his way into the kitchen, thinking he could fix himself a midnight snack.

Another problem: he didn't have an appetite. Just one look at the food in his refrigerator and he felt like he was going to be sick.

What was *happening*? He had never felt this way before. He couldn't even place what he was feeling. In the forefront of his mind was confusion and excitement and anxiety, but in the background... Shit.

Could it be possible that he might like Blaine Anderson?

It's been a week. One week since Kurt last saw Blaine. One week since they had kissed. And while Kurt missed his best friend like crazy, he was honestly grateful for the time they spent apart so he could gather his thoughts.

He still hadn't come to any real conclusions, though. He wasn't sure what had happened that night, but a few days later and Kurt was finally feeling back to normal.

Which is why he finally was the one to call up Blaine to see if they could hang out.

"Hey, Blaine. I get off work tonight around 6 tonight. Want to meet me at the office and hang out for a bit? We could try out this new restaurant that just opened."

"I'd love that," Blaine said through the telephone line. "I'll see you soon."

Kurt was relieved Blaine hadn't mentioned the kiss or seemed awkward about it. But, as it turns out, Kurt should have worried about himself being awkward more so than Blaine, as he unfortunately learned when Blaine showed up to pick him up.

Blaine knocked on the door before entering, just like he always did. Kurt turned around just as the younger man was entering, and froze.

Holy shit. Did Blaine always look that good? Kurt couldn't see anything different about the man. No change in hair style or clothes or cologne or anything. So why did Blaine suddenly look at least ten times hotter than he did to Kurt last week?

"Hey you," Blaine greeted Kurt after a few seconds of awkward silence, during which Kurt openly gaped at Blaine. "Are you... uh... are you ready to go?"

"What?" Kurt snapped out of his daze. "Oh! Hey! Sorry, yeah. Long day... Yeah, let's go."

And so the two men departed from the office and walked the few blocks to the restaurant, during which Kurt internally fought with himself over whether or not he should hold Blaine's hand. Where did *that* thought even come from? Ughhh!

Unfortunately, dinner wasn't much better. Blaine did most of the talking, while Kurt stared, spilled his drink three times, literally drooled spaghetti sauce all over himself, and tripped over his chair in an attempt to get up to go to the bathroom.

"Kurt... are you okay?" Blaine finally asked, after having put up with Kurt's strange behavior for most of their meal.

"Huh, what?" Kurt startled, snapping out of his daze... again.

"I asked if you are okay. You seem... distracted."

"Oh! Uhhh, yeah. That. Ummm... I'm fine! I'm just... tired. Yeah. Tired. Nothing else. Sorry," Kurt rambled, then looked down at his plate, blushing.

Blaine observed Kurt in silence for a few seconds, before shrugging off the odd behavior and continuing with his meal in silence.

Blaine couldn't help but wonder if Kurt was upset with him for kissing him last week. Blaine hadn't meant any harm by it. It was just a simple, friendly good bye kiss. And Kurt hadn't seemed to mind. But he was still nervous. That's why he had given him his space and let him call first to make plans for them to hang out again. But Kurt didn't seem upset. In fact, he seemed the exact opposite. He seemed really happy to see him. He was just... distracted, for some reason.

Well, whatever it was that was distracting Kurt, Blaine was sure he would figure it out eventually. Until then, he'd just let it go and hope things got back to normal soon.

Chapter Eleven

Luckily, things did go back to normal between Kurt and Blaine. Four days after their awkward dinner, Blaine was just hanging about his apartment, enjoying the rainy Saturday, and toying around with his guitar, when Kurt showed up on a whim, without invitation- not that Blaine minded one bit.

And just like that, things were completely back to normal between the two, much to Blaine's relief. It looked as though Kurt really had just been distracted the other night and Blaine had done nothing wrong after all.

So now the two men were dancing around Blaine's living room, singing along to the Wicked soundtrack at the top of their lungs. Kurt was doing his little shimmy dance, while Blaine's spinning in circles around him, and it's the most fun either of them had had in the longest time.

This. Moments like this. This is why Kurt loved spending time with Blaine. He could just let go around him. He could completely be himself, but with another person. He'd never had that before and he loved every second of it.

"Okay, okay. I think if we do one more song I might pass out from exhaustion," Kurt finally declared, bending over to try and catch his breath.

Blaine just danced over to him, still a regular old ball of energy, before poking fun at him. "What, tired already, *old man*?" Blaine asked with a wink.

"Oh no, Anderson. You did *not* just call me old!" Kurt screeched, before running at Blaine to playfully tackle him down to the couch.

Blaine complied to Kurt's attack, even though he could have easily resisted it. He raised an eyebrow at the older man, but Kurt didn't seem to notice, so Blaine let it go and just smiled up at the man who was currently laying on top of him, holding his body weight up with his forearms and knees.

Blaine didn't mind this new side to Kurt at all. If he didn't know any better, he'd say Kurt was acting... flirty? Holy shit. That's what it was. Kurt was flirting with him.

Blaine was internally freaking out. Oh my god! Kurt was flirting with him. So he decided to take advantage of it and carefully placed his arms around Kurt, who had him pinned down to the couch. Once Blaine had a good grasp around Kurt's center, he tightened his hold and pulled Kurt down directly on top of him.

"Oomph!" Kurt let out a breath as he slammed into Blaine, but then he snuggled in closer, resting his head on Blaine's chest.

"Why are you so comfy?" Kurt murmured.

Blaine didn't reply, but simply began stroking Kurt's hair, content to lay there on the couch all afternoon with the man he loved.

"Where do you see yourself in 5 years, Blaine?" Kurt asked, softly.

'Married to you,' Blaine thought to himself. "I see myself as a musician, still living in New York, married to the man I love, and with a beautiful, adopted, little girl. How about you?"

"Mmmm, that sounds nice. I like those last two things. As for the first, I want to get even further in my fashion career. I mean, I know I've already come leaps and bounds, but there's always room for improvement. I want to be considered the next Alexander McQueen."

"You will be. You're amazing, Kurt. I've seen your designs. Trust me. There's a reason all the best celebrities wear your stuff. I mean, hell, you're already featured in Vogue."

"Yeah, but I'm still working under someone else. I want to open my own company. I want to start my own magazine, that will become even more famous than Vogue."

"Again, you'll do it. I believe in you," Blaine reassured

Blaine couldn't help but smile to himself as he realized that they were talking about the future. They had spent the entire day together and not once had any conversation about the past come up. Not once had Kurt referred to the old days when he used to babysit Blaine. They were finally focusing on the present and the future, and damn did that make Blaine feel good.

"Thank you," Kurt murmured. "Coffee!"

"What?" Blaine asked, confused at Kurt's sudden outburst.

"I need coffee. I'm gonna fall asleep on top of you if I don't get coffee," Kurt explained, his voice laced with exhaustion.

Blaine laughed. He wouldn't mind falling asleep with Kurt in his arms, but he supposed he could give in to Kurt's request and face the rain outside, if that's what the older man really wanted.

"So then the girl at the bar starts getting sick, right in the middle of my set and she's puking all over her date while I'm trying to sing Bob Dylan, and it's this loud retching sound and it was just horrible. But it was so hard not to laugh, at the same time," Blaine finished his story about his latest night playing at a bar as he and Kurt sat in The Drowsy Poet, their regular coffee shop.

Kurt finally stopped laughing and wiped the tears from his eyes. "Blaine, that's horrible! I shouldn't be laughing, because that girl seriously could have gotten hurt, but oh my god!"

"I know, right?" Blaine chuckled.

"Excuse me," an unfamiliar voice interrupted.

Kurt and Blaine both looked up to see who had approached them. It was a gorgeous man, who looked to be about 20 or so, and he was currently leering down at Blaine. Kurt felt his face instantly flush in anger.

"Hi, I couldn't help but notice you when I walked in, and I just had to talk to you," the mysterious man announced to Blaine. "My name's-"

"He doesn't care what your name is," Kurt interrupted, angrily, his expression instantly turning from one of disdain to shock as he realized what he had said. Blaine, too, was currently staring at Kurt like he had seen a ghost.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize this was a date. Sorry for trying to steal your-"

"We're not together..." Blaine interrupted politely, watching Kurt out of the corner of his eye. Kurt seemed to be having an internal battle with himself, and Blaine couldn't help but watch on with an amused expression.

"You sure about that?" the guy asked, then sullenly walked away.

It was silent for a few seconds before Kurt finally exclaimed, "Oh my god, I am *so* sorry. I don't know why I snapped at that guy. He had every right to ask you out."

"Kurt, it's okay. I would have turned him down anyway," Blaine reassured.

"Oh... well, still... I'm sorry. That was completely uncalled for."

Blaine didn't reply, but simply gazed back at the man sitting across from him with the most adoring look he could muster. Because even though Kurt didn't seem to understand why he had snapped at the man, Blaine did. Kurt was jealous, which meant he might *finally* be coming around.

After coffee, the two men decided to go back to Kurt's place for a while and end the day with a movie. They were just getting settled on the couch when there was a knock on Kurt's front door.

Kurt internally contemplated whether he wanted to get up and answer the door or ignore it, but there was no need to decide after all, because before he could even make up his mind, one Rachel Berry came bursting through.

"Kurt!" Rachel called out.

"Hey, Rachel," Kurt greeted unenthusiastically from his spot on the couch. "What brings you here?"

"I haven't seen you in forever and I miss my best friend! That's what brings me here. I can't get by on just phone calls, Kurt. I need some best friend bonding time," Rachel explained, then looked over Kurt's shoulder and saw Blaine sitting on the couch beside him.

"Oh. Am I interrupting something?" Rachel asked, not taking her eyes off Blaine.

"No, not really," Blaine answered, a friendly grin on his face. "Hi, I'm Blaine."

"Oh! *You're* Blaine! I was wondering when I was going to get to meet you!" Rachel announced, skipping over to the young man who was still sitting on the couch. "I'm Rachel! It's a pleasure to finally make your acquaintance."

"Same," Blaine replied, reaching out to shake her hand.

"Ummm... well, I guess if you're going to stay, Rachel, I'll go pop us some popcorn or something," Kurt said, then headed into the kitchen, while Blaine longingly watched him depart.

Rachel, being her observant self, didn't miss the look Blaine gave Kurt.

"No way... are you shitting me? You're in love with Kurt?" Rachel exclaimed the second her best friend was out of the room. "Well, I'll be damned. Little Blaine Anderson fell in love with his babysitter."

"Oh god... you're not gonna tease me, too, are you? I finally just got Kurt to stop," Blaine groaned, hiding his face in his hands.

"Wait, does Kurt know? Was this a date?"

"He doesn't know I'm in love with him. But I'm pretty sure he knows I 'have a crush' on him. I'm still not sure if he reciprocates it, though," Blaine sighed, thinking back to the two kisses he had given him, and how nothing had come from it, yet.

"Just give it time. Let him figure everything out, okay? He has always guarded his heart. He learned his lesson the hard way in high school when he fell in love too quickly with the wrong guys, and it never ended well. So he's much more careful now. But he'll figure things out eventually. Besides, you're his best friend, and he used to babysit you. If he has feelings for you, no way he's going to come to terms with that easily," Rachel explained. After being Kurt's best friend for years and living with him as well, she knew her friend inside and out, and she knew that he liked to protect his heart. But she also knew that once he did love someone, then he would love more fully and more wonderfully than anyone else was capable of.

"Thanks," Blaine gave a weak smile. "Wait, hold up. How do you even know about me? How do you know Kurt used to babysit me? He doesn't refer to me as 'that kid he used to babysit' to his friends, does he?"

Blaine asked, horrified at the thought that the man he was in love with might still refer to him as a six year old boy.

"No, he doesn't refer to you like that," Rachel scowled. "You've basically replaced me in the best friend department in just a matter of months. You're like, all Kurt talks about it anymore. It's like high school all over again. He used to rave on and on about little Blaine, the adorable little boy he babysat after school every day. Except the way he talks about you is kind of different now, but- HOLY SHIT!"

"WHAT?" Blaine shouted, ducking down, just to be safe.

"Uh... nothing. I... thought I saw a bug?" Rachel tried to cover up her slip-up.

Blaine looked at her like she was crazy, but decided to just let it go. He had heard stories about her from Kurt, so odd behavior coming from her wasn't really too surprising for him.

"Anyway... I think I'm just gonna go..." Blaine trailed off. "You deserve some best friend time with Kurt, too. Tell Kurt I said bye and I'll call him later tonight."

"Oh! Okay. Thanks, Blaine. You really are a sweet guy," Rachel said, waving to Blaine as he exited the apartment.

A few seconds later, Kurt came walking back into the living room, holding a bowl of popcorn.

"Hey, where's Bla-"

"KURT! HOLY SHIT!" Rachel exclaimed, cutting Kurt off and effectively making him drop the popcorn bowl at her sudden outburst.

"WHAT? Oh my god!" Kurt screeched, looking around him for any signs of danger.

"YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH BLAINE! THAT'S WHY YOU'RE ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT HIM. At first I thought it was like high school all over again, because you used to talk about him a lot back then, too. But no! This is completely different now! You talk about him now because you're in love with him," Rachel accused, now standing directly in front of Kurt and poking her finger into his chest.

"Oh my god, Rachel! Shut up! He might hear you!" Kurt stage-whispered, panic in his eyes. "Besides, I'm not in love with him..."

"Okay, first of all, he won't hear us. Blaine left. He said he'll call you tonight. Second of all, you need to explain yourself. Because it certainly seems like you're in love with him," Rachel said, grabbing both of Kurt's hands and tugging him over to the couch so the two friends could sit together and talk.

"I'm not... I'm not in love with him, okay? I just... I don't know," Kurt trailed off, thinking before he spoke again. He wanted to make sure he phrased this correctly. "Blaine is... Blaine. He's just, he's wonderful, and talented, and considerate, and compassionate, and funny, and we get along perfectly, and he's so great. But, I just don't feel right about it, Rachel. So I'm trying to push these feelings under. I can't give in to this. It's just messed up. Maybe he's not a kid anymore, but it doesn't change the fact that I still used to babysit him. I mean, my god! What would his parents say if they found out? They'd be pissed. They'd have me arrested as a child molester or something. I can see the headlines in the newspapers now- 'ex-babysitter returns years later to steal baby from cradle.' I mean, I'd be stealing their only child away from them. And I'm still seven years older than him. And just from that alone, taking away the fact that I used to be his babysitter, I'd still be robbing the cradle just by being so much older than him. And-"

"Whoa, whoa, whoa! Kurt! Breathe," Rachel commanded, realizing that Kurt was quickly starting to panic. "Let's just be rational about this, okay?" Rachel paused, allowing Kurt to slow his breathing and nod his head. "Okay. So why do you think having feelings for Blaine is such a bad thing? I think it's wonderful! You said it yourself- he's a great guy. And honestly, the age difference just isn't a big deal. So what, you're seven years older than him? But you're 25, and he's 18. You're both adults. You're both pursuing careers in New York. He's not even in school. And I honestly don't think his parents, or yours, would care if you got together."

"Ummm... well, I guess you're right. Actually, everyone seems to want us together, on second thought..." Kurt trailed off. "I mean, when I told dad we kissed, I thought he was about to send out wedding invitations, he was so happy."

"Wait, you two kissed? Oh my god! How could you not tell me this? When?"

"Ummm... a few months ago. And then again about two weeks ago," Kurt said shyly, a deep blush appearing on his cheeks.

"And how did you feel when he kissed you?"

"Ummm... good? Light. Happy. Nervous," Kurt replied, blushing even more, if that was even possible.

"Sounds like you like him," Rachel stated, smugly.

Kurt didn't reply. He honestly just didn't know what to say.

Chapter Twelve

Okay, okay. So Kurt liked Blaine. It took him long enough to figure it out, right? But there, he finally said it. Or... errr, thought it.

With help from the outside perspective of his dad and Rachel, along with just being around Blaine enough and not being able to resist his adorable charms anymore, Kurt had finally admitted it to himself. He most definitely liked Blaine. There was no use in fighting it. He had given up on lying to himself. He was just tired of trying to resist.

So... yeah... he liked Blaine.

Now what? Kurt had no clue. He wanted to make a move, he most definitely did, and he suspected Blaine was interested. He had kissed him twice, after all. But what if Blaine had moved on? What if Blaine had changed his mind? What if Kurt took too long coming to terms with his feelings and Blaine was just over it now?

So, basically, Kurt had come so far, but it still felt like he was miles away. He just honestly didn't know what to do. Just because he had all these feelings now didn't mean he's ready to make a move. He wanted to give this time- ease into this relationship. Because they are best friends, after all, so he doesn't want to mess this up. So he could ask Blaine out and risk getting turned down, or having it work out only to end up possibly ruining their friendship somewhere down the line if they were to break up, or he could just go back to ignoring his feelings.

HA! Yeah right. He had tried ignoring his feelings. That definitely didn't work. Especially now that he had admitted it to himself, it seemed like his feelings were constantly on the front of his mind.

So, in the mean time, while Kurt tried to sort through what he would do about his feelings for Blaine, he decided to spend all of his free time with Blaine. And when he wasn't with Blaine, he was thinking about Blaine or texting Blaine or talking about Blaine...

Shit. He had it bad.

There is this gorgeous guitar in the window of the music shop I just walked by. Thought of you :) -K

Oh! Katy Perry song just came on shuffle. Thought of you... again :) -K

Cute little puppy in central park. Looks just like you :p -K

Blaine looked down at his phone, smiling. Three text messages from Kurt in the past hour... before 9 in the morning. All of which told that Kurt was thinking about him. Kurt must have decided to walk to work that day instead of taking the subway, Blaine thought to himself.

Blaine was down right giddy reading these messages. He just knew that Kurt was getting closer and closer to figuring out his feelings for him. He just *knew* it. Kurt *had* to be figuring it out.

But even if Kurt didn't figure it out soon, or even if Blaine was just making it all up in his head, he would be able to live with that, because he still had Kurt as a friend, and that alone made him happier than he had been in years. Even if Kurt couldn't love him in the same way, he would survive, as long as Kurt was in his life.

"Hi, Blaine!" Kurt greeted over the phone. He was swamped with work, but it was finally his lunch break, so he thought he would call his best friend.

"Hey, Kurt! What's going on?" Blaine asked, grinning goofily at his phone.

"I'm on my lunch break, so I thought I would call you," Kurt replied, simply.

Blaine waited for more, to see if Kurt needed something or wanted to make plans or anything like that, but Kurt didn't say anything else.

"Oh! Umm, just to talk?" Blaine asked, curiously.

"Yeah! Is that okay? I just missed you," Kurt said, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

Blaine couldn't help the huge smile that broke across his face. Did Kurt have any idea what he did to him?

"I missed you, too. My place or yours tonight?" Blaine asked. It had become a bit of a tradition for the two men over the past few weeks to get together every night after Kurt got off work, going back and forth between their apartments.

"How about mine? I'll cook. Oh, and bring your guitar! I want to hear that new song you're working on," Kurt said excitedly.

"I'd love to play it for you! And be sure to bring your newest designs home with you because I want to see those. I bet they're brilliant," Blaine complimented.

"Oh, no... they're nothing special," Kurt blushed.

"If you designed them, then they're special by association."

Kurt didn't know what to say to that, so he just grinned at his phone in silence for a few seconds before clearing his throat and changing the topic. "Ummm, anyway... what are you doing right now? Tell me about your day so far!"

And the two men continued to converse all throughout Kurt's lunch break, conversation coming as easily as ever.

Kurt couldn't help but be disappointed Blaine couldn't come see him at lunch that day, though. Kurt couldn't lie to himself anymore... most days he sat in his office secretly hoping Blaine would show up during his lunch break and surprise him. Some days Blaine did show up, coffee in hand, and it was the highlight of Kurt's day, and the days Blaine didn't show, Kurt would be sad and grumpy for the rest of the day, and would immediately rush over to Blaine's apartment once he got off work in order to spend some time with his best friend.

Okay, so yeah... he was getting a little clingy, or co-dependent, or whatever you want to call it... but he just really enjoyed Blaine's presence. Blaine was the best friend he'd ever had, and he was always thinking of things or seeing things he had to tell Blaine about, and the same seemed to be true for Blaine with Kurt, so their friendship and reliability on one another worked.

If Blaine was being honest with himself, Kurt wasn't the only one with changing feelings toward his best friend. Blaine, too, was falling more and more in love every minute he spent with Kurt.

Kurt had been coming to all of his shows for the past few weeks, which was something Blaine never expected so soon after moving into the new city. He had been there for over half a year now, and while he had made friends and had a few regulars who came to his shows, he never anticipated having a best friend who he was in love with who would show up week after week just to show his support. It warmed Blaine's heart like nothing ever had before. He felt like the luckiest guy in the world.

And that wasn't the only time he spent with Kurt. In fact, they spent most evenings together now, too, just hanging about or going for walks in Central Park, or having coffee at The Drowsy Poet, or seeing a movie together, or just having drinks on the couch while they swapped stories about their pasts and dreams for the future, talking and joking about anything and everything.

It was the best and easiest relationship Blaine had ever had with anyone.

Kurt was just so wonderful. Blaine remembered looking up to Kurt as a child. He had a crush on the older man when he was younger, and it was no wonder why, after getting to know Kurt again. Kurt was strong and funny and compassionate and protective and loving and wise. To Blaine's knowledge, Kurt wasn't even in love with him, but Kurt still managed to love Blaine more fully than anyone had before, and it made Blaine happier than he'd ever been.

It was another Saturday when Kurt showed up at Blaine's apartment unannounced, once again. Blaine hadn't even thought about the fact that Kurt would probably show up, which is why it was a surprise for Kurt when he knocked on the apartment door and was greeted by a young girl, who looked to be about six years old.

"Uhh... Blaine?" Kurt called out, looking at the young girl who was standing in the door frame of Blaine's apartment.

"Kurt!" Blaine called out from what sounded like the kitchen. "Hey! I wasn't expecting you today! Sorry, I should have called you and told you I was babysitting."

"Oh! No, it's my fault. I should have checked to see if you were free first," Kurt shouted back. "I'll just... I'll just go..."

But before Kurt could turn around and leave, the young girl grabbed his hand and pulled him inside of the apartment, leading him toward Blaine, who was running into the entryway of his apartment in order to convince Kurt to stay.

"Well, looks like Rebecca doesn't want you to go, so you'll just have to spend the day with us. Isn't that right, Rebecca?" Blaine asked, crouching down to the young girl's level. Rebecca nodded shyly in return, still clinging to Kurt's hand.

"She likes you," Blaine observed. "I've never seen her warm up to someone so quickly."

"Umm... not to sound rude... but who is she?" Kurt asked, looking at the adorable young girl with look of strong affection.

"Oh! Right! Sorry! Rebecca, why don't you introduce yourself?" Blaine asked cheerfully.

Rebecca turned to face Kurt and yanked on his arm to get him to crouch down to her level. Kurt squatted down to the floor and took both of Rebecca's hands in his own.

"I'm Rebecca Anderson. Blaine's my cousin," she said softly, smiling.

Those few short words were all it took for Kurt to love the girl instantly.

"She is precious, Blaine! Oh my god," Kurt squealed. "Can I do her hair? And play dress-up with her? And have a tea party?"

Blaine laughed, admiring watching Kurt with his young cousin. Kurt was so great with kids, it amazed him. He should have known Kurt would be great with his cousin, though. After all, Kurt had been great with him when he was her age, too.

"I already called dibs on playing dress-up with her. But you can definitely do her hair if she wants. And then we can all have a tea party. How does that sound, Rebecca?" Blaine asked.

The young girl nodded eagerly, then ran off into the other room, presumably to grab her suitcase with her dress-up clothes in it.

"Hey," Blaine finally greeted Kurt once Rebecca was out of the room, reaching out to grab him in a hug.

"Hi," Kurt replied, hugging back eagerly.

"She's cute, huh?" Blaine asked, love and admiration apparent in his voice.

"She takes after her cousin," Kurt agreed, smiling flirtatiously. "How long do you have her for?"

"Just today..." Blaine sighed. "My aunt and uncle came to explore the city on vacation and asked if they could leave her with me for the day so they could go off on their own for a bit. And, of course, I instantly agreed. I love spending time with her, and she's grown so much since I last saw her."

At that moment, Rebecca came running back into the room, suitcase in hand, and grabbed both Kurt and Blaine's hands and led them into the living room, chatting the whole way about how she wanted Kurt to do her hair and that she had been through Blaine's closet and picked out a nice bow tie for him to wear at tea.

So Blaine was absolutely great with his cousin. Kurt couldn't stop watching them interact together. Like, seriously... he had never seen anything so adorable.

Blaine was like a little boy again around her. But... it was different, too. Kurt had seen Blaine as a little boy, after all, and this was definitely different. Blaine was so paternal and gentle and fun and Kurt couldn't get the image of Blaine with their... or, err... *his* own daughter one day out of his mind.

Blaine would make *such* a good father. He had just enough energy to keep up, he had her respect so she would listen to him without him having to be overtly firm, he went along with all of her crazy ideas, and didn't even hesitate before putting on a tiara and bow tie and sitting down to tea with the young girl and all her stuffed animals.

By the end of the afternoon, Kurt was practically swooning. He had never seen this side to Blaine before, and he was amazed to realize that there were still sides to Blaine left for him to discover. That thought excited him because he wanted to get to know as much about Blaine as possible.

Kurt had also been on the opposite side of the spectrum when it came to Blaine and kids. Blaine had always *been* the kid in Kurt's mind, so seeing Blaine interact with children in the way Kurt used to interact with him seemed to further put everything into perspective for Kurt and show him just how far Blaine had really come.

Blaine glanced up from where he was playing Barbies on the floor with Rebecca and saw Kurt on the couch looking at him. Kurt didn't seem to realize that Blaine had caught him looking, so Blaine was able to watch him for a few seconds. What was that look in Kurt's eye? It almost resembled the look Kurt had been giving Rebecca all day, but it was more intense. Was it... adoration? Wow. Kurt was staring at him in adoration.

Right at that moment, Kurt seemed to come to his senses and realized Blaine was watching him, so he quickly averted his eyes, blushing. Blaine smirked at him, then turned his attention back to Rebecca.

It seemed like Kurt really *was* coming to his senses. Kurt might actually be realizing his feelings toward Blaine. Blaine was so excited at this prospect that he had to fight the urge to just stand up, walk over to the couch, and kiss Kurt right then and there. But, first of all, that would be completely inappropriate in front of his six year old cousin, and, second of all, he had already kissed Kurt twice. It was Kurt's turn to make a move.

So he would continue to wait.

Chapter Thirteen, Part 1

"Knock knock."

"Come on in, Blaine," Kurt greeted from his desk at work, without even glancing up. It was about time for his lunch break, so Blaine was right on time.

"How did you know it was me?" Blaine asked as he entered Kurt's office.

"Well, for one, you just said 'knock knock,' so I heard your voice, plus that's how you always enter a room. And, second of all, it's almost my lunch break, and you're the only one who ever shows up to surprise me during my lunch break, so you do the math," Kurt teased.

"Well, I'm afraid I don't have much of a surprise with me today. I didn't bring coffee or food..." Blaine trailed off.

"Then to what do I owe this pleasure?" Kurt asked, standing from his seat and walking around his desk to stand in front of Blaine.

"I... just wanted to see you," Blaine said shyly.

"Well good, because I was just thinking to myself how much I missed you," Kurt said, then blushed, realizing how forward he was being.

"Oh?" Blaine questioned, gaining his confidence back, reaching out to take Kurt's hands.

"Yeah... so how about we go out to coffee? Drowsy Poet?" Kurt asked, releasing Blaine and turning around to gather his things.

"Do you even have to ask?" Blaine smiled, then held the door open for Kurt as the two men departed the office.

Coffee with Blaine was easy and fun, as usual, but Kurt couldn't help but suddenly be nervous about what he was thinking about doing... what he was thinking about asking Blaine. This idea had been floating

around in Kurt's mind for days now, since he had found out the news, and so far, he hadn't had the courage to ask Blaine.

But now, Blaine was sitting across from him, looking gorgeous as ever, and all Kurt could think about was how much he just wanted to be with the younger man. He was so beyond worrying about all the other things he had fretted over in the past regarding Blaine. Now, he just wanted Blaine.

So it was decided... he was going to do this. Oh god.

"Hey, Blaine?" Kurt asked, suddenly becoming shy, glancing over his coffee cup at his best friend who was currently sitting across from him.

"Yes...?" Blaine asked, confused at Kurt's sudden change in demeanor.

"I have to ask you something..." Kurt trailed off.

Blaine smiled to himself at Kurt's nervousness, but nodded his head for Kurt to continue.

Kurt still didn't say anything, so he eventually said, "I'm all ears."

"I... Umm... well. I have this big show coming up. Like, really big. It's basically the biggest fashion debut I've ever done. All of my newest designs will be modeled on the runway. *Just* my designs, actually. No one else's. It's a pretty big deal. Basically, if I'm ever going to make it on my own with my own label and magazine and get separated from the fashion company I'm with now, this is the first big step toward that. This is my chance to get discovered."

"Kurt, that's so fantastic! I'm so proud of you!" Blaine interrupted, reaching out to take Kurt's hands in his own, squeezing them affectionately.

"Yeah... thank you," Kurt gave a weak smile, his nerves taking over. Blaine looked at Kurt curiously, wondering why he seemed so nervous. He knew this was a big deal, but he thought Kurt would be more excited than nervous at a time like this. Kurt was always so confident, after all.

"Is there something else?" Blaine asked.

"Yeah... umm... after the runway show, they're throwing a big after party for me. Karaoke, lots of drinks, important people, networking... that kind of thing..."

"Uh huh," Blaine acknowledged, wondering where Kurt was going with this and when he was going to get down to what was really bothering him.

"And I was wondering... if you would like to go with me. To all of it. The runway show *and* the after party. As my... date?"

Blaine froze, then echoed, "date?"

"Yes, Blaine. Dat-"

"Yes."

"Yes?"

"Yes. Absolutely. I would love nothing more than to be your date."

"Okay," Kurt chuckled, relieved that Blaine hadn't turned him down. This was progress. Maybe they could finally move forward in this relationship. Kurt hoped so, because he was pretty sure that he was finally ready.

"Hey, maybe you could sing some karaoke. Bring your guitar! There are going to be a lot of important people there. Surely someone would notice you if you sang and you could finally get signed," Kurt suggested.

"Yeah, maybe," Blaine said, only halfway paying attention to what Kurt was saying anymore, because Kurt had asked him out on a date. Holy shit. Everything was finally coming together.

Since Kurt had asked Blaine on this date, he thought it was only fair for him to pick him up for it as well. Blaine had agreed, thinking nothing of it, assuming they would ride the subway to wherever they were going, or get a cab.

Which is why he freaked when he opened the door to Kurt... and saw a fucking limo.

"Kurt?" Blaine asked, glancing over Kurt's shoulder, trying his best to not start jumping up and down in excitement.

"Yes, Blaine?" Kurt asked coyly.

"Please tell me that limo isn't just parked there. Please tell me that limo is for us."

"That limo isn't just parked there. That limo is for us," Kurt echoed, a huge grin on his face.

"Oh my god!" Blaine squealed, scooping Kurt up into a huge hug, then running past him to crawl into the limo. "How? Why? Oh my god!"

"My boss lent it to me for the night. Figured I deserved one for my big debut," Kurt shrugged, crawling in after him.

"This is literally the coolest thing ever. I'm freaking out," Blaine exclaimed, bouncing up and down in his seat, playing with the random buttons all around him.

"You really are like a puppy," Kurt observed, grinning at the excitable man.

"I can already tell that tonight is going to be amazing. By the way, you look extremely handsome," Blaine complimented, looking over his date.

Kurt blushed, then responded, "As do you."

"So, this is really happening?" Blaine asked after a few seconds of silence. "I'm going on a date with Kurt Hummel, fashion designer extraordinaire?"

Kurt giggled, happy to see that Blaine was so excited about it.

"Yes, Blaine, this is really happening," Kurt reassured.

"Okay, good. I just had to check and make sure I wasn't completely delusional," Blaine grinned back at the older man.

About thirty minutes later, the limo pulled up outside the lavish building where the fashion show would take place. Blaine got out of the limo first, then held out his hand to assist Kurt.

"Thank you. Now, I have to run backstage for a few minutes to make sure everything is in running order, which it won't be, so I will remain backstage for a few more minutes after that to fix everything that my incompetent assistants have managed to ruin, but then I will be right back by your side for the rest of the night. Rachel is going to be here, too, so I suggest you go find her," Kurt suggested.

"That's just fine. Take your time, Kurt. This is your night, after all," Blaine smiled.

"You are so great," Kurt practically swooned. "I'll be right back." And with that, Kurt leaned in, gave Blaine a short kiss on the cheek, then darted to the backstage area, leaving Blaine alone.

Blaine scanned the crowd for a few minutes, recognizing a couple of famous people who he had to physically restrain himself from fanboying over, before he spotted Rachel.

"Rachel!" Blaine called out as he approached her.

The girl looked up and spotted Blaine and immediately hurried over to him.

"Blaine! I'm so glad to see you again," Rachel greeted, pulling him into a hug. "Word on the street is that you're Kurt's date."

"I am," Blaine beamed.

"Yay, honey! I'm so happy for you! I told you he would come around eventually."

Blaine blushed, then nodded.

"Here, come sit with me. Kurt has a seat in the front row, obviously, so we're sitting next to him. We need to catch up!" Rachel squealed, grabbing Blaine's hand and dragging him over to the rows of seats placed around the runway.

"So, has he asked you out, yet? Like, officially as his boyfriend?" Rachel pried.

"Not yet. But I think he's making progress. He still has no idea that I'm completely in love with him, but I can just sense a change in him lately. I think he'll figure it out soon. Regardless, being his date tonight is a big step in the right direction," Blaine explained.

"It is! It definitely is. He hasn't taken anyone other than me to events like this in years. Literally years, Blaine. This is a huge deal!"

Blaine blushed again, trying his best to contain his excitement around all the other prestigious people who were currently surrounding him. He needed to look good at Kurt's big debut.

"Oh, there's Kurt. He's headed this way. I'm gonna go get more to drink and let you two be by yourselves for a bit," Rachel said, leaving with a wink. Kurt took her place mere seconds later.

"Everything okay backstage?" Blaine asked. "You didn't take very long at all."

"What can I say. I had a hot date waiting for me so I had to hurry back," Kurt replied, winking at Blaine. And whoa, where had that come from? Kurt had been laying it on pretty thick lately, but wow. This boldness was new. Not unwelcome, but new.

"But yes, everything backstage was surprisingly running smoothly. I was kicked out, actually. They told me to go out and enjoy my big debut."

"I'm sure it's going to be perfect," Blaine reassured, reaching out to take Kurt's hand in his own, rubbing circles over Kurt's knuckles with his thumb.

"Thank you," Kurt whispered softly.

The two men continued to chat quietly as they waited for the runway show to begin, heads leaning toward each other, their foreheads almost knocking together as they spoke. They were occasionally interrupted as people came up to Kurt to introduce themselves or congratulate him on his success, but they were mostly left alone to just bask in the presence of one another.

"Oh, looks like we're finally starting," Kurt exclaimed as the lights dimmed and Rachel slipped into the vacant seat on the other side of him.

"It will be great. Relax," Blaine whispered in Kurt's ear, making the older man shiver. To top it all off, Blaine finished his statement with a swift kiss right under Kurt's ear. This man was going to be the death of him, Kurt thought.

The runway show was just as Blaine said. It was perfect. It was about as flawless as a fashion show could go, actually, and Kurt was beaming with pride by the end of it, as were Rachel and Blaine.

"Kurt, that was amazing. Your designs never cease to amaze me, and they were even better in the flesh! I am so proud of you," Blaine exclaimed for about the tenth time later that night, as the two men were in the limo on their way to the after-party.

"Thank you, Blaine. I'm so happy you were there to experience it with me," Kurt whispered into Blaine's neck as he hugged the shorter man. "And, to thank you for supporting me, I have a surprise for you."

"Wait, what?" Blaine asked, letting go of Kurt and shifting back in his seat to look into Kurt's eyes.

"I was in charge of some of the guest list, and I invited the head of that big record label you've had your eye on. And, he wants to hear you sing. So, while this doesn't mean you'll be getting out of doing karaoke with me later, looks like you'll have to perform some songs on your own as well, because you're officially the entertainment for tonight," Kurt said with a smile.

Blaine froze. He couldn't believe this. He couldn't believe he had someone as wonderful and thoughtful as Kurt in his life. He just... he seriously could not believe this.

"Kurt..." Blaine whispered, in shock.

"No need to thank me. It was no trouble at all. But you better go out there and kick some ass. Tonight was my big chance at reaching my future goals... and now it's your turn."

"I lo-"

"We're here," the driver said, interrupting Blaine as they pulled up to the venue for the after-party.

"Go show 'em what you've got, Blaine," Kurt said with a wink as he pulled the younger man out of the limo.

Chapter Thirteen, Part 2

Okay, get it together Blaine.

So you almost told Kurt you love him. Bad. That was bad. That was stupid. Thank god for the driver. Yes, you should buy the driver a gift basket.

And now you have to sing for really important people which could consequently result in getting signed. Okay. Yeah... not a big deal right now, because the love of your life is holding your hand... while you're on a date with him. Don't say it. Don't say 'I love you.' Oh god.

"Blaine, are you okay? I can see your inner dialogue from here..." Kurt teased, knowing exactly what Blaine looked like when he was having an argument with himself in his head. Kurt always thought it was adorable. That, too, should have been a sign that he liked the guy. Kurt really was an idiot.

"Now who's the one with an inner dialogue?" Blaine joked, seeing Kurt's face contort in frustration.

"Sorry! Got lost in my thoughts. Anyway, you ready to do this?" Kurt asked, pulling Blaine gently closer to him, so he could wrap his arms around the shorter man's shoulders.

"I think I am," Blaine sighed, wrapping his own arms around Kurt's waist.

Who knows what would have happened next if the guy in charge of talent hadn't come running up to them at that exact moment.

"You're Blaine Anderson, right?" he asked Blaine.

"That's me!"

"Okay, we're ready for you. Come with me backstage. Mr. Hummel can wait here."

"Mr. Hummel, huh?" Blaine teased as he walked away.

'Don't look at his ass, don't look at his ass,' Kurt repeated in his head. 'Ah, fuck it. He's my date. I'm looking at his ass.'

Kurt wandered around the crowd a bit once Blaine left to go backstage, mingling with people who offered their congratulations on his debut, and meeting other people who told him of their interest to one day work under him.

Kurt still couldn't believe that he had actually made it. It seemed like all of his dreams were coming true.

"Ahem," a voice interrupted Kurt's thoughts.

Kurt looked up and saw Blaine standing on the stage, guitar in hand, ready to play. He quickly hurried up to the front to show his support.

"My name is Blaine Anderson, and it looks like I'll be playing for you a bit tonight. I would like to thank Kurt Hummel for this opportunity, and for bringing me along as his date to this awesome party. I'm happy to be here!" Blaine announced, then began strumming the opening chords on his guitar.

*Give me a second I
I need to get my story straight
My friends are in the bathroom
getting higher than the empire state
my lover he's waiting for me
just across the bar
My seat's been taken by some sunglasses
asking 'bout a scar
and I know I gave it to you months ago
I know you're trying to forget
but between the drinks and subtle things
the holes in my apologies
you know I'm trying hard to take it back
so if by the time the bar closes
and you feel like falling down
I'll carry you home*

*Tonight
We are young
So let's set the world on fire*

*We can burn brighter
than the sun*

*And I know that I'm not
all that you got
I guess that I
I just thought maybe we could find a ways to fall apart
But our friends in back
So let's raise a toast
Cause I found someone to carry me home*

*Tonight
We are young
So let's the set the world on fire
we can burn brighter
than the sun*

*Carry me home tonight
Just carry me home tonight
Carry me home tonight
Just carry me home tonight*

*The moon is on my side
I have no reason to run
So will someone come and carry me home tonight
The angels never arrived
but I can hear the choir
so will someone come and carry me home*

*Tonight
We are young
So let's set the world on fire
we can burn brighter
than the sun*

*So if by the time the bar closes
and you feel like falling down
I'll carry you home tonight*

Blaine played a few more songs after that first one, and after Blaine finished his set, karaoke started up, and some exponentially less-talented musicians began to drunkenly sing.

"Hi," Blaine whispered into Kurt's ear as he approached him from behind, wrapping his arms around him. "Is this okay?"

"What?"

"This. Me... hugging you, I guess?"

"Yes, Blaine. This is perfect. Your song was perfect, too, Blaine. I loved it." Kurt said, grabbing onto Blaine's hands that were resting on his stomach and pulling him tighter.

"Thank you. I wrote it for you."

"Dance with me?" Kurt asked.

Blaine responded by spinning Kurt around so they were facing each other, then wrapped his arms back around Kurt's waist, pulling him in tight and swaying lightly back and forth.

"I'm so happy I'm sharing tonight with you," Kurt whispered, his head resting on Blaine's shoulder, right where it belonged.

"I'm so happy to be here with you tonight," Blaine whispered in reply.

"What were you about to say in the limo?" Kurt asked. He had his suspicions, but he just really wanted to hear Blaine say it for some reason, even if he wasn't completely sure if he returned the sentiment as strongly.

"Ummm... what" Blaine asked, trying to deflect the question.

"You said 'I lo-' and then the driver cut you off. What were you going to say?" Kurt asked.

'And wow, okay,' Blaine thought. 'You can't really get a more specific question than that.'

"I said... uhhh... you know, I can't remember," Blaine said, giving up. He had been in the moment then... not that he wasn't in the moment now, because everything was kind of perfect, but he was over-thinking it now and a small part of him still wanted Kurt to make the first move, and he was just freaking out. "Do you want something to drink?"

Kurt sighed, then nodded his head, slowly releasing his hold on Blaine.

"I'll be right back," Blaine said, then left after giving Kurt a swift kiss on the cheek.

At the bar, Blaine ordered two rum and cokes, then waited for the drinks to be ready, sitting in silence by himself. He felt kind of out of place here, not knowing whether the people he talked to were important or not, so he didn't really know how to act.

"Hi, you're Blaine Anderson," a person suddenly announced to his right.

"Uhhhh, yeah. That's me," Blaine smiled, slightly taken aback, then reached out to shake the other man's hand.

"I'm Thomas Etheridge, head of talent at Big Deal Records," the other man introduced himself. Blaine froze.

"Uhhh, oh. Okay. Hi. You're the reason I sang tonight. Okay. No big deal," Blaine stuttered, then blushed, knowing he had just made a fool of himself.

Thomas chuckled, then responded, "yes, that would be me. I just wanted to introduce myself and tell you I really enjoyed your performance tonight. In fact, I'd like to give you my card. Call me sometime next week and we can schedule you to come in and sing something for us. How does that sound, Mr. Anderson?"

All Blaine could do was gape.

"I'll take that as a yes. Here's my card, and you enjoy the rest of your evening, Mr. Anderson," Thomas said, then slipped away from the bar.

Blaine grabbed his drinks at lightning speed, then literally ran back to Kurt's side, greeting his date with a quick but passionate kiss on the lips, completely caught up in his excitement.

"Blaine!" Kurt shrieked. "What are you doing?"

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done that. I've kissed you three times now without asking. God, I'm such an idiot. But I'm too excited right now to care!" Blaine said, practically jumping up and down, mindful not to spill the drinks he was still holding.

"No, not the kiss. I don't mind that you kissed me. But why are you so excited?" Kurt asked, watching his date with an amused expression, secretly loving it when Blaine started acting like a puppy.

"I just met the head of the label. He gave me his card and he wants me to come in next week and sing for him!" Blaine squealed, completely missing that Kurt had just said he liked it when Blaine kissed him.

"Oh my god! Blaine! That's so amazing! I'm so happy for you!" Kurt said, pulling Blaine into a hug.

"I propose a toast," Blaine announced, holding out Kurt's drink for him to take. "To new beginnings."

"To new beginnings," Kurt echoed, taking a small sip of his drink and smiling at his date.

"I'm tired..." Blaine whined, his head resting on Kurt's shoulder in the back seat of the limo. "We should have stopped after we sang that fourth karaoke song..."

The party had lasted until about 4 AM, and they were currently on their way back to Kurt's apartment, where they would crash for the night... or, errr... day.

"I'm sorry, baby. You can sleep if you need to," Kurt cooed, gently patting Blaine's hair.

"I'm not a baby," Blaine mumbled.

Kurt laughed. "I meant it as a term of endearment, Blaine."

"Oh."

The limo pulled up to Kurt's apartment at around 5 in the morning, and Kurt was currently trying to search for his keys to get inside, which was a difficult task with Blaine wrapped around him, nuzzling into his neck. He was so adorable. 'I'm so in love you with,' Kurt thought to himself, then froze.

Oh my god.

Oh my god.

Oh my god.

He was in love with Blaine.

Oh my god.

How had he not seen this sooner? Of course, he had finally realized that he liked Blaine, but in love with him?

Well, tonight had been perfect, he supposed. And not because it was his big debut and it went flawlessly, and not because the party had been amazing and Blaine had gotten potentially gotten signed, although all of those things were definitely perks. But tonight had been perfect because he had spent it with Blaine. Blaine, who was the best friend Kurt had ever had. And he made him happier than he'd been in years. Kurt couldn't make it a whole day without talking to him, and when they kissed, it was like fireworks. Blaine had been there for Kurt his whole life, and vice versa. They depended on one another, and supported one another, and they were just perfect together. Plus, not to mention, every time Kurt saw Blaine, his heart felt like it was about to beat out of his chest.

"Holy shit, I'm in love with you," Kurt whispered, only half aware that he was saying it out-loud. He felt Blaine tense up against him, then slowly shift away, eyes searching Kurt's for any sincerity or truth to the words he had just spoken.

"You... what?" Blaine asked, disbelieving.

"I'm in love with you," Kurt repeated, his voice clear and strong with confidence. Now that he knew it, he just couldn't hold it in anymore. "I, Kurt Hummel, am in love with you, Blaine Anderson."

Blaine didn't respond. He quickly took the keys from Kurt's pocket, unlocked the door, then pulled Kurt inside behind him. He shut the door, turned around, then grabbed Kurt's hands, all in one fast movement.

"Say it again," Blaine said.

"I'm in love you," Kurt announced again, a huge smile gracing his face. "You saved me, Blaine, even before you realized you were doing it. And now, you're making me happier than I've ever been, just by being around. I love spending time with you, and I just... shit... I'm in love with you."

Blaine laughed, relieved and overcome with joy, tears welling up in his eyes, but he ignored them and pulled Kurt into a tight hug, burying his head in Kurt's neck.

"Kurt... oh, Kurt. I love you, too. So much."

Kurt gently leaned back from the hug, and cupped Blaine's cheeks with his hands, staring into Blaine's eyes briefly, hoping to convey all the love and warmth he felt with one look, before slowly leaning in.

When their lips met this time, it was more than fireworks. It was just pure fire, and warmth, and love, and passion. Kurt licked gently at Blaine's bottom lip, and Blaine immediately complied by opening his mouth and meeting Kurt's tongue with his own, unable to repress a light moan. Kurt had finally made a move, and it was perfect and wonderful and right.

The two men eventually broke away to catch their breath, foreheads touching and lips brushing as they breathed in and out.

"I love you," Blaine said again, whispering the words against Kurt's lips.

"I love you, too," Kurt replied with a smile. "Your parents are gonna kill me, though."

"Wait, what?" Blaine asked, leaning away a little bit, giving Kurt a searching look.

"Your parents... they're gonna freak when they find out I'm your boyfriend," Kurt explained, although he couldn't lie- he wasn't too worried about that right now. How could he worry about anything when he and Blaine were in love and standing so close to each other?

"Are you kidding? My parents love you! I told them I was in love with you months ago, and they've been rooting me on," Blaine smiled, reaching out to softly caress Kurt's cheek with the palm of his hand.

"Well then, they sound just like my dad," Kurt giggled.

"What do you mean?"

"I told my dad we kissed, all those months ago, and he was ecstatic. He apparently had been dying for us to get together since that family dinner back in Lima."

"Me and him, both," Blaine sighed. "Me and him, both."

And with that, Blaine leaned back in and recaptured Kurt's lips with his own, and slowly began walking them backwards toward the bedroom.

The End

Epilogue

5 years later...

"She's beautiful," Kurt whispered, holding his new-born baby cradled against his chest, gently stroking her light smattering of honey-colored hair as she peacefully slept.

"Of course she is. She's ours," Blaine responded, standing on his toes to peer over his husband's shoulder to observe his little baby girl, arms wrapped carefully around the older man's waist.

"What are we going to name her?" Kurt asked.

The two men were still currently in the hospital, their little baby girl being born less than an hour ago to their surrogate mother. The baby looked just like Kurt, which Blaine was so thankful for. They had agreed that if they tried again for another one, which they probably would, then Blaine would be the sperm-donor, but Blaine wasn't thinking about that right now.

Right now, all Blaine could think was that his life was absolutely perfect. He had his husband, Kurt, and a beautiful baby girl, who looked as stunning as the man he loved. Blaine had been instantly smitten with his daughter the second he saw her, and he knew immediately that he would do whatever it took to protect her and take care of her.

"Is it weird that I kind of want to name her after my mom? I mean, she kind of set us up, along with my dad... in a really messed up, demented way, all those many years ago," Blaine admitted. Kurt giggled softly, careful not to wake the baby.

"I think that sounds like a wonderful idea. Your mom would love that. And could her middle name be Carole? I feel like it would make my mom finally feel like a full part of the family. Charlotte Carole Hummel-Anderson. It's perfect."

"She's perfect," Blaine whispered softly in response, nodding his head. Kurt gently turned around to face his husband, and shifted Charlotte into her father's hands.

"She's ours," Kurt whispered, watching his husband, the love of his life, rock their child in his arms. It was the most beautiful thing Kurt had ever seen.

"Blaine, hurry up! Our plane leaves in two hours, and you know it will take forever to get to the airport!" Kurt rushed his husband, who was still packing the last few items in his suitcase.

"Is Charlotte all packed?" Blaine asked, zipping up his suitcase and pulling it to the front door of their apartment.

"Yes! Obviously. I packed all of her things *yesterday*," Kurt huffed.

"Obviously," Blaine echoed, giving his husband a teasing smile and a quick kiss. "Go grab Charlotte out of her crib and then I'll be ready to go."

"Okay," Kurt said, hurrying off to gather his daughter.

Kurt could hardly believe it had been a whole month since he brought his daughter home from the hospital. He couldn't believe how smoothly that month had gone, as well. Of course, he never slept, and his clothes were severely suffering due to spit-up and spilled food, but he had never been happier. And he still loved watching Blaine interact with Charlotte. He was such a good father, which Kurt always knew he would be. And Charlotte was all he could ask for in a daughter, as well. She never cried too much, and if she did, all it took was a lullaby to get her to fall back asleep, she fit perfectly in both Kurt and Blaine's arms, and, even at only a month old, she was already strikingly beautiful, just like her papa, Blaine would always say.

And now they were taking her back home to Ohio so their parents could finally meet her. It was hard enough for them to wait a month, and they hated that they couldn't be there when she was born, but the mother had gone into labor early and they just couldn't get a flight up, plus their jobs kept them busy and tickets weren't cheap. So Kurt and Blaine Hummel-Anderson convinced their families to stay put in Ohio, and they would come to them once they felt Charlotte could handle it.

"We're going to be that annoying couple with the obnoxious crying baby on this flight, aren't we?" Blaine joked once they were in the cab and on the way to the airport.

"Oh god. We're so old. How did this happen? Where did our lives go, Blaine?" Kurt moaned.

"I don't know about you, but I'm still young," Blaine announced proudly. "I'm only 23. Now you, on the other hand... already in your 30s? What a shame."

"You're incorrigible and I hate you," Kurt sighed.

"You love me," Blaine smiled.

"I really, really do."

"Mom? Dad?" Both Kurt and Blaine called out upon entering Kurt's old home. The families had decided to meet there so everyone could be together at once.

"They're here!" Kurt heard Carole squeal, then saw her round the corner and rush over to hug him. "Oh, look at you, Kurt. You look handsome as ever. How do you manage to still look so handsome with a new-born baby around?" Carole asked, cupping her step-son's face with her hands and turning his head left and right to get a good look at him.

"Moisturizing. I always told you it would help out," Kurt joked.

Finally, Burt, Finn, Charlotte, and Bill entered the entryway of the house as well, all rushing forward at once to hug their children, and brothers, in Finn's case.

"Careful of Charlotte!" Blaine exclaimed. Charlotte was currently resting in his arms, looking around at all the new faces with wide, curious eyes.

"Oh my god, she's beautiful," Charlotte Anderson exclaimed. "I still can't get over the fact you named her after me."

"Well, she's just as beautiful as her grandmother. Both of them, really, so it only made sense," Kurt smiled, reaching out to hug his mother-in-law.

It was then that Kurt and Blaine both looked up at their fathers, then exchanged a look when they saw that Burt and Bill were currently standing further back, silently crying as they stared at baby Charlotte.

"Dad, you okay? Bill?" Kurt asked, grinning smugly at them, knowing all too well how overwhelming it could be to just be in the presence of his daughter.

"She's beautiful," Burt choked out. "You did good, kid."

Burt stepped forward to hug his son, then walked over to Blaine, giving him a pat on the back before reading out his hands, signaling that he would like to hold his granddaughter.

Charlotte Hummel-Anderson had been a little restless, wriggling around quite a bit in Blaine's arms after the long flight, but the second she got into Burt's arms, she instantly snuggled down, on the brink of sleep. Burt giggled, gently, lightly petting her hair.

Bill watched his good friend lull his granddaughter to sleep. "Blaine, son, I am so proud of you. You two both did good. And she is absolutely gorgeous."

"I get to hold her next," Charlotte exclaimed. "She is named after me after all!"

"Then Uncle Finn!" Finn finally exclaimed.

And that is how the rest of the evening went, each family member taking turns holding the baby, and catching up with Kurt and Blaine.

When it was finally time for baby Charlotte to go to sleep, putting her in Kurt's old baby crib that had temporarily been placed in Kurt's old bedroom, where Kurt and Blaine would be sleeping during their time home, the adults were finally able to just sit around the living room and enjoy being together as a family again. It had felt like so long since they had all been together.

"I remember when you two first got together, five years ago," Charlotte reminisced. "I mean, obviously, I remember the first time you two even met, when you were both just young boys. But when you two finally got together, even as friends. Blaine called me, like, a week after he got back to New York after seeing Kurt again, and I knew immediately that he was in love. He went on and on about Kurt for hours. How excited he was that they had started hanging out, how wonderful Kurt was, how funny Kurt was, how handsome Kurt was... he wouldn't shut up. And I was so happy, because Kurt always went out of his way to look out for Blaine before. Don't think I never noticed, Kurt, how good you were to my son. And I just couldn't wait until you two got together."

"Yes, yes, mom. Kurt's heard this all before. Please stop torturing me," Blaine moaned, hiding his face in his hands.

"Oh, that's nothing. At least you fessed up to your feelings," Burt retorted. "Kurt here didn't have a clue. I knew months before he did. From the second you two saw each other again, I hoped you would end up together. I could tell that what you boys had was real. And then when you finally did get together and Kurt called me and told me, I swear I could hear the smile in his voice. I just knew you would be good for him, Blaine. You always were."

"Same for Kurt. Kurt, you were always so good to our son. I was so pleased when I found out you two were together," Bill commented.

"Oh, god. I wish I had known that when I asked your permission to marry Blaine. I was so scared," Kurt laughed. "I obviously had nothing to worry about. I mean, I freaked out enough when we told them we were together, Blaine, and they were so excited about that, just like you said they would be. But still... I thought I was going to pass out from fear."

"I thought you were too," Bill said, grinning fondly at his son-in-law. "It probably didn't help that I jokingly gave you a hard time. Yelling at you for stealing away my baby boy, asking why you couldn't pick someone your own age."

"YOU DID WHAT?" Blaine howled, not believing his father could be so cruel.

"Shhh, Blaine. Charlotte!" Kurt warned, reminding him of their sleeping baby girl upstairs.

"It was only a joke. But I think I scarred Kurt for life. I immediately said yes, once I teased him a bit. I honestly couldn't ask for a better man for my boy. I mean, I picked him out all those years ago to take care of you, so it would be pretty hypocritical of me to say no to him taking care of you now," Bill said.

"I take care of him, too..." Blaine mumbled, crossing his arms over his chest and pouting.

"Yes, baby. You do," Kurt cooed, leaning over to kiss his husband on the cheek.

"And their wedding. Absolutely splendid," Charlotte said, thinking back to that day, three years ago. "It was the same week the first issue Kurt's fashion magazine, *Kurtsy*, hit the stands, and Blaine's album made

it to number one on iTunes the night before, making their wedding absolutely unforgettable, as if it wouldn't already be unforgettable on its own. I could never forget that. I was so proud of both of them."

"I have Kurt to thank for that. I mean, for my album going number one, and for marrying me, too, I suppose," Blaine said with a grin. "But I never would have gotten signed if he hadn't arranged it for me at his fashion debut," Blaine said, wrapping his arms around his husband, and resting his head on his shoulder.

"Oh, I don't believe that for a second," Kurt argued. "You would have been a star with or without me. You are a natural talent, Blaine Hummel-Anderson. Me, on the other hand... I would have given up on my fashion dreams if you hadn't been there supporting me and cheering me on. And then you helped me search for my own office space and read through all the employee's applications, and it all just kind of took off from there. And now here I am, in charge of my own fashion firm, with Kurtsy rivaling Vogue sales, just like I said it would," Kurt smiled smugly, proud of his own success. "As for being thankful to me for marrying you. Sweetheart, I would marry you again in a heartbeat. So thank *you*."

"I still can't believe this is our life, sometimes," Blaine sighed.

"I remember crying for hours when they called and said I was going to be a grandmother," Carole reminisced. "They had been searching for months before they finally found a surrogate, and it caused so much heart ache and stress for so long, but now I have this beautiful baby girl for a granddaughter."

"Who looks just like her papa," Blaine said with a smile, looking over at Kurt.

"The next one will have to look like you. I demand it for my own selfish gain," Kurt pouted.

"Yes, dear."

"Anyway, it's late. We should probably all go to bed. I'm sure Charlotte will wake you two up at least a few times tonight, and we have a long day ahead of us tomorrow," Burt announced, yawning and stretching as he stood from the couch.

"I'm so happy we're all together again," Charlotte announced, as she stood and started gathering her things to make her way back next door with her husband.

"And we have this whole week together. I can hardly stand how happy it makes me," Carole said.

"Same, it's so good to have our boys back. Anyway, we'll let you all get some sleep. See you tomorrow morning at breakfast," Bill said, as he and his wife left and made their way across the street, content to know they would be back in the morning and spend the whole week with the Hummel's and their son and granddaughter.

"Good night, boys," Burt said. "Sleep tight. And we're so, so happy to have you home."

"You too, dad. And we're happy to be home," Kurt said, wrapping his arms around Blaine as they began to make their way upstairs.

"Good night!" Blaine called over his shoulder.

The two men crept quietly into Kurt's old room, careful not to wake their daughter, then quickly changed into pajamas and crawled into bed, automatically wrapping their arms around one another and cuddling close together like they did every night.

"It's so good to be home," Kurt whispered.

"It is. I'm so glad our parents got to meet Charlotte. I just want to show her off to the world," Blaine whispered back, lightly nuzzling into Kurt's neck, breathing in the scent of his husband.

"Don't do that," Kurt whimpered.

"Don't do what?" Blaine questioned.

"Nuzzle me and breathe me in and turn me on. It's not fair. We can't have sex again until we get home next week," Kurt whined, quietly.

"Kurt! Oh my god! Don't say that in front of the baby," Blaine gasped.

"Okay, first of all, she's asleep. She can't hear us. Second of all, even if she could hear us, she wouldn't understand. She's a month old, Blaine."

"Fine. But eventually, she's gonna figure it out, and I'm not gonna be the one to give her the sex talk," Blaine pouted.

"Oh god. We'll have to do that, won't we?" Kurt moaned.

"Not we. You. We just established that," Blaine teased.

"Oh shut up. I'm having an actual crisis here. We're going to have to deal with her dating. And buy her tampons. And protect her against bullies. And buy her a bra. Oh god. I can't do this," Kurt panicked.

"Oh my god, we've had her a month and you're panicking *now*?" Blaine sighed, gently rubbing his husband's back to calm him down. "Look, Kurt. You are a wonderful father. You are a wonderful husband. You are the love of my life and the way I see it, you're perfect. You will be fine. Yeah, all of those things are gonna happen eventually, but we'll deal with them as they come. We'll figure things out. And we'll have each other to lean on through it all, just like we always have."

"Why are you so perfect?" Kurt sighed, tilting his head to capture his husband's lips in a passionate kiss. "I love you so, so much."

"I love you, too," Blaine replied, drifting easily to sleep, knowing when he woke up, Kurt would be there holding him in the morning, and every day after that for the rest of their lives.