

# **Obnoxiously Sexy**

**by**

**beingalive**

**Klaine || AU || M**

*Blaine and Kurt are rival models and meet at an event after a suggestion from Blaine's agent, Nick. They hate each other but the undeniable chemistry encourages a magazine to believe they would look great together on a photography spread. Will they be able to resist what seems inevitable?*

[scarvesandcoffee.net/viewuser](http://scarvesandcoffee.net/viewuser) || [scarvesandcoffee.net/viewstory](http://scarvesandcoffee.net/viewstory)

eBook by [klainedficspdfs](http://klainedficspdfs) || [klaineficspdfs.tumblr.com](http://klaineficspdfs.tumblr.com)

## Contents

<b>Chapter One</b>	- 3 -
<b>Chapter Two</b>	- 8 -
<b>Chapter Three</b>	- 14 -
<b>Chapter Four</b>	- 24 -
<b>Chapter Five</b>	- 32 -
<b>Chapter Six</b>	- 46 -
<b>Chapter Seven</b>	- 51 -
<b>Chapter Eight</b>	- 60 -
<b>Chapter Nine</b>	- 68 -
<b>Chapter Ten</b>	- 74 -
<b>Chapter Eleven</b>	- 83 -
<b>Chapter Twelve</b>	- 91 -
<b>Chapter Thirteen</b>	- 96 -
<b>Chapter Fourteen</b>	- 105 -
<b>Chapter Fifteen</b>	- 111 -
<b>Chapter Sixteen</b>	- 118 -
<b>Chapter Seventeen</b>	- 131 -
<b>Chapter Eighteen</b>	- 136 -
<b>Chapter Nineteen</b>	- 145 -
<b>Chapter Twenty</b>	- 153 -

## Chapter One

Blaine wasn't sure how the rivalry had started. Being a supermodel was hard work but he knew how petulant and ungrateful he would sound if he moaned even slightly about the long hours and the difficult life habits he had to adopt. He was lucky, he knew that and he got to do amazing things but he still went home alone and the only thing his agent ever suggested was to watch this Kurt Hummel and his sudden rise to acclamation.

Kurt Hummel. God he was beautiful and he knew it. Blaine would take one look at him on the front cover of a magazine and sigh in both annoyance and secret admiration. His porcelain skin and cheek bones seemed to only accentuate his lofty and unattainable angelic qualities. Those blue eyes of his, at once piercing and peaceful, seemed to search the soul of anyone that looked on his picture. And suddenly he seemed to be everywhere.

Blaine's agent, Nick would thrust Kurt's pictures his way, point at his profile in a magazine or when he was interviewed on television and explain that this guy was doing things right. Blaine had no trouble getting work and the last thing he wanted to hear was that someone was vying for his top model position and making it look so easy. Blaine had been in the business for a few years now, was renowned for his body as well as his curly hair and warm brown green eyes and he didn't need some lofty and fragile boy trying to make him look bad.

Any magazine or runway project that didn't want Blaine clearly wanted Kurt and they were never in the same publication together. They looked so different, Blaine knew, that instead of capitalising on that, he guessed that they only wanted to separate them further. He hadn't actually met this guy, someone that had only been a model for a year, his sudden rise to great fame clearly coming as a shock to him but Blaine knew he would be unlikely to see him in real life. Blaine was often required to attend magazine parties, celebrations of fashion and the fashionable elite but Kurt seemed to avoid these events or only attend those that Blaine wasn't invited to. The idea that Kurt was invited to more exclusive events annoyed him further.

"I wish you wouldn't push pictures of him in my face," Blaine said to Nick, a disgusted expression on his face as he gave the pictures back. "Why are you showing them to me anyway?"

"I think you need to take him more seriously, Blaine," Nick said exasperated as he sat back in his leather chair in his office. "He gets the magazines we want Blaine; he gets the contracts that we strive for. We need to take note."

"Why?" Blaine said, just as annoyed. "I'm never going to be what those people want. If they want Hummel they can have Hummel."

"That's not the attitude, Blaine," Nick said more measured now, considering another tack. "I'm not saying the work is going anywhere, you're definitely sought after and people are desperate for you," he said as Blaine smiled with a mixture of relief and arrogance, "But everyone seems to want Kurt now and I worry that if we don't point out how versatile you can be, you'll soon lose favour."

Blaine looked at Nick carefully. Nick had been there the whole time and he knew how lucky he was to have his oldest friend act as his agent. Meeting at Dalton, their mutual love of music and Nick's business acumen had proved invaluable to Blaine when he was spotted in a mall in Ohio when he was a late teen. Nick had studied as a lawyer while acting as Blaine's agent which only made him more important to him and looking at him now, he knew he meant no malice and only wanted to give advice.

"I get it Nick," he said sighing, "I do but I don't want to change who I am. I'm not Hummel."

"I know that Blaine," he said smiling slightly, "But maybe we can push you two together in the public eye a bit, ensure you're seen together and your profile raised. Maybe then people will see how well you could go together?"

Blaine thought about it. He did understand the logic and he could see how it would work but he knew Nick hadn't factored in one tiny little issue.

"I think you've forgotten the one problem we have here," Blaine said, smiling sadly.

"What's that?"

"Kurt Hummel can't stand me."

"I need water or something," Kurt said as his face unravelled and his body relaxed. He had been posing for hours, the photographer and shoot director pushing and prodding him, seeming to forget he was human. Most people seemed to assume that models never needed food or water, perhaps being some kind of other-worldly creature that existed without normal human needs but Kurt needed to remind them. He had changed into countless outfits until they were satisfied and no break given he couldn't go ahead without something.

His assistant soon got him a bottle of water and he thanked her profusely before being approached by the director again.

"I think we need another outfit Mr Hummel," he said, stroking the material of the jacket Kurt wore as if forgetting that Kurt was underneath. "I'm thinking a fierce T-shirt, perhaps with just the jacket over your shoulders, as if you don't quite belong here," he said, his eyes roving over Kurt's body, images and ideas flitting across his mind. "Mandy," he shouted to the corner of the room and Kurt grimaced as the director walked briskly in the direction he had shouted in.

"God he's insufferable," Kurt moaned, looking carefully at his assistant Sara, who smirked in amusement. "It's not funny," he said though he couldn't help but smile slightly at her cheeky grin.

"You've got to admit it is slightly," she said, still laughing and starting to flick through a magazine, "I mean just one look at your face makes me laugh."

"Thanks," he said trying to sound annoyed but she knew he wasn't. "Do you think I could just walk out? Do you think they'd miss me?"

"I think so," she said looking around at the bustling bodies and in particular one poor woman who was transporting various outfits to another side of the room. "Only after a while though."

"Exactly," he said, finding some food in his satchel and scoffing it down, "Fancy a meal afterwards?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed, "Thank god I work for the only model that eats normally."

"I'm graced with beautiful genes and a high metabolism," he said, waving his arm in the air dramatically.

"And a giant ass ego," she said winking. She hadn't been working for Kurt that long and he laughed that she felt comfortable enough to insult him so soon.

"Ooh look at this guy," she said spotting a model spread in her magazine, "He's something else," she cooed, looking a little closer. Kurt did the same.

"Oh yeah," he said, stepping away, "He's something else alright," he said.

"Do you know him?" she asked, suddenly the most animated she had been that day.

"Sort of," Kurt said, "I know of him of course and that is just as much as I want to know him I think."

"Why?" she asked, perplexed.

"It's a long story," he said looking out for the director to see if he was needed soon. "Blaine Anderson is just obnoxious, enough said."

"What did he do?" she said leaning in closer as if Kurt was going to impart the juiciest gossip.

"He was at some event and a television crew did a little piece on the lives of models which he featured in. He'd obviously had a few to drink and was with some other guy but he was asked his opinion of the new up and coming model Kurt Hummel and he smirked to the camera and said clear as day: 'Kurt, you left your pants at my place so I sold them on eBay.'"

Sara looked wide-eyed at Kurt for a moment, a beat only as this sudden knowledge worked itself together in her mind and she suddenly laughed at the realisation of what he had said. Her laughter rang out in the bustle of the room, people who had been on a mission suddenly stopped to stare at her and Kurt tried to hush her by pulling at her arms.

"Oh my god," she said amidst her giggles, "I can't believe he did that," she gasped, "That is perfect!"

"It isn't perfect," he hissed, trying to get her to lower her voice, "He's annoying and arrogant. As if I'd let him anywhere near me."

"Oh yeah?" she asked, smirking, "You sure about that?" She clearly didn't believe him and to prove her point she pushed the magazine article with Blaine's picture blazoned over it, in his face.

"Yes I am sure," he said pushing it away. "Blaine Anderson is nothing but an arrogant, obnoxious, annoying little hobbit and...." He tried to continue but seemed to run out of steam.

"And?" Sara questioned.

"Oh what the hell," he said lifting his arms up in resignation, "He's sexy as hell and he knows it."

"Ha!" she said, smirking and triumphant in her success. Kurt just laughed.

## **Chapter Two**

Nick didn't get his opportunity until two weeks later when August Man, Malaysia's definitive men's journal, hosted a party to celebrate the pictures of Kurt Hummel that adorned their front cover as well as a fashion spread inside. This month's publication was clearly iconic and the party, though officially to celebrate the male celebrities featured, was to highlight Kurt's rise to fame and his new popularity. He was the *real* star of that month's issue.

"You want me to go to a party in honour of Kurt Hummel and cosy up to him?" Blaine asked incredulously as he met Nick for coffee down town.

"Well that might make him a bit suspicious," Nick said smirking, "But yeah, that's basically what I'm suggesting."

"No," Blaine stated simply, looking out the window of the small coffee shop that they frequented often. He knew the owner but he looked so different with his three day stubble and beanie hat that no one would recognise him behind his shades.

"No?" Nick questioned, raising an eyebrow, "Blaine, we spoke about this."

"I'm not going to a party in his honour," Blaine said simply, looking back at Nick to make himself understood. "It'll look so obvious and he'll be suspicious."

"It's a party for models and the fashionable elite. You belong with this crowd Blaine," Nick said.

"It should be me," Blaine whispered, "Am I that much out of the loop?" He could barely look at Nick he felt so small and Nick felt a little sorry for him sitting there nursing his medium drip.

"Blaine you have an automatic invitation," Nick said, "I wouldn't call that being 'out of the loop'."

"It's a party for him," Blaine sulked, "I know he hates me."

"One comment, come on," Nick said smiling, "How can he bear a grudge when you look so sexy and cute?" He chuckled hoping to laugh Blaine out of his stupor. Blaine looked at him and smirked.



"You're sure you're not gay?"

"You know I love my Holly, right? But I wouldn't chuck you out of bed," he said nudging his elbow, making Blaine laugh a little. "So you'll go?" Nick asked.

"Yeah, I guess," Blaine said, sipping his coffee once more, "If you think Hummel won't mind me disturbing his shine?"

"Oh I think he might need a little reminder of how hot and sexy Blaine Anderson really is," Nick winked, "Just in case he didn't know already."

---

As soon as Blaine entered the hotel he realised it had been a mistake to turn down Nick's offer to accompany him. Looking around, Blaine could see couples and groups of models, fashionable, beautiful and sexy as hell. They held their tall glasses of champagne and nibbled on the smallest appetisers, as if even those tiny morsels would fill them up and make them bloat. Blaine always felt alone amongst the crowd, always aware of how fake those relationships really were and he wished he had brought along his only real friend.

The hotel rooms were adorned with giant pictures of Kurt that featured in the publication, no wall left blank and everywhere Blaine turned he faced an impeccable face or Kurt in a Mick Jagger T-shirt, rolled slightly at the sleeves to accentuate his toned arms. His sunglasses and pose highlighted his chiselled cheekbones and full lips and Blaine felt himself stare slightly open-mouthed at the pictures at his every turn. He soon closed his mouth, realising he saw beauty every day so Kurt Hummel should be no exception, nothing special. He grabbed a glass of bubbly from a waiter as he turned again to see a better photo, obviously taken as a behind the scenes shot. Kurt was in his jacket and scarf from a later picture but in the middle of laughter at hearing something funny, Kurt was clasping his hands together, his face alive with laughter lines and amusement. Blaine suddenly realised that was so much more attractive than any other picture of Kurt that surrounded him in the hotel.

He glanced around, hoping to recognise another model, another sycophant and found only a smirking grin as Sebastian walked over.

"Well hello gorgeous," Sebastian said, holding his drink aloft in greeting and wearing his tailored outfit, his pose straight and correct. He knew perfectly well he was attractive, another model, another bright young thing and Blaine found himself glancing around to see if he could spot an escape.

"Hi Sebastian," he said, still searching.

"How have you been?" Sebastian asked, "I didn't think I'd see you here celebrating the wonder that is Kurt Hummel." Blaine laughed, slightly bitter and jealous and glanced around at the large photos surrounding them. "Not after what you said about him on television."

"Yes, well Hummel isn't the only perfect model here," Blaine said, glancing around hoping to see the model himself.

"I couldn't find him either," Sebastian said, "He appears to be quite allusive. He doesn't come to these events very often, probably worried about the pallor of his skin being affected by all the lights." Sebastian smirked.

"Yeah he is pretty precious," Blaine said without humour and he swallowed the bitterness as he wondered how early he could get away with leaving. He knew he couldn't leave without making his presence known or seeing the man himself but as he spotted people from runway projects he knew they were expecting much greater things from him. He was Blaine Anderson, someone that had made it, achieved everyone's idea of perfection but as he saw girls smile his way, he knew they knew nothing of him. The shell was easy to reveal and he was always worried that they'd spot the hollow emptiness underneath. The ideal of the perfect body, the perfect face left him feeling a little shallow and he longed for real life, wanted a real conversation. He turned to face Sebastian and realised he would never get that here.

"Maybe I should find some food," he said, leaving Sebastian hanging in search of a waiter and a tray of tiny food.

It was as he took a bite of a tiny sausage that he finally saw the man of the hour. He wore a dark jacket from his August Man shoot, the white shirt open at the neck and Blaine's eyes flashed to the blown up image of his black and white face, his blue eyes clear and haunting. He looked like a debonair Buster Keaton and as he walked into the room next to a young blonde girl, Blaine wondered what power this guy had that even the voices in the room would quieten in his presence. Blaine couldn't even feel jealousy, only admiration at the gentle power this man had and he wanted to get closer but held back. He stood in

the shadows slightly, thought he was unnoticed until someone squealed slightly at spotting Blaine, causing Kurt to glance in his direction.

"There you are," she said, "I've been waiting for you to arrive, this party's been dull dull dull without you." She winked and came closer and only because he knew her so well, Blaine let her link her arm with his as he was squeezed closer.

"Tabitha darling," he cooed and kissed her on the cheek, "It's been too long."

"Yeah, yeah," she said, waving his attempt at platitudes aside, "What trouble have you got yourself into? Or do you plan on making some?" She winked again and Blaine smirked.

"No trouble, I've been good," he said smiling cheekily.

"Any good gossip?" she asked, leaning impossibly closer.

"None," he said and she looked disappointed, "How's GQ been getting on without me?" Tabitha was the editor of the magazine and had given Blaine his first big opportunity. He had her to thank for a lot of his subsequent contracts and he loved her like a wicked older sister. She could be brutal when in the boardroom but her manicured nails and long legs hid her gentle charm and quiet sense of humour.

"We need another shoot soon," she said suddenly serious, "It's been far too long and I mean that Blaine. I love your look you know that. Just set a date and time and we'll get the best. In fact, we've got a new line coming in that I know will be dying to snap you up."

"Definitely," he said nodding, "Just ring Nick."

"Good," she said, "Now business is over, what are you doing here? I didn't think this kind of event was your thing?"

"It's not really but Nick had this idea," he started and he looked down at their arms linked, then found himself glancing at Hummel again to find the chestnut haired beauty surrounded by sycophants but looking in his direction. They locked eyes for a second before Tabitha seemed to notice and she tugged him to look back at her.

"An idea?"

"Yeah, Nick is impressed with Kurt and wants me to capitalise on it; thinks we should do a photo shoot together or something." He shrugged his shoulders in nonchalance but the thought of spending time alone with him sent a little thrill down his back.

Tabitha paused, looking at Blaine carefully before glancing at Kurt and Blaine could see her cogs working.

"But that's an excellent idea," she whispered, glancing at the both of them, her mind already conjuring images of them together. "Of course, I can see it now...."

"I don't know, I know he's kind of got that porcelain thing going on, too precious for the real work," he said smiling.

"But you should meet," she said suddenly, untangling her arm from Blaine's and gripping his arm to lead the way towards Kurt who was still surrounded by other beautiful people. He noticed Blaine and Tabitha coming closer and his eyes widened slightly in apparent panic.

"Kurt darling," she cooed as she came closer, "You know Blaine don't you?" she asked nonchalantly, slightly waving him away as if to suggest that of course Kurt knew Blaine. Blaine loved her a little more in that moment.

"Yes I think so," Kurt said, a little shocked at being addressed like that.

"No we've never met," Blaine said stretching out his hand in greeting, which Kurt took in surprise, "But I've heard of you of course," he said smiling.

"Of course," Kurt said smirking. He didn't want to give anything away, didn't want Blaine to know his silly words had affected him in anyway.

"I seem to recall someone referring to you at a party I attended once," Blaine smirked knowingly and Kurt blushed. Blaine knew he knew.

"I never did get my pants back," Kurt said confidently, "How much did you get for them?" If Kurt was going to be messed with he wanted the ball to be in his court.

"Oh not as much as I'd hoped," Blaine said laughing.

"So," Tabitha said, trying to inch herself closer to get in on the conversation, "Blaine and I were discussing a great idea of his," she started and Blaine pinched her slightly.

"Ow," she said removing her arm, "What are you doing Blaine?" She was completely oblivious and Blaine let her plough on. "You two should shoot together. You'd be great." She beamed, waiting patiently for her idea to be accepted. Kurt looked at Blaine after a while, who could feel a slight blush grace his own cheeks and Blaine attempted to smile. He knew that he must appear desperate to garner favour with the next new thing and he hated that he would be indebted to Hummel in anyway.

"This was your idea?" Kurt asked Blaine, smirking slightly.

"Only so you'd learn from the best Hummel," Blaine quipped quickly, "I don't think you've been in the business that long, you don't know the pitfalls." Kurt set his jaw and swallowed. He loathed the idea that Blaine thought he knew more, thought he was better.

"I think I'm doing fine without your help actually," Kurt said laughing lightly and glancing at the photos of his shoot all around the room as evidence. "I'll consider helping you out though," he said.

"Oh I don't think I need any help from you," Blaine laughed, "Have you seen my body? Only in your dreams I imagine."

"Oh god...." Kurt said laughing at the arrogance and shaking his head. "Bring it Anderson," he said simply.

"So we have a photo shoot?" Tabitha asked, looking from Blaine to Kurt with a confused expression.

"Yeah we have a photo shoot," Blaine said, "Let's give Hummel a chance to catch up," and he leant in to whisper the next part to Kurt, whose breath hitched at the close proximity and the glittering brown eyes.

"Maybe you can earn your pants back," he said, catching a whiff of Kurt's cologne and he breathed him in.

## Chapter Three

"You're shooting with Blaine Anderson?!" Sara squealed the next day as she was getting Kurt his lunch. Kurt took it quietly, almost wincing at her noise. He had a banging headache and this was just another day, a small shoot to update his headshots, another way to promote himself. He just wanted to crawl under his covers at home and not emerge until morning.

"Yes," he whispered, closing his eyes, "And you can only come along if you are quiet."

"When is it?" she bounced on her feet, quieter but just as excited as before.

"I don't know, it's got to be organised yet. They'll get in touch I'm sure," he said.

"You don't seem that excited," she said looking at him carefully. "I mean I know you 'hate' him," she said, indicating the quotation marks with her fingers, "But we both know that's not true. Why the hesitation to shoot with him?"

"He's an ass," he said, massaging his temples with his fingers, "He came waltzing up to me, claimed I needed *him* to support and teach *me* when he's the one falling behind. He shook my hand so hard he nearly crushed my fingers and he smirked."

"Oh yes, clearly ass-like behaviour," Sara laughed to herself, reaching in her bag for pills.

"What?" he asked wearily, "What are you getting at?" he said, taking the offered pills desperately.

"I don't know," she said, shrugging, "I mean it seems a little silly to me. Surely it's all a joke, you don't really hate him?"

Kurt thought about it for a moment and then realised it made his head hurt.

"No I don't really hate him but he is annoying and arrogant," he said, "I just don't need him making my life more difficult when this job is stressful enough as it is."

"And don't you think he knows that?" she said quietly, "He might be just the friend you need, a model that sees the world just like you do."

"I don't think he is even capable of such profound thoughts on beauty, he probably just wants to get laid," he said closing his eyes in annoyance as he was called by the photographer yet again.

"Maybe that's what you need too?" she said as he walked towards the cameras and lights and he turned sharply in annoyance at the barely heard comment and scowled.

---

Blaine had barely finished his orgasm, just waited long enough for Sebastian to roll over and start to snore quietly before he got up and retrieved his screwed up outfit and shoes. Sneaking out to change in the hallway, making sure he had his phone, wallet and keys, he snuck out the door. He knew what it would look like to people walking along the sidewalk at this hour in the morning but he didn't care. The cool breeze hit his face as he started the long walk home, already sober, already feeling the shame creep along his face.

He didn't know why the ice-queen himself had crept so easily under his skin making him itch and crave him but he had. After the barbed comments and the easy competitive remarks, Blaine had wandered back to Sebastian who had seemed to understand exactly what Blaine needed and had given it so eagerly. There was an easy understanding between the two of them, a 'friends with benefits' type arrangement although Blaine knew he couldn't stand any sort of conversation with the guy. Any attempt at getting to know Blaine for real always left Sebastian wanting more, Blaine only wished he would shut up.

He walked quite quickly, knowing it would take a long time to get home to shower and wallow in self-pity in front of the television but right now he was just left with his thoughts. When he had signed his first modelling contract he had no idea it would lead to a life like this – shallow, beautiful and inconsequential. He hated himself.

He thought back to the photos adorning the hotel suite, the photos of Kurt, black and white, austere, porcelain, untouchable and it annoyed Blaine even more. Seeing him in the flesh had only made him think of how unattainable he was, how unworthy Blaine was even to be near him. It only made him crave him more.

He seemed so perfect and aloof and Blaine knew that he himself was so flawed, so beautifully empty that he just wanted to be filled up with Kurt and Kurt alone.

He dug in his pocket, finding the empty condom wrapper from earlier and felt a sinking feeling settle in his stomach, a feeling he knew would stay for the duration of the day, until he forced himself out of his stupor and carried on with life. The more he slept with models like Sebastian, the more he realised he was searching for something so beyond his grasp and it only made him feel more desperate. He thought back to flawless Hummel and knew that what had annoyed him the most amidst the arrogance that Kurt displayed, the supposed knowledge that he was the new 'in thing' was that it might be true. Blaine already felt jaded and he had only been in the business for a few years. It had already driven him to despise the job, hate the fake and deplore the beautiful. He knew it would fade, that if he was the favourite one day, he might not be the next and Kurt still didn't know that. He was so naïve, just like Blaine had been and Blaine just wanted to knock him from his pedestal and make him realise.

The one truth he realised as he continued to walk home was despite hating Kurt's beauty and what it represented about the life of a model, he only wanted to drown in him and take comfort; escape the world, burrow under the covers and only see Kurt.

---

Their photo shoot was scheduled for two weeks later and it seemed that work suddenly flooded in for Blaine, meaning he had no spare time until after their shoot together. He had two days with Vogue modelling suit after suit and he knew that Nick had done well to get that contract, which was followed by three days on a beach, wrapped only in a towel. He met Nick for a quick dinner after the final day and he had flown home.

"God, Blaine," Nick had gasped as he sat down opposite him in the restaurant, already showing the prints he had been emailed. "Look at you." Nick thrust the pics in his face as Blaine slowly took the menu. His flight home had been long and tiring and he knew he had to work again the following day. He did not want to be reminded of what he had been spending the last three days doing.

"Ok Nick," he said, pushing the photos away, "I was there, remember? I've seen them." He looked over his menu, not noticing Nick's careful glance as he put the pictures away. Blaine quickly decided what he wanted and started looking around for a waiter. He hadn't had time to go home properly, just dropped off his bags and he just wanted a shower and a sleep. He caught someone's eyes, who then indicated he would be right over and Blaine finally looked at Nick, who was eyeing him with a conflicted expression on his face.



"What?" Blaine asked, feeling under scrutiny, "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Nick didn't get a chance to answer straight away, the waiter taking their orders and then disappearing.

"Well?" Blaine asked when they were finally alone, "What is it?"

"Nothing," Nick said, shrugging, rearranging his napkin and cutlery.

"Look Nick, I'm tired, it's been a long few days and I just want to sleep," Blaine said.

"I get it Blaine," Nick said, smiling in understanding, "Don't worry."

There was an awkward silence as they waited for their orders and Blaine found himself looking around the restaurant, watching people eat and chat happily to their companions. He felt suddenly alone and he looked at Nick who was smiling encouragingly.

"I want that," Blaine whispered, not meeting Nick's questioning gaze, "I want pleasant conversation, I want relationships and love and easy happiness."

"And you can't have that?" Nick asked quietly and Blaine finally looked at him.

"I don't think so," Blaine said shaking his head, "All I seem to get is cheap fucks and sycophants wanting more and more from me, expecting beautiful things from me all the time and it's tiring."

Nick finally noticed that Blaine was shattered, tired definitely but something beyond that. His eyes were mere shadows surrounded by purpling hollows and his nose was shiny. His hair, normally so tamed and styled, was now ruffled and curling. He looked so exhausted that Nick felt guilty.

"I'm sorry Blaine," he said, "Go home, get some sleep, we don't have to meet. I just wanted to catch up but we can definitely do that another time."

Blaine looked at him gratefully and smiled.

"Thanks Nick," he said standing, "I'll see you soon?" Nick nodded and Blaine waved slightly as he left, leaving Nick pondering on Blaine's statement of loneliness.

*"I want pleasant conversation, I want relationships and love and easy happiness."*

---

The shoot with OUT magazine over, Blaine finally managed to get nearly twelve hours of sleep the night before the GQ shoot with Kurt, so upon approaching the building they were to shoot in, he looked comfortable and well-rested. He was dressed casually, knowing that the crew would soon spruce him up, clothe him in something appropriate so his tight jeans and jacket would soon be removed, along with his hat and sunglasses. Kurt was talking in the corner with the blonde girl he had seen with him at the party, who Blaine assumed was his assistant but he glanced over at Blaine as he entered. Blaine smiled, trying to appear cocky but it faltered as he took in Kurt's pristine appearance. Wearing a tight waistcoat over a white shirt and blue jeans, he looked casual but perfect and Blaine swallowed, already feeling like he was at a loss.

He grabbed a coffee from the catering table and a girl approached him, ushering him to the make-up stand. She barely said two words to him as she placed a gown on him and started preparing his hair and discussing his make-up with someone next to her. Blaine could see them discussing him in the mirror completely oblivious to him and he sighed but he could see Kurt who happened to be in his eye line in the mirror. Kurt looked over Blaine and glanced at the girls and smiled slightly and there was a hint of something else. Kurt knew. Kurt knew exactly what Blaine was feeling and he understood. Blaine could feel a blush creep along his cheeks but he held Kurt's gaze until Kurt was called away by the photographer.

Kurt was soon ushered to the same make-up table as Blaine and they found themselves next to each other and staring into the mirror. There was a comfortable silence for a while, as if they both knew that it was golden and not to be underappreciated. Sara handed Kurt a few magazines and said she was going to get more coffee and check their emails.

He flicked through the magazine not really looking at the photos but he soon saw some pictures of the party he had attended for August journal two weeks ago. There were pictures of Kurt and a few other models sipping champagne and he nearly turned the page until he saw the photo in the corner of the article. It was a photo of Blaine coming out of the hotel in the early hours of the morning after, with the caption: 'What was the superhot model Blaine Anderson doing leaving so early in the morning?' His suit looked decidedly more rumpled and he clearly hadn't seen the camera lurking in front of him, suggesting he didn't know he was being papped. He looked a little closer at the pictures and Kurt wondered why he

hadn't seen these before. He chanced a glance at Blaine in the mirror over the magazine and accidentally caught his eye, when Blaine smirked right at him.

"You can look all you want Hummel," he said laughing, "Don't mind me, I'm just enjoying the peace and quiet."

The remark appeared casual but Kurt knew he was again trying to mess with him and he swallowed. He wasn't going to mention the magazine but now...

"Oh I should think peace and quiet was definitely your scene," Kurt said with a new smirk on his face and Blaine looked at him through the mirror in surprise. "From what I can see here anyway you look like that's all you wanted and you thought you'd got away with sneaking out." Kurt thrust the photo in Blaine's face who stared at it for a good minute before looking at Kurt who was silently laughing and took the magazine from him.

"Where did you get this Hummel?" he asked looking carefully at the picture and its caption.

"It's just lying around," Kurt said smiling, "So who was the lucky guy? Anyone I know?"

Blaine blushed, still staring at the picture but remaining silent.

"So it is someone I know," Kurt said, "Well you can spill to me, I won't tell anyone." He laughed and Blaine couldn't stand it anymore. He stood abruptly and shook off the gown covering his shoulders, surprising the make-up assistant. He walked outside to the hotel balcony, suddenly desperate for a cigarette, despite giving up three months ago. Kurt looked surprised but didn't say anything and continued to watch himself in the mirror as the preening continued.

Blaine could feel his hands shaking slightly as he tried to light the cigarette, the magazine already discarded on the patio table next to him. He was alone, the only other person just finishing their cigarette as Blaine entered. He glanced down at the crumpled photo and leant back on the glass behind him. It wasn't the scandal, it wasn't the implication of relations with other people, it was the idea that people could see the real him there on the page. Behind the glossy photos and the perfect body, there was Blaine Anderson, looking down and guilty, his whole life a façade. He couldn't bear the idea that everyone would see this, that he had revealed something of himself and that Kurt Hummel had been the one to discover it and throw it in his face. He took a steady drag on his cigarette, determined to calm his frayed nerves and

remain poised. It took a few minutes and more heady puffs on his cigarette before he felt calm enough to return to the shoot, to explain himself slightly and really show Kurt Hummel who he was dealing with.

As he returned, Kurt had clearly finished his make-up and hair and was being led away to the costume department, appearing deep in conversation with someone who was to dress him appropriately. He saw Blaine come in but said nothing and Blaine walked over to finish his make-up. The make-up assistant looked worried that she had upset Blaine and he softened at her expression.

"Don't worry, it was nothing you did, I just needed a cigarette," he said, shrugging his shoulders as if to say he was trying to kick the habit but couldn't. She smiled.

"Oh that's ok, me too," she said, "I've given up twice now, both times unsuccessfully."

Blaine was soon rushed to costume as Kurt was busy chatting to the shoot director, Blaine already aware that he was off to a shaky start. They no doubt thought Blaine was a typical diva model, unapproachable and hard to work with. He would need to work harder to prove them wrong. Once he was changed he noticed they had fitted both Kurt and himself in tailored outfits, tight and debonair. Kurt was in a dark green jacket with a tie while Blaine was in a dark green striped suit that he knew accentuated his eyes and a black skinny tie. Blaine had to admit, as he walked towards Kurt and the shoot director, they both looked good.

"Hi, where do you want me?" he asked politely and Kurt looked at him carefully, hoping to see something else behind the façade.

"Oh, hi," the guy said surprised at finally seeing Blaine, "Let's have a think." They were led to the centre of a room with big windows and a large cream sofa in the middle. "I'm thinking that Kurt you would look fabulous against the light and almost looking down at Blaine here as he lies on the sofa. What do you think?" he asked the photographer, who was moving both Blaine and Kurt to match the idea. Kurt looked at Blaine as he was moved and prodded and Blaine knew. Kurt's annoyance wasn't obvious but Blaine could tell he hated being moved just as much as Blaine did.

They were soon aligned the way the photographer wanted and cameras popped, lights flashing. Blaine and Kurt didn't flinch, so used to the glare and the lights. They were asked to move one way, then the next, movements suggested, until Kurt was finally asked to go on the sofa too and sit next to Blaine. Arms were draped over each other, again movements made for them as if they were mannequins and the close

proximity made Kurt slightly uncomfortable. So many photos were taken that talking was almost encouraged to give unusual photos that just might be the 'one shot they wanted'. Kurt found himself whispering to Blaine, who was now opposite Kurt, their legs together as they faced each other on the sofa.

"Sorry about earlier," Kurt said, trying to maintain the intense stare the photographer wanted. "I probably pushed too far."

Blaine was surprised. He quickly schooled his face to remain poised and his eyebrows sank back to their normal place on his face.

"Oh," he whispered, "Thanks."

They were moved again, this time Kurt was asked to lie on the sofa as Blaine posed facing away from Kurt but leaning on the opposite arm rest. Kurt could admire his strong back from his stance and again he was asked to look one way then another. The last pose in this outfit was to be more intimate and as the photographer suggested Kurt suddenly realised why he preferred to shoot alone. They were asked to sit together facing each other on the sofa, their legs up and entwined, Kurt practically in Blaine's lap. He blushed slightly as he could feel Blaine's strong legs beneath his own and Blaine looked down as the photographer moved them until he was happy.

"Now rest your head back Kurt," the photographer said, "Great," he said as Kurt exposed the creamy skin of his neck and Blaine swallowed fiercely, thinking instantly of the kisses he could plant on that perfect skin.

"Now laugh," the photographer said and Kurt did, though no sound left his mouth and Blaine almost smirked at the absurdity of it all. He really was a consummate professional and Blaine suddenly realised he had judged this Kurt Hummel, new supermodel in the making, far too harshly and far too soon.

"Great Blaine," they were saying, "Keep that expression." And Blaine was grateful that Kurt couldn't see his face from his position looking at the ceiling; he dreaded to think what his face showed. "Right," they were saying, "Let's change."

They were given new outfits and asked to change in the little room behind them, just one room, just one place to change.

"Oh," Kurt said looking around in panic, "I think I've found the reason I don't normally shoot with other models," he laughed with a sudden nervous energy and Blaine smiled too.

"I really don't think you have anything to worry about Hummel," he said, the smirk had returned and Kurt instantly felt the hairs on the back of his neck bristle in annoyance. "Unless of course you're worried I again might outshine you."

"Urgh," Kurt grimaced, "Why do you have to be such an ass?"

He really wanted to know and Blaine was slightly taken aback.

"Because," Blaine started but couldn't finish. He had no idea why he was being such an ass.

"I look great and I know it," Kurt said smiling with a confidence he didn't feel. He started to take off the jacket and unbutton his shirt. "I get paid to look great, I get told constantly that I look great, I believe I look great."

"Ok, ok, no need to rub it in," Blaine said, starting to undress himself, "I get told the same things, I believe I'm great too."

"But there's no harm in a little humility sometimes," Kurt said, finally unbuttoning his shirt to reveal his undershirt beneath. Blaine was slightly disappointed.

"You should listen to your own advice," Blaine said, his shirt completely gone now too, revealing his toned and tanned chest underneath. Kurt couldn't help it, his eyes roved over his body quickly then looked down. The look hadn't been lost on Blaine.

"Look all you like Hummel," he said, chuckling, "I didn't get the show but you can sure enjoy mine."

"Urgh," Kurt moaned and turned away to find his next outfit. He could hear Blaine continue to chuckle behind him. "You may think you're confident and sexy but you really are not. Of course the guy you spent the night with after the party probably thought otherwise." He didn't see Blaine's surprised and hurt expression, his cocky façade slipping slightly, Kurt still looking for his new shirt and accessories. "I take it he was a model that had that pleasure, someone I knew," Kurt continued and laughed, finally picking up his shirt and looking towards Blaine, who was notably silent.

"Laugh all you want Hummel, at least I get some," Blaine said deadly serious, picking up his new shirt too and dressing himself again. His expression was of steely determination and Kurt realised he had gone too far with his own barbed comment. He soon reasoned that Blaine had it coming and continued.

"Oh I get some," Kurt said confidently, despite it being a lie, "I just don't like shagging other models - so arrogant, so perfectly beautiful, so stupid." Blaine had suddenly come much closer and Kurt could see the browns and greens of his glittery eyes and wondered what Blaine was going to say next.

"We're not all like that Hummel," Blaine said, "Unless you're tarnishing your own reputation with that statement." Kurt smiled slightly.

"I speak as I find," Kurt said, a slight tremor to his voice that Blaine noticed. "Apart from a few exceptions," Kurt said, indicating himself, "Models are generally egotistical and so consumed with their own beauty that they don't care about furthering their minds and developing an opinion."

Blaine looked carefully at Kurt, so close that he could count his eyelashes. He suddenly wanted to kiss away his smirk, to see him come undone at his hands but the desire to prove him wrong slightly overtook the desire to feel him underneath him. He looked at the blues of his eyes, preparing a witty comeback then sighed.

"Of course you're right," he said and Kurt quirked an eyebrow in surprise, "I've found the same."

Blaine avoided Kurt's curious gaze as he continued to change and he left the changing room to speak to the photographer, thinking of his own ideas and wishing to be heard. Kurt was left to wonder at the exchange and consider perhaps there was more to this Blaine Anderson than he had at first assumed.

## Chapter Four

"I think the idea we need to create is 'off-duty debonair'," Blaine was saying as Kurt finished changing and approached the photographer. "Undone bow ties, open necked shirts, laid back poses," Blaine continued, noticing Kurt's entrance but ignoring him, the photographer looking carefully at Blaine, images floating across his mind. "Definitely black and white."

Kurt looked carefully at Blaine. He was wondering where all these ideas had come from and what went through his mind. He really was confusing and deeply frustrating. Blaine was obviously a jerk, had acted like an ass but now here he was describing photo ideas perfectly and doing exactly what needed to be done – giving control back to the models, letting people know that they had minds too. Kurt felt his mouth open slightly as he watched Blaine work a little more magic over the photographer.

"I see," the photographer was saying, nodding silently, "I think we need to discuss the dynamic between the two of you though. I can see Kurt in these positions but where would you be?"

Blaine looked at Kurt then as if he had only just realised he was in the room and listening.

"What do you think Kurt?" he said quietly, his clear eyes looking deeply at Kurt as if they alone might hold the answer. Kurt was taken aback.

"Oh, I don't know," he said and he silently cursed that he had sounded so clueless and idiotic. "I guess either you're watching, looking over and completely detached or you want to join."

"Yes," the photographer said excited and jumping up, moving his hands to suggest angles and movement. "I'm thinking the latter, you want to join in Blaine but you don't know how to, you're envious and detached but desperate to get a little closer."

Blaine didn't like the implication but he nodded, accepting the idea, wanting nothing more than to appear amenable.

The photographer started to undress Kurt, take off the bow tie and lace it around his neck, letting it hang as he undid the top button of his shirt. Kurt felt a blush creep along his face and he tried to avoid Blaine's eye as he noticed Kurt's discomfort. Kurt was again moved to sit on the sofa, his body adjusted so he looked laid back and casual. He was asked to lay one of his arms over the top of his thigh and look in the



distance, the other arm leaning on the sofa behind him. Blaine was instructed to stand a little way off from the sofa and stare at Kurt and no acting was needed – he wanted the guy that sat so casually, that seemed so aloof and unattainable. He swallowed, reigning in his growing desire and willing himself to concentrate on the task ahead.

"Great Blaine," the photographer said as he papped away, lights adjusted, "Place your hand on the back of the sofa as if you want to get that little bit closer. Fantastic!"

They were asked to move again, their faces this way and that until the camera was placed again on its tripod and Blaine and Kurt relaxed.

"I have the perfect idea," the photographer said leading Blaine away from Kurt who watched from the sofa. "Wear this," he said giving Blaine a waistcoat and he seemed to notice the bright pink glasses that had been placed on the side when Blaine entered the room. "And these," he added and Blaine looked a little confused but complied and changed.

He came forward, the waistcoat slightly baggy on his frame but the long sleeved shirt open at the neck, with the pink sunglasses looped inside his shirt at the top. He was moved to a light grey backdrop and Kurt, seemingly forgotten, turned so he could see the shot unfold. Blaine was asked to move his head again, different shots taken and Kurt moved slowly to the monitor as the shots were uploaded onto the screen.

They were breathtaking and Kurt felt his breath still. There was one shot where Blaine was looking to the side, his expression slightly imploring, his stance straight, his hair ruffled and curly. He looked sad but resigned and Kurt knew then the magic of the camera and the beauty that was standing near him.

Kurt was then given a velvet jacket to wear and he stood against a pitch black backdrop, a single light shining on him and he was asked to place his hands in his pocket and to look sideways into the distance. Blaine was given suspenders and his pink sunglasses and the photographer played with the shots, changing the black and white so the only hint of colour came from the glasses, bright pink against the sombre background. He looked so happy and carefree as he posed, a silent laugh across his face that Kurt was mesmerised until the final snap and click and Blaine returned his pose to normal, ever the consummate actor and Kurt felt like he had been tricked. They were soon asked to change and they returned to the changing room at the back.

Blaine had his back to Kurt as he shimmied out of his tight pants and Kurt could see only his ass in his tight boxers. Kurt lifted his gaze away and swallowed before he spoke.

"You were amazing," Kurt whispered, "Your shots were amazing."

Blaine turned slowly, still only in his shirt and boxers and searched Kurt's expression for any trace of irony or mockery.

"Thanks," he said quietly, not sure how to take the praise, "I guess you have learnt a lesson today."

"What lesson's that?" Kurt asked.

"How to act like a pro when you don't feel it," Blaine said, still clutching his pants in front of him as if they protected him from Kurt. "How to work the professionals in your favour and...." Blaine turned away, Kurt's intense gaze a little too much as he started unbuttoning his shirt.

"And?" Kurt asked.

"And how to appear beautiful when your soul is black," Blaine said, barely audible but his shaky whisper could be heard and as Blaine finished dressing and he picked up his belongings, deliberately avoiding Kurt's gaze, Kurt watched, Blaine's last phrase whirling in his mind, over and over.

Kurt blinked as Blaine left him alone to change, thinking over what had been heard and exchanged and more confused than ever. Where was the cocky and annoying Blaine now? He seemed more real but so far away and Kurt wanted to grip onto him before he disappeared entirely. As he came out of the changing room, clutching his phone and keys, he searched the room for Blaine but found it empty. Sara looked over with a confused expression but he gestured for her to stay where she was and he would return. He left the make shift photography studio and entered the hotel lobby, again his eyes darting this way and that in search of Blaine and caught a glimpse of a moving figure out near the bar at the furthest end.

Blaine was ordering a scotch and he sat at the bar, clearly in his own world oblivious to Kurt sitting near him and ordering his own drink, just an orange juice.

"I don't understand you," Kurt whispered so only Blaine could hear and Blaine looked up, a little startled to find Kurt so close. "Why the act? Why do you want to come off as such an ass?"

Blaine thought for a long time, staring at the warm brown liquid in his tumbler.

"Oh it's not an act," he said, avoiding his gaze, "I am an ass."

"No you're not," Kurt said simply, "So why pretend."

"It's just easier," Blaine said, still looking down. Kurt looked at Blaine's drink, noticing how the browns and the ambers matched his eyes as Blaine swirled his drink round and round.

"Do you like your job?" Kurt asked.

Blaine looked up so suddenly Kurt was a bit surprised and he instinctively sat back. Blaine had never been asked such a simple question, it was normally a given that he loved his job, who wouldn't? The travelling, the pampering, the adoration and appreciation of his beauty and he had loved it all at first. Being snapped up as a late teen at a time when he was ridiculed for his sexuality and desperate to get out of high school, he jumped at the opportunity to escape his life and live his dreams. It had been magnificent at first, surrounded by people that awwed and ahhed at his beautiful contours and his smouldering eyes and his sweet bow lips but after a while he saw through the comments and the desperate cloying closeness of the people around him. They didn't know him and they didn't take the time to bother. He was a face, a body and a beauty and all he could do was lap up the praise and take the rewards.

"I used to I guess," Blaine said after a while, "I think I can see through it a little more now."

"Which is why you hate me so much?" Kurt said and Blaine blinked, wanting to deny that he hated him but knowing there was some truth to what he said. "You think I need to be taken down a peg or two on this successful ladder. You want me to know." There was no malice or annoyance in Kurt's voice. He understood and Blaine found himself nodding.

"Well you don't need to worry," Kurt said getting up after finishing his drink, "I know."

Kurt was near the door before he was stopped by Blaine's gentle hand and he turned to see Blaine's wide eyes, open and confused.

"Don't go," Blaine pleaded and Kurt hesitated until Blaine spoke again. "There's a party tonight for GQ. Tabitha invited me." He left it hanging in the air but Kurt said nothing. "Will you come?"

Kurt had never seen him so small and he wondered what courage it had taken for him to ask. He found himself nodding.

"Ok, I'll come."

---

The music was loud and Kurt entered as people bustled around the room, no one dancing, no one listening. The lights flashed, speeding around at different angles and in different colours, never focusing on one spot for any length of time. The beat pulsed and made the room jump and Kurt seemed to float through the room, his feet never really touching the floor, only the beat carrying him along.

Something in Blaine's tone as he left the hotel lobby stuck in Kurt's mind and led him to come to the party alone. He watched the gathering of models, the older and sophisticated looking languid and bored as others mingled and swirled in the crowd – eager to please and ingratiate themselves. Kurt hovered around in the corner of the room until two models approached and air kissed him on the cheek. They tried to discuss his shoots that week, initiate a discussion on what he had been doing and the contracts they had secured for themselves. Kurt tried to sound interested, smiled at their eagerness and offered advice when it was asked. It was clear they were just starting out and admired Kurt's poise but he felt himself get a little lost amongst the questions and the desire to reach a higher plane. He smiled then excused himself, saying he needed a drink.

As he turned, drink in hand, he bumped into someone taller and almost spilled his drink on their firm chest.

"Oh I'm so sorry," Kurt started as he looked up and into Sebastian's sardonic smirk.

"No problems Kurt," he drawled, enjoying it a little too much. "Enjoying the party so far?" he said eying his drink held high and Kurt's perfectly sculpted wrist, the bone jutting out slightly.

"It's ok," Kurt said simply, "What I expected really." He looked around the room, hoping to find Blaine or someone he knew a little better than Sebastian, some way of escape.

"Looking for someone?" Sebastian said and Kurt thought it sounded like a smirk, like he was constantly being teased and he briefly considered throwing his drink in his face, just to see what his face would look like then.

"No one in particular," Kurt said, trying for nonchalance.

"I'm waiting for the party to start too," Sebastian said, looking around, "I wonder when Anderson will turn up. I do love that pretty ass."

Kurt looked sharply at him, shocked at his attitude and the mention of Blaine.

"Oh yes, you've felt it too haven't you Hummel?" Sebastian laughed, "Want it for yourself? I don't blame you."

"I don't want Blaine's ass," Kurt said, blushing deeply and the lights flashing around the room changed to a red colour, hinting at hell and giving his face a look of horror.

"Oh I think that pretty blush of yours tells me otherwise," Sebastian said leaning closer to Kurt's ear and Kurt realised he was trying to irk him, wind him up and intimidate him. He stood back.

"Well you're wrong," Kurt said confidently taking another sip of his drink.

"Don't throw away the chance if you get it Hummel," Sebastian continued, further back now. "He's a sweet ass definitely, gives it up so nicely too."

Kurt hated him.

"It was you at the hotel with him?" Kurt asked but really it came out as a statement of realisation and Sebastian laughed loudly.

"Yes indeed, I saw that little photo too," he said, "It really didn't do him justice."

Kurt could feel bile rise in his throat at the disgusting comments Sebastian was saying. To discuss sex and Blaine so trivially really riled him and it showed clearly on his face.

"Don't look at me like that Hummel," Sebastian said, a hint of anger in his voice, "You don't get to judge me with your white virgin ass. Blaine knows the deal and it's convenient. I expect nothing from him and he gets nothing in return. It's a hard job, this is just one of the perks. Maybe if you'd been in the business a little longer, you'd know. I'm sure you'll find out the hard way." Sebastian turned to leave and started a conversation with another group of models, looking at Kurt to see how his comment had played out on

Kurt's face. He smirked when he saw Kurt's cold stare straight ahead. Kurt prepared to leave when he saw him.

Blaine was smiling. That perfect slowly sardonic smile plastered on his face and showing anyone he met or air-kissed that he was here and perfect and available. He was walking in, people seeming to part slightly and so desperate to touch him, make their presence known. Ever the charmer, Blaine had time for everyone, a word to say in greeting, a warm smile or shake of the hand. He walked fully into the room and grabbed a drink from a passing waiter when he saw Kurt and his fake smile faltered slightly. He was taking in Kurt's stony expression as he came closer.

"You made it," Blaine said as he stood in front of Kurt, "Have you been here long?"

"Just long enough to have a full exacting conversation with Sebastian," Kurt said ruefully and Blaine wondered what they had discussed. He didn't have long to ponder before Kurt filled him in, his sarcastic bite back and his eyes a stone-cold blue.

"Oh he filled me in on your little arrangement," Kurt said, looking around for another drink, a waiter. "I know all about the August party and your quote pretty ass unquote." Kurt saw a waiter and he reached out for a drink quickly. Blaine's eyes widened as he saw Kurt fiercely grab a drink and gulp down the fizzy liquid. The bitch was back and Blaine felt his own guard go up.

"Oh right," he said, instantly cocky and confident, "Jealous are you Hummel?" Kurt looked taken aback, instantly recognising the tone. "You should have said, I would gladly let you tap this."

Kurt was horrified and stood back, looking over Blaine's face as if to chase the ghost of the real Blaine.

"Or I bet you would be the perfect bottom," Blaine smirked, chancing a glance at Kurt's ass encased in his tight red pants.

Kurt moved so his ass couldn't be ogled and stood further back.

"Get lost Anderson," he said, finishing his drink and hoping to find somewhere to put his empty glass. "Sebastian may like that kind of arrangement but I certainly don't. I think I've said before, I don't do models." His emphasis on the word 'do' had Blaine swallowing in awe. He was so cold, so porcelain, Blaine had an urge to pull him closer, watch him come undone.

"I think I'll be going," Kurt said, preparing to leave, "I see there's nothing for me here after all."

He walked coldly out of the room and never looked back, as Blaine watched, slightly dazed and beautifully confused. He shook his head finally and practically ran towards the exit, catching Kurt just in time, grabbing him by the wrist, as Kurt turned round quickly.

"What...." Kurt only had time to say as firm lips were pressed against his own and forcing his eyes closed. He let their lips move together for only a moment before he realised and stood back, breathing heavily.

"What are you doing Anderson?" Kurt choked out, his eyes wide and lips already cherry red. The kiss had been hard.

"Showing you what you've been missing out on," Blaine said, looking at his eyes then his lips and breathing deeply. "Don't you want to know what all the fuss is about?"

Kurt felt nervous butterflies in his stomach at the sardonic tone, the leer and the lust blown eyes. He felt like he was being devoured and it shocked him that he didn't want it to stop. Blaine seemed to understand Kurt's indecision and he stepped closer, his mouth hovering near Kurt's ear.

"Don't you want to know what all the fuss is about?" he repeated, his warm whisper near Kurt's ear lobe going straight to his cock. "Don't you want to know how many ways I can make you come? God Kurt, I bet you look so pretty when you come," he said, practically salivating and Kurt almost sunk in on himself.

The door behind him suddenly opened and Kurt was broken out of his reverie as he stepped aside to let a couple in. When he looked back up he could only stare at Blaine's dark eyes and wonder if his own were so lust blown. He gulped, glad the moment was broken, worried what he might have done.

"Yes I probably do," Kurt said simply, "But it's a privilege that you'll never see Anderson."

And he turned fiercely, his straight back showing poise and control when his insides were squirming. Blaine looked on and for the first time since he had become a model, he realised he had been rejected and he had never felt so alone and pathetic.

## Chapter Five

Blaine stood there for a moment, feeling the cold air hit his face as the door of the hotel was opened and closed, people flitting in and out. Kurt had long gone, Blaine's eyes no longer looking in his direction, rather feeling the cold, feeling the isolation as if it was completely alien and unknown.

After a while Sebastian came out of the party to find Blaine remaining by the door and he called to him, encouraged him to come back, to enjoy the flow and the buzz. Blaine shook his head, prepared his face again and returned to the room, soon grabbing a drink from a waiter and downing it in one. The night was young and there was no time to waste.

Sebastian would look over at Blaine every so often, just the hint of sadness showing in his body as he chatted and laughed with others. Blaine joked and wandered the room, flitting from one group to another as if he belonged there and wanted nothing more than to show that he had a right to be there too. Sebastian lost interest after a while, knowing that if Blaine was interested later he would find him and he flitted too.

Blaine had been to enough of these parties to realise that perfection was all important but actually easily achieved. The illusion of happiness or at least contentment was easily believed, no one wanting to really know or understand if you felt otherwise. If Blaine felt a little off, who would notice? If Blaine's face didn't light up quite as quickly as the others when someone made a witty comment, who was to say? Everyone wanted to believe the good feeling so they did.

As Blaine slipped off much later, completely gone and inebriated, barely able to walk straight, no one really noticed or if they did, nothing was said or mentioned. Sebastian saw Blaine stumble by the hotel door as he collected his coat and for a single moment he considered helping to take him home but held back. Blaine was a big boy he reasoned and it would be much more hassle than it was worth. Blaine was sure to be too drunk for even light groping in the back of a taxi.

As it happened, Blaine didn't even make it to a taxi before he stumbled again and decided the shop doorstep that he had discovered on his way to the ground would be a suitable place to remain for the foreseeable future. It felt cold on his cheek as he nestled further down but he decided he liked the chill compared to the warmth of the party. He simply wanted a rest and it was far too much effort to get up again and attempt to walk to a taxi. He woke a few hours later, light beginning to creep up along the sides of the building on a new day and the noise of the early traffic shaking him awake harshly. His shirt was



crumpled and upon inspection Blaine noticed he had spilt a dark liquid along his front. His neck couldn't be moved comfortably and his head was banging, a horrible taste of old carpet in his mouth if he tried to swallow. He sat, sitting on the shop doorstep, his head rested in his hands until the dizziness subsided and he thought he might be able to manage getting up and walking. He stood, blinked against the light and gingerly looked for a taxi. Spotting one at the end of the street he walked a little faster and collapsed on the back seat, mumbling where to be taken and hoping that he could crawl into bed and never wake up.

---

Blaine finally woke the following afternoon in his own bed and thankfully alone. He sat up in stages, leaning his head in his hands for a while, then standing and finally stumbling slowly to get water and pills. After making such an effort to get out of bed he didn't fancy going back so he made it to the sofa and pulled a blanket over his legs. It wasn't particularly cold but the comfort of being under cover and unseen was too much. He turned on the television to watch something mindless. The thought of leaving the apartment, even for food suddenly felt overwhelming and he decided if he needed anything he would order in. Having a few days off seemed the perfect way to forget he was alive.

Except he couldn't switch off. His brain kept reliving moments he was sure he had erased by drinking so much alcohol. The only thing that had been achieved instead was pausing his evening, as if frozen at exactly the moment Kurt rejected him and turned away, leaving him to watch the door of the hotel in silence. He couldn't remember the rest of the evening.

He wasn't sure why it bothered him so much. He knew that he could have had any gay guy at that party. He was on fire, he knew that – the charm, the easy smile and confidence made him ooze beauty and he noticed many guys, including Sebastian checking him out and wondering what they had to do to get close, to slink closer. But Blaine looked around, noticed the eager young things and the older wiser pros and it all sickened him as he left. His smile never left his face but it suddenly seemed so tawdry and empty that he left only to burrow away in his apartment. As he watched the mindless chatter on the daytime talk show images of Kurt's face still flitted across his mind – the haughty expression, his back showing strength and power as he walked away. Blaine was left to wonder if he had imagined that flicker he thought he had witnessed before Kurt's guard went up. Was that desire? Were Kurt's eyes dark and smouldering, just like Blaine knew his own must have been?

God he wanted him and he was in trouble.

Kurt woke late morning the following day safely ensconced in the loving embrace of Bruce his boyfriend arm and wandered to the kitchen for juice. He could hear Rachel practicing her scales in the shower, her high notes making him realise this was what had woken him from his enjoyable dream which had started to come back in flashes as he stared out the high window of the apartment space he shared with Rachel. Warm lips on his, skin touching, hands groping and although it was only flashes of images, he knew it was Blaine and he touched his lips with his fingers as if he could chase the ghost of the dream as he stood there. Rachel came out to start coffee, a towel around her body and her pink shower cap on her head.

"I just need the bathroom for a few more minutes," she said as she bustled around the kitchen.

"Don't worry about it," Kurt said, broken out of his reverie and starting to get his cereal. "I don't have to be anywhere today."

"Well I've only got a few classes today, do you want to grab coffee later?"

"Yeah, sounds good."

"Oh I forgot to mention," she said turning her head to face him, "A few of us are going to Callbacks tonight. Do you fancy going?"

"Oh I don't know," Kurt said, his eyes hovering over his cereal, "I don't think it's my kind of scene."

"Don't be ridiculous Kurt," she said, walking away in the hope that Kurt would finish making the coffee, "You haven't been in ages and I miss hearing you sing."

Truth be told, Kurt had deliberately avoided singing in public for quite a while as his modelling profile rose. He didn't want the unnecessary publicity, the added worry that he would embarrass himself and if he was honest it reminded him too much of his shattered dreams, ones that seemed so far away now.

"Please," Rachel whined, coming closer to kneel at Kurt's feet and look up at him with her big brown eyes. Kurt sighed.

"Ok," he said, knowing full well that she knew he couldn't resist.

"Excellent," she said, jumping up and clapping her hands excitedly. "You know you love it when you're there. It's so different from those stupid parties you go to."

Kurt nodded in agreement as she went back to the bathroom to finish her rituals. Kurt had tried to bring Rachel along to a few of his parties but she was so in awe of the beautiful models she couldn't hold interesting conversations with anyone that tried. She was more beautiful in Kurt's opinion than any of those thin girls with porcelain features and cheekbones to die for but Rachel didn't seem to think so. Their lofty nature and air of coldness had Rachel in a rare moment of silence and Kurt hadn't suggested another party. He'd rather stay at home with her anyway.

---

Blaine must have drifted off to sleep on the sofa as he was startled awake by a sharp collection of knocks on his front door and as his legs were tangled in the blankets, he tripped and fell landing on his knees. Cursing he stumbled to the door.

"What is it?" Blaine asked harshly as he pulled the door open and faced an embarrassed looking Nick.

"I've been banging on your door for ages," he said, walking in confidently once Blaine knew who it was. "Didn't you hear?"

"I was asleep," Blaine muttered as he followed Nick to his living room.

"What are you doing?" Nick asked, looking around at the dishevelled room – the dropped blanket, the television on and the littered remnants of take-aways and cans of diet soda.

"Relaxing, chilling," Blaine said, a hint of defensiveness in his voice, "I don't get to do a lot of that at the moment."

Nick took the only seat that wasn't covered in litter and looked up at Blaine, his eyes patiently waiting for Blaine to add more detail. When none came he started again.

"You need a cleaner," Nick said simply.

"Look is there a reason you came to disturb my peaceful afternoon?" Blaine said, wrapping himself in his protective blanket.

"No," Nick said, "Do I need a reason?"

"No I guess not, it's just you're usually round here to tell me off or ask me to do something. It's normally work related."

Nick looked a little hurt. He hadn't realised and he smiled sadly. Blaine looked shattered, his skin looking sallow and unwashed. Nick knew he hadn't been looking after himself and the recent picture of Blaine stumbling out of the hotel two weeks ago had just been brought to his attention. Surely he hadn't been that obsessed with the job, that unaware of his friend?

"No Blaine, I'm just here," he said quietly, "How have you been?"

Blaine looked a little startled at the question and smiled slowly.

"I've been better and I certainly must have looked better," he said chuckling slightly.

"You do look a little worse for wear," Nick said smiling too, feeling more at ease, less attacked, "Good night?" he smirked.

"Something like that," Blaine said, his defences instantly up. He did not want to discuss this at all.

"Oh?"

"Just a party, the usual," Blaine said, trying for nonchalance and going back to the television but Nick saw through it.

"How did the shoot with Hummel go?" Blaine instantly sat up, his knees tucked in. "Why, what did you hear?"

"Nothing," Nick said, looking surprised, "I know I had to find out about the hotel visit the hard way but I don't have sources of gossip surrounding you Blaine."

Blaine realised how stupid he was being and relaxed a little.

"Why so defensive?" Nick asked, looking worried. "I'm not out to get you Blaine, I promise."

"I know, I know," Blaine said, realising he had sounded paranoid. "There are just quite a few people I don't trust at the moment. I guess I forgot you were one of the good guys."

Nick was hurt but didn't show it. He knew he had been pushing Blaine recently, shoot after shoot, party after party. He was merely tired and overworked and he had forgotten their warbler days and the times before things had gotten complicated. He suddenly had a brilliant idea.

"Why don't we go out tonight?" Nick said excitedly, "I'll call up a couple of the guys and suggest a good quiet karaoke bar where we can sing. Just like the good old days."

"I don't know," Blaine started.

"Come on Blaine, it'll be so different from the parties you usually go to, I promise."

Blaine thought about it for a moment, then looked at Nick, so eager and happy at the thought of a good night out and he couldn't say no. He nodded his head in agreement.

"Ok but only if you help me get dinner while I clean myself up," he said, getting up, already feeling a little lighter at having some company tonight.

"And clean my apartment," he shouted on his way to the shower.

---

Once he was changed, the prospect of a good night at an obscure bar with old friends had Blaine feeling alive, energy zinging through his veins again. Blaine was so used to slicking down his curly locks for photo shoots, people so used to seeing him in a certain way, he was able to go out to an obscure place, his hair curly but tamed with slight gel, and not really be bothered. The occasional fan would ask for an autograph or a photo if he was out and recognised but in a place such as Callbacks, where the students were young and hopeful of their own careers, they realised it paid to be casual and carefree. No one bothered Blaine as he sat at a table and waited with Nick. David and Jeff had been free, Wes too caught up with work to make it at such short notice. It had been a while since either David or Jeff had seen Blaine so he was roughly greeted with a hug as they entered and everyone stared at them and laughed.

"Gosh Blaine," Jeff said laughing, "It's true then, you really do brush up good."

Blaine laughed and tapped his arm playfully. He had missed them both, their lightness making him realise he had tucked himself away from the real world in favour of the emptiness and he could feel himself get a little teary at the thought that he had let it slip away. He made a silent promise to be better at maintaining his friendships.

They sat there for a while, chatting, laughing, catching up and Blaine finally felt like he'd never been away from them. Nick noticed the change in Blaine's demeanour and he smiled, ordering more drinks.

"I think we need to sing," Nick said suddenly, "Show these amateurs what it's all about," he chuckled.

Jeff and David instantly liked the idea but Blaine held back.

"Oh I don't know," he muttered, "I mean what if it got out?"

"What that you're a good singer and you have fun?" Nick said mocking. "Come on Blaine, live a little. In fact it might boost your career," he said joking.

"Come on," Jeff said, already standing and about to request a song from Pascal. "You only live once."

Blaine stood and laughed, thinking he'd probably regret it but he soon found himself singing Teenage Dream, like all those years before; Nick, David and Jeff in the background and soon the crowd were asking for more. Misery had everyone calling out warbler cries and laughing and no one noticed Kurt and Rachel enter.

"I don't believe it," Kurt whispered as his eyes lighted on Blaine.

"What?" Rachel asked, coming closer so she could hear above the laughter and the singing.

"I know him," Kurt said, "Although he looks totally different now," he said still shaking his head in disbelief. They took a seat by the bar, Rachel ordering drinks, Kurt unable to turn his eyes away. It was only as Blaine, Jeff, David and Nick stood down from the stage that Blaine saw Kurt standing by the bar and he froze.

Blaine stared in disbelief for a while and eventually walked over towards a smiling Kurt.

"Kurt," he said stating the obvious as he got closer. "What are you doing here?"

"I could ask you the same thing," he said smiling confidently.

"Hi, I'm Rachel." She handed Kurt his drink and took Blaine's hand in hers, shaking it. "How do you two know each other?"

"He's a model," they said together and chuckled nervously. This was a new situation for both of them and Kurt realised he was finally seeing the real Blaine again, the one that had been hidden at the party. As Blaine stood awkwardly at the bar, Kurt realised the slight blush and nervous behaviour suited him. He was in fact adorable.

"Do you come here often?" Blaine asked and Kurt smirked when Blaine realised what he had said and cringed. "I mean, do you.... This place...."

"Yeah, I've been here before but only once or twice. Rachel goes to NYADA," Kurt said smiling kindly.

"Oh that's great," Blaine said. "Right I'd better get back to my friends," he said nervously after an awkward pause. "I mean they'll be wondering where I got to."

"Oh yeah, see you around Blaine," Kurt said. Blaine turned slightly, nodding his head in recognition of Kurt's words but not knowing what to say in reply. This was a completely alien feeling to Blaine. No man had ever made him feel disarmed and so nervous. Blaine, the confident model who oozed sex appeal and charm, who could make any ordinary human melt was now a puddle of goo. Kurt Hummel who could see right through his façade and pulled him up on it suddenly made him feel alive with something akin to butterflies in his stomach and bubbles under his skin. He returned to Nick in a daze.

"Was that Hummel I saw you with at the bar?" Nick asked incredulously.

"Yeah, Kurt," Blaine said, drinking slowly from his glass.

"Oh it's Kurt now is it?" Nick said smirking slightly. Blaine looked up when he noticed.

"No it's not like that," Blaine said blushing again, "I just said some embarrassing things last night that I want to forget."

"Oh, like what?" Jeff asked casually.

"Didn't you just hear the part about wishing to forget," Blaine said downing his drink. He saw Kurt move to his own table with Rachel and the idea that Kurt's lasting impression of him would be last night's comments, his hard lips on his own and whispered pleas in his ear made Blaine stand, clunking the glass back down on the table.

"I'm going to sing again," Blaine said and Nick and the others looked up at him in surprise. Before they could reply he was off. Kurt could see him stand and approach Pascal again and he didn't have long to wait to hear what he was going to sing. The choice was quite a surprise to Kurt who sat forward in his seat, his mouth slightly open.

*When you were here before*

*Couldn't look you in the eye*

*You're just like an angel*

*Your skin makes me cry*

Blaine tried not to sing directly at Kurt, his voice smooth enough to sink into Kurt's bones and stay there. A few people at the bar seemed to recognise Blaine as he stood there and they whispered to themselves, checking they were correct.

*You float like a feather*

*In a beautiful world*

*I wish I was special*

*You're so fucking special*

The use of the swear caused Kurt's breath to hitch and he couldn't believe Blaine had chosen this song, such an antithesis of what they both stood for in their professions that Blaine seemed to be offering a proverbial middle finger to the world.

*But I'm a creep, I'm a weirdo*



*What the hell am I doing here?*

*I don't belong here*

*I don't care if it hurts*

*I want to have control*

*I want a perfect body*

*I want a perfect soul*

Kurt smiled slightly. He knew Blaine had a perfect body but being a model you always worried it would be taken away, would disappear and you would be left with nothing but a personality that no one was interested in. Kurt knew there was more to Blaine than his cocky comments and sex appeal but he was actually intrigued enough to have a proper conversation now, if Blaine allowed him to get that little bit closer.

*I want you to notice*

*When I'm not around*

*You're so fucking special*

*I wish I was special*

*But I'm a creep, I'm a weirdo*

*What the hell am I doing here?*

*I don't belong here*

*Whatever makes you happy*

*Whatever you want*

*You're so fucking special*

*I wish I was special*

*But I'm a creep, I'm a weirdo*

*What the hell am I doing here?*

*I don't belong here*

*I don't belong here*

Kurt applauded, after a beat of silence, when everyone else joined in too. Those that had recognised Blaine seemed to look confused. Why was this model singing about being a creep and a weirdo when he clearly had everything he had ever wanted? But Kurt understood and Rachel looked closely at Kurt and leant in closer to whisper in his ear.

"He's a little strange," she said, "I like it."

Kurt laughed. He decided he'd make it easier for Blaine and get new drinks for himself and Rachel and sure enough as Blaine came down from the stage, he walked towards Kurt and leant on the bar.

"So what do you think?" Blaine asked, just a hint of worry was evident in his voice, a lot of his confidence returning as he had sung.

"Oh it was impressive I guess," Kurt said shrugging his shoulders, well aware that Blaine was covering. "I've seen better."

"Oh of course Hummel," Blaine said laughing and Kurt smiled. The use of his surname was starting to do things to Kurt. "I'm sure you have. Care to show me how's it done?"

Kurt rarely refused a challenge. Rachel's challenge of Defying Gravity and his later win with Bring Him Home brought out his inner diva but he had thought he was above such petty competitions now. He didn't need to show everyone how awesome he was, they should already know but as he looked at Blaine's cocky expression, remembering those pink lips on his own the night before and how intoxicating it had felt to be so close, he could only try to match the confident smile.

"Oh I could show you how it's done in my sleep," Kurt said. "You want to see the real Kurt Hummel now Anderson? Think you can handle this?" he said, pointing one fantastic finger along his own jutting collarbone and chest, skimming down his thigh. Blaine's eyes followed the finger, making him swallow. He suddenly wanted to be that finger.

"I think I can handle it," Blaine said, though he swallowed again. Kurt nodded and walked up to the stage, whispering in Pascal's ear. He stood facing the crowd, the piano playing and he smirked slightly as Blaine stood by the bar, eyes transfixed.

*I've seen the world*

*Done it all*

*Had my cake now*

*Diamonds, brilliant*

*In Bel Air now*

*Hot summer nights, mid July*

*When you and I were forever wild*

*The crazy days, city lights*

*The way you'd play with me like a child*

Kurt's voice was mesmerising. Blaine knew his voice would be high, but he couldn't comprehend how beautiful it was, just like his perfect complexion and blue grey eyes, and he stared straight at him. No shame, no fear now. He wanted Kurt and he didn't dare shy away from the feeling.

*Will you still love me*

*When I'm no longer young and beautiful?*

*Will you still love me*

*When I got nothing but my aching soul?*

*I know you will, I know you will*

*I know that you will*

*Will you still love me when I'm no longer beautiful?*

It was almost like a challenge and Blaine suddenly panicked that he wouldn't be able to do it. He wanted desperately to show he was more than Kurt had assumed, more than the persona he had created but he didn't really know how. The thought of everyone discovering him for the fake he was scared him more than anything.

*I've seen the world, lit it up  
As my stage now  
Channelling angels in a new age now  
Hot summer days, rock n roll  
The way you play for me at your show  
And all the ways I got to know  
Your pretty face and electric soul*

*Will you still love me  
When I'm no longer young and beautiful?  
Will you still love me  
When I got nothing but my aching soul?  
I know you will, I know you will  
I know that you will  
Will you still love me when I'm no longer beautiful?*

*All that grace, all that body  
All that face makes me wanna party  
He's my sun, he makes me shine like diamonds*

*And will you still love me  
When I'm no longer young and beautiful?  
Will you still love me  
When I got nothing but my aching soul?  
I know you will, I know you will  
I know that you will  
Will you still love me when I'm no longer beautiful?*

Kurt's applause actually out-weighed Blaine's and Kurt's stunned expression made Blaine want to completely lose all control and fall hard. Blaine remained at the bar as Kurt approached, his expression questioning what he had believed to be true.

"So what did you think?" Kurt asked with just a hint of shyness behind the cocky expression.

"I think you're beautiful," Blaine whispered and although Kurt had heard it thousands of times before from the sycophants and photographers, the comment from Blaine made his face flush in embarrassment. Blaine took the chance.

"Do you want to escape?" he asked, and Kurt had the feeling he was asking to escape so much more than just the bar. He swallowed nervously and nodded.

## **Chapter Six**

*"Do you want to escape?"*

The words seemed to hang like an invitation as Kurt nodded. Blaine made his excuses to the others but Kurt seemed able to relay the reason he was leaving early to Rachel through a single look. She understood immediately.

As they prepared to leave the bar, Blaine grabbed his hand with just a look back to check that Kurt was following and the quiet of the street outside and the glare from the street lights shook Kurt from his reverie, looking at Blaine's fingers linked with his own.

"Where are we going?"

"A surprise," Blaine said without turning back and Kurt skipped slightly to keep up and make sure he was level with Blaine and no longer trailing behind. Blaine paused to look at their hands and blushed slightly.

"Sorry I didn't mean to take you away like that," he said a little sheepish, "Did you want to leave? We can go back if you want to make a night of it with your friend or..."

"It's fine Blaine," Kurt interrupted, smiling kindly, "You asked if I wanted to escape and I did."

Blaine smiled – a warm genuine smile that Kurt decided suited him and was probably very rare. He was intrigued.

"So where are you taking me?" Kurt tried again.

"Nope, no can do," Blaine said laughing slightly. He took them both on the subway and they walked some more without Blaine relaying anymore information. Blaine seemed to take pleasure in the silence and Kurt didn't want to disturb it with idle chat so he waited. He had a while to observe and think about the different sides of Blaine he had met and seen over the last few weeks and he wondered whether he reflected so many different characters himself. His head started to hurt.

"What are you thinking about?" Blaine said laughing and Kurt's eyes rose to meet Blaine's that were watching with amusement, light and laughter in his eyes.

"You," Kurt said simply, "I don't understand you."

It seemed to wipe the smile off Blaine's face and bring him to reality with a bump. He paused then his lips twitched slightly.

"I guess I'm hoping that tonight might be different, that I can explain myself a little."

Kurt searched his face for any insincerity and found none. It was on the tip of his tongue to say a cutting remark only to save himself the embarrassment of being without words and unsure of himself. He found himself at a loss often with Blaine and felt a little disarmed. He decided he would see how the night played out.

They soon reached Blaine's chosen destination and Kurt looked up at the tall building, expecting the place to be locked to visitors, it was getting a little late.

"The Rockefeller Center?" Kurt asked as Blaine pressed a simple code by a side door and opened it, allowing Kurt to enter first.

"You have a personal code?" Kurt asked, visibly impressed.

"I know someone," Blaine said shrugging although Kurt could tell the cocky comment masked a very real sense of embarrassment.

They walked past security and indicated that they were going up the escalator.

"This is where you're taking me?" Kurt asked, unsure whether to be impressed that he could see the place at such a late hour, when all other patrons had gone home or to wonder what could be so special about a place he had visited loads of times before.

"Yes and no," Blaine said simply, indicating that they were going to the 70th floor, the very top. "You may have seen the observation deck before but this will be something very different."

He gave no more of an answer as the elevator continued its journey. Kurt could feel his stomach rise and sink with the elevator as they moved up and he tried to remember the last time he had been to the center, deciding it must have been years ago. He had never seen the observation deck and wondered about its

view. It took a surprisingly long time to get right to the top but as the doors opened, Kurt tentatively left the cosy box as Blaine hung back, wanting Kurt to see first.

Kurt crept out as if it was a sheer drop rather than a circular protected view and he inched closer to the barriers as he saw New York go further and further outwards. It seemed to be endless – the little lights, the big buildings aglow and blinking at the top – despite the darkness there was a sea of lights and if you looked close enough some came on while others were flicked out. Kurt's breath hitched at the sight and Blaine smiled that he could show him something new and vast in the little world they occupied.

"Wow," Kurt breathed, "It really is big up here."

"Or down there," Blaine said chuckling.

"I don't want to think about that," Kurt said averting his eyes from the vastness below. "How can you be allowed up here so late?" Kurt turned slightly, taking his eyes from the view.

"My friend does security here and I've had parties up here before after hours so I know the code. Security is here all night and they recognise me." Blaine tried to sound nonchalant but Kurt was having none of it.

"Why do you want to gloss over what you can have here, your privileges?"

"Because I shouldn't really have it, it's all because of what I look like, all because of a brand and what I can bring to the place. Nothing more, nothing less." Blaine looked out at the view ahead, creeping forward to lean slightly on the railing. It would be impossible to do anything dangerous here so protected was their view but Kurt flinched slightly anyway and inadvertently came closer.

There was a comfortable silence as they watched the world. It looked like it was detached from everything else, the world ahead solid and straight, unfeeling and cold and it brought a kind of peace over the outdoor area where they stood. It seemed life went on regardless and not for the first time, it made Blaine realise how small and insignificant he really was in the grand scheme of things.

"Did you always want to be a model?" Blaine asked without looking at Kurt who stood solidly next to him, unmoving and continuing to search the world below.

"Not really, it just sort of happened." They continued to stare below, words travelling between them, nothing else.



"How?" Blaine asked.

"I was auditioning for NYADA as was my friend Rachel and although we both got accepted my headshots drew attention when I first came to New York and someone from my faculty recommended I send my pics to someone she knew. The rest is history."

"Did you have a chance? Did you consider saying no?"

Kurt thought for a moment, the question appearing very weighty. He had considered declining but he had felt foolish. It had been his dream to sing for so long and to finally see his way to achieving it was overwhelming but modelling had seemed such a big opportunity that he hadn't felt he could decline. Looking back he felt that it would help his career in the long run but as time wore on he realised his dream of singing had faded and a bigger picture had engulfed it. His smaller dream seemed trivial and immature in comparison.

"I did consider saying no but I guess I felt ungrateful and that I should take opportunities when I can. I thought the rest could wait, that I had my whole life ahead of me to catch up. Now it just seems so very far away."

"So you don't like the job?" Blaine asked carefully.

"No it's not that," Kurt said, looking up at Blaine for the first time since creeping closer to the view. "I do like what I do and the things I get to experience but I guess I needed to feel that little bit more attractive and special and I never really considered that that comes at a price."

"What price?" Blaine whispered as if he already knew.

"I don't know really," he said feeling a little lost, "I guess it doesn't really matter what you seek and how you find your self-worth. It's all surface, no feeling and it's not really what I value and feel is important. I want to be more than the perception."

"What do you want to be?"

"Loved," Kurt said instantly, "For my flaws and imperfections, for my hatred and anger, for my passion and energy." He looked at Blaine's honey coloured eyes, could almost see something swirl and water there and he whispered in the air between them.

"I want to be fully known and understood, not for my beauty but for everything else in between."

"I think beneath your beautiful is worth searching for," Blaine said, his eyes pools of honey as he searched Kurt's face.

"But that's not what the world values," Kurt whispered as if he thought that Blaine was mad.

"I know," Blaine said smiling kindly, "It can be our little secret."

## **Chapter Seven**

"Do you really hate the job that much?" Kurt asked after a while, the traffic below buzzing and clanking. They continued to stare at the world below, not at each other.

"No not really," Blaine said, "I think I hate what it means. I hate that I'm loved despite being horrible, I hate that I'm revered for good genes. It's like I want to be the worst possible man I can be, just to prove that they're all wrong."

Kurt looked at him carefully without saying a word and Blaine instantly felt like he was being judged. He took a step back, distancing himself from Kurt and the notion that he should better himself.

"Don't look at me like that," Blaine said, almost scowling.

"Like what?" Kurt said quietly, much more interested in how Blaine was reacting than how he appeared to Blaine.

"Like you judge me and think badly of me," Blaine said, "I'm not so different from the rest really; I'm just honest about how it's changed me. Everyone else pretends they are perfect while doing drugs or starving themselves. I'm honest about my hang-ups and demons."

"Are you?" Kurt said suddenly, his eyes wide as if to question Blaine's very truth. Blaine was surprised.

"Yes, I am what I am."

"Oh really," Kurt sneered, suddenly sick of the whole conversation. "One minute you're all over me like a bad rash, desperate to get in my pants then you hate me for being perfect and make my life a misery. Now you appear honest and contrite, careful of your words and intelligent. Which is the real Blaine?"

Blaine didn't know. He was surprised that someone had called him up on it – his persona, his way of protecting himself from harm, was fragile and changeable he knew but to have Kurt question him on it, completely threw him.

"Who are you?"

"I don't know," Blaine said simply, feeling miserable leaning on the railing, his hands together in front of him.

"Well maybe you should find out," Kurt said, suddenly kind, his eyes blinking in the slight glare of the lights in the city.

"I don't know how to do that," Blaine said quietly, ashamed to admit that much to someone he barely knew. He looked up at Kurt, wondering what power this boy had over him. He wasn't much younger than Blaine but he already seemed to know so much about the world and Blaine himself. Perhaps Kurt didn't need educating about the fickle business of beauty and perfection; maybe Kurt could teach him a few things.

"Do what you love, see the people that are important to you, visit the places that inspire you," Kurt said, "See what comes out of life when you really live it."

Blaine considered what was said and nodded.

"Will you help me?" Blaine looked like such a sweet, lost boy that Kurt almost did a double take. Surely this wasn't the cocky, obnoxiously sexy guy from the party a couple of days ago?

"I don't know what I could help you with but I guess I could try."

Blaine smiled – a small smile that seemed to catch him unaware but his eyes twinkled and for the first time in quite a while he was looking forward to the future and not wondering when he would next see his face in a magazine.

---

The magazine spread for GQ came out the following week. Glorious black and white shots showed both their debonair and playfully carefree sides. In many of the shots Kurt looked so wonderfully collected, with just a hint of unruly detachment as if he didn't want to belong to the austere and composed world. With just a hint of stubble, Blaine looked carefree in his suspenders, his pink sunglasses hanging over the side. Kurt looked at the photo and knew that he was the only one that knew the truth – it was all a charade and well acted. They both looked in a state of undress, as if returning from a party and Blaine looked over the spread, sitting alone in a coffee shop and noticed Kurt's practiced poses and serious expression. He wondered if Kurt ever got ruffled or annoyed.

They had exchanged numbers that night atop the Rockefeller Center but neither of them had contacted the other as if afraid to start a conversation and see where it might lead. Blaine knew that the ball was in his court, it would have to be his decision to take Kurt up on his offer to help him but as he had returned to his lonely apartment, Blaine knew he wouldn't do it. As he walked home alone his mind whirled and seemed to slow down during the journey as if it was finally processing the conversations that had taken place at 850 feet. He couldn't believe he had revealed so much of himself to Kurt and just like after a painful chemical peel on the face, he wanted to wrap himself up protectively and hide away.

Nick and Tabitha were both pleased with the final photography spread and both got in touch with Blaine separately to tell him. Tabitha had heard only good things about the feedback from the shoot and already interest had increased for the two of them. More offers came in for Blaine, making Nick busier than ever and in a position to be extremely picky. Blaine maintained that he would need a week off before his next big shoot and Nick agreed understanding Blaine's need for a rest. There was to be a party for the next issue of GQ and they were both invited but Blaine had a sudden urge to hide away. He tentatively text Kurt to ask if he was going.

**Are you?**

... was the only reply Blaine got, which infuriated him. He felt like a teenager all over again checking if his friend was going somewhere before he went there himself but the idea of going alone suddenly scared Blaine.

**Yeah, I'm going.... I think**

... was Blaine's reply and he nervously waited for Kurt to answer.

**Ok, I'll go.**

Even more infuriating.

---

Blaine arrived deliberately late, determined to enter only when Kurt had been there for a while. It felt pathetic but he had a tendency to feel disarmed around Kurt and he couldn't afford to feel any more isolated or exposed. As he entered Kurt was surrounded by people, the only indication that it was Kurt was the chestnut hair that he could just about see above all the people. Kurt was smiling politely at

someone's comment and clearly discussing the pictures that Blaine and Kurt had shot together. Blaine had only known Kurt a few weeks but he could already tell that Kurt was only being polite and that he secretly wished all the sycophants away.

As Blaine came closer, Kurt seemed to be able to sense him approach and he looked up, his eyes softening slightly when he realised he had arrived. Kurt gently touched the girl's arm in front of him, whispering something close but she seemed to feel placated and he walked away from the group, coming straight towards Blaine.

"You came," Kurt said simply.

"Yeah. I thought I'd better show my face."

Kurt looked around, finally taking in his surroundings and imagining how Blaine was viewing it all.

"It's quite a party isn't it?" Kurt said after a while.

"Yes," Blaine said, looking around at the people he barely knew, beautiful and austere. "It feels a little crazy here actually." Blaine avoided Kurt's eyes as Kurt was looking at him carefully.

"You want to escape again don't you?" Kurt asked, a slight laugh to his voice and Blaine looked at him harshly as if he'd been caught doing something he shouldn't.

"Well maybe I should do the rounds, drink a few drinks," Blaine said nonchalantly, shrugging his shoulders and he turned, leaving Kurt wondering what had just happened.

---

Blaine didn't really know. He soon flittered around the room, grabbing drinks where he could, talking to people he didn't really know and the following day he wouldn't even remember their names or what they had discussed. Kurt had conversations with people he knew, including Tabitha who invited him to do another shoot soon, already sharing her ideas. He stayed for a few hours but as soon as he was bored and he could feel the loneliness creep in, he left. It would hit him every so often in a crowded room, away from people he would normally gravitate to, the feeling would travel along his arms like a tingle and he would glance at the people he was talking to and know that he needed to leave, that it wouldn't matter if he stayed. He took one more glance at Blaine, who was talking to Sebastian and laughing as if he had just said

the funniest thing he had ever heard. Kurt swallowed the bile he could feel rise at the sight of Blaine putting on his mask again and not for the first time he wondered if Blaine would ever want to be real enough to have a proper friendship with anyone. As he grabbed his coat he considered the many ways Blaine confused him and how he had revealed little snippets of himself only to guard himself again with an iron mask that was irrefutable and solid. He didn't have time for someone who was so unsure of himself, that wouldn't trust a single person and that was scared to reveal a shred of the real person beneath the shallow shell. He was just about to leave when he heard a ruckus behind him and found Blaine and Sebastian stumbling out of the party room, laughing hysterically and trying to hold each other up.

Kurt stood still and watched as they went to retrieve their coats, hands touching and Blaine's lips wandering over the skin of Sebastian's neck. He seemed to be having a lot of fun until he suddenly noticed Kurt and he stopped.

Time seemed to freeze as he realised Kurt was present and watching them carefully. Blaine's eyes were fixed on Kurt, a serious expression on his face, his brown eyes, golden and swirling with desire and need. His hands continued to grip Sebastian but Sebastian seemed to sense that Blaine's attention was suddenly diverted and he stopped too, glancing from Kurt and Blaine in curiosity.

Sebastian whispered something in Blaine's ear and giggled, obviously a snide remark about Kurt but Blaine's lips slowly twisted into some sort of smile, while the rest of his face remained impassive and controlled. He finally blinked and turned away from Kurt to face Sebastian and resumed their conversation. Kurt blinked and left.

Kurt decided to walk home, his insides twisted and nervous. There had been something fleeting in Blaine's eyes, something lost and troubled and Blaine had known and recognised that Kurt understood. Kurt knew everything and Blaine had at once hated it and craved to be closer. Kurt walked home determined he wouldn't let Blaine Anderson bother him, that he wouldn't want to save him but as he fell asleep that night, he knew that there was so much more to the obnoxious model he had seen that night.

---

There were photos the following day – photos of Sebastian and Blaine leaving the party and getting into a taxi, giggling and wobbly, clearly intoxicated, clearly horny. Hands wandered in the pictures, which only caused more giggles and one picture showed Sebastian leaning in close to whisper into Blaine's ear, warm

and intoxicating, Blaine's face one of desire and want. Blaine was asleep late in the afternoon when Nick banged on his door to alert him of today's news.

"Urgh, what are you doing here?" Blaine said as he finally opened the door to an impatient Nick.

"This," Nick said, brandishing the newspaper and showing Blaine the photos. "This is why I am here."

It took quite a while for Blaine to look over the photos and understand what he was seeing, his eyes flitting from left to right until he thought he might throw up.

"What is this?" Blaine asked but Nick only made his way inside, pushing past a confused Blaine who was trying to hold himself up by the doorway. He slowly followed him inside.

"Blaine I don't know why you keep doing this?" Nick said, his face in his hands as he looked up from the sofa. "What is going on?"

Blaine sat down opposite him, looking down, not sure how to answer.

"Well?"

"Oh for fuck's sake Nick, you're not my dad," Blaine said, suddenly exasperated and annoyed, "This has nothing to do with you."

Nick looked up, hurt and anger etched clearly on his face. He looked over Blaine's dishevelled appearance and sighed.

"Ok Blaine," he said calmly, "I get it, you're having some kind of breakdown and I wouldn't be a good friend to you if I didn't notice and mention it. I worry about you, this looks bad, this looks really bad." He held up the newspaper again but Blaine merely closed his eyes, trying to shut out the world.

"You do realise what this will do to your career?" Nick said calmly and as Blaine didn't answer he continued. "You'll look trivial and sloppy. People will suspect you have a drinking problem, or worse an issue with drugs. They'll think you won't turn up on time or will be a liability. This doesn't look sexy or beautiful Blaine."



"Who the fucking hell said I wanted to look sexy or beautiful?" Blaine shouted, standing up despite his banging head. "I don't Nick, I don't want to look sexy and I'm certainly not beautiful, so shut the fuck up and get out of my apartment. Get the fuck out!" He pointed to the door for emphasis and Nick just looked at him, his mouth open, his eyes wide. He'd never heard Blaine shout at him like this, they'd never had such a row.

"Blaine, I don't understand why you're doing this," he whispered, trying to come closer to Blaine as he stood. Blaine brushed off his hands that were trying to reach out. "I just want to help."

"No you don't," Blaine said, suddenly quiet and defeated, "You don't want to help, you merely want to judge and demonise me." He lowered his head and Nick thought he could hear tears in his voice. "Just leave Nick," he said, "Just leave."

Nick watched him carefully then decided there was nothing he could do if Blaine didn't want to talk and he walked to the door. He turned just before the door, back to Blaine who was still standing with his head lowered, his arms hanging weakly by his side.

"You and Kurt were invited onto the Late Show with David Letterman but considering the circumstances of last night I declined on your behalf. I thought you might need some time to recover and make up excuses for your behaviour. I'll see you in a few days." And he left, Blaine sinking to the sofa upon hearing the door click shut, his head in his hands and he let the tears fall, hot and fierce upon his face.

---

Kurt had been asked as a last minute add-in because some famous actress was unable to make her interview and Kurt had been available. He was rushed into the studio which was to film the interview that afternoon so it could be aired that evening. He was barely acknowledged as he entered, plonked in a make-up chair and his hair tidied and styled. He was whizzed off again to the green room where he waited for his announcement.

The interview was pleasant and David Letterman, despite the short notice and the young appeal of Kurt's modelling, seemed to know quite a lot about Kurt's burgeoning career. He asked him about his current spread for August and GQ magazines and what it was like being a model. Kurt answered the questions with modesty and good-humour but soon the questions turned slightly more personal and regarded his co-worker, the inimitable Blaine Anderson.

"So what is it like working with him?" David Letterman asked, smirking slightly as if he knew the answer Kurt would give. "Quite a diva I hear."

"Slightly," Kurt said, smiling pleasantly, giving the impression that he found it quite appealing and didn't have any issues with the dark-haired model. "He is quite a pleasure to work with really," he said, as if he himself was surprised, "He knows his job well."

"Anything to say about the rumours regarding Sebastian Smythe?" he asked.

Kurt had seen the photos, of course he had, but he didn't want to discuss such personal matters on a television show. He smiled politely.

"No, it's not really my place to say," he said calmly.

"So Blaine Anderson is really nice and you love him dearly?" David Letterman said sarcastically, hoping to get a rise out of Kurt and finally succeeding.

"No I wouldn't say that," he said smirking, "I hate his guts but I can't deny that he *is* obnoxiously sexy." He laughed to make it quite clear he was joking and the audience loved it, clapping and showing their approval with laughter. The interview was soon wrapped up and Kurt left the studio, again feeling like he could now remove the shell and wallow at home, huddled next to his boyfriend arm to watch repeats of Gossip Girl.

---

He didn't realise Blaine would watch the interview at home, alone that night. He was huddled on the sofa, buried amongst his blankets and feeling too warm but not wanting to expose himself anymore than he had done that week. He knew that Kurt was only saying those things to get a laugh from the audience, to shut up the interviewer but it hurt that Kurt would think badly of him, even slightly. To hear him say that he hated his guts made Blaine's stomach sink painfully and he didn't really know why it bothered him so much. He couldn't remember much about the night before but he could remember Kurt's blue piercing eyes searching his own as he prepared to leave with Sebastian. He knew he was being judged slightly but it was more than that. Kurt seemed to know everything that he was trying to hide. Blaine had panicked when Kurt had asked him if he wanted to escape, because he *had* wanted to escape. It had been obvious to Kurt, and Blaine had wanted to run and hide. Not from the people that surrounded him at the party, the

sycophants and fellow models, rather he had wanted to run from Kurt, who already seemed to know him so well. He could feel his wall go up and he had flirted with Sebastian, knowing exactly what that would lead to. Blaine wasn't naïve enough to think that Nick didn't have a point about his image but he also knew that it would cause no lasting damage. As much as they didn't want to admit it, companies secretly loved a little bit of gossip and scandal surrounding their models, as long as it didn't damage the brand. Blaine knew the only damage he would cause would be to himself.

As he watched Kurt on television, deftly answering questions and appearing polite and educated, he was jealous that Kurt didn't appear burdened with the business. He was successful and Blaine only felt alone and pathetic, sitting on his sofa in only his underwear, amongst take-out wrappers and empty soda cans.

He would wallow no longer. He left the mess but returned to his bedroom to shower and change. He would find out Kurt's address from Tabitha and go over there. He had to prove himself and if Kurt had admitted on national television that he found Blaine sexy, then there was hope for them yet.

## Chapter Eight

Blaine knew that if he went to Kurt's place looking scruffy he would know he'd spent the whole day in his underwear. He knew that if he turned up immaculately dressed that Kurt would be suspicious too, perhaps under the impression that he was trying to impress him. He couldn't win.

He finally opted for a casual but 'god-damn sexy' outfit - his tight dark jeans and a polo shirt – casual but tight enough to show he hadn't been lounging about all day. He took a deep breath outside the building that Tabitha had told him would house Kurt if he was in. There was no buzzer so he walked up to the loft where he knew that Kurt shared a place with Rachel. The stairs gave him an opportunity to breathe and take in the height of the apartment, the big space, the slightly dank smell of old apartments that were designed for storage rather than living. Blaine wondered why Kurt didn't get a nicer place, more money, better neighbourhood, as he stood watching the sliding door, no courage, no oomph to finally knock and enter.

Kurt was preparing to go to bed inside the apartment. Having finished making a cup of tea and dressed in his pyjamas he was walking past the sliding doors to his own bedroom area when he thought he could hear a loud sigh.

Rachel was out and although he hated to admit it, he didn't really enjoy going to bed without someone there to help lock up and turn out all the lights. He would often imagine noises – creaks, cracks in the walls, ghosts, burglars - and he felt foolish that he had imagined something again. He continued walking to his bedroom when he heard a scuffle of feet and another loud breath. Someone was there.

Grabbing a heavy blunt object from the backless bookshelf, Kurt approached the door, placing his hot tea to one side. He slid the door open swiftly, lifting the object high to threaten whoever was behind the door. Before Kurt saw him, he heard the loud squeal of fear and panic.

"What are you doing?" Blaine screeched in his rarely used higher register. "Is this how you greet all your visitors?"

"What are you doing here?" Kurt shouted, finally putting the object down, his hands shaking with sudden adrenaline. "Why were you outside my door breathing heavily?"

"I was about to knock," Blaine said quietly, suddenly aware that he must have seemed a creeper. He walked in slightly casually as Kurt leaned on the open door and inadvertently gave him space.

"And how do you know my address?" Kurt shouted again, following him into the apartment. He kept close to Blaine as he wandered around as if he might suddenly steal or break something precious. Blaine didn't know where to sit or what to do and he suddenly started crunching his knuckles. He realised what he was doing and stuffed them in his pockets.

Kurt looked over Blaine, his body tensed, his hands in his pockets, his gaze facing downwards and his own shoulders relaxed slightly.

"Why are you here Blaine?" he whispered.

Blaine looked up, his eyes slightly wider, not sure how to answer and Kurt had the sudden idea that he looked like a deer in headlights or worse that Kurt might be a hunter.

"I don't know," Blaine said suddenly laughing but without humour, "I had a plan on the way over here, I guess I run out of steam while I walked."

Kurt took his tea from its place by the door.

"Well would you like a drink while you decide?" Kurt asked.

"Tea, thanks," Blaine whispered, a little embarrassed that it wasn't a stronger drink to match what he knew Kurt was used to seeing him drink.

"I saw you on television tonight," Blaine said quietly, aware that Kurt might not be able to hear him from his place in the kitchen. Kurt did. He turned as the kettle boiled.

"You did? I thought you were supposed to join me?"

"I couldn't make it," Blaine said simply, not wanting to give himself away but Kurt's surly expression as he nodded in acceptance let Blaine know that he knew what had happened with Sebastian and the photos. Blaine was suddenly angry. Kurt had turned away, his attention on making the tea and he didn't trust himself not to make a comment.

"You can't help but judge me, can you?" Blaine said getting up and moving closer to the kitchen. "You hate me, can't stand my guts all because I'm better than you at your job and you know it. You stand there, looking all high and mighty, diva-like and a little precious in your monogrammed pyjamas making tea and *you judge me?*" Blaine scoffed. Kurt looked at him for a long while and he finally took a long breath, his expression cold, his eyes unfeeling.

"No I don't judge you," he said simply, "But someone should before you ruin yourself."

Blaine looked a little alarmed. "What do you mean?"

"Oh I don't mean the casual sex and the over indulgence with alcohol – that describes most models, it's what we do to survive. I mean your self-esteem, your identity, your beauty."

Blaine looked even more confused and Kurt considered that maybe he wasn't totally sober from the day before.

"Beauty?" And Kurt laughed that Blaine would fixate on that word.

"Oh not your beauty on the outside Blaine," Kurt said as if he was talking to a five year old. He took their teas and sat down on the sofas as Blaine followed. "You don't have any other beauty?"

Blaine thought about it for a moment. The only time he really felt beautiful was when he played the piano. As if his eyes were magnets they suddenly alighted on the piano in the corner of the room.

"You have a piano?" Blaine asked.

"Yeah, Rachel's dads gave it to her for Christmas. They said they couldn't be expected to visit New York without the prospect of dinner theatre," Kurt laughed.

"Rachel's dads? Plural?"

"Oh yeah, they're gay. Rachel only met her mum a few years ago actually. Long story."

"So you play?"

"I used to when I was a kid," Kurt said, eyeing the piano, "But I suppose I don't use it as much now. Do you play?"

"Yeah but I don't own a piano. My parents do but I was only ever allowed to play when I said I was practicing, never for pleasure."

"You can now, if you like," Kurt said then continued when Blaine looked up expectantly and with slight confusion. "Play I mean, for pleasure."

Blaine eyed the piano again a little suspiciously as if it would be suddenly taken away or it would disappear. It seemed a massive object despite the large space of the apartment and he realised he hadn't played for years, ever since he'd left home. He suddenly wondered if he would forget and he stood in preparation, continuing to eye it, size it up, see if he could work with the magic it might produce. Kurt looked at him carefully in silence, understanding and giving him time. He sat back as Blaine walked over to the instrument and sat down, letting his fingers walk over the keys, trying out different melodies, snippets of songs until he started playing a new song. He had that gift where hearing a song once or twice allowed him to be able to play, effortlessly knowing where to place his fingers. His parents had taught him well.

Kurt watched as he started to recognise the song that Blaine was playing. Without seeming to realise he was doing it, Blaine started to sing quietly, almost to himself and Kurt watched, mesmerised.

*You tell all the boys "No"*  
*Makes you feel good, yeah.*  
*I know you're out of my league*  
*But that won't scare me away, oh, no*

Kurt started to sing the next verse and Blaine looked up in surprise but turned his concentration back to the keys, hoping he wouldn't ruin it for Kurt as he sang.

*You've carried on so long,*  
*You couldn't stop if you tried it.*  
*You've built your wall so high*  
*That no one could climb it,*  
*But I'm gonna try.*

They sang together, locking eyes and understanding:

*Would you let me see beneath your beautiful?*

*Would you let me see beneath your perfect?*

*Take it off now, boy, take it off now, boy*

*I wanna see inside*

*Would you let me see beneath your beautiful tonight?*

Blaine seemed about to sing the rest but Kurt effectively stopped him by singing slightly louder and Blaine could only watch Kurt sing as he continued to play the piano. His eyes widened when he saw Kurt sing so directly to him as if he wanted him to understand, so Blaine watched carefully, only occasionally looking at the keys below.

*You let all the boys go*

*Makes you feel good, don't it?*

*Behind your Broadway show*

*I heard a boy say, "Please, don't hurt me"*

Kurt knew. He smiled slightly, kindly at Blaine as he continued to sing to him and Blaine could only stare as Kurt sang a promise to a guy he didn't really know and who had let him down a few times.

*You've carried on so long*

*You couldn't stop if you tried it.*

*You've built your wall so high*

*That no one could climb it.*

*But I'm gonna try*

With a final smile at Blaine, Kurt let him sing with him. Blaine could feel tears spring to his eyes at the simple pleasure singing to another guy could produce.

*Would you let me see beneath your beautiful?*

*Would you let me see beneath your perfect?*

*Take it off now, boy, take it off now, boy*

*I wanna see inside*

*Would you let me see beneath your beautiful tonight?*



*I'm gonna climb atop your ivory tower  
I'll hold your hand and then we'll jump right out  
We'll be falling, falling but that's OK  
'Cause I'll be right here  
I just wanna know*

Blaine sang on his own finally and Kurt let him give more of himself than he knew he had ever done before.

Would you let me see beneath your beautiful?  
Would you let me see beneath your perfect?  
Take it off now, boy, take it off now, boy

'Cause I wanna see inside

Knowing the song meant a little more to them, superficial models who were beautiful only on the surface it would seem, they sang together and laughed slightly. Their voices blended so well that Kurt didn't want it to end.

*Would you let me see beneath your beautiful tonight?  
See beneath your beautiful, oh, tonight.  
We ain't perfect, we ain't perfect, no.  
Would you let me see beneath your beautiful tonight?*

Blaine finished beautifully, looking once again at the keys and letting the notes play out. He stopped but didn't look up.

"Why did you come here Blaine?" Kurt whispered in the silence.

Blaine looked up slowly, carefully gauging Kurt's meaning and deciding what to say, what barrier to put up.

"I think I wanted to shout at you, tell you that you shouldn't hate my guts like you said on television tonight, even though I know you should, even though I know I'm not what you need. I know I'm way out of your league but I don't want to be and what I did last night probably wasn't my shining hour, wasn't the best decision I ever made and I – I guess – well now I'm just rambling."

Kurt had got up as Blaine had started to talk but Blaine wasn't able to look in his direction, so unsure of what he was saying and what he really meant. He looked up as Kurt gripped the piano now in front of him, his eyes boring holes into Blaine, searching him, begging him to finish.

"I like it when you ramble," Kurt said, "You seem less confident and cocky. You seem real."

Blaine smiled. "I am real," he said.

"Not all the time," Kurt said by way of explanation, "I wish you were real all the time. This Blaine," he said gesturing to the small sweet boy that sat on the piano stool in front of him. "This Blaine is real, this Blaine is beautiful."

"I'm not beautiful," Blaine said sadly, tears appearing in his eyes as he started to shake his head.

Kurt huffed out in annoyance and sat down next to Blaine on the piano stool. Blaine looked a little startled seeing him so close. Kurt's blue eyes were shining with so much clarity that Blaine felt compelled to look.

"It doesn't matter what you look like on the outside Blaine," Kurt said, "It doesn't matter what you do or what you say, when I see you and I mean the real you, you complete – I mean, I feel..." Kurt seemed to come a little unstuck and Blaine tried to help by placing his hand gingerly on the bottom of Kurt's thigh as it rested next to his own. Although it didn't relax Kurt in any way, he did seem to come to some kind of conclusion in his mind. He looked up and smiled at Blaine.

"When I see the real you Blaine," he whispered, "You move me. As I watched you sing I understood you and the only thing I want to do is...." Kurt's voice became steadily quieter and Blaine was about to ask him what Kurt wanted to do when Kurt came even closer, placed his fingers on Blaine's chin and touched his lips with his own. They moved gently and Blaine could feel himself come undone like a ball of ribbon falling down the stairs. It was so gentle and soft, so slow and sensual it made Blaine tingle and he licked his lips, causing Kurt to gasp slightly at the sensation. There was suddenly no hesitation; Kurt's hand found the back of his neck as Blaine pulled him closer by the waist.

They continued to kiss for quite a while until they run out of air and they parted – lips cherry red and eyes blown wide in wonder.

"You kissed me," Blaine gasped out, almost accusingly.

"Yes," Kurt said, blushing but laughing, "You didn't want me to?"

"Oh fuck of course I did," Blaine said as he realised what he had said, "But I thought you hated me."

"Oh I do hate the Blaine that everyone sees, I meant what I said but I know by now that that's not you, I like the real Blaine quite a lot actually." He blushed at the admission and Blaine laughed.

"Well I'll have to show him a little more then," Blaine said stroking Kurt's arm up and down, up and down and Kurt could feel his head loll to the side slightly, exposing a little of his neck, which Blaine eyed and admired. Kurt had closed his eyes and Blaine took the time to kiss his neck gently, causing Kurt to smile in pleasure.

"Care to stay and watch a movie?" Kurt asked quietly, keeping his eyes closed as Blaine continued to kiss along his neck. He noticed the sudden coldness and opened his eyes to find Blaine sitting up and looking at him in awe.

"You want me to stay?"

"Yes, were you planning to have your way with me and disappear in the middle of the night?"

Blaine looked a little shamed and a blush crept along his neck as he realised that was the usual state of affairs. Kurt smiled then laughed at Blaine's awkwardness.

"I'm afraid I won't make it easy for you," Kurt said, "If you wanna get with this, you need to work for it. I won't be messed around. I'm not like Sebastian and the others – if you're serious about wanting to show the real Blaine then you should stay and show me more and I don't mean the model Blaine who gets naked at the drop of a hat and uses sex to cover himself."

Blaine looked like he was considering his options, his eyes flitting over Kurt's perfect face and his inquisitive expression.

"I'll stay," Blaine said, "But only if we get to kiss some more."

Kurt grinned. "Of course."

## Chapter Nine

Having only met Blaine once, Rachel had instantly seen the chemistry between them but she knew it was much more complicated than simply getting together. Kurt seemed to want to protect himself around Blaine, as if he worried his heart would break and Rachel felt a little protective towards her best friend here in New York. She knew that Kurt didn't really let anyone in easily and hadn't had any relationships beyond casual dating so to walk in to her apartment later that evening to the sight that met her eyes was quite a surprise.

She stopped just short of the sofa and watched quietly as Blaine and Kurt slept on. It had seemed that they had finished watching their movie as the credits were now running and although it looked like they had started just casually hugging, Kurt had clearly slipped so his head was now resting firmly on Blaine's chest. Blaine's breath was coming in ragged and on the exhale he was blowing over Kurt's hair, causing it to ruffle slightly. Kurt's cheeks looked sleep-warm and he was smiling. Rachel didn't make a habit of watching Kurt sleep but she had to admit that she had never seen him look so peaceful.

Without wanting to disturb them she covered them slightly in a blanket and tiptoed away, smiling to herself.

---

Blaine woke first and remained deadly still when he realised the position he was in and more importantly how tight Kurt was pressed into his side.

He wondered when a blanket had been put over the two of them and if he would be able to wriggle out of the suddenly overwhelming warmth of arms and coverings. He didn't want to wake Kurt so remained in the same position, hoping Kurt would wake soon too.

His arm was still tucked around Kurt's waist, Kurt's hair under his chin and he softly pressed his lips against the top of Kurt's head. He had time to think and look around as he waited and the thought of being so exposed to his own thoughts scared him slightly. Last night had been nice. A movie, snuggling, Kurt getting closer, tucking himself into his side. There had been kissing but more than that there had been casual conversation and laughing and finding out more. It was all so new to Blaine that as he half lay on the sofa, hearing and feeling Kurt breathe on his chest, he started to panic. He couldn't remember ever getting this close to anyone and it scared him that someone like Kurt had so easily gotten under his skin

and stayed there. Blaine only knew models and perfection, he only understood the rush and party, the shoot and the runway and although Kurt was part of that world too, he was also set apart and clean. He was too pure for Blaine and what he had done with his life since he had become adored and admired. Blaine looked up to notice that he could see his reflection in the shiny black piano that he had played on earlier and although his face was just a blurry shape he could see enough to know that he looked stern and worried.

He started to think about the boy nestled in his side and how perfectly normal the night before had felt. Blaine had never really experienced anything remotely domestic, not even at home with his parents. Cooper was so much older, he had spent most of Blaine's teenage years in LA and his parents were so busy with their own high-flying careers that they were hardly home and allowed Blaine to live independently. Blaine had loved it at high school, his often empty house the perfect place for parties as long as he tidied up before his parents got home but now as he looked back, he realised he was just an incredibly lonely boy trying to fill the hours. He had never been any good at spending time alone and the coping techniques he had learnt as a teenager crept into his adult life too. Having sex had seemed like nothing to Blaine, just another way to pass the time and although he had lost his virginity to a sweet young guy who also had been new to the whole modelling industry, that too had seemed casual and just bros helping bros. Sex was uncomplicated as long as both parties knew the score; relationships were the tricky part even a friendship involved divulging new and private information. Blaine had only old friends who knew him from high school or casual acquaintances that didn't really know him at all. He kissed the top of Kurt's head again gently and realised that he had revealed more of himself to Kurt than anyone. Before he had any time to wonder what magical powers of persuasion Kurt had in his blue eyes, he could feel Kurt stir on his chest and murmur something muffled and cute as he woke.

Blaine remained perfectly still until Kurt seemed to realise who he was lying on and he got up tentatively, blinking awake adorably. He sat back and yawned slightly.

"Have you been awake long?" Kurt said, his voice a little croaky.

"Not that long," Blaine said, "I didn't want to disturb you."

"Did you put the blanket on us in the night?"

"No," Blaine said slightly worried at the implication.

"Oh I guess Rachel must be home."

"Right," Blaine said, a little startled and getting up to stand next to the sofa but now looming slightly over Kurt who remained seated. "I better be going then I guess."

Kurt's eyes widened in surprise then he seemed to understand and simply nodded.

"Right," Kurt said coldly, "I'll see you out."

He got up and made to start walking to the door but noticed that Blaine hadn't followed and he turned by the door to see Blaine had remained by the sofa, looking a little lost and confused.

"You're not going?" Kurt asked.

"No," Blaine said a little uncertain. He looked like he didn't quite recognise his own voice and had no idea what he was saying. "Can I stay for breakfast?"

Kurt let his mouth twitch slightly upwards into a smile. Blaine's hair was sticking up in places where he had rested on the sofa and he looked so small standing there, defenceless and vulnerable.

"Ok," Kurt said quietly feeling his guard coming down again and he started preparing batter for pancakes as he asked Blaine to make the coffee. They completed their assigned tasks in the kitchen relatively quietly, only exchanging preferences for breakfast foods and opinions on good coffee. Kurt allowed Blaine to adjust to this new situation, understanding more than Blaine gave him credit for and waiting patiently until they were eating pancakes and sipping coffee a little later.

"So who were your friends the other night? The ones you sang with?" Kurt asked conversationally.

"Guys from high school. We went to Dalton Academy together and sang in the Warblers. Nick's my agent now but I met him there too and he's my oldest friend."

"That's good," Kurt said, "You need someone you can trust in this business."

Blaine felt instantly guilty. He had treated Nick badly these last few days he knew, argued, shouted and basically acted like a right diva but the great thing was he knew that Nick was just looking out for him and always cared. He would need to apologise and make amends. Blaine soon started sharing Warbler stories

and Kurt laughed in all the right places. Kurt mentioned his own glee club with all its politics and explained that it had given him some of the happiest times of his life. Nationals, trophies, friends, a purpose, a place to belong – it had made high school a lot easier to deal with and it had changed everything. Without it, Kurt would never have imagined he could have made a success out of anything, let alone modelling and he knew its importance. Sharing that with Blaine, who seemed to understand exactly what he meant, was a relief. Kurt had started to feel like he'd forgotten the importance of singing in his own life recently and he realised sadly how much singing had been hidden in the sidelines of his life.

Blaine found himself relaying his dreams when he had been at high school and Kurt laughed in understanding and revealed how similar his had been. Blaine's gaze softened as he stared at Kurt laughing, his eyes crinkling beautifully and his face alive. It was nice to share simple conversation with someone, relay dreams and ideas, share breakfast, help clear up and laugh. Blaine couldn't remember a time when he had felt so chilled.

"Any plans for the day?" Kurt asked after a while when despite the coffee he suddenly felt a little drowsy.

Blaine realised he had no plans for the next week and as he looked over at Kurt's expectant face – he'd asked a question and was awaiting an answer – Blaine thought of an amazingly crazy idea.

"No plans but how about a holiday?" Blaine asked in a rushed voice, suddenly aware of the ridiculous question and hoping Kurt hadn't heard. No such luck.

"A what?" Kurt asked, sure he'd misheard.

"A holiday," Blaine repeated, confidently ploughing onwards. "I need a holiday and I'm not working for the next week. What do you say?"

Blaine looked expectant. He knew the idea was crazy and that Kurt would have to be crazy to say yes but he continued to stare hopefully as Kurt considered his options. He didn't have any work in the next week either and the prospect of a holiday as an actual vacation and not a work holiday appealed greatly to Kurt but then he realised what he was considering – a holiday with a near stranger, someone that barely knew himself let alone whether he could be trusted. Kurt gulped.

Blaine became a little worried at the delay, the silence hovering over them like a cloud and his face fell. He brought the barriers up and smiled confidently, getting up from his comfy position at the kitchen table.

"Sorry stupid idea," Blaine said, "You barely know me, I get it. Well I'll probably go somewhere and see you around then Kurt at the next party or whatever..." His voice trailed away, noncommittally avoiding Kurt's gaze. He had nearly reached the door.

"Wait Blaine."

Blaine stopped, his heart stopped too.

"I'll go."

"You'll go?"

Breathing resumed.

"Yes," Kurt said simply, no emotion, nothing revealed, "I need a holiday too and it'll be nice to get away from New York. Where did you have in mind?"

"Italy," Blaine said off the top of his head. Kurt smiled.

"Sounds lovely."

---

It took no time at all to book the small villa and flights. It seemed when you had money and a few connections holidays were easy to book and although the villa was small, really only big enough for two, it was easily enough for their needs and it had two bedrooms.

Nothing was mentioned about sleeping arrangements but Kurt breathed slightly easier knowing he had that option for privacy. Blaine looked so carefree and excited about the idea of his first real holiday, no work, no hassle that Kurt hadn't wanted to bring up his concern. Their relationship was so new and undefined that Kurt worried it was merely paper-thin and would crumple with any storm. Sexual relations between them seemed a childish worry and Kurt didn't want to appear innocent but he also knew his father's voice was prevalent in his thoughts. He would not consider what Kurt was about to do a wise and considered choice.



Kurt knew he was crazy but something about Blaine, at least the Blaine he had seen last night and this morning and who had revealed so much more of himself over the last few weeks – that Blaine he knew he could trust and spend time with. He wasn't worried, in fact he knew he needed the break and Lake Como sounded perfect.

Flights booked for the following day, villa chosen and transfers sorted, all Kurt and Blaine had to do was plan and pack. Blaine said he would sort the taxi for the following day and they agreed times to meet. Blaine hovered by the door, not sure what to say or how to relay his gratitude that Kurt was coming with him after all. Kurt seemed to understand.

"I'm looking forward to it Blaine," Kurt said, stroking his arm comfortingly and Blaine felt his eyes close and a hum escape his mouth.

"I know this is crazy Kurt," Blaine said, still a little scared to open his eyes and catch Kurt's gaze, "But you do something to me and I just want to spend more time with you." He opened his eyes, his confession made and Kurt smiled.

"I know, me too," Kurt said but after a while he had to ask before Blaine left and the holiday started the following day. "What are we Blaine?" he whispered, blushing slightly.

Blaine looked over Kurt's face, so beautiful in its imperfections as well as its straight lines, chiselled cheekbones and piercing blue eyes that seemed to search Blaine now. Blaine could only be honest.

"I'd like us to be something Kurt," he said simply, "Anything you want but I need something."

Kurt smiled slowly, knowingly, his eyes twinkling.

"Can we try something important and life-changing? Can I see the real Blaine and kiss him and watch him come undone without the perfection and the beauty? Can we have that kind of something?"

Blaine considered what Kurt was saying and smiled slowly. That sounded scarily intimate and completely new and he felt suddenly like he was jumping.

"Yeah, that sounds perfect as long as you're there to catch me?"

Kurt nodded and grinned.

## Chapter Ten

Blaine woke unseasonably early the next morning strangely excited but almost twitching with nervous energy. He felt a weight on his shoulders as if the success of the trip was entirely dependent on him and his attitude and he knew something simple might ruin what might prove to be a perfect trip. He didn't want to leave Nick and his home without alerting someone of his holiday but the thought of ringing and explaining the situation to Nick after he had so horribly shouted made the sinking feeling in his stomach return. He knew he would need to apologise to Nick, explain his actions, maybe even confess a little of his motives and nuances of character and he couldn't do that. Nick and the Warblers had seen quite a few things in Blaine's life but nothing had ever been mentioned about how he'd changed – it was always left unsaid but Blaine knew they disapproved and wanted their old friend back. If he explained now, if he apologised it would seem empty and trivial. He wanted to prove himself and Blaine thought of the holiday as a perfect way to realign again, make sure he knew himself again before he came back and had to pick up the pieces.

He knew leaving now when the newspapers were full of stupid pictures of his misdemeanours was pure escapism and shirking of responsibility but he knew Nick would be able to deal with it much more smoothly if Blaine was away somewhere. Blaine would need to be secretive especially after Kurt's comments on television the night before – it would look a little suspicious if they suddenly holidayed together – but it would do him good to be sensible. He knew the holiday was beneficial in more than one way.

Ringling too early for Nick to answer, Blaine left a message on his phone explaining that he was going on holiday with a friend and wouldn't be home for a week. He mentioned that he would appreciate secrecy in the matter and he apologised for his behaviour and the avoidance of the consequences. He would explain everything when he returned.

With all the last minute arrangements and packing it was only as he was in the car that was to take Kurt and himself to the airport that he realised. He was going on holiday with Kurt. With Kurt. Alone.

It wasn't that he was worried about their new relationship or even the act of defining said relationship but he did realise he was sinking fast and that if he wasn't careful Kurt could change everything in a matter of days. Kurt had changed things, he thought to himself as he watched New York whiz past through his window. He'd never been so introspective about his character and why he did the things he did before meeting Kurt. Kurt made him want to be better but also tried to show him that there was good already

there, buried underneath all of Blaine's layers. Blaine didn't feel bad about himself when he was with Kurt, unlike time spent with his parents, but he did want to be more, he did want to strive towards something other than the selfish model persona he liked to project to the world.

Blaine's driver soon honked outside Kurt's apartment and Kurt waved happily through the high window when he could see Blaine stand outside. Blaine had got out in preparation to help with his luggage and Kurt had to do a couple of trips in the dodgy lift to get his suitcase downstairs.

"We're only going for a week remember," Blaine said, chuckling slightly as Kurt gave him a pointed stare.

"You should have seen the original packing I did about three hours ago. This is the reduced version," Kurt said, putting the luggage in the boot of the car. When it was finally arranged to his liking and the boot closed, Kurt stood by the car and looked up at his apartment.

"Worried about leaving?" Blaine asked quietly and so close, Kurt could feel his slightly warm breath on the side of his neck.

"Not really," Kurt said, still looking at his apartment, "I think the change will do me good."

"Good," Blaine said, pulling Kurt around so they faced each other. "I can't really explain why I'm looking forward to this holiday so much.... I just know I need to get away and I need...."

"Peace?" Kurt whispered in the space between. Blaine's eyes flitted between Kurt's eyes and he smiled. He was about to say that he needed Kurt but 'peace' fitted just as well.

"Yeah, peace," Blaine said and he knew he could already see it in Kurt's eyes, swirling in the beautiful blues and greys of his irises. He moved a little closer to tentatively place his lips against Kurt's. They kissed for a few seconds, Kurt smiling into the kiss until they realised the driver was waiting and they sat in the back of the car which took them to the airport.

They arrived at JFK airport late afternoon and checked in and got boarding passes. They ate an early dinner, keeping conversation light and carefree. Blaine didn't seem to find any kind of peace though until they boarded their flight, seeming to search constantly for people to distrust and expecting others to come towards him and demand attention. If anyone recognised them they kept their distance and Kurt found himself sitting next to Blaine on their flight and placing his hand gently on Blaine's jittery knee.

"We're fine," Kurt said calmly, "No one knows us and if they did it doesn't matter."

Blaine looked at Kurt's calm expression, his eyes wide and honest and he felt his breathing slow down. He shook his head and smiled, acknowledging his silliness.

"I know, sorry."

"Don't apologise, we're just enjoying a holiday and once we're away, we're really away." Kurt looked a little mischievous, his eyes alight and Blaine's smile grew bigger.

"You'll like the villa then," Blaine said, "It's remote but so beautiful. I can't wait to show you."

"Have you been there before?" Kurt asked.

"Only once but it was wasted on the person I went with. I'd much rather spend time with you there. I get the impression you'll appreciate it."

Kurt knew not to push the subject of that other person and took the opportunity to look at the air stewardess and her instructions. After a while the silence allowed them to look out the window at the ocean that soon lay below and it looked so vast and untouched that Blaine realised he really was small and insignificant in the grand scheme of things. He smiled to himself and Kurt noticed.

"What are you thinking?"

"Just that I'm small," Blaine replied upon turning around to see Kurt's inquisitive expression, "Just a dot really."

"Well at your size, yes," Kurt quipped, laughing at Blaine's pretend shock and hurt expression.

"You wound me Kurt, you cut me deep."

Kurt tickled him playfully, causing Blaine to laugh and ruin his serious expression resulting in an adorable pout which made Kurt smile. Conversation was easy between them and Kurt would look intently at Blaine as he spoke, sharing trivial things about modelling contracts and people he had met, but sharing so much more than that, and he would smile. It was nice to finally have someone in the industry that recognised it for what it truly was – inconsequential and trifling. Everyone was so beautiful that it would sometimes

make Kurt's teeth ache and almost like someone putting nails down a chalkboard. Words from perfect lips tasted like sugar but were painful to hear in their stupidity. Kurt had always known the truth, had tried to avoid spending any significant time with models, so he knew he had given the impression he was aloof and unapproachable. Blaine, it seemed, surrounded himself with the industry and seemed to know nothing else. It made him so unhappy that Kurt wondered what the appeal was. As laughter calmed down, as Blaine finished retelling his worst modelling experiences of carrot sticks for lunch and having to roller skate when modelling a car despite being a complete novice, Kurt asked him what was bothering him.

"Why do you stay in the world of modelling on the outside? Why don't you just do the job and escape, why go to the parties?"

Blaine looked carefully at Kurt, surprised to be asked such a question and not really knowing the answer.

"I don't really have anything else," Blaine said his head almost spinning with trying to find an answer. "I came into it all so young, I didn't really know what I wanted to do with my life and I got so swept away with it all. It was easier to go along with the tide, join the party, live the dream. It took me a while to realise it was never really my dream, not really me. I guess I didn't really think until recently."

"Do you want something more now?"

"I don't really know," Blaine said honestly, "I guess I want the chance to find out and know for myself."

"Well a holiday sounds perfect then," Kurt said smiling and Blaine looked a little surprised at his pure and honest face. He knew that he was only a couple of years older than Kurt but he felt so ancient but not so wise in comparison.

"How do you do it? How do you separate the world and the job?"

"I guess I separate it too much. Modelling is only a job to me and it doesn't bother my real life at all, mainly because I don't let it. I don't really have any model friends but I've not made any new friends either. I have my oldest and greatest friends but no one to challenge me or to make me think - until you came along."

Blaine smiled. He had worried that he was continually demanding and needing more from Kurt – wanting and taking - but now maybe they could support each other. Kurt's beautiful eyes, green in the light reflected from the window, twinkled with realisation and the light made his skin glow. Blaine felt his mouth open slightly and he shook his head. Kurt raised one impeccable eyebrow.

"Beauty is a funny thing," Blaine said, shaking his head in puzzlement, "I mean is it all science? Why are we chosen as beautiful, why are we considered the ideal?"

"Are these rhetorical questions or do you expect answers?" Kurt asked slightly amused at Blaine's earnest expression.

"Yes," Blaine said emphatically, "I need answers. I think I've struggled with the answers for so long."

"We're ascetically pleasing to the eye, that's mathematics apparently. The lines of the face, the symmetry, the contours but I guess what is beautiful one year might change the next year."

"Exactly," Blaine said as if he had known the answers all along, "But do you know the truth? Do you know when I've seen you look at your most beautiful?"

Kurt shook his head, his stomach still jittery with the idea that Blaine thought he was beautiful.

"The behind-the-scenes shot from that August man photo shoot. They used a photo for the party that didn't make it to publication but it was shown at the venue anyway. It wasn't part of the supposed shot and you weren't looking at the camera but god you were so fucking beautiful. I saw it and knew."

Kurt didn't ask what he knew, his face portraying his need to know and his desperation for Blaine to continue.

"You were laughing at someone in the back of the shot, your scarf around your neck and your hands clasped. Your face was so alive with laughter lines, your face so animated that it was the perfect shot because it wasn't the perfect shot. Does that make sense?"

Kurt nodded in understanding. He knew the shot Blaine meant, had remembered the blown up picture at the party that hadn't made it to the publication that was never meant for the magazine. He had wondered at the party why they had used it to adorn the room when it wasn't to be used but he had thought nothing of the picture since that night. He could understand why Blaine liked the shot – the complete opposite of a model's craft, the picture represented everything that modelling was not.

"I know we're new to this Kurt," Blaine said suddenly, clasping Kurt's hand in his, "But I promise, if you let me, to help you remember how perfectly imperfect you are."

Blaine's eyes seemed to twinkle slightly with the promise and Kurt smiled so bright that a few people around them seemed to realise something important was happening and stopped to stare. Kurt leaned forward slightly and kissed Blaine's cheek sweetly, finally resting his head on Blaine's shoulder, their hands remaining clasped together between them.

---

The flight was long and by the time they arrived it was morning in Milan. Kurt and Blaine had drifted to sleep soon after their conversation but woke a few hours later to watch a film and chat. When they sorted their luggage, they picked up their rental car and prepared for the nearly two hour drive to Vareena, a village on Lake Como.

"I'll drive," Kurt said emphatically when the car rental papers had been signed. They were both allowed to drive the vehicle when it was in their possession but one look at Blaine, slight purple bags under his eyes and his eyes shiny with tiredness, Kurt knew he was the most awake out of the two of them.

"Are you sure?" Blaine asked politely, "I really think I'll be ok when I get some coffee in me."

"No it's fine. It's not a long journey and I can sleep when we get there."

They soon got on their way and Kurt would occasionally look over, Blaine leaning slightly back in his adjusted seat, his eyes closed, his bow lips slightly apart. His eyelashes fanned out across his face, his eyes slightly fluttering in his sleep. Kurt wondered what he was dreaming and whether he would remember the dreams upon waking. Not for the first time, as he glanced over occasionally whilst driving, he realised Blaine truly was beautiful. He got to thinking about what Blaine had said earlier and hoped that Blaine wouldn't think he was shallow as he appreciated the beauty lying by his side in the rental car. It wasn't that Kurt admired the lines of his face or his symmetrical features, rather it was the simple peaceful expression that rested on Blaine's face as he slept. He looked so innocent that Kurt knew Blaine was young and during the day piles of unwanted rubbish that life threw his way managed to make its way onto his face and ruin its simple innocence and untarnished beauty. There were no lines of worry or creases of fear upon Blaine's face now and Kurt knew what Blaine had meant about that shot at the August party after all.

They arrived at the villa, Blaine waking up just as they arrived, his body seeming to recognise the change in pace and he was able to explain to Kurt where to park so they could walk the rest of the way to their

villa. As soon as they pulled up and got out of the car Kurt stopped talking, his sentence left unfinished, his mouth open.

The day was breathtakingly beautiful. The sun had risen on a new day, the breeze cool enough to ensure the heat was not uncomfortable and the tourists not yet arriving. Kurt looked around the village as they started to take their luggage to their villa, Blaine confidently leading the way. Kurt tried to take it all in, his sleepy head stirred awake by the images around him and Blaine turned round to face him when they had arrived. He laughed.

"We have all week to appreciate it, I promise," Blaine said laughing at Kurt's awe struck face.

"Another promise Blaine?" Kurt said quietly, in all seriousness, "I think this has the possibility of being my favourite place in the whole world and you might just be my favouritest person for bringing me here."

"Favouritest isn't a word," Blaine said winking in mock pedantry.

"Well I think we need to start a new dictionary." Kurt took his eyes away from the ethereal beauty around him and kissed Blaine sweetly on the lips.

"I think we should see the villa first and sleep for a few hours," Blaine said quietly.

"Ok," Kurt said, nodding as Blaine took all the luggage and led the way.

---

The villa was perfectly sized for their needs and so set apart that they could feel completely free from everything but so close that they could get to town whenever they wanted. Blaine dropped the luggage in the lounge and followed Kurt who was taking the grand tour of the place.

"This terrace is amazing Blaine," Kurt said as he sat on the seat overlooking the lake. "The view is amazing." It actually seemed to take his breath away as Blaine followed his gaze out to the water. The landlord had left them pink lemonade in martini glasses waiting on the table of the terrace where white curtains, tied at the sides, surrounded their view. The table was adorned with white flowers and the mountain loomed in the distance, making Kurt completely understand the overwhelming feeling of smallness that Blaine had felt earlier as they flew over the ocean. They were next door to the most beautiful sight Kurt knew he would ever have the pleasure to see.



They sat there sipping lemonade for quite a while in silence, appreciating it all, sinking in real beauty and Kurt felt his eyelids droop as the peace fell over them both.

"You should get to bed," Blaine said as he watched Kurt battle to stay awake. "I had a little sleep as you drove, you haven't slept in hours."

"I know but I don't want to waste the day," Kurt said pouting.

"We'll just sleep for a few hours I promise," Blaine said, already standing and starting to lift him up which was relatively easy, so tired and lax in his arms.

"Ok, ok," Kurt whined, his lips pouting adorably.

Kurt was so sleepy he didn't seem to notice they were heading for the same bedroom until they arrived with the luggage and he looked around.

"Oh sorry," he said blushing slightly, "I should check the second bedroom."

He wandered to the other side of the villa and found the yellow beds. It seemed the master bedroom, all nicely adorned with a red bed spread, a lovely picture of hearts above the bed was really the main bedroom. The much bigger second bedroom was designed to contain a maximum of five people with a bunk bed and three single beds. The covers were an old yellow and the art work minimal. Kurt smiled a small grimace without Blaine seeing.

"Well I guess this will suit me fine," he said, walking forward to decide on a bed to occupy.

"No Kurt this is ridiculous, this bedroom is grotesque compared to the master bedroom. You should have that one, I'll be fine in here."

"No Blaine, you haven't allowed me to pay for this trip so far, the least I can do is to let you have the best bedroom."

"No I insist," he said, already trying to move his luggage into the second bedroom although Kurt tried to stop him.

"Why don't we just share?" Kurt asked after a while, already feeling sleep threaten to take-over. "We can argue about it later, I just want to sleep." He looked about to plead and Blaine laughed.

"Ok, left or right?"

"Always left," Kurt said confidently.

"Good." Blaine didn't say anything about the fact that he rarely slept on a particular side, never having anyone to occupy his bed for longer than a slight doze and preferring to spread out like a starfish. He didn't notice Kurt's hesitation by the bed as Blaine stripped to his boxers and crept under the covers. He looked up from the pillow and smiled at Kurt's nervous attitude.

"I've seen you change before, remember?" Blaine said laughing lightly and Kurt blushed that he was nervous at all about something so silly. He quickly stripped to his underwear too and went under the covers.

They stuck rigidly to their sides until Kurt stretched his shoulders and turned to face Blaine in the bed.

"Thanks for taking me here Blaine," he whispered, as if the walls could hear them and he might disturb the peace.

"You are most welcome," Blaine said smiling and opening his arms invitingly. Kurt snuggled closer, dipping his head in the warm area between neck and shoulder. He kissed gently, smiling into the skin and making Blaine melt slightly. It was already proving to be so different from his last visit here and Blaine found his eyes drifting closed as he wrapped his arms more fully around Kurt who lay nestled into his side. Kurt fell asleep there, warm and comfortable and so full of the beauty that he saw in the lake and in the warm brown eyes that had promised him the most amazing holiday.

## Chapter Eleven

Kurt really hadn't meant to sleep longer than a few hours but the short drive after the long flight and constantly being on edge about Blaine had Kurt quickly relaxing in his arms and sleeping for hours. By the time he woke, the sun was lower in the sky and the bed empty.

He got up and took a scan around the room to find suitcases empty and put to one side as well as one of the pink lemonade glasses by his bed. He was a little confused, rubbed his waking eyes and stood to put on a pair of yoga pants to lounge around in. He often found himself confused about Blaine but he had known coming on this trip was a leap of faith that Blaine would settle, not worry so much about the job and all his insecurities. He wondered if he was being too trusting, that maybe one day Blaine would break his heart but as he walked out of the bedroom to see Blaine surrounded by grocery bags and steaming food he watched and knew that Blaine's guard was finally fully down. As Kurt entered, a slightly flustered Blaine turned round and his face, though slightly panicked, stretched out into a broad grin which clearly reached his eyes.

"You're awake," Blaine said happily, "Please help me," he grimaced soon afterwards, knowing his plans were going awry and Kurt chuckled, coming closer.

"What are you cooking?"

"Just a simple Spaghetti Carbonara but the sauce has congealed slightly and I can't seem to manage the pasta and the sauce at the same time," he said, nearly whining but Kurt seemed to know what to do instantly and grabbed more cream and seasoning, stirring and mixing to form the right texture. Blaine took a step back and watched in awe as Kurt deftly took control. Blaine had only glanced at Kurt as he had come in, quickly returning to his cooking in an effort to salvage what he could, but as he stood back he could appreciate the view he had before him. Kurt, wearing nothing but yoga pants looked beyond perfect, the skin of his back smooth and pale with not a blemish but there were sleep lines along his back where he had stretched and Blaine had to touch and feel. He tentatively came closer, Kurt concentrating on the sauce before him, not noticing the hand reaching out to feel along his silky skin.

"Oh," Kurt said, the word coming out as a strangled moan and Blaine leant in closer, his whole arm surrounding Kurt's waist.

"Your skin is amazing," Blaine whispered as he leant closer to kiss Kurt's shoulder, the bare skin underneath his lips feeling sleep-warm.

"Blaine, I need to do the sauce," Kurt said, stirring madly in order to stay focused on the given task.

"But you taste so much better and you came out looking like that," Blaine said taking a slight step back but looking lasciviously at the man in front of him.

"Looking like what?" Kurt said cheekily, knowing full well what Blaine's darkened eyes revealed about his thoughts.

Blaine paused slightly, taking another step back to be able to fully appreciate and describe the sight in front of him.

"Fottutamente bello," Blaine said, his words coming out quickly and he swooped in to pepper Kurt with kisses so gently that it tickled Kurt's neck and caused sighs of pleasure to escape.

"Blaine the dinner...." Kurt said, his head falling back as Blaine continued to kiss and nip the expanse of pale skin on show.

"You can't come out like this, all beautifully perfect, all sleep-warm and not expect me to notice, to come closer, to touch what I can. I'm only human Kurt," he said, single words between kisses and tiny touches. Kurt lowered his head after a while, realising if he didn't stop now he never would.

"Don't do that," Kurt said, returning to the dinner, resolutely avoiding Blaine's eyes in case he fell again. Really that guy had wonderful lips and magical powers.

"Don't do what?" Blaine asked, instantly serious and worried.

"Make our relationship all about that, all of nothing," Kurt said, a steely quality to his voice now which Blaine hated.

"Sex? Is that what you mean?" Blaine said and Kurt looked up, noticing the offended tone and smiling sadly.

"In a way," Kurt said, finally turning the stove off. "I don't want to be just another conquest to you, another Sebastian." At the mention of a person solely related to their lives on the outside Blaine blanched and looked hurt. He nearly stumbled back onto the kitchen counter. He covered his reaction with a cough as he gathered plates and a table cloth to set the table outside on the terrace.

There was an uncomfortable silence as Kurt put the final touches to dinner, saw the effort Blaine had gone to prepare the perfect first dinner in Italy. He swallowed the guilt that threatened to rise and tumble out as an apology, as he took in Blaine's straight back and strong pose as he poured drinks and got ready to eat.

Kurt quickly changed into a more appropriate outfit for dinner and everything was taken outside to eat on the terrace where the sun was lower in the sky but not yet settled. The Alps could be seen on the horizon standing majestically and unmoving and they both took a moment to watch and admire in silence. They really were small in comparison.

They started eating, the dinner now completely restored and no one could tell it had been so close to disaster. Blaine would glance at Kurt every so often and smile sadly but nothing else was said as they ate and Kurt was considering apologising when he thought again and dropped his fork, causing Blaine to look up from where he had been staring at his spaghetti.

"Why do you do it?" Kurt whispered, "Why do you sleep around like that?"

"What do you mean?" Blaine asked, clearly confused, his eyes wide.

"I mean why put yourself out there like that, like you just don't matter?"

Blaine stared at Kurt for what felt like ages before a slight smirk graced his lips.

"I don't mean to be obvious but with the lack of any decent male material around in the real world, why not dip in and enjoy when you find them?" he said.

"But you're surrounded by beautiful men and with the nature of the job, a high percentage probably gay – why not try conversation and a real relationship?" Kurt asked.

"I have, I am," Blaine said emphatically, his tone defensive. "It's harder to find than you think."

"That doesn't answer my original question," Kurt said, "I know it's hard, I'm in the same situation so believe me I know but you don't seem like the others. You were never happy doing that, surely?"

Blaine felt exposed. He didn't really know why he'd slept around. It was easier with Sebastian because he'd never expected conversation and light laughter or domesticity but with the others it had just been about sexual needs and satisfaction. Sebastian had been convenient because it was the same person and he didn't have to hunt for it. He never really searched for anything else.

"No I guess I was never happy doing that," Blaine said sadly his eyes downcast.

"Hey," Kurt said lightly taking Blaine's hand where it rested between them on the table, "I'm not judging, I promise. You just seemed unhappy with it all and I guess I never understood why you did it."

"Or why you do it," he finished. Blaine looked up.

"No it's in the past," Blaine said, "We're exclusive right?" Blaine's voice trembled slightly at the end as if he still feared rejection and Kurt looked beyond sad that he had felt the need to ask.

"Blaine, we're definitely exclusive, as long as you're happy," Kurt wasn't asking a question though it sounded slightly like he needed confirmation and Blaine smiled sadly.

"I'm definitely happy with that Kurt," he said, "I want to be exclusive. I don't really understand what you do to me... I always feel like my skin is paper-thin around you, like you can see through everything, warts and all."

"You definitely don't have any warts," Kurt said, laughing and taking a chance to scan over Blaine's face, neck and torso as he held his fork to his mouth.

"You know you're worth so much more than Sebastian and casual fucks right?" Kurt asked after a while, Blaine in the middle of twirling spaghetti on his fork. Blaine looked up, his eyes shining to be told such a sweet thing. He nodded.

"Good, I just wanted you to know," Kurt said, continuing to eat and seeming satisfied that he had done well. Blaine watched as Kurt twirled spaghetti on his own fork and ate, completely oblivious to Blaine's eyes flitting over his beautiful face. Kurt couldn't possibly understand what he had said and how much it had meant to Blaine. Brushed aside by his own parents, now completely his own person he hated to admit

to himself how lonely he had been for so long. Kurt looked up in the silence and smiled at Blaine's face, so clear and open in the dimmer light of the lake in front of them.

Finishing their spaghetti, appreciating the gentle swish of the water and the noises of a village, Blaine soon brought out the dessert: a traditional tiramisu from a local shop and filled their glasses with wine from a vineyard not too far away.

It must have been something about the setting sun or the great expanse of mountain ahead of them but Blaine found himself answering Kurt's simple questions during the evening. Kurt didn't want to pry and it was so obvious to Blaine that he was just interested in his life story and wanted to know more so Blaine told him everything.

Kurt laughed about Burt and Carole and how they always worried he wasn't eating enough in New York and whenever they visited they would bring casseroles for him to freeze and store just in case. He told stories about Rachel and how she had been the most unexpected best friend he could ever find. Blaine found himself sharing stories of pranks and singing with the Warblers and Kurt laughed and noticed the twinkle in Blaine's own eyes, the relaxation in his face.

"What about your parents?" Kurt asked, Blaine's posture suddenly changing, "Where do they live now?"

"Still in Ohio," Blaine said simply, wanting to go back to earlier conversations, hoping to gloss over his awkward relationship with his parents.

"Do you see them often? What do they do?"

"No I don't see them often and they're both lawyers – it's how they met."

"Do you they like you modelling? I mean I think my dad wishes I did something else but is happy if I'm happy," Kurt said by way of explanation.

"I don't think they really care," Blaine said simply, the laughter lines around his eyes long gone and he stood indicating the empty glasses in front of them. "Another drink?"

Kurt nodded and smiled, recognising the avoidance tactic and not wanting to push. Blaine soon came back with the wine bottle which they finished, a warm glow appearing on Blaine's face from the wine already drunk. There was a beat of silence until Kurt tried again.

"I'm really glad my dad is ok now though, he had cancer last year and nearly died of a heart attack a few years ago so he seems to keep cheating death and reminding me how much I really need him. I can't imagine life without him."

"Gosh Kurt, that's tough. How did you get through that?" Blaine looked a little astonished. Imagining going through that himself, without needing therapy or rehab, seemed impossible.

"Good friends, family," Kurt said shrugging his shoulders as if everyone had that. "I did develop a little OCD though," he laughed, "Tapping my nose at certain times, only wearing blue. I guess things get a little crazy sometimes."

"How did he react when you came out?" Blaine asked quietly.

"I was really nervous. I saw how he got close to my step-brother when he married Carole and I always suspected he wanted a straight son, someone he had things in common with. When I told him, he said he'd known since I was three and asked for sensible heels. It was never an issue, he said he loved me just as much and he's shown it so many times over. I really am lucky."

"Yeah," Blaine said wistfully, looking at the swirling wine in his glass.

"Your parents not as understanding?" Kurt asked tentatively.

"You could say that," Blaine laughed with no real humour. "They barely acknowledged it. I was expecting my dad to get angry but he just became colder when he finally registered that what I said was true. There was a brief time when he believed he could convert me, straighten me out by bonding over cars but when that finally didn't work and I went to a Sadie Hawkins dance with another boy, he just retreated. I wasn't the son he wanted so he went away. My mum never really changed, I think she suspected all along."

"I'm sorry Blaine," Kurt said kindly stroking his hand as it rested on the table between them. "At least they're not antagonistic about it?"

"Oh yeah there is that," he said ruefully, "I guess I wasted a lot of time when I was a teenager expecting more from them and found them lacking so many times that I guess I stopped expecting. I barely see them and they don't expect me to contact them beyond Christmas and birthdays. They probably see more of me in the papers and magazines."



They sipped more wine as they spoke about Kurt's mum and his memories of her until Kurt looked up and gasped slightly.

Taking a quick look at Kurt, Blaine then turned his attention to the view. The sun had nearly set and was just above the mountain, stretched out in all directions around it, almost as if the source of light was the mountain itself. It seemed to glow and shine, the water shimmering in the drops of light emerging from the rock, like a perfect sheen.

"Wow," Blaine breathed.

"That's so amazing," Kurt whispered, "I can't believe we're here." He turned to Blaine and smiled, knowing he didn't want to be here with anyone else.

"Thanks Blaine for bringing me here," he said then turned to the water again, tears appearing in his eyes. Although the view really was beautiful, the sunset perfect, Blaine found himself watching Kurt's face as the sunset reflected on his face and in his eyes. Kurt's eyes seemed to swim, his smile serene and sweet, his appreciation of the beauty so obvious that Blaine could only stare at his profile in amazement. Blaine suddenly realised the light appeared to be shining from his face, his skin aglow and peace emanating from him and he smiled.

"Why are you looking at *me*?" Kurt said, turning to face Blaine suddenly and laughing nervously. "There's so much beauty out *there*," he said, pointing at the sunset ahead of them. Blaine simply shook his head.

"I'd much rather watch you," he whispered and Kurt blushed slightly under his intense gaze.

They watched for a while, Blaine still admiring Kurt's beauty occasionally looking at the lake view as the sun fully set in the sky, now becoming obscured by the mountains ahead. Kurt didn't notice Blaine was getting closer to him, until Blaine's arm brushed along his own, sitting closer in the wooden seat.

"I like you a lot Blaine," Kurt suddenly whispered in the near darkness, the sun the only source of light apart from the lamp in the room behind them. His eyes were twinkling as he looked sincerely at Blaine, who was mere inches from his face. He suddenly wanted to declare so much more, could feel Blaine's warm breath on his lips and came closer, brushing his own against Blaine's rose coloured lips. Blaine seemed to relax into the kiss, melt against Kurt and his hand cupped his cheek gently, something to hold onto as he fell. Kurt's skin prickled at the touch, shots of electricity shooting down his spine and then he

could fully taste Blaine's warm lips that tasted of wine, so soft and light which elicited a moan. Blaine pulled back and smiled before his lips grazed Kurt's again, this time with more pressure and urgency, making them lightheaded and dizzy. Kurt felt along Blaine's chest, his fist tightening on his shirt, balling the material into fists in an attempt to pull him closer. Blaine's lips parted nervously as Kurt's tongue trailed slowly along his bottom lip. Their tongues met and swirled together slowly like they had all the time in the world and this was just one more area to fully explore. Blaine feels like he's come undone, first through conversation and revealing so much of himself and his weaknesses and now this – a sweet, slow kiss that has him even weaker. He's not used to this: feeling and wanting, he's only ever known speed and the deft removal of clothes and getting the deed done. He maps the roof of Kurt's mouth with his tongue as his hands weave around Kurt's back, feeling the muscles stretch and move under his fingers. When they finally part, gasping slightly for air, the sun has completely set and the mountains loom over them slightly darker than the water and just as majestic as before. Blaine's eyes glow almost like cat's eyes of amber and Kurt smiles that his beauty here and now is just reserved for him and he has a whole week to find out more and settle and fall and it's glorious.

"Mi toglì il respiro," Blaine breathed.

## Chapter Twelve

*"Mi toglì il respiro," Blaine breathed.*

Kurt's lips felt numb in the cooler air, his blue swirling eyes searching for something like insincerity in Blaine's gaze, but finding none. He smiled slowly, taking in Blaine's awe-struck face and wondering if his own heart had stopped beating in the near darkness. Kurt almost went to walk back to the inside of the apartment to turn on more lights but he realised the magic would morph into something more tangible and he wasn't ready for it to dissipate. Blaine looked on at Kurt's face and leant in closer to place kisses on Kurt's cheek and as Kurt angled his head to one side, exposing his neck, Blaine barely grazed his lips along the pale skin as if he didn't want to spoil what lay underneath his lips. The dull glow just over the mountain created a porcelain sheen over Kurt's skin and made him sigh. Kurt closed his eyes as a wave of pleasure threatened to overtake him and he fought to hold in a low moan.

"I know you want to take things slow," Blaine murmured over the delicate skin of his neck, "But I don't know..." He seemed to struggle to form words, so engrossed in what he was doing and Kurt didn't mind, loving what Blaine was making him feel. Despite the warning earlier and wanting to learn more about Blaine before he took more of a trusting step, the desire to feel and touch almost overwhelmed Kurt too and he keened as Blaine nibbled a little harder, making his back arch in pleasure.

"Oh," Kurt moaned and Blaine closed his eyes, letting his mouth taste as his fingers explored the soft skin that rested underneath Kurt's shirt. Blaine had been angled slightly higher over Kurt but at the moan he lowered his body to rest on him, his erection straining and Kurt moaned louder. It seemed to shake Blaine awake as if he had been dreaming and now was fully aware of his surroundings. He parted from Kurt, leaving a slither of air between their bodies, his lips red from kissing such perfection and Kurt opened his eyes and held in the moan that threatened to escape at the sight above him. Blaine looked so gloriously undone that he wanted to dress him only to undress him slowly and do it all over again. His shirt was open wide at the top revealing his little muscled chest but slightly protruding collarbone and his amber eyes shone in the dim light of the fading sunset. He looked amazing.

"I think maybe we need to stop," Blaine whispered, looking over Kurt's face, searching for any reason to continue but Kurt got his breath back and nodded. His brain kicked in, the edge of reason returning despite the promise of glory and he stood slowly as if to make the decision final.

"Maybe you're right," Kurt whispered. He took in the mountain before him and sighed in contentment, Blaine already wishing he had been so wrong instead. Kurt seemed to think of an idea and looked back to Blaine.

"How about a walk? The paths here are supposed to be fantastic and I'm not remotely tired after such a long nap."

Blaine smiled that the night wasn't over nor that he was banished to his own room and he got up, holding his hand out for Kurt to take. Kurt took it gently and smiled nervously, the romantic gesture not lost on him at all and making him melt slightly more than the kiss had done moments before.

---

Despite the late hour, the darkness of the streets, Kurt and Blaine could still work their way through the streets of Varenna, the cobbles and high steps leading them through narrow alleys separating houses and what appeared to be little art galleries. One particular walkway was lined with paintings of Lake Como and religious buildings nearby, the red handrail helping them to gain the correct footing as they walked up ragged and uneven stone. Daffodils and potted plants adorned small windows and Kurt instinctively grabbed Blaine's hand as they walked, not realising the significance for Blaine, who had never held anyone's hand since he had been a child crossing the street. Kurt looked this way and that, his mouth open at the simple beauty and Blaine smiled that he could still appreciate it all. A simple vacation, one without work and no one knowing who they were, gave them anonymity that they had missed in the hustle of New York life. In the evening heat they could still wear shorts and T-shirts and feeling the warm ghost of a breeze on their arms they came a little closer, arms brushing together and smiles shared as they took in the simplicity and wished for easier times when they returned. A few people taking night-time strolls themselves, nodded politely when they met Kurt and Blaine on the walkways and it felt nice to be a part of the community even for a short time.

Finding another walkway, this time closer to the lake itself, the path manicured and maintained, another red handrail guarding tourists from plummeting to the lake below, they walked along until they found a deserted alcove, a cube of stone with archways on each side overlooking the lake. They rested hands on the ledge of the cut away windows, boats that were docked on the calm waters blocking part of the view and watched, deserted now in the cooler evening.

"It's what you said before about beauty," Kurt whispered in the stillness, his posture remaining the same, his eyes on the water ahead. "It's all so simple, not manufactured, not posed or fake; just a true reflection of a culture and community. It's appreciated because it's not ruined. I don't really want to come here during the day when all the tourists will snap their cameras and come closer in search of beauty. I like it just the way it is now."

Blaine didn't know what to say; just looked at Kurt then through the window as if seeing it for the first time. He knew Kurt was right, that beauty was here simply because it was here and not designed that way. The older architecture, the simple houses, the narrow walkways all made Blaine think of simpler times before super fast travel and multiple choices. They stood in silence for a while, appreciating it and waiting. The time didn't drag, just stilled as they watched – nothing happened, no rivers crossed just things understood and known for what they were. Kurt turned slowly upon hearing Blaine's breathing change in the stillness and was a little shocked to find tears work their way slowly down his cheeks in the half-light.

"Blaine?"

Blaine couldn't speak, his head shook from side to side for a moment, his eyes never leaving the water until he felt a little more composed. He faced Kurt eventually.

"I feel a little like I've grown, I know that's silly," Blaine tried to say but it came out too quiet and rushed, Kurt barely understanding until Blaine repeated. Blaine couldn't really describe it but he felt overwhelmed and a little annoyed that he had begun to let himself fill with hate while beauty carried on in the world. How had Kurt managed to keep so sane and appreciate life for what it was? Why was Blaine always so tempted to push the truly great things in his life so far away?

"Do you know when you're at your most beautiful?" Kurt asked quietly after a while and Blaine, unable to answer just shook his head, wondering what Kurt was going to say. "When you sing, even when it's a sad song or self-deprecating something shines out of you and I know you for real, like everything else is washed away. You standing here, you know now too and I like the Blaine standing here: everything else stripped away and you're perfect, just the way you are now." Kurt looks at Blaine's eyes shining with unshed tears and they seem bigger somehow in the dim light of the water. He looks like a little lost boy standing there, looking to Kurt to be understood and taken care of. Kurt gives him a hug in the cube shaped alcove, alone and set apart from the lake. He parts from him slowly, untangling Blaine's arms that had clung around his back and now hang loosely along his waist. He places gentle kisses on his forehead and as Blaine closes his eyes, he kisses along his cheek and jaw finally resting his lips on the thin and

precious skin of his eyelids. Blaine gasps at the sensation and feels himself melting, clinging closer, hoping that as Kurt takes him apart, he can start to build him up again and make him a little more whole.

Blaine doesn't know how long he stands there and is ministered to, the kisses along every inch of skin on his face until they are walking home and silently they let themselves into their apartment. Kurt walks them to the bedroom – the master bedroom adorned with a red duvet cover and pictures of hearts – and undresses Blaine just as carefully as the kisses just moments before. As every inch of skin is exposed, Kurt kisses every part as if he is rebuilding and appreciating what was lost before. Blaine feels himself grow hard at the gentle touches but it is beyond sex, he just concentrates on the feeling and he realises that Kurt is painting him with his lips, touching and making him come alive in ways he had never been before. He had come before but now he feels and is treasured. Completely naked he is walked slowly to the bed and lies down on his own, only to see Kurt start to undress slowly with no trace of awkwardness. Kurt is not ashamed of his own body like Blaine had supposed and the absence of arrogance from Blaine's eyes causes Kurt to smile that he too is adored simply for who he is. He feels around the bed for the thin sheets as he lifts them up for both of them to trickle underneath. The light from the hallway causes a sheen like moonlight to fall along the exposed shoulder and arm of Blaine and Kurt kisses it gently, smiling at the lovely warmth underneath his lips. They know it is just a nap, a beautiful way to end a perfect evening but lying there naked, unashamed and simply adoring they start to kiss, slowly and without desperation. Kurt knows Blaine can feel his hardness between them as it presses against his thigh but tonight isn't about sex, this is more. Blaine has never wanted someone as much as he wants Kurt but suddenly he wants to feel even more exposed than he already is. It's not about 'getting off'. The slow touches, the careful ministrations, the gentle kisses, prolong the glorious torture. Both hard and pressing on the other, they touch agonisingly slowly but with his eyes now open Blaine takes in the show of skin beneath his fingers. It's not about screwing his eyes shut and just allowing intense pleasure to take over, not like with Sebastian. He wants to see, wants to understand what is happening and know that Kurt is feeling it too.

And he is. His eyes shine bright, his smile beautiful as he is touched. Time seems to slow until they get a little closer and feel a little more. Touches get quicker, kisses wetter and lower and it's not quite enough. The careful ministrations get more needy and Kurt is suddenly desperate to feel. He moans loudly near Blaine's ear, which he thinks might just drive him over the edge and Blaine lowers his hand over Kurt's hardness. They have taken so long to treasure and adore, to kiss and touch that now they give each other permission to touch lower, to feel the strong muscles and contours of their bodies, they take and time speeds up, sensations threaten to overwhelm, moans loud, arching of backs and they come separately, eyes open, mouths wide, sighs of pleasure escaping.

Despite the stickiness and the sweat starting to prickle along their skin, they come closer, legs tangled together, hands roaming along each other's back. Blaine looks at Kurt, already sleepy but looking so happy and content that Blaine melts and he smiles, hoping that he can deserve the love etched on that sweet face.

## **Chapter Thirteen**

Kurt woke late that morning, the sun streaming so brightly on his face he was a little surprised that he had stayed asleep for so long without noticing. He blinked awake and realised he couldn't move his limbs, so encased in another body and a little sticky from the heat but the slight movement allowed a slither of air between them. He looked up to find Blaine slightly raised above him on the pillow and looking down at him, his amber eyes aglow and twinkling with happiness. It was a truly beautiful sight and made him smile.

"Good morning bello," Blaine said happily, "Did you sleep well?"

"Mmm, yes," Kurt murmured, the sound muffled in Blaine's neck as he kissed him there. "Have you been awake long?"

"Not too long, I didn't want to disturb you so I ended up watching you like a creeper."

Kurt laughed, a deeper grumble along his chest, causing a tickle along Blaine's own chest.

"Breakfast?"

"Sounds lovely."

Blaine gave Kurt a light smattering of kisses along his cheek and jaw and jumped up, a spring in his step and Kurt smiled as he watched him put on a pair of boxers and walk confidently to the kitchen clearly showing his modelling expertise. Kurt waited a few minutes before donning his own underwear and walking out to the kitchen to watch. Blaine was engrossed in his task, making coffee, pouring orange juice and preparing batter for pancakes. He didn't notice Kurt watch, so Kurt leant on the door frame and drank the sight in. He smiled knowing that Blaine didn't show this domestic side very often and it was more precious because he finally got to share all this with someone else. He walked further into the room after a while, causing Blaine to look up.

"Oh I wanted to surprise you when it was all finished," Blaine said pouting.



"Don't be silly, I don't expect waitered service all week Blaine. This is your holiday too and the pleasure is in enjoying as well as helping." Kurt came up beside Blaine as he was pouring the orange juice and felt along the firm skin he found on Blaine's side. Blaine shivered and closed his eyes.

"Oh someone's ticklish," Kurt said as if he'd discovered a secret and would enjoy every second.

"No just you," Blaine said smiling as he leant in to kiss along the sweet pale skin on Kurt's neck.

"You look so different to me," Kurt said taking in the sight of the two of them: milky creamy skin and the tanned shades of Blaine. Blaine chuckled.

"I think that's why I fell in love with you so easily," Blaine said easily, as if simply mentioning they had run out of milk. Kurt's eyes stopped roving over his body and focused on his amber eyes of honesty. "You look flawless, without a blemish. I look like I've been working in the yard for too long." Blaine continued to make the coffee, focused on the task at hand, chuckling to himself and not noticing Kurt's silence until he ended it.

"You fell in love with me?" Kurt whispered, a little in shock at the declaration. Blaine looked up, the first realisation that he had said something a little forward. His eyes widened then his lips lifted in a warm smile.

"Yeah," he said nodding, "Does that bother you? I know it's a little soon, but I'm definitely fa-" He had no time to finishing before Kurt pounced, his arms weaving around Blaine's shoulders and kissing him fiercely. Blaine smiled into the kiss, gripping Kurt's back as close as he could.

"So that's ok?" Blaine said, chuckling as Kurt parted from him and he could continue to make the coffee.

"Yeah, that's ok," Kurt said laughing as he made the pancakes.

---

Breakfast or brunch was gloriously simple as they watched the mountain loom from their terrace, the sun already high in the endlessly blue sky.

"This is what heaven will be like, won't it?" Blaine said simply sighing as he looped a leg over Kurt's as they sat side by side on the wooden bench.

"I don't believe in heaven but I would think it would look like this though."

"You don't believe in heaven?" Blaine asked a little surprised.

"Not really, I guess I don't really believe in a god that persecutes different groups of people and alienates others but I know people that do believe. Do you?"

"Not really," Blaine said thinking it through, "I believe in being good to people and maybe there's a glorious oblivion when we die but I guess I've never really thought about it before."

"Do your parents go to church?"

"No, they're never in town long enough but they go for special occasions."

At the mention of his parents, Blaine turned a little morose and Kurt apologised.

"No don't be silly," Blaine said, "I guess I just wish my parents were a little more like Burt."

"You two should meet," Kurt said simply, taking the time to get up and put the breakfast things away. Blaine followed him a little simply and slowly.

"You would want me to meet your dad?" Blaine asked incredulously.

"Yeah why not?" Kurt asked, "I guess that's a bigger deal to you than it is to me."

"I guess I never saw myself as suitable enough to show the parentals."

"Well you brush up pretty good and I know the rest is bravado and we'll work on that."

Blaine nodded his head, incredulous that Kurt wanted to take the time to get to know him more and liked what he saw enough to introduce him to his family. He smiled.

---

They spent the day walking around the old churches of San Giorgio and San Giovanni Battista, stone structures with cracked frescos of saints on the pillars. The tower of San Giorgio gave a gloriously high

view of the lake below and it really took their breath away. San Giovanni Battista seemed lower on the outside but once inside Kurt looked up at the wooden structure supporting the ceiling in awe that the place could look at once so simple and majestic.

"Beautiful hey?" Blaine said. Not quite sure what he was referring to, Kurt looked carefully into Blaine's eyes and smiled.

"Yes, beautiful." Blaine smiled back, knowing exactly what he was referring to.

---

They found a little restaurant called Bar Il Molo and ate as the sun set, enjoying red wine from Italy and well priced pizza. They shared several desserts when Kurt couldn't decide which one he wanted to indulge in while he was away. "People always think models don't eat," he said licking his fingers after eating Nutella waffles from Blaine's plate and then taking a spoon to eat gelato from his. Blaine laughed.

"I wish I had your genes," he moaned slightly as he ate regardless, "I know I'll have to work extra hard when I go back."

"Urgh," Kurt groaned at the thought, "Don't mention going back, I want to pretend a little longer."

"We have a few days my sweet," Blaine said as he licked his fingers of chocolate. "It's nice here, free from prying photographers and nosy people. I don't have to perform here."

Kurt looked at him, sipping his wine and glancing every so often at the sunset and the beautiful colours.

"You don't have to perform when you go back either," he said kindly.

"I know, but I find it hard. People expect so much."

"You don't have to prove them right, you can enjoy the job for what it is, you can work and reap the benefits."

"What benefits?" Blaine scoffed, "I think this is where you show your naiveté Kurt." Kurt looked a little hurt at the insinuation that he knew nothing of the pitfalls of the job. "I don't see the benefits of being offered drugs, alcohol and free sex so frequently. It cheapens everything."

"That's why I avoid all the parties," Kurt said simply, shrugging his shoulders. "And you don't have to accept the offers, you could say no."

Blaine looked a little stunned, as if he had never considered the option. Kurt had to smile slightly.

"When one person makes you think that's all you're worth, you start to believe it," Blaine said and Kurt seemed to understand and nodded his head.

"The same guy as before?" he whispered, the very mention of the guy threatening to spoil the peace and beauty.

"Yeah," Blaine said, his eyes widening that Kurt had been that perceptive.

"Well clearly not worth anymore of your time," Kurt said, "Whatever he did, whoever he is – you, Blaine, are worth all things beautiful and he is not."

Blaine stared at Kurt, his eyes filling instantly with tears at the kindness of the man in front of him, his utter belief in him, despite the silly things Blaine had said. As if under the impression that the feeling was getting too morose on their terrace where they sat, the management obviously decided now was the time to start playing jazz music. A simple small orchestra started: two using a saxophone, as well as one on a trumpet and another on the piano. Blaine laughed as he blinked away the tears.

"Oh yeah, it's Wednesday," he said as way of explanation, "I saw on the poster, they play music here."

They swivelled their chairs so they could see the sunset as well as the jazz musicians as they started a few recognisable classics.

"I've never really understood jazz music," Kurt said after a while as Blaine looked engrossed in the sound. He clearly admired their hard work and was spellbound.

"Are you serious?" Blaine said incredulously, "They're awesome."

"Ok Blaine," Kurt said, laughing slightly, "If you say so, I've just always thought it was a little too much, just fast noise."

"Now I know you can't be serious," Blaine exclaimed open-mouthed but he soon closed it as an idea popped into his head. He got up quickly and spoke rushed Italian to a waiter nearby, who looked at Kurt a little disgusted too. Kurt looked a little embarrassed at their identical expressions of incredulity. The waiter nodded his head at whatever Blaine had asked and he went to speak to the piano man who looked at Blaine and nodded happily.

Blaine sat again to watch as the singer finished his song, the crowd whooping appreciatively. He suddenly looked directly at Blaine.

"Vorremmo invitare Blaine a cantare una canzone," he said quickly, the only recognisable word to Kurt was Blaine's name and he was a little surprised to see Blaine walk confidently up to the microphone.

"Questo è per Kurt," he said simply and laughed at Kurt's surprised expression as the music started to play.

*Puorte o cazone cu 'nu stemma arreto  
'na cuppulella cu 'a visiera alzata.  
Passe scampanianno pe' Tuleto  
camme a 'nu guappo pe' te fa guardà!*

*Tu vuò fa l' americano!  
mmericano! mmericano  
siente a me, chi t' ho fa fa?  
tu vuoi vivere alla moda  
ma se bevi whisky and soda  
po' te sente 'e disturbà.*

*Tu abballe 'o roccorol  
tu giochi al basebal '  
ma 'e solde pe' Camel  
chi te li dà? ...  
La borsetta di mammà!*

*Tu vuò fa l' americano  
mmericano! mmericano!*

*ma si nato in Italy!*  
*siente a mme*  
*non ce sta' niente a ffa*  
*o kay, napolitan!*  
*Tu vuò fa l' american!*  
*Tu vuò fa l' american!*

Blaine looked in his element up there singing with the musicians like he had known them all his life. He clung to the saxophonist as if they were best friends and they came closer to the microphone as they sung together. Blaine had no trouble with the lyrics, his Italian flawless and Kurt sat there open-mouthed.

*Comme te po' capì chi te vò bene*  
*si tu le parle 'mmiezzo americano?*  
*Quando se fa l'ammore sotto 'a luna*  
*come te vene 'capa e di: "I love you!?"*

*Tu vuò fa l' americano*  
*mmericano! mmericano*  
*siente a me, chi t'ho fa fa?*  
*tu vuoi vivere alla moda...*

He finished and took a few seconds to get his breath back, but he looked gloriously flushed, his hair escaping its gelled confines in the Italian heat of the bar. The crowd rapturously applauded and he beamed as he took a low bow and walked off the little stage, the clapping still continuing, Kurt the most enthusiastic.

"I can't believe it," Kurt said, coming closer to Blaine's ear as the music continued. "How do you know so much Italian?"

"I lived here as a kid, that's why I love coming back," he said sweetly.

"Blaine, I don't think you understand what that did to me," Kurt said, moaning low in his ear and Blaine felt the tiny hairs on the back of his neck stand on end as his mind caught up with how his body was feeling. "We need to leave now," Kurt said simply and he took the opportunity to nibble Blaine's ear slightly to prove his point. He must have made it pretty clear because Blaine's eyes went ten shades

darker and he stood, gripping Kurt's hand fiercely and taking him out of the bar, leaving copious amounts of money to pay the bill as he went. The saxophonist made a little distinctive noise to signify his goodbye and they waved in reply, beaming faces faced their way.

They made it home in record time, managing the cobbled streets with sudden ease and they only tripped slightly as they entered their rented villa. Blaine didn't have much time to recover before Kurt pushed him against the front door and kissed him fiercely, moaning loudly. He made his way to Blaine's neck and muttered there.

"You don't know what you do to me Blaine," he moaned, rutting against Blaine's thigh to give him an idea. "You speaking Italian does something to me."

Blaine smiled as he kissed what skin he could find as Kurt worked his way over his jutting collarbone and did his own marking. Blaine suddenly turned Kurt around so he was pressed against the door and he started to undo his shirt, exposing his chest and creamy toned skin.

"Così fottutamente bello," he murmured against Kurt's chest, causing vibrations against Kurt's skin. Kurt reacted by slamming his clenched fists against the door in pleasure which seemed to go straight to Blaine's cock, straining in his tight pants.

"Suoni...." Blaine breathed against his skin, "Gemiti..." he moaned in response to Kurt's own moans and Kurt rutted up desperately finding only air and he whimpered in disappointment.

"Blaine, *please*...."

"Per favore," Blaine muttered almost incoherent, "Implorare, fa qualcosa per me..."

Blaine came closer, rutting desperately himself as Kurt's sounds became more dirty.

"Così fottutamente carino; così fottutamente sudicio...." He pushed harder, as Kurt met him thrust for thrust and far too soon they clung to each other as they rutted hard and fast, Kurt gasping as Blaine continued to mutter obscenities in Italian along Kurt's skin and near his ear. Kurt suddenly came loudly and gasped as the sensation threatened to overwhelm him when Blaine came too and as soon as he finished, Kurt sunk to the floor, still breathing heavily.

"Fuck..." he breathed, "I have never come so hard or so fast," he said, his mind catching up with his actions and causing his face to flush in embarrassment. Blaine closed his eyes and laughed, tilting his head back so Kurt could see his Adam's apple bob in delight.

"That was amazing, I should speak Italian more often if that's the response I get," he breathed, opening his twinkly eyes to Kurt who laughed nervously. Blaine looked a little like he wanted to devour him again.

"Let me catch my breath, then you can try again," Kurt said chuckling.



## Chapter Fourteen

The next few days were spent in much the same way – drinking in the ambience whilst eating on their terrace, sipping sangria in musical bars and lying for hours at a time, stroking and touching perfectly warm skin in the lazy heat of the village by the lake. The thought of going back kept haunting Kurt like a belch might bring back the taste of previously eaten food. He closed his eyes in displeasure at the thought.

"What are you thinking?" Blaine inquired as he saw his expression. Blaine was lying sideways on their bed, propping his elbow up to stare over Kurt's lithe and pale body.

"That we have to go back soon," Kurt muttered and Blaine smiled sadly that Kurt felt the same way. If he was truthful, Blaine was a little scared about going back. The phone call to Nick had been relatively easy in comparison to how the 'discussion' might go and he didn't relish the thought that modelling life would continue when so much in his own life had changed.

"Maybe we should have one more glorious day, go to another bigger place on the lake and really enjoy the last day," Blaine said, determined for Kurt to have only good memories.

Kurt checked Blaine's expression, could see the hope in his eyes and he smiled, small and slow to begin with but there nonetheless. He would do pretty much anything for this guy. He nodded and kissed him sweetly.

---

They decided on the bigger town of Bellagio – bustling and loud, full of shops, they immediately felt a little smaller as they left the ferry that had taken them from Varenna. They held hands against the tide of tourists and the larger groups of people as they wandered around shops and eventually decided on a smaller café, tucked away a little, for lunch.

It was only as the bustle died down and they settled near the lake late afternoon that they could talk a little deeper. Blaine looked at Kurt as he took in the beauty surrounding them and as if he could sense the darkness hovering over Blaine in his worry, Kurt looked at him carefully too, raising his eyebrow in question.

"What's wrong?" Kurt asked.

"I just really don't want to go back," Blaine said quietly, looking down at his hands and Kurt knew it was so much more for Blaine. Kurt didn't want to go back, was dreading it too but Blaine seemed to positively fear it and he could see the panic rising in his cheeks and widened eyes. Kurt grabbed his hand as it rested on his thigh.

"We'll be ok," Kurt said, kissing his cheek sweetly to reassure him, "You can stay with me for a bit when we get back, if you like." It was a casual comment to Kurt, one borne from care and a need to help, but Blaine looked at him as if he had just been offered the stars. He grinned widely and Kurt laughed.

"You would really want me to stay?" Blaine asked quietly in awe of the beautiful man beside him.

"Of course," Kurt replied, squeezing his hand, "I mean if it'll help ease the transition between here and there. I know it'll be hard to leave all that behind, I know how intoxicating it can all be, all the parties, all the sycophants but we can just stop and ignore it Blaine. We can stay safe and tucked away from the world, just in my little apartment in Bushwick."

Blaine looked at Kurt and felt tears pool in his eyes. Kurt looked a little astonished that such a gesture would make Blaine so sad and he quickly came closer, kissed him and cupped his cheek with his hand.

"If it's too much.... I mean we don't have to...." Kurt began.

"No don't be silly, it's so far from too much Kurt.... I - " Blaine said, blinking away his tears, "I just never expected you to suggest that."

"You're welcome to stay anytime Blaine," Kurt said quietly, "I'll miss seeing you like this, all the time and just a few metres away and..." He struggled with his next words, already feeling a little choked and emotional at the sight of Blaine. It had been a safe haven here, so set apart and gloriously simple. He couldn't bear the thought that things would go back to normal between them.

"I'll stay for however long you want me to, Kurt," Blaine said, his tears gone, just his open and honest eyes gazing back at Kurt's clear complexion and blue eyes. "Things won't go back to how they were before, I promise." He squeezed Kurt's hand back and Kurt smiled.

Bellagio, in the middle of its music festival celebrating classical artists as well as its tribute bands in the square, encouraged bars and restaurants to celebrate their own music as customers ate their dinner. Blaine and Kurt found themselves in a quiet restaurant at the edge of the town still with excellent views of the lake and a man started playing on the piano in the corner, designed to create a relaxed atmosphere. Kurt sat back and watched and Blaine, as was his custom, sat back too, his gaze sometimes falling on Kurt and his beauty as well as listening to the music as it fell over them. Kurt took in Blaine's more relaxed pose and how it reflected his own and he smiled. He wondered how things had changed and although he used to worry that Blaine would flit between the comforts of his model persona and the startling truth of his own life, he knew that they would be ok, that they would work it out and know each other for who they really were. Kurt suddenly stood when the audience were invited to sing and he spoke to a waiter in broken Italian as Blaine watched on, surprised and open-mouthed.

"I'm sorry I don't speak Italian," Kurt said as soon as he was given a microphone, "Not like my friend Blaine here," he gestured towards him and Blaine beamed. "But I would like to sing a popular song at the moment and I would like to dedicate it to Blaine, who has showed me what real beauty is because I see it inside of him in so many ways."

Although some didn't understand a word that Kurt was saying, a few tourists clapped and awwed at the lovely sentiment, looking to Blaine, expecting to see the love and adoration that seemed to glow out of his beaming face.

Kurt began to sing, nervous at first until a few people, obviously recognising the popular song, sat up or swayed slightly to the piano music.

*Aren't you somethin' to admire?*

*'Cause your shine is somethin' like a mirror*

*And I can't help but notice*

*You reflect in this heart of mine*

*If you ever feel alone and*

*The glare makes me hard to find*

*Just know that I'm always*

*Parallel on the other side*

Kurt sang to Blaine, knowing and showing just how beautiful he really thought Blaine was. He was making the promise; he would be there, through all the silliness and the parties, beside the sycophants and the beautiful and they would shine together.

*'Cause with your hand in my hand and a pocket full of soul  
I can tell you there's no place we couldn't go  
Just put your hand on the glass  
I'll be tryin' to pull you through  
You just gotta be strong*

*'Cause I don't wanna lose you now  
I'm lookin' right at the other half of me  
The vacancy that sat in my heart  
Is a space that now you hold  
Show me how to fight for now  
And I'll tell you, baby, it was easy  
Comin' back here to you once I figured it out  
You were right here all along*

*It's like you're my mirror  
My mirror staring back at me  
I couldn't get any bigger  
With anyone else beside of me  
And now it's clear as this promise  
That we're making two reflections into one  
'Cause it's like you're my mirror  
My mirror staring back at me, staring back at me*

*Aren't you somethin', an original  
'Cause it doesn't seem merely a sample  
And I can't help but stare, 'cause  
I see truth somewhere in your eyes  
I can't ever change without you  
You reflect me, I love that about you  
And if I could, I would look at us all the time*

Kurt smiled – he knew they were beautiful together and Blaine laughed - some of his cockiness and sex appeal came rushing back. Just one look at them on a model spread was enough to tell others they were different but the same, sexy but beautiful, perfect in such an imperfect way.

*'Cause with your hand in my hand and a pocket full of soul  
I can tell you there's no place we couldn't go  
Just put your hand on the glass  
I'll be tryin' to pull you through  
You just gotta be strong*

*'Cause I don't wanna lose you now  
I'm lookin' right at the other half of me  
The vacancy that sat in my heart  
Is a space that now you hold  
Show me how to fight for now  
And I'll tell you, baby, it was easy  
Comin' back here to you once I figured it out  
You were right here all along*

*It's like you're my mirror  
My mirror staring back at me  
I couldn't get any bigger  
With anyone else beside me  
And now it's clear as this promise  
That we're making two reflections into one  
'Cause it's like you're my mirror  
My mirror staring back at me, staring back at me*

*Yesterday is history  
Tomorrow's a mystery  
I can see you lookin' back at me  
Keep your eyes on me  
Baby, keep your eyes on me*

Kurt sang the final lines, slowly, quietly, a promise of more than was offered but Blaine relaxed, knowing that Kurt would be there, would help him and he didn't care what others said or did to change that. He could do this; he could stand up for what he really wanted in life and together they could finally reflect that. Kurt sat down and Blaine immediately kissed him, causing a few tourists around them to clap, whilst others scowled, not used to seeing such a public display of affection between two men. Blaine took his hand and walked them out of the restaurant and prying eyes and although Kurt didn't know where they were walking to, he let Blaine lead the way as they walked beside the lake.

They eventually stopped and leant on a railing, watching the slight ripples of the water in the peace of the evening.

"Thank you for that song, Kurt," Blaine whispered looking at him earnestly, "I don't really know what happened here, on this holiday.... I guess I changed and worried that I would revert to my comforting ways when I returned but I don't think I will now. I guess you see me for who I really am and I don't care who knows it now. I don't care who sees the real me because I have you and you... you're just... I can't describe how you make me feel Kurt, I just...." Kurt could see his struggle and came closer, tilting his chin so their eyes locked. Kurt smiled.

"You've made it so easy to fall in love with you Blaine," Kurt whispered, "You're so amazing, thanks for showing me." It was so easy to come closer, so easy to allow their lips to come together and they didn't know how long they kissed until they heard the click of the camera, saw the light flash harshly against their faces and they blinked, suddenly aware of the man with his large camera, his baseball hat and his sly grin. Standing next to a woman who appeared to be his wife, pointing at Kurt and Blaine, obvious recognition on her face, they rushed away before Kurt and Blaine realised what had happened.

## **Chapter Fifteen**

"What was that?" Kurt asked as the couple scurried away. Blaine just stood open-mouthed. "Blaine?"

"I can't believe they did that...." Blaine whispered, coming more to a realisation of what had just happened.

"They were nobody, they didn't have to do that."

"And now they're going to sell the photos I'm sure," Kurt said ruefully as if he understood very well the state of the world. "Let's enjoy our last few hours because going back home will be a little different."

"What do you mean?"

"Isn't it obvious Blaine? They'll print them as pictures of a secret dalliance, I'll be another one of your conquests and no doubt they'll quote my television appearance as evidence that it was a quick affair or one where you took advantage."

Blaine looked a little shaken, his eyes wide as if he could visualise the photo spread and the captions before his very eyes.

"It doesn't worry you?" Blaine said, a little taken back at Kurt's nonchalance.

"Of course not, not in the long run anyway. Are you worried?"

"Well yeah, of course," Blaine said, then looked quickly at Kurt's face and made a quick effort to change how it had sounded. "I mean only for what people will think based on earlier pictures of Sebastian and I. Aren't you worried that people will warn you off me? Don't you think your dad will be a little shocked?"

Kurt gasped, his hand shooting to cover his mouth quickly. Blaine's expression softened.

"You didn't think of that?" Blaine continued, "Well we'll do a little damage control and appear nonchalant and confident at the airport tomorrow on our return. You can call your dad and I can call Nick and we can sort this out."

Blaine looked so masterful and in control that Kurt couldn't feel panicked anymore and he took Blaine's hand and squeezed it in his own.

"It means I need to ask you a question a lot earlier than I thought I would have to ask though Kurt," Blaine said hesitatingly, "I mean I always wanted it but I know what the business is like and I know what it gets like in the media and I wanted to spare you that.... I wanted - "

"Blaine just get to the point," Kurt interrupted and Blaine smiled.

"I wanted to ask whether you wanted to be out and proud with me, whether you minded if we were seen as exclusive and officially dating in the public eye and...." Kurt smiled slowly as he realised and interrupted Blaine with a kiss.

"You ramble far too much when you're nervous," Kurt said with such a sweet smile on his face as they parted that Blaine beamed. "Of course I want to be exclusive and out and proud and officially dating in the public eye. I want all that with you Blaine."

Kurt didn't think it was possible for Blaine's smile to get any bigger but it did. He looked perfectly happy and adorable in that one moment and Kurt looked for a few seconds until he couldn't resist pressing his lips against that adoring smile once more before they walked back to their villa.

---

As soon as they returned, Kurt and Blaine made their respective telephone calls like planned and went in separate rooms. Neither was looking forward to the conversations but after a glass of wine on the terrace to steady their nerves and enjoy the last of the night sky they did what was required.

"Dad?" Kurt asked as soon as he heard Burt's voice.

"Of course it's me Kurt," Burt said with a light chuckle, "What's wrong?"

"You can already tell something's wrong?" Kurt asked a little incredulously.

"Yep, you give it away every time," Burt said, "For a start you sound nervous and whenever you check it's me, I know you have something important to relate. Spit it out, then."

Kurt took a deep breath.



"I know I've been a little busy lately, Dad, I know I haven't rung recently but I've been seeing someone," Kurt began.

"Oh," Burt said sounding surprised, "Why do you sound so nervous then?" he laughed lightly, "You don't sound like you enjoy dating this guy whoever he is."

"It's not that Dad," Kurt said, "It's complicated."

"Look as long as he's treating you right.... He is a he isn't he?" he suddenly interjected and Kurt laughed, almost like a barking noise he was so surprised by the comment.

"Of course it's a guy Dad! I haven't turned straight in the last few months since I've seen you."

"Sorry, sorry," Burt said, "So I mean as long as he's treating you right and isn't a jerk like that Blaine guy you mentioned in that interview.... Anderson? Is that name? I mean he sounds like a guy you wouldn't want to meet at those parties that I hope you don't really get involved in...." Burt realised the other side had been very quiet for a little while.

"Kurt?"

"Sorry, still here," Kurt said.

"What is it you want to tell me son?" Burt said simply, leaving no room for Kurt to lie or conceal the truth.

"I may as well tell you," Kurt said, "You'll find out soon enough."

"Kurt?"

"I'm dating Blaine, dad," Kurt said confidently, sitting back on the sofa as Blaine came back into the room. "His last name is Anderson and he's a model but I was wrong about him. I don't 'hate his guts' like I said on national television but he can be a little obnoxious when frightened into a corner and he is incredibly sexy," he said smirking as Blaine realised he was being spoken about.

"Kurt have you seen the pictures of him and that other model? They were all over page 6 and before you mention that I don't usually read such rubbish, Carole had it in the house. I don't think this guy's good news Kurt."

Kurt's face fell a little and Blaine could guess what Burt was saying on the other line, though he couldn't hear it.

"No dad, I guess I know him a little better than that now and I know that's not him," he said, "But he has had the time to show me the real him."

"Well I should meet this Blaine then," Burt said after a while, "Sounds like he's made quite an impression."

"Oh, sure that'll be great," Kurt said breathing easier now he knew Burt was coming round.

"Just take care Kurt," he said quietly, "I don't want to see you get hurt."

"I know Dad," Kurt said kindly, "I've missed you."

"I've missed you too buddy."

"You should know they'll be pictures of us in the papers," Kurt said.

"What?" Burt exclaimed, "Please tell me it's not like those other photos Kurt? We spoke about this, about not throwing yourself around..."

"No Dad, they're not like that," Kurt said quickly, as Blaine joined him on the bed, stroking his knee slowly, methodically. "We were kissing on the beach and some tourist took a snap."

"Which beach?"

"In Italy," Kurt whispered, hoping to go unheard.

"Italy? You went on holiday with this guy?"

"Dad, I'm ok, I know him more than you think. I know it's rushed but it's fine."

Blaine smiled sadly that Kurt was having this conversation. He knew he was sounding like the bad influence that he was worried about, probably Burt's worst nightmare for a future son-in-law – woah where did that thought come from?

"Dad, I should go," Kurt was saying, "We're catching an early flight tomorrow but I promise I'll see you soon Dad and it's all ok."

"Ok kiddo," Burt said sounding as if he would rather stay on the line but understanding his son was now an adult. "I think sometimes you had to grow up too soon Kurt," he said sadly.

"I know Dad," Kurt said slowly, "But I had the best example, I promise."

Burt nodded his head, feeling a little choked and glad for the fact they were separated by so many miles. He realised Kurt couldn't see him though and he made some kind of sound in the affirmative.

"I'll be seeing you kid," Burt said after a while and they exchanged goodbyes.

"You ok?" Blaine asked as soon as the conversation ended.

"Yeah, he's worried about your pictures but I think he trusts me and my judgement." Blaine nodded sadly.

"But he wants to meet you soon, Blaine, that's a good sign."

"I'll have to prove to him that I can do it, that I can make you proud."

"You can and you do Blaine, don't worry." It was now Kurt's turn to stroke the soft tanned skin on Blaine's hand as it rested on Kurt's thigh.

"How did it go with Nick?"

"Not so good," Blaine said, almost forgetting the conversation he had had in the other room. "He did this rueful annoyed laugh when I first told him about the pictures, as if I'd got myself into another mess. He was quite surprised it was you though."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, we've had arguments about you before."

"Why?"

"Nick thought it would be a good idea if I tried to emulate your career and your sudden rise to fame. It was actually his idea to model together. He thought if we were seen more in the public eye than I would rise in the modelling ranks."

"That's ridiculous Blaine," Kurt said, "I mean you're already there, everyone wants to be you, every model wants your contracts, wants your body and eyes. You look amazing."

Kurt had let his enthusiasm for Blaine overflow a little too much but it only caused Blaine to smile sweetly, a light tinge of pink on his cheeks.

"Wow, thanks," Blaine said, his head a little lower, "I guess I always thought I was on the way out, needed a little more to get back to the top. Nick was convinced it was you."

"But that's the nature of the job Blaine," Kurt said kindly as if he had worked it out months ago. "We'll continue to get contracts for a while but our looks will fade and we'll have to do something else. Only the lucky few get to do this forever or those that have work done. That won't be us, Blaine."

"What do I do then?" Blaine asked, and he looked so small on the bed, despite Kurt only having an inch atop of him.

"You become you Blaine - who you were really meant to be," Kurt said taking Blaine's hand in his more earnestly.

"I don't know who that is."

"Well I know," Kurt said simply, "And that will be enough for both of us at the moment."

Blaine looked up at Kurt slightly from his position against the headboard where he had slipped slightly and kissed him. He wasn't sure when it had happened but Kurt had quickly become the most important person in Blaine's life and he couldn't let him go.

---

Sebastian saw the pictures and the captions way before Blaine and Kurt in the end who had to wait the following day to see them as they arrived at the airport. Having a friend in magazines was really a god-send to Sebastian who could pick and choose what he wanted printed.

"You need to change the caption," Sebastian said simply.

"What do you mean?" Gerry asked, "What's wrong with: 'Modelling love-birds found enjoying Lake Como'?"

"Apart from the tacky and corny phrasing?" Sebastian said laughing ruefully, "You need something else. You need to push another story."

"There is no other story," Gerry was saying, though Sebastian looked like he was ignoring him and visualising the caption himself.

"You should caption it with: 'Kurt Hummel – not such the pristine little model after all. Blaine Anderson – the model extraordinaire following similar patterns.'"

"Ouch," Gerry said, quickly writing down what Sebastian had said, "You really don't like either guy, do you?"

"You could say, I have a thing against Hummel but it really wouldn't be worth printing that."

Gerry merely nodded and walked away.

## Chapter Sixteen

Kurt Hummel and Blaine Anderson seen here enjoying their vacation by Lake Como in Italy. We are starting to wonder whether Kurt Hummel is really such the morally pristine model after all. Is Blaine Anderson following his usual pattern of bed and conquer?

---

Kurt and Blaine arrived at their airport in New York the following day and were greeted with the expected paparazzi as they left the terminal with their luggage. Nick was there to support Blaine like he had arranged over the telephone and he must have called Sara because she was there too. She quickly took Kurt's suitcase and wheeled it along behind her, obviously trying to be as helpful as she could. Nick shielded Blaine and Kurt, who had arrived hand in hand to show solidarity, from the snapping cameras and they were ushered out as quickly as possible.

It was only as they were about to leave the airport and enter the waiting car that Kurt noticed the headline and caption with the expected photo. He was about to take a paper when Nick pushed him as gently as possible into the car.

"I've got copies inside," he said quickly and he tucked Blaine's head into the car behind Kurt, giving the impression that Blaine was under arrest. He had no time to laugh before the car sped away with all its passengers.

"What the fuck was that?" Blaine exclaimed as they drove away.

"That my dear was the paparazzi, what were you expecting after the photo that was taken?"

"I don't know," he said a little more subdued, "I mean it was an innocent enough photo, I don't understand."

"They think Kurt is another Sebastian presumably," Sara said, "They want all the gossip."

Sara worked as a PA for a few models but enjoyed reading and catching up on gossip when she could and especially when it involved her 'charges' as she liked to call them. She looked over at Kurt and Blaine who

sat opposite her in the car and felt sorry for them. They looked small and a little lost. This had taken them by surprise it seemed.

"It still seems a little too much," Blaine said, clearly annoyed, "I mean I was expecting the cameras but not the press of them. They were just coming closer and closer, no sense of personal space."

"Well I think we've got the publicity we always wanted for your career," Nick said laughing with no humour, like he had brought this upon himself.

"Can I see the photo?" Kurt asked, his hand out for the magazine. It was the first time he had spoken since leaving the airport and Blaine looked at him with concern. Kurt read quickly and then Blaine peered over his shoulder.

"It sounds a bit harsh," Kurt said sadly, "I guess Sara's right."

"No she's not," Blaine said, getting angry, "You're not just like Sebastian to me, you're not just a conquest."

The car was silent. Nick had never seen him look so adamant but at the same time simply misunderstood and lost.

"I know Blaine," Kurt said tenderly stroking his hand as it rested on his thigh. Blaine seemed to feel instantly at ease and he relaxed as Kurt's fingers wove over his hand. Nick and Sara took in the scene before them and smiled at each other.

"So this trip then?" Nick asked, causing Blaine and Kurt to look up in surprise, almost forgetting they were not alone. "Was it good?"

Blaine and Kurt smiled as they took in their tanned faces and happy grins.

"It was the best trip," Kurt said, "Just what I needed."

"Yeah, lovely and perfect," Blaine said then his face fell, "Until that stupid tourist ruined it."

"Well we can do damage control over that situation," Nick said finally understanding, "We'll sort it Blaine, don't worry."

"Thanks Nick," Blaine said, finally taking in Nick's kind smile and softened expression. "I never did get to properly apologise for all the crappy behaviour before," he said looking a little embarrassed.

"Don't mention it Blaine," Nick said, "I haven't really been there for you recently. I think I forgot my place as best friend over being an agent. I should have known better."

"But I should have treated you right and I'm sorry Nick," Blaine said, "I really am."

"It's ok Blaine, all's forgotten," and he smiled to show he meant it. Blaine looked relieved.

"Where are we off to guys?" the driver asked.

"My place," Kurt said confidently before anyone else had the chance to interject. He gave his address quickly.

Nick nodded in understanding and smiled. Maybe this Kurt was exactly what Blaine needed and he thought to himself he'd never seen his friend so relaxed and at peace. It was a welcome change.

---

Blaine and Kurt were undisturbed as they entered Kurt's apartment, paparazzi obviously nowhere to be seen and Rachel was simply making tea.

"You're home," she said happily but her expression remained fixed when she saw Blaine too.

"Yeah home and nearly safe and sound," Kurt said a little tired, "I'd love a cup of tea."

"Sure, bad trip?" she asked. She had seen pictures that morning and knew that there was more to the story.

"Not really," Kurt said, his eyes closed as he rested his head on the back of the sofa, "Just a tourist took a picture of us kissing and now the magazines think I've been conquered like second world war Poland."

Blaine nervously sat down next to Kurt on the sofa after taking his own shoes off and said nothing.

"Oh just that," Rachel said, a hint of a laugh in her voice that Kurt could hear with his eyes closed.



"You saw?" Kurt said, his eyes now open.

"Sorry," she said, shrugging her shoulders apologetically, "The pic looked sweet if that's any consolation?"

"I guess it is actually," he said smiling, closing his eyes again.

"I'm off out after my tea," she said, taking a seat opposite the sofa, "So you'll have the place to yourself. I've been invited to sing at a concert at NYADA again."

"Really?" Kurt asked, sitting up and looking interested. It was times like these he envied Rachel her success at NYADA.

"Yeah you're welcome to come along," she said.

"I don't know..." Kurt said looking at Blaine worriedly. He knew going out might encourage people to take photos again, especially if he was with Blaine.

"We can go later if you like?" Blaine offered, the first time he'd spoken since he'd entered the apartment.

"Cool, I'll save you seats near the back," she said getting up and finishing her tea. "I should get ready."

"You don't have to go if you don't want to," Kurt whispered, as soon as she had left.

"I want to Kurt," Blaine said emphatically, "We'll sort ourselves out here, get changed and washed and join her later. Maybe a few drinks at a bar? We shouldn't have to hide away and so what if someone takes another photo? It'll show them that you're not the simple conquest I whisked away on holiday after all."

Kurt smirked.

"I wouldn't mind being a simple conquest you know," he said jokingly, "I mean it sounds like one of your conquests would get some amazing sex."

"Oh no honey," Blaine said hotly in Kurt's ear as he leant closer, "My amazing sex is only reserved for one person now and I simply have to say: fottutamente bello and it gets pretty steamy."

Kurt shivered slightly at the sound and wondered what it was about those words, those Italian dirty words that got him so hot and bothered. He felt himself go instantly hard.

"Fuck Blaine," he whispered, "You can't say things like that if we want to go out later."

"Keep those thoughts for later my darling," Blaine continued to whisper, taking his time to kiss that sweet spot just below Kurt's ear. "Bath time?" Kurt laughed.

"That sounds so clean and sensible," Kurt said smiling as Blaine went to his bag to rummage inside for a towel and washing items.

"Not the way I do it beautiful," Blaine said and he took his time to get up and walk away to the room he hoped housed Kurt's bath. He turned and winked, hoping that Kurt would follow. He of course nearly ran towards him.

---

They were nestled together after a while, Kurt leaning on Blaine's chest on one side of the tub. The soapy suds nearly overflowed and Blaine was still rhythmically circling little areas on Kurt's chest despite the fact that they were now completely clean. Blaine and Kurt had taken it in turns to wash each other, massaging scalps with shampoo and cleaning sensitive areas. Blaine felt like he'd been hard for hours and although he knew Kurt was also hard and would often sigh in pleasure against his chest, Blaine did nothing about his erection until now. He adjusted his position slightly so he knew it could be felt against the lower part of Kurt's back and Kurt's eyes widened in pleasure.

"You know you're awesome don't you?" Blaine whispered against his neck as he nibbled along the skin there. Kurt sighed. Blaine could never get enough of how perfectly beautiful Kurt was. He looked down at Kurt's chest, at the firm muscles beneath his fingertips and couldn't understand how someone like Kurt ended up with someone like Blaine, but he decided not to focus too much on that point. Kurt was murmuring something incoherently.

"I love how you feel under my fingers, how perfectly angelic you look but then I know I get to see you come undone and change and feel and love and I fall in love with you all over again," he was placing open mouthed kisses and nibbling where he could along Kurt's shoulder and neck. Blaine had started to rut slightly up and down against the small of Kurt's back causing Kurt to moan in pleasure. He suddenly

moved so Blaine's dick slipped in the water between his cheeks and Kurt groaned so loudly it made Blaine impossibly harder.

"Oh fuck Kurt, the sounds you make...." Blaine murmured against his skin as his moans joined in with Kurt's. He rutted harder.

"Blaine....." Kurt whined, his eyes closed, just concentrating on the pleasure, the intense sensations with the warm water over his skin and Blaine's mouth on his neck and now his hand so confidently placed exactly where Kurt had needed it. He bucked up into Blaine's hand.

"So eager," Blaine murmured against his neck. He rutted harder and faster.

"Fuck Blaine..... so good," Kurt moaned again, continuing to buck into his hand shamelessly.

"You're so gloriously perfect Kurt, so fucking gorgeous, I just...." Blaine continued to rut, loving the feeling of the slide between his cheeks, the wetness and ignoring the splash of water over the side. He loved to watch the movement of Kurt's stomach as he moved upwards, the rise and fall of his chest as he breathed heavily, the glorious look of intense pleasure on his face as he closed his eyes. Kurt was so perfect, so normally unobtainable and here he was, in Blaine's hand, on Blaine's lap and it was all too much, all too perfect. Blaine came with one final thrust upwards into that perfect wet space. A few seconds later, Kurt came too with a shout of Blaine's name and a final sigh of immense pleasure.

"Now that was awesome," Kurt said, still coming down from his high but wiping the come from his stomach.

"It was," Blaine said sighing, "Now I suppose we have to join the real world again."

"No we don't have to if you don't want to Blaine," Kurt said, swivelling around in the water to face him, "Rachel will understand."

"No I want to Kurt, I do," Blaine said, "I just worry what will happen to us. It's nice in here."

"No one can touch us Blaine, and what we have," Kurt said quietly, his eyes so intensely boring into Blaine's that he could only stare.

"I sometimes think I don't deserve you Kurt," Blaine said, his eyes suddenly filling with tears. Kurt looked a little taken aback and he came closer to cup Blaine's cheek in his hand and hold him closer.

"You do deserve me Blaine," Kurt said sincerely, "Never doubt that. They don't know you, they just know the model Blaine and any intelligent person knows not to believe what you read in the papers."

"But Nick had started to believe it, I could tell."

"Not by the end," Kurt said, "He knew the mistake he had made and I don't think he'll make it again. Don't worry what people think Blaine, it really isn't worth it."

Blaine nodded and blinked away the tears.

"We really should leave if we don't want to look like prunes at this place tonight," Kurt said and he kissed Blaine tenderly before getting up out of the bath and grabbing a towel. Blaine took one look at Kurt's lithe body and looked down at his own. He had a tiny layer of fat over his stomach that hadn't been there before the vacation and he noticed he was a lot hairier than Kurt. He made a mental note to visit the gym tomorrow and make an appointment with the hair removal lady at the spa. Kurt noticed the look but grabbed a towel for Blaine and started drying him, not speaking a word as he rubbed the towel in circular patterns that soothed and protected Blaine from so much more than he could ever know.

---

Rachel was just about to start when they appeared and although they had missed the first song they weren't so late that they had made a scene. Rachel, true to her word, had saved them seats at the back so they could slip in unnoticed.

She sang beautifully and looked perfect in her floaty pink dress, tight until it cascaded down from her hips. Kurt and Blaine had dressed in a suit and tie for the event and they looked crisp and poised sitting together. Blaine, looking tense as he watched, instantly relaxed as Kurt stroked the soft skin on the top of his hand as it rested on his thigh. Blaine looked over at Kurt's angelic face, watching and feeling as Rachel sang, his blue eyes twinkling. Blaine reflected that no matter what happened, nothing seemed to faze Kurt and he looked so powerful and amazing sitting there in the half-light that Blaine's breath hitched. *He may look like the perfect model but I get to see him like this every day*, Blaine thought.

As they milled about at the end of the evening, no one referred to the pictures of Kurt and Blaine and when anyone asked what they did for a living they seemed terribly interested but this world was set apart from the sordid affairs of the B-list celebrity and they were free. Blaine was suddenly very grateful that they had come out after all.

Rachel had agreed to change so they could go out afterwards and Blaine and Kurt took their ties off and unbuttoned the top button on their shirts to look more casual.

"Callbacks?" Rachel asked as soon as she was ready. Blaine nodded in happiness at the thought of going back there like before and Kurt smiled.

The place was full and heaving with students but it felt like such a place of acceptance and bustling ambition that Blaine didn't mind. They quickly grabbed a table at the back and Kurt bought them drinks as Rachel and Blaine settled to watch two girls singing by the piano. They were so lost to the music; they seemed to be purely singing for pleasure. Rachel looked at Blaine.

"Blaine?" she said, sounding a little worried. Blaine had closed his eyes and his expression suddenly looked a little pained.

"Do you sometimes wish you could change the past with a click of your fingers?" he asked, keeping his eyes closed. Rachel murmured that she would. "I think sometimes, when I look at Kurt and how perfect he is, I just wish that I could erase all my mistakes, take everything and put it in a box that I could destroy and never return to. I would be the best I could be.... for him."

Rachel was a little worried at Blaine's statement and paused for a while before she answered, determined to give him the best response she could.

"I don't think Kurt would like that," she said quietly so in the loudness of the bar, only Blaine could hear her. Blaine opened his eyes to catch her meaning. "I think he loves you just the way you are and that includes your past and your mistakes." She looked so sincere and kind, Blaine felt tears appear in his eyes for the second time that day.

"Do you really think so?" he whispered, so quietly that Rachel could only lip read.

"I know so," Rachel said, "I know because we've all made mistakes and Kurt never judges, never asks anything from us. He's loyal and loving and so perfect but he always forgives and sees the good. I know

that he loves you, I can tell when he looks at you and it's not pity and it's not regret that fills his eyes. It's only love."

Blaine looked at Rachel, his eyes still filling but he left the tears where they were and refused to blink until Kurt suddenly appeared with their drinks and laughed at them.

"You both look so serious," Kurt was saying as he sat down and he nearly didn't notice Blaine hastily wipe tears away that had fallen on his cheeks when Kurt had appeared.

"Blaine?" Kurt said, worry changing his voice.

"I'm fine," Blaine said hastily and attempted a smile. "I think maybe I need to sing."

"Well Pascal looks like he has his work cut out for him tonight," Kurt said trying to lighten the mood, "I'd get in there quick with a song choice."

When Blaine left to add his name to the list, Kurt quickly turned to face Rachel with an accusing glare.

"Rachel what did you say to make him so upset?"

"I didn't Kurt," she said defensively and she quickly summed up what she had said. Kurt looked even more confused.

"But what's wrong?" he asked, not really expecting Rachel to give an answer.

"I think he's feeling a little burdened by his mistakes, his past, whatever he did."

"But I know what he was like, how model Blaine is so different from what he's really like. It doesn't bother me."

"Well maybe it bothers Blaine," Rachel said simply.

"I think there must be something more," Kurt said, more to himself, his mind racing to figure out what it might be when Blaine returned.

They watched for a while in silence as more and more people sang, conversation limited because of the loudness of the bar. It was soon Blaine's turn. He nervously approached the microphone and smiled as he introduced himself and explained his song choice.

"I'm dedicating this song to Kurt," he said smiling, "Who I'm starting to realise might just see me for who I really am and although it scares me, I think I'm just about ready to let it all go." He physically relaxed as he sat by the piano, almost as if he was shaking it out, letting it all go and he looked up at Kurt and smiled.

*They say life is a battlefield*

*I say bring it on*

*If you wanna know how I feel*

*Live it till it's gone*

*I'm just saying that what don't kill, only makes you strong*

*If you don't recognize what is real*

*Then forever is a long, long, long, long, long, long, long, long time*

He looked so fierce and powerful up there, so different from how he had approached the piano that Kurt's mouth opened in awe. Maybe he truly was now free.

*Some things never change here we go again*

*Feel like I'm losing my mind*

*Shake it off, let it go, I don't care anymore*

*Just go numb*

*You never know until you let go*

*Let's go numb*

*I can feel you now*

*Keep on doing the same old thing*

*And you expecting change*

*Well is that really insanity*

*Or just a losers' game?*

*I only trust in the things I feel*

*Some may say that's strange*

*You better recognize what is real*

*Cause forever is a long, long, long, long, long, long, long, long time*

*Some things never change, here we go again*

*Feel like I'm losing my mind*

*Shake it off, let it go, I don't care anymore*

*Let's go numb*

*You never know until you let go*

*We all go numb*

*I can feel you now*

*Can you feel it?*

He looked directly at Kurt as if he was asking him the question and Kurt nodded so Blaine could see. Blaine smiled widely and left the little stage to a glorious applause.

---

"I've never heard that song sung like that before - as an acoustic," Kurt said as way of introducing the topic as they walked to the subway. Rachel stayed behind to talk to a few of her friends from NYADA and was happy to see them later.

"Yeah I tried it a while ago, just singing in the shower and I guess I could play it when I got up there," Blaine said shrugging his shoulders as if everyone had that talent.

"That's amazing Blaine," Kurt said stopping in the street to emphasise his point. "I can't believe you have that talent.... Well I can but I mean, it's an awesome talent. You should sing more often, show off."

"Oh I don't know," Blaine said nonchalantly.

"Blaine," Kurt said, gripping Blaine's arm, "It's amazing. It really is." Kurt's blue eyes were so wide and honest that Blaine kissed him sweetly, not wanting to see such purity ahead of him.

"Blaine, you're avoiding what I just said."

"Sorry," he said, "I mean I know I can play and sing. I suppose it's never been that big of a deal before."

"But it is a big deal," Kurt said getting a little exasperated. An idea suddenly occurred to him. "Blaine, I've got it, that's what you are, that's what you can do when you don't want to model anymore."



"What do you mean?" Blaine asked a little confused.

"When you asked me on holiday what you could do when everything faded, that's it, that's what you can do. Sing."

Blaine looked at Kurt like he was mad.

"You think I'm good enough?"

"Of course you are Blaine, you sound fantastic."

Blaine thought it over, not realising that they had stayed still on the street and people occasionally passed them as they walked home. The idea had never occurred to him, never thinking about what he actually liked to do he suddenly realised that it was that all along. Whenever he was sad as a kid or teenager he had played the piano or sung songs and it had filled the lonely hours, made him feel better. Belonging to the Warblers had made feel like he belonged; like he was part of a team and that he was special. He hadn't felt like that in a long time. Not without Kurt by his side anyway. He looked at Kurt again and smiled.

"You really think I could make a career out of it?" he asked.

"Blaine, you could do anything you put your mind to," Kurt said kissing his cheek tenderly, "But yes I think you could. I mean it Blaine, you sound perfect when you sing, and more importantly you look like you come alive. That's when the real Blaine shines."

No one had believed in Blaine so much, not his parents or his friends in a very long time and he looked at Kurt as if he had sprouted wings. Kurt looked utterly beautiful in the light of the stars and the full moon, his eyes twinkling with hope and love and promise and Blaine could only scoop him up in his arms and spin him around until he was breathless, placing kisses on his cheeks repeatedly. He put him down eventually.

"What was that for?" Kurt said giggling and breathing heavily from being squished.

"For loving me and believing in me and being perfect," Blaine said and he had the sudden urge to laugh and cry at the same time. "I love you Kurt."

Kurt had never seen someone embody love so easily, it just seemed to ooze out of Blaine and he smiled.

"I love you too Blaine."

## Chapter Seventeen

It seemed the holiday was their only time off before they were working again. Kurt had been invited to model for a new men's after shave which was to include television adverts as well as magazine photos so it would occupy him for the next week. Blaine was finally asked to be on the runway for Topman after a break of a year and he didn't want to admit it to Kurt but he was nervous. He was staying with Kurt for the foreseeable future, allowing them to see each other whenever they could get some time, but he would get up early in the morning to go to the gym and not return until Kurt was just getting up for breakfast. When asked if he wanted any food, Blaine always declined, explaining to Kurt that he had had some breakfast at the gym café. Blaine was flicking through the photos of the outfits he was to model the following week.

"Wow this is nice," Kurt said in surprise, "I didn't know that Topman was that good, I always thought it was just a British label trying to catch up with the big names."

"Yeah it looks pretty good," Blaine said, looking carefully at the outfits, "I'll be wearing quite a range."

Kurt took in Blaine's expression as he worried his lip between his teeth.

"Are you looking forward to it?" Kurt asked and Blaine looked up quickly.

"What? Oh yeah of course," Blaine said falsely cheerful. "I haven't walked a runway in so long, I just worry that I won't be good enough."

"Are you serious Blaine?" Kurt said incredulously, "You were fantabulous at your last one. I remember watching you, just before I got my first shoot and I wanted to be you Blaine. I admired you so much. I knew if I could do half the job you did I'd be ok."

He was so sincere that Blaine could only stare back at him incredulously.

"You seriously watched me before?"

"Yeah and afterwards. No matter how much of an ass you were in public I knew you were good." Kurt winked to show he was teasing. Blaine swallowed.

"I don't know if I can do it now Kurt," he said, looking back over the outfits.

"Blaine," Kurt said, taking his hand, "What's going on? Why can't you do it?"

"Look at me," Blaine said standing quickly and twirling so Kurt could get a good look. Kurt looked over Blaine's admirable body and his very fine ass and gave Blaine a confused expression.

"I don't get it," he said, "All I see is a fine tush and a great body."

Blaine laughed.

"Really?" he said, "You don't see the layer of fat or the need for more exercise and less cake?"

Kurt's eyes went wide.

"Are you serious?" he exclaimed, "I've never seen any fat on you. Have you not seen your beach photos?" Blaine couldn't remember and shrugged his shoulders. Kurt rushed to get his copy of his People's magazine and he thrust it into Blaine's face when he had found the right pages.

"The people went wild Blaine; I even remember all the extra shots being released. There were hundreds on tumblr."

Blaine looked over the shots.

"But these were airbrushed slightly," he said, "It's not real life."

Kurt promptly tugged at Blaine's T-shirt and he asked silent permission if he could continue. Blaine shrugged. Kurt took the bottom of his shirt and lifted it up revealing a tanned and toned stomach beneath.

"See?" Kurt said, "It's just the same, no exaggeration."

"But it's all nothing Kurt, you know that."

Kurt thought over what to say next and he smiled.

"But do you know what I love the most? I love when you just come out of the shower or you've just eaten a dessert or drank a few beers, you have this teeny tiny belly and it's perfectly gorgeous." Blaine look horrified. "No let me finish. You see your abs won't always stay like that, I know. I mean I wish mine were

like that at all but I know they're not. I'm firm but I don't have the lines that take dedication that quite frankly I never have or want to have. My point is this Blaine: I love you whether you have a little belly that I can stroke and tickle with my fingers or whether you have tight abs and firm muscles. You're cute and beautiful but not because you have a perfect v shape or a tiny waist but because you make me laugh and your eyes make me melt and you sing so well. You come alive when you sing and laugh and talk, I love it when your eyes become all crinkly or when you talk about a song and get all enthusiastic. That's when you're beautiful Blaine but I don't mind looking at these photos," he said jokingly, giving Blaine a little smirk. Blaine seemed to be taking this all in.

"Do you mind if I give this all up?" Blaine said after a while and he kept his eyes resolutely down until Kurt spoke.

"Do you really want to?"

"Yeah, not straight away," he said, finally looking at Kurt, "I mean I want to be able to support myself but I want to cut back. I don't need the expensive apartment and the rich trappings. I just need you."

"If you're sure Blaine," Kurt said.

"Yeah as much as the business has helped me I'm pretty sure it'll kill me eventually. I think I'm obsessed with being perfect and I can feel it creep up on me again. I just want to be the best I can be and I don't want to worry about it anymore. I think I want to try my hand at singing professionally." He said the last bit as if he was admitting his most closely guarded secret. Kurt smiled widely.

"That's great Blaine," he said enthusiastically, "I think you'll be fantastic."

"I think I could do anything with you next to me," he said and Kurt's smile became even wider.

---

"The magazines seemed to have died down a little now," Sara said as soon as Kurt entered the room for his shoot.

"Well good morning to you too," Kurt said, walking straight to the coffee machine and pulling a face.

"Don't be like that," she said skipping along beside him, "I thought you'd want to know."

"Yeah I am happy that they're leaving Blaine alone," Kurt said, his expression softening.

"You're really in a relationship with him?" Sara asked quietly.

"Yes, did you think it was a ruse?"

"No I just don't really see you two together that's all."

"After all that time you spent ribbing me, saying I needed to 'tap that'?"

"Well I don't take that comment back," she said smirking, "But I didn't think he was the relationship kind."

"Well he is," Kurt said and Sara accepted defeat.

"If he makes you happy, then I'm just jealous," she said smiling and Kurt laughed. He couldn't stay mad at that cheeky face and he begged her for a breakfast croissant.

---

Fashion week came along and Blaine was even more nervous than before. He waited back stage impatiently wringing his hands and swallowing nervously, bouncing on the balls of his feet to get rid of his nervous energy. Kurt tapped him on the back.

"Fuck Kurt!" he exclaimed, "You nearly killed me!"

"Sorry," Kurt said, "I just wanted to wish you luck and see how you were."

"I was fine before you came along," he said smiling and Kurt laughed.

"Sorry about that. You sure you're ok?"

"I'm nervous Kurt, you know that," he said impatiently, "But I'll be fine, I promise."

"You know you're beautiful right?" Kurt said coming close so he could whisper in Blaine's ear, "So beautiful that everyone will be looking at you rather than the clothes."

Blaine smiled.

"But the most important thing is I get to see you later tonight all ruffled against the pillow, your curls having escaped and your laughter lines back and you'll be more beautiful than anyone here today."

"Thank you," Blaine whispered, kissing Kurt for a long time, almost to see if he could steal some strength from those soft lips.

"I'll be out there watching you and whooping when I can," Kurt said, laughing and he gave one last twirl as he walked away from Blaine.

Blaine's outfits were modern and eye-catching on the runway. He started the night in a simple black suit with shiny lapels adding a touch of modernity and showed many summery shirts that looked young and showed off all his hard work in the gym. A few of the bright jackets also caught the eye of many of the fashion forward at the show. He ended the night in a tiger onesie that made Kurt chuckle and he definitely whooped then. He met him back stage afterwards and hugged him tightly.

"Do you get to keep any of the outfits?" Kurt whispered.

"I can ask for one or two I think," Blaine said smiling at the seductive tone Kurt had used, "Why, do you want the black suit?"

"No I want the onesie," Kurt said smiling, "I think you're the only guy that can really rock a tiger onesie and I think you should definitely twerk in that!"

"Deal!"

## **Chapter Eighteen**

Saying you wanted to cut back on your modelling contracts and try out singing was actually easier as a concept. It was only as Blaine lay on his back in Kurt's bed, mindlessly stroking Kurt's hair as his head lay on his chest, that he could consider what he really had planned. At two in the morning, Kurt had been asleep for a while, his gentle breaths tickling the hair on Blaine's chest.

"Blaine?" Kurt suddenly mumbled, the words vibrating along his chest. He sat up leaning on one arm and adorably rubbed an eye. Blaine smiled. "What are you doing still up?"

"I couldn't sleep," Blaine said quietly, "Don't worry, go back to sleep."

Kurt looked at him for a while and chuckled slightly.

"You don't know me very well then," he said, "I couldn't sleep if I knew you were still up. Why can't you sleep?"

"I don't know," Blaine said, "Just thinking."

"About what?"

"I guess about what I said earlier – how I'm going to break into the singing business."

Kurt thought it over.

"You'll speak to Nick, explain things to him and what you want now and then you sing wherever you can and for as often as you can. You get seen and heard and hopefully your existing fame in the industry will open some doors."

Kurt had sat up, now leaning on the headboard as Blaine's head rested on the pillow. He looked up at Kurt's face – so sure of what he was saying, Blaine's eyes wide and searching.

"How do you know all this? How can you be so sure?" Kurt's face softened.

"Because," he said, sinking down on the bed so he was now facing Blaine, his lips inches away, "I believe you can do it and I know that you have a leg up the ladder already with your existing career."



"But won't people think I'm trying to cash in on my fame and wonder what I'm doing?"

"Maybe to start with but that's Nick's concern. If he could sort out modelling contracts to suit your image, he can sort singing contracts the same way and I get the impression you would be prepared to work hard for this?"

"Oh yeah definitely," Blaine said emphatically. Kurt smiled.

"Then everyone will see how you were born to sing and forget you were ever a model."

Blaine sighed. It was so nice to finally find someone he could relax with, let his guard down and really love. He rolled onto Kurt's awaiting open chest, mimicking Kurt's pose from earlier and found that he loved having his hair stroked while he drifted off to sleep, just as much as he loved to stroke Kurt's.

---

He met with Nick the next day over coffee and he was surprised at the change in direction, letting Blaine know immediately that he wasn't sure it was his best move.

"I know it doesn't seem responsible especially as I'm getting more modelling offers than ever before but I know this is what I want Nick. I've thought about it and discussed it with Kurt and I think I could do this."

Nick looked over at his best friend, someone he had known since high school who he had seen change and morph into someone he hardly recognised and now sat sipping coffee. Blaine's eyes had never been so twinkly and bright, his face never so enthusiastic and well-rested. He smiled to himself.

"What?" Blaine asked quizzically.

"You," Nick said, "You've come back."

"What do you mean?"

"You used to be like this when you sang with the Warblers but since you took up modelling it sort of ebbed away and now it's coming back. You really love this Kurt don't you?"

Blaine was a little taken aback by the direct question about Kurt but he thought over how he had changed for the worst over the last few years, how he had slowly let the modelling world take over and then he thought to Kurt and smiled too.

"Yes, I really love him."

"Good," Nick said, "I should get to know him. How about tonight at Callbacks? You can sing and maybe speak to a few people, find out where's best to sing. I can ring a few bars to see if they would be interested and between us we can get a few contacts."

The change in attitude and the positive ideas coming his way had Blaine suddenly feeling more energised and eager to start. He sat up and beamed.

"Really?"

"Really Blaine," Nick said, "Anything that's got you back where you were before – enthusiastic and happy again – is something I want to pursue. This Kurt really is amazing isn't he?" Nick laughed. "I mean a few weeks with him and he's helped you become the Blaine you were always meant to be." Nick continued to laugh until it slowly died down and he looked at Blaine who was smiling wistfully – his head in another place entirely.

"Yeah he really is amazing," Blaine said quietly, a smile on his face, his eyes soft.

"You best keep him then bro," Nick said, in his best attempt at slang and Blaine laughed as they left the coffee shop.

---

Callbacks was full and people were desperate to play the piano but it seemed most students tonight were singing bittersweet songs or attempts at new music. Blaine walked in with Kurt and Nick and after getting a few drinks, sat down and let the depressing music surround him and pull him into a funk.

"This is depressing," Nick said, pulling a face at Kurt, "What night is it?"

"Just a normal student night," Kurt said, "Rachel might be here later." He glanced at Blaine who looked like he was contemplating making a quick escape.

"You need to come in early with a happy song," Kurt said, stroking his arm to get him back on track.

"I don't know Kurt," Blaine said, "Look around, everyone seems to be expecting misery. Maybe someone died."

"No don't pander to them," Kurt said, already determined Blaine wouldn't quit or give up, "They might think they want sad songs but they don't know what's good for them."

Blaine thought it over but still didn't look convinced.

"Think back to the songs you played when you were a teenager to cheer yourself up. What song did you love to play as you waited for something to happen?"

Blaine thought back to those many lonely nights as he played at his piano after finishing all his homework and his parents were out at a function. He would lose himself so wonderfully in a few songs, it was often gone midnight before he realised he should probably get to bed for school. He knew the perfect song and his eyes lit up in realisation. Kurt was glad he knew.

"I'll need a guitar for this song though," Blaine said, looking around to see if he could spot one.

"Blaine this is a *piano* bar," Nick said, "I don't think they're going to have what you need."

"Nick sign me up for a song and I'll find one."

Blaine left their table, spoke to a few people at the bar then left and returned a little while later carrying a guitar and walking beside a man that looked obviously homeless.

"Blaine, where did you get that?" Kurt asked, a little worried.

"I borrowed it off Jim here," Blaine said introducing the guy that stood next to him. "I promised a drink and a good show if I could use it and he agreed."

Kurt tried not to pull a disgusted expression as Jim took a seat between Kurt and Nick. Blaine's turn was up.

"Hi everyone," Blaine said confidently into the microphone and Kurt had to admire the way he went so quickly from nerves to self-assurance. "I found a guitar, actually I borrowed it from Jim here so thanks Jim."

A few people in the crowd turned to where Blaine had been pointing and looked a little unsure as to how Jim had gotten into the establishment but kept their thoughts to themselves. Blaine carried on regardless.

"I'm going to sing a song that I love very much and have loved for years. It always cheers me up so here goes."

He let the familiar chords ring loud and clear through the bar as people became quiet.

*Here comes the sun,*

*Here comes the sun*

*And I say it's all right*

*Little darling, it's been a long cold lonely winter*

*Little darling, it feels like years since it's been here*

*Here comes the sun,*

*Here comes the sun*

*And I say it's all right*

*Little darling, the smiles returning to the faces*

*Little darling, it seems like years since it's been here*

*Here comes the sun,*

*Here comes the sun*

*And I say it's all right*

Kurt watched as the crowd that were listening carefully had started to tap their feet and move their shoulders. Smiles appeared on faces, sad songs forgotten so it was relatively easy for Blaine to get the crowd to sing along with him.

*Sun, sun, sun, here it comes*

*Sun, sun, sun, here it comes*

*Sun, sun, sun, here it comes*

*Sun, sun, sun, here it comes*

*Sun, sun, sun, here it comes*

*Little darling, I feel that ice is slowly melting*

*Little darling, it seems like years since it's been clear*

*Here comes the sun,*

*Here comes the sun*

*And I say it's all right*

*Here comes the sun,*

*Here comes the sun*

*It's all right, it's all right*

The crowd wanted more and although Blaine looked truly surprised, being the consummate professional he always had a song or two up his sleeve. He asked if Pascal could help on the piano and a hush descended on the bar once more.

*Yellow diamonds in the light*

*Now we're standing side by side*

*As your shadow crosses mine*

*What it takes to come alive*

He took once glance at Kurt, barely lifting his head so only his green brown eyes could be seen fanned by his beautiful eyelashes and Kurt almost lost his breath. He looked so utterly free and complete up there, he really was alive.

*It's the way I'm feeling I just can't deny*

*But I've gotta let it go*

*We found love in a hopeless place*

*We found love in a hopeless place*

*We found love in a hopeless place*

*We found love in a hopeless place*

Blaine looked at Kurt and smiled.

*Shine a light through an open door*

*Love and life I will divide*

*Turn away 'cause I need you more*

*Feel the heartbeat in my mind*

*It's the way I'm feeling I just can't deny*

*But I've gotta let it go*

*We found love in a hopeless place*

*We found love in a hopeless place*

*We found love in a hopeless place*

*We found love in a hopeless place*

*Yellow diamonds in the light*

*Now we're standing side by side*

*As your shadow crosses mine*

*What it takes to come alive*

They clapped, they cheered then Blaine came off the stage and gratefully handed Jim his guitar. He beckoned for him to go up to the bar with him for his drink so Kurt and Nick were left alone once more.

"I never really understood before," Nick said quietly and Kurt looked directly at him so he could repeat it.

"I mean I knew he could sing, we all knew that but I guess I never really got why he loved it so much."

"But now you do?" Kurt asked.

"Yeah, you saw it, he really does come alive doesn't he?" Kurt nodded and smiled. "He's really good," Nick continued, "I mean with that voice my job will be easy and he has the whole package."

"Yes he does," Kurt said, looking over at Blaine by the bar.

"Do you sing Kurt?" Nick asked.

"Yeah I mean as a hobby, I guess," Kurt said uncomfortably. With all the persuading he had done with Blaine he had forgotten that it had once been his dream too and he had got lost along the way.

"But you're good," Nick said, "I remember."

"Yeah, I guess dreams change," Kurt said shrugging his shoulders and accepting the drink that Blaine was handing over to him.

"I think Blaine here is a fine example of how dreams never really change," Nick said, including Blaine and Jim in their conversation. Blaine looked confused. "I mean they morph into something else for a while but come back just as strong, almost like the universe's way of reminding you of when you were young," Nick laughed at himself. Blaine looked at Kurt finally understanding and stroking his thigh under the table.

"Well I think without NYADA I'm no one," Kurt said shrugging, "I'm not trained, no one will credit me on Broadway."

"People go to Broadway all the time with no classical training," Nick said, "You're a name Kurt, that'll be enough."

"Just drop it Nick," Blaine whispered, sensing Kurt was uncomfortable but Kurt smiled to show Nick he wasn't offended and talk turned to Blaine's songs and what a success he had been. They tried to engage Jim in conversation but it was stilted and he let them off the hook and went his way with his guitar after Blaine thanked him again. Blaine and Kurt soon walked to get a taxi a little later.

The silence hovered over them for a while, both in their own thoughts and looking down at their feet as they walked. Blaine stopped after a while and waited until Kurt had realised.

"Blaine?"

"I think you should try for Broadway Kurt," he said a note of finality in his voice making him sound very powerful.

"No Blaine," Kurt said slowly, "Don't feel you have to say this because you're trying to live your dreams, don't worry about me, I'm fine in the modelling world."

"No you should try too," Blaine said, taking his hand emphatically, "We both can be dreamers and live for the future." Kurt laughed.

"It sounds very romantic but not very realistic," Kurt said smiling sadly as if he was explaining the cruelty of the world to a much younger man. "I know what I am and it's fine."

"You don't know who you are," Blaine said, "No one really knows until they try. Do you really want to live out your days as a model?"

"No I'll eventually wither and die like the rest of you mere humans but I'll find something else to do after my star wanes."

"But why don't you use your fame now? Why not get your agent to hook you up with auditions. I'm sure Nick's right, people will want a name to their show, it won't matter if you aren't trained. Your voice is so unique Kurt, it's special."

Kurt thought it over for a while then looked up at Blaine's hopeful expression.

"I'll ask but I don't think it'll work," he said but Blaine could see the idea running through his head and his eyes lighting up with possibilities and he hoped that Kurt would really start to believe for real.



## Chapter Nineteen

In the end Kurt didn't tell his agent that he had decided to audition for the second lead in a relatively new production on Broadway. The show had done a year on Broadway as well as a national tour and it was ready to come back again with a new rejuvenated cast. The second male lead was a unique part, not romantic but the 'friend' character, important in the development of the main characters. Kurt couldn't help but think and hope that he had chosen probably the most suitable part, if only someone would give him a chance.

He was automatically given a first audition and he knew it was often difficult for the average hopeful to even get a foot in. It still didn't dawn on Kurt that they might be impressed with his existing career until he showed up and immediately heard the whispered mutterings from everyone in the room.

There was the usual four sat behind the table, peering at the sheets ahead of them, checking who was next and what to expect, then looking up sharply, clearly intrigued to what the model Kurt Hummel looked like up close and personal. The main casting lady, a fierce looking woman who looked like she had been doing this for too long, cocked her ear to the guy sat next to her who was whispering quickly. He was obviously impressed that Kurt was here, even if she was not. There were a few dotted around the room, the stage dependables who weren't directly involved in casting but knew the production better than anyone. They managed to speak to the people next to them while barely moving their lips. Despite their subtleties Kurt knew he was being spoken about, his presence causing a shift in the atmosphere that was different to the young hopefuls that had been before. It only caused his nervous butterflies to twirl and flutter more quickly in his stomach.

"Hi I'm Kurt Hummel," he said, unable to keep the tremor out of his voice, "I'm here to audition for the role of Ethan."

"Go ahead Mr Hummel," the lady said, looking a little less severe now she had spoken to the guy next to her, "When you're ready."

Kurt took a steadying breath, after quickly giving his sheet music to the man at the piano and he closed his eyes in preparation.

*Something has changed within me*

*Something is not the same*

*I'm through with playing by the rules  
Of someone else's game*

And he was through with it all. As he saw the casting group assembled before him he knew this would be no worse than being peered at and prodded when modelling. They treated him like a specimen then but now he was doing what *he* wanted, striving to live *his* dreams.

*Too late for second-guessing  
Too late to go back to sleep  
It's time to trust my instincts  
Close my eyes: and leap!*

*It's time to try defying gravity  
I think I'll try defying gravity  
Kiss me goodbye I'm defying gravity  
And you won't bring me down!*

*I'm through accepting limits  
'Cause someone says they're so  
Some things I cannot change  
But till I try, I'll never know!*

*Too long I've been afraid of  
Losing love I guess I've lost  
Well, if that's love  
It comes at much too high a cost!*

He stood up taller, lifted his face slightly, his nose upturned, his eyes searching the light above as if it would shine down only for him.

*I'd sooner by defying gravity  
Kiss me goodbye I'm defying gravity  
I think I'll try defying gravity  
And you won't bring me down!*

Kurt had practiced the song with Rachel, had been able to reach the high-F with no problems in rehearsal but now as it approached, he saw the expectant faces and nearly panicked but he stayed his ground, his feet firm beneath him.

*I'd sooner by defying gravity*

*Kiss me goodbye I'm defying gravity*

*I think I'll try defying gravity*

*And you won't bring me down!*

*Bring me down!*

*Ohhh ohhh ohhhh!*

He reached the note and stayed there long enough for the fierce casting lady to raise an eyebrow. She was visibly impressed. There were murmurs around the room amidst the open-mouthed expressions that a man had been able to reach such a high note. There was a sudden applause and smiles along the table of four.

"Thank you Mr Hummel," the guy said, clearly a producer, "We'll be in touch."

"Thank you," Kurt said and he took a simple bow and left the room.

---

"That's fantastic Kurt," Blaine exclaimed as soon as he heard that Kurt had got a second audition. "I knew you would."

"Well I think it's probably because of my name," he said shrugging as if the news was nothing.

"No Kurt it's because you're perfect," Blaine said, squeezing his side as they stood in the kitchen of Kurt's apartment cooking dinner. It felt like their plans were finally coming together. Despite Blaine's initial apprehension that he would just be taken as a singing model, he seemed to thrive in small piano bars across town that recognised his talent and admired his hard work showing he knew he had to start at the bottom. "Your voice is perfect."

"Thanks, they certainly seemed impressed," Kurt said warming to the idea that he was superb.

"Tell the truth," Blaine whispered near his ear, a delightfully teasing lilt to his voice, "You blew them away and you know it."

Kurt smiled and shrugged one shoulder slightly. "Perhaps?" Blaine laughed.

Santana walked into the apartment then and seemed in a foul mood, whatever happening during the day causing her to take out her anger on the two people that she saw first as she came into the apartment. Especially two guys that reminded her that she was currently single.

"Urgh," she said, not attempting to cover her disdain at their close proximity and the clear love that oozed out of their pores. "Please try to erase all the gay love dust that seems to be floating around here." Blaine looked a little sheepish but Kurt just rolled his eyes.

"Good evening to you too," he said. Her eyes seemed to find a pile of clothing near the sofa that clearly didn't belong to her or Rachel so she walked over to it and picked up the first top.

"And do we need a discussion about this?" she said, revealing the top that clearly belonged to Blaine.

"What do you mean?" Kurt asked.

"Why do we have a pile of Blaine's laundry on our sofa?" she said, clearly annoyed.

"Sorry I'll put it away," Blaine said, walking over to the pile apologetically.

"No," she said, placing the top almost behind her back as Blaine tried to take it, "You're not getting my point. Why do you have a pile of laundry here? Where do you actually live now Blaine?"

Blaine didn't know what to say. He looked from Santana to Kurt, wondering what his defence might be when Kurt spoke for him.

"Santana, don't be so rude. It's none of your business where Blaine lives or where he stays. I seem to remember you live here without real permission and at least Blaine is welcome."

Santana pursed her lips and Blaine had a sinking feeling in his stomach. This was just the beginning.

"Oh he's welcome here," she said in a tone that suggested he wasn't really. "I just don't get why you don't make it official, why he doesn't move his stuff in permanently and start paying rent. Of course it might be because he's a commitment-phobe and that would be too much of a big deal," she said as if Blaine wasn't there. She didn't wait for an answer, her comment left hanging in the air until she went behind her curtain to her bedroom.

Kurt continued with the dinner, not really looking at Blaine until Blaine walked back to the kitchen after placing the top on the pile again.

"Kurt?" Blaine said, touching his side gently.

"Don't worry about San," Kurt said without looking up and madly stirring the sauce, "She's just angry at something else, I can tell. She always takes it out on us. Maybe someone threw up on her on the subway."

"Kurt," Blaine said, his fingers becoming more insistent along Kurt's firm side, until Kurt was forced to look at Blaine properly.

"We never discussed it," Blaine began.

"No Blaine because we never needed to," Kurt said smiling slightly, hating to see the worry in Blaine's eyes. "You asked to stay here when we came back from Italy and I know you need time. Just ignore Santana, you can stay as long as you like."

"But I should go back."

"Only if you want to," Kurt said, now taking the plates out to serve the pasta.

"But I don't want to," Blaine said, this time taking Kurt firmly by the waist, forcing him to stop and look at Blaine's earnest expression and twinkly eyes.

"What?"

"I don't want to go back," Blaine said, smiling now, "I've been going back to my apartment sometimes during the day to get clothes and other things and bringing them back here a small amount at a time. I don't want to go back there."

"Why?" Kurt asked, already hoping he knew the answer.

"Because I don't have anything I love there anymore," Blaine said, inching a little closer, "There's no Kurt there."

"There's a Kurt here," Kurt said, feeling a little silly for saying the statement but already feeling a little lost in those eyes of warm honey.

"I know," Blaine said, smiling at the lovely sentence, "That's why I love it here. Would you mind if I stayed here permanently and paid you rent?"

Kurt never gave him an answer but Blaine supposed the kiss that made even his toes tingle meant yes.

---

At Kurt's second audition he read lines with another hopeful using a scene from the musical and sang 'Being Alive' - another number that had those watching him silent and awestruck. He was asked how the production would affect his modelling career and he answered confidently that his dream of Broadway would always come first. They seemed please with his answer and said they would get back to him.

In the meantime, both Blaine and Kurt had been invited to the GQ Man of the Year Party which swarmed with men and had an abundance of alcohol. It was the first party that both Kurt and Blaine had attended since they had been forced to become public about their relationship after leaving Italy. They had been spotted eating out numerous times, their photo snapped and a little mention every so often, the gossip columnists commenting on their relationship as if they knew the finer details. For once Blaine wasn't worried about what they wrote but this party represented their first official outing together, one where they would be forced to deal with prying eyes and inquisitive stares from people in the business, people who knew who they were and what they were about. Kurt had insisted that they didn't have to go.

"Oh we have to go, I know that much," Blaine had said.

"But we really don't," Kurt said.

"Yes we do," Blaine said, taking Kurt's hand, "We need to still their voices."

"If you're sure?"

"I'm sure."

Blaine hadn't really factored in the appearance of Sebastian at the party, not aware that he would have an invitation. Sebastian was actually the first person to come up to them both as they stood by the bar sipping their first drink.

"So you two love birds finally made it," Sebastian said smirking, "I thought the photos might have scared you away from public appearances."

Kurt stared at him, realisation dawning.

"You had a hand in the Italian photo?" he whispered.

"Oh yes, that was a personal favour, I don't need you to thank me though," he said smirking, "All the publicity was bound to make your careers soar."

Blaine was seething next to Kurt and unable to speak.

"Oh yes, it did wonders for our relationship too," Kurt said not a hint of sarcasm and Sebastian was a little surprised.

"Still going strong then?" he said laughing, "I would have thought Blaine here would have gotten a little bored by now. You never were one for a regular relationship Blaine," he said poking his side, "I'm still around if you need a little something extra, shall we say." He leant in to whisper closer to Blaine's ear which seemed to help the ticking in Blaine's veins to finally cease.

"No," he said loudly, "I don't think I'll be needing you anytime soon Sebastian."

"Well you know where I am when the day-to-day gets a little boring," Sebastian continued.

"I think actually that time of my life where I settled for mediocre sex and meaningless conversation is now passed and if I could I would completely erase it."

Blaine and Kurt took the opportunity to leave the temporarily stunned Sebastian and walk over to Tabitha who they wanted to speak to about the possibility of another photoshoot together. Kurt's phone rang.

"Oh," Kurt muttered, "I better take it outside," he said to Blaine who nodded. After a minute he followed Kurt outside to hear the last few sentences of their conversation.

"That's fantastic," Kurt was saying, "Thank you so much for this opportunity, I won't let you down."

Blaine quirked an eyebrow, already confident he knew the answer to his unasked question.

"I got the part!" Kurt said jumping up and down once he had finished the call. "Look out Broadway here I come!"



## Chapter Twenty

Blaine's career didn't appear to be soaring as high as Kurt's or as quickly but Blaine was happy nonetheless. He was getting more and more regular bar gigs, getting known around town as someone who prepared a fantastic set of happy covers and acoustic versions of upbeat songs. He threw in a few Disney songs to hit the nostalgic nerve that existed in everyone that came along to watch. He soon developed a little cult following – people that enjoyed being at the forefront of new music and Blaine found himself trying a few songs he had experimented with in his bedroom when he was a kid. He was pleasantly surprised by the response and gradually became more confident and enjoyed the journey for what it was – a slow steady meandering to achieving his dreams.

He did a few modelling contracts, just to keep his toes in, a few campaigns that required a few days a week of his time and avoided accepting work that required travelling so he could concentrate on his craft in New York and be there to support Kurt.

Kurt was enjoying the rehearsals and came to his first one much more prepared than anyone else there. He already knew the songs and his lines and it was only a matter of perfecting the director's vision and working with the new cast. He loved it and was quickly accepted by the cast and crew as a well known name but someone who was prepared to work hard for his success on Broadway. Blaine and Kurt flitted out of each other's lives in the weeks that led up to Kurt's first performance but it just made any time they spent together more special and sacred.

The first night came along – the previews and New York Times critic present – and Kurt was understandably nervous.

"You'll be awesome, I can't wait to see you," Blaine said, as he looped his arms around Kurt's waist where he stood in front of the mirror. Kurt was barely making an effort to get ready knowing he would be put in costume and full make-up when he got to work and he looked up to see Blaine's face on his shoulder.

"How do you know?" Kurt said. He had been in the middle of his mirror pep talk to himself when Blaine had walked in. Now he let his nerves take over. "You've never seen me perform, you don't know what I'll be like."

"I may have snuck in when you were rehearsing once or twice," Blaine said looking mischievous. Kurt smiled.

"You saw me?"

"Yeah, Kurt you were amazing," Blaine said earnestly, his eyes wide and shining with pride in the mirror. "You'll be amazing tonight." He pressed his lips to Kurt's neck gently, causing Kurt's eyes to flutter closed and a sigh to escape. He visibly relaxed. "I sometimes can't believe you're mine," Blaine continued, his voice now a whisper against Kurt's neck. "I can't believe you let such a failure into your life."

"You're never a failure Blaine," Kurt said, his expression changing to one of worry. "You shouldn't say that about yourself, it makes me sad."

Blaine suddenly looked like that was the last thing he wanted to do and he tried to smile.

"I'm sorry, I just look at you sometimes and wonder how I got so lucky that you took a chance on me. When I first met you, I was so messed up and I...."

Kurt turned around in the mirror and faced Blaine, placing his hands around Blaine's face so he could make sure he was understood.

"Blaine, I love you," he said his eyes roving Blaine's face, taking in his beautiful eyes, wide and brown. "I love you just the way you are and will always look back at our first meetings and chuckle. You are amazing Blaine, never forget that."

"Don't you wish those times hadn't happened?" Blaine asked quietly.

"No," Kurt said honestly, "I don't think you would be the same and I wouldn't change you for the world." He smiled as Blaine's eyes continued to shine.

"Now I need to go," Kurt said placing a gentle kiss to Blaine's lips. "I'll see you at the after party?"

Blaine nodded and smiled.

---

And Kurt was glorious. Not that Blaine had ever doubted it. He sang beautifully, danced and acted well, outshining the main actor and causing a few tears when he sang near the end. Kurt had been right; the role was perfect for him and the critics were preparing their reviews highlighting this new talent.

Blaine only looked at Kurt on stage, only saw his perfection and knew there would never be another perfect opportunity to ask what he had planned to ask and he felt the heavy presence of the little black box in the pocket of his jacket. He tapped it continually throughout the performance to check it was still there and he felt the nerves swirl in his stomach at the thought of what he was to do in front of so many people. He was the first to stand as Kurt came out to take his bow, his clapping heard above everyone else and he even whooped and hollered. He had never felt so proud and he realised if only one of them could fully achieve their dreams he would want Kurt to realise his. He soon prepared to enter the after party and wait for the cast to join them. He downed a glass of champagne that was offered to him and found another glass to steady his nerves, then his eyes alighted on the piano.

He smiled. No one was nearby, no one seemed to be about to play and he wondered why it might be there if it wasn't to be used. A sudden cheer erupted in the room and Blaine turned to see the main cast making their way through the crowd that was clapping. Kurt's eyes sought out Blaine's and when they arrived he smiled. Blaine went straight to him.

"You were perfect," Blaine whispered in Kurt's ear, weaving his arm around Kurt's waist in case he lost him in the crowd and praise that was being thrown his way. They kissed and Kurt realised this is what had made his night – his guy being there to support him for all to see, knowing he would never have taken the chance without Blaine's belief in him.

"When you sang that song...." Blaine started, "Kurt, you made me cry, everyone had tears and goosebumps, I almost wanted to come up on the stage to comfort you."

Kurt laughed. "I didn't think I was that good of an actor."

"I believed every word you said and sang, you looked so gloriously beautiful up there. You've found where you belong and I'm just really glad I can see it all."

"I'd be nothing without you by my side," Kurt said, kissing his cheek and squeezing Blaine closer to his side.

"I have an idea," Blaine said, smiling and eyeing the piano, "Do you think they'd mind?"

Kurt looked around to see who he could ask, knowing Blaine planned to sing.

"No I think it's a great idea," Kurt said, the crowd at the party already talking with the cast and laughing and joking going on. Everyone was distracted but conversation stilled when Blaine started pressing the keys of the piano.

"Hi everyone," Blaine said, "I hope you don't mind me interrupting conversation but I wanted to sing this for Kurt who was perfect tonight on his Broadway debut and I can't resist a sparkling piano." There was a chuckle in the audience and Blaine looked up at Kurt, already showing that despite the crowd and the party, Blaine only had eyes for Kurt.

*I can feel you breathing*

*With your hair on my skin*

*As we lie here within the night*

*I'll pull the sheets*

*When it's cold on your feet*

*Cuz you'll fall back to sleep every time*

The images of domesticity with Blaine, how they had been living together for a few months now so effortlessly, flitted through Kurt's mind and he smiled, knowing the rest of the cast were looking his way with slight jealousy that he was being serenaded so beautifully by such an attractive man.

*Grow old with me*

*Let us share what we see*

*And oh the best it could be*

*Just you and I*

Kurt stilled, wondering if Blaine knew the importance of what he was asking Kurt in the presence of everyone. Blaine looked up from the keys, his eyes open and so honey-like in the dim shade of the room and he beamed, his smile leaving Kurt in no doubt that he meant every word.

*And our hands they might age*

*And our bodies will change*

*But we'll still be the same as we are*

*We'll still sing our song*

*When our hair ain't so blonde  
And our children have sung we were right*

*They'll sing  
Grow old with me  
Let us share what we see  
And oh the best it could be  
Just you and I*

*And the hairs they stand up  
And my feet start to thump  
Yeah the feeling is dreaming around*

*You'll be the one  
Make me hum, make me come  
Make me feel like I'm real and alive*

*Grow old with me  
Let us share what we see  
And oh the best it could be  
Just you and I*

*Grow old with me  
Let us share what we see  
And oh the best it could be  
Just you and I*

Now was the time, now was the moment as Blaine finished the song on the piano and waited for the applause to die down. He felt a rushing in his ears, heard no words and could only see Kurt who was smiling widely. He looked so perfect, the light shining down on him like a spotlight and his blue eyes twinkling. Blaine went to stand from the piano stool, tried to get his hands to move to the little black box in his jacket but he couldn't, he was frozen to the spot and he could only look. Look at Kurt's perfection and wonder what he thought he was doing. He couldn't propose to Kurt, not when he was so good and so beautiful standing there where he belonged. Kurt's smile faltered as he took in Blaine's expression and

questioned why he hadn't moved. Kurt moved for him and came to the piano stool. He knelt in front of Blaine as everyone watched on.

"What's wrong Blaine?" Kurt whispered so only he could hear.

Blaine could only shake his head, tears appearing in his eyes and a smile touching his lips.

"Did you mean it?" Kurt asked, his eyes hopeful, "Do you want to grow old with me? My skin all wrinkly, my hair all grey but my outfits as glorious as ever?" Kurt said, laughing at himself but asking Blaine nonetheless. Blaine smiled and nodded earnestly, still unable to speak. Kurt smiled.

"Good," he said and he reached into his own inside pocket of his jacket, Blaine's eyes going wide. "Then I think now is the perfect time to ask if you'll marry me?"

Blaine's eyes went wide and he covered his mouth quickly. He rapidly recovered though and started to laugh, shaking his head and getting his own little box as Kurt opened his to reveal the most fitting white gold ring with a strip of diamonds along the centre.

"I got one too," Blaine said, Kurt's eyes going wide that they had planned to propose to each other, that they were on the same page. The light glittered on the rings in the boxes and the crowd started to realise what was happening and started to cheer. "Will you marry me Kurt?" Blaine asked.

"Yes Blaine," Kurt said laughing. "Will you marry me?"

"Yes Kurt." And Blaine's tears started to fall in earnest now but these were happy tears, no trace of nerves or worry. They exchanged engagement rings and stood up, showing the room what had just happened and the room erupted in more cheers. They kissed and hugged and laughed and the night was beautiful.

---

Blaine received a business card that night from an associate from a small production company – someone that had watched his performance and was interested in further discussion with Blaine about the possibility of an album deal. So lost in Kurt's blue eyes and happiness he barely registered what he had been given but the opportunity was there nonetheless when Blaine came down from his high and realised he had everything he had ever wanted and it had nothing to do with his beauty or his fame or his money.

It had everything to do with Kurt.