



FANFICTION Series



Timeline: AU

What if Justin met Brian a little bit older and wiser?

First Go Round

Walking into the fog-filled, strobe lighted atmosphere I make my way over to the bar, acquiring my usual territory. Taking a hit of E and holding my double shot of Beam in hand, I look out on the dance floor smirking at the patrons that seemed to take the theme of tonight rather seriously.

The Eighties.

Where labels made the man.

Excess was the general rule.

And looking out for number one was the main philosophy.

My type of decade.

Taking a cursory glance over the place, I am not surprised to see the usual suspects leaning against the bar, surveying the crowd. With cocky grin and attitude in place, I made my way over to begin the first step to enjoying this evening. Giving my order to the bartender, I make myself comfortable, waiting for the questions to begin.

It didn't take long.

"So Brian, who's the victim tonight?" came the irritating voice of one Ted Schmidt, accountant and loser extradonaire.

Tongue in cheek, I came with the ready-made retort. "It will never be you, so don't worry about it."

"Looks like someone is being a bit of a meanie tonight. Is it because someone hasn't been fucked in the last hour?" Emmett shot in, taking a sip of the apple martini, once again dressed in something that should have been hidden in a very deep dark closet.

"No, Dr. Ruth. I just had a shitty day at work, although I don't know why I am explaining myself to you."

"So, what happened Brian?" came the concerned voice of my best friend Mikey. Can always count on 'Good Ol' Mikey' to give a shit when everyone else doesn't.

Sighing as if the weight of the world was on my shoulders I replied, "Nothing more than a few thousand fuckups by the idiot twins themselves. Add on to the fact that I had to deal Ryder on my ass all day with a dunce of a temp and you have just summed up my day so far." I complained, downing my first shot and signaling for another one.

With my second double shot in hand I asked, "So what's been going on here so far?"

Emmett fairly jumped up and down, as if he couldn't hold the news in any longer. With a big smile on his face he taunts, "Well apparently there is someone that is stirring up quite the interest in here and for once it isn't you...."

Rolling my eyes at this pathetic 'Nelly' bottom behavior I reply nonchalantly, "And I would be concerned because..."

"Your fickle subjects will dethrone the 'King' soon?" Ted snickered, trying to cruise a guy that was way beyond his league.

Not giving him the satisfaction, I just ignored him and went back to my usual game of sightseeing.

Then came a familiar intro that I remembered from a long time ago and that is when I noticed that the lights had dimmed a little and it seemed that a circle had formed in the middle of the dance floor. Craning my neck a little bit, I could just barely make out a blonde head, but that could be taken care of quickly. Draining the last of my shot, I left the glass and my little playgroup to see what the hype is about.

Walking through the masses is never a problem for me. It almost seems that they part like the Red Sea, most trying to cop a feel here and there.

Ignoring the touching as I always do, I finally make it to the front and I am met with a sight that will always be imprinted on my brain for wet dreams to come.

I once knew a girl named Nikki

I guess you could say she was a sex fiend.

I met her in a hotel lobby masturbating with a magazine she said how'd u like 2 waste some time and I could not resist when I saw little Nikki grind.

And boy did he ever follow instructions. Watching those hips sway back and forth, I just stood there taking in everything about this mysterious new addition to the Babylon clientele. Electric blue eyes, bright smile, swimmer's build, and the most attractive feature of all...a bubble butt that just wouldn't quit.

I think that I have just found my 'victim' for tonight.

Breaking away from the pack, I walked up to the two dancing bodies and pushing the other man away took his spot, intent on having my turn with the young man.

Placing my hands on the slim hips I pulled him in close, giving him a small preview of what he would be moaning from later on that night.

Leaning in for the kill, I whispered the words that many had the pleasure to hear. "So, you want to go to my place?"

Shaking his head, he licked those berry-red lips, making my jeans tighten even more. "Uh-uh. We go to mine. It's closer."

"How do you know how far I live from here?" Was this boy some kind of stalker or something? I might do just about anything, but I draw the line at psychos.

Giving me another one of those megawatt smiles, he laughs "You're joking right? Who doesn't know Brian Kinney, the proclaimed 'Stud of Liberty' address?"

Twink does have a point, and right now my dick didn't care where we did as long as it was soon...and I for one never argued against logic like that.

"Well since you know so much about me, can I get your name at least?" I don't even know why I asked...like I would remember anyway.

"Justin."

Grabbing his hand, I get a firm hold on his wrist and get off the dance floor wanting to get the festivities started.

she took me to her castle
and I just couldn't believe my eyes
she had so many devices
everything that money could buy
she said sign your name on the dotted line
the lights went out
and Nikki started to grind

Ten minutes later found me staring up at one of the old modest brick buildings that are so common in this part of town. Grabbing my hand, he pulled me in and up the two flights of stairs and finally in front of a modest apartment.

As soon as the door was closed behind us, we were all over each other, attacking anything that was standing in the way of feeling flesh on flesh. Thankfully there wasn't a whole lot of that. I barely had time to get a good look at the place, when I was pushed backward and fell onto something soft and lumpy. A second later, another body followed the same path, hands and lips touching me everywhere.

At first I was content to let the blonde do what he wanted, but I was never one to stand on the sidelines for long. Now it was both of us trying to devour the other, trying to take what we could get not caring if the other got anything out of it. Then it became a game of who could get the other to come first.

And I never back down from a challenge.

Feeling him scoot back a bit, we end our marathon make-out session, eager to get to the main event. Giving my lips one last lick, he grinds into the hardness beneath him, making me groan from the effort of throwing his ass down on his carpet and fucking him senseless.

"Hmm...can I guess that you are ready for the show to begin?"

Pressing our clothed cocks even closer together I give him his answer. No other words were spoken as he pulled me up and guided me to the place that would be witness to all the action.

The castle started spinning
or maybe it was my brain
I can't tell u what she did to me
but me body will never be the same
Her lovin will kick your behind
she'll show no mercy
but she'll sho'nuff sho'nuff show u
how 2 grind

"Oh Christ!" I yelled, as I finally came for the second time that night. Pulling out, I flopped down beside him trying to come down from the hormonal high I just reached.

Where in hell did he learn that move? Is he some type of acrobat or something.

Seeing him laugh, I realize that I must have voiced my thoughts because he replied, "Nope, I've never been in a circus although I guess those gymnastic classes my parents made me take were good for something." And then he started the downward journey to my cock that was already showing its appreciation at from his generous attention.

/Thank goodness for pushy parents./ was my last thought as I surrendered to the pleasure that I was getting from this very talented young man.

I woke up the next morning
Nikki wasn't there
I looked all over
all I found was a phone number on the stairs
it said thank u 4 a funky time
call me up whenever u want to 2 grind

/Where the hell am I?/ was the first thought in my head as I tried to block out the blinding sunlight coming from the large picture window directly in front of the bed. Not dwelling that much on my current location, I rolled over

reaching out a hand for the hot little body that I had so much fun with last night when all I was met with is cold sheets.

Slowly opening one eye, I take in the crimson walls, ivory woodwork, and huge sketches that are hanging on the wall.

Seems that Blondie has a flair for the arts.

Letting the smell of caffeine gradually wake me up, I pull on the jeans I wore last night and padded out to the living room, hoping for a small encore performance. Unfortunately, my little performer had other plans.

B.

Sorry to leave like this, but I had plans that I just couldn't break. There is some coffee made, fruit, and bagels if you're hungry. Help yourself. I just wanted to let you know that I enjoyed last night and that your live show far exceeds your reputation. I'm sorry about your shirt. Call me on my cell and I'll replace it for you. Don't worry about locking up. The door will lock automatically when you leave. Later.

J.

Screwing up the paper, I throw it across the room, feeling a bit pissed at these turn of events. I mean, who does the bubble-butt asshole think he's dealing with here? I'm the one that is supposed to do the little 'morning after' speech. I was the one that blew off one-night stands....not the other way around.

Fuck him and his lame ass breakfast!

Slipping on the rest of my clothes in no time, I walked over to the couch, picked up my jacket from where it fell last night and walked out the door.

Walking back towards my loft, I found myself humming the damn song that started this thing in the first place and came to a decision.

I would definitely be seeing that 'Darling Twink' later.

He could count on that.

Karma is a Bitch

In an upscale neighborhood located in the outskirts of Pittsburgh, a young woman sat at a table of a fashionable cafe, waiting for someone to join her. Luckily, her wait wasn't long, as a young man jogged up to the table, gave her a peck on the cheek, and greeted her in their normal fashion.

Giving her his trademark smile, he happily yelled, "Hey Brat!"

Smiling, she waited 'til he sat down and leaned over to give him a kiss of her own.

"Hey J." Noticing that her friend was adjusting more than needed in his chair, she could take a good guess at what made him almost an half hour late, but decided to tease him a bit.

"So what's the excuse this time? And it better be good, since you are late to a long overdue breakfast with your best friend."

"Oh, believe me. It was worth it! A little over six feet tall, lean build, silky hair, and hazel eyes to drown in," he finished dreamily, before his peace was shattered abruptly.

"Wait a minute. You mean to tell me that he stayed all night? Since when has that been allowed?" Ever since the Hamilton incident, Justin having someone spend the night was unheard of.

"Shut up! Besides, I haven't told you the best part."

Leaning across the table, she bounced in her seat, glad to see that smile she missed so much on her friend's face again.

"Well, out with it."

If possible, his smile got even larger. "It was the infamous Brian Kinney."

Raising her eyebrow, she demanded quizzically, "Who's that?"

Forgetting that Daphne didn't know the ins and outs of gay Pittsburgh, he decided to make it a bit clearer. "I guess you could say he's the 'King Stud' of Liberty Avenue," and he smiled a little as he took another huge gulp from his tall glass of milk.

"Was he everything that they said he was?"

"That and then some. Fuck Daph! It was simply amazing!" he gushed, letting the woman know that this Brian Kinney person was someone she definitely wanted to meet. Anyone that could get that reaction from Justin was someone with serious skills.

"Does this mean that you will be seeing him again?" she asked hopefully,

With a shrug of his shoulders, he replied noncommittally. "Probably not."

Not able to hold back her frustration, she couldn't help herself. "Why?"

"Because from what I heard we both have the same policy. No two-time tricks." He regret to tell Daphne that was one of the main reasons he had sought him out in the first place.

"Oh, that's right. Another one of those new 'stupid' rules you've made up for yourself. Speaking of which, has the stupid fuck tried to contact you since you've been back?" she asked snidely, and instantly regretted it when she saw the bright smile disappear from Justin's face.

Acting on instinct, she reached over and placed her hand over his, giving it a comforting squeeze. "I'm sorr-"

Giving her hand a squeeze back, Justin gave her a small smile to let her know that no severe damage was done. "No. It's alright. I guess it's still a bit hard, ya know?"

Yeah, she knew alright. Daniel Hamilton, or Danny to his friends.

Successful author...great personality...funny....handsome as hell...and a lying cheating bastard that broke her Jussie's heart. When she had first met him, she was happy for her friend. Hell, even the ten-year age difference didn't bother her....well, not that much.

As time went on, she had even forgotten about that, just happy that her friend was happy.

Then it all fell to shit.

She remembered when Justin had called her in the middle of the night to ask if she could come get him. Hearing the sobs, and never thinking about the fact that it would be a eight-hour trip, she threw on some sweats,sneakers, grabbed coat, wallet, keys, and ran out the door. Six and a half hours later found her in front of Justin's New York apartment door, terrified at the state the place was in.

Clothes everywhere. Glass on the floor. Books and other things ripped off the shelves.

Looked like Goliath himself had had a major tantrum, and amongst the ruins stood Justin, destroying anything within arm's reach.

Not missing a step, she calmed him down, dried his eyes, then helped him pack up all his belongings as quickly as possible, so he wouldn't have to stay in the apartment that was haunted with the ghost of his now former lover.

During the long ride home, the worried girl was able to get the story. Of how Justin had walked into the apartment that he shared with his boyfriend of three years, intent on celebrating the anniversary of when they met.

Of how he was planning on telling him that he had decided to stay in New York, refusing the position he was offered back home in Pittsburgh.

Of how he had decided to ask the man he loved to be his partner for eternity. Of course, he wanted to surprise him, so he had kept all of this to himself.

Imagine the 'surprise' when he walked in on and saw his 'partner' and some nameless trick fucking like rabbits in THEIR bed, moaning and groaning for all they were worth.

Then to make it even more twisted, Danny waited till he came to kick the trick out. Then after the trick left, the fucker just put on some clothes and walked out to places unknown, leaving his lover to ponder what the hell had happened.

After hearing all this, the furious girl was ready to turn the car back and whip some 'Dannyboy' ass, but her sad friend told her it would be a waste of time and effort. Besides, he wanted nothing to do with him. He wanted to cut all ties.

And cut them he did...starting with the old Justin and replacing it with one that didn't smile or laugh as much, one that only cared about fucking a guy then moving on to the next; one that began to look out for himself instead of others.

For all the things she hated Daniel Hamilton for, she cursed him to the deepest pits of hell for that alone.

Not wanting to dwell on that asshole longer than necessary, she piped up, "So, how are things going with you? Finally settled into your place, after what...three months?"

Biting into a fresh and hot cinnamon bun, he said, "Yeah. After going through all those negotiations with the landlord, I made my usual 'alterations' and now it's perfect." Licking the icing that stuck to his upper lip like a child, he asked, "You coming over soon?"

Nodding, she took a bite of her own breakfast. "Sure, but I'll call first. Don't want to have a repeat of what happened last time, do we?"

Wincing at that particular memory, he groaned. "You'll never forget that, will you?"

"Nope. I wouldn't be a good best friend if I did," she chuckled at the put upon expression of the blonde boy across the table.

Taking another bite of the warm pastry in front of her, she started digging deeper.

"So how is the new whiz kid doing in the real world?"

"Never better. As a matter of fact, I will be starting my first major assignment next week. Can you believe that I even get an expense account?" He laughed, fairly jumping in his seat at the thought of spending someone else's money for once.

"Hmm, I guess all the restaurants in the tri-state area are going to show a phenomenal increase in profits, huh?"

"Fuck you!" the blonde exclaimed, still smiling in megawatt mode.

"We tried it, remember? And I seem to recall that it didn't work out that well, so I'll pass on the offer...thanks anyway," she responded to his outburst smugly, loving the ease that they always seemed to have with each other.

Seeing the look his best bud was sporting, Justin could tell that she felt the same way he did. "Gods, I missed you Daph."

"I missed you too, Jussie." she warmly replied, calling him the nickname she had dubbed him with when they were five.

"How things are with you? I mean, we've been sitting here for almost a half-hour talking about my adventures and I have yet to hear about any of your 'getting dick' pursuits.

Screwing up her face, she tried to act offended by his demand." You are such a nasty boy."

"I try sweetie. Now give me some information, before I tell your mother what I walked in on last Labor Day..."

Remembering that particular risqué incident, Daphne couldn't help but mutter, "Wait, let me change that to asshole."

"Flattery will get you nowhere. Now tell me all about it," and thus began another outrageous conversation between the two friends, each enjoying their time together.

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Downtown Pittsburgh.

Frick Building.

15th Floor. Conference Room A

Among the people seated at the mahogany table, no one looked more attentive than Brian Kinney. Although, if one could read his thoughts, they would be surprised at how talented an actor he was.

/I wonder if he realizes that I haven't heard a word he said yet.../ thought the bored ad executive, bending yet one more paper clip out of shape. Seeing that his boss nowhere close to losing steam, he sighed and settled back in the plush seat, getting comfortable to let his mind wander to other things.

Well, the one thing...person that had been on his mind since last weekend.

Justin.

Ever since that night, he hadn't been able to get the blonde out his head. Not to say that he hadn't fucked anyone else, but the image of those eyes, hair, and smile would just piss him off because they wouldn't leave him alone.

What pissed him off even more was that he was beginning to act like a teenager. He didn't even want to remember the times when he had pulled out the cell number and gone to the phone to dial, only to stop or hang up right before it started ringing.

This was too un-Kinney-like for his taste.

"Now I would like to introduce you to the consultants I called in to help with this campaign. They are with the Keller Group, so please try to make them welcome." Going to the door, Ryder opened it and made a motion for someone to come in. In the next few seconds, Brian's eyes widened as four people trooped into the room. Usually new people wouldn't get a such a reaction from him, but this was a special case because standing directly in front of him was none other than his 'darling twink' from the past weekend.

Putting his stone mask back on, he took covert glances at the smiling blonde, trying to rein in the urge to leap over, flip his little adorable bubble-butt on the table and give him a 'proper' welcome to the firm.

But he doubted that Ryder would appreciate it much.

"Now I would like to introduce our temporary additions to the team. First, we have Jen Parrot-" he blanked out once again, taking inventory of the third person to enter the conference room. Blonde hair styled in that chic messy look that seemed to be the rage, familiar blue eyes filled with awareness, deep blue shirt with a silk tie of the same color, black tailored slacks that seemed to hug his lithe form, and shiny pair of black Kenneth Coles.

Seems the mysterious twink also had some fashion sense.

"This is Justin Taylor and he will be working in our art department." Turning towards Brian, he continued, "Kinney, you and him will be working closely in terms of creating the image for this campaign, so please try not to burn him out to quickly," Ryder droned on, shooting Brian a dubious glance.

/I seriously doubt that.../ Brian thought mischievously, thinking back to that night he spent with the energetic graphics consultant.

After that, the meeting seemed to speed by, Brian growing more and more impatient to main event of reuniting with young man standing in front of him. As soon Ryder adjourned the meeting and gave the signal to personally introduce themselves to the new arrivals. Waiting for Justin to be alone, Brian made his move set in full predator mode.

"Well, isn't this a coincidence?" was his opening gambit to get his new co-worker's attention, eager to see his reaction.

With an amused look on his cherubic face, Justin grinned. "If you say so."

"So?"

"What?"

Not satisfied with the conversation so far, Brian thought it was time to be a little more overt. "Nothing, just wondering how this is going to work out..."

"I don't see the big problem here," came the nonplussed answer, throwing Brian off a bit.

He would have thought that the twink would feel a little apprehensive about working together, but instead acted as if he couldn't have cared either way.

And for some strange reason, this made Brian pissed, so in true Kinney fashion, he told himself that it was time to push things along.

"So, you don't mind that while you're showing me mock ups for a new campaign, that I will be having flashbacks of how I made you scream that night, or how I was able to bend you in positions that could get you a job in any circus..." he said calmly, although there was an undercurrent of sensuality laced with it.

Justin just smiled, getting a kick out of seeing this man trying to get him worked up. If he only knew he was wasting his time.

Giving the hazel-eyed man a measuring look of his own, Justin asked "Is this some new type of flirting that I don't know about?"

Shaking his head at the boldness of this young man, Brian began to play along.

"No. Just telling you what might happen so that you can...be prepared for it..." he

"Well thanks for the heads up. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to meet the rest of the team," he turned around, before Brian's voice stopped him.

"No problem. Will you be coming to the brainstorming session?"

Looking over his shoulder, he smirked, "I don't know. I prefer coming under the sheets, but...to each their own, right?" and off the other man went, Brian's eyes glued to the motion of the slight back and forth motion of the young man's ass. Shaking his head, Brian gathered his things and walked out the conference room with a small smile on his face. Walking down the hall to his office, Brian couldn't help but think that maybe the vacation he was planning could be put on hold.

It looked like there were enough fun things to do right in the Pitts.

Pain Management

>>>BRIAN<<<

Liberty Diner.

Proverbial greasy spoon for all fags in the in the Pittsburgh area.

And the meeting place for my particular group of friends...as sad as that is.

Pulling the door open, I am immediately assaulted with the sights,sounds, and smells of this particular stomping ground. Like the king that I am, I survey my territory and give a small smile as I locate my vassals, waiting to see how long it will take for them to realize that I am here.

"Hey Brian!" came the shout across the hustle and bustle of the busy diner and it's patrons.

Five seconds....not bad.

Slipping into the booth, I give my best friend a quick peck on the lips and sit down to wait for his mother to come over and take my order. As it is, I already know that I am going to get raked over the coals for what they consider my 'anti-social' behavior, but after the development at work a few weeks ago, I haven't really been focused, causing me to stay extra hours in order to be productive.

Grabbing a fry off of Mikey's plate, I ask, "So, how are you losers this evening?"

The flashy fashion-challenged queen sitting across from me boasts, "I don't know what you're talking about since I don't see any losers sitting at this table..."

"Denial is a bad thing Emmett," I began to say, before I was grabbed up in a rough hug, by the Rainbow Tornado, also known as Debbie Novotny.

"Hey, you little shit! Finally decided to grace us with your presence?" she yelled in her usual cheery manner.

Trying to smooth out the imaginary wrinkles in my Armani, I gave her what passed as a polite greeting. "And hello to you Deb. I must say that your wig is looking extradonairy today."

Clocking me upside my head, she demanded briskly, "What can I get for you, asshole?"

"My usual."

Turkey on whole grain wheat. No mayo. Have to watch the figure and all that.

Jotting it down on her overflowing pad, she flounces away to attend to another customer. "Be back in a minute," she calls over her shoulder, which in Deb-speak means that it is going to take a bit more than that.

"So, where have you been?" Mikey demanded, taking a bite out of the hand-held death trap known as a hamburger.

"Well unlike the rest of you slackers, I've been up to my neck in this new campaign. Since the client is shelling out millions of dollars for this thing, Ryder is stressing me for it to be perfect. Then we got the added bonus of getting some high-priced consultants to help us. I guess they felt we couldn't do it on our own,"

"No wonder you look so tired. I guess not having your daily trick is affecting your health," Ted readily pointed out, smugly munching on today's special.

Not one to pass up on an opportunity, I slammed one right back. "Now Teddy, just because you're not getting any doesn't mean the rest of us aren't. Besides, it's great when tricks make house calls or office calls, whatever the case may be," I smirked, loving the way the accountant's face twinged with equal parts envy and resentment.

"Should have known that work would never stand in the way of Brian's dick," he muttered, going back to his club sandwich, his face set in a scowl that does nothing for him...like anything does for that matter.

"Will you two give it a rest already?" Mikey whined, while stuffing his face with the food placed in front of him.

Turning my attention to my best friend, it sometimes amazes me that he didn't resemble a miniature Michelin man with all the food his mom shoved down his throat over the years and believe me, I was an eye-witness and willing participant to those feasts over the years.

Just as I was about to snag another fry, I felt a tug on my sleeve. "Hey Brian, isn't that the guy you left Babylon with the other night?"

Prying off the gripping fingers with a certain air of distaste, I said wearily. "You're going to have to be more specific than that, Em."

Getting excited, he grabbed onto my sleeve again, making me a bit pissed, but I try to ignore it as he prattles on.

"Blonde hair, blue eyes, adorable smile, and a butt that I have been saving to have for years. Is that specific enough for you?"

Swiveling my neck, I turned around to see the source of my frustration for the past three weeks standing right inside the door.

/Dammit! First the office, now this?/ I thought heatedly, wondering if the world was playing one big cosmic joke on me. I wouldn't put it past the twink if he was.

"So how was he?"

"I don't kiss and tell, gentlemen...and I do use the term loosely..."

"Come off it, Brian. Tell us," Emmett urged, leaning forward in his seat as if he is about to hear all the CIA's secrets.

Leaning over a bit myself, I get a few inches from his face to tell him exactly what information I had for him.

"None of your fucking business."

Then, acting as if I didn't give a fuck, I stood up and made my way over to the booth across the room, intent on figuring out the puzzle that was Justin Taylor.

>>>JUSTIN<<<

As I was looking at the menu, I noticed a shadow above me and a silky voice asking, "Are you stalking me?"

Glancing over top of the double-sided menu, I gave the impeccably-dressed man a look of my own. "Now why would I want to that?"

Sliding into the booth across from me, he leans back against the red vinyl, trapping me in an intense gaze. "There could be a lot of reasons."

Not sure if I should play along, but interested anyway, I asked skeptically, "Name one."

With supreme confidence, he replied with pride, "My dick."

Rolling my eyes, I could do nothing but smile, falling into the game that we have been playing for the last couple of weeks. "Contrary to popular belief, having a big dick does not automatically make me remember someone. It's what they do that gets stored into memory."

"Well, there's another reason for you."

"I guess you're right..." I agreed, having a flashback of how he operated his own 'machinery', but thankfully that reverie was disrupted before I made a fool of myself.

"Hi, Sunshine! It's about time you stopped in!" Debbie called out, giving me the same hug I've seen her give to practically everyone and one that I happily return.

My history with Deb Novatny began in 1996, when I revealed my sexual orientation to my parents. Although it took some time for all of us to come back before my big news, they slowly learned to accept me for who I am and not make me feel as I was some freak of nature. I met Deb during my first PFLAG function that my mom dragged me to and the rest is history. Ever since then, Deb has become a second mother to me. Matter of fact, it was through her that I learned all I needed to know about the hottest stud ever to walk Liberty Avenue.

Though she'll never know it.

Giving her the smile that was the inspiration for the fond nickname, I laughed, "I told you I would Deb. How are you doing?"

"As much as I can be, sweetie."

Looking back and forth between Brian and me, I could see her eyes narrow, letting me know that she was about to ask the question that had been on her mind ever since she walked over here.

"So how do you and Brian know each other, or can I take an educated guess?"

Taking no offense at the implication, I just told her the truth...well the clean version anyway, although I could tell that she jumped to her own conclusions.

"You'd probably be right. How is Vic doing?" Note to self: Have to make time to spend with Vic.

"Just fine, sweetie. Now what can I get for you?" she said happily, pulling out the much overused notebook.

Looking over the menu for a few seconds, I decided to indulge myself. Besides, it was probably time to get a membership in a gym anyway.

"A double cheeseburger, fries, and a large chocolate shake....oh and lemon bars for dessert."

"I'll put that order right in for you. I'll be back with your milkshake in a minute." Turning her attention to the man across from me, she asks, "Brian, do you want me to bring your order over here?"

Tongue in cheek, he grins, "Have I ever told you that you are one smart cookie, Deb?"

Shaking her head ruefully, she gives his cheek a hearty pinch. "A simple yes would have done, smart-ass. I'll be right back with your milkshake, sweetie," and off she goes, clearing a path through the hungry masses of Liberty Avenue.

Glancing at Brian, I see the most unreadable expression on his face and in this instance I want to know exactly what he's thinking. "How in hell are you going to eat all that?"

"Blessed with a great metabolism...at least that's what my mother says. So, what do you want? If this is about work, I would appreciate it if we kept that in the office. I value my downtime."



"Understandable, but it's not what I was going to talk to you about.

I believe that you made me an offer and I wanted to know if it was still on the table."

"Huh?"

Smirking even more, he reminds me, "The cleaners."

/Like I really believe that one, Kinney/

"Oh, I was wondering when you were going to act on that. Just bring the shirt to the office tomorrow and I'll get it taken of."

"Or, we could go to my loft after you finish and I give it to you there," he suggested silkily, giving me those bedroom eyes that I imagine have worked on every trick that ever had the pleasure of seeing them...and unfortunately I don't know how long I can resist them myself, but once again my brain helps out by pointing out something that is absolutely hilarious and within seconds I am giggling like a schoolgirl and even more so when I see the confused look on the hazel-eyed seducer's face.

"What?"

Guessing that I could let him in on the joke, I laughed, "That is a real variation of 'Want to come and see my sketches?' routine."

Seeing the way his face went blank, I take it that he wasn't expecting something like that. However, he reverts back to Kinney mode and begins refute my claim.

"First, I don't use routines. Second, you're the artist. I'll save that for you to do," he replied haughtily, taking a sip of the water that Deb had placed on the table ages ago.

Taking a sip from my own glass I smirked, enjoying the feeling of throwing this man off-kilter. Since working with him, I have learned that Brian is a control freak and when the control is taken away, he will do everything in his power to get it back.

Which makes for a pretty good show if you ask me.

But just as I was about to up the stakes, my cell phone chose that moment to ring. Inwardly groaning, I pulled the damn thing out to look at the call display, annoyed at whomever interrupted my fun.

However, seeing the name and the number, I knew I had to put the game on pause for the time being. With an apologetic smile in place, I said, "Excuse me for a minute."

Seeing him nod, I flip open the phone.

"Hey Mollusk, what's up?" I answered the call, curious as to why my little sister was calling me.

"Hey Jus. I just wanted to give you a bit of news. The dumbfuck called over here looking for you."

Oh great. What in the hell is wrong with HIM? Wasn't breaking my heart enough for the dipshit?

Hoping that my anger wasn't showing on my face, I asked firmly, "Uh huh, and what did you say?"

"That it is was none of his fucking business and to stay away from you before I gave him an illegal castration," she replied sweetly, as if it was the most natural response in the world.

Sometimes I really love the little brat.

"Good girl."

"Well, since I'm such a good girl, would you mind doing something for me?" she asked slyly, alerting my big brother alarm big time.

Should have known that there was a catch in all this, but by the sound in her voice, it didn't seem like something that I should really do...a.k.a. my parents didn't approve.

Trying to sound remorseful as possible, I began nervously, "I don't-"

"If you don't then I might let it slip to the ex where you live. You know that he left his contact numbers...." she slipped in before I could finish, making me want to smack the smile off the smile that I know she has on her face right now...gloating wench.

Sometimes I really hate the little brat.

Daphne and I taught her too well.

Knowing that it was a lost cause, I gave up the fight, the news that my ex was in town too much stress as is. "Fine! But I'm not doing anything illegal, you little shit!"

Hearing a happy giggle come down the line, she said, "Don't worry, it's not...well not really. Love you Jus!"

"Love you too. Bye"

Snapping my phone off, I stuffed it into my pocket, pissed that I can still get conned by my little sister. I swear, she must have written the handbook on how to make an older sibling's life miserable.

Turning my attention to the amused man across from me, I feel myself blush slightly, feeling a little of the tension that the phone call caused lessen.

"Sorry about that. That was just my annoying baby sister alerting me to something."

"Nothing serious I hope."

"Trivial, really," I responded dryly, not wanting to go into what the phone call was about. Then in a matter of seconds, I relaxed and realized that I had the perfect solution in front of me to help me forget about my 'pest' problem for the time being. Whispering huskily, I leaned in, watching those gorgeous hazel eyes darken with lust.

"So, do you want to sit here and try to flirt some more, or do you want to fuck?"

Not giving it a second thought, he grabbed my wrist like he did that first night, threw some money on the table and hustled me out of there, ignoring the yelling coming from one pissed waitress and a table of friends.

The ride to the loft was full of heated looks and stolen caresses, but in no time we were in front of the building that I had heard so much about my first weeks back home.

In the elevator, he had already pulled out my dick, making my head fall back against the cool brushed metal interior.

It took him no time to get the door open and set the alarm before I found myself completely naked and slung over a shoulder, being carried to the Holy Grail for all gay men in the tri-state area.

Brian Kinney's bed.

As much as this interlude started out hot and heavy, Brian changed gears, slowing the pace down a little.

Pushing me back on the soft duvet, he straddles me and begins to kiss my neck, moving progressively lower and lower until he reached the place that had been screaming for his attention ever since he sat across from me. Bypassing that area, he continued on, licking the inside of my thighs, letting his warm breath spread over my balls, making them tighten even more. I was sure that I was going to come from that alone, but thankfully he put a stop to that and then built me up again until he was ready to enter me.

Giving me the lube, I wasted no time in snagging the cap off and slathering it on his cock, anticipation pulsing through my veins at what I was about to experience. The memory of the first time was humming repeating in my brain when he flipped me over on my stomach. Preparing me quickly, I didn't even hear the sounds of the condom being ripped open and pulled on, but I sure as hell felt it when Brian entered me, hitting home in one thrust.

"FUCK YES!"

Reaching over, he grabs my chin and gives me a quick kiss. "Don't worry, I will," he whispered ferally, giving my ear a small bite, before beginning the natural motions that takes us to worlds unknown.

"Damn! Are you sure that you even have bones?" Brian breathed heavily, worn out from the exhaustive play we're taking a break from in order to catch our breaths.

Rolling over, I smiled and ran a finger down his side, appreciating the graceful lines and curves that made this beautiful man. I wish I had a sketchbook nearby.

"The last time my doctor checked he didn't see a problem."

"Hmm. So how do you like working at Ryder so far?"

"I actually like it more than I thought I would. I was worried that I would be working with a fat, balding, greasy, homophobic, old guy, but I guess I lucked out. You're only old."

Giving me a hard pinch in the side, Brian grinned. "Fuck you."

Matching his grin, I flippantly replied, "You already did, and I must say quite well, thanks."

Lighting a cigarette, he takes a puff and gives me that tongue in cheek expression that I've been itching to draw. "Do you have a smartass answer for everything?"

"Call it a gift," I smiled as I swung my feet to the side and began searching for the clothes that were hastily thrown on the floor earlier.

Finding my boxers, I slipped them on, then standing up, I turned around to face the satisfied man lying underneath the neon lights.

Tearing my eyes away before another part of my anatomy began to make its position known, I blurted out, "Well, I have to get going. Big day tomorrow and all."

/Smooth going, dumbass./ I ranted to myself, the knowing grin from Brian making me feel even worse.

Getting up himself, the other man stubbed out the cancer stick, slipped on his navy silk robe, making his way toward the kitchen, beckoning me to follow.

After getting a glass of orange juice, he turned around and said, "Like I don't know that already. However, I have a better solution. You can stay here, we fuck some more, I'll drop you off at your place to get a change of clothes in the morning, then we can go to work."

Giving him a small smile for his efforts, I tell him rationally, "That sounds too complicated. Besides, I like my bed."

Seeing that he has lost this battle, he decides to compromise. "Do you want me to call you a cab or something?"

Waving him off, I said confidently, "No thanks. I parked my car near the diner and it isn't that far of a walk."

I could still see that he wanted to debate the point, but his little internal mechanism wouldn't let him do it.

Prideful prick.

"Whatever."

Nodding in agreement, I walk around the counter and stand before the man who has rocked my world, both sleeping and awake.

"Thanks again for a good time. If you keep this up, I might have to purchase season passes," I tease, leaning up to give him a peck on the cheek.

"Ha ha funny, Twink," Brian says gruffly, pushing me away a bit, but not before grabbing my chin and placing a firm kiss on my already swollen lips.

Pulling away, he only says one word, "Later."

"Later. Oh and don't forget the shirt tomorrow," and with that, I made my way to the large door, exiting the loft and out to the street, whistling as I walked to the diner and my car.

Thirty minutes later, after a quick stop at Primanti Bros., I was walking up the stairs to my apartment and thinking about how many more of my rules that I would break for Brian Kinney. Hell, I'd already admitted to myself that the guy was a fantabulous fuck, but there was so much more to his 'stud' image that pulled me like a moth to a flame. I just wanted to explore all those layers...see what made him tick.

But shit, look where that had gotten me last time.

A one way trip to the Heartbreak Hotel.

And it was this thought that was in my head as I hit the top step and heard a voice that I thought I would never hear again.

"Hello Justin."

I don't know how long I stood there, looking at the man that had shattered my heart along with my rose-coloured glasses, but my brain summed up the situation quickly and easily in just five words.

Dammit. To. All. Fucking. Hell.

Degrees of Separation

>>>JUSTIN<<<

I can't believe this.

I simply can't FUCKING believe this.

I come home from the high that comes from a Brian Kinney fuck, and look what happens.

Danny 'Dumbfuck' Hamilton, my ex, is standing in front of my apartment with a big ass smile on his face.

Did I end up in the Twilight Zone or something?

Hearing a small laugh, I look up to see Danny giving me the smile that I fell in love with.

"No, but a lot of people think that Pittsburgh is the closest thing to it," he grinned, sliding his arms around my waist, pulling me closer to him.

Brushing the back of his hand against my cheek, he whispers softly, "I missed you, love."

"What the fuck are you doing here? Why are you here? And how in fucking hell did you find out where I lived?" I lashed out roughly, pulling away from him, partly anger at the laughing man in front of me, partly embarrassment of at speaking my thoughts out loud.

Not reacting in any way to my rant, he gestures to my apartment, "Do you really want to have this conversation in the middle of your hallway?"

Not wanting him to step foot into MY home, but knowing that he was right, I conceded. "Fine! Move out my goddamn way so I can open the door!"

"Now, tell me what the hell is going on here? I thought we said all we had to say in New York," I muttered, looking at the man who has caused me so much pain.

Damn, what I wouldn't do for a double shot of Absolut right now.

"J, did you really think that it was over?" he asked as if we had only been apart for a few days, instead of a few months.

"Well, I kinda figured it out when I caught you with your dick up some trick's ass! Just because I'm blonde doesn't mean I'm stupid!"

"I never thought that you were a fool. If that were the case, I would have never have hooked up with you in the first place."

"Lucky me. Now tell me why you're here, before my foot can't come up with anymore excuses for not being planted up your ass!" I snapped, trying to put as much distance between us as possible.

"Look J, you know I'm not good with apologies and shit like that. Hell, you probably know me better than anyone. All I ask is that you listen to what I have to say first."

"Fine. Plead your case."

"Remember when you came home that night and told me about that offer from the firm here?"

"Yeah, so?"

"And how you told me that you were thinking about taking it so that you could be closer to your family? Well, it got me thinking how we hadn't been getting along lately and I just thought that it was your way of telling me that you were leaving me without saying the actual 'let's be friends' speech."

"So...you're telling me that you fucked that other guy just to get me to leave you?" If I had a dunce cap, I would have slammed it down on his fucking head.

"I know it sounds horrendously stupid, but I did it for you. I didn't want to be the one to tie you down," he explains, looking the stupid fuck that he is.

"So why the hell are you here? Did I forget to pay my half of the rent or something?" I replied nastily, not buying his shit for a minute. If you really love someone, you don't throw them off the highest cliff that you can find.

Seeing that my attention was back on him, he stated simply, "I missed you J."

Rolling my eyes heavenward, I let him know that I am not impressed. "You already said that."

Sighing, he shoves his hands in his pockets, looking me directly in the eyes, as if that would help. "Seriously Justin. Every day since you left has been pure hell. You don't know how it felt walking into our apartment and seeing our life shattered and you gone."

"I guess it could be right up there with seeing the man you were going to ask to be your life partner fucking somebody else," I shoot back harshly, getting grim satisfaction watching him pale underneath his thirty dollar a session tan.

"Oh J," is all he says as he tries to come closer, but I halt that quickly, holding up a hand for him to stop. With a hurt expression, he pleads earnestly, "Please Jus. Can't we work this out somehow? Don't you think that we owe it to ourselves to work this out?"

Feeling myself about to explode, I clench my fists to control my already sky-high temper. "Daniel?"

With a look of hope, he hastily replies, "Yes?"

"Listen carefully to what I am about to say to you. I don't owe US shit, but I do owe it to myself to find someone that will not treat me as a dumbass child as you so effectively did for all these years."

Crossing the room, I open the door, giving him the universal gesture for what he needs to do, but he just stands there, looking like a lost little puppy. Steeling myself, I reinforce what I want him to do in words, so he doesn't mistake my actions.

"Get. The. Fuck. Out."

"Justin," he tries one more time to touch me, but I'm not having it...not when I'm not sure and what might happen.

"Get out," and stay out a voice in my head adds, sounding suspiciously like Daphne.

Great now, he's finally driven me around the bend.

"I can see that you're still upset with me and I totally understand, but know this: I am not giving up on us. I know I fucked up, but I will do everything that I can to make you see that I want us to be together. I know that deep down you feel the same."

Taking a card from his coat pocket, he dropped it on the coffee table.

"Here is the hotel that I am staying at for the next week. You can rip it up if you want, but I would really like to talk to you before I go back," he pleaded, sincerity shining in his eyes.

/And you can take a flying leap for all I care, asshole/ I thought viciously, wishing he would leave already.

Giving it one last shot, he approaches once again. "I love you, and I will always love you. I know that I fucked up, but doesn't my feelings for you count for something?"

Pushing him away, I let him know exactly what I thought of his latest revelation. "Well you can keep it for the tricks you haven't fucked yet." With one last biting glare, I said the words that I wasn't able to say the first time: "Bye Daniel," which was followed by me slamming the door so hard I was sure to hear shit from my neighbors in the morning about it.

Walking over to the couch, I just plopped down and stared at the small white rectangle with elegant gold script. Picking it up, I just looked at it, the anger and the pain coming back full force. Throwing it back on the table, I picked up the cordless phone and called for reinforcements.

Three rings later, my prayers were answered. "Daph, how about we schedule your grand tour about now?" I asked, hoping I didn't sound like I was going to have a nervous breakdown...even though I was pretty damn close.

"Do you know what time it is, Taylor?" came the grouchy shout, reminding me of the last time I called her like this, but as a best friend, this is a duty that she has to uphold.



"Daniel was just here," were the only words I uttered before Daphne went into her impressive imitation of a veteran sailor. After calming down, she became the rational girl that I knew and loved.

"Give me fifteen minutes and don't start throwing stuff, because I would hate to have to help you clean up your own shit, okay?" she says, I guess in an effort to make me smile.

"Yeah," was all I could say, thanking God for giving me a best friend like her. Maybe it was time to remind her of that fact. "Have I ever said that you are my bestest friend in the whole wide world?"

"Yeah, but it never hurts to hear it again. Now hang up so I can get dressed, and remember to take deep breaths."

"Whatever Brat. See you in a few."

"Bye Jussie," and soon the dial tone was buzzing in my ear.

Hanging up, I lean back against the cushions and close my eyes, wondering when my life turned into a fucking soap opera.

>>>BRIAN<<<

Leaning back in the big black leather chair that I've worked so hard to acquire, I look out the windows at the Pittsburgh skyline, thinking back to when I was boy and my parents decided to act like actual humans. It was one of those cold winter days where you had to bundle up against the wind, even though the sun was glaring in the sky.

I still can't remember what the occasion was or anything, but I do remember my mom smiling and telling my sister and I to get dressed and that we were going out. Soon, we were at the incline and I could remember running to the overlook and just looking over the Three Rivers and the Golden Triangle and thinking that I wanted to know what went on over there. When I asked Jack ( I refuse to call him my father, because he never was one) about it, he just told me that it wasn't any of my business since I would never know.

Well, here's a big FUCK YOU Jack Kinney!

Pushing those thoughts away, my mind wanders back to Friday night and the 'fun' I had with a certain blonde. But as much as it made me smile, I began to worry.

It's not really the fact that I allowed Justin to give me a repeat performance of his great 'talent', but the fact that I pursued him. That is something I'm going to have to stop before it gets out of control...if it hasn't already.

Plus it didn't help that I had to get an earful from my best friend about ditching him at the diner that night.

Like it hasn't happened before.

Then to get the usual cutting remarks from the gay version of Abbott and Costello made me wonder if continuing this little game with Justin is good thing.

Then again, I always do like living life on the edge...

BEEEEEP

Sighing, I turn around and deftly press the intercom button. "Yes?"

"Your ten o'clock is here," she said merrily, making wonder what exactly was making my assistant so happy. Hmph, probably got laid this weekend.

Shuddering at the image of hetero sex, I lean back and wait for the entertainment to begin.

Watching him walk in, I take in the dull eyes and wan smile and my conscience starts to nag at me, but as with all Kinneys, I ignore it and proceed to do what I want for my own enjoyment, which will eventually lead to me fucking other people over in the process.

Let the games begin.

"Good morning Mr. Taylor."

"Good morning Mr. Kinney," he responds cordially with all the enthusiasm as a wet blanket as he opens his portfolio case and hands me the placards for the upcoming McTennin Sports campaign.

Taking a careful perusal, I grudgingly had to admit thy man was good. "I am impressed. To tell you the truth, I thought this whole consultant thing was a bunch of bullshit and a waste of money."

"Lucky for me that you aren't in charge of the company, huh?" he smiles, giving me a flashback of the events at the diner and what led up to one of the top ten fucks I've had in life.

Looking down at my wide mahogany desk, my brain starts to imagine what else it could be used for. Looking up, I see his expectant face and I mobilize into action. Getting up, I walk over to my door and close it, making sure both my guest and my secretary hear the audible click of the lock.

Turning around, I press the intercom button. "Cynthia, please hold my calls. Mr. Taylor and I do not want to be disturbed for any reason," I tell her calmly, looking into startled blue eyes.

A few seconds later, he asks the question I've been waiting for. "What do you think you're doing?"

"Well, I thought that since we're having such a great creativity session, that it would be a shame to waste it."

"Is that so?"

"What did you think? That I would rip those mockups out your hand, tear your clothes off, clear my desk, throw you on it, and have a quick fuck?" I quip effortlessly, his immediate reaction telling me that is EXACTLY what he was thinking...maybe even wanted.

Backing off, I decide to give him a few moments to compose himself. I would hate to see this game end too quickly. Once he takes a deep breath, he begins again.

"Mr. Kinney-"

"I think that you can call me Brian now, don't you?" I said languidly, loving the reaction coming from the body in front of me. Damn he looks adorable like that. Funny, how I never really liked adorable before fucking him...

"MISTER Kinney," he stresses again, but I can tell that he is barely holding on, if the bulge I see in his Dockers is any indication.

"I thought I told you to call me Brian," I remind him, loving the way his blush now reaches the tips of his ears.

Fucking adorable, I tell you.

Moving just far enough from my grasp, he tries to steer the conversation back to solid ground. With a determined gleam in those baby blues, he demands, "I don't think that is very professional, do you?"

Giving him his space, I walk around to the other side of my desk, hoping to hide the obvious hard-on I got from playing with him. There was no need to let the blonde know just how much I was enjoying this. I don't have any doubts that he would find a way to use that against me.

Sitting back down in my leather chair, I reapply my take-no-shit executive demeanor and reply truthfully, "Not really, but as you well know, I don't follow conventions that much."

"So, what do you want to look at? Is there something else that you want?"

Now that is a loaded question if I ever heard one.

"Oh, there is something alright. Something that I promised you last night..."

"Really? Care to refresh my memory?"

"Here it is," and that is when I reveal my wrinkled, stained shirt that he so graciously offered to get cleaned for me.

Seeing the confusion briefly flit across his face gave me a bit of satisfaction.

Don't like it very much, do you Twink?

"Oh right," then he slowly reaches over to take the shirt, looking more than a little bit lost. "Umm, is there anything else that I can do for you?"

"There is, but I don't think my boss would appreciate it if we do such things in the office do you?"

"I thought you said that you weren't conventional?" he said skeptically, looking at me with feigned disinterest. Yeah, like I really believe that...

"But I am a realist, and sometimes you have to conform to get what you want. Don't you agree?"

"Look BRIAN," he stressed, his smile disappearing altogether. "I wouldn't mind playing your little mind games, but I had a late night and I am really not in the mood for this weird type of foreplay that you seem so fond of, so why don't we act like the adults we are and leave the innuendos for later."

"If that is the way you want it," I replied, silently letting him know that I didn't believe him for a minute.

"Yes, that is what I want."

"Fine. Now what do you have for me?"

The next hour flew by as we sat discussed the direction of the campaign. It was amazing the innate talent and instinct he seemed to possess. My reservations about bringing the consultants in were slowly diminishing as I worked alongside him, seeing our collective genius come to life in front of us.

As we were putting the finishing touches on the draft, he asked casually, "What are you doing for lunch?"

Smirking, I asked. "Why? Do you think you can make me a better offer?"

Giving me a small version of that sunshine smile, he replies, "Well, I have to know what my competition is."

"An author that was sent by the publishing company that we want to promote. They felt that it would be good if we met a marketing representative along with one of their top authors."

Zippering up his portfolio, he turns back with a strange look on his face, his face gone paler than when he first came in my office. "What's the author's name?"

Giving him a look of my own, I say evenly, "Daniel Hamilton. He writes these cloak-and-dagger novels that take place in queer meccas like Chelsea and Greenwich Village. Have you read anything of his?"

Without answering my question, he slung his case over his shoulder and swiftly walked out my office, leaving me to wonder what in hell just happened.

Before I even had a chance to regroup, Cynthia walks in with a tall, dark-haired, good looking guy in tow. Taking my mind off the blonde twink enigma that just stormed out my door, I pull my mind back to the business at hand.

After Cynthia makes the necessary introductions, I step up and exchanged pleasantries that was used when trying to impress a new client.

"Excuse me Mr. Hamilton, but I was told that there would be a Mr. Ericsson joining us. Where is he?"

Smiling, he explains, "I'm sorry about that. It seems that Perry isn't feeling so well, so I will be the only company you have today. Is that alright?"

"Not a problem in the least," I respond, silently thanking whatever germ knocked Ericsson on his ass. Now, it would be even easier to find out what the connection between him and Justin, without a third party complicating things.

Gathering my coat from the hook near the door, I usher him out the door eager to find out the story behind the mystery that is Justin Taylor.

Grand Gestures

>>>JUSTIN<<<

This is all a dream.

A horrible, fucked-up nightmare.

Out of all the advertising agencies they could have chosen, in the continental United States, HIS publisher just had to go for this one.

What in hell does a publisher need to advertise anyway?

Hearing the irritating beep of the telephone, I picked it up in a jerky movement, barking into the receiver.

"Taylor."

"Jus, you won't believe what I just saw at lunch," my best friend screamed in my ear, making the headache I had even worse.

Pinching the bridge of my nose, I sighed heavily, already having a good idea. "Let me take a guess. You saw Dumbfuck with the hottest man in the tri-state area."

"How'd you know?" came the confused reply.

"Remember when I told you that Daniel said he was here for business?"

"Yeah."

"Well, it just so happens that his publishing company wants to try to change its image and whatnot.

Anyway, they chose Ryder for the job. Brian told me that not only did they want them to meet with their marketing execs, but also with their best-selling authors."

"Shit," was the only word said, before Daphne's deductive skills kicked in. "Wait a minute. Is this the same Brian that fucked your brains out a couple of weeks ago?"

Knowing that I couldn't keep anything from her, I groaned, "One and the same."

A low whistle and a muttered, "Double shit," was all I got in return.

Picking up one of the stress balls on my desk, I began flexing my hand, sincerely wishing that it were around a specific ex-boyfriend's neck. "I really thought I was through with him, especially after he showed up at my apartment. Now I have to work alongside him and the man that I have sort of an interest in for the next few months. What am I gonna do? Who the hell did I piss off up there for me to be in this type of melodrama?" I ranted, being like the Drama Princess others have claimed me to be.

"The fuck if I know, but Jus you can't let that get to you."

"Easier said than done."

"But if anyone can find a way, it's you. Call me if you need to talk. Bye Jus," and with that sound advice, she hung up.

Slowly returning the phone in its cradle, I lean my head on my drafting table, thinking that at least I wouldn't have to do whatever the evil little Mollusk had planned. Shaking my head, I grabbed up the phone to order something from the Italian restaurant down the street when a knock came on the door.

"Hello Mr. Taylor," came the gruff greeting from the man standing in the doorway.

"Good Afternoon, Mr. Ryder. Is there something that I can do for you?"

"Not really. I just came to compliment your work on the McTennin account," the man complimented sincerely, taking a seat across from me.

"Thank you sir." I wonder where this going...

Nodding, he continued, "That is why I want you to work with Kinney on the Newlin account. Will that be a problem?"

Hell fucking yes!

"Not at all."

That wasn't what you were supposed to say, you stupid shit!

"That's good. I'll be meeting with both of you later on today to see what you come up with in terms of concepts, " he said briskly, getting up and walking out the door.

Hearing the door close behind him, I just laid my head on the drafting table and wondered how I'm going to come out of this damn mess alive.

>>>LINDSEY<<<

Coming down the stairs from putting my son down for a nap, I hear the doorbell ring. Before the person has a chance to push it again, I hurry to answer, not wanting anything to disturb Gus' sleep. Especially after all the hard work it took for me to get him there.

Opening the door, Brian breezed in without being invited, as usual.

"Hey Linds," he greeted me with the usual peck on the cheek. Shrugging out of his designer label coat, he asked, "Where're Sonnyboy and Muncher Number 2?"

"Our son is taking a nap right now, and MELANIE has to work late at her firm. She is involved with a big civil case in Washington right now. So quit stalling and tell me why you decided to make this impromptu visit."

"Right," was all he said as he walked towards the overstuffed chair, making himself as comfortable as his long legs would allow.

As I looked at him a bit more closely, I began to see tension that isn't usually there. Something was up, and if it was big enough for him to drive to what he affectionately calls 'Muncherville, U.S.A.', then it was something big.

Knowing that I had to be careful, I asked him politely, "Are you thirsty?"

Giving me his uniform smirk, he joked, "Do you have anything stronger than apple juice?"

"I'll see, but I'm not making any promises," I called out, walking to kitchen to get us something to settle down with.

I could tell that this was going to take awhile.

Minutes later, I came back with two glasses filled with white wine and a plate of crackers and cheese.

That was about as hardcore as it was going to get. Getting comfortable on the couch, I started my interrogation right away, "Why are you here?"

"What? I can't just stop past to see how my son and my favorite lesbian are doing?" he asked innocently, although his eyes told a completely different story.

"Of course you can, but as I pointed out before, you aren't one to just drop by without calling first, so don't change the subject."

"I don't know why I even bother with you," he muttered, shifting again as he leaned back in the old recliner across from me.

"Because I am the only one that will call you on your bullshit, except for Deb," I pointed out matter of factly, hoping that he wouldn't stall for too long.

Picking up his glass, he took a gulp of wine before starting, "Well, I told you that Ryder decided to use consultants on a few of the huge accounts we acquired?"

"Yeah, I seem to remember that bitching session," I smiled, remembering the rant he made a couple of weeks ago.

Ignoring my attempt at humor, he continues, "Well, it turned out that one of the consultants was a trick I picked up one night at Babylon."

"What's the big deal? It's not like that sort of thing hasn't happened before," I reminded him, wondering what was so unique about this trick than the thousands of others.

As I saw Brian begin to fidget, I knew that whatever happened between him and this other man really has him on edge.

Now it was the time to push.

"Brian, why do I feel that that you're not telling me the whole story?" I asked, raising my eyebrow the way I do to Gus when I catch him hiding something he shouldn't.

Looking slightly nauseous, he slowly admitted, "It's just the fact that I haven't been able to get the little fucker out my head."

Brian Kinney thinking about someone after he fucked them? NO WAY! That is not the natural order of things in the Kinney universe.

Hoping that my face didn't betray my surprise at this, I treaded very carefully. "Why, Bri?"

"If I knew, don't you think that I would have been able to do something about it by now?" he said tiredly, looking at a distant point somewhere behind my back.

"It's just that usually I can figure out a person, what makes them tick. I have to in this business.

But with this guy I never can tell. However, I think that I may just be getting some help in that department."

"From where?"

"The ex, who just happens to be a best-selling author for the publishing firm that became one of our newest clients."

"So, what do you plan to do?" If there is one thing I know about Brian, he always has a plan to get what he wants.

Eyes hardening, he replied coldly, "Nothing."



Knowing that I was toeing the edge, I couldn't help but add, "If it bothers you this much-"

Quickly grabbing his coat, he slid it on and stalked towards the door. "Well, that is all I wanted to say. I'll be over later this week to see Sonnyboy." Wrenching it open, he called over his shoulder, "Bye."

And once again the Great Kinney makes his grand exit.

Shaking my head ruefully, I pray to the Powers That Be Gus doesn't carry the same dramatic genes that seemed such an integral part of his 'Dada'. I have no doubt that this will be the last time we will be having this conversation.

>>>DANIEL<<<

It's been almost a week and he still hasn't called me back.

Maybe I should have just kept my ass in New York, but just as soon as I think about that, I think about what is waiting for me there.

Nothing.

It's been that way ever since he left.

And going to his apartment didn't really help matters.

I knew that I should have called first, but I was so anxious to see him that I couldn't wait any longer nor take the chance that he would say no. After pulling some considerable strings, I found out where he lived. So for nearly two hours, I stood outside his door waiting for him to get home. I can still remember seeing the small smile he had on his face as he turned the corner, reminding me once again what I had lost just because I was feeling 'neglected'.

It wasn't until after he left that I realized what true neglect is.

Then a few months later, my editor tells me that I will be in Pittsburgh for a few weeks with some annoying guy from marketing.

When I heard the news, I thought that this was a sign and I wasn't going to ignore it, but I guess I got caught up in the fairytale ending that I wanted so badly for us.

And it doesn't help matters to know that Brian Kinney is in the mix as well. When I met the man, my gaydar went through the roof. At first I thought he could be a healthy diversion while I waited for Justin to come to terms with what was between us.

However that idea was shot down when he started making some inquiries about Justin. They weren't blatant or anything, but I could tell that he was trying to pump me for information, which lead me to believe that he's interested.

Very Interested.

Hell, I wouldn't be surprised if they haven't already fucked yet. He seems to be Justin's type all right.

Dark. Mysterious. Brooding. Sensual.

But after doing some meditation on this, I decided that does not matter. I love Justin, and I know that he still loves me, no matter what he's said so far or his actions. Especially if he was going to ask me to be his life partner before everything went to shit.

Pulling on a tight black sweater and cream silk pants that I laid out hours ago, I got myself ready to go out, hoping to have a little fun at my publisher's expense. Walking out the door I made my way to the nightlife on Liberty Avenue, secretly hoping that I would run across the path of a beautiful, stubborn blonde.

Time to claim what's mine.

&gt;&gt;&gt;DAPHNE&lt;&lt;&lt;

"C'mon Justin, I promise to behave myself," I pouted, knowing by the little sigh he let escape that he was about to give in.

It's already been a week and he still on edge about this new drama development in his life.

"I dunno Daph. I still remember what happened the last time," he reminded me of what we like to call the 'Garbage Pail Kid on Crack' incident. He always pulls that whenever he doesn't feel like taking me out. I'll admit it worked the first couple of times, but I've gotten over my fears of bitchy cross-dressers that can't take a fashion tip and having boyfriends that are curious about pussy.

With the extra bonus of being asked for a personal demonstration from yours truly.

After about another minute of debating, I decided to deploy the most ultimate weapon known to females.

[illegible]

"FINE! Just shut the hell up brat," he laughed, making me smile. It was a sound that I had missed this last week, ever since the run in with the ex.

Retaliating in kind, I declared, "That's Queen Brat to you, asshole!" Can't let the subjects forget their place.

"Whatever. Just get your ass dressed and be ready in fifteen minutes. I am not going to sit on your couch for two hours while you try to decide what to wear. I mean it, Chanders."

"I heard you the first time, Taylor. I'll see you in a bit," I smiled as I hung up the phone, feeling like a soldier returning from a brutal war.

True to his word, Justin pulled up to my building and laid on the horn, letting me know in no uncertain terms that I'd better hurry or he would make good on his threat.

Thirteen and twenty seconds later, looking like the hot diva that I am, I ran down the steps, hopped in his car, smacked him upside the head, and ordered him to drive, like the princess that my daddy always said I was.

Soon enough, we were cruising down the neon-lit path that every gay boy in Western PA walked sometime in his life. I can still remember the night that Justin told me that he was going to get laid come hell or high water and made his trip down here. Of course being the dutiful friend that I am, I covered for him, but with a promise to get full details of his 'journey' into manhood.

Parking a little way from the main strip, we step out the car looking like the hotties we are. As we made our way to the club he had scouted earlier, I felt transported a few years back to when we used to do this on a weekly basis, having the best time of our teenage lives.

Stepping through the entrance, I feel like Alice in Wonderland on an acid trip. The strobe lights and smoke were everywhere, making me remember the first time I had a chemical high.

Ah, the memories.

Shoving our way to the bar, we order a Jell-O shot each, with a tequila chaser then set out to burn up the dance floor to the techno beat 'Star Guitar'. All too soon, though, it was over, but not to worry because my favorite song of all time started filtering through the sound system.

This should really get the party started.

~~~~~

punch a higher floor
if u don't like the world u livin' in
take a look around u
at least u got friends

u see I called my old lady
4 a friendly word
she just picked up the phone
dropped it on the floor
sex, sex is all I heard

are we gonna let de-elevator
bring us down

oh, no let's go!

~~~~~

Falling into the beat, we were quickly surrounded by half-naked, gorgeous, sweaty men, a girl's wet dream. It didn't have the same effect with the knowledge that any of them looked at me as anything but the blonde twink's tag along.

But, fuck if Prince is not helping my fun quotient go up by the minute...

Turning around I see that signature smile of Justin's and I know that I did the right thing by dragging him out tonight.

He so owes me for this.

Feeling as if someone was watching, I look over Justin's shoulder to see the most beautiful man I have laid eyes on. A moment later, he notices me and gives me a smile that gives me a tingle in that special place.

As he begins to make his approach, I send a prayer to any spiritual entity that he has a twin brother somewhere that has heterosexual tendencies.

>>>BRIAN<<<

Coming into Babylon, I can't help but grin as I hear an oldie but goodie from the former 'Artist', recognizing it from the CD I got on an impulse buy last weekend. Looking down in the crowd I search for a bit of fun for the evening and stop when I notice a familiar blonde head...who seems to have his own personal faghag and fan club.

This night just got better.

Listening to His Royal Closet Case, I make my way to dance floor to obtain my special brand of medicine. Shrugging off numerous offers, I keep my eyes trained on the ass that I seem to have developed a fascination with. I tried to just enjoy the view, but it wasn't long before the flashy female dancing with him noticed me. Giving her the grin that I know will make her weak in the knees I sidle up to my prey and make my presence known.

Grabbing him from behind, I lick his ear and blow, wanting to feel the shudder run through him.

"Hey Taylor."

Turning around, his eyes widened to the size of dinner plates. "Brian!"

"Now you call me by my first name," I teased him, not letting me grip weaken one bit.

"Justin, I know that your mom taught you better manners than that," his friend tapped him on the shoulder, eyebrows raised. Seeing the put upon expression on the blonde's face, I made a note to make nice with this friend.

"Brian, this is Daphne. Brat, this is Brian Kinney," he said grudgingly, glaring the bouncy female in front of me.

Ignoring him completely, she held out her hand. "It's nice to finally meet you Brian. I've heard so much about you," Daphne smiled, covertly giving me a head to toe inspection.

Giving her another knee-wobble grin, I said, "Is that so? What exactly have you heard?"

"Just how big your co-" she began to say, before a well-placed hand covered her mouth before she could finish, although it was entirely too late.

"That's enough Daph. Weren't you about to get another drink or something?" he asked stiffly, a small blush staining his cheeks.

Eyes narrowing, she relented, "Fine, fine. I'm going, but I will be back."

Once she was gone, I laid my body flush against Justin's backside, my dick letting me know that it liked what it felt. I knew it wouldn't be long before he felt it too.

Five seconds later....

"What are you doing?"

Trying to fuck you later. "Dancing with you."

Grinding his ass against me like he did that first night, he gave me a wicked smile. "Feels like you're trying to get a stain in those Gucci pants to me."

Gripping his waist tighter, I whispered huskily, "That's what dry-cleaning for."

~~~~~

Let's go crazy

Let's get nuts

let's look 4 the purple banana til' they
put us in the truck, let's go!

~~~~~

Interrupting the silence between us, I spoke up, "So I guess you like this song too, huh?"

Giving me a half-smile, he replied, "I guess you could say that I'm a fan."

"Are you feeling a little crazy tonight?"

Breathing heavily, he sighed, "Why?"

Instead of answering him, I let my hands do the talking. Letting them glide down his linen enclosed thighs I let them rest on what I have jerking off to for the past few days. Grabbing those cheeks in my hands, I pushed our groins together, enjoying the friction between our bodies. Shit, it felt better than the blowjob I got before coming here. Which I hope to do again sometime soon.

~~~~~

we're all excited

but we don't know why

maybe it's cuz

we're all gonna die

and when we do

what's it all 4

u better live now

before the grim reaper come knocking on your door

tell me are we gonna let de-elevator break us down

oh, no let's go!

~~~~~

Just as I felt him hardening against my thigh, I was about to suggest that we take this back to my loft, when I heard someone shout angrily, "Justin!"

And that fast, my lust-induced high is quickly sidetracked as I recognized the voice.

Standing across from us, giving me the evil eye is none other than famed novelist, Daniel Hamilton.

I felt, more than see Justin freeze up. Glancing back and forth between him and Justin, I didn't know what intrigued me the most.

The steely determination coming from Hamilton.

Or the nervous panic that I could feel emanating from Justin.

In no time at all, the surly ex was standing beside us, face flushed and frown in place. "What the fuck is going on here?"

Till this day I don't know what made me do it, but I knew that the look on Justin's face wasn't something that I liked seeing. It just didn't fit with the smart ass that I had come to know, and then I remembered the disappointment of Hamilton being so close-mouthed about Justin, silently telling me to back off.

So in true Kinney form, I let Hamilton know just whom he's messing with. No one fucks with me on my turf...and I always get what I want.

And right now both principals extended to Justin.

Besides, it's not like I have to kiss Hammy's ass anymore. The contract has been signed and delivered as of this afternoon.

It's showtime.

Pretending to ignore the tension in the blonde, I pulled Justin closer and told him softly, "Play along." Before he could even respond, I pushed his chin up, and laid a kiss on him that would be the talk of Babylon for the next week. At first, I felt his hands pushing at my chest, but the resistance started to melt away to be replaced by the heat and abandon that surprised me during my previous 'experiences' with the twink.

Pulling away from the dazed and confused blonde, I let my gaze fall on the pissed author and without any thought to the reactions I was going to get from this, I replied smoothly, "I didn't know kissing my boyfriend was such a crime."

Pigs Do Fly

>>>MICHAEL<<<

Now I am fully convinced of one thing that has been bothering me for the past few weeks.

My best friend has been kidnapped and a pod person has been put in his place.

I know that is sounds silly, but the only explanation that I have for the strange behavior from the self-appointed 'Stud of Liberty Avenue' lately.

And this latest display proves just that.

For Brian Kinney to act possessive over anyone is rare, but for him to declare someone his 'boyfriend' in front of most of Pittsburgh's gay population...was like Captain Astro getting killed by a pickpocket.

It is time to get answers.

"What in the FUCK do you mean 'BOYFRIEND'?"

"Shut it Mikey," came the nonchalant response that I expected, but this time I was not going to stand for it.

"No I will not SHUT IT! What the hell is going on Brian? Why didn't you tell me that you had a boyfriend? How long has this been going on?" I just couldn't believe that Brian didn't tell me he had a boyfriend. We're BEST FRIENDS for crying out loud!"

Then again, Brian is a master at keeping me out the loop.

Selfish asshole.

"Not now, Mikey," he says blandly, although I can see his eyes flashing with determination, letting me know if that I pushed, he wouldn't tell me anything!

"Fine, but you have some explaining to do," I warned him, glaring at the shocked blonde beside him. Fucking twink! This was entirely his fault!

If I couldn't get answers from Brian, it was time to try something else.

And just as I was about to start ripping into him for forcing Brian into this situation, the girl standing next to him perked up, "Feisty, isn't he?"

Rolling my eyes a la Kinney, I continued on my mission, but was once again ignored, this time by the pissed ex. "Justin, I know that this isn't true, so you might as well cut out the games now."

"Who said it wasn't true? Brian has treated him better than you did in all those years you two were together, you fucking asshole," the girl defends him angrily, looking at the ex with murder in her eyes.

Seeming to come out of his trance like state, the twink turns towards her with a grateful smile. "Thanks, Daphne."

"No problem," came the cheerful response, although the glare she leveled at the other man was anything but.

Ignoring her, the other man turned his attention to the blonde. "Justin, I really need to talk to you. Can we please go somewhere more private?"

Stepping away from Brian, he gets directly in the guy's face and says calmly, "Obviously, you didn't hear me that night in my apartment. Hell, did you ever think of where I was coming from that late at night?" After about a minute of silence, Justin snickered, "I thought so, but now that we understand each other, I'm going to tell you this for the last time. Leave. Me. The. Fuck. Alone."

"Yeah, what he said," Brian smirks, pulling Justin away from the fuming man and back into his arms.

"Double that for me, Dumbfuck!" and with that the drama trio exits the dance floor, leaving me to bring up the rear.

As I make my way to the bar, I feel like I am in a real bad episode of the Twilight Zone. After pushing and shoving my way through the stunned masses, I finally made it to the bar. Just as I about made it, I saw Brian lean over to blonde, whisper something and then started walking away. Not wasting anytime, whirl him around. "Where's Brian?"

Giving me a little annoying smirk, he replied, "Restroom. Is there something that I can help you with?"

"Yeah! What are you doing with Brian??!"

Giving me a weary glance, he turns back to the bar, dismissing me. "Look, you need to ask him."

But before I could pressure him again, the wannabe lesbo that was with him stepped between us and handed him a shot.

Shooting me a glare, she turned back to the twink and smiled. "Alcohol is the perfect crutch in situations like these. Bottoms up, Jussie."

Snatching the shot out of his hand, I demand again, "What is going on between you and Brian?" There was no way I was going to let this go.

"What business is it of yours if there is something going on between us?"

"Don't you even know who you're talking to?" Damn, was this guy stupid? I thought everyone knew the score between Brian and me.

The way he looked at me was really starting to get on my nerves, until something changed. Giving me a small smile he holds out his hand. "Nice to meet you...again."

Smacking his hand away, I cross my arms. "Whatever."

"You really don't remember me, do you?" he grins, looking like a little kid about to pull a prank. Which seemed oddly familiar for some reason.

Shaking the feeling off, I snap, "Am I supposed to?"

"Does a PFLAG barbeque about five years ago ring a bell?" he asks amusedly and suddenly my head is filled with an embarrassing moment involving condoms, potato salad and rainbow flags.

"THAT WAS YOU! YOU LITTLE-" I yelled, ready to inflict a little revenge for that shit, but was stopped by the Fuckman himself.



"What's going on here?"

Spinning around, I confront Brian. "You tell me." Pointing at the blond twerp, I yell, "What the hell are you doing with him, Brian?"

Shaking his head, with a look of amusement on his face, he singsongs, "I know that Deb taught you better manners than that Mikey." Fuck, I hate it when he treats me like a child.

"Looks like he forgot a few lessons," the witch says from behind Brian, making me wish that I was a girl so I could pop her one.

"Daphne, be nice," the twink warns her, although I could tell that he couldn't give a shit about what she did.

"I will, if he does."

Shaking his head, he ignores me completely, and asks 'Jussie', "You ready to go?"

"Yeah, I think I have fulfilled my drama quotient for the month."

Handing the witch his keys, Brian's 'boyfriend' says, "Don't go crazy with my car, brat."

"Shut the fuck up J. Just so you know, I'll be calling early tomorrow."

"Bitch."

"But you love me," she grinned, pinching his cheek. Then she found a new target.

"Brian?"

"What?"

"Do you have a straight twin walking the Earth?"

"Sorry."

Tilting her head to the side, she shakes her head. "I didn't think so, but it doesn't hurt to ask, does it? Well, it was nice to meet you and I know that we just met, but can you do me a favor?"

"What is it?"

"Fuck his brains out," and with that, the evil sidekick was gone.

Finally. Now I could get my answers without any more interruptions. but before I could even open my mouth, Brian shot that idea to hell.

"Alright then. Let's go." And as if he just realized I was there, he leaned over and gave me peck on the cheek. "I'll talk to you later, Mikey."

And just like that, they were gone.

As soon as they leave, I can see Ted and Emmett making their way through the crowd towards me. By the looks on their faces, I knew exactly what was going to happen.

"Michael! Is it true?!? Does Brian have a boyfriend? Is it? Is it?!?"

Shrugging my shoulders, I signal the bartender, "I don't know Em. I just don't know."

And with Brian involved, you never assume anything.

>>>JENNIFER<<<

I know that over the past few years, my son and I have grown apart. It is the natural order of things. But I still know when something isn't right. Call it a mother's intuition.

It started a few months ago when he moved back to Pittsburgh. I'm not saying that I wasn't happy that he was moved back, but to me it seemed quite sudden. Especially since the last time I talked to Justin, he told me that he wasn't going to take the job here in order to stay with Daniel in New York.

So I go to the one person that I know would know everything: Debbie Novotny-PFLAG Supreme Mother

Debbie and I met at my first PFLAG meeting and in spite of all our differences, we clicked and I can't be thankful enough for all her help and support when Justin came out.

Of course, it took time for both Craig and I to come to grips with our son's sexuality, but I just think that it could have been so much worse.

And I was right in my assumption in asking her about Justin. After he moved back from New York, I tried to ask him what happened between him and Daniel, but he just brushed me off or changed the subject entirely. Then, I hear Justin has been spending time with a man named Brian Kinney who is considered somewhat of a libertine in the gay community, although I could sense that there was more behind his story than what Deb told me.

And since Molly was spending the night at a friend's home, it was only logical to call the other person that would give me the rest of the story.

Hitting the speed dial, I let the phone ring and was not disappointed when I heard a sleepy voice answer, "Hello."

"Hi, Daphne. This is Jennifer."

"Hi, Mrs. Taylor. How are you doing?"

"Fine, thank you."

After talking about small things, she finally gets to the question that I've been waiting for.

"Is there anything that I can do for you?" she asks hesitantly.

"Actually, I wanted to know what happened between Daniel and Justin."

After a few moments of silence, she replied, "Um, I don't think that it's my place to tell you."

"Well, what do you know about Brian Kinney?"

"Who told you about that?" I could practically hear the surprise in her voice, which let me know that I was on the right track.

"The PFLAG Grapevine. Now are you going to tell me or do I have to tell your mom about the time I caught you and Justin-" No matter how old a child gets, the 'mother' threat works every time. Besides, I don't think that Diane would like to hear the real truth behind her Lexus getting totaled. I don't think she ever got over it, which I remind Daphne of as well.

"Man, and I thought Justin was an extortionist."

Smiling at having my method work once again, I say smugly, "Where do you think he learned it from? Now spill and don't leave out any details."

>>>BRIAN<<<

Opening my eyes, I'm a bit disoriented and then I realize that once again I'm in Justin's bed.

And by the extra warmth on my left side, I'm not alone this time.

Rising up on my elbow, I lean over and look at the blonde sleeping beside me, and just take in the peaceful and beautiful features. My fingers are itching to touch, but I don't want to wake him up just yet. After the little performance we put on in Babylon last night, I think that he needs all the rest that he can get. Plus the little confrontation with Mikey didn't help matters, but I will clear that up later.

Hearing a small moan, I look down see two very sleepy, bright blue eyes, complete with a small grin, looking like one of those angel figurines my aunt used to have all over her house.

Fucking romantic bullshit.

"What are you looking at?"

Trying to push my thoughts back to the deepest reaches of my brain, I look around the room, thinking of an appropriate response. "Your great color scheme."

"Right." Stretching a bit, he gets more comfortable and then turns to look at me, his expression somber. "Look, if I didn't say it last night, I just wanted to thank you for the save last night from Dumbfuck," he mutters, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes looking so damn adorable that I want to jump him right then and there. But that could wait.

"It was the least I could do. Besides, it seems that Dannyboy needs a firm and swift kick in the ass, and who better than me to give it to him?"

Sighing, he gets up and tugs on his robe. "But you do know that there are going to be repercussions from this, and not just business related?"

"Such as?" Like I ever gave a fuck about those.

Turning around slowly, he looked as if I just grown another head. "Did you really forget what happened last night?"

Doing my best to look bored with this conversation, I smirk, "Besides making Hammy look pathetic?"

"You kinda declared that you were my boyfriend Brian, and from what I gathered on the Avenue, that is something that Brian Kinney just doesn't do."

/Thanks for reminder kid,/ I groaned inwardly, not wanting to think of the inquisition that was sure to come from my 'family'. But I was not going to let him know that.

Rolling him underneath me, I licked his ear, feeling a shiver of anticipation go through him. "I like to keep my subjects guessing."

"Then, my Lord, as a thank you for your valiant courage, I'll make you some breakfast."

"Sure thing, but there are some things that you have to attend to first,"

"Like?" and with a slight thrust I let him know exactly what I was referring to.

"Oh."

"And you'll be saying more than that in a couple of minutes," and of course I was right.

It was another two hours before we got out of bed. Offering me a towel and washcloth, he pushed me into the shower, while he prepared breakfast. Without my favorite blonde distraction, soaping up and rinsing off took no time at all.

Stepping out of the bathroom, I grab up the clothes I had on last night, wincing at the feeling of day-old clothes against my skin, but what can you do? I think next time, Justin should come to the loft instead.

Following his voice into the kitchen, I look at the art lining the walls. I've ignored it until now, but I soon realize what talent the little twink possesses

I can remember looking at the mockups for the McTennin account and was amazed at the creativity he had. Looking at one in particular, I am stunned at the detail that is captured by his hands.

Hmm, maybe he and Lindsay would want to get together and talk shop.

Wait a minute...what the fuck am I talking about? Moving away from the wall, I start down the hallway again. As I get closer to the kitchen, I hear Justin talking to someone, but I am certain that we are the only two people here, which means only one thing.

Speakerphone.

Not wanting to be a rude guest, I wait until he finishes. Of course, if I hear anything, it is truly unintentional.

"Yeah, I'm fine."

"Has he called you?" the voice asks, and I recognized it as that girl he was with last night.

"No, he hasn't called me and I think after last night, he never will. Now if you have gotten all your questions answered I have to go. I'm fixing breakfast."

"Oh, so you and Brian had a sleepover? I didn't know you allowed them to stay now."

"Kiss ass, brat."

"I think I'll save that for Brian. Oh and by the way, your mom kinda knows about Dumbfuck and Brian. I'm really sorry, but you know how she is."

"Yeah, I do, and let me guess. She used the Lexus against you? Jesus Daph, don't you think that it is time to tell her already? It's been almost six years."

"Like that would really matter. You should see the way she gets whenever we pass a dealership. Besides would you tell your mother you totaled her car?"

"Not a chance. Listen, I gotta do some things, so I'll call you later."

"Fine, but you better call me, Jussie, and please don't be mad."

"I already told you, I'm not and I will. Bye Daph."

"Love you J."

Hearing the dial tone cut off, I go back to looking at the art decorating the halls, thinking about just what I am getting into with this twink.

"You can come out now."

Turning around, I just look at him and wonder if I can get him to skip breakfast for a bit.

"What are you talking about?"

Coming closer, he smiles, "So, did you like everything you heard?"

And once again, I ignore him.

"What are you talking about?"

Shaking his head, he asks, "Are you hungry? I made bacon, scrambled eggs and toast, with freshly squeezed orange juice."

"I don't know, Justin, that seems like a lot of fat and calories," I reply, trying to get another look at some of the sketches.

Since this was the last time I planned being over here.

"Life is too short to be worried about dumb things like that. Now get in there, sit down, and eat the food I slaved over for us." And grabbing my hand, he pulls me down the hall.

"Has anyone ever told you that you're real demanding?" I asked, looking at the plate with big helpings of traditional breakfast food. I don't even want to know how many hours at the gym it is going to take to work this shit off.

"Fuck you, Kinney," he grumbles, plopping across from me, attacking his own plate, and stuffing a slice of toast topped with egg and bacon in his mouth.

"I don't think that is going to happen any time soon, but as soon as I eat, I'll see what I can do for you."

Rolling his eyes, he grabs another piece of toast and gives it the same treatment, washing it down with a big gulp of OJ. How he can eat like a vacuum and stay thin like he is is a scientific marvel.

"Brian?"

Still playing with my eggs, I look up. "What?"

Giving me a serious look, he says, "You do know that this can't happen again, don't you?"

Of course I do, but I want to hear what he has to say. "Care to enlighten me as to why?"

Leaning back in his chair, he crosses his arms. "The Newlin account."

Oh right, the new account that Ryder dropped in my lap before I left the office on Friday.

"What does that have to with anything?"

"Well, according to Ryder, we will be working exclusively on this project and I think that it would be a bit difficult if we kept up these 'extra-curricular' activities outside the office, don't you?"

"I don't know. It could be seen as an added benefit." I can tell by the grimace on his face, that he caught the double meaning behind that. I wonder what he would say if I told him if I thought he looked hot when he was angry. I remember the way he told that dickhead off last night, and how it made my dick hard.

Like it is now.

Shaking his head in resignation, he goes back to his breakfast and I go back mine. Right now, I didn't want to think about what would happen after this breakfast was over, all I knew was that I didn't feel like giving him the traditional Kinney brush-off. I don't know what it was about him that made it that way, but until I found out, I was stuck with the blonde running through my mind day and night.

And I guess it was the same thing that prompted me to ask him, "Feel like meeting my son?"

>>>MELANIE<<<

As soon as I walk in the door, I am met with the love of my life. After the terrific welcome kiss she takes my briefcase and walks me over to the couch on the way telling me that she made my favorite for dinner. As soon as she settles in beside me, I wrap my arms around her, decompressing from the hell of being a junior partner who has to work on the weekends.

"Sweetie, Brian is coming over in about an hour. Is that alright?"

/When has it ever been okay for that asshole to come over/ I ask myself, letting Lindsay know exactly what I was thinking.

"Okay, dumb question, but I just wanted to give you fair warning."

Knowing that there is no way of talking her out of this, I ask with a sigh, "So why is the Great Kinney gracing us with his presence tonight?"

"He told me that he just wanted to catch up and see how things are going with Gus, but I think that there is something else going on."

"Such as?" Knowing Brian, it could be anyone's guess.

"Well, according to Michael, it seems that Brian has a boyfriend," she grinned, her eyes lighting up.

Now I know that the world is about to end, because that is the only possible reason that I can think of for the words 'boyfriend' and Asshole's name to be in the same sentence.

"And how does he know this?"

"Apparently, Brian announced in front of everyone that was in Babylon last night that he was taken, and Michael called me to see if I knew anything about it."

"Do you?" which she probably didn't or I would have known about it already. Sad to say, but true.

"You know that I wouldn't have been able to keep something like that to myself."

Pulling her closer, and rubbing her almost flat tummy, I smile, "I take it that you're going to give him a thorough cross-examination when he gets here..."

"Well, you do give terrific lessons, counselor."

Pulling back a bit, I give her peck on the nose. "Enough about the Asshole. How are you doing today?"

"Good. It seems that the little person is a bit restless today. It took me almost an hour to get him to take a nap."

"Hmm...I hope that isn't a sign."

Turning to look at me, she asks, "A sign of what?"

"The Kinney attitude," I grimace, my imagination supplying an image of Gus smirking with one of those candy cigarettes hanging from his mouth.

Shaking that picture out my head, I glance down at the woman in my arms and hope that whatever Kinney is up to won't piss me off.

Too much.

After a hot shower and a great dinner, we were relaxing in front of the television with Gus snuggled in between us, when we heard the distinctive knock followed by "Open the damn door already!"

Placing a hand on my arm, Lindsay gets up knowing that if I do, I wouldn't be as nice. Getting up, I pick up Gus and place him on my hip, so he can see his 'Dada'. So imagine my surprise, when not only do I see Asshole but a person that I thought I would never see around these parts again.

"Justin?!?"

"Mel?!?"

The Proverbial Fan

>>>JUSTIN<<<

Looking out the passenger window, I've forgotten how beautiful fall can be in Pittsburgh.

The vibrant reds, oranges, and yellows of the leaves. The green of the grass on the lawns. The freshness that seems to linger in the air. The season of change. Something that I was becoming very accustomed to lately.

Leaning back against the black leather seat of Brian's jeep, I want to just forget everything that has happened. Forget about seeing Daniel. Forget about Babylon.

Forget about these growing feelings for Brian.

~~~~~

Look at you now you've disenchanted
can't believe how things can change.
Take a little out of life and things get strange.
And now you find the wishes you were granted
things you thought were in your hands
have slipped away.
How much can you withstand?
The wasted time the money spent
a sign that reads 'For Sale or Rent'.

And everything is at a standstill
and where's someone who'll be on hand till
you're no longer disenchanted,
thinking everything is wrong?
~~~~~

Cursing Brian's fixation on early 90s music, I can't help but feel a kinship with the words flowing from his state-of-the-art sound system.

Is that why I'm sitting in this Jeep, going who knows where? Am I deluding myself into thinking that Brian is just a casual fuck?

Am I using him for my own selfish needs?

~~~~~  
You know you're not the only one to wait so long.
I wonder, can you try again?
Are you that strong?
~~~~~

Could I ever be again? Will I ever put myself out there for someone else?

"Music not to your liking?" Turning my attention to the nonchalant man beside me, I lie effortlessly.

"It's fine. Why do you ask?"

"Because ever since this song came on, your face has looked like you just swallowed a bunch of lemons."

Why does he have to be so damn observant all the time? Time to change the topic. Ignoring his question completely, I give him a fake smile, "So, what's he like?"

Giving me a look that told me he knew what I was trying to do, he grinned, "Who?"

Suppressing the need to roll my eyes, I elaborate, "Your son."

Turning up the heater a notch, he shrugs, "I guess he's your normal two-year old."

Confused, I couldn't help but press.

"What do you mean 'You guess'?"

"Just what it sounds like."

Rolling my eyes for real this time, I decide to look out the window and ignore the infuriating man next to me. I don't think in all my life that I have met such a puzzle as Brian Kinney.

He comes off as the most arrogant shit that you'll ever know, but then he'll do something like he did last night.

Seeing Daniel standing there, demanding that I listen to any more of his bullshit was unbelievable. But that was nothing compared to what Brian did. Telling everyone that he was MY boyfriend. After that, everything is really a blur. Well, except for meeting his irritating friend and the fuck fest that followed at my place afterwards.

"What are you going to do about Dannyboy?"

Hearing something about Daniel snaps me out of my thoughts. "Huh?"



"I asked you, what are you going to do about the case of the ex that you seem to have?"

Not really wanting to think of that right now, I say the first thing that came to mind.

"Wish that he gets a horrible rash and his dick falls off."

With one of his rare smiles, he laughs. "Never knew you could be a meanie, Justin."

"Good thing you found out early in the relationship, huh?"

Scowling, he steps on the gas. "Kiss ass, Taylor."

"Sorry. I only do that Monday through Friday," and nothing is said for the rest of the ride.

Soon we pull up in front of a rambling Victorian house and I can't help but think of the gingerbread houses my grandmother used to make. I remember she used to let me lick the batter from the mixing wand. Hmm, I bet Brian would be able to get it all. Maybe we could hold a contest or something.

"Stop the naughty thoughts about me, Jus."

"And what makes you so sure that they're about you?"

"Right now have this goofy smile on your face, like you just had the most amazing fuck last night," he says, giving me that sexy smirk that sends a tingle down my back. "Oh wait, you did. Go ahead and smile all you want to."

Getting out the Jeep, I toss back, "Anyone ever tell you what a conceited bastard you are?"

"On numerous occasions," he smirks, gesturing for me to follow him to the place he calls the 'Muncher Palace.'

Seconds later, Brian is banging on the door yelling, "Open the damn door already!"

Soon, I hear footsteps and the door is opened to reveal a tall smiling blonde who doesn't hesitate to throw her arms around his neck.

"Hey Bri! Nice to see you."

"I know," he replies, giving her a kiss on the cheek as he walks in.

Scowling at his back, I get the hint that I am going to have to introduce myself.

"Justin. It's nice to meet you," she smiles, and I can't help but feel that I've met a kindred spirit.

"Same here. Brian has told me that you are an art teacher," I said, hoping to strike up some conversation and wondering exactly why Brian dragged me over here.

"Justin?!?"

That is when I look up to see a memorable brunette that is holding a baby on her hip, which could only be Brian's son.

"Mel??" This is not happening. Simply not happening. Why is she here?

/Maybe because she is Lindsay's lover, dumbass/ a voice says, sounding suspiciously like my own.

"Ohmigod! I don't believe it! What are you doing back here?" and soon I am pulled into a half hug.

Going with the simple answer approach, I replied, "I work here now."

Pulling back a bit, she narrows her eyes. "And why wasn't I told?"

"It wasn't really front page news, Mel." And that is the way I wanted it.

Leaning closer, she whispers softly, "What happened?"

"Can I tell you later?" I reply, pleading silently that she wouldn't push me on this. At least not in front of Mr. Inquisitive over there.

Giving me a small smile and a hug, she relents, "Sure hon."

Releasing the breath that I wasn't even aware that I was holding, I gratefully turned the attention away from me. "So who is this?"

Smiling down at the boy in her arms, she says warmly, "Justin, this is Gus. Gus, this is Justin."

"Gus," the mini Brian says, pointing to himself. Then he reaches out to me and by natural instinct, I take him out of Mel's grasp.

Pointing a stubby finger at my chest, he says, "Jussin."

"Nice to meet you Gus." And without warning he gives me a firm hug, followed by a sloppy wet kiss. Hmm, looks like he picked up some of his father's technique.

"Play now?" he asks in that cute toddler voice of his. Staring into familiar hazel eyes, I can't help but give in to the kid. "Sure."

Smiling like someone who just got his or her way, he commands, "Down, pwease." Yep, this is definitely Brian's kid.

Once he is on the floor, he grabs my hand and begins to drag me over to a corner filled with toys, but before we get there, he stops and turns around.

"You too, Dada!" and just like that, Brian gets up and comes over.

Man this kid is good. With his famous smirk in place, Brian loops his arm around my shoulders, his eyes sparking mischievously.

"C'mon Jussin, let's play."

I barely resist leaning into the warm arm as I follow father and son into the living room, wondering how in hell I ended up here on a Saturday afternoon.

>>>DEBBIE<<<

"Ma, are you even listening to me?" my only child whined, making me wish that I had a piece of duct tape.

"Maybe if you would shut your mouth for a minute I could hear you," I sigh, tired from working a full shift at the diner. Pulling off my old and battered Easy Spirits, I breathe a sigh of relief. "Now tell me what has you so upset."

Taking a deep breath, he says quietly, "Brian has a boyfriend."

"Brian who?"

Giving me a look as if I'd lost my mind, he screeched, "BRIAN, Ma! You know, the man that has been my best friend for the last seventeen years?"

"Brian Kinney?" This is not possible. Well, according to the world of Brian Kinney it's not. Nodding his head, he sighed, "The one and only." Then he plops down on the couch like a dejected puppy.

"You mean Brian 'Whateverthefuck' Kinney?"

"I think that we've covered that, Deb," my brother chuckles from behind me.

Shooting him a glare, I snap, "Shut it Vic."

Going over to the couch, I sit next to my son and pull him into a loose hug.

"So who is it?"

Grimacing, he mutters, "Some stupid twink named Justin." Instantly I get a picture in mind of a blond young man with the brightest smile I've ever seen. Plus it doesn't hurt that he has a bubble butt that won't quit. Now it was time to see if my suspicions were correct.

"Sunshine!?!?" Seeing the confused look directed at me, I explain, "You're talking about Justin Taylor, right?"

If my hunch is right, then I would finally get some answers to questions that have been bothering me all week.

"Yeah, or at least that's what I caught last night," he answers grumpily, then whips his head towards me in surprise. "Hey how did you know?"

"You remember the Taylors, don't you sweetie?"

I know I would never forget that night they came into that PFLAG meeting. Mr. CEO, his country club wife, and their All-american son were something of a rarity in this organization.

"No, but I do remember a little blonde runt embarrassing me in front of everyone at the summer picnic a couple of years back," he pouts.

Trying not to laugh too hard at the memory, I reassure him.

"Baby, it was all in good fun. You have to admit that it was funny." And believe me it was. I just felt bad because that was the first and last function I was able to convince Michael to go to.

"Yeah, well you weren't the one that had to take about five showers to get rid of the potato salad," he snapped, before stomping off into the kitchen.

Feeling a hand squeeze my shoulder, I look up to see Vic smiling madly. "So, do I really want to know?"

"I'll tell you later," I whisper, motioning the sad lump sitting at the kitchen table.

"Do you think it's true? Brian being off the market?" Vic asks, reflecting the same doubt that I knew was on my face.

"I really don't know Vic. I really don't know." But if what I remember about Justin still holds true, he would be the perfect person for the job.

I think that Liberty Avenue is in for a show that it won't soon forget.

>>>LINDSAY<<<

Sitting in the dining room with Mel, I can't help but smile at the scene that's playing out in the living room.

One blonde and two brunettes. Rolling on the floor and laughing so hard that it makes even my stomach hurt. Truthfully, I never would have thought that Brian would have been in Gus's life the way that he has, but seeing him now, I guess that is all the proof I need. Looking away from Brian, I begin to concentrate on the 'surprise' guest.

Looking at him, he is the complete opposite of what Brian usually goes for.

His typical tricks are more like he is: tall, dark, and handsome, with a touch of danger thrown in.

But Justin resembles those innocent cherubs that Michelangelo painted on the roof of the Sistine Chapel. Glancing over at Melanie, I notice that she's distracted. Time to make my move.

"Sweetie?"

"Yes, baby?"

"Are you going to tell me the story between you and Justin or will I have to play the guessing game?"

Leaning back into her chair, she asks, "I don't know. What do I get in return?"

Getting up, I sit down on her lap and begin my bargaining technique.

"A night with no interruptions. Just you and me, bubble bath, candles."

"And?"

"Some of the hottest sex we'll ever have." That should seal the deal.

"You drive a hard bargain, Peterson-Marcus," she grumbles nuzzling into my neck, pressing small kisses randomly.

"Well, I've had terrific lessons, Peterson-Marcus." Needing to stop this little interlude before it goes any further, I pull away. "Now quit stalling and tell me what is going on!"

"Do you remember that I told you I was awarded an all expenses paid scholarship in my last year of law school?"

"Yeah, so?"

"One of the conditions was that I had to meet and keep in contact with the founders of the scholarship. You ever hear of the Hamiltons?"

Seeing my nod, she continues. "Anyway, I met Justin at one of their get-togethers and we just clicked. That is when I found out that he batted for the same team and that he had his own personal trainer so to speak."

"Let me guess? Their son, right?"

"Correct, counselor."

"But isn't the son substantially older than him?"

From the information I remember in the short bio included in his books. I deduced that he had to be at least ten years older than the charming blonde playing a few feet away from us.

"Since when has that really mattered? Now do you want the full story or should I stop?"

Knowing that she was looking for an excuse just to do that, I wasn't going to budge until I got what I asked for. "No chance."

"Well, as I said, Justin and I became kind of close. I guess I came to think of him as a little brother."

"Okay. Now what is the reason that you were so surprised to see him?"

"He's been living in New York for the last couple of years, working at one of those ad firms on Madison Avenue. I just thought that he was happy with his life there."

"There is more to it, than that. Tell me, Mel."

Shaking her head, she replied gruffly, "Sorry babe. Lawyer/Client privilege, but I will tell you that if Brian is thinking that he can get over on Justin, he's got another thing coming."

"Which is?"

"You'll find out soon enough." And once again that look of concern is on her face. Following her gaze, my eyes rest on the laughing blonde man and can't help but wonder what happened to him for Melanie to be so concerned.

>>>DANIEL<<<

"Baby?"

Reaching out to pull my lover towards me, my hands instead touch cool crisp sheets. Slowly opening my eyes, I see that the other side of the bed, which would usually be occupied by a nubile young blonde, was instead empty.

"Justin?"

Wide awake now, I take a glance around the hotel suite and I cringe at the destruction area it had become. The clothes that I wore last night are hanging over the television set, and it seems that I put a dent in the mini-bar.

But there is no sign of Justin ever being here. And with that thought, last night's events flashed through my brain.

I can't believe that fucker had the audacity to claim Justin as his.

I could tell by Justin's reaction that it was a lie, but for him to go along with it stunned me.

And I cannot forget the trusty sidekick being there to step up to her darling Jussie's defense.

Nosy bitch. Never did like her anyway.

Thinking about the soap opera from last night, I still can't believe that Kinney played the part of cock blocker so well. According to the queens on the Avenue, Kinney runs a sort of Grand Central Station for all tricks in the Tri-State area, which validates the point that he and Justin aren't together.

So just what is going on between them?

Getting up, I walk over to the bathroom and try to look for anything that will take away the hammers pounding in my head. Grabbing a few packets of Tylenol, I walk back into the suite and swipe a bottle of water from the fridge. Popping about four pills, I guzzle the entire thing silently, thankful to rid myself of the cottonmouth I had earlier.

Turning on the shower, I let it run for a bit, turning on the small bathroom stereo that I carry every time I travel. Stepping into the steam, I lean into the water, hoping that somehow it could erase the image of Justin and Kinney together. Seeing Justin in the arms of anyone other than me was something that I was never prepared for. As the steam begins to rise, I lean against the cool tiles and allow my mind to flow back in time when things were so different.

I can remember the first time I saw him. It was at one of those boring ass functions that my parents hold for the scholarship winners of their foundation. So there I was, intent on getting smashed when I saw this blonde dream walk into the ballroom.

Those first few weeks were, for a better word, idyllic.

Even though there was a significant age difference, that seemed to disappear during every conversation, every glance, every touch. Being in a relationship with him was something that I never thought I would have. Moving to New York and living with him had its ups and downs, but overall it was magical. It seemed that there was nothing I couldn't do with my Golden Boy by my side, where he would always stay.

Then came the job offer. That fucking consultant position at the Keller Group. One of the best firms in the US, which just happens to be located in Good Ol' Pitts.

When he came and told me about it, I was shocked that he was even considering it. It hadn't even been three years ago when we escaped that hell and he was thinking of going back.

What the fuck?!

Of course, I didn't say anything except that it was his decision to make and that I would support him either way.

What a bunch of bullshit, and I went out and proved it when I picked up that trick and brought him back to our place to fuck.

Feeling the water turning colder, I shake the image of a tear-streaked face from my mind and turn the taps off. Grabbing the towel from the door, I roughly dry my hair, which would probably give my stylist apoplexy. Smiling at the thought of pissing Alexander off, I wrap another towel around my waist and walk back into the room.

Trudging over to the windows, I look out on the overcast skyline and wonder how I am going to fix this mess. The more rational side of my brain is telling me to just let it all go, that this relationship is over.

On the other hand, my heart is telling me to go out there, get Justin, drive to New York, and never let him out of my sight again.

Like that was going to happen with Kinney in the way. I bet he thinks just because the kiss-ass Ericsson signed those contracts, that he doesn't have to worry about me.

Coming to a decision, I walk over to my carry all, pull out my laptop and power on. If Kinney wants to play games, he'd better prepare to lose.

Because I never have and don't intend to start now.

## Power Play

>>>MICHAEL<<<

It's been almost three weeks after the showdown at Babylon and Brian still hasn't told me the whole story, which is really starting to piss me off. I mean, it's not like he really meant all that shit he said that night, so I don't know what the big deal is in telling me. Then, to top it all off, everyone is acting like The Blonde Menace is the best thing since sliced bread...even Ma.

"Hello, can I help you?" I automatically ask, not bothering to look up from the inventory sheet. I swear these things get more confusing each month.

"Are you Michael Novotny?"

Having a sense of déjà vu, I ask curiously, "Yes. Is there a problem?"

"I am beginning a new novel soon and I need someone with a background in comics and Pittsburgh to help me. I asked around, and heard that you were the best man for the job. Here's my card. Right now I'm looking for a place to live, but you can reach me by my cell phone anytime. I would really appreciate it if you would do this for me."

Taking a quick look, I glance at the name and instantly the memory floods my brain. "Is that the only reason that you're here?" C'mon, I may be naïve, but I'm not a complete idiot.

Showing no reaction at all, he nods his head. "I guess you know who I am then."

"The ex of the blonde rash that seems attached to my best friend's ass. I think most of Pittsburgh remembers what happened a few weeks ago."

"I should have known as much. So what do you think of their relationship. From what I've gathered, Brian has never had a boyfriend and has told many that he never would."

Not knowing the true reason myself, I asked a question of my own. "Why do you care? You and Justin aren't together anymore, are you?"

"Look, we both know that there isn't anything going on between the two of them. To be clear, I want Justin back and I came here thinking that you cared about your best friend enough to do what is best for him. I think that we can help each other out."

"I guess you already have some type of plan?"

"Of course. What I'm saying is that we should put on a little production of our own."

"Are you serious?"

"Absolutely."

Now this was a spin I never saw coming.

Grabbing a pad, I jotted down the address of the diner and handed it to him. "How about we meet tomorrow there around ten?"

Giving me a warm smile, he says, "Sure." Before walking out the door, he turns around and gives me this searching look that almost makes my toes curl. "I'll be there. Thanks again."

Watching him through the glass as he left the store, I glanced down at the small white card in hand, knowing that I wasn't doing this just for myself.

All for Brian.

My best friend.

>>>EMMETT<<<

Hearing the bell on the door ring, I look up and am not surprised to see Ted and a surprisingly smiling Mikey stalk through. Ever since that monumental night at Babylon, the poor boy has worn a permanent frown on his face, and all because his best friend proclaimed that the twink that has taken the Avenue by storm is none other than his boyfriend. All he has done is bitch and moan how Brian doesn't spend more time with him and he is the reason that Brian is keeping secrets from him, seemingly under the curse of what he's dubbed the Blonde Menace.

As if Brian Kinney can't think and do for himself, but one does have to wonder what is really going on between the hottest 'couple' on Liberty. Everyone grasped the reason Brian did what he did at Babylon, but for him to continue the little charade is keeping us queens busy with anticipation. For the last couple of weeks, the two beautiful ones have been seen everywhere together, seemingly attached at the hip. In fact, a lot of people have been coming to Babylon just to witness their almost nightly floorshow.

Next come the mommies with the precious baby in tow. Looking at that child one can see the one good act that Brian has done for the world.

"Hey Ladies," I greet them, picking up little man so that he can spend some time with Auntie Em. With those ugly hats that the Munchers keep stuffing him in, he's going to need some guidance, which I willing offer if his label-queen father hasn't already filled the position.

"Hey guys and girls," a cheerful voice called out, announcing the arrival of none other than Brian's 'boyfriend'.

"Jussin!" the kid shouts, making a flying dive into the startled man's arms, but Justin recovers quickly and nuzzles the boy's nose with his. Now this is a surprising development. Looking over at my now growling roommate, I silently begin the countdown to the launch of the Shuttle Footinmouth.

10

9

Body tenses....

8

7

Face changing colors....

6

5

Glare intensifies....



4

3

Mouth twisting into massive frown...

2

1

Mouth opening wide...

"How the hell does Gus know Boy Wonder?"

Ladies and Gentlequeers, we have Lift-Off!

And seeing the barely concealed grins on everyone else, I know that I am not the only one who made the same prediction.

Sliding into the booth next to Melanie, Justin plopped Gus on his lap. Looking at her son and his new playmate begin a game of tic-tac-toe on a napkin, Lindsay stepped in to explain. "Brian brought him over the house a few weeks ago. It seems that Gus and Justin have really hit it off."

Not liking this news one bit, Michael muttered, "Really? I wouldn't think that Brian would let a trick near Gus."

Giving Mikey a glare of his own, Justin was about to reply, until Brian, who had just come in, beat him to it. "No, I wouldn't, but since he's my boyfriend, I really didn't see the big deal. Now slide over," he says, not waiting for his best friend to follow his command. Once he's comfortable, he gives his usual morning greeting. "Hey Deb! A little service would be appreciated."

Hearing his father, Gus turns his attention from the beet-red blonde and launches himself from Justin's arms. "Daddy!"

With practiced ease, he caught the little boy in his arms, displaying a side that few ever got to see. "Hey Sonnyboy. How are you doing today?"

"Good. Me and Jussin are going to play," the toddler announced happily, catching everyone at the table off-guard, most of all Gus's new playmate.

"You are?"

"Mmm hmm. We gonna go to the park and play on the swings," Gus announced, looking at Justin with the biggest smile on his face, stopping any protests that the blonde might have made to the contrary.

Shaking her head at what she called Gus's 'Kinney' tendencies, Melanie asked, "Do you mind, Justin? I mean, if it's too much trouble-

Returning the bright smile coming from Brian's son, he shook his head. "No problem at all, Mel. Besides, some fresh air will do me good, right Gus?"

"Right!"

Just then Deb came over and greeted the new arrivals. "So, will you actually stay this time to eat or should I make both orders to go?"

"Can I just get a cup of coffee without the side of lecture?"

Ignoring Brian, she asked instead, "What can I get for you Sunshine?"

Looking like a kid on Christmas morning, Justin gushed, "An order of cinnamon French toast, three scrambled eggs, a side of bacon, a side of sausage, an order of homefries, and a large orange juice."

Appreciating anyone with a healthy appetite, Deb just laughed. "Coming right up honey."

Once Deb left to put in the massive order, Justin seemed to notice that the table had gone quiet.

"What?"

Not hesitating to speak his mind, Brian asked, "How the hell do you eat like that? That much fat content in one sitting is fucking disgusting!"

"I've always been blessed with a great metabolism. And I don't know why you're complaining, seeing how you've benefited from the energy that all that 'disgusting' fat gives me."

Seeming to think it over, Brian conceded. "Good point. By all means, stuff your face."

Giving Brian a small grin, Justin teased him. "Like I need your permission."

And I know that I am not the only one that is a little shell-shocked at seeing Brian act so playful...especially with someone that he's fucked before. Taking a discreet peek at Michael, I see that another verbal battle is about to begin. Getting comfortable in my ringside seat, I wait for the bell to ring.

Ding! Ding!

"Can you please can it with the PDA? I would like to actually keep my food down if that is fine with you."

Rolling his eyes, Brian leans back wrapping a relaxed arm around a smirking Justin. "What's your problem?"

"Nothing except the blonde pest is smashing me against the wall," Michael whines, shooting daggers at the smiling pest beside him.

"You know Michael, it might be better if you ate something with more fiber. That way you could get rid of all the shit you seem to be full of. Or you could bulk up on your starches. I remember how you used to love potato salad. Too bad you can't get it for breakfast."

Slamming the spoon in the cereal bowl, my roommate ignored the drops of milk that had splashed on his face and angrily shrieked, "Fuck you!"

With a toothy smile, he replies politely, "No thanks. I have standards to uphold you know."

Winner by knock out, The Blonde Bombshell!

Finally noticing the milk dripping off his face, he grabbed a napkin and roughly wiped it off. "Whatever."

Afterwards, everyone heaved a sigh and went back to what they were doing, now with the added bonus of watching Justin demolish the mountain of food that Deb had placed in front of him.

"You really shouldn't tease him like that," Brian chided, snatching a sausage off of Justin's plate.

Smacking the offending hand with his fork, Justin replied, "Why not? Besides, it's all in fun. If he can't take a joke, then that isn't my business."

"So, what is this about you and Gus going to the park?"

"I know about as much as you do. I think your son is really beginning to take after you."

Then we all watched as Brian leaned over and began to whisper in Justin's ear, and by the fierce blush spreading across Justin's skin, it was most likely X-rated.

"I'm not interrupting anything, am I?"

"What in the FUCKING HELL are you doing here?!? Why aren't you in New York?" he asked sharply, his knuckles gone white from gripping the fork in his hand.

"Research for my new novel." Smiling widely at the irate blonde, the ex casually asked, "Michael, are you ready to give me that tour now?"

Making Justin and Brian move, Mike slid out the booth, sneering at Justin as he passed him by. "Sure."

Sitting back down, Justin pushes away his plate half-full of syrup-covered bread, which Gus digs into without a problem.

We all wait a few minutes, until Justin breaks the silence. Glancing at a seemingly calm Brian, he asks, "Well, aren't you going to go see what that's all about?"

Why should I?"

Watching the couple stroll out the door, Justin turns back, anxiety written all over his adorable face. "You're his best friend. Aren't you going to say something?"

"Mikey is a big boy. He can take care of himself," although his tone seemed to suggest he wasn't quite so sure about that as he wanted to be.

Looking at Teddy, I could tell that as sad as it was, we agreed with him.

>>>JUSTIN<<<

"Has anyone ever told you that you think too much?"

Looking up into amused hazel eyes, I muttered, "On occasion."

Grabbing a cigarette, Brian lit up and relaxed against the mounds of pillows, blowing smoke rings into the air, something that I could never seem to do. "Let me guess, this never-ending case of the ex you seem to have?"

Wishing I had a cigarette of my own, I sighed. "Got it in one and the bad thing is, I should have expected this from him."

Another ring goes in the air. "Why?"

Stretching, I work out some of the stiffness from being more or less bent in half for nearly forty minutes. "Because Daniel has never been what you call a 'good sport'. It has been always been all or nothing."

"Well lucky for you, I operate on the same principle."

"I've noticed."

Flicking ash off the tip, he inhales again. "So what are you going to do?"

"Nothing. What are you going to do about Michael?"

"Like I said before, he's a big boy. Now, on to another topic that you have been avoiding. What is the deal between you and the Biker Muncher?"

"Huh?"

Giving me his famous eye roll, he continued, "Your big sister figure, Melanie. I know that you told me you both met at the scholarship thing, but that still doesn't explain why she was so surprised to see you back in Pittsburgh. What happened?"

Not really wanting to deal that lingering problem as well, I shot back, "Does the phrase 'None of Your Business' mean anything to you?"

"C'mon Jussin. I promise I won't tell," he goaded, trying to imitate his son, complete with smile and wide eyes.

Grabbing the cigarette dangling off his lips, I took a calming puff of nicotine, slightly pissed that I had fallen off the wagon. Trying to make a smoke ring of my own, I said, "Just because it works for Gus, doesn't mean that it's going to work for you."

"Then I guess I'll have to think of a different way." Snatching the cancer stick out my hand, he puts it out and pushes me back on the bed in one seamless motion.

Hovering over my body, he gives my collarbone a slow lick, a delicious shudder ripping down my spine. Pressing his lean body flush against mine, he offers, "How about my dick up your ass until we both pass out?"

Knowing that he felt my agreement against his thigh, I reached up to kiss lips that were becoming a somewhat of an addiction...one I wasn't sure I wanted to break.

"It doesn't hurt to try."

>>>DAPHNE<<<

Sitting here with Justin takes me back to when we were younger and used to have sleepovers. We would take over the living room, stuff ourselves full of junk food, and talk about all our problems. Something that he seems to have a lot of now ever since he found out that Daniel is still in Pittsburgh. He found out the other day when he accidentally bumped in to him downtown. The dumbfuck gave him some sad story about staying in town so he could do research for his new novel, but I'm not buying it. Men like Daniel don't give up easily and Justin knows this too.

Sticking another spoonful of Chunky Monkey in my mouth, with a Kaluha chaser, I ask him, "So what are you going to do now?"

"I don't know Daph." And with the lost look in his baby blues, I see something I haven't seen in three years.

Resignation.

"Well, if things are going the way you say they are with Brian, you might have to tell him at some point. He is your boyfriend. Besides, you might want to warn him in case that asshole tries to get back at him for what he did at Babylon. You know how your ex is when he doesn't get his way." Which was one of the main reasons I couldn't stand the pompous ass.

Snatching the bottle from me, he takes a swig himself. "Daphne, I've told you before that there is nothing like that between us, and from what I know of Brian, he can take care of himself. End of Story."

Not believing that for a minute, I snatch the bottle back. "So the impromptu fuck sessions you two are having to don't have anything to with it?"

And sounding a broken record, he declares once again, "It's just fucking Daph. The last time I checked, that does not constitute a relationship."

"And him taking you to meet his son means nothing either? Nor introducing you to his friends?"

"What does that have to do with anything?" he demanded guiltily, looking like a kid that has his hand caught in the cookie jar.

Grinning, I snort, "Jussie, until now, I would have never thought that you would have fallen into the blonde stereotype."

Narrowing his eyes, he says, "I'm not dumb, Daph. I'm just being a realist. And in this reality, Brian Kinney doesn't do relationships or boyfriends. Sure we have fun with each other and I have met his friends and family, but I'm not going to read anything more into it.

Seeing that my friend was still floating down a famous river, I decided to give him another push. "But it could..."

Shaking his head, he crosses his arms, looking like a four year old. "Let it go, Daphne."

Not put off by his use of my full name, I began again. "But-"

Giving a look that I've only seen from my mother, he says slowly, "Let. It. Go."

"Alright Jus...no need to turn into ÜberBitch, but you shouldn't ask for my advice if you're just going to shut me out anyway."

"Sorry. It's just that I am getting tired of people reading into more than what really is."

"I guess your mom has been getting after you?" By the look on his face, I already knew the answer to that question.

"Like you wouldn't believe. I mean, it's not like I haven't lived on my own before or anything," he said sarcastically, rolling his eyes for effect.

"But Jus, you have to understand. Especially after what happened-"

"Daphne."

Smacking his hand out my face, I let him hear some home truths. "Fine. I won't because you are such a big boy. However, I won't let you shut out the people that care about you...even if you aren't aware of doing it."

After brooding for a few minutes, he gives me a small replica of his famous smile and pulls me in. "Thanks for the reality check, Judge Hatchett."

It's quiet for awhile then he asks softly, "Daphne, what am I going to do?"

Rolling my eyes at his DP ways, I ask, "Are you going to listen this time?"

Pinching me, he smirks, "Promise."

Knowing what I would do, I tell him. "Have fun. And if it turns into something more...then it does. You can't let what happened with Dumbfuck make you scared."

"Who says I'm scared?"

"It doesn't take a psychologist to know that, Justin. Now, are you going to let Daniel win or are you going to get your man?"

"You forget one important factor in all this. The King Stud doesn't believe in relationships either."

"Well I guess you'll just have to change his mind, which we both know seems to be a special ability you seem to have."

"You are one pushy bitch."

"Tell me something that I don't know," she laughed, while he was ducking out of a well-placed smack up the head. Grabbing another pillow, I was about to launch my offensive attack when his phone rang. Picking up the cordless, he calls a halt to the little war.

"Hello?" Grinning, he mouths that it's his sister. "Hey Demon Spawn, why are you calling me so late?"

Listening for a moment, he replies, "Uh-huh. Yeah, I remember."

Picking up the stress toy from the end table, he begins playing with it. "That's pretty big Molly, and I don't think that I should have to, seeing how the fucker found me anyway."

After few more minutes, he shouts, "You wouldn't!"

Seconds later, the glare that Justin is giving the toy in his hand lets me know that she most definitely would. Makes me thankful that I am an only child. "Fine, you sadistic sea creature. You'd better be ready bright and early tomorrow."

"Yeah yeah. Hate you too, Mollusk. Bye."

"What was that about?"

Putting the phone back in the charger, he shrugs, "Just Molly calling in her favor."

"Which is?"

"Driving practice."

"Why doesn't she-" Then remembering the 'lessons' that Mrs. Taylor gave her son, I stop myself. "Sorry. Stupid question." Getting my weapon back in position, I asked, "Now weren't you in the middle of getting pummeled by a pillow?"

Snatching a pillow himself, he threw my challenge right back. "Bring it on."

RING RING

Calling a time out, he looks at the display, frowning a bit before picking it up. "Hello."

"Hello? Is anyone there?"

"Whoever this is better say something before I hang up."

And that is when I see his face crumple up, the phone falling from his fingers.

"No."

Backing up, he slides down the wall, still looking at the buzzing phone, his voice rising to a panic state. "No."

Picking up the phone, I look at the caller ID display, only to see that the number was blocked. Hitting the talk button, I walk carefully over to him.

"Who was it on the phone?"

Not getting an answer, I bend down and reaching out slowly, I asked again,

"Justin. Look at me. Who was it?"

"He's back."

Getting an oily feeling in my gut, I asked anyway. "Who's back? Who is it, Justin."

Eyes wide with unshed tears, he confirmed my worst fears. "Chris."

Pulling his stiff body closer, I want to scream, yell, punch, kick, do anything that could be felt by that sick bastard. It was because of him that Justin left his home, his family, his friends, and became so dependent on Daniel, before his rose-colored glasses were finally smashed by the prick's real nature.

Not knowing what else to do, I begin to rock us back and forth.

And Just When You Thought It Was Safe

>>>MELANIE<<<

"Hey Melanie. I really need to talk to you. Do you mind if I come in?"

Opening the door a little wider, I stand back to let him through. "Of course not." Taking a quick glance at his face, I know that there is something really troubling him, but I'll wait to find out what it is.

Offering him a seat and coffee, we sit and talk about nothing, waiting for the right moment to get to the real reason of this visit.

Not being able to look at his sad face anymore, I reached over and grabbed his hand. "What has that asshole done now?"

"Who are you talking about?"

"Brian, Daniel, same difference."

Shaking his head, he gives me a bitter smile. "Neither. I have a much larger problem than that right now." Taking a deep breath, he drops the bomb I wasn't prepared for.

"Chris has been in contact with me, and this morning I received a phone call from the authorities telling me that he was released three days ago,"

Nearly knocking over my mug, I yelled, "That's not possible!"

"I'm afraid it is." And I could tell how shaken up he is by the fear and anger swirling in his eyes. "Right now, I just need to know what I can do to keep that crazy motherfucker away from me."

"Well, I'm going to have to review the case, of course, and also check out exactly what happened for him to be released and why you weren't informed." And I will also make sure to find out who is responsible for that fuck-up as well.

"Thanks. How long do you think this is going to take?"

"A few days to a week." Getting up to get more coffee, I asked, "Have you done anything yet?"

"Daphne went with me to change my home number and I'm in the middle of getting the cell changed too."

"What about your apartment?"

"I'm not going to run just because he wants me to know that he's back to pick up where he left off. Besides, you need a security pass to access the elevator and the stairs and no one can go anywhere without showing picture ID and signing their name in the visitor log. I think I learned my lesson from last time."

"I'm glad to hear it, but don't you think that it would be a good idea to stay at your mother's for a few days until I find out what's going on?" I urge him, not liking the stubborn set of his jaw.

"No, Mel. I will not allow myself to turn into some punk-ass faggot that can't take care of himself. If he tries to come for me again, I'm going to leave him a few reminders not to fuck with me!"

After that outburst, I wanted to hold back my other words of advice, but this had to be dealt with. "You know that you are going to have to tell your ex about this. I know that you are not on the best terms right now, but if something happens, he would be your best witness, considering he was there when this first happened."

"And just when I gave him the ol' heave ho."

"Or I could do it for you..."

"I appreciate the offer, but I'll handle it. I don't want to repeat the mistake of having others taking care of my problems."

"You know if it gets too out of control..."

"I know."

"What about your mom?"

"I've been going back and forth on that one. Daphne told me I shouldn't shut her out, but I don't want it to stress her out like it did the first time. Plus, she should be concentrating on Molly right now."

"And Brian?"

"Do you think I should?"

"Not that I like the asshole or anything, but I think it would be a good idea if he knew what was going on."



"In case the psycho goes really demented?" he muttered, taking a quick sip of the caffeine that I placed in front of him earlier. Calming down a bit, he continued, "Sorry about that. It's just that I thought this was all over long ago. Guess faggots don't get the same treatment from the legal machine."

"That may be true for now, but that doesn't mean we can't call them on their shit and that is what I plan to do first thing tomorrow."

"Thanks for the coffee, but I really have to be going. I promised Molly that I would take her out driving. I can't put her off any longer."

"Alright. I'll be in touch with you and remember what I said."

"I will. Bye."

Watching him walk to his car, I shake my head wondering if the kid will ever get a break.

>>>JENNIFER<<<

As soon as the doorbell rang, I called up the steps. "Molly! Your brother is here!"

"I'll be down in a minute."

Opening the door, I smile as I step back to let Justin in. Giving him a hug and kiss, I say, "Your sister isn't ready yet, so this should give us sometime to catch up." Seeing him slump into the Lazy Boy, I take closer look and I notice he has this tiredness about him, as if he hasn't been getting enough sleep.

"Been working hard?"

"What?"

"I wanted to know if you've been working hard lately? You seem tired."

"Maybe a little. I've been put on a large account at the firm where I'm consulting and it seems that we've been working round the clock lately."

"Well, maybe you need to go home and get some rest. Molly will be upset, but I'll handle it."

"No need. Besides, I don't want Mollusk terrorizing you. I promise that I'll get some rest later."

"You'd better."

"Mom-"

"Now, is there anything else bothering you?"

"Nothing that I can think of right now," and seeing the stubbornness in his eyes, I know that he wasn't going to budge.

"Alright, I'll back off for now, but don't think that I am going to forget."

"Never have before." Then giving me a hard look, he adds. "But don't go terrorizing Daphne for info either."

"Justin, would I do something like that?"

And just as he was about to answer, the sounds of an excited teenager came rampaging down the steps. "I'm ready Jus."

Standing up, he walks towards the door. "We'll be back around three."

"That's fine. Bye Justin. And Molly, listen to your brother."

"I will! I will. Bye." Dragging her brother behind her, they slam out the door. Walking over to the picture window, I move the drapes aside to watch my children pull away from the curb and began to wonder if I was reading too much into his behavior. He's told me over and over again that I have a tendency to overreact, and I admit that I do.

It's a mother's prerogative after all, and I will find out what's going on with him. This time, I just have to use another source.

And I know just the person to help.

Grabbing the phone, I punch in a familiar number and wait for the other person to pick up.

"Hello?"

"Hi Diane. This is Jennifer. How are you doing?"

"Just fine. What can I do for you?"

"Nothing really. Just wanted to know if you wanted to go out to lunch and maybe, catch up?"

>>>JUSTIN<<<

Munching on the large chicken salad Daphne was forcing me to eat, my mind once again fixated on my latest problem: the release of my ex-stalker. After changing my numbers, giving the security at my building a restricted list, changing the locks, and taking some other safety measures, I still had a problem resisting the urge to constantly look over my shoulder. It pissed me off that just when I thought I was getting my life back on track, this happens.

I must have been a real shit in a former life.

"Earth to Justin"

"Huh?"

Shaking her head ruefully, she said, "So are you finally back here with me or do you need more time in that mind of yours?"

"Sorry Daph."

"No need." Pointing a finger at my half-empty plate, she smiles, "Hey, at least you've been eating instead of playing with it like you have the last few days."

"So how did the driving lesson go?"

"She only stalled about ten times and yelled at me about six, but all in all, not bad for a first time."

"That's good. Did you tell your mom about Chris?"

Knowing what my silence meant, she shook her head in disappointment. "I take it you didn't."

Directing my anger at a tomato, I said evenly, "I really don't need Super Jen to come to the rescue. Remember what happened last time?" I reminded her, thinking back to how overprotective my mom became after what happened.

Executing one of her famous eye rolls, she continues, "Well, I'm just giving you fair warning that she is going to find out sooner or later. When I talked to my mom a few days ago, she was asking me how you are doing and that your mom had told her that she was worried there was something going on with you that you wouldn't tell her about. Then she continued with the classic line, 'You know that you can tell me anything, right?'"

"I should have known she would find another way."

"So, don't you think that it would be better coming from you? Besides, I could really do without the guilt trips."

"I'll give her a call tomorrow."

"Good. Now, what did Melanie have to say?"

"She would start working on it right away and that I should tell Daniel and Brian what's going on."

"Are you?"

"I do owe Daniel that much, but I don't know about Brian."

"Why not?"

"If I tell Brian, 'Oh by the way, the man that was stalking me a few years ago is out of prison and it seems he wants to pick up where he left off,' that is really going to fuck things up. If there is one thing that I've learned about Brian Kinney is that he doesn't like to get tangled up in anyone's drama but his own."

"And you seem to forget that he willingly stepped in your business when Daniel came into Babylon."

"That was because he just wanted to piss Daniel off," or at least I think so.

"Keep denying it, Justin."

"Shut it, Brat."

>>>BRIAN<<<

As I try to look like I'm actually paying attention to the shit that these dumbasses are spewing, I can't help and think about the latest drama I seem to be involved in, and it just so happens that my fave fuckbuddy is in the thick of it. Apparently, the little show we've been putting on for Liberty Avenue hasn't deterred Dannyboy in the least, and his little story for sticking around doesn't sit well with me. As for Justin, he acts like it doesn't concern him that much, but there is an edginess about him that wasn't there before. Thankfully it hasn't affected his work...yet.

And I don't even want to think about my best friend's stake in all this. The only thing I know is that if Daniel wants to play dirty, I can too.

Arrogant fucker.

"So, Mr. Kinney? What do you think?"

Looking down at the boards they pushed right under my nose, I can't help but wonder if anyone understands English in this office. Glancing back up at the newly dubbed 'DoubleDumb' twins, I decide to give them a crash course.

"Can't you stupid dicks ever get it right??!?" I raged at the trio sitting in front of me, wishing that I could somehow smash something, but there's no way I'm wasting my good shit on these hopeless fucks.

Looking suitably terrified, they began to stutter, "W-W-We're sorry-"

"Sorry doesn't cut it! Now take what I said, process it, and get the fuck out." Quickly they get up and leave, but just before they walk out the door, I warn them, "The next copy better be fucking fantastic or both of you are going to have a hard time extracting my foot out your asses. Go!" And like all little rats, they scattered.

Shaking my head at the revulsion of working with simpletons, I hear an amused voice say behind me, "Impressive."

Turning around, I see my assistant smiling in that maddening way that I have come to know means that something's up.

Sitting back down in my chair, I begin to reorganize the chaos of my desk. "What do you want?"

"Just came to tell you that you have a one o'clock lunch meeting with Newlin and Ryder."

Snapping my head up, I ask her, "I thought that was scheduled for next week?"

"Well Newlin decided to drop by unexpectedly today and Ryder being the kiss-ass that he is wanted to take him out to lunch with the executive that would be handling the account, meaning you."

"When did you find all this out?"

"About ten minutes ago, but it seemed that you were having so much fun ripping new assholes that I didn't want to take away your fun. Or mine for that matter."

Noting the hidden sadistic streak my assistant seems to have, I said, "Call Taylor and tell him to meet me fifteen minutes beforehand, so we can go over last minute details."

"Since when is your dick a 'last minute' detail?" she quipped, a wicked smile on her face. Ever since she caught me checking out Justin's ass one day, she can't help tease me about it.

"Bitch."

"Have to be, since you're my boss."

Ignoring her little dig, I dismiss her. "Fine. Get out."

With a small snort, she opens the door. "Going. Good luck."

"Whatever." Like I've ever needed that shit.

Minutes later, a knock and a blonde head pops in my door. "Cynthia said you wanted to see me?"

Waving him in, I watch as he walks over to my desk, silently willing my dick to behave, which is kind of hard when my eyes seem to be stuck on the image of his body glowing underneath blue lights...like they were last night.

"I wanted to know if you were busy with anything right now and if you have any plans for lunch."

"Nothing really pressing and no. Why?"

"I've just been informed that Newlin dropped by, and Ryder decided to take him out for lunch, dragging me along for the ride, and since you've been on this account from the start, I'm asking you to come too. As you and I both know, Newlin is a picky bastard and I wouldn't want to get caught looking like every other idiot that Ryder has working for him."

"Fine." Looking at his watch, he says, "Let me grab my stuff and I'll come back with the concepts we've come up with so far."

"Before we go, I wanted to know if you're up to this."

Seeing his eyes narrow a bit, I knew I'd hit a nerve. "With what?"

"The stalker-like ex."

Seeing him take a deep breath, he answered coolly, "I could really give a shit. Why are you asking?"

"Just wanted to know if you're going to be alright, because I can't have you spacing out right now. This account is going to take priority the next few weeks and we won't have time for bullshit."

"You don't have to worry about that. As far as I'm concerned, he's not here. However, I would warn Michael about getting tangled up with him. I'd tell him myself, but if you've noticed, he doesn't like me very much."

And recently being made aware of the reason, courtesy of my irate best friend, I can't help but add, "I guess that happens when you stuff potato salad down someone's pants."

Shaking his head, he smirks. "He needs to let that go."

"Sorry to tell you this, but my best friend can hold a grudge longer than it would take for you to grow another inch."

Scowling, he tugs his portfolio strap up on his shoulder. "Tell me something that I don't know."

Ten minutes later, we meet outside the building and begin to walk towards the restaurant two blocks away, seeing how Ryder and Newlin had already left. We were making the usual conversation between us, when suddenly he stopped.

"What's up?"

Looking over to the other side of the street, his eyes look wild and panicked. "Nothing. It's nothing."

Not convinced in the least, I made him look me in the eye. "Are you sure?"

Taking a deep sigh and with a firm nod of his head, he replied, "Yeah. Just got a little lightheaded for a minute."

"Well, let's go feed the beast," I smirked, knowing that he was lying. Right now, it would just have to wait till later.

It still amazes me what people will tell you when you're pounding their ass into oblivion.

>>>DANIEL<<<

Lighting up another cigar, I relax against the pillows, and watch as the smoke rises to the ceiling, letting my mind drift to happier times, trying to ignore the blinking cursor on my laptop. However that didn't last for long as my cell phone began blaring on the nightstand. I let it ring for awhile, hoping that the person on the other end would give up, but after ten rings it didn't seem likely.

Irritated, I snatched up the phone, and growled, "Hello."

"It's me."

Lying back against the pillows, I ask idly, "What can I do for you, Michael?"

Sounding as if he was whispering, he hissed, "We need to talk."

"About?"

"What do you think?"

Cringing at the whiny undertone, I sat up and leaned against the headboard, the lazy relaxed mood shot to hell. "What is the problem? I think that things are moving along nicely."

"Yeah, well I think things are about to get a bit harder."

"Why is that?"

"I was hanging with Brian one night and he was telling me about this new account that he will be handling."

"And?"

"Justin will be working on the account too."

Rolling my eyes at his dramatics, I reminded him, "Along with several others."

"From the way Brian tells it, Justin and he are the only ones who will handle this account because their boss doesn't trust anyone else to do the job."

Crushing the cigar in my hand, I already have a good idea of what this could mean for my plans. Being an author, I know how what can happen when you begin to work closely with someone. I've had it happen before.

Knowing what I had to do, I got up and began digging for clothes. "Look, Michael. I have to go. I'll call you later to discuss our next move."

"Wait-", was all I heard as I clicked off the phone. Pulling on the turtleneck and silk pants, I grabbed the phone again, but before I could dial, it began ringing.

Not looking at the caller ID, I just answered. "Hello?"

"Can I speak to Daniel Hamilton?" a gruff voice asked.

"Who is this?"

A jeering laugh fills my ears before the mystery person speaks. "I know it's been four years, but I would think that you would at least remember me. Especially after all the shit I've gone through for you."

Recognition and repulsion began to throb in my body. "What do you want?"

"We need to talk."

Like that was really going to happen.

"I'm sorry. We had an agreement and I stuck to my end of the bargain. Now I think it would be wise of you to not call again."

"I don't think so. That would have worked a few years ago, but that's not enough. Besides, don't you want to hear what your number one fan has to say about your latest works?"

"And I'll repeat once again. We had an agreement Hobbs, and I gave you what you wanted. Now leave me the fuck alone."

"Well, here's a lesson that I've learned over the years. Life never works out how you want it too."

"I know what you're getting at and I think that your punishment could have been a lot worse."

"Bullshit! And if you don't want your precious Justin to hate you even more than he does, you'll meet me in two hours. Although, I doubt he'll really care that much if he's fucking the Stud of Liberty Avenue on a regular basis."

He knew just what buttons to push. "How the fuck do you know about that?"

"You see Danny-baby, I've made connections of my own," came the cryptic answer, making me feel more agitated. "Now are you going to talk to me or will I have to have another chat with someone else?"

Knowing that I didn't have a choice, I bit out, "Where?"

"The Max and Erma's restaurant that's about a block down from your hotel."

Hurrying to the windows, I whip the curtains aside and begin to scan the streets below. "Where are you?"

Practically hearing the smirk in his voice, he replied, "Wouldn't you like to know? Talk to you later, Daniel."

Clicking off my cell, I barely resisted the urge to throw it against the wall. I can't believe this shit is coming back to bite me in the ass now. More to the point, what the fuck was I thinking when I approached Hobbs about doing what he did to Justin?

It was about three years ago that a well-known publishing house in New York City picked me up. With such a demand for my work, my editor suggested that it might be best to move there. The only problem was that Justin didn't want to leave Pittsburgh at the time. Being that he was about to start his last year of school and his parents going through a not-so-friendly divorce, he wanted to stay and help mom with Molly. But even then, I was greedy. I wanted him with me and I would do anything to make that happen.

First, I tried bribing him with expensive gifts and connections that I could use to get him into some of the best art schools in the city. When that didn't work, I began to work the guilt angle, telling him that I would be so lonely without him and that if he really loved me as he said he did, then he would move with me.

When that backfired, I had to think of another way for Justin to realize that staying in Pittsburgh wasn't what was best for us.

And my answer came in the form of Chris Hobbs...my number one fan.

Soap Opera Reality

>>>CHRIS<<<

Watching the blond disappear around the corner with the hot man beside him, I blend back into the crowd, a smile on my face at what I've accomplished so far.

Five minutes later, I'm standing in front of the restaurant, and I can't help but smile at the sight of Daniel looking like a nervous wreck. Serves the fucker right for putting me through the shit that he did.

All in the name of love.

Fucking pitiful bastard. It's almost funny that I used to act like he treated the fucking world and everything in it. It's embarrassing to think that I even drove for ten hours just so he could sign my book.

"Glad you could make it."

Looking like shit warmed over, he bit out, "Cut the bullshit. What do you want?"

"I just wanted to see if everything worked out as you wanted? You know, with the blond love of your life."

"We've been through that already. Tell me what you want. Now!"

Taking joy at seeing one of the poised Hamiltons become unglued, I just smiled. "How about we order something first. You can imagine the food in prison is for shit." I joke, waving the waitress over so that she could take our orders.

As soon as she left, Daniel tried to turn the tables, by going on the offensive. "Now tell me what you want, or I'll call the cops and let them know that you are up to your old tricks."

Quickly I reminded him who has the advantage here. "What about Justin?"

After a slight pause, he shrugged, "What about him? As you so elegantly put it, he's moved on. Maybe it's time that I move on too."

"I don't believe that for a minute or else you wouldn't be here."

Seeing that I had called his bluff, he hissed, "What the fuck do you want from me?"



"Well as can probably guess, I need money and lots of it. You can probably guess that being an ex-convict sorely reduces your chances of obtaining gainful employment, so I figured that I could come to my richer-than-fuck buddy and ask for a little help."

I guess he had a feeling that it would be something like this because in no time at all, he had his checkbook out, pen ready.

"How much?"

I waited till the waitress put down my drink, then took a long leisurely sip, loving the way the steam was practically coming out his ears. "I think five thousand should do...for now."

Raising an eyebrow, he gave me a suspicious look. "For now?"

"Of course. You don't really think that I was going to go for chump change like that, do you?"

"I guess that was too much wishful thinking on my part." Then giving me this soulful probing look, he whispers, "For what it's worth, I am sorry for what happened to you. I thought that you wouldn't be punished-"

Stopping his bullshit, I cut in fiercely, "Well, I was and you are going to make it up to me. Is that clear?"

Taking a sip of his whisky and soda, he asks, "How long is this supposed to go on?"

"Oh I don't know. How does three years sound to you?" Ignoring the steak that I had ordered, I grabbed my jacket and stood up. "Thanks for the lunch. I'll be in touch." And with that parting shot, I left him sitting at the table, looking like the lonely son of a bitch that he was.

And it will stay that way if I have anything to do with it.

>>>BRIAN<<<

An hour later, the four of us are sitting in the Italian restaurant down the street from the agency, and my boredom was increasing by the minute.

Feeling as if I was going to take a face dive into the pesto penne I ordered, I felt something move up my leg.

Instantly alert, I casually take a glance at Justin who is sitting to my right, but by the expression on his face, I can't make out if he is responsible for the little game that is going underneath the table.

Feeling it again, I turned to the oblivious blond, wanting to know just what the hell he was thinking about pulling some shit like that during a business lunch. At least he could wait until we could do something about it.

"Is there a problem Mr. Kinney?" Newlin asked, giving me a creepy smile that I've noticed has been appearing more and more lately.

The sickening smile and the way his hand was creeping closer to mine, I tried my best not to squirm. "Not at all."

"Are you sure? You seem a bit preoccupied." Maybe because your foot is trying to rub up against my dick, old pervert.

"Nothing at all. However, I wanted to know if you've decided on the design for the new logo. "

"I really don't know."

Interrupting the discussion between Ryder and Justin, I said, "Well Justin here can tell you all about the different options that we have created so far.

"But I would still like to discuss the direction that you see this campaign going in. As you know we are a company that holds itself to hard standards and we want that to come across in the message. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?"

Loud and clear.

Trying to move my leg out of reach, I tried hard to keep the grimace off my face. I may have done a lot of things and a lot of people, but there are standards that I have to uphold and there was no way that I was sticking my cock into the big fat blubberbutt of the man sitting next to me. "That won't be a problem, I assure you."

Seeming not in the least put off, he smiled. "Well, judging by your reputation, I guess that you can back that up."

Trying to smile back, I wondered just who in hell I had to fuck to get a drink around here.

After the lunch with the client from Hell, Ryder ordered us to refine some of the ideas that we had created already to have ready for his approval within two days. Seven hours later, I decided that Ryder and Newlin could kiss my ass.

"How about we call it a day? I'm tired of looking at the same shit over and over again and I think that we've earned an early night."

Stretching himself, Justin yawned. "I'm not going to argue with that, but why the change of pace? I thought that your personal motto is: Never Enough!"

"Well you have been misinformed, Taylor. Even men like me need a break once in awhile, especially considering the lunch with the geriatric closet case."

"What are you talking about?"

"It seems that Newlin wanted to play footsie with yours truly during lunch today."

He stood there for a good ten seconds before he laughs, "You have got to be kidding me. I mean, the man has a wife and five kids, Brian. And let's not forget the 'grandfather' factor in all this."

Shaking my head at his naïveté, I grinned. "Like that means anything nowadays. Although I am a bit surprised that my gaydar didn't pick up on it. I guess I'm going to have to get a maintenance check."

Slipping the board into his portfolio, he stops and turns around, a mischievous glint in those deep blues of his. "I could give you one. I promise to give a very thorough inspection."

"Wait a minute. I thought that you said office hanky-panky was a big no-no."

"Well, being the naïve child that you think I am, I am apt to change my mind."

Looking down at the now uninteresting layouts on my desk, I decided I had other pressing matters to deal with. Shutting down my laptop, I grabbed my jacket, my briefcase, and a pale wrist.

"Let's go."

Pulling away, he walks over to the door, locks it, and then turns back around to look at me. "No."

Not moving from where I stood, I started to feel that ping every time I saw those bedroom eyes of his come out to play. "What do you mean 'No'?"

"What I mean is that I don't feel like waiting to drive to my place or yours. We do this here. Right now."

"Strip."

He just stood there, arms crossed firmly against his chest with an eyebrow raised. "Make me."

I don't know what has gotten into the blond and at this point, I could really give a shit. My 'other head' was taking over. Striding over, I ignore the buttons on the shirt, ripping it from his body and loving the sight of the pale skin beneath. Not giving him time to think, I began my assault, making him gasp and moan in no time. Tugging his belt

free, I stand back and look at the live porn on my desk. This is something that I had been thinking about ever since I saw his smiling ass sitting across the conference room table.

It was time to see if this desk was worth the money.

Giving Justin's chinos a quick yank, I fumbled in my side drawer for the essentials needed for this interlude to continue. Fingertips touching the familiar items of condom and lube, I moved back a bit, relishing in the sight the contrasts between the pale body laying against the dark wood of my desk. I bet that I could sell millions of desks with this image alone.

One right after the other, I pressed lubed fingers in the tight ass I've become so familiar with, stretching it for the hard quick fuck he seemed to want. Once I felt his hips grinding against my fingers, I knew that he was ready and I was too.

Pulling my fingers out, I immediately replaced it with something much much bigger.

"FUCK YES!" came the excited shout beneath me making a grin appear on my face. In no time at all, I begin a demanding rhythm, Justin following my lead without any difficulty. All too soon, the sparks and heat became too much nearly destroying us at the end.

As we both tried to recover from nearly going into cardiac arrest, I propped myself up and figured that this was a good time as any to get answers to what happened earlier on our way to the restaurant. "So are you going to tell me what happened earlier?"

He looked at me for a few seconds, before turning to face the window. "I don't want to, but after what happened today, I'm beginning to think that I don't have choice."

"Everyone has a choice, Justin."

Grabbing his socks in one hand and shoes in the other, he began to walk away. "Not in this."

Not liking the defeat I heard in his voice, I pressed, "What the fuck do you mean?"

"Brian, there is something that you need to know about Daniel and I."

Having heard enough about the asshole from my talkative and annoying best friend, I snapped, "Do I really have to?"

But I could tell that was the wrong thing to say, when he angrily blurted out, "Yes! I want you safe, okay?" Eyes widening, he slammed his fist on my desk. "Dammit!"

Processing what he just said, I just pulled him against my body, hoping that he would calm down enough to explain what he just said. "Justin, what the fuck is going on here? What do you mean that you want me 'safe'?"

Feeling the tension leave his body as quickly as it had come, I knew that he was ready to give in. "Promise not to freak out?"

Feeling a bit put out that he would even suggest such a thing, I replied, "I never 'freak out.' Now, explain."

After a deep breath, he says evenly, "The person that used to stalk me has been released from prison and is starting his old tricks."

I could do nothing but look at the blond before me and not for the first time wonder if it was such a good idea to take him up on that dance in Babylon.

"Did you hear me?"

Realizing that he was speaking to me, I asked carefully, "Did you just say 'stalker'?"

Looking at the floor, he mumbled, "Yes."

Great. This was just fucking great! Not only do I have to deal with a clingy ex, but now, there is someone stalking this kid?!?

"What the fuck are you? The male 'Ericka Kane'? I know I call you Drama Princess, but I didn't think that you would live up to the part so well. First there is your dumbass ex, and now this..."

Now that the mood was effectively shot to hell, I watched as he began to dress quickly. After pulling his sweater over his head, he said briskly, "Look, I'm just telling you to be more aware. I don't want to see anything happen to you."

Getting an unfamiliar warm rush at his words, I cut it off with a quick sarcastic comment. "Awww...what is this? Can it be that Justin Taylor is telling me that he has feelings for me?"

I could tell that I hurt him with my words, but he recovered quickly, giving me the same emotionless mask that I've worn over the years. "Get over yourself. I'm pretty sure that you can look after yourself, but if something happened to you, I don't want it to be because you got tangled up in the shit that surrounds me."

"Right."

Then with a small smile, he adds, "Plus, I would feel really bad if something happened to Gus's 'Dada'. For some reason he loves you like crazy and I would hate for him to hurt because something happened to you."

"His Dada would feel bad too. If there is something that I can do to help-"

"You could take me back to your place and give me a repeat performance, what do you say?"

Shaking my head at the mood swings, I gave him a smile of my own. "You are a nympho."

"I don't see you complaining that much." Throwing my shirt to me, he said, "Now, the faster you get dressed, the faster we can go back to do what we do best."

"Fucking?"

"What else?" he quips giving me that fake smile that I've been seeing lately.

"By the way, we're going to dinner at Deb's on Sunday."

"Did you stop to think that I might have plans?"

"No, but I don't really care. I was told under no circumstances that I was to show up without you or I would lose one of my balls, and you can probably tell that I'm kind of attached."

"Reaching out to grab my crotch, he mumbles, "I don't know if I'm up to an official gathering of your family."

Reveling in the sensations that were emanating from my dick, I pulled him to me to give him a nice and sloppy kiss for his efforts. Now feeling an erection that matched mine, I leaned down and whispered in his ear, "How about I show you why you should be concerned too?"

Seeing the answering glint in his eyes, I was not surprised by his hurried grasp on my wrist. "Let's go."

>>>VIC<<<

There have been many things that I've seen in my life, but none can compare to the sight of Brian Kinney bringing a date to one of our family dinners.

And the reactions from said family was nothing short of hysterical.

Michael glared at the couple, constantly stuffing his face with baked ziti. I guess it was that or let his foot take its place. Don't get me wrong, I love my nephew as if he was my own son, but there are times I wish he would think before words start flowing out his mouth. One could blame it on the fact that the new man in his life cancelled on him at the last minute, but I know that Brian showing up with someone that he already has a grudge against is the real trigger for his 'stay the fuck away' aura.

As for the married couple, it was a mixed bag. Lindsay seemed genuinely happy to see Justin and Brian come in together, but Mel looked as if she was sucking lemons with the smell of rotting fish directly beneath her nose. Gus seemed to be very happy, practically screaming bloody murder to be let out of his chair to play with 'Daddy and Jus.'

Emmett and Ted were of course, the dynamic duo they always seem to be. Where Ted just hung back to observe the two 'friends', Emmett was more demonstrative. The real treat was every time he placed an arm or gave the kid an affectionate squeeze, Brian would either casually move the arm or give the fashion queen a look that clearly said, 'Hands Off!' I think I'll bring that up when Brian and I have another one of our 'heart to heart' chats.

And who can forget my sister for her wonderful bear like greeting as she mauled the two men as they came through the door. Both of them came out looking none the worse for wear, although Brian began complaining about the wrinkles in his new Dior sweater.

As for the dinner itself, once again my sister put on a fantastic spread and I could see her smile widen as she watched her little Sunshine eat enough for four men, while Brian looked on with an eerie mix of revulsion and amusement as he chomped on his usual salad. Soon enough, things began to wind down and the family split up into smaller groups here and there. As I was sitting at the table, I spied through the front window Justin sitting on one of the patio chairs on the porch, a content Gus leaning back on his chest. I think that this was a perfect time to get to know Brian's latest a little better.

Excusing myself, I get up and walk out, taking a deep breath of the night air. Walking over to the oblivious pair, I pulled up a chair, enjoying the sight. "I have to say that I am truly impressed by how much you packed away at dinner. Are you sure that you're not half-Italian?"

Giving me one of the smiles that he was famous for, he said, "Not that I know of. I never thought that I would actually want to get up from a dinner table, but I guess there is a first time for everything." "Um I don't think that we really met before." Sticking out his hand, he introduces himself, "Justin Taylor, newbie to the Liberty Avenue."

Giving it a warm shake of my own, I returned the gesture. "Victor Grassi, brother to the fairy godmother of Liberty Avenue. Nice to meet you, Sunshine."

Blushing a bit, he groaned good-naturedly. "Not you too."

"Sorry, but Deb has called you nothing else, so it sort of stuck."

"I can believe that. Deb told me that you used to live in New York," and from there we just talked, about things that we used to do and places we used to go in New York City.

"So, how does it feel to be Brian Kinney's 'boyfriend'? My nephew that it was quite a scene you two put on for everyone at Babylon."

Picking up the toy that Gus dropped on the porch and pulling another out of his pocket, he smirked, "It has its perks."

Knowing exactly what perks he was talking about, I continued, "It seems that you know everyone here pretty well."

"Actually, I knew Melanie from before, and I met Brian when I became a consultant at his firm. As for everyone else, I met either through Melanie or Brian."

"Interesting." Taking note of the smiling toddler on his lap, I smiled, "Seems that you get along well with Gus."

Placing a small kiss on the child's forehead, he nods, "He's an adorable kid, but I feel for Mel and Linds when he gets older."

"Takes after his father."

"I know. I found that out right away."

Having had enough small talk, I went straight to the point. "So, what is the real deal between you and Brian?"

"I'm surprised."

"About?"

"That you actually lasted this long to ask that. It seems that with everyone else, that is the first thing out their mouth."

"Well, I'll give you a few tips on dealing with this family and just to let you know, you are a part of it now, so you might as well deal with it."

Grinning, he nodded slowly. "I guess I don't have a choice, do I?"

"You still haven't answered the question. What is really going on with you and Brian?"

"Damn, I was hoping you forgot."

"Sorry. Now either tell me or I make my own conclusions and I should warn you that you don't want me to do that."

"Alright old man!" he smiled, reaching over to cuff me on my arm. Settling down, he says, "I'm sure you heard about what Brian did for me a few months back."

Remembering Michael ranting and raving for nearly a week about it, I nod. "I think I've heard about it here and there. Go on."



"Well, that's about all there is to it. He just helped me out of a bad situation."

"So, you mean to tell me that you haven't fucked at all?" and the instant flush, visible by the light coming from the window, gives me my answer.

Trying to downplay the situation, he shrugs, "Anyway, that's about it."

"Justin, I may just be an old retiring queen, but I'll tell you now that there is something more going on between you two that you don't want to admit."

"Maybe-"

"Justin, do you think that Brian is the type of person to let people in easily?"

Seeming to think it over, he replies, "No."

"Then that proves my point."

Giving me this blank look, he sighs, "I don't understand."

Or he just didn't want to. Not knowing what else to say, I pointed again to the family inside. "The answer is right there." Deciding that I had made my point, I turn to look at him. "Now I better get back inside before Deb comes out here and starts nagging."

Pulling the now drowsy toddler against his chest, he gave me a small grin. "I'll be in a minute."

"Alright," and I walk back into the chaos, hoping that he would at least give it a chance. Feeling someone stare at me, I look up and I'm not surprised to see Brian giving me a questioning look and I just nod my head, letting him know that everything was fine.

Or at least they would be.

>>>LINDSAY<<<

Walking into the house, I let the warmth seep into my bones chasing away the chill from being outside in the cold with a giddy two and a half year-old intent on making a snowman after a freak snowstorm in the middle of April, which isn't that unusual for the Pitts. Stripping Gus of his snowsuit, I watched as he quickly raced to the small playroom set up beside the kitchen, wanting to start on the Brio project that I had lured him home with.

I was smiling until I looked at the petite form bent over our antique desk. Seeing the defeated look on my lover's face, I instantly went over to her. Something happened or was about to. I just had to figure out which one it was.

"Mel?"

No answer.

Tapping her on the shoulder, I tried again. "Mel. Honey, what is it?"

"Um..."

"Tell me."

"I can't. Lawyer/Client privilege."

I should have seen that one coming...

Looking around me, she asks, "Where's Gus?" And no sooner had she said the words, footsteps were heard stomping across the carpet, leaving a trail of Brio blocks in their wake.

Feeling a tug on my pants leg, I squat down to look at a smiling boy that was beginning to look more and more like Brian every day. "Momma? I wan' to see Jus."

"Didn't you just see him a couple of days ago?" I reminded him gently, thinking back to the family dinner that happened a few nights ago...and the little visits before then. It really amazes me how quickly Gus has taken a liking to him. Gus has always been a friendly child, but the rapid connection between them is still surprising.

"Cuz he plays with me..." then leaning in, he whispers loudly, "even better than Daddy."

Smiling at the thought of someone being better than Brian Kinney at anything, I said, "I'll call him tomorrow and see if he can come over, okay?"

"Kay." And then as an afterthought, he added, "Tell him he can bring Dada too." And I try not to laugh, thinking that Brian would be appalled to know that he has become somewhat of an afterthought. When I look up, I tell the Mel was having the same thoughts by the wicked grin on her face, but just as I was about to ask her about it, the phone on the desk rang.

Groaning, she picked it up. "Marcus." A few seconds later, the small smile disappeared completely.

"Hello, Daniel."

Instantly my ears picked up at hearing this name, wondering why in the world he would be calling Melanie, knowing that she is a close friend of Justin's.

"I don't know. I'm kind of busy right now and..." she began, smiling as I bit her on her ear, but the playful attitude disappeared in a matter of seconds.

"Are you sure?" she asked briskly, letting me know that whatever happened was serious.

"I'll be right there, and this better be good Daniel," she muttered, flipping her phone off.

Wondering what could be going on, I started, "I take it that was Michael's new boyfriend."

Screwing up her face, she sighed, "Yeah. Seems that he needs my help with something urgent."

"He's a Hamilton, right? Doesn't he have a fleet of lawyers to choose from?" or at least he should, considering how loaded his family is.

"He could, but this is something that he claims only he could trust me with."

"The same something that had you brooding earlier and if I'm not mistaken for a couple of weeks." Getting silence as my answer, I backed off. "I know I know. Lawyer/Client privilege. Knowing that she was beating herself up for keeping things from me, I tried to reassure her that I understood. Wrapping my arms around her, I give her a quick squeeze. "I love you, you know that?"

Smiling again, she leaned up for a kiss. "Well, you can show me how much, later tonight."

"Definitely." Gathering up the papers on the desk, she stuffed them in a battered briefcase. I think I'll get her a new one for her birthday. "This shouldn't take long, but if it does, I'll call."

Giving her one last kiss, I held out her coat to her. "Okay. Don't let him stress you out honey. I love you." And with one last kiss, she was out the door.

"MOMMA!"

And hearing the summons, I quickly picked up the little tyrant and became a slave to the Mighty Brio tower.

>>>EMMETT<<<

"And thank you for shopping at Torso," although I wish you had gone went somewhere else, I thought, giving the lard butt in front of me a sweet smile as I handed him his bag of too small clothes.

Going to the back of the store, I began hanging up the new shipment of leather pants that just came in, and was pleasantly surprised a few minutes later.

"Hey Emmett."

"Hey sweetie!" After a quick hug and kiss, I pull back to look at him and notice that every thing is not all sunshine and roses. "How are you doing today or do I have to guess by that frown on your face?"

Shaking his head a bit, he said, "Don't worry, I'm good. Just a bit tired, you know?"

Thinking logically, I laughed at the most likely reason he felt that way. "I can only imagine how long Mr. Big and Bad keeps you up all night."

"I guess so." Walking over to a rack of silk shirts, he looks for a minute then says, "Hey Em, can I ask you a question?"

Walking over, I lean on the rack and give him what I hope is a comforting smile. "Sure hun. What is it?"

"What would you do if you really liked someone but the entire time that you're with them, you try to deny your feelings?"

"I take it that you're falling in the Kinney trap."

With a rueful smile, he nodded. "Practically flat on my face."

"Usually I would have told the poor fool that got caught in the Kinney web to cut his ass loose as soon as he could, but you're different."

Putting back the gray cashmere sweater he had been studying, he looked up. "How?"

"Honey, when you can make Brian Kinney declare himself off the market in front of practically the entire Liberty Avenue population, there has to be something extraordinary about you."

Shaking his head, he says, "I don't think so. And we both know the reason he did all that was because he wanted to piss off my fucked up ex...oops, I meant Michael's new lover."

Wondering if the jealousy was for Brian or the ex, I asked cautiously, "Does that bother you?"

"Not at all. I just think that Michael should be careful dealing with Daniel. I would tell him myself, but I don't think that he would want to listen to what I have to say."

And knowing the hilarious reason behind it, I nod, "Well since it seems that you are part of the family, I guess it wouldn't hurt to let you know some history. As you already know, Brian and Michael have been best friends since anyone can remember, and they are fiercely protective of one another, so when Michael snaps at you, I wouldn't take it to personally. He's just trying to look out for his friend."

Putting back a shirt that would have done absolutely nothing for him, he replies, "Doesn't he think that Brian can look out for himself?"

"I'm sure he does, but with the legendary friendship those two have, that opinion is kind of mute."

"I guess I can understand that...a little bit."

Seeing a lingering sadness in his baby blues, I'm instantly concerned. "Are you okay?"

Looking a little shaky, he said, "I will be." Putting the shirt back, he turns to me, bright smile in place. "Hey Em. Do you feel like hanging out sometime?"

"Don't have to ask me twice. I think being seen around town with the hottest twink to hit the Avenue should make my stock rise significantly...well if Brian doesn't kill me first."

Rolling his eyes, he gave me a lopsided smile. "Brian doesn't speak for nor own me. I do and if I want to hang out with you, then I will. Matter of fact, how about lunch right now?"

Running back to the counter, I grabbed my small duffle and yelled to my manager that I was leaving for lunch. Threading my arm through Justin's, I pulled him out the store into the bright day, wishing that I could chase away Sunshine's blues.

To Be Continued....



## Queer As Parents

Timeline: AU

Summary: Think of this as 'The Brady Bunch'....QAF Style

Finally spotting the familiar curly head of his best friend, Justin maneuvered his way through the throngs of shoppers that filled the Ross Park Mall food court. Tired from his mall safari, he plopped down in a chair, and snatched a few fries from the plate across from him. Getting no reaction from Daphne, he started to think that this latest crisis was something bigger than a relaxer gone wrong.

Grabbing another fry, he began, "So what is the problem? You sounded like you had another horrific experience at the hair salon," Justin teased, hoping to get a smile from his best friend.

Not rising to the bait, Daphne just looked at him, the sadness there stopping whatever assumptions he had made. "You have to promise not to call me any names, berate me, or lecture me."

Still not convinced that the problem was earth shattering, he said, "Damn Daph. I'm not one of your parents. Now spit it out. It can't be as bad as the last time you tried to-"

"I'm pregnant."

Whatever reaction the scared girl was looking for, it certainly wasn't the gut-busting laugh that was attracting attention from the people walking past them.

"Shut the fuck up! This isn't funny, Justin Aaron Taylor!" and that panicked outburst certainly got the blonde's attention, seeing how his best friend never used his full name save for the most dire circumstances. With humor giving way to anxiety and confusion, he asked seriously, "Are you sure? How far along are you?"

With a roll of her eyes and a slight grin, she answered, "Three home tests and a doctor's visit don't lie and from what the doctor said about six weeks." But just as quickly, the smile faded to be replaced with the tears from earlier. "What are we going to do?"

"I don't know Daph...I just don't know," and at that point in time his mind was at a total standstill. How was he going to explain this? Most people wouldn't think that he would become a teenage father considering his preference in bed partners.

Coming out of his own trance and noticing his friend about to lose it completely, he pulled her close. "We'll think of something, " he murmured, rocking the crying girl back and forth. Exactly what, he wasn't sure, but there had to be a way for this to work out.

Minutes later, he felt his friend move away from him and watched as she tried to wipe at tears that were still rolling down her face. "Look, neither one of us were expecting this to happen, so I'll understand if-"

Knowing what she was trying to do, Justin shook his head. There was no way that he was going to let Daph go this alone. "Listen to me. I'm not gonna bail on you now. Have I ever before?"

"But what about-" she began; knowing that what she just revealed had drastically changed whatever future plans Justin might have had.

Knowing that she was thinking about his 'alternative lifestyle', Justin cut her off. "We'll talk about that later. Right now, I think that we have to call a family meeting and see what to do."

"I'm scared."

Grabbing her up in another hug, he whispered to her and to himself, "I am too, but we have to get over that."

The ten-minute ride to their subdivision in the North Hills seemed to take forever, each dreading the confrontation with the small gathering waiting for them at Justin's house. Pulling into the driveway of a fashionable townhouse, each teen took a minute to prepare for what was to come, taking little comfort that whatever happen they would face it...together.

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"It's about time you two showed up. James, Naomi, and I were about to go crazy waiting," Jennifer Taylor smiled, growing concerned at the solemn mood of her son and his best friend.

"Sorry about that, there was some type of accident on McKnight Road," Justin said, pulling Daphne up the stairs behind him. Reaching the top, he spotted the other people they had called for this important discussion. "Thank you for coming Mr. and Mrs. Chanders," Justin said, waving hello to the couple sitting on the loveseat.

"Not a problem, Sweetie," she replied, motioning them both over for a kiss and a hug. Turning her attention to Daphne, Naomi asked, "Is there something wrong, honey? It's like you've been on edge for weeks."

Glancing over at Justin, she stepped closer and took a deep breath. With fear and anxiety flowing through her veins, she confessed the problem that had been ruling her life for the past three weeks.

"Mom, Dad...I'm pregnant."

There was silence for about a minute, when Daphne's father asked the next logical question.

"Who is the father?"

Stepping up next to Daphne, her best friend wrapped a comforting arm around her shoulders. "I am."

"Justin, this is no time to play games. Can't you see how serious this is?" his mother reprimanded, disappointed in her son's antics.

Turning steady blue eyes to Jennifer, Justin repeated, "Mom, I am the father."

"How on earth did this happen?" Naomi demanded, not knowing whether to laugh or cry at the irony of the situation.

Giving a slight smile, Justin began, "You see, when men and women reach a certain age-"

"I don't think this is the time to be a smart mouth," Jennifer muttered from behind her hands, thinking that after her less-than-amicable divorce from Craig, and Justin's coming out, this would have been the last thing that would have happened.

Seeing his attempt to lighten up the atmosphere fall short, Justin mumbled, "Sorry."

After a few seconds, he began to feel antsy, waiting for his mom to confront him. "Well? Aren't you going to say anything?"

Turning teary eyes on her son, Jennifer sighed heavily, "What do you want us to say Justin?"

Wincing at the pain and disappointment in his mother's expression, he avoided her gaze. "I don't really know. I just guessed that you would be pitching a fit right now."

"Which I'll probably do later, but we have to come up with a solution to this problem."

Squeezing the tan hand held in his, Justin grinned. "That's what we were hoping for."

Coming out of her daze, Naomi asked hesitantly, "I take it that you are keeping the baby?"

"Yes we are!" both soon to be parents said in unison in a tone that brooked no argument.

"No need to get so worked up you two. I just asked because I wanted to know exactly what we're in for."

Giving her mom a questioning look, Daphne asked, "What are you talking about?"

Getting over her shock, Jennifer jumped in. "I think what Naomi is trying to say is, that even though this baby is yours and Justin's, this new addition is going to affect all of us."

"Mommy?"

Jennifer asked, "Yes, baby?"

With a big smile on her face, eleven-year-old Molly asked excitedly, "Does this mean that I'm gonna be an aunt?"

Pulling her daughter over to her, she just hugged her. "I guess it does."

"Great! Can I baby-sit, Justin?"

"We'll talk about that later Mollusk, but could you go upstairs while I finish talking to Mom?"

Feeling a little putout at not being included, Molly slowly nodded and stomped up the steps.

Rubbing the stress from his neck, Daphne's father muttered, "You would think with all that money were paying that school, they could at least teach them about safe sex."

"James!" both women exclaimed, wondering how he could think of something like that at a time like this.

Hoping that his smile wasn't showing, Justin spoke up, "I assure you that we did practice safe sex, Mr. Chanders, but I guess we hadn't been as thorough as we thought. Please know that we wouldn't have done what we did if we weren't prepared."

Sighing, he motioned for his daughter to come sit by him. With unsteady steps, she reached her father's side, and sat down with her head lowered. Tilting her chin up, he stared into her watery brown eyes and silently mourned the loss



of his little girl. "Daphne, honey, I'm not going to sit here and pretend that I am happy about this situation, but you are our daughter and we will stand by and support you."

Feeling grateful for her father's acceptance, she turned her teary gaze to the other person that had a stake in all this.

"Mom?"

Seeing the hesitation and hope, Naomi could do nothing but open her arms, wanting to comfort her child. "Come here, Babygirl."

Thankful that everything was working out for his friend, Justin turned to face his own family.

"Mom? Are you alright?"

Shaking her head sadly, she said, "I really didn't think I'd be a grandmother this early, Justin, but as Naomi and James are standing by Daphne, I stand by you."

Feeling gratitude and relief wash over him, Justin pulled the older woman into a hug. "Thanks Mom." After a few moments passed, he asked anxiously, "What about Dad?"

Wincing about the inevitable war of words with her ex-husband, she said, "We'll deal with that when the time comes, but I think we have more important things to figure out now." And shortly afterwards, their parents moved to the dining room to discuss the futures of their children, leaving the two friends alone.

"Jus."

"Hmm?"

Knowing that she had to try one more time, Daphne began, "I know what you're trying to do, and like I said before, you don't have to give up-"

"And like I said before, I'm going to be a father in eight months, which means that I have someone more important to think about than just me."

Placing her head on his shoulder, she whispered, "I'm so sorry Jus. I never meant for this to happen."

Putting a gentle hand on the still flat stomach, Justin said, "No need to be Daph. Besides, I can't wait to see my dad's face when he finds out his queer son has a kid."

\*\*\*\*Six Years Later\*\*\*\*

Trying to ignore the ogling stares from some of the women standing outside Shadyside Academy, Brian Kinney let loose a long sigh, wishing for the hundredth time that week that he hadn't persuaded the Munchers to finally go on their 'honeymoon'. Although he didn't regret spending uninterrupted with his son, he could now understand why Linds and Mel took him up on his offer. Thank goodness they were coming home on Sunday.

Thinking back six years ago when Linds told him his little soldiers had done their job, he had told them, and himself, that he did it for her and that he was too young to be a parent to anyone.

That was, until the child he held in his arms reached out to grab his finger. He knew right then that he couldn't walk away from the little life that he helped create.

Who would have guessed that the Stud of Liberty Avenue turned into doting father in 0.8 seconds?

Certainly not the Prada-clad executive waiting for a small replica of himself to sprint out the front doors.

"DADDY!" a five-year-old Gus shouted, excited to see his father, after being separated from him just this morning.

Catching the little boy in his arms, he spun him around in the air, making Gus laugh harder. "Hey Sonnyboy!" Pulling him into an affectionate hug, he asked, "So, how did your first week of kindergarten go?"

"Super! And guess what?"

"What?"

"I now have a best friend!"

Happy that Gus made friends that quickly, he smiled. "Well good for you! What's his name?"

"Kiki is a girl, Daddy. She got all this curly hair and pretty eyes, " his son giggled before letting his dad know that he wanted to be let down. Granting his son's request, he placed the boy on the ground and enveloped the small hand in his own and began walking to the black Infinity sedan parked on the curb. Just as they were a couple of feet away, Brian felt a tug on his pants. Stopping, he knelt down and asked, "What's wrong, Gus?"

"Kiki, Daddy!"

Picking up the excited young boy, he began looking over the crowd of people still standing in front of the school. "Where?"

"Over there," his son explained, pointing towards the front steps. Glancing in that direction, Brian's gaze sought out the little girl that was dubbed Gus's best friend, but seconds later his hazel eyes locked on the man holding her hand. Blonde hair, swimmer's build, and with the pings that were being emitted by his fairly accurate gaydar, Brian figured it wouldn't hurt to become better acquainted with the man. Just as he was thinking of a way for this to happen, Gus already had it covered.

"KIKI!"

"GUS!" came the instant reply, followed by the girl dragging the laughing man behind her. A minute later, two people slightly out of breath stood next to Brian and his son, wearing identical smiles.

Smiles that almost blinded him.

Trying to act unaffected, Brian greeted him, "It seems that she has a pretty powerful grip."

Grinning in reply, the shorter man introduced himself, "Hi, Justin Taylor and this is my very strong daughter, Kierra."

"Brian Kinney and this is my loudmouth son, Gus", Brian grinned, reaching out to shake the pale hand in front of him.

And the pings became sirens when skin met skin.

Looking down into equally shocked blue eyes, Brian could only grin, thinking that maybe the Munchers going on vacation wasn't such a bad idea after all.

## Kids Say The Darndest Things

\*\*\*A Week Later\*\*\*

"GRANDMA JEN!" came the loud shout from the doorway, making the woman waiting in the hall smile gently. Squatting down to catch the small cyclone, Jennifer scooped up her granddaughter, having memories of doing the same when her children used to come home from school.

"Hi, sweetheart." Giving her a kiss on the forehead, she whispered, "There's a surprise waiting for you in the dining room."

Pulling back to look at the older woman, she asked excitedly, "What is it?"

Putting her grandchild back down on the floor, she whispered in her ear, "Why don't you go and find out?"

Running feet were heard, followed quickly by another loud yell. "GRANDMA OMI AND POP POP!"

Holding her arms open wide, Naomi welcomed her granddaughter, flashing back to a time when she did the same thing to another little girl almost twenty years ago.

"Precious."

Reaching over, James tweaked the little girl's nose. "Hey Babygirl."

Watching this, Justin, who had just arrived home himself, and Jennifer hung back in the living room, allowing the Chandlers to spend time with their only grandchild. After Daphne's passing, Justin and his mom knew that Kierra's other grandparents needed this time to be close to their daughter's child after being apart for so long.

Waiting until the initial hugging and kissing session was over, Justin determined that it was safe to make his presence known. "Hey everyone."

Looking up, Naomi held out her hand, gesturing for Justin to come closer. "It's so good to see you, honey."

Giving the sitting woman a kiss on the cheek, he replied, "Long time, no see. How have you been?"

Giving her granddaughter another squeeze, she smiled widely, "Fine now."

Digging in the pocket of her shorts, the small girl pulled out a piece of paper and pushed it into her father's hand. "Here Daddy."

Taking a quick glance at the note, Justin asked, "What's this?"

"It's so I can play soccer."

Surprised by the answer, Justin looked at the small girl curiously. As far as he knew, Kiki didn't even know what a soccer ball was. "Since when have you wanted to play soccer?"

"Today. Gus said he's gonna play and I wanna to play too," the small girl smiled, flinging herself on to her grandfather's knee for a game of 'Crazy Legs'.

"Honey, don't you think she's a little young to be playing? I remember that Molly used to come home with all sorts of cuts and bruises," Jennifer looked at her grandchild with concern.

And knowing that her concern has partly to do with his mother's fear of Kierra turning into a tomboy, he said, "I don't know. What do you think Kiki?"

Demonstrating the stubborn streak inherited from her father, she declared to everyone in the room, "I can play Grandma! I'm a big girl."

Having seen that look in her son's eyes so many times, she shook her head ruefully. "Yes you are. Now who is Gus?"

"My bestest friend in the world."

"Did you make any other friends?"

"Yeah, but Gus is the funnest. He lets me play with his G.I. Joes and he pinched Jason when he ate my Play-Doh."

Chuckling at that, Justin said, "That was nice of him."

Sliding down from her grandfather's lap, she walked over to her father, a sweet smile on her face. "Daddy, can I watch cartoons now?"

Shaking his head, he replied firmly, "You know the rules, Kiki. Homework first."

Using a tactic her aunt had taught her, Kiki looked up at her father, puppy eyes clearly displayed, rocking back and forth for the full effect. "Gus says his daddy lets him watch cartoons and then he does his homework."

And seeing the trick for what it was, Justin smirked, "Well, I'm not Gus's daddy, so I guess you're outta luck, Squirt. I'll be up in a minute to help you, okay?"

Looking around and not seeing any of the other adults coming to her rescue, she pouted for a bit and whispered, "Okay." Snatching her backpack, she ran up the steps, telling her Aunt Molly that the 'eye-thing' didn't work.

Watching her grandchild disappear from sight, Naomi turned to look at Justin.

"How is the new job coming along?"

Accepting the glass of iced tea his mother given him, he took a sip before he answered. "The firm seems pretty great. I actually have an office, my own assistant, and the department seems pretty laid back."

"How is Kiki adjusting to the move? I know that you were really worried about that."

"Better than I expected. After what happened with Daph, she was been really shy and withdrawn, but now it seems she is slowly getting back into things."

"Now, how are you doing?"

Shrugging, he replied calmly, "I'm here Naomi. That's all I can say right now." After a moment of silence, Justin asked, "Have you settled into the new house yet?"

Laughing, Naomi shook her head. "Just barely. I never realized that there was so much junk." Her smile dimming a bit, she looked at Justin. "If it's alright with you, I have a few things of Daphne's that I want to give to Kiki."

Smiling softly, the young father replied, "I think that she would like that." Then coming up with a better idea, he added, "Matter of fact, I'll come over there with her, and we can go through it together. Knowing Kiki, she'll want a story to go along with everything, and I might as well be the one to do it."

"That's fine. I'll expect you in a few hours, and I made your favorite."

"Have I already told you that I love you like a second mom?"

"Ever since you were three." Looking towards the blonde woman still standing she smiled. "Jen, you're more than welcome to join us."

To everyone's surprise, a blush began to spread across her cheeks. "Thanks, but I have a date,"

"You do?"

Snickering at Justin's reaction, Mr. Chanders gave his shoulder a comforting squeeze. "Why wouldn't she? She still looks good, Justin, if I do say so myself."

"James!"

Cowering a bit under the steely glare of Naomi, he acted oblivious to what would have mad his wife upset. "What?"

Shaking her head, she grabbed her husband's hand. "We're going now, before my husband sticks his foot in his mouth any further. See you tonight."

Laughing at the couple, Justin and his mother waved. "Bye."

Later that night, a man began to toss and turn, the dark sheets beginning to stick to his pale form, grimacing at the images that were playing through his subconscious.

[DREAM]

"Hurry up Justin! She sounded really worried!"

"I am! I am! Just hang on!"

"SHIT!"

"JUSTIN!" was the last thing he heard before darkness took over.

Waking up in a hospital bed, Justin turned his head to find his mother holding his sleeping daughter.

"How do you feel?"

Noticing the dried tears on his mother's face, he tried to lighten up the situation. "Like I've been run over by a tank." Looking at his sleeping daughter, he asked tiredly, "Where's Daphne?"

Seeing his mom turn away, the anxiety and dread that he had been feeling since he woke up began to increase tenfold. "Mom, what happened? Where is she?" Seeing the unshed tears in the blue eyes that mirrored his own, Justin already knew the answer before his mother said, "I'm sorry honey. She didn't make it."

No.

No.

No.

NO!

[END DREAM]

"NO!" Pulling the damp covers off his sweat-soaked body, Justin sat up, taking deep breaths to calm him after reliving what happened a little over a year ago.

Feeling the need to see his daughter, he slipped on his robe and crept out of his room. Shuffling down the hall, he slowly turned the doorknob and peeked inside, taking in the slight snores coming from the small figure huddled underneath the Power Puff Girls comforter.

Walking over, he just stared at the little person that took up so much of his heart. Leaning down, he brushed the curly bangs back, placing a small kiss on her forehead. He smiled as he remembered the time she was born. It had been a chilly December night when Daphne had called him and screamed that her water had just broken. Pulling on the first thing that his hands came in contact with, he dressed, banged on his mother's door and yelled that he was on his way to the hospital. Cutting ten minutes off the usual fifteen-minute trip, he quickly parked and ran into the hospital's emergency room. Almost crashing into the nurse's station, he babbled like all fathers-to-be and was directed to the maternity ward. After a quick hello to Daphne's parents, he scrubbed up and made his way to the room where he heard someone loudly cussing and screaming. Quickly he made it over to his best friend's bedside, taking over from Naomi.

"The next time I ask you to do me a favor, JUST SAY NO!" she wailed, followed by another death grip on his already mangled hand.

Observing the weariness begin to settle on the girl features, Justin slipped into his role of encouraging coach. "C'mon Daph. Just one more push, and it will all be over."

Looking at Justin with tired eyes, she whimpered, "I don't know if I can."

"If you do, I'll make weekly trips to Dave and Andy's," Justin promised, playing on one of Daphne's weakness. Seeing that it was having little effect, he took it a step further. "And buy all your cappuccino fudge waffle cones for a year."

Coming off another contraction, she breathed heavily, "If you don't, I'll cut your dick off."

After another twenty minutes of screaming, pleading, and overall unbearable pain, Justin became the first person to welcome Kierra Joie Taylor into the world.

Coming back to the present, Justin sat in the chair beside his daughter's bed, looking out the window to watch the familiar sight of the sun rising.

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Taking a quick glance at the clock on the wall, Brian was slightly relieved to see that he only had three more hours to deal with all this crap. It would have been slightly better if he could have gotten some of it done over the weekend but that wasn't possible since Tornado Gus had claimed the loft.

"Brian?" came the tinny voice of Cynthia over the intercom.

Looking up from the pathetic mockups on his desk that he would have to fix tonight, he growled, "What?"

"Lindsay Peterson on line one for you. Should I put her through?"

"Yeah." Slipping on the headset, he answered, "Hello."

"Hey Bri."

Making another note on the board in front of him, he asked, "What can I do for you, Linds?"

With a small giggle she said, "I just wanted to know who you were making googly-eyes at?"

Wondering what in the hell his friend was talking about, he could only say, "Huh?"

"You know how Gus is at that stage where he makes up a song for everything?"

"Yeah, and?" he prompted, hoping that his longtime friend would get to the point sometime in the next century.

"For the past day or so, he been singing how Daddy's been making googly-eyes at Kiki's Daddy and how you are gonna get married and be kissy-kissy."

Shit.

"Is that all you wanted to tell me?"

"What do you mean 'Is that all?'" What is Gus talking about? And who is this Kiki that I've been hearing so much about?"

"Apparently his new best friend. Seems that she was just enrolled last week while you and Mel were doing things I'd rather not think about."

"Hmm, I guess I'll just have to ask Gus about it. While I have you on the phone, I want to talk to you about this soccer thing. We have a problem."

Not surprised at hearing this topic again, he replied, "I thought there was nothing more to discuss."

"Look, wanted to let you to know that you will have to take him to his first game. Something's come up."

Cracking the red pencil in his hand, Brian yelled down the line, "Wait a damn minute. I already did my duty when I chipped in for the gear and team fees. There was never a clause in there about driving him to games."

"Look, Mel has to go to New York on that weekend since one of her aunts is going in for hip surgery, and I don't want her to be up there alone," Lindsay replied, not the least bit put off by Brian's pouting.

"Doesn't that wife of yours have any other relatives that can sit and comfort Aunty Needahip?" Brian jeered, not being able to pass up the opportunity to burn Mel...no matter how indirectly it might be.

"Brian! She's Mel favorite aunt and she has always supported Mel through everything. Be nice!"

"Stop the lecture already. I'll be a good soccer daddy, okay?" Not even waiting for the 'thank you' that was sure to come, Brian disconnected the call, not wanting to agree to something else he didn't want to do.

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Two weeks later on a crisp Saturday afternoon, two teams of five year olds were running around a field in Mellon Park. Standing on the sidelines with the other proud parents, Brian looked out on the field, his eyes trained on his son who was taking the position of striker.

Once the game was underway, Brian relaxed a bit, taking a casual glance at the other parents standing on the sidelines. As he shook his head at some of the sights, his eyes landed on a familiar blonde setting up a chair and pulling out a large book of some kind. Other than that time he picked up Gus, he and the other man never saw each other. The other times he actually volunteered to pick Gus up from school in hopes of meeting the blonde, he was instead given the opportunity to meet more of Clan Taylor, starting with his mother and then the younger sister. And

each time, he was left with the distinct impression that he was being sized up. Whether for the male Taylor or themselves, he didn't know.

It was time to find out.

"Hello."

"Nice to meet you again, Mr. Kinney," the smiling man replied, his blue eyes hidden by trendy Ray Bans.

Grinning, Brian replied, "So you remember me?"

"How could I forget?" /Especially when my mother and sister have been raving how handsome you were,/ Justin thought amusedly, deciding to keep that bit of information to himself.

Seconds later, both men watched as Kierra began to run down the sideline, set on a collision course with a bulky defender from the opposing team. Grinning at the resulting crash, Brian spoke up, "Seems that your daughter shows no fear."

"Just one of the many things that she inherited from her mother."

Thinking that this would be the best time to dig deeper, Brian asked casually, "By the way, where is your wife? She doesn't want to be a 'Soccer Mom'?"

Not looking away from the action on the field, the young father replied calmly, "I'm not married."

Moving on the next possible reason, Brian asked, "Divorced?"

Shaking his head ruefully, Justin grinned. "Nope."

Feeling a bit frustrated, Brian pressed, "So where is Kierra's mother?" Pointing to the paparazzi-looking group huddled at the end of the field, he continued, "I'm surprised she's not out here with the rest of the soccer moms."

Hanging his head a bit, the blonde focused on his little girl. "She passed away a few years ago."

Feeling like the asshole that so many claim him to be, the older man mumbled, "Sorry."

With his smile back in place, Justin waved it off. "No need."

Twenty minutes later, the referee blew the whistle to signal the end of the game. Seconds later, Brian was attacked by a blue and white blur and noticed that Justin was in the same predicament.

"Did you see me? Did you see me?" Gus asked excitedly, brown hair sticking to his sweat-slicked forehead.

Scooping up his son in his arms, Brian smiled. "I sure did, and since you won I think that we should go somewhere and celebrate."

With a matching grin on his face, Gus asked, "Can Kiki come too?"

Looking over at the girl that was being twirled in the air by her proud father, he nodded, "I don't see why not. Why don't we go over and ask?"

Instantly, Gus ran over to his friend. "Hey Kiki. Hi, Mr. Taylor."

Taking his daughter off his shoulders, he gave the little boy a high five. "Good game, Gus."



"Thank You, Mr. Taylor."

Coming up behind him, Brian spoke up, "Gus wanted to know if both of you would join us for a small victory celebration. Ice cream sundaes on me."

Shrugging, Justin replied, "I don't mind." Looking down at his daughter, he asked, "How about it, squirt? You want to go for ice cream?"

"Can I get double-fudge cookie dough?" Knowing that he was going to regret it, but not being able to say no to the beaming face in front of him, Justin just nodded. As they walked towards the parking lot, the two men began talking, while keeping a watchful eye on the two five year olds that were hyper from winning their game.

"So, where are you from?"

"Here originally, but we've just moved from Atlanta a few weeks back."

Brian frowned at that. "I can't believe people actually choose to move here, especially if they already escaped once."

"Believe me, if it wasn't for the fantastic job offer and substantial raise, I would probably still be in the Peach Capital of the World," Justin grinned, taking in the strong profile that the other man presented to him. Then when the taller man turned to look at him, Justin could only think: what I wouldn't give to have him sit for a portrait. Maybe one day...

"DADDY! HURRY UP!" came the annoyed shout of two five year olds, ready to get the reward they were promised.

"We'd better before they try to figure out how to drive the cars themselves," Brian smirked, faintly hearing his son tell Kiki why their fathers were taking so long...in the form of the song Lindsay told him about.

Moving a little faster to get to his motor mouth son, Brian hoped that this little adventure wouldn't blow up in his face.

TBC



## Funny Business-Prologue

January 1993  
Penn State  
The Creamery

"Can you please hurry the fuck up?!? If I'm late for this meeting, Ballbuster will chew my ass out and not in a good way," Brian Kinney snarled to the jumpy woman who was standing in the frozen yogurt line on what had to be the coldest day in January.

Groaning at the man's dramatics, she said, "It's not like you like him anyway. Now, do you want vanilla or chocolate?"

Ignoring his friend's attempt at trying to calm him down, he hissed, "In case you haven't noticed, it's fucking freezing outside and in case you've forgotten, I need this class in order to get my degree in May, which means that I can't piss the snotty prick off by being late for a meeting that he said is very important."

Ignoring her companion's bitching, the statuesque blonde just inched forward, her mindset lingering somewhere between fudge pecan and caramel swirl. Finally reaching the front of the line, she quickly put in her order. Satisfied, she began to focus on the senior's latest dilemma. "Did it sound like a good or bad thing?"

Shaking his head, he huffed. "That's just it. I couldn't figure it out and I've read the thing almost a thousand times."

Handing over the money for her cone, Lindsay said, "What are you doing after that?"

"Get wasted, find a willing victim, the usual," the brunette mumbled, anticipating the outcome of this impromptu meeting with the infamous professor.

Looking as if her friend lost his mind, Lindsay interjected, "No you're not."

Raising an eyebrow, Brian asked skeptically, "I'm not?"

"Nope. You're going to dinner with me."

Knowing his friend's penchant for solving problems with food, Brian frowned, "I could really deal with not eating any of that shit they serve in the Hub..."

Already planning reservations at the Chinese restaurant in town, she reassured him, "I promise it will be off-campus and I'm paying."

"I'll be at your room about six," and with a peck on the cheek, he ran off to catch the Loop. Pushing his way on to the already crowded shuttle, Brian squeezed through and reached out to grab the handlebar above the seat. Relaxing for the ten-minute trip across campus, Brian began to think exactly what the problem was with Professor Bostler, better known by his nickname, Professor Ballbuster. A professor of Business Ethics, Eric Bostler is well-liked and respected by colleagues. However, he engendered the opposite feelings from current and future students alike.

Brian could remember the horror stories about Ballbuster when he was a freshman just starting out in the business college. When it came time for him to take his Business Ethics course, Brian was a bit apprehensive, but so far everything seemed to be moving along fine.

That is until he received an email two days ago.

Signaling for his stop, Brian jumped off the bus and ran into Business Administration Building, taking the elevator to the seventh floor. Passing the department secretary, he walked down the hall until he reached a wooden door that many students have kicked, punched, or yelled at. Taking a deep breath, he knocked twice and stood ready for whatever was waiting for him on the other side. Seconds later, a distinguished looking gentleman opened the door, smiling warmly. Waving in the anxious twenty-two year old, he said cheerfully, "I'm glad to see that you could make it, Brian."

Feeling like Daniel walking into the lion's den, Brian slowly walked into the office. "Thank you, sir."

Gesturing to the chair in front of his desk, Bostler said, "Please call me Eric. Have a seat and I'll get started."

Sitting down, Brian went straight to the point. "Am I in trouble or something?"

Laughing and not surprised at Brian's assumption, Bostler turned to calm the edgy student in front of him. "No. I just wanted to know if you would be willing to help me out a bit. You are graduating this May, correct?"

Feeling alarm began to curl in the pit of stomach, Brian replied, "Yes."

Digging in the file cabinet near his desk, he asked, "Have you gotten any offers?"

Wary of where this was heading, Brian struggled to maintain his mask of nonchalance. "Two, but I'm still waiting to hear from a couple of other firms."

"I see." Finally seeing what he was looking for, he pulled out a thick folder and slid it across the desk.

Reaching out for the folder, Brian began to look at the contents inside. "What is this?"

"A packet for a business program that I am trying to develop for high-school students in the area. The students come up with a product and go through the normal business practice of production, marketing, and distribution, all within a pre-set budget. Seeing how you are one of the top students in the marketing department, I figured that you would be great in helping them understand exactly what they need to do."

Momentarily stunned at the compliment from the grinning man across from him, Brian wanted to know more. "Would I have to grade them or anything?"

"No. That would be left to the graduate students and myself."

Nodding, Brian leaned back in the chair, relaxing a bit. "So what would be my role in all this?"

"Actually you, along with two others, would act as an assistant to the graduate students that I've put in charge of the program. In return for participating in the program, you will be exempt from attending lectures and examinations, receive a nice stipend at the finish, along with a nice letter of recommendation from me to any prospective employers. All of this being contingent on your evaluations from the graduate and high school students themselves."

Not wanting to seem too interested, Brian looked through the papers again. "Sounds too good to be true."

"I figured that I would tell you that before I let you know that this isn't some glorified babysitting job. It will be real work. Dealing with teenagers who think they already know everything can be taxing in itself. Teaching them is harder still. So, do you want in or not?"

Thinking of the letter of recommendation, not to mention money, Brian dug out a pen and began to sign the papers in front of him. "When do I start?"

"The orientation will be next Friday, but I wanted you to meet the graduate student that will be supervising you today." Hearing a knock at the door, the older man smiled. "Looks like he's right on time." Getting up, Bostler crossed the small space to the door and flung it wide open.

"Glad to see that you made it, Justin. Come in, come in." And that was when Brian saw what he thought had to be the most fabulous piece of ass ever to grace Happy Valley. Longish blonde hair, bright blue eyes, compact swimmer's build, and a smile that literally lit up the room, all of this sending a healthy jolt of lust to Brian's dick.

Noticing the discreet up and down glance he was given by the grad student, Brian deduced that he wasn't the only one pleased with what he saw.

"I would like to introduce you to one of my undergrad students, Brian Kinney. Brian, I would like you to meet, Justin Taylor, one of our brightest MBA candidates here at Penn State."

Blushing a little from the professor's high praise, Justin stepped closer to the auburn-haired man in front of him, "Nice to meet you."

Taking in the unexpectedly strong grip from the shorter blonde, Brian grinned, "Likewise."

Motioning for both men to sit down, Bostler turned to Justin, "Brian will be reporting to you for the duration of the program."

Fixing a challenging blue gaze on Brian, Justin grinned, "I hope that won't be a problem."

Answering the challenge with one of his own, Brian replied, "Not at all."

Funny Business 1  
Market Research

Blue Mountain High School  
Classroom

"Welcome everyone and thank you for coming. My name is Eric Bostler and I want you to know what you are going to be in for during the next couple of weeks. First I should put your fears to rest that you will have to sit here and listen to an old man talk you to death. As a matter of fact, this will be one of the few times that you will see me. Standing up front with me will be the students that will help you during the program. On each folder there is a number located in the bottom left hand corner on your packet. Now, the next step is to find those people with the same number as you and I give you time to get to know each other. Go."

After about ten minutes of chairs scraping and desks being moved about, the groups slowly formed. Once the noise level decreased to a normal level, Bostler spoke up. "Now that you are all settled, take a look at the people sitting near you since they will be the team you work with for the duration of the program. If there are any problems that need to be addressed, please tell any of my assistants at the end of the session. With nothing further, your mentors will be taking over from here. Have fun." And with that he left the classroom, leaving the college students in charge.

Stepping up to the front, Justin began, "I'm Justin Taylor and I will be one of the assistants here to help you. The other assistant wasn't able to make it today, but Parker will be here next week. Now, I'll introduce the students that will be working directly with each group. When I call your Group Number, please raise your hand so they know where you are," and Justin began to rattle names off, finally ending with, "and for Group Four, Brian Kinney."

Feeling five sets of eyes focused on him, Brian squared his shoulders and like a prisoner about to face the firing squad, he made his way to the small circle of desks near the back of the room. Pulling up a chair, he began, "Since we are going to be working together for the next twelve weeks, we should introduce ourselves. So, who is going to be the brave one and start?"

The five high-school students looked at each other, before the one closest to Brian rolled his eyes, and took the initiative to get things started.

"Trent. Seventeen."

"Perry. Sixteen," the walking Gap ad mumbled, fumbling with the paper football on his desk.

"Shane. Sixteen going on thirty."

Looking like the typical California surfer-boy, the next student said, "Jaime. Eighteen in a couple of days."

"Maia, eighteen and you are really cute!"

At a loss on how to respond, Brian only said, "Thanks."

Leaning over her desk, she smiled wider. "No really. You're hot. You have a girlfriend?"

Trying not to flat out laugh in the girl's face, Brian just shook his head with a grin. "No."

With a sly smirk, she asked, "Do you want one?"

"Like he would actually go out with you?" the blonde boy next to her laughed, earning a heated glare in return. Rolling her eyes at the immaturity of teenage boys, she continued her mini inquest.

"So, how old are you?"

Not being to pass up that opening, Jaime answered for the amused college student. "Old enough not to be your boyfriend."

With a swift smack upside the head, she hissed, "Shut up, Ogre."

Giving her a beaming smile back, he replied sweetly, "Bitch."

Noticing a shadow fall over the group, Brian turned around to come face to face with an amused Justin. "Is there a problem here?"

Guessing that the grad student had heard most of the conversation, Brian answered, "Not at all. Just getting to know each other."

"Some of us more than others," came the sarcastic comment from the brunette sitting on Brian left.

Pinning him with a glare that promised a painful death, Maia hissed, "Don't start, Perry."

Trying to keep a straight face, Justin turned his attention to Maia and Jaime. "Would either one of you like to be switched into another group?"

Giving a slow shake of her head, a dirty blonde girl grinned at Justin

"Don't mind them. They're just flirting."

"Shut up, Shane!" came the unified shout of two blushing teens, both of them turning away from the other.

Barely holding his laughter in, Brian asked the other three students, "Are you sure?"

"Yeah, they'll kiss and make up by the time this is over. Don't worry about it," Trent explained, as he leafed through the materials of the program folder.

"Like Justin said, my name is Brian, I'm twenty-two and I'll be graduating in May. Now that we have that out of the way, let's get down to business. Anyone have any suggestions on what they want to sell?"

As the group began to brainstorm on what they wanted to do, Brian sat back and observed the person sitting in the front of the classroom, working on some paperwork, thinking how sexy the blond looked in his silver frame glasses.

As the first session came to a close, Brian felt strangely exhilarated from doing something good. Who would have thought? When five o'clock rolled around, Brian was impressed. He thought that after what happened at the start of the session, they would be too unfocused to get anything done. On the contrary, they had already decided what product they wanted to manufacture, and split up required tasks amongst themselves, with little support from him.

He was jotting down some notes for the progress report of his group, when Justin stood beside his desk. "So, are you staying around?"

Noticing that they were the only ones left in the classroom, he said, "Yeah. It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be."

"It never is." Getting up, Justin told him, "You know that you don't have to turn those reports in until Wednesday. Why are you doing it now?"

"I like to stay on top of things," and seeing the faint blush rise on the pale skin made Brian's grin wider.

"Um, do you need a ride or anything?"

Taking this opportunity to get to know the blond better, Brian grinned, "If you don't mind. My jalopy died on my last week and I am beginning to learn that the bus system is for shit."

Packing up his things, Brian followed the grad student to the parking lot, delighted in finding the rear view as pleasing as the front. A minute later, Justin unlocked the doors to his brand-new Accord coupe, both men closing the doors against the bitter cold.

As they pulled out on the street, Justin asked, "Where do you live?"

"Collegiate Square Apartments. Know where it is?"

Hoping that his face didn't show how pleased he was at hearing this bit of news, Justin replied, "That's about two blocks up the street from me. What a coincidence."

Making conversation, Brian casually asked, "Where did you do undergrad?"

With his smile dimming a bit, Justin replied, "Dartmouth."

Wanting to see the smile return, Brian teased, "You don't look like a nerd to me."

Laughing, Justin replied, "I forgot my pocket protector at home." As they passed the snow-covered fields and bare trees, he continued, "It seems that you have a pretty lively group."

Thinking of the past two hours, Brian grinned. "I think that it won't be so bad, especially see how I have to the 'Maia and Jaime' show for entertainment."

Having seen the show firsthand, Justin nodded. Those two sort of remind me of my best friend. Brought back good memories."

"You look too young to sound so old."

"It's a curse of mine." While they were stopped at a traffic light, Brian asked, "Have any plans this weekend?"

"Probably work on my thesis and harass my roommate and her boyfriend."

Barely resisting rolling his eyes, Brian snorted, "Sounds like a wild time."

"Well, State College doesn't offer that many choices, I'm sure you'll agree," Justin clarified quickly in defense of himself.

"It's not that bad. You just have to know where to look."

Not taking his eyes off the road, Justin grinned, recognizing the test the senior was throwing his way. Accepting, he replied, "Are you offering to give me a tour sometime?"

"I'm game if you are."

"Let me think about and I'll get back to you."

And knowing that the cute blond was, Brian just smiled.

\*\*\*\*\*

Walking swiftly down the halls of the Athletic Building at eight o'clock the next morning, Brian kept trudging to the room that held tired student athletes that had to attend weekend mandatory study halls.

"I thought you weren't going to make it, Kinney," Alex Thompson, striker for the Nittany Lions Varsity Soccer Team, and the only straight person that Brian actually claimed as being a friend, smiled, looking at the person that just slumped in the chair beside him.

Not losing a step, he smirked, "I always come when I say I do."

Rolling his eyes at the standard Kinney innuendo, Alex asked, "Where were you yesterday?"

"When?"

Looking as if the taller boy had lost his mind, he said, "For the Business Ethics class that we both have to suffer through."

"Oh yeah. I forgot to tell you that I don't have to go anymore."

"Excuse me?"

Pulling out a study sheet and textbook for English, Brian repeated slowly, "I. Don't. Have. To. Go. Anymore." Still seeing the stunned expression on the redhead's face, he picked up his book, hiding his grin. "I think you need to lay off the headers for awhile."

Not put off by the cynical comment, Alex snorted, "And what makes you so damn special?"

"Because as of Friday afternoon, I am exempt from all lectures and tests in Ballbuster's course."

"I know you're good, Kinney, but how in hell did you swing that?"

"My natural talents."

Not being able to let the comment pass, Alex snorted, "Damn. I never would have thought Ballbuster batted for the other team."

"I'm talking about my natural marketing talents. Or at least that's what he told me."

"Are you going to answer me or do I bug you for the next two hours that we're stuck in this hell hole?"

"I get to help out with a pilot program that he starting at the local high school. He wants to give them the opportunity to create a business and see how they handle the responsibilities and consequences of having one."

"So basically you're going to be babysitting a bunch of kids that will probably get crushes on the tall handsome college stud."

Rolling his eyes, Brian shook his head. "It's not babysitting. That was the first thing that he made perfectly clear."

"Well, what are you doing?"

"To answer any questions they might have or to help them out if they get stuck. Even though there are twenty students in the program, I really only have to deal with five."

"That doesn't sound bad, but why are you doing it?"

"A glowing letter of recommendation, nice stipend, and connections," came the automatic answer

"Why do I get the feeling that you aren't telling me the whole story here? I know that look in your eye and it is only displayed when you've eyed a new piece of ass. Who is it?"

With his mind's eye being filled with the vision of golden blond hair and bright blue eyes, Brian gave nothing away. "None of your damn business."

"Fine. You don't have to tell me now, but I'll find out. By the way, a group of us are going to that new club that's opening up tonight. You game? "

Knowing the redhead would pester him until he agreed, Brian shrugged, "Whatever." Then gesturing to the blank paper in front of Alex, he grinned wickedly, "Don't you have some essays that need to be written?"

"Fuck you."



"Sorry. I don't do friends, but I'm sure I can find someone to help you out if you want to try."

With his face matching his hair, Alex muttered, "I'm shutting up now."

"Good." and satisfied that he had won that verbal battle, Brian settled down to read about the complexities of microeconomic supply and demand theory.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Morning."

Turning around from the stove, his roommate and friend smiled. "Hey Jus. Want some breakfast?"

"Is Lance here?" he asked, looking around for Iris's boyfriend, who made a living working as a chef for one of the hotels in town.

Shaking her head, she said, "No. Why?"

"Then never mind. I don't want to have to be sick all weekend."

"For your information, Asshole, Lance has been teaching me and he said that I've gotten a lot better." Sliding a mug of steaming coffee to her bleary-eyed roommate, she asked, "So, how did the first day of the program go?"

Shrugging his shoulders, he slid into one of the kitchen chairs. "The kids themselves seems alright, and Brian is working out fine too."

"Who's Brian?"

"One of the seniors that I'm supervising during the program. Actually he's more like an assistant," Justin trailed off, thinking about other things that Brian could 'assist' him with.

"Justin Taylor, are you holding out on me?"

Snapping out of his barely formed daydream, he said quickly, "What are you talking about?"

"Well, going by your strawberry face, I say that there is something about this Brian that actually has you interested. And we both know that it takes someone exceptional to meet your standards."

"Anyone ever tell you that you are one nosy bitch?"

"All the time. Now answer the question. Is he hot?"

"Beyond."

"I need a little more description here."

"Tall, moody hazel eyes, thick auburn hair, lean body, and a face that made me wish for a sketchbook and pencil right there."

"Okay okay. He's a fucking masterpiece come to life."

"I don't know about all that, but he's pretty damn close." Taking another sip of coffee, Justin grinned, "So, what are you doing tonight?" which in turn brought up memories of last night's conversation.

"I thought that we could maybe go out to that new club that is opening up near Old Main, enjoy what little time we have left before we have to enter the Real World. It's 21 and up so you make sure you bring ID. I don't want to have to go through what happened last time we went out."

"Mm Hmm."

Noticing the non-verbal answer she got in return to her fabulous suggestion, Iris poked him in the arm. "Justin, are you having a blond moment or something?"

"Sure."

Still not satisfied, she napped her fingers in front of his face. "JUSTIN!"

Blinking, he turned to see his roommate's face only an inch from his. "Um, can I help you?"

Moving back a bit, she said, "Glad to know that I have your attention again. Now tell me why your head was in the upper atmosphere."

"Nothing really. Just thinking about things."

Having only seen Justin in this mood before, she grew concerned. "What's wrong?"

"It 's just that ever since I met the kid, I've had this sensation in the middle of my stomach, and it won't go away."

"Who's the kid, Justin? Look, just because you look like you belong in high school doesn't mean-"

"No, you dunce! I'm talking about the undergrad I'm supervising. Brian Kinney."

"Oh, then that's not so bad, but you do know the problem, don't you? It's so obvious..."

"Well Dr. Paeillo, what is the diagnosis?"

"Justin and Brian sitting in a tree...K-I-S-S-I-N-G. First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes-"

"Stop it right there, cause there is no way men can get pregnant."

With a pat on his head, she walked back to pour more coffee. "Don't worry. I'm working on it."

"You're supposed to be going to med school for good not evil."

"Being evil is more fun! Now go wash up so you can take me out to breakfast."

"I thought you were cooking?"

"I did too, but the batter isn't cooperating right now." Seeing the grin on her friend's face, she warned, "Don't say a word, or I will set you up with the most facially challenged boy in the place tonight."

Ignoring the threat, he shook his head, "Thanks for the offer, but I think that I can do fine all on my own. Matter of fact, I already have." Then turning, he began to walk back to his room, trying not to laugh at the look of surprise on the young woman's face.

"Hey! What do you mean by that?" the girl yelled, making the blond grin at the image of thick auburn hair and fascinating hazel eyes.

TBC...



## EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER:

Two Years after Rage Party: Justin is haunted by the ghost of Brian Kinney

Goddamnitmotherfuckingshit!!!

Wearily, I turn my head to look at the digital clock on my night table and realize that once again I am awakened in the middle of the night. Going by rote, I reached for the sweats that I'd abandoned on the floor hours ago and pulled them on, shivering at the coldness as they touched my skin. Stretching, I get up, grab my Discman then walk to what the English like to call a 'sitting room', which is really no bigger than a closet. Dropping into the worn leather recliner next to the window, I just sit and stare at the lamppost shrouded in fog across the street, being reminded of another lamppost, in another place, another time. Putting the headphones on, I hit play and a smile comes to my face as I recognize the song from one of the many burned CDs that Daphne has sent me. Listening to the first few bars, I can't help think that she put this one on here for me specifically. I wouldn't put it past her to do something like that, because I would have done it for her.

Leaning against the backrest, I look again to the lamppost, press the 'repeat' button, and let the memories take over.

~~~~~

Last night I cried, tossed and turned
Woke up with dry eyes
My mind was wasting, feet were pacing
Lord, help me please, tell me what I have gotten into

Ran my 3 miles to clear my mind
It always helps me out
It's my therapy when I'm losin' it
Which is usually, hey

I'm on an emotional rollercoaster
Lovin' you ain't nothin' healthy
Lovin' you was never good for me (For me)
But I can't get off

This emotional rollercoaster
Lovin' you ain't nothin' healthy
Lovin' you was never good for me (For me, oh)
But I can't get off

~~~~~

Yeah, that was a long hard ride. And like the songs says, there was nothing healthy in it, but that didn't stop me wanting to go stay and enjoy the ride for as long as I could. I held on for all it was worth. There was no way I wanted to miss a minute of the Kinney Express.

At times, it seemed that everyone had a ticket for this particular ride. In all my life, I have never known someone as charismatic as Brian.

Of course, his looks have also something to do with the initial attraction, but there is something intangible that just makes people become his loyal subject or fiercest enemy.

Love or hate him, and the kicker is that he could give a fuck either way.

Or at least he wants you to think that, because Brian Kinney lives by this credo: no excuses, no apologies, no regrets.

What he forgot to add to the list are no expectations from anyone but himself. Less disappointment and if things fuck up, you can only blame yourself.

All this can be found in the Kinney Safety Guide.

All new members of his fan club are urged to get one. Something I found out rather quickly.

Too bad I lost my handbook along the way.

~~~~~

Yesterday I told myself
I was gonna be okay
Gonna start a new day, truly happy
I was gonna take control of me

But eventually reality hit me
Mentally, physically, emotionally
And I opened my eyes and realized
That I was still bein' taken for a constant ride on your

I'm on an emotional rollercoaster (Ooh, baby)
Lovin' you ain't nothin' healthy (For real, it's never happened for me)
Lovin' you was never good for me (Oh, but I can't get)
But I can't get off (Ooh...ooh...baby...)

Emotional rollercoaster (You got me goin' up and down)
Lovin' you ain't nothin' healthy (Oh)
Lovin' you was never good for me (Never good for me, ah)
But I can't get off

~~~~~

That is what I told myself when I started that madness of a relationship with Ethan. That I was tired of Brian's shit, conveniently forgetting about my own fuckups. That I was tired of being his round-two draft pick, instead of that coveted spot of number one pick.

That I was done with living my life according to Brian Kinney.

What a bunch of bullshit that was.

I can remember waking up the day after the party and turning over, only to be faced with the cold reality of my hasty decision.

Turning back around, I finally let the tears fall, silently, so as to not wake the sleeping man next to me. I don't think that he would appreciate me mourning the loss of my ex-lover.

And that is what Brian was to me. No matter what he or anyone says otherwise.

Prideful Prick. Then again, we're both prideful pricks or we wouldn't have gone through this shit in the first place.

But that doesn't change the fact that I still love the fucker. When Ethan and I parted ways, I never felt so numb. Even when he left to go on a student tour across the country, I felt absolutely nothing. And that is why when I got back to the rathole of apartment we shared, I just sat and stared at the four walls that had become my own personal prison.

Sucks to be me, right?

Then to add to my angst, the next day I received a letter from PIFA's financial aid department, confirming receipt of my tuition payment for the next semester.

Uh uh! There was no way I was going to depend on Brian for anything anymore. I gave all that up when I walked away that night.

After ripping that piece of news to shreds, I got online and began looking at art programs that were offering full scholarships with the added bonus of being a considerable distance away from Pittsburgh...and Brian. About three hours into the search, I was about to give up, when my eye caught what could be my escape ticket outta the Pitts.

Right then and there I applied and waited for almost two weeks for a reply.

My hopes weren't in vain. When I checked the mailbox and found a thick envelope containing an acceptance letter and other orientation materials for the Gainsborough Scholars Program from the London College of Arts and Textiles. At least one part of my life was going right.

Going to the tuition office and arranging for them to refund the money to Brian the day before my scheduled departure wasn't as much a hardship as I thought it would be.

Plus it also saved me from having the inevitable confrontation with Brian when he finds out what I've done. Persuading my mom that this was the best thing for me was another. Don't get me wrong, she was happy that I had been accepted into the program, but she felt that I didn't have to go all the way to London to continue my education. Feeling like the adult that I was trying to become, I pointed out all the reasons in an orderly, sensible fashion. Still, it took some time to win her over, but she signed all the documents that I needed and gave me her blessings with the wish for me to be happy.

Then came the dreaded goodbyes to my Liberty Avenue family. I know that they were pissed that I didn't tell them in person about this new venture, but after some lengthy emails and one phone call from Deb, I got the point across that I didn't want them to 'make things right' and run and to tell Brian. Truthfully, I assumed that the breakup between Brian and me would have caused havoc on the tight group.

Color me surprised when Deb showed up on Ethan's doorstep and gave me the hug that I'd wanted ever since walking out of Babylon.

Then she scolded me for handling things the way I did and turned right around and cursed Brian out for acting like a shithhead, which is something only she can do.

Soon after, Emmett, Ted, Vic, and Mel approached me separately, saying that I made the right the decision for myself, even if they didn't believe that I was content with it.

Next came Lindsay, who after a little awkwardness, welcomed me back in the best way: asking me to baby-sit for Gus again.

As for Michael, well I already knew that there wouldn't be any forgiveness nor any future Rage aspirations, so I just remained content with the people that were willing to not treat me like a leper.

Three weeks later, with only two suitcases, art supplies, and a heavy heart, I was on a plane bound for Heathrow and a new beginning.

~~~~~

So tired of you makin' love to me
Then disappearing so suddenly
Up and down it goes
And I'm so tired of you pacifyin' me
With promises you know that you'll never keep
Round and round it goes, I am on a

I'm on an emotional rollercoaster (Oh)
Lovin' you ain't nothin' healthy (Ooh, ain't nothin' healthy 'bout it, baby)
Lovin' you was never good for me (Nothin' healthy 'bout it, baby)
But I can't get off (Oh, oh)

~~~~~

Thinking back, that had to be one of the most irritating things about the man. There were times when he could be so gentle and loving, giving me glimpses into the Brian Kinney that was hidden underneath his 'fuck the world' attitude. Then as soon as I would begin to dig deeper, he would shut down and reappear with mask back in place and push me away by doing something that he knew would fuck with my heart.

The time I moved in with him after the bashing, it got so bad that it became more or less the norm for us. Cycle went as follows: I push for more. He decides that I'm getting too close. He would fuck with me. I would react. He would apologize in traditional Kinneyese fashion. We would have fantastic make-up sex.

Pretty fucked, huh? I know that is what just about everyone outside the relationship thought. But not me.

Well, not at first. I guess that I was just so excited to get a chance to ride, that I didn't look at all the pre-boarding precautions too carefully.

Then again, I probably would have ignored them anyway.

Hearing loud knocking on the door, I pull off the headphones and realize that the sky has begun to show signs of sunrise. Shaking my head at yet another wasted night, I yawn and stretch, working out the kinks from sitting for so long. Giving a momentary thought of putting on some socks, I walked across the hardwood floor and hope whomever is behind the door brought something for breakfast.

Hearing a gurgling sound, I know that my stomach agrees with me.

Opening the door, my hunger is stripped away by the sight of a rough-and-tumble Brian Kinney. Well, at least for him. A layer of stubble coating his hard-defined features, designer casual clothes flattering the natural lines of his beautiful body, smoky hazel eyes, and of course, silky auburn hair arranged to appear as if he just finished fucking...or getting fucked. Skipping pleasantries, I got right to the heart of the matter. "Why the hell are you here?"

Giving me a casual head-to-toe appraisal, he grins, "Hey Sonnyboy. Can I come in? It's fucking freezing outside."

Knowing that I could say no, but my heart won't give me any choice in the matter, I open the door a little wider for him to move through, wondering if I am prepared for whatever is going to happen next.

~~~~~

Emotional rollercoaster

Lovin' you ain't nothin' healthy

Lovin' you was never good for me

But I can't get off this

~~~~~

And with him standing here, I have to accept the fact that I will never want to get off the wild intense ride that is Brian Kinney.

The End?

# BREATHE

Two Years after Rage Party: Brian wants answers and doesn't care how far he has to go in order to get them

Looking at the bags on my bed, I just shake my head, wondering what in hell I'm doing running after someone. Then again, this isn't just anyone and this isn't really surprising, seeing how he's made me break 'my' rules before.

Fucking Twat.

"Where are you going?"

Snapping out of my thoughts, I turn around. "Look, it's just some personal business that I have to take care of. Now, do you want to house sit or what?"

"No need to be snarky, Brian, but I do have one more question. Why me? I'm sure that Michael would want to do this."

"Yes he would, but I don't want to hear his shit right now." Walking into the bathroom, I make sure that I have everything I need for my impromptu trip.

"So, where are you going?"

"If I tell you, you'd better not breathe a word of it to anyone."

"Have I ever? Now where to?"

"London." Seeing the stupid grin appear on her face, I continue, "And before you even remind me, yes, I do realize that is where Justin lives now."

Looking unconvinced, my partner in crime smirks, "So, this has absolutely nothing to do with him? Nothing at all?"

"If it did, do really think that I would be telling you? Now get your ass off my bed. I don't want it contaminated with hetero cooties."

Rolling her eyes, she ignores me. "Whatever. So I take it that I am your switchboard until you get back?"

"I knew you were a smart cookie." Taking the suitcase and the carryon near the door, I tell her, "I should be back in a week, two at most."

Rolling her eyes at my vague answer, she huffs, "Fine."

Hearing the beep outside, I open the door and move my things into the waiting elevator. After making sure she knows the alarm codes and such, I remind her, "Don't throw any wild parties and please, no straight sex in the loft. I don't want my place or reputation to be ruined."

"Will you go already?" she whines, actually pushing me out the door. Grinning at her eagerness for me to leave, I close the door to the elevator. "Bye, Cynthia, and don't let anyone know where I am. I mean it."

"Go get your man, Brian." she grins, waving through the grating, which I honor with a one-finger salute.

Five minutes later, I'm sitting in the backseat of the taxi, knowing that there is no chance of backing out. "Where to, mister?"



Pushing my doubts to the side, I answer, "Pittsburgh International." And with that, I begin to prepare myself for what I am about to do. Twenty minutes into the ride, I mentally smack myself before pulling out my cell phone, realizing that I have to make one last call before I leave the country.

"Linds?"

Sounding a bit out of breath, she answers, "Brian? Is that you?"

Trying to not think about what she, and most likely her wife, was doing beforehand, I explain quickly, "Yeah. Listen, I have to go out a town for a while and I just wanted to let you know that if there are any emergencies or problems with Gus, call Cynthia and she will get in contact with me."

"Where are you going?"

Making scratchy noises, I wind it up. "Dammit! My battery is about to die. I gotta go. Give Sonnyboy a kiss from me. Bye."

"Wait-" And that was the last thing I heard before turning off the phone and slipping it back in the inside pocket. No doubt I will be hearing about that stunt when I get back.

After paying and tipping the driver, I walk over to the Liberty Air counter and go to the kiosk to pick up the ticket that I ordered online five hours ago. Checking my bags through, I make my way through the security checkpoints and catch the shuttle to the gates. Forty seconds later, I am walking towards the first class lounge, intent on fortifying myself for this trip.

Giving my order to a waiter, I pull out my laptop and boot it up, hoping that some work will get rid of the rare case of nerves I have. Clicking on the latest presentation, I can't help but grin at the irony of it all. I mean, here I am, Brian Kinney, about to go against all I believe in because of a fucking car commercial.

Yeah, that had been a real shit day. It seemed that everything that could go wrong did. Vance ripped me a new one for not kissing some old hag's ass, Cynthia had called in sick and the temp that was sent over from the agency was about as useless the resident Idiot Twins.

Getting to the loft, I changed clothes, turned on my voicemail, and began on the shit that I hadn't been able to finish at the office while I was being punished by The Powers That Be. I was halfway through another fucked up presentation, when I heard this funky beat start. Having forgotten that I had turned on the television for background noise, I pushed away from my desk, and walked over to hear it more clearly. It was a commercial for another stupid SUV, but that was secondary compared to the music. Of course this led to me checking out the company website, and was surprised to learn that they had uploaded the music samples featured in their commercials. While keeping a mental note of this marketing strategy, I found out the name of the band...Tele-something and began searching for the full version.

~~~~~

I brought you something close to me,
Left for something you see though your here.
You haunt my dreams
There's nothing to do but believe,
Just Believe.
Just Breathe.

~~~~~

Closing my eyes, I let the unique beat fill my ears, my brain going into a freefall of bass and electronica, and not a moment later my eyelids are plastered with the blurred image that I've tried to banish with the usual prescription of fucking and drugging. And all I got in return were pounding headaches, repeated cases of cottonmouth, and the grim realization that some nameless trick was sleeping on Justin's side of the bed.

~~~~~

Another day, just believe,
Another day, just breathe
Another day, just believe,
Another day. Just breathe.

~~~~~

And for those months that we were apart, that is all I did or at least tried to.

Even though it had been nearly a year since 'The Party', I felt that there was still something unresolved between us.

Then one day as I was looking at my Palm Pilot, I noticed that I had put a reminder in there about the tuition payment that was due for PIFA. I didn't even think about how he would react when I sent the check in. All I saw it as was fulfilling my part of the contract that we made between us, nothing more.

Once again, I remind you that I am accomplished bullshit artist...especially when it comes to myself.

As the months passed, I followed my usual routine, but secretly hoping I ran into the elusive blonde, since I know he'd had to have received a notice from PIFA about his tuition. I could have asked the Liberty Peanut Gallery, but there was no way in hell I was getting them involved...anymore than they already were.

Then about a month later, I got a note from PIFA's Bursar's Office telling me that Justin's tuition had been deposited back into my account.

That night, I drove up to the raggedy building and sat in my Jeep for a few minutes and went over my game plan. To be honest, I wanted to know how he was really doing. After hearing about the breakup with Fiddlefuck, I thought that he would eventually make his way over to the loft to 'reminisce' over some of the better times that we'd had, except for occasional frosty civil 'hello' and 'goodbye'.

So, with another check and determination in hand, I walked up to his apartment, prepared to get the answers I wanted.

And he'd better have a damn good explanation for this cloak and dagger shit.

Climbing up the unsteady staircase, I prayed that I wouldn't fall through the stairs before I reached the apartment itself. Reaching the sixth floor, I walked to the end of the hall, gave the door a sharp knock and waited.

And waited.

And waited.

Knowing that he should have been home by now, I begin to wonder just where the little fuck was when I hear someone clear their throat behind me. Turning around, I see a small, greasy looking man, his head looking as if it was polished with lard.

Walking towards the repulsive troll, I demanded, "Do you know Justin Taylor?"

"You mean the blonde kid?" Nodding, I asked, "Do you know when he'll be back?"

Shaking his head, he replies, "He's not. He packed up and moved out almost two weeks ago."

Now that was a surprise, because as far as I know, Deb hadn't said anything about him moving back in with her. Which could only mean one suitable option.

His mother.

Needing confirmation before I drove to the townhouse in Suburbia, I asked, "Did he leave a forwarding address?"

"Yes, but I don't know if I should give it to you." Reading the greed in the old scumbag's eyes and not in the mood to have a tantrum, I sighed and pulled out a fifty. "Will this change your mind?"

Making a show of thinking about it, he took the money out of my hands and turned, walking down the steps. "Come down to my office and I'll give it to you there." After about ten minutes of him digging around in his office/dumpster, he finally finds what I paid him for, writes it on a slip of paper and gives it to me.

"Is there anything else that I can do for you?"

Not bothering to thank him, I walk out of the dingy office, the paper burning a hole in my pocket. "No."

Slamming out of the building, I open the Jeep door and just sit there, knowing that my eyes had to be playing tricks on me.

Because there is no fucking way that Justin's address is somewhere in London.

~~~~~

I'm used to it by now.

Another day, just believe.

Just breathe. Just believe.

Just breathe.

Lying in my bed,

Another day, staring at the ceiling.

~~~~~

Working on autopilot, I find myself in front of Deb's front door. But before I can casually walk in like I usually do, it opens.

Standing in an old bathrobe and stupid smile, the amused person asked, "Are you coming in or do you need a few more minutes?"

Ignoring the sarcasm, I mutter. "Very funny, Vic." Walking through the door, I ask, "Where's Deb? I thought she would be off by now."

"She had to go fill in for another waitress that called in sick," he explained, sitting back down on the couch. "Is there something wrong?"

Still standing, I turn to him, already knowing that he has an idea of why I'm there. "I don't know, is there?"

And I was proven correct when he says, "By your tone, I guess you found out about our little globetrotting artist."

Ding! Ding! Ding! Give the old fag a prize!

Trying to keep my temper in check, and get myself back in control, "Who else knows?"

Getting up, he began to walk towards the kitchen. "Practically everyone does."

"And why didn't anyone find the time to let me in on this?"

"Maybe due to the fact that you've acted as if you couldn't have cared less about anything concerning Justin."

"That might have been true, but that still doesn't explain why no one told me...like that's ever stopped any of you before."

"Sit down, Brian."

Ignoring his offer, I shrug my jacket back on and began to walk back to the door. "I can't. I want to catch Deb at the diner."

"Sit, because I really don't think that you want to go through anymore public scenes, do you?" Vic offered again, only this time I knew that I didn't really have a choice.

Sitting in the chair he indicates, I don't waste time. "So, can you tell me what's going on?"

"As much as I know, but you have to promise not to rip everyone a new asshole for keeping this from you."

Accepting the coffee mug from him, I take a deep breath. "Fine. Now what do you know?"

"Apparently after he and Ethan called it quits, Justin felt lost."

"What do mean 'lost'? Even after all that he has been through, Justin is still one of the most focused people I know."

"Like I said, Justin felt that everything was moving way beyond his control and so decided that he would finally do something about it," he said, taking a sip of the coffee in front of him.

Realizing that he isn't going to say anything else, I stand up, my patience running out. "That's not telling me anything, Vic."

Glancing up at me, the look in his eyes stops me in my tracks, halting whatever little temper tantrum I was about to have. Shaking his head sadly, he gets up, comes around the table, gives me a hug and whispers in my ear, "Well, maybe I'm not the one that you should be talking to."

~~~~~

Just breathe. Another day.

Another day, just believe.

Another day.

I'm used to it by now.

I'm used to it by now.

Just breathe. Just believe.

Just breathe. Just believe.

Just believe. Just breathe.

Just believe.

Another day, just believe.

Another day.

Another day, just believe,

Another day, just breathe,

Another day (I do believe).

Another day(so hard to breathe)

Another day(not so hard to believe)

Another day. Another day.

~~~~~

And with those words and that damn song, I'm sitting on a jumbo jet in the first class cabin headed for Jolly Ol' England. Besides, I'm tired of just living for another day.

At least without Justin there to spend it with me.

<<<Ladies and Gentlemen, we will be landing at Heathrow International Airport in a few minutes. Please have all necessary documents and identification for Customs ready before departing the aircraft. Thank you for flying Liberty Air. Once again, welcome to London.>>>

Hmm, I just hope I get the welcome I want. Waiting for the herd to pass through, I stretch and work out the kinks that came from sitting too long. Grabbing my carry-on, I walked off the plane, praying that I'm not making a complete fool of myself. Signaling for a taxi, I climb in and tell the driver the name of the hotel that Cynthia booked me into. Not giving in to the jet lag I was feeling from the transatlantic flight, I shower, change clothes, make my way to the lobby and snag a cab to take me to Justin's address.

Arriving at a brick fronted building, I pay and tip the smiling giant, and walk in. Checking the mailboxes on the side of the entryway, I make note of the exact apartment and started to walk up the stairs, not really trusting the rickety elevator. Reaching the third floor, I look for Justin's apartment and smile as I recognize his work on the wooden door at the end of the hall.

Telling myself not to be a pussy, I knock and wait to see the man that I have missed all these months.

"What in hell are you doing here?"

Focusing on the angry blues directed at me, I can't help but take a thorough glance at the young man that stands before me, and it takes considerable control not to just push him back inside, flip him on his bed, and fuck him senseless.

Knowing that could come in all due time, I give him that Kinney smile and reply, "Hey Sonnyboy. Can I come in? It's fucking freezing outside."

# DESTINY

Brian and Justin come face to face after two years

~~~~~

I lie awake
I've gone to ground
I'm watching porn
In my hotel dressing gown
Now I dream of you
But I still believe
There's only enough for one in this
Lonely hotel suite

The journey's long
And it feels so bad
I'm thinking back to the last day we had.
Old moon fades into the new
Soon I know I'll be back with you
I'm nearly with you
I'm nearly with you

When I'm weak I draw strength from you
And when you're lost I know how to change your mood
And when I'm down you breathe life over me
Even though we're miles apart we are each other's destiny

~~~~~

"Why are you here?"

"Just trying to breathe," and came the cryptic answer from the tall man striding past the mystified art student, instantly dissolving the shock inside Justin. Not knowing what to make of Brian's statement, Justin went on the attack.

"What are you doing here Brian? And I can really do without the cryptic answers."

Deciding to play a bit, Brian asked mockingly, "Damn, I can't even get an offer of coffee? What would your mother say, Sunshine?"

Not missing a beat, Justin replied, "Probably that I was stupid for letting you in the first place, and as for the offer, I can't because I ran out." Running a shaky hand through his blonde bangs, he explained further. "I actually thought it was Keilan before I opened the door."

"Who's Keilan?" Brian asked, wondering if he had assumed too much, thinking that it wouldn't be the first time when it came to Justin.

Justin, reading the undertones in the simple question, answered calmly, "Classmate and resident nut ball. She usually drops by here all hours of the day."

"Decided you like pussy, huh?" Brian quipped, shedding the warm leather bomber and surveying the small flat more closely.

Leaning against the closed door, Justin watched Brian carefully, having the distinct feeling of wanting to run as far away as possible from the man in front of him. "No, but she does. I met her at one of the local clubs one night and from there we just clicked."

Not turning from one of the many sketches hanging on the wall, Brian asked, "So, you're not lonely over here?"

Surprised that the older man would even ask, Justin quickly said, "No, but that's not to say that I don't get homesick once in awhile."

"Have you been back since you left?"

"No, but right now, I don't have the time. With all the seminars and projects they throw at us, it's a wonder that I get to sleep sometimes."

With a saccharine sweet smile, Brian replied, "I'm sure the Boy Wonder can handle that."

"Anyway, why are you here or can I take a guess?" Justin shot back, hoping that Brian wouldn't dodge the bullet this time.

"Get the fuck up Jus! Time for brekkie! I got those muffins you like, so open the door you horseshit! It's cold out here!" a loud screechy voice shouted through the door, followed by insistent knocking.

Wishing that the ill-timed distraction could have come a bit earlier, Justin shouted, "Bugger off Kei! I'm busy."

"Yeah right, like you actually have someone there with you. Now quit playing and open the door or you know I will act like a nut until you do," came the yelled retort, making Justin groan.

Trying to ignore the amused look he was getting from the older man, Justin strode to the door, and opened it a crack, coming face to face with bright green eyes. "Please Kei," he pleaded, hoping that the girl would have some mercy and leave it alone. He should have known better than that.

"JUSTIN! Why did you leave me and the kids?!? You said that you didn't care if-"

Yanking open the door to his persistent friend, he grabbed a handful of gray sweatshirt and pulled a giggling mass in.

"Bitch."

"Of course, but you knew that already," she laughed, patting his cheek in apology. She was about to make her way to the kitchen when her line of sight caught on something that she had only seen on paper and tattered photos. Stopping in her tracks, she looked back at the sulking blonde behind her, and knew that her guess was correct.

"Oh, am I interrupting something?" she asked, completely aware of the tension in the room, but ignoring it for now, since she wanted answers to what was going on between her friend and the smirking man standing across the room.

A bit put out by this latest distraction, Brian decided that it was in his best interest to get in this girl's good graces. Giving her the famous Kinney grin, he held out his hand. "Not at all. My name is Brian. Who are you?"

"You're Brian?" she exclaimed, ignoring his question entirely. "You're right Jus, he is hot!"

"Kei!" Justin hissed, a slight blush on his cheeks.

"You are sure are grumpy this morning Jus," she muttered good-naturedly. Then turning back to Brian, she continued, giving him a shrewd glance. "But I guess that you have a good reason be."

Giving Justin a peck on the cheek, she whispered, "I'll ring you later. You had better lose the attitude by then." Stepping away from her friend, Keilan smiled at the older man in a way that made him shift uncomfortably. "Nice meeting you, Brian."

"I think that it is a little too late to impress him with your excellent manners, Kei," Justin reminded the girl, receiving a swift swap upside the head for his troubles.

"No one asked you, Jus." Before walking out the door, she turned to glance at both men. "I'd better get a full report later. Bye boys and try to behave, and please remember that the walls are kind of thin."

Laughing, Brian said to the frowning blonde, "She reminds me of Daphne."

"Don't get me started on how those two gang up on me. When Daph came to visit, you could have sworn they were like long lost twins or something, appearances notwithstanding," Justin said, trying to calm his heart at being alone with Brian once again.

Walking over to the counter, Justin dug into the bag that Keilan had put on the counter and pulled out a poppy seed muffin. After taking a huge bite, he said, "For the third time, what do you want Brian?"

Not answering directly, Brian began walking around the modest room again, taking in the small touches that Justin had added. Once he made a full circuit, he dropped onto the second-hand loveseat that Justin had rescued at a yard sale. "How are you doing Sunshine?"

Giving the taller man a wary look, Justin sat down in the old leather recliner across from him. "I know that you can do better than that."

Not put off by Justin's obvious annoyance at his presence, Brian leaned back and regarded his former lover pensively. "Since when have you become so cynical?"

"Had a good teacher," Justin shot back, instantly regretting the words. Closing his eyes for a moment, he said, "Look, I don't want to do this so early in the morning. I'm just a little off because I haven't been getting enough sleep lately."

Making a note of that, Brian asked casually, "So do you want me to come back when you're not so stressed out?"

"No, I want to know why you're here," Justin muttered, still at a loss as to why his ex was sitting across from him in a small dorm room halfway across the world.

Not put off by the blonde's frown, Brian replied, "I have questions that only you can answer and you can start by telling me why you felt the need to transfer schools and move clear across the Atlantic."

Having practiced with this question, he immediately answered, "I just needed a change."

"From what?"

"Everything, I guess."

Shaking his head, Brian pressed for more. "That doesn't answer my question, Sunshine."

Snapping his head up, the artist retorted hotly, "It's Justin. That nickname doesn't really fit me nowadays."

Being thrown off a bit by the sudden spurt of temper, Brian held up his hands in a defensive gesture. "Damn, you really are a moody bitch."



Crossing his arms, Justin just gave him an annoyed glance. "I guess I should thank you for that lesson too."

"Justin, contrary to what you think, I didn't fly all the way over here to trade insults with you. We need to talk."

Rolling his eyes at hearing Brian's suggestion, he couldn't help but say, "Hmm. This should be a novel experience."

Ignoring the biting sarcasm being flung in his direction, Brian tried another approach. "Just get dressed and let's go get something to eat. Maybe some food will put you in a better mood."

'I doubt it,' Justin thought, not having the energy to continue this game of wits this early in the morning. Dashing into his bedroom, he whipped off his sweats and t-shirt, replacing them with a hooded sweatshirt, dark denim jeans, and old sneakers. Satisfied, he walked back out to the sitting room, and almost laughed at the disdainful look Brian gave him.

"I know it's not Armani or D&G, but I hope I don't embarrass you too much."

And knowing that he was caught, Brian just grinned. "Whateverthefuck. Let's go fill ourselves with whatever junk you use as fuel."

~~~~~

On a clear day
I'll fly home to you
I'm bending time getting back to you
Old moon fades into the new
Soon I know I'll be back with you
I'm nearly with you
I'm nearly with you

When I'm weak I draw strength from you
And when you're lost I know how to change your mood
And when I'm down you breathe life over me
Even though we're miles apart we are each other's destiny

~~~~~

The walk to the café three blocks down was in complete silence, neither man wanting to break the shaky truce that was declared back in Justin's room. Being on friendly terms with the husband and wife that owned the place, it took no time to get a table during the busy breakfast rush.

"That's all you're going to eat?" Justin asked, pointing to the small plate of toast and poached egg.

Raising an eyebrow, Brian smirked, "Is there a problem with that?"

Shaking his head in amusement, Justin grinned, "It's good to see that some things never change."

Taking a look at the demolished plate of Justin's he had to agree. "Yeah." Laying his fork across the plate, Brian decided that it was time to do what he came here to do. "Now that you have a full tummy, do you feel like talking?"

"I'd rather we didn't, but I don't think that I have much of a choice, do I?" Justin sighed, his appetite abruptly leaving him.

"I always admired your intelligence and since you are such a smart boy, you can probably guess why I'm here," Brian said, gesturing to the waitress for more coffee.

"My tuition to PIFA?"

"That's secondary really. What I really want to know is why you felt the need to leave without at least telling me," Brian replied, amused by the redness that crept along the pale skin.

Sticking to his policy of complete honesty, Justin started to play with the eggs on his plate, not ready to face the accusation contained in the hazel eyes. "I didn't want you to know and I didn't want you to feel that you (HAD)have to take care of me. Again."

Shaking his head, Brian leaned over. "Try again."

Putting down his fork, Justin replied, "I'm serious Brian. C'mon, you have to admit that it hasn't exactly been great between us."

"So. Just because we are a bit cold to each other-" the older man began before he was interrupted by harsh laughter coming from Justin.

"A bit? Excuse me if I disagree with you."

Conceding that point, Brian snapped, "Fine. We might not be close like we were, but that still doesn't explain why you left without saying goodbye."

Feeling the bitterness leave as quickly as it had come, the blonde groaned. "And I'll tell you once again that I thought you wouldn't care one way or the other if I left or not. Truthfully, I thought that you would be happy that I was gone." And looking into the blue eyes that had haunted him far longer than he cared to admit, Brian realized that Justin truly felt this way.

"Well, you assume too much," he said softly, catching the surprise in the blonde's face. No longer in the mood to sit outside in the morning chill, he asked, "Are you finished?"

Taking one last look at the empty plate, the nervous blonde knew that couldn't put this off any longer. "I guess it's time to talk then."

"Let's catch a cab back to my hotel." Seeing the hesitant look on his companion's face he offered instead, "Or if you're not comfortable with that, you pick the place."

Taking a calming breath, Justin looked Brian straight in the eye, letting the other man know that he wasn't going to run anymore. "No, your hotel is fine."

~~~~~

On a clear day
I'll fly home to you
I'm bending time getting back to you
Old moon fades into the new
Soon I know I'll be back with you
I'm nearly with you
I'm nearly with you

When I'm weak I draw strength from you
And when you're lost I know how to change your mood
And when I'm down you breathe life over me
Even though we're miles apart we are each other's destiny

~~~~~

Twenty minutes later, the cab pulled up in front of the LC Sheraton Park Tower, dropping off two passengers looking as if they were about to walk through the Valley of Death, which could be an accurate description for the possible aftermath of their long overdue 'chat'.

Trying to keep up with the swift gait of the taller man, Justin wondered if this was such a great idea after all. Walking through the lobby, he began to muse about another luxurious hotel, in another huge city, and with a small amount of hope, wondered if there would be a repeat of that time long ago.

It was a quiet but swift elevator ride to the twenty-first floor, and two minutes later, Justin found himself in a well-appointed suite that made his room look like a glorified cardboard box.

"I should have known that you would be staying here," Justin remarked, looking out the window towards London's fashion district, which was nearby.

"Nothing but the best." Turning from the mini-bar where he was pouring himself a neat whiskey, Brian asked casually, "You want anything?"

Shaking his head, Justin sat down on the small couch, watching as Brian threw back a shot and started pouring himself another.

"Are you nervous?"

Looking over his shoulder, Brian replied, "Why would you think that?"

Justin just pointed to the refilled shot glass in his hand.

Smirking, he said, "Justin, you should know better than that."

Smile fading, he answered, "I think that could apply to a lot of things that I've done over the past two years."

Taking this as his opening, Brian walked over to the easy chair across from Justin and sat down. "So what happened? And I want a straight answer this time." Looking into eyes that he'd dreamed and fantasized about for so long, Justin felt stripped and knew that he couldn't keep lying to Brian...or himself.

"I was losing it. Not just with you, but everything. It seemed that everything I did or said was wrong."

"Why didn't you talk to someone?" Brian asked.

"Like who? You have to admit that after what happened between us, I was persona non grata for a while."

"Explain."

"After the party, people picked sides. I'm not saying that it was done consciously, but that is what happened. Besides, I thought it was best that I distance myself from everyone for awhile."

"And?"

Looking out the window at the sun setting over the tall spires of the Tower of London, Justin said softly, "There is nothing else to say."

"Wrong."

Snapping out of his trance, Justin turned to see livid eyes trained on him. Wondering what could have set Brian off, all he could think to say was, "Huh?"

"Fine. I guess it's my turn, but if you interrupt me once, I will tie you to the chair and gag you. Understand?"

With Brian's anger igniting his own, Justin snapped, "What gives?"

"That is the question that I've been asking myself lately. What gives with the shit that is still between us?"

"Brian-", but that was all he could get out before the dark haired man pulled him up in a fireman's lift and began to carry out the threat he made a moment ago. Fifteen minutes later, Justin found himself gagged and tied to a straight back chair, glowering at the grinning man admiring his handiwork.

Ruffling blonde hair, Brian asked, "Comfortable?" Getting a glare in return, Brian just nodded. "Now, I am going to tell you exactly what I think."

Pulling up a chair to be close to the irate man, Brian began. "Justin, you know about my childhood and you have some idea about how infinitely fucked it was...all due to the people who claimed they loved me. Sure I was the mistake they wished they would never have made, but during all the yelling, beating, and habitual neglect, Jack and Joan claimed that I should be grateful for the 'love' that they were giving me."

Pulling back the face that turned away from him, he wanted his former lover to listen and understand what he was trying to say.

"Justin, I don't know when I will ever be able to say those three words to you, because I would never want to turn into the liars that I had to grow up with, so for now I'll let you know in other ways. And I'll start by telling you all the things I've missed since you left."

Glad to see Justin paying attention to what he wanted to say, Brian let loose of the words he'd held in for over a year.

"I miss you greeting me at the door after I've had a shit day at the office, I miss how I could come up behind you and wrap you in my arms while you would cook dinner, I miss how we would just sit in front of the television and just zone out, I miss arguing over trivia that no one in their right mind would give a shit about..."

Seeing a small twinkle come into the gorgeous blues, he continued, "I miss how you look at me with that shine in your eyes, I miss seeing that blinding smile when you wanted the world to know that you were happy, I miss you bugging me to stay still as you tried to sketch me for the millionth time."

Getting closer so that their faces were mere inches apart, "I miss seeing your mouth swollen after I've mapped every inch of your mouth with mine. I miss tugging on your nipple ring as I made my way down your body. I miss hearing the moan you would give when I would swallow you whole. I miss seeing how the blue light would make you glow when we fucked, the sweat from both of us making you become even brighter."

"I miss losing myself in that tight little ass of yours, hearing you say my name over and over, I miss your hands stroking my back. I miss the little gasps and growls you would make, letting me know that you were close. I miss looking into those passion-dazed blue eyes as you came, your ass clamping down to make sure that I went along with you. I miss how you would let me rest my weight on you and hold me tight, not letting me pull out until my dick grew soft."

Wiping the tears that trailed down the pale face, Brian whispered, "And I miss holding you throughout the night, knowing that even someone as fucked up as me had someone that cared about him."

New tears followed the barely dried tracks down Justin's face, while Brian removed the improvised gag from trembling lips. Smiling slightly, he reached around the back of the chair to undo the complicated knots in the silk tie he used he'd placed on the other's wrists. As soon as Justin's arms were free, they immediately wound around Brian, his head tucked firmly between neck and shoulder.

Feeling strangely peaceful after revealing a part of himself he'd hid from Justin for so long, Brian looked down at the blonde head underneath his chin, thinking about the irony of his usual chatterbox being speechless after his 'declaration'.

"Did you hear what I just said, cause if you think that I'm gonna repeat it-"

"Brian?"

"What?"

"What happens now?"

Having been so focused on confronting Justin, Brian surprisingly hadn't thought much beyond that. "I don't know, Justin."

Trying another approach, Justin turned to face the pensive man beside him. "What do you want?"

"Immediately or eventually?"

"Both."

"Fuck you within an inch of your life and bring you back home to the family that misses you."

"Ok."

Raising a apprehensive eyebrow, Brian prompted, "Ok, what?"

Leaning in closer, Justin kissed the full red lips that were so close to his own. "It will be ok." And hearing and seeing the steady love reflected back at him, Brian accepted for the first time that there were some things that he couldn't control.

And loving the person in his arms was one of them.

~~~~~

When I'm weak I draw strength from you
And when you're lost I know how to change your mood
And when I'm down you breathe life over me
Even though we're miles apart we are each other's destiny

~~~~~

END



Timeline: Takes a drastic turn after Ep. 110. Set a few years in the future.

New York City

Within a studio apartment in Chelsea, a young man was wondering if it was possible to strangle someone through a telephone, because the person on the other end was about to become his first victim.

Inhaling another lungful of nicotine, he asked casually, "And I have to do this why?"

"Because I'm your friend and you love me."

Pacing back and forth across cold hardwood floors, Justin shook his head. "Not good enough."

"Because you are the most beautiful man that God has ever created to exist on the planet."

Smirking, he replied, "Tell me something I haven't heard already."

"Because if you do this, you'll be making one queer, who happens to be one of my close friends, very happy during his last hours of being a bachelor."

"You mean to tell me this is for a guy who is having a commitment ceremony the next day?"

"Mmm Hmm. His partner is having one too, and since they are very good friends of mine, I wanted to give them the best."

"You mean to tell me they're having a bachelor party together?" Putting out the cancer stick, he tried not to laugh at the ridiculous idea. "Doesn't that kind of defeat the purpose?"

"Of course not asshole! I've already called Patrick for Andrew, and now I'm calling you for Jay. Please please please please please-"

Trying to find another way out, Justin resorted to what always worked in the past with his boss. "I don't know Phil. I really need to get some work done for my classes..."

"Fine, Justin. I understand. I guess you just don't care about the bonus that you were going to get."

His ears perked up at one specific detail.

"Bonus?"

"Yes, bonus. Probably enough for you to take those classes you said needed to graduate next semester, instead of waiting for fall, like you had planned." With a deep sigh, she continued sadly, "Don't worry, I'll try to find someone else."

Hating the way she had effectively pushed his buttons, he mumbled, "I hate you."

Giggling coming down the line, Phil cooed, "Love you, Justin. I'll drop by your place tomorrow afternoon and help you."

Resisting the urge to reach for another cigarette, Justin stressed, "It better be more than a leather thong this time."

"Believe me, it is."

"Whatever." Switching to professional mode, he asked, "Client's name?"

"Jared Hawthorne."

"Where?"

"Trump Towers, Room 9734."

"What time?"

"I told him to expect you around ten-thirty."

Grabbing a nearby notepad, he began to jot down the information given to him. "Is there anything else that I need to know?"

"No. Just do what you do best and that should be it."

"Alright. See you tomorrow, Phil."

"Thanks for doing this for me. I really appreciate it. Bye babe."

Hanging up the phone, Justin plopped down on the small couch and tried to ignore the homework that was waiting for him, instead thinking of the routine that would give him the means to finally get his graphic arts degree.

Meanwhile in Times Square, two colleagues sat in a dimly lit lounge, trying to unwind from a day of constant demands from the picky assholes they called clients. They had been there for almost two hours, making small talk but mostly discussing the upcoming nuptials that were going to take place in two days.

"So, when are you taking the plunge, Kinney?" The ebony-haired man asked his brooding companion, gesturing to the bartender for another round.

Looking up from the refilled glass of Beam in his hand, Brian came face to face with his old friend and temporary co-worker, Jared Hawthorne. "I guess that will be the day I decide I like pussy, and knowing that isn't going to happen in this lifetime, I pretty much have to tell you that it won't happen."

Taking a sip of the brandy that was placed in front of him, Jared, or Jay to his friends, gave him a slightly tipsy smile. "Still haven't found the one, huh?"

Ignoring a fleeting memory, Brian rolled his eyes. "Haven't really looked, nor do I care to." Not wanting to explain his reasons for it, he flipped the tables. "Now can I ask you a question? Why are you even going through this shit?"

With a faraway look on his face, no doubt thinking about his 'beloved' partner, Jared gave him a goofy smile. "Because I love him, and he is the one that I want to spend the rest of my life with."

"Well, can't say that I envy you, but to each their own."

"Did you get my message about the bachelor party tomorrow?"

Not hiding the grin that came to at the bizarre idea, Brian snorted, "I thought that was a joke!"

"It's real enough, and to top things off, my friend Phil said she had a surprise guest for me."

Not sure if he heard right, Brian prodded, "Phil is a she?"

"Short for Philadelphia," and seeing the confusion on Brian's face, Jared shook his head. "And you don't want to know why."

Smirking, the other man asked, "So, what did she say about tomorrow's entertainment?"

"That he would definitely make my last night as a bachelor something to remember."

"What does Andrew think about this?"

Knowing what Brian was trying to imply, Jared laughed, "Hell, this party was his idea, and I don't think that he minds that much since Phil is giving him a surprise as well."

"Is she a Muncher or something?"

"Nope. Straight as they come. It's just that she loves having a group of gay boys to surround herself with."

"Okay." Taking another sip of the strong whisky, Brian inquired, "When is the big party?"

"Why? I thought you didn't believe in all the 'commitment' bullshit."

"I don't, but I never turn down a chance to have a good time. So where is it?"

"Trump Towers, Room 9734, nine o'clock, and the 'entertainment' starts at ten-thirty." Writing all this information on a napkin, Jared looks up expectantly, "Does this mean I can count on seeing you there?"

"If I have nothing or someone better to do." Swallowing the last bit of amber liquid in the glass, Brian threw enough cash on the counter to cover his and Jared's tab.

"Take it easy, Hawthorne, and tell the little woman I said hello."

"Whatever, Kinney. Don't try to go through the backroom in one night."

"Been there. Done that." With one last wave, he opened the door and stepped out on the busy New York City streets, fingering the thin piece of paper. As he hailed a cab to take him to his hotel, Brian couldn't help but smile thinking that there were some breeder traditions that he didn't find so bad.

Have you ever gotten up in the morning and had the feeling that something was going to happen? You don't know whether it's good or bad. All you know is that it's going to happen...and it's going to be BIG! That is what I've been



feeling ever since my alarm went off, and it's gotten stronger as the hours pass. I'm not even going to count how many times I've picked up the phone to cancel this gig I have tonight, but with the possibility of having my dick served to me on a platter by Phil, I never finish dialing the number. And it also feels as if I'm being compelled to go to this thing...that what I've been waiting to happen will happen in that hotel room. If there is one thing that I have learned since living here is to trust my instincts.

I just wish they gave me a little more information so I can be prepared for what (or may not) come.

Then again, I could finally be cracking up.

I'm surprised I lasted this long.

J.

Trump Towers  
Room 9734  
10:37 p.m.

Listening as the sounds of the party become louder and louder, Brian couldn't help but think about what he was walking into.

Knocking loudly, it didn't take but a few seconds for the door to swing open.

"HEY!" the man at the door greeted happily until he saw who was standing in front of him. "Oh, it's just you."

Rolling his eyes, Brian walked past the slightly frowning man and began to look around. "Well, it's nice to see you too, Jared."

"Sorry about that. It seems that Phil is running late and the natives are starting to get a little restless." Looking out into the hallway one more time he shut the door. "Actually, I'm surprised you're here at all."

"I didn't think I would make it, but I figured this might be the first and last time I see a faggot have a bachelor party, so I figured 'What the hell?'"

Taking Brian's coat, he pointed to the far right corner of the spacious suite. "The booze and food is over there. Help yourself."

"Thanks."

After saying hello to a couple of people he knew from the office and clubs, he settled down in one of the plush chairs on the side of the room and relaxed. Swirling the Beam in his glass, Brian looked out the window on the concrete jungle of New York and began to wonder what had happened to Justin.

Even though it had been five years, Brian knew that he would never forget him. Hell, there were things that he did for the kid he had never done for anyone else and in all in a space of a few months.

He let him name his son.

He offered the boy a place to stay and supported him when his fucking ass of a father kicked him out.

He had actually cared the little shit had followed his dreams of being an artist...hell he still has the sketch of the boy's talent.

Hell, he'd fucked him more times than he could count, which was something that was never known to rarely happen...very rarely.

Once in a while, Brian would think about everything he had done, how he had broken long-standing rules just for this beautiful blond boy, but he would just shrug it off and try not to think too deeply about it, not really wanting to examine the reasons he acted around the young man that had breezed in and out of his life.

Then his loft was robbed blind, all the beautiful possessions that he worked so hard for and surrounded himself with, was history, and in feeling violated and helpless, he concentrated his anger on the person who was ultimately responsible.

Sometimes, he could still see watery blue eyes and trembling lips as he ripped the kid a new asshole for not setting his state of the art alarm system.

"Hey, you alright man?"

Snapping out of his trip down memory lane, he looked up into questioning amber eyes.

"Yeah." Then pasting a bored expression on his face, he continued, "I'm just wondering when this party is actually going to start."

Rolling his eyes at the man's typical behavior, he said, "Just wanted to let you know that Phil is here, so if you want a good view, you might want to move up."

"Thanks for the tip," Brian smirked, watching the other man walk away. Seeing the other men began to move, the ad exec decided to stay right where he was.

Walking to the center of the room, a wildly dressed woman, who Brian deduced was the infamous 'Phil' clapped her hands to get everyone's attention. "Good evening gentlemen." Noticing the puzzled look on most of the faces in front of her, she laughed, "I'm not tonight's entertainment, no matter how many of you secretly want to see snatch! I'm here in the role of best man...woman...whatever," A couple of snickers were heard throughout the room. "Anyway, I have known Jared ever since I moved to this town and that I wish him all the happiness in the world with Andrew. Now with that sappy shit out the way, it is also my duty to give Jay this last chance to act like a total slut before he tries to become the perfect 'husband'." Walking over to the blushing man on the couch, she pulled him up and then made him sit in the chair that was suitably placed in the center of the room. "So, now I will give Jay a night that he will never forget, but all of you will have fun celebrating with him as well."

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As he looked into the wall length mirror in the bathroom, Justin tousled his hair a bit and adjusted the tight flight suit. He grinned thinking that Phil kept her promise about the costume. It seems the groom to be had a thing for Val Kilmer in 'Top Gun', so she told him said this would be the perfect time to make one of Jared's fantasies come true. Putting on the crew hat and aviator glasses that he hoped to convince Phil to keep for himself, he made his way to where the fun was. After standing still for the last five minutes, he heard his cue, and taking a deep breath, put his game face on.

It's Showtime.

Rounding the corner, Justin blocks out the rest of the crowd, keeping his eyes focused on the keyed up man sitting in the center of the room. Getting closer, he can't help but think that at least the guy wasn't a troll. In his line of work, that makes it a bit easier. Catching the thumping bass line, he stood in directly in front of the guest of honor and began his patter.

"Jared Hawthorne, it has come to my attention that you have accepted the mission of getting hitched tomorrow. Is that correct?"

Smirking at the way the other man's mouth was wide open, Justin walked a little closer and closed it for him.

"Well, before you do, my commander has informed me that you need additional training and I have been selected to give it to you. Do you accept?"

With a wide smile on his handsome features, the young account manager replies firmly, "Bring it on."

Letting the rhythm move him, Justin began to let his hands trail over his body, his movement exaggerated for the benefit of those that didn't have front row seating. As he was dancing, the airman took a casual glance around the room, taking pleasure in the heated looks that were being thrown in his direction from the men in the room...all except one.

But Justin could care less. He had to concentrate on the client who seemed to be enjoying himself immensely. Soon enough the chanting started, letting Justin know his skill was being appreciated.

"TAKE IT OFF! TAKE IT OFF! TAKE IT OFF!"

With an encouraging smile, the dancer walked closer to Jared, offering the zipper of the flight suit. "It seems that your friends want me to step it up a notch. Are you ready?" Without hesitation, Jared clamped the zipper between his lips and with a few tugs pulled the suit apart almost to the middle of his chest.

Stepping back, Justin pulled the zipper down further stopping at his navel. Now he began to really get in the act, smoothing his hands over his fairly defined chest and abs, courtesy of the gym Phil dragged him to three times a week.

"Phil sure wasn't lying about you. You're amazing!"

"Thank you and congratulations."

"Hold on, what's your name?"

Responding as he had for the past five years, Justin said, "Aaron."

"Well, I know that Phil promised you a little extra, but I want to know would you mind making a bit more?"

His eyes turning into frost, Justin replied coldly, "I'm sorry if my employer lead you to believe that I offers other 'services', but I'm sure I could refer you to someone."

Eyes widening at the assumption the blond made, Jay said in the same tone, "Look Aaron, I don't, never have, and won't ever pay someone for something that I can get for free." Pointing to the far side of the room, he said, "I want you to give a private dance to the lump sitting over there by his lonesome. I think he needs a pick me up."

Feeling a little foolish, Justin gave his client an apologetic look. "Sorry."

"No harm, no foul." Placing the wad of bills in Justin's hand, Jay pressed, "Will you help me out?"

Giving the sitting man his money back, Justin smiled, "It's on the house."

Making his way over to the jaded man sitting off to the side, Justin tried to shake that feeling of déjà vu that he felt and tried to add on to the bonus he would get tonight. Besides, he loved a challenge.

With the hoots and hollers bolstering his ego, the entertainment walked up to the expensively dressed man and whispered in his ear, "You don't like the show?" Giving the earlobe a lick, he "How about I show you something that might be a little better than what's outside the window?"

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As he watched the dancer move and sway in front of his drooling friend, Brian felt that familiar jolt shoot right down to his dick, taking an appreciative glance at the tight ass incased in the cheesy flight suit. He had to admit, that had to be the most perfect bubble-butt he'd since...

A long time.

Not wanting to think about that specific topic again, he turned his attention back to the lit up New York skyline, wondering how much time he had before the free booze ran out.

And that is when he feels someone lean over, his hot breath washing over his ear.

"You didn't like the show?" A tongue flicks out, leaving a trail of wetness behind. "How about I show you something that might be a little better than what's outside the window?"

A second later, his lap is full of blond boy, his hands gripping the perfect ass...molding them as if they were familiar somehow.

Damn, he even fits like that kid...

Leaning back in the seat, Brian figured that he might as well enjoy the personal attention that he was getting. Trying to keep a straight head, which was becoming increasingly difficult considering the constant rubbing against his already straining cock. Pulling out of the lust-filled daze he placed his hands on the swaying hips, stilling them for a moment.

Hoping to catch him off guard, Brian leaned forward and returned the favor he received earlier. "Well if it isn't Little Boy Lost."

Hearing the man's husky voice brought back hazy memories of blue lights and silk sheets, throwing Justin back in time to a place that he had run away from years ago. A man that he has tried to forget ever since that night five years ago. Deciding to ignore the little comment, Justin tried to get the hauntingly familiar man back to the matter at hand. Not caring if he was being irrational, Brian grabbed the glasses off and looked into shocked blue eyes and right then knew his suspicions were correct.

"Justin."

Not ready to face what his racing heart was telling him, Justin played the dumb blond card.

"Do I know you?"

Firming his grip on the slim hips, Brian just shook his head. "Justin, you can stop the games now. I let you max out my Visa and didn't send the cops after your ass, so you should know that I'm not going to hurt you."

Knowing that he was caught, Justin could only utter one word. "Fuck."

"Don't mind if we do, but I think that we need to talk first, don't you?"

And figuring that he wasn't going to be able to get up, he reluctantly nodded and said, "I'll be done in about forty-five minutes. Is that okay?"

"No problem," and then he released the younger man from his grip, but before Justin could walk back to the front, Brian snagged his wrist. "Don't get lost again."

Knowing the underlying threat for what it was, Justin quipped, "I don't think that will happen anytime soon."

"Meet you down in the lobby in forty-five minutes." In other words, if he didn't show up, his ass was Brian's.

And not in a good way.

Walking back to the front of the room, Justin tried to ignore the burning sensation that he felt on his wrist, knowing that he was going to feel more than that after the 'talk' that he had coming to him.

Much more.

There are times in life that I've felt everything would be perfect if I could reverse time and go back into the womb. Think about it, you got a comfortable waterbed, all the food you can eat, and your demands met when you want them.

Last night definitely qualified as one of those times.

I knew yesterday that something big was going to happen, but I never expected something like this...

Actually anything but this. Not to mention the fact that by letting him fuck me made the situation ten times worse.

Now my only problem is what am I gonna do about it?

Maybe I can call in to Montel and ask Sylvia Browne for help.

Later,

J.

Trump Tower  
Lobby  
12:05 a.m.

Stepping slowly out the elevator, Justin scoured the lobby, fervently hoping that the last hour of his life had all been a hoax, but that theory went out the window as a strong hand, gripped his shoulder and turned him around. "I thought I told you not to be late."

Resigning himself to what was going to happen, he shrugged off the not so gentle hold. "Phil had to talk to me for a minute. Are you ready to go?"

"Lead the way, Sunshine," Brian sneered, taking a little pleasure at the wince Justin made at hearing the old nickname.

Once on the street, Brian immediately began to hail a taxi, but Justin feeling his stomach complain about its empty state said, "There's a diner a few blocks from here and I'm starved from all that hard work. Can I get something to eat before we have this 'talk'?"

Waving the waiting taxi on, Brian turned around, knowing what the blond was up to, but deciding to let it slide for now. "I don't care, but let it be known that we are going to have this 'talk', whether you like it or not."

"I know," Justin replied, gratitude filling his voice at being handed this little reprieve.

Within ten minutes, they walked into a deli that Justin was fond of when he was in Manhattan. Finding a booth this time of night wasn't a problem and in no time at all they gave their orders to the barely awake waitress. Once she slouched off, the area became thick with tension and Justin felt the need to cut through it. Tentatively, Justin tried to break the ice. "So, you live here now?"

"Not exactly. I've been here for a few months working on a campaign."

"Still in Pittsburgh?"

"Not all of us can run away on a stranger's dime can, we?" came the sarcastic retort, making Justin feel even lower than he had before.

"Um, about that-"

Stopping the hasty explanation, Brian interrupted, "There is nothing to it. Believe me, if I cared, I would have set the cops on your ass a long time ago. Lucky for you that I have a high paying job that allows twinks to travel in the lap of luxury, " he replied, surprising Justin when he began to laugh.

"What's so funny?"

"It seems that Mystic Marilyn was right, after all."

Vaguely remembering the cross-dressing fortuneteller from Woody's, Justin was curious. "About?"

"One of my friends asked if she could tell us what would happen to you, and she said that you would become a famous go-go boy in Chelsea." Seeing the amazement of the performer's face, Brian couldn't help but add, "Although I can tell that you have expanded your territory quite a bit."

Nearly choking on his water, Justin hurriedly put the glass down. "I guess so. How is everyone?"

Watching for any reaction, Brian replied, "More or less the same."

"That's good to know."

Picking up on the disappointment radiating from the blond, Brian went for the jugular. "What's the matter? You thought I would tell you how everyone was bemoaning the fact their 'Poor Little Sunshine' was all alone in the big city with no one to look after him?"

Not wanting to show the extreme hurt he felt from the verbal attack, Justin replied evenly, "Not at all. I'm just glad that everyone is doing well. I know that you won't believe me, but I do think about everyone from time to time, and you just proved that I was right."

"I wouldn't go that far. Did you even think to pick up a phone?"

Wishing that the waitress would hurry up with their order, he squirmed in his seat, feeling like that dumb seventeen-year old all over again. "I didn't want to intrude on your lives as much as I had already."

"I think we both know that it was a little late for that." Taking a sip of the expensive coffee in front of him, he asked the question that had bugged him over the years. "Why didn't you come back?"

With a bitter laugh, he replied, "To what? I had nothing left there to go back for. My father didn't want me. I was just making my best friend's life a living hell because she had to stick up for me every day."

Cutting the angst parade short, Brian cut in, "Did you forget about the woman that brought you into this world or the little sister that looked up to you? For fuck's sake, do you know she even showed up at my door, screaming and crying about how I ran her 'poor baby' out of Pittsburgh and how I had to get him back." Getting himself under control, he lowered his voice, the biting tone still clearly present. "Hell, do you even know where she lives?"

Not appreciating the uncaring shit role that he'd been put, Justin replied with a bit of smugness. "She moved to Bridgeport, Connecticut after divorcing my dad. That's where my grandparents live."

Bristling at this knowledge, Brian resisted the urge to grind his teeth. "So, you have talked to your mother. I wish you could have done that before she terrorized me."

"I'm sorry about that. It was just that I needed to be settled before I confronted her. I would have thought that she would have told you that I was okay."

"Well, I guess she figured since it was my fault in the first place, that I had no right to that information. Your mother has a healthy passive-aggressive streak." Moving on to other matters, he asked briskly, "Why did you stop using the credit card?"

Swallowing the large bite of cheeseburger, Justin shrugged, "Because I didn't want to be found anymore and I didn't want to owe you anymore than I had too."

"Like you've made any plans to pay me back? Excuse me if I don't believe that."

"I did. But with school and everything, I would have to wait until I got a real job."

"So, how does it feel to be an over-glorified go-go boy? I guess it pays pretty well since you haven't been living on the streets or have been in any other dire circumstances Deb pictured you in over the years."

"Are you going to keep bringing that up?"

"Yes, I am until you realize what the fuck you did." Looking through narrowed eyes, Brian wanted the next words to hit home. "You hurt a lot of people, Sunshine."

"Even you?"

Leaning back against the red vinyl booth, Brian shrugged. "Does it matter?"

And knowing the answer for what it was, Justin replied in the same manner. "No, it doesn't." With another memory flitting through his mind, Justin asked, "How's Gus?"

Dissonance quickly filled the brunet's frame, letting Justin know that he had crossed the line. With a voice as cold as Antarctica, Brian said calmly, "My son is no business of yours."

"Fine."

After that the conversation between the two men dwindled to silence, each finishing the last of their late night meal. Noticing that Justin was done, Brian pulled out his wallet, deposited enough bills to cover the check and tip. Seeing Brian's action, Justin slid out the booth and walked out the diner with Brian following close behind.

"Well, you've stalled long enough. I think it is time to show me where you've been hiding all these years."

And seeing the determination in the older man, Justin knew that he had run out of time. "There really isn't that much to show."

"Let me be the judge of that."

Twenty minutes later, Justin opened the door to the place he called home for almost three and a half years. Walking through the semi-darkness of the room, he turned on a small lamp, giving the ad-exec a better view of the artist's apartment.

"Shit. You weren't kidding."

"Well, it's not as big as I'm sure you're used to but it is just fine for a struggling artist like me."

Taking a cursory look around the small place, Brian just nodded. "I can see." Noticing the various textbooks on the crowded desk in the corner, Brian turned to face the young man that still held some of the innocent teenager that he remembered. "Tell me, how's college life?"



With a tired groan, Justin sat down and began to relax into the well-worn cushions. "Thankfully almost over. After the gig I did tonight, I don't have to wait till next semester to graduate because I have funds to add the credits that I need in order to walk in May and get my degree over the summer."

"How did you finish high school?"

"That is where Phil comes in. She saw me one day as I was pounding the pavement for a job. She saw me from a restaurant where she was waiting for a friend. Anyway, she flagged me down, introduced herself, and offered me a job."

"What happened when you told her the truth about how old you are?"

"She just asked me when I was turning eighteen. From that point on, I was her little brother. She showed me the ropes of New York survival. Actually it was Phil that convinced me to call my mom."

"What exactly does the woman do? And is Phil really her real name?"

Smirking at this, Justin replied, "Ms. Philadelphia Kendall runs one of the most exclusive erotic dance services in New York. As for the other thing, you're going to have to ask her."

"The gay boy Heidi Fleiss, huh?"

Justin tensed, pissed at being compared to a prostitute almost twice in one night. "You have to go off the clock to do the horizontal tango. Phil is strict about that type of shit."

"What about you?"

Becoming more irritated, Justin snapped, "What about me?"

"Didn't your mother ever teach you that it is impolite to answer a question with a question?"

"Sure did, but you kind of lose it when you've lived in this city for a couple of years." Wanting an end to the conversation, Justin got up. "Do you mind if I get something to drink?"

"By all means." And Brian watched as the young man walked over to small refrigerator in the kitchenette and reached in for a bottle of water. Opening it, he watched as Justin took a long gulp, leaving the bottle about half empty once he was done...all the while oblivious to the watchful eye of the brunet sitting a few feet away. However, that was going to change quickly.

Not thinking about on his reasons for doing this, Brian got up and strode over to Justin, no longer in the mood to talk.

"Brian?"

Leaning down, he placed a kiss Justin's collarbone, the natural smell of the blond's body making his pants increasingly uncomfortable. "I'm going to fuck you now."

Feeling his body's reaction to the whispered words, Justin took a shaky step back. "What the fuck are you-" but his rant was interrupted by two lush lips pressed against his, clouding his mind in that almost forgotten sensations of desire and lust.

And recognizing the state that Justin was currently in, Brian went in for the kill. "You were saying?"

Shutting out the internal voice that he was about to royally fuck up, Justin pointed to a closed door off to the side of the main room. "Bed is in there."

"Good thing to know." And those were the last words spoken between the two men, their hands, mouths and cocks taking over the conversation. Neither one knew what happened to their clothes, but were thankful when they were finally discarded, skin rubbing against delicious skin. Brian couldn't help but give the blond a predatory smile, letting him know that he was in for the roughest fuck of his life.

And Justin didn't mind one bit, the only thought in his head of how he hadn't felt this good...since he left.

Reaching for the leaking cock already covered in pre-cum, Brian leaned in close, his voice husky with the riotous feelings rippling through him. "Come for me. I know you want to and I know that I can make you." But still Justin held off, wanting to show the older man that he took direction from no one...that he was much more than that scared little virgin that he'd picked up underneath a street light...and who ran all those years ago.

"No."

Seeing the challenging flash in the bright blues, Brian decided to change strategy.

Pushing the slender man on the bed, he roughly rolled him over, not wasting anytime covering him with his larger form. For one ephemeral moment, a light from outside washed over the room, bathing the bed in an eerily similar blue glow...almost as similar as the sight of pale and tanned skin intertwined.

Grabbing his pants that were near the bed, Brian dug in his pockets until his fingers found what they were looking for. Placing the small tube of lube and foil packet on the night table, Brian laid siege to the body that had made his hormones race at the slightest provocation.

Kissing down the slim torso, Brian sucked and nibbled on Justin's nipples, giving each individual attention until they stood up. Following the natural grace of Justin's body, he allowed his lips to trace the firm muscles of his abdomen, his tongue leaving a cool trail as it went lower and lower. After he had lapped up all the pre-cum that escaped from his earlier attentions, Brian concluded that it was time to step it up a notch.

Slicking a finger, he drove it home into the ring like muscle that had been quivering since Brian started his sexual offensive, loving the moans that were coming from the cherry lips he plundered earlier. Adding two more fingers, he quickly stretched out the tight hole, his dick jumping at the thought of where it would be in just a few seconds.

Locking his eyes with Justin's, Brian ripped the foil packet, rolled the condom on, and slowly lifted the dancer's legs over his shoulders. Attacking the swollen mouth again, Brian slid into the tight ass that had tempted him all night, his enjoyment increasing when Justin matched him thrust for thrust, holding nothing back, the past and the present beginning to swirl together as they pushed and pulled each other to the brink.

Just as he had aimed for, Justin went over first, shot after shot of cum landing on heaving chests. Proving his dominance, Brian now concentrated on getting off, pummeling the snug ass that surprisingly fit his dick like a glove. After about two forceful thrusts, Brian felt the blond clinch around him, sending him over the edge as well.

Afterwards, both men just laid there, one on top of the other, not wanting to break the orgasmic bubble they seemed to be enclosed in. However the sticky body fluids between them and the coolness of the apartment began to seep in, making moving a necessity. Working on instinct, Brian rolled off Justin and pulled the younger man towards him, both exhausted from the physical and emotional wringer they'd gone through.

The next morning found Justin staring out of the large window of his apartment, sketchbook sitting forgotten in his lap. When he had woken up beside Brian earlier, for a split second he felt that he was back home...in Pittsburgh. Then awareness began to filter in, and not knowing what else to do, he climbed out of the nest of pillows and blankets, grabbing his sketchbook and pencil, before walking to the living room, hoping that the sunrise and drawing could somehow calm him. Only problem was his brain not being able to think past the events of last night...and the price that he would have to pay.

"Justin."

Turning from the relaxing sight before him, Justin turned to look at the beautifully rumped looking man. "Good morning."

Snatching up the leather jacket that had been flung on the couch, Brian shrugged it on. "I'll be going now. It might be a good idea to call Deb. Even though it's been a few years, she thinks about you now and then. She has enough to worry about without her wondering whatever happened to her 'Poor Sunshine.'

Smiling a little at the thought of the boisterous waitress, Justin said, "If she allows me to get a word in first." Knowing that there were things that still needed to be said, Justin spoke up first. "Brian?"

"What?"

"I know that this is a little late in coming, but I do appreciate what you did for me," and seeing the amusement in the hazel eyes, Justin decided to clarify, "you know...letting me use the card and all."

"Good, cause I'm calling your debt in."

Standing, Justin squared his shoulders. "I told you that I would pay you back as soon as I could get a full-time job after school. I'm sure a successful executive like you has a lawyer. Get some papers drawn up and I'll sign them so everything can be fair and square."

"You seem to think that I want to be paid back in currency. I told you before, if that is all I wanted I would have taken care of it years ago." Coming a little closer, he pinned the blond with an icy glare. "Oh no, I have much more than that in store for you."

Growing more nervous with each passing second, Justin was determined to keep a cool façade in front of the older man. "What are you talking about?"

Leaning even closer, Brian bent his head down, his lips an inch away from the mouth that gave him so much pleasure the night before. "Later, Sunshine."

"Wait!" but by the time Justin reached the open door, his former lover was gone, his footsteps retreating quickly down the steps and leaving him with feelings that he had tried so hard to get rid of.

It's been almost two weeks since that damn party and the memory of what happened that night still hasn't given me a moment's peace. It's becoming really irritating when all I can seem to draw is his face. When I called Daphne and told her what happened, she just laughed at me and said that karma can be a real bitch when it wants to be. You'd think for a psychology major graduating summa cum laude, she would have something more profound to say.

Now the only thing that I'm worried about is these damn feelings that seemed to pop up out of nowhere. Wait, that's a lie. What I mean to say is why do they have to come back? Shit, I am such an easy slut. One fuck from a person that I haven't seen in five years and I know for a fact that if he was to come over here right now and ask me if I wanted to fuck, I would happily spread my legs. Phil would say that it's because he's one hot bitch stud (which is absolutely true), but I know better. There is this certain magnetism that he has, making me feel like that stupid ass moth going steadily into the flame. And with the payback that I have coming to me, I feel that flame getting closer and closer.

If it's this bad after only spending a few months with him, I don't even want to think of what could have happened if I had actually stayed in Pittsburgh. Probably follow him around like some stupid little puppy.

Thank the world for small favors.

Well, I guess it's time to put that to the side and get ready for this show Phil is putting on. She came up with the idea of having a strip show/slave auction for charity and asked if I could be in it as a favor. You'd think after the last favor I did for her, I'd learn my lesson, but I guess I'm just a glutton for punishment. I really don't have a problem participating, seeing how the funds go to AIDS Hospices and teen shelters, so at least if something does happen, some good will come out of it.

Later

J.

\*\*\*\*\*

Café Sol  
3:45 p.m.

"You do know that you are fucked in the head?" came the astute statement from the chain-smoking woman sitting across from me.

"Can you tell me something that I don't know already? That is the reason that you're here."

Clucking her tongue, she wags a finger in Justin's face. "Hey watch the attitude. Besides, I don't think that there is really anything that you can do except wait and see what happens."

Rolling his eyes at her mother hen routine, he said, "I've been trying, but it doesn't seem to be working."

"Why?"

"From the little that I remember and what happened the next day, I am practically a sitting duck, while he is out planning to do whatever," Which is something that is beginning to make me paranoid.

"Well, I talked to Jared the other day and he told me that he only has about three weeks left here."

Trying to ignore the pang of regret at hearing the news, he said, "And what? Is that supposed to make me feel better?"

"No. Just making an observation." Seeing that the blond was still uneasy, she reached over and grabbed his hand in a comforting hold. "Hey, Jus?"

With a slight smile, he looks up from his plate. "Yeah?"

"Promise me something. "Don't let him destroy everything that you've worked so hard for. I know that he helped in his own twisted way, but you have made your own way too. Don't let him take that away from you."

And seeing the sincerity in the woman's eyes, Justin just squeezed her hand back, letting her know that he heard what she was trying to say. "I promise."

Pleased that another crisis has been averted for the time being, Phil prodded Justin into recounting the time-consuming phone call he made last night. "So, how did the phone call to Mom number 2 go?"

"More or less what I expected. She read me the riot act several times before breaking down in tears and making me feel like a complete shit. After she calmed down, she said that she and Vic are thinking of coming up for a visit."

"Who's Vic?"

"Her brother. Actually, he used to live in the Village until his HIV infection progressed to full-blown AIDS. When I was talking to him, he began telling me some interesting stories about his time here."

"Did you talk to him?"

"A little, but there really wasn't that much to say since I had only met him a few times before I left, but I got the impression that he was pissed with me for putting his sister through so much worry, which I understand." Pushing the salad around on his plate, he sighed, "She says she really would like to see me and to be honest, it felt good hearing her voice again. Made me realize just how much I missed her."

"I think that it might be a good way to apologize for not seeing you for almost five years and it sounds that she really cares about you, Jus."

Shrugging his shoulders, he said slowly, "I guess, but I really don't want to go back to the Pitts. You know it's called that for a reason." And I would know that first hand, the morose man thought, remembering those last few months of his life in the city where he was raised.

Sensing that a change in topic was sorely needed, Phil thought of the perfect distraction. "Have you talked to Daphne lately?" And like clockwork, Justin began giving her a play-by-play rendition of their latest marathon phone call. She had been pleasantly surprised at the deep affection between the two friends, something that she now shared with the blond.

"I got an invitation to her commencement and a follow-up email telling me that my pale ass better be there or she would soon change it for me. The invitation was extended to you, so how about a road trip? I have about two weeks before summer session starts and you've been complaining about how you need a break from the city. Besides, Daph told me that the invitation was extended to you. So, what about it?"

"How about we can take it a step further and swing by Pittsburgh, and on the way back we can stop in Bridgeport to see your mom. That way we see everyone in one fell swoop. That sounds terrific, doesn't it? I'll call my brother Leo and see what he can hook us up with in terms of tickets."

His head whirling from seeing his simple suggestion spinning out of control, Justin tried to pull the brakes on another of Phil's 'terrific' ideas. "Wait a minute-"

Taking one last sip of her margarita, she stood. "Sorry, can't right now since I'm late for a talent meeting. Now don't forget to be at the venue by 8. Jules will have your outfit all ready for you. Bye babes."

Watching the petite woman dart out into the heavy pedestrian traffic of the New York City streets, Justin continued to eat, wishing not for the first time that he could just tell Phil no.

Throwing down enough money to cover his meal, Justin got up and started walking to the nearest subway station, listening to the song that had been on repeat for the last few day on his mp3 player.

~Isn't it ironic...don't you think?~

\*\*\*\*\*

Watson and Halloran Agency  
Brian Kinney's Office  
6:01 p.m

Brian couldn't believe that he was still stuck in the office on a Friday after five. Although he wanted to blame it on the stupidity of his staff, he knew that a major reason could be a certain blond that he'd been unable to forget. Brian wondered off and on why he couldn't have just left things at the semi-reunion fuck they had and leave it in the past. No, he had to open his fucking mouth and promise that he would pay the blond back for the hell he had been put through on the other man's behalf. And Brian Kinney never made empty threats. Now he just had to find a way to deliver.

Wishing a slow painful death for the dumbass that created the horrid copy in front of him, Brian nearly lost it when the phone interrupted his malicious thoughts. Throwing the papers down, he harshly pressed the speaker button.

"Speak."

Soon a familiar voice boomed from the speakers, making the frown on Brian's face deepen. "Brian, you will never guess who had the nerve to call today."

Pinching the bridge of his nose, the tired ad-exec played along, already having a heavy suspicion of the person that his friend was ranting about. "Who?"

"That stupid blond kid that ran away all those years ago! You know, the one that Ma brings up from time to time?"

Seemed that the little shit followed through, he thought wishing he could have been on the line when Deb ripped a new one in the little fucker. "So what?"

"Well, he called her today out of nowhere and then Ma invited him to visit her and Uncle Vic. I mean, what the hell is she thinking?"

"Maybe that she wants to see the boy that she has worried off and on about for the past few years."

"Whatever. Anyway, how are things going in New York? You're coming back in a few weeks right?"

"I'm not sure, Mikey."

"What do mean? You said-"

"Something has come up with the client here and of course when shit hits the fan, I seem to be the only one that can fix things."

Not doing a good job hiding his disappointment, Michael pouted, "Is it really bad?"

"I don't know. The jury is still out on that, but I'm not going anywhere until this shit is taken care of," he said, not thinking of the paperwork on his desk.

"Then how about I come up with Ma and Uncle Vic to visit you? That way, we can catch up and maybe hang out or something."

Now that could have some potential. "Wait a minute. When is Deb coming up here and why?"

A little happier at having caught Brian's interest again, Michael readily explained. "Apparently the little shit invited her and Uncle Vic up for a visit, but there aren't any definite plans yet."

"Right. Hey Mikey, I have a meeting in a few minutes, so I gotta go. I'll call you sometime this week, alright?" he said, not waiting for the other man to respond before hanging up the phone. But not a minute went by when someone knocked on the door.

Deciding that he would have to fix this over the weekend, Brian growled, "Who the fuck is it?"

"You really need to learn to relax," a playful voice said, making Brian take notice of the tanned, fit, and thoroughly fucked face of Jared Hawthorne, fresh from St. Croix and St. Thomas.

"Well if it isn't the happily married queer. Nice to know you're back. Now, what the fuck do you want?"

"Yes, my vacation was great. Fucking, snorkeling, and more fucking. Thanks for asking," the other man said casually, plopping himself into the seat across from Brian.

Feeling his hands itching to strangle the redhead, Brian clenched his fists. "You have ten seconds."

"I just wanted to know if you were up to going to Phil's with me."

"What?"

"Do. You. Want.-"

Hating the fact of looking like an idiot for a second, Brian snapped, "I understood that part, Asshole. Your friend owns a club too?"

"Not really, but she does create shows at different sites from time to time. It seems like she has a hand in almost everything. The reason I asked is because you seemed to enjoy the dancer from my party, and I wouldn't mind seeing him again myself."



Ignoring the small spark of annoyance he felt at hearing that particular comment, he drawled, "Didn't you just get married?"

"Doesn't mean that I can't look, does it? Besides, Andrew is invited too. It's a charity type thing, so it shouldn't be too bad. So, are you in or out?"

Thinking of a night nearly two weeks ago, he thought that he definitely would be again. "Yeah, give me the address and I'll meet you there." Handing Jared a note pad and a pen, he watched the other man scribble the information down and then push the pad back to him.

Giving the address a quick glance, he looked back at the grinning newlywed and asked, "Don't you have anything else to do but sit here and bug me? In case you haven't noticed, I'm busy."

"Oh sorry your Royal Badness." Before Jay stepped out the door, he turned back to his friend, smirk firmly in place. "By the way, you might want to get your dick sucked before you come. Put you in a better mood."

"Thanks for the advice. Now get the fuck out."

Looking at the address scrawled on the paper, Brian couldn't help the evil grin that spread across his face. There was nothing he enjoyed more than giving someone a thorough mind fuck, and the errant blond was long overdue.

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Club Throb-Dressing rooms  
8:05 p.m.

Rushing into the dressing room, Justin said hi to his fellow performers, relief washing over him when he spotted an empty chair. Slumping down, he sat his carryall down on the floor, releasing a sigh at being able to lighten the load that he'd been carrying for most of the day, wishing he could do that for the other problems he had...particularly one of the auburn-haired, hazel-eyed variety.

"Hey man, are you alright?"

Snapping out of his thoughts, Justin met the concerned glance reflected in the mirror in front of him. "Yeah, it's just been that school has been keeping me up nights." Among other things, he silently added, thinking of chestnut hair and gorgeous hazel eyes.

Sitting down in the chair next to Justin, the man said, "Glad I don't have to put up with that shit anymore," the dancer said, outlining his almond shaped eyes with kohl.

"Well we all can't be lucky to be a kept man, Kemi," Justin smirked, alluding to the man's penchant for hooking up with older men...much older. Although the Japanese man could have any man he wanted, he seemed to gravitate to men that had the words 'Sugar Daddy' written on their foreheads. Not as if they minded taking care of him.

Shrugging, Dakemi gave Justin a meticulous glance and smiled, "You could if you wanted one, you know. Besides, don't knock the geriatric set until you've tried it. Viagra works wonders."

"Whatever. So are you still going to Japan to visit your grandmother?" Justin asked, knowing that his friend was finally returning home after almost fifteen years. He had talked of nothing else for the past two months.

"Yeah, I can't wait to see the old hag. She even told me that she lined up some gigs for me and wanted her ten percent cut for her efforts," Dakemi joked, happy that he could make the blond smile a bit.

"Jus! Kemi! I'm so glad you're here!" Both men turned around at the excited shout from their friend and employer.

Smirking, Justin replied, "Well I kinda figured that if I didn't show up I would be on your shit list for the rest of eternity."

"Smart boy." Giving both men peck on the cheek, she flitted away, leaving a string of lipstick smudged cheeks in her wake. Shaking their heads, both dancers grabbed tissues, wiped the red markings from their face and began the transformation that would no doubt raise a lot of funds from a bunch of queer and queer-friendly patrons.

Three hours later, Justin was waiting off stage, watching Dakemi accepting his due for the fantastic performance. Smiling at the sweaty man that ambled off the stage, he adjusted his hat one last time and strutted onto the stage as if it was his. Walking to the pole amidst piercing whistles and loud catcalls, the blond took a deep breath and slipped into his role of a futuristic cowboy, his fingers playing with the silver colored lasso at his hip, never knowing a pair of gleaming hazel eyes tracked his every move.

~~~~~

Don't tell me to stop
Tell the rain not to drop
Tell the wind not to blow
'Cause you said so, mmm

Tell the sun not to shine
Not to get up this time, no, no
Let it fall by the way
But don't leave me where I lay down

~~~~~

Meanwhile, the sight on stage captivated a handsome man who was sitting at a table in the VIP section. As the music began, Brian's mind flashed back to another city, another club and another dance that he would never forget, grimacing when he thought of what happened that night. Shaking the bad feeling off, the Armani-clad man sat back and enjoyed the show, knowing that by the end of the night, he would be getting another private performance...from his own personal slave.

TBC...

# Stand-alone

## The Jump Off

Told from Justin's POV.

"So are you going back in there?"

"I'm not going to let him get away with this. It's time for him to know that I'm not putting up with his shit!" I fumed, still riding the fury from the little dramatic piece that was directed by none other than Brian Kinney.

Pompous Asshole.

"Are you sure that is what you want to do? Do you really want to do this now?"

Still hearing the loud music coming from MY party, I grimaced. "I have to, Ethan. If I don't I'll over think the whole thing, and then I'll lose my nerve. Right now, I need to be angry."

"This is it, huh?" he asked softly, making me feel like an utter shit, but we both knew that this was how things were going to end up. If not now, then later down the line. This is for the best.

With a light kiss and hug, I whispered in his ear, "I'm sorry about this."

Pulling away, he just gives me a smile full of sadness and understanding, making me even more upset at Brian for allowing me to get someone else tangled up in our drama. I realize that is a bit unreasonable, but that's nothing new since that's been pretty much the trend this past year.

"Don't apologize Justin. It's not like I didn't know this would happen. Besides, I'm a big boy," he joked weakly. Clasp my hands in his, he asked gently, "Can we still be friends?"

Not wanting to give his hopes up, I tell him the truth. "In time, but I have to get things cleared up with Brian first."

"I understand," he nodded. Giving me a push towards the entrance, he said, "Good luck in there. Don't let that bastard get away with anything."

Returning the smile, I nod, "Believe me, I won't."

Walking back up the street, I can't believe that tonight turned out the way it did. Of course I'm not stupid enough not to know that there were going to be fallout from what happened between Ethan and I, but I figured that he wouldn't do it tonight. What happened at the loft was bad enough, but I guess he felt that I had to bleed a little more. I might have dealt with all the pain, hurt, insensitivity, and all that other bullshit that Brian has thrown my way, but I refuse, ABSOLUTELY FUCKING REFUSE to be pushed off a 'Kinney' cliff.

He can save that joyride for Michael and anybody else that demands too much of him. Ignoring the stunned look from the bouncer, I stalked back inside to MY party. There was no way I was going to let him get away doing this.

No. Fucking. Way.

And just as I predicted, it wouldn't take long for my 'family' to notice when I walked back in and I also knew that there was no point in trying to avoid their questions, so I stood my ground and waited for the assault to begin.

"Baby, are you okay?" came an anxious voice from my right side. Turning around, I saw Emmett, Ted, Deb, Daphne, Mel, Lindsay and my mom looking at me as if I would fall apart at any moment.

Hell, if I survived a bat to the head, I can survive this.

"I'll be just fine once I talk to Brian," I said grimly, preparing myself for the emotional warfare I was sure to face.

My mom just shook her head in disappointment. Whether it was directed at Brian or me, I don't know nor did I really care right then. "I don't know if that is such a good idea, right now."

"Why don't you sit over-", Debbie began to say before everyone started to throw in his or her advice into what I should do, but I couldn't do that anymore.

Little Justin had to think for himself.

Putting up my hand, I waited until they stopped. Then looking each and every one of them in the eye, I calmly explained, "No. I need to talk to Brian now."

Moving to the main floor, I scan the room, instantly finding Brian dancing with the Rage clone that he had been fucking in the backroom only minutes before. Not taking my eyes off the masked one, I make my way to him only to be stopped by the one obstacle that I didn't want to tackle right now.

Michael.

With a triumphant smirk on his face, he begins his performance. "Way to go Boy Wonder. Nice way to fuck up OUR party," he smirks, loving every moment of his avenging-angel act.

Waving him off like the goddamn pest he is, I spit out, "Look Michael. I don't have time for this. Now excuse me."

Blocking my way again, he yells back, "No! I'm not going to let you hurt him anymore than you already have. You made your choice when you walked out with the fiddler. Leave Brian alone."

Seeing he was going to be the expected whiny asshole about this, I decided it was time Michael to get some of the honesty that he seems to be sharing lately. "You need to listen to your own advice."

Crossing his arms, he shoots back, looking down his nose at me. "I'm not the one that was fucking around."

Giving him a superior look of my own, I allowed the words I've been biting back for some time to burst out. "And I'm not the one that is still lusting after my best friend. So go back to Ben and fuck off."

"NO! Now you listen to me-" he began again, only his little tirade was interrupted by none other than Brian himself.

"Trouble in paradise already?" he sneered, his eyes glazed from whatever substance he snorted up his nose or swallowed down his throat.

Predictable Fuck.

Ignoring Michael's pit-bull routine, I yell back, "We need to talk. NOW!"

"Justin, I know your mother taught you better manners than that. It is impolite for a host to abandon his guests," he chided, waving a finger in my face. "But we both know that I never cared about those." Pulling me close he

whispers in my ear, "Then again, change is good," and he pushes me away from him, turning around to dance with the masses.

Wrong move fucker.

Grabbing his arm, I twirl him around and snatch the mask off, tired of him hiding behind them.

"What the fuck is your problem?!" he snarls, his eyes flashing hot with anger.

Not put off one bit, I jab him in the chest, ignoring the little tingle at the point of contact. "Right now, it's YOU!"

"Well, I could really give a shit about that." Putting his head on my shoulder he whispers softly, making my hairs stand on end. "Look I gave you what you wanted. Now go run along for your boyfriend misses you."

"Liar," I whispered, missing the warmth as he moved his head back to look me face to face.

"That is really the pot calling the kettle black, Sonnyboy. Now, if you don't mind...", he trails off, making the move to go back to his adoring fans.

Shaking myself out of that sexual haze, I grab his wrist to keep him there. "Yes, I fucking mind, Brian! Now let's go!"

And he gives me the standard Brian Kinney answer. "Fuck you!"

"Right now, I'm not sure I'd let you," and ignoring the looks, whispers and protest from other involved parties, I drag a barely resisting Brian out of Babylon, ready to do what I should have done months ago.

Seconds later, we stand across from each other in the narrow alley outside the club, sizing each other up like the sheriff and outlaw in those old Westerns he likes to watch, and there was no surprise as to who fired the first shot.

"So, are we going to talk or stand out here to give a street side performance?"

Feeling the anger well up again, I give him a bitter smile. "I have to admit. You really know how to throw a grand production. Hell, you even had me going for a minute, but you already know that the shit you just tried to pull didn't work, right?"

"So what? You want a fucking cookie or something? As far as I'm concerned, it worked out pretty well."

Not put off by his sarcasm, I asked, "How do you figure?"

"You walked out with him, didn't you?" he taunted, a mix of triumph, resentment, and resignation appearing for one fleeting second before he schooled his face back into its customary unreadable mask. Walking over to where he leaned against the brick wall, I stood directly in front of him, not giving him any space to maneuver. It was now time for him to listen to what I had to say in the only language he could understand. Pulling him towards me, I give everything that I am and will be into a mind-shattering kiss. A kiss that makes your toes curl, stretch, then curl again. A kiss where you find out all the little nooks and crannies of the other's mouth and fall into the bliss of becoming one with them.

A kiss of later, because no matter what was happening between us now, there would always be a later for us. Pulling away, I take one look at the face that I know will haunt my dreams from now on. With one last smile, I walk away, jumping off the cliff all on my own.

END

# The Power of Candles



Post 220: Justin makes an interesting birthday wish

Standing in the middle of the loft, I wonder what is the fastest way to get all my shit and get the hell out. to make sure that I haven't left anything. Lord forbid that I have to come back here.

Back to face...him.

Sure, I was all gung-ho at Babylon, but now I just don't have the courage to face Brian.

Or the heart.

And that was the reason why I was here, straight from the Rage party to get my things, because I know that there is no way that Brian is going to observe our 'curfew'. Why would he?

Every time I close my eyes, all I can see is him fucking that Rage clone, then it fast-forwards to our dramatic standoff.

Felt like I was in a shoot out at high noon.

The only thing that bothered me was I just didn't know who the bad guy was in this.

Brian, for trying to remind me exactly what I was...a convenient trick.

Or myself for having my personal 'fuck you' to Brian on clear display in front of everyone.

Especially our family and friends.

I can do nothing but shake my head at the fucking mess we are in now.

Then again, that's all we were together...a big fucking, yet beautiful, mess.

Well, it's time to start the clean-up process.

Walking over to the stereo unit, I turn it on and press the random button, hoping that some upbeat song would fill the space that I was about to vacate, but with the way my life was going, I should have known better.

~~~~~

I never had a dream
That I could follow through
Only tears left to stand
Round my eyes once again

I don't know who I am
Or what I'm going to do
Been so long I've been hopelessly confused...

~~~~~

Thinking on this past year I come to a realization that is exactly what I had turned into...one confused little crybaby.

Courtesy of Chris Hobbs and his baseball bat.

Stupid fucker almost kills me and gets community service. What type of shit is that? It's a wonder that I even function at all...although there were some things that he took from me.

My trust in others.

Almost took my art.

And more importantly, my fluency in 'Kinneyese'. Maybe if I had that, I wouldn't be packing up my stuff to take to my mom's house, to my old room where I'll cry myself to sleep every night for fucking up the one thing that I've ever wanted.

~~~~~

This can never really end
It's infinitely sad
Can someone tell me when
Something good became so bad

So if you have a cure
Tell me wouldja please send
A picture of my life
With a letter telling how
It should really be instead

~~~~~

And you know what, that is the honest to God truth. Because no matter what has been done or said. I know that it will never be over between us.

At least to me.

Brian was and still is, my everything. I've had so many firsts with this man that no matter where I am or whom I'm with, Brian will always be there like a phantom, overshadowing everything.

I never knew those words he spoke to me that first night would actually become truth and will forever be true.

Damnit.

Going over to the desk held the computer Brian brought me, I picked up the sketchbook beside it and started to thumb through, each image bringing a memory along with it. Finally, my eyes land on the sketch that was done so long ago. It was one of Brian hovering over me, my wrists clasped in his one hand, both of us looking at each other.

Feeling the tears begin to build, I closed the book, not wanting the drawing to be ruined by tears. Lord knows I have enough of those from the past few weeks.

~~~~~

The precipice is there
But will I ever dare
Throw myself in the sky
So at last, I can die

See, I've become a man
Who holds nothing to live
Who am I
If I just disappear?

~~~~~

As I smash another sweatshirt into the duffle bag, I think about the 'life lessons' that Brian taught me.

Like taking no one's bullshit.

Never settling for second best.

Going for what you want.

Or the one he seemed to live by... when you want someone out your life, throw him or her off a fucking cliff.

Which he did with such finesse at the party tonight.

Fuck, I am such a dumbass! I wish I could take this guys advice and just leave everything and everyone behind, not wanting to look back.

Thinking about it some more, I think that is not such a bad idea.

Just to disappear.

But now is not the time to be planning any more escapes. I have to concentrate on this one first.

~~~~~

This can never really end
It's infinitely sad
Can someone tell me when
Something good became so bad

~~~~~

"That is something I would like to know too," I whispered to the silent loft, slinging my backpack over my shoulder, as I took one last look at the place I called home for almost a year.

"Well, when you find out, let me know," came a mocking voice from the doorway, freezing my movements.

Risking whiplash, I whirled around to see the man that I wanted to avoid at all costs.

"Brian!"



Throwing his leather bomber on the couch, he walks over the fridge and pulls out a bottle of water. Opening it, he takes a big gulp and looks at me. "Who were you expecting? I do live here the last time I checked."

Shaking off a pleasant memory of another time he performed the same actions, I begin to explain hastily, "That's not what I meant. I just thought-"

"What? That I would be out getting fucked in numerous ways just because my little blonde stalker finally found another obsession?" he snorted, his face expressionless. "You should know better than that."

"I don't want to do this tonight Brian, so I'll just go." There was no way I was going to stay around Brian when he was in the type of mood. Hell, I would have felt better if he yelled and screamed at me to get the fuck out.

Much safer than the cool civility that he was giving me now which was masking something truly dangerous.

And I was proven right, when two seconds later, Brian had me cornered against him and the cold metal door of the loft. "No! You're not going anywhere until we finish this!"

Trying not to lean in to his body, I snapped hotly, "Finish what Brian?!? Fucking each other over? I think that you made it perfectly clear that you could give a flying fuck about what I do, so let me get my shit and I'll be out of your life for good." Looking into his eyes, I could tell that I'd just wasted my breath.

With his face closer to mine, he said dangerously, "Apparently, your hearing is bad, because I just told you that it's not over," pressing a hard kiss against my lips, he pulled away. "And never will be."

Now to hear that type of declaration come from Brian should have made me the happiest little twink on Earth, but strangely it had the opposite effect. So using that anger I tried to put some space between us.

Putting a hand against his chest, I pushed him a bit further. "What are you talking about?"

"You Justin. You!" he growls, smacking my hand away, pressing his body against mine again as if there was some magnetic force between us, which I have no doubt that there probably is.

Hoping that I didn't choke on the lump in my throat, I asked quietly, "What about me?"

Slamming a hand on the metal door behind us, he gave a frustrated yell, "Everything dammit!"

Now I know that the man in front of me cannot be the Brian Kinney that I know and yes fucking still love.

Since I still haven't said anything, I could tell that he was losing his patience and fast. "What you still don't get it? Fine, let me simplify it for you. I'm talking about me fucking loving you, while you fuck around me behind my back!"

"And I told you that I was fucked for doing that! Now can you please let me go-" I yelled back, now deciding this would be the best time to put up some type of a struggle, although my body wasn't helping matters.

"NO! I'm tired of fucking myself over. Besides, you owe me this!"

Feeling the fight go out of me, I let myself go limp, leaning back on the door. "I already know that Brian. And the promissory note that I have proves that I will pay you back-" I begin to explain in earnest, before I am stopped by him leaning his forehead against mine.

"I'm not talking about money. I'm talking about another chance."

"What did you say?" Right, now I'm hallucinating, because according to Kinney Rule 12, there aren't such things as second chances.

His mouth morphing into that familiar smirk of his, he cocks his head to the side, looking sexy as all hell.

"Another chance, is that a problem?"

~~~~~

So if you have a cure
Tell me wouldja please send
A picture of my life
With a letter telling how
It should really be instead

Oh, tell me how it should be

Yeah, yeah, yeah...tell me

~~~~~

"Justin, look at me," he asked quietly. I could do nothing but let him grasp my chin, his hazel eyes boring into mine.

"Aren't you even going to say anything?"

Taking a deep breath, I finally meet his eyes with my own. "I don't know if that is such a good idea."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't know if there is anything that I could say." Which would definitely be a first for me.

Giving me one of his rare smile, he suggests, "How about, 'Yes Brian. I would like to make this work and have a second chance, please.' "

Meeting him halfway, I reply "Or how about, I love you and I know that I've been a complete and utter asshole for lying and betraying you, but I hope that you can forgive me." Let that be enough. Please let that be enough.

"That can work for now," and with that he picks me up and starts walking in the direction of the bedroom. As he lays me on the bed, he strokes my cheek and I can't help but lean into the touch.

"Justin."

Looking into smoky hazel eyes, I wait for him to say something, anything that will take edge off what is happening between us. I want this night to last a while.

"Justin."

"Yeah?"

"I want you to-" but before he can finish, we hear someone knock on the door. We try to ignore it at first but it just keeps getting louder and louder. Shaking my head, I just close my eyes, and hope that whoever is on the other side will take the hint and go away.

However, when I open my eyes again, I find myself in my own apartment, not the loft of some years ago. Shaking off the last vestiges of the dream, I'm still somewhere between reality and Dreamland, when I hear knocking on my door. Looking at clock on the nightstand, I grab a pair of sweats and pad across the cold hardwood floor. Not bothering to look through the peephole, I open the door to reveal a gorgeous, Armani-clad man with a bouquet of white and red roses.

"Happy Birthday, Justin."

Smiling, I move to the side to let Brian in the door. As soon as the door is closed, I'm pushed up against it, hugging the man that had been in my thoughts just a few moments before. As I'm caught up in the storm of lust that always comes up between us, I can't help but silently thank his son Gus who reminded me to make a wish as I was blowing out my candles on my birthday cake, because it seems that this time...

It came true.

END

# Dreams & Make Believe

Brian takes a trip down memory lane...

"So are you coming?"

I just look at him. He really can't be serious and I ask him so.

"Why wouldn't I be? Besides, you can't tell me that this hasn't affected you any."

And if it has, I'm sure as hell not going to let him know. "Yes I can. Besides, I don't really see the big whoop over all this."

"Brian!"

Turning away from the work in front of me, I growl "What?"

Looking at me for a few minutes, he shakes his head sadly. "Never mind." Grabbing his coat on the way to the door, he shouts, "I might stop and grab something to eat with friends, so don't wait up."

Keeping up appearances, I sigh and turn back to my desk. "Whatever."

Hearing the loft door bang shut, I get up from my desk I get a shot glass, a bottle of Beam and walk into the bedroom. Bending down, I twirl the combination lock of the small safe and pull out an old leather portfolio. Leaning against the side of the bed, I open the binder carefully, not

It was my senior year at Central Catholic and as a requisite for graduation, all senior students had to complete at least forty hours of volunteer work at facility approved by the administration and I didn't complain when I was assigned to work at the public television station down the street from the school.

The next Monday, I showed up at WQED Studios ready to be the best office gopher I could be. I thought that if I played my cards right, I could get some wonderful letters of recommendation out that I could send to colleges...that were far away from the Bastard and The Warden.

Well I was half-right.

After going through a small orientation with the other volunteers, I was dragged to an elaborate set that seemed oddly familiar. As I looked around, my eyes spotted someone that I'd only seen on the ten-inch screen of our television and it was then that I knew I was going to be doing something a little more than fetching coffee and making copies.

Feeling the volunteer coordinator nudge my elbow, I snapped out my struck daze and made my way over to the man that rescued me for at least a half hour in the afternoon since I could remember.

"Hello Marcy, how are you doing today?"

Beaming she replied, "Just fine Fred." Gesturing for me to step up next to her, she said, "Brian I would like to introduce you to Fred Rogers. Fred, this is Brian a new volunteer that will be working on the set with you."

Pointing that famous smile in my direction, he shook my hand, "Nice to meet you Brian. Welcome to the neighborhood."

"Nice to meet you too, sir."

Getting up from the chair, he wrapped a friendly arm around my shoulders and began to give me the grand tour of the Land of Make Believe.

Those afternoons when I had to go down to the station became my guilty pleasure. Although I really didn't enjoy keeping track of hand puppets and other props, I lived for the personal attention that he showed me...more than my parents ever did, and when it came time for volunteer work to be completed, I stayed on for the rest of the year, trying to soak up as much goodness as I could before I had to return to the cold dreary house that my family supposedly lived in.

I can remember clearly my last day on the set. After we finished taping, Marcy brought out this huge cake and placed it right in front of me and just when I was about to ask her what was going on, Mr. Rogers stepped in.

"We know that this is your last day with us and we just wanted to let you know how much we appreciated your hard work. And this is also congratulations on being accepted to Penn State."

"How did you find out?"

Eyes twinkling, he replied. "I have my ways. Now, I think that it's time to open the gifts that we've been hiding for the past week."

"Thank you Mr. Rogers."

Shaking his head he laughed and gave me a small hug. "Call me Fred."

And now I'm holding that moment in my hand.

"What are you doing?"

Looking over and up, I see the irate blonde that had stormed out of the loft a few minutes ago. "What are you doing back so early?"

"I forgot something, but now I'm glad I did," he smiled, sitting down and wrapping his arms around my waist. Getting comfortable, he turned to look at me.

"So, why are you holding a picture with you and Mr. Rogers and don't think that you can use sarcasm to get out of this one."

"I'm just paying tribute to one of the few that helped me escape the clutches of Jack and Joanie Kinney."

"How?"

"It's a story that I will tell you later, Sunshine. Now go get a glass."

# Oblique Clarity

\*\*\*\*\*

see i been watchin you for a while  
your smile and stuff  
but i want to know if i can be with you for tonight alright  
is that alright baby, baby

\*\*\*\*\*

Standing on top of the catwalk, I watch the mass of sweat slicked bodies move, my eyes locking on the particular person that I had been looking for all night. And as usual he was at the center of everything, his body entrancing his former kingdom. Sipping on the double JB that I ordered, I relaxed and enjoyed the show, trying to ignore the whining that was constantly flowing in and out my ears.

"Brian? Hey, are you even listening to me?"

Shaking my head at Mikey's obliviousness, I turn back to the radiant sight on the dance floor. "Um, sorry. Got a bit distracted."

Following my intense gaze, he spits out, "Figures," and I can hear the wheels turning, alerting me to the now expected 'Why did you take that ungrateful shit back?' lecture that was about to spew from his mouth ever since Justin and I got back together. Time to get out of here. Hurriedly, I finished my drink, and then made my way to go down the stairs, leaving my friend in the hands of his understanding and loving boyfriend. It was time to go after what I wanted.

\*\*\*\*\*

There is only one for me  
you have made that a possibility  
we could take that step to see, um  
if this is really gonna be, all you gotta do is say yes

\*\*\*\*\*

I'm right behind him now and I know that without a doubt that he will be more than willing to leave with me. That is something that I've become very sure about over the past three years. I guess you could say it's a sure thing.

Giving the troll he was dancing with my patented 'fuck off' glare, I wrapped my arms around his waist and began to rock against him, not missing a techno beat.

"Hey."

"Hey." Leaning closer, he leans his damp head back on my shoulder and asks breathlessly, "What can I do for you?"

Trailing my hands down his chest, I lift up the hem on his shirt and touch the pleasure points that I have memorized, loving the way his bright blues glaze over, gliding shut halfway. Tracing his earlobe with my tongue, I say, "I think that's pretty obvious. So, the question is, yes or no?"

\*\*\*\*\*

all you gotta do is say yes  
dont deny what you feel  
let me undress you baby  
open up your mind and just rest  
i'm about to let you know you make me so  
all you gotta do is say yes  
dont deny waht you feel  
let me undress you baby open up your mind and just rest i'm about to  
let you know  
you make me so, so, so ,so ,so ,so,so,so  
you make me so, so, so,so so, so ,so,so um  
\*\*\*\*\*

Not waiting for an answer I pull him even closer, enjoying the familiar warmth filling my body, tempting me to rip all my clothes off and his, but strangely that is something that I don't wish to share with all the drooling queers around us.

"Where have you been? Seems you've been a little busy homo lately," I say lightly, hoping that he didn't hear the irritation that I'd felt when I couldn't get in touch with him for the past few days.

Grinding even more into my tented 501s, he grins. "I had to finish up a couple of things that were due at the end of the week. Not all of us can order other people to do our grunt work."

Giving his ear another nip, I say, "I don't know about that. You seem to get me to do things that I would never admit to."

And seeing the shock followed by the strobe bright smile lets me know that I am going to be rewarded for 'communicating' that little bit of information.

Sometimes talking can be a good thing.

\*\*\*\*\*

loving you has taken time (taken time)  
but i always knew you could be mine  
i recognize the butterflies inside me tonight(tonight)  
all you gotta do is say yes  
\*\*\*\*\*

As we rock back and forth with everyone else, I let my mind drift to something that I'd been thinking about lately. I know I've said that I'd loved him since the first time I laid eyes on him, but I know that wasn't the case at all. It was just my dick along with my WASP morals telling me that the strong almost obsessive attraction I had for him had to be loved. Besides, that was the only defense I had when I adopted my stalker routine.

But unlike before, it was real the second time around.

Opening my eyes a little bit more, I notice the 'look' that I've been getting more and more since we've gotten back together. I still haven't been able to interpret it yet nor am I sure that I want to, but I know that it makes me feel fanfuckingtastic. That is all I need right now.

I know mostly everyone thinks that both of us are idiots for trying this again, and if I were the over-analytical, self-pitying, confused, dumbass person I was before we parted ways, I would have fallen for their bullshit, hook line and sinker.

Now, I could give a flying fuck what they think or what they say. It doesn't matter anymore. I'm not going to delude myself and say that I wouldn't like to have their support, but if I don't, then fuck it. To tell the truth, I was surprised that Brian didn't give me that much hell over getting back with him, because I was truly prepared for the long haul, but it seems we both learned an important lesson this past year: Go for what you want.

I know it sounds corny, but I knew that this time around it was going to be different. We weren't together because my parents kicked me out. We weren't together because some deluded asshole swung a bat upside my head. We are together because we want to be. And if they don't like it they can kiss both our asses.

Turning around, I lean up and give his neck a lick, breathing heavy in his ear since I know that gets him hot. "Yes, please."

Without replying, he grabs my wrist and leads me off the dance floor, striding towards the exit and seconds later we are peeling out the parking lot, ready to make up for lost time.

\*\*\*\*\*

all you gotta do is say yes  
dont deny what you feel  
let me undress you baby  
open up your mind and just rest  
i'm about to let you know you make me so  
all you gotta do is say yes  
dont deny what you feel  
let me undress you baby open up your mind and just rest i'm about to  
let you know  
you make me so, so, so ,so ,so ,so,so,so  
you make me so, so, so,so so, so ,so,so uh  
\*\*\*\*\*

In no time, he swung into his parking space and both of us raced up the steps, not wanting to wait for the slow elevator. That was used only as a means of foreplay. Fumbling for a minute, he finally slammed the key in the lock and opened the door to place that held so many memories for me. We made our way to the bedroom in the frenzied manner, leaving a trail of clothes in our wake. When my knees hit the end of the bed, he wasted no time in toppling me over, spreading over me like a homemade quilt that you only get from Grandma. Instantly, we try to connect from head to toe, kissing, groping, tugging, pulling to be closer. And then it starts getting hotter, hotter, hotter...

Then it stops.

It takes me a few seconds to realize what happened, but once I squash down my raging hormones, I face the man that is leaning on the edge of the bed. Propping myself on my elbow, I cock an eyebrow, wondering why he stopped. After getting no response to my silent query, I spoke up, "What are you waiting for? An invitation?"



Seeing conflicting emotions flit across his Greek God features, he tilts his head to the side, his eyes burning into mine. "Just wanted to make sure that this is what you want."

Wishing that he would continue with the pleasurable activity we were participating in, I tried to lighten up the mood. "I'm here, aren't I?"

And he doesn't say anything for a few minutes, giving me the same look as he did earlier at Babylon, but I wasn't going to back down. After another infinite minute passes, he reaches out and softly traces my cheeks, displaying that indiscernible emotion that he will probably never put it into the words I want to hear, but now that I am remastering my understanding of Kinneyese, I don't think I need it as much. So when I find myself once again surrounded totally by his glorious body, I reply to what he is telling me with his strong, warm embrace.

"I love you too, Brian."

END