

Learning About Pluto

by

A-Simple-Rainbow

Kurt/Blaine || AU || PG

Blaine is a primary school teacher. This year, he has a brand new student putting him through hell. Kurt is the kid's father, fresh out of a messy divorce he's struggling to figure out how to make it ok, again. When a dedicated teacher meets a frustrated parent - both just as committed to helping the small kid - they can't ignore the chemistry between them.

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Chapter One

Blaine sighs for the umpteenth time "Jason." He says in a stern tone "Please take your notebook and got to the corner. You can write your essay over there just the same."

The boys huffs, but, for once and rather miraculously if you ask Blaine, does as he's told.

Class continues and Blaine does his best to ignore the teasing giggles coming from the corner every time a classmate says the wrong answer. During recess for lunch he crosses the corridor and opens the door to Finn Hudson's office. "Your nephew is impossible!" he gasps.

It's the third day of school and he's had to send him to the corner three times already.

Finn just gives him a shrug "Yep." He laughs and pats Blaine's shoulder "You have my brother's number in the file." He says as he turns back to his own desk, cleaning up items and stuffing notebooks into his briefcase "I'm not going to get involved. It was hard enough convincing the kid I wouldn't be spying on him when they decided to enroll him here."

"Where are you going?"

"Field trip." He grins "We're going to the Zoo! Sam's already loading the kids up to the bus." he announces cheerfully "See you tomorrow buddy."

"Oh, right. I forgot about that. Have fun."

Finn gives him a laugh "As if." Blaine returns the smirk. Field trips are the worst thing. Nothing but stress and counting heads every five minutes.

Back in his classroom for the afternoon Blaine does his best to ignore Jason and the way he keeps mimicking everything Blaine's doing or saying like he's just so *stupid*! Once the bell rings to shouts of joy and class is dismissed, Blaine resists the urge to ask for a word with Jason – it's only the third day, maybe he's just acting out, maybe he'll calm down.

With a long, tired breath he cleans up his desk and heads out for the day – craving that ice cold beer in his fridge and a good old episode of Will and Grace while he grades homework. He puts everything back in

order in his classroom and his desk, taking his usual half an hour, before he leaves. He's heading out towards his car in the parking lot when he notices the small child on the front steps of the school.

Doing his best not to resent the kid he approaches with a soft smile "Hey, buddy." Jason looks up but doesn't say anything "What're you doing here?"

The kid shrugs "Daddy forgot, I guess."

"Oh." He should go back inside and check for his number, call him to remind him "Well, that happens sometimes... Grown ups have very busy lives and some things just... slip their minds."

Jason nods, giving Blaine his best annoyed face and letting him know he's not up for a conversation, let alone one so condescending.

Blaine doesn't feel comfortable going back inside and leaving the kid alone, outside. So he sits down and takes out his phone texting Finn for his brother's number. "Mind if I wait with you?"

Jason eyes him with disdain before shrugging and saying "I wasn't going to take candy from strangers, you know. I'm not stupid."

"Oh no, I know that." Blaine says lightly, ignoring the sting of the kid's tone "I just have a lot of homework to look through today, and I'm not feeling it right now."

"So you're procrastinating." The kid says, just as Blaine's phone buzzes with Finn's reply.

Blaine quirks an eyebrow "That's quite the word you got there."

"I told you. I'm not stupid."

Blaine just chuckles as he types out *"Hello Mr. Wilkes. This is Blaine Anderson, your son's teacher, and it's just a reminder that he's waiting for you to pick him up at school. You don't need to worry, I'll wait with him as long as you need, but he tells me you were supposed to come, which is why I'm texting you."*

He hits send and tries not to act too patronizingly towards Jason. The kid sure doesn't seem like he'd appreciate it. "So, how are you liking the new school?"

The boy shrugs.

"Do you like your classmates? Are you making friends?" he asks. Jason is the newest student in their third grade class. All of the other students already know each other from the first and second grades, and Blaine's noticed he doesn't usually join the rest of them in the courtyard.

Jason gives him a dirty look before saying "I know you hate me. You don't have to be nice to me."

"I don't hate you!" Blaine frowns at once "Why would you think that?!"

"You're always making me sit in the corner!"

"Because you're misbehaving!" Blaine counters "I can't have you disrupt my class. You're not the only student I have and if you're disturbing my class the others can't learn."

"Whatever. They're dumb, anyway."

"Jason." Blaine chastises, but just as he does a speeding black car halts suddenly, tires screeching and a door flings open.

A tall, brown haired man in a fine looking suit clambers out of the car, practically panting "Jason!" he sprints to where Jason's already standing up and hiking his bag over his shoulder, looking thoroughly bored "Jason! Sweetie! Oh my god, I am so sorry!" the man gasps as he reaches them, dropping to his knees and wrapping his arms around a completely stoic Jason. The man glances up and, over a pair of designer sunglasses, locks his bright blue eyes on Blaine "Thank you, Mr. ...?"

"Anderson."

"Right. I knew that." He nods standing up and offering his hand, which Blaine takes with a polite smile.

"So you got my text?"

"What?" Mr. Wilkes frowns before shoving a hand to his pocket, pulling out a blackberry "Oh! Oh, god. I didn't forget!" he gasps, cheeks suddenly bright red, before turning back to Jason and kneeling in front of him "I didn't forget, sweetie!" he promises, slightly frantic "Daddy just had a big meeting that ran a little

late and I didn't have time to ask Jane to pick you up, ok? I thought uncle Finn could look over you until I got here."

"Finn's class is on a fieldtrip." Blaine clarifies.

"Oh, shoot. Right. Of course. He must've told me. I just... I keep forgetting these things." He runs a tired hand over his face before startling and looking back at his son "Not you! I never forget you."

"Yeah, yeah." Jason rolls his eyes and starts towards the car, which miraculously hasn't been stolen, yet – door wide open and key presumably in the ignition.

"Jason!" Mr. Wilkes calls after him, but the boy just keeps on walking to the car "Fuck." Mr. Wilkes curses under his breath "Fuck, fuck, fuck." He gives a long sigh before pushing his sunglasses back in place and holds out a hand towards Blaine again "I'm so sorry, Mr. Anderson. Thanks again."

"N-no problem."

"Well... It was a pleasure, and..." Mr. Wilkes smiles awkwardly before starting towards his car "I'll see you... whenever you inevitably have to call me over because of Jason's behavior."

Blaine sputters "I... I'm... not..."

The man just gives him a bitter laugh "Come on, Mr. Anderson, let's not pretend here. No point in pretending he's not the spawn of Satan sometimes." He jokes before turning on his heel and sprinting back to his car, leaving a gaping Blaine behind.

His cell buzzes with a new text "*Do you need a different number or did Kurt get back to you?*"

"Everything's fine. Your brother's picked him up already. He didn't forget. Got held up in a meeting. How's the zoo?"

He receives a picture in reply. Sam's in front of a cage, clearly impersonating a monkey, and Blaine just snorts, pocketing the phone and finally heading home to his beer and TV.

It's two weeks after that that Blaine finally gives up, asking the principle's secretary to call Jason's parents *inviting* them over for a talk. His behavior is impossible in class: he's disruptive, mean and belligerent. And

the worst part is that the kid is actually really, really smart. He always turns up the best compositions and never once has he missed his homework or turned it up incomplete or wrong. His skill level is quite possible above third grade, and if it wasn't for his behavior Blaine might still be calling in his parents to suggest he skip a year. Blaine really wants the kid to succeed, but with behavior like that, not even an impeccable score sheet could keep him from trouble.

Finn volunteers to take the kid to the gym and throw some balls around while Blaine waits for his parents and talks with them.

He's straightened his desk three times before there's a knock and Mr. Wilkes perfectly styled hair is in view. "Mr. Anderson?"

"Oh!" Blaine stands at once, walking around his desk to greet the handsome man – he's dressed in an impeccable suit, with an indigo blue tie that make his eyes shine bright, and if it weren't for the frantic display he'd witnessed weeks ago Blaine would be ready to assume this was a classic case of workaholic parents who forget they have kids and completely ignore them (maybe it's just a classic case of parents who know they're kids are trouble but don't have time, nor patience to deal with it, chalking it up to the teachers)"Mr. Wilkes, hi!"

"It's Hummel." He says "Kurt Hummel. Not...- I'm not Wilkes."

"Oh... I... his file says Jason Wilkes, I thought."

Mr. Hummel gives him a tight smile "Yes, well, the divorce has been finalized today so it's officially Hummel for me. Jason, I'm afraid, will be stuck with Wilkes forever." He explains lightly as he walks towards the chair Blaine's pulled up.

"Divorce?" Blaine asks politely as he takes his own seat, too.

"Yes. It's funny. You never think you're gonna end up filing for divorce when you agree to organizing your child's name alphabetically. Or when you agree that using a hyphen isn't all that aesthetically pleasing... So you figure, it's just a name... It's not like he's any less mine, anyway. And I mean, it's the least you can do, when your husband never really wanted kids in the first place – you say sure! Pick the name! Sure, let him have *your* familyname! Anything to make him more involved in the process... even if Jason isn't the most interesting name, or if my family is six times the family his will ever be, and my surname certainly is better

and stronger. But by this time, you're just excited he's involved in it, so you could care less about the kid's name as long as he exists and he's yours! And you're excited that your husband is finally excited too." Mr. Hummel says in a perfectly composed tone, like he's discussing the weather "Now, what nobody ever tells you is that it'll do you no good to let him pick the name when he's just a lying, cheating man whore that sleeps around with the male half of the entire PTA at your son's school."

"Oh my god." Blaine finally manages, when there's a moment of pause.

"I'm sorry, that was big rant... And too much information. It was, wasn't it?"

"No... it's fine, it's ok. I just... I wasn't expecting it." Blaine manages to stutter out.

Mr. Hummel gives him a half amused smile before sighing and saying "So tell me, Mr. Anderson. Do you hate my son, yet?"

"No!"

"Because I do. Most days. I do."

"I... huh... what."

"He's so infuriating. God, I wish I could just.... Argh. Anyway, I've tried everything, I've tried being the good cop, I've tried being the bad cop... I've tried... God I've tried giving him just as bad as he gives... I've tried no TV, no console, no comic books, no desserts...! I've run out of things to take away from him, unless I make him starve. And I'm completely alone because... hey, do you see my ex-husband sitting here next to me? No! Of course not! He's too busy to have a son. I'm telling you, these last five months... worst of my life."

"So do you think it has anything to do with the divorce?" Blaine frowns carefully.

Mr. Hummel just laughs "Well, I'm no genius." He jokes, reminding Blaine of Jason's sarcastic streak.

"Right..." He says, refraining from pointing out the similarity.

"It started before, though. His dad was... wasn't around much, and I work too – full time, so... - I'd get off work as soon as I could, pick him up from school, and then I'd still have to cook dinner and clean the

house, because god forbid any of them ever help me with that! So I guess I never had much time to play with him. And he resented that of course. He acted out – I got called to his school a lot, and he kept bringing home bad reports, and it had to stop. So we got a housekeeper, and I tried to keep my office hours to the exact stipulations in my contract, refused to work overtime and I started hanging out with him more. And I also begged my husband to get more involved he did – he took care of the PTA and Jason's old school, went to every meeting, helped with every function. Things were definitely looking up, and Jason was so much better, until... well... then word got out my husband was sleeping with one of the other dad's, and... *then* it turned out it hadn't been just one dad."

"Oh."

"We had to get him out of that school, obviously – but at the time it was almost summer break and... I regret it so much – I should've pulled him out at once, no matter what. I think those two months were absolutely traumatizing for him. It wasn't just our divorce, it was the other's kids whose parents were separating too telling him his father had seduced theirs, had turned their father's into fags... and you know kids... kept calling *him* a freak and a home wrecker – and you know kids don't learn those words from a dictionary."

"Oh my god." Blaine gasps.

Mr. Hummel just gives him a sad, knowing smile "that being said... it... I can't just excuse his behavior because he had a hard time. It's not ok. I... can't have a spoilt brat for a son, just because his parents got a divorce. God knows where I'd be if my dad had let that happen to me when I was a kid and my mom died."

"Right, I understand that completely." Blaine nods, trying to keep a straight face at the completely overwhelming outpour of information coming his way.

"When I say I hate my kid, I'm joking. Obviously. But... it does get... hard." He pauses and avoids Blaine's eyes, instead choosing to inspect his hands closely before sighing and saying "I'm not... I'm not here to try to excuse him. To convince you to cut him some slack. That's not it at all. It's the opposite. Reprimand him as much as you need to. He needs to know boundaries, and he... I'm not going to treat him with kid gloves because he had a shitty thing happen to him. He needs tough love, and... well... I just. I'm his dad, right? It hurts doing this, watching him get mad at me because I don't buy him every single toy he asks for, or because we're not having pizza for dinner every night... But if I don't love him enough to do that, no one will." He sighs tiredly before shrugging and adding "I'm just... I'm just running out of ideas, it's all."

Blaine smiles and leans closer "I'm sure, he'll be better at some point."

"Yes. He's already moved past trying to cry his way into having what he wants, and now he's entering the plain brat phase. I'm sure he'll get back to normal eventually. In the meantime I just have to try not to kill him." He says with a chuckle.

Blaine gives him another smile before tilting his head and risking "Have you – excuse me if I'm overstepping – but have you considered... professional help?"

"Like a shrink?!" Blaine gives a tiny nod and before he can explain he meant a psychologist or a therapist and not exactly a shrink Kurt's eyes bulge out and he hastens to speak "That was a joke! I'm not going to kill my son! I'm just! I don't need a-"

"Not for you!" Blaine interrupts, holding back a laugh at Mr. Hummel's frantic expression "For your son. I mean for Jason. I know a great therapist who specializes in dealing with children, I could give you her card."

"Oh!" the man gasps before hiding his face in his hands and breathing out a laugh "I'm sorry. I just..."

"No, it's fine. I know the bow tie doesn't exactly scream sense of humor, but I do have one." Blaine shrugs "Here, have the card anyway, and call if you need to. Dr. Pillsbury's office isn't that far from here, and if you schedule the appointments right after school I could even take Jason, myself."

"Oh, I couldn't-"

"It wouldn't be any trouble at all, it's on my way home. So think about it, and give her a call, if you want. I promise you she's amazing." Blaine says, refraining from saying he used to be her patient as a teenager.

"I... thanks... I'll think about it."

Blaine just smiles and nods "Anyway... I... If you're fully aware of your son's behavior, then I'm not sure there's all that much we can discuss here."

"Yeah." Mr. Hummel nods, standing up and brushing his pants "Well, I really am sorry he's giving you so much trouble. I'll... I'll take away his TV privileges again until he gets a good report from you."

Blaine can't help but laugh at that "He's gonna hate us both."

"Humph. I'm used to it. You... however... well, good luck with that, Mr. Anderson."

"It's... huh...it's Blaine... I don't really... call me Blaine, Mr. Hummel."

The man laughs "In that case it's Kurt." He says as he hikes his bag over one shoulder and offers a hand.

Blaine tries to ignore the sparks of electricity as their eyes refuse to leave each other, Kurt's smirk mesmerizing, and takes his warm, strong hand.

"See you around, Blaine." The man says before turning and leaving Blaine with an after taste of *something*. Something sweet and spicy. He shakes his head before the thought can go any further. Kurt is one of his student's parents. Kurt has just gotten out of a messy divorce. Kurt is not an option.

Kurt is cute, though. And funny, even as he talks about his nasty divorce, and seemingly smart. Blaine sighs with the full knowledge that Kurt's kind of his type.

The next day Jason is absolutely at his worst – the most insufferable he's ever been and it takes all the self-control in Blaine not to send him to the principle's office. When he asks the class to pair up and Jason's left alone Blaine realizes something, though.

A friend. That's what the kid needs. A true friend, a true ally. Someone who he can talk to about whatever he wants and trusts without fearing any judgment. Not a therapist, no, that's different – equally important but completely different.

So, when the bell rings he asks Jason to stay for a word. Jason rolls his eyes and approaches Blaine's desk just as he finishes writing on a piece of paper.

"So Jason." He starts "This is your report for today."

Jason just continues to silently glare at him.

"It says you behaved perfectly."

Jason squints suspiciously "Why?"

"Because TV's a big deal." Blaine shrugs with a smile.

"No, it's not." Blaine just looks at him pointedly before the kid rolls his eyes and sighs "Fine! It is! But I thought grown-ups were supposed to tell us it's not."

That makes him laugh, which only makes Jason look more irritated.

"Listen, Jason. I know things aren't perfect at home right now."

"Oh here we go." Jason rolls his eyes yet again.

"What?" Blaine pauses "What do you think I'm going to say?"

"That dad still loves me even if he moved back to LA and never calls anymore. That daddy's trying really hard but he has to work to pay the bills. That I need to be a little man because daddy can't do everything alone. That..."

"Buddy...! That's not what I was going to say."

"Yeah, right. I know you talked to daddy yesterday. I know he told you everything. I know you made a deal. You're just like him."

"Yes, I did! And I'm breaking that deal right now, aren't I?" Blaine tries, pausing enough time to exchange a meaningful look with the boy "I was going to say, that I know sometimes grown ups won't understand you, and I know that stinks, right? I'm sure you're trying your best."

Jason eyes him warily.

"I'm giving you this report because I trust you, and I'd very much like you to trust me." He says softly walking around his desk, and lowering himself so he's eye to eye with Jason "Listen, I'm on your side, Jason."

"You still called daddy in here... and you told him."

"I had to. You have to understand, buddy, I need you to follow my rules in class, so that everyone else can learn."

"They're dumb. Everything's too easy."

"I know." Blaine resists a laugh "You're by far the smartest kid in here, Jason. I'm not just saying that, you are. But you have to understand we can't all be that smart. Just like we can't all be good soccer players like Mattie."

"I stink at soccer."

"You really do!" Blaine does laugh this time and Jason smacks his chest "What?! It's true!"

"I thought you were cheering me up!" he whines with ill-conceived amusement. And wow, he's just like Kurt. They have the exact same smile, and they have the exact same eyes.

"Right! But the thing is, Jason, you don't have to be good at everything. You're already the smartest kid in class."

"Ok."

"Everyone's got their talents." Blaine shrugs "And everyone's entitled to stink at something, too."

"What do you stink at, Mr. B?"

Blaine considers it for a while "I'm a very bad driver. I can't cook at all. You already know I can't draw. I play the guitar and the piano, but I absolutely cannot play the violin. I'm not a fast runner at all. And I wish I could play football, but I really can't."

"Wow. That's a lot of things."

He chuckles and shrugs "I can also do a lot of things, so it's ok."

"It is?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Well... daddy sings really well. And uncle Finn, and aunt Rachel, and aunt Mercedes, and... well... my daddy's friends can all sing. But I don't think I can."

"Alright. Not everybody can sing. Actually most people can't."

"But daddy'll be disappointed."

"I'm pretty sure he'll be fine." Blaine shakes his head "He just wants you to be happy."

"He keeps saying that. But then he won't let me watch TV." Jason complains and Blaine feels a small sense of victory, noticing there's no trace of malice left in it. It's just a kid talking about stuff. He trusts Blaine.

"That's just a parents' job. When kids misbehave it's a parent's job to make sure it has consequences, so that they will learn *not* to misbehave." Blaine explains calmly, looking carefully for any trace of anger and annoyance. He finds defiance, as the boy crosses his arms over his chest and cocks his hip.

"My *dad* always buys me the toys I want, even when I'm bad." *Your dad feels guilty about all the shit he put you through so he's trying to buy your love*, Blaine thinks and before Blaine can come up with something else to say Jason adds "Or he used to. When he was home."

"Listen. Your daddy can't buy you everything you want, because toys are expensive and because life is... well, it's about earning things. It means he loves you very much, because it means he's doing what's *best* for you even if it means that you get angry with him. It's called sacrificing."

"Yeah, right."

"It's true, buddy." Blaine smiles before standing back up and running his fingers through the kids hair, receiving a weak scowl in return "Anyway, here's the report, so you can watch TV."

Jason looks at him for a long time before taking the report "Thank you."

"You're welcome, Jason. Make sure you watch a good show, tonight. Now, go on, I'm sure your dad's waiting for you"

Jason just nods before he leaves.

That evening Blaine's curled up in his couch, watching Jack McFarland and Karen Walker perform an outstandingly funny duet, when his cell rings "Sam! I told you, I don't want to go out."

"It's hum... it's not... it's not Sam...?"

"Oh!" Blaine gaps, recognizing the voice at once – it's a really nice voice "Hi, Kurt! I'm sorry! I thought-well, never mind. Is something wrong?"

Kurt chuckles and says *"I know what you did, Mr. Anderson."*

Blaine feels the heat crawl up his face, and can't help the smile that takes over it "What *ever* do you mean?"

"I mean the report, mister." Blaine can make out the sounds of cartoons on the other side.

Blaine completely ignores the fact that their tone is nothing if not flirty and mutes his own TV "He was a perfect gentleman today."

"No, he wasn't." there's a smirk in Kurt's voice, if such a thing is possible.

"Ok, fine, he was insufferable. I needed an aspirin by lunchtime. But I think he just... he really needs someone who he can talk to with no expectations. Someone he doesn't feel like he owes anything to."

Kurt is silent for a moment, there's shuffling and a door closing *"I know..."* he sighs *"I've been thinking and I'm going to call that therapist you recommended."*

"That's great!"

"Yeah... He's... particularly well behaved today. He didn't even say anything when he saw me prepping the broccoli for dinner." Blaine chuckles but Kurt continues before he can't say anything *"I know you talked to him, he said so. He wouldn't say what about, but, thanks. Whatever it was, it worked."*

"He's a good kid." Blaine smiles.

"Deep down, like, way deep." Kurt says and Blaine can't help but actually throw his head back and laugh at that. "Anyway" Kurt interrupts with a chuckle *"I just wanted to thank you, and, huh, I guess I'll just... hmm. I suppose I'll see you at the bake sale."*

"Bake sale?"

"For the drama club, right...? I figured I'd get involved in things, put on a good face for the PTA moms. I know from experience it's not good when they hate you because they usually take it out on the kids, and I need them not hate my son."

"Oh! Right!" Blaine gasps remembering the fundraiser, scheduled two weeks from now. It makes him a little disappointed that it'll be so long before he gets to talk to Kurt again, but his brain quickly supplies the fact that Kurt is a parent, that Kurt is fresh out of a divorce and that Kurt is, therefore, off limits "I'll see you then!"

"Yeah, thanks again."

"No problem. Bye!"

"Bye!"

They hang up, Blaine wanting nothing more than to keep talking to him for hours on end. He chastises himself and puts the sound back on with a sigh.

The following two weeks Jason behaves progressively better. For the first few days it's almost like he's testing boundaries, but after a while he seems to be calming down. Well, he still rolls his eyes and sighs a lot, but at least he keeps his annoyance to himself. Blaine is sure to give him a smile at the end of each day – he keeps it off of condescension and more playful than anything – and Jason actually smiles back most days. It feels like each day is another battle he's won.

He receives a couple of texts from Kurt gushing about Dr. Pillsbury and thanking him profusely for the referral. One night he receives a text saying *"He offered to help! He actually OFFERED to help with dinner! I'm amazed. I could fly from happiness right now."*

He just smiles and texts back *"I think I saw him making a friend today, at recess, too. I'm glad he's making progress."* Before going back to his microwaved lasagna, and picking up his laptop where a blank word page, safe for the words 'Chapter 1', awaits him. It's the third time he's decided to start over. But somehow a picture perfect family doesn't seem all that right to him.

Every children's book he looks at includes a picture perfect family. What about the kids who don't have one? What about Jason? What about Lena, whose mother left while she was still two years old? What

about Pete, whose mom was barely out of high school when she had him, no trace of the dad whatsoever? Where are they supposed to find a book they can relate to?

In a society where divorce numbers keep climbing monumentally, affecting the lives of children everywhere, Blaine thinks it's straight up bizarre how little support there is for them from the arts.

That night he writes without pause. He's reached twenty full pages before his words start faltering and his eyes start drooping. He goes to bed with a smile on his face and for the first time since he got out of college feeling like he might actually fulfill his lifelong dream of writing at least one children's book. Finally he has a strong message he wants to get out.

The next day he can't help smile a little wider at Jason, and ruffle his hair and exchange a few words.

"Have I told you you've been a really great student lately?" he says as everyone else scurries out of the classroom.

Jason gives him an exasperated smile and hides his blush.

"I'm proud of you." He reiterates "And I bet so is your daddy."

"Yeah, yeah..."

Blaine just laughs "Excited for tomorrow?"

"Sure." The boy shrugs and hikes his schoolbag higher "I gotta go now. Daddy's waiting for me, so we can bake things, or whatever."

"See you tomorrow, then, Jason."

"Bye, Mr. B."

At home Blaine decides to forego his beer and Will and Grace for once and tries to bake cookies, failing miserably and ending up calling Tina so she can come over and help him out. Tina's the drama teacher, but also the art teacher and the music teacher – basically she's in charge of the whole arts department –, and, aside from Sam, she's his best friend, and has been since he started working at the school – straight out of college (thanks to amazing professors and impeccable education records, and also god bless

recommendation letters!)] – and she fell in love with him. The infatuation had been put behind them soon enough, Blaine making sure she knew he was Kinsey six gay.

They put on music and sing and dance while they bake.

She snorts when he slips on some flour, only managing not to fall on his butt and completely ruining his amazing dance step. He flicks the dishcloth towards her and she runs squealing to the living room.

Blaine just laughs not bothering to follow her, and instead he makes sure he sticks the tray in the oven before he sets the timer and joins her in the living room where she's already splayed on his couch with a wine bottle open.

"What're you doing?!" he laughs "We've got school tomorrow!"

"Oh, come on, just one glass."

"*Parents* are coming!"

"One glass!" she pushes.

"Fine! One!"

She beams while he takes two glasses out of the cupboard and returns to sit next to her. She pours the wine and then smirks "So... I met someone."

"Oh?" He grins.

"He's a dance teacher. I've been thinking of adding dance to my program, and I was checking out a school. His name is Mike, and his abs are the seventh wonder of the world."

"Tell me more. Dates? Calls? Texts?"

"We're going on a date on Friday!" She giggles "But we won't stop texting each other! I love text flirting."

"I know, it's my favorite too." He says wistfully, trying not to think of the few texts he's exchanged with Kurt.

"Have you been flirting with someone?" she teases, nudging him with her foot.

"No!" he says, too fast to sound sincere, and as such receives a glare from her until he's blushing and smiling shyly "Not really... maybe... almost. I don't know. It's... it's not something that..."

"Oh my god, who is it?!"

"I... I may be developing a crush... on a dad."

Her eyebrows rise, disappearing behind her bangs and she smirks "No laws against that."

"I know, but... come on. You're telling me you'd just go for it?"

"I don't know... It depends, is he worth it?"

Blaine gives an unconvincing shrug "I don't... we've only met twice, and then we had one brief conversation on the phone, and there were just a couple of texts. But it's... it's more than that. He's fresh out of a really messy divorce, Tina, and Jason, his kid, has been giving him hell, already, I doubt he's looking for a relationship anyway."

"He's Jason Wilkes' dad? He called me about getting the kid involved in the school play... said the other kids told him not to bother showing up to rehearsals because he was a freak and no one liked him anyway."

"What?! They said that?! Wow... kids suck." Blaine mutters, making a mental note of paying better attention to why exactly Jason doesn't mingle with his classmates during recess.

"I know, right? I met the kid, actually, I asked Sam to talk to him during P.E.. He's... he's not the nicest either, but..."

"He's been doing much better! But I'm sure it's... it can't be easy watching his parents get divorced, and... you don't even know the half of it. That's why I'm not... Of course I'd like to ask Kurt out on a date – he sounds really smart, and he's so funny, you have no idea, and he's *gorgeous*, come on, who wouldn't get a crush on that? But... it's... complicated."

She sighs "Well, anyway, just don't... don't walk away from something special just because the circumstances aren't perfect, Blaine."

He smiles and shrugs "Yeah, well..."

"Will he be at the bake sell tomorrow?"

"I... I think so. He said so."

"Good... I want to see him."

"*Tina*...!"

"Just *see* him! From afar. I promise. I'll keep my mouth shut."

He gives her one last stern look before giggling and nudging his foot against her "Look at us, a couple of smitten idiots." She returns the giggle and downs her glass before refilling. He eyes her for a while before muttering "so you're staying the night, I presume."

She just grins.

In return, Blaine laughs once she groans in the morning, complaining of hangover. He passes her a glass of water and an aspirin and reminds her she's not a college student anymore. She scowls in response and he tells her to hurry the fuck up. For some reason there's a small tingling in Blaine's toes and fingers today, and he really doesn't want to be late.

He joins Sam as soon as they get there in setting up the tables. He's holding a table above his head, Sam telling him every detail about the movie he watched last night, when he spots Jason stepping inside the school, hand held by Kurt. Tall, lean, designer clothed Kurt.

"Hey Mr. B!" Jason calls, holding up a huge bag "We made muffins!" he says excitedly.

"Sam..." he grunts, and the other man gets the unvoiced request, so they put the table down "Hey Jason, hey Kurt." He says ruffling the boy's hair and shaking Kurt's hand, noticing he has to drop an equally large bag before doing so "That's a lot of muffins!" He chuckles.

Kurt seems to blush a little at that and shrugs "I came home early yesterday and I took today off so I could... so... hm... we might have gotten a little carried away, I guess."

"That's great!" Sam interrupts "We can never have enough muffins!" he announces cheerfully.

"This is my colleague, Sam Evans. He teaches P.E.. Sam, this is Jason's dad, Kurt Hummel."

"Hi!" they say as they shake hands.

"Daddy." Jason pipes up.

"What?" Blaine frowns.

"He's my daddy. My dad's in LA."

"Right." Kurt smiles awkwardly "I'm his daddy. Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Evans." He smiles "So, where can I put these! And how can I help? I'm afraid I didn't realize there would be hard labor involved, and I'm not exactly dressed for..."

"Oh, you could go help Ms. Chang over there!" Sam says before Blaine can even give him a look "She's organizing and labeling the cakes, over there."

"I will, thank you!"

Blaine watches them go and sighs dejectedly.

"What?!" Sam frowns.

"Nothing, nothing. Let's go."

He tries to ignore the growing twisting of his stomach as he sees the rest of the PTA moms arriving, knowing he's probably missing his chance to talk to Kurt. But then again, he shouldn't want to talk to Kurt. Not like that anyway.

He finishes positioning the tables and walks over to where they keep the tablecloths. Kurt is bending over the bag – Blaine definitely doesn't look at his butt. "You looking for something in particular? They're all the same size."

Kurt startles a little before noticing it's Blaine and straightening up with a hint of a flush "Yes! I was looking for something that's not hideous." He says, holding out a bright green cloth.

Blaine laughs "You know this is a school's bake sale, right? It's not a wedding reception." He teases before crouching down and grabbing a pile of them.

"Exactly! You should be teaching them important life skills like decoration and color coordination!" He counters in clear mock seriousness, his eyes bright with mirth.

This, Blaine, realizes, is a lost cause. He doesn't stand a chance of not developing feelings for this man. "I promise I wasn't the one who bought them."

"Do you know who did? Tell me who should I report to the police?"

Blaine bites his lip playfully (trying not to register the fact that Kurt's eyes follow the movement) before leaning over and whispering "Mrs. Philips."

"The blonde one?" Kurt mutters back.

"They're all blonde." Blaine chuckles.

"Oh... I meant the natural blonde one." Kurt shrugs.

"Right, yes, that would be the one."

"Oh... she's a bitch." He says automatically before startling "Oh my god, pretend I didn't say that!"

Blaine just bites back his laughter and shakes his head "Said what?" They share an amused smile before Blaine gestures towards the tables "Come help me?"

Kurt huffs and grabs another pile of tablecloths "Alright... I'll even use the barf colored one."

Blaine laughs.

"But I demand my muffins are sold on a less offensive table."

"You're impossible." Blaine breathes "I can see where Jason gets it from!"

Kurt gasps in horror "Take that back!" he throws a cloth, hitting Blaine square on the face, but he just snickers and walks a little faster "I mean it! Take that back!" Kurt calls after him "That was a horrible thing to say."

"Boy, do you love your son!" Blaine jokes, throwing a cloth over a table.

"I do. But I'm his father. It's biological, I can't help it. I wouldn't if I could." He says, doing the same on the next table, grinning with mirth "He makes me want to gauge my eyes out, sometimes. There's no way he takes after me."

Blaine just laughs and shakes his head before carefully saying, "You are *so* wrong, Kurt. And, you know, he's my favorite student, so..."

He watches as Kurt falters in his movements, his cheeks coloring once the full meaning behind Blaine's words hits him. He presses his lips together, the corners quirking up before he turns towards back towards Blaine "I thought you weren't supposed to have favorites?"

It's Blaine's turn to blush under Kurt's attentive eyes "I guess I'll just have to ask you not to tell anyone."

"I'll think about it. But if Mrs. Phillips threatens to buy more tablecloths, I'm going to have to use this knowledge to my advantage." Blaine laughs "No seriously, I think I want my muffins on a cloth-less table."

Blaine's phone buzzes in his pocket and it's a text from Tina.

"You two look cozy!"

He tries to ignore the burn on his face as he types back *"Shut it."*

"He's hot and gorgeous. I approve."

"SHHH leave me alone"

He pockets his phone and directs an innocent smile towards Kurt, who returns it and, as they move on to other tables he turns to Blaine "So, tell me about yourself, Mr. Anderson. I feel terribly vulnerable here with you knowing all about my divorce and me knowing nothing about you." Blaine gives him a soft smile, but before he can start Kurt adds "It's strictly professional, I promise." He shrugs with a teasing smirk that completely betrays his words and makes Blaine's stomach do a summersault "I just want to know the man that's teaching my son how to add and subtract."

"Sure." He chuckles bashfully, before clearing his throat and trying not to sound like a teenager with a crush "Well then, professionally speaking, I graduated from NYU with a double major in Teaching and English and a minor in Music, and then I just came here fresh out of college."

Kurt gives him an impressed glance before asking "Did you always want to be a teacher?"

"No. I wanted to be a musician, or an actor... Broadway. Up until I had to get some money together for college and started baby sitting and tutoring younger kids... and... I don't know. I guess I just found my calling. I went to college thinking I'd become a music teacher, though... but I fell in love with English and hence the double major."

"Did you ever consider college level teaching, or high school?"

"I love kids." Blaine says simply.

He sees as the short answer registers in Kurt's face, he sees the curiosity build, but he also sees the moment he refrains from asking. It's not that it's a big deal – Blaine wants to be there for kids when they're small and vulnerable, when sometimes parents forget to be and kids are too young to know why – he wants to make sure they've got someone looking out for them, someone trying to keep their illusion of a big, bright, wonderful world alive for a couple more years before reality crashes. He wants that because he never really had that – his dad worked too much, his mom cared about him but loved her benefits a little too much, his brother was busy with his own adolescence. He remembers his teacher for it: the person who kept telling him he was a good kid, and lent him Disney DVD's so he could watch home.

"I'm from Ohio." He adds, changing the subject.

"Oh! Me too!" Kurt gasps.

Conversation comes easy between them, like Blaine knew it would. They handle the muffin and cupcake section of the sale together, and the whole day is a blur of laughter and teasing glances. He notices Mrs. Phillips eyeing them with suspicion and a slight sneer.

"She *is* a bitch, thought." He mutters as he leans over to put a couple of twenties away.

"What?" Kurt frowns with confusion.

"Mrs. Philips." He clarifies "I really, really... dislike her. Moms like her are the reason I avoid getting involved in PTA as much as I can."

Kurt follows Blaine line of sight before he sighs "Oh." He shrugs "I'm used to it, I guess. But Jason's definitely not getting any play dates with her daughter. You should've seen her face when she put the puzzle together and realized I was divorced from a man and not a woman."

"Really?"

"Pfft... When I was a working, straight single dad she was just about ready to be my new best friend... She figures out I'm gay – which come on... not that surprising, really – and it's like I have leper and I'm the worst dad in the world."

"Ugh..." Blaine scoffs.

"I wonder if she knows her daughter's teacher loves dick." A voice says next to them and Blaine turns to find Sam.

"*Sam!*"

"What?! You do!"

"That's- I- Jus- *Sam!*" he groans, feeling his cheeks burning a hot shade of red "Jesus Christ, Sam."

The stupid man-boy just shrugs and turns to Kurt "I didn't realize earlier, but you must be Finn's brother...? He told me about you, you settling in fine?"

"Yeah, yeah, thanks." Kurt smiles, visibly holding back laughter, his own face flushed "We're doing fine."

"Good. I'm sorry about the divorce thing. Must suck."

"It does." Kurt says with a strange smile, while Blaine just gapes at Sam's complete lack of filter "But, I'm... I'm happier now, so..."

"Cool! Great!" Sam grins "Can I get a muffin?"

"Are you going to pay for it?" Blaine eyes him sternly.

"Later...?" Sam offers with a cringe, making Kurt snort.

"No."

"Oh, come on! I'm staff! I moved tables! I deserve a muffin."

Before Blaine can reiterate his stance on the subject, Kurt's grabs a napkin and a muffin "Here. Have your reward, and stop asking people you just met about their divorces."

"Cool!" Sam grins before taking his muffin and scurrying away.

Blaine watches him go with a scowl before turning to Kurt "You know, if you reward him for his stupidity he's never going to learn."

Kurt smirks back "Says Mr. Lying report card."

"He said I love dicks." Blaine mutters under his breath, making sure no one can hear him "I could kill him."

"I don't know." Kurt shrugs, as he ties up the trashcan bag and picks it up "I kind of liked it." he throws over his shoulder before walking away, leaving a flushing, gaping Blaine behind.

"Oh my god." He gasps. That was flirting. That was definitely flirting. That was real life flirting! That was...

"I'd like a muffin, please!"

"Oh my god!" Blaine practically screams as he finally notices the woman standing in front of him "You scared me." He smiles trying not to look entirely pathetic.

Kurt's recruited by one of the mom's to help paint scenarios for the drama club, so their interaction is reduced to the occasional eye contact for the rest of the day – it takes three times before Blaine can actually smile towards him, wide, happy and maybe even a little bit cheeky.

By the time the day ends, Blaine barely gets to say goodbye. He catches up to him as he's already hoisting Jason's backpack over his shoulder.

"Oh, you're going already?" Blaine asks stupidly.

"Yes. Kind of exhausted, really." Kurt breathes with a smile.

"Right, well. Hum... I... well, I guess I'll see you around?" he asks with innuendo.

He watches as Kurt picks up on his tone and smiles "I guess you will."

"Come on, daddy!" Jason whines, pulling Kurt's hand towards the exit "I wanna go home."

"Alright. Let's go, kiddo." Kurt smiles and then turns to Blaine, looking way too hot to be ok "Goodbye, have a nice weekend, *Mr. Anderson*."

"You too." Blaine manages as he watches them turn around and head out.

"You have got it *bad*." Tina's voice drawls right next to his ear.

"Tell me about it." Blaine sighs before going back to find something to do. It doesn't do to dwell on these kinds of thoughts.

Late that night he's not quite so successful at avoiding them, but then again, taking into account the way Kurt kept looking at him, and the way he'd said Mr. Anderson at the end of the day, there wasn't much to feel guilty about as the feeling seemed pretty much mutual.

That Sunday he agrees to go for a hike with Sam – maybe physical exertion can help his growing sexual frustration.

"Maybe we could call Finn." Blaine says, just as he buckles up.

Sam pulls out of his parking and starts driving "Nah, he's at his nephew's birthday party."

"It's Jason's birthday?" Blaine frowns "Huh. How did I miss that?"

"You know your students' birthdays?" Sam looks at him in surprise.

"I write them down on a calendar in the classroom, so we never forget to sing. I must've forgotten to write his down, he was the only new student I had this year."

"Right. That's sweet of you." Sam considers.

Blaine just gives him a half annoyed smile before pulling out his cell phone.

"Tell Jason I said Happy Birthday! :)"

"He says thank you! :)"

"He's very polite. Will there be cake tomorrow?"

"Do you want cake tomorrow?"

"I always want cake."

"Attractive."

Blaine can't help but laugh at that and Sam glances over with a smirk "Who're you talking to over there?"

"Ku-Jason's dad. I was just wishing Jason a happy birthday."

"Jason's dad?" Sam quirks an eyebrow "Jason's gay dad? Single gay dad?"

"Divorced."

"And therefore single." Sam shrugs easily.

Blaine just shoots him a smile and sighs, typing away on his phone *"Why, thank you!"*

"Are you going to keep texting all day?"

"No." Blaine answers with a chuckle "There's no reception on the trail, anyway."

"Adventuuure!" Sam practically yells and Blaine throws his head back with laughter.

"I'll have Jason bring you some cake from today. But he said he doesn't want to have a party at school, so..."

"Oh, I was half kidding, you don't have to do that! (Why not? should I be worried?)"

"You? No. He wanted to invite you to the party. And Ms. Chang (I think he has a crush on her. Cute). He just says he doesn't have any friends at school."

"Oh shit."

"It's fine. He'll come out of his shell. He's shy and it's the start of the year. Don't worry."

"Is he having a nice birthday, though? Is he having fun?"

"Yes! He's laughing and playing with his cousins, it's great. I haven't seen him this excited in a long time."

"That's great! :D I can't wait for the cake tomorrow, then!"

"I made it myself, I'll save you the best piece."

"Is it going to be delicious?!"

"I said I made it, didn't I?"

"I'm sorry! I forgot, of course! I'm going on my bi-weekly hike with Sam– you met him – just now so I can burn the calories beforehand!"

"Lol, like you need to burn calories beforehand."

"Are you saying I'm scrawny?"

"No, I'm saying I wouldn't mind seeing you in hiking attire."

"Oh! Is this a thing we do now?"

"What?"

"Flirt."

"Do you want it to be?"

"Yes."

"Then it is."

"So, maybe we could come hiking together, then. So we can both take advantage of the hiking attire. Listen, we're almost at the track, and there's no reception there, so I bid you a flirty goodbye. ;)"

"You are a dork, Mr. Anderson."

Hiking with Sam is, as usual, amazingly satisfying. They talk while they walk, – mostly about Sam's date the night before and how fantastically smitten he is – but more than half of the time is spent in comfortable silence. As is traditional they sing a song as they reach the end of it, reveling in the privacy of an open, empty field, away from it all, then they laugh and bang their chests together before getting into the car and driving back for a revitalizing shower at Blaine's a sci-fi movie with beer.

Blaine is, therefore, in a ridiculously good mood Monday morning.

He greets his students cheerfully, makes sure Wendy's fully recovered from her very nasty breakup with Tommy, makes sure Tommy's fully recovered from his very nasty breakup with Wendy, and tells Julian he's happy to have him back after that flu. When Jason walks up to him, container in hand, he grins "Hey buddy! Had a nice birthday?"

"I guess." The kid shrugs, his complete lack of smile taking Blaine completely aback "This is for you."

"Thanks!" Blaine smiles and leans a little closer "Is everything alright, Jason?"

"Yeah." He says quickly before going to his desk without another word.

Blaine watches him carefully while he waits for every student to arrive. The boy has his head on his arms and is staring out of the window listlessly.

When Blaine starts the lesson the kid doesn't even budge. When Blaine calls on him with a question he knows Jason could answer in his sleep, the boy shrugs and mumbles, "dunno."

Reluctantly he excuses the class for recess and doesn't hold him up to talk.

He's at his desk, carefully eating his slice of heavenly lemon and strawberry cake, while flipping through a book, when he hears the commotion outside. He's out of his desk in a flash, opening the door to the playground, eyes immediately finding the huddled group of kids, growing by the second. The teacher on watch is already sprinting towards it and Blaine doesn't miss the name she's calling "JASON!"

Chapter Two

He groans before he sprints, squeezing himself through the sea of little kids until he reaches the center where Jason is being held back from Cynthia Phillips, who is on the ground, tears already pouring down her face, with scraped hands held out.

"Jason! What did you do?!" He gasps, and the kid looks at him with such anger in his eyes, like Blaine has just betrayed him completely. It breaks his heart. He never wants to see that look in a kid's eyes again, and certainly not Jason's. He sighs and calms down, kneeling in front of him "Jason. You know I have to send you to the principal and call your dad, right?"

Jason looks at him for a long time before he pulls his foot back and kicks Blaine's crotch, making him gasp for air and dear life. He tries to keep the tears of pain off his eyes and get his voice back, just so he can say "Principle. Now." He watches the other teacher hold back her laughter as she grabs Jason's hand and pulls him along.

On shaky legs Blaine stands up and turns to Cynthia. "Are you ok?"

She sniffles "No...!" as if it's the most obvious thing in the world.

God, this girl annoys him so much. Almost as much as her mother. "It's just scraped hands, Cynthia. I think you'll live." And then, because he knows Cynthia Phillips, he says "You're coming with me to the principle, too."

"W-what?! *He* pushed m-me!"

"And you're going to tell me he wasn't provoked first?" Blaine eyes her sternly before turning on his heel and saying "Come on, I'll take you to the nurse first."

He walks briskly to the nurse office, tells her to take Cynthia to the principle once she's done and then practically jogs to the office, cell phone already in hand.

He's about to press 'dial' when he reaches his destination and overhears Mr. Figgins' secretary "Thank you again, Mr. Hummel. I'll see you soon, then." With a defeated sigh he pockets the phone. He was really hoping he'd get to make the phone call himself. Kurt's probably freaking out right now.

"Where's the kid?"

"Inside."

"Already?" He gasps "Shit." He says before he knocks and pushes the door open "Principle Figgins? May I?"

"Mr. Anderson!"

"Joanne, you can go now." Blaine says unceremoniously, purposefully ignoring the small kid on the chair opposite Figgins "I got this."

She gives him a tight smile, clearly disliking how Blaine's completely overstepping her, but he couldn't care less, right now. "Sure." She stands and leaves, while Blaine flops down.

"Do you know what happened, Anderson?"

"No. No one does." He adds as his eyes flicks towards the door Joanne's just disappeared through "I heard the commotion and went over, just as Joanne did. Cynthia Phillips was on the ground with scraped hands and says Jason pushed her."

"Is that what happened boy? Did you push Cynthia?"

Jason is as stoic as he is silent. Blaine feels his stomach twist. He needs to talk to Jason alone.

There's a knock on the door and the nurse walks in with Cynthia in hand.

Figgins sets to interrogate her instead. She's much more vocal, telling them about how hard Jason pushed her and Blaine can see the way Jason is clenching his little jaw, and fisting his little hands while she describes the way she was just talking to him and then he pushed her for no reason at all.

Blaine clenches his own jaw and takes a deep breath before saying "Principle Figgins. A word with you? Alone?" Figgins nods and tells the kids to wait outside. The door's barely clicked closed before Blaine turns back to the older man "She's lying. She provoked him. I'm sure of it."

"How?"

"He was perfectly calm this morning. He's been an exemplary student for the past couple of weeks, he hasn't given me any trouble at all. He was calm this morning – sad maybe, but perfectly calm. But he wasn't angry. He wouldn't have hit her out of the blue. I know Cynthia – she likes to push people's buttons and she does it well."

"She's never been in my office before."

"Because I don't send students to your office unless I absolutely have to! I've had to shut her up way too many times, and she used to pick on Shania last year, Timothy, the year before. I know Cynthia. I've had her parents come talk to me plenty of times, but they always excuse her saying she's just young, and she'll grow out of it. I can't do much except her send her to the corner when she does it in my classroom."

"He used violence. Physical violence. I cannot tolerate that."

"I understand that. I'm not saying he should be excused. I'm saying she should be punished too."

"There's no way to prove she provoked him."

"Are you serious?!" Blaine gasps, before running a hand through his hair "I guess it's my fault, then. I should've just sent her to your office every time she was mean to another kid. Even if you say you think we should be completely autonomous in our disciplinary actions, right?" he says harshly and watches the man cower an inch down his chair "So, just because she's not physically violent she's not going to learn the consequences of her *actions*? Rest assured Figgins, I *will* send her and any other kid who ever lets out a single bad word towards another classmate ever again to your office, from now on!" He says before standing up "Now if you'll excuse me I need to speak to my students, while you figure out Jason's punishment."

He stands and turns to leave before Figgins hauls him "Wait. Send her in. I'll talk to her."

He gives the man a tight smile "Thanks" he says before walking outside "Cynthia." He says gesturing for her to go inside. She looks at him warily as she goes inside. Two years in his classroom is apparently enough for her to know he doesn't really fall for sweet gold locks and innocent eyes, when he has her sit in the corner at least once every two weeks for badmouthing a classmate. With a sigh he makes a note to talk to her seriously, too – maybe if her parents don't want to teach her how to be nice, he should: it would be pretty hypocritical of him to go out of his way to help Jason so much and not do the same for her. He closes the door after her before turning to Jason, and sitting next to him. "Hey buddy." He says to no response "That's quite a kick you got there."

Silence.

"Wanna tell me what that was all about?"

"No."

"What did Cynthia say to you?"

"I won't tell *you*."

"Why were you upset this morning?"

"I won't tell you! Go away. I don't like you!"

"Why not?!"

"Because!"

"That's not an answer."

"Yes, it is."

"No. It's really not." Blaine smiles "I think you still like me. I think you want to tell me. I think you *need* to tell me."

"Why?"

"Because I'm your friend. Because I trust you to tell the truth, and you trust me to believe you." He says softly, laying a gentle hand on the boy's shoulder "I won't even tell the principle Figgins you kicked me."

"What?"

"I won't, I promise. I know you only did it because you were really angry, and I know you won't do it again. I just... buddy, I just need to know why you were so angry at me!"

"Because."

"Was it because I assumed it was your fault? You know, that was wrong of me, it really was. I'm sorry about it."

The boy remains silent, but Blaine can see the ice melting.

"Do you accept my apologies? Can we be friends again?"

Jason shrugs, trying to look unaffected before he adds "You said you'd call my dad."

Oh. Fuck. Blaine keeps doing that, doesn't he? "I meant to say daddy. I'm sorry. But... what if I had wanted to call your dad? Why would it be so bad?"

Jason looks away, locking his eyes on his fidgeting hands "I turned eight yesterday."

"I know."

"My dad forgot." He says quietly "He didn't give me a present, or a card... he didn't even call me to say happy birthday. He just forgot. Or... or... or he hates me. I don't know."

"Oh." The words get caught in Blaine's throat even though he knows he should be saying, but it's really hard putting them together. Jason looks completely heartbroken.

"Daddy kept saying he would call, he was sure. Daddy keeps saying that. Daddy keeps saying dad loves me. But... dad never does. Dad left and he never calls... and I think he doesn't like me... I think... I don't want him to know I'm bad because... I don't want him to hate me more." Jason says, his voice breaking a little and his chin trembling "And yesterday daddy was really, really upset, too. He thought I was asleep, but I

heard him on the phone, talking to dad. He was really angry. I never heard him like that. I don't... I don't like it when he's like that."

"Oh, sweetie. You... he... I'm sure..."

"I didn't know what to do to make it better." Jason says carefully "I waited until he wasn't screaming anymore to go in his bedroom. He was crying, Mr. B. I don't like it when my daddy cries. He hasn't cried in a long time, too – I thought it was over. I don't want him to be upset because of me."

"I'm so sorry, Jason." Blaine gasps, wrapping an arm around his shoulders and pulling him closer "He wasn't upset because of you. You did nothing wrong, buddy. I promise."

"I did now." He says with the smallest voice "They called him, didn't they?"

"Yes. They had to. What you did *today* was very bad, Jason. He needed to know."

Jason just sighs dejectedly before sniffing. Blaine immediately moves to kneel in front of him, catching his shoulders in his hands and ducking to meet the boy's eyes.

"I'm so sorry." The boy mumbles "I didn't... I didn't... but she called my daddy the 'f' word, and I *know* it's not a nice word."

"The 'f' word?!" Blaine prompts, blood turning cold in anticipation.

The boy nods "She said her mom said my dad was a... a... a *that word* and that he was trying to seduce you... she says her mom thinks he's probably a-a man-whore like the rest of them."

"Oh my god!" Blaine gasps "Oh my god. Oh my god." That bitch! That fucking bitch, saying those things in front of her *children*!

"I'm sorry I pushed her, but she was being mean!"

"Jason, sweetie. Those are terrible things to say about someone, and she definitely shouldn't have said them. The f word isn't a good word at all and neither is man-whore, or whore, for that matter. Those are very bad words that you shouldn't ever say, ok?"

"Are they worse then... shit? Or fuck?" he whispers the last words.

"Much worse." Blaine nods "because they're mean and hurtful. They're names bad people call others when they want to hurt them."

"Does Cynthia hate me?"

"Cynthia doesn't know you enough to hate you, buddy – she just... she just heard her mother say things and I doubt she even knew what those words meant, ok?" Jason nods sadly and Blaine sighs, squeezing his shoulders a little more "She was being mean, and Principle Figgins is talking to her right now, and I'll call her mom too, Jason. She's not... I... What she said was very, very wrong, and it's not true, ok?"

"Ok?"

"But what you did was also wrong, buddy. You never, ever hit other people. No matter how mean they are first."

"What do you do, then?"

"You hold your head up and you walk away. The worst thing you can do to bullies is ignore them."

"It was really hard to ignore her." Jason mumbles.

"I know, I know. And next time you'll be better, though. You'll be smarter. You'll do the right thing."

Jason just looks at him with big blue watery eyes "I don't want there to be a next time."

"Oh, buddy, me neither."

The principle's office door is opened and as Cynthia slips out Figgins calls out for Jason. Blaine squeezes his shoulder in encouragement. He watches as the boy slips inside, before he tells Figgins' secretary to call Cynthia's parents, and finally he turns to the little girl.

"Cynthia. Jason told me what you said to him. That was... very wrong. And I'm really sorry he pushed you and hurt you, but what you said was also very, very ugly."

"It's true, though! My mom says so!"

Blaine tries not to say something stupid "And I'll also be talking to your mom. I don't know what the rules are at your home, but in this school there are certain words that aren't allowed. We don't call other people names, no matter what. We treat them with kindness and respect."

"He's a freak. He's always alone."

"Cynthia!" Blaine chastises "If you call him things like that no wonder he wants to be alone. You're not being very nice to him, are you? Be nicer to him, and you'll see he's a very nice boy, too. That's all there is to it. You have to be kind to people, and treat them well. Being mean and calling names won't do anyone any good, especially you."

She remains silent.

"You know why I send you to the corner so many times, right?"

"Bur the other kids are so stupid-"

"They're not. Cynthia, you have to stop this. You're a smart, beautiful girl – you don't need to be mean to kids to get others to like you. If you're nice, they will at once." Blaine's going to continue his lecture, but the sound of hurried footsteps interrupts. He turns to see Kurt practically running towards them. "Wait here." Blaine tells the girl before jogging to meet Kurt.

"Where's my son?" The man says at once, only stopping when Blaine's hands hold him in place.

"Wait." Blaine pleads "Wait a sec, Kurt. I need to talk to you before you get in there."

"My son just pushed a little girl, Blaine! I need to get in there and ground him for life."

"Please hear me out!"

"I'm not going to let you fake a report card for him again!"

"It's not like that, Kurt! He was provoked."

"That's no excuse!"

"It is!" Blaine counters, holding the other man in place "Cynthia Phillips called you a fag in front of him. Told him you were a man-whore."

"W-what?!"

"I..." Blaine sighs and rubs a hand over his face "Mrs. Phillips shared her views on you with her family, and you know kids. They're like sponges, they pick up on everything. And she was teasing him, and he got angry."

"Oh my god."

"He was upset about yesterday, too, Kurt. He doesn't... he heard you on the phone... and he knows you were crying. He's... afraid of upsetting you. He doesn't want you to be upset because of him anymore. And he thinks he's dad left for LA because he hates him. You should... he looked so sad... he's so sorry, Kurt. Please don't bite his head off."

Kurt looks like a deer caught in headlights before he finally manages to stutter "I... I need to go find my son, Blaine."

Blaine just nods and steps aside. He barely remembers to follow him as Kurt falters, noticing the girl, sparing her a glance before he pushes the office door open, not even asking the secretary for permission. Blaine pushes the door shut just as Kurt walks over to his son's chair and picks him up in his arms "Hey sweetie." He says softly. Jason looks surprised and confused, before accepting his father's embrace and tucking his head into his chest.

"Mr. Hummel!"

"Principal Figgins, right?"

"Right."

"I would've hoped you'd have waited for me to talk to my son." Kurt says sharply. It's something to behold: Kurt's anger, Kurt's protectiveness towards his son. "I was under the impression that was the usual procedure."

"Yes, well. Everything happened too fast."

"Regardless. Anyway. My kid was provoked."

"He pushed a little girl."

"I know. And for that he deserves whatever punishment you see fit. But I need to know that the kid who called me a f-... a... huh, a fag to his face will face consequences for it."

"I was not aware of that." Figgins hurries to say, color draining slightly from his face "Are you sure?!"

"Yes." Blaine says, voice sure. Of course she wouldn't have told him the whole story.

"She told him she'd called him a name. That was all. I didn't... Are you absolutely sure? Jason, is that true?"
The boy in Kurt's eyes looked at the principle, clearly holding back his tears before nodding "Blaine, could you ask Mrs. Harrow to call Cynthia's parents?"

"I already did."

"Oh." Figgins nods, clearly still stunned by the whole thing "Then, hum, we'll just wait for them, and talk to them as well. Obviously the use of that language will have repercussions."

"Good." Kurt says shortly "Is my son being expelled?"

"No. It's his first offense. He'll get off with a warning and detention once a week with Mr. Anderson for the rest of the term."

"That seems ok to me. Have a good day Principle Figgins. I'm taking my son home now." Kurt gets up and leaves, boy in his arms, just like that. Like Figgins, Blaine gapes after him before he catches himself and practically runs after them. He doesn't run much before he catches up to them in the middle of the corridor, Jason standing and Kurt kneeling in front of him, with a sad smile, holding his small hands in his larger, stronger ones. Blaine doesn't know what to do, so he just stands there, a couple of feet away, feeling completely intrusive.

"I'm sorry daddy!"

"It's ok, sweetie."

"Aren't you mad?"

Kurt cringes before he smiles "A little. I won't lie. I hate the thought of my son hitting other kids. But I don't hate *you*. I could never hate you. I only love you. Always. I love you from here to the *Moon*. From here to Pluto even! Kiddo, I love you more than anyone else in this whole wide world."

"I know."

"Honey. I'll always love you! No matter what! Even when you do stupid things, ok?"

"Ok."

"And I wasn't upset with you yesterday."

"You were upset with dad?"

"Yes."

"Because of me?"

"No. Because of him. That's all. I was upset with him, no one else. It has nothing to do with you, sweetheart."

"You were mad because he didn't call me."

"Exactly. Because *he* didn't call you. It's not your fault."

"I... I don't want him to call me, though." Jason says after a moment of silence and Blaine watches the way Kurt looks absolutely taken aback to hear that "I don't, daddy. I don't wanna talk to dad anymore."

"What? Why not?!"

"He hurt you."

"Oh, honey...!"

"He made you cry, daddy. And he just left. And... You're happier now. You don't cry so much. You only cry when he does something bad – and he does that a lot. So. I'm mad at him, and I don't want to talk to him ever again."

"Oh, honey, sweetie, I... He's your dad. He loves you. And whatever mistakes that he made... it's between him and me, not you."

"Yes, it is!" the boy counters "You're my daddy and I don't like it when you're sad. I don't like it when people make you sad. And I don't like people who make you sad." Jason announces, puffing out his chest "He makes you sad."

"He's your dad."

"He left."

"He's still your dad."

"He still left."

Blaine watches as Kurt takes a deep breath, struggling for words, so he finally steps over and kneels and gently squeezes Jason's shoulder "Jason. Sometimes grown-ups make really, really stupid decisions. They make mistakes that really hurt other people. It's not their intention, but they do. That doesn't mean they don't love those people. Your dad loves you even if he hurt you."

"He didn't hurt me. He hurt daddy. I don't know how. They won't tell me." He adds with a pointed glare towards Kurt "But he did."

"Ok. And you have the right to be mad at him for that. But you shouldn't stop talking to him."

"Why not?! He stopped talking to us."

"He's just really busy." Kurt says softly.

"That's a lie. I don't care about him. All he does is lie!" Jason cries, eyes brimming with tears again.

Blaine is lost for words and Kurt is too. They exchange worried glances before Kurt finally sighs "Do you want to go see Dr. Pillsbury?"

"And ice cream."

Kurt sputters out a laugh "Sure, sweetie."

"Ice cream first."

"Sure." Kurt says before standing up and holding out his hand for his son.

"See you tomorrow, Mr. B." Jason says "You're really cool."

"Oh thanks!" Blaine laughs "You're pretty cool, too. I'll see you tomorrow."

Kurt looks between the two with a fond smile before turning to Blaine and sighing "I'm surrounded with coolness."

"You're pretty cool, too, don't worry." Blaine winks.

"Yeah, daddy, you're cool too." Jason pipes up, completely missing the exchange of looks between the two adults, or the way that Kurt's flushing and biting his lip "Now let's go get some ice cream!"

Blaine stares after them as Jason tugs Kurt away – completely missing or choosing to ignore the way Kurt keeps looking over his shoulder to meet Blaine's eyes.

Once Cynthia's parents arrive, five minutes later, he sits down with them and Figgins and he has a very serious, and at times, very frustrating conversation about it and isn't appropriate family conversation, and promises to make sure any more language like that from Cynthia will have very serious consequences – not just for her, but for her parents.

By the time he gets back to class (Joanna taking care of his kids while he's busy) he's got a splitting headache and is exhausted from fighting with ignorant assholes. He wishes that would be enough to call social security, but he knows better.

Blaine's phone buzzes in the middle of his class. He doesn't check it until lunchtime, and he's sitting with Tina and Sam, both of them sharing war stories on kids' fights and horrible parents. He checks out of the conversation as he texts and eats at the same time.

"I'm sitting in a coffee shop, crying my eyeballs out and trying to be discreet and graceful about it, while my son is in a therapist's office. When did my life get so fucked up? Anyway, I wanted to thank you so, so much for being the coolest teacher in the whole wide world."

"(If you ever need someone to talk about without the need to be discreet or graceful, I'm a good listener) So, (this is me hoping to lighten the mood) did he tell you about the part he kicked me in the goods?"

"WHAT?!"

"I'd never felt that kind of pain before in my life. He has a mean kick."

"WHAT?!"

"I think I made him angry when my first instinct was to tell him off."

"WHAT?!"

"I mean, I guess I could've asked 'what happened?' instead of 'Jason what have you done?'. He just looked so betrayed."

"WHAT?!"

"You know this is kind of fun. Me just saying anything and you replying with the same word every time."

"HE DID WHAT?!"

"Oh! There's a variation!"

"Seriously! Blaine. He did what?!"

"I don't think I'll ever have kids, now."

"Shit. I'm so sorry! I'll take away the TV for a month!"

"Don't. It's fine. It barely hurts anymore."

"It's not fine! He pushed a girl and he kicked you. AND you let me take him out for ice cream?!"

"So did that get you to stop crying?"

"So you were just trying to distract me and he didn't really kick you?"

"Oh no. He definitely kicked me. Right in the merchandise."

"Fuck. Blaine! You should've told me."

"It's fine. I talked to him about it. He won't do it again. And I kind of promised him I wouldn't tell, so..."

Blaine is surprised when his phones buzzes with an incoming call instead of a text.

"I have no idea what do to..." Kurt sighs.

"It was just a bad day, Kurt... Don't lose yourself in it. Just, start over from today and don't... make a big deal out of it." Blaine says softly, springing from the lunch table and completely ignoring Tina's wide eyes and Sam's grin as he leaves his plate half eaten and goes back to the privacy of his empty classroom.

"I don't just mean today... I... I'm completely lost. No one ever told me how I'm supposed to deal with all of this. Getting over my husband... that was... that was easy. I was over him in two months... I barely ate any ice cream at all, and I only watched Bridget Jones once. But... my son? My son hating his dad? Telling me he doesn't even want to talk to him? How do I stop that? Why don't I wanna stop it? Why does it make me feel better? I'm the worst father in the world..."

"Kurt, stop that. You're not the worst father in the world. It's a messy divorce, things get complicated. But Jason is a smart kid, a strong kid, and he'll be alright. If today has taught us anything is that he can actually stand up for himself, not just from Cynthia, but..."

"I know..." Kurt mumbles and maybe there's a smile in his voice "He's a Hummel, so he's got that covered. Nobody pushes the Hummel's around."

"I told you he took after you."

"Blaine!" Kurt chuckles.

"And I still mean that as a compliment."

"Blaine..." Kurt sighs and there's a long stretch of silence before Kurt breaks it "Blaine, I-"

"I'm sorry. I don't... I know you... I... this was... I'm going to... I have class, and I'm sorry for that. It was inappropriate."

"Oh!"

"I'll go now. Goodbye, Kurt, have a nice day."

"Huh, you too, Blaine, I... thanks for everything, again."

"No problem. Anytime." He says before he hangs up and drops his phone like it's burning his hand.

Stupid, stupid, stupid Blaine and his stupid mouth and stupid feelings. He bangs his head on his desk, because maybe he can force his head to forget about Kurt and his amazing eyes, and about Jason and what it would be like to take the two of them to the movies and get ice cream afterwards, giving Jason a piggyback and holding hands with Kurt. He groans because will he ever stop falling too deep, too fast?

He only barely notices when the bell rings and he tries to get back some semblance of normalcy before kids start streaming back inside.

The next day they have tests. Maths in the morning and English in the afternoon. At home, Blaine is happy for the pile of tests to grade, as he definitely needs the distraction. It works up until the point where he grades Jason's. At first it's nerve-wracking, then it's awkward and finally it's completely... unbelievable. He reads both three times before he's sure about it.

He'd toyed with the idea, yes, but now he's sure he needs to do it – even if it means calling Kurt to school again, and talking to him after that humiliating phone call.

That's how he finds himself in the principal's office, awaiting Kurt's arrival, Jason waiting patiently outside after Blaine assured him nothing bad was happening.

Kurt arrives soon enough and looks at Blaine with a quirked eyebrow. Blaine can't even help the smile that spreads over him.

"Mr. Hummel, please sit down!"

Kurt does, on the chair next to Blaine's and smiles shyly "Did Jason do something again?"

"Oh no. Quite the opposite. Mr. Anderson?"

Blaine gave both men a tiny smile "The truth is, I've been noticing Jason's work since he started here, and it's been consistently great. I checked his file from his previous school and it was a good report, too, but... huh, we had some tests yesterday, and I was reading his and it was... it was *good*. Like unusually good." He explains "I didn't say anything until now, because I wasn't sure, and I thought maybe you helped him out with his homework, or something – which is fine and encouraged!" he adds when Kurt opens his mouth to speak "But these tests were taken in class, and there were other exercises too, of course... and all of it, especially his written work, is completely above average. I was thinking, we should run a few tests and... I think he could benefit from skipping a year."

"Skipping a year?"

"Going straight for fifth grade once this year stops. I could use my weekly time with him to advance his studies, get him caught up with the fourth grade."

"Are... Wait? Really?!"

"Yes. Most of his disruptive behavior in my class stems from clear boredom. He's annoyed that I'm teaching something so easy, and he's even more annoyed when his classmates have trouble catching up to it. I really think it would do him good." He smiles, having made his case.

The conversation is easy, and with Kurt's blessing, Figgins promises to call in experts so they can assess the situation better.

As they leave, awkwardly telling each other to go first – Kurt finally doing so, and Blaine following him out –, Kurt pulls him aside, hand at his elbow.

"Blaine." He says, barely above a whisper "Just so you know..." he looks to make sure no one is listening to them "I don't care if it was inappropriate, Blaine. We had agreed that... *inappropriate* was good, remember?" He says before letting his hand trail down Blaine's forearm and skim his hand, as he steps back and away, leaving with a soft, tempting smile. "I'll see you tomorrow!"

"Tomorrow?" Blaine frowns, resisting every urge to walk after him.

"Ms. Chang called to ask me for help with the sets for the school play." Kurt says with a smile "So, I'll see you tomorrow." He turns to where his son is sitting "Come on, Jason, or you'll be late for the appointment with Dr. Pillsbury."

"Oh." Blaine says stupidly as he watches them leave.

Blaine loves painting the sets (painting he can do – it's only drawing that has him failing miserably). Tina knows that, he'd agreed to help with those weeks ago. Tina set this up. He hates Tina. Tina and her bright idea of getting him in the same room with Kurt while they work in ratty old clothes and get paint all over themselves and look ridiculous and... probably adorable.

He loves Tina.

He tells her that over the phone as he looks over his wardrobe and tries to decide which clothes are bad enough to ruin, but good enough to look acceptably good in. Old jeans and white T-shirt it is.

Tina is enthusiastic about it, and Blaine is, like always reluctant. The voice in his head is still loud, no matter what Kurt himself says. Kurt is a dad. Kurt has just been through a divorce. Kurt should not be an option.

The next day, however, it's very hard to remember that when, after classes, he walks into Tina's practice room, set pieces spread all over, cans of paint and brushes stacked neatly on a table, he has to contain a gasp as Kurt is already in there, talking to Tina in ridiculously tight jeans and a worn black T-shirt that says NYADA.

Blaine tries not to gape too much as he approaches them, his class in tow.

"Hey!"

Kurt swirls around and Blaine blushes and doesn't miss the way Kurt looks at him, suddenly feeling scantily clad in his sleeveless NYU shirt (it was his workout tee and he'd cut the sleeves to get rid of the sweat stains) "I didn't... I didn't have anything else." He explains.

Kurt just smiles "It's very fashionable. And flattering." He adds in a whisper.

"Well!" Tina interrupts and Blaine nearly pulls a muscle on his neck turning to her too fast "Let's distribute this, shall we?!"

Sam and Finn are helping, too – having arrived a little late – and so each adult takes five kids, dividing the sets between them.

Blaine thanks god he gets little Jimmy on his group – the boy's hyperactivity keeps him from getting too many chances to loose himself in looking at Kurt, and Kurt's, tight, tight jeans stretching over his ass, or the paint on his arms making every stretch of muscle shine, or his colorful smile each time he talks to a kid, or the tongue peeking out whenever he's concentrating really hard.

"Mr. B!" Lilly calls him out of his reverie "I don't know how to make a cloud...!"

"I'll show you, sweetie." He says with a smile, thankful for the distraction.

He hops to her side and crouches down next to her, taking a brush, wrapping her fingers around it and then wrapping his hand around hers. He explains the movements as he makes them, making sure she's got the hang of it before he lets go and smiles broadly "That looks very cool!" he tell her as she continues and she beams up to him before going back to her painting. He refrains from ruffling her hair – his hands are painted a deep shade of multi-color by now – and looks up to see if anyone else needs help.

His eyes lock on Kurt's, instead, who's smiling fondly and Blaine can't help smiling back, he does try to hide it, ducking his head and his hand fleeting from pinching the bridge of his nose to scratching the back of his neck, and then Kurt's clear, tinkling laugh fills the room. Blaine startles and as he lifts his head every kid around him bursts out laughing.

"What?"

Kurt stands, taking a cloth and wiping his hands on it before walking over and kneeling in front of Blaine
"You got paint all over your nose, Mr. B."

"Oh!" Blaine reaches up to touch it, only to stop himself before he could look like yet a bigger idiot. Instead he feels his heart hammering out of his chest when Kurt lifts the cloth to his face and starts wiping gently at his nose.

"It's not coming out..." Kurt squints "the cloth's too dirty, actually, it's just making it worse."

"How worse?"

Kurt just chuckles and scrunches up his face.

"Oh well, don't worry about it." Blaine says, making sure his hand is still sufficiently dirty before he wipes it across Kurt's face "At least that way we can match!" he laughs, as Kurt just gasps.

The kids' laughter is absolutely infectious and everyone is roaring, while Blaine can just about make out Jason's voice saying "Oh my god! He's so dead!" before he collapses in giggles.

"Mr. Anderson!" Kurt gasps before he flat out plunges a random brush in a can and wipes it across Blaine's face, catching him wide across the forehead.

"Kurt!" Blaine gasps "There are kids watching! Think of the example you're setting!" Blaine gasps, and takes the opportunity of a completely gaping and fuming Kurt to get his hand on a can and splash it in full dripping glory to his cheek.

"Alright! Alright!" Tina calls, coming between them "That's enough!"

"That is *not* enough!" Kurt says at once, looking purposefully at Blaine, who's grinning, smug with victory.

"Yes, it is. You're going to start a paint war, ruin all the work we've done! And get the kids into it, too!" She warns, concealing her amusement way too well and managing to be sufficiently intimidating "Now, go to sink and wash your faces!"

They look sufficiently chastised as they stand and walk to the sink; Blaine waiting patiently while Kurt splashes water and scrubs furiously at his face. He offers a towel with a smile when Kurt finally turns to

him, water dripping all over. Kurt snatches it from Blaine's head, hiding his own smile with a poor excuse for a scowl. Blaine can't help *giggling* before he bends over the sink and does the best he can at washing his face. He closes the tap before stretching his hand for the towel – he receives it, as well as a bump to his hip that make his knees buckle a little and he fumble for balance. He catches Kurt's chuckles as he walks away, having disappeared into the sea of kids by the time Blaine's done drying his face.

It's even harder keeping his eyes from straying after that, but practically every time they do he finds Kurt staring back, and it's even harder keeping himself from returning coy smiles.

Once everything is satisfyingly painted and he's finished returning kids to their respective parents and politely smiling and commenting on the ruined clothes, he returns to help Jason finish washing the brushes off. Kurt's with Tina, putting lids back on the paint cans. "So, did you have fun?!"

"Yes. But my daddy's going to be mad at you, you know?"

"What? Why?!"

"Because you put paint on his face! He hates it when people put things on his face."

"Oh my..." Blaine pretends to worry.

"I do hate it when people put things on my face." A voice startles them and Blaine turns to face Kurt "But I may forgive Mr. B if he apologizes properly."

"I'm sorry...?" Blaine offers with a slight smile.

"Tse, tse. Try again." Kurt says dismissively before he wraps his arms around Jason and lifts him up "Let's go, little guy! You need a bath! With bleach!"

"Doesn't he need to apologize?!" Jason says, but wraps his legs around Kurt's hips and his arms around his neck, nonetheless.

"Oh, the wound's still fresh. He can apologize later." Kurt shrugs before giving Blaine a pointed look "Now we need to go, because daddy hasn't worn these jeans since college and he forgot he used to be anorexic then, so he's pretty sure circulation south of the equator has stopped by now."

Blaine can barely contain his snort and watches as they leave "Bye Mr B!" Jason calls over Kurt's shoulder.

"Bye Jason! Have a nice weekend!"

On his way home Blaine passes by a florist shop and something inside of him snaps because in less than a minute he's calling Tina.

"Are you still at school?"

"Yeah, just about to leave actually."

"Can you go to my desk and check Jason's file for his address?"

"Why?" she teases.

"I need to apologize for the paint war." Blaine says simply.

"I'll want details." Is all she says before she hangs up. Three minutes later he gets a text with the address, so he turns to the smiling lady behind the counter and says "Do you deliver?"

"Sure!"

He beams and picks an unpretentious, but beautiful bouquet of colorful daisies, adds a pretty card and scrawls *I'm sorry! :)* over it. He leaves the shop with a spring in his step. Tina is right. There are no laws against it. And he shouldn't waste something special just because the circumstances aren't perfect.

An hour later he receives a text saying.

"Apology accepted. So, so accepted."

On Saturday he rings Finn to wish him a happy birthday and gets himself talked into a barbeque. It's not exactly hot, but it's warm enough that it might be pleasant, so he says yes and quickly dresses himself. It isn't until he's on his way over that he remembers Finn is Kurt's brother, and so Kurt will probably be there. His wardrobe choices suddenly seem completely wrong.

With a deep breath he climbs out of the car, clutching the wine bottle in his hand for dear life.

A smiling Rachel who lets him in and graciously thanks him for both his presence and the wine opens the door. He meets Finn soon and hugs him, slapping his back and laughs and congratulates him. Finn's kids pop out of nowhere with shouts of "BLAINE!" having apparently grown a ridiculous amount since Blaine emergency-babysat them last year. At that Jason comes sprinting and wraps his arms around his waist "Mr. B! You're here!" he says and beams up at him "Awesome! Come! I need to show you my bike! I got it last week on *my* birthday and daddy let me ride it all the way here!"

"Cool!" he gasps letting the boy drag him away and exchanging helpless, amused looks with Finn and Rachel. They reach the bike and Blaine is sure to be appropriately enthusiastic "Wow! That is such a cool bike! I love red! I'm so jealous! Can I ride?!"

"No!" the boy giggles "It's too small for you!"

"Oh shoot." He sighs "Are you a good biker?"

"I'm the best!"

Blaine can't help the laugh that escapes him at that.

"Do you want to come draw with me?"

"I can't draw. You know that."

"I'll teach you, come on, Mr. B!"

The kid drags him away again and Blaine really doesn't have the heart to tell him he was supposed to be here to be with the grown ups and not the kids – and even if he did, he wouldn't. Jason is terrific, when he's not angrily kicking your balls.

They settle down on a small table crayons around them. Jason is actually pretty good at it. Blaine is hopeless. Blaine is attempting his second house on a hill (while Jason was pretty much drawing the shit out of a race car), when he feels someone watching them and he looks around to find Kurt leaning against a table with a beer in his hand, surrounded by two couples, but looking directly at Blaine. He raises the beer towards Blaine in a toasting gesture before mouthing Hi. Blaine gives him a small wave and smiles before Jason's voice pulls him back to their table.

"What's Pluto?"

Blaine frowns at the question and tries not to laugh too hard "What?"

"Not Mickey's dog, I know that one. But... You know how you were teaching us about the moon and the solar system. I told daddy I love him from here to the moon, like he tells me all the time, and I told him how far that was and Daddy said he loved me from here to Pluto. What's Pluto?"

"Oh, it's... huh... it's like a planet, but not really. Well, it used to be a planet, but then they decided it was too small to be a planet and they said it couldn't be one. It comes after Neptune. You remember Neptune, right?"

"Huh-huh! But why did they think that? Why can't it be a planet just because it's small?! You're short and you're still awesome."

Blaine actually laughs at that, the height jokes having long since stopped stinging as much – and this time it came with a pretty cool compliment from a pretty cool kid "You are absolutely right. Personally, Pluto used to be my favorite planet, so I will always think of it as a planet. So..."

"Oh." Jason says and then he goes back to his drawing like nothing ever happened. It's another while before he speaks again "Daddy says I'm meeting with some people on Monday. He wouldn't tell me what it was about but I heard him on the phone with Uncle Finn. He said they're going to see if I'm like... super smart of whatever."

"Oh..."

"Is that true?"

"Huh..."

"If I am... a-are you going to stop being my teacher?" Jason asks, his voice small and fearful. Blaine has a hard time controlling his smile at that.

"No! No, buddy! Not this year. If it turns out you are, we're going to start spending your detention learning a bunch of new stuff so you don't have to take fourth grade, and you'll go straight to fifth."

"Oh. Ok." He says, going back to his drawing. They sit in silence for a while before Jason looks up again and says "My dad is a lawyer, and he's super smart. He went to Harvard."

"That's cool."

"Do you think if it turns out I'm super smart too he'll come back?"

Blaine's not quite sure what to say to that and he wants to slap himself when "I thought you didn't want him to come back." is what comes out.

"I don't!" the boy says at once before shrugging and munching on his lip "but... I... I'm just wondering... do you think so?"

"I don't think it works like that, buddy." He says softly.

"Do you think he left because he thought I wasn't smart enough?"

"Jason, your dad didn't leave because of you. And he certainly didn't leave because you weren't smart enough! You're plenty smart! I would know, I'm your teacher!"

"Even if those men on Monday say I'm not super smart!"

"Jason..." Blaine sighs, pulling his chair closer to the boy so he can look in his eye "Remember that first talk we had? The first real talk we had? When I told you people don't have to be good at everything?"

Jason nods.

"Well, they don't have to be... geniuses either. You don't have to be super smart. If you are that's great, if you're not that's great, too! Just like being small shouldn't make Pluto any less of a planet, no matter what other people say. It's still a planet, and it's still a kickass planet." He grins as Jason seems to be catching on to what he's saying and he takes the boy's hands into his for emphasis "Listen, no matter what happens on Monday, no matter what they say about you, the truth is that you're Jason, and Jason is pretty awesome, whether he is super smart or not. You don't have to know everything, you don't have to get every problem in class right – you don't have to always be right, Jason." Jason eyes him carefully as if he's trying to understand Blaine's words, so Blaine takes his hand and squeezes before he says "No matter what, I'll still be proud of you."

"Why?"

"Because all that matters to me is that you *try* to get the right answer and that you work hard for it, and *that* I know you do. And because you're a really nice kid. Never underestimate being nice, Jason – nobody likes a meanie, ok?"

Jason gives him a brilliant smile.

"*And* because that is a really awesome drawing. How do you do that?!"

Jason laughs "I don't know... I just do."

Just then they're interrupted and Blaine's nose is filled with the fresh smell of aftershave and cologne when Kurt crouches by the table "Jason, sweetie, your cousin's were looking for you. They wanted to play hide and seek."

"Oh! Cool!" He gasps before sprinting off.

"I'm so sorry he kidnapped you!" Kurt sighs standing and offering Blaine a hand to help him up from his mini chair "He just adores you. Every time I pick him up from school, there's a full hour of him telling me all about the awesome things you did that day. Two hours if there was a song that day."

Blaine tries not to blush as he laughs "I'm sorry...?"

"Oh, no! I quite enjoy it." Kurt says with a smirk.

Before Blaine can say anything close to flirtatious a large, black woman stops to stand next to them "Hey! Kurt! Are you going to introduce me to your friend, here?!" she drawls.

"Oh!" Kurt gasps and smirks before allowing Blaine a better view of Mercedes and introducing them "Blaine, this is my friend Mercedes. Mercedes, this is Blaine Anderson, my son's teacher, who is *gay*."

"Oh." Mercedes deflates at once with an eye roll "Figures. Every time." She mumbles and Blaine exchanges a glance with Kurt who's clearly biting back a laugh "Every singl-wait. Oh!" she gasps, suddenly much perkier, looking between the two of them with a grin "Oh! Oh!"

"Oh?" Blaine frowns, while a red-faced Kurt who's not laughing anymore suddenly has his hands on Mercedes's shoulders and is pushing her away.

"I will catch you later, Blaine!" he calls while Mercedes cackles and parrots his words in a teasingly infatuated tone.

He catches Blaine later when Kurt's coming out of a bedroom and Blaine out of the bathroom. "Hey..."

"Hey..."

"So... Jason is staying the night with his cousins, and Finn and I... oh, and Noah and Sam, I guess, were going out for drinks later tonight... Did they tell you?"

"Huh, I think Sam mentioned, but I didn't... I didn't think you'd..." Blaine loses his words a little bit once he noticed exactly how close they're standing.

"I am... so."

"So...?" He prompts, his eyes completely glued to Kurt's.

"Come out with us?"

"Sure."

Kurt's lips twitch with a smile and Blaine can't hide his own, stepping a little closer before he can realize what he's doing.

"KURT! YOUR SON JUST ATE DIRECTLY FROM FINN'S BIRTHDAY CAKE!" Rachel's voice calls from downstairs and Kurt hangs his head with a deep, miserable sigh while Blaine does the same with ill-concealed laughter "WITH HIS BARE HANDS!"

"I swear to god." Kurt mutters before he turns on his heel and disappears down the hall.

Blaine follows him downstairs after a while to find a furious Kurt holding two small but very messy hands, covered in cake and icing. Blaine looks around to find the birthday cake missing a good chunk.

"Tony dared me to do it!" Jason cries in self-defense.

"I don't care if Tony dared you to jump off a bridge! You are not having any more cake! In fact you aren't having more cake in *two* weeks! In this family we are civilized and we wait for the cake to be cut, and we use a knife to cut it, and we eat it in a plate with a fork – or a spoon at the very least! We are not savages!"

Everyone around them is clearly suppressing laughter. Blaine thinks he can see Kurt doing just that too, as he finally turns around and drags a chastised Jason to the bathroom.

"I love you from here to Pluto, daddy..." he thinks he hears Jason meekly say, and he has a hard time not collapsing with laughter.

"Blaine, dude!" Finn puts an arm around his shoulder and pulls him away from the spectacle with a wide grin "Dude, a bunch of us guys are gonna hit the city tonight for a few drinks and actual party, you should come!"

"I – yeah! Sure!"

"Cool!"

"So, I'm going to head home and change to something more... you know, and... I'll meet you where...?"

"Oh, we'll pick you up! Kurt's the designated driver. He never drinks." He beams before pulling Blaine in for a quick "So, thanks for coming and I'll see you later, dude."

"Yeah, see you later."

At home Blaine wonders how one dresses for a date that isn't actually a date, but a perfect excuse for one.

He decides to go for form fitting jeans and burgundy dress shirt, less gel on his hair and his best pair of shoes. He eats a few bites of leftovers before Sam calls him telling him to get his ass to the car. He grabs his leather jacket – yes, he's that desperate – and leaves quickly, snatching up his wallet, and his keys.

He doesn't get to look at Kurt properly because he gets stuffed in the back seat next to Sam, and a big bulking guy that must be the Noah Kurt had been referring to. He stretches his hand across Sam and says "Hey, I'm Blaine. Blaine Anderson!"

"Hey, Noah Puckerman. Puckzilla. Yo." He says as he bro fists Blaine's hand instead of shaking it.

Blaine just smiles and chuckles while he retrieves his hand.

"Please excuse Noah. He thinks he's still in high school." Kurt says from the driver's seat.

Noah rolls his eyes before saying "I told you, only Berry's allowed to call me that, and it's only because she's always called me that, anyway."

"Yes, but then I wouldn't annoy you as much as you annoy me."

Blaine bites his cheek to keep himself from chuckling and enjoys the snark that flies between the two as they move through the city. They finally park on a street lined with bars and pubs and Blaine follows the rest of them as they go straight into one that says "OPEN MIC" on its door. Blaine recalls Jason telling him about his dad's friends all being good singers.

They take up a fairly large booth – Blaine is practically pushed into sitting next to Kurt by a *very* nonchalant Sam. Once Sam scoots in next to Blaine he leans in close and smiles "Don't worry, bud, I got your back. I'm your wingman!"

Blaine gives him a look before leaning back and saying "I don't think I need a wingman, Sam, but thanks. Do you?"

"Get Kurt to give me her friend's number...?"

"Which friend? What about that girl you went on a date with last week or something? You were in love!"

"I was. She... didn't call me back. So. And... Mercedes."

Blaine raises his eyebrows and smiles "Mercedes?!"

"Yeah." Sam beams, excited.

"I'll see what I can do." Blaine bumps their shoulders before turning to Kurt who's ordering his non-alcoholic drink. He smiles, waiting for the waiter to turn to him and he orders his own, very much alcoholic – he could use the liquid courage tonight (although he's pretty sure he'll keep it at one drink and

only get that nice, soft buzz; too much courage would be a bad thing) "So..." he turns to Kurt "What about that NYADA T-shirt? I know my Broadway, and I'd know if you worked there... I know Rachel does – she's phenomenal, by the way, but... I never saw you on any stage."

Kurt beams "I can't believe you noticed that!"

"Oh, but I did. I considered Broadway, remember? I told you that. I looked into NYADA before I changed my mind. They were very... exclusive."

"They are. I went there. I graduated there."

"You did?!"

"Yes, but you're right. I'm not on Broadway. Or... any stage, really. I got a couple of small parts after college and my stage career, although cut short, was actually starting to pick up. But I missed my old intern job at more than I expected. I took a break from the stage, went back to Vogue, didn't miss the stage, stayed at Vogue. My old boss was so thrilled that when she decided to move on to bigger and better adventures she gave me her position. So here I am, running."

"Wow!" Blaine gasps "You gave up a Broadway career?! That's... That takes guts."

Kurt shrugs "Shortly after that I got married anyway, and... when I started wanting kids I knew the Broadway schedules were pretty impossible for that, so it really was for the better."

"You never regret it?"

Kurt receives their drinks from the waitress, hands Blaine his and sips his own "No, not really. I got all the stage I need in my shower. Do you?"

"I never had a career to give up in the first place."

Kurt gives him a pointed look before rephrasing "Do you regret not pursuing it?"

Blaine shakes his head as he takes a sip, swallowing before saying "Definitely not. I still sing, though – all the time. I just... do it for myself."

"And for your students." Kurt smirks and Blaine nods with a grin "Jason says you're amazing. But then again he says everything you do is amazing. You know you're making my life pretty hard, right? I can't compete with the awesome Mr. B!"

Blaine laughs "It's probably the novelty. He'll get over me soon enough. Don't worry."

"Yes, well, he still loves Ms. Chang the most, so... she's got us both beat."

"Oh, you can't tell her that." Blaine urges "She'll never shut up about it."

"I won't, but she probably knows. I mean, he blushes every time he says her name."

Blaine chuckles and takes another sip before shrugging "I don't know, I was pretty clueless the first time it happened to me. It wasn't until it was Valentine's Day and the girl came up to me with her card and flat out asked me to be her boyfriend that I noticed. Turns out, everybody knew but me." Kurt laughs into his drink "In my defense, it was my first year teaching!"

"I bet it happens every year." Kurt says teasingly.

Blaine blushes before saying "Not this year, no."

"Oh... I wouldn't say that." Their eyes are locked and Blaine can feel a tug to lean in closer, sees the way Kurt licks his lip and the corner twitches up in the ghost of a smile "Let's sing a duet..."

Blaine refuses to be turned into a puddle of jelly so he makes his voice drop as low as it can, and he flicks his eyes towards Kurt's lap before smirking and saying "I'd much rather dance."

He feels a small sense of victory and pride as he watches Kurt exhale and his eyes become slightly clouded as he says "Or that." and he takes Blaine's hand and turns to push Finn and Puck out of the way, so they can move to the dance floor – on the way out of the table Blaine barely manages to down the rest of his drink.

Before they're completely immersed in a crowd of dancing bodies Blaine still catches Finn's surprised tone "What?! Are they like...?"

"Dude?!" Sam's voice trails after them "Are you blind?!"

Blaine chuckles until they reach a fairly good spot, and then Kurt's hands are on his waist, holding tight and pulling close. Blaine refrains from gasping out "Oh my god!" but he does sigh, long and heavy before he lets a hand settle on Kurt's firm chest and another around his neck. The music isn't perfect, but it's enough of a pretext to move in slow, deep movements that bring their bodies closer by the second. Once they're flush against each other Blaine can finally feel the alcohol in his system, and between that and the fact that he can't smell anything except Kurt, he's not sure he can decide if that's good or bad.

One of Kurt's hands move to cradle the back of his hair, fingers splaying and carding through his curls, tugging slightly, making Blaine practically moan as drops his head against Kurt's shoulder, and let's his hand grip Kurt's shirt a little tighter as his hips move against Kurt's. He slides his hand through the back of Kurt's shoulders, and settles it over the back of his neck, nails scratching slightly as he moves to cup his jaw.

"Jesus, Blaine...!" Kurt pants, pulling back slightly so he can look into his eyes "If you keep doing that I'm going to get hard." He laughs nervously and even in the dark dance floor Blaine can see he's blushing. It's hard wrapping his head around the fact that the person turning him on so much right now is the exact same that blushes and giggles like that. It's hard wrapping his head around the fact that he doesn't have to choose between either, because Kurt is perfect – Kurt is everything he's ever wished for. Kurt with his bright, eager eyes, his blushes and his teasing smirks.

He wants to lean in and kiss him – press their lips together and find out if Kurt's lips are as amazing as they look – but instead he shakes his head. "I can't."

"What?" Kurt frowns, and just like that they've stopped dancing.

Blaine drops his hands from Kurt's body and runs a hand through his head "I'm sorry, Kurt, I want to, but I can't do this. I can't be your rebound guy. I'll just..." he takes a deep breath, not even sure he wants to say it but he does anyway "I'll just end up falling for you and then I'll get my heartbroken when you decide you're over me, so... I can't. I'll just... I'll just go now."

"What?! Blaine!" Kurt calls after him, but he doesn't stop, barely pausing to leave some money on the table as he rushes out of the bar and hails a cab.

He ignores all of the texts he receives afterwards – most are from Kurt but there are a lot from Sam and a couple from Finn. He switches the phone off and, as soon as he closes his apartment door, he discards his clothes and gets into the shower.

He spends his Sunday watching TV and dozing off at hour long intervals. He regrets it. He regrets it so much. He shouldn't never have left, he should have stayed and talked to Kurt. He should have just told him what was wrong and listened to Kurt's answer. But now... Now he'd made an ass of himself, Kurt probably wouldn't ever talk to him again, let alone want to hear him out or go out with him.

After two in the morning, in a moment of insanity he texts Kurt.

"I'm so sorry."

Horried he goes to sleep before he can do anything worse.

In the morning it's particularly hard to get out of bed, but he manages, and takes a long shower – he even shaves.

Back in school he tries not to look too miserable when Jason comes in and instead he smiles. The boy smiles brightly back. It's, therefore, safe to assume Kurt hasn't trash talked Blaine, yet.

"Ready for the meeting after school?" Blaine asks softly.

"Yeah! I'm going to show them how smart I am!"

"Awesome!" They high five.

"I read all about Pluto yesterday, Mr. B! It's my favorite planet, too! I've decided I want to be an astrophysicist so I can prove Pluto is a real planet. At least that's who daddy says studies the planets. I thought it was astronauts. They're cool, but I'm glad I won't have to wear those funny suits or go on the rocket ships. They look cool, but I'm kind of scared of flying, anyway, and I'm really scared of heights." He says in a fast sprint and Blaine can tell just how nervous he actually is.

"That *is* very cool, and you'll be a great astrophysicist." He gives Jason a small hug and then tells him to take his seat.

It's not the best lesson Blaine has ever given – he's distracted, and slightly exasperated. But at the end of the day it's the best he can manage and he's pretty sure he just needs an ice cream and a Disney movie and he'll be fine by tomorrow.

He bids every student but Jason goodbye for the day, and then takes his hand and takes him to Figgins' office. The men that came to talk to Jason are already there and waiting, and he introduces himself to them. He's about to suggest they use their classroom when he sees Kurt approaching through the glass door.

Trying not to cower under the desk or something, he braves through it as Kurt steps inside and shakes everyone's hands including his. He can't bring himself to look up, though, and he wonders if Kurt did.

"So, maybe you'll want to use my classroom?" Blaine says, clearing his throat.

"Yes, that would be great. Show us the way?" one of the men says.

Blaine, Jason, Kurt and the two men walk in silence, nervous energy buzzing between them. Before they go inside they turn towards Kurt and says "We'll talk to you afterwards."

"Of course." Kurt nods, and the two men slip inside with Jason, leaving the door half open.

Blaine walks to one of the chairs on the hallway, next to the opposite door, and drops onto it with a sigh.

"Blaine..."

Kurt's voice is soft and hesitant, and while Blaine is still looking at the floor he watches Kurt's feet come into view with slow, careful steps. He chances looking at his face and he finds him smiling gently.

"Hi..." Blaine offers with a cringe.

"Hey." Kurt says sitting next to him "Can we talk?"

"Y-you want to talk to me?"

"Of course."

"I thought you'd be mad at me."

"My ego might be bruised, but it'll live." Kurt shrugs. There's a stretch of silence where both of them seem to be looking for words, and then Kurt finally sighs and says "You wouldn't be the rebound, Blaine." Blaine turns to look at him, confused and Kurt half smiles "I've had my rebound. It was a friend, an old friend. He's had feelings from since... since high school, really, and I never wanted anything romantic with him... but when all of that shit went down he was there, and... my self esteem was pretty low, and... the way he looked at me, Blaine, was like I was his personal god, or something. It was so... and sure the sex wasn't great but at least he wanted to sleep with me, right? But then one day I was doing laundry and his clothes were there with Jason's and mine and I was horrified. What the hell was I doing? I was living with someone because he thought I was a dream, and... well, it was like I woke up from a trance, and I realized the situation had to end. It wasn't fair to anyone, and especially to Jason."

"Oh..."

"So, yeah, I've had my rebound. And I've had time after that, too. I've rebuilt my self-esteem from scratch, I got over my feelings for my ex, I've accepted myself as I am, single or not. I don't want *or need* another rebound, and you'd never be that. Sure you make me feel good about myself, but... I want *you*, too. I like you as much as I like the way you make me feel – or the way it feels when you smile at me, and... well. I'm rambling now."

Blaine gives a half chuckle "It's ok. I like it. I think it's cute."

Kurt gives him a smile "And I know what freaked you out, and maybe it should've freaked me out too. To be honest I didn't – I wasn't – I never planned for things to get so intense so fast. All I wanted was a dance. And then I wanted to date you – slowly. I wanted to go to dinner with you, and then have coffee a couple of times, and then at least two movie dates, and then another dinner, and then dinner at my place, afterwards you'd get to know my friends and we'd go out with them a few times, and then just us two to dance some more, and then, finally, a weekend afternoon with Jason and I, where we'd get ice cream – or hot pretzels because it'll be winter by then – and we'd come over to my place and Jason and I would cook you dinner, and then you'd stay the night. But all of this would take at least two months, because I want to take things slow, and make sure you are not a rebound."

"Oh." Blaine gasps "Really?"

"Really." Kurt nods "I really like you, Mr. Anderson, and I would never let myself use you for something like a rebound. I want something real, something that lasts, and I want that with someone like you. Well, I want that with you."

He smiles, and Blaine can feel his own eyes wide open and glued to Kurt's in awe. He beams "I'd really like that." He says, his voice barely above a whisper as he contains his enthusiasm.

Kurt bites his lips carefully before leaning closer and nudging Blaine's shoulder with his own, Blaine shifts enough so that he can face Kurt, and their knees touch. Taking Kurt's hand in his, in a leap of faith, he leans closer until their noses are touching and Kurt's eyes are so close to his that they're verging on blurry. He waits, smiling and waiting for Kurt to close the rest of the distance.

When he does his eyes slip shut at once, and he barely holds a sigh as soft lips press gently to his. It starts off appropriately innocent for a first kiss in a school hallway, but then Blaine can't hold back his sigh anymore and he breathes, and his hand cups Kurt's neck, keeping him close, closer. Kurt shuffles towards Blaine's body too, his hand caressing Blaine's cheeks, thumb running over his jawline with both eagerness and heat.

They pull back with a deep breath, and Blaine's relieved to see he's not the only one blushing as he beams, and Kurt, chuckling, drops his head to Blaine's shoulder.

"So," Blaine says carefully, conquering his blush "how does Wednesday work for you?"

"Huh?"

"That dinner. Think you can manage Wednesday?"

Kurt looks up beaming and kisses him again, smiles meeting in a half giggling kiss.

- a year and half later-

A Different Kind of Picture Perfect

By Blaine Anderson

Dedicated to all the Plutos out there. Different doesn't mean better or worse. It just means different, and everyone is different one way or another – we are equal in our difference and it's in that that we find so many things worth discovering and writing about.

Special, special, special thanks to Jason and Kurt.

Jason for giving me someone to write for. Kurt for teaching me how to do it. Both for inspiring me from the first to the last word.

I'm sorry you had to read its every version.

Thank you for being my very own perfect picture, I love you both from here to Pluto.