

Appassionato

by scoobygang8

"Appassionato" is a musical term for when the composer instructs a musician to play a piece of music with extreme passion.



Summary: Basically, Brian and Justin never met under the streetlamp. 3 years later, they meet at Hunter's school play; the twist in this story is that Justin is NOT an art virtuoso, but a PIANO virtuoso. Can he fend off his feelings for the predatorial Brian in order to preserve his dignity? And will Brian be able to fend off his feelings for Justin when they become more than purely carnal?

"The piano is able to communicate the subtlest universal truths by means of wood, metal and vibrating air."

-Kenneth Miller

Chapter 1

"I swear on my life, I am never, ever gonna let the kid live this down."

Brian's evil grin peeked out over the top of his plain white coffee cup while he laughed mirthlessly.

Michael frowned. "Brian, it's not a joke! I think it's wonderful. Hunter needs an art credit in order to get into this liberal arts program, and the

musical theatre class fits perfectly! It just so happens that he's a wonderful singer, and he's got one of the lead roles."

"In Grease??" Brian scoffed. "Jesus, I've never heard of anything so humiliating. Does he have to do the whole greased lightening, tight pants bit?"

Michael said nothing. Brian grinned wider.

"Oh my God, he does, doesn't he?"

"OK, just for that, you're coming opening night." Michael said, reaching for the salt. Brian grabbed it and held it out of Michael's reach.

"Oh, that's really not going to happen."

"Really? Just like I'll never tell anyone about how you had sex with that guy who turned out to be...how old was it? I remember he got the senior's discount at Applebee's..."

"Would you shut the fuck up?" Brian said through gritted teeth. His eyes shot daggers at Michael while he tried to come up with a way out of this. Nothing came to mind.

"Fine, I'll come to the stupid fucking play, but I can't be held accountable for my behavior upon arrival." Brian slumped down in his seat.

"Oh, you won't have to worry about that, you'll enjoy yourself, the play's going to be absolutely fabulous-"

"The play is shot to shit!`

Hunter plunked himself down beside Michael, out of breath.

"Come again?" Michael raised an eyebrow.

"Our music teacher, Mr. DeCarlo, managed to slice off two of his fingers in the paper cutter." both Brian and Michael grimaced. Hunter rolled his eyes.

"He's fine, he got them reattached, but he can't play piano for a while obviously, and nobody else can play well enough to do the whole play! If we don't get another pianist by friday night, we can't do the fucking show!" He whined.

"What a shame that is. Looks like the play's not going on after all. Well, no use crying over spilt milk." Brian said, reaching into his jacket pocket and pulling out a twenty, throwing it on the table. "Later, boys."

Brian sat at his computer desk, trying desperately to keep his mind at task on this report. He finally managed to get on a tangent about the newest flavour of toothpaste (how do you make that sexy?) when the phone started to ring. Of course. He decided to try and ignore it and keep writing, but by the fourth ring, his train of thought was sufficiently broken. Heaving a sigh, he picked up the phone.

"What?" he snapped.

"Guess whaaaaaaaat" Mikey drawled mischievously.

"Mikey, I'm not in the fucking mood right now. I'm busy."

"So," Mikey continued, ignoring him, "Some freshman girl in Hunter's play, her brother is a concert pianist, and she managed to convince him to play for the week of the play, pro-bono."

"...And I care because?"

"Well, because now you know what your plans are for Friday night!" Mikey exclaimed, elated.

"You don't expect me to still go to that, do you? It's not happening." Brian said firmly.

"Alright then. Hey, that guy you did, do you think he knew anyone on the titanic?" Mikey snickered.

There was silence.

"You realize I'm going to kill you for this. It'll almost be worth it just for the opportunity to humiliate Hunter even further with the evidence."

Mikey smiled. "Love you t-"

Brian hung up, and threw the phone at the couch.

Brian stood dejectedly in the lobby of Hunter's high school, twisting up a programme in his hands and generally just hating life. He leaned in to Mikey's ear.

"Gotta take a piss."

"Don't even think about trying to escape. I've got my eye on you."

Brian walked away, not saying a word. Now he just had to find the fucking bathroom in this place. As he walked past one hallway on his right, he heard a young feminine voice shout "Hey!"

He doubled back, before seeing a girl in a poodle skirt run across the hallway. One of the cast members, or at least he hoped. When she didn't look at him, he understood that it wasn't him she was talking to. She pushed open one of the doors leading to the parking lot to let someone in.

"Thanks, Mollusk, sorry I'm late. You look great!"

And in walked one of the most gorgeous men Brian had seen in quite a while. Brian usually wasn't into pretty boys, but this guy's beauty was undeniable. From his gorgeous blond hair to his perfect petite frame and-'God, would you look at that ass?' Brian thought, and most of all, the most sensual mouth upturned in the warmest smile. Brian only had about three seconds to take in the blond beauty in ratty converse sneakers combined with what had to be designer jeans, before the young teen took him by the arm and exclaimed, "come on, the auditorium's this way."

Brian didn't have to wonder if this guy was gay; aside from the way he spoke and his demeanor, no straight man had both an ass like that and the fashion sense to know exactly how to display it. He made a mental note to find where the man was sitting once he got into the auditorium.

Brian found Mikey and Ben at the front door to the auditorium and muttered "Let's get this over with." Mikey grinned.

Brian glanced around, looking for the head of golden hair, but to no avail. He frowned. Hadn't the guy gone straight to the auditorium? He shrugged to himself and sat down next to Mikey.

A few minutes later, he saw him. He was walking across the auditorium in front of the seats toward the band pit, glancing over a stack of papers, biting the tip of his thumb in concentration. He had to swerve to avoid a drum kit, and eventually sat himself down at the piano, spreading out the papers in front of him. It clicked in Brian's head; this was the new pianist, the kid's brother. Not exactly what he was expecting, not that he was expecting anything in particular. He pulled a pair of rimless reading glasses out of his shirt pocket, put them on and started absently playing the chords of the piano music on top of the closed lid of the piano, his foot tapping along on the floor. Brian, in spite of himself, thought the blond might have looked even sexier with the glasses, which usually wasn't

really a turn-on for him. Within minutes, the rest of the musicians had seated themselves, and the lights in the auditorium had dimmed. Some middle-aged balding man walked out to the side of the stage with a followspot highlighting the shine on his forehead.

"Good evening everyone, and welcome to the opening night of our production of Grease!" A rousing applause erupted from the audience, with a few whoops, undoubtedly from the cast's classmates. "It's been a long journey for our cast and crew to get to this night. Tonight, we would especially like to thank Justin Taylor, an amazingly talented pianist who stepped in at the very last minute in place of Mr. De Carlo, we could not be more grateful." The audience applauded once again, and the blonde gave a small smile, and held his hand up humbly to accept the applause.

Within a few minutes, there were gawky teenagers dancing awkwardly onstage and trying to battle against their changing voices whilst struggling in tight jeans. It turned out that Hunter did have a pretty good voice, in the role of Kenickie, but Brian didn't notice. He was too busy keeping his eyes glued to every move of the young piano player. Justin, was his name. His fingers moved frantically and complicated across the keyboard, but his face didn't show any conflict, as though this were the easiest thing in the world. They did, however, reflect deep concentration, licking his lips as he quickly lifted a hand to turn the page once every minute or so. The grace in his fingers as they danced, dipped, curled, hammered and scurried along the keys was surprisingly sexy to Brian, but even more so was the way his eyes narrowed and darted across the music on the page, completely unshielded by any kind of privacy or self-consciousness. Brian wondered if he would be just as fearless and passionate writhing under him, if his fingers would move as gracefully across Brian's skin as they did over the piano. He silently resolved to find out.

Everyone was milling about the "refreshments", i.e. about a million veggie platters and about a million and one of those two-bite brownies. Mikey and Ben had scurried off to congratulate Hunter, while Brian was lurking around, looking for the young pianist. He spotted him speaking with some parents, laughing and smiling graciously while sipping a plastic cup of punch. He politely excused himself when he spotted his sister, and swept her into a hug, a matching smile on their faces. He stayed talking to her for a few minutes before she ran off to talk to her friends. Brian chose this time to swoop in.

"I saw you playing piano." he said sultrily.

Justin looked at him skeptically, raising an eyebrow. "Yeah?"

Brian nodded, smirking. "Yeah."

Justin blinked, unimpressed. "Great."

Brian was a little put off by Justin's disinterest, but then in retrospect, thought of how obvious and dumb his statement had been. "You were fucking good."

"Thank you." Justin replied stiffly. An uncomfortable silence passed them by.

"So, you know someone in the play?" Justin inquired half-heartedly.

"Uh, yeah, I'm a sort of family friend of Hunter, he played kin-kick-ick..."

"Kenickie."

"Yeah, that one."

"Well, you must've been enthralled..." Justin raised an eyebrow, smirking. Brian smirked back.

"Actually, I was basically conned into coming here..."

Molly was tapping Justin on the shoulder. "C'mon, Jus, Mom's got the car and she's leaving."

"Ok, Mollusk, I'll be there in two shakes." He turned back to Brian. "It was...um...nice talking to you, Mr...."

"Kinney, Brian Kinney." Brian held out his hand. Justin hesitantly took it, but the moment he did, something happened; Brian couldn't put his finger on it, but it certainly made his breath catch in his throat, and his cock jump. Looking into Justin's eyes, he could tell the man wasn't completely unaffected. It took a second for Justin to reply.

"Um...Justin Taylor." He dropped Brian's hand. "Have a good evening."

And with that, the gorgeous man was gone. Brian felt the disappointment sinking in his chest. He turned back to Mikey, Ben and Hunter.

"Let's *go*."

Chapter 2

Justin sat in a cafe, his interest in his macchiato long faded.

"I'm not sure I understand what you're saying, George" he said slowly.

His agent shifted in his seat. "Justin, there's no shortage of pianists in the music world. You've got amazing talent, no one's trying to argue that,

but as superficial as it sounds, your main secret weapon is your sex appeal." Justin frowned. "Justin, it's not a negative. It's something that most concert pianists don't have, and it's what's gonna bring in the younger audience who otherwise wouldn't be listening to this sort of thing. Now, your star is rising in the music community, and we need to start concentrating on what's going to-"

"Sorry, what does any of this have to do with me being gay?" Justin interjected bluntly.

George sighed. "Justin, we need to cater to the female demographic, not just the male. Women may not pay as much attention if they don't think you're available. Some people might even find it off-putting. I'm not saying you have to start dating women, you just can't flaunt your sexuality."

"I don't flaunt my sexuality George. And in case you've forgotten, I almost died coming out of the closet, I'm not gonna go back in, I can't-"

George cut Justin off. "-I understand, Justin, but this is your career. It's everything you've worked for all your life. Is it worth it to sacrifice it all?" Justin sighed, and checked his watch. "Shit, I gotta go, I'm late" he said, getting up.

"Promise me you'll think about it." George requested.

"...Yeah, I'll think it over."

Justin raced through the parking lot to the door where Molly told him to meet her. He yanked on the door, but of course it was locked. He was about to turn around to find another entrance, when he heard a familiar voice shout "HEY!" And there was his kid sister, yanking the door open. He couldn't help but think how adorable the little brat was in her pink poodle skirt and pigtails. After telling her as much, she dragged him into the auditorium. He couldn't get his conversation with George out of his head. It was the ultimate conflict; who he was versus what he loved. Perhaps it wouldn't be so bad to just avoid being public with his sexuality. What business was it of anyone's anyway?

He got through the play with relative ease; he had rehearsed with the musical director earlier and the music wasn't too hard. He whipped out the best of his country club manners when parents began to mob him and fawn all over him for his generosity and talent after the show.

The first moment he actually got to himself didn't last long. A deep, sultry voice crept over his shoulder, and he turned to see a tall, dark-haired man standing close to him. Jesus, this was the last thing he needed right now,

some self-proclaimed sex god hitting on him. Was the fact that he had noticed Justin supposed to flatter him or impress him or something? He responded as blandly as possible.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah" the stranger said, cocking an eyebrow. Christ, this guy was standing too close to him. Who did he think he was?

"Great." 'Go away' Justin thought. He refused to even look the guy in the eye, in case it gave him the idea that what he needed right now, in order to think objectively about his next career move, was some gay sex. Which was absolutely not the case. When the "conversation" lulled, he actually considered just walking away, but then he felt sorry for the guy, who was clearly not used to being ignored.

"So, you know someone in the play?" he asked, throwing the guy a bone (though probably not the one he wanted).

Oh man, he couldn't even figure out the name of the character his friend was playing. Justin couldn't help but smirk and mock him a little. He was slightly surprised to sense a smile coming from the other man, rather than utter humiliation. That caused him to start to look up at the man's face for the first time, when he felt a tugging on his arm. Mollusk, of course. That was his cue to exit.

"...It was...nice to meet you, Mr...." He held out his hand, and looked the man in the eye, as it was horrible manners not to look someone in the eye while introducing yourself. (God, he really was a little WASP at heart.) That was when his heart skipped a beat in spite of himself. He'd been able to perceive that the guy was hot from his absent glances at him, but he hadn't gotten a good look at his face until now. He really was beautiful, like Dorian Gray beautiful. His jawline, his mouth, beautiful...but it was his eyes. His eyes were hazel, with glints of green and so much secrecy...they were poetic. They were...Chopin's nocturne no.8 Opus 27 no. 2. That was it. He realized he had been holding onto "Brian Kinney" 's hand for a while without saying anything. He hastily introduced himself, blushing, before hurrying off with his sister.

Ohhhhh, this was not good. He couldn't do this right now, especially since the guy was far too arrogant for Justin to even begin to tolerate him, that much he was sure of.

For the rest of the week, he couldn't get that nocturne out of his head.

Chapter 3

Brian shifted through the files on his desk when Gardner came tapping at his door.

"What's up?" Brian inquired, not looking up from his paperwork.

Gardner held up a decorative black and silver card. "You got this from Jennifer today." He handed it to Brian.

"Then to what do I owe the honour of receiving it from you instead of Cynthia?" Brian asked, looking it over.

"Well," Gardner began tentatively, "Technically it was for both of us, but as you know, I have the dinner with David Sachs tomorrow night, so I'm unable to attend. I'm hoping that you're available..."

"Why the fuck do I have to go to a dinner party for realtors?" Brian groaned. Gardner sighed.

"It's an appreciation dinner for the clients of the realty company, Brian. Which means not only do we show our gratitude to them, but we also make nice business-y chit chat with their clients, who could subsequently become *our* clients. Unless you'd rather go to dinner with David Sachs..."

"No, no, it's fine, I'll go. Jennifer's a nice enough woman anyway, so it shouldn't be too torturous. *Shouldn't* being the operative word" said Brian, throwing Gardner a withering glare. Gardner just smiled and walked out of Brian's office.

"A business dinner?" Justin groaned despairingly.

"Honey, it'll be fine. There will be plenty of people to talk to, open bar, and it'll be over before you know it. My co-workers have been dying to meet my virtuoso son...and...I'll make you that strawberry rhubarb pie you love so much?" Justin frowned, but Jennifer knew that look of crumbling restraint. "...two of those strawberry rhubarb pies you love so much?"

"FINE." Justin sighed, smiling despite himself. Jennifer beamed and hugged him hard. "Those pies better be damn good" he grumbled, hugging her back.

Brian arrived at the banquet hall in his second-favourite armani suit. He was expecting something a bit smaller-scale than this, but he now saw the reason

Gardner wanted him to go so badly. It was a complete breeding ground for good business. He hadn't stepped three feet in the door when Jennifer was in front of him.

"Brian!" She greeted warmly, taking his hand and accepting his kiss on the cheek. "I wasn't sure if you'd come."

"Of course I came, Jennifer, I wouldn't miss this for the world." he replied with a charming smile.

"Well, I thought perhaps that you might be able to meet some of our important clients and make a few connections, actually. And, of course, you must meet my son, I brought him with me, he's around here somewhere."

"Ah yes, your son" Brian recalled. "The piano virtuoso-"

And within an instant, Brian felt like the biggest idiot at not making the connection before. Jennifer Taylor's pianist son...Justin *Taylor*. As if on cue, Justin strolled on up to his mother, saying he'd just popped off to the washroom, before freezing in horror at who she was speaking with.

"Justin, this is Brian Kinney. He's one of the partners at VanGard, one of our bigger clients. Brian, this is Justin."

Justin smiled stiffly, holding out his hand. "Mr. Kinney."

"Please, call me Brian" Brian insisted, grinning wryly. Justin said nothing, the cold smile frozen on his face.

Other than the awkward conversation following their introduction, Justin managed to avoid Brian most of the night. Brian didn't seem to be making a valiant effort at tracking him down either, and for a moment, Justin wondered why. He supposed that after his abrupt rejection the other night, Brian's ego had been somewhat bruised. Justin took some advantage of the open bar over the course of the night, of course not indecently...then again, it only took about 3 drinks to get him sloshed. As the alcohol slowly entered his system, Brian managed to get more and more attractive from across the room. Justin couldn't do anything but want, though, since even if he had the shamelessness to throw himself at Brian, this wasn't exactly the place. Meanwhile, there was still the conflict in the back of his mind of his anti-gay contract. He hadn't worked up the nerve to tell anyone yet.

He saw Brian excuse himself and head toward the front doors, which got his attention. Was he leaving already? No, he wasn't, otherwise he would've gotten his coat from the coat check. It was, after all, only March, and Pittsburgh wasn't exactly balmy. Intrigued and slightly drunk, he decided to see where Brian had disappeared to. He followed him out the front doors and found him on the front

step, smoking a cigarette and looking perfectly imperfect sitting cross-legged on the concrete stair in a designer suit. He walked up behind Brian and plunked himself down next to him on the step. Brian glanced at him, mild surprise in his eyes, before staring straight ahead into the street.

"Mr. Taylor" he greeted half-heartedly.

Justin didn't make pretense with formalities. "Hey, you're gay, right?" he said slightly slurring, sipping at his beer. Brian's mouth turned up at the corners, amused.

"That's correct."

"Mmk." Justin conceded. "So, I'm asking this from one gay man to another, with no underlying importance or anything, just because I don't really know you and as such have nothing to lose..."

Brian's brow furrowed. "...alright."

"So, say you had this amazing, amazing opportunity, the kind of thing that you wouldn't ever think of turning down, except in order to do it, you had to sacrifice something morally, but it wouldn't hurt anyone, except maybe yourself. If it involved sacrificing some of your moral beliefs for a little while, would you do it?" Justin glanced lazily at Brian, his beer bottle dangling from between his thumb and forefinger.

Brian paused. "So, your agent wants you to go back in the closet?"

Justin gaped. "How did you know that?"

Brian rolled his eyes. "I'm in advertising, I've seen this before, and I managed to piece the puzzle together what with all the indiscrete metaphors you threw at me. Plus it makes sense."

Justin looked at Brian confusedly. "What does?"

"Well, the other night when you blew me off so bluntly, I knew there had to be a reason." Brian smirked. Justin shoved him clumsily.

"You are such an arrogant asshole! You honestly think that there's no chance in the world that maybe I just wasn't interested in you?"

Brian shrugged. "There was a chance...but it didn't seem particularly likely."

Justin shook his head, laughing incredulously. "Prick. So, what do you think?"

Brian pursed his lips. "I always say...it's not lying if they make you lie. On the other hand, you shouldn't have to answer to anyone except who you're fucking when it comes to your sexuality. It's a tough call."

Justin slapped Brian's arm with the back of his hand, surprising himself at how tipsy he was after 2 and a half beers. "I know, right! It's nobody's business but mine, but I've worked for this kind of attention since I was what, 4? But in the meantime, I've struggled with my sexuality for about as long, and now I'm finally in a good place with it and they want me to go back in the fucking closet!"

"How old are you, Justin?"

Justin thought for a moment. "21."

"And it took you this long to be ok with your sexuality?"

Justin rolled his eyes. "No, it took me 'til I was about 16 to be ok with my sexuality, but after coming out at my senior prom, the quarterback of the football team hit me in the head with a baseball bat and put me in a coma for 2 months. So, it took a while to get over that."

"Shit."

"Yeah. I'm ok now though. I just...meh...maybe...and this dinner thing fucking sucks..."

Brian chuckled. "Agreed. Don't tell your mom I said that though."

Justin started playing a sonata on Brian's leg, lazily leaning his head on his shoulder. Jesus, he was drunker than he should've been. He turned into a complete shameless cuddlebunny if you put a few drinks in him. "She promised me strawberry rhubarb pie in order for coming here. I don't know if it was worth it or not."

Justin's light touch was driving Brian crazy. It was strange how a warm head on his shoulder and the sweeping, gentle touches on his leg could affect him more than a trick reaching around and grabbing his cock through his pants.

"I'd say it's worth it." he murmured.

"I am bored out of my mind, Brian Kinney." The heat from Brian's shoulder was starting to seep into Justin's skin, and he could feel that familiar stage of drunkenness that came directly after "cuddly Justin" coming on. *'I'd better be careful'* he thought. He sat up straight and pulled his hands away from Brian's leg. "I need to find something to do...or go home...what do you suggest?"

Brian was silent for a moment, still staring out indifferently into the road, though on the inside, he was surprised to find his leg and his shoulder missing Justin's touch. Well, there was one suggestion...

He shrugged. "We could go back to my apartment and fuck."

Justin thought. Or, tried to think. At that point, there wasn't much to think about, except, *'Fuck being careful.'*

"K."

Brian nodded. "I'll get our coats."

Chapter 4

Brian avoided Justin's glance, and stayed at the opposite end of the room. He convinced himself he wasn't playing games with Justin, but if he had been, this would've been the best way to tempt him. Make him think that Brian had forgotten all about him. He could feel the blond's eyes on him all night. That was a strange sensation. It almost made him slightly self-conscious, almost as if he gave a shit what Justin thought of him. It was getting harder and harder by the minute to not just go over there, sweep him out of the room and fuck his brains out in the men's room, so eventually he decided to just go out for a smoke. Within minutes, Justin was sitting next to him on the stoop. *'Works every time'* Brian thought. But instead of cupping Brian's crotch or breathing in his ear that he wanted to "get out of here", Justin just started talking to him. Like, in a conversation. That was new. And oddly enough, Brian didn't mind it. Usually, he'd just give some sarcastic remark, and drag the kid away to fuck him, but he seemed legitimately conflicted. And, Brian couldn't fuck him while he was feeling conflicted. He found himself having an actual conversation with this mysterious blonde that he'd never admit to thinking about after they'd parted the first time. The kid even managed to make him laugh. He was finding it so easy to talk to Justin; he even forgot for a moment how much he had wanted to fuck him. Then he was touching Brian. Gently, innocently...it was driving him crazy. He was playing some piano thing on Brian's fucking leg. Somehow, that was sexier than if he'd just zipped open Brian's pants and started blowing him. Brian turned his head to where Justin was resting his on Brian's shoulder, and saw in his eyes that concentrated, passionate look he'd seen the night of Hunter's play. That did him in. When Justin stopped touching him, immediately Brian felt its absence. *'Fuck it'* Brian thought, and invited Justin back to the loft. To his slight surprise, Justin accepted. Without missing a beat, he offered to grab their coats. It took all his self control not to run to the coat check.

Justin sat in the passenger seat of Brian's corvette, impressed by the vintage car. The "we're driving to my apartment so we can fuck" drive always felt a bit awkward to Justin. When Brian turned on the car, a CD had automatically turned on in the CD player.

"Is this Broken Social Scene?" Justin asked after a few minutes.

"Mmhmm."

Justin nodded. "I went to their concert last April, at the Music Hall..."

Brian smirked slightly. "I did the publicity for that concert."

Justin had been staring at Brian's hair for the past few minutes. It looked so soft, he had such an urge to run his fingers through it. Then he realized, since they were going to fuck, that wouldn't exactly be inappropriate. So he raised a hand and touched his fingertips to the side of Brian's head. Yep, it was soft alright. He ran his fingers through it, surprised at how such a tough, masculine character could have such soft, smooth hair.

"Really?" he said softly.

Blood had started to rush to Brian's head at Justin's touch. He did his best not to close his eyes at the talented fingertips running across his scalp, entangling themselves in his hair.

"Why the fuck are you playing with my hair?" He said, trying not to stutter. Justin didn't stop.

"Is it bothering you?"

Brian shrugged. Justin removed his hand from Brian's head, and placed it instead on his upper thigh. He really could be quite the slut when he wanted to.

"Is this better?" He moved his hand slightly up Brian's thigh. Brian fought to maintain control of the vehicle, and his breathing. What the fuck was this kid doing to him?

"If you want me to drive off the fucking road." He said huskily. Justin chuckled, removing his hand.

Within minutes, they pulled up in front of Brian's building. They got out, and Brian fiddled with his key to get in while Justin ran a hand down Brian's hip.

"Brian, you know this isn't anything, right? It's just meaningless sex."

Brian laughed out loud. "Don't worry. The words 'sex' and 'meaningful' don't belong in the same sentence when it comes to my sex life."

Justin grinned. "Well then hurry the fuck up."

In the elevator, Justin pushed Brian up against the grate and undid his shirt, sucking, licking and nipping at his neck. Brian leaned his head back, his hard-on growing and his breathing becoming heavier. He got out of the elevator and punched in the security code for the loft, sliding the door open. Brian had to feel those lips on his. They were driving him crazy the whole time they were talking, throughout the car ride, since they met...

He pushed Justin up against the steel sliding door and ducked his face down to his. To his surprise, Justin moved his face out of the way. Brian moved to kiss him again, and Justin placed a hand on Brian's chin.

"I don't kiss on the mouth."

Brian smirked. "The hell you don't." He moved to kiss him again. Justin grabbed him by the chin and steadied his face.

"If I wanna get fucked in the ass to get off, that's fine and it doesn't mean anything. Kisses are different. They mean something."

Brian tried to hide his disappointment, and shrugged. "Whatever." He undid Justin's tie and went to work on the buttons of his shirt. He walked backwards toward the bed, stripping Justin while Justin did the same to him. Justin kissed his neck and bit his chin lightly. Brian was holding onto his self control by his fingertips. He pushed Justin lightly onto the bed, and stopped to admire his body. God, his body. His silky white skin, that ass that had to be one of the nicest he'd ever seen. It was driving him crazy.

Justin's eyes grazed over Brian's body. He knew Brian was hot, but he never would have imagined that this was what was under the suit. He grabbed Brian around the hips and pulled him onto the bed so they were both kneeling. He ran his tongue up Brian's neck while Brian cupped Justin's ass with his hands. He directed Justin to turn around so he was on his hands and knees. Within minutes, Justin's face was smashed into the mattress, Brian sinking into him. Usually when Brian fucked a guy, it was just pounding toward the finish line, and anything until then was practically boring. This, on the other hand...this was amazing. It was like electricity, every touch a shock of pleasure. Brian was bent over Justin's back, licking and sucking the nape of his neck, eager for every contact of skin he could make. Justin was almost overwhelmed by the sensation of Brian's hot sweaty body covering him while his dick moved inside him. They were panting and moaning and crying out practically in unison, like their bodies were made to fit together like two pieces of a puzzle. Justin's orgasm hit him like a tidal wave, and he yelled and clenched around Brian's cock until Brian's orgasm ripped through him and he roared, both of them collapsing back onto the bed.

"Holy shh..." Justin gasped. Brian just laid next to him, panting. Once Justin caught his breath, he remembered the circumstances under which he was here. It meant nothing. It was just a fuck. He chanted this to himself in his head, and convinced himself that he couldn't lay there with Brian any longer.

"Can I use your shower?" he asked. Brian nodded and pointed to the bathroom door. Justin heaved himself up and padded into the washroom.

Brian was unsettled. That was different. That was very different. He was connected. Usually it wasn't about anything other than having an ass to sink into, regardless of who it belonged to. This time it wasn't just about the ass. It was about all of Justin. His hair, his skin, his voice, the way he moved...It was all a part of it. He was fucking connected. He could tell that this was dangerous, and told himself to put it out of his mind. *'Don't think about the sound of his voice. Don't feel any different than you normally would because you know that Justin is in the next room, naked and wet. Don't hope that everything turns out alright with his agent...FUCK.'*

Justin entered out of the bathroom, towel around his waist. He began picking up his clothes off the floor and putting them back on, one by one. Once he was dressed, he turned back to Brian with a smirk on his face.

"Well," he said, "thanks for...having me." He laughed slightly, smiling sheepishly. Brian couldn't help but suppress a grin. "Goodnight, Brian." Justin turned to walk out. The gears in Brian's head were turning.

"Justin." Justin turned back. "When's your next performance?"

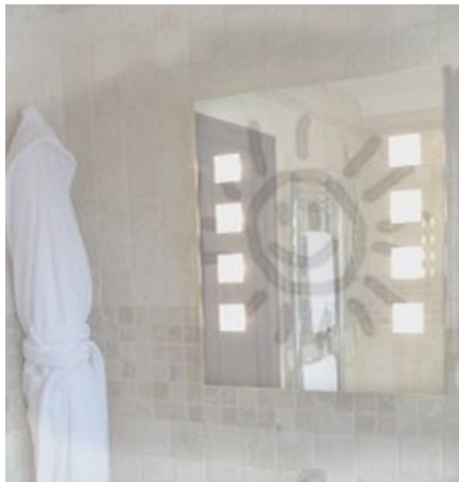
Justin cocked an eyebrow. "...Why? You wanna come?"

Brian scoffed. "I know some agents. Some that aren't complete assholes like whoever the fuck you've got. I can easily persuade them to go."

Justin smiled. "Heinz Hall, April 13th." He turned back to leave, then remembered something else. "Oh, um...let me know if you need tickets, I can get you some for free. You know, if you convince anyone to come."

Justin slid open the door and left, chanting as he descended the stairs, *'It meant nothing, it was just a fuck. It meant nothing, it was just a fuck. He's an arrogant prick with no interest in you. He's an arrogant prick with no interest in you...'*

Brian moseyed into the bathroom to clean himself up. He decided that now would be the best time to start the process of forgetting about Justin. He was headed into unfamiliar and dangerous territory with this guy, he could tell. That's when he saw it.



For whatever reason, he couldn't help but smile. "Sunshine." He muttered.

Chapter 5

For the weeks after Brian had seen Justin, he had, on the surface, assumed that he had seen the last of him. However, deep down he knew that he would see him again, he had to. It didn't even take that long, either.

Three weeks later, Brian was next in line at the Starbucks. He was lucky to have gotten there when he did, since now the line-up was nearly out the door, and the service was getting slower by the minute. He was trying to decide on a drink when *he* walked in and joined the line-up. Brian smirked, and Justin caught his eye and smiled wryly, giving a wave.

"Hey Sunshine." Brian called to from halfway across the room. "What do you recommend?" he asked, pointing to the menu.

Justin shrugged. "I always just get a vanilla latté." Brian nodded, walking up the counter and ordering. The barista handed him two cups of coffee, and Brian walked back to Justin, handing him one.

Justin let out an exasperated laugh. "You didn't have to do that."

Brian shrugged. "You can repay me by sitting with me so I don't look like a total loner. And don't act like you don't have time, I saved you at least 15 minutes of standing in that line." Justin smiled, and they walked over to an available table.

"So what'd you call me just now? Sunshine?" Justin asked, sucking a bit of coffee off the side of his finger.

Brian raised his eyebrows. "An homage to the artwork you left on my bathroom mirror."

"Oh, right," Justin laughed. "Sorry, I just have this thing with fogged up windows or mirrors, I have to draw on them. Must be the artist in me."

Brian nodded, rolling his lips into his mouth. "Well, it's actually good I ran into you, because I was gonna have someone call you, except I didn't have your number."

"Really? What for?" Justin inquired curiously.

"There are a few agents interested in you, they'll be at the concert, and I wanted to give you their names to make sure you talked to them. Hold

on, I've actually got their names..." he rifled through his briefcase and came up with a page with the agents' names on it, handing it to Justin. Justin peered at it, slightly astounded.

"Jesus, Brian...you didn't have to do this..."

Brian shook his head, shutting his briefcase. "It's nothing..."

"No, it's something." Justin smiled, before squirming uncomfortably. "Eugh, it's weird enough that I'm playing someplace that big, let alone that there will be people there interested in my playing besides my mom and my sister."

Brian furrowed his eyebrows. "What about your Dad? Not a big fan of you being a musician?" Brian recalled hearing his name a couple years ago when Jennifer was going through her divorce. Justin shook his head.

"More like not a big fan of me being a fag. We haven't really spoken since he kicked me out when I was seventeen. So I'd be surprised if he showed up." He took a sip of his coffee. Brian stared at Justin. It was a wonder the kid was so well-adjusted, after being abandoned by his father, and attacked... *'Strong little bugger'* he thought.

"Yeah, that's fathers for you." He offered.

Justin nodded. "I take it that your father's not a fan of your sexuality either?"

"No, he certainly wasn't. He died a few years back, but not before telling me before he died that I was the one who deserved to be dying, of AIDS or some shit." He raised his coffee in a mock-toast. It took him a moment to realize he'd never actually told anyone about that before.

"That's rough" Justin murmured.

"That's life" Brian countered. Justin nodded solemnly, before shaking his head.

"Well, this has turned into a rather heavy conversation." He laughed softly. Brian snickered as well.

"Ok, fine then. Tell me how you managed to get a gig at Heinz fucking Hall." Brian said, impressed.

"You make it sound so impressive" Justin laughed. Brian raised his eyebrows, as if to say 'isn't it?' "It's not like it's just me. I'm just the guest pianist for the Pittsburgh Sympony."

"*Just* the guest pianist for the Pittsburgh Symphony" Brian mocked. Justin buried his face in his hands, groaning.

"It's more fucking terrifying than anything else. I mean, I've never played a venue that big, and I don't even get to set foot on the stage until the actual concert. I mean, my first time in such a huge hall will be in front of hundreds of people, I won't even be able to adjust to the size..."

"Aww, Poor little genius" Brian chided, grinning.

"I'm serious!" Justin exclaimed, laughing. "The thought of walking across that stage, and sitting at that baby grand and playing fucking *Gershwin*, it's terrifying enough, but the fact that I won't be able to do it until the day of... there's nothing to prepare me for it, you know? Just believe me, it's a blessing, but it's also enough to induce cardiac arrest." Brian laughed. Jesus, he was hanging on this kid's every word. He gave a shit

that he was nervous. The only other person he'd give a shit for was Mikey, only he didn't also want to fuck Mikey. What the fuck was he doing?

"Well, you know you're gonna be fine. You wouldn't be asked to do it if you weren't fucking brilliant, would you?"

The corner of Justin's mouth tugged up in a lopsided smile, and he poked Brian's forearm on the table. "Thanks."

Brian looked down at where Justin had touched him, and caught a glimpse of his watch.

"Shit!" He practically jumped out of his chair, grabbing his briefcase. "I was supposed to be at the agency 5 minutes ago. I gotta run."

"Oh, ok. Run." Justin nodded. "Wait..." He pulled out his wallet and handed Brian a business card. "Give me a call? ...You know, if you have any questions or concerns about the concert."

Brian took the card, looking at him and trying to stifle the pansy-ass fluttery feeling in his chest. "Got it."

"It was good talking to you, Brian."

Brian couldn't think of what to say, so he just nodded. He started toward the door, before pausing, turning back, pulling out his own business card and placing it on the table without a word, before rushing out of the café. Justin grinned, then groaned.

"Oh, not good." He mumbled.

Chapter 6

Justin strode into the shop with the bold, loud sign out front. He didn't know the first thing about comics; he only knew about this place from the handful of times he'd headed down to Liberty Avenue out of sheer boredom. It seemed like the place to go for Jay's birthday. His former schoolmate and friend got off on all that geeky comic book shit; he'd constantly spout off new plot elements of his favourite storylines, or some shit about the latest thing he found online, "mint condition". Justin just pretended to listen most of the time.

The bell above the door jingled when Justin walked in, and he headed straight for the short brunette at the counter, cataloguing something or another.

"Um hi, I was wondering if you could help me; I have a friend who's really really into Justice League of America, and I wanna get him something, but I don't really know anything about that stuff..."

The brunette smiled. "Justice League? Absolutely, you know what we actually have is this vintage lunchbox, which would make a pretty cute gift, I know you don't I?" Michael asked abruptly. Justin looked at him blankly.

"Um...I don't think-" Justin was cut off by Michael snapping his fingers, remembering.

"You're the piano player, from Hunter's play. Grease? My foster son, Hunter, he was Kenickie."

"Oh!" Justin exclaimed, slightly surprised. "Yeah, that's me. Hunter's your foster son, eh?" Michael nodded enthusiastically.

"Yeah. You were really good. And that was so great of you, stepping in at the last minute like that."

"Oh, well." Justin shrugged. "Oh, hey um, if you're Hunter's foster father, you probably know Brian." he said, trying to sound non-chalant.

"Brian Kinney?" Michael cocked an eyebrow. "Yeah, he's my best friend. How do you know him?..." Michael smirked at Justin's slight blush, and continued, "...he asked, knowingly."

Justin was slightly flustered, but he couldn't stop grinning. "Uh, yeah...nice guy." Michael laughed.

"Yeah, a lot of guys seem to think so" he said wryly.

"Actually, he's helping me find a new agent. My current one wants me to go back into the closet, so I'm gonna let him go as soon as I find someone else."

"Wow. You must really be high-profile for Brian to agree to take you on as a client; he doesn't usually do representation for individual people, and certainly not for any low price."

"Actually, he's doing it pro-bono." Justin said, slightly high-and-mightily. Michael frowned, confused.

"That means free, right?" he asked.

"Yeah. I didn't even have to ask, he just volunteered. As I said, nice guy" Justin said, grinning shyly.

Michael furrowed his brow. He was concerned for this kid. He didn't want him getting the wrong idea about Brian's intentions, whatever they may be. He leaned across the counter on his elbows, speaking secretively, as if he and Justin weren't the only ones in the store.

"Listen, this may be kinda blunt of me, but I don't want you to get the wrong idea about Brian. He's not your potential partner, and he never will be." Justin looked taken aback and slightly offended. Michael flustered, realizing the harshness of what he'd said. "It's not you, it's not you at all. It's him. He doesn't do the boyfriend thing. In fact, he's pretty much the leader of the anti-love coalition, he's completely against it. Don't get me wrong, I definitely wouldn't put it past him to want to get you into bed, but he's not the type to go about it sideways; if he wants to sleep with you, he'll probably just say so."

Justin smirked knowingly at Mikey. "Well, I don't know about that..."

Mikey shook his head. "I do. Brian doesn't do love, romance, boyfriends, the whole bit. He never will. It's a matter of principle for him."

Justin folded his arms in front of him, slightly surprised by the audacity of this guy trying to convince him that Brian wasn't interested in him, as if he knew shit. "Well, he volunteered to go out of his way to find me a new agent, as well as treating me to coffee and a conversation about our childhoods, not to mention the fact that this is all after we've already fucked, so that's kind of out of the way..." Mikey stood, slightly slackjawed. "Listen, I know you don't mean anything by it. I don't doubt you know Brian way better than I do. But I can also tell when something is there. I'm not saying we're dating, or we ever will be, but there's something there."

Michael stared at Justin blankly, but with a hint of amusement dancing in his eyes. "Okay."

Justin nodded curtly. "I'll take the lunchbox, then."

"Fly, Fatass, fly!" Brian called out with a guffaw. Michael dissolved into giggles, passing the joint back to Brian.

"How come we always end up quoting stupid old movies whenever we get baked?" Michael chuckled.

"Mallrats is not fucking stupid!" Brian said indignantly, rolling over onto his back on the shag carpet. "It is the voice of a generation." Mikey snorted.

"Oh!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Guess who I had a conversation about you with yesterday?"

"Who's that?" Brian grunted.

"That blond kid...I didn't catch his fucking name...the piano guy."

Brian turned abruptly to face Mikey. "Justin?"

Mikey shrugged. "Sure. Anyway, apparently you're helping him find an agent?"

Brian felt slightly exposed at the thought of Mikey talking to Justin. It was as if they were two separate parts of his life that were never supposed to intersect. Mikey broke his train of thought when he continued.

"He seems to think you liiiiike him" he giggled. Brian's heart froze in his chest.

"Why the fuck does he think that?"

"I dunno. That's just what he said. He said that there was 'something there'" He exaggerated the last two words, snickering. Brian was seeing red. He felt like he'd just been accused of murder.

"That's fucking ridiculous. I don't get all mushy over some blond twink."

Michael snorted. "Yeah. That's what I told him. I wouldn't blame you though, he's fucking cute." Brian shook his head. Gorgeous, more like, he thought in the back of his mind. Justin's words, however, were directly in the front. Who the fuck did the kid think he was, acting like he knew exactly what was going on in Brian's mind? He had to remember to set things straight at the next chance.

11:34 p.m.

"Yeah?"

"Brian, it's Justin."

Brian paused tentatively. Mikey had left a mere half hour ago.

"What is it?"

"Um, I just wanted to check and see what the deal on the agents was, see if you needed any tickets or anything..."

"I don't need you to get any fucking tickets, we can afford the eight fucking dollars."

Justin was taken aback by the harshness of Brian's voice and his comment.

"Actually Brian, for your information, the tickets are forty dollars, it's the Pittsburgh symphony, not a fucking high school play. And what the hell crawled up your ass and died?"

"That's original. Did you make that up yourself?"

"Brian-"

"And just for the record, I don't know where you got the idea that we're some couple, because we're not."

"What?? Who the fuck said anything about-"

"When I offer a hand in the name of your career, it's because I'm doing you a fucking favour, not trying to be your fucking boyfriend. I'm not that desperate for a piece of blond boy ass."

Justin felt like he'd been slapped in the face. It took him several moments to collect himself and steady his breathing to reply calmly.

"Just so you know, Brian, I was never trying to get in your pants. You're completely entitled to think whatever you want to think about me, and I'll respect that. But as long as you feel that way, you can stay the fuck out of my career...cancel whoever you have booked, tell them not to come and don't call anybody else...and you can stay the fuck away from me."

Justin hung up.

Brian stared at the cordless phone in his hand, empty beam bottle dangling from the other, breathing heavily through his nose. He threw the phone across the room and it cracked the window. He walked up the stairs and collapsed onto his bed, staring at the ceiling.

Chapter 7

*"Message 5-Justin? Justin, just fucking pick up the phone every now and again. I just hope you know I'm not gonna call off any of the agents or anything. Just because I was a dick doesn't mean I'm gonna go out of my way to undo the arrangements I had made. I know you're pissed off and you probably hate me, and I wouldn't blame you, but your career shouldn't be what suffers. So, just forget the fucking grudge and call me so that I can help you. And stop leaving messages with my fucking secretary trying to cancel shit, it's stupid and if the agents found out about it, you'd fucking ruin your career. Just, call me.*click* End of message."*

Justin clicked the delete button yet again, sighing. He knew he was being a brat, not to mention a fucking idiot, but he couldn't bring himself to call Brian and let him do him any more "favours". He hadn't thought he was that attached, but this hurt more than it should have. He felt like such a fool; he'd had a pretty good impression of who Brian was from the beginning, but he'd let himself think that he'd misjudged him. Of course, if Brian was such a jerk, wouldn't he have stopped calling Justin by now? He didn't know what to think. He almost wanted to forgive and forget, but this just served as a perfect warning: Brian was not a good risk. He had the power to really hurt Justin, and this was just a taste of that. The combination of how hard and fast Justin had fallen for him and how heartless and uncaring Brian could be was a lethal mixture, a recipe for disaster. This was what Justin told himself every time his thumb hovered over the green button on his phone when Brian called. The count was at 7 times now.

This was a bad idea. Brian kept repeating that in his head as he made his arrangements, as he borrowed Mikey's cellphone in lieu of his own, as he thought about it throughout the day. This was a bad idea. It was way too desperate, way too involved, way too grand of a gesture. He really just wanted to make it up to Justin for being such a twat, and when he was

honest with himself, it was worth it. It wasn't anything to do with himself, or trying to be romantic or charming, he just didn't want Justin fucking up his own big break just because Brian was an asshole. Justin clearly wasn't all that interested in the agents, so Brian had gone through his brain about what was theoretically keeping Justin from giving the defining performance of his career, when it came to him. And now, it was 1:30 a.m. and he was sitting in the corvette outside of Justin's apartment. He took a deep breath and dialed Justin's number from Mikey's phone.

"Hello?"

"Justin."

"Who is this?"

"Come outside, I'm parked in front of your building."

"Brian?"

"Yeah. I've gotta talk to you."

"It's fucking 1:30 in the morning. And I don't want to talk to you."

"Yeah, you've made that pretty fucking clear. But I'm here now and I just need you to hear me out. It'll be worth it."

Justin scoffed. "It'll be worth it?? What the fuck does that mean?"

"Justin would you please just get your ass outside?"

Justin hung up, and the phone went dead in Brian's ear. He cursed, assuming Justin had just hung up on him and gone to bed or something. However, a few minutes later, Justin strode out of his building onto the street, and stopped in front of the passenger door.

"What is it?" he asked shortly. Brian leaned over and unlocked Justin's door.

"Get in."

Justin narrowed his eyes. "What, are you abducting me or something?"

Brian nodded. "Something like that. Would you just get in the fucking car?"

Justin rolled his eyes, opening the door and getting in. "Make it quick."

"You got somewhere to be?" Brian inquired.

Justin scowled at him. "My bed?"

Brian pulled out of his parking space and onto the dark road, before he began to speak.

"I'm a total shit sometimes. Most of the time. If that's not something you can handle, then you're probably right to shut me out of your life."

"What, is that supposed to be an ultimatum?"

"No, it's a fucking fact" Brian countered.

There was a silence, while Justin waited for Brian to continue, because there really wasn't much to say to that. He didn't know that Brian was trying to summon up every ounce of courage in him to swallow his pride and say the next bit of the speech carefully planned in his head.

"When I heard that you'd been talking to Mikey, and that you knew that I- that you thought that I had feelings for you, I freaked. I don't do the boyfriend thing, I make a point not to give a shit about anyone but myself and the handful of people I trust, because it's fucking dangerous. I have fucking issues. Daddy issues, childhood trauma, all that shit. It's a self-preservation thing, but it doesn't have anything to do with you, or however I may..." Brian winced as if the words tasted bad in his mouth. "...feel about you. Comprendé?"

Justin stared at Brian incredulously.

"So...was that an apology?"

Brian snorted. "That was the closest thing to an apology you'll ever get out of me."

Justin nodded. "Well, I suppose it's not necessary to completely hate your guts. So, that's the closest thing to forgiveness you'll ever get out of me." Brian suppressed a smile.

"Cool."

Justin glanced around. "So does this mean you'll take me home now? Where the fuck are we anyway?"

Brian glanced at him, slightly surprised. "What, did you think we weren't actually going anywhere?" He turned suddenly, down a dank back alleyway, before stopping the car and getting out. Justin got out tentatively.

"Oh God. This is the part where you kill me, isn't it?"

Brian just snickered. "Follow me."

He was counting doors along the wall, before stopping in front of one and pulling out a key. He unlocked the door and pulled it open, Justin following behind him.

The building had all of its lights turned off, so Justin couldn't see clearly where they were. He followed Brian through a few doorways, up some stairs, down a couple of hallways and finally into one particularly narrow hallway. Brian got a small flashlight out of his pocket and looked around on the walls, until he focused on a fusebox on the wall behind Justin.

"Brian, where the fuck are we?" Justin whined as Brian brushed past him and opened up the box.

"Patience, young fella." He searched around the different switches. "M3...SL...House. Here we are."

And with that, the hallway was flooded with light, and Justin saw that beyond the hallway was pulley systems and curtains, and he recognized it was a backstage area.

"What the..." he walked along toward the source of light, and found himself walking onto the biggest stage he'd ever been on in his life. He recognized it instantly. It was Heinz Hall.

Justin gazed around in awe at the enormous theatre, when he heard Brian walk out onto the stage behind him.

"Ta-dah" Brian said quietly with a modest hand gesture. He looked at Justin's awestruck face, nervously trying to evaluate his expression.

"How did you..." Justin shook his head. "...Do this?"

Brian looked him square in the eye, and said in a deep voice, "I'm a very powerful man, Justin."

Justin laughed hesitantly, his eyes still roaming around the ornate ceilings and chandeliers. "Jesus, Brian..."

Brian shrugged. "You said you wanted to practice..." he said quietly. He looked around. "It looks a lot bigger from onstage" he mused. "Well..." he gestured to the baby grand. "It's all yours, maestro." He walked down the steps from the stage and took a seat near the back of the orchestra. Justin walked slowly over to the piano and sat down, running his hands over the beautiful keyboard. As Brian sat down, Justin sat, his hands at his sides, not moving. Eventually, breathing deeply, he placed his hands on the keyboard, and with a thunderous smash that made Brian jump, he began to play a flurry of notes, his forehead creasing with concentration, and his hands dancing violently across the keys. And he had that look again. That look that infiltrated Brian's dreams, that he constantly thought about seeing, sweaty underneath him. The look that, when on occasion he had actually seen in front of him, had made him forget his own name. Before he knew it, Justin's hands had stopped moving, and he was practically panting for breath after the energetic passage of music.

"Is that all you got?" Brian called chidingly. Justin snickered.

"Well what would you request, Mr. Kinney? Perhaps something technically astonishing?"

Brian pondered for a moment, walking closer to the stage and sitting in the front row. "Something...astonishingly...astonishing."

Justin smiled hesitantly. He turned back to the piano and thought for a moment before he started to play. When he did, the room filled with a tangible mysterious beauty. Each note landed in the air like rain, to the point where Brian thought he might be imagining the thunderstorm he could hear outside. Justin's eyes were closed, and his mouth slightly open. The music wasn't elaborate, just simply, heartbreakingly beautiful. Brian was fucking hypnotized. After a few minutes, he found himself gravitating toward Justin, walking up the steps onto the stage.

Justin was lost in his favourite piece. Everyone always requested the most technically complicated pieces, in order to gawk at his skill, but no one ever asked him to play anything he loved. He loved playing piano, of course, but usually when he was alone, it was this music that he played. He only slightly came out of his daze when he felt a hand grazing the side of his head gently. He turned his head slightly toward the hand, and Brian's fingers softly touched his cheek. He stopped playing and closed his eyes to the sensation.

"Keep going. You're so fucking beautiful when you play" Brian murmured. He wasn't sure where these sweet words were coming from. It was as if he was under Justin's spell...his music, his skin, his eyes...

Justin let out a shuddery breath and continued to play. Brian kept stroking his hair, until eventually he settled on his knees and kissed Justin's neck, running his hands down the length of his arms. Justin's fingers stumbled on the keys.

"I c-I can't play chopsticks with you doing that." He huffed out. Brian stood up behind him and took a few steps so he was standing beside

Justin. Justin pushed the bench back and put his hands on his knees. He knew in the back of his mind that he should stop this now. He was getting in too deep, and so was Brian for that matter.

"Brian..." he muttered, not looking at him. He stood and turned, his back against the piano, but before he knew it, Brian was standing closely in front of him, his hypnotizing hazel eyes swimming with conflicting emotion, locked with Justin's. Justin struggled to remember why he was fighting this. Brian ran his hands slowly up and down Justin's arms.

"You..." he murmured into Justin's ear, "What you...do to me..." Justin fought to maintain control.

"Brian..." he said softly, trying to emphasize a note of warning in his voice.

"I want...fuck, I want to kiss you so bad, Justin." Brian gazed into Justin's eyes, seeking some sort of permission. He slowly lowered his mouth to Justin, who, breath shuddering, turned his head gently, avoiding Brian. Brian hovered, searching his face, and when Justin stopped to look at Brian's lips, mere inches away from his, he knew he was done for.

And when their lips touched, the world stopped turning.

Justin's legs gave out and he collapsed against the keyboard of the piano, letting out a messy jumble of notes that went unnoticed over Brian's tongue grazing over his bottom lip.

Brian stopped having coherent thoughts the moment that Justin's lips were on his for the first time. They were perfection, like a concentration of all the hypnotic beauty he'd seen in Justin since the first time he saw him. He was so dizzy, it felt as if their lips and tongues dancing and tangling were the only thing keeping him on his feet. Their hands roamed, Brian pressing Justin to him as tightly as possible, Justin's arms thrown around him. Neither of them remembered the other one breaking the kiss; one

moment their lips were touching, the next, they were breathing against each other's faces, nose to nose, eyes closed.

"Brian..." Justin breathed.

"Fuck." Brian huffed out quite eloquently.

"It's time to go." Justin said. Brian felt the unknown implications of that statement pull on the edges of the dream that had settled upon him. He nodded and pulled away from Justin, walking across the stage to the exit. Justin followed behind him. They stopped under the awning when they saw the rain pouring. Justin turned to Brian. He placed a hand on the stage door.

"Thank you...for this. I..." he shook his head. "Just, thank you."

Brian nodded, then gestured toward the car. "Come on."

They dashed through the rain to the car. The car ride was made in silence, as they both pored over the meaning of that kiss. Brian knew he'd completely fucked everything up. He'd plunged in too deep, so now he couldn't get out, and what's more, he'd gone too far and driven Justin away. Justin reacting the way he did, demanding that Brian take him home...that was all Brian needed to hear. It was over, whatever it was. And now it was up to him to try and get himself back on the right track.

He pulled up outside Justin's building, the rain still pouring. He turned to Justin, who was staring at his hands, a small delicate smile playing at his lips.

"Well, goodnight." Brian said simply. Justin looked up abruptly, the smile gone from his face.

"You're...you're coming in, aren't you?" he asked, slightly hurt and confused. Brian looked at him, and couldn't help but smile with relief. Justin grinned, threw open the door and darted through the rain to the door. Brian got out and ran after him.

Chapter 8

Justin unlocked the door to his apartment and practically stumbled in, shedding his jacket and dropping it on his kitchen counter. Brian walked in slowly behind him and closed the door. He glanced around at the studio apartment, with hardwood floors, exposed brick and a mattress on the floor in the corner under the window. It wasn't exactly out of Interior Design Magazine, but it was so Justin. He couldn't ever remember being nervous before sex, not even his first time. But he knew that in this moment, there was more on the line than he'd ever willingly put there before. Justin had his back to him, putting down his coat and taking his keys and wallet out of his pockets and putting them on the counter. Brian stood in front of the door feeling slightly out of place in Justin's rather bohemian apartment.

"Nice pla-"

Before he could blink, Justin had him pinned against the door and his lips pressed against his. Brian felt a shiver run through him and quickly responded, threading his fingers through Justin's hair. The rain soaking Justin's hair ran past Brian's fingers and down his wrists, and he could feel droplets running down the side of his head from his own hair. Brian would have thought that the novelty of Justin's lips sucking and biting and caressing his would have worn off a bit since the first time, but it was just as powerful and helplessly addictive. He ran his hands down the side of Justin's head, down to his rain-soaked, ice-cold t-shirt and peeled it off his slight frame. He ached in the moment that their lips parted to lift Justin's shirt off of him, and he made damn sure to re-connect them the second his shirt was off. Justin's agile fingers were quickly undoing the buttons on Brian's shirt, having already ditched his zip-up sweater, and within seconds his shirt was gone as well. The cold of the rain on their skin contrasted with the heat of their bodies as they made as much physical contact as possible. Brian grabbed Justin around the waist and pressed him against him, lifting him up onto his toes. Within another minute, they had gotten rid of their pants, and Justin wrapped his fingers in Brian's leading him over to the bed. He pulled off Brian's underwear without breaking the kiss, and Brian returned the favour, humming with anticipation into Justin's mouth. Justin finally broke the kiss, and looked into Brian's eyes. Brian saw Justin's eyes hooded with lust mere inches away from his, his breath coming out heavy from between swollen lips, and he felt himself being pulled in, like an undertow, the real world getting further away as he disappeared into the depths, his only thought a single word ...

Justin.

Justin moved down onto the bed, pulling Brian down with him. Brian practically pounced onto him, kissing and licking at the ivory skin between his neck and his ear. Justin let out a breathy sigh, and they both moaned softly when their cocks brushed for the first time. The rain continued to pound against the window while the two men found warmth and comfort in their own safehavens. Justin reached blindly under the pillow and pulled out a condom, pressing it into Brian's hand. Their hair soaked Justin's pillowcase and their damp bodies slid against each other. Justin moved to turn over, but Brian held onto his shoulder to stop him. He didn't want to have to stop kissing him just because they were fucking. Justin's legs wrapped around Brian's back and Brian kissed him slowly as he entered him, eliciting a moan from both. It was as if the world stopped past their skin and heat, and they existed solely in each other, the only other noise besides their gasps and moans being the smattering of rain against glass and the occasional thunderclap. Lightning lit up their skin, and made Justin's hair more golden for a split second. Their sweat mixed with rain, dripping down their bodies and into their eyes and past their fingertips.

When it was over, Brian was on top of Justin for a few moments, Justin enjoying the pressure of Brian's body pinning him to the mattress. When he rolled off, Justin mind immediately switched into real-world mode. *Brian Kinney doesn't believe in love. Brian Kinney doesn't do boyfriends. Would he run? Would he gather his clothes and waltz out the door?* Justin's thoughts were interrupted by an arm snaking around his waist and pulling him against Brian's chest. And that was all it took to permanently quiet the thoughts running around his head, just a blanket being pulled over the both of them, and Brian's breath softly touching his face.

Brian had stopped thinking about everything too. He wasn't thinking about how he had never stayed over at another guy's place after sex since he'd had his own apartment, or how he'd never felt so safe while he was in so much danger.

Chapter 9

Brian woke up to realize that he was not in his own apartment. It took him a moment to remember exactly why, and when he did, he was hit with a feeling of dread. He'd completely gone too far the night before, given Justin a part of him that he couldn't get back, and now he was in the boy's apartment and couldn't come up with any graceful way to get out. He stared worriedly out the window through which sunlight was streaming. He felt the slightly moist warmth of Justin's hand on his hip, the young blonde lying behind him. He slowly turned over to face Justin, and saw him, eyes closed, hair spread over the pillow, breathing evenly. He was easily the most beautiful thing Brian could ever remember seeing. In the moment his eyes fell upon Justin's sleeping form, it was as if all of the apprehension that had flooded him moments ago just melted away.

What do you do when the person who makes you feel safe is the one who could hurt you the most?

Brian gently ran a hand through Justin's hair, causing Justin to shift and murmur slightly, smiling softly in his sleep. Brian gave serious consideration to calling in to work just so he could stay here and watch him. Within moments, Justin's eyes fluttered open, and it didn't even occur to Brian to stop. Justin smiled and stretched like a cat.

"Morning." he murmured, gazing into Brian's eyes. Brian settled down so that their noses were practically touching.

"Mmm...morning." he replied. He had been hoping that Justin would wake up soon, because at the first sight of those lips, he wanted to kiss them again. So he did, softly and slowly. Justin slung a leg over Brian's and placed a hand on his chest as they kissed lazily, basking in the morning sun. Brian didn't know what this was, it wasn't anything he'd done or felt before, but he knew it was far too late to dismiss it. Their lips parted, and Brian laid his head back onto the pillow, studying Justin's face. His brow was furrowed, and he was biting his lip.

"What?" Brian inquired. Justin smiled wryly and shook his head.

"What're we doing here, Brian?" Justin said hesitantly. Brian blinked and took a deep breath.

"You ask me as if you expect me to have a clue" he laughed hesitantly. Justin laughed for a moment, then frowned again.

"I mean, I'm not stupid, Brian, I know I'm not your boyfriend..."

Brian glanced away, suddenly slightly ashamed of his devout beliefs in anti-love. His gaze fell upon the clock. *10:22 a.m.* 11 a.m. stuck out in his head. It took him a moment to remember why; the meeting with Leo Brown.

"Shit!!" He practically jumped out of bed and started grabbing his clothing.

"Brian, where are you going?" Justin said confusedly, sitting up.

"I have to go." He said hurriedly. He was on his way to the door when he heard Justin's voice ring out in the apartment.

"So this is how it is, then? You come and go as you please, take as much as me as you like and then leave?"

Brian had stopped dead in his tracks and was looking at Justin, mouth agape.

"Brian, I'm not a total pussy and I don't get all lovey dovey over very much, but I'm confused over this and I feel like I could get hurt pretty easily here. I'm not gonna go through any more of this if I don't know for sure that you actually give a shit about me. If I don't really...know what I am to you."

Brian stared at him, totally shocked and disgusted. Here he was, laying everything on the line for this kid that he hadn't known a month, giving up everything he believed in, and he was the one being accused of not giving a shit? He was the fucking bad guy here, the one who would be hurting Justin? Taking as much of him as he pleased, like some meaningless fuck? How could he-*No, you know what? no-*

"Fuck you, Justin" he hissed, before storming out, slamming the door behind him, leaving Justin wearing a shocked expression.

Justin sat in bed, staring at the door in shock after Brian had left. He couldn't even figure out what had just happened. He thought he should be hurt or angry at Brian for speaking to him like that. He had heard Brian being snide and insensitive, but never just saying anything as simple as "fuck you" or sounding so genuinely angry. All he could think about was, what had he done to make Brian act like that? His request hadn't been that ludicrous, had it? He deserved to know that Brian cared about him before he jumped headlong into complete vulnerability. After all, Brian was a self-proclaimed non-romantic, non-caring, lone wolf kind of guy. Except...that whole Heinz Hall thing had been pretty romantic, the repetitive calling, and asking permission before kissing him, all of it had been pretty out-of-character for him, frighteningly out of character...and who could argue that he didn't care about Justin when he had gone so far against his own self?

And Justin basically accused him of using him, and not caring. After he had even stayed the night and held him and kissed him. Justin held his head in his hand.

"Oh God.

What did I just do?"

Brian's day had gone disastrously. From the moment he slid open his loft door, all he wanted for companionship was a bottle of beer. Whatever this shit show with Justin had been for the past little while, it was pretty safe to say it was over. Justin assumed that Brian was just being shitty old Brian, and Brian had basically gone and proven it. What's more, he didn't even regret it. This wasn't like that random drunken outburst when he'd said a bunch of shit he didn't mean. He

meant it this time. Justin had dismissed him even when he'd completely succumbed to him. he may as well just start the recovery process now; it was inevitable that sooner or later, it would crash and burn, may as well be sooner. He tried to figure it was better this way, since when he faced it, he knew that there was no way he would've been able to get out on his own.

He finished off the last quarter of a bottle of beam, the alcohol swirling in his veins, not doing anything to curb his thoughts of Justin. In fact, it just seemed to have the opposite effect. It had made him maudlin and depressed, and now he was dwelling on lesbianic thoughts of "how could Justin just think that, after everything?" He rose to get another bottle of Beam, when someone started knocking at the door. Whoever it was, they had some nerve coming to his loft when he was this drunk, he thought fuzzily. He trudged over and slid the door open to reveal a familiar angelic blonde looking apprehensive.

"Hi."

Brian gave him the sourest look he could muster, then practically stomped back into the loft, but leaving the door open for Justin. Justin noticed the empty bottle of Beam dangling out of Brian's hand.

"Oh...you're drunk." he said with utmost eloquence.

"You're observant." Brian countered bitterly. He flopped down onto one of the bar stools. Justin took a careful few steps into the loft.

"Um...I just came by to say, I shouldn't have said what I did-"

"I mean, how fucking unobservant do you have to be, Sunshine?" Brian blurted out. "Not to mention, fucking self-centered..."

Justin's eyes widened indignantly. "Self-centered?"

Brian narrowed his eyes at him. "God, you think this whole thing is all about you. I'm just this random guy, this secondary character who waltzes into your life and does all of this for shits and giggles?" Brian gestured grandly with his arms. "There's no way that this could completely fuck up my life, that I could be doing something that could...that could..."

Justin could feel the guilt burning in the backs of his eyes, weighing down his chest. He said Brian's name softly, but Brian quickly cut him off.

"-You're not the only person who could get hurt here, you little twat. I've never even fucking done this before, you realize that, right? This isn't me. This is the opposite of everything that I've ever wanted or believed, this is completely...not....safe for me. I don't trust people, but I'm on the verge of trusting you, and willingly, *willingly* giving you the fucking power of hurting me,

and this whole time, you think I'm just trying to get in your ass! You have the fucking nerve to ask me what you are to me, as if I'm gonna say you're just a good fuck or something...That's not the fucking question. I mean, fucking...." Brian paused and finally looked at Justin, who was staring down at the floor, breathing carefully to avoid the tears from coming. Brian let out a huge sigh, and said disgustedly,

"What am *I* to *you*?"

Justin didn't reply. He just continued to stare at the floor. Brian could feel his anger building at Justin's silence. He repeated his question.

"What am I to you??"

Justin was trying to process whether the danger of the situation was really worth what he wanted to say. He continued to stare at the floor, until Brian got up and walked to the door, pulling it open wider.

"Get out."

Justin stood still, finally raising his head, tears glistening in his eyes, his jaw clenched determinedly.

"I said, get the fuck-"

"Chopin's nocturne no.8 Opus 27 no. 2."

Brian stared at Justin confusedly. "What the fuck are you talking abo-"

"Chopin's nocturne no.8 Opus 27 no. 2. That's what you are to me, that's what you've always been. I saw it in your eyes the first moment I met you." Brian was baffled. He didn't know what it meant, but he could tell it was something big. "It sounds ridiculous now, but it's my favourite nocturne. It has been since I was 12, only I could never interpret it or figure out what it meant. But I saw it in you from the beginning, and just like that I understood." Brian's heart was pounding. Justin knew that at this point, there was really nothing left to risk, so he tried to translate what he was saying so Brian may understand. He walked up to Brian until their faces were inches apart, and looked him directly in the eyes.

"I'm in love with you, Brian." He said softly and deeply. "And I'm scared shitless."

He turned to walk out. The ball was in Brian's court now; there was nothing left he could do or say. As he crossed the threshold toward the elevator, he felt a warm, slightly shaking hand grab his wrist painfully tightly and pull him back. He was turned to face Brian. His jaw was clenched, and he was breathing slightly

more heavily through his nose. There was something so powerful radiating from his gaze, that could have been interpreted as anger, fear, passion, lust, all of which were in there, along with a million other feelings that didn't have names yet. Justin was mesmerized, his breath caught in his chest. He waited for Brian to do something, because he really didn't know what was going to happen next. Frankly, neither did Brian. He just knew he couldn't let Justin walk out after that revelation. That he was in as deep as Brian was...that for the first time, Brian realized that they were completely on the same page. That Justin had managed to figure it all out. All he could think to do, all he could manage to say, was nod. Nod slowly at Justin and hope that he got it so he wouldn't have to try and say what he couldn't.

Justin got it. He was shocked that Brian hadn't thrown him out on his ass or run away. He had thought that if Brian ever returned his feelings, it would be a relief, make things easier. But now, he was lost, he was confused, he was scared...

And he had never been more turned on in his fucking life.

He moved closer to Brian, trying to evaluate how he was reacting. He moved his mouth close to Brian's ear, and breathed his name.

"Brian...." he felt Brian take a sharp breath. He took that as enough of a signal.

"Fuck me."

He wasn't sure when Brian had grabbed him by the waist and shoved him, but one minute he was standing in front of him, and the next he was slammed against the steel sliding door, Brian completely pressed against him, his tongue down his throat. Their teeth, tongues and lips clashed clumsily as they consumed each other, fingers removing clothing, searching for more exposed skin. They ground their hips together and gasped into each other's mouths. Brian grabbed Justin behind the neck and pulled him over to the futon on the floor and pulled him down with him. Justin was on top of him, pinning Brian's wrists to the floor and sucking and licking up his chest and stomach. Brian growled his name, making Justin's cock leak and eliciting a moan, before he moved back up to kiss him fiercely. Brian reached behind him under the futon for the hidden condoms and lube, and prepared them both. He sat up so that his chest was pressed to Justin's, and Justin used Brian's shoulders as leverage to lower himself onto his cock. They both let out a groan, panting and pausing for a moment, before Justin began to rock back and forth on Brian's cock. Justin let out a strangled cry as Brian buried his face in Justin's neck, repeating his name as if begging for something he already had. Justin rose to his knees so that he could fully slam down on Brian's shaft, hitting himself in the prostate and eliciting a loud cry from himself and Brian. He did it again and again, faster and faster, and they both knew this wasn't going to last long. Justin's arms were tight around Brian's neck, and Brian craned his neck to kiss Justin, moaning into each other's mouths.

When Justin least suspected it, Brian grabbed him around his waist and flipped him onto his back, and started pounding into him in earnest, provoking phrases like "fuck" and "oh God" from them, interlaced with each other's names, until it all became explosions of light behind their eyes and everything around them was completely lost in oblivion.

Brian wrapped his arms tightly around Justin, clinging to him, and whispered his name. Justin kissed all over Brian's face, and collapsed back onto the cushion, both panting and breathing onto each other's faces.

After a moment of reveling in each other, Justin smiled. Brian cocked an eyebrow at him, but couldn't help reciprocating just slightly.

"This isn't so bad, now, is it?" Justin mumbled shyly. "We can do this without all the drama and self-conflict, can't we?"

Brian chuckled, and kissed Justin's forehead, stroking his arm.

"I suppose we could give it a shot."

Justin snorted. "How romantic."

"That's me."

Chapter 10

Justin woke up feeling slightly stickier than usual, and on a lumpier surface than he was used to. Not to mention, wrapped up in the arms of a man that definitely wasn't a usual fixture in his apartment. He felt cool breath brushing his cheeks and eyelashes and opened his eyes to find himself inches away from Brian's sleeping form. As steely and break-hearts-take-names Brian kept himself during the day, Justin took pleasure in how gentle and innocent Brian looked while asleep. He nestled himself closer into Brian's arms and studied the straight line of his nose and where his eyelashes brushed his cheeks. He wondered how he got here, what he did right along the line to find himself in the arms of-

"Stop fucking staring at me."

Brian kept his eyes shut, but smirked, burrowing his face into the fouton. Justin blushed and grinned.

"Sorry, it's just a little hard not to."

Brian groaned, but threw a leg across Justin's and flopped on top of him, kissing where his neck met his shoulder, which he decided was his favourite place on Justin. Well, besides the obvious, which Brian was about to rediscover.

They fucked slowly and rhythmically, trying to make contact with every inch of skin. Afterwards, Justin tentatively rested his head on Brian's shoulder as they lay on their backs, and Brian allowed it. Justin started practicing his right hand part of Rhapsody In Blue on Brian's stomach lazily, humming the tune. Brian couldn't help but smile, and couldn't help but think how many times he couldn't help but smile when he was around Justin. Then he was suddenly struck by a realization that caused him to exclaim out in complete and utter shock and surprise.

"Hmmpf."

Justin turned his head and stopped his finger's patterns on Brian's ribcage. "Hmmpf?"

Brian tucked his lips between his teeth. "So this is 4 times now, right?"

It took Justin a moment to clue in. "4 times...oh. Yeah. Why?"

Brian shrugged. Justin poked his ribs. "Why?"

"That's just the most I've ever..."

Justin paused, then raised his eyebrows in realization. "With one person?"

Brian nodded softly.

"Really?? Why?"

"Personal motto of never more than once, never letting it get boring or tedious..."

Justin stuck out his bottom lip. "So has it gotten boring or tedious yet?"

Brian shrugged again. "A little."

Justin jabbed him in the ribs, and Brian laughed.

"Asshole!" he exclaimed. He continued poking Brian in the ribs and stomach, and quickly learned how ticklish Brian really was.

"You're right, we're not remotely hot or amazing together." he continued to tickle Brian, who was gasping for breath. "We're monotonous, tedious, boring, are we?"

Brian tried batting Justin's hands away, to no success, so he tried a different tactic, and pulled Justin down to him by the neck and silenced him with a searing

kiss. He rested his forehead against Justin's.

"Not this. Never this."

"S'more like it." Justin murmured against Brian's lips. He glanced at the clock behind Brian's head.

"Shit, I need to take a shower." He stumbled off of the fouton. Brian stared after his retreating form.

"You have somewhere to be at 2 a.m.?"

"Bed. The concert's tomorrow. So is it cool if I use your shower?"

"I dunno, I think that may be overstepping some personal boundary."

Justin grinned. "Then I guess you won't mind that I'm sleeping in your bed tonight."

Brian pictured a warm-skinned, fresh-smelling sunshine sleeping against him under his sheets, and smiled peacefully.

"I guess not."

Chapter 11

The electronic discord of Justin's cell phone jingling woke them both from their sleep. Both of their limbs were weighed down, whether it be worn out from the night's activities, or in Brian's case, from the vast amount of alcohol he had consumed. Brian slowly opened one eye and saw Justin blearily looking around for his phone, mumbling something to the tune of "motherfucking piece of shit..." Eventually he paused to inquire to the room, "where the fuck is my phone? I had it in my jacket pocket..." Brian looked around and saw Justin's jacket lying on the ground near the fouton. He blindly pointed toward it, flopping back down onto the pillow. Justin rolled out of bed defeatedly.

"Shit!"

He padded naked across the loft to his jacket, giving Brian ample view of his form, which he took full advantage of. Justin bent to dig through his jacket and fished his phone out of the pocket, finally answering it. Brian drifted slightly back to sleep, until he heard Justin's exclamation.

"What??"

Brian looked up. Justin was pacing back and forth, pressing the palm of his hand to his forehead. "Mom, I don't understand...so...damage? Like, are we talking,

singed curtains, or the building a pile of ashes?" there was a pause while Brian's heart beat sped up. "Yeah, I know. Because I wasn't at home last night. I didn't hear my cell phone. I was...busy. No, I'm not at home now. No, Jesus, Mom, not a random hookup, and please please never ask me that again. No. I'm...at Brian's. Brian. Kinney. Yes, Mom. Mom, with all due respect, that's really none of your business. Listen, can we just talk about this later? Ok. *sigh*. Love you too." Justin snapped his phone shut, and Brian instantly pretended he hadn't been listening to the whole thing. Justin stomped back up the stairs, and Brian raised an eyebrow sleepily at him.

"What was that about?"

It took him a moment to notice that Justin looked genuinely upset, not that it really surprised him after the half of the conversation he'd heard. Justin crawled back onto the bed and sat semi-cross-leggedly in front of Brian, looking defeated.

"The concert's been postponed until later notice."

Brian's blinked. "What? Why?"

Justin shook his head disbelievingly. "Apparently some fucking punk-ass bitch teenagers broke in and set fire to the curtains."

"I thought those things were supposed to be fire-proof."

Justin snorted. "Not when you soak them in gasoline."

Brian hung his head. "Shit. So, what are they gonna do?"

Justin sighed heavily. "Repair the damages, and if they can do it in good time, they'll reschedule the concert. If not..."

Justin flopped back onto the bed frustratedly, muttering "fuck..." Brian looked at him for a moment, then touched his arm.

"It's just a concert..." he started slightly uneasily.

"Just a concert?!?" Justin nearly shouted. Brian immediately regretted his choice of words. "This isn't just a normal concert Brian, it's fucking Rhapsody in fucking Blue! I've been preparing this piece for a year now, and been wanting to play it since I was 13. This is a big fucking deal and now it might not even fucking happen!" He let out a monumental sigh.

Brian tried not to stutter. "I-I didn't know..."

"No, I'm sorry." Justin shook his head, then moved over to Brian and kissed him on the forehead twice. "I'm being a total bitch, it's just so...disastrous, you know?" He laid staring at the ceiling for a minute, and Brian turned his head to look at him.

"You gonna be alright?" he asked tentatively, trying not to sound too caring.

Justin pursed his lips. "Yeah...I mean, no, but....yeah. I'll be fine. I should probably go and talk to the artistic director and see what he thinks I should do." He lifted himself from the bed and started to get re-dressed.

"Yeah, I should probably get to the office, I was only supposed to be there an hour ago." Brian muttered, getting up and going to the bathroom.

Once they were both dressed, Brian strode into the middle of the loft up to Justin.

"I'm sorry this whole thing had to be such a killjoy, Brian. It *was* an amazing night before all of this." Brian adjusted the lapels of Justin's jacket attentively.

"Yes, you should be ashamed of yourself for somehow miraculously causing all this shit to happen, Sunshine. Selfish asshole." He gave a small lopsided smile. Justin grinned defeatedly, pressing his forehead into Brian's shoulder.

"Eughhhh..."

Brian circled his arms around Justin. "Mmhmm. Do you need a ride anywhere?" Brian inquired.

"No, I just have to head up to the theatre, or what remains of it. It's only a couple blocks away, and I could use the walk."

Brian nodded. Justin was staring at his shoes dejectedly. Brian pressed a finger underneath Justin's chin to push his face to his, gazing into his eyes. He pressed a small, sweet kiss to the lips where, though he'd never even think it out loud, he'd found home.

"Later, Sunshine."

"Later."

Brian had been getting that numb blankness behind his eyes from staring at a

computer screen too long when his intercom buzzed him out of a near coma.

"Brian, Jennifer Taylor is here to see you." Cynthia said matter-of-factly.

Brian raised an eyebrow. "Send her in" he said hesitantly.

Seconds later, Jennifer strode into his office, and sat herself across from him.

"Jennifer! To what do I owe this pleasantly unexpected visit?" Brian drawled in his most charming voice, making an extra effort since he knew she was aware what he had been doing to her son's ass for the past couple of nights.

"I hear you're fucking my son."

Jennifer always was straight to the point. Brian felt his throat nearly close up. He'd never been ashamed of his sex life, but then again this particular situation had never arisen.

"Well...if that's what you kids are calling it these days..." Brian started carefully. Jennifer sat forward in her chair.

"This isn't a joke, Brian. Now, I've known you a long time, and I like you. I do. But I've known Justin longer and I like him more. And I've been made aware of your...customs in your personal life, and I don't have a problem with them because they don't concern me, and are none of my business. But when it involves my son, it's my business, and I know that he does not fit into that world."

Brian stared at her. Jennifer held up her hand and nodded reluctantly. "I know, I know, I'm not completely naive. My son's not a complete saint...*sexually*" she cringed, and Brian tried his hardest not to laugh. "But I know him, Brian, and I can tell when he's getting in deep. He cares about you, Brian, a lot. And as much as I respect you, I know you well enough to know that you can never give him what he needs. He's been through enough in his life, especially when it comes to who he fucks and who he loves. He doesn't need to get his heart broken now, of all times. And I know that's what's going to happen if you humour him enough to let this go on any longer. So please, just stay away from him. If not for his sake, for mine."

Brian looked from her face to his desk. He realized, she was right. This wasn't something he'd ever done before, and it wasn't a safe bet. He didn't know how to go about not hurting someone in this situation, and when it came down to it, he was Brian. He was going to fuck this up. And when he did, he'd hurt Justin. He couldn't do that. He looked at Jennifer and realized that she was completely right. He took in a great breath and nodded curtly. She let out a breath that neither realized she'd been holding, and reached for her purse.

"I have a meeting in 5 minutes, Jennifer, if you'll excuse me."

He got up from his desk and left her sitting across from it.

Chapter 12

Justin had agreed to having lunch with his mother, despite the fact that there were two definite topics of conversation, and he wasn't looking forward to either of them. As they sat down, Jennifer began with the less uncomfortable one.

"I'm sorry about what happened with Heinz Hall, sweetie" she said, putting a hand over Justin's on the table.

"Yeah, me too. But, if they can get everything rebuilt in time, they'll just reschedule, so I'll just have more time to prepare" Justin simplified, taking a sip of lemony water.

"But if they don't-"

"If they don't, there's nothing I can do. So can we talk about something else?" Justin said pointedly, then immediately regretted his request.

"Alright" Jennifer said boldly. "How about we talk about this situation with Brian Kinney?"

"Eugh. Ok, Mom? It's really none of your business. Yeah, me and Brian have something going on, but we haven't got it all figured out, so I'm not in a position to talk about it."

"Justin, I'm not naive. You don't have to try and come up with some sort of explanation, I'm aware that at your age, it isn't uncommon for young men to be promiscuous-"

"Ugh, Mom-"

Jennifer continued forcefully, "-but just because I understand doesn't mean that I approve of this. Justin, he's twelve years older than you, first of all."

'That much?' Justin thought, but shook the thought from his head. "Mom, that's irrelevant. Besides, it's not as if we're just fucking. We're something, ok? Something significant."

"That's what I was afraid of" Jennifer sighed. "Justin, he's a complete hedonist. He sleeps around, he takes drugs, and he certainly doesn't date men or even care about men, at least not in a romantic sense."

"He cares about me, Mom." Justin said evenly and firmly, looking his mother in the eye.

"I'm sure he would have you think that, Honey" Justin started to protest, but Jennifer continued. "I'm not saying he's the devil. He's always been nothing but respectful to me. But I've known him longer than you have. And it's common knowledge among anyone who knows him, he's first and foremost a sexual predator. I don't want you getting involved with someone like that, you'll get yourself hurt."

"Mom, stop. You don't know what the fuck you're talking about, and what's more, it's absolutely none of your business. I'm an adult and I can make my own decisions. For your information, I care very much about him, and he cares just as much about me. Now, if we don't drop this conversation, I'm out of here, ok? I don't need this, not right now."

Jennifer sighed, and nodded, opening her menu. Inwardly, she resolved to pay Brian a little visit later.

(A few hours later.)

"Brian? It's Justin. I'm gonna be in your neighborhood a little later tonight, around 9 or 10, so I thought I'd stop by, I'm sorry I couldn't get a hold of you, you weren't picking up your cell....anyway, I guess if there's any problem with me stopping by, call me and let me know. Later.

End of message."

Brian stood in the kitchen, sipping a glass of bourbon and listening to Justin leave the message. He couldn't help think that he was gonna miss that voice. Within minutes, he had everything planned out.

(A few more hours later.)

Justin walked up to Brian's building and saw someone walking in the front door. He decided to slip in behind them instead of buzzing Brian. He took the industrial elevator up to the top floor and knocked on the steel door. He heard loud, thumping music from inside, and after a few seconds of pounding the door, he determined that there was no way Brian was going to hear him over the racket, so he slid the door open.

"Brian?"

He noticed movement to the right, and his heart basically snapped in two. Brian was fucking some guy on the fouton, and he came just as Justin saw him. He looked up at Justin, who practically stomped over to the stereo and flicked it off.

"Can I help you?" Brian said, panting.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Justin spat.

"It was....Trent, wasn't it?" Brian said, asking the man under him.

"Kent." The man said uneasily, sensing trouble.

Brian turned back to Justin. "Kent."

"Was that supposed to be funny?" Justin said, seething.

"What've you got your balls in a knot for?" Brian pulled out of Kent, who scrambled for his clothes and practically scampered out of the loft.

"Last time I checked, I never said I was your boyfriend. I can fuck whoever I want, when I want."

Justin gaped. "Yeah, you're right. Do whatever you want, what have I got to do with anything? Although, fucking him where we fucked last night during the exact time when you knew I'd be coming over was a bit low." He gestured at the answering machine with the blinking "new message" light.

"Oh, right, the phone message, 9 or 10. Must've forgotten about that, it's amazing how things can slip your mind when you've got your dick in some guy's mouth. Excuse me for just a second, I should be up for another round in about 5 minutes." He disappeared into the washroom to rid himself of the condom. When he returned, as he suspected, Justin was gone.

He got in the shower, reassuring himself that he was in control again. He meant to hurt Justin. He meant to drive him away.

He didn't mean to bruise his knuckles when he punched the shower wall.

Chapter 13

The concert at Heinz Hall was canceled. The extent of the damage had exceeded everyone's expectations, leaving construction extended for another 6 months and Justin curled up into a ball on his couch, clutching a mug of tea. His phone had rung on the table in front of him 5 times, and every time he'd just stared at it. He didn't really feel like hearing about how sorry everyone was that he had wasted a year of his life and had the biggest opportunity of his career pulled out from under him.

Meanwhile, across the city, Rufus Wainwright had fallen on a set of concrete stairs outside of his hotel.

People at Kinnetic were running around like chickens with their heads cut off when Brian came in around 9 am. They all stopped when he walked through the door, and he noted that nearly everyone's face paled a bit. He took about 4 long strides to Ted's desk, who seemed to be trying to put as much distance between himself and Brian as possible.

"Theodore?" Brian said, almost sweetly. Ted attempted a smile, which came out as more of a grimace. "Why exactly does everyone appear to be frightened of me?"

"w-w-well, uh, I duh-d-duh-dunno Bri, I think they might be more, just, um, stressed..." Ted said with what could only be described as "the Ted stutter"

"What happened?" Brian demanded.

Ted gulped. "Remember The Music Hall, and how we do their publicity for shows?" Brian nodded.

"And the charity concert tonight for the Grassi House where Rufus Wainwright was supposed to be the guest artist?" Brian nodded again.

"Well, um, there's this ligament in your wrist that connects your-"

"TED." Brian barked. "What. Happened."

"Rufus Wainwright sprained his wrist this morning, so...he's not doing the concert."

The employees in the art department jumped when they heard the boss' voice scream "FUCK", though it wouldn't be the first time. Nonetheless, they knew that Brian Kinney angry was the first sign of an Armageddon, and only the newest guy was brave/stupid enough to go out and see what was going on, only to be nearly knocked over by Brian storming past Ted into his office. Ted jumped up from his seat to trail after him.

"I have 2000 patrons paying \$100 a ticket for that fucking concert, and new beds, plumbing and faucets, and a new fucking water heater on its way to the Grassi house, Theodore!" he yelled at Ted, because clearly, as he was the one who told him, this was all his fault.

"Normally it wouldn't be a problem, but since 99% of his music is piano-based,

and he's classically trained, they can't get by without it and none of his band members are good enough to play what he plays, so he feels that he can't do a whole concert without piano, and since they don't exactly have a concert pianist handy, they're kind of stuck."

Brian stopped dead in his tracks. His mind flashed back to about 3 weeks before.

He never tried to represent anyone without doing his research first. Furthermore, it was important, when he had a famous client's attention, to do the best job possible, which meant looking where the others didn't. He had discovered that Rufus tended to play a lot of his unrecorded/lesser known songs while on tour, so he immediately went after every B-side and EP that he could get his hands on. He read Rufus' list of accolades while one of his first EP's was in the CD drive of his laptop. He had to admit, he didn't mind the stuff one bit; that is, until a particular track came on. Brian's hand stopped, poised above the page he was turning, his breathing stopped, his heart nearly stopped. Filtering out of the speakers was the haunting melody that Justin had played for him that night in the now nicely-toasted Heinz Hall. He closed his eyes for a split second, before shaking his head and skipping to the next track.

"Ted."

Ted cocked an eyebrow. "Yeah, Bri?"

"Tell Cynthia to get Geoffrey Hunter on the phone. I might be able to recommend someone."

Brian spoke to Geoff, the GM for the Music Hall, for about half an hour, convincing him that Justin was right for it. When Geoff asked if he'd be able to play Rufus' more complicated stuff, and Brian told him of Justin's brilliance. When he asked how he'd be able to prepare all of it for tonight, Brian said he couldn't make any guarantees, but he knew Justin was a fan of Rufus' and could already play some of his songs. When Geoff asked whether Justin was cute, Brian wanted to punch him in the mouth. But he stifled his urges and replied with just, "gorgeous." They agreed to meet with him if he was available.

Justin had fallen asleep in his sulking place on the couch, wrapped up in his comforter, when Daphne stormed in through the door.

"Ok, asshole, that's it. Justin? Where are you?" She walked past the lumpy mound on the couch, not noticing there was actually a twink lodged within the pile of blankets until she heard a muffled groan from somewhere inside. She stomped over and pulled the blankets away, revealing a tousle-haired Justin

looking like he'd just lost his puppy.

"Look at you! I've been calling you all night, Justin! Would it kill you to answer your phone?!"

"Maybe." Justin frowned. Daphne heaved an annoyed-best-friend-sigh.

"Don't you think you're being a little bit melodramatic over this, Justin?"

"No." Justin said stubbornly. "Not considering my life is fucking over." He grabbed the comforter off the floor and threw it back over himself. Daphne walked around the couch and grabbed his cell-phone off the table.

"Look! The phone's working! It's even on! And what's this? 12 missed calls!"

"If it makes you feel any better, I've been ignoring everyone's calls, not just yours" said a voice from somewhere inside the couch. The phone started ringing again in Daphne's hand.

"Justin!" Daphne pointed the phone at him. An arm reached blindly out of the covers and shoo-d her away. She let out an "ugh" and flipped his phone open.

"Justin Taylor's phone."

Justin flung the blankets off of him. "Daph!"

Daphne ignored him. "Oh. Jesus. Um, ok, yeah, he's right here." She handed the phone to him. "It's someone calling on behalf of Rufus Wainwright?"

Justin scowled. "You're so full of shit, Daph." he put the phone to his ear, and practically growled a greeting. Within 5 seconds, his eyes were widening at Daphne, who was nodding with her eyebrows raised.

An hour later, Justin was nearly peeing his pants. He was sitting on stage at the Music Hall playing piano with Rufus Wainwright, i.e. his real-life Gay Messiah sitting about 5 feet away, nodding in appreciation at his knack for playing Rufus' songs. They had mentioned that someone had heard of him and thought he might be suitable, but no names were mentioned, and it led him to think that maybe his star really was rising, if he was that well-known already in the community. Turned out, Rufus was a really chill guy, just like Justin knew he would be, and the only strange moment was when Justin had somewhat gravely asked that they perhaps play something instead of "Ashes". That night he was playing "Tulsa" and "Cigarettes and Chocolate Milk" and "Little Sister" and being introduced to thousands of people as "My new pal, Justin Taylor" by Rufus Fucking Wainwright, who was about 800 times hotter in person, even if he was wearing a suit that would make Liberace blush.

Definitely a step up from how he thought he'd be spending his evening.

After the show, most of the audience had headed home while he hung out with Rufus and the band backstage, when Rufus asked him casually if he smoked, and they headed out to the stage door.

They could still see a few people filing out the front doors, though they were hidden by the dark in the alleyway. They were talking about random shit, the Met, Rufus' boyfriend who apparently was a painter or something, and New York City. Rufus was sharing an anecdote about life on the road when Justin recognized a tall, dark figure leaving the venue. His eyes and mouth widened in shock. What was he doing here? Why would he be? Had he really just come to see him? That seemed less than likely.

"Um-Just, just a second, can you excuse me?" Rufus nodded, looking confused. Justin walked further up the alleyway, calling out to Brian.

"Brian? Brian! Hey! Brian!"

He didn't know whether Brian had heard him, but he just kept on walking in the opposite direction.

Rufus walked up behind him. "Friend of yours?"

Justin shook his head. "Not exactly, I'm just...surprised to see him here, that's all. Surprised he actually came."

"Why's that? He's the one who recommended you."

Justin's head snapped around to look at Rufus, sucking back his nicotine, and back at the retreating figure headed for a vintage corvette.

'What??'

Chapter 14

"Brian, Jennifer Taylor is here to go through the details of the extension into 253 with you."

Cynthia's electronic voice buzzed through the intercom.

Brian closed the windows on his computer screen. "Send her in."

Moments later, Jennifer Taylor walked in and sat across from him. They had met a few times since their discussion, and every time, they knew just not to acknowledge it. They talked business, Brian nodded and Jennifer pulled papers out of her briefcase for him to

sign. Brian hoped to God that she wasn't as anxious to ask personal questions as she appeared to be. Apparently, today wasn't his lucky day.

"What happened, Brian?"

Brian shifted in his seat. "What do you mean?"

Jennifer stared him down confidently. "You know what I mean. He's been really upset, but he won't tell me why."

"Jennifer, no disrespect, but leave it alone, please."

Jennifer sighed. "I know, it's none of my business, and I'm being nosy, but he's my son, Brian. And it's only been 3 years since I saw him on life support. Not to be maudlin, but that kind of thing doesn't leave you. Now I find myself needing to protect him from all the pain that I can, since I couldn't then. Can you understand that?"

For a moment, Brian tried to think of something like that happening to Gus, but he couldn't even go there. He almost felt ashamed of never considering the effect of Justin's bashing on Jennifer. Still, he really didn't want to go into this.

"It's over and done with. He's pissed, but he'll get over it and be fine. I just did what you asked, and it's done, end of story. Now, if there's anything else I can help you with..." He left the open invitation for Jennifer to piss off hanging in the air.

Jennifer raised an eyebrow at him. "I don't recall asking you to piss him off."

"What would you have me do? Politely ask him to leave and never come back?" Brian tapped a pencil on his desk firmly.

Jennifer recognized something below the well-known scowl. Just a crease of the brow, slight clench of the jaw, an emptiness behind the eyes...He was hurting. For the first time, Jennifer almost considered wishing she could take back her request. She stood and, picking up her briefcase, looked him in the eye and said, "You're a good man, Brian."

Brian smirked faintly. "Well, just don't tell anyone. You could ruin me with that information."

Jennifer smiled. "I won't." and with that, she was gone.

"You know what was weird?" Justin said, ripping off a giant piece of cotton candy and stuffing it into his mouth.

Sometimes Jennifer wondered how it was that he was a functioning adult in society, much less an acclaimed classical musician.

"What's that, honey?"

"Well, Brian's a douchebag and basically proclaims to the world that he doesn't give a shit about me. But then, the night of the concert, I saw him leaving the Music Hall."

Jennifer turned in her seat on the park bench. "He was at the concert?"

"Yeah. Not only that-" he took another chomp out of his cotton candy-

"Rufus told me that he was the one who recommended me.

He even spent like an hour with Rufus and his people convincing them I was right for it. They were just gonna cancel it."

"He really must care about you." Jennifer breathed.

Justin scoffed. "Did I just hear you say that he must care about me? That's a far cry from what you've been saying up until now."

Jennifer shrugged. "Maybe I've had a change of heart."

"That was quick. Nearly as quick as HIS change of hea-" Justin stopped mid-sentence, as his brain started to connect the dots. What his mother had said about Brian at lunch, and how later that day, Brian had done a 180... And she worked with him...

Of course.

"What did you say to him, Mom?"

Ever since her conversation with Brian earlier, Jennifer had been getting the feeling that she had made some grave mistake in forcing Brian away, and this recent revelation had confirmed it. She couldn't bring herself to lie to her son.

"Justin..."

"Oh my God." Justin paced, covering his face with his hands. "You said something to him? What the fuck were you thinking? No, you know what, I don't even care. What. did. you. say."

Jennifer looked at him defeatedly. "I told him that I'd known him too long and too well, and that he could never give you what you needed."

"You said what??" Justin nearly shrieked. "What gives you the right-"

"Nothing does, Justin. It was wrong of me and I'm sorry. I was just worried about you, but that doesn't excuse it. I completely overstepped my boundaries."

By now, Justin wasn't even listening, but rather, pacing back and forth, deep in thought. There was something missing...

The answering machine. Brian had heard it, and yet the new message light was blinking. Brian had listened to Justin leave the message, rather than answer the phone...so he was home, not out finding some trick...and he knew Justin was coming over...

He'd set it up.

"I have to go." Justin grabbed his bag and walked hurriedly out of the park.

"Justin!" Jennifer called after her son.

"We'll talk about this later!" he yelled over his shoulder.

Brian was changing out of his stuffy (but expensive) suit. Other than his strange run-in with Jennifer, it had been a pretty good day, all in all. He'd landed the account he'd been working towards for a month. 20 Million fucking dollars. He was practically glowing. He'd called Mikey to tell him, who had decided that they were going to celebrate with chinese food and pot. He was just splashing water on his face when he heard knocking at the door. Since when did Mikey bother knocking? Maybe he wasn't in the mood to catch Brian fucking some guy against the kitchen counter...like last week.

"It's open!" he shouted from the bathroom. He finished drying off his face, and, clad in a v-neck undershirt and sweatpants, i.e. his "getting stoned and eating his weight in crispy won-tons" outfit, he descended from the bedroom.

"Since when do you-"

But it wasn't Mikey standing in the middle of his loft.

Justin had almost forgotten how gorgeous Brian could be. Aside from the fact that he hadn't seen him in almost a month, save for the night of the concert, he'd also never seen him in anything other than either a designer suit or nothing. Now, in his casual t-shirt and thin sweats, Justin drank in his muscular arms and slim hips and broad shoulders and...well, basically tried not to drool, and to ignore his dick, which seemed to actually be lunging AT Brian. He came here with a purpose.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" Brian's quiet voice startled Justin out of his trance. He took a deep breath.

"So, apparently you're full of shit."

Brian cocked his head at Justin.

"Enlighten me." he drawled.

Justin shook his head. "Did you really think that I would never figure it out?"

Brian stared at him. "You ask that as if you expect me to have a clue what you're talking about. Besides, I'm busy, so could you-"

"When exactly did you turn into such a pussy?"

"Ok, how many random, vague open-ended questions are there going to be? Because I actually do have plans-"

Justin ignored him yet again. "To be intimidated by my mother? She's not that scary of a person Brian, believe me, I know. I thought you had a little more in you than that."

Brian narrowed his eyes. "I'm not intimidated by your mother."

"No, you just agree with her." Justin said softly. Brian couldn't think of how to reply. Justin took a step forward, putting his hand on his hip. "Well, whatever she says, she doesn't speak for me. You think I would have been wasting my time with you if you weren't good enough for me? I knew what I was doing, and I can take care of myself. I know that what you did that day was a complete act, that it was all bullshit. I actually can't believe that it took me this long to figure out." He

tilted his head to look at Brian, who was now sitting on the edge of the couch, staring at the floor. He pursed his lips.

"But you still hurt me. And you did it on purpose. And just because it wasn't real, doesn't make it ok. So I'm not ok yet."

He turned to walk away, before stopping himself. He turned back to Brian and walked quietly across the floor to him. He was still staring at the floor until Justin got close enough for Brian to feel him. He looked up into Justin's eyes. Justin placed a hand on his shoulder and felt Brian tense under his touch.

"What you did...the concert. That was real." He moved his hand to the side of Brian's head, and kissed him lightly on the forehead. When he pulled back, he saw Brian's eyes closed for a moment before they fluttered open again. He was glad to know he wasn't unaffected.

"I won't forget it."

With that, he turned and left.

When Mikey walked in, he found Brian still sitting on the edge of the couch, looking like he'd seen a ghost.

"What the fuck's the matter with you, Mr. Hotshot?"

Chapter 15

Justin was feeling antsy and stircrazy in his apartment. He had spent the last 6 nights alone there, and he felt like if he did it one more time, he might short-circuit. On a whim, he decided to go dancing at Babylon. He hadn't been there since he was in the conservatory, but it felt like time for a visit.

Brian was at the bar, being cruised when he felt a warm body beside him. He turned to evaluate, when he was taken by surprise by a familiar sunshine smile.

"Hi Brian!" he laughed, as if they'd been friends for years.

"Not used to seeing you here." Brian remarked.

"Yeah, it's been a while. I was just kind of bored, that's all. You come here a lot?" Damn, he sounded perky. It was probably the sex on the beach he was sipping. Brian wasn't sure what to make of Justin starting up a conversation with him.

"It passes the time."

The song changed. "Oh God, I love this song!" He looked at Brian. Yeah, I know what you're trying to do, Sunshine, Brian thought. He wasn't going to make it that easy.

"Do you really?" Brian drawled.

"Yeah." a silence passed them by.

"I haven't danced in forever." Justin said off-handedly. There it was. Brian smirked. He imagined the slim hips moving under his hands. *Bad idea.* Beads of sweat on the pale slender neck. *Must resist.* Hips grinding into his and full lips on his neck.
Ok, that's it.

"Would you like to dance, Justin?" Brian said in a mocking tone, which brought another blinding smile. Damned if he wasn't still in love with him, said a voice inside him that he tried his best to keep silent.

"Really?" Justin glowed. Brian shrugged, raising his eyebrows, the image of nonchalance.

Brian could see the gears turning in Justin's head as his smile faded.

"You know what? Maybe we shouldn't." He turned back to the bar. Brian raised an eyebrow.

"I'm not going to proposition you or anything, Sunshine." Brian said, rolling his eyes.

"I know." Justin turned to look at him. "Problem is, I can't promise the same thing."

There weren't many times in his life when Brian felt the urge to whimper. He was nearly convinced this kid was a wizard by now. Justin checked the time on his cell phone.

"I should probably get going. It's late." He threw a fiver down on the bar to pay for his drink.

"It was good to see you, Brian. Later."

"Later."

Justin threw his keys down on the counter, and toed off his sneakers when he saw the blinking light on his machine. Who had called him so late? He pressed the play button and heard his mother's voice. She was crying.

"Justin? Are you there? Look, I know it's late, but there's something I need to tell you. Please, call me back when you get this. I love you."

Justin looked at the clock. 1 a.m.. She sounded upset, and she did say to call as soon as he got the message. His heart was pounding with concern for her. He picked up the cordless and pressed 3 on the speed dial.

"Hello?"

She didn't sound tired, but she still sounded like she was crying.

"Mom, what's going on? I got your message, are you and Molly ok?"

"Oh, Honey, we're fine. It's your father."

Justin sighed. "Oh God, what's he doing now? Refusing to pay for Molly's school again?"

He heard his mother swallow loudly. "No, he...Justin, he's dead."

Chapter 16

The next day, Justin learned that his father had tried to run a red light and been t-boned by a Pittsburgh Powertool convoy somewhere on the outskirts of town. Around 1p.m. he found himself sitting in a mahogany-panelled office with a middle-aged, frumpy lawyer, his mother, his sister and what he assumed was his father's new girlfriend...or wife?...who was periodically shooting him dirty glares, as if *he* was the one who wasn't supposed to be there. He hadn't said a word to anyone other than the few words that were necessary. He was still basically numb everywhere, not having the slightest clue as to what he should be feeling right now. He couldn't cry, he couldn't be relieved, he couldn't even sleep, which explained his rather worn appearance more aptly than any emotional grief.

After an hour or two, it was proven that Justin even being there was completely unnecessary. Craig hadn't left him anything. He left some money to Jennifer, enough for university tuition for Molly, and the rest to...Marci, was her name?

It got worse. Within hours, cards and phone calls arrived periodically at Jennifer's house, all addressing Jennifer and Molly. Uncle Frank's new wife hit the nail right on the head when she came to see Jennifer and Molly at their house. Upon meeting Justin, she exclaimed, "Why, I didn't even know Craig had a son!" Craig's brother stood behind her giving him the "you-sullied-the-family-name-and-split-up-my-brother-and-his-wife-with-your-butt-pirate-antics" glare that Justin became familiar with throughout the rest of the day. Later in the evening, he gave up and headed up to the guest room, and laid down sideways on the mattress, staring up at the ceiling. He felt so unbearably alone that he

felt he needed to talk to someone who was removed from all of this. He pulled out his phone and pressed the speed-dial to Daphne's apartment.

"Hey, what's up?"

Justin couldn't think of how to reply. *Hey, my Dad died?* He didn't want feel like being morose, but he didn't feel like being casual. He didn't even feel like talking, when it came down to it. He tried to think of something to say to her, to brush it off, but he just didn't have the energy.

"Justin? You there?"

He looked at the phone, and snapped it shut. There was no one he could call, who wouldn't coo and moan and try to pat him on the leg and console him over his loss and act like they understood, because they didn't. No one who would quite understand what it was like to lose the father who had long since decided he hated you.

Wait...

He grabbed a sweater, and headed down the stairs. He kissed his mother on the cheek, who was still sitting on the couch, and walked out the door without another word. He wrapped the cardigan sweater around him tightly as he walked at a steady pace, realizing it wasn't nearly enough to keep him warm in the surprisingly cold May weather. He shivered as the harsh wind messed up his hair and bit at his cheeks. Within 15 minutes, he was outside the tall brown building, his finger on the buzzer, fully shaking. He pressed it, and a moment later heard the familiar voice snap at him.

"What?"

Justin gulped. "It's Justin."

There was silence for a moment before Brian pressed the button again. "Listen, I don't know what this new arrangement is that you've decided on, that apparently we're buddies now or something, but that doesn't mean you can just drop by unannounced. I have a fucking life you know."

Justin nearly punched the wall. He controlled his breath, silently praying for Brian not to make this difficult.

"Just let me up, Brian. Please." He didn't care how desperate or sad his voice sounded, cracking on the last word. Brian didn't say anything else, but Justin heard the buzzer go off, allowing him access to the building.

Brian could tell something was wrong with the kid from his voice through the intercom. He hoped it wasn't another fiasco like Heinz Hall; God knew how many more letdowns like that Justin could take. Brian slid open the door and looked Justin up and down, taking in his dishevelled hair, red cheeks and sunken eyes. *Jesus.*

"Bad day?" Brian asked incredulously.

Justin stared at Brian, who was staring back at him, worried and confused. And, the words just fell out of his mouth.

"My Dad died."

It was as if everything that had happened hadn't been real until Justin said it out loud. Once he did, it hit him full-force, and his head spun. Brian saw him sway slightly, which broke him out of his shocked stupor to grab him around the waist and hold him tightly to his chest. He felt his heart swell with sadness for him, and the need to see that he got through this and didn't lose himself. He felt Justin start to suck in oxygen desperately and his muscles gave out so that he was dead weight against Brian's body.

"Oh God..." Justin stammered softly, gasping for breath.

"Okay, okay, Justin. Breathe." Brian said softly but firmly into his hair. Justin fought to steady his breath shakily. Brian stroked his hair with his free hand and murmured non-words into his ear for minutes that didn't feel like real time, that just faded in and out.

Once he was breathing steadily, Brian crouched slightly to place an arm across the back of Justin's thighs and lifted him up a few inches off the floor.

"Come on." he murmured.

Justin crossed his arms around Brian's neck and pressed his face into the curve of his shoulder. Brian laid him down on his bed, and went back to close the door and turn out the lights. When he came back, he saw Justin lying on his side, his eyes glistening with tears, emotionless, empty, no trace of sunshine left in him. Brian kneeled onto the bed and laid down facing him, taking his hand in his. Eventually, Justin looked up into Brian's eyes, and Brian couldn't stand to look at the pain there. He pulled Justin closer so that he curled into Brian's chest, and Brian wrapped his arms around him, breathing into his hair. Justin hesitantly placed his arms around Brian's waist, and after a moment he squeezed him as tightly as he could, cocooning himself in Brian's embrace. Brian didn't say a word, and Justin was thankful. They laid in silence for what seemed to go on for hours, but could've been any amount of time, before Brian felt Justin start to tremble, and tears seep through his thin cotton tank top. He held Justin to him tighter and closed his eyes, trying not to think about how right this felt, despite the circumstances. Minutes later he pulled back a bit to look at Justin, wet-faced and red-eyed. Justin scrubbed the tears off of his face with the backs of his hands.

"God, I'm sorry, Brian-"

"Shut up." Brian said quietly, stopping his hands from wiping away the tears and kissing him softly on the forehead.

.....

.....

"He hated me."

Brian closed his eyes. "He didn't hate you."

"But I couldn't be the person he wanted me to be."

"You're right, you couldn't." Brian whispered in his ear. "But you're the person you want to be. And you're...you're the most beautiful person I know, so if he couldn't be proud of you then that's his issue, not yours."

Justin looked at Brian for a moment, who avoided looking back, then buried his face in his shoulder, choosing to say nothing for a while.

.....

.....

"But he..." Justin breathed. "He was my father, Brian. And he didn't want me. He left me out of the will, most of his friends didn't even know he had a son..."

Brian shook his head in disbelief. Justin was the closest thing he knew to perfection, how could anyone, let alone his own father, so fervently reject him?

"Fucking bastard" he breathed. Justin looked up at him, slightly surprised. Brian looked back at him nervously, afraid he may have said the wrong thing in outwardly insulting his recently deceased father. Then he realized that Justin's mouth was twisting upwards into a watery smile, and eventually he laughed weakly. Brian smiled uncertainly. Justin nodded.

"He was a fucking bastard. A *fucking bastard*."

Brian let out a small chuckle, wiping away Justin's tears with the pads of his thumbs. Justin grabbed onto Brian's wrists and held them, looking into his eyes.

"Brian..."

Brian stared back into Justin's red-rimmed eyes, and thought that he could listen to Justin say his name like that for the rest of his life and never get tired of it.

Justin nestled his head back under Brian's chin, wrapping his arms around his torso.

"I still love you, you know." he said softly.

"What for?" Brian blurted out before even realizing he'd thought out loud. Christ, that had sounded stupid.

Justin breathed in deeply. "For making some sense of this. And making me feel..." *Don't say loved, don't say loved*, he chanted over and over in his head. Now was not the time to freak Brian out. "The opposite of how he made me feel."

And for once, Brian actually felt proud of something.

"Can I stay here tonight?" Justin asked quietly.

Brian snorted a bit at the redundancy of that question, but he knew not to chide him for it. "Of course."

"Thank you." Justin started to undo his pants.

"What're you doing?" Brian asked suddenly. As much as Sunshine taking off his pants was usually a good thing, he really didn't think now was the right time for that.

Justin looked at him bewilderedly. "Have you ever tried to sleep with jeans on?"

Brian nodded in understanding, feeling like an idiot. Justin tossed his jeans off the end of the bed, and Brian lifted up the covers to let Justin in, before curling himself around him, not even having to suppress the usual warning bells and questions plaguing his mind. Justin needed him. He was here. End of story.

Chapter 17

Justin awoke to the smell of coffee and an empty bed. It took a moment to remember where he was and why he was there. He pushed his face into the pillow sleepily, and was met with the scent of Brian, which he had come to know well. He was well prepared to keep his face stuffed into that pillow all day, before he remembered that the real Brian was somewhere in the apartment. He sat up in bed and saw him in the kitchen, making toast. He stumbled out of bed and trudged down into the loft, sitting down on one of the bar stools.

"Morning" he greeted, trying to sound chipper.

Brian turned his head to look at him, then turned back to fixing the coffee. "How are you feeling?"

Justin blinked. "Starving, actually." Brian snorted. "I, uh, I didn't really eat anything yesterday."

Brian nodded understandingly, before placing a plate of buttered toast in front of him, then turning back to the coffee. Justin sighed longingly. "Thank you," he said warmly, downing half of one of the pieces of toast in one bite.

"Jesus, I'm a drama queen, aren't I?" he mused. "I mean, I know it's supposed to be a hard time, but, like, I didn't sleep, I didn't eat, I didn't talk to anyone, and then at 10 at night I show up at your place a complete train wreck." He blushed and looked up at Brian embarrassedly. "Sorry about that, by the way."

Brian let out a sigh as he turned to Justin, placing a cup of coffee in front of him. "When my father died, I had an orgy at my apartment, left the funeral mid-service to smoke a joint, made an embarrassingly dramatic scene at the wake, went bowling in his team jersey..." he glanced down at the newspaper in front of him. "And eventually ended up clinging to Mikey, crying like a princess." He tapped the counter, before looking back up at Justin. "And I knew he was dying."

Justin tilted his head at Brian. "It probably wasn't as bad as you remember it."

Brian stared at Justin. "My nephews ran away from me, screaming."

Justin broke down laughing. He laughed until he had tears in his eyes, and Brian couldn't help but suppress a grin. "I'm sorry, it-it's just..." Justin started, before bursting into more fits of laughter. When he imitated Brian's nephew screaming in a high pitched voice and flailing his hands through fits of giggles, Brian joined in the laughter.

"Jesus..." Justin gasped, wiping his eyes. Brian was leaning on the counter, coffee in hand, looking at him. Justin narrowed his eyes at him, still smiling.

"How do you do that?" he asked quietly.

Brian tried not to squirm with discomfort at how Justin was looking at him. He went back to the counter and put jam on his toast.

"Shit!" Justin exclaimed suddenly.

Brian turned yet again- he was beginning to feel a bit like a ballerina. "What?"

"You know what's going to happen now, don't you?" Justin said defeatedly. Brian frowned.

"I'm going to remember the nephew thing in the middle of the funeral, and I'm going to burst out laughing."

Brian huffed out a laugh. "Well, just try to make it sound like uncontrollable sobbing and people won't think anything of it."

Justin smiled. "Is it bad that I'm making jokes about my father's funeral?"

Brian gave a small smile. "When is it?"

"Two-thirty."

Brian nodded. "You should probably get a move-on then."

Justin heaved himself off the stool, and headed back to the bedroom, where he located his jeans and sweater, pulling them on. Brian trudged around to the other side of the bar, sitting down on one of the stools and picking up the paper. Justin returned to his side, placing a hand on his shoulder.

"Brian." Brian said nothing, but turned the page of the paper. Justin sighed and continued. "What I said last night-

"Forget it." Brian said flatly. "Everybody says shit they don't mean when they're upset, so don't worry about it."

Justin seriously considered beating the shit out of him, but instead grabbed onto the back of the stool and swiveled Brian around to face him.

"You just don't fucking get it, do you?" He paused, and ran a hand down the side of Brian's head. "You're such an idiot."

Brian huffed out a bitter laugh. "Yeah, well then what the fuck are you still doing here?" he said harshly.

Justin didn't flinch or back away, but smiled. Not what Brian was expecting. "Maybe I'm an idiot too." He took a step closer to Brian, then let out a sigh.

"Thank you for being there last night." He leaned in to kiss Brian on the cheek. And that's really genuinely all he intended to do.

But when he felt the warm skin under his lips, and felt Brian lean into his touch, he couldn't bring himself to pull his face away. When he saw Brian's eyes closed, he didn't see any way to avoid touching his lips to Brian's.

When he touched his lips to Brian's, and they moved and responded under his, all hope was lost.

Brian spread his legs on the stool for Justin to stand between his knees, and grabbed him around the waist, pulling him to him. He tasted like coffee and toast and morning breath and fucking perfection. Justin fisted a handful of Brian's hair and moaned softly, driving Brian insane. Brian remembered that this wasn't supposed to happen, and broke the kiss, breathing Justin's name. Justin was panting, eyes closed, lips red and swollen, and Brian couldn't resist, and smashed his lips back onto Justin's mouth, meeting his tongue with his. Justin forgot everything, forgot his own name, and only knew that what he needed right then and there. He trailed his hand down to Brian's sweatpants and ran it over the growing bulge, swallowing the soft groan that it elicited from Brian. He ground his groin into Brian's leg while he rubbed Brian's hard-on, meeting Brian's moans with his own.

"Fuck me" he whispered breathily onto Brian's lips. That woke Brian out of his daze. He placed a hand on Justin's shoulder, pushing him gently, breaking the kiss.

"We can't" he breathed, eyes still closed.

Justin opened his eyes. "Why the fuck not?"

"Because you have a fucking funeral to go to." Brian said firmly. "And...because this isn't where you belong."

He hopped down from the stool and stalked up the stairs to the bathroom. Justin heard the tap turn on, and took a deep breath, recovering. He took a few steps toward the bottom of the stairs, and called out through the closed door.

"If you think I'm giving up, that only proves that you're an idiot."

Smiling slightly, Justin headed home to prepare for his father's funeral.

Chapter 18

That kiss...

It fucking left him reeling, left him to jerk off in the shower, thinking about Justin's words....

If you think I'm giving up, that only proves that you're an idiot.

And about that kiss...

That fucking kiss.

It made the reasons for pushing Justin away foggier and foggier in his brain, til there was nothing else but him. But they were still there, and became painfully whole and daunting when Justin wasn't around.

Jennifer had never been the scheming type.

But, she had to hand it to herself, this was pretty MacGyver of her, this idea she had. Justin was picking her up from work for their weekly lunch date at 1 p.m. . She gave him the address of the company office to pick her up from, but failed to mention the name of the company. At 12:50 she walked into Brian's office and spent about 5 minutes going over the blue prints for the new offices, and at 12:55 she put her plan into motion.

"I think I was wrong about you and Justin."

Brian looked up from the blueprint, aghast. He blinked a few times, and managed to utter an "uh..."

"I know, it's a bit late, but I can see that-"

"Jennifer-"

"Brian, I think he really loves you. And that used to be what I was afraid of, but now I can see that you-"

"Jen, are you serious?" He exclaimed.

Justin walked down the back alleyway that his mother had directed him to. He got to the fogged glass doors with the correct number on them. He could've sworn he could remember this place being a bathhouse or something...but no. His mother had directed him here, that'd be ridiculous. He pushed open the doors and walked into a rather impressive modern office. He spotted a reception desk on his right with a rather attractive blond sitting behind it.

"Hi, I'm just here to pick up Jennif-"

On the wall behind her was enormous sleet grey lettering spelling out "KINNETIC". Well, shit. He'd just walked right into Brian's office.

The blond tilted her head forward inquisitively. "...Jennifer Taylor?"

Justin jerked himself out of his stupor. "Um, yeah."

"She's just in her meeting with Mr. Kinney right in there." She pointed to the office across from her desk. "You can have a seat."

He forced a small smile, and sat in a chair against the wall by the office door, where he could actually make out the words that were being nearly shouted. Was Brian fighting with his mom?

"This is ridiculous! First you tell me to stay away from him, and I fuck everything up to do that, practically shove him off a cliff, and now once it's all over you just change your mind?!"

"Basically, yes." Jennifer stares at the floor.

"Well that's too bad because it's too fucking late. We can't just...go back, like nothing happened. Besides, you were right about everything, ok?" he tried his best to sound casual about the last bit, but couldn't help his eyes casting downward on his desk.

"That's where you're wrong, Brian. I was wrong. I was being a stupid, overprotective Mom sticking her nose in business she knew nothing about, and I completely regret saying what I did because it was a mistake. But..." and she shook her head in disbelief, nearly laughing, "and this is going to sound like a bad Meg Ryan Tom Hanks movie, but...it's not too late. He still loves you. And I can tell that you love him just as much."

Brian scoffed, turning his head to the side. Jennifer cocked an eyebrow and sighed. "Tell me you don't."

Brian was silent for a moment. "What if..."

"What if what? What if you piss him off? If you fight? Then you'll still be doing better than my first marriage. He's not a delicate little flower, Brian, I think that's been proven. He can take it. And I don't think you're even capable of doing anything that would really hurt him, considering the possibility of you hurting him literally sent you running last time."

Brian walked around the desk and sat on the edge in front of her. "What if I can't make him happy?" he grumbled.

Jennifer smiled sadly, placing her hand on his folded arms.

"What if you're what makes him happy?" she countered. "You can't take that away from him. Besides, he's fuckin' miserable without you anyway, so what've you got to lose?"

When Justin had heard enough and decided to walk in, he nearly laughed out loud at the brief look of terror on Brian's face.

"Mom, you ready to go for lunch?" He asked calmly, smiling.

Jennifer smirked. "Sure, honey." She headed for the door, when Justin murmured in her ear. "Just give me a sec." She smiled broader, and nodded,

stepping out of the office.

Justin walked closer to Brian, who shifted uneasily against the desk.

"Brian, you need to give this up." Justin said confidently. "It's really getting old."

"Justin, go have lunch with your Mom."

"I will. But first we're gonna sort this out." Brian looked up and raised his eyebrows challengingly. "I don't understand why you're still doing this to us, Brian." He took a few more steps until he was two feet away from Brian. "You love me.... You love me." Brian drooped his head. "I know, that's scary as hell. But the thing is, I love you too. And I want you just as much as you want me, and we're miserable without each other, so what the fuck are you so afraid of?"

Brian looked up into Justin's eyes. "I can't be your boyfriend. That's not who I am. You deserve better than what I can give you." He looked down again. "You can do better."

"GAAH!" Justin stormed away, throwing his hands into the air. "You don't fucking get it, do you? I'm really fucking in love with you, Brian, more than I've ever known, and I know you don't have a lot of experience in this area but this-" He gestured frantically between him and Brian, "-This doesn't happen all the time! You only get this once in a fucking lifetime! And you know what I'm afraid of Brian?" He walked quickly back to Brian, exasperated and desperate from his rant. "I'm fucking terrified that we're going to lose this altogether because you're too chickenshit afraid of making a mistake. Because maybe we'll fuck and talk and laugh and kiss and fight together for the next twenty years, or maybe it'll only be a week before we end up hating each other's guts and we'll be back to our old lives. But goddammit,, I'll have you 'til then." He placed his hands on either side of Brian's head and pressed his forehead to his. "Please..." He kissed Brian softly, slowly, before pulling back. "Just get your head out of your ass." He saw Brian's lips twitch, and he pulled back and ran a hand over his face. "Now I have to go have lunch with my mom, who is undoubtedly standing at the door listening to all of this. So, if you decide to be a half-sensible human being, you'll know where to find me." He pulled away, and walked out. Brian took a few strides across the room and threw himself onto his leather couch.

Chapter 19

He drove home to the loft, dug some day- old chow mein out of the fridge and picked at it with his chopsticks. He took his beer to a chair by the window and stared out onto the Pitts, the city lights seeming to reflect the stars. He thought about how he used to think he had everything figured out. He thought about how different his life had become in the past couple of months. About how good the good had been. How good it could still be. How shitty everything was right now. And one thought screamed out above all the rest.

"What am I doing?"

"What am I doing here?"

He sprung up from his barcelona chair and walked determinedly halfway across the room. Then he stopped, turned, and took a step back.

"Fuck it."

He walked all the way to the counter and grabbed his car keys. He stared at them for a few seconds, then with a growl of frustration, he whipped them in the direction of the couch and stormed into the bathroom. He put his hands on the sides of the sink and leaned against it, staring at his reflection.

"Do it."

"Just fucking do it."

"SHIT!"

He blustered back into the living room and searched for his keys, eventually finding them under the couch, and, not allowing himself to think about it any more, he walked quickly out of the loft and locked it behind him.

Justin walked across the stage. They had replaced the curtains, and repainted the stage, but other than that it looked the same. Someone had supplied him with a lighting boom lit on one side of the stage, rather than turning on all of the lights in the hall. Pittsburgh symphony had decided to put Rhapsody in Blue in with their next concert, and Justin had agreed to it on the condition that he'd be able to practice in Heinz Hall at least twice before the concert.

He refreshed his memory of the Gershwin for a little while, before it became a little too tedious.

Then, with a twinge in his chest he slowly started to play his favourite nocturne.

About halfway through, he felt a shiver go up his spine, and creepy as it seemed in his brain, he knew he was there. He decided to keep playing until Brian cut him off, only he never did. Once he got all the way through the nocturne, he sat still, not wanting to turn around in case he was imagining things. Finally, he heard his voice.

"What was that?"

Justin smiled and rubbed his face with his hands, before turning around on the bench.

"You," he answered simply.

Brian furrowed his eyebrows, "Me..." then smiled slightly. "You mean..."

Justin nodded. He saw Brian take that in, and stood, but he didn't get any closer. He waited for Brian.

Brian itched his forearm, and laughed nervously. Justin laughed back.

"You..." Brian started. "Uh-um...I..." He gestured toward his chest, and sighed. He looked back up at Justin, and the way the stage lights hit him and cast shadows across his features. His heart hammered in his chest, and he willed his hands not to shake.

"Ok, does there need to be a big dramatic speech? Because those are really your forte, not mine." Brian said in a rush. Justin laughed, and shook his head no.

Brian walked closer to him. "You were right, I'm scared shitless. But I think I can do this, because...it's you. It's us. So...yeah."

They stared, hands in their back pockets, acting like old acquaintances. Justin smiled. "Wow, Brian you're right." Brian furrowed his brow and gulped. "speeches really aren't your forte."

Brian laughed, and Justin took a step forward and ran his hands down Brian's arms to his hands. The slight shaking he felt in the older man's hands made him smile wider as he stared into his eyes. Brian took his hands out of Justin's and placed them on either side of Justin's head, resting his forehead against his. Justin wrapped his arms around Brian's waist and let out a soft, weary groan.

"Justin..." Brian breathed.

"Brian." Justin replied quietly.

Brian kissed him, and the lights burned under their eyelids and they kissed until they had to stop because they couldn't help smiling and Justin had to bury his face in Brian's shoulder.

Justin felt Brian's shoulder start to shake, and for a horrifying moment he thought the man might be crying, but he looked up and saw that he was...well, basically giggling.

"What?" he asked. Brian shook his head. "What??" Brian kissed his forehead,

nose and lips, and pulled him against his chest, his body still buzzing with fading laughter, because that was all that would come out.

Jennifer was right about one thing, Brian thought, this was like a bad Tom Hanks/Meg Ryan movie. But when he had his arms full of Sunshine, it was just so hard to care.

Chapter 20

"It's pretty amazing that you knew I'd be here, Brian. It's straight out of, like, a Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan movie or something." Justin grinned broadly up at Brian.

Brian stared at Justin, marveling at how he and his mother seemed to share the same brain. He snorted. "Take it easy, Meg. Your mom told me you were here."

His smile deflated. "Oh. That's a little disappoi--hey, how come I have to be Meg Ryan?"

Brian started to turn and walk slowly toward the exit. "Well, if the hair-do fits..."

"You shit!"

He followed Brian backstage, staying behind him. "You know, you're gonna regret this when you try to fuck the shit outta me and you can't stop picturing Meg Ryan..."

Brian reached back and tousled Justin's hair. "Somehow, I think I'll manage to focus on something else."

Justin smiled, and grabbed Brian's hand, pulling him back to him. "Hey..."

Brian's grin faded to a small smile as Justin stood on his tiptoes to kiss him slowly. As Brian's tongue slipped out to run over Justin's lips, Justin let out a small wicked laugh and met it with his own, and pretty soon they were wrapped in each other, wrestling tongues and breathing heavily.

"Tell me you brought your car" Justin gasped, running his hands across Brian's back. Brian dropped his head to Justin's shoulder and breathed into his neck.

"Fuck, why not just do it here?" Justin felt his smile against his skin. He stopped, and looked at the stage apprehensively.

"Splinters." he said, wincing a bit. Brian snickered.

"Ok, the loft it is" he agreed.

They got all the way to the elevator before they started mauling each other. When Justin murmured in his ear, "I want you to fuck me 'til I pass out, Mr. Hanks", Brian was sure he'd officially made the best choice of his life, though he hoped that Justin never call him that again. He responded with a kind of moan-laugh, and when the elevator stopped, Brian grabbed Justin around the waist and hoisted him off his feet, Justin laughing into Brian's lips before wrapping his legs around Brian's waist.

They got inside the apartment and Justin got back on his feet so they could get naked and move toward the bed simultaneously. This resulted in Justin tripping over his own pants and nearly landing on his ass, and Brian grabbing him around the waist, both of them dissolving into laughter. As their laughter subsided, Justin expected Brian to continue his ministrations, but he just held him around the waist, and after a moment, Justin got his cue and curled his arms around Brian's shoulders, pressing his face into his neck. They stayed like that for a few minutes before Brian's hands began to run across the skin of Justin's back and he felt Justin's cock twitch in response. He chuckled and placed slow kisses to Justin's neck, swinging him off his feet and carrying a laughing Justin to his bed. They kissed, and Justin breathed Brian's name. Brian pulled back and looked at Justin's face, framed by his strong hands smoothing back the impossibly soft blond hair.

"Where did you come from..." he breathed incredulously.

Justin smiled and pulled Brian down for a needy kiss. His hand strayed to Brian's dick and Brian groaned into Justin's mouth.

Justin pulled back, panting against Brian's lips. "Who the fuck cares, as long as I'm here now." He kissed him again, running his tongue around the circumference of Brian's lips. "Now hurry up and fuck me before I explode."

They fucked, in no particular order, four times on the bed, twice in the shower, and once on the couch. As Justin listened to Brian's heartbeat between sleeping and awake, he figured that might actually be a record for him. The clock blinked 2:02, and Justin, despite being more tired than he could ever remember, and despite the soundly sleeping Brian that he was curled up against, couldn't sleep to save his life. He knew what would ultimately happen if he closed his eyes, and he wouldn't let the night be tainted like that.

"Sunshine, go to sleep for christ's sakes."

Brian's voice jarred him out of his train of thought. He looked up at Brian's

sleepy eyes staring back down at him.

"How'd you know I wasn't asleep?"

"I can tell" Brian breathed. "What's the matter? Usually my dick puts guys into a near coma."

Justin snorted and slapped his chest. "No no, it's...nothing."

He looked up at Brian again, who cocked an inquisitive eyebrow. "I don't wanna be a downer or anything. The night was so great, I just don't...falling asleep would ruin it."

"Don't tell me you're gonna break out into an aerosmith ballad."

Justin groaned and pressed his grinning face into Brian's chest. "Not like that..."

"Like what, then?"

Justin looked up at him, and sighed, tight-lipped. "Ever since I was bashed, I've had nightmares almost every night. They're not as bad as they used to be, but still..." he trailed off, and shook his head. "I know it sounds really babyish, I just don't want to ruin the night, I don't want to lose this..."

Brian looked at him, then tightened his hold around him. "Go to sleep, Justin. I'll be here." He rested his cheek against Justin's, whose eyes drifted shut.

Justin only dreamt about the north pole, Daphne becoming a firefighter and Brian's arms, and woke up into an even better reality.

Michael's POV

The gang and I were all having breakfast at the diner, talking about tonight's Battle of the Biceps at Babylon (holy alliteration, batman!) chowing down on Ma's ridiculously large helpings of bacon and flapjacks, and wondering about the whereabouts of Brian. Actually, I'd been wondering about that myself for the past couple of days. I'd only spoken to him on the phone briefly a few times, and I noticed two things: one, he sounded a lot less pissed than he had been for the past few months, and two, a couple of times, there was an equally happy voice in the background. That was weird.

Finally, he strolled in, and I was about to call him over when someone followed him in...holy shit.

Oh holy shit.

It was that piano kid from Hunter's play.

The one who was falsely convinced that Brian had feelings for him.

Oh holy shit.

Brian was grinning the dopey grin he usually only gets after some really good pot or E or something, and Justin was laughing behind him. They headed for a booth near the front and Ma, who looked like she'd just seen a UFO, sprung up and bolted over to take their order/pry into Brian's personal life.

I couldn't hear what they were saying, but I did see Brian's grin retract into a gleaming smirk, and Justin (I think that was his name...) start to order before being cut off by Ma's rapidfire questions. He met them with a smile, and Ma seemed pleased, stroking his cheek before giving it a little smack, and walking away beaming, undoubtedly off to just bring them whatever food she thought would be suitable for them rather than actually taking an order. Justin stared as she walked away before giving Brian a shocked and amused look, which Brian reciprocated with a stifled chuckle. I've known Brian a long fucking time, but I've never seen that weird giddy look on his face, not once. This was like the fuckin' northern lights or some shit. By now our table had quieted down and we were all staring at the couple. (couple?!) I noticed that throughout their chit-chat, Justin's foot started to run up Brian's calf while he leaned over the table on his elbows, grinning. Brian nodded matter-of-factly and got up from the table hastily, motoring past us toward the bathroom, and yanking Justin's lapel behind him. He snapped his fingers in my face as he strode by, and Justin followed after him.

"Jesus, can't you- oh hey, Michael!" Justin giggled as he was dragged past me quickly.

"H-h-hi..." I stuttered, staring after them. I turned back to the group, whose jaws were resting nicely on their plates in front of them.

"Is it just me, or..." Emmett trailed off. "I can barely even say it."

"That's not how he usually treats tricks the morning after." Ted frowned.

"That's not a trick." I said, shaking my head in disbelief.

Emmett and Ted stared at me, telling me with their eyes to continue.

"They've known each other for a while, and definitely have slept together more than once..." I murmured. They gaped even wider, which I didn't even know was possible.

"Wha...wha..." Emmett was speechless. That was a first.

"Brian is....with someone?!?!" Ted exclaimed in a whisper.

"WHAT?!" Ma basically leapt into the booth next to me and leaned in like we were planning a bank robbery. "Tell me everything" She said in a stage whisper.

"Ma, you're crushing my arm" I groaned, squirming closer to the wall.

"Stop whining. Does Brian have a boyfriend?"

"We know about as much as you do, Deb" Ted shrugged.

A few more minutes went by like that before Brian and Justin strode back out casually, the only change a slight flush to Justin's cheeks. Brian trailed behind Justin, before Ma reached out and grabbed Brian's wrist, pulling him back.

"Alright, what's going on between you and this Justin kid?" she demanded with a gleam in her eyes. "Is he your boyfriend or something?"

Justin doubled back and sauntered over to them, a shy smile on his lips.

"Deb, you know I don't believe in such conformist labels. And furthermore we don't owe anyone an explanation for anything. Now if you'll excuse me, we're off to have a brunch fuckfest." He slung an arm around a blushing Justin and steered him out of the diner.

"Uh, it was nice meeting you..." Justin called over his shoulder.

And that was the gang's introduction to Justin Taylor.

1 year later

Brian's hands twisted the program into a tube as he willed his heart to slow the fuck down. Justin, with the help of his new and more than competent agent, had gotten his first New York gig at the NY Philharmonic, at their night of Prokofiev, Mahler and Chopin. Justin was the Chopin part for two pieces; one, a mazurka, and one, (the one who had wowed the adjudicators and gotten him the job) Nocturne No. 8, Opus 27 no. 2.

The lights dimmed to signal the end of intermission. Brian straightened in his seat. He had no fucking idea why he was so nervous, he wasn't even onstage, for christ's sake.

Justin walked onto the stage, and the enormous audience immediately applauded, with a few whoops in. Brian's heart nearly exploded with pride, and the nerves were gone. How could he be nervous when Justin looked so calm and composed, giving the audience a smile and a gracious nod. Brian had, on some level, expected him to be wearing a tuxedo with a tailcoat that he would drape

over the back of the piano bench; instead, he was wearing a well-tailored black suit with a thin black tie, and he looked hot as fuck. He sat and his fingers danced with ease over the keyboard for the Mazurka, and it took Brian a moment to realize he was actually shaking his head in wonder. Justin had that dream-like look that had drawn Brian in from the start, and there wasn't a hint of nervousness on him, unlike a few hours earlier when Brian had to do everything in his power to keep Justin from soiling himself or hyperventilating.

He finished the mazurka and turned on his piano bench to give a small bow as the crowd erupted into applause. Brian had chosen a seat right in the second row in front of the piano, despite how the box office had told him that the acoustics were terrible in that spot. Justin looked down and could make him out, and gave a small grin, turning back to the piano. He gave Brian one more quick, heavy glance, before closing his eyes. His fingers touched the keys and Brian immediately recognized the first notes to the nocturne he, in spite of himself, had come to know by heart.

The End.