**Alantie’s**

**QAF Fictions**

**LOLA**

**By \_alantie**



AU. Not much to be said. It's about Justin embracing his artistic side and being a lovely girl named Lola, whom Brian Kinney begrudgingly meets one night at Babylon...

Part 1

Brian Kinney only fucks men.

And fuck you if you think otherwise. Only not fuck you if you're a chick, or a dyke, or a transmogrified whateverthefuck.

Or a twink in drag.

Because honestly: what is the appeal? Either you fuck men, or you fuck women, or you fuck both. Why screw up the system with some odd little gender-confused cross-dresser? Brian vaguely remembers reading somewhere that guys like seducing "girls", but finding a cock underneath all the shiny pink fabric. He understands the cock part, but it's the shiny pink fabric.... well, Brian doesn't think he'll ever be able to wrap his brain around that.

He should know better though. The fucking second he starts thinking about this shit, is the moment that said shit hits the metaphorical fan.

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Babylon is fucking hot tonight.

Dozens upon/humping dozens of slippery, glittery, half-naked gay boys, their hips rotating, grinding, twisting against each other. Like a big tangle of dance-music induced sex. Thumpa-thumpa vibrates Brian's chest, hips, groin, and he feels like he's been waiting hours for this moment. He needs to fuck, and he needs to fuck hard.

Michael is leaning against the bar, one of his hands tucked into Ben's back pocket, both of them laughing and gazing into each other's eyes. Brian would be disgusted by it if he wasn't so pleased that his friend was happy.

"'lo, Mikey. Professor. What are two lads like you doing in a place like this?" he drawls, nodding to the bartender. A tumbler of whiskey is immediately set in front of him.

"We told Emmett that we'd come out to meet his friend Lola tonight," Michael explains, shifting his pelvis to the beat of the music.

"Lola?" Brian asks in a gasp induced by the fiery trail of alcohol burning down his throat.

"One of the first people he met when he came to town, you know, back when he met Godiva? Lola moved to New York City, an artist or something, and just came back to visit Emmett for a while. She's one of Godiva's lost boys."

And that's why Brian shouldn't think about that kind of shit. Because stuff like THIS happens. It's fate, or the planets, or jinxing or karma or something. Now he's going to have to make nice with Emmett's little friend, and for that he's going to have to be drunk, and have been sucked off. By a man, thank you very much.

Twenty minutes and an unsatisfying orgasm later, as he's weaving his way back through the sweaty, hard bodies of bears, studs, and twinks, he sees them. Their shadows at the end of the flourescent bar, the four of them all blue and white tones and big laughs. Emmett has arrived, and Michael and Ben are both captivated by the small blond mop of hair standing in front of them.

Fucking Lola.

What a joke.

He slings his arms over Emmett and Mikey's shoulders to take in the new addition, and instead of seeing some diminutive hesheit that looks at him with fearful, uncertain doe-like eyes, he finds himself looking at someone who knows exactly who he is.

Emmett shrugs off his arm. "Hello, Brian. This is my friend Lola. Be nice."

Lola has blue eyes. And extends her hand which Brian takes, tilting his head.

Her drag isn't like any Brian's seen before. It's almost... childlike. Jeans that are obviously a girls, with whisps of glitter climbing from a bell-bottom hem so wide that only the tips of his red sneakers can be seen. A long, fluttery top, with lace and sequins and an overall antique doll feel to it, falling from his shoulders to cover his crotch, making him seem like a prepubescent girl. His shaggy blond hair is pulled back with a red plastic barette on one side, and his lips, cheeks, and eyelashes are painted like a lady's. A terrifyingly beautiful male lady.

Brian glances away.

"Hi, Brian. It's nice to meet you. Em's told me a lot about you and your friends."

Her voice isn't some lame-ass faux falsetto, and yet it's smoother and higher than it sounds like it could be. It's chocolate and cherry souffle - dark, strong, and feminine.

"You too.... Lola."

Emmett slaps his arm with the back of his hand. "Brian, be NICE."

Brian shakes his head, laughing with no amusement.

"Jesus, Honeycutt, I didn't say anything! If you want, I can say something that's actually rude so you can have a decent excuse to hit me..." he drawls out the last word, "No? Okay then. If you'd boys... and girl excuse me, I'm going to go dance with some real men. Ta-ta, Lola."

He spins and waves sarcastically, "And for that last comment, Emmett, you can smack me later."

The crowd of horny men instantly embraces him, hands all over his body, under his clothes. Lips against his neck. Men men men, those words go running through his head, and when he opens his eyes to glance in Lola's direction, he pretends he's looking at her in disgust.

Emmett has his arms around Lola's bird-like shoulders, Lola's eyes are on Brian.

Huh. Interesting.

Not that Brian is, or anything.

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He's been dancing for a while, just enjoying the vibrating, quivering, strobing sensations of the dance floor when a hand gently closes around his elbow.

Now that's not usual gay-dance-club touching.

He should have known when he'd open his eyes and drop his chin back to earth that there'd be someone else not usual standing in front of him.

"Everyone has been worshiping you all evening, I had to come out and see what all the fuss was about," she says, glancing around with a slightly lustful smile on her face.

"Yeah, get in line. I was dancing with him." Brian nods over to a shiny little latino boy with a fucking talented tongue, gyrating his cock against Brian's thigh.

She gives Shiny Latino Boy a once-over before looking up at Brian. Staring up at him.

"My name's Justin."

"I thought it was Lola."

"Only when I'm dressed as Lola," he explains, scratching behind his left ear.

"It's kind of pathetic you know, that you need to dress like a girl to prove your worth. It's anti-slit-your-wrists therapy."

Justin tilts his head to the side, long black lashes leaving shadows across his face, "I'm not suicidal, this isn't therapy."

"Then why do it?"

"You honestly want to know, don't you? This is really shaking up your world."

"Answer the question, Lola," Brian shoots back, eyes wandering around the room briefly before settling on Justin's Lola-face.

"It's fun? It's liberating?"

"Are those questions?" Brian asks with a smirk. Then Justin looks up at him and smiles, all glitter and bemusement and Brian's lips turn down into an argumentative frown. "You're a fucking man, not a woman."

"A gay man," Justin points out, fingers quickly rising to touch his barette as if to make sure it still looks okay.

"Still have a dick though, right?"

Justin laughs, head thrown back. His adam's apple bobs under the pale skin, and his left hand cups his balls through his long frilly shirt. "Yeah right, I'd never give that up."

"But you do... every time you dress up like a pussy."

"It's a form of expression. Welcome to the age of gender confusion. Embrace the chaos, Brian."

"Embrace it, huh?"

Lola has the nerve to lick her lips, slow and tantalizing. "You want to?"

Brian scoffs. "Like I said, princess, get in line."

"Maybe that's what you should do," Lola throws back. In one swift movement, she's got Shiny Latino Boy by the waist, and is grinding herself against him. Shiny Latino Boy is interested, and his hands push up the fluttery shirt to reveal Lola/Justin's perfect, round boy-ass encased in tight sparkly denim, little hips swirling and showing it off.

Brian needs another drink.

No way is he attracted to a cross-dresser.

The bartender serves him two more glasses of Beam, which he throws back so fast, Mikey drifts in his direction, big brown eyes full of concern.

"Brian, what the fuck? Don't get so trashed tonight that we need to take you home. Ben and I were just about to leave."

"Lola can take him home. She drove me," Emmett says, waving his hand limply as he sips his Cosmo.

"Yeah, Mikey. The lovely gender-confusion-embracing Lola can take me home. She's hell behind a wheel. Really knows how to work that stick shift."

"You certainly wouldn't know from experience, would you? Now that fine piece of ass over there," Lola points over her shoulder to a throughly debauched and fucked Shiny Latino Boy, "he can crow about how I work my stick shift. I was definitely hell behind his wheel."

Emmett laughs and Lola smiles at him self-satisfyingly, "Those creative plays on words were for you, honey."

Brian rolls his eyes.

"Enough already. I'm drowning in the estrogen."

Emmett makes a scoffing, outraged sort of sound, and Lola just laughs.

"You know what?" Brian turns to face her, "You're getting on my fucking nerves."

She raises her chin and stares at him, all shining eyes and Cover Girl blush. "Why, because your insults don't bother me?"

"That has nothing to do with it."

"No, the fact that I'm amused by you, that's the issue here. Bruising your ego, stud?"

Emmett can't help but interject a cunty "meOW" and hiss somewhere in there. Brian wants to wipe that entertained expression off his face. And her face, too.

"I'm not nearly drunk enough for this," Brian groans. Two more shots, please.

The bartender can read minds. Two glasses of Beam are slid in front of him, the whiteblue glowing light of the bar shining up through the amber liquid.

"And this, my dear sweet Lola, is classic Kinney avoidance behavior. As in, he's avoiding conceding defeat to us," Emmett explains to his little friend, bending down to stage whisper it in her ear so Brian can hear him.

"Fuck off, Honeycutt." Brian drawls, flashing him the middle finger.

"And on that fine note, I'm gonna go shake a tail feather. Joining me, darling?"

Lola waves him off, "Nah, go ahead. Maybe later. Have fun!"

The crowd swallows Emmett's tall, lanky queen-shape, but Brian can still see his hands, fluttering proudly with all the others. Emmett's all about the pride. That's probably why Brian's been able to stomach him. Even enjoy him sometimes.

"I love Emmett's shame."

Lola leans next to him, smooth little elbows perched on the edge of the bar, as his back curves against it. It pushes his chest out, creating a long bow of delicately-covered boy torso. Brian wishes Justin would lose the get-up so he could run his tongue up the skin.

"What shame?"

"That's what I mean," Lola says, voice somehow standing out over the thumpa thumpa, "He doesn't have any."

The two shot glasses are now empty. Brian can make eye-contact again. Lola is waiting - she's looking right at him.

"Neither do you."

She seems struck by the compliment, but takes it in elegant stride.

"Who has time for that bullshit?" she says with a casual shrug. "Life's too short to hide. Be who you are, no apologies."

"No regrets."

Brian shouldn't have said that so softly. Lola's pupils have just dilated. Only a little bit, but Brian notices. And strangely... he likes it.

She moves forward, just slightly, so that the edge of her fluttery shirt is brushing the front of his pants.

"All bets are off now," she tilts her face like a cat, cherry lips erotically close to his jaw, "No more rules for the rest of the night. I am going to do my damnedest to get what I want tonight, but you only get one shot - just one - to invite me to your place when Em and I drop you off."

When Lola pulls back, Brian misses the heat and smell of her breath - cinnamon and alcohol.

"And if I don't?"

She shrugs. "Then you'll never know, will you? I want to see if you really believe in no apologies, no regrets."

When did her hand end up on the waistband of his jeans? Brian was too distracted by her mouth to notice. And the challenge in her eyes. And that intent arch of her eyebrow. And the way she moved her head - dominating and submissive, all at one time.

Lola knows it, too.

"We'll see."

That's all he's going to give her, and for now it's enough.

It won't be enough later on.

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It's that same later on when Brian is on his way back from the bathroom after taking a piss (and just the smidge of a bump. Really.) that he realizes what he's probably gotten himself into. And what his dick has gotten itself hard for.

Lola's standing under the stairs, lime green and sharp blue lights filtering through the grated metal, leaving long lines of black shadow across her blond hair and tiny butterfly body. Brian can see her lips against another boy's earlobe, and her hand between them is moving in a very distinct way. The boy's head is hanging back in ecstasy, and those lips are moving, moving, speaking. Dirty girl.

He watches as she slides her other arm around the boy's tight little waist, and then the hand disappears into the back of his cargos. A moving bump with a destination... under the fabric.... right to ground zero.

The boy comes on her feathery pastel something of a shirt, and she seems amused by it. Proud of him. Practically pats the fucking kid on the head.

So, little Lola is a top dog. Cocky and sure of her "feminine" wiles. She had hinted at it before, practically licking her lips with satisfaction after fucking Shiny Latino Boy, but seeing it was a different thing.

Brian decides in an instant: he is going to invite her home.

And teach puppy a few things about being a real leader of the pack.

Part 2

Emmett ends up driving Lola's car: an old 1987 BMW that Brian approves of. It suits both sides of Justin's chaotic personality, and when Brian stumbles into the back seat, he finds himself thankful for the cool leather against his flushed face.

Lola drops down next to him, surprisingly ungraceful.

"It's been forever since I've sat in the back seat of my own car," she slurs just a little bit, laughing as she throws her little red sneakered feet over the back of the passenger side seat.

"I'm always in the back seat of my own car," Brian practically snorts, head rolling back onto the head rest. He sighs and runs his hands through his hair, all drunk and tingling.

"That's because we're always taking you home drunk, high, and fucked-out," pipes Emmett from the driver's seat. He opens the sunroof for some fresh cool breeze, and Lola leans over to stare out of it, head on Brian's shoulder.

"You're not always taking me home, Honeycutt. You don't have a car. Fuck, do you even have a license?" He scrunches up his face and tries to lean forward to interrogate Emmett some more, but the heavy weight of blondness and a red plastic barrette weighs him down. "What the fuck are you on?"

The question shakes Lola out of her daze, and her eyes fall back to Brian. "What?"

"What are you on? You're staring out the sunroof like it's the most fascinating fucking thing in this god-forsaken town, and we both know that's not true because that title belongs to me."

Lola's face is slack and pink and bright and childishly entertained. She licks her lips and talks against Brian's jaw, "I'm not on anything. I'm just watching the street lights flash by. They're gorgeous and fast like electricity."

Brian rolls his eyes and slings his arm over the back of Lola's seat.

"That's because they ARE electricity, kid."

"Don't spoil his fun," Emmett warns, changing lanes like a pro, "Our Lola sees things in this world no one else can. That's why she's such a successful artist."

Brian doesn't hear that whole sentence because Lola has taken his left hand and put it between her - no no no. Strike that, that's definitely a 'his' - legs. The glitter on the denim makes the bulge there shine in the street lights. Brian starts to stroke.

She lifts her hips in time with his stroking, her eyes hooded as she licks the fruit-scented gloss off her lips. And in that one instant, just a second where her lashes open enough, and her eyes are blue, and sharp, and aware, and fucking turned-on, and the hot swollen hardness pulses under Brian's hand, all of it combined makes this aching need inside of Brian to lick that fruit-scented gloss off of Justin's pretty little Lola-lips for her.

So he does.

It's a man's mouth, everything about it. The faint bristly feeling of his chin, the width of his lips, the strong angle his tongue takes in Brian's mouth - it's all familiar. But there's the smell of strawberries between them, and Brian is pretty sure that his lips are going to have the barest tint of red on them once Lola pulls away.

Only he doesn't want her to.

Because Lola is one fucking great kisser... encouraging and aggressive. Beseeching. She searches Brian's teeth, and gums with her tongue, sucks at his bottom lip like it's the sustenance that Lola needs for Justin to go on. Or maybe it's the other way around, and just thinking about Lola needing Brian to survive makes him stroke this fucking artist's cock a little harder. God, he wants skin.

Emmett hasn't noticed the make-out session that has begun in the back seat, but he DOES hear the sound of Lola's zipper being yanked down. The ears of a bottom, jesus christ, to them a zipper is Pavlov's Bell.

"Whoa, easy boys!" he calls, swerving a bit from distraction. "Justin, you'll never forgive me tomorrow after you've had him if I let there be cum-stains on your vintage leather."

Lola pulls away gasping, and Brian thinks her ear looks positively delectable, under all that blond mess of hair. She tries to respond to Emmett, but can hardly get the words out, and Brian fucking loves the fact that he turned this proud, saucy little princess into a quivering, horny little boy toy.

Yeah. That's what he thought.

Lola's still a joke.

When they pull up in front of Brian's building on Tremont, Brian is more than ready to get Lola's ass into his loft. She's been princessing out all over the place for the last ten minutes of their ride, arguing with Emmett about stupid issues that Brian couldn't care less about; but he stays quiet and behaves because his hand is still resting on brief-covered hard, damp handful of groin between her legs, and his arm is slung around her quaint little shoulders. And her earlobe tastes good, all soft and fleshy and tiny.

"Emmett, don't fucking crash Lola's car taking it back to your place, okay?" Brian warns, pushing open his door and sliding out. Lola's fingers are in his belt loop and she follows quickly.

"Wait wait," Emmett gasps, leaving the car running as he jumps out onto the sidewalk. "I'm supposed to take her car home, while you take her up to your loft and fuck her brains out?! Lola... Justin, are you sure you wanna do this? Brian is an asshole... even more than you. He doesn't even like boys in drag."

"It's no rules for the rest of the night, Honeycutt," Brian repeats Lola's words as he jabs a finger (gently) into Emmett's spandex-covered chest, "She's coming with me. And coming, and coming and coming."

He walks backwards away from his friend, with big spooky eyes and waves with both hands. He really needs to stop doing shit like that in front of Lola. She rolls her eyes at him and puts her hand on Emmett's shoulder, whispering words Brian can't hear. But whatever it is, Emmett nods, and gives Brian one last withering glance before he drives Lola's shiny little blue beemer away.

And they're left alone on the damp sidewalk as the eery sound from a blind crosswalk warning echoes through the streets.

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Lola looks severely out of place, and uneasily hot standing in Brian's loft of white light and smooth stainless steel lines. Usually there are older twinks, or muscle queens, or Abercrombie and Fitch models standing on Brian's glossed wood floor, staring around his haven with curious eyes and boners under their pants.

But tonight, it's just her. Red toes emerging from a silvery hem, and her arms folded neatly over her soft polyester gauze blouse. She looks around with an artist's appreciation, and can't help but comment on the windows.

"This place is amazing," she says, impressed. "You must get awesome light."

"I guess so. I'm not here much in the day. Gotta make a living to afford my kingdom."

She shuffles like a petulant teenager to the window and pulls aside the curtain, city light framing her body.

"And a beautiful kingdom it is, King Kinney."

A flirtatious smile thrown over her shoulder is all Brian gets, and he decides that enough time has gone by. Enough blithering chit-chat, and definitely enough childish foreplay. It's time to get this show on the road.

Lola's body tenses up when he presses his chest to her back. Nervous laughter. Lola's hands reach up to clutch the windowsill.

"Shy, sunshine?"

Where the fuck did that pet name come from? Jesus christ, Kinney.

"A bit, all of a sudden," she admits in a reedy voice, "It's been a long time since I've gone to someone's place."

"Oh yeah? Prowl the back room's instead?" Her skin is like a magnet. Brian closes his fingers over her biceps, and she shivers, almost imperceptibly.

"Something like that."

"Come on, I thought you were supposed to be seducing me, here. The great drag princess was gonna show poor little King Kinney what's what."

She laughs, body loosened by the break in tension, by the dry little joke Brian managed to throw in there, when all he really wants to do is rip off her little Lola outfit.

He wants Justin, damnit.

That boy underneath the get-up that is so completely comfortable with himself, so completely sure who he is, that it manifests itself in an iron flower - a little girl with a firm jaw. He's man boy girl woman artist Lola Justin.

And fuck, yes, Brian will admit it: it's hot.

"You're right," she says with finality, and turns... all traces of shyness are gone, and suddenly the prowling cat, the fucking minx from Babylon is back. One hand flat against Brian's chest, the other undoing his belt.

Yes, yes, fuck yes.

Come on, Lola, prove something to me.

Brian leads the way up to the bedroom by his pants, knowing that Lola won't let go even if someone offered her the world, and all the pretty make-up and jewelry in it.

"I was hoping the night would end up like this," she admits, pushing him back against the bed. He falls on it, his knees open and ready to intercept her body.

"Oh? I had great doubts that it would... then I saw you give that twink a hand job under the stairs, and I had to see what all the fuss over you was about." Brian cocks an eyebrow at her, and she smiles. Fucking smiles like she hasn't got a care in the world - and like she knows something that Brian doesn't.

Her hands flutter over his body, desperate but controlled, and remove Brian's clothing with surprising strength. And with each article of Lola Justin removes from himself, his voice becomes deeper and kind of rough like someone who smokes. Brian thinks it's intoxicating, but when Justin reaches up to remove the red plastic barrette, Brian puts his hand over it and stops him.

"Leave it on."

Justin hums under his breath, knowing eyes pale against the black of his mascara, and replies, "Gladly" with a bit of a whisp in his voice that makes Brian even harder.

A soft hand cups Brian's cock, palm sliding up and down the length with even strokes, and Brian throws his head back against the pillows of his bed, savoring the feel of Justin's naked body on his thighs.

"Your cock is so hard... and hot...mmm'n so wet," Justin leans forward to purr against his ear, making the words breathy and tangible. Brian's consciousness unravels.

"Fuck foreplay... I'm going to slide a condom onto it, just... like... this..."

A condom packet rips open, and Brian waits for the rubber to unroll over his dick.

And when it never comes, he opens his eyes to see where it went.

... it's on fucking Lola's fucking dick.

Fuck that, this wasn't the plan.

He's about to protest, opens his mouth to bitch at her, queen-out, be outraged - when Justin continues, still stroking Brian as his hips begin to grind against Brian's body. "And then you'll lube me up, so my ass is wet and slippery and desperate for you to shove your cock into it. God, will I want it..."

"Justin..." Okay, his voice sounds breathy, and not fucking pleading, lest someone think otherwise.

Wet masculine fingers slide down Brian's balls and to his ass, gently prodding in and up... opening.

Four fingers, suddenly full. Oh my fucking god.

Justin whimpers a bit as his fingers scissor apart the muscles of Brian's hole.

"And finally, when I can't take it anymore, I will beg for you to fuck me. I'll practically cry for it, because in that moment...nothing, nothing can beat being fucked in the ass by a man."

Brian suddenly remembers how that feels. "Fuck, Justin..."

The fingers slide out and are replaced by Justin's cock - blunt, hard, and pushing in. And like a fucking slut, he pushes back, spreads himself, brings his knees up around Justin's trim little waist, and opens his mouth against the gasping one above it. More more more moremoremore.

Yeah, way to show him about being leader of the pack, Kinney. Christ.

Part 3

He feels stretched and empty now that Justin's cock is out of his ass. It's been a long time since he's felt like that. That memory is saturated in the smell of cheap ass industrial cleaner, and the feel of a locker against his face as a man with a whistle around his neck slides out of him.

Justin's memory will be soaked in glitter and sharp witty tones, and that's enough to make Brian's cock feel a little flushed again. Even as Justin lays sprawled next to him. Even as he hopes that the memory is replaced by another one with Justin, and another one, and another one.

He isn't going to admit it though. Hoping is for pussies. Brian just does.

Justin's moppy blond hair is tickling the skin of his arm, and when he goes to smack it off, his hand stays there, tangles, winds into it. Justin's scalp is damp, and Brian likes the feel of it against his fingertips.

"No apologies, King Kinney," Justin says in a compliment masked as a sigh. Brian watches his black eyelashes flutter, and he taps his index finger against Justin's temple.

"And no regrets, Princess Lola."

"That's Queen Justin to you."

Brian chuffs into his pillow and reaches blindly into the dim dark to find the pack of cigarettes he knows he left on his night stand.

"Light me one."

Well, now. "Someone's turned into a bossy twat here, and I know it isn't me."

Justin's head tucks and rolls until those blue eyes settle on Brian's face, blond strands whipped all over in front of them like straw in the wind. A left hand wiggles out from under his pillow and ends up on Brian's chin, gripping it in a way that reminds Brian of his first grade teacher.

This night is just full of fucking memories now, isn't it?

But maybe that's what makes this Justin so alluring. So... enigmatic. A tight little body of unruly delicacy - and unprecedented depth. The way Lola challenged him from the get-go, and how she grinned with respect. How he ignited things within Brian that had been buried in the shadowed, sharp recesses of his mind. Nobody touched those places, and now Justin was doing it with a shimmering seduction and an arched eyebrow of intelligence.

"Thanks, by the way." is what he says, still gripping Brian's chin.

"For what?"

Brian's voice is softer than he would like, but then Justin nudges himself up further, so he's hovering just inches above him. Eyes perfectly even, and body perfectly covered. And it's good.

"For letting inviting me to stay. For giving me a chance. For proving what kind of man you are."

There's a flush rising in Brian's face, and fucking hell, he will not blush, damnit.

So, he rolls his eyes instead, and Justin gives his chin a fond little shake.

"Don't take over my twat status, ass," he says in a pouty-sort of voice, and Brian practically feels his eyes get bright. His hands smooth up Justin's back and grip his shoulders, holding him there.

Justin continues, "And thanks for letting me top you. I know you don't do that often."

"Try never."

Justin's lips roll into a quiet, knowing little smirk and he nods just once before asking permission with his eyes to kiss Brian.

Permission fucking granted. It's about time. Jesus.

Sucking on Justin's tongue has been severely under-practiced during the course of this night, Brian decides with a mouth full of tongue and saliva that isn't his. Justin whimpers a little into the kiss, and is moving to straddle Brian's waist, when suddenly they roll, and Brian tucks Justin's little body underneath his. Like a child cradling a toy. Or a lioness cradling her cub. Or a stud cradling his twink.

Or his Lola.

They stay like that for a while, just kissing wetly. Limbs tangled in a flurry of dried sweat and rough hair, and hands squeezing and groping for sensitive spots and places that tense when touched. Brian can't get enough of the way Justin's hair smells, or how his neck tastes, or the heavy weight of his legs around Brian's ass, and he thinks that some part of his sanity has just slipped away, never to be seen again.

Fuck. It's extreme contentment all of a sudden, and when the hell did that happen? Where did it come from? Why is it that suddenly all the nights of those slippery boys and Abercrombie and Fitch models suddenly boil down to the feel of Justin's little body and red-stained lips nestled underneath him, on his bed?

Brian needs a cigarette. Or twenty.

Justin watches him light two cigarettes with an intuitive expression. And they both take drags at the same time, like synchronized swimmers for lung cancer.

"You like New York?"

Brian is curious. He always wanted to go to New York eventually. Kudos to the boy who could.

"It's better than L.A."

"Oh?"

"I'm actually moving back to Pittsburgh, though." Justin admits in a breath of smoke that goes wafting up to the rafters overhead. Brian is watching the smoke, Justin is watching him.

"What the fuck for?"

"I just bought a gallery off of North Front Street. I plan on showcasing local artists, and maybe some of my own stuff.

"Huh."

Justin laughs, puts out his cigarette and buries his nose in Brian's stomach.

"Don't worry, I'm not going to start stalking you." He grins against the skin, "Unless you want me to."

And when Brian just shrugs, suddenly there's a face burrowing into his crotch like it's the only home the owner of the face ever wants to know.

Here in Pittsburgh. And right in this bed.

So Brian puts out his cigarette, and he let's it make it's offer. Because suddenly, Brian doesn't seem to mind something permanent.

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They move together, hard and fast, Justin on all fours and swinging back to accept Brian's cock with eager grunts. The sun is rising somewhere behind the sheer drapes and thick clouds, and the glow that is cast over the room is eery and erotic. Brian loves how Justin arches his back, the way he swings back his hand and grips Brian's ass or thigh like a lifeline, and when Brian tangles his hand in Justin's hair and wrenches his head back, they both come almost simultaneously. They collapse, all intertwined and sated, on the damp sheets, and Brian can't help but lick at Justin's wet, gasping little lips that still taste like strawberry lip gloss and whisper words of admiration for one of the hottest fucks he's ever had.

Forty-five minutes later, they do it again.

And it isn't until ten-thirty, with a belly full of homemade omelets, that Justin leaves - but not without slipping his red barrette into Brian's front pocket, and kissing him the way only a lover knows how to.

Brian still doesn't mind.

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Babylon is fucking hot tonight.

Okay, Babylon is fucking hot every night. It's because it never changes. It has the same constant beat, and the same half-naked boys. It's reliable.

Just like his presence there is.

It isn't long after he's in the door that he's propositioned. He hasn't even made his way to the bar or gotten a drink yet, but some random kid who knows of him, but hasn't had the honor of getting to really know him decides to be brave enough to offer.

"So... wanna fuck?"

"That's your witty repartee? That's supposed to make me want to fuck your brains out? "Wanna fuck"?"

The kid shrugs, looks clueless.

"It usually works, dude. I mean, come on, right? I'm hot."

Brian snerks, eyes starting to wander. "Well, hey, all the power to you, buddy. Get lost."

"What?"

Brian's eyes land on Justin. Really Justin. Completely Justin. He's standing at the bar with Michael and Emmett, in cargoes and a tight little tank-top with a pointless graphic spanning the front. He's laughing about something, all white teeth and shaggy blond hair and a perfect nose. Fuck, his mouth is...

Brian looks back down at the kid. "I said, get lost. I have a better offer."

The kid looks around in confusion, "From who?"

Justin's eyes land on his. Blue, intelligent, sparkling, and amused.

"From him."

Brian pulls a little bit of red plastic out of his pocket and holds it up for Justin to see in the flashing lights. Arches an eyebrow at him pointedly, and Justin laughs and puts his drink down. Joins him.

"Hey."

His voice still stands out over the vibrating dance music. His fingers close around Brian's elbow.

Elegant, interesting, enigmatic, beautiful, boy, girl, Lola, Justin. Him.

"Hey."

And they grin at each other like pussies. Like pussies who have a secret they're not going to share.

Because the bottom fucking line is: Brian Kinney still only fucks men.

Red barrettes are just a bonus.

--

THE END.

**Dry!Series**

AU: Brian/Justin Highschool!fic

It's two teenage boys falling in love through the seasons of coming-of-age, and I have plans to keep weaving the tale for as long as it takes.

Parts: One-Four (Sneakers, Morning, Inside, and Dry)

Dry!Series :: Sneakers

It is the first pep rally of the new school year. The principle stuffs all of the classifications and social ranks of teenagers into the gymnasium, shouting with a microphone while the noise level on the bleachers rises higher and higher, vibrating the metal rafters. Band playing, drum rolls echoing, and the cheerleaders shrill little chants that never drown out the obnoxious squeak of their brand-new sneakers on the glossy floorboards.

Justin rolls his head back and stares out the skylight at the pale, unnaturally cold September weather, and he can't help but feel offended for it that they'd dare to have an event like this on a day like today. This was the kind of afternoon where you went home and collapsed on your flannel comforter and gazed at the cracks on your ceiling until it got too dark to see them anymore, or your mom called you down for dinner.

But instead he was here, in this whirrling carousel of school colors, flourescent lights, and marching band trumpets that sounded like a migraine instead of music.

"This shit drives me fucking insane," the boy next to him says, slouching so that his long back stretched in a perfect bow.

"I think the cheerleaders are the only ones who like it," Justin agrees, noting with an artists ever-watching mind that the kid's voice seems to stand out more than the deafening noise around them.

"They only like it so that they can break in their new sports bras."

"And get fucked in their cars later by football players who get hard from watching them bounce around in those dumb little skirts for an hour." Justin surprises even himself for saying it, and almost apologizes until the boy snorts in amused agreement and turns his head to face him.

"My name's Brian."

"Justin," he replies, offering his hand politely. Brian raises an eyebrow at him, and Justin pulls his hand back, rubs self-consciously it on his tea-dyed jeans.

"Do you think Principle Marks knows we don't care?" Brian nods towards the display, eyes dark and apathetic.

Justin shrugs, shoulder brushing against Brian's. "It's his job to try to make us."

The cheerleaders and jocks start throwing inflated balls bearing the mascot's face into the bleachers of students, and Justin feels overwhelmingly smothered by it. He glances up at the skylight again, yearning for the day.

"Hey, are you okay? You look like shit," Brian says, fingers flex like he is about to reach out, but then they smooth down his own abdomen, thin tee-shirt rippling against the hard youthful muscles.

"I'm um... feelin-"

"Want to get out of here?"

Justin feels his skull rattle with shrill cheers, and he looks directly into Brian's calm, wise hazel eyes that look like the sky in the skylight. Feel like peace.

All Justin needs to do is nod, and Brian has their backpacks, their jackets, and their bodies down under the bleachers in record time, with only one surprised outcry from Daphne Chanders, who was sitting behind him and thought that they'd get in "sooo much trouble!" if they got caught sneaking out.

Their sneakers are silent on the asphalt of the parking lot, and the zipper tabs of their backpacks make a steady tin clicking with each step they take away from the school, and towards the horizon. Brian pulls his hood up, a faded black cotton that clashes with his brown hair, but blends in with the subtle grey sky that is misting so thick and smells like earth and pumpkin candles. Breeze whips their jackets, making them snap and flutter, muffled and strange.

"So, you're a senior, right?" Justin can't help but talk, it feels like he's supposed to.

Brian's hands fist in the front pocket of his hoodie, "Yeah, you?"

"Senior. Held back a year though."

"What for?"

Justin is grateful for the mottled pale light of the afternoon, grateful for the way it makes all the lines of the sidewalks, the street, the hard edges of houses and porch stairs into an endless haze. It does the same to his mind, and his answer, and what it reveals.

"I left my old school... amidst some... controversy?"

"Is that a question?"

"No, it's just... it sounds so pathetic to say I left a stuffy private school because of controversy, you know? Cliche, and annoying."

Flick and snap of a lighter, Brian's motions are achingly graceful. Cigarette smoke begins to swirl into the fog, and Justin wants to draw THOSE angles and lines of Brian's hand and the long white slash of the burning paper roll.

"So what was the controversy?"

"Rival with another student... accusations of sexual harrasment and assault. It wasn't pretty."

Brian has the balls to chuckle, loose and smoky, "Was he?"

"Was he what?"

"Pretty."

Relief washes through Justin, like sneakers finally hitting asphalt after being caged in the auditorium.

"He was alright."

They both smile, certain and knowing.

"So, Brian," Justin says his name in a hooking tone, bouncing his bag on his back and tilting his head towards the other boy, "what are you doing after you graduate?"

"Hopefully going to college like everybody else. Gotta get out of this fucking town and away from my goddamn parents, you know?"

"Oh come on, tell me what you really think," Justin jokes. It makes Brian laugh again.

"Who has time for bullshit, right? Seriously, the world is my fucking playground," He tilts his chin back and smiles into the sky, and Justin wonders where the dark boy that was curled inside himself at school went, "Gonna go to New York or something. What about you?"

"Well, if my father has his way, I'll be a business major at Dartmouth."

"And if Little Justin gets his way?"

"Rent's expensive in the Big Apple, you'll need a roommate," Justin's wit is as fast as his new crush. Cliched term, real emotion.

"And what would you do in New York City?"

"Mmm, be utterly, fucking inspired. Put all of that energy of the center of America right into my art. All those bright flashing electronic billboards with celebrities that stretch stories upon stories over your head. Obnoxious, but so fucking alive."

"...Because things are dead around here."

"Well, yeah. Don't you notice it?"

"I wasn't asking. I was agreeing." He flicks the cigarette butt into the street, where it flips into a dozen orange sparks that get blown away by the crisp breeze. It blows Brian's hood off and wraps it around the side of his neck, and Justin has the urge to reach up and fix it.

He goes with that urge.

Brian just stares at him through his lashes, his head ducked, and Justin doesn't want to let go of the soft black cotton, fingers tucked under it and against the warm plane of Brian's fabric-covered back.

"An artist, huh?" Brian's voice is nearly halting, tightly packed with atmosphere and earth.

Justin pulls back his hand, "Yeah."

In another perfect movement, Brian's hand darts out and wraps around Justin's wrist, stopping it's retreat and holding it between them. He pulls it closer to him.

"That explains all the stains on your fingers."

A blush rises through Justin's body, and he wishes for once in his life that he didn't have stains on his fingers, or hesitation in his voice, and that something about him could be deemed acceptable.

Brian takes a step forward, towards Justin. Puts his hand on his shoulder, and pushes him towards a row of thick trees, firmly, with a look that screams unspeakable whispers.

The foggy afternoon didn't make Justin feel breathless until now.

The intent tilt of Brian's head is open, gives freedom for Justin to flee, or stay; sneakers sinking into the moist soil and trampled grass that smells alive as it dies, giving absolution to two teenage boys taking refuge in the dark foliage and making that... leap.

The kind that Changes Everything.

Introductions are over, like the summer and heat, leaving behind a void in which they have control. Brian takes it, leaning down and brushing his gently rough lips against Justin's.

And then Justin becomes acceptable, reborn anew in fog and the unique feeling of belonging to this taller, younger, steadier boy he goes to school with. He feels like a man, feels like THIS was what he was looking for when he was staring out the skylight of the gymnasium's iron eaves.

Brian must feel the same way, since they both whimper-moan slightly at the wet sound of their mouths opening to each others for the first time. Their foreheads slide together, fingers curl into shaggy, wind-whipped hair and clutch at jackets over heaving chests. Dry melding of lips, pressing the softness so it is crushed between teeth and jaw, and when their teeth clash, hungry and jolting, their bodies do too. There is a mindless freefall, tipping over into swollen desire and spit that tastes achingly sweet.

"Oh fuck, Brian," Justin whispers, moist and hot, into Brian's gasping mouth.

Brian's eyes flutter open, lashes whispy like the haze in the pine tree nettles that are their cover, "I just...I had to do that."

Justin answers by smoothing one hand up the cold edge of zipper, fingers following it all the way to Brian's neck. He covers the rapid pulse with his lips, and Brian tilts his chin back, carefree and satisfied by the fluttering of Justin's tongue on the skin.

Sobs are caught in Justin's chest, that unravelling disbelief and elation that feels like thousands of stars bursting in his lungs. His eyebrows scrunched, mouth open on Brian's again, tongues heavy and thirsty and winding. He wants to crawl inside Brian's jacket, shirt, skin and exist only for him.

Which is, of course, ridiculous. They've just met.

More desperate kisses begin to ebb into parting, like the light from the day. Words fail, like the moon's attempt to shine through the cold misty sky. They walk home, distant and quiet like the air that they breathe, like the sound of their shoes on the damp pavement.

And then Justin's paint-stained fingers curl into Brian's jeans belt loop, and the stars inside explode when the corners of Brian's lips twitch upward in a soft, rare, always perfect smile.

Dry!Series :: Morning

The next morning dawns brilliant and clear. The shadows are long and blue, and the cold cracked concrete of the highway stretches into the sunbathed horizon with promise, like a long inviting carpet. Walk, ride, run, just take the road. Anything can happen. And a bunch of other Hallmark expressions.

Field trips always seem exciting when they're being talked about. Announcements, permission slips, money orders... all the organized political nonsense that leads up to taking 250 seniors to Gettysburg for a day dominates the weeks before it happens. The kids get excited just because thats a whole school day that they don't have to be in a classroom.

Slanted seven o'clock sunlight saturates Justin's morning walk to school, and he moves slowly, wandering back and forth over the sidewalk, in a sleepy, daydreaming sort of way. His head feels drowsy, and that might have something to do with the lack of sleep from the night before. But it was too hard to drift off peacefully when his mind kept replaying the kiss with Brian, the taste, the smell, the feeling of his larger, harder body holding Justin's. The more Justin thought about it, the more aroused he'd get until his skin felt too hot and oversensitized and he could feel every single thread of his sheets against his naked body.

Students file into the school buses, all mumbling through yawns and chipped yellow paint. Seating assignments on a clipboard point Justin into the last bus, the one with only eight teenagers, all of them wearing earphones, and Justin feels comfortable and relieved.

The heater under the seat clicks and whirls, and makes Justin's legs so hot that he has to pull his knees up against his chest, the courderoy smelling like warm, musty electricity. The windows fog up a little from his breath, and the bus rocks gently when the severely overweight driver settles heavily into the front seat. Strangely silent, eerily still, like the calm before the storm and Justin's just about to drift asleep with the cold damp window pressed against his forehead when an old car with a bad muffler pulls into the parking lot.

Unfashionably arriving fashionably late. Justin's heart flips and flutters like gravel sprayed by a spinning tire.

He watches Brian in his father's car for a few minutes, the spotted stains and scratches on the flimsy bus window making the scene look dirtier than it should. Or maybe the scene is just plain dirty, like the hunched 40-something man in the thick plaid coat and the churlish expression who is obviously Brian's father. Brian gets out of the car suddenly, his long body tense and angry, and he slams the door behind him, before striding purposefully to the last bus. A squirrelly little teacher is about to speak up, tell him to check the bus assignments first, but turns the other way and bothers herself with something else.

Brian looks too tall for the bus, standing at the top of the steps, at the end of the aisle, like this dark embodiment of young masculinity. His hazel eyes sweep the bus and it's passengers with a look of disdain, until they land on Justin.

Justin wants to avert his eyes, let the sleepiness of the morning be his excuse for retreating into himself, but then god, when their eyes meet, everything sort of melts.

"This seat taken?" Some anger has faded from his face, and is replaced with an intoxicating look of amusement and subtle flirtation.

"You always use lines like that?" Sharp and assholic response.

Brian's lips curled into a smile of respect, and he leans down so his head is only a couple of inches from Justin's, whispers carefully,

"Only for hot older blonds with fucking fantastic kissing skills."

Justin rolls his eyes, but feels his gut grow hot with desire, "Well, it wasn't a very good line. Maybe you should get new material. Hot older blonds are not easily impressed."

Brian huffs a nearly silent laugh, looks both ways, almost edgy again, "So, can I sit with you, or what?"

"Of course you can," Justin says, giving away his eagerness to be near Brian again.

He slides in enough that their shoulders and thighs are pressed together, and Justin feels so fucking relieved that he is finally being touched.

The bus's careful rumbling increases to a jolting vibration as it begins to move, a long line of yellow trailing out of the school parking lot and towards the turnpike heading east. And not five minutes down the road, Brian's hand takes advantage of the unconsciousness of the few other students on board, and slides over to Justin's leg.

His fingertips follow the threads of the material, the soft ridges that tighten over Justin's knee, and stretch up his thigh, over and over, back and forth, like he is addicted to the feel. Justin looks up at him, entranced with the way his shaggy brown hair falls over his forehead, and the way his mouth is parted, lips pale and crisp like a painting. Hazy web of seduction laces around them, drowsy and lustful, and Brian lets his fingers smooth all the way up to the top of Justin's inner thigh, almost touching his groin, but not quite; his eyes following his hand.

"I thought- I thought a lot about... last night," nearly silent whisper from his bent head, cool and filling Justin's ear.

Justin closes his eyes and tilts his head, Brian's nose at his temple, his lips on his cheekbone.

"Me too," Justin admits in a whisper, cracked like the paint on the bus.

"Thought about the way you taste... thought about what'd it be like to..." Brian trails off, and Justin doesn't mind because he knows what he was going to say.

The bus driver up front begins coughing like a lifetime smoker, and then turns on fucking country music, and it's enough to dispel the erotic fog that was surrounding the two boys.

"We should, like, find a bathroom when we stop," Justin says, smiling, fingers fiddling with the button on Brian's cuff.

Brian grabs Justin's fingers and looks down at them, thumb playing over two stains that Justin tried vigorously to wash out, "I'm definitely up for it."

The bus turns onto the turnpike and the new angle causes the sun to streak into their seat, burning patterns into the fabric of their clothes, and Justin decides he wants to feel the heat on Brian's stomach.

No sooner does his hand settle onto Brian's taut abdomen, Brian is hissing and moving away from Justin's touch.

Suddenly the sunlight is too glaring, and the passengers on the bus are too silent, and the highway looks like a desolate staircase to something that holds no potential.

"What the-" Justin starts, and Brian's hand grabs onto his and brings it back to his stomach.

"I forgot. It's okay. Just - careful, okay?"

"Look, Brian, I don't kno-" Justin tries to pull his hand out of Brian's, but it's held fast.

"Don't," is all he says, a soft, gruff, unguarded word, and Brian pushes Justin's palm back on his stomach, "Keep it there."

Something tells Justin that Brian will never ever beg, and never has, but this would be as close as he'd ever come to pleading for something. The wild look in his hazel eyes is the same that was there when he climbed onto the best, only drained of anger. He needs Justin's touch.

They both look out the window, watching the Pennsylvania forests and hills go by, streaky from speed. The sunlight flashes and splatters against them and their faces, and Justin slips into a doze feeling Brian's fingers smoothing up and down his own, the tight, tender belly rising and falling under his palm. Warm, alive, and full of promise.

Dry!Series :: Inside

The first time Brian fucks Justin is in the gritty, abandoned dark of the boy's locker room after school. It's primal and needy, because after weeks of foreplay, it's time to explode.

Brian is possibly too rough, angry and annoyed with himself after spending two hours in detention for the fourth time this month. Justin just seems to enjoy the punishment because he spent the last two hours in an honor's society meeting, and hates himself for it.

Justin thinks that maybe they were drawn to each other in the first place was because they were both stuck; he in an endless carousel of being A Good Son/Student and lacking inspiration, and Brian in the violent cyclone of Troubled Youth. It makes sense, especially now, with his face pressed against a locker and a hard cock up his ass.

Whatever it is that made this happen, made it feel so right, Justin is grateful for it.

And Brian is too, feeling the smaller body of the boy swing back and accept the thrusts with timed perfection. He fists Justin's dick, fingers nudging the heavy balls, as he breaths in the smell of sweat in the blond hair behind Justin's ear.

"We're - going - to - have - to - do - this - more - often - from - now - on," Justin cranes his head back, gasps against Brian's lips.

Brian's tongue laps at Justin's moist bottom lip before he grunts back, "More - often? Fuck, - we're - doing - this - again - right - after - this."

The head of Brian's rubber-covered penis drags over Justin's prostate, and he writhes in tortured delight.

"Jesus."

Justin's hissed word is rusty and echoes off the tile and lockers, useless like the clawing his hand is currently doing to the doors; worn out locker doors with decades of school years, and dozens of coats of paint on them.

Brian wonders how many times they've been fucked against.

He sweeps his hand up Justin's arched, taut, boy belly and chest, until he's clasping his throat through the collar of the white tee-shirt. Feels the breath and groans in the skin, thrumming and alive. His skin feels so young and fresh, like a little child just starting to go through puberty, and as Justin's voice cracks with another moan, it sounds like the skin feels. Fourteen year old prize that Brian has the pleasure of possessing.

Justin comes first, shooting hot, lush spurts of ejaculate all over the metal in front of him, and lets his hand fall to clutch Brian's ass, pulling him into his body as hard as possible. He hopes he leaves finger-shaped bruises on Brian's body.

Then the flaring heat of Brian's orgasm in his ass makes him squeeze his eyes shut, forehead falling against the steel, and he rubs his sweat against the coldness.

"Fucking' A," Brian whispers into his ear; longer, taller body sagging against Justin's back.

"Yeah." is all Justin can say, and it's enough.

Their lips meet again, tongues sliding and twisting in each other's mouths, filling each other with saliva and unspoken words while Brian's softening cock slips from Justin's hole. It leaves a void, and Justin misses it with each sweep of Brian's tongue along the roof of his mouth.

"Again?" he asks around the kiss, and Brian nods and steps back.

"In the shower."

"And after that?"

"Again."

"Good," Justin says, and faintly smiles.

And the lack of inspiration, and the Troubled Youth melts away as Brian clasps his hand and leads him to the empty and dark locker room showers

Dry!Series :: Dry

several weeks after the first time

Autumn is a time for change.

A mysterious, untouched sort of time. Every year it seemed just when it could be grasped, it'd slip away into winter, not to return for long springs and endless summers. The world gets crisp, curling with blankets of brown and orange. Leaves cover the yellow grass, and the wind sounds like trumpets born on the back of everlasting rustling. Sharp blue skies, and streaming sunlight through clouds hinting at snow. Change is a living thing, autumn is it's showcase. It's annual fanfare, only appreciated by those who notice.

And Justin does.

Laying on his back here, he watches it all unfold, feels autumn curling around his limbs, and whipping through his hair. Here with his head on his boyfriend's stomach, change is unfurling into the future, and Justin is ready to reach out and touch it.

"It feels older every year," Brian says, voice cool and dry, humming against Justin's head.

"What does?"

"Fall."

"It is, I guess," Justin says, rolling onto his stomach and settling his chin in the woven bristles of Brian's wool sweater, "Older like us. I think... I think we grow with it."

Brian has one arm arched over his head, fingers loosely tangled in his shaggy brown hair, looking like a god in the golden grass, lips slightly chapped like his words, "Kinda like how Christmas gets less and less exciting every year, right?"

"Burden of growing up."

The sun is setting behind the hill they lay on, setting the atmosphere on fire in long brushstrokes until it tapers into the approaching night. The breeze is colder and loud in their ears.

"It's kind of sad," Brian almost whispers, other hand coming to Justin's head now and playing with his hair. Comb, smooth, tug; comb, smooth, tug; comb, smooth, tug.

"Only if you think of the future as a bad thing," Justin buries his nose into the sweater, inhaling cigarette smoke and the scent of Brian.

"It just fades so fucking fast. Then it's just...gone. And you look back, and you think you had it good then, but you're really just fooling yourself, right? Because now, in this moment, you don't feel like you have it good. You feel like shit. Because life is always shit. Fading, quick, and cold, you know?"

Justin loves when Brian's mind runs away with him. It's like he's witnessing his being in the making, secret and intense. He's never been much for secrets, which is why they do so well in high school, so upfront about their homosexuality. But sometimes, in these dim moments of fleeting change and saturated words, he needs to know that there are so many pieces of Brian that only belong to him. Broken, perfect pieces that are tragically ancient for someone so young.

"Do you think this moment is for shit, Brian?" Justin asks quietly, peering at him over the long brown-covered expanse of his chest. Brian raises his head and looks down at him, eyes sharp and serious.

"Fuck, Justin," he practically gasps, incredulous that Justin would think that.

Hands grip Justin's hair and pull him up to his knees before they slide along his neck, cold and clinging to his head to keep him still. Keep him staring straight at Brian.

"Justin," voice so earnest and pleading, like the painted sky and the wind all in one, "Never- " crack, swallow, "Fuck. It's never for shit with you."

Their lips meet, dry and genuine. Justin feels like he can't get close enough and whimpers desperately when their mouths open and tongues slide together, full of unspoken words. Brian presses his palm against Justin's cheek, fingers clawing into his skin as if he wanted to peel it back so he could crawl inside.

"I love you," Justin whispers into Brian's slack mouth, their foreheads pushed together so hard it nearly aches. Brian's arms wrap around Justin's slight waist, and he pulls his body flush against his own.

They roll, Justin's legs spreading wantonly, courderoy and denim grinding together as Brian moves his hips in deep, attentive thrusts. Brian buries his face in Justin's neck, breathing deeply and sighing like he's never been more content in any other place in the world, and Justin thinks thats probably true.

"Brian," he says softly into his ear, lips moving against the heated curves of skin, "Brian, I don't care about.. getting old, and fading away. Let's just stay like this, an' we'll be okay. We've got to be."

Brian pulls back to look down at him silently.

Then he kisses him, abrupt and fervid, sweeping him and his doubts away. Answering his pleas in affirmation.

Yes, I won't worry.

Yes, we'll stay this way.

Yes, I love you.

They make love right there on the hill behind the school, sun already set against the hills of Pittsburgh, and shadows long and blue on the dry grass. Brian keeps his arms cradled against Justin's body, keeping him warm from inside of him and against him and around him. Breath hot and moist against each other's lips, whispered words of affection and promise, feeling so much older than they are, and feeling that maybe, maybe it isn't so sad. They both come with brilliant groans and content sighs, and Brian stays inside him, their fingers linked tightly until it gets too dark to see each other's faces.

And around them, the autumn continues it's fanfare for change. Change for the season, change for the world, change for them. It's dry and rustling, but its real.

Parts: Five-Seven (Rain, Blue, and the special thanksgiving one that was never posted at bjfic.net, Edible)

Dry!Series :: Rain

Dead autumn rain against the windowpanes feels slightly reminiscent of a home Brian has never had. A place that doesn't really exist, except for in these moments of dim reflection and rushing silence; Justin standing at an easel and painting in the empty classroom. The rain makes a sound that is constant and timed, like crickets on a summer night, but so much more trustworthy; a sinking sensation of comfort made of fog and fleece. The wind whistles in melancholy violin strains against the glass, rain pinning battered leaves to the soaking-wet sill, like the reenactment of a tragedy.

Brian always assumed that to paint, you needed the best light possible so that each color could be used precisely, but watching Justin paint, shrouded in the desolate greens and honest golds of a rainy day, he doesn't think so. Justin seems to be using the dooming light to work for him, just as absolute as if he were painting in the most brilliant noon that ever existed.

"Are you bored?" Justin asks him, living voice strange in the abandoned room. He taps a paintbrush against a glass jar filled to the brim with water, fingers covered with stripes and splatters of so many bold colors that Brian wonders if they'll seep into his skin and become part of him.

"Not bored," he responds with a shrug, tilting his face back towards the mystery of the rain-riveted windowpanes, "Rather be here than home."

Justin nods, his posture quiet and elegant as he drags a paintbrush over the rough canvas, the bristles full of slippery paint.

"I like to be here... when school is over, and the teachers have all gone home to get drunk or grade papers. It kind of inspires me. Mrs. Ketchman is really cool for trusting me to be in here after-hours."

Brian makes a small masculine sound in his chest to acknowledge his boyfriend's words. His fingers run absently up and down the grain of wood on the surface of the desk he sits on, legs dangling and heels beating against the metal legs in time with the rainfall, tempered and soothing. The air smells like paint and public school paste and floor cleaner from the janitor down the hall, and it laces a haze of sleepiness around Brian.

He might have drifted off, because minutes or hours later, Justin is satisfied, and rouses Brian from which ever faraway horizon of thought he was entertaining in twisted technicolor or subtle shadow.

Justin steps back from the angled easel, and crosses his arms over his chest, tight blue shirt stretching over his back. Brian thinks it matches the clouds over the world today, all taut and just plain right.

"Come look at it," Justin turns and looks at him, voice and eyes a matching grey.

His sneakers squeak against the olive green tiles as Brian comes to stand behind Justin, staring at the shimmering canvas of moist color in surging strokes. Confident and distinct, like Justin.

"It's an old woman."

"Smiling," Justin adds. His face is glowing with sweat and tiny drops of paint that have dried on his cheekbone. Like rain.

"At... are those flowers?"

"Old women always smile at flowers," simple statement, and Justin says it like it's the most beautiful thing he's ever uttered, "I think, they like, appreciate things like that. The little things. We sure as hell don't. Like they always smile at color and children."

Brian shoves his hands in his jean pockets, and shrugs his shoulders forward so the redorangebrown of his plaid shirt falls over them, "I thought old ladies yelled at kids to get off their lawns?"

Justin flashes a silent look that tells Brian that his humor was not invited to this moment of weather-wrought reflection of his work. Brian apologizes by sighing and stepping closer, honest and giving.

"It's-"

"Thank you," Justin replies, knowing that Brian's words could never, ever be said, but knowing exactly what they mean. Trustworthy silence and familiar rain-torn leaves that feel like home.

A threatening gust rattles the classroom windows, and all the damp trees, bark shiny and black, bow with the force of it. Brian wraps his arms around Justin from behind, one hand sliding into his front pocket and the other around his chest; over warm fabric and sensitive skin. His cold nose nestles against the sweet-smelling heat of the hair behind Justin's ear.

"Brian," Justin smile-whispers, voice hitching with arousal. Painting always makes his body thrum, feel alive. He gets nearly giddy sometimes, just laughing or fucking or breathing with so much intent and passion. But right now, Brian is...

"Not tryin' to- I mean, I just want to-" Hold you. Be like this. Feel that thrum in your small body in the faded threadbare light of this evening.

Justin leans all his weight against Brian's chest, savoring the hands that cup his groin, and smooth across his throat. The careful, inspired breaths of Brian in his hair.

"When it doesn't rain, I miss it," Justin muses lazily, words spinning a web around them like windowpanes against a downpour. His fingers reach up and curl under Brian's soft flannel collar.

"The sounds?" Brian opens his mouth against Justin's earlobe, pink and delicate.

"And the smells. It almost smells like paint," he sighs with his eyes closed, lets out a whispy chuckle, "I might be the only person in the world who likes the smell of paint."

The trustworthy silence always leads to confessions that feel like flickering gold flames in the rainy fall darkness. Brian faintly smiles and admits softly,

"Nah. I like it too... reminds me of you. "

Old ladies aren't the only ones who can appreciate small things.

Dry!Series :: Blue

They move together, fast and desperate, having thirsted for this moment all day long through droll classes and annoying responsibilities. Brian pushes into him hard, straining with his entire body, sweat glistening across his skin like stars. Moist breaths mingling and the constant motion, the world tilting and spinning in a great expanse of pleasure and craving for each other's hard bodies.

The house is empty, but loud. Full of all the sounds that Justin never notices when his family is there, and only make him jump when he is alone. Not alone now though, completely full, Brian ramming into a spot deep inside that makes him writhe and wonder about his sanity. In his peripheral vision, the blue of his walls merges with the old stencils of sailboats around the border and Justin thinks that it seems wildly perverse, yet strangely appropriate, to be having sex in his childhood bedroom.

A sharp breath, a groan. Damp skin sliding together in a undulating tangle, striving for the release. Heated whispers in each other's ears about raw, unbridled lust.

"Fuck," Brian's halted, gasping voice.

Justin arches up against him and swallows that voice in his mouth, feeling it resonate in deep velvet masculinity in his gut. Clenches himself hard, as if he could hold Brian inside him for eternity.

"Justin," Brian rasps between their mouths, "Fuck, Ju-"

He cuts off as he comes, flood of warmth in Justin's body and pulsing perfection that allows him to tip into an equal free-fall.

The orgasm is blue like the walls with a flare of achingly red adoration, devestatingly undone.

Brian collapses next to him after the waves ebb, smelling like humanity and feeling so alive that everything else pales around them; warm, sated lovers.

Rolling to gaze at him, Justin nudges his head into the pillow like a purring kitten, tucking it against his boyfriend's damp shoulder.

"Good?" he asks, lips brushing Brian's skin.

"Fucking brilliant," Brian responds in a sigh, his hand sliding up Justin's long smooth back to tangle his fingers in his shaggy golden hair, "Where are your parents?"

"Soccer with Molly. They think we're studying at the library," Justin snorts softly, rolling again, "You'd think they'd know better by now."

"Yeah, well. Your mom's in denial and your dad's just an asshole."

"At least..." Justin trails off, not continuing, and just stares at the ceiling.

Brian's body shifts and he slips out of the bed to open the windows and grab his pack of cigarettes. Justin watches him with shadowed artist's eyes. The twilight light bending over the angles and curves in his back. The way he has transformed from boy to man right there, in the indigo tones that fill the room. Quiet and subtle and wise.

Justin never thought it would be possible to be so in love.

The lighter clicks and snaps, and Brian carefully crawls back onto the bed, flopping down on his back with his head on Justin's boyish chest.

"You look so hot when you smoke," Justin's voice is breathy and soft like the smoke plume that Brian blows into the air. It gets caught in the crisp breeze coming through the window, and whisked away.

"You look so hot when you're laying there all sweaty after I've pounded you into the mattress," Brian grins wickedly and Justin writhes in coy delight.

"Fuck, I look hot all the time," he shoots back, tugging playfully on Brian's dark hair.

They tussle mischievously for a minute around the cigarette, snagging it from each other and taking laughing drags. Empty hands grope over already-discovered, but always-desired places and it isn't long before the cigarette is extinguished in a dirty plate next to the bed, and their lips are sealed together, tongues mimicking their body's motions.

The sky is deep azure outside the windows, and the room is swathed in the kind of dark that makes everything muffled and erotic. The air smells like dinner baking in someone else's house and both boys laugh when they hear their stomachs growl in response.

Food can wait though. Studying at the library can wait. The entire universe can fucking wait.

Right now all that matters is their naked bodies pressed together, desire and contentedness. Grown boys making love to each other in the navy blue twilight of a childhood bedroom.

Dry!Series :: Edible

Thanksgiving.

Brian wants to know what the fuck the fore-father's were thinking when they decided to make it a holiday. Because there's really nothing to be thankful for here in the Jack Kinney household. No cornucopia's full of plump, ripe fruits or steaming turkeys or laughter.

There are old, cracked baskets with bruised apples, and a turkey that was left in the oven too long, and the laughter is tight, sour, and criticizing.

All those relatives, all old and bitter, sitting on Joanie's furniture like it's their own, and smoking so much that the fake wood panel walls are getting a hazy film on them. Brian slinks away from them, hides in the shadows at the bottom of the staircase, or stands next to the grandfather clock, hoping that his long lanky body blends in.

But it doesn't. Aunt Marge wants to examine how his jeans are too big around the waist, and too baggy at the bottom, and Cousin Lisa wants him to take her up to his room so she can fool around with his stuff, and Grandpap just keeps slapping him on the back or rustling hair and asking him in a unnerving voice of innuendo about his girlfriend.

Grandfather's should not remember anything that has to do with sex.

But the more he asks, the more Jack glares, until Brian finally does flee to the back porch and lays there on the concrete slab, staring up into the forever blue.

"Claire told me you came out here," a grating, female voice comes from the doorway.

Brian closes his eyes and turns his head into the gritty concrete, hoping she goes away.

The door closes, tiny glass window in it rattling, and Brian hears his cousin sit down next to him. Fucking relatives, with their false sense of familiarity and they're goddamn need to invade, like there's actual intimacy there. Pretend like they actually know who the fuck you are, when they don't.

"Why'd you come out here?" she asks, nudging the back of his head with her gloved little hand.

"To get the fuck away from you," Brian mimics her voice as he pulls a cigarette out of his pocket and lights it quickly.

"Smoking's gross, Bri," she tosses her head of nappy blonde hair, and gives him another petty, feminine slap on his arm, "You're too young to do it, anyway."

"Hit me again, and I'll shove my cigarette in your eye, Peggy," grumbling and short, like the time it took him to light the cigarette.

Peggy giggles, "You're crazy."

"I'm also out of here."

He stands up and pulls his jacket closer around his torso, like a shield and shelter, ready to run. Under the rusty swingset, through the hedge, down the alley, across several rows of lawns and a busy street or two, around the park to the nicer neighborhood, and then... home.

"You can't leave on Thanksgiving, Bri. Besides, Claire told me to come out here to make sure you didn't go to Dustin's house. 'Cause she knew you'd want to leave, and that'd make your mom and dad really mad."

Brian turns and stares at her, eyes flaring with crackling anger, "It's Justin. And I'm not going there. I'm just going.... the fuck away."

It is a lie, of course, and as soon as he makes it through the hedge, ignoring Peggy's pouting shouts and the slam of the back door, he takes off in a jog towards Justin's house. The cold air makes his cheeks numb and red, and the combination of it and smoke in his lungs tastes intoxicatingly refreshing. The ground meeting his shoes, faster, faster, faster until Brian wants to just laugh with the feeling of it. Laugh the way nobody in his family can or does.

By the time he gets to Justin's his body is sore, and there is searing pain in his chest and throat, but it makes Brian feels free and alive. There are cars parked in front of Justin's house, BMW's and nice new Volvo's, and the windows are bright with those little electric candles.

He peeks in one of them, sidling against the brick and searching for that golden head worthy of a halo of splattered paint and come. And as nasty as that is, Brian thinks it would become him. Make him glow.

He hears Justin laugh before he sees him, the right kind of laughter, that should be in a family gathering. Justin's leathery little grandmother pinches his cheek before smoothing a shaking hand down his silky blond hair, and Justin beams at her, full of love. Brian knows, because that's the look he is on the receiving end of so often.

Then blue eyes fringed with light catch his shadow in the window, and Brian watches as Justin carefully excuses himself, and slips out the front door.

"Brian!" he calls in a shiver, the pale blue fuzz of his delicate cashmere sweater catching the brisk Thanksgiving twilight.

"Hey," Brian responds, voice low and rough. He ducks his head and walks towards Justin, freezing grass crunching under his shoes.

"What are you doing here? I thought you had family over?" his eyes look concerned, and his tone matches them.

Brian shrugs, simple but informative, and Justin nods and steps off the porch to him.

"Family not as great as planned, huh?"

"I never plan on them being anything more than irritating," Brian's hands instantly grip Justin's small hips and bring him against his body, suddenly feeling the spirit of thanks when Justin's body sags and his arms wrap around him.

"Well, we're almost done. We just have to draw names for the gift exchange for Christmas. Big family, you know? But you can come in, I'm sure mom won't mind," Justin's words are muffled in Brian's jacket and Brian loves it. Holds him tighter. Combs one hand in his hair, and the other grips the sweater at the small of his back.

"Your dad might."

"So? Fuck him," Justin said, pulling away to stare up at Brian's shadowed face. Brian let his eyes drift over his freezing porcelain cheeks before he closes them. Shield and shelter.

"It's..."

"I know. It's fine though, really."

"I'm not as fucking strong as you sometimes, Justin. I'm just... here. Nothing, sometimes, you know?"

It's an admission made of porcelain itself, ready to shatter and break into a million pieces on the frosted grass. Justin's cold hands clasp Brian's face, and his thumbs smooth over Brian's closed lashes before lips settle, chapped and warm, on lids. Brief, open-mouth kisses, like glimmering electric candles in the windows, comforting and familiar.

"Oh, Brian."

His whisper is enough, and Brian opens his eyes to look at him, feeling Justin's fingers clasp the hair that falls over the shell of Brian's ears.

"You really need to stop telling yourself that shit," Justin continues, serious and vibrant, "Just 'cause your dad thinks it and says it, doesn't mean you have to believe it."

"Fuck that, Justin, I don't give a shit about anything my fucking father says."

Justin puts a finger over Brian's lips, "Okay."

He has a faint, masculine smile of encouragement, and Brian kisses it quickly before stepping back away from Justin, hand already missing the downy fuzz of his sweater.

"Please come in," he doesn't beg, but Justin has perfected the art of asking with just the right amount of pouting lip, sparkling eyes, and the teasing, excited flush of cheeks; Brian finds himself nodding and being led by firm, dry fingers into the house.

Jennifer greets him with an affectionate hand on his shoulder, and an offer to get him some pumpkin pie, while Justin's grandmother keeps repeating what a beautiful couple Justin and Brian make. Some of the younger cousins stare at them in awe and curiousity, and Brian thinks its wonderful. Even when Craig walks in the room, except for a brief frown, he accepts Brian's presence with a nod, then can't help but grin at how excited his old mother seems to be about the situation.

Everything is warm and gold, and Justin's hand is always on his leg, or curled around the hem of his long-sleeved tee, like a promise and an affirmation of love. Brian eats slow bites of pumpkin pie while he watches Justin interact with his family, all smiles, laughs, and careful teasing that results in a living room filled to the brim with joy.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Justin whispers in his ear, fingers playing in Brian's belt loop.

"You look hot, being such a good family boy," Brian whispers back, staring into Justin's eyes and breath warm against his face.

The blue of Justin's eyes darkens as his pupils dilate, and Brian knows what that look means.

"We're sneaking to my bedroom in thirty seconds. You excuse yourself to the bathroom, and I'll clear your plate to the kitchen and then meet you up there, okay?"

He rattles off the instructions in a low, sexy voice like it's a top-secret mission: impossible, and Brian feels himself harden in his American Eagle khaki's.

"Got it. I'll get the fuck out of here," Brian answers, putting his plate down. He stands and politely excuses himself, shooting off a smirk and a joke that makes the family laugh and forget his departure as the conversation rotates another direction.

The sounds of the gathering fade away between floors and carpets and walls, and Brian can't help but feel warm and content as he flops down onto the navy blue bed and tucks his head under the pillow. The soft, faded fabric smells like Justin's hair, and his sweat, and his come, and his spit, and everything that makes Justin a living, breathing, beautiful man.

He barely has time to notice and realize before the door creaks open, shuts solidly, and previously mentioned man has climbed up onto his back, shoving his head under the pillow to meet Brian's.

"My family-" nuzzle and kiss, in the hot muffled dark of pillow case and mattress, "loves you-" tongue skims along Brian's bottom lip, "and my grandmother-" full kiss, slightly moaning into it, "asked what-" lips brushing chin, jaw, "college you went to-" open-mouth on Brian's cheekbone, " because she thinks you're so handsome-" he sucks on Brian's earlobe, "and then she asked-" breaths against his eyebrow, "if we were going to get married. Christ, you should have seen the look on Mom's face. It was priceless. Then Uncle Bob and Aunt Terri started laughing and making fun of me in a white tux, and Grams told them that we'd be dashing, and Mom talked about how happy you seem to make me, oh fuck, Brian, it was so great."

Brian keeps his eyes closed during Justin's enthusiastic attention and delightful babbling, enjoying the feel of him straddling Brian's back, and squirming insistently. He feels just so... happy. The smell of Justin, the feel of Justin, the warmth of Justin. It's overwhelming, blooming, fucking drowning Brian.

Drowning.

"Bet you don't feel like nothing now," Justin teases, his hands sliding up under Brian's shirt, and trailing along his boyish ribs.

"You always make me feel like something," Brian says, his voice as dark and as hot as the feel of their faces pressed together under the pillow.

"Because you are. You're never just here, Brian Kinney. You're fucking everything."

Brian pushes the pillow off of their heads, and it falls to the floor, forgotten. Justin blinks against the sudden light, nose scrunched and hair disheveled. In one motion, Brian has them turned and reversed, so that he's hovering over Justin, and Justin's legs are wrapped around his waist.

"I know," Brian says, acknowledging how much his boyfriend loves him, and not trying to be egotistical at all. But Justin grins and playfully nudges him anyway, knowing that too much emotion, and too many poetic, silken words will just create more of a problem than what is already spanning between them. More of a problem than Brian's self-deprecating narcissism.

"Look what I brought up," Justin wriggles underneath him, their semi-hard dicks rubbing together through their pants, as he tries to reach for something.

"Your cock?" Brian asks, eyebrow raising as he slowly pushes his hand down into Justin's pants.

Justin bites back a moan, head tilting back just a bit, exposing his throat, and Brian dives in to taste it.

"B-Brian, stop a sec-a second. Fuck!" he says in surprise when Brian bites the protruding tendon in his neck as his head is turned, "You fucking bit me!!"

"You just taste so sweet, Sunshine," Brian says wickedly, his hand moving in deep strokes over Justin's stiff penis.

"I'm trying to tell you that I brought something else sweet up, asshole."

Justin's voice is halting, gasping, but he still manages to present a bowl of light and airy something-or-other with pineapple bits in it, and holds it in front of Brian's face.

"Looks like whipped cum," Brian's voice is muffled against Justin's hair.

"It's whipped pineapple pudding."

"Why would I want to eat that when I can eat you?" Brian asks honestly, hand pointedly moving from cock, to balls, to the puckered opening of Justin's ass.

Blue eyes glaze over, and hazel ones sharpen with intent.

"Eat it off me."

Eyebrow arches over sharp eyes.

"You want me to peel off your clothes and smear this pudding all over your hot little body and lick it all. off.?" Brian whispers huskily, defying the familial warmth that the house had filled him with. Now it was all about sex. It was all about sex with Justin.

"God, yes."

"Want me to fuck you?"

"You know I do."

"How hard?"

Justin's eyes open and become clear and he wraps his arms around Brian's neck and pulls him down so their lips are touching, but not pressed together. Warm, again.

"Not hard. Just want you in me."

Brian thinks that those are probably the sexiest words he's ever heard, quiet and true with their lips brushing together, but would never admit it to anyone. Never admit that someone telling him NOT to fuck them hard was sexier than if they begged him to.

Clothes are removed with a careful, silent sort of grace, that is ancient and gold like the candles in the windows. Justin turns off the lamp so that those candles can cast their glow over skin that seems to shimmer in it.

The whipped pineapple pudding is not forgotten, their fingers feeding it to each other, or just sharing it between open mouths and full kisses. Once Brian puts some of it in his palm and wraps it around Justin's dick, just so he can eat it off in eager licks that drive Justin wild.

They fuck, sticky and so sweet that Brian is sure that even their sweat will taste like sugar. Justin arches and grinds against him, rolling them over at one point so that he can ride Brian like there is no tomorrow. But it's still tender, and it's still perfect, and even though it seems so naughty to be fucking while the extended family is laughing and talking and drinking coffee in the living room right underneath them, Brian just feels like he's finally at home.

By now you get the point.

Parts: Eight and Nine (Electronic and Slip)

Dry!Series :: Electronic

Justin wakes up to muffled atmosphere and the droll sound of a radio announcer listing off schools that are closed for the day. The window panes are frosty and glowing so bright against the venetian blinds, that Justin covers his head with his pillow. It smells like Brian.

His cell phone begins to ring then, vibrating at the same time, and Justin always has to fight back the urge to smash it like a bug and answer it instead. The color screen reads 'Brian', and Justin is glad that once again, he resisted his dark side.

"'morning," Justin yawns into the phone, rolling back under his pillow where it's safe and warm and the fabric feels strangely better now that Brian is talking to him.

"Hey. We don't have school today."

"I figured. I heard the radio on down in the kitchen. Mom would've woken me up if I had to go."

Something's shuffling and fidgeting on Brian's end of the line, and Justin closes his eyes and pretends that it's Brian laying next to him.

"Wanna go sledding?"

Justin laughs, and wishes he could kiss him. "What? I didn't know you liked sledding. Do you keep your sleds in the same stash as your comic books and 'The Emperor's New Groove' DVD?"

"Shut the fuck up. And that movie's fucking hilarious. You practically pissed your cargos."

"Uh, no. I practically shot all over them. You were giving me a hand-job, remember?"

Brian practically purrs in response, and Justin puts his hand between his legs and starts to fondle himself through his briefs.

"So, do you still wanna go sledding? 'Cause if you want to, I'll go." His voice sounds lazy, and he counts on Brian instantly knowing why.

The voice that buzzes back sounds the same, "Hold on a minute, let me get off first."

Breathing together over electronic lines, thousands of molecules in the air like snowflakes. All merging together to create this timed perfection of shared space, with physical distance.

"Are you hard, Brian?"

A hitched sigh and filtered groan is his response. He knows Brian won't talk dirty back, not when he's at home, but Justin still wants Brian to come from his words, and he wants it to sound the same way the day feels: muffled and glowing.

"I wish you were here. I want to slide my hand under the sheets and find your cock instead of mine. Your perfect, beautiful cock... so smooth and hard and hot. I want to twist your pubic hair in my fingers and bury my nose in it."

His words feel scattered, like he can't even grasp them even though he's saying them. Everything is fragmented and erotic, and Justin can't distinguish between the vision in his mind, the shallow pants in his ear, and his own hand moving deep and purposefully over his aching erection and heavy balls.

"God, I want you inside of me," Justin sighs, wistful for something he knows so intimately, but is unable to have right at this one fleeting morning moment, "You move so fucking perfectly when you fuck me. Hit that place inside of me over and over and over. S-sometimes I wish, I wish you could just crawl inside... that I'd nev-never be away from you, and you'd alwa-ays be apart of, of me. Deep, pumping, harder. Oh fuck, Brian, get your ass over here right the fuck now. Please."

Maybe it's the desperation in his voice, or maybe it actually was his words, but he hears Brian hold his breath and tip over the brink of ecstasy, and Justin fists himself faster to just catch the end of Brian's orgasm with his. White, ropey come all over his chest, and it makes Justin feel so homesick, he aches.

"Are you coming over?"

His voice sounds pitiful.

"I'll be over in fifteen minutes, Justin."

Justin feels the homesickness ebb away into post-coital blossoming.

"Good," he says, closing his eyes and burying his head in his pillow again, "Bring your sled."

Five minutes later he gets a text message: You are so hot.

And ten minutes after that, Brian rouses him by throwing a snowball against his window, and greeting him with a lopsided grin- holding up two sleds.

Dry!Series :: Slip

It's that same snowy grey day in February. School's cancelled, traffic doesn't exist, and all the kids are heading up to the hill behind the school building with neon-colored plastic sleds, and hey, they weren't going to be left out. [Brian insisted. He'll blame it on Justin, that Justin whined to go sledding, but it's a lie. However, it's a lie Justin will live with. He kind of finds it adorable.]

They make a detour to the Kinney household, tromping as quietly as they can through the kitchen to get M&M's from the bag above the fridge. Brian snuffs in quiet laughter as he pushes handfuls into the front pocket of Justin's snowboarding pants, Justin gripping his wrist and playfully wrenching away.

They leave puddles of mud and cindersnow, and are halfway across the yard when the backdoor swings open and Mr. Kinney shouts for his sonnyboy to get your ass back in the house!!

He has gotten his socks wet in a puddle on the linoleum.

Justin is told to wait outside.

Ten minutes later, Brian returns with a split lip, a bruise blossoming on his cheekbone, and shoulders hunched.

"I slipped. Our boots made the floor really slippery," he says, not looking at Justin, tongue darting out and sliding over his sore lip. Expression closed off like the filmsy backdoor that had slammed shut behind Mr. Kinney, loose window rattling ominously.

Justin knows better.

"Or you had a sledding accident," he offers as another excuse to tell, "I jumped on your sled while we were going down - knocked you off."

Brian smiles as best he can, pulls on his gloves with rough little tugs. "That makes me sound like a pussy."

"And makes me sound like a twat."

Justin grins cheekily, face flushed from the cold, but eyes wise with concern.

"We're the perfect pair, then." Brian glances over as he begins to walk, grabs the sled from Justin's hands, "Don't look at me like that."

"Look at you like what?"

"And don't play dumb, Justin," he sighs.

"Oooookay. First, I'm 'looking at you like that', and now I'm playing dumb? Jesus, Brian, I'm not doing anything."

Justin wishes that Brian's voice sounded the way it did when he came, all gasping and groaning and fucking delighted, during the phone sex earlier. Now it just sounds... threadbare.

"You always do this- act like it's not a big deal --"

"-- Fuck that, it IS a big deal!" Justin interrupts, grated and outraged.

"It isn't! But you act like it isn't 'cause you want to spare me," he spits the words like they're disgusting, "or something. Fuck you, Sunshine. I'm not going to break like some silly faggot. I'm not going to cry to my fucking boyfriend just because my dad hits me."

Justin stops walking.

"Don't talk to me like that. Just because you're stupid fucking defense mechanism has kicked in, I don't deserve to take that shit. As your friend, as your boyfriend, but most of all, as someone who fucking loves you, you son of a bitch. ... now can we go sledding already? It was your goddamn idea in the first place."

They stare at each other for a second, Brian's eyes changing from angry to realizing to a sorry he'll never be able to express.

"Justin."

He waves Brian off, trudging away from him and into the hedge that surrounds Mrs. Butterbee's yard. Before he can push through the snow-covered hemlock branches, Justin's tugged violently backwards by a hand gripping the back of his ski coat.

"I'm sorry," Brian whispers into his ear, putting his arms around Justin's body and holding him so tightly, Justin feels like he can't breathe. Like when there's too much icy wind and it's right in your face and you can't get a proper lung-full of air.

Now that Justin thinks about it, he probably feels like that every single time he is with Brian. But in a good way. In a desperate, drowning, overwhelmed, fucking in love way.

Brian turns him around so that Justin has no choice but to look up at him. He raises his hand and skims his fingertips over Brian's expression, all honest, and hesitant, and abused. The bloody crack in Brian's lip is warm and swollen.

"This...," Justin swallows, stares at the cut, "Fuck, Brian..."

Brian's hand closes over Justin's and pulls it away from his mouth, warm breath turning into a crystalized fog between them, and the snow crunches under their boots as Justin leans into Brian's chest. He clutches the lapels of Brian's ratty old army jacket, and feels the heavy arm of his boyfriend settle around his shoulders.

"I'm okay. I'm okay. It's okay." Brian's mumble matches the frayed evergreen branches around them - cold, resiliant, and alive; brushing Justin's face with reassurance.

They share a brief kiss, and Justin tucks one of his hands in Brian's pocket until they arrive at the hill, and it's way more fun to throw snowballs at Daphne Chanders than it is to think about abusive fathers and breakable skin.

It's hours later when they trudge home, all wet socks and numb noses. Brian insists on walking Justin home, and once they're there, Justin insists on Brian spending the night. After all, what's a hot shower and a warm cocoon of a bed without his boyfriend?

It's so much better than phone sex.

**Quadruple Digits**

Takes place after that hot fuck in Season 4, where Justin rides Brian on the bed? And there's a reference to "quadruple digits". This fic picks up an hour or so after that conversation. Or maybe the next day.

"Wait a minute."

Justin's voice was abrupt and bright in the silent loft. Brian looked up from his computer, bluewhite plasma light reflecting under his face.

"What?" Eyebrow raised.

"You said," Justin drawled out, getting up on his knees on the [very expensive designer] sofa, face showcasing a grin of realization and triumph, "quadruple digits."

Oh fuck.

"Yeah? So?"

"You admitted it!" breathless, blown-out smile now, cheeks rosy.

"Justin, I've admitted how many times we've fucked plenty of times before," Brian rolled his eyes and went back to his work.

"But! You rate them..." Justin sounded as if he were trying to bait him.

Brian pinched the bridge of his nose with his fingers, and then smoothed the hand back into his hair as he sighed, "You're acting like you're seventeen again."

"Seventeen year-old Justin made you hot," Justin countered, sliding his perfect ass over the arm of the sofa until his feet hit the floor.

"Twenty year-old Justin makes me hotter," Brian shot back, snippy but honest.

"How hot?" fucking purred Justin, sauntering towards him, coy and predatory at the same time. His paint-stained fingers twisting and fiddling with the tee-shirt over his abdomen, causing the hem to lift and drop in a tantalizing beat. Glimpse of soft boy belly, gone. Glimpse, gone. Glimpse-

Oh fuck. Literally this time.

"Top five fuck this afternoon, that's how hot," Brian said huskily, licking his lips. Justin came to a stop in front of the desk, making a show of rubbing his hard-on over the edge of it, little jeans strained and bulging.

"That's pretty hot."

"Get your fucking ass on my cock right the fuck now."

Justin had the nerve to chuckle and take his time walking around the desk, but then finally he was straddling Brian's lap and grinding himself against his stiff dick.

"Quadruple digits, Brian. You've probably fucked me more than the total number of guys you've done," Justin breathed into his ear, small bites on the lobe to punctuate his words.

Brian's hands gripped his rotating hips, sliding fingers under the waistband, "Seriously fucking doubt it, Sunshine."

Justin pulled back, nonchalant shrug not meeting his eyes, "Maybe."

Which translated as, 'If thinking that helps you sleep at night, Kinney.'

Brian tilted his head and stared at his partner, "Let me guess, you're onto me?"

Justin looked surprised, and Brian secretly loved when he could surprise him.

"I... wasn't going to say that. But yeah. I'm onto you," The grin came back, and Justin did a little shimmy that made both of them groan, "I'm soooo onto you."

"Why don't you take your fucking pants off and really. get onto me."

"You're still just as impatient as you were three years ago."

"Yeah, well," Brian grunted, helping Justin pull off the jeans, "some things never change."

Justin nodded, hummed in his chest, "The reason behind the impatience does."

"Justin, would you just shut the fuck up and give me a condom?"

Justin tilted back and pressed his ass harder into Brian's groin as he reached back towards the desk and pulled a condom out of a drawer. Slid it on, lubed it up, Justin lined himself up and sunk down.

Brian ran his tongue up Justin's slender neck and pushed it into his mouth, wet and full.

"You were impatient then because you wanted to have me so you could kick me out and deny it ever happened, deny you liked it, and deny that you wanted me again," Justin gasped against his lips. Brian tried to press them back together again to shut him up, but Justin grabbed his wrist hard enough to bruise.

"Fuck!" Brian groaned, in pain. In pleasure. Justin grabbed the other wrist and clenched his ass around Brian's dick.

"Now you're impatient because you can't get enough of me. You haven't denied since double digits."

This time Brian succeeded in kissing him again, and he did as violently and as punishing as he could.

But it was wanton and confessing and Justin knew it.

Brian fisted his hand in Justin's short hair, digging into his scalp and wrenching the boy's head back.

"Justin," said his name gruffly and truthfully.

Justin blinked his eyes and stared at Brian, both of their faces shining with sweat, hips still thrusting against each other.

"What?"

"Justin."

"What, Brian?"

Brian dropped his forehead to Justin's tee-shirt covered shoulder and breathed in the hot fresh smell of his body.

"I don't mind quadruple digits with only you."

And that was what Justin apparently wanted to hear, because he let out something that sounded like a whimper and a contented sigh, and pulled Brian's head up to kiss him again.

Quadruple plus one.

**Blur**

The quintessential 308 fic. POV. My first Queer as Folk fic that I'm posting on here just to have it in the memories.

Brian POV

The introduction was a passing noise. A sound blur. A buzzing.

Brian heard his employee say the words, but he didn't remember them.

"Brian, this is Justin Taylor, our new intern. Justin, this is Mr. Kinney, one of the partners in the agency."

Those blue eyes looking at him so intently from behind the fringe of shining blond hair.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Kinney."

Justin's hand was extended towards him. And goddamnit, he was Brian fucking Kinney. He played it cool in every situation. He took Justin's hand.

Shook it. Tugged it. Squeezed the warm muscles and bones of an artist's worn hand in warning and desperation.

What. the fuck. was he doing here?

When those words came spilling out in the privacy of Brian's office, he was proud that his voice was that same strong tone tinged with annoyance and boredom as it always was. That his so expertly supressed emotions weren't surfacing in this moment of complete scatteredness. He only hoped that his eyes weren't screaming all his secrets to his young EX-whatever-the-fuck-he-used-to-be.

"I had no idea our former relationship was still a problem for you..."

Damn his voice, his sly cockiness. Damn his smart-ass wit. Damn the complete and utter truth of that statment.

"Just don't expect any special treatment," Brian said with a slight raised eyebrow and his patented unforgiving gaze that made lesser men (and they were all lesser) squirm.

"I never have," Justin replied truthfully, his head tilting and eyes turning softer. A small smile.

Brian looked away, faking his disinterest so that Justin wouldn't notice how he lost his breath.

--- --- ---

Justin POV

Justin hunted him out. Scanned the crowd of muscled studs, tweaked-out queens, and slippery twinks jumping and twisting to the pulsating music for that trademark face. That face of god.

He spotted it near the bar, approached with intent.

Brian was going to be his again.

His heart hurt. Brian's beauty was painful. The perfect mussed way his hair fell, the noble line of his nose, his rosey lips.

Justin's paint-stained fingers ached to comb through that hair, to brush his lips down that nose to kiss those lips.

They greeted each other casually. Knowingly.

Brian's expression looked bemused and annoyed at the same time. It made Justin feel like he was losing the battle, that Brian knew what was going on and would no fucking way give Justin what he wanted.

With a toss of a head, causing his blond hair to fall away from his eyes he hinted about dancing. After all, the world always fell away when they danced. When Brian would pull their bodies impossibly close and they would breathe erotic trails over each other's face and neck. When their hands would slip under their clothing just to touch the hot, smooth skin underneath.

But Brian rejected the hint. Wit matching wit.

Justin was shut down.

Oh well. He'd see him at work tomorrow.

Everywhere Brian goes, he'll be there.

--- --- ---

Brian POV

It was disconcerting to round the corner into the art work room of the agency, and see Justin casually tilted back on a stool with his feet propped up against the table. The perfectly comfortable way he was flipping through a magazine, biting on his lip thoughtfully.

Brian swept into the room in all his glory. Fuck feeling disconcerted.

They maintained a business-oriented exchange, except for the brief moment when Brian hit Justin's feet off the table.

But Justin kept turning pages and only glancing up occasionally, propped his knees against the edge instead, while Brian bitched about the staff and rattled off commands in his expertise.

A brief moment when silence reigned. Brian could have left the room. He should have.

"So how's it going, Taylor?" He couldn't help it. He wanted to know.

"Good," he threw aside the magazine, "everyone's incredibly nice. And I've already learned more than I would in an entire semester of school."

"That's great," Brian injected just the right amount of sarcasm.

"Which," Justin continued, sitting up. Leaning forward. "says a lot about you, actually."

"About me?" Brian put more weight on his hands against the table, slacking his arms. Getting closer.

"Yeah. They say the tone of the workplace is established from the top. So its a great compliment to you that you have such a dedicated and hard-working staff."

Justin was wearing a baby blue collared shirt and baby blue sweater.

It was a trivial thing, but for some reason it meant so much. The spun gold of the hair on his forehead was gentle, setting off the light blue brightness of his eyes.

He was drawing Brian in with those eyes.

And the little shit knew it.

They leaned closer. Both smiling slightly at the situation that they both sensed...couldn't avoid...wanted...

But with a slick assholic comment and a rough condescending pat on the shoulder, Brian effectively broke the moment. And got as far away from those eyes as he could.

--- --- ---

Justin POV

Fumbling with the boards during the meeting was just a clumsy mistake. Speaking up in his artistic knowledge during the meeting was a silly mistake.

Showing up Brian Kinney in front of a client was a downright fucking stupid error.

Now Brian angrily helped him clean up, tossing aside the boards and product with an expression of disgust. Justin flinched internally.

"I'm sorry, it won't happen again," he said in a dry, but sincere voice.

"Damn right it won't. You're through."

Mr. Kinney was firing him. For screwing up. For those last words the client said to him, "You guys had better be careful...or this kid's gonna have your job."

Justin argued back, fighting against Brian, he wasn't going to let this opportunity slide away from him.

The words were sharp, smart.

Then it turned into an argument about their relationship.

"What..and you're so smart? If you had any fucking brains at all you never would have let me leave!" Justin walked towards him, watched as Brian turned his body to face him, looking down at him with those cold hazel eyes. "You would have told me that I was making the biggest mistake of my life. That I would live to regret it. That what you gave me was worth a thousand...a million times more than anything he had to offer," his voice turned serious and piercing, "You would have told me that you loved me. That you would go on loving me even after I was gone. But as usual, you never said it, so it's just as well I go."

He moved to his retreat. He wanted to get out of that room, and away from the body of that man who had stomped on his heart. Away from that expression of uncaring selfishness.

Brian's arm reached out across his torso and pulled him back roughly. Made him stand in front of him again.

"That is so like you! You don't hear what you want, so you leave," Brian bit back, his features twisting as he mocked, "Try sticking up for yourself for a change? Have some balls."

Justin stared up at him.

Have some balls. Have some courage.

His gaze fell to Brian's lips.

And in one fast movement, he reached back and grabbed Brian's head, forcing it to his own.

Kissed those lips with all the heartbreak and hurt and desire that he'd been feeling everytime he saw him from the moment they broke up, until now. All those times he asked people to not talk about Brian because he was with Ethan. All those nights he'd wake up and stare out in the darkness, wondering about the man who had taught him everything.

Brian kissed back. Leaned into it. Opened his mouth.

Justin bit at his lips before pulling abruptly away and sweeping out the door.

His whole body hurt from the argument, but a little part of his heart was shining with pride at that final expression on Brian's face when he ended the kiss.

Brian had been just as lost as he was.

--- --- ---

Brian POV

It was as if his thoughts summoned the subject of them.

The knock shook him out of his trance and he looked up in the doorway to see Justin standing in its frame.

"Mr. Kinney?"

"Taylor. Come in. Sit down," he said in a low, tired voice. Justin slowly sat down on the chair across from his desk. Brian leaned forward and arched a brow at him questioningly, "You wanted to see me?"

Justin nodded and took a deep breath. Calm, collected, and prepared.

"I gave it some thought and I decided that you should take me back.

A wave of something passed through Brian's body at those words. He feigned slight interest.

"Oh?"

"Even though I've made a few mistakes, you'd be making an even bigger one not to give me a second chance," Justin's professionally stated.

Brian nodded with practiced emotional distance, "I see."

He didn't.

Arousal and hope was shooting through him so fast, he felt floored.

It was like the moments when Justin had returned his bracelet to him, when the silence was so deafening, and the emotions were so tight, and Justin's fingertips were brushing against his pulse-point in such an erotic way. Brian had figeted at the time and said that Justin should get back to his boyfriend.

This time, the "piece of blond boy ass" was here, ready to go. Wanting it all back. No boyfriend to get back to.

Brian could act on this arousal.

Which was a strange feeling. He always ALWAYS acted on his arousal. It was his way.

But over the last couple of months, this particular lust was supressed. Hidden. Just shadows in the night with tricks who had long blond hair, and his overactive imagination. Cold mornings wishing the bouncy teenager with the intelligence level of a grad student was there, in his life. In his loft. In his bed.

"'Cause now I understand what it is you want of me," Justin leaned back. Brian looked up at him with serious hazel eyes, unable to hide the emotions that Justin's words were stirring in that moment, "And I know what to expect from you."

He took a deep breath. Returned to the professional business charade that his intern/ex-lover was pulling him into.

"You also understand that you'll be required to work long...hard hours..." his voice hitched with a breath that revealed his arousal, "sometimes deep into the night?"

Justin's eyes seemed glazed with as much desire, "It'd be a pleasure to work under you...sir."

Their dance of witty words was back. The flirtation.

"And you're never to play violin music in my presence again."

Brian didn't care that he had sacrificed his selfish pride in that second. He was willing to admit that he never, EVER wanted to hear the sound of the man who had stolen HIS Justin from him. Justin could mock this new weakness. Hell, if the situation was reversed, he would have.

But instead the younger man blinked slowly, his posture relaxed and humble, and his voice a sincere, understanding whisper, "I promise."

They stared at each other for a moment.

"Good. Well then," he said, standing and walking around to the front of his desk, "You can start," moved aside a desklamp, sat on the edge. Crossed his arms over his chest, "immediately."

Looked intently and expectantly at Justin. A moment. A beat. A decision.

Watched Justin get up and close the door before Brian's gaze dropped to the floor. One spot, his mind zeroed in on every little sensation of this moment.

The relief that was inside of him. Gratefulness.

The quiet humming of love. He wasn't about to turn into a pathetic and sappy queen, for fucksake, but still...he couldn't help but feel that familiar chord resounding inside of him that brought back memories he wouldn't trade for all the money and hottest fucks in the world.

When Justin crept into his bed, trying to be quiet, and all Brian could do was slowly pull up the covers, silently inviting him to stay.

When he pulled a crying Justin into his arms to comfort him as he packed to live in New York City.

When he sacrificed his pride and danced, laughed, and kissed the graduating senior at his prom in front of the whole school.

When they made love in the slowest, most gentle way possible, teaching each other how to worship each other's bodies.

When Brian rolled to his chest and allowed the younger man to slide his dick into the tight hole of his ass for the first time.

When instead of spending a weekend together, he exclaimed and insisted that he wanted to spend an entire week together.

When he paid for his education because it was something Justin was meant to do, despite the fact that they weren't together anymore.

Brian raised his chin and looked up at Justin just as he approached. Both of their lips turned into a smile before they met.

He was happy.

All the interior emotional drama faded away as their mouths opened to each other, and Justin's hand came up to grasp his neck. The wet wholesome taste of his mouth, filling and overcoming his senses.

He had missed the way Justin tasted. The way his breathy moans would feel against his neck. The weight of the blonde head on his shoulder, or how he would lean against Brian's hard and willing body.

Brian had missed fucking everything about Justin.

They kissed endlessly in the cool golden light of his office, savoring the feelings, and when they pulled apart to breathe or undress each other, they would keep their foreheads together. Didn't want to lose contact.

Justin leaned over to unbuckle Brian's Gucci belt, and even the seconds apart was too much. With a teasing grin and a rippling laugh from Justin's lips, Brian dragged him back up to his mouth and kissed the chuckle right out of the blonde.

Kissing around a smile was almost as good as kissing around ice cream or a joint. Especiallly Sunshine's smile.

What the fuck was he thinking? Waxing poetic when he was about to fuck the same kid he'd been wishing he could fuck for the last couple of months? His dick was at full attention, the office building deserted, and a hot ass ready to be plowed...

...and he was thinking about how great it was to kiss Sunshine's smile. It was almost enough to make him heave and-

Justin buried his face in Brian's neck, sniffed. Then let out a sweet little sigh that one only gives when they come home after a very long trip....

And all Brian could do is pull him impossibly closer, and carefully push Justin's pants off his narrow hips and rounded ass. His hands ran over the curve of it, gentle.

Justin sighed again, running kisses up along his ear, his fingers petting the hair behind it.

"I need you inside of me," he whispered, pleaded, "Brian..."

Brian smoothed his hands up Justin's soft back, feeling the ripple of it as Justin moved. He took it as a sign to turn around and lean over the desk, until Brian stopped him.

"No."

It was all he said, but Justin looked up at him with lust-clouded blue eyes, prepared to do whatever Brian told him to do.

"Lay on the floor."

Well, maybe not everything.

"The floor?" Justin asked, tilting his head, "Why not the desk?"

"Just lay on the floor, okay?" Brian's voice crackled with its usual attitude, and Justin couldn't help but roll his eyes at the command.

But he obeyed anyway.

Brian leaned over the desk to grab a condom out of a drawer before he sunk to his knees next to the blonde. On the floor because he couldn't bear to fuck him in the same cold way he fucked that stupid up-and-comer. And on the floor for old time's sake.

On the floor.

Bending over the pale naked body, waiting for his attentions. Licking and sucking a silvery trail up the younger torso. Hooking Justin's legs around his own naked waist. Sliding the condom onto his erection.

Sinking into Justin's body for the first time in months.

And Brian could tell the exact moment when Justin realized why they were fucking the floor...

They were picking up where they left off, taking it slow this time around.

Justin let out a groan of pure ecstasy. Brian sealed his mouth over his.

It was a passing noise. A sound blur. A buzzing.

And it was the sweetest fucking sound in the world.

END.

**Untitled Straight!Brian Fic**

**aka: Conviction**

Justin's dad gets him a job working with Brian Kinney, a straight guy with a past. The simple internship turns into something a whole lot more.

Warnings: heterosexuality, Brian/Other, Justin/Other. References to abuse. Violence.

Prologue - Introduction

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Brian could still remember the first day Jack had hit him.

He had to have been about 8 years old, on one of those late summer afternoons where everything is gold. Crickets and lawnmowers humming through the screen door and open windows. The air smelled like that fresh cut grass and lemonade, and Brian was sweaty and dirty from riding his bike and climbing trees all day. Joanie had left one of her fashion magazines near the radio in the den, and the model perched on an old corvette gracing the cover had caught Brian's eye. But his gaze lingered on another model of the masculine variety. The model was young, and lean, poised and scandalous with his tight clothing, showcasing a sexy cigarette in an advertisement somewhere in the middle of the magazine.

That's when Jack came stumbling in, slurring angrily about the fucking heat and how he couldn't wait for football season, Jack Daniels bottle loosely clutched in his fingers. And he caught his only son with his nose in the glossy pages of something flowery and scented.

The fist came out of nowhere.

Brian remembered the smell of the ochre carpet against his bloody nose, and fleeting glimpses of the boot kicking him in the ribs over and over against the backdrop of the tacky fake wood wall panels they had. Taste of blood in his mouth, the burn of tears in his eyes. His pleading voice, "Dad, stop. Please, please, stop!" Everything gold, brown, and crimson, now swirling and chaotic. Cut grass blended with crickets and fashion magazines mixed with the smell of Jack Daniels, and everything was hurting, hurting, hurting. Over and over and over.

Eight years old, and the first day in a long string where his lanky frame would end up bruised and beaten.

Gold days of bloody noses in summer afternoons. Grey days where Jack would lock him in his room as he cried. Candy-colored days of family outings turned into public humiliation and his father's wrenching grip on the back of his neck. Black days of unconsciousness. Brilliant emerald days of flashing panic underneath the blanket on his bed, listening to Jack's muffled voice in the hallway. Raging red days where Brian would glance at a boy walking by, and would be in the hospital with a broken bone an hour later.

Beads of color that were days on a string. A string of days so long, Brian could wear them wrapped around his neck a bazillion times in a necklace of pride...pride that he survived, that he was still who he was, and better, stronger man because the character-building abuse.

Only instead, the string of days was a noose, choking the life out of his future, and smothering his spirit.

Sure, he had survived, but he was bitter and cold. Harsh and...straight.

Because that's what it all came down to. Not only was Jack Kinney's boy a mistake- and an unwanted one at that- but he was a faggot. And it was beaten out of him.

So that he was the man he was today.

--- --- ---

Justin felt so free in moments like these.

Standing in the center of his spacious studio apartment, the hardwood floor cool against his bare feet. Paint-splattered jeans and paint-striped tight white tee shirt, there were even paint-speckles in his shaggy shining blonde hair. The canvas stretched before him, leaning against the easel. Sneaker Pimps playing on the CD player.

It was only in these moments that he felt pure. He felt that life itself had become better. That all his problems: his father's

disapproval with his lifestyle, his differences with the dean of PIFA, his dysfunctional relationship with Cody.

All of them glowed with the light of knowing that those problems made him stronger, made him more resilient. Even fucking inspired him.

Because pain fueled art, the same way it bred determination. And Justin's art was very determined. Art was the core of this moment, of the freedom it held. The deep green and white tones of purity and peacefulness. The inky black lines of paint on the canvas that matched the shadows and night-filled windows. Bright, clean white light in the kitchen and in the lamps from IKEA that lit the wood floor and high steel beams. Melting and meeting, shadows and white. He sank into it.

Justin had a strange poetic and artistic existence that grew from the elegant WASP up-bringing he was born into. It was a unique combination. Sometimes so unique it was disconcerting and made Justin feel like he was bipolar or schizophrenic or had something-the-fuck wrong with him.

Everything was an opposite, a contrast. His father's discontent, his mother's acceptance. PIFA often scolded him for angry, inappropriate works of art that caused other students to feel uncomfortable, and the professors questioned Justin's motivations and emotional well-being, all while they encouraged his talent. And while Justin had the hard edge to him that could slice anyone's words or intentions, he still had the quiet mature elegance that made him look reserved next to hilover's bitter spewings of hetero-hatred and uprising.

White light, black night. All of it clashing, but the contrast was fresh and perfect. Essential.

Essential to Justin's sanity. Essential to his being. Essential to these freeing moments.

The only times he ever felt pure.

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Chapter 1 - Company

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The sight made him stop dead in his tracks and glare with undisguised irritation. Three women at the dining room table in his home, their heads bent together over papers and address books, talking excitedly and laughing in that annoyingly shrill way that women do.

"What the fuck is going on?"

They all looked up.

"Brian, honestly. You won't be able to speak like that once the baby is born," Joan Kinney instantly scolded, her eyes squinting dangerously and her lips curling in a way that brought back tattered memories.

"We are planning the baby shower, if you must know," Nancy Peterson said with poise, holding up several brochures to frilly restaurants and country clubs that screamed high society.

Brian sneered in disgust and threw his coat over the back of the couch, "It's my house, I think I have the right to know what you're all clucking and scheming about in my dining room."

"Mother thinks that it's already horrific that we aren't getting married yet, she insists on a beautiful baby shower that too many people are invited to," Brian's fiance Lindsay informed him, eyebrow arching pointedly, "that way, society can still accept us, and we can continue to rise in the social ranks."

She winked at him, and he smirked at the sarcasm in her voice.

The easy companionship that they had together in college was what fueled Brian to continue to date her after they graduated. Lindsay was low-maintainence, smart, and warm. It also helped that as soon as Jack Kinney had met her when Brian brought her home for Thanksgiving in their freshman year, the guy was smitten, and the beatings stopped. Seemed Brian was now exactly what Jack wanted, and had a girl that twenty years before Jack would have fucked. If Lindsay was uncomfortable with the sexually-tainted approval of Brian's father, she didn't let on. She just continued to love her sharp, successful, if distant boyfriend, and encouraged the relationship to turn into an engagement. Which it did, six years after they graduated.

"It's not a joke, Lindsay, darling. It's an obligation. You were born into it, you must maintain it, despite whatever...man you choose to marry and procreate with." Nancy looked at Brian as if he were nothing more than scum on the bottom of her Talbot shoes. Joan turned an embarrassed red at the obvious barb to the Kinney family's low-class status.

All those years of Joan trying to be higher class, trying to prove that despite her drunken husband's job as a steel-mill worker, she could still be refined enough to be a part of a country club, and meet the ladies for tea at the Hilton to catch up on gossip.

All those years were for shit. Now, Brian watched his mother stutter for a moment and then eagerly sip her iced tea, turning red again when a bit rolled down out of the side of her mouth and down her chin. She daintily wiped her face off with a little pink napkin and then looked away.

Avoidance was the Kinney way. And she had taught it to him well. The same 'all those years' that she tried to be above her class, were the same 'all those years' that she left the room whenever Jack began to beat him.

Brian felt a disgusted shiver run through him and the sick feeling in his stomach he got whenever he thought of the past. So he pushed it aside as quickly as possible, and turned to his future mother-in-law,

"Wrong order, Mrs. Peterson. Procreate with, THEN marry."

He smiled cheekily, satisfied when the old woman's lips parted in shocked outrage. As if she needed to be reminded.

"You should be thankful you make a decent living," she hissed, pointing at him with a perfectly manicured nail, "Or you'd be our daughter's worst mistake. And the most pathetic embarrassment in the history of this family."

"Mother!" Lindsay exclaimed, looking at her with wide eyes. Brian just smirked nastily, the rush of the hatred filling his veins

with dirty joy.

"A simply fabulous living, actually. In fact, I'm so successful, your husband just asked me to head up the new ad campaign for his business merger. Paying me a shitload."

"Language, Brian! It's not becoming," Joan drawled, only feeling confident in the useless correcting of her obnoxious son.

"Tom told me he was going with another agency..." Nancy said with confusion.

"Guess he changed his mind," Brian shrugged, "We have a meeting tomorrow morning about it."

"You're perfect for it," Lindsay beamed, reaching out and smoothing her hand down his arm.

"I'm always perfect," he corrected arrogantly before leaning over and grabbing a couple of the brochures and handing them individually to each woman with flourish, "Now, you ladies better get back to your fucking baby shower planning. Don't want to let the high society down!"

And with a final sarcastic grin and intimidating eyebrow arch, he disappeared to his home office, closing the door firmly behind him.

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The heavy sound of the door shutting announced Cody's arrival, and Justin found himself closing his eyes briefly at the sound, almost in disappointment.

Daphne sat on the couch in front of him. The two of them had their legs tangled under the blanket, passing a cigarette back and forth and talking about random little things. The TV was on, some stupid sitcom that tried to be funnier than it actually was, while the half-empty KFC carton lay open on the coffee table.

"Hey," Justin called over his shoulder.

"Hey. What are you doing?" Cody asked, kicking off his shoes and walking across the glossy hardwood floor. Then he stopped abruptly and looked down, "Justin...."

"What?"

"You got paint on the floor. AGAIN."

And that was the end of the peacefulness. Cody angrily stomped over to the kitchen to grab cleaner, ranting about how he had a long day at work and the LAST THING HE WANTED was to come home and clean up after his boyfriend. Justin shifted up higher on the couch, to watch, to defend himself, to apologize; he didn't know, and tried not to notice how Daphne had scrunched down into the cushions on the other side as if she were shielding herself from the oncoming argument. And Cody's obvious dislike of her.

"I'm sorry," the words came, and Cody ignored them.

"I had better go," Daphne whispered, kicking aside the blanket and tugging on her shoes.

Justin tilted his head to the side in knowing sympathy, "'k. I had fun tonight, Daph. Tell the new boyfriend if he breaks your heart, I'll kick his tight virgin ass so hard he won't be able to sit down for a week."

"You tell ALL my boyfriends that," she giggled as she rolled her eyes.

"So? I mean it," he nudged her playfully with his toe. She grinned and tugged a piece of his hair in response.

"Did you save me any?" Cody asked abruptly, sitting down on the chair next to Daphne's side of the couch and reaching for the KFC carton. Daphne's bright smile instantly faded and she swung her backpack onto her shoulders.

"There's another carton in the fridge, Cody. I bought extra for you guys to heat up tomorrow," she said uncomfortably, shifting her weight side to side on her red Converse sneakers.

Cody blinked at her and then turned his attention back to the chicken container on the coffee table. Daphne just shrugged and smiled weakly at Justin, offering a slight wave before slipping out of the apartment.

Justin glared at his boyfriend.

"You didn't even say hi to her," he accused, "Why do you act like such an asshole?"

Cody stopped chewing and looked cluelessly surprised, "An asshole? Did I fucking hear you right? Who came home to whose big mess after WORKING all day?!"

"It was a couple of splatters on the floor, Cody. Besides, the apartment's in my name, my security deposit. Why do you care?" Justin stood up and folded the blanket in jerky movements to place it nicely on the back of the sofa.

"Because it's my home?" his boyfriend responded in a 'duh' tone, "And as for Daphne...she knows I don't like her, why pretend?"

"Because she's my friend?" Justin mimiked the tone.

"She's a prissy straight Carnegie Mellon brat."

"And I'm your snobby gay PIFA boyfriend. God, you are such a heterophobe. You discriminate more than any straight person I have ever met."

Cody stood up, "You fucking apologize for that," he growled dangerously.

"I'm not going to apologize. I'm not sorry," Justin folded his arms over his chest and stood his ground.

"Yeah, well, you're a little hypocrite. You are known for causing problems at PIFA...for standing up for your sexuality, for who you are, for saying smart-ass, controversial shit loudly and painting about issues that the school board assholes don't even want to think about! Then your best friend is...her," He spat the word. "It's pathetic, Justin. Don't just stand up at school, be who you are EVERYWHERE. Don't be a pussy."

Justin was used to the words. Used to the frenzied hatred that consumed Cody. It was actually the first thing that attracted Justin to him, other than the boyish grin and glowing blue eyes fringed by the longest lashes he had ever seen. Cody was strong in ways that he would never, ever be. He would cut things out of his life if they offended anything about his sexual identity, or his goals. That included any type of straight person. He worked on Liberty, he partied on Liberty, he lived on Liberty, he'd die on Liberty. Or maybe in Chelsea, West Hollywood, or San Francisco in the future, but Justin never thought that far ahead.

The verbal bashing was repeated, and Justin's head dropped in weary submission. It was all old, and worn-out, like an old movie that played over and over on a cable channel. Justin knew Cody's lines, and instead of delivering his, he decided to drop it.

"I can't NOT be Daphne's friend. I grew up with her," he said, hands dropping to his sides.

Cody sighed, "Fine. But just don't have her around when I am, okay?"

Justin found himself agreeing, and Cody smiled and blinked those beautiful eyes.

"Come here," he said, reaching out and tugging Justin forward by the front of his shirt.

Their lips met fast and sure, tongues instantly tangling together. Both of them moaned into each other's mouths at the warm familiarty. As familiar as the script they seemed to be following, repeating the same cycle of arguments and make-up sex over and over. Predictable.

But then Cody's hand slid into Justin's pants, cupping his erection, and Justin couldn't help but remember that there was still passion there too.

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Ch. 2 - Pitch

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The long towering hallways of Ryder Advertising were lit by sunlight through arching plate-glass windows. The halls always made Brian feel taller. And even more attractive, but honestly how could that be the case with someone already as hot as he was? He tugged confidently on his tie, and nodded a polite business greeting to several guys in the art department who were making a run to Starbucks.

This was his sanctuary, even if it wasn't completely his. Where he was in complete control and knew it. Everything spinning around him, his engagement, his fiancee's pregnancy, the family, and the goddamn social climbing- he didn't care about any of it, not really. What he fucking cared about was making money, and having the choice being able to either make big-time executives squirm uncomfortably or be impressed with his advertising genius. He cared about working with the most talented, smartest people in the business, and still being more talented and smarter than them.

He was simply the best. Nothing mattered but that.

Cynthia intercepted Brian at the door of his office with his latest messages and second cup of coffee for the day.

"The guys from Tayson are already in the conference room waiting," she informed him, taking his briefcase and following him into his office.

"Ah, right on schedule," Brian purred through a grin, gathering what was needed for the presentation. He headed for the conference room and called over his shoulder, "Have Liam bring the boards."

Cynthia turned around and gave him a smile and a sarcastic salute, "Good luck!"

"Luck has nothing to do with it, Cynthia," he shot back, "You should know better."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah..." she chuckled and rolled her eyes as Brian pushed through the impressive doors to the conference room.

Inside, Tom Peterson stood up to enthusiastically greet his future son-in-law. "Brian! I expect you have a wonderful pitch to pitch our way this morning, eh?"

He laughed at his own joke and shook Brian's hand in a plump red grip.

"Of course I do, Tom. You come to the best, you get the best," Brian said, his right hand against his stomach as he bent his head knowingly.

"Ha-ha, smart boy. Let me introduce my new partner." a middle-aged man with intense blue eyes stepped forward."This is Craig Taylor. Craig, this is Brian Kinney. Partner here at Ryder, and about to marry my daughter Lindsay."

"Pleasure, Kinney. I've heard a lot about you," Craig offered his hand, which Brian shook firmly.

"It's all true, Mr. Taylor."

"A man of confidence. I appreciate that," Craig smiled as he sat, "So, what have you got to show us?"

For the next twenty minutes, Brian detailed a hot, hard, and fast campaign to promote the new merger of two strong Pittsburgh companies. And from the looks on the men's faces, they were impressed by what he had to offer. When he was finished, they proved his assumption correct.

"It's perfect, Brian! Simply perfect! It should boost our profit AND expand our service-base," Tom raved, clapping the ad-exec on the back, "Craig, we might even have to hire some new employees."

"We don't want to get ahead of ourselves, Tom. While I am anticipating a buzz over this campaign, I do have a requirement," the other business man said, threading his fingers together seriously.

Brian glanced over at his future father-in-law, who nodded knowingly, "Right, the requirement."

"What... requirement?" Brian asked warily. Tom exchanged a look with Craig.

"One of the reasons we came to you was because Craig's son here is a fine-art student at PIFA. He needs real job experience for some credits, and since we're soon going to be family, I thought..."

"... That you could take advantage of the fuckin' family bond by pawning a kid off on me." Brian shook his head with a sarcastic smile.

"He's not a child, Brian. He's twenty years old, and extremely talented. Working with him will only benefit you," Tom insisited.

"And him as well, hopefully," Craig said in a steely voice. Brian's eyebrow lifted in surprise at the tone.

"Still, I'm not a babysitter. I'm a professional advertising executive. Get him a job in the mail room," Brian said as he stood up

and pushed the papers into a pile to take to his office, "Good day, gentlemen."

"We will raise your profit percentage," Craig's tone stayed low and nearly dangerous and it stopped Brian in his tracks out the door.

"How much?"

"Ten percent more."

"Twenty-five."

"Twenty."

"Fine."

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Despite the late morning sunlight filtering through the sheer curtains and the blue sky that backed it, Justin woke up in a bad mood. It might have had something to do with the argument before Cody and he fucked, or maybe the half-a-pack of cigarettes he smoked before he fell asleep. Whatever it was, Justin felt depressed and annoyed and tense for an unseen reason. It filled his chest, and skull, and made the morning feel like a dirty thing. He slowly shifted out from underneath Cody's warm, possessive body and padded naked to the shower, hoping it'd do something to relieve the tension in him.

It didn't. And it got even worse when Cody slipped in behind him, whispering heated words of desire that should have faded erotically into the sound of the water, but instead echoed off the large tiles and gave Justin a headache.

"Cody..." he sighed, head dropping back to Cody's shoulder.

"What?"

"Not right now, okay?" Justin nibbled and kissed his lover's earlobe to soften the rejection of morning-shower sex.

"Why not?" Cody asked, pulling away and staring at the side of Justin's face.

"I'm meeting my dad for lunch. He said he has something to talk to me about."

Cody snorted, "We can guess what that will be. 'Justin,'" he said mockingly, "'I want to talk to you about that...boy you're living with...'"

Justin spared him a faint smile, "Believe it or not, my dad doesn't really care about you."

"No, just you and your 'disgusting lifestyle', which I happen to be a part of."

Justin sighed and turned off the shower abruptly. Cody followed him out, snatching the towel from his grip and toweling off Justin's body for him. Justin just closed his eyes and let Cody control the moment, let him dry where he wished, lick where he wanted, and then lead him by the hand to their bedroom to dress him.

The anxious, depressive tension was stronger than ever.

And it was still there when Justin arrived at Rustic Bend, the trendy masculine -straight- restaurant he was meeting his father at. He nervously smoothed his hand down the front of his black turtleneck sweater and dragged his finger along the top of the collar to make sure none of his blonde hair was tucked into it as the hostess escorted him to Craig's usual table in the corner.

"Hey Dad," he said quietly as he sat down.

"Justin," Craig nodded, looking up from his Wall Street Journal.

"Um...nice place," Justin said, artist's eyes scanning the restaurant's arching wood beams and elegant windows.

"Yeah, hey, can you hold on a minute?" his father requested sharply, raising a cell phone to his ear while his eyes never left the newspaper's stock section.

"Sure," Justin muttered, staring at his shoes, listening to his father growl at someone in much the same way as he growled at his son.

They had both received their entrees by the time Craig ended the call and tucked the paper back in his briefcase.

"So, how are you doing?"

Justin glanced at his father and arched a pale eyebrow, "You really want to know?"

"Just don't tell me details," Craig said, cutting his steak.

"Right," he said in a tired breath, "Well, I'm good. School is fine, Cody's fine, everything is fine."

Craig continued eating, only nodding slightly at his son's answer. Justin stared at him for several moments before asking, "But that's not why you asked me here? What do you want?"

"I got you a job."

Justin looked skeptical. "With your business that I don't even know what it is?" he said, guardedly.

"No, with an advertising agency. Ryder. They're heading up our new campaign, and our ad-man is willing to have you work with him. It will give you some experience."

"In the art department?"

"With one of the partners," Craig informed him, sipping his beer, and finally looking at his son.

Justin's face registered shock, "Partner? That's kind of intense."

"I'm sure you can handle it. His name is Brian Kinney. You're supposed to meet him at his office tomorrow afternoon, around four-thirty."

"How much did you bribe him with?" Justin asked, knowing that his father had pulled some strings. Predictable.

"He's about to marry Tom Peterson's daughter. It was a favor."

"And how much money?"

"Justin..."

"How much?"

"Enough."

"I figured," Justin sighed, head dropping.

"What, that I bribed him to show you the ropes of what he does best?" Craig asked, eyebrow arched.

"And no doubt to try to have some of his heterosexuality rub off on me."

Craig shrugged and said casually, "It wouldn't hurt."

Justin felt the air leave his lungs and the realization was like a kick to the gut. It felt like his father just shouted the words "I don't love you" right in his face. Justin would never, ever be good enough. He knew that now, right in this moment, more than he had ever suspected or consciously knew before.

Those cold blue eyes that only showed emotion when he was furious. His father's tired lips in that same hard line, the face

always the same expression, like worn-out wallpaper, faded and unforgiving. Justin thought that maybe, if he looked hard enough, he'd see some sort of signal that there was more to his father than that. A peel or tear in the mask that would reveal the father that used to take him camping, or would carry him on his shoulders, or would treat him to ice cream after a baseball game.

But that man wasn't there anymore, and all that was left was the pale and tired distance of their relationship and his constant. fucking. desire. for his Justin to be different. To be straight, to be a businessman, to be everything but what his son was.

Cody's offended and rebellious voice came screaming into his head, and Justin stood up abruptly.

"I'll go meet the guy tomorrow, Dad. And I'll work with him, for you, because I am grateful for the opportunity, but know this:" he leaned forward over the table, right into his father's face, "I will never, EVER be straight. I am who I am. Stop. trying. to change me, and fucking deal with it."

Craig blinked, unaffected.

And Justin tossed his napkin down on the table, said goodbye, "Thanks for lunch," and left the restaurant.

Ch. 3 - Talent

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This was not what Brian was expecting.

When Ryder talked about retiring, Brian assumed the agency would be given, in its entirety, to him, even if the contract didn't detail that. He and Ryder were friends, and had made each other a lot of money, it was only logical that the company would become his. Only fuck logic, apparently that wasn't the case. Ryder was selling his little-over-half to another agency, and things were about to change.

"I'll be losing 25 percent of my income, Marty," Brian growled roughly, slamming his fist down on his desk as he glared at his

ex-business partner.

"I'm sorry, Brian. Really, I am. But the money Gardner Vance was offering me was just too good. He's wanted this agency for years, and I'm finally in a position to sell it to him, and he's awfully disappointed I'm not selling all of it. I'm sure you and he will get along fine, though," Steve said in an apologetic voice, threading his fingers under his bearded chin.

"Sure, get along fine, after you both screw me over," Brian laughed sarcastically, "Whatever happened to loyalty?"

"You still own the same percentage of the company."

"Did you catch the loss of income, Marty? Did you hear that part?"

Marty held up his hands in surrender, "I got it, I got it. Again, I'm sorry."

"Sorry is bullshit."

A knock on the door interrupted their conversation, and Cynthia stuck her head in, "Mr. Kinney, your four-thirty appointment is here, Justin Taylor."

Brian heaved an annoyed sigh and nodded wearily, "Send him in as soon as Marty and I are finished."

"Yes, sir," Cynthia replied, as formal as possible in front of the other boss, and slipped back out of the office.

"It's okay. Take your meeting, I think we're finished," Ryder said, standing up and reaching out to shake Brian's hand.

He stared at it for a moment before shaking it firmly, pointedly, "Oh yes, we're finished. In more ways than one."

All Ryder could do was give him a tight smile before exiting the room. The second after, another man walked in.

Brian had his head down, looking at the papers on his desk, and struggling to control his temper when he heard the newcomer clear his throat. Annoyance shot through him and he looked up swiftly to intimidate the shit out of his client's kid.

And stopped.

Felt a strange sense of fluttering tenseness in his belly at the man standing before him that he hadn't felt in years, and smothered it just as quickly.

"Mr. Kinney?" the blonde began tentatively, "I'm Justin Taylor. My father said you were expecting me."

"Yes, Craig. He's a... convincing bast- business man, isn't he?" Brian said, holding out his hand in greeting. Justin shook it as he laughed. Strong grip, soft hands. You can tell a lot about a man by his handshake.

"It's okay, yeah, 'bastard'. You can say it. And yeah, he is. Look, I have to apologize for him. If you don't want to do this, I completely understand."

Brian motioned for him to sit down, "You don't want to have the learning experience?"

"No! I mean, yes, I do. But I can understand how annoyed you may be," blue eyes flashed knowingly.

"If you annoy me, I'll let you know," he said, leaning back in his plush leather chair.

Justin smiled again, "Deal."

"So, Mr. Taylor, what experience do you have?"

"I brought along some prints and samples of my artwork...fine art, and a little graphic design. I rent a computer and program from the school to use a majority of the time, since I have some trouble with my ri-..." Justin trailed off awkwardly as he rumaged in his bag and pulled out a thick binder, "Anyway, a lot of it is classical methods maniuplated digitally."

He handed the binder to Brian, who began paging through it. Justin watched him with an anxious expression.

"These are good," was all Brian said.

Truth was, they were amazing. The kid knew what he was talking about, knew what he was drawing about, and knew just how loudly he was saying it. He was just about to turn the page with the same steady rotation he had been flipping through with, when one of the painting prints caught his eyes.

It was the profile of two men, their jaws sharp and cheekbones chisled. Perfectly-shaped lips pressed tightly together, but their mouths obviously open and sharing all that was in them. One had his hand pressed against the side of the other one's head, fingers stretched open and covering as much as possible. Brian recognized the slightly shorter one.

The flighty panic hit his gut again at the image, and Brian swallowed as he realized he couldn't help but ask about it. He held up the print, eyebrow arched in amused question, his perfect Brian Kinney mask in place as he denied all those old emotions inside of him. Pushed them away. Smothered and executed them, or at least tried.

Justin had the decency to blush.

"That's me and my boyfriend. Self-portrait."

Brian nodded and tucked it back into the glossy pocket.

"My, uh, dad didn't say anything to you about that, did he?"

"I don't see how it's any of my business," Brian said truthfully. Justin's eyebrows shot up.

"You're right, it's not. And I'm not ashamed or anything! It's just that my dad... he- ah, never mind. Not important," Justin waved his hand vaguely and accepted the binder that Brian handed back to him.

"You are talented, Mr. Taylor. I look forward to working with you. We start tonight."

"Tonight?"

"You have plans?"

"I did. I'll cancel them."

"Good, 'cause we're going to the most fucking snobby place in town, and it's important that we be there to make contacts for future clients."

"I thought I was helping you with my father's campaign?" Justin asked, confused.

Brian gave him a look, "You want experience or not?"

"Fuck yes."

"Do you have a tux?"

"Um, not so much."

"I suggest you go rent one then. Meet me back here in two hours."

And with that, Brian dismissed him.

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"What the fuck are you wearing?" Cody asked as he walked in to see Justin standing all decked out in front of the full-length mirror.

"A tuxedo."

"I see that, why?" he walked around Justin, checking him out from head-to-toe.

"I'm going to some shwanky party downtown tonight with my new employer," Just explained, adjusting his jacket.

Cody's tilted his head, "As his date?"

"As his assistant. Please, he's straight," Justin rolled his eyes.

"Even worse," Cody grumbled.

Justin remained silent until his boyfriend left the room, not wanting Cody to continue his usual tirade, while wanting him to say something about the tuxedo. It had been two years since Justin had worn a tuxedo, on that fateful night where Everything Had Changed.

Cody was there that night. They had done nothing more than dance to some pop song with everyone else, but just the confirmation that Justin was, in fact, a faggot was enough for Chris Hobbs to follow Cody and Justin to the parking garage. After the bat connected with Justin's skull, Cody took off after Chris and beat him to a pulp. Daphne had called the police.

Justin smoothed his hand down the tiny buttons. Cody should have said something. Mentioned the occasion that he was wearing a tux for the first time. Comforted him at the memories. It was Cody's goddamn duty to do it. As his friend, as someone who was there, as his lover.

But he hadn't. So Justin resigned into himself, and accepted it with the usual grace he accepted everything else with. Then he glanced at the clock, and rushed out the door, only shouting back a goodbye.

The taxi ride was short, and Justin felt itchy the whole way there. He was excited, nervous, but for some strange reason

extremely content with this latest twist in his life. It was an odd contrast to what he had been feeling the last couple of days, and Justin told himself it was because of this new opportunity with a neat new employer.

What he wouldn't admit to himself was that it had more to do with the employer than anything else.

The taxi pulled smoothly up to the curb in front of Ryder's building and before Justin could open his door, it was opened for him. By Brian.

"Right on time," he drawled, standing back to give Justin room to climb out of the car.

"They say punctuality is a virtue," Justin said, following Brian to a shiny black luxury car with tinted windows.

"They are fucking morons," Brian shot back.

"It's not a virtue, then?"

Brian slid across the leather back seat after Justin.

"You know what's a virtue? Going to a party to meet and greet over 300 people who are useless except for their very very deep wallets."

"I am in awe of how virtuous you are, then."

"The most virtuous man you'll ever meet, kid."

Justin glanced over at him in the darkness of the backseat, and took in Brian's self-satisfied grin...

And couldn't hold back his own smile.

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Ch. 4 - Society

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The charity/press event in the Hilton ballroom was glamorous and elegant. The room was glowing with crystal and candlelight and the tinkling laughter of dozens of socialites who had nothing to do than pose pretty on their lover's arms.

Brian despised the entire fucking thing. He wished the chandeliers would crash to the floor and crush all those glittery people and their fake tittering and gossiping. Or maybe the tall windows would smash and drown out the classical music. Then a strong wind would rush through the broken glass and sweep everyone and their million dollar filth away. He would love to see that.

Maybe because deep down inside, he knew this wasn't where he belonged.

Justin looked excited, though. He carried himself well, like he was used to this kind of social function. Brian glanced at him again just to make sure, took in the flushed cheeks and smooth blonde hair that fell to his collar, bright blue eyes shining and shell-pink lips curved into a slight smile.

Ochre carpet, afternoon sun, ripped and tattered magazine crumpled next to him, startled at the sound of footsteps coming into the room

Brian looked away and cleared his throat.

"Shall we?" He tilted his head towards the ballroom after the doorman took their coats.

Justin nodded, "So what exactly do we do in there?"

"Mingle, meet people, make small talk."

"Wit is very fashionable at the moment," Justin quipped. Brian raised an eyebrow at him. Justin flushed, "Um, Peter Pan."

Peter fucking Pan.

"Great. Use that as your opening line, kid," Brian said, voice saturated with sarcasm.

"Oh, I have much better opening lines than that. My pick-up lines...they're to die for," Justin said, teasing glint in his eye.

"I'm sure they are," and Brian cleared his throat again.

Justin backed-off, seeming to sense Brian's growing annoyance. If only he knew how deep and true that annoyance was. It surpassed annoyance and took on an anxious desire that was like a tiny flame in Brian’s gut. The place where the panic came from.

Acquaintance and clients greeted him with hearty pats on the back and sly handshakes. Brian tried not to notice the way their eyes would drift back and forth between him and Justin, taking in the boy's small effeminate stature and graceful demeanor, and wondering. And he just stopped trying to introduce Justin as his new intern, because that scandalously implied more than simply labeling him an art-student. Of course, despite any assumptions that they made, they were quick to congratulate him on his upcoming marriage, and the baby on the way.

Then one of his old rivals approached him with a sickening look of sympathy on his face, and Brian knew exactly what was coming...

"Hey Kinney, I heard about Ryder selling his half to Gardner Vance...rough."

"Already, huh? Well, thank you, Landon. I appreciate the gloating sentiment. Now if you'd excuse me..," Brian growled at the saccharine grin of Landon Carter. Justin, who had just gotten back from the bathroom, looked up at him in surprise at his tone of voice.

"You know, I wouldn't be surprised if Gardner took over completely. Booted you out, bought your share. I sure hope that it doesn't happen. For your sake, Bri," Landon continued, placing his hand on Brian's shoulder.

"Remove your fucking hand."

Landon opened his mouth to say something, when Justin grabbed Brian's arm and pulled him to the side, pointed stage whisper, "You have a phone call, Mr. Kinney. Tayson, Inc has a question about their campaign. It's urgent."

Justin handed him his own cell phone and Brian put it up against his ear.

"Tayson, Incorporated, you mean that big merger that-"

"Yeah, that's the one," Justin answered quickly, dismissing Landon with a unimpressed once-over. His hand found its way to Brian's arm again, "Sir, we should go to the hallway."

They quickly made their way into the empty hallway and Brian pulled the silent cell phone away from his ear and gave it back to Justin.

"That was fucking brilliant, Taylor," Brian laughed, almost in disbelief.

Justin shrugged modestly, "That guy was an asshole."

"Yeah..." Brian trailed off softly, "Hey, you ready to go?"

"Make enough contacts?"

"Did you?"

Justin nodded, a careful expression of happiness, "Yeah, I learned a lot."

"Glad I could be of service," Brian snarked.

"Me, too."

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Life always felt kind of surreal in a car at night, especially riding through a glittery city with a belly full of champagne. Brian had begun playing with his palm pilot as soon as they had gotten into the chauffered car, and Justin was grateful for the brief moment of silence before he had to ask his burning question. He studied Brian's noble roman profile -

Wait. What the fuck?

Justin calmed himself down. It was okay to notice his employer’s obvious good looks. It was the artist in him that noted the straight slope of his nose, the sheer gorgeous curving lines of his lips, and his delicate chin and jawbone. The line from his ear to his shoulder, a sweep of masculinity that Justin was sure even Michalangelo would ache to recreate.

"Do I have something on my face?" Brian broke through his thoughts, not even looking up at the young man.

Justin blushed, grateful that Brian couldn't see him in the darkness, "No, I just was trying to work up the courage to ask you something."

"So ask," Brian said, his eyes still trained on his palm pilot. His voice was low, and honest. No bullshit. It pleased Justin.

"What was that asshole talking about?"

"My partner at the agency sold his half of the company instead of giving it over, or selling it, to me. I'm going to lose a drastic amount of my income, and have to deal with a new partner. I'm not happy. It really fucks it all up," Brian explained in the same tone, same position.

Justin bit his lip.

"Welcome to the wonderful world of business, Taylor."

Justin stared at him.

"Well?"

"Why don't you start your own agency?" Justin blurted out, feeling like he was a naive 12 year old again.

Brian looked up at him for the first time since they had gotten in the car, his hazel eyes startled but bright and knowing.

" 'the fuck?"

Confidence filled Justin, and he forged ahead with his explanation, "I mean, come on, you have so many clients already. Everyone loves you and what you do for their companies. I know that, and I've only known you for a day, but being at that party, I saw it.," Justin practically bounced on the seat, hands sweeping in enthusiastic gestures, "And you met a ton more people tonight who will use your genius, and make money off of you, and you will make money off of them, and its this viciously brilliant cycle, so why NOT do it by yourself? Hell, you're making enough money from my dad's company to get you started."

Brian just stared at him.

Justin blushed again and swiped his hair off his forehead with his palm, "Sorry, got carried away."

"You are a strange kid."

A grin split Justin's face that he couldn't help, "I know. But you have to admit that it's a good idea."

"Clever," Brian offered, tilting his head and pointing a finger at him.

"Genius," Justin corrected, before turning to stare back out the window. He let the silence of the moment be filled with Brian's thoughts.

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Ch. 5 - Notes

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At 9 o'clock every morning, Justin would poke his head into Brian's office and smile.

Then the day would continue as normal. Justin would work in the art department or an empty conference room, either leaving notes with Cynthia for Brian to meet him in one of the rooms, or interrupting with his head-poke and smile, so that they could discuss campaign designs and marketing slogans.

The boy was smart; sensible in an artistic, spontaneous sort of way. Everything about him was fresh and new to Brian, from the ideas he'd come up with for logos, to the way he'd tilt back his head and laugh, loud and full. Brian had never known anyone who laughed like that, and he was pretty sure he never would. Justin was.... different. Better.

Brian appreciated the easy professional camaraderie they had, and almost looked forward to Justin's smart-ass quips that usually shot down Brian's arrogant complaints. Looked forward to them.

That wasn't natural, was it?

Natural. No. What was natural were the phone calls from Lindsay, telling him that the doctor said the baby looked great, or that her mother was driving her nuts, or that she needed him to go to his tailor and get his suit for the wedding fixed. What was natural were the tense, annoying lunches with his mother, or the occasional messages from his future father-in-law asking about the campaign. Those things were natural. They were what he had to think about.

Cynthia brought in his fourth cup of latte for the day and a note on a neon post-it from Justin.

Art room at 3. Got a new design to show you.

Signed in an elegant, scattered scrawl as if it were a piece of artwork.

Brian looked at the clock. 2:36.

Oh well, close enough. Fuck natural.

He stood and combed his hands through his hair and straightened his tie as he left his office.

The door to the art room was ajar, and Justin was alone inside. His body bent over the wide work desk, hair falling across his eyes, and biting his lower lip in concentration.

"Genius at work?" Brian said sarcastically, but not able to help the grin that graced his lips as Justin looked up at him.

"You better believe it, Mr. Kinney," Justin snarked, pulling a pencil from behind his ear and making a careful mark on the paper he was working on.

Brian looked around the otherwise deserted art room. "Where is everyone?"

"Lunch," the kid's voice was muffled from the other pencil which he stuck in his mouth.

"At three?"

"It's not three yet," blue eyes flashed at him.

"Close enough," Brian muttered almost defensively, shrugging his shoulders. He walked around the side of the table and looked at the dozens of boards laying out on its surface. "Did you do all of these today?"

"Um, and last night. This is what I wanted to show you though. What do you think?"

Justin put down his pencils and held up the paper he was working on. It was a new logo design for Tayson, Inc. Clean, crisp, concise. Professional and high-quality. Brian was once again impressed.

"It's good," he said in a satisfied lilt, "And when last night were you working on these?"

The kid blushed, and put the paper back down on the table, "Um, pretty much all night."

"All night?"

"Well, once I get started..."

"What'd your boyfriend have to say about that?" the words were out before he could stop them. Or think about them.

Justin's blush deepened, face bright and smooth.

"Well, he wasn't exactly happy. But this is my job, you know? I had to get this stuff out while it was still in my head."

"Ah, a dedicated employee," Brian's eyebrow arched as he nodded with a half-smile that made the kid look away.

He felt breathless and irritatingly interested at Justin's reaction.

Yeah, still not fucking natural.

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At 4:30, the note was delivered to Justin, asking him to come to Brian's office before he left that evening. It was signed by Cynthia. He stared at her loopy feminine cursive for a while, as if different words in Brian's handwriting might appear.

Then when Justin realized what he was doing, he was disgusted.

He felt like a little girl with a crush. Eager for Brian's comments on his work, or his dry sarcastic advice. Even a cruel little smile or annoyed sigh. Justin liked it all. Liked it. For some reason it made him feel special, just that he got a reaction. Because as Justin had observed with the others, most of the time, Brian would stare and shoot someone down and barely react at all.

With Justin, he was different.

No. With Brian, Justin was different.

It was a startling realization, but Justin realized it was honestly how he felt. He wasn't feeling overwhelming and rebellious like he was with his father, and he didn't feel surrendering and brooding, like he was with Cody. He felt different....better, even. Brian respected him, taught him, and matched his wit... which Justin had to admit was kind of a turn-on.

"Hey, Justin, you finished here?" Diego, the head of the art department, interrupted his thoughts, with one hand on the lightswitch.

Justin nodded and tossed some stuff in his messenger bag, "Yeah, I just have to talk to Mr. Kinney before I head out."

"While you're talking to him, you might want to add that I want to hire you full-time after his Tayson campaign is finished... we could really use talent like you around here 24-7."

"I don't think I can handle putting in 24 hours a day anymore after this is over. I'm already worn out from the last three weeks," he laughed, slinging his bag over his shoulder.

"Eh, yeah, not everyone is cut out for the fast advertising life," Diego said, tilting his head and chuckling.

"Especially when all they do is stand around and delay interns who I am supposed to have a meeting with," a smart, icy voice came from the opposite doorway.

Diego jumped at his boss's pointed interruption, and Justin turned to see Brian saunter in, all power and lethal grace, staring at Diego in that cold, distant, expressionless way. The other man politely excused himself with an embarrassed stutter and Justin suppressed his amused grin.

"He's terrified of you," Justin observed.

Brian snorted, "He's a good artist who gets things done quickly, but the guy's pathetic. You're fine for the 'fast advertising life'."

So, he was defending him. That disgust-worthy warm crush feeling bloomed in Justin's chest, he chose to push it aside, focus on reality: he had a boyfriend, and besides? how cliche was it to fall for the one guy you could never have? Move on to safe ground, go back to business.

"I was just on my way up to see you," Justin said in apology.

"But I want to get the fuck out of here, so I was tired of waiting," Brian said in a sharp tone. Justin flinched.

"Right. Well, what's up?"

"My fiance is having a dinner at her house tomorrow for your fathers' new business merger. She says its her duty as a daughter, whateverthefuck, so, you're invited." Brian seemed like he wanted to be anywhere but at that dinner. His eyes were dark and guarded, his face closed off, and he was fiddling with something in his jacket. Everything about him screamed to leave him be.

Justin asked his question in a quiet voice, as if Brian was a skittish horse that was about to bolt, "My family, her family, and your family?"

Brian snorted. "Let's hope mine doesn't make it."

"Oh. That bad, huh?" Justin said in an even quieter voice, understanding that place of uncomfortable love/hate for parents, and it seemed to catch Brian off-guard and the closed-off look turned startled.

"Something like that."

Justin's turn to be startled. Something felt like it broke between them. A shift, like sand but more violent. Because of quiet voices in a dark art room. He peered at Brian, wondering if he was feeling the charge in the air. But his shadowed hazel eyes were staring at the floor and as he cleared his throat and shifted on his feet, Justin knew that whatever just happened would be ignored and forgotten.

"So, tomorrow Cynthia will give you directions," Brian began to leave the room.

"Yeah, I'll be there," Justin replied, following him out. At the hallway, Brian turned and strode quickly to the elevator, while Justin moved towards the stairs, only looking back once and calling to Brian, "See you tomorrow, Mr. Kinney."

He thought he might have heard a 'later'.

Ch. 6 - Lions

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With the cool sheets against his naked back and a cigarette in his mouth, Brian finally felt relaxed. Lindsay hadn't come home yet from the grocery store, and she had rushed out of there an hour before to get stuff for the dinner that night. Joan called to tell him that both her and Jack would be coming, and Brian couldn't conceal the sneer as he accused her of trying to be one of THEM, when she'd always be steel-worker trash. She replied "Brian, really..." and made an excuse about how she had to get to church, but Brian could hear her getting out the sherry bottle from the alcohol cabinet.

So now his mother was going to show up at the dinner drunk, and his father was going to say inappropriate things, and Craig was going to stare and make sharp comments, and Tom would keep clapping Brian on the back and shoulder, while Nancy would probably babble away with Craig's wife about country club business, and Lindsay would act like it was all the most wonderful thing ever and smile until her face was red, and Justin would...

...Brian didn't know what Justin would do. But he trusted it. He trusted in it. For reasons Brian didn't want to think about, he knew without a doubt that Justin would handle the situation, and handle it well.

He scrubbed his hand down his face, and felt tired and irritated when his cigarette went out. He lit another one.

The front door banged shut and he heard Lindsay drop some bags on the counter before making her way to the bedroom.

"Brian, are you home?" she called, pushing open the bedroom door.

"My corvette's outside, isn't it? That is a good tip-off that I'm home," he snarked, taking a drag and staring at the ceiling.

"And doing absolutely nothing than sitting on your naked ass and smoking in our bed!" she rolled her eyes and came to stand over him.

"At least my naked ass is fine," he drawled, pointing the cigarette at her. She was really bad at hiding her blush and gleeful smile whenever someone - even him - pointed out how hot he was.

"Why don't you come help me with groceries. Pregnant lady here, you know," she took his cigarette and put it out in the ashtray next to the bed.

Brian heaved a great sigh, "Do I have to?"

"It's your duty as a future father and husband. Come on."

Thirteen bags later, Linds was up to her neck in cooking all sorts of exotic sounding concoctions, and the smell made Brian sick. He decided to move his cigarette contemplation to the back porch, and sat there staring at the leafless and spindly tree branches, hoping that they'd spell out words that would make something be okay. Not that he'd ever admit that he DIDN'T feel okay. The sun set behind the next door neighbor's house, and even when he could see his breath without it being full of smoke, he didn't go in.

"Brian?" a voice came from the side of the house, deep in shadows and Brian jumped. The owner of the voice moved into the faint light shining through the windows. It was Justin, bundled up in his pea coat with a frumpy scarf and gnarled mittens, carrying a small pot full of some bright, cheery flowers grown in a greenhouse.

"No one answered the front door, so I..." he continued, stepping closer, golden light bathing him, shining off his hair, showcasing his pale blue eyes and rosy-cold cheeks.

Brian glanced away sharply and stuck his tenth cigarette in his mouth, gruffly talking around the roll of paper and sweet-smelling tobacco, "Yeah, sorry about that. Linds is a maniac in the kitchen. I think she's got music on, too. You can go in the backdoor, there. She's excited to see you again."

Justin laughed, warm and soft, "Last time I saw her, she was my babysitter and she played lions with me under my dining room table."

Brian arched an eyebrow at Justin.

"When was that? Three days ago, kid?"

The emphasis on kid made said kid look indignant and proud of his nickname at the same time, "Try ten years ago."

"Well, maybe you can go help the lioness get her killing prepared," Brian nodded towards the back door again.

Justin glanced at the door and then back at the empty space on the step next to Brian.

"Actually, if you don't mind and have an extra cigarette, um, I'd like to stay out here for a while. My parents were on their way, and I'd like to avoid them as long as possible."

Brian tilted his chin up as he regarded Justin. Blinked slowly. Silently giving permission and wondering if he'd have to use words.

But he didn't. Justin understood, and quietly sat next to him, the material of their jackets brushing against each other.

He should panic again that the kid could read him so well, or panic even more at the nudge of Justin's knee against his as he fidgeted for lighter, but for some reason....

Fuck, he didn't want to think about it.

Justin reached for the pack then, and expertly lit a cigarette. Brian watched the motion of his hand and the shape of his lips as he smoked it.

It was that moment that Kinney's got there, and the swaggeringly trashy voice of his father drifted through to the back porch. Justin glanced over at him, doing that disconcerting reading thing that he did in he car after the party, and Brian ignored the look for a few moments until it was inevitable that they join the families gathering in the house. He stood and waited at the backdoor for Justin to flick the leftover cigarette filter into the night, gather his pot of flowers, and come up the steps.

"Taylor?" he held his arm out over the entrance, stopping Justin before he went in. Justin looked up at him with bright eyes filled with questions, pale eyebrows high.

"Yeah, Mr. Kinney?"

His breath smelled of cigarette smoke and an original husky masculinity.

"Don't let the father's get to you. Mine, or yours..." Brian said, knowingly. Almost comfortingly.

And as long as Justin was the only one who ever heard him speak in a quiet, caring tone like that, Brian found himself okay with it. Okay with whateverthefuck was going on inside his gut and brain.

Justin blinked slowly and nodded, swallowing and giving Brian a slight smile before going through the door.

Into the lion pit.

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Dinner was bright. Too bright for Justin, and he kept his head bent most of the time so his long shaggy bangs would cast a shadow over his eyes, slouching back into his chair so he didn't have to respond to the dozens of different conversations bouncing around the table.

It was loud. His mother, Lindsay, Mrs. Peterson, and Joan Kinney were gossiping at deafening decibels, and giggling as they sipped their white wine that they had all agreed "went excellently with the pasta, dear". Both Jack Kinney and Mr. Peterson were well on their way to drunk, Jack being slightly vulgar and mean but still animated, and Mr. Peterson so red and jolly, Justin thought he'd explode. Justin's dad was just being snide, chuckling at Mr. Peterson's jokes, then arguing about business.

Brian was quiet.

Justin watched him through the fringe of his hair, watched the chandelier's golden light change and bend on the delicate skin on Brian's face as he would move his head. Watched the way his eyes looked tense and guarded whenever Jack would say something, or the way he'd glance at Lindsay with the occasional look of being lost. He probably wasn't even aware that his face was so open and expressive. After all, no one would pay attention to him unless he was being brilliant or extremely arrogant and inappropriate. When he was quiet, it was as if he didn't exist.

Justin felt as if Brian was a puppy that he wanted to adopt. He wanted to take him home and protect him, and beg his parents and Cody to let him keep Brian, promising to take care of him. His parents and Cody would say no, and Justin would cry and throw a temper tantrum, ultimately shutting himself up in his room, with puppy Brian - the only one who understood his pain.

And that was why this crush was so pathetic.

Because Brian was a full-grown, capable man, with a fiancee and a baby on the way and a successful career. He didn't need Justin.

But Justin.... Justin was starting to think that maybe he did. And he refused to think about what life would be like without working with Brian. The thought of a day without him now, felt like going a day without art.

The voices seemed to explode again as all the parents and Lindsay burst out into laughter. Apparently Justin missed the joke, and by the look of it, so did Brian. Lindsay leaned over to kiss him though, and he smiled faintly for her sake. She left, and returned to the table with another bottle of wine, red this time, and began pouring it into everyone's glasses.

"Jus, you want some?" she asked, her big smile beaming as she laid a hand on his shoulder, "If I can't have any 'cause of this bun I've got in my oven, someone should at least have my portion!"

Justin looked up at her and shook his head, "I'm still underage, Linds, remember?"

"I always forget! I'm sure that hasn't stopped you though..." she trailed off knowingly, teasingly.

He shrugged and smiled, "College is about experimentation, right?"

"Let's hope that's all it is," he thought he heard Craig say under his breath, but Justin chose to ignore it, bending his head, getting that shadow back over his face. To protect him.

Linds moved onto Brian, on the opposite corner of the table, "Wine, Bri?"

"No thanks, I've got an early meeting tomorrow."

"Hasn't stopped you before, sonnyboy," Jack slurred, putting his hand on Brian's collar and grabbing it in a tight, "playful" grip, tugging at his son.

"It's different when it's business, Dad. Important business," his voice sounded tired, and forced through clenched teeth. Justin watched him carefully.

"Ah, Ryder sold the agency. I heard about that. Rather unfortunate, eh?" Tom Peterson shook his head over-dramatically, as if it were the greatest sorrow of all time, "You're going to lose some money, aren't you, sport?"

It wasn't just the "sport". It was the whole conversation's turn in general. Justin wasn't sure if he should take cover, or do something drastic to change the subject when Brian's face got darker and tighter, and the lines of his face got sharper.

"Brian will be fine. As long as he keeps his temper in check and gets along with the man who's taking over Ryder's half," Lindsay said, constantly grinning in that annoying protective/authoritative/motherly girlfriend way. Brian's eyes flashed with anger, and his lips began to curl into a cruel comeback that would surely turn the dinner into a whirlwind of shouting, blaming, and defending.

"Actually, I think Mr. Kinney should start his own agency."

Brian's hazel eyes turned sharply to Justin.

"Not a bad idea, Justin, sure, I mean, he's brilliant enough. But it's quite a gamble, don't you think?" Linds' tone was concerned as her hand slipped once again around Brian's shoulders.

Brian kept staring at Justin.

"After all, he's developed his client list so well at Ryder, it'd be counterproductive to go off and start his own agency," Tom put in his bit of advice.

"And expensive," Craig said, raising his glass towards Brian briefly before taking a sip, "Justin, you don't know enough about business to suggest that. You chose PIFA over Dartmouth, son, remember? You always have such grand ideas that aren't exactly logical."

"Not that we don't believe in you, Brian, dear," Joan said in a near-stutter, trying to be the caring mother that Justin was sure she wasn't.

"It's just that it's not....practical. You have other things to worry about. Like the baby!" Nancy Peterson said, all refined and uptight.

"Oh, and the wedding," Jennifer said, grinning a bit and leaning forward, "Lindsay, bring me that book you were talking about...with all the floral arrangements you were thinking about? I'm simply dying to see them!"

And that was the end of the Justin-Thinks-Brian-Should-Have-His-Own-Agency conversation.

Brian was still staring at him.

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Ch. 7 - Silence

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The office felt like another world at two o'clock in the morning, and if Brian could have his way, he'd only work at night. The dark stillness of the building, only a fourth of the fluorescent lights on, corners full of shadows. To only be serenaded by the heat clicking on and off, or the janitors coming through with vacuums, and the occasional one-word greeting he'd get from them.

He shuffled through his papers for an instant and then realized that what he needed was in the art department, and made his way down darkened hallways and one emergency-lit staircase to the large work room....where a light was on. Huh. And there was the one responsible...

"Taylor," he sighed in a chastising way, raising an eyebrow at the young man who was asleep at one of the tall desks, head on his bent arms.

Brian walked over to him and pinched the corner of his pale blue sweater, tugging gently to wake him up. The boys response was smack his lips and nestle his face into his elbow. Then Brian flicked his hand, but Justin only mumbled and twitched his hand a bit. After a moments hesitation he slowly smoothed his hand down the shaggy blond hair at the back of Justin's head, and again when the kid didn't respond. And then one more time.

"Hey, kid," he said, fingers combing through the pale silky hair, "Wake up."

As soon as his eyelashes fluttered, Brian pulled his hand back violently, opting instead for folding his arms over his chest and looking bemused.

Justin's cloudy blue eyes registered confusion, "Bri-...Mr. Kinney?"

"You planning on paying for room and board?"

"Ah, sorry, I...I guess I'm too exhausted... drifted off," Justin rubbed his eyes, and blinked lazily.

"You're not being paid enough to put in these kind of hours, Taylor," he nearly scolded.

"At least I'm doing the job..." the blond countered around a yawn.

"Until 2 in the morning. That's impressive, but you'll be no good to me if you're tired all day tomorrow."

Justin nodded and looked around for his bag, "You're right. I'll be getting home right now. I promise."

Brian watched him pack up his stuff and put on his coat and dig around in his pocket for change, and then he wondered why he was watching the kid do this stuff. Brian told himself he was just watching under the pretense of making the kid go home, even though he knew...deep down inside... that was not why he was so acutely interested in the smallest things Justin did.

"'kay, I'm gonna go call a taxi, then. See you tomorrow, Mr. Kinney," he said in a sleepy voice, waving lazily.

"Hey, wait," he stopped him.

Justin turned back.

"If you give me 10 minutes, I can drive you home," Brian offered, cursing the soft way he said it.

But then Justin smiled.

"That'd be great. I'll wait here."

With a nod, Brian left the art department to get his stuff together. Oh well, he didn't need to stay there the rest of the night anyway.

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Justin liked the silence between Brian and him as they walked down to the parking garage. Liked everything about it.

The sound of their footsteps on the marble, then concrete. The tired sigh one of them would occasionally emit.

The pale lights and inky shadows. The piercing orange street lamps and parking lot lights.

Even the smells...the clean sterile air of the building, and leaked gas and exhaust in the garage.

Brian reached in his expensive coat's pocket and in one of the closest parking spaces, a corvette beeped and headlights flashed. He tugged out the keys and unlocked it by pressing another button, nodding his head over to the passenger side door, as if Justin didn't know where to go.

The silence continued to reign in the close, leather and shadow-shrouded interior of the sports car, and Justin alternated between watching lights flare and fade on Brian's face, or staring out the window and dreading the moment when he'd have to speak up to give directions. Brian made the decision for him.

"Which way?"

"North Front, off of Liberty."

"Doesn't seem like a place the Taylors of Pittsburgh would live," Brian said casually.

"It's my apartment. I share it with my boyfriend, Cody," Justin explained softly, artist eyes flickering to the way Brian was tensing his jaw, and the way his hand gripped the gear shift tighter. Made the muscles define and sharpen. Justin wanted to draw them.

"I haven't met Cody, yet." Brian seemed to fidget for conversation.

"Do you want to?"

"Not particularly," Brian answered in a droll voice.

Justin laughed quietly. "I really like that about you."

Brian looked over as they pulled up to a red light, "Like? What?"

"That you tell the truth so bluntly. No bullshit." Justin grinned at him, "It's an admirable quality, Mr. Kinney."

Brian snorted. "I'm glad you approve, Mr. Taylor," he responded, sarcastic and sweet at the same time. His lips were curved up slightly, and Justin wanted to smooth his fingertips over them.

He bet Brian's lips were probably softer than Cody's. His hand sure was, as Justin remembered from their first handshake. He felt homesick for that handshake.

"Here we are, North Front off of Liberty. Now where?"

Justin pointed through the windshield. "That brick building, two blocks up. See it?"

Brian nodded and accelerated through two yellow lights before pulling up tight against the curb.

"That will be eleven dollars," Brian said with tongue-in-cheek smirk.

"Oh please. You should be paying me for having my delightful company for the last six minutes," Justin teased back, gathering his belongings at his feet and opening the corvette door. The dome light came on overhead and lit Brian's face with an eery soft glow.

Was it just Justin's imagination, or was Brian's expression almost... wistfully, pleasantly shy?

Then the egotistical, all-powerful mask came back, and Brian put his hand out and gently shoved Justin's shoulder out of the passenger seat.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever, kid. Get out of here."

Justin climbed out and bent down, flashing Brian a grin and a "See you tomorrow", before slamming the door shut.

He tried not to look back and watch Brian drive away, but he couldn't help it.

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Ch. 8 - Crashing

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Brian had just come around the corner into the art room, in one of those slow-motion car wreck sort of situations. Justin was balanced delicately on the very top of a ladder, fiddling with the lighting fixture on the ceiling, and Diego was standing under him, hands on the ladder. Until something distracted him, and Justin leaned too far to the side, and the entire situation collapsed. Brian thought he even ran to try to catch Justin in slow motion,

But it was too late.

In a flash of popping fluorescent lights going out, and a blur of orange and blue and blond, Justin fell ten feet to the industrial carpet-covered concrete, and the ladder crashed on top of him.

The art department became a madhouse in the greyblue darkness, most of the employees didn't even realize that Justin was on the floor, under a ladder, and struggling to catch the breath that was knocked out of him.

Brian knew. To him, there wasn't anything else in the world at that moment. And the halted panic that should have arisen inside of him at that thought only existed for the still body of a blond man on the floor.

He pushed through the fumbling, exclaiming knot of people moving towards to the door, and kneeled down next to Justin's prone body.

"Jus- Taylor, hey. Hey hey hey, come on now," Was that his voice? So high-pitched and desperate?

Justin was conscious, the breath had been knocked out of him so he was gasping for proper lung-fulls while he awkwardly fumbled with the weight of the ladder. His startled, pain-filled blue eyes registered Brian with such relief, that Brian felt the bottom drop out of his soul.

"Let's get this off of you," Brian suggested, trying to be soothing and hoping he didn't sound as fucking helpless as he felt. The ladder was easy to cast aside, it rattled and crashed against one of the desks and Brian couldn't care less about it. "What the fuck were you doing on that piece of shit?"

"The b-bulb kept flickering. Diego said he-he was going to call the janitor, b-but I said I-I'd use the ladder in the custodian closet to fix it."

Brian looked at him like he was crazy. He spoke to him like he was crazy, too.

"Are you fucking insane?"

"It's been said," Justin responded, dry and ached, before his face twisted into an horrifying grimace as he tried to move his arm. Big, fat, glassy, perfect tears filled his eyes suddenly, and Brian couldn't stop his hand from reaching out towards him.

"...Brian, I - I - I can't feel my hand," Justin practically whimpered, "Oh god, my hand...Brian. Not again, I - I won't be able t-to..."

He started hyperventilating or crying then, Brian couldn't tell which. Only that he was freaking out, and that Brian felt achingly responsible, and even more so everytime Justin said his name in that voice. His first name, which sounded so.... something coming from him.

"Relax, hey, calm down. It's okay. Here, let me take a look. Shh, calm down, okay?" he tried to sound comforting.

Justin responded in a choked sob that sounded as if he were trying to stifle it. Brian leaned closer to see better in the shrouded dark of the room and checked his body for his injuries.

"I think your right arm is broken, that's why you can't feel your fingers," he diagnosed, taking in the sickening bend of the arm.

Justin's face twisted in an expression of crushed agony.

"...But we won't know anything until we get you to the hospital," Brian continued.

"Might as well saw my fucking arm off. It's worthless now."

"Hey now, you'll be alright. A broken bone is nothing," Brian shot back, hating the sound of surrender in Justin's voice.

"But after prom..." Justin trailed off, and closed his eyes in weary sadness. Alarm surged through Brian.

"What happened at Prom?" he asked, trying to keep the kid awake in case he had hit his head on the concrete.

"Got bashed in the skull for being gay."

Brian pulled back to stare at him, "Someone did that to you, just 'cause you're gay?"

"With a baseball bat. Spent three days in a coma, and almost six months in therapy to regain control over the motor skills in my hand," his answer sounded like he said it a bazillion times. It made Brian feel cold.

"Just for being gay?" he asked again, not quite able to comprehend or believe or something.

Justin blinked out of the sleepy trance of memories and gave Brian a look.

"Come on, are you serious? Straight assholes are so homophobic, they'd do anything to get rid of queers."

Brian's mind flashed to the picture of the near-naked male model he was looking at in that magazine before his father found him. He never forgot that picture. The sheer perfection of that man, his blue eyes and pale, sinewy body, the cigarette resting between his beautiful fingers.

Then the fist that came out of nowhere. The smell of the ochre carpet against his bloody nose, and fleeting glimpses of the boot kicking him in the ribs over and over. Taste of blood in his mouth, the burn of tears in his eyes. His broken, pleading voice, "Dad, stop. Please, please, stop!" Everything gold, brown, and crimson. And hurting, hurting, hurting. Over and over and over.

Of course he couldn't forget that either.

Justin's pain-filled sigh reminded him that there were more important things at hand than reliving the day something inside of him died. Justin was struggling to stand up, and Brian didn't think about it; he just wrapped his arms around Justin's waist and pulled him up against him.

Christ, his body was small and sweet.

"Well, you survived," he responded to Justin's anger, helping him over to a bench and sitting both of them down. One of his arms stayed around Justin, and Justin didn't seem to want it gone, "Have to be a brave, strong little fucker to get through shit like that."

Justin's dim eyes met his at the words of soft admiration.

"Didn't feel brave or strong at the time."

"You never do. Doesn't change the fact that you are, though," Brian said as he bent his head and fiddled with his cell phone, ready to call a doctor or Cynthia to get a doctor or someone else in the outside world to talk him out of what he was feeling at this moment. He felt like he was ready to bolt and didn't want to ever be anywhere else, at the same time.

"Thank-you," Justin whispered in reply.

Brian's hand slowly moved to the top of Justin's head, going for "fatherly", but ending up just feeling warm and right at the contact. Equal and close. Entire walls shifting and crumbling inside at the feel of the other man's skull against his hand.

"I...I wouldn't say it if it wasn't true," Brian shrugged, hand sliding to Justin's shoulder.

"I know, that's why I..." he looked away, "Never mind."

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Brian's hand was on Justin's shoulder, fingertips under his hair and against the skin of his neck, until the ambulance arrived. Brian had called Cynthia about getting his stuff ready for him to leave for the day; he was planning on taking Justin to the hospital himself. Cynthia talked him into just calling an ambulance and Justin couldn't help but feel kind of disappointed at the strange expression of relief and gratefulness on Brian's face when she offered to call 9-1-1.

The paramedics arrived quickly whisked Justin away, and he could faintly hear them asking Brian questions about the accident that they could have just as easily asked him. Why did they always think that the injured person was incapable of answering intelligently and informatively? It was like the weeks that he was in the hospital after the bashing, and all the doctors and even his physical therapists only communicated with his mother. He was only an invalid for three days when he was in a coma, for christ's sake.

Justin hated thinking about that time in the hospital. And here he was, on his way back to one, and the memories were never more painful. Their shattered remains, snippets of sound and flashes of images, made razor-sharp cuts in his soul with their jagged, bloody edges. The smell, the feel, the fear, the voices...

"There was blood everywhere..."

"Cody punched a hole through the hospital wall...after he broke four of Chris's ribs, you know..."

"You looked like you were, like, dead...."

"It was kinda gross, everyone was crying and going crazy...."

"They let Daphne ride in the amublance with you and hold your hand..."

Justin would never admit it, but he wanted someone to be in that ambulance with him right now, and hold his hand. He felt claustrophobic, and panicked when someone began to shine a flashlight in his eyes. The siren was too loud, and the people were too warm, and the light was too blaring. The earth was spinning and turning and something inside him was screaming in agony, like being drunk and having a hang-over at the same time. It was too hot, and too cold, and too dark, and too early, and he was too sleepy, and too alone, and in too much pain, and it was pounding, piercing, pounding, pounding, pouding, pounding....

He leaned forward, slapped away the hand with the flashlight, and threw-up all over the lap of the nearest paramedic.

Chapter 9 - Apart

News of Justin's accident spread like eager, professional wildfire the next day. Everyone wanted to know what happened to the "adorable blond artist intern" who fell off the ladder and put the lights out in the art department for an entire afternoon. Diego claimed that he spent the afternoon that his department was out of commission in the hospital with Justin, but he had actually taken a couple of guys to a Steelers game. Everyone talked about how much Diego liked Justin. Everybody told everyone else how much Justin liked working with Diego. No one mentioned Brian.

Brian had always hated gossip. Hated the hissed whispers and the looks that would follow someone when they were the subject of the petty little words being traded over cubicle walls and around water coolers. It was like high school, and sometimes Brian was sure that people never really grew up. Like how his father still abused alcohol as if he was a kid who just discovered it, or how Lindsay would giggle the same way she would in college when the star quarterback remembered her name.

Or how Brian felt when Cynthia brought in a phone message slip, the little 'Urgent' box checked, from Craig Taylor.

Dad was taking away his favorite toy. His favorite.... person.

When the fuck did that happen? When did life without this fucking kid feel like emptiness?

The blue ink of Craig's name blurred together and stung his gut.

Emptiness was going to be something he was going to have to get used to again.

And that thought almost made Brian physically sick.

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Two weeks later.

Justin thought that maybe if he stood in one place long enough, that if he was at the same exact position when Cody got home from work that he was when Cody had left, maybe they'd have Justin committed to some mental institution for being catatonic. Or depressed. Or just fucking nuts.

But as much as Justin wanted it to happen, it never would. Craig Taylor was already keeping Justin's homosexuality hush-hush, no way would he want people finding out that his faggot son was also insane.

That was how he felt right now though.

Like he was as stuck as his arm was in the fucking splint.

He missed Brian.

His mind kept replaying the moments that Justin remembered seeing real concern in Brian's eyes. Replaying and remolding and reminding, just to experience that beautiful shock of the realization that Justin had even seen Brian with his fucking family and never ONCE seen that same concern. It was only for him.

After the beautiful shock came the piercing pain of missing Brian, which lead to the silent, unmoving desire to be as Nothing as his life seemed to be now.

How could everything pivot on a man who got bribed by Justin's father to give him the job? One straight asshole of a boss who was cruel and arrogant to everyone around him? One mind-numbingly gorgeous man with tasseled chestnut hair and sharp eyes with whom Justin had amazing chemistry and an even more brilliant connection?

The absence of Brian almost hurt as much as his father's indifference, and Cody's insensitivity did.

And that was a lot.

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Ch. 10 - Snowfall

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Brian had been watching him for nearly fifteen minutes now. His small, bundled up body sitting like a splash of black ink on the perfect whiteness of the snowy grey day. He had his mitten-covered hands turned up on his lap, and every now and then he'd bring them to his face and study them.

The campus was nearly empty, only a couple of students jogging through the medium snowfall to get to another warm brick building for class. Justin stayed put though, and Brian finally decided to approach him.

"So is this what you do with unemployment? Sitting around, staring at your mittens and waiting for the hypothermia to set in?"

Justin looked up at him, startled.

"I-" he started, then swallowed and began again, "I'm not staring at my mittens, I'm looking at the shape of the snowflakes that land on them," he explained, eyes now shining with an hidden smile that Brian almost desperately wanted to see, "What are you doing here?"

"Came to see you. Wanted to see how your arm is doing," Brian shrugged.

"Oh, so you do care," Justin snarked, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Care is such a strong word..." he drawled as he bounced lightly on his heels in the snow, "Let's just use 'curious'."

"The arm is good. Almost healed. I just have to wear a splint now."

"How about drawing and painting and stuff?"

Justin looked taken-back, and glanced down at his mittens briefly before responding, "You know, in the last four weeks, you are the first person to ask me that."

Brian nodded with tight lips and squinting into the clouds, "So what's the answer?"

"I have some trouble controlling, you know, keeping lines tight, but only because it hurts a bit. And the splint restricts my wrist. Doctor says it should be fine though."

"Good to know."

They both were silent for a couple of seconds, enough that they could only hear a distant church bell somewhere in the city, everything muffled by the snowfall. Justin's cheeks and nose were so red, and he seemed to know it, because he brought up his hands and cupped them over his nose and mouth, breathing hot puffs into the wool. Brian sat down next to him on the freezing bench and looked at him for a moment, weighing his words before finally speaking them.

"Listen, Taylor, your father called me after the accident and thanked me for giving you a chance. And, of course, to tell me that you wouldn't be coming back to work-"

"Yeah, he told me I shouldn't be a "burden"," Justin made the quotation marks in the air with clumsy mittens.

"The truth is, you aren't. You're damn good at advertising. I'd like you to come back."

"Are you serious?"

"Well," Brian sighed, leaning back on the bench and extending both arms over the back of it, "You're easier to work with than that joke Diego."

Justin laughed, breathy and frosty and Brian felt his chest shake and collapse with the subconscious desire to taste it.

"So...will you?" he said when he could manage it.

"You want me there?" It wasn't really a question. And it was because this fucking smart ass of a kid knew the fucking answer. And why the hell did that make Brian feel so... alive inside?

Brian nodded once, looked out into the foggy grey distance and spoke into it, "Will you come back?"

"Absolutely."

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Justin wanted to stay there forever, feeling fresh and new, as if he had just been reborn into a recently stretched canvas and a world without color yet. And he wanted to put the color into it.

Brian sat next to him on his left, leather-gloved hands squeaking as he tapped his fingers randomly against the frosty metal of the bench behind Justin to his right. The length of his arm behind Justin's shoulders, just resting there, made him feel more perfect than ever before.

He leaned back a little more, surprised and content when Brian's arm didn't tense or move.

"I should probably go to class soon," he sighed, staring up towards the sky, blinking against the snowflakes.

"Me too. I've got a meeting with Gardner-fucking-Vance."

Justin glanced over at him, "The guy who bought Ryder's half, right?"

"That's the one. Fucking asshole. I'm going to hate him, I know it," Brian growled and pulled both of his arms back to his lap. Justin felt the absence of that weight against his shoulders like an addict wanting a fix.

"You hate everyone," he grinned, watching Brian, waiting for the reaction.

Brian's eyes flashed at him, sharp and hot, "I do not."

Justin tilted his head, raised an eyebrow.

"Okay, yeah, I do. Fuck you," he conceded, tugging his glove off and giving Justin the middle-finger.

Laughing, Justin stood up, "I wasn't expecting you to admit defeat so-"

The snow had melted against the concrete a bit, but falling temperatures made it turn to ice. Or so the weatherman and a science teacher would have told him. All Justin knew was that his sneakers slipped against the ground, and he gasped in surprise as he felt himself begin to fall.

Brian jumped up and grabbed him. One arm around his waist, the other under his shoulder, their bodies twining in a muffled bundle of wool and fleece.

"That would be fucking wonderful if you broke your arm again, kid," Brian laughed, still holding onto him. Justin saw his adam's apple bob as he swallowed twice.

"It wouldn't break. The splint would protect it. That's what splints are for," Justin shot back, eyes searching the ground to find a safe place to walk.

"Here, wait, let me help you. It looks slippery pretty much everywhere. And you're so fucking clumsy."

"I am not," Justin practically whined. He slid his uninjured arm around Brian's waist as the two half-slid, half-shuffled towards the snowy grass to get off the icy concrete.

"Yeah, whatever. Let's go find another ladder for you to fall off of," Brian shot back teasingly, keeping his eyes on the ground and his hands on Justin.

It made Justin entirely too gleeful.

Brian slipped the next time, and Justin was glad that he was able to right him before he fell, because they would both go down if that happened. Brian's feet slid forward against his, and Justin couldn't help but laugh at the sight of Brian Kinney losing control of his functions. His mitten-covered hands gripped the forearms of Brian's expensive coat.

"Alright now?" Justin asked, face feeling cold but alive. Brian just stared down at him, his eyes unreadable and intense.

Sometimes, snow in Pennsylvania has an electrical charge that you can taste. It surrounds and surges through everything, and sucks up all the sound and darkness and leaves you with a big grey and white world where everything is possible because of the energy. The shock. The push of something new, yet familiar.

Justin could taste it right now, and he licked his cold, slightly-chapped lips. He glanced down at Brian's, full and red, and knew.

Just knew.

Brian's chin dropped almost imperceptibly, eyes still dark. And that's when Justin nudged himself up on his toes and pressed his mouth against Brian's.

He could blame it on the snow, he could blame it on the situation, he could blame it on his attraction to Brian, but Justin didn't want to. He just want it to BE. Pure and charged and unrehearsed.

UNpredictable.

He didn't know if Brian was going to push him away, or kiss him back and then -

- Brian's tongue slid into his mouth, shockingly hot, and his un-gloved hand combed up into Justin's hair, under his fuzzy hat, against his warm pads of fingers against his scalp. Clinging and shattering.

And Justin sagged against him, heavy and desperate and perfect.

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Chapter 11 - Entropy

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So, here he was.

He had acted like a fucking coward, had torn his mouth away from Justin's and fled from the scene of the crime. And now he was here, in that same office, hours later, on a same kind of night, as if nothing ever changed. The weight of the tumbler full of Jack Daniel's was familiar, so was the subtle feel of a cigarette between his fingers, and his feet propped up on the desk. Familiar, right, good. okay.

But everything was different. The bottom had dropped out of his life. Replaying that kiss, over and over. Eager lips against his open mouth, masculine groan of approval, the clinging pressure of Justin against him.

"Uh, sir? This is a no-smoking building." The late-night janitor interrupted this thoughts, sticking his head in the partially open door.

"Fuck off," Brian grumbled. Another sip, another drag, a long sigh.

The janitor swallowed and nodded, shifting back and forth on his feet.

"Right. Well, I just wanted to let you know before I left- I just saw that kid from the art room out front smoking, and he asked if you were up here, so you might have a visitor soon. Er, heads up, and all of that...I guess," he stuttered through his words.

Brian felt a surge of hopefearhateanxietyjoylustpanic, and abruptly fumbled to get his stuff together.

"Now, see, if you wanted me to stop smoking in the building, all you had to do was tell me that. I'm fucking out of here."

"Er- yes, sir, I'll just-"

"You're not going anywhere."

Brian knew that voice. It came from behind the janitor's shoulder, that cold, low tone of a man who had something to say. Justin stood in the hallway, shoulders squared and eyes serious. The beautiful, polite kid who had entered that way months ago had disappeared.

"Taylor, if you know what's good for you, you will turn the fuck around and get lost. I don't want to see you around here again." Did he sound as nervous as he felt?

"Bill, you can go," Justin said to the janitor, never taking his eyes off Brian as he moved into the office, "Brian and I will turn off the lights on this floor before we leave."

The balls of this fucking kid, holy fuck.

"Um, okay then Mr. Taylor. You fella's have a good night."

Bill closed the door behind him, leaving nothing but tense silence and two blue eyes snapping with an attitude Brian was slightly afraid to be on the receiving end of.

"I never took you for a coward."

Brian snorted, "And I never took you for a fucking moron. I told you to get lost."

"Yeah, well, I've never been good at following other people's orders," said Justin evenly, coming around and standing in front of Brian's desk; arms crossed.

"That's funny, you seemed to follow your father's just fine. 'Go work at Ryder Advertising, son.' 'You may no longer work at Ryder Advertising, son.'," Brian shot back.

"Fuck you, I'm back, aren't I? You asked me to come back."

Christ. Those words made him feel wistful for the time when everything about Justin was good and amusing and impressive. When he was all sunshine and clever words and creativity. And now that Justin was older and wiser and angrier, Brian felt helpless and drowning. This Justin frightened him, but deep down in his gut, he still felt this undeniable attraction to him, and maybe that meant it was more than just...something. Maybe it was everything. Maybe it was an advertisement in his mother's magazine on a humid summer day, so long ago. Maybe it was that feeling of absolute control and confidence that he got when he was pitching an idea to a multi-million dollar company.

Or it could be a mind-blowing, devastating mistake.

Think of his fiance. Think of his unborn baby. Think of his parents. Think of his career.

"And now I'm asking you to leave," he said finally.

Justin wasn't going to let it go. Brian watched as the younger man's body practically coiled into a predator, complete with sharp teeth. He tensed, waiting for the attack.

"Why? Because I kissed you and you liked it?"

There it was.

"Shut your fucking mouth."

"You like it open, as I recall. I mean, you shoved your tongue into it," Justin drawled casually, tilting his head.

"Jesus Christ! Shut the fuck up!" Brian felt desperate, edgy. He paced over to the window between his office and the hallway, and double checked out the blinds to make sure no one was in the hallway,"Nothing happened, you little shit. And you won't bring it up again."

"Nothing happened? Denial doesn't suit you, Mr. Kinney," Justin sighed, "It happened. I'm here to discuss it. You ran away from me. I mean, I understand, it freaks you the fuck out, but come on, give me something here..."

"I can't believe I'm having this fucking conversation, with --"

"With what? A boy? A man, Brian?" Justin practically mocked, and Brian suppressed his flinch.

"--With you. It sounds like a goddamn teen movie script. I've never had a conversation like this with anyone. Not even Lindsay," he rubbed the back of his neck, looked at Justin and displayed all the helpless rage he felt inside at that moment, "God... fuck you, Justin. Get the hell out of here."

"You... you said my name."

His tone changed, like the sudden passing of a storm. His head was bent, eyes that were hard, were now shockingly warm. It took Brian's breath away. Justin stepped towards him, hand reaching out towards him, beseeching, reaching, touching.

Brian forced the words out. "So fucking what? What are you still doing here?"

His voice broke like a kid going through puberty. Justin took another step forward. His left foot was between Brian's, and Brian was achingly aware of it.

"I need to do this," Justin whispered. And then their mouths were pressed together again, and oh god was it fucking amazing.

Justin bit his lips and tangled his tongue, and skimmed along his gums and sucked Brian's essence out of his throat as if he wanted Brian to bleed and laugh and plead and melt all at one time.

And Brian felt ready to.

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He couldn't get close enough, deep enough, intimate enough.

Neither of them could.

The way Brian tasted, the way he was so eager to taste, but so hesitant. It was fucking hot. Brian's hand clutched Justin's sweater at the small of his back, lifting it ever so slightly until finally his fingers brushed the skin above his waistband. Brian's beautiful, masculine, masterpiece fingers.

"God," Justin gasped into Brian's mouth, their breath and spit merging, hot and wet and rushed.

"Yeah," Brian rasped in agreement, hand tentatively flattening on the small of Justin's back before smoothing up the skin.

"Are you going to deny this?"

Brian pulled away and pressed the side of his face to Justin's, moving slightly to create friction with their stubble. "Think I'll be able to?"

"Please don't." Justin wasn't above begging. He put his hands on Brian's shoulders and gripped the muscle, "Please."

"This is... I mean, I don't know..." Brian pressed his forehead to Justin's temple, "Justin, I don't know what to do here."

"It's all or fucking nothing, Brian. And you've already taken the first step. Just look what you've started," he ground his erection into Brian's thigh, gasping against his neck.

"I did that, huh?" Brian smiled, shy and unsure, maybe a little pleased with himself, and Justin's heart expanded and imploded at the same time.

He bit his lip and nodded. "Now, are you going to take care of it and fuck me already?"

Chapter 12 - Straight

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The wild, searing look in Justin's eyes made Brian breathless and overwhelmed with aching need.

Justin grabbed Brian's hand and placed it on his clothed ass, closing his fingers around Brian's, forcing him to feel the flesh. Lips against Brian's chin, speaking into the skin as if he could imbed the words permanently.

"You want this."

Oh god, was it possible to want it more? Brian closed his eyes, wondered if Justin would be able to catch him if he fell. When he fell.

"I want it," he answered.

"You want me?" Justin's voice took on a hesitant edge. As if he were finally afraid of Brian, and finally afraid of this unexpected, intoxicating turn of events. Brian latched onto the uncertainty like it was a lifesaver. He wasn't the only one who was desperately lost.

And Justin wasn't the only one who could be in control of the situation.

Brian responded, raspy and deep and reassuring, "Fuck, I've wanted you a lot longer than I will ever fucking admit to you, or myself."

Justin smiled, relieved, and leaned against Brian's body, his fingers beginning to pluck restlessly at the buttons of Brian's expensive oxford. "May I please undress you?"

"You're asking for permission now? You didn't ask before you kissed me," Brian raised an eyebrow at him, amazed and pleased that he could be joking around in a moment like this. The kind of moment that tips the scales and throws a life off balance.

"Now I'm being careful. I don't want..." Justin trailed off, cheeks flushing.

"Hey..." he put his finger under Justin's chin, forcing him to look into Brian's eyes, "Don't want what?"

Lashes fluttered over blue eyes that glanced away.

"Forget i-"

Brian cut him off with his mouth. Aggressive pushing of his tongue against Justin's, rewarded by a low groan that vibrated the boy's body. The light in the office, streetlights reflecting off of mounting snow, was faint and bare, like the frayed edges of leveled reasoning. Disappearing logic, and dissipating denial... leaving nothing but desire in it's place.

The weight of Justin's splinted arm fell across the swell of Brian's ass, and he stepped forward, walking Justin back towards the sofa in his office. Puffs of breathy laughter washed over his face as Justin fell onto the cushions. His finger hooked in Brian's belt-loop insured Brian to follow.

"Careful, careful..."

"Yeah, I'm so clumsy, right?" Justin teased, nudging his nose under Brian's earlobe, and running his hand up the expanse of bare back, "I'll show you how clumsy I can be..."

A hand slid into Brian's expensive slacks and cupped his groin.

Fucking hell. For a small kid, his hands were large and strong and masculine and oh my god, everything fit so nicely in his palm.

He gasped into Justin's ear. Justin smiled. Brian kissed him again.

"If you - if you break your arm again, you could sue the agency for Vance's half," Brian managed to say seconds, moments, hours of kissing later.

"Mmmm, and then give it to you?" Justin's voice was like a hum, all sweet and corporeal, and he twisted his hips so Brian's thigh could sink down between his.

"Your father might encourage you to take it, you're his little business man after all."

Justin's blissful expression eroded to a serious one, and Brian felt the panicked little boy inside him start to swell up in his soul with a scream of terrified outrage and the desire to flee again.

"My father wishes I would be a business man, but whenever I try he treats me like shit. He sent me to work for you so you could, undoubtedly, teach me things, while kicking me around and making me straight," Justin said, voice nearly as frightening as it was when he entered the office moments earlier. His eyes were dark, snapping and defeated at the same time, and just completely wrong.

Brian shifted and sat up. Let time spin away. The clock ticked, Justin breathed - waited carefully, the heat clicked off, the snow kept falling outside the window, and Brian combed his fingers though his hair helplessly.

"Brian..."

"Straight," he sighed and shook his head.

Justin lay against the arm rest of the sofa, his shirt open and Brian vaguely wondered when it was that he, or Justin, unbuttoned it. He reached out and placed his hand on the small, smooth, bare chest... the tan roughness of his skin contrasting with the pale porcelain of Justin's. Brian spoke again, words grated and unreal in the silence.

"I'm not, am I?"

Justin's eyes were luminous now, and he covered Brian's hand with his.

"I don't know," he whispered, slow and without answers. Justin wasn't going to solve his problems, or fix his life.

Justin was just going to be.

The same good and amusing and impressive Justin he was the second he walked in that office door the first time. All sunshine and clever words and creativity. Now warm, and wet, and hard, and responsive.

Brian slid his hand up the chest, around the neck, and pulled Justin's head against his.

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Two hours and no sex later, Brian was sleeping against him. The perfection of that man's face now smooshed and drooling in the crook of Justin's neck, and Justin felt the need to practically weep with how fucking brilliant it felt.

Brian was so much bigger than him, the heavy weight of his body pushing Justin into the cushions of the expensive couch. He felt kind of giddy, and protective, and childish, and sexy, and wanton, and honorable, and debauched, and regal - all at one time.

It felt... pure.

Justin cradled Brian's hips between his legs, their naked torsos rising and falling with shared breaths. He pressed his nose into Brian's touselled brown hair, smelling his shampoo and sweat. God, what was it about this man?

A muffled, wet moan came from the lips on Justin's neck, and Brian's eyelashes fluttered against his skin.

"'Morning," Justin chuckled, grinding his hips up against Brian's. He smirked when Brian ground back.

"Mmmmph, gnreg," Brian mumbled, and Justin watched as his back muscles flexed as he raised himself up on his elbows to look down at Justin.

"I'm sorry, what the fuck did you just say?"

Brian looked pathetically confused, "'Don't know. Don't remember."

His hair was sticking up all over. Puppy Brian was back full-force. My god, Brian would kill him if he knew Justin was thinking that.

"You look so hot."

"When did I fall asleep?" Brian asked, lowering his head to Justin's chest and closing his eyes again.

"'Bout an hour or so ago."

Brian grabbed one of Justin's hands and moved it so that it was on his head, fingers in Brian's hair. He huffed with contentment when Justin began combing through it. Justin smirked and felt the tell-tale warming in his groin.

"You been awake this whole time?"

Justin nodded. "Couldn't sleep. Didn't want to."

"We should, um.. probably be getting to our respective homes. It's gotta be almost four a.m.," he stifled a yawn, and placed a hand on Justin's hip, "Conrad will be wondering where you are."

"Cody," Justin corrected, arching an eyebrow at Brian.

"Yeah, whateverthefuck."

"Kiss me."

"No, you kiss me," Brian practically pouted.

Justin laughed, "Do you always act like this much of a child when you just wake up?"

"I'm just acting like you always act, kid," Brian shot back, and Justin was surprised he didn't add a "neener neener neener" to the end.

"Come on. Kiss me, Brian."

"Mmm, no."

"Fuck you."

"Do you want to?"

Justin raised his head and peered into Brian's eyes, reflecting the glow of the streetlights and snow... and his vulnerable desire.

"I want you to fuck me," Justin whispered, hand on Brian's cheek, "I just don't want you to take off afterwards. I don't know if you're..."

"Fuck you, Justin, I'm ready."

Justin sat up and pushed Brian off of him.

"Are you? Are you really? You've lived as a fucking straight man all your life and five hours ago was the first time you've ever been kissed by a guy, and now you're ready to fuck him? Just like that?"

Brian's head dropped and his fingers reached out to run idly along the pattern in the sofa's fabric.

"I never said that was my first kiss with a guy."

Justin hoped he didn't look as astonished as he felt. And he really hoped he didn't look as jealous as he was.

"What?"

Real articulate.

Brian paused, swallowed, stood. He lit a cigarette and stood at the window, long lean naked back, and name-brand pants low on his hips. Justin hurt with how much he wanted him.

"I used to make out with this kid in junior high. Matthew. He was this weird goth kid, you know the kind, all small with sharp edges?"

Justin faintly smiled at the description, goddamn he was beautiful. His words...

"My dad saw us. Freaked Matthew the fuck out, and I got.... well, forget it. Anyway, the school district re-zoned and Matthew ended up going to a different high school, so nothing happened. But yeah. First kiss: Matthew."

"Brian, did your dad...?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

Justin stood up and crossed the office's cold floor to slide under Brian's smoking arm and press hot kisses under his jaw.

"I want you inside of me."

"Yeah?"

"Fuck, yeah."

"Good," Brian breathed against Justin's lips, and once again they made their way to the couch.

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Chapter 13 - Sweat

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He didn't expect it to be as hot as it was.

He didn't expect Justin's face to look like that.

He didn't expect that he'd have to ask Justin to lie still for a moment so he didn't erupt before they even got started.

He didn't expect to feel like a virgin, and he didn't expect that it'd be so good even though he was. Technically.

Justin clenched and unclenched with perfect timing as Brian thrust and he couldn't help but wonder why everyone just didn't have anal sex all the time? It'd sure help with the overpopulation problem.

He didn't stay on that thought trail long, it reminded him of children, which reminded him of pregnancy, which reminded him of Lindsay. And he would NOT think of Lindsay when there was this beautiful shaggyblondprettymasculinepalestrongsmall boy riding his dick with his bristled chin tilted back and his soft lips open like a gasped prayer.

"Justin..." Brian sighed, closing his eyes and leaning his forehead on Justin's shoulder, sticky with sweat. Justin sat on his lap, legs wrapped around Brian's waist, all coarse hair and strong gripping.

Blue eyes opened as Justin's head nodded forward again. Level, calculating, knowing blue eyes. He was staring Brian down. Intimidating, challenging, daring... gaze unwavering as his hips jerked in a sinful way. Riding riding riding...

Christ. Could Brian's dick get any harder?

"Mmmnguh," Justin wheezed/moaned/gasped, rolling his head forward and mouthing the skin under Brian's ear... all wet lips and fluttering tongue.

Brian wasn't going to last much longer.

He told Justin so.

The kid had the audacity to chuckle through heavy breaths, but he pressed a reassuring kiss to Brian's eyebrow.

"Me neither."

"Fuck, you are so fucking hot," Brian couldn't help but admit, thumbing a perfect, flat pinkbrown nipple.

Justin whispered something indecipherable and bit - fucking bit - the tendon in Brian's neck as he ground his cock against Brian's stomach.

That. was hot.

With a fistful of damp blond hair in one hand, and clutching the small of Justin's back with the other, Brian pushed impossibly further into the tight, slippery, constricting hole and came. Complete with a strangled grunt, involuntary writhing, and those so-called fictional shooting stars and fireworks.

Justin used his splinted arm to pull Brian's chest completely flush with his own, and his good hand to jerk himself off as he desperately rode out Brian's remaining hard-on. Faster faster moremoremore... and he was gone.

And it was amazing.

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They had practically melted onto the floor, subconsciously craving the vast space to lay sprawled and tangled at the same time.

"It stopped snowing," Justin said, breathing hard, and feeling stupid for commenting on the weather after he just had one of the best orgasms in weeks.

"I like how your cum looks on my chest," Brian replied, all sudden and off-the-lame-weather-topic. His eyes studied his chest and his fingers pointed vaguely to the beads of pearly cum splattered on his sweaty skin.

"I like how my ass looks on your cock."

Brian huffed/snorted and rolled over, head on Justin's chest, and Justin idly noted that was the third time he'd done that tonight.

"I like how your mouth looks on mine."

"You really like how my cum looks on your chest?" Justin squinted his entire face.

"Mmhm."

"Freak."

Brian ignored him again, and changed the subject. Must be a post-coital personality trait.

"Can we do that again?"

"When?"

"Tonight. Tomorrow. Next week," Brian's voice was like a glowing hum, and a solid whisper. His eyes were practically fucking sparkling and Justin began to think that maybe post-coital Brian was his new favorite thing in the universe.

"All three?" Justin said, smiling when Brian brushed fragmented kisses along his ribcage.

"Good idea, kid."

Justin missed his name said in Brian's voice.

"I'm full of good ideas," he sighed, fingers couldn't help but tangle in Brian's wet hair.

"Justin."

There it was. That's what he wanted.

"Yeah?"

Brian didn't say anything, and that was okay. It was somehow appropriate.

They laid there for minutes, maybe an hour, just touching and kissing and basking, when finally the snowy nighttime world became grey with a rising sun, somewhere behind the clouds. Brian got up and gathered Justin's clothes, dressing him slowly and concisely, like an artist working on a masterpiece.

And Justin was sure no one would ever believe, (if he ever told them) that Brian Kinney led him by his hand down to the car, drove him home, and kissed the back of that same hand before Justin climbed out.

Chapter 14 - - Office

Daylight has the power to change anything. Opinions, decisions, attitudes. Crushes. It has the power to turn them from passionate affairs swathed in night, to pathetic mistakes in glaring, unmistakable day. To make you feel like a fool for acting so irrationally. To make you appear flippant and dishonest for changing your mind, when you were so set on it during the night, when the world was dark and stifled and empty.

Or to reaffirm that yes, that was the right decision.

Yes.

Yes, Brian did have a crush.

He barely slept after he dropped Justin off. Lindsay had fallen asleep on the couch, a Turner Classic Movie flickering on Brian's liquid TV, and Brian had left her there. He had wanted to be in his bed without the warm softness of his beautiful blonde fiancee, so that he could replay the fervent heat of another beautiful blond.

There was... regret inside, remorse even. Brian did feel the tug of betrayal in his soul, that Lindsay didn't deserve the now blossoming immature sin he was succumbing to. The dreaded immature sin of a crush. No matter what, he knew he'd love Lindsay, she was his best friend.

And Justin was...

Justin.

Brian tilted back in his leather chair, and regarded the sofa across his office. The sofa that he had fallen asleep on Justin's chest on. The sofa he had fucked Justin on. The sofa on which he decided it was time for a change. It was time to let the panic go to hell, and it was time to be Brian fucking Kinney in every aspect of his life.

He glanced up at the clock.

Nine-oh-one, and Justin had yet to stick his head in the door and flash Brian his grin.

Jesus christ, what was taking him so long? Was he having second thoughts? Justin did have a boyfriend, after all. And not to mention how totally and completely against office policy their little affair was.

Was it an affair?

Fuck, Brian hated having questions. He hated doubt. He didn't ever want to feel like this, and now here he was playing with his shirt cuff, and unable to work on any of his campaigns until -

His office door opened.

Justin slipped in, and shut it firmly behind him, his fingers fondling the lock as he turned it. Brian envied that lock.

"Hey," Justin said, simple, sexy, and just a little bit tentatively. As if he were checking the waters of Brian's morning-after attitude.

"You little shit," Justin's eyebrows went up at Brian's tone, "I could barely sleep last night because I got hard. Again. Thinking about that fuck."

That smile was going to kill Brian dead.

"I know right? I had to jerk off in the shower when I got home."

Justin sauntered along the edge of the room, turning the wands to close the venetian blinds and looking at Brian like he was going to eat him up.

"Oh yeah," Brian smirked, "Thinking of me?"

"Who else?" Justin turned to him as soon as the world was closed off and pushed away from the simmering energy that was buzzing between them in Brian's office.

Brian shrugged, and unfolded his long body from the chair, perching nonchalantly on the edge of his desk. Justin came to stand between his thighs, assured and confident and right. Brian decided he wanted Justin to be between his legs all the time.

"So, came to talk to me about the campaign?" Brian asked him, tugging the corner of Justin's pin-stripe collar.

Justin bit his lip and shrugged, nimble fingers sliding up Brian's tie and wrapping it around his hand.

"Actually, I'm going to blow you. Right here, right now."

"That will do wonders for your father's business," Brian teased, feeling himself grow hard.

"Yeah, people will love it," Justin laughed and licked his lips. Brian zeroed in on the action, "but I'll love it the most."

"I've never been blown by a guy before." How profound, Kinney. Honestly.

"Well, lucky for you, I am a fellatio-fucking-master."

"Get to it, then."

Justin had already unbuttoned and zipped his slacks, rubbing Brian's achingly hard cock through the black fabric of his boxer-briefs with his palm, and Brian didn't know what else to do than to tangle one hand in Justin's hair, and lean back as far as he dare so he didn't lose sight. He wanted to watch that blond boy head bob up and down on his dick.

After tugging down his pants and underwear, Justin went to work. And it was more than just bobbing. It was nipping, and sucking, and licking, and wet hot suction kisses. It was vibrating moans and a tilting head and eager lips. Justin's tongue fluttered up the rigid underside and he breathed heavy through his nose as if he were trying to nestle his face right into Brian's groin and stay there.

Unfuckingbelievable.

Brian threw his head back and let out a long, shuddering groan when Justin began deep throating him, palming his balls and gripping his thigh with his hands. Yeah, Brian definitely wanted to have Justin between his legs all the time. He had never, NEVER had a blow job like this one.

Maybe it wasn't stupid to say he had never been blown by a guy before. Maybe he should have said he'd never been blown before.

Then Justin hummed, nose in Brian's pubic hair and suckled on the base of his cock while his throat constricted around the rest of it, and Brian shot so hard, his ass lifted off the edge of the desk. And he was vaguely aware of two arms coming around his back and holding him up so he wouldn't lay back and mess up the contents on his desk, but his body was buzzing too loudly, and his heart was pounding, and everything was spotted as if he just stared into headlights from opposing traffic.

"Fuck," was all he could gasp, and Justin pressed his warm little face into Brian's neck and smiled.

Then someone knocked on the door, and Brian could hear Vance's deep accent talk with Cynthia on the other side.

"Fuck! That's Vance, isn't it? Your new boss!?" Justin exclaimed, cheeks flushed and reaching to pull up Brian's pants.

Brian laughed and grabbed Justin's fluttering hands, "Whoa, whoa, easy. I'll do my pants, you get the file off my desk and spread it out on the coffee table. We'll look like we were working."

Justin nodded furiously, and as he fumbled with the files, licked the remaining come off of his lips. Brian had to look away for fear of starting something when his fucking boss was right outside.

Once the room was presentable, and Vance had already called an impatient "Kinney!" through the door, Brian took a deep breath and looked over at Justin.

"Ready?"

Justin nodded and pretended to look studious.

Brian couldn't help but reach over and grab his neck, leaving a quick, hard kiss on Justin's moist lips, whispering against them, "Thanks for the blow job. It was incredible." before opening the door.

Vance's appearance was short, he nodded his head tersely at Brian's introduction of Justin Taylor.

Justin just seemed to blink, trying to keep up with the conversation, and Brian found himself barely paying attention to what Vance said when lashes over pale blue eyes was so much more interesting. And damned if the little shit didn't know it too, because a slight curve of his lips and erotic tilt of his head, and Brian was ready to push Vance out so he could fuck the kid again.

"Kinney, remember what I said: prove to me you're worth it. This is my company now."

Okay, maybe Brian would push him out for that.

But it ended up he didn't have to, because Vance left right after that parting shot, and Cynthia stepped in to tell Justin that the art department had put his fresh prints in the empty conference room.

The blue eyes flashed invitingly in his direction, and Brian decided it was in his best interest to see those prints NOW.

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"What a fucking asshole...'prove to me your worth it'? Please."

Justin was ranting. Justin was pissed off. He slammed his papers down on the table and angrily pulled out one of the conference table chairs.

"Down, boy," Brian drawled as he gracefully sat at the head of the table, peering over the mock-ups that laid on the surface.

"Seriously, Brian, why aren't you more upset?" Justin asked, unable to believe that Brian Kinney, of all people, wasn't freaking the fuck out over his fucking boss's patronizing comment.

"Because I know I'm worth it," Brian said with a shrug. A stupid, fucking, nonchalant shrug.

"Yeah, so he shouldn't treat you like THAT!" Justin pointed angrily in the direction of Vance's office.

"Justin."

Justin looked up, surprised to see Brian standing and coming over to sit on the chair next to him.

"Listen, I'm better than that guy. I'll let him strut his shit right now, because in a couple of weeks, he's going to be begging me to keep making him look good. It's how this shit goes down. It's business. I bide my time."

Justin sighed, and rolled his eyes, his voice dropping to match Brian's, "I just feel like... you shouldn't have to bide your time. YOU should strut YOUR shit NOW."

Brian chuckled, and Justin tried not to hate him for it.

"I'm fucking serious, Brian! Don't laugh."

"It just doesn't work like that though, Taylor."

Justin grabbed Brian by the tie again and yanked him so their lips were together.

"It should," he whispered harshly, and Brian opened his mouth so Justin's tongue could slip in.

"Why?" Brian grumbled around Justin's lips.

"Because you should have your own agency. Rule the fucking world," Justin said between nips and tasting Brian's gums and the soft skin just inside his lips.

Brian sucked at Justin's mouth, and then swallowed and Justin felt his groin tighten. And suddenly Brian's hand was on it.

"You should too. World's best artist."

Justin crawled onto Brian's lap for the second time in 24 hours.

"You know just what to say to get a boy's engine revving, Mr. Kinney," he mumbledlaughed, grinding his hard-on into Brian's stomach.

"Pure honesty does the trick," Brian replied, one hand on Justin's ass, the other eternally in his hair.

Justin pulled back and looked seriously into Brian's hazel eyes, "That's why I said what I did."

Brian just pressed his lips against Justin's throat and ground against him harder.

They never finished looking over the new prints.

Chapter 15 - Surrender

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Justin's work was interrupted a few days later by an urgent phone call.

A few days of innuendo, and flirting, and closed blinds, and late nights of fast, eager fucks. It was a whirlwind of an affair, and Brian's mouth watered ever time he reminisced how it felt to touch Justin, taste him, hear, smell, fuckkissbreathetalk with him.

The phone call had sent Justin into his own sort of whirlwind though. His face had gotten frustrated and tight as he packed up his stuff and mumbled a goodbye to Brian before taking off.

Cynthia said Cody had called.

Brian did his best to distract himself from the anxiety that information ignited.

And so that's how he found himself four hours later, laying on his office sofa and smoking and trying to entertain himself with something other than replaying brutally hot sex with his intern, or the feeling of loss when said intern had taken off to tend to his boyfriend.

He was getting fucking sick of this place, but the janitors hadn't arrived yet, and there had been no phone call from Linds asking where he was, so as long as this pack of Marlboros held out, Brian wasn't moving his ass.

Until the phone rang.

"Kinney," he answered, bracing himself for Lindsay's sweet, concerned voice.

Not Lindsay.

"Cody's in jail overnight, wanna come over?"

"What the fuck? Justin?"

"Who else?"

Brian blinked, and Justin must have heard it because he answered, "Cody has... a temper. And it's his fucking temper's fault he's in jail, so when I went to see him at the precinct, I told him I wasn't bailing him out. He said good, he's proud of the fact that he's been put in jail for the cause. Whatever the fuck."

"Your boyfriend's in jail, and you want me to come over to your place on Liberty Avenue."

"Well, yeah," Justin's voice crackled. He was on a cell phone, "I wanna fuck on a bed, Brian."

Brian was uncomfortable. Don't tell anyone.

"I should probably spend the evening with Linds."

"Then you might want to ignore the hot guy who is currently leaning his hot ass against your hot corvette and waiting for you to take him home."

He couldn't help but laugh at that, stretching to stand, and eagerly looking for his coat so he could go meet this... hot guy in the parking garage.

"I'll be down in a minute."

"And we'll go to my place?" Justin's voice sounded like a kids, all hopeful and bright. Brian felt a warm, peaceful sort of smile curve his lips.

"Yeah," he said softly, "we'll go to your place."

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"Tah-dah!" Justin exclaimed, greeting Brian by lifting his newly-freed right arm with flourish, "The doctor called my cell while I was a the lovely county lock-up and said I could remove the splint today."

"Just like that?" Brian asked, unlocking his car so they could both climb in.

"Well, that's the wonders of technology. My physical therapist e-mailed my doctor, who faxed her a form, and then she took me to get x-rays, and sent them by courier to my doctor who called me on my cell to let me know everything was a-okay."

Brian pretended to be amazed, and spoke sarcastically, "Incredible. Just what will they think up next?"

Justin knew he was glad. He grinned a smug, lip-stretching smile, and put his hand on Brian's leg.

"Drive fast, 'kay?"

"No worries, sunshine, we'll get there in less than eleven minutes this time."

And they did.

Seven minutes later, they were making out in the elevator to Justin's apartment, and Justin couldn't remember ever making out in this elevator before. Ever. He wondered why not, when it was so much fun... the weightless feeling in his belly, the tingle of space and machinery under his feet... the tongue in his mouth, and the hard body pushing his against the wall. Maybe he was just waiting for the perfect fucking guy to do it with.

The doors opened with a rattle and 'ding', and Justin stumbled out into the hallway and against his front door, Brian following closely behind. He fumbled for his keys and laughed, all breathy and excited, when Brian's mouth closed around his earlobe. Good god, that felt good.

And that hard cock grinding against his ass was awfully distracting.

The door finally opened and they practically fell through, a tangle of warm limbs and wet mouths.

"What'd you tell Linds?" Justin gasped into Brian's ear, tongue tracing the folds.

"Business trip overnight to Philly," Brian rasped back, tugging at Justin's jeans, "What'd you tell Calvin?"

"That I didn't expect to see him until tomorrow evening, even if he did get bailed," Justin answered, pushing Brian's coat to the floor and kicking off his own shoes, "Bedroom's that way. I bought new sheets. Deep green, 'cause you'll look damn sexy on them."

Brian laughed as he tugged Justin's shirt over his head, "You artists, always thinking with the rainbow."

"Yeah, lucky for you that rainbows are my thing," Justin shot back, yanking Brian's belt out with a seductive snap and tossing it into a random corner of the apartment. Brian's eyes dilated.

"Yeah, lucky me," he growled, putting his hand against Justin's chest and pushing him backwards until they reached the bedroom and the oh-so-special deep green sheets. He shoved Justin onto the bed, "Oh look, you look sexy on deep green, too."

Justin laughed and licked his lips, and Brian took that as the invitation it was and covered Justin's body with his.

Christ. Justin was beginning to think that maybe this affair... it would go on forever. He could barely remember a time when he didn't know what having sex with Brian felt like, and it had only been a couple of days. If he was that far gone, he'd never be able to give Brian up. Ever. This was... unpredictably eternal. Or something.

Lube warmed between Brian's fingers eased the way for his latex-covered cock a few moments later, as if foreplay wasn't necessary. And quite honestly, it wasn't. Their entire work-day was foreplay, and the unexpected interruption that afternoon had only made them hotter for each other as they had to wait hours until they could do this again. See each other again. Share each other's space, body, spit, air.

They didn't come until the tips of both brown and blond hair were dripping with sweat, and the running caused stinging eyes. Justin muscles felt over-rubbed and raw and so warm and full from the constant thrusting motion and stretch that Brian gave him. Lungs tight and lips wet, they fell over the brink, staring at each other in gasping awe.

Each time, it felt like it couldn't get better, it did. Unprecedented sexual chemistry.

Well, not entire unprecedented. Justin knew from the moment they traded their first words that he was gonna fall for this guy.

Justin watched Brian's expression carefully as he came above him, his face dark and radiant, confident and innocent, all at the same time. Fucking brilliant.

It didn't take long until the condom was thrown in the general direction of the trash can, and they were sprawled across the sheets like swimmers on a beach... basking, and warm, and peaceful. Brian asked for a cigarette and a lighter, and Justin waved his hand absently towards the night stand, tucking his head into a pillow to watch Brian secretly.

A flick, a deep breath, and the room became silent.

"Why are you staring at me?" Brian said, minutes or hours later. Justin didn't know.

"Just want to."

"I'm not doing anything."

"So?" Justin asked, defensive and curious.

"So, people only pay attention when I'm being an asshole or pitching an idea to a million-dollar corporation. Not when I'm laying in bed and smoking."

"I think you're gorgeous laying in bed and smoking."

Brian huffed, and looked over at him. Offered Justin the cigarette.

"I'm just trying to figure you out, Brian. That's all," Justin explained, taking a drag as Brian held the burning cigarette and breathing the smoke out towards the ceiling.

"So ask, and I'll tell."

"You say that, but you won't," Justin said, half amused and all honest. He slid his body around and put his head on Brian's stomach.

Brian shrugged, "Yeah, you're right. I just can't, walk around and let everyone know what I'm thinking though. Where's the mystery in that?"

"Oh, I understand. I like you mysterious," Justin teased, reaching behind him to pinch Brian's thigh, "I just... I wonder why you haven't taken more control of everything. Why you deal with the bullshit.... when you're so... Brian."

His eyes darkened and sharpened with seriousness.

"I don't know. Why fuck with a good thing? I make a shit load of money, I got a good life. No problems."

"Hmm," Justin mumbled, pressed his face into the hot skin of Brian's belly before continuing, "Well, just for the record, I believe you can make a lot more money, and make your life even more fucking incredible. I mean, you're already on your way... just look who you're fucking."

Brian laughed and put the cigarette into Justin's mouth to shut him up... but only seconds before he took it back out so he could kiss him.

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Chapter 16 - Why

"Good morning!" Lindsay's voice was full of sunshine and the next door neighbor's wind-chimes as she greeted Brian at his house the next morning, "How was your meeting in Philadelphia last night?"

Eleven o'clock sunlight slanted in the windows and lit everything yellow and innocent, and Lindsay smiled up at him from her place on the sofa.

"Long, hard," Brian responded, grumbling and remembering a masculine body and stubbled morning-kisses, "persistent. How'd your doctor appointment go?"

Lindsay stood up, hand on her back to brace herself and her massive stomach, "It went well. Doc says I should be popping out this kid any day now."

She tilted her head towards him, expecting a kiss or some sort of husbandy-like greeting probably. Brian just smoothed his hand down her hair and walked past her to the kitchen to sift through the mail. She waddled after him.

"Any problems at work?"

Brian closed his eyes briefly at the concern and love that was in that question. She stood, leaning against the counter and regarded him sweetly, carefully.

"Just my new asshole boss," he said with a shrug, tossing junk mail in the trash.

"Well, just hang in there. Respect him and listen to him, and he'll do the same for you."

She turned to put dishes into one of the cabinets when Brian startled her by replying, "No."

"What?" her perfectly shaped eyebrow arched, "No, what?"

"No. I'm not going to let him kick me around like his dog."

"Honey..."

"Lindsay, I'm thinking of starting my own agency."

Her mouth dropped open, and she laughed unbelievably, "Are you... out of your mind?"

" 'the fuck?" Brian exclaimed, standing up, "Can't you just... support me?"

"How do you plan on paying for your own agency?"

Brian winced at the rising tone and the squaking sound of her argument, her soft rounded body framed in the sunlight reflecting off the kitchen counter. All female indignance and outraged housewife.

"I HAVE money, Lindsay. You should know. You're using it to pay for your wedding."

Now that pissed her off.

"YOUR wedding too, Brian. In case you've forgotten."

Brian rubbed the back of his neck and clenched his jaw, "Whatever. All I'm saying is... I can do this. I've got money. I am going to start my own agency. It will be rough at first, but I know - I fucking KNOW - I can do it."

He felt impassioned and free and he felt Justin's support and encouragement deep down inside... clever words and full laughter... Justin saying what no one else would. What Brian hoped Lindsay would.

"Brian, you can't afford to take that slump before you start to make money. If you even DO! We have a child to think about, and the wedding, and then a MARRIAGE, Brian. Why choose this moment to decide to sacrifice? I mean, of all the things to sacrifice FOR, you want to sacrifice for your own career. Instead of your family. We're your future, Brian."

Brian tried not to resent her for that. Tried not to lash out like his old man did whenever his mother spoke up. Felt the noose coming around, tighter and tighter and tighter.

"I am... I am sacrificing for my...family." He could barely say the word. He didn't grow up in one, and now he had to be apart of one? A husband, a father, a responsible adult? Why did the same panic that used to rise up in him whenever Justin grinned at him, now swell inside him?

Lindsay shuffled towards him and took his hands in hers, so soft and small.

"You took on the responsibility of a family when you proposed to me, and fathered this baby. When you asked me to move in. This is reality.... and right now, I can't see the stress of you starting your own business, necessary to our lives. So, I'm asking you," she blinked, eyes full and watery, "I'm pleading with you: put this out of your head until we can put our minds on it together. Once all of this is settled. Please, Brian."

Brian stared at her, felt all his fighting instincts shutting down. He remembered that feeling from his childhood. It was like watching Justin get carted off by that ambulance... sad, wanted to go with him, but knew it was his goddamn duty to stay behind.

"Linds, I want- " to go with him. To stay with him. I think I'm falling for him, Linds.

That's not what he said. And that's not how she took his false-started sentence.

"I know, but its time for you to be the man of the house. Pay attention to me, be ready... this kid's ready to come out!" She smiled and put one of his hands on the hardness of her swollen womb. "Your child."

She was right.

And Justin was wheeled away.

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"I'm here to pick up Cody Bell."

The officer looked up, gave Justin a condescending, judgemental once-over before grunting and nodding in the direction of a lady officer standing in the back. She noticed, and stepped forward - smiling and accepting... if a little pitying.

"Mr. Bell is just getting his things from the guard. He'll be out in a minute or so," she told Justin, "You can sit right here and wait, if you'd like."

But Justin didn't need too, Cody pushed out of the precinct holding-cell doors, and greeted him with a tight hello. Until he noticed that the Homophobic!Officer was looking at them, and then he slung his arm around Justin's shoulders and laid a big, fat, foreplay kiss on his neck. Shooting a glance in the officers direction, Cody ushered them out to the street.

"What the fuck, Cody?" Justin grumbled, shrugging off his boyfriend's arm, "I'm not your little boy toy."

"Oh come on, I was just giving that cop a hard time. He is such an asshole, you wouldn't believe."

"And yet, who was the one who spent the night in jail?" Justin asked sarcastically, walking briskly in the direction of their apartment, five gritty blocks downtown.

"Oh fuck you! I'm proud I was in jail. I got in this fight with this straight guy, you should have seen it, Justin. It was fucking incredible. I tore him apart." Cody trailed after him, arms waving dramatically as he recounted his "brave" exploits of straight-boy-bashing. "He didn't think a fag could punch that hard, but boy, he believed it once he was bleeding on the fucking ground."

Justin stopped for a second to stare back at Cody.

"Is this all you want to do with the rest of your life?"

Cody stopped walking, too.

"What?"

"Is this it? Work at the gym, landscape for overweight fags, and beat up any man who doesn't suck dick?" Justin asked, hands shoved in his pockets and his shaggy blond hair blowing across his face. Looking at Cody and wondering who the hell he had spent the last three years of his life with, Cody's tense, frenzied hatred consuming everything.

"Justin, I'm not going to have this conversation with you on the fucking street,' Cody answered, walking ahead of Justin, footsteps abrupt and angry.

They were silent until they arrived at the apartment.

Justin tore off his coat and went to the fridge, desperate for something to distract him from throttling Cody. God, he wished Brian hadn't smoked all of his cigarettes.

"What the fuck is this, may I ask?" Cody's voice was as cold as the floor he lifted Very Obviously Gucci belt off of.

Justin looked at it, and him, and his hand, and finality settled into his skin.

"A belt?"

"A GUCCI belt. You can't afford something like this. Who. the fuck. took off their belt. in OUR home - and forgot it here?"

Cody threw the belt at him, fast and hard.

Justin caught it and slammed it down on the counter.

"So I fucked someone while you were in jail," he said simply, taking a sip from his bottle of Dasani, crinkling the blue plastic under his fingers, holding back holding on holding in.

Cody shrugged, sharp and sarcastic, "Right, okay, whatever, except WE DON'T FUCK PEOPLE IN OUR HOME!"

"Don't yell at me. Look, I understand, I broke the rules, but for fuck's sake, Cody - things haven't been right between us for a while!"

"So who was he?" his voice was casual and sent chills through Justin's system.

"That's none of your business," Justin said, arching an eyebrow at him.

Cody grinned coldly and fucking sauntered to the bedroom. "Hmmm, new green sheets. Expensive too. Haven't been changed, by the smell of this room."

Fuck. Justin knew he had forgotten something.

"Gucci belt plus expensive green sheets plus all the time you've been working equals....." he held out the last syllabol until Justin rolled his eyes, "You fucked a guy you wanted to impress. Which means you probably let him top you."

Justin looked away and crossed his arms over his chest.

"It's that your so-called boss, isn't it? All these days of working so hard haven't paid off, so you had to seduce the guy and let him fuck your tight little ass to get ahead."

Flashes of Brian's sweat-dripping touselled hair, and the way his lips looked around the filter of Justin's last cigarette. How he kissed Justin when they woke up tangled together, all bristled chins and skin that smelled like each other.

"That's not why I slept with him."

"So why did you?"

Brian's voice, his eyes, his words. His grin, his height, his wit. The way his heartbeat thumped in that slender hollow solidness of flesh and bone and breath.

"Because I care about him."

Cody sneered, and muttered the name "Brian Kinney" in a half-laugh, disbelieving sort of way.

And they didn't talk again.

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Chapter 17 - Finished

Brian knew he was there. He could feel the change in the energy. The feeling like someone was watching him, and he didn't ever want them to tear their eyes away.

"You can come out, Justin," Brian called quietly towards the end of the driveway. He was sitting on the side porch of his- their- Lindsay and his home, crisp winter night surrounding him and making his face feel cold as he smoked on the step. Justin was a black shape at the end of his driveway, hesitant and full of loud thoughts.

Brian could hear Justin thinking.

He approached, blond head bent and eyes shadowed, like the way he sat during the entire fucking family dinner so many weeks ago. Justin's hands were stuffed in his pockets and something about him was screaming in agony.

They had that in common.

"Hey," Justin practically whispered standing in front of the steps and staring.

"Hey."

He suddenly stepped forward, and tugged the hand that was holding the cigarette away from Brian's mouth so he could wedge his face against Brian's, brushing their lips together.

"I've missed you all day."

Brian just nodded, but opened his mouth and kissed Justin for all he was worth. A lot. Savored the taste of his tongue, or the way he'd moan inaudibly into the deep recesses of Brian's throat. Memorized this man he couldn't get his mind off of the moment they had met.

"We shouldn't do this here," Justin's moist whisper broke off the kiss, and Brian nodded again. Justin was right.

He tried not to be too rough when he pushed Justin away. And Justin looked like he tried not to be disappointed. Then he spoke,

"Cody knows."

God, here it comes. The breakdown.

"Knows what?" Brian played dumb, focused on his cigarette and on keeping his eyebrow so perfectly, sardonically arched so that Justin would flee before the end.

"About us," Justin answered, entire face scrunched and searching as he tilted his head. Brian wanted to kiss him again. But now... that wasn't an option. It was over. Over. Over. Over. FINISHED, goddamnit. Spit out the words.

"What us?"

He did it. Let no man ever say that Brian Kinney was not full of bullshit.

Justin took a step back.

"What?"

"It's been fun kid, but I've got too many other things to think about. I can't be focusing on sneaking around to fuck you. Besides, I'm sure you get enough fucking at home," Brian lit his next cigarette off of the previous one. He was going to have to break into the next pack.

"Brian, hold the fucking phone here a minute, will you?" Justin's voice was a cross between outraged and hysterical, and yet he managed to keep his head on straight and strong and fuck, if he wasn't still the most beau- stop.

"I'm sorry, did I catch you by surprise?"

"You could say that," Justin responded, "Okay, so just because Cody knows, doesn't mean we have to be.... I mean, I'm thinking of breaking up with him. I.... Cody and I don't have what you and I have."

Had, Justin. We had it. We don't still have it. Don't ever use the present tense again. Because I don't still -

"I don't believe in love."

Justin tilted his head and crossed his arms over his chest, "I didn't say 'Love', Brian, and I wonder what Lindsay has to say to that."

"I don't believe in love... with you."

"You can't look me in the eye and tell me you feel NOTHING for me."

Brian stood up, looked down at him, right into his blue blue eyes.

"As far as I'm concerned, I'm taking advantage of the hot blond boy ass that works for me. A pre-marital affair to get my rocks off. And now it's over. "

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Justin stared up at him.

Trying to crawl into that mind, into the hours that happened between their sickeningly sweet, emotional morning fuck and 'later', to this moment where Brian was suddenly treating Justin like he treated everyone else:

Like he was nothing.

Nothing but... what were the words that he just used? Right, Justin didn't know why he was pretending not to remember them, when they were bouncing around and echoing so loudly in his head, he didn't think he'd be able to sleep for weeks.

Blond boy ass that works for him.

Justin wanted to say "Fuck you." and storm off, but Brian was...

... the unpredictable, unprecedented, unscripted love of his fucking life, goddamnit.

Yes. Justin fucking admitted it.

"Brian..." he beseeched, needing to fight for this man, "What the fuck happened today? Why are you doing this? Please, I just want to-"

"It's only been five days, Taylor. Christ, get a grip!"

Justin had to give him props for being an amazing actor, Brian looked at him as if he honestly didn't care. Justin knew that couldn't be true. I mean... his father didn't care, Brian always did. He did. He did. He fucking did.

Denial was lovely this time of year.

"It's been a lot longer than that, Brian. You fell for me the moment I walked in your door."

"I'm going to make this very, very clear for you, Mr. Taylor, and then it will never be brought up again, do you understand?" Brian began, leaning down, all intimidation and control, "First of all, it's Mr. Kinney. You will not call me by my first name again. Interns don't have that right. Secondly, there was no falling. It was lust. It was fun. It was a couple of fucks. I have been bored and stressed out lately, you provided relief. That is it. Now, if you'd excuse me, my fiancee is asleep naked in my bed, and I'd rather be in there with her, than standing out here discussing your silly little boy crush on me."

He stood up and walked to the door, only stopping to look back and say, "I suggest you go home and get your sleep. We have to present our final phase of the Tayson campaign to our boss, Mr. Vance. And then, you can finally get the fuck out of his business, and my life."

The door slammed shut, and Justin curled his hands into tight fists and spent the rest of the night walking in a night that felt as cold as his soul.

Chapter 18 - Arrival

The next three days happened precisely as Brian wanted and needed them to. Brian avoided Justin, Justin avoided Brian, and whenever their eyes would meet, something would slice and punch inside of Brian's gut and he'd look away. But no words were traded, no longing glances, and Justin didn't come barging in his office and demand they talk.

Justin didn't do anything. His entire being was shut down, and off-limits.

Brian tried to tell himself he was glad.

The Tayson, Incorporated final review went over well, and Vance was pleasantly surprised with "the kid's work". Justin accepted his compliments with grace and courtesy, and so fucking knowingly that the confidence made Brian have to excuse himself to the bathroom momentarily to get himself under control. He had always lov-- respected Justin's confidence.

After the meeting, Justin Taylor left Vanguard for good.

Diego came to Brian's office a couple of days after that, asking desperately for Brian to hire Justin back. "You know he was good, Mr. Kinney." and Brian told him to get the hell out of his office, he had work to do.

Goddamn Diego, if only he knew. Brian was aware exactly how good Justin was.

When the door burst open later that day, weeks after Justin had left the company, Brian was half-expecting it to be him, half-hoping his face would be red and blotchy, but eyes dark and serious, and pleading for a second chance.

But then again, Justin would never stoop so low as to beg him for anything. And that's what made Justin better than everybody.

Cynthia was the one who came flying into his office and he was about to shout at her when:

"Brian! Oh, my god! Lindsay's mom just called! SHE'S HAVING THE BABY!"

Christ, why did women's voices get so loud when they were announcing things like engagements and babies?

Brian stood up calmly from his desk and gathered his stuff.

"Where?" he asked her, pulling on his coat.

"Allegheny General. Mrs. Peterson says hurry. The doctors think she should deliver within the next two hours."

It wasn't Justin, but at least it was a distraction.

-

Actually, it took three hours. And Brian wasn't even allowed in the delivery room. His place had been taken by Nancy Peterson, who insisted that she needed to be there for her daughter, and Brian was "just fine waiting outside."

Whatthefuckever.

When his son - his fucking SON - was finally born, Lindsay asked him to come in to see and name him. Lindsay laid tangled in the sheets, her hospital gown twisted around her sweaty body, and her hair streaky and limp.

Brian may have a crush on a boy, but Lindsay looked fucking beautiful.

"Hey," she whispered to him, taking his hand and pulling him down to sit next to her. A tiny bundle of cotton and flesh and big huge eyes was nestled in her other arm, and Brian couldn't take his eyes off of it.

"Mom wants me to name him Cornelius after my grandfather, but I was thinking something simple, like 'Gus'," she said, running a finger along the baby's bright red cheek, "We never talked about it...so-"

"Gus," Brian said, when his voice finally worked, "I like Gus."

She smiled and lifted Gus up to his arms, and he held his son like he was the most precious thing in the universe.

Because he was.

But he was only allowed to give him a brief kiss on his teenytinysosmall nose before a nurse lifted the baby away, and Mrs. Peterson began to fuss over Lindsay.

Brian was escorted back out to the waiting room, to the same orange plastic chair he had been sitting on while Linds was in labor, and the greater Peterson family began to pour in...

...and he was left utterly alone.

There were no words. No arrogance or sharp-comments to say snidely. Lindsay's cousins were talking about a vacation they all went on, her uncles discussed a football game, the mothers bickered about baby stores. Swirling and spinning and babbling under the obnoxious flourescent lights. Rotating around him without giving a damn.

Nobody staring at him, just because they loved his presence.

Only one in the person in the universe did that.

Brian looked at his fingernails, and played with his shirt cuff, and when Mrs. Peterson came out and told everyone that Linds had fallen asleep for the night, Brian knew exactly where he had to be.

Who he needed to go to.

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Justin pulled open his front door and could barely believe who stood in the hallway staring back at him.

"What the fuck do you want?"

He knew, that was cruel... but how could...? Brian didn't expect Justin to greet him politely and fucking happily did he?

"I... I'm a father."

Brian's words were awed and emotional, and his eyes darted about as if his entire world was changing and the only thing he needed in it right at that moment, to hold it all still, was Justin.

Justin, his...

... blond boy ass. Fuck that.

"Congratulations," Justin said, attempting to close the door. Brian's hand reached out and stopped it.

"Justin..."

He closed his eyes against the sound. How dare Brian say his name like that.

"Justin, please.. I... I'm fucking sorry, okay? I didn't... I didn't mean what I said, I just - " he took a deep breath. "God, I'm a dad."

A faint smile drifted across across his face, "It's kinda weird, you having a kid."

Justin sighed and let the door swing open; pulled him into his arms, heart feeling warm and wanted when Brian sagged against him and clutched at his hips.

"What is it?"

"A boy," Brian mumbled into his hair, "We named him Gus. He's so small."

Justin laughed, closing his eyes and butting his forehead against Brian's shoulder.

"Well, it looks like the straight guy has decided to try out the opposing team."

Cody. Justin had forgotten he was home. Hell, he had forgotten Cody even existed.

Brian's entire body tensed, and they both stood up and turned to face Cody; his hands on his hips.

The united front must have ticked Cody off because all of a sudden his fist was raised and he was striding towards Brian with such malicious intent on his face, Justin heard himself shout, "Cody, no!"

Something changed in Brian's posture then, the proud relief that he was carrying with him when Justin had first seen him in that hallway suddenly shattered into stunned eyes and a hand that shot out and gripped the door frame until his knuckles were white.

It dawned on Justin, in those brief, silent, desperate seconds that Brian had gone through this before.

He jumped between Brian and Cody, and savagely pushed his... ex-boyfriend away.

"Cody, what the fuck, leave him alone!"

"You pussy! He's a breeder. I heard him, talking about his baby. You want to be with a disgusting poser who wishes he had the strength to be a fag?" Cody adjusted his shirt, face red and spit spraying from his mouth as he shouted. He turned to Brian, "That's right, A FAG. Are you ready to be a fag, you piece of straight trash?"

And then Cody was on the floor, cheek bruised and lip bleeding. Justin stared at his fist in awe.

Brian blinked and looked at him, "Wow."

Justin nodded and stooped down, gently turned Cody's body over to look at him. In the corner of his eye, he saw Brian slip out of the apartment, leaving them alone.

"Cody, I have never, EVER raised my hand to anybody until this moment. I want you to know I never will after it. I don't work like that. You, however, do. I am not going to live with your hate, and your discrimination any. more. Now, if you'd excuse me, I am going to take Brian, my lover, to a hotel and spend the night making love to him. I expect to see the apartment empty of your stuff when I come back."

Cody's eyes were watchful and listening, and he nodded just once, tongue darting out to lick the blood off the corner of his lips. Justin couldn't help the water that seemed to spring up inside knowing that this was over. They had been through so much. He leaned over and kissed Cody's cheekbone gently and whispered 'goodbye'.

Brian was waiting in the hallway, head bent and body slouched.

"Hey."

He straightened and his eyes looked strangely bright, "Hey."

"Um, so... I broke up with him. I think we haven't been together for a lot longer than tonight though..."

Brian nodded and looked to the stairs, "You, um... wanna go somewhere?"

Justin held his hand out. "Yeah, I kinda want to take you someplace. Will you come with me?"

"For the night?"

Justin just blinked slowly in response, and Brian put his hand in his... his gorgeous masterpiece masculine hand. God, Justin had missed it. He squeezed it tight.

"Let's go."

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Chapter 19 - Inside

It wasn't that easy. Brian usually didn't care about stuff like apologies and forgiveness, but he knew that Justin was biding his time. It wasn't simple. There was something churning between them as they climbed into Brian's jeep. Ready to explode.

Justin didn't speak until they were ten minutes out of the city, and Brian braced himself.

"You hurt me."

Brian bent his head as he drove.

"Brian, you hurt me so fucking much. And I feel like a fucking pussy admitting it to you, but damn it."

"If it... helps, I hurt myself, too."

"It doesn't. I knew you didn't mean what you said but you still fucking said it. I mean, blond boy ass, Brian? What the fuck is that?"

"A lie?"

"Damn straight. Now tell me the fucking truth."

He couldn't. But he reached over and took Justin's hand and kissed the flat softness of his palm, breathing in the fingers that curled against his face.

"That's not good enough."

"I know," he sighed, dropping Justin's hand onto his lap. Justin kept it there."So where are we going?"

"Go to the Steel River Hotel."

Brian's eyes cut over to him, and glanced away when Justin stared back.

"Nice. Are you paying?"

"You are." Justin's voice was simple, tight, and honest.

He rolled his lips. "Right."

They pulled into the nearly empty parking lot, and Brian couldn't decide if the silence between them was reassuring or tense. The man at the front desk was overly polite, forcing himself to be accepting of the fact that two men were getting a hotel room at nearly midnight. His eyes were the same as those fucking debutauntes from that party that Brian took Justin to, way back on the first day they met - they implied so much speculation.

Brian found that he didn't care, and offered Justin a slight smile when they made their way to the elevator. Justin didn't return it, and didn't say a word.

Okay, now the silence was killing him. It was louder than the whirl and lurch of the elevator, and Justin stared at his own reflection in the shiny copper doors. He looked like he hated himself, and it made Brian sick to his stomach. He attempted to make conversation.

"They want you back at Vanguard."

Lame conversation topic. Justin snorted.

"I want you back there too," Brian amended.

"That's not what I was scoffing at."

Brian knew. It was the Vanguard part. The doors dinged and quaked open.

"Still hung up on that, huh?"

Justin shrugged and walked towards number six-oh-five.

"So, what happened?" he asked, changing the subject to something they needed to talk about. He used the key card to open the heavy hotel room door. "Why'd you come back?"

The 'to me after all you've said' was left off, but Brian could hear it as if Justin had screamed it.

"I missed you. Nobody... um," Brian rubbed the back of his neck and sat down heavily on the bed, "Nobody sees me like you do, I guess."

"Nobody sees me like you do either," Justin admitted.

"And you were right... it was you from the beginning. I... always -- fuck."

"You don't have to say it." Justin practically whispered from his place across the room. So far across the room. Leaning near the window. Brian stood up and walked over to him, concentrating on the feel of the carpet under his shoes and the dry, fabric softener smell of the hotel room to center himself.

He stopped next to Justin and gave up. Surrendered to this boy, this man who suddenly was everything.

"Don't you need to hear it?"

Justin shook his head and grabbed the front of Brian's suit. Intent in serious blue eyes.

"Wait ..."

Brian didn't know if he was ready for that yet, but he knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, what Justin wanted...

"I need this" Justin whispered, looking at Brian's lips and then dropping his gaze to his ass.

what Justin needed

"Be..."

"Careful. I will."

what Brian needed

"I trust you."

"Good, because you can."

what Brian was -

Gay.

- -

They were naked, writhing and grinding against each other, moist and hard. Wanton. Brian's hands fluttered rapidly over every inch of Justin's smooth pale skin, clenching his muscles and gripping his thick blond hair- streaked with glowing white like his vision. Mouths open to each other, alive and full of saliva, sharing words that could only be spoken like that. A fucking sensory overload.

And when Brian felt the nudge of Justin's hard and leaking cock on his hip, and the gentle pushing of his hand on Brian's shoulder, he knew. It was time. He rolled with the hand, and sighed- careful, trusting as Justin's body spread out over his back.

Nobody was ever going to be able to touch this moment. Not Lindsay, not Vance, not the Peterson's, and especially not his parents.

He was finally Brian Kinney.

Fingers spread his ass, searching and gentle. Justin's breathed in his ear. His cock dragged against the small of Brian's back. Brian ground his hips back against Justin.

Two fingers opened him, massaged ... filled ... stretched.

He butted his head into the pillow and Justin dragged his tongue up along his neck, making him shiver. Cool and hot, wet and dry, like light filtering through a tree on a humid summer day. A summer day that was nothing like the day his dad first hit him.

The fingers were replaced by a latex-covered penis, slippery with lube, and Brian vaguely wondered when Justin had done that. At the speed of molasses, the head thrust in, like a slow surge of realization or love.

Brian bit his lip and groaned in pain, "Christ, Justin..."

"Easy, easy..."

"I should be telling you the - mnuh - same thing."

"I am being easy on you. God, I'm going so slowly," his voice rough and whispered, "Open up for me..."

Brian pushed and Justin slid into him. Deep and full.

"Open up for me." Those words meant something different now.

"God, you're in," he gasped, "You're fucking inside, Justin."

--- --- ---

He was inside of Brian.

All skin, and damp, and heat, and dark, and sinking, and rough, and merged, and hard, and pulsing.

Apart of him.

Justin looked down at where his balls and pubic hair rested against the splayed flesh of Brian's ass, dick buried inside. He smoothed his hand up Brian's thigh, over his bottom, and up the skin of his side. Over and over. Smoothing and soothing.

Whispered nonsense words in Brian's ear seemed to make Brian's entire body melt like lava against Justin's chest. God, he was so fucking warm and existing.

The motion, moving in and out, touching every part of Brian that he could reach, soon turned desperate - as it does when climax is looming somewhere nearby. When every single kiss, and thrust, and wrenching is so pleasurable and right that Justin feared for his sanity, and Brian's too. Under him, a chestnut-colored mess of hair tilted back, Brian's chin jutted out; eyes closed, mouth open. A vibration of a moan sounding from deep down in his gut, and he pressed his ass back against Justin's cock, accepting and desiring. Wanting.

Faster, harder, more.

More, fuck, Justin, god, deeper.

He was practically begging. His eyelashes were wet. Justin's were already dripping.

What everybody else didn't know was his to savor. This was worthy of tears.

Brian came with a strangled groan, his entire body flushed and sweaty and twisting against the sheets as he shot all over them. The brilliantly unreal clenching of his muscles wrung Justin's cock, and he pushed into Brian as far as he possibly could, pressing his cheek against a damp shoulder blade and hot skin, and jerking load after load into the condom.

They sank together onto the mattress, worn-out and emotionally threadbare.

Justin pulled out reluctantly and tossed the full condom towards the trash, cautiously watching Brian's face as he rolled over.

"Hurt?" he asked, anticipating harsh words and another bitter farewell.

Brian nodded, and said, "But in a good way."

He opened his arms and Justin crawled on top of his long beautiful body, sweat-slicked chests sticking together as they buried their faces in each other's necks.

Justin felt complete. Like everything in his life had been blinking and wailing, and now it had stopped and shut up. That some light had clicked on, and life was flooded with this new sense of accomplishment and love.

Brian shifted under him, face nuzzling closer and deeper.

"Justin."

His voice was wet and soft in Justin's neck.

"Justin, I think I..."

love you.

The words were unspoken, but audible.

"I know..." Justin's whisper was barely there,"Does it scare you?"

Silence.

Then "Yes."

Justin rolled them so Brian covered him, pressed him solidly into the mattress.

"Don't worry. I'll catch you."

Brian's response was to close his eyes and breathe, body relaxing completely.

And Justin caught him.

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Chapter 20 - Possibility

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It was an ungodly hour of the morning when they left the hotel, all sleepy eyes and holding hands, and headed for Justin's apartment. The sky was just starting to lighten promisingly in the east, and Brian's exhaustion and sore ass made him lethargically affectionate, like a sleepy child, and Justin seemed amused and touched by it. As Justin drove, Brian snoozed on his shoulder, lulled by Justin's fingers in his hair. A picture of equals who had just discovered something about themselves, and it made them unbelievably filled with peace.

Justin's apartment was cold and dark when they finally arrived, and Brian wasn't the least bit surprised to find it empty of Cody's stuff.

"He did it."

"You didn't think he would?" Brian asked, arching a brow, "You fucking punched him."

"I know, but... he doesn't give up without a fight."

"You punched him. I think that constitutes as a fight."

Justin rolled his eyes and headed for the bathroom. Brian yawned and watched him go.

"Yeah, but that was a firecracker pop compared to the atom bomb that usually goes off with Cody," he called behind his shoulder as he pulled off his tee shirt. Brian slid to his right a couple of inches to keep Justin's rapidly undressing body in his line of sight.

"Think he'll come back?"

Justin disappeared around the corner to the bathroom, and a pair of pants went flying from the doorway into the hallway, followed by a pair of boxer-briefs. He poked his head out, blond hair ragged and fluffed.

"Nope. He's finished. This fight is over, it's on to the next. Are you going to join me?"

Brian couldn't help but grin and follow the trail of discarded clothes. Two hands grabbed him around the waist once he hit the door frame, and yanked his body into the already-steamy bathroom.

"I can't stay long, Sunshine. I have to go see my kid."

"Okay, Daddy. A quick shower, then you can leave."

"I took a shower at the hotel."

Justin "mm"-ed and unzipped Brian's pants, slow and tantalizing, blinking up at Brian with shining blue eyes. Those lashes should be illegal. Seriously.

"They're not going to let you into the hospital to see Lindsay or the baby yet. It's not even five a.m. There are visitor's hours in the maternity wing."

Brian re-zipped his pants and smoothed his thumb over the pout that formed on Justin's lips.

"How the fuck do you know the hours? Hang out lately in the maternity wing, kid?"

Justin stepped back, "I've spent more time in the hospital the last couple years than most kids my age."

Curling his fingers into Justin's hair, he pulled Justin back towards him, forcing their groins, hips, chests together. Justin slid his leg between Brian's and breathed in the side of his neck.

"Right. I forgot. Sorry," Brian said, kissing Justin's small little earlobe and pressing his temple against Justin's hair. Just stood there, holding his beautiful man, the sound and steam of the shower casting a distant, surreal veil to the moment. Finally Justin lifted his hands and smoothed them down Brian's shoulders.

"You have to go see your beautiful boy."

Brian snorted softly. Beautiful man, beautiful boy. How did his life get like this?

He nodded and moved towards the door, double-checking his fly and about to leave when he turned back.

"Before I go, I just need to make sure you - "

"Make sure I love you back?" Justin responded, eyebrows raised.

Brian looked down and rubbed the back of his neck, sighing, "No, asshole. I know that. I need to make sure you - " he paused, squeezed his eyes shut, "forgive me."

"For what? Calling me an asshole just now? For bringing up the hospital thing? For saying no to sex?"

"None of the above. Come on, you know what for."

Justin tilted his head innocently, knowingly, "For what?"

"Jesus Christ, Justin, can't you just let me off the hook? I apologized last night."

He sighed and came to stand in front of Brian, all naked skin and a wise expression.

"Say it again."

Brian blinked and brought his hands up to cup Justin's face. "Justin, I'm sorry for being an ass. You aren't... and I... I mean, this, between you and me is... something."

He was surprised when Justin laughed, a gentle chuffing sound before he rose to his tiptoes and pressed a kiss against Brian's lips.

"I know. I got it. You didn't mean what you said, and you know that whatever the fuck is going on between us is real. And whatever shit hits us regarding it, I'm ready for it."

Brian tilted his forehead against Justin's.

"Let's not think about that yet. I'm not ready for the shit."

Justin nodded and pulled away, smiled and said, "Later. You go see your son."

"Later."

And just before he disappeared from sight, Justin called back, through the rushing sound of the shower:

"And I love you too, Brian. Give Gus a kiss for me."

Flashes of memory sometimes mix with day dreams in sudden bursts of clarity. Like in movies when the camera zooms in on the actor's face with a woosh and a flare of light, and it replays some scene in black and white with fuzzy edges. That's what happened to Brian in that moment, only it was his future that wooshed in front of him. His subconscious hope for it.

When Brian looked back towards the door way, on his way out of his lover's apartment, he had the briefest glimpse of a family - of Justin cradling Gus. Holding his hand. Going to a baseball game. Cheering Gus on as he went on his first date. Graduation. College. Gus's first job. All of them, with Justin standing there as a dutiful, loving second father to Brian's first.

And it seemed possible.

--- --- ---

Cynthia greet him with a hug and a laugh.

"Justin! What are you doing here?"

He smiled innocently at her as she sat back behind her desk. "Just came to see how you all are holding up without my presence. Is your boss in?"

"He's in the conference room, setting up for a pitch in an hour. Just between you and me," she leaned forward conspiratorially, the curly blond ends of her long hair brushing over the desktop, "I think he's nervous."

"About?"

"This pitch. Getting it to impress Vance. Now that he's got a baby, maybe he feels the need to work harder to feed it. I don't know." she waved her hand absently, "Don't mind me."

Justin grinned at her encouragingly and drummed his fingers along the top of her computer monitor.

"Well, how about I go down there and let him insult me sarcastically for a bit. Might help him lose the anxiety."

Cynthia tipped her head in thanks. "By all means, Mr. Taylor. My boss is yours to submit to."

Justin winked at her in parting, and walked the fluorescent and industrial blue hallways, occasionally greeting people he'd worked with. The conference room door was closed, blinds pulled shut, and a shadow was pacing.

He would recognize that shadow anywhere.

It made his blood rush and his body heat, and his lungs collapse and sink with desperate desire. And jesus christ, it had only been two days since they'd been together, but that was like two days without sunlight.

Brian's back was to him when he entered, it tensed to a violent degree when Brian heard the door shut behind him, and Justin knew he was preparing to turn around and scream at whoever interrupted his preparations.

"Fuck me," is all Justin said, and the tension melted away as Brian turned to face him.

"Justin," Brian responded, eyes getting bright.

"Fuck me right. now."

A grin struck across Brian's face, feral and seductive.

"Missed me, have you?"

Justin nodded, sauntered up to Brian, and pressed his nose and lips against his face. Nuzzled and breathed in the smell of Brian's skin. Brian's arms wrapped around his waist, hands darted under his shirt and clutched at the small of his back.

"Mmmm, hey," Brian whispered, kissing Justin's jaw. "What're you doing here?"

"Just wanted to see you. Class is out for the day, and then Cynthia told me you have a big pitch coming up. Thought you could use a stress-reducer before it started."

Brian laughed dryly into his neck, as his hand smoothed up to grip at one of Justin's shoulder blades. Brian always clinged to the strangest parts of his body, and it made Justin swell with lustful appreciation.

Well, maybe not so strange. At least, for a gay man. Brian's other hand had just made it's way into the back of his pants, fingers wiggling between the cheeks of his ass.

"You are incredible," Brian whispered, "Always know... just... what.... I... need."

And his thumb pushed into Justin's little puckered hole.

Justin mewled, head rolling forward to Brian's shoulder. All the energy suddenly sucked out of him. Forget the vixenish seduction he had planned, he was just utterly seduced himself.

Brian walked them backwards until Justin was sprawled across the conference room table, his ass hanging off the edge and Brian grinding his erection between Justin's legs. Thumb pulled out briefly and then replaced at a better angle. Justin was lost.

"I need you inside of me," Justin practically whimpered. There was this aching, empty void that needed to be filled by Brian's body rightthefucknow. It was if reality was unravelling at the speed of his blood rushing, and time and their location, and all the stuff that SHOULD be taken into consideration was thrown to the wind.

Brian ripped off Justin's jeans, leaving them hanging off of one of his sneaker-covered feet. Armani slacks unzipped, cock pulled out, Justin rasping "Condom and lube in my front pocket."

Grinding, panting, kisses between preparations, two male bodies clutching at each other, clothes disheveled and an erotic haze building building churning gasping heat.

Suddenly interrupted.

Gardner Vance, with his hand on the door knob and standing in the threshold, face stuck in an expression of surprise and authority.

"Vance," Brian exclaimed in a growl, turning his body so Vance couldn't see his [softening] dick, and definitely couldn't see Justin, wanton and half-naked on the conference table.

Brian. What a gentleman. His hero.

Vance cleared his throat, and after Brian fastened his pants he turned around, still shielding Justin.

"I came to tell you that Mr. Peterson of your Tayson campaign is on the phone to praise you for your fine work, Mr. Kinney, but I see you're otherwise..." he trailed off, conveying his discomfort, "I will go tell him you are currently unavailable."

Oh god, it was going to come crashing down. And as much as he hated Brian working for this old-balled little foreign man, he didn't want this to become this situation to become an Issue, capital 'i'. Brian seemed unable to move, contemplating the situation, and Justin awkwardly slid off the table.

"Wait...wait, Mr. Vance," he called out, fumbling to pull up his jeans, "This isn't - I mean - "

"Mr. Taylor, I do believe your project here at Vanguard was completed. I do not think you should even be on the premises. I'll have the security guards escort you out with Mr. Kinney."

"What the fuck?"

"You're fired," Vance said matter of factly to Brian, "Now, if you'd excuse me, I need to inform Mr. Peterson that his ad man is no longer working at Vanguard Advertising. I'm sure he'll be very curious to learn why."

"Mr. Vance, please," Justin shouted, buttoning his fly and running after him. A hand reached out and snagged his shirt, pulling him back and stopping his advancement.

Vance slipped out into the hallway, and that was that.

"It's finished. It's time." Brian said into his ear, steadfast and yet withdrawn. Knowing that it had finally happened - he was Out.

Justin stood there, breathing hard, his back against Brian's chest, his hands on Brian's thighs, his shoulders heavy with Brian's arms and head.

Here it comes.

Chapter 21 - Forged

--- --- ---

"JUSTIN TAYLOR, Brian?! You're having an affair with a boy I used to BABYSIT! "

Brian watched Lindsay pace back and forth in the living room, her reflection on the blank TV screen swirling and bending and making Brian kind of sick. If her voice wasn't already having the same effect. He wasn't disgusted with her, just... felt like the entire life he had here was somehow obsolete, beyond him. Not him.

"Saves you the trouble of meeting the in-laws," he offered pathetically, and tried to decide whether he should grin or hang his head in shame.

Lindsay stopped pacing and planted her hands on her hips, eyes narrowing at him.

"The in-laws? Brian is this... I mean, you and Justin aren't..." she trailed off, disbelief over her pretty features. Maybe some embarrassment, rage, and a little bit of her own shame there too. "Do you love him?"

Her voice was cracked and whispered, blue eyes round as she watched Brian stand from the couch and walk towards the mantel.

"Yes."

She bowed her head into her hands, maybe crying, Brian wasn't sure.

"And he... loves you?"

She sank down on the couch, her eyes raised to look at him, and Brian nodded.

"When Daddy called me... I didn't want to believe. I mean, it's so... I should have known, right?"

Brian shook his head then and came to sit next to her. Took her hand.

"I don't even know if I knew, Linds, I mean, really knew. The thing with Justin... it came out of nowhere. All of a sudden he was... we were... it felt right. For once in my fucking life."

"And with me, you aren't?" Her tone very very vulnerable, like it was about to shatter into a billion pieces.

Brian grabbed her other hand, pressing her long, manicured nails into his skin and savoring the feel of them.

"Linds, you're my best friend. If nothing, you gave me the freedom to discover this... and I still love you. I hope... I mean, I was sure that even when you found out, you'd still..."

"Love you back."

He blinked slowly in response, looking down into her watery eyes, and hoping that he wasn't too presumptuous to figure that even eventually, Lindsay would be on his side.

"It's too soon, I'm too... overwhelmed, this is just... so fucked. I mean, JUSTIN!?! Brian, what the fuck were you thinking? Even if you feel that you are gay or something... I'd figure you'd experiment with someone your age but JUSTIN TAYLOR?"

And she was back on her feet again. Pacing. Arms waving dramatically. Brian sighed.

"Were you fucking him when we had that dinner? Were you in a relationship with him, right under my nose?!"

"No, Lindsay. Fuck, no."

"Well, then when?" She stopped and stared at him. It was like a song on repeat. "Give me details, Brian! When, why, where. how? Tell me! I think I have the right to know!"

"It started after the accident, when he broke his arm at work. We were talking, and then... he slipped, and I caught him, and then we were kissing and it was... fuck."

"And you've... had sex with him?"

Brian nodded slowly, just twice.

"How was it?"

"Lindsay!" he practically gawked at her. And she looked pretty astonished at herself.

Her cheeks flushed and she looked away, "I'm sorry! I shouldn't have..." her eyes cut back to him, "But how was it?"

"Is."

"What?"

Brian swallowed, "How is it. Present tense. We did it more than once, and I plan on doing it again."

She bowed her head in understanding, hands folding over her biceps as if she were holding herself. Shrugged her shoulders, encouraging him to answer her embarrassingly curious question.

"It's... hot," he grinned slightly, awash with memories. "It's like... he crawls inside my head and becomes apart of me. I've never really had sex like th - "

Interrupted.

Cut off by the sound of a puttering rumble, the squeal of bad brakes, and the slam of car door then. Lindsay tossed aside the curtain to see who had pulled into the driveway.

"It's your father," she said, and Brian felt the flashing panic strike his gut... and then, the steely bolt of courage. Kind of the same steely color Justin's eyes became when he was passionately stubborn about something. Strong.

Jack violently knocked on the front door, and entered without waiting for a response.

Brian was suddenly glad Lindsay had never insisted on getting a screen door. His dad just would have torn it right off. He'd done it before.

"I just got off the phone with Tom. He had quite the story to tell me, son. Can you guess what it was?"

Cruel, cruel face, red and angry; shoulders hunched like he was preparing his fist to fly. Brian couldn't do anything but stare at him. And answer him. Man to man.

"He told you I was gay. That Vance fired me because he caught me having sex with a man in the conference room."

Oh my god, he said the words. Out loud. To his fucking father.

Jack laughed, humorlessly, and Brian saw Lindsay shiver at the sound of it out of the corner of his eye. Her eyes were on Brian - accusing and protecting at the same time.

"Tell me it isn't true. Tell me you're not a fairy, sonnyboy."

"It's true. I am."

Jack hissed, "Fucking FAIRY!"

"Don't call him that!" Lindsay shouted, head whipping to stare at her nearly-father-in-law, "Don't you fucking call him that, Jack."

"Lindsay, sweetheart - that's what he is. A cheating fudge-packer! You like it up the ass, huh? Like a little pussy!?"

"He doesn't deserve that kind of treatment!" She was angry. Her claws had come out. And Jack was puffing himself up for the challenge.

"Well someone should make him feel ashamed of himself!"

"I didn't do it to cheat on Lindsay, Dad. I wasn't trying to hurt her, or whatever the fuck you think I'm capable of in your sick, twisted mind."

"I don't think you're capable of much more than being a stupid fucking disgrace to the Kinney name. If only little Joanie would have had that abortion like I told her to, we never would have had to deal with this bullshit. Never shoulda let her have you. Hurt this poor girl," he pointed at Lindsay, "hurt your mother, fucking embarrassed me. The Peterson's are outta their minds right now, 'cause of you. All because of you, the faggot!"

He slammed his fist into the wall. Lindsay jumped.

Brian was ready to throw off the noose.

--- --- ---

He heard the shouting from the street. The bitter angry words of abortion and faggots. It was like Cody's evil twin and arch-rival. So much anger packed into such small words. Justin found himself hoping that Gus wasn't in that house, that Gus wouldn't be awakened, only a few days old, by the sound of hatred. He hadn't even met the infant yet, but he was apart of Brian, and that meant everything to Justin.

The door was open. Justin could see Jack standing just inside the living room, his fist had just hit the wall, plaster rippling around it. Lindsay's eyes flew to his, and Justin had a brief moment, standing there in the foyer, behind Jack, and wondering if he should run and hide.

Then his eyes met Brian's, and Justin wouldn't run away even if he were offered the world.

"You listen to me Jack. And listen well, because I'm never going to communicate with you again after this," Brian began, voice unwavering and resolved. Entire days and weeks and months and years of his childhood were finally getting purified. Justin had opened the doors, but it was Brian who was taking the steps out into the sunshine. It was all Brian.

"Let's face it- you've always known I was gay, Jack. Always. From the very first day you punched me, to until this day when it was finally put into fucking words for you. And I used to be a coward, I used to let the fea- the ANGER - I had for you, I used to use it to let myself avoid who I actually was. But now... I'm not going to be that person anymore, Jack. I'm QUEER. And whatever that means for Lindsay and me, it's our business. Not yours. Never yours, ever. again.

"So now I'm going to ask you to get the fuck out of my home and my life. And you won't say anything to the young lady standing behind me, and you will ignore the young man standing behind you. Because I'm finished with you."

Jack turned and looked at Justin, his face growing sour and dark.

"Jack!" Brian shouted sharply, "Don't even make EYE-CONTACT with him or I will gladly demonstrate on you your punishment and anger-management techniques that I grew up with."

The old man seemed speechless, finished, for the first time in his life, and practically skulked out of the house, leaving the door wide open behind him, like a mouth that was spewing him out.

"You think it's over?" Justin asked, watching Jack climb into his clunky car and puttering away.

"No. But for now it is. For me, it is." Brian replied, stepping over to watch the car disappear up the street.

Justin turned and looked up at him, "That was twenty-nine years of waiting to have that confrontation."

Brian nodded, rubbed his chin before putting his index finger across Justin's lips, "Wouldn't have happened if it weren't for you."

Lindsay's voice came from the blurred darkness behind Brian, "Justin, may I have a word, please?"

She jerked her head in the direction of the back porch, and waited for Justin to acknowledge her and obey before she lead him to the steps, overlooking a green and sprawling backyard.

"I feel like you're about to write down my name on that little notebook you used to have, and write down how I misbehaved so my mommy can ground me," joked Justin feebly, heavily sitting down next to her soft, post-pregnancy body.

"You're in more trouble than that."

"If it helps, I love him, Lindsay. More than I've ever loved any man in my entire life."

Lindsay smiled faintly, gazed out towards the horizon as she spoke,

"He said something kind of like that about you." She paused, glanced over at him, waiting for his reaction. Didn't get one and continued, "And you're not surprised."

Justin shrugged, "I know he loves me. I am secure in what we have."

Her eyes returned to the horizon. "I was never secure. Ever. And then you weasel your way in, and are completely satisfied, completely trusting in what he feels for you, and what you two have created together. It makes me feel..."

She trailed off or choked up, and Justin felt the shame rush into his gut.

"Linds, I didn't mean.... I mean, I wasn't trying to..." he took a breath, "It had nothing to do with you, or the families."

"I know."

"Do you... Do you hate me?"

"No, I don't," her voice was reassurance and gentle piano music, and the orchestra strings rose in a relieved crescendo inside of Justin, "I'm hurt. I won't deny it. It wouldn't be right if I wasn't. But I guess... part of me is glad that this whole lie is over."

"He wasn't trying to lie. He just wasn't ready yet."

"And I know that. I... accept it," she combed her fingers through her hair, leaned her forehead on her palms, "Shit. I should feel more... betrayed or something, shouldn't I? Like, isn't my self-esteem supposed to plummet because I feel like I can't be good enough for my fiancee? Aren't I supposed to have the sudden urge to call Oprah to get some sort of counselling on national TV?"

Justin chuckled at his words, and it must have been infectious because soon she was laughing with him, a chattery, relieved sound. Tears were in her eyes, and Justin slung his arm over her shoulders.

"What'd your father have to say to you?" Lindsay asked him. Justin rolled his lips and sighed.

"We aren't speaking."

"It went that well, huh?"

Justin laughed, "Yeah..."

"Our parents think we're all nuts. My parents yelled about suing Brian for being gay, Brian's dad came over to beat it out of him, and your father is pretending you don't exist. We ARE fucking nuts, aren't we?"

"Only in the best way. Who cares what the fuck anyone thinks, that's my new motto."

Brian's voice came from behind them, door creaking as it swung open on it's hinges, and Brian's long body folded itsself to sit down between Justin and Lindsay. A small bundle wiggled in the cradle of his arms. "Justin, meet Gus."

Justin stared in awe at the baby's small face, and huge hazel eyes. Brian grinned faintly at him and passed the infant over, all cotton and small warm body. Gentle and watchful, father's hands to lover's.

"Oh my god, he's incredible," Justin breathed, his nose touching the end of Gus's. He felt Brian's hand on the back of his neck, fingers tangled in the shaggy hair at his nape. Justin looked up at him, strong and knowing, and the world shifted into final focus.

"Brian..." is all he could say and Brian nodded at him, lips curved in a soft smile; expression bright, open...

And pure.

THE END.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

E P I L O G U E ::

Brian's subconscious image for the future wasn't that far off. It was everything he secretly wanted, and more. Like when you go to a much-anticipated movie with low expectations and feel warmly surprised at how good it was afterwards.

"Daphne, how many times do I have to tell you to get your fucking feet off of my very expensive coffee table?"

"At least one more time, Brian!" she replied cheekily, raising her bottle of Snapple in salute.

"Justin, did you finish those boards for Eyeconic?"

"Yes, Cynthia took them to be matted." His voice was low and bemused as he sat on the couch next to Daphne, perusing through a magazine and pointing out advertisements that he admired to his friend.

"What about - "

"I took care of it, they'll be here by two," Justin said without looking up. Flipped a page.

"Did - "

"Yes."

"You don't even know what I was going to say."

"Of course I do," He finally raised his chin and looked at Brian as he got up off the sofa. "Relax. You're being anal. "

"Yeah, lucky for you," muttered Brian, shuffling through his papers.

Justin chuckled and settled on the edge of the small [and also very expensive, goddamnit ] conference table in Brian's office.

"Stop freaking out. We're business partners for a reason, remember? I've got your back."

"Twat."

Justin grinned slyly in Brian's direction. "You better hope not."

Brian smirked back at him, and sauntered across the expansive room, glowing white and pristine business art deco, to join his smug blond partner, lounging so casually on the table.

"Partners," Brian repeated. "Took me hell of a long time to admit that."

"Two years. Well worth it."

They kissed, soft and slow, tongues touching lightly. Tasting and savoring.

"Mmmm," Justin hummed through his nose as he pulled back and licked his lips, "When's Linds bringing Gus over?"

Brian glanced at his watch. "'bout an hour. He's staying with us all weekend... Linds has a hot date."

He rolled his eyes at the last word, and pushed his nose against Justin's cheek.

"Male or female?"

"Who knows?" Brian shrugged, "I don't care, as long as she's happy."

"And I don't care as long as you are."

"Are you offering to give me a happy, kid?"

Daphne spoke up, mouth full of potato chips,"Can you guys wait until I leave? Or at least until I get a camcorder?"

Brian groaned and let his forehead fall to Justin's shoulder with a frustrated thump. "Daphne, you know, lunch break is over. You can go whenever you want."

"I thought you liked me here."

"I do. And truth is, when you're gone you're all I ever think about. I fantasize about you when I'm making love to my boyfriend. But I feel that absence makes the heart grow fonder, don't you agree darling?"

Daphne laughed and waved him off. "Okay, okay, I got it. See you tonight at our secret rendezvous?"

"Can't wait!" he said with big fake grin that was sarcastic, playful, and affectionate all at one time.

She practically skipped over to give them both innocent pecks, brown curls bouncing, and winked on her way out the door. Justin shook his head with a smile, cheeks flushed and eyes sparkling.

"You two are priceless. One of these times I should demand you act on all this verbal foreplay."

"Why? Wanna watch?" He slid his hand into Justin's pants, "Does it make you hard?"

"YOU make me hard. What is it about us and offices, huh?" Justin chuffed in a laugh against Brian's neck.

"Must be our kink. Our aphrodisiac," purred Brian, stroking Justin's cock.

"I mean, seriously - " he cut off to groan, "we have sex in offices more than we do in our own bed. Our first fucking time was in your office. Jesus, Brian, that feels amazing."

"I know," Brian said smugly, hand moving from dick to balls to ass, in long, sure sweeps. Over and over until he was using the moisture from Justin's cock to slick his hole.

"I hate to interrupt, boys, " Cynthia's voice buzzed over the intercom, "But the fine partners of Kinnetik have a meeting with Liberty Air in about fifteen minutes, and I was thinking they should probably be presentable for it. So um, Brian? Remove your fingers from Justin's ass so he can get the boards from the art department."

Brian growled something about firing Cynthia and telling Liberty Air to fuck off, because his dick was fucking hard, goddamnit, but Justin shut him up with a long winding tongue shoved into his mouth.'

"Success gets you hot, Kinney, don't deny it," Justin murmured, sucking Brian's spit from his lips.

He shrugged in response, admitting that Justin was right without words.

The decorative glass doors on the other side of the room rattled with a knock, and Cynthia yelled through them "Fourteen minutes!"

Brian pulled his hand from Justin's pants. "We're continuing this later."

"Like it's even an option not to," Justin joked, sticking his tongue out.

"Don't tempt me, Sunshine. Next time you stick your tongue out, I'm eating it."

"We have to wait until our son falls asleep before we go at it tonight, you know."

"Well, you know what they say..."

Justin zipped up his pants and put his hands on Brian's shoulders, tilting their foreheads together, "Absence makes the heart grown fonder?"

Brian shook his head and rolled his lips in amusement.

"Punctuality is a virtue?"

Brian laughed.

"Anticipation is half the fun?"

He shook his head again, their noses nudging into each other's.

"Hmmm... I love you?"

"No, that's just what I say."

Justin grinned, "Well, luckily, I think they are fucking morons. I'm only interested in what you have to say."

"I knew I hired a smart kid."

And they kissed until Cynthia barged in with their five-minute warning.

T H E E N D (for realz, yo. This is it. Straight!Brian, signing off.)

**Insanity**

Brian has always thought there was something wrong with him, especially when he thought about Justin...

Brian has always thought there was something a little bit wrong with him.

Everyone has always told him so, of course. His mom and sister were the first, always criticizing in disappointed sighs and catty hisses; dad was always just drunk enough to yell and hit. After teachers and peers, Debbie was the next person, calling him a shit and shaking her head at his attitude and obnoxious comments. Lindsey found his emotional problems amusing, and sometimes slightly sad but she was blind to anything else. And Michael, despite his loyal worshipping, would occasionally give him looks that made Brian feel like he was still a child who would never grow up.

Not that he wanted to.

And then there was Justin.

When Brian closed his eyes, he'd see Justin's adoring blue eyes staring up at him. But then he could always hear that strong, unwavering masculine voice that Justin's had developed into telling him that if he wanted to leave, he'd had better reasons. Plenty of them.

So, yeah, Brian knew he was fucked up.

Sometimes when he thought of Justin, he'd resort to a kindergarten existence. "Pretty blonde hair" or "Pretty blue eyes" or "White teeth" or "I feel happy when he hugs me" or "Justin's cock is so.."

...Okay, so kindergarteners didn't think that way, but still. Maybe Brian simplified to keep himself from thinking what he actually thought. If that made any fucking sense. Which it didn't, of course, because, hey? Screwed up, remember?

But occasionally, when he was laying naked in his bed, smoking a cigarette or a joint, listening to Justin snore next to him, he'd let himself go. Let that insanity take over.

He'd let himself like the way Justin was letting his hair grow in again, all gold and mussed to perfection. Or the sky blue expressiveness of his eyes, how they'd get round or squint. And that smile, fuck, that smile got Brian every time, so bright and bold and brave and a bunch of other 'b' words that he'd only ever think, never utter. Then there was his body, smallish but broad and growing older and darker and stronger every day. Still pale though, and pinkish, and delicate, and Brian didn't know whether he wanted to bite it or protect it sometimes.

It was as if he liked Justin's body so much, he wanted to eat it up, and hold it inside himself and be possessed and exist just for him...his boy.

The closest he could get was when they fucked, and as much as that happened, Brian could never distance himself enough to actually appreciate how connected they were. He was too caught up, too overwhelmed by the sensations. By the feel of Justin's clenching muscles and the way he'd fist the sheets and gasp. When the tip of Justin's tongue would touch the edge of his front teeth as he stared up at Brian through his lashes, which was almost more erotic than his groans of "Harder, Brian. Harder, damnit. Fuck me."

Brian liked when Justin said his name.

He liked it even more when he'd say it as his hands found Brian's, and their fingers would automatically intertwine, so right and comfortable and flawless. And especially when he said it as he'd be scratching his ear, and tilting his head to the side, and sighing sweetly between those pink-shell colored boy lips.

Yeah, totally fucked up.

And then, before he'd fall asleep to Justin's perfect snores, he'd tell himself that secretly, all those 'likes' he had regarding Justin were really 'love's.

END.

**Feel Wicked**

Gale/Randy RPS

Did Gale go see Randy in 'Wicked'? My imagination answered that question.

Public disclaimer: Great respect for Gale Harold and even more for Randy Harrison. None of this is true. Mean no offense. For entertainment purposes. I don't know them, they aren't in a relationship, Gale Harold is straight, and Randy Harrison is in a happy and long-term relationship with [brilliantly cruel writer] Simon Dumenco. RPS stems from their amazing chemistry on-screen, not any actual sexual/romantic relationship. (All G/R fans are scoffing right now.)

Title: From a line in 'Wicked', at the end of the love song'As Long As You're Mine':

Fiyero: What is it?

Elphaba: It's just, for the first time... I feel...wicked

Part 1:

He told Randy that he would be there. But he never said when.

It was a surprisingly calm saturday night performance on a beautiful evening in New York City when Gale showed up. The kind of evening where the concrete is still warm after basking in summer sunshine all day, and everyone is sitting on the steps of their Brownstones, chatting about vacations and the summer concerts in Central Park. Gale nodded in greeting to those that he made eye contact with, but kept his head down as he slipped into the grand lobby of the Gershwin theatre only minutes before the show started. Queer as Folk fans were dedicated, and no doubt a handful of them were at every performance to see their beloved Justin sing and dance. The last thing Gale wanted was to be recognized. Or to steal his co-star's fire.

The lights had just dimmed and the overture had just started when he found his seat in the center of the Orchestra section, tripping over the feet of cuddling couples and bouncy pre-teens. Singing voices filled the theatre with powerful strains and the mystery and magic of the musical swept the entire audience away. Including Gale. Until...

...He came out on stage.

It was with the rest of the ensemble, but Gale spotted him immediately. In fact, he couldn't understand how everybody in the audience's attention wasn't diverted from the main characters, and rivetted on that slim blond boy in the colorful suit on the right.

Sunshine was Justin's nickname. Randy was so much brighter than that.

Gale shifted in his seat so he could watch him better. Watch his co-star and friend who had been so discontent with filming a television show in Toronto, suddenly be the happiest he had ever seen him. Watched the young blond dance with the rest of the players, blue eyes sparkling and involved. And then he opened his mouth to sing.

He had heard him sing in the shower a couple of times. But this was totally different. Mind-blowingly, beautifully, devestatingly different.

Randy was Broadway Incarnate.

Voice rich and full, his whole body caught up in the acting of the story for the stage, the blinding stage lights reflecting off his face, his clothes, his eyes, his hair. Smile beaming.

Gale was breathless. And hard.

For the rest of the fucking play.

The show ended with a rousing, yet tragic, number and the audience went insane with applause. When Randy bounded out with the actress he played opposite of, Gale stood up and clapped louder, along with a group of girls to the left who screamed Randy's name. Bingo. They were the ones he was going to have to avoid when the house lights came up.

The curtain dropped, Gale slumped into his seat with his nose buried in the Playbill, waiting for the massive theatre to clear out. It didn't take long, but even then the masses had surrounded the stage door outside the theatre, waiting for the principle actors to emerge. Gale dodged them and crossed 51st street to wait in the shadows of a restaurant canopy.

He heard the squeals again as Randy exited the theatre. Flashes went off. People clapped and cheered for him. Gale watched the top of his shiny blond hair move back and forth down the line of fans, signing autographs and getting his picture taken with people who had paid 100 bucks a pop to see him in his Broadway debut.

Several minutes later, Randy's very recognizable body broke away from the crowd and he pulled his headphones over his ears and began briskly walking up the street. Gale followed him, getting closer and closer, crossing the street to be behind him, closer and closer and closer until...

...he reached out and tugged Randy's earphones off his ears.

Randy whirled around with a look of surprised and annoyed outrage. Until he was greeted by the sight of Gale staring down at him with an amused expression.

"Gale, what the fuck? How long have you been following me?"

"I missed you, too," Gale answered, shoving his hands in his jean pockets and shrugging with a goofy grin.

Randy returned the smile, "What are you doing here?"

"I just saw the most amazing show...it had this hot little blond munchkin in it."

"You're into short, huh?" Randy teased, wrapping his arm around the taller man's bent arm.

"Innit obvious?" Gale looked pointedly down at the top of Randy's head, which he could see so well from the lofty height that he stood over him.

Randy laughed, "Wanna get coffee?"

"Don't you have to get home to Simon?"

"You didn't come all the way to New York to just walk me back to my apartment and say goodbye. Of course you want to go get coffee with me."

"Actually, I came all the way to New York to see your Broadway debut like a good friend should, didn't even think about coffee, you know?"

"Simon is visiting friends in Boston. And I was hoping for more than coffee," Randy looked up at him again, blue eyes twinkling in the lights of the city, a suggestive smile drifting across his perfect lips.

"Hence me not even thinking about it," Gale grinned, then stuck his tongue out at his friend.

"You're so mature," Randy said with dry sarcasm.

"You love it."

"You wish."

"I KNOW."

"You know nothing."

"I do so fucking know, you know?"

Randy rolled his eyes, and then nodded towards a small cafe buried under a skyscraper, "Coffee?"

"How about beer?" Gale sighed, fidgeting back and forth.

Shaking his head, Randy pulled the door open for both of them, "Need you to have some caffine so you can be up all night."

"I NEVER have a problem with staying up for you." Gale whispered in his ear. Randy shivered with arousal and pushed Gale away.

"Later," he hissed, "Save innuendo for later."

Gale chuckled and sat at a shadowed table in the corner with one lone little candle on it, "But it's so fun to see you blush."

"Just know that you'll be paying for that at that later time we just mentioned," Randy promised with a wink before walking to the counter and ordering two extra-shot latte's. He returned to the table and slid one of the drinks across the surface to Gale.

"Huh?"

Randy waved his hand in the air, "Nothing."

Gale just shrugged and took a big gulp of his.

"So...how's L.A.? Is that where you are living right now?"

"Nah, stayed in Toronto. I was just visiting my mom in Atlanta though," Gale told him, fiddling with the coffee stirrer in his drink.

"How's she?" Randy asked, genuinely interested. Always interested in All Things Gale.

"She's good. Getting old. You know how it is. How have YOU been?"

"Amazing," Randy's smile was smooth and heart-stopping, "I'm really happy."

"I could tell," Gale admitted quietly, his hazel eyes meeting the other man's blue ones, "You um, on that stage....you looked..."

"Hot? Handsome? Dashing?" Randy supplied teasingly, nudging Gale's foot with his sneaker-covered one.

"Beautiful."

He gave Randy a shy, but honest half-grin and hooked his toe around his ankle, drawing the younger man's foot forward, between his.

"You liked it?" voice hesitant and hopeful, Randy blinked his long lashes and looked down at the table. He wanted Gale's opinion, respected it, even more than what any critic had to say.

Gale shrugged his shoulders and leaned forward, "The show was okay. Kinda girly. Good music though. You were... outstanding. Incredible. Gorgeous. You belong on Broadway, Randy."

Beaming sunshine smile. And then his other sneakered foot joined Gale's feet, ankles intertwining.

"Thanks."

"Just bein' honest, you know."

"You always are." His hand slid slowly across the surface to play with the cuff of Gale's long-sleeved sheer Oxford shirt.

"Wanna get out of here?" Gale asked, propping his toes on the edge of Randy's chair, between the man's legs, a mere 6 inches from his crotch.

Randy's face twisted in a disapproving frown and he tugged on the cuff, fingers sliding underneath to touch Gale's pulse-point, "We just got here. And you didn't finish your latte, yet."

Gale grabbed the mug and threw back the last mouthful of coffee while he pushed his foot forward so it brushed Randy's balls through his khakis.

"Now," he breathed, slamming the mug onto the saucer, "can we go?"

Randy shook his head stubbornly, shifting his hips away from Gale's foot, "I'm not finished yet, Gale."

"Please?" he asked, licking his lips slow and purposefully.

"Stop it!"

"Randy...come on. You know you want it," Gale winked, pushing his foot forward again against Randy's sofuckingbeautiful endowment.

"Fuck!" Randy hissed, and then took a deep breath and nodded, "Right, let's go."

Their feet flew apart, and they gathered their stuff in a flurry and walked quickly from the cafe onto the cool night street.

"Your hotel or my apartment?"

"My hotel. Don't want to be where you are with..." he trailed off in a strange and urgent voice, adjusting his jeans around his hard cock.

Randy nodded and moved to slip his finger in Gale's belt loop, needing to feel connected to his best friend, co-star, and lover as they strode down the sidewalk to his hotel. Then he remembered who he was, and what they were, and where they were, and he pulled his hand back and shoved it in his pocket.

--- --- ---

It had been a long time since they had been together.

Their relationship was different when they were filming. More satisfactory. They'd spend time with the cast on days off, or with each other on set. Then there were the intimate/romantic scenes of Brian and Justin that would allow the two of them to bask in each other's presence...the tastes, smells, and feeling of the other man. Then there were random weekends when they'd meet at a small motel to just enjoy the "chemistry" between them. If only the fans knew. It was so much more than chemistry.

"I've missed this. Missed you," Randy whispered between gentle kisses along Gale's jaw as they shut the room door behind them.

"Missed you more," Gale wrapped his arms around the smaller man's neck and held him impossibly close, burying his nose into the short shining strands of blonde hair, "We HAVE to spend more time at that motel in whatchamacallit this year."

"Mississauga. And you know we can't," Randy said in a quiet warning, nuzzling his ear.

Gale heaved a sigh, before pulling away and tugging Randy's tee-shirt off, "I know."

"Don't pout," Randy laughed, clasping Gale's face between his hands and forcing him to look at him.

"You like my pout," he countered, walking them backwards towards the bed.

"Mmm. No comment," Randy grinned and let Gale push him back onto the mattress. It bounced under his weight, and he tugged Gale's belt loops so that the bigger man fell onto the bed next to him.

"YOU? No comment?" he asked, running his fingers up Randy's bare back and into the hair at the nape of his neck.

"We really shouldn't talk about...you know," Randy said, rolling over and straddling Gale's narrow hips as he unbuttoned the Oxford that covered that delicious chest.

"You sound like me," Gale snorted, grabbing hold of Randy's khakis and unzipping the fly.

"I've had plenty of time alone with you to pick it up," he said, leaning down and suckling Gale's earlobe as he smoothed his hands up his now-naked chest.

"Better be careful when using it in public, or the fans will pick up on it too."

"You worry too much."

"I'm not the one who said we shouldn't talk about it," Gale retorted. Randy sat up abruptly and looked down into the hazel eyes of his lover.

"Gale..."

"Randy...", he mimicked.

They stared at each other for a moment, bare-chests heaving from their groping, kissing, and talking. Pants unbuttoned. Cocks hard. Emotions somehow more involved than ever before.

Randy climbed off of Gale and stood next to the bed, rubbing his face with his hands, "Fuck, we shouldn't do this. We should STOP doing this."

"What? Why? What are you talking about?"

"It's wrong, for one. Second, I don't lie Gale, and this entire thing is a lie. It's counterproductive to our lives, relationships with other people, and careers."

Gale stood up and moved towards Randy, his hands grasping his forearms and pulling him forward.

"Randy," he whispered clumsily, pressing his forehead against the smaller man's, "God, I know. I understand. But Randy...this? This is so much more than all of that, you know? You and me. Fuck, watching you on that stage tonight was torture. You were so fucking hot, and so fucking unattainable, you know? I wanted you more then than I have ever wanted you before. I felt jealous of those girls screaming for you. 'Cause you are kinda mine. This beautiful man that I have had the priviledge of touching and fucking and kissing and tasting. When you opened your mouth and sang, I could barely keep myself from running up there and grabbing you and hugging the breath out of your tender little body. Little munchkin." He breathed a quick laugh against Randy's cheek.

Gale's muddled words had spun a web around Randy. He leaned heavily against the smooth torso before him, his hands limply resting on the waistband of the taller man's designer jeans. Feeling Gale's nose tickle behind his ear, lips against it, breath warm and moist and seducing.

"Fuck me, Randy...please fuck me," he whispered hotly. His body began to move rhythmically against the younger man's pliant body. "You...moving in an' out...inside...me...please, now.."

It was like he couldn't get the words out, and Randy had never been turned on in his life.

He had always been turned on by Gale. Turned on by some way they'd touch or kiss in a scene. Turned on by his innuendo which was so erotic and homosexual for such a "straight" guy. Turned on by how Gale would play with the hem of his shirt or the ends of his hair when they were riding in a car together or just sitting at lunch, talking.

Turned on by the way Gale would pant and moan and grunt when Randy would fuck him. Turned on by the possessive words Gale would whisper in his ear as he'd fuck Randy.

It was probably the same way for Brian and Justin. Brian was turned on by Justin's hot little young body and obsessed with claiming it. Justin was turned on by this older, more experienced man losing it around him, and obsessed with bringing him to his figurative (and literal) knees.

Passion. That's what it was.

And right now, everything about Gale was setting Randy's body aflame with it. He groaned.

"Oh, fuck you, Gale," he muttered into his ear, making his decision, and pushing him back down on the bed.

"That's what I just asked you to do," he murmered back cheekily, shoving Randy's khakis over his ass as Randy tugged Gale's jeans down his legs.

"Expecting this?" Randy asked, pointedly rubbing Gale's naked erection.

Gale nodded, "Why would I wear underwear when I'm going to see you?"

Randy's only reply was to give him a sly but guarded smile.

"C'mere," Gale wrapped his larger hands around Randy's small, smooth neck and brought their lips together. Opening immediately, groaning deep in their throats as their tongues filled each other's mouths.

Neither wanted foreplay. They just wanted to be connected. To be comfortable. Hard, hot, into each other. Gale reached across the bed blindly for his jeans with the lube and condoms in the pockets, Randy's hand followed to help him while neither of them pulled away from the wet, full kissing.

They had it down to clockwork, each of them had played both parts, and this time it was Gale's turn to sheathe Randy's cock with the rubber protection, while Randy's fingers got glossy with lube and began to slide in and out of Gale's rectum.

"Christ," Gale swore, back arching as Randy began to push his wide, blunt cock into the hole.

"It's always so...fucking good. Everytime, isn't it?" Randy gasped into the smooth skin of Gale's neck, holding the other man's legs over his skinny shoulders.

"Always," came the nearly reverent response.

They began to move faster, harder. Desperate for the release and desperate for the moment to last...all at the same time. Gale's body writhing and arching, Randy's thrusting and pulling. Hands surged over each other's bodies, smoothing the beads of sweat. Fingers clutching at damp locks of hair or pushing it off foreheads.

Moaning, sighing, whispered words of affection that would never be repeated, only replayed in their memories.

Their eyes met. Communicating so much.

"I...I...can't stop this," Randy admitted in an almost angry or pleading gasp, slamming his cock into Gale's clenching asshole. It hit his prostate at the perfect angle with perfect pressure. Gale let out a groan and slapped one hand down against the mattress, twisting the sheets in his fist, "Can't...ever...stop. Always want this."

"You're...always inside of me. Feel....feel you all the time. Feel wrong....but feel you.." Gale cried out, eyes fluttering closed for an instant before he felt like he would die if he didn't look into those blue eyes at this moment.

"Always feel you, too.." those blue eyes got glassy with water. Gale closed his eyes for good. He didn't think he could see that. He didn't think Randy would want him to see that. He didn't want Randy to have to feel that. Tears were a boundary and a turning point.

"Don't...don't..." he pleaded, felt like he was about to sob. His body being rocked by the penis surging in and out of his body. Everything felt so full and aching.

But perfect.

Randy made a choked sound like he was holding back a sob too as he buried his face in Gale's neck. His hand came down onto Gale's rock hard erection and began stroking it savagely as he raced them both towards the sweet dirty release, now ready for the end. Needing the end.

And then they toppled over it, swept away into the pleasure of their orgasms.

"Don't pull out, 'kay?" Gale said in a nearly child-like voice, almost fearful. His hands clutched Randy's blonde hair, holding his head at his shoulder.

"I won't," Randy assured him in a quiet and cracked voice.

And they slowly fell asleep, their sweaty, come-stained bodies intertwined on the hotel sheets.

Feeling warm, safe, and comfortable.

Part 2

Gale loved kissing Randy.

It was no secret either. You would have to be blind not to notice it. Something about those perfect pale coral lips, the sweetness of his mouth, his straight white teeth, and tonge that was so wet, warm, and inviting....Gale was intoxicated every time. He loved pushing his mouth against Randy's, lips crushed against teeth, and tongues tangled.

That's what they were doing now. Kissing each other awake as the window glowed blue from the morning shadows that filled narrow NYC streets as the sun rose higher and higher in the sky. Hands smoothing over each other and under the sheets. Soft breaths and content gasps.

Gale forever remembered the moment he first saw Randy, was first introduced to him. It was at one of his last auditions. Randy had already been cast, and Gale was so... taken with him. Gale was straight, really, but something about Randy's delicate femininity touched something inside of him. Like a chord on a guitar thrumming perfectly in his soul. Randy was elegant, and young, and fucking perfect. Gale had watched him so closely in that audition, thereby giving Brian his breathatking stare that the directors encouraged and the fans swooned over. But it all began with Randy. It was always all about him.

And it probably always would be.

"Where are you?" his rough morning voice broke Gale's thoughts.

"What?"

"You were kissing me, and then down my chest and then all of a sudden you stopped and your consciousness just sort of vanished. Where are you?"

"Somewhere over the rainbow," Gale replied, raising his head from its place on Randy's smooth pale abdomen and grinning goofily.

"Cute, Gale. Real cute," Randy snorted, fingers winding nearly urgently and posessively in the dark locks of his lover, "Seriously, though. What were you brooding about?"

"You." honest, soft answer.

"Yeah? Really?" Randy asked, eyebrows raised, voice interested.

"Always."

"What specifically about me?"

"You really wanna know?" Gale asked, chin resting on the bottom of the smaller man's rib cage. His hands smoothed up and down Randy's slender sides from shoulder to knee, revelling in the warmth and silkiness.

"I would not have asked if I didn't."

Gale sighed and tilted his head so his ear was against Randy's chest and he could hear his heartbeat and breath.

"I was thinking about how much I love to look at you, and how much I love kissing you, tasting you. How much I love touching you. How I'm grateful I am permitted to. I feel lucky."

"You said something sort of like that last night," Randy reminded him, fingers tracing Gale's jaw, ear, neck.

"It never gets old, you know?" Gale tilted his head again to look into Randy's bright blue eyes.

"Yeah. I know," the blonde whispered. Blinked slowly. Stared into each other's souls, reading the emotions of the moment, "Come here."

Gale instantly crawled up the beautiful body of his Randy and began kissing him again. Those perfect kisses.

God, he loved to kiss this man.

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"Jesus Christ, first time I'm backstage on Broadway and its not even for something I'm performing in," Gale complained as he followed Randy through the hallways of the Gershwin Theatre.

"I thought you were content with indie films," Randy replied, calling over his shoulder as he nodded or waved to a couple of cast mates who were all preparing for the matinee performance.

Gale shrugged, then quickly dodged out of someones way, shooting them a glare before slipping into Randy's dressing room after him, "I am, but can't help but miss the stage."

"The stage is so much better than being in front of a camera," Randy grinned at Gale through his reflection in the wide mirrors.

"You're biased, Mr. Broadway," Gale accused him teasingly, dropping down on the couch against the wall. Randy just mimicked his friend and shrugged. Gale threw a pillow at him.

Not to be outdone, Randy flung it back and held up a warning finger so Gale wouldn't continue the game. The older man's eyebrows shot up in question. Randy began to peal off his clothes sensuously. Gale's eyebrows dropped and his eyes clouded over with lust.

"Strip tease?" he choked out, adjusting himself through his pants as Randy began to unbuckle his belt.

"It's called...getting into costume," he said in a low, seductive voice, blue eyes sparkling and a shining smile glimmering across his teasing expression.

"Fuck," Gale said in an aroused, secret hiss, "Stop bein' so hot and stuff!"

"Can't help it," Randy winked.

Three minutes later, Randy was standing in his dressing room, decked out perfectly in his munchkin suit...with the exception of the waistband of his pants, which were pulled down so Gale could have access to his hard cock.

He threw back his head as Gale began to hum, tongue flickering the underside of his penis. Harder, faster, more sensations. One of Gale's hands slipped in to massage his balls, while the other gripped that perfect ass.

Randy bit his lip to keep from groaning long and loudly as he came in his costar's mouth, nearly slumping down as the aftershocks still rocked his body. Gale stood up and pulled the smaller man against his body.

"Always wanted to blow a midget," he joked, kissing the side of Randy's neck, under his ear.

"Not a midget, a munchkin," Randy corrected him, still trying to catch his breath.

A loud knock shook the door.

"Hit Make-Up, Randy. Curtain in fifteen!" a voice called through it before moving on.

Randy pulled away from his friend, giving him a peck against his jaw, "That's my cue. The first one of the day, that is."

Gale sighed, "Yeah, I should probably get going. I'm driving back to Toronto today. It'd be nice to get back BY today."

"Won't happen," the blonde glanced at the clock, "But if you get tired, pull over and sleep somewhere, okay? And no pot when you drive, either, right? Really."

"Yes, mother," Gale rolled his eyes.

Randy reached out and grabbed the other man's chin and forced him to look in his eyes, "Gale. I'm serious. I want you safe."

The harsh hazel in Gale's eyes softened and he stepped towards him, "I know. I'll be good. I promise."

"And, Showtime will totally flip if anything happens to fuck up their beloved queer show, so you should be careful not to do anything stupid. No one else can be the Great Brian Kinney," Randy joked, slinging his arms over Gale's shoulders, fingers combing through the thick brown hair.

"I never do stupid stuff," Gale nearly pouted, his fingers fiddling with the bright hem of Randy's cute little Boq suit.

"Or say stupid stuff either, right?" Randy nudged his nose against Gale's face, eskimo kissing and nuzzling the skin.

"Now you're making fun of me." The pout came out full-force. Randy almost giggled.

"I'll let you fuck me really fast before you go to apologize..." he drawled, trailing off alluringly. Gale grinned and pushed him down to the couch.

In the end, no one noticed the extra few wrinkles in Boq's suit at that performance, nor the small stain in his breeches, nor the small red hickey that adorned his neck that the make-up crew was ever so professional to cover without comment.

And Gale drove back to Toronto with wrinkled clothes, stains, and hickeyed with pride...pot staying safely tucked away. Looking forward to the beginning of filming for the last season of the queer show that brought him his Randy.