

Louder Than Words

by

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Kurt/Blaine || AU || PG

A rosy cheeked stranger walks into Kurt's bookshop one autumn evening, and the story begins. mute!Blaine

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Chapter One

A rosy cheeked stranger walks into Kurt's bookshop one autumn evening, and the story begins

As Kurt Hummel flipped the sign of the tiny bookshop from 'closed' to 'open', a feeling of expectation and anticipation burned in his chest. Something thrilling was going to happen this year, he could feel it. Something new - something exciting. It had taken weeks to redecorate after having inherited the shop from an old gentleman who had to move to Florida due to his elderly condition, but right now, taking in the warm, inviting atmosphere that smelled of old books and fairytales, Kurt would admit that it was perfect. It was his. It was all his. Kurt squealed internally and did a little happy pirouette on the spot. It was perfect.

It was late Saturday, just one hour until closing time, and Kurt was exhausted yet ecstatic from the constant flow of costumers he had had during the day. A few of them admittedly having probably searched refugee from the biting New York autumn, accepting hot beverages and looking through the shelves. Most of the people who came in left with a new book in their hands, and Kurt thrilled at all the money they had left in his register.

Not expecting anymore visitors this late, Kurt was putting some books back on their spots, soft jazz playing in the background, when the cold draft from the front door being pulled open and quickly closed again filled the room. Straightening up, a welcoming smile already on his face, he turned to face the new arrival. His smile dithered as the breath was knocked out of him. With rosy cheeks, a long mustard yellow scarf draped around his neck, a messy disarray of dark curls and warm coffee eyes that seemed to be flickering from the candle lights, the man's face lit up in a hesitant smile, his eyes drifted quickly up and down Kurt's body appreciatory, taking him in, before blushing and ducking his head. The man looked to be around Kurt's age, perhaps twenty-five years old, take or give, and he was absolutely *stunning*. Kurt had never seen anyone look that much like someone stepped right out of a fairytale. It was crazy. Kurt felt his cheeks redden, and he ducked his head as well.

"Hi," Kurt said tentatively, brushing a hand ineptly down his face. The boy lifted his head and gave him a crooked smile, bringing a glove-clad hand up and giving a little wave.

"Come on in, I'll make you a drink! What do you want?" Kurt walked back to the back of the front desk, searching through the drawers. He frowned, "I'm sorry, I only have coffee left, is that OK?" The man had taken his scarf and coat off, revealing the most adorable outfit consisting of an olive sweater vest that

clung tight to the shape of his body, and a black bowtie. *A bow tie*, Kurt thought, *kill me now*. The man nodded his head in reply as he stepped further into the shop, taking in the hundreds of books that were stacked around the room, his eyes glinting.

Kurt quietly brewed the coffee, letting the man search in peace. Apparently he wasn't a big talker. The stranger kept pulling fairytale books out from the shelves, flipping through them with adoration on his face, before gently putting them back, clasping his hands behind his back. Kurt studied him for a second; he moved so gallantly, keeping his posture straight and proper. He seemed to be from a different time, a time of gentlemen and chivalry. Kurt put his coffee down on the desk before pulling out a box with crème, milk and a bowl with little white sugar cubes. "Help yourself," he said softly, careful not to startle the man who seemed to be in his own world. The man gave yet another smile, still not saying anything, as he added two sugar cubes and a pinch of crème to his coffee, before taking a sip and swaying a bit on the spot, a happy smile still tugging at his lips.

Kurt waited for him to say something, but when it became evident that he wouldn't he asked, "What is your name?" The man seemed to ponder him for a bit, before reaching into his back pocket and pulling out a little book with blank papers. He grabbed a pencil from the front pocket of his vest and quickly scribbled out, "Blaine. What about you?"

Kurt stared at him, suddenly feeling sort of empty and very stupid. "So you're...?" he trailed off, not sure how to formulate himself. Blaine gave him sort of a sad smile, nodding almost unnoticeable. Kurt didn't know what to say. Blaine waited for a second, letting Kurt think it through a bit more, before pointing at Kurt's chest and raising one adorably triangular eyebrow. "Oh, sorry!" Kurt said, reaching out a hand, "I'm Kurt." Blaine's hand was warm and strong and felt like comfort and home. And as their eyes locked across the desk, Kurt once again felt the burning in his chest, emotions dancing in anticipation for things to come.

Chapter Two

After letting go of each other's hands - Kurt noticing happily the reluctance on not only his part, but Blaine's as well - Blaine had put a big hand on Kurt's bicep and squeezed lightly before taking his drink and turning back to the shelves. Kurt had picked up a small feather duster, walking around the store making sure everything was properly unsoiled. They kept sending shy glances at each other, blushing and hastily looking away when they caught the other looking.

Humming happily along with the quiet background music, Kurt started slightly as he felt a hand on his shoulder. Throwing a hand to his neck, he quickly turned and found Blaine standing right behind him, an amused, apologetic look on his face. He held out a beautiful green book and blinked twice. Kurt, who for a second had gotten a bit distracted by the huge, golden eyes, counting thousands of long, dark lashes, quickly recovered and took it from him. "The land of stories?" The golden title of the book seemed to glimmer in the dimmed lights. "You know that is a children's book, right?" Blaine nodded and shrugged, looking a bit embarrassed. Kurt smiled at him. "It's one of my favorites." Blaine beamed.

Pulling out a brown, leather wallet from his pocket, Blaine nodded his head towards the register. Kurt shook his head. "No, no, I've already emptied the register today, you take it." He thrust it back into Blaine's arms. Blaine's mouth fell open and he immediately tried to hand it back to Kurt, gesturing towards his wallet. Kurt giggled. "Honestly, Blaine, it's yours. Totally free. Stories are meant to be shared, right?" Blaine shook his head and pulled out the notebook again, quickly scribbling something.

"I want to pay you."

"Nope." Kurt popped the 'p', chuckling at the frustrated look on Blaine's face as he wrote again.

"You can't just give it to me!"

"Oops, too late, just did! Now, it is closing time and I am terribly tired. I hate to be rude but you have to go now." Kurt picked up Blaine's scarf and jacket and handed them to him, before ushering him out the door, snickering at Blaine's attempt of thrusting money into his hand. Out at the sidewalk, the autumn air cold and biting, Kurt finally wrapped Blaine's scarf around his neck so many times that Blaine, who had finally stopped struggling, looked like a big yellow burrito. "Come by again sometime?" Kurt asked hopefully. Blaine nodded and gave a happy little sigh. And then, as quick as lightning, he darted around Kurt's back, opened the door and threw two twenty dollar bills into the store, before running away with a gigantic,

goofy smile on his face, turning back and waving before disappearing down the streets. Kurt gaped after him, suddenly feeling particularly warm despite the cold.

Chapter Three

It was to be six days until Kurt and Blaine would meet again. It had been a stressful week, the constant flow of costumers keeping Kurt on his toes all day. Still his mind kept drifting back to the handsome man with the pretty curls and charming demeanor: the man who evidently was unable to speak. Kurt assumed he was mute, from birth or an accident or illness, he did not know. He could even have some sort of mental block or trauma from some sort of previous incident. Either way, he had not spoken a single word that day, and Kurt found himself drawn to him, intrigued.

It was 7 o'clock Friday night, the rain pouring down outside and the harsh wind throwing leaves against the windows, when a soaking wet figure hastily shoved through the door. Kurt was ringing up some books for a lovely old couple, happily chatting with them about how to properly ice cupcakes. He turned when the bell rang signaling Blaine's arrival and gave him a small wave and smile before turning back to the customers. Waving the couple goodbye a few minutes later, Kurt walked over to Blaine, stopping in front of him and taking him in. Blaine was wearing sweats and a black hoodie, which were soaked through, and his hair was falling into his face. He looked absolutely delicious, and Kurt gulped. Blaine was breathing harshly and holding his hand to his side. Kurt chuckled, "Jogging? In this weather?" Blaine shrugged with a nod of his head, a sated smile spreading over his face. There were still a few people in the store, looking through the variety of novels, several of them drinking hot beverages, but Kurt and Blaine paid them no mind, both smiling foolishly at each other, lost in their own thoughts.

"Excuse me, do you have *The Catcher In The Rye*?" Kurt bowed his head to see a young boy, maybe thirteen years old, with blonde hair that looked startling against his dark skin, look up at him expectantly. "Yeah, yeah, I do, just one second." Kurt turned back to Blaine. "Just, I don't know, make yourself comfortable. Have a drink or something, read a little? I'll be right back." Blaine just smiled at him and reached a hand out to touch his arm, before walking over to the coffee maker. *Damn*, Kurt thought with a blush as he watched Blaine walk away before quickly hurrying over to the boy. *Blaine's ass looks fantastic in slacks.*

Kurt shook hands with the last customer, giddy with joy; the man had bought all seven Harry Potter books *three times*! His triplets' birthday was coming up and apparently, "If my kids don't love Harry Potter I'm putting them up for adoption godammit!" Closing the door behind him, Kurt turned to find Blaine sitting on the floor with a book in his lap. Kurt leaned over him, reading behind his shoulder. "Whatcha reading there?" Blaine lifted his head to smile up at him, turning the book and shoving him the cover. "*To Kill a Mockingbird*? You really have excellent taste in literature. Hang on."

Kurt walked over to his bag and fished out his laptop, before joining Blaine on the floor, their thighs and arms only millimeters apart. Despite his wet clothes, Blaine seemed to radiate warmth. Or maybe he was just imagining it. He did feel a bit lightheaded. Opening a blank word document, Kurt handed the Macbook over to Blaine. "So that we can talk," he explained.

"Good thinking!" Blaine typed, "Do you own the place?"

"Yeah, just bought it a couple of months ago. It's... I love it." Kurt tugged at his sleeve.

"It's lovely, Kurt."

Kurt felt a big grin stretch across his face. "Tell me about you?"

Blaine turned his head to look at him for a second. Kurt didn't dare look back, scared of what he might do if their faces were that close in his current state of lightheadness, instead brushing some non existing dust of his pants. Blaine's eyes followed the movement of his hand, before turning back to the computer, typing quickly.

"My name is Blaine Anderson. I'm 26 years old, currently unemployed but I get by with the money I inherited from my grandfather. I was, as you've obviously guessed, born mute which sucks of course, but I get by. I love the sound of saxophones, snow and red wine. I spend my days doing whatever I feel like, mostly reading, working out, watching old movies and cooking. At night I like to sit at the roof of my house and watch the city breathe. New York was my first and only love."

Blaine's eyes never left Kurt's face as he read, carefully gauging his reactions. Kurt felt his eyes tear up as he came to the part about saxophones. It was something about the atmosphere in the room, the warmth from the candles and the sound of the storm from outside in addition to sitting so close to him that made him over emotional. He just wanted to wrap Blaine up in his arms and hold him. The last line had him wondering. How someone as excruciatingly attractive and perfectly charming could have gone his whole life without finding that special girl was a mystery to Kurt. Surely, Blaine should have had a whole line of them waiting for their chance. Kurt had had a couple of boyfriends himself since moving to New York, though none of them lasted more than a few months. He would keep searching, though. He knew that somewhere someone was waiting for him. Someone perfect.

After a few moments of silence Blaine nudged him in the side with his elbow, pointing at him. And Kurt told him about his life, about growing up in Homophobia, Ohio, about his mother passing away, how he had moved to New York to become a Broadway star but finding his peace working alongside books. He found himself rambling on about little details about himself that no one should really care about, but Blaine never seemed bothered. He kept nodding excitedly, his expressions changing from sympathetic to angry to amused, typing little responses to what he was saying on the laptop, sharing bits of pieces about himself in retort.

And just like that, Kurt and Blaine became friends.

Just like that.

Chapter Four

Kurt was on top of the world. He was practically skipping down the pavement, squinting his eyes and enjoying the warmth of the sun on his face. An old homeless man was playing the harmonica on the side of the street and Kurt, feeling particularly gracious, slipped a twenty into his cap, laughing as the man took his hat off for him. As he walked along, smiling at every person he passed, his mind kept drifting back to the day before and the moment he had shared with Blaine. They had spent almost two hours on that floor, asking each other trivial questions like their favorite color and previous pets. Kurt ran a finger down the soft material of his scarf: red, just like Blaine's favorite color. He thought about the things Blaine had told him, like how he was born in a small town in Italy but moved to New York city when he was just a toddler, how he loved cooking and played the violin. Kurt, while having had quite a few friends over the years, some better than others, had never really felt *understood*. He had felt loved and accepted, but never on quite the same level as everyone else. But with Blaine he felt differently, like they were closer somehow – on the same wavelength - and although his attraction started leaning towards feelings that were less than convenient to have about his straight friend, Kurt hoped they could become closer. He practically bounced into the mall where he would be meeting Rachel, ready to get his shopping on.

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Kurt huffed and pulled his coat closer around himself. The dark had begun creeping upon the city, and Kurt's high spirits had died down a bit. He was walking down the street, heading towards his apartment that was right next to the bookshop, his hands full of bags from the mall. He halted as he came to a questionable looking alley. He never took that route when it was dark, he knew how cruel New York could be at night, but he was trying to make it home to catch the evening's episode of White Collar and it would save him ten minutes. Straightening his back, he headed into the dark alley.

He was about halfway through when an eerie sensation made the hair on the back of his neck stand up, though when he turned back he saw nothing but a couple of dumpsters overflowing with garbage. He picked up his pace. He was just a couple of minutes away from his street when he saw the shadow in the corner of his eye. He whipped his head around and saw a large, dark figure walking a couple of feet behind him, quickly and determined headed towards him. First, Kurt tried to walk even faster, but when the man matched his pace, he started running. So did the man.

"Hey, baby, hold up! I'm not gonna hurt ya! Just stop for a second, let's talk!" The man's voice was dark and mocking as he shouted after him. Kurt's heart was beating wildly in his chest as he ran as fast as he

could, turning into his street. He could see his bookshop just a few feet away, his house a few feet away from that again. Someone was leaning against the window of the shop, and Kurt shouted desperately to catch his attention, "Help! Please!" The man straightened up, and took a few steps towards him. And as he came closer, Kurt could just make out his features. It was Blaine. Of course it was Blaine. Kurt ran straight into his arms, and Blaine immediately pushed him behind his back. The stranger had slowed his steps when he saw Blaine, and now seemed reluctant. Kurt briefly wondered why - Blaine was a rather small guy after all, and the other man was probably six foot three or something - but when he saw Blaine's face he understood why the man looked downright scared. Blaine was *seething*. Wearing a tight black sweater drenched in sweat that showed off his muscles, *and helloooooo muscles*, his hands balled into fists, Blaine looked positively *dangerous*. The man held up his hands as Blaine started heading towards him, "Hey, man, I was just kiddin' around. I wasn't gonna do nothing," he slurred, obviously drunk out of his mind. The man walked backwards, stumbling a bit. "I'm gonna go now, leave you two alone, alright? No need to get violent here," he continued rambling. When he deemed the distance far enough, he quickly turned around and started sprinting back the way they came.

Blaine turned around; eyes filled with a mixture of rage and worry, and cupped a hand to Kurt's cheek, his other hand winding around his waist. Kurt fisted his hands in the material of Blaine's shirt and sighed in relief. "Thank you," he said, resting his forehead against Blaine's shoulder. Blaine wrapped both arms around him and held him close, letting him calm down. It felt so safe in Blaine's arms, comforting and calming. Kurt felt his pulse slow down. After a few minutes Blaine gently pushed him away so his eyes could ask the silent question.

"Yeah, I'm alright. Thanks to you," Kurt whispered, sniffing a bit. Blaine pondered him for a bit, before nodding.

"I live right there," Kurt pointed towards his apartment, "Can you come with me? I-" he trailed off, his voice shaking. Blaine furrowed his eyebrows and nodded, before pulling Kurt with him towards the building, holding him close to his side.

Kurt unlocked the door, and let Blaine step in before him. Although it wasn't big, Kurt was very fond of his home. It was warm and inviting, with wooden floors and candles and decorations spread around. To his immense embarrassment, Kurt's stomach growled loudly, and Blaine turned to him with a grin. Kurt blushed, "Sorry, I just haven't eaten since breakfast. Would you, um... like to join me for dinner?" Kurt bit his lip.

Blaine started running on the spot, pinching his nose and waving his hand. Kurt laughed, “You can have a shower first if you’d like. I can probably find some clothes that will fit you.” Blaine’s eyes seemed to darken for a moment, before he nodded and smiled.

“The towels are under the sink. I’ll just put the clothes outside the door meanwhile.”

Blaine put a hand on his shoulder before closing the bathroom door after him. It wasn’t until Kurt had put the clothes down, and heard the water start running, that he really realized the situation. Blaine Anderson - gorgeous, stunning, hot as hell, *straight* as hell -Blaine Anderson, was naked. Right behind that door. In Kurt’s house. In Kurt’s shower. And he would be wearing Kurt’s clothes. While having dinner with him.

Well, shit.

Chapter Five

Kurt busied himself while waiting for Blaine to finish his shower by putting his new clothes away and changing into a soft blue sweater and grey slacks – stylish slacks, thank you very much - trying not to think about how Blaine looked right now, all wet and soaped in and... *no, Kurt, stop it.* Just as he placed a new absolutely gorgeous burgundy tie carefully in a drawer, he heard two loud knocks from the living room, followed by the sound of the front door bursting open and two voices shouting, “Uncle Kurt!” and “Hello?” Rushing to the living room, Kurt immediately found himself with an armful of mustard yellow and brown.

“Rose,” Kurt laughed, hugging his niece tightly to his chest. There was nothing on earth he loved dearer than Finn and Rachel’s three year old daughter, Rose, with her huge brown eyes and too-big yellow sweater that reached down to her knees. As soon as he had put her down she instantly darted into the hallway to explore his apartment. Finn pulled him into a big hug.

“You forgot one of your bags from your shopping and Rachel told me to go give it to you,” he said, handing over a black paper bag, and grinning widely.

“Oh, the boots! Thanks, Finn!”

“Hey, are you alright? You look a bit pale,” Finn studied him for a bit, and Kurt had to give him credit for being so attentive. He could usually be a bit oblivious, but he had one of the biggest hearts and was the best man of all the people Kurt knew.

“Yeah, I’m fine. There was this guy who was... bothering me, but Blaine, you know, fixed it an-”

“Blaine? Who’s B-,”

“I found a man in the bathroom. His hair is curly.” Finn was interrupted by Rose’s reappearance, skipping happily into the room, towing a confused looking, freshly showered Blaine, clad in Kurt’s red sweater that was a bit tight on him and black slacks that were a tad too long, by his hand. “He didn’t say hi to me. I said hi to him and he didn’t say hi back,” she sounded a bit affronted but carried on, “But I still like him. He is pretty. Is he your boyfriend Kurt? Are you Kurt’s boyfriend?” Kurt and Blaine both blushed as the little girl looked expectantly up at Blaine.

"No, sweetie, he is not my boyfriend," Kurt said, turning his back to Finn who had raised one eyebrow. A wet, incredibly attractive stranger hidden in Kurt's bathroom probably did not sound as innocent as it really was, and Kurt hurried to talk, "Blaine can't speak. He is mute. You know what that is, right, Rose?"

Rose's eyes widened. "He can't speak?" She turned to Kurt. "Kurt, maybe you have to kiss him! Like in the Little Mermaid! Kiss him, Kurt! Kiss him, kiss him, kiss hi-,"

"I don't think Blaine here is a mermaid, honey. Someone's just born that way. I'm sorry, man," Finn said, giving Blaine an apologetic smile and mouthed the word, "*Sorry.*"

Rose pouted and hugged Blaine's leg. "I'm sad you can't talk, Blaine." Blaine just smiled and crouched down. Rose immediately put her arms around his neck in a hug, clinging to him while he patted her hair and kissed her cheek, before standing up again, taking her hand in his. Kurt felt his heart swell at the sight. Blaine was even good with kids – what the hell couldn't this man do?

A slightly uncomfortable silence spread through the room, and Kurt looked between the two men.

"This is my brother, Finn," he said finally, gesturing, "and this is Blaine, my... friend." Finn stepped forward and Blaine took his offered hand with the hand that wasn't being held prisoner by Rose. "And this little princess is my niece, Rose." Rose stretched her neck to smile brilliantly up at Blaine, who waved and chuckled, stroking her hair back from her face.

"Blaine and I were just making dinner if you guys want so-,"

"Oh no, no, we wouldn't want to interrupt your dat- dinner," Finn said, "Rachel's cooking tonight, anyway." He pulled Kurt into another hug and patted Blaine on the shoulder. "You two have fun. Come on, honey, say bye."

Rose let go of Blaine's hand and reached her arms out to the both of them. Kurt and Blaine allowed her to pull them both into a three-man hug, and both smiled bashfully as their faces were brought close together behind her back.

"Bye Kurt, bye Blaine!" she said, before skipping back to her father who picked her up in one arm.

"Bye, sweetheart," Kurt said. Blaine blew her a kiss, and she giggled fiercely.

“Bye, guys.” Finn didn’t leave without sending Kurt a final, knowing grin.

And as the door slammed shut behind them Kurt and Blaine found themselves, for the first time, completely alone.

Chapter Six

"So... you hungry?" Kurt turned towards Blaine, his face still slightly red from embarrassment. Blaine grinned, giving two thumbs up.

"Great! I just have to check and see what ingredients I have," Kurt stopped by the couch to get his computer from his bag and handed it over to Blaine. "So that we can, you know... talk."

Blaine nodded and followed him to the kitchen, placing the computer on the counter facing Kurt who was pulling eggs, pasta, cheese, bread and everything else he could find out of the fridge and cupboards of his tiny, wooden kitchen. Blaine opened a word document and quickly typed, "Do you live here by yourself?"

Kurt glanced up to read.

"Yeah, though, as you just witnessed, my dear brother and his family likes to stop by unexpectedly at every hour at the day." Kurt scrunched his nose and emptied two liters lumpy milk down the drain. He heard the sound of Blaine typing and looked over at the Macbook.

"No girlfriend, then?" Blaine wouldn't meet his eyes but stared down at his bare feet, kicking the carpet. Kurt stared at him incredulously. *Girlfriend?*

"I... no, no girlfriend. No. No. I don't – that's... no."

"Why not?"

Blaine finally looked up and their eyes met. Kurt swallowed, clutching a pack of flour to his chest. "I don't like girls. I'm... I'm gay. But that's okay with you, though, right? Because you don't seem like the kind of guy who would have a problem with that, you know, and it would really suck if you are because I really like you and you are so nice and sweet, but if you are then please just go because I don't need-" Blaine had to walk over and put his hands on each of Kurt's shoulders while profusely shaking his head to get him to stop his rambling.

"Sorry," Kurt mumbled, looking down at the floor.

"Kurt, I'm gay, too," Blaine wrote. Immediately a feeling of hope and relief so intense that it nearly choked him spread through Kurt's chest, and he couldn't stop his face from breaking into a huge grin, which Blaine matched.

"Great!" Kurt exclaimed, instantly blushing, "I mean, that's, um... you know... I can't really cook. Think you can come up with something out of this?" He gestured to the articles of food on the countertop, hiding his face behind his hand. Blaine responded by rolling up his sleeves with a wink that made Kurt's heart flutter and getting to work.

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"What was your favorite thing to do as a child?" Kurt asked, swallowing down his last bit of food, containing himself from moaning. Watching Blaine work the kitchen had been amazing. He moved so fluidly, adding spices and tasting the sauce with a spoon before frowning and adding more herbs, and as Kurt had taken the first bite of chicken and pasta his eyes had dropped shut and his head tipped back with a low, "*Blaine.*"

They were currently sitting cross-legged on top of the kitchen table, chatting lightly about everything between heaven and earth.

Blaine rolled his eyes before typing, "Duh. Blanket fort."

"Blanket fort," Kurt replied. "Blanket fort. Oh my gosh, Blaine, we should totally make a blanket fort!" Blaine's eyes lit up in childlike excitement, and he jumped off the counter, dragging Kurt down with him.

Together they practically ran to the tiny closet in the hallway and grabbed all the blankets, duvets and pillows they could find.

Half an hour later and they were finished. In the middle of the bathroom, supported by ropes fastened to the top of shelves and the shower, stood the most magnificent blanket fort ever made.

"You're right, the warm tiles do make it cozier," Blaine wrote on the laptop resting on his stomach. They were laying side by side on top of dozens of soft pillows, about three blankets slung over them. The space inside the fort was rather limited and their arms brushed underneath the covers, making them both blush into the darkness.

“Thank you for tonight, Blaine. It was really nice.” Kurt’s voice was nearly a whisper.

“Thank you for letting me in your house,” Blaine paused for a second. “I’m really glad I went into your bookshop that night, you know, that I met you. I’ve never had many friends.”

“Me neither,” Kurt breathed. “And I’m really glad you did, too.”

“Being mute, I’ve always been different, you know? It’s like – people were always nice and sympatric and all, and they would always talk to me in the beginning. But then, after a while, having to rely on me having something to type on would always become too much of a bother. And after a while they always give up,” Blaine looked over at Kurt, his eyes shining with tears before continuing typing. “But you were so nice and understanding, and I finally felt like I found someone who would actually take the time for me, sort of. Like I am worth it. I just wanted to thank you for that.”

Kurt felt his own eyes start to prick and had to swallow a few times to stop from choking. “You are worth it, Blaine. I mean, I know we’ve just met and that we don’t really know each other that well, but I know you’re worth it. I won’t give up on you.”

It was quiet for five long minutes. Kurt felt his eyes start to drop. Right before he fell down into unconsciousness, he felt a soft, tentative hand brushing his own, before sliding into it and squeezing. Kurt and Blaine both fell to sleep with a smile on their faces that night.

Chapter Seven

Kurt woke up with his face pressed into the pillow. Turning over, gasping for air, he squinted into the darkness, confused. The spot next to him was empty. Blaine was gone. It was, however, still warm, so it could not have been long since he left. Kurt rubbed his eyes and crawled out of the blanket fort, his thoughts still dazed with sleep. As he padded barefoot into the living room, he noticed the illuminating green clock on the microwave revealing the time to be 3.40am. Kurt filled a glass with water and leaned against the kitchen counter to clear his head. Why had Blaine left? It was not as though they had planned to fall asleep together, but the least he could have done was to leave him a message or something, telling him where he had gone. Just as feelings of doubt and hurt started seeping into his brain did he notice the silhouette of someone sitting on the small porch outside the living room. Kurt had to take a moment to collect himself, before softly opening the door.

Blaine was absolutely breathtaking; his face illuminated by the city lights that made his eyelashes cast long shadows down his face, his eyes huge with longing and adoration. Even though the porch had heating, Blaine was snuggled into a big blanket, his feet propped up on the railing, and he turned his head as he heard Kurt's arrival.

"Hi," Kurt breathed, standing awkwardly by the bench. Blaine lifted one arm in invitation, and he slung the blanket over him as Kurt settled close by his side, his head dropping onto Blaine's shoulder. They sat like that for a while, snuggled together on Kurt's sixth story porch, gazing over the skyline of New York - warm despite the cold wind. Eventually, Blaine used his phone to type out a message, holding it up for Kurt to read.

"I woke up thirsty, and then I noticed the view. I haven't had the chance to see the city like this for a while."

"It's stunning," Kurt whispered.

That was all that needed to be said. And as he once again felt Blaine's hand hesitantly slipping into his own, threading their fingers together, Kurt gathered up all the courage he could muster and leaned in to press his lips softly - barely even there - to Blaine's cheek, before blushing and staring determinedly straight ahead. And from the corner of his eye he could see Blaine's face spreading into a smile so bright it put all of New York to shame.

“-OH, THIS HAS GOTTA BE A GOOD LIFE, THIS HAS GOTTA BE THE GOOD LIFE, THIS COULD REALLY BE THE GOOD LIFE; GOOD LIFE, GOOD LIFE-“

Kurt spun around, giggling as he spilled batter over his pants, singing by his heart's means as he flipped another pancake onto the platter

He guessed it was just something about waking up in the arms of the amazing, kind, sweet, wonderful, *perfect* man he had a crush on, his soft curls tickling his face, and being pulled closer when he tried to get up, that put him in kind of a good mood. Kind of fantastic mood. Kind of the best mood he had ever been in. And God, he loved this song.

. “-WHAT IS THERE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT?”

As the song faded out and ended, Kurt slung his arms out, splashing batter from the spatula in his hands all over the walls, and giving a deep bow to his invisible audience. He jumped about three feet in the air as he heard clapping coming from the hallway. Leaning against the doorway with a gigantic smile that made his eyes crinkle stood Blaine, sleep muzzled and sated, clapping enthusiastically, his eyes trained on Kurt.

“Blaine! How long have you been standing there?” Kurt felt his face turn red, “Oh God, did I wake you? I woke you, didn't I? I'm so sorry!” Blaine's smile just widened, and he walked over to Kurt, throwing his arms around him and pulled him into a big hug. Kurt's heart nearly exploded. *Shit, he smells amazing.*

Blaine pulled away after a long minute and stared at him for a while, before leaning in and pressing a light kiss on Kurt's forehead. Kurt couldn't keep from breaking into a goofy smile, his face undoubtedly bright pink. What the hell had he done to deserve this?

“I made pancakes.”

Chapter Eight

“Can I... oh my god, I don’t know why I’m getting embarrassed now, I mean we’ve slept together – oh god, not *slept together* - but you know, *slept together*, and I really shouldn’t be embarrassed by this, but...” Kurt rambled, feeling his face getting redder by each word uncontrollably spilling from his mouth, looking anywhere but directly into Blaine’s politely expectant yet obviously amused face. “Can I... can I have your number?” he finished lamely, stuffing his hands into his pockets.

Blaine, looking thoroughly amused, held out his iPhone, and Kurt quickly added himself in his contacts before handing it back - Blaine instantly typing out a text.

After eating their pancakes in a comfortable silence, Kurt had excused himself to the bathroom to get ready for the day, while Blaine entertained himself by reading the newspaper on Kurt’s Macbook. As Blaine had followed him down the stairs he had gingerly placed a guiding hand on the small of Kurt’s back, effectively causing Kurt to nervously trip over his own feet. They were now standing, facing each other, outside Kurt’s bookshop.

Blaine grinned slyly up at him as Kurt felt his phone vibrate in his pocket.

“You are cute when you blush.”

Shit.

“Oh, wow... well, I must be absolutely adorable right now then,” Kurt said, flushing and ducking his head. *Blaine is flirting with me, Blaine is flirting with me, Blaine is flirting with me!*

Blaine had to place one finger underneath Kurt’s chin and tilt his head up to get him to look at the phone he was holding up, causing thousand of butterflies to erupt in Kurt’s stomach.

“I had a really nice time, Kurt. Thank you.”

“I did too,” Kurt said, “Will you... will you stop by again sometime?”

Blaine grinned, “Most definitely. Expect to see a lot of me in the future, Mr. Hummel.” Stuffing his phone back into his jeans, Blaine stepped forward and took one of Kurt’s hands, gently kissing his cheek, before walking away with a wave and a smile, an adorable blush coloring his cheeks.

Kurt had only just turned the vintage sign on the door from, ‘closed’ to ‘open’ before his phone lit up, signaling a new text.

“You also look cute when you sleep.”

And if Kurt couldn’t keep from grinning stupidly throughout the whole day... well, then it certainly wasn’t his fault.

“He can’t talk *at all*?”

“No Rachel, that is usually what being mute entails,” Kurt rolled his eyes fondly at Rachel’s horrified expression.

“Oh my god, Kurt, that is so sad,” Rachel said, her eyes trained on her husband and daughter who were playing with their huge Dalmatian which they had named *Joe* out of all the suitable dog names in the world. Her expression brightened and she turned to Kurt, “But he is hot, right? And gay? And you *like* him?”

Kurt sighed, “Yes. Yes he is. And yes, I do. Of course I do.”

It was Saturday morning and when Kurt had gotten a call from Rose, excitedly asking him to join them all on a trip to the park, Kurt had not hesitated in his agreement. He was now sharing a bench with Rachel, who, after having talked constantly for one hour, had generously listened to his tales about Blaine Anderson, the handsome gentleman who had swept Kurt Hummel off his feet. He hadn’t seen Blaine since their goodbye three days ago, but he had received a few texts – all of them so sweet Kurt squealed internally just thinking about it. It seemed as even though Blaine had been tentative and a bit shy in the beginning that he was actually quite the charmer; able to reduce Kurt to something similar of a thirteen year old fangirl with a simple good morning text.

After Finn and Rose had ran over, both exclaiming with voices raspy from exhaustion, “Hungry!” they had all headed home to shower and get dressed, agreeing to meet at the new Italian restaurant in the city in two hours.

Rachel, looking amazing in a red strapless dress, straightened his midnight blue tie as he met with the tiny family in the entrance of the restaurant, and Finn slang an arm around his shoulders jovially as they got seated. The restaurant, Buca Di Beppo, was wonderful; dimmed lights and tasteful red tablecloths emitting a warm feeling, beautiful waiters clad in black expensive suits and dresses sliding gracefully between tables, taking orders and charming the customers into emptying their pockets in tips.

“What do you want to eat, sweetie?” Rachel said, leaning over Rose, who was clad in a darling red dress that matched her mother’s, pointing at pictures of food and explaining what they were. Kurt hid his laughter behind a napkin as a tall blonde waiter flirted shamelessly with a completely oblivious Finn, who ordered them all red wine and appetizers.

The food was delicious and the conversation was light and pleasing. Kurt felt perfectly comfortable as he nipped at his wine studying the other guests, mostly young couples out on dates. He sighed longingly as he watched a giggling girl being fed spaghetti from a fork of her boyfriend. He wanted that; romance - love. And he wanted it with Blaine. Blaine, who right at that moment apparently found it convenient to walk into the restaurant looking flawlessly dashing in a dark suit with an open collar, no tie. Kurt dropped his fork in surprise, and Rachel, Finn and Rose all turned their heads to see what Kurt was staring at.

“Blaine!” Rose exclaimed, jumping down from her chair and running towards him.

Kurt felt his heart drop into his stomach. Because Blaine wasn’t alone. A tall, devastatingly handsome man with brown hair and eyes so blue that Kurt could see it from where he was sitting, accompanied him, and they were obviously on a date. As Rose grabbed the hand of a pleasantly surprised Blaine, pulling him towards their table, Kurt felt nauseous. He wanted to hide, to run away, to bury himself ten feet under the ground. Blaine was on a date. With someone else. Kurt felt so stupid; of course Blaine didn’t like him back. Kurt had absolutely nothing on the man who, besides Blaine himself, was literally the most attractive person he had ever seen in his life.

Rose, Blaine, and the stranger who had trailed behind them, a bemused look on his face, stopped in front of their table and Kurt dropped his eyes to the napkin he was nervously tearing apart in his hands.

"I found Blaine," Rose said proudly, "and a pretty man followed us."

"Pretty, huh? I'm afraid that next to a beauty like you I'm practically invisible, sweetie," the stranger said, patting Rose lightly on the head. *Damn you and your charming charmingness*, Kurt ground his teeth bitterly. Rose shone with joy at the praise. "Hi, my name is Cooper. I take it you know Blaine?" the man continued, holding his hand out. Finn shook it firmly.

Kurt wished Rachel would stop looking at him like that.

"Finn," Finn said politely, nodding at Blaine in greeting, "and this is my wife, Rachel, our daughter, Rose, and my brother Kurt". Kurt shook the man's hand with a forced smile when his name was mentioned.

"Nice to meet you," he said, feeling Blaine's eyes on him but refusing to meet his gaze.

"Kurt," Rachel hissed, stabbing him in the ribs with her elbow. He finally looked up, eyes automatically pulled towards the light from Blaine's phone.

"Cooper is my brother."

Kurt could practically hear the heavenly angel choir appearing in a cloud of light in the ceiling. "Hallelujah, hallelujah, halle-lu-jah!"

Chapter Nine

"- and it turns out it is our grandmother! Remember, Blaine?" Cooper snickered and the whole table burst out in laughter. The evening had consisted of excellent food, great company, and Cooper Anderson's never-ending stream of embarrassing stories starring his younger brother. Kurt's cheeks hurt from all the smiling he had been doing, and he glanced over at Blaine on the other side of the table, who's head was bowed and cheeks red as he laughed bashfully down at his plate. Turning to Cooper, Blaine used his hands to sign a pattern, which Cooper translated, "Blaine wonders if I could please find anything else to say that won't make you think he's some sort of idiot," Cooper smirked, "but I'm afraid I don't want to do that. I'm having too much fun." A fresh wave of laughter erupted.

The Anderson brothers were quite the pair; where Blaine was shy and modest, Cooper was boisterous and cocky in a tasteful and not really unpleasant way, yet they also shared tons of qualities such as charm, benevolence, politeness and ridiculously good looks. *Seriously*, Kurt though somewhat enviously as Cooper slapped Blaine goodheartedly on the back, *what the hell does their parents look like?*

It had been surprisingly easy and not awkward having Cooper and Blaine join the table. Their handsome looks and demeanor had much like Kurt, captivated Rachel and Finn had been ecstatic finally having someone to discuss sports with. Rose, who had insisted on being seated between them, had spent the evening being showered with compliments from the two brothers who instantly adored her, and Kurt had spent the evening sharing shy glances with Blaine who would sometimes nudge his foot with his own under the table, causing Kurt to giggle and the others to stare at him curiously for his seemingly spontaneous outburst.

"So, Kurt," Cooper turned to Kurt, a devious grin on his face, "I have heard a lot about you." Blaine's head immediately shot up. He stared at his brother, horrified.

"Oh, really?" Kurt said, curious. "Like what?"

"Well, like how your ass- ouch!" Cooper's head snapped to Blaine who glared at him furiously, frantically shaking his head. Cooper pouted and turned back to Kurt. "As I was going to say before I... *stabbed my toe in the table* - like how you are extremely intelligent and have excellent hygiene and how that new shampoo you're using makes your hair look absolutely *lovely* -" Blaine reached out a hand, threatening to ruffle Cooper's hair, and Cooper backed away, putting his hands up in defense. "Sorry, sorry, I'm gonna shut up now, take it easy." It was a heavenly evening, indeed.

-

"I have to pee," Rose somewhat later loudly announced to the table.

"I'll take her," Kurt said as Rachel moved to get up, taking Rose's hand and ignoring Rachel's wink as Blaine wept his mouth on a napkin and stood up as well.

The hallway outside the lavatories was blissfully quiet in comparison to the diner hall; dark wood paneled the walls, a plush, dark burgundy carpet muted the footsteps of passing people and a great chandelier cast a soft light over the room. Kurt and Blaine stood facing each other, leaning against the wall as they waited for Rose.

"So..." Kurt said after a few moments of awkward silence, "your brother?"

Blaine smiled and shrugged, being forced by the absence of a translator to once again pull out his phone.

"Yes, Cooper's visiting from Los Angeles. Sorry about him."

"Oh, no," Kurt said, "I like him."

Blaine's face fell for a second before hastily going back to a pleasant smile.

"He was always the good looking one," Blaine typed.

"Oh, please," Kurt sniffed before he could stop himself. Blaine's face lit up in a smile so wide it made his eyes crinkle, and they both looked away from each other, blushing. Kurt had been doing more blushing in the past weeks than he had in the past twenty-six years of his life, and, to be honest, he loved it.

"Cooper's visiting from Los Angeles," Blaine wrote. "He is an actor, though not very successfully so. He gets by from our grandfather's heritage, too."

"Blaine..." Kurt hesitated before asking, "where are your parents?" A sad, melancholy look captured Blaine's face, and he gently brushed his fingers against his chest, over his heart.

"They are dead. My parents got shot when I was one. The neighborhood we lived in in Italy was rough, lots of criminality and violence and stuff. My grandparents immediately rushed me and Cooper to New York,

taking care of us until they died as well. I was eighteen.” Kurt gasped, and Blaine looked over at him, a sad smile tugging at his lips. Noticing Kurt’s shocked expression, his own softened and he stepped closer to him, bringing his hand up but lowering it again before it could touch Kurt’s cheek. “It’s okay, Kurt. I’m okay,” he wrote.

“My mom died when I was six. Cancer,” Kurt murmured, swallowing back the tears that threatened to spill.

“I’m so sorry, Kurt.” Blaine stared at him concerned.

“She was amazing and I miss her a lot. But it’s okay, you know? It’s okay now. I have my dad, his wife Carole, Finn and Rachel, Rose and... well, you.” Kurt swallowed thickly. Blaine gently took his hand and squeezed it, before letting go again.

“You do.”

Another silence spread over them, heavy but peaceful, both in their own thoughts. Kurt felt emotionally closer to Blaine than he ever had, with anyone, really, feeling more grateful than ever that Blaine had chosen to walk into his shop - into his life. He let out a breath and ran a hand down his face.

Blaine suddenly looked over at him, eyes wide and sparkling. He wrote something on his phone, hiding the screen away from Kurt with his hand and paused for a few moments, seemingly deliberating if he should show it. Looking up again, meeting Kurt’s genuine smile, Blaine moved his hand, and looked away, allowing Kurt to read the screen. Kurt felt his heart speed up, his pulse quicken and a feeling of exhilaration and glee spread through his chest. The message was simple, really, but to Kurt, who had never had those words uttered to him before, at least not in that sense, it meant the world:

“You look beautiful tonight.”

As Blaine nervously turned his head back, and their eyes met in an intense connection, the door shot open with a bang and Rose skipped out, babbling happily as she took each of their hands, dragging them back to the dining hall, “There were pink towels! Pink! I love pink! Pink is my favorite color. In my house the towels are white, but these ones were pink! Isn’t that fantastic? I wish al-”

And if Rachel, Finn or Cooper wondered why Blaine and Kurt returned flushed and grinning from ear to ear, they thankfully didn’t comment on it.

Yes, it was a definitely lovely evening.

Chapter Ten

Monday arrived and with it the first day of winter, air biting cold, though no sign of snow. Kurt loved the winter; he loved the bowed trees, branches hanging low from the white blanket that covered all of New York City, he loved the dark nights where he could rightfully with good conscience curl up with a big cup of cocoa and watch the snow fall outside his window. He loved the hot baths he would take when he had been outside in the cold, and he loved the children dragging each other around on sleighs in the park. Right now, however, the thing he loved most about winter was the bundle of freezing customers it brought to his shop, huddling together and seeking warmth among the books.

“Thanks sweetie, have a nice day.” Kurt winked at a gorgeous redhead teenage girl, handing over her change and chuckling as she blushed and smiled brightly before taking her newly bought book and heading out, brushing past a handsome man as he entered the store.

“He was right, this *is* a lovely little shop you’ve got here.” Cooper Anderson, wearing a dark coat and fitted slacks, looked around with a fairly impressed expression while making his way to the counter.

“Cooper! Hi!” Kurt said, surprised, as the strikingly good-looking man leaned against the desk with his hands in his pocket.

“Good day, Kurt,” he grinned, “how are you today?” Kurt smoothed his hair with his hand, he couldn’t help but feel self-conscious next the attractive Anderson, though decently less so than his brother whether Kurt was biased or not.

“Good! I’m good. How about you? You want something to drink? Coffee? Tea?”

“Coffee would be great, thanks.” Cooper removed his coat and sat down in one of the plush love seats in a far corner of the shop while Kurt pulled out a cup (he couldn’t serve his future brother in law beverages in a cheap paper cup like the other customers got, what would he think?) filled it with steaming black coffee and poured a cup of lemon tea for himself, before sitting down opposite him in another love seat. Though he might feel like a horrifyingly ugly beast in comparison, it was impossible to feel uncomfortable with Cooper. He had this sort of aura of warmth, much like Blaine, that just put him at ease.

Cooper took a sip of his cup, politely saying, “Excellent coffee,” before setting the cup at the small table between them, placing his hands in his lap and leaning forward.

"I know you must be wondering why I'm here. I just wanted to have a little chat with you." Cooper smiled reassuringly as Kurt gulped."

Oh, about anything in particular, or...?" Kurt was curious, during the dinner a couple of nights ago he hadn't really had the chance to talk much with Cooper, simply enjoying his stories and listening to the others talk.

"Well, yes... It's regarding Blaine. Do you like him?"

Kurt choked on his tea.

"I... what?" he spluttered, feeling a blush beginning to creep over his face. Cooper rubbed his eyes tiredly.

"Look, Kurt, I know this is very... well, *forward*, of me. But you have to understand; Blaine has never *been* with anyone before. I've seen a lot of shit happening to him because of his *condition*," his voice hardened and his mouth twitched, "Now, I don't know how you feel about him, I honestly don't know anything about you, though you seem like a really good guy. Blaine has a tendency to trust people who don't deserve it, which often put him in sucky situations, but I will not allow anyone or anything to hurt my brother. I'm not saying this to scare you or anything, you understand, though, right?"

Kurt was strangely touched by the sweetness of the gesture. Turns out Cooper Anderson was a big softie at heart.

"I understand that, and I would honestly never intentionally hurt Blaine. He is... well, probably the best guy I've ever met, and I wouldn't dream of abusing his trust. Seriously, though, you don't have to worry – I don't think Blaine will ever, you know, *like me*, so that's, like, not an issue..."

Cooper raised an eyebrow at him and smirked.

"Oh, Kurt. Sweet, sweet, delusional little Kurt," he leaned back in his chair, "Thank you, though. I hope I can trust you. I think I can; you seem sincere," Cooper mused and Kurt smiled and took another sip of his tea.

"You know," Cooper said after a while, "I can see why Blaine likes this place so much. Despite the obvious reason I mean, this place is practically overflowing with books. Dear little brother has always had his nose stuck in a book ever since he learned how to read, that little nerd." Kurt chuckled, imagining a tiny, curly

haired little Blaine with glasses on his nose and a bowtie around his neck, reading a lexicon five times bigger than himself.

“Yes, that’s how I met him, alright. He bought a fairytale book.” Thinking about the memory of Blaine first walking into his bookshop made Kurt’s stomach twist, and a smile spread over his face.

“Hah!” Cooper exclaimed, “I’m so not surprised, Blaine has always loved fairytales! Our granddad would always read them to us, even though I was like twelve,” he rolled his eyes, but with an unmistakably nostalgic sad smile.

They chatted for another hour about their jobs, hobbies and other basic stuff you tell people you’re just getting to know. Kurt found that he really liked Cooper, he was charming and funny, and actually really intelligent; he was a doctor after all, unemployed, yes, but still. Their conversation was cut to a short as Cooper got a text, and rose from his seat.

“I have to go. I have a date with this girl named Summer. Total babe,” he winked and Kurt rolled his eyes.

“Yes, boobs and stuff... yum,” he sniffed and Cooper laughed out loud, slapping his shoulder.

“Preferences, preferences.”

“Well, it was great talking to you, Kurt, I hope we can do it again sometime,” Cooper said as Kurt held the door open for him.

“Absolutely! Have fun on your date! And no funny business,” Kurt playfully reprimanded and Cooper laughed again.

“You sound like my brother. Well, good night, Kurtsie!” He waved as he headed out on the street, pulling his coat closer around himself.

“You too! Say hi to Blaine from me if you see him.” Kurt shut the door after him with a grin just as a message ticked in his phone. His heart jumped as he saw that it was from Blaine, and he quickly opened it.

“I’m in a pet store. Kurt, they have puppies! They are so cute!” Kurt grinned, quickly typing his response.

"Puppies generally are really cute creatures I have heard."

"Kurt, I want a dog. Should I get a dog? I should get a dog."

Kurt could practically feel Blaine's excitement.

"So get one! YOLO and all that!"

"Oh my god, you did not just YOLO me. Kurt. Seriously. Kurt. No."

Kurt laughed, throwing his head back as he walked back to the counter to empty the register and close up.

"Kurt, I don't have enough money on me. But I want a dog. Can I take one? Would you stop liking me if I steal a dog?"

"I will under no circumstances be associated with a dog-napper. No."

"L." A new text ticked in before Kurt had the chance to answer.

"Their eyes, Kurt. They are looking at me with those eyes! This brown one just spoke to me, honestly, 'Blaine take me home, love me Blaine' "

Kurt giggled. Blaine was seriously the cutest thing ever.

"Step away from the puppies, Anderson."

"I am in misery."

"Step. Away."

"Fine, I'm leaving."

Kurt lightly dusted a few shelves, while whistling, as the last text ticked in.

"Fine, I'm outside now. In the cold. Alone and lonely. Just like the puppies. I blame this on you."

“On *me*? How is this my fault?”

“You told me you wouldn’t hang out with a dog-napper. Kurt?”

“Yes?”

“I like you better than puppies.”

Kurt almost dropped his dusting feather – coming from Blaine, that was pretty much the best compliment he could ever receive.

Chapter Eleven

Kurt was miserable. Well, not *miserable*, more like tired and grumpy and he had spilled coffee on his new crisp, white shirt that morning and permanently stained the fabric. The week had gone by in a flurry of work, tons of customers needing his attention at every hour of the day, which of course was excellent for business, but also extremely stressful and tiresome for him personally. In addition, he had not seen Blaine for *six days*. They had exchanged a few texts here and there, sure, but Blaine had not stopped by the bookshop a single time, and Kurt was too apprehensive about the whole thing to ask him to simply hang out. Though they had grown rather close over the past week, there was still an invisible tension between them and Kurt was not exactly sure if Blaine felt they were good enough friends for casual meet ups, and it really, *really* bothered him. He found himself craving Blaine's company, his warmth and tendency to search physical contact in form of casual touches, but also the special smile he gave Kurt that he had not seen him direct at anyone else but him. He *missed* Blaine. Even more than he missed Rose – which was really saying something. This was bad.

Shit, Kurt thought as he threw himself down head first on the couch, rubbing his hands over his face and taking a deep breath, releasing it through his mouth. *I'm in love with Blaine. I am very, extremely in love with Blaine.*

Hugging a pillow close to his chest, Kurt stared up at the ceiling of his living room. He must have known for a while, subconsciously. It was inevitable, really - nothing he could have done to prevent it. And it was all Blaine's fault. How dared he walk into Kurt's life with his endearing little quirks and liquid eyes capable of drawing Kurt in and capturing him completely with just one look? "And that *ass*," Kurt groaned out loud, feeling absolutely insane. And now there was nothing he could do about it. Blaine could turn out to be a puppy-killing, children-slaying psychopathic maniac, and Kurt would still forgive him and fall dreamily into his arms. With no way out, he supposed his only option was acceptance. He would accept the fact that he was permanently in love with Blaine Anderson and that no man would ever measure up, which meant that if Blaine never fell in love with him back then he would be single forever and die alone. Wonderful.

It was nine pm Friday night, and Kurt was once again alone in his apartment. Before his earth-shattering realization about his undying love for Blaine, Kurt had just gotten off the phone with his father after suffering yet another half an hour of questions about his love life and if there was anyone special in his life yet. Though Kurt had acknowledged his fate as a single, unlovable loser, Burt had in no way done the same. Kurt knew he was worried about him being lonely, which he had assured him over and over again that he was in fact not. In the end, inescapably of course, he had managed to manipulate Kurt, using his

unique Hummel prying skills, into telling him about Blaine. *"Yes dad, he is gay... yes I like him... no, I don't know If he likes me... yes....yes... no history with drugs, no, not as far as I know... no... yes..."* In the end Kurt supposed it was easier just to lay it all out on the table. He knew his dad would tell Carole, who would in turn tell Finn, who would definitely tell Rachel who already knew, of course. Kurt sighed as he remembered the conversation he had had with Rachel about Blaine when she had visited him on work last Wednesday...

"... and the way his arms nearly ripped that suit apart.. damn."

"Yes, Rachel, I noticed. Of course I noticed."

"And that smile! I nearly fell in love with him myself, I swear." Rachel giggled as she took a sip of her 100% organic orange juice, winking slyly at him over the table.

"He is... he is perfect. Oh my god, Rachel, he is perfect isn't he?" Kurt groaned into his coffee.

"Pretty much, I think." Rachel's face suddenly turned serious as she determinedly pointed a finger at him. "But so are you, Kurt. And I think Blaine sees that, too. And if he doesn't he is an idiot and you deserve better."

Kurt had just stared at her incredulously. He knew Rachel meant well, and he loved her for that, but sometimes she could be absolutely ridiculous.

Kurt was deliberating whether to order from the Chinese place down the street, or if he should just go to bed with a book when a text ticked in.

"Where are you?"

It was from Blaine. Kurt frowned.

"I'm at home. Why?"

"Are you busy?"

Kurt felt the first twinge of hope - did Blaine want to hang out with him?

"Nope."

“Put on warm clothes and come outside.”

Kurt stared at his phone for a while before excitedly jumping off the couch and quickly getting dressed. He pulled on a gray turtleneck, a black coat with big buttons that reached him mid-thigh, and a dark gray beanie and matching gloves, before grabbing his keys and running down the stairs. It seemed like an eternity since the last time he saw Blaine, and as he pulled the front door of the apartment building he felt the same way he did the first day Blaine walked through his door. Perhaps the biggest smile he had ever seen adorned Blaine's face as he grinned up at Kurt, his arms out turned upwards and his cheeks rosy. He was wearing a red scarf and a black coat similar to Kurt's, and his clothes were covered in white. Big, fluffy snow flakes were falling from the sky and during the few hours Kurt had spent inside with his curtains shut, it had already covered the ground, trees and open surfaces in the white substance. Blaine's grin widened, if even possible, as he pointed at the snowflakes, nearly jumping up and down in excitement. Kurt stepped into it, laughing and twirling around on the spot, holding his arms out in a similar manner as Blaine, before stopping right in front of him with a matching smile.

“Snow,” Kurt said, and Blaine's eyes twinkled. “You really love snow, don't you?”

Blaine just smiled and grabbed Kurt's hand in his own mitten clad one and dragged him alongside him, heading towards the park.

Kurt felt as he was walking on clouds as they walked silently side-by-side, close by each other's side, holding hands, all traces of his previously grumpiness gone. He was holding hands with a boy in the snow in the dark. This was by far the most romantic thing that had ever happened to him, and he sighed dreamily. Blaine turned his head curiously toward him, but Kurt just shook his head and smiled. In the park, streetlights were casting a yellow glow lighting up the path and Kurt and Blaine could see every little flake of snow when they passed underneath them. They could hear the sound of New York in the background, of taxis and people and shouting and singing. Kurt stayed quiet and Blaine didn't pull out his phone. They passed some people, mostly couples seeming to enjoy the sudden change of weather. Kurt knew he and Blaine looked like a couple, too, holding hands and keeping close, yet they were not. He sighed again, and Blaine glanced at him before suddenly halting to a stop and turning to face Kurt.

It was quiet now – the sound of the city fading. No people were in sight. Kurt felt cold, then warm, then cold again, as he watched Blaine look at him, his expression concentrated, deliberating. Blaine was so close and Kurt could see how the tiny snowflakes clung to his impossibly long eyelashes, he could see how wet his lips were from the snow and the slight stubble on his chin. They were still holding hands. Blaine's

expression changed from deliberating to wondering, and Kurt could feel Blaine's grip tighten on his hand as Blaine's eyes shifted down to his lips. Kurt's heartbeat turned to a frantic thumping in his chest as Blaine started moving closer, tentatively and shyly. Kurt held his breath, his eyes slipping shut in anticipation. Everything felt like a dream, everything moved in slow motion, everything was blurry except Blaine's hand in his, firm and strong. Blaine's lips were centimeters from his own when he paused. Kurt didn't dare move an inch, rooted to the spot. And then Blaine... *turned his head and kissed him on the cheek*. Kurt's eyes shot open as Blaine stepped back and turned away from him, cheeks fiery red. Kurt had never felt disappointment like that before. His heart dropped into his stomach and he dejectedly crossed his arms against his chest. What had happened? And what the hell did this mean? Did Blaine like him? And if he did, why did he pull away? To his utter horror, Kurt felt his eyes start to tear up, and he took a step back.

"I should... I should go," he whispered. Blaine turned back to face him, his expression sad, and he reached out a hand and *clapped him on his shoulder*, before giving a little wave and hurrying forward on the path. Kurt almost ran home, his clothes and skin getting soaked by the snow.

As Kurt was snuggled underneath two duvets drawn up to his chin in his bed, he didn't know how to feel – happy because Blaine had been so close to actually kissing him, or miserable because he had pulled away? It was all so maddening. Obviously Blaine felt some sort of attraction towards him (unless he was playing some sick, twisted game with him of course), which should be enough for Kurt to be on cloud nine right now. But then again, he hadn't actually done it. And it would have been so easy. Kurt groaned in frustration and rolled over onto his back. It didn't seem like he would get much sleep.

Blaine didn't text him goodnight.

Chapter Twelve

Rose sniffled and buried her face into Kurt's shoulder.

"You okay?" Kurt murmured and rubbed her back soothingly. Rose hummed in affirmation and clung tighter to him where she was cuddled on his chest. It was just past 7 pm and Kurt's niece was spending the night at his house so Rachel and Finn could have some 'couple time', as they had called it when they dropped her off at his doorstep. Kurt had instantly known something was off by the way Rose hadn't immediately thrown herself around his neck, and as soon as her parents had left he had lifted her up in his arms and laid them both down on his beige cotton couch with a bag of emergency gummy bears in close reach.

"Want to tell me about it?" he asked softly, and Rose leaned up on her arms so she could look at him, her blue eyes huge and wet.

"Uncle Kurt, how do you know you're in love with Blaine?"

"What?" Kurt said, taken aback. Damn that girl was intuitive.

"Do you get butterflies in your tummy when he looks at you?"

"More like helicopters," Kurt muttered lowly to himself. "Sweetie, do you have a crush on one of your friends?"

"No!" Rose exclaimed as if it was the most preposterous thing she had ever heard, but when Kurt just raised his eyebrows at her she bowed her head in defeat, "Maybe. Yes."

Kurt chuckled fondly and held out two red gummy bears that Rose gratefully stuffed into her mouth.

"So what's his name?" Kurt said in a singsong voice and pulled her back down in his arms.

"Jaden," Rose whispered somewhat embarrassedly and Kurt lightly flicked the tip of her nose.

"You are not allowed to feel embarrassed with Uncle Kurt, remember our secret honesty-tell-everything-leave-no-details-out-sorority?"

"You like Blaine." Rose was not taking any shit today. "But how do you know?"

Kurt sighed in defeat. "If I tell you about Blaine will you tell me about Jaden?" Rose nodded and held her hand over her heart. "Okay... well, yes, I do like Blaine. Like, more than a friend. And you want to know how I know for sure? Well, when I'm with him I feel... happy... and warm. And then it sort of tingles," realizing how that might sound, Kurt hurried to add: "In my toes. And when he smiles at me my heart beats faster. And I want to kiss him. And I want to spend all the time in the world with him – all eternity." Kurt finished, grinning goofily at his own cheesiness. Somewhere along the way he had apparently been reduced to a teenage girl. Rose turned onto her back and stared up at the ceiling, much like Kurt had done the day prior when he realized his feelings for Blaine.

"Has he kissed you?" she asked. Memories of yesterday came rushing back from where he had been avoiding them and Kurt cringed.

"No. Well, almost. Yesterday we almost kissed."

Rose's mouth fell open and she turned her head back, looking at him upside down. "What happened?"

"We were out in the snow and he was holding my hand while we were walking. And then he stopped and leaned towards me, but when he was close enough he turned and kissed my cheek instead," Kurt tried to explain, but it all came out sort of messy.

"But why? Doesn't he like you too? Mom said that he does. She told Dad when they thought I was sleeping. But I heard."

Kurt ground his teeth in annoyance. Like Rachel knew anything about anything.

"I don't know, sweetie. I don't know. But now it's your turn. Who is Jaden?"

And Rose told him all about Jaden Williams who was *six years old* and had pretty blonde hair and had pushed her on the swing during recess and complimented her dress. And when Rose asked him if that was love Kurt answered that if that wasn't love, then he didn't know what was.

“Come to my house tonight? I’ll cook you dinner?”

That was the text that had brought Kurt to his current situation. It was Saturday night, one week since he had last seen or heard as much as a word from Blaine Anderson. Kurt had thought all hope was gone, each day passing pulling him further down in desperation and hopelessness. He knew he could just have texted Blaine himself, but seeing how their last meeting had ended he had wanted to wait and see if Blaine would make the first move. The text had ticked in earlier that day, causing Kurt to having to spend six hours tripping with nerves. Deliberating what to wear had been nightmarish. How formal was it, was a suit too much? He had wanted to impress Blaine and in the end he had gone with a black tight-fitting shirt and dark woolen suit pants, a silver watch he had inherited from his late grandfather, black shined shoes, and topped it off with spending forty minutes coiffing his hair to perfection. And he looked damn good. If this was how it all ended, at least he would go down looking stylish as hell. Kurt took a deep breath before knocking on the door of Blaine’s *huge* house (he was pretty sure he had seen Chris Brown exit the neighbor house) and putting on his best smile as the door was pulled open.

He was met with two disturbingly similar, yet extremely endearing faces, grinning up at him. Blaine, dressed impeccably in a deep burgundy shirt, a black bow-tie fastened around his neck and black dress pants with black socks, no shoes, his hair slightly gelled back and his skin a glowing bronze, was clutching a tiny black dog to his chest, whose tongue was hanging out as it barked happily and tried to break free from his arms to get to Kurt.

“Hi, Blaine,” Kurt said as he stepped into the big hallway, and Blaine put the dog down on the floor, which immediately rushed to Kurt’s feet and started sniffing the pants of his leg.

“And who are you, beautiful?” Kurt bent down to scratch the extremely enthusiastic puppy’s head, giggling as it licked his fingers. He looked up at Blaine who was staring down at them with a fond look on his face. “You actually bought a dog.”

Blaine nodded, seeming rather proud of himself, and pulled the same notebook he had used back when they first met out of his pocket. “Say hello to Charlie! He is a black lab!” Blaine drew a huge smiley face behind the words and held out a hand to help Kurt to his feet. Blaine took his coat, hanging it up in a closet hidden behind a huge mirror, before leading the way to his living room, Charlie trailing happily alongside them.

Blaine's home was exquisite. The rooms were gigantic, tastily decorated with white flowers on every surface, lit candles and soft, white carpets covering the floors. Two of the walls in the living room were simply huge windows, offering a view of a huge garden, currently covered in a thick layer of snow. In one corner, a black grand piano was resting, shining in the dimmed candlelight. Kurt hadn't realized how rich Blaine was, and he briefly wondered what his grandfather had done to make that amount of money.

A big table with enough room for a party of six was set for two, two tall candles and spotless white cutlery on a white tablecloth, another bouquet white roses in the middle. The smell of food coming from the kitchen seeped into the living room, divine and mouth watering. Blaine held out one of the chairs for Kurt before rushing off to the kitchen to get dinner ready. Kurt was surprised by how at ease he felt sitting there, petting Charlie who was sitting on the floor next to his chair. It had not been awkward at all. Not yet, at least. Blaine seemed to have a skill in making people feel comfortable in his presence, just like Cooper. Kurt hummed along to the soft jazz in the background as he waited for Blaine to come back.

"Honestly, Blaine, you should think about making a profession out of your insane cooking skills or something," Kurt said after another mouthful of salmon and cucumber and taking a sip of his wine. Blaine smiled happily at him over the table, his cheeks full of food. He swallowed and wrote something in the notebook, sliding it over the table so Kurt could read.

"Just wait for dessert. I spent three hours making it." Kurt giggled.

"So... what have you been up to this week?" Kurt said after a few moments of silence had passed, looking down at his very interesting plate. "I bought Charlie. I played with Charlie. I walked Charlie. What about you?"

Kurt glanced up quickly to see Blaine staring down at his equally interesting plate.

"Oh, you know... working. Bookshop."

"Good week?"

"Yeah."

"Good."

"Yeah."

They finished dinner in an extremely awkward silence. Kurt couldn't think of anything to say, and Blaine didn't write any more messages. Occasionally they would both look up at the same time, their eyes would lock, and they would both blush and look down again. After they finished they carried their plates to the kitchen, which was just as extraordinarily beautiful as the rest of the house.

"Go sit in the couch and I'll bring you dessert," Blaine wrote, and Kurt did as told.

(A/N: Sorry to interrupt your reading, but for this next part it is extremely important that you listen to ['Falling Slowly' by Glen Hansard](#) (<- click or youtube it) while reading. Please, please, do, otherwise it won't work. Okay I love you, carry on.)

Kurt sat on the sofa and watched the snow fall slowly outside the windows as the song in the background changed from soft jazz to a beautiful guitar melody. Blaine appeared in the doorway to the kitchen carrying two plates of a very complicated looking soufflé of some sort just as the singing started. He froze on the spot as he met Kurt's gaze. Their eyes were locked for what seemed like an eternity as the first lyrics drifted through the living room, eerily beautiful.

I don't know you, but I want you, all the more for that. Words fall through me and always fool me, and I can't react.

Blaine put the plates down on a table before slowly walking over to Kurt, their eyes still locked. He paused in front of him for a moment, before slowly reaching out a hand. Kurt swallowed and took it, allowing himself to be pulled up and into Blaine's arms.

And games that never amount to more than they're meant will play themselves out.

Blaine walked with him to the middle of the living room, placed a hand on the small of Kurt's back, pulling him close against his chest. Their eyes never left each other as they started spinning slowly, so slowly, foreheads resting together.

Take this sinking boat and point it home, we've still got time.

They were so close. Everything was hazy. The song was beautiful and haunting.

Raise your hopeful voice you have a choice, you'll make it now

And as Blaine started moving closer, Kurt knew he wouldn't pull back this time. Because now he knew Kurt wanted it too. There was no question, no fear. Sweet, simple hesitation dragged the moment further as the song fueled their emotions.

Falling slowly, eyes that know me, and I can't go back.

Their eyelashes brushed as their lips met for the first time, in a kiss so sweet, so faintly. They met again and again, bodies pulled closer, breathing soft. It was pure, it was raw and so, so sweet. It was anticipated and earned. They could feel their hearts beat against each other, the tears on the other's face, fingers brushing necks, cheeks, hair, smiling against each other's lips, the music seeping through their very skin.

And it was beautiful, so beautiful.

You've made it now. Falling slowly sing your melody, I'll sing it loud.

Chapter Thirteen

Walter Jonas was a true New Yorker through and through, having spent the past 76 years of his life in the city. Walter had lived through many sad events, the passing of his brother, his house and every belonging going up in smoke during a particularly nasty fire, and loosing his right leg due to heavy burns he attained in the accident. Yet he had never felt sorrow as horrible as the one he felt when his wife and best friend for the past 40 years, Annie, finally lost the fight against cancer. He remembered this day particularly well. It was December 2nd, late evening, when he watched her eyes close for the last time, clutching her hand desperately and willing her to stay with him forever. One day later he was walking quickly towards the tiny flower shop Annie had adored, wanting to make sure they were able to attain her favorite flower, Sunflower, for the funeral, whether it was appropriate for the setting be damned. Thinking back at it now, he was surprised he had managed to think clearly. It was the lowest Walter Jonas had ever felt in his life. Despair threatened to overtake the rest of his life as he desperately tried to remember exactly the way Annie's skin felt after she had taken a lavender bath. But something changed that day.

The flower shop was very tiny, simply three rows of shelves filled with flowers of every color and shape. The young receptionist talked with him in a carefully polite manner, as she could see the emptiness behind his weary eyes and wrinkled face. That was the moment they walked in. Walter remembered turning to the entrance and seeing two men roughly the same size and age walk in, one with a head of dark, untamed curls, a mustard yellow scarf draped around his neck-the other with a lighter shade of brown hair, slightly taller with particularly blue eyes. He could instantly see that they were closer than friends; the blue-eyed man kept giggling and blushing while the other couldn't keep his eyes off him for a second. Both of their faces were adorned with goofy smiles and their hands were clasped tightly between them. He watched as they walked over to the white roses, leaning against each other, hands brushing arms. Walter ignored the salesgirl's attempt at catching his attention back, openly staring at the couple. After 80 years of living, seeing couples in all shapes and forms, he could understand that they had just gotten together, maybe just that same week. The blue-eyed one kept talking, but the other man did not say anything at all, just staring at him with that same lovey-dovey look in his eyes, sometimes nodding. At one point the tall one pulled a single white rose out of the bouquet and held it out to the other who blushed and smelled it before running a finger down his cheek and leaning in to press a soft kiss to his lips. They eventually ended up buying two roses, one for each, and exited the shop as they had come in: happy and in love, so insanely in love. Walter left right after them, excusing himself lamely before quickly rushing out the door. Annie was dead. She was gone. For him, love was over. But for the two men, love had just begun. Suddenly Walter could not help but laugh out loud, lightly dabbing his teary eyes and smiling. It was their turn now, and he could not be happier.

Walter Jonas was to live for six more years. One of his last meetings with daylight was a lazy Saturday afternoon in late July. He had finally been allowed to visit Central Park one last time, which had been where he had first met Annie. He knew his time was running out, and he wanted to say a last goodbye. A male nurse named Anthony was pushing him in a wheelchair, couples and old people and dogs dodging them respectively. He saw them as they rounded a corner; would remember them no matter what his Alzheimer meant. They were lounging under a tree, older now, though their appearances had not changed much in the past six years. The blue eyed boy was resting on the curly-haired's chest between his legs where he was propped up against a tree. Blue-eyed was reading a bright green book with golden cover art and the curly haired was reading it with him, over his shoulder. Sometimes Curly would use his hands to sign a pattern of some sort, and the blue eyed boy would answer with a fond smile and some whispered words that Walter couldn't hear from the distance. They looked just as in love as they had that day in December, their smiles just as bright. A black Labrador was sleeping in the grass next to them, lying on his back with his tongue sticking out. Walter asked Anthony to pause for a moment, to allow him to take them in one last time. He watched as a girl, eight year old perhaps, with brown hair in a bright red bow plopped down next to them, saying something that caused them both to laugh. Watched them just sit there with each other, the one against the tree occasionally kissing the chestnut hair in front of him, holding him close against his chest by clutching his waist.

In some silly way, Walter supposed that was the world's way of bidding him goodbye. To let him know that it was okay, he could go now. Walter Jonas died two days later in his old house in Brooklyn, pictures of his wife on the walls and the smell of white roses heavy in the air. He was found three hours later, a smile permanently etched on his face.

*'Well, I saw you there just the other day
You smiled at me in a secret way
So I let you in and you captured me I'm your prisoner, it's what I wanna be*

*When it feels like it's love
All the stars lift you up
Well, to place you high above
On top of the world I'm just glad that I found you*

*Like a thief you came to steal my heart
I'll surrender now, because you broke my guard
Such a pretty face, it warms my soul
And your sweet blue eyes, they shine like gold*

When it feels like it's love

*All the stars lift you up
Well, to place you high above
On top of the world*

I'm just glad that I found you
- Found you by Ross Copperman