**Like Father Like Son**

**By Tinkabelle**

AU. Gus is sixteen and dating a blond-haired, blue-eyed older man named Justin. Brian is about to meet Justin.

WARNING: There’s a brief Justin & Gus pairing before B/J got together.

Brian pulled up outside the school in his jeep. He glanced over at the school kids pouring out of the school, ties awry, shirts un-tucked. Boys with their pants hanging low, the girls with big earrings and blindingly shiny lips. Ah school. He drummed his fingers on the steering wheel, and glanced again at the clock. Three forty five. And he knew that Brian hated to be kept waiting. Yet he insisted on dawdling with his stupid friends.

He spotted the boy at the top of the stairs, making his way down them, calling out something over his shoulder. Brian recognized Shane and Tommo behind him, their hands tucked in their pockets or gripping the strap of their bag which was slung over one shoulder. Brian shook his head. Fucking school kids.

The boy was a little bit shorter then his friends, his face clean shaven and his shirt un-tucked. Brian could see the bulge in his pocket, which he assumed was a deck of cigarettes. Little shit. The boy ran a hand through his dark hair, and grinned at the girl he was talking too. His teeth flashed white, and Brian knew what that girl was seeing. The beautiful hint of dark to the skin, the hazel eyes rimmed in green, the impish and slightly bad boy smile which drew men and women alike.

Which he got from his father.

“Gus,” Brian said, standing up in the jeep. He leant on the rails. “Get in the car, would you?” Gus saw Brian and grinned. He waved goodbye to his friends, and Brian rolled his eyes as the Gus checked out the girl as she walked off. He was slightly broader then Brian had been at that age, his chest looking slightly constricted in the shirt, but he had his fathers same thin waist, and a bubble butt he must have gotten from Lindsey’s side. Sort of short-ish legs, but cute, and he seemed permanently to be grinning. Brian shook his head. Little heartbreaker.

Gus chucked his bag in the back, and climbed in.

“Hey, I thought Mum was picking me up.” He said, turning up the radio slightly simultaneously. Brian glanced back at the milling kids. God, they all looked so much older then they had when he was sixteen. “Hey, earth to Dad, god, what is it with you and schoolboys?” He asked cheekily. Brian rolled his eyes, and gave him a gentle cuff on the back of the head.

“What, do you want me to be put up as a pedophile?” Brian asked grumpily. He checked his watch again. “Who was the girl?” Gus frowned, as though trying to remember. He glanced out the window, and laughed.

“Oh, that’s Vics. She’s in my math class.” He waved out the window at someone as Brian turned the key in the ignition. “Oi! Eli, are you going to the thing tonight?” Brian looked out at the boy waiting by the bus stop and nodded his head in recognition. Eli he knew. A tall, quite serious boy with caramel hair. Brian groaned in disgust at the gesticulations Gus was making, and roared off down the street.

Lindsey was getting the shopping out of the car when they pulled into the drive way. Gus jumped out, almost before Brian had pulled to a complete halt.

“Hey, Mum, I’ll help you with that.” He grabbed the shopping out of her hand and bounded up towards the house before she could say anything. She looked at Brian in amazement.

“Alright, what does he want?” She said, putting her hands on her hips. Brian grabbed another two bags of shopping.

“I think he’s going out tonight, so probably cash.” Brian said with a shrug. Lindsey groaned.

“God, why didn’t anyone tell me kids were expensive?” She slammed the boot of the car, juggling her handbag and her shopping bag as she tried to click the auto lock. “He’ll eat half this food by tomorrow, and then will need a three hundred dollar pair of jeans, just like his father,” Lindsey said, glancing at Brian’s Armani outfit in disgust.

“Be still my heart,” Brian joked as he pushed the door of the house open with his foot.

“So, can you still look after him tonight?” Lindsey whispered.

“Linds, he’s sixteen. He can look after himself.” Brian said, not looking at her. Lindsey growled, getting ready to get into it.

“Don’t you remember what we were up to in those days? I mean, we were only seventeen when,” She made a face. Brian nodded.

“Point taken. So, who’s the dyke you’ve got a date with anyway?” He asked, pulling the shopping out of the bag. Gus had already disappeared upstairs, leaving the ice-cream and the milk to go off in the sun. Lindsey put them in the fridge with a sigh.

“Her name is Melanie, and she’s a lawyer, or something,” Brian raised an eyebrow. “Oh, I don’t know,” Lindsey said, sounding exasperated. “She’s nice though, and I haven’t been on a real date in ages, and please, please tell me you’ll take Gus tonight?” She pulled on his shirt, looking up at him.

“Don’t pull that face on me. Don’t,” Brian said and then rolled his eyes. “Fine. But I’m meeting the boys for one drink. And Gus is going out,”

“Just be sure you’re back before he gets home.” Lindsey said calmly, her begging having succeeded. She patted her hair, basically ignoring Brian now as she thought about what she was going to wear, and whether she should wash her hair.

“So this is what University looks like,” Brian said, glancing around the campus. “Nice.” He followed the tour group, loitering at the back. Only a few more months of school and then the summer, and then this. Then he’d be making enough money to move out of the shit-box they called home, away from Jack, away from Joan, away from it all.

“Shit, sorry,” Brian said as he jolted the girl next to him. She looked up at him and smiled. Cute, short pixie hair and a sort of longish nose. Blonde too, which was never a bad thing. “Hi, I’m Brian.”

“Lindsey.” She said with a grin.

They ended up going for coffee, then going for dinner which she paid for and then going out. They got so drunk under the stars in the warmth of the Pittsburg summer and then she kissed him. It had been a while since he’d kissed a girl, but it seemed pretty much the same. She felt softer under his touch, her lips more giving. He pushed her up against the brick wall of the house near the party she’d taken him too, and suddenly everything seemed so promising. Maybe he could do this too.

Three months later, Brian took Lindsey to his graduation and Lindsey found out she was two weeks pregnant.

Brian was pacing in Lindsey’s kitchen at two in the morning. Fuck. He checked his watch again. Gus still wasn’t home. Three times he’d grabbed the keys to his jeep to go find the boy, but each time he’d stopped himself, trying not to be the over protective parent.

He sighed with relief when he heard a key turn in the latch. He bounded into the hall, only to be disappointed, the panicked feeling coming back full force. It was only Lindsey. She was smiling happily to herself, her hair a bit messed, her lipstick not exactly freshly applied. Brian grinned. Someone had been up to something. She started at the sight of Brian and then rolled her eyes, patting her hair.

“Not a word.” She pointed at him. He shuddered at the visuals. She hung up her scarf and pulled off her coat. She checked her watch. “Brian, what are you doing in my kitchen at two in the morning?”

“Gus still isn’t home.” Brian said, all his frustration spilling out in those words. To his surprise, Lindsey laughed.

“Brian, it’s two in the morning. His curfew isn’t until three.” She gave a look of amazement at Brian. “Tell me you knew that.”

“Are you kidding me? He’s sixteen.” Brian said, his eyes wide with amazement, but more at himself. God it seemed like only yesterday that Gus was thirteen and asking him permission to go to a party. What the hell had happened and how could he not have been involved? He felt he definitely should have been involved in setting Gus’s curfew. Then again, maybe he had been. He put his hand to his forehead. He definitely remembered Lindsey saying something…

“Brian, don’t you remember what we were doing when we were sixteen?” She smiled sweetly. Brian rolled his eyes.

“I know. That’s the point.” He said grumpily, not liking being caught in so typical a moment of fatherly concern. He fingered the tin box in his pocket. “Want a smoke?”

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“God, I can’t remember the last time I looked at the stars,” Lindsey said quietly, the curling smoke from her cigarette flowing up towards the soft night. Brian looked up from the corner of the back porch where he was nestled from the wind, tapping the mix into the paper. He pushed the filter in place and bent his head to lick the white paper, and seal the joint. “Do you remember when we were twenty one and we went out to that art party?” Brian smiled and nodded. Lindsey touched her lips, and she laughed.

“I remember the hell of a time we had getting a babysitter.” Brian murmured and lit the joint. Lindsey watched him inhale, and tilted her head.

“That was when I told you I was thinking of buying this place, with my mum’s help.”

“And that you didn’t want me moving in with you, if I remember correctly.” Brian moved to sit next to her on the step, passing the joint before he exhaled with a groan. Lindsey took it like it was a loaded gun, and took a small toke as though remembering how. She smiled at the familiar taste, exhaled, and took a bigger toke. Brian looked up, his hands in the pockets of his expensive jacket.

“I was still in love with you even then,” She said sadly, and gave him a little nudge. Brian nodded, threading his hand through hers. She frowned, taking another drag. “Not in love in love, but in love with the idea of us. Being together. You me and Gus. Daddy, mummy, baby. I wanted you so badly that night. I wanted us to finally click, to get it right.”

“My being gay probably was the problem there.” Brian said dryly, gesturing for her to pass the joint. Lindsey looked at him, as though she hadn’t seen him in a long time.

“You knew you were gay when we first slept together, didn’t you?” Brian pulled a face, and got up, walking in the small garden as he dragged on the joint. Lindsey clasped her hands in her lap. “Ah, this is a conversation for another night perhaps. When our son isn’t out till four in the morning,” Brian shook his head.

“You looked beautiful that night. You wore green and gold with your hair all done up, just like now,” He gestured at her.

“Ah, details only a gay man would remember.” Lindsey said, laughingly. Brian nodded to himself, his eyes on the ground.

“I wish I’d been more a part of Gus’s life these last few years. I feel,” Brian paused again, and then looked up at her, this beautiful blonde woman who had changed his life so much and given him more then he had ever thought he would deserve. “Like I’ve lost him a little bit. Like he’s moving further and further away from me.”

“I think we all feel that.” Lindsey said with a tight smile. She brushed her hair of her shoulders, and pulled her shawl tighter. “It’s a parent thing.” Brian sat again, passing her the joint. She put her hand to her mouth for a moment and then took it.

“We had some pretty tough years, didn’t we Linds?” Brian said, giving her a consoling look. Lindsey leant her head on his shoulder.

“Do you ever regret? Keeping him?” She said quietly.

“God no.” Brian said hurriedly. He looked at her quizzically. “Do you?”

“Well,” Lindsey said; a slightly distant look on her face. “It was never on my life plan, a kid when I just turned eighteen with my gay boyfriend no less. Four years of putting ourselves through university and working our fingers to the grind and being shotgun parents. But, now… It seems like the best thing that ever happened.” She smiled and leaned in, giving Brian a gentle brush on the lips. Brian nodded, leaning his forehead against hers, breathing in the familiar smell of her, remembering those four years where they’d shared a shitty bed in some shitty apartment, dead tired most of the time, holding each other, sometimes more.

It had been a strange time, and he had pretty much lost everyone else but those two people, Gus and Lindsey, while he’d spent every spare hour working or trying to study for university while worrying about the bills. He’d been lucky though, had landed a low boring job in an advertising firm and had worked his way up. Those had been some of the darkest and longest years of his life, but had also been the time when he remembered being most happy. Away from the thumb of his father, away from the wailings of his mother, being able to come home to a woman he loved even if not in a sexual way. To watch her paint while he cooked dinner. To watch her worry about him, and to be able to hold that small creature, to hold Gus close to his chest and for their hearts to beat against one another, knowing that this child was his, made of his flesh. To know that no one could ever take that away, and no one would ever hurt this child like he himself had been hurt.

Lindsey’s head swung around at the sound of a revving car. She smiled, and released a breath of relief. She dropped the joint butt, and stubbed it out, kicking it under the house. “That’s Gus,” Brian tilted his head and heard the low rumbling of his son’s voice. Lindsey kissed Brian’s forehead. “Check that he’s not smoking marijuana will you? I saw him last week having a smoke on the verandah when he got home, and I just want to make sure it’s cigarettes.”

“I wonder where he could have picked up that habit.” Brian murmured with a dry grin. Lindsey rolled her eyes, wobbling her way back into the house. In the door way she turned, leaning against the wood.

“You can crash here for the night if you want Brian. That loft must get awfully cold on nights like this.” Brian turned his head, Lindsey getting the full impact of his beautiful profile. He nodded slowly. Lindsey shut the screen door after her and made her way back upstairs. Brian pulled out a cigarette, and lit it, standing for a moment in the backyard, glaring up at the stars.

He put his lighter back in his pocket, and made his way around the side of the house. He pushed the branches back, and tried to make as little noise as possible. He could hear rumble of voices, his sons and someone else’s, low as though trying not to wake anyone. As he got closer he could hear how slurred those voices were. He grinned. How many times had he and Mikey sat on Mikey’s front porch, ripped or drunk off their minds and talked until dawn, thinking that Deb couldn’t hear them? Brian smile faded as he thought of Michael.

They’d become so distant now they were nearly strangers. Brian had watched his little best friend go out into the world of parties and clubs, boyfriends and casual jobs and had envied him. And had lost him. Brian hadn’t been able to go to all those frat parties or stay out till six in the morning. He was lucky if he could fit a beer in on a Friday night.

“That was fucking amazing, Eli” Brian heard Gus say. Brian leant against the side of the house, just being able to see the two boys on the verandah. Their shoulders were touching as they slouched against each other for support. Brian could see the cigarette smoke curling up from Gus’s hand. Gus giggled. “You loved it. Come on, tell me you loved it.”

“It was good, Gus, it was good,” The taller boy said quietly. Brian smiled, about to interrupt when something changed. His smile faded. The taller boy put his hand on Gus’s back, it running up over his son’s shoulder blade, to rest in that thick dark hair. Gus turned, his giggles silenced, and his eyes flickered shut as he leant in to kiss Eli softly on the lips for a second, their lips barely even parting. Brian couldn’t see Eli’s face but he could see Gus’s as he smiled blissfully as they broke away, his head leaning on Eli’s shoulder. Brian watched his son take another drag.

“I can still feel the bass,” Gus almost panted.

“I know, my ears are ringing,” The rest of the conversation seemed to be absorbed into the wind for Brian. He felt frozen, his own cigarette burnt down to the stub. He saw his son as a four year old, face covered in food, his infectious grin already being used to get his way. He saw his son riding the bike he had bought him for Christmas. He remembered playing soccer with his son in the park, and taking him shopping on weekends, wandering down the streets with no where better to be, watching the autumn leaves, watching the passing people, but more then anything watching his son, his wonderful, amazing son, smile and fool around and love him. He watched his son love him.

And now he had just witnessed something else. Something he shouldn’t have seen, something between his son and this other boy, something maybe small that meant nothing, but somehow, in the foundations of Brian Kinney, he was shaken.

He looked at his beautiful son, half asleep from drugs and contentment in the arms of another.

“Where are those fucking reports Cynthia?” Brian growled, slamming the draw’s shut for the fourth time. Cynthia stood at the door, her mouth wrinkled with worry.

“I don’t know.” She said quietly, and took a few fearful steps into the room. “Brian, can’t you just leave it till tomorrow.” Brian looked up at her in amazement and then glanced at the clock. He blinked. It was nine-o’clock in the evening.

“Fuck.” He murmured, glancing around his desk again. He picked up one folder after another and then shook his head. “Go home, Cyn.” He said quietly. She frowned instead and took a step towards him.

“Are you alright boss?” She asked. He looked up, his hazel eyes troubled. He stared at her for a moment, nearly not recognizing her. Then he focused and nodded.

“I’m fine. Just,” He flexed his hand unconsciously. “Need a break, is all.”

“Well,” Cynthia looked at her watch. “By the time you go home and change, Babylon will be getting pretty good.” She smiled encouragingly. Brian nodded, pushing his hands through his hair. Yeah, that’s what he needed. To go out and get laid. Or more accurately, since he wouldn’t be lying down at any point, to fuck some random trick against the wall of the back room.

It was ten-thirty by the time he got to Babylon. He glanced longingly at the dance-floor, momentarily considering making a bee-line for it, getting hot and heavy to one or two good songs and then starting the fucking straight away. But there was plenty of time for that, and he needed a drink first.

And the boys would be cut if he ignored them.

“Well, look who finally graces us with his presence.” Emmett said with a low whistle. Brian rolled his eyes, pushing through them to the bar. He nodded at the bartender and ordered a Jim Bean.

“Yeah, long time no see.” Michael said quietly, still standing by Emmett. There was a time when Michael would have come and wrapped his arms around Brian, friendly like; they were always just friends. Maybe given him a comforting kiss on the back of the neck. And the two of them would have danced all night. But they just hadn’t spent enough time together recently, and the familiarity that Brian remembered having had faded.

“Well, the married life is a tough one. How’s Linds and Angus these days?” Emmett asked. Brian downed his drink.

“Fine.” He grunted. “They’re always fine.” He turned to look at Michael for a moment, but Michael was looking away. He sighed, and looked to Em. “Dance?”

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Lindsey paused at the entrance to Gus’s room. Slowly she stepped it, flicking on the light. She glanced around the room. Clothes were strewn on the floor, some on the bed. He certainly didn’t have his father’s more anal qualities. She picked up his school clothes, placing them on the bed and then sat down on the edge of it.

The wall next to the wardrobe was covered in photos, not just on the bulletin board which was meant to be for school stuff, but all over the wall, a haphazard collage of smiling faces. She could see the form for an excursion pinned over some, and she lifted it to look at the photos below. One from his school dance last year, his arm around the boys neck. She remembered these boys. Shane, Thomas, Mark who had gone to live in London, Eli, Graham. She smiled, tracing her son’s exuberant face in the photo, and let the form drop, covering it again. Her fingers ran over the edges of the Polaroid pictures. Gus, kissing that girl Danielle in a chaste, jokey way, both their profiles to the camera. His friends Graham and Shane smoking, their heads back in mock gangster style. Eli and Gus, and a red head girl sticking her tongue out between them. Gus hugging his ex-girlfriend Janis on the beach, their hair slick from just coming out of the surf. One of his father, Brian, from when he was in university, a cigarette drooping out of his mouth, surprise caught in those haunted eyes. Lindsey picked that one up. She wondered where Gus had got it. Her eyes glazed as they darted over the other pictures. Group shots from a New Year past, girls glowering or hugging and giggling. Eli giving the camera the finger. Gus with a blonde girl on his lap.

She remembered the night this photo was taken of Brian. She remembered how she had wanted Brian to take her home and fuck her, though she knew he was going out, to those bars where she couldn’t follow. She remembered thinking how beautiful he was, in his desperate rage that drove him. How beautiful he was in this photo. How beautiful he was in her life.

She picked up Gus’s uniform, shaking her head, reattaching the picture to the notice board next to one of her and Brian holding Gus as a baby, and put the uniform in the cupboard. She sighed, a smile forming on her face as she placed it next to his other blazer, the much smaller one which he had grown out of what seemed like not that long ago. Instinctively she reached out a touched the material, running her hand up the arm and down the front, over the thick pocket. Where she felt the bulge.

She reached into the front pocket, pulling out the contents with some difficulty. More photos, though these had not been taken to hang on his walls.

Gus and Eli holding up a bong in a mock heroic pose. Gus rolling a joint, his shirt off, staring straight at the camera.

And then the Polaroid’s.

Lindsey put her hand to her mouth. Gus, in bed, naked, giving the camera a dull come-fuck-me look that she recognized from Brian’s book of facial expressions. She kept flicking through, and it was as if she’d known already, as if she’d seen these photos a million times before. Some boy, beautiful because of his youth and his eyes closed in blissful intensity, kissing Gus’s cheek, while Gus looked directly at the camera from which he’d taken the photo. Gus and a blonde boy, in bed together, the camera held above them, a grin on both their faces. A photo of Eli, shirtless and so close to the camera that you could see the naked longing in his eyes. Lindsey held this one for a long time.

She remembered Eli sitting at her dinner table, talking to her about how much he loved painting and was hoping to study art history if he got high enough in his SAT’s. She remembered going to church to see him sing in the choir, his mother so proud of him and Gus trying not to laugh himself to death. She remembered Brian and Eli sitting on the porch, sharing a cigarette while they though Lindsey was inside, waiting for Gus to get back from soccer training.

Her mind went back to Gus, that naughty, cheeky grin that she knew so well. She blinked, her mouth dry, and she slid the photos back into the pocket of the blazer.

She wondered if Brian knew.

She checked her watch. Ten past one. Gus should be home, if he really was at that house party. She glanced out the window. The night and all its dark enticements had carried her son away, and suddenly the world outside seemed a dangerous and disturbing place.

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Brian slammed his back against the wall, the Trick already bowing down before him. This guy was not the best looking, but he had a mouth like a hover. You could see just by looking at him, that his mouth was definitely his best asset. Brian grinned. No one could say that about him, all of him was his best asset. Hell, if he met him, he’d fuck himself. His smile became a drunken groan as the trick speeded up. He was having drunken thoughts, and this blowjob was amazing.

Just then, in the quiet of the backroom of Babylon, where only the sounds of moaning men and the pump of the bass from the room outside seeped though, Brian’s phone went off. The trick looked up startled. Brian grabbed his head angrily. Damn work ethic of these tricks. You never stop in the middle of a blow job.

He pulled his phone out of his pocket with some difficulty, trying not to disturb the trick’s motion.

“Linds,” He said with a sigh, his head lolling to one side. “How’s my little woman?” He was close now; he could feel the pressure started. He licked his lips, his breath becoming a little more jagged, his hand flexing unconsciously to the trick’s movement.

“Brian, where are you? I’m really worried. Its one thirty and Gus hasn’t come home.”

“Weren’t you the one that told me to…ah,” A groan escaped his lips. “Be overprotective of the boy?”

“Look, I just called the house where he was meant to be at a party, and they said it got broken up by the cops at eleven thirty.” Brian came with a groan and then he closed his eyes. Shoving the trick off and doing up his pants with one hand, he was starting to get worried.

“Hey, you could at least get off the phone,” The trick murmured and Brian gave him a deathly look, covered one ear to hear Lindsey better, and left the backroom.

“Well where the hell is he? Have you called his cell?” Brian muttered angrily, striding past the boys who had been waiting for him. He was out on the street now, and he swung himself into the seat of his jeep. Michael and Emmett looked on curiously. Where the hell Ted was Brian didn’t have a clue. Maybe he’d finally got lucky with one of the Twinkies in Babylon.

“Yes. Like fifth-teen times.”

“Well where the hell is a sixteen year old boy at two in the morning?” Brian said angrily, hitting the steering wheel for emphasis.

“That’s the thing. He might be at the same place as you.”

There was a long pause.

“What?”

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Gus grinned down over the railings of Babylon. He bit his lip, barely able to contain his excitement. He glanced over at the boys on his left and the boys on his right, all of whom were cruising him. He stirred his drink with his straw. He could tell he was going to like this place.

He could see why his dad had been going here for so many consecutive years.

He wished Eli had come with him again, but for Eli the whole thing was just a bit of fun, a bit of a gag.

Well, that’s what he pretended.

Gus shook his head. He had not come here to brood over Eli, he’d come here too… He frowned. He wasn’t sure what he’d come here to do. The other times someone had come with him, Eli or Carl from the soccer team, or even Liv who he told mostly everything to. And they’d danced and mucked around and then gone home, not partaking in the other occurrences in the club. It had been a bit of a game to all of them, getting a fake ID, sneaking out from the parents and all that. Carl had been the only one overage, he’d bought Gus here.

Gus grinned as he felt someone’s arm slid around him. He glanced up, a big top smiling seductively down at him.

“Wanna dance?” Gus did a once over of the dance floor. There were cuter guys down there, and he could probably loose this guy after one song. Still, the guy wasn’t that bad, sort of cute in a burly way.

“Hell yes,” He murmured, as he stopped a familiar head in the crowd.

He made his way through the dance floor, dragging the trick with him, and grinned confidently as he spotted that blonde hair only a little bit away.

A blonde head he recognized.

He pulled the trick into a dance, feeling the man’s big hands on his back. He turned around, letting the trick rub up his back. He saw the blonde look over, wearing a tight white singlet and a black chocker, his eyes flashing in recognition. Gus ran his tongue over the edge of his teeth and beckoned the blonde boy.

“Hey,” He said, allowing the blonde boy to pull him into a dance, away from the burly top, hands touching for a second. The blonde shook his head ruefully at Gus with a bemused grin. He raised his eyebrows at Gus.

“Isn’t a little bit late for you to be out?” He said, sliding one arm around Gus’s waist, their hips moving in time to one another. This little bit of contact sent the hairs on Gus’s arms up, and something else too. He licked his lips, his face flushed. He knew what he wanted… sort of.

“And you’re what, twenty?” Gus said indignantly.

“Twenty is a whole lot better then sixteen.” The blonde said, raising his eyebrows.

“Shut up,” Gus muttered, not liking to have his nose rubbed in it. He pulled the blonde closer, trying to gain control, to remind the blonde that while he may be young, there are always certain advantages to that. “You only know that because you snooped through my cupboards.” The blonde laughed.

“And found your school uniform. You are way too young for me.” Gus tilted his head.

“You didn’t mind the other night,” He whispered, and let his lips linger by the blonde’s ear. He breathed in the scent of the blonde’s neck and felt the shudder run through the man. “I’ve still got the Polaroid of the two of us,”

“Evidence for when the police get onto me for sleeping with minors.”

“Yeah, about that…” Gus ran his hand up the blonde’s arm. He paused for a moment, staring into those blue eyes. The beat picked up, and Gus could feel the sweat on the blonde’s forehead. “What are you doing for the rest of the night?

“Gus,” The blonde said warningly.

“Or I could find someone else,” Gus said, glancing at the other dancers. “Someone older and meaner, who’ll take me into the backroom and use my young,” He dragged the blonde’s hands down his body. “Teenage body in anyway they could think off.” He paused, biting his lip. The blonde shook his head at him, laughing.

“God you’ve got a vicious streak for one so young,” The blonde murmured, pulling the young Kinney closer.

“I get it from my father I’ve been told,” Gus said, all grin’s now that he was getting his way. “Come on Justin, make it my night.” Justin groaned, already seduced by that velvety voice once before and almost physically felt the slight tremble in that mock confidence. He didn’t like the idea of this boy going out into the night, and getting seduced by the other, more dangerous members of Liberty Avenue. He remembered his own half terrifying half exhilarating trips here, and he remembered this fear. He pulled the boy closer, protecting Gus with his body, their youth and vulnerability blindingly on display for anyone to see.

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“Fuck,” Gus said, rolling over in the bed. Justin groaned, pulling the pillow over his head. Gus reached into his pants and pulled out the phone which had been vibrating for the last twenty minutes. “Oh shit. It’s my dad.” Justin nodded sleepily, pulling himself out of bed, yanking on some pants, a hand covering his yawn.

“Gus,” Gus nearly groaned at the angry sound of his father’s voice. He leant over and grabbed the deck of cigarettes of the side table, gesturing to Justin a question if he could smoke. Justin nodded, a smile forming on his face and he watched the young boy in his bed light a cigarette, the sheets barely covering his vitals, his hair crumpled beyond recognition.

“Do you know how many times your mother and I have called you?” Gus closed his eyes, rubbing his fingers over them to get rid of the sleep. He pulled the phone away from his ear and checked the number of missed calls.

“Fifty six times?” He said, forcing the words out of his dry throat, taking a drag.

“Damn right. Where the hell are you?”

“I’m at a friends.” Gus groaned, peeling himself out of the bed. He followed Justin into the kitchen, rubbing his head. His red boxers stuck uncomfortably to his legs, and he ashed on the cigarette ashtray on the kitchen table. Justin was making coffee, rubbing his head sleepily. Gus watched him, a smile forming on his face. God this boy was beautiful. He couldn’t wait to tell Liv.

“Whose?”

“Um,” Justin looked over at him and gave him a sympathetic look. “I’m at Eli’s. We… I had a big night last night. Don’t tell mum, but I,” He paused, glancing around for inspiration to pad out his lie. “I ran into Janis last night and I just… I don’t know. I drank too much and I got into this big argument with Janis and I just didn’t want to be alone.”

“You’re mother said the party you were at ended at eleven thirty.” Brian said suspiciously.

“I know. Me and Eli and some of the boys went round to a mate’s house and had a bit of a drink.”

“Were you smoking?”

“Dad, no.” Gus stubbed out his cigarette. “I told you I’d quit. Otherwise I won’t get the car, remember.”

“Damn right.” Brian hissed, but Gus could hear the obvious relief in his voice. “Get your arse home. Do you want me to pick you up? Your mother is having a mental. She called me while I was at Babylon, and I spent half the night looking for you.” Gus closed his eyes. Fuck, that was a close one then.

“Don’t pick me up, I’ll get a lift,” He looked over at Justin, who was buttering toast. “I’m so sorry.”

“Damn right you are.” The phone went dead.

“Shit.” Gus murmured. He rubbed his head and glanced over at Justin. Justin passed him a coffee without comment, sitting down on the couch. Gus followed his example, though rather more carefully. God his arse would be sore for a week.

“So I’m guessing that was the parents?” Justin said after a moment, trying to be diplomatic.

“Yep.” Gus shook his head. “They’re pretty pissed.”

“I know what that feels like,” Justin gave Gus a side look, trying to see how shook up the boy was. He smiled comfortingly. “When I first came out, my dad went mental. He smashed pretty much all the furniture in my room, and threatened to send me to boarding school.” Gus laughed in disbelieve.

“You’re kidding.”

“Nope.” Justin took a sip carefully, and looked over at Gus. He reached out and ruffled his hair affectionately. “It’s something we all have to go through though. How do you think your parents will react?” Gus frowned, and then shook his head.

“I don’t know. My dad is… I don’t know. They should be cool with it. They should.” He repeated, shaking his head again. “They just want what’s best for me.”

“Most parents do.” Justin said quietly.

“My parents are just pretty protective. They went through a lot of shit, cause they had me so young.” Gus looked over at Justin, wondering whether he wanted to hear all this. “They were only seventeen when my mum got pregnant. And my dad… I don’t know. He had pretty rough when he was a kid, and I think he just wants to protect me. I don’t think he’s ready to hear his kid is taking it up the arse at sixteen.” Gus added, pushing his hair off his face, his dark eyes troubled. He thumbed the top of his mug. Justin reached over, and touched his cheek, kissing him for a moment, letting him know.

That he was there.

“Fuck, sixteen,” Justin said, shaking his head, a smile forming on his face. “At sixteen I think I was still kissing girls.”

“Great visual.” Gus said, rolling his eyes in disgust. Justin laughed, pushing the boy away, and getting up to tip out his coffee in the sink.

“I should go.” Gus said suddenly, glancing at his watch. Eleven o’clock.

“If you need to, you can crash here anytime. It’s pretty scary out there.” Justin said with self-conscious casualness. Gus turned, and gave Justin a sour look over his shoulder. Justin gave him an affectionate slap up the back of the head. “It’s not a marriage proposal Gus. I’d just rather you’re here, getting fucked by me then by some leather daddy who wants to make you his bitch, alright?” He said jokingly, and Gus laughed, dropping his head for a moment at the visual of that.

“Hey, that sounds like a bit of a party.”

“Trust me, I’ve been there, it’s not that great.” Justin joked and Gus grinned, rubbing his hand through his hair in excitement. There was so much still to be done. Justin tilted his head, and wanted to laugh. God, this boy could wear out a soccer team. So much excitement and sexuality.

For one so young.

“What on earth were you thinking?” Lindsey yelled. Brian rolled his eyes, lighting his cigarette. He leant forward, stretching out his arms. Sleeping on the couch was always a bitch. He turned his head, to see if he could see Lindsey berating Gus in the living room.

“Mum, I’m sorry…”

“Sorry just doesn’t cut it Gus. I don’t know who you are these days. You stay out till all hours of the night, you’ve been cutting school,” Brian frowned. He didn’t know about that. “And I have no idea where you are. Do you know how worrying that is for a parent? I try to give you freedom, don’t I leave you here without a babysitter when I have to go out of town? Can I do that next time I have a conference? There needs to be a level of trust in this house,”

“I know. I just…”

“You know? Do you? Do you know how worried I was? How worried your father was? What would you think if I didn’t come home one night?”

“I’d think good riddance.” Brian heard his son mumble and he grinned despite himself. That’s right boy, fight back. Kinney’s have a backbone after all.

“What did you say?” Lindsey went up a sound bracket.

“I said I’d think good riddance. Thank god she finally got laid.”

“You take that back, Angus Kinney, or you are grounded for a month.”

“No. I’ll stay at Dad’s.” Brian winced. Don’t drag me into this Sonny Boy, he thought, taking another drag.

“Oh no you won’t. You are not going to get out of this by playing us off one another. You’re not going out until I say so. You’re not getting any pocket money.”

“You’re just worried I’m going to turn out like you and dad. Get some girl pregnant at seventeen, and spend the rest of my life paying for it.” There was a pause, and then Brian heard it. Lindsey had slapped him. He dropped his cigarette, and strode inside, to find Lindsey sitting on the couch, holding her hand in her lap as though she had been slapped herself, with Gus on the other side of the room, red cheeked.

Gus took one look at Brian and then he bolted upstairs. Brian turned to watch him go, and then looked at Lindsey. She was shaking, tears falling down her face. Brian sat down next to her, and he held her as she wept against his chest. After a moment, when she was calmer, he took her by her elbows and moved her away slightly so he could see her face. She wiped her eyes on her sleeve, and looked up at Brian.

“Lindsey,” Brian said quietly, his face unusually blank. “No matter how angry or upset you are right now, I want you to know this: You ever lay a hand on Gus again, and you’ll regret it for the rest of your days.” He said, and pushed her away. She broke down into tears again, but she was trying to restrain herself. She watched Brian make his way upstairs.

“Gus,” He said, knocking on the door. He pushed it open, sighing at the sight of his son, stretched out on the bed with his back to him. Gus rolled over and gave him a what expression.

“Come to put in your two cents?” Gus spat.

“You weren’t at Eli’s last night.” Brian said stepping into the room and closing the door behind him. He smoothed his shirt and looked up at Gus, his hazel eyes clear. “Where were you?” Gus licked his lips.

“I was out.”

“You were with someone.” Brian said, grinding his teeth to stop him saying more.

“Yes.” Gus said, waiting for the onslaught, but none came. Brian touched one of the photos on Gus’s wall, not looking at him. His dark eyes looked troubled.

“When your mother and I found out she was pregnant, we made the hardest decision of our lives. My mother never spoke to me again, my father broke my nose, Lindsey was very forcibly told to deal with the problem. That’s what they called it. You. A problem. But we didn’t. We chose a way that was in the end, the best for us. And we did it all by ourselves.”

“I’m not going to make your mistake, Dad.” Gus said angrily.

“Let me finish.” Brian said coldly. “There are things you have to do at this age, things you have to work out, that no one, let alone your parents can help you with. I never considered you to be a mistake son, but no one except Lindsey could understand that at the time. So, if you are staying out or,’ Brian touched on of the photos and then removed his fingers as though they had been burned. “Doing whatever you’re doing, I understand that you may not be able to talk to us about these things. That you may have to do them on your own.”

Gus was quiet.

“But that does not mean you can treat your mother like you just did,” Brian continued, still not looking at him. “And there are mistakes that I will stop you from having to experience even if I have to chain you to the bedroom wall, do you understand me?”

“Yes.” The boy breathed.

“And I’m going to ask you this just once.”

“What?”

“Are you tricking?” Brian looked up at Gus, who was reeling from shock.

“What? God, no Dad.” Gus bit his lip. “Dad, I don’t know where you’d…”

“I haven’t been a good influence, I know that.” Brian cut in, his voice deadly steady as though he was letting none of his emotions through. The words seeming to be forced out. “I think this week you should stay home with your mother, and you should not go to that concert next weekend. And I think that you should talk to your mother about some things, because she’s feeling very upset and worried right now.”

“Are you going to stay tonight?” Gus asked, and he sounded suddenly very young. He didn’t like the idea of his father going, leaving him alone, in so much trouble. Brian shook his head.

“You need to work this out between you.” Brian looked up, the implicit guilt that had tainted all his words evident in his eyes. This was not his house, it hadn’t been for a long time, and he would only make matters worse.

What did he know about parenting?

\* \* \* \*

“Hey, Gus,” Dean Meyers called out as Gus walked past his table in the canteen. Gus raised an eyebrow. The three guys he was sitting with leant forward. Gus gave them all an appraising look. They were the more boring of the jock group, not cool enough to joke around with and not nice enough to, hell, just not nice enough.

“What?” He said, already bored. He could see Eli and Vic at the end of the hall, sitting in the window seat.

“So, did you fuck Janis Germain when you were going out?” Dean asked, glancing at his friends with that annoying smile on his face. “Cause she’s looking damn hot this year.” Gus mind flickered through the number of things he was never going to do in his life; like run an Olympic marathon or learn how to do pottery or get a tattoo that says Shania Twain is my god or go on that psychic reading show by John Edwards. And on the top of that list of things he was never going to do was fuck Janis Germain.

“Nope, sorry boys, a gentle man never tells.” God these high school jocks were boring. He bet at university somewhere in some bathroom, Justin was getting his dick sucked. He bet all those men who spent their Saturday nights at Babylon would at some point get their dick sucked today. He sighed. And he had algebra next.

“Ah yeah,” Dean said nodding his head empathetically. “So was she fucking sweet?” Gus closed his eyes for a second.

“Yep. Sweet.” Anything to get him the hell away from here.

\* \* \* \*

“No man, I’m grounded. I know,” Gus chucked the tennis ball at the wall again. He flicked on his computer, and sighed. No emails. “And that bitch Manelli gave me a detention for after school tomorrow.” He glanced at the clock. Ten o’clock. God, Babylon would be going off right now. He wondered if Justin was there. Not that he wanted to be clingy, but… God he wondered if he should have given the blonde his phone number.

“Hey, Eli, I got to go.” Gus said, dropping the phone before the boy could respond. He got up and pulled on his jacket. He got half way down the stairs before he heard the call from his mother’s bedroom.

“And where in the hell do you think you’re going?” Pale green dressing gown and a face set like stone. Gus sighed and turned.

“I’m going nuts here. I’ve got to do something.”

“You are not leaving this house.” Lindsey said firmly.

“Just you fucking watch me.”

“You got a mouth like your father,” Lindsey said, following him down the stairs. Gus grinned at that, his back still to her. Yep, just like his father, made for fucking, sucking and blowing.

“You’re going to gay bars, aren’t you?” And that made him stop in his tracks. Gus spun around.

“What?”

“You think I don’t know?” Lindsey said, standing five steps above him, her hand on her hip. Her hair was tied back in a loose bun and she looked tired. “You think I’m stupid?”

“Mum, I’m not…”

“Don’t you dare lie to me Angus Kinney,” Lindsey said, coming down to stand in front of him.

“Where the fuck do you have the right to call me a fag?”

“A fag? You’re going to use that word in this house?” Lindsey repeated with shock. She raised a hand as though to hit him again, and Gus flinched. She shook herself, steeling her rage, and turned, heading back upstairs. “Where do I have the right? I’ll show you, Gus, I’ve seen you’re goddamn photos.” Gus’s eyes widened as he realized what she was going to do.

He ran up the stairs after her.

“Stay the hell out of my room.” He roared, grabbing her arm as she reached his bedroom but she shook him off, tearing the cupboard door open and retrieving the photos. Gus stood there, chest heaving. Lindsey held up one and then another.

“This. This and this and this.” She flung them at his feet. “You and Eli I can understand. But who is this? Huh? Who is this blonde boy you’re fucking in my house? This is your room; I can see your posters. And who is this; this is my mother’s beach house? Who are these men? Some of them are old enough to be your father.” She held up the one of Justin and he grabbed it off her, clutching it so hard that it bent.

“You don’t have the right.” He hissed.

“I don’t care about the drugs Gus. I don’t care that you’re gay. I just don’t want you going out there and putting yourself in harms way. You’re sixteen years old.” She said, grabbing his shoulders.

“You don’t know. You’ve ruined it. You’ve ruined it.” Gus muttered, and then looked up at her, eyes wide with fear. He threw her off, and she slammed against the cupboard wall. She was still standing there, riveted to the floor with shock, when she heard the front door slam close. She flinched, pulling her dressing gown tight across her as though for protection.

\* \* \*

Justin was on his computer, checking his university email. He glanced over at the TV where the same old TV show was showing. He glanced at the clock again. God, the time seemed to be barely moving. Maybe he should have gone out with the boys for the night. He couldn’t be bothered with the gay chat-line; he was probably just talking to a bunch of trolls anyway.

He lit a joint with a sigh. He’d been hoping to save this for the weekend when Daph was flying in from out of state. He missed her, and he wished she hadn’t decided to go to university so far away. He took a toke and then coughed. He hadn’t used much tobacco.

That’s when he heard the knock at the door. Furtively he put the joint in the ash tray and shoved it in the top draw of his desk. He grimaced. Great, now all his philosophy books would smell like chuf. He hurried to open the door, forgetting even to look through the spy glass.

“Hey,” He said, at the sight of Gus. The brunette was obviously upset, and his face was slightly splotchy from tears. Justin’s eyes widened. Gus ran a hand over his nose, glancing over his shoulder, his usual natural charm dissolved in this pitiful display. Justin pulled the door open wider, and let him in. “Gus what’s wrong?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.” He said, sniffing back a new batch of sobs. He sat down on the couch, while Justin, remembering to put the safety latch on went to recover the joint. Gus’s eyes widened as Justin pulled it out, careful to ash the end, and came over and sat with him. Justin took at toke and then with a sigh offered it to Gus.

“Did your parents….” Justin trailed off. Gus looked at him sourly, and took another toke.

“My mum found the photos. Of me and you. And, the other ones.” He mumbled. Justin grimaced. He remembered when his own parents had found out, how violated he had felt knowing that they’d snooped through his stuff. That they’d seen the drawing’s of Ethan.

“How’d she take it?” Gus passed the joint back, and leant back on the couch, glancing around.

“Is it all right if I crash here tonight?” Justin frowned, glancing at his hands. He really didn’t like the idea of this kid sleeping here, especially when a mob of angry parents were out there somewhere looking for him. “Please. I could go to my dad’s, but I don’t want to have to put up with the Spanish inquisition. And he’s probably got someone there anyway.” Justin sighed again. And here he thought he was going to have a nice boring night, smoking and maybe doing a bit of painting, before heading to bed and wanking of to his fantasy of Brad Pitt.

But he took one look at the kid, and he thought of all the terrible things he might do if he didn’t let him stay. He remembered how hard it was, telling your parents, telling anyone, when you were so young and maybe not even sure. He remembered how vulnerable the kid had looked in his arms the other morning, and how guilty he had felt when he had found out how young the boy was, on that stupid night where he had taken him home and fucked him. While his mother was away, sneaking into to the little boys room to pervert their son, like he was the thing all teenagers should be protected from.

“Alright, stay.” Justin paused. “On the couch.” Gus twitched his nose, for a moment looking like he wanted to disagree, but then nodded.

“Thanks Justin,” Gus said, as Justin got up to get a blanket. And some thing for him to sleep in. Those tight jeans were not leaving much to the imagination, but Justin could imagine that they would be hell to sleep in.

But he wasn’t going to fuck him while he was in this state.

He tossed the blanket at Gus’s head, and then with a sigh, sat down in the arm chair, and picked up the remote. He gave Gus’s a half smile and was glad when the boy returned it.

They watched about twenty minutes of ‘The Big Hit’ before Gus’s phone started ringing. Gus glanced at it.

“It’s my dad.”

“Are you going to answer it?” Justin asked casually. Gus bit his lip and shook his head.

“He’s going to yell the house down.”

“Well, hopefully not my house.” Justin said, and he felt a pang of remorse for feeling inconvenienced by the boy. He turned off the movie. The boy looked exhausted. “Come on. Turn that thing off and let’s go to bed.” Gus nodded and then paused as he saw Justin holding out his hand to him. A hopeful smile spread across his face.

“What? I’m not sleeping on the couch?” Justin rolled his eyes, pulling the brunette up. He nudged him with his hip towards the bedroom.

“No. You’ll sleep with me. But I’m not fucking you.” He said, pushing the boy into the bedroom. Gus quirked his eyebrows as he pulled back the sheets.

“Maybe I’ll fuck you then,” He said, sounding like the ultimate dirty minded teenage boy. Justin gave him a doubtful look, and Gus laughed.

“One day Justin Taylor, I’m going to top you.” Justin pushed Gus over, wrapping his arm around him, and forcing the boy to lie still.

“You kiss your mother with that mouth.”

“Not recently.” He murmured, and Justin could already feel the exhausted boy falling in the rhythms of sleep.

\* \* \* \*

Justin woke long before Gus did. He went out into the lounge room, rubbing his head sleepily. He opened a window, the entire place still filled with smoke. With a slow deliberation, he sat down on the couch and picked up Gus’s phone. It was vibrating. The color screen displayed one word.

Dad.

Justin flipped the phone open.

“Hello,”

“Who the fuck is this?”

“Look, I don’t want to get involved here. Gus is here. He’s asleep, and he’s safe.”

“Who are you?” Justin put a hand to his forehead at the sound of that angry voice.

“I’m just a friend. And Gus is going to need them if he’s going to get kicked out by his parents all the time.” There was a long pause, and Justin pulled a face. He was really wishing he hadn’t said that last bit.

“Listen you fucking pervert, who ever you are. Gus is a sixteen year old boy, do you know what they do to bastards who fuck minors…”

“No, you listen to me you homophobic son of bitch,” Justin said angrily. “Being gay doesn’t make us perverted which is something you better learn day fast because Gus is a proud gay man, and you’re going to have to accept that or you’re going to loose him just as fast. So get your head out of the fucking Middle Ages and face reality. I’m looking out for your son, which is a hell of a lot more then you were doing when you turned him loose on the streets last night.” Justin hit the end button, and tossed the phone down on the counter. He turned at the sound of movement from behind him. Gus, shirtless and brown eyes full of amusement, tilted his head in a very Kinnish fashion.

“Um, Justin?” He said after a moment. “Did you just call my dad homophobic?”

“What the fuck?” Brian said, as the phone disconnected. He looked over at his bed, where he could see the two tricks from last night still lying, entangled up in a mass of flesh and muscle. He blinked. “What the…?” He hit the buttons for Lindsey’s cell. She answered it on the second ring.

“Did you find him? Please to god tell me you found him.”

“Um,” Brian said, opening the fridge door. “No, but I did just speak to someone he’s staying with.”

“Who?” Lindsey gasped over the phone. Brian started pouring himself a glass of guava juice, his mind still reeling.

“Um, I don’t know who, but the man called me a homophobic son of bitch I think his exact words were.” Brian leant heavily on the counter with one hand. He heard a slight squeak from Lindsey.

“What?”

“I know.” He nodded at her last few comments, and clicked the phone shut, tossing it carelessly on the counter, hearing it clang with a wince. He took a sip of his juice, and tried to force his head to stop throbbing.

Right, that wasn’t working.

He went into the bedroom, feeling the air thicken even as he stepped into it. Brian yanked opened the blinds, watching the tricks stir. Limbs wrapped in limbs, a head resting on a shoulder. Brian rubbed his eyes sleepily, sighing. Fuck, that had been quite the activity the night before. It had worn him out enough to forget his no sleepover policy. One sleepy head jerked up, glancing around, and Brian gave him a dry look.

“Shower.” He said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder as a direction. “Then go.” The other one groaned, and Brian left the bedroom. It was going to be a bloody long morning. He could feel it. He opened the newspaper, grimacing at the thudding sound as one of the tricks fell out of bed, trying to concentrate on the front page. He glanced over his shoulder, and the frown on his face softened as he saw one naked body cross the space between his room and the bathroom. Maybe there were certain advantages to having guests. And they were using his shower…

The door bell rang, waking Brian out of his daze that had already got him up of his seat and heading towards the bathroom. His morning frown immediately reappeared, and he strode over to the metal door, yanking it open with one angry motion.

His eyes widened slightly at what he saw there. It was not what he had been expecting.

“Who the fuck are you?” And god did he hope the response contained the words fuck or blowjob in it. Blonde, gorgeous, with this fucking amazing pale skin that look soft. Yeah, that was the word Brian thought of when he looked at him. Soft, so soft that you wanted to reach out and touch. This was the kind of kid Brian had spent his high school wanking of to, his college years chasing and his later years reminiscing about. Brian bit his lip, and wondered how on earth he could get this boy into bed with the littlest possible time wasted. He suddenly didn’t give a fuck about the tricks in the bathroom, or even why he was here. He just wanted to grab this boy behind the back of the neck and pull him against his body, to be pleasantly surprised by the hardness of his abs, and his arms, and hell, by the size of the hardness he would inspire…

“Dad?” Gus stepped into view, biting his lip, looking all the sixteen year old boy that he was. Brian’s eyes widened in shock, then anger at the sight of his son, and then finally, realization as he looked back at Justin. Justin gave a weak grin that might have been an apology. Brian’s eyes went dull with annoyance.

“Fuck me.” Brian cursed. Not before coffee. He could so not deal with this right now.

“Well, I know where Gus gets his manners from.” Justin joked, his blue eyes for a moment sparked with mischief. Both Kinneys gave him a rather sour look, and he grinned again at the similarity between the two of them.

“And you are?” Brian said, raising an eyebrow.

“Dad, this is…”

“I’m Justin.” Justin cut it, looking up at Brian with almost nervousness. He glanced over at Gus, and then more defiantly at Brian. “Justin Taylor.”

“And I’m the homophobic arsehole.” Brian said and, as if on cue, the two tricks emerged, hair still wet from the shower, clothes clinging to ever muscle. They gave Brian a smile, and he returned it faintly.

“Give us a call, if you’re interested in another party.” The one Brian had referred to in his head a Moaner said, handing Brian a piece of paper, and giving the boys a friendly glance, strolled out. The second one (Growler), lingered, and then gave Brian another piece of paper, whispering.

“And if you’re ever interested in a more exclusive party,” He grinned, and then also looking at the two boys, and raised his eyebrows. “Or even, any sort of party. Youngens fine with me,” Brian’s face rippled with disgust.

“Cya,” Gus said cheerily as the Trick left, and even turned to wave and, to Brian’s disgust, check out the trick’s arse. Justin raised an eyebrow, his hands crossed across his chest.

“Gus,” Brian managed to say finally, looking back at his errand son, trying to regain control of this situation. “Go take a shower. I’m taking you to school.” But he was looking at Justin now, his eyes dark. Gus grimaced, recognizing the deadpan look on Brian’s face and disliking the tension between the two.

“Dad, don’t…”

“Gus, go.” Brian snapped, his head flicking back. Gus jumped, and then nodded, not looking at Justin as he slunk past. Brian didn’t move, even as Gus turned to look back at them, pausing with uncertainty. Brian waited until he heard the click of the bathroom door, and then he shifted.

“Coffee?” He said, moving inside. Justin stepped over the threshold gingerly, his eyes wide as though expecting a trap. Brian sighed as he set down the two mugs on the bench. He seemed a little bit lost as of what to do from there. Finally he looked up, and Justin nearly shivered at the intensity of that look.

“What are you doing with my son?” He asked, his tone a mixture of frustration and confusion. Justin shifted awkwardly from one food to another.

What am I doing indeed, Justin thought to himself, and then shook his head at that stray thought.

“I don’t know what you want me to say…” Justin broke off with a shrug. He winced as Brian’s face shifted into one of frustration.

“You don’t know? Well, what would you do in my case? My sixteen year old son has just shown up at my door with a complete stranger,” Brian eyes darkened as he spat the last words. “Who I don’t know if he’s been fucking for the last three years or if he picked him up in a bar last night. And I don’t know which is worse. So, I’ll ask you again, in more polite terms perhaps, what exactly are your fucking intentions towards my son?” He said, the words almost grinding out of him. Justin released the breath he hadn’t known he was holding. He bit his lip, and, glancing at the bathroom, took step forward.

“Look,” He said in a hushed tone. “I’m not looking to hurt your son, it just sort of happened.” He paused, trying to think of what else to say. Brian shook his head.

“So you don’t make a habit of fucking sixteen year olds?” Brian said aggressively. Justin’s eyes flared with anger.

“Hey, come on. You know it could have just have easily been you and me ending up in bed together, and your son with those two tricks that just walked out.” Justin said, and then quickly hurried on, not letting his mind linger on what he had just said. Brian shifted, but he was listening. “I’m not saying that I’m who you were hoping Gus would be seeing, but I’m just saying he could have gotten himself into a lot more trouble then ending up in bed with me.” Brian smiled faintly.

“Does he think he loves you?” Brian said cautiously. Justin shrugged.

“I think he knows what it is. I think it’s just a bit of fun for him.” Brian nodded, almost violently.

“And you use a condom?” Justin’s face grimaced, and he managed to blush.

“Yes.” Brian seemed lost again. He glanced at the coffee cups, and seemed to remember what he was doing. Even though it was his kitchen, it took him about ten minutes to find the coffee beans. Justin watched the working’s of his face, the internal monologue that seemed to be plaguing him. Finally, Brian looked up, his eyes puzzled.

“I don’t know what I’m meant to do here, Justin… right?” He said, hesitantly. Justin nodded. “I’m not the perfect parent, and god knows I’ve fucked up more times then I can count. I want to protect my kid. But you’re right. There are a lot of fucking arseholes out there. I know, I’ve fucked half of them. And I also know that Gus is, a much as I hate to admit it, as headstrong and stubborn as I am. So if I tell him not to see you, or not to go to Babylon, I’ll never get rid of you.” His voice hardened slightly. “And I’ll probably loose him to boot. So what the fuck do you think I should do?”

Justin laughed. God they were so similar it made him want to scream. Gus had that slightly more mischievous and carefree attitude, but this Brian was something harder. All those attractive things about Gus; his supreme confidence that was hinged on arrogance, those facial mannerisms, hell even the way he stood, were all matured in Brian. And distilled. Brian was lean, confident and fucking vibrating with sex appeal. His whole body seemed tightly under his control, every motion strong. What it would be like to lie in those arms, with the skills of Brian combined with all that enjoyable energy that Gus had. There was a directness and a level of self control in Brian that Justin found appealing. And he also had the impulse to see whether he could break that self control.

“I don’t know.” He said, shaking his head. “Love him, I guess. Don’t be a prick like our parents were.” He said and Brian caught his tongue between his teeth, nodding as he took in those words.

“He’s only sixteen.” Brian muttered. Justin glanced over at the bathroom, noticing the mess in the bedroom, the empty bottle of vodka on the floor. He could also see the ash tray to be emptied resting on the steps, and he guessed suddenly that Gus’s partying lifestyle attitude might also be inherited.

“Yeah, but what were you doing at sixteen?” Justin looked up, and Brian caught the flash of desire in those blue eyes. He had to blink to shake of the shock. He grinned.

“I was blowing my gym teacher at fourteen.” Justin laughed, and leant forward, mimicking Brian.

“And I was kissing high school girls until I was seventeen. So I’m guessing it’s a Kinney trait which you’re worrying about.”

“Yeah, I’m worrying about it because I got myself into a hell of a lot of trouble.” Brian growled.

“And I’m guessing you still are.” Justin said softly, unable to contain his grin in the face of Brian’s attempt to hold onto his anger.

“Uh, Dad?” They both turned at the sound of Gus’s voice. Gus was wearing a towel wrapped around his waist, his hair still dripping from the shower, a bar of soap in his hands. Brian raised his eyebrows in response. “I think you might need to clean your shower or something, because,” He broke into a laugh, his face breaking into an amused grin. “There’s some pretty interesting stuff in there. Um, and I think some of it’s not very old…” He trailed off. Brian wanted to bury his head in his hands. Those fucking arsehole tricks had been fucking in his shower. Without him.

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“Come on,” Brian said, yanking on Gus’s shirt. Gus gave a quick wave over his shoulder to Justin, content knowing that his phone number was now nestled amongst all the others in Justin’s phone. Brian also gave a cursory look back at Justin, his eyes mingling with a sort of resentful want. Gus clambered into the jeep, and Brian got in on the other side, looking in the rear view mirror as Justin drove away. Then he started his own car, giving Gus a deathly stare as he turned on the radio.

They drove in silence for about five minutes, Gus waiting as Brian contemplated.

“How old is he?” Brian said finally. Gus blinked. He’d thought he was going to get the yelling of a life time. They again, it was always hard to predict with Brian.

“About twenty, I think. He’s at Pittsburgh’s Art school or something.”

“How the fuck does he afford that car then?” Brian growled. Gus laughed.

“I don’t know Dad.” He drummed his fingers on the side of the car, putting down the window. Then he looked back, a cheeky grin in place. “We didn’t exactly exchange life stories, if you know what I mean.” Brian grimaced, glancing over at his son.

“You’re not going to make this easy on me, are you?” He said gruffly. Gus shook his head, a grin permanently in place. Brian gritted his teeth.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“That I was a fudge packer?” Gus said, with equal innocence. Brain grimaced again.

“Gus,” He said warningly, and Gus nodded. Alright, he’d stop being a cock.

“I just, I didn’t know for sure, and it’s not like its easy ever talking with your parents about, you know, sex shit.” Gus said, looking out the window and talking very fast. “I mean, I’m not going to come home and tell you about this hot blonde I bagged, whether it’s male or female.” Brian wanted to close his eyes, but he was driving so he just nodded.

“So, this hot blonde…” Brian said, lingeringly. “Is he your,”

“Boyfriend?” Gus still marveled at the fact that Brian could never manage to articulate the word, in any sentence, for any reason. “I don’t think so. I like him, and he’s fun, but I don’t… well, you know. Love is bullshit right?” Brian’s face went stony at this Kinnyism. Damn, maybe he had taught his son too well.

“You’re sixteen. You’re not meant to be saying that.”

“Dad, being in love with guys from school who are invariably fucking their cheerleader girlfriends even if they are wanking off to guys tends to put a downer on the whole love thing.” Gus said sarcastically. Brian’s eyes widened and the car swerved slightly, causing Gus to grip the side of the car. “Fuck Dad, watch the road.”

Brian couldn’t believe Gus had just said that. His Gus. Gus who went to soccer practice, and parties and had a million friends. Who was the most perfect, most normal, and most happy kid he’d seen. God he’d been so thankful that Gus had turned out like he had, with so many friends, so much go lucky happy charm.

And now he was talking about being disillusioned with love and the alienation of being gay in school.

Now he was talking like Brian had when he’d been at school. It was like a too intimate imposter talking through his son’s mouth.

“Does mum know?” Gus said, quietly, and Brian’s heart melted. He looked over at Gus’s ruffled hair and the worry in those big brown eyes. He gave him a sympathetic nod. Gus sighed.

“Linds is just worried. You’ve pushed her pretty hard these last few days. And she’s a mother. They’re meant to be worried Gus.” Brian bit his lip. “I’ll talk to her.”

“Thank you.” They were pulling up to school now, and Gus glanced out at the school yard. God, how could he go back in there, and be Gus Kinney, after everything that had happened last night. Everything was different now.

“Just ease up on us a bit Gus. And for fuck’s sake be careful.” Brian said, looking directly ahead. Gus smiled, and gave his dad an affectionate kiss on the cheek. “And come home straight after school.” Brian added as an after thought, standing up in the jeep to call after his disappearing son.

“I can’t.” Gus yelled back, his cheeky grin once again in full force. “I’ve got detention.”

“What the hell for?” Brian snapped.

“For calling a teacher a bitch.” Gus shrugged, and then pelted up the steps so as to avoid Brian’s wraith. For once he was glad to be heading in to school. God, he had to find Liv, and tell her everything. And Eli. Eli was never going to believe it.

“Lindsey, come on,” Brian said, but she pushed past him, her arms wrapped tight around her, her fingers plucking at the wool of her jumper. She sat down, the cup of tea in her hand shaking so that it splotched on the wooden dining table. Brian grimaced. That would leave a stain if he didn’t clean it up. But he sat, putting on hand on Lindsey’s knee. Lindsey dried her eyes on her sleeve, and then rather ungraciously wiped her hand across her nose. Alright, it wasn’t a pretty picture, but he’d seen worse. Hell, he’d been there at Gus’s birth after all. “Linds,” He said, giving her a long measured look. She shook her head at him.

“I can’t Brian. I can’t do this.” Brian rolled his eyes, and leant back.

“What, and sitting around the house crying is going to help? We knew he was going to have sex one day. He was very unlikely to become a monk.” Lindsey shook her head, and sipped her tea.

“You think it’s some big joke.” She said reprovingly, shooting him a grumpy look. “You love it. Your gay son following in his fathers foot steps.” Brian leant back in annoyance.

“Um, when did this become my fault?” Brian growled in disbelieve. Lindsey shook her head, and held his hand for a moment where it rested on the table.

“Of course it’s not your fault. I’m not saying that. But…” She paused, and bit her lip. “Maybe it’s just a phase…”

“Lindsey.” Brian said, his face wrinkling with horror. “You did not just say that. Do you know how cliché that is? Do I need to remind you what you did when your parents said that you were just doing it for the thrill or shock factor of it or some bullshit?”

“I said that muff-diving wasn’t an extreme sport, more of a dietary choice.” Lindsey said faintly, her face breaking into a girlish smile. She looked down at her long fingers, and she laughed softly. Brian tilted his head hopefully.

“Hey,” He said, tilted her head up, his hand on her chin. She rolled her eyes, batting him away.

“Oh, am I so terrible Brian? That I want him to be dating some nice girl his age from his school who I can worry about him getting pregnant, rather then him out at some terrible club like Babylon, where…” She broke off, giving Brian a guilty look.

“Men like me will hit on him?” Brian said.

“Yes. Even if he was with some boy his age.” She shook her head. “Who is this Justin? And why can’t he go out with someone his own age?”

“Linds,” Brian said seriously, cutting into her babble. “If we try to stop Gus seeing this Justin, it’ll just make him more determined to. And anyway, better the devil you know.” He said, and Lindsey gave him a dirty look. She sighed again, tapping her nail on the side of her cup.

“Do you remember when we could bribe Gus with candy and punish him with a frown? Now I can’t get him to do the dishes, let alone stop him going to gay bars.” She stared at something off in the distance. “I’m losing him in the exact same way I lost you.” She said quietly. Brian frowned, but remained silent. She looked up and a long silent look passed between them.

Then the phone rang.

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It should have been a perfectly normal afternoon. It certainly felt so as Gus leant against his locker, finishing a message he was sending to Tommo. He bite his lip. Yeah, three grams should set them for Friday night. They were going to have a bit of a boys night at Shane’s. If he wasn’t still grounded that was. Bloody hell, it he was he was going to be pissed. Shane’s house was fucking amazing, and his parents only went away once in a blue moon.

“So, what do you think of Lily, Eli?” Vic said, popping her gum bubble as she did. Gus looked up with a grimace. He didn’t know how much Eli told Vic, but he assumed that she knew even if he wasn’t batting for the other team, he wasn’t swinging much at anything. Eli shrugged, not looked at Gus which aggravated him more.

“Oh yeah, she’s alright.” Eli quickly glanced up at Gus, and Gus raised an eyebrow. “What do you think?”

“I don’t really go for fake tan.” Gus snapped, chucking his books back in his back. Vic laughed.

“Oh yeah, what do you go for then?” She said, coiling her arm around his waist jokingly. Eli laughed, but his quiet eyes remained on Gus’s. Over Vic’s dark head, Gus gave Eli a long look, and then he kissed the shorter girls forehead.

“Big butch girls with peanuts for brains,” He said jokingly, and pushed the smaller girl away slightly. He knew Vic had a major crush on him, and though he loved her, he sort of hated the fact that just by being friends with her he was encouraging it. He heard Eli give a low whistle through his teeth, and Vic inhale quickly, and he frowned, wondering who was approaching.

He barely had time to half turn his head before he regretted it.

“Gus, can I talk to you?” Janis tilted her pretty little head, her hand moving to rest possessively on his elbow, her long acrylic nails looking capable of scratching out an eye. She gave Vic a dismissive look and then smiled at Eli. “Hey, Eli,” She said, and the taller boy shifted to stand up straight from where he had been leaning on the lockers. Gus sighed, and ran his hand through his hair. He nodded.

“Alright. Walk me over to my detention.” He waved goodbye to Vic and Eli, who watched then depart before talking in a sort of hushed chatter. Gus gritted his teeth. Great. Now there would be about ten dozen rumors that him and Janis were a thing again.

They walked in silence until they got outside. Gus checked his watch. He had ten minutes before his detention, which was over in the science labs. He patted it pocket.

“Go for a ciggy?”

“You read my mind,” She said, and they headed over towards the bike sheds.

“Alright.” Gus said, positioning himself against the aging wood wall, lighting his cigarette with Eli’s blue lighter that he really meant to give back. He passed it to Janis, and she tilted her head as she lit up, frowning slightly in concentration. She leant her head back and blew the smoke upwards. “What’s going on?”

“I wanna go to the school dance with you.” She said. Gus laughed. Good old Janis, always abrupt. He shook his head.

“I’m not fucking going.” He took another drag. “And why? We went last year together, and look how great that turned out.”

“Gus, I’m not asking you to get back together with me, god,” She flicked her blonde hair over her shoulder, pausing to hold back her irritation. Gus almost grinned. He still knew how to piss her off it seemed. “I know how unbearable going out with me was,” She snapped bitterly.

“Oh, the guilt trip now.” Gus said raising his eyebrows. “Remember, you were the one pashing Thomas Yetchen three days after we broke up.”

“Jealous of me?” She said, her glossed lips forming a pout. Gus looked slightly taken a back.

“Fuck no.”

“Look, I didn’t mean to get shitty with you alright? I know, I get it. You were straight with me when you told me that you were… you know. Not straight.”

“A faggot?” Gus said helpfully. She rolled her eyes.

“God Gus, way to be on the aggression path today. What you finally get something shoved up your arse?” She gave him a bright smile, and he gave her the finger.

“As a matter of fact, yeah I did get fucked until three in the morning last night, how about you?” Gus lied.

“Oh, fuck Gus. I do not need to hear about your sex life right now.” She spat back. They paused, both silent for a moment, as Janis ashed her cigarette, staring at the light that was filtering through into the dusty shed. Gus rubbed his head with his spare hand guiltily.

“Janis, why in hell would you want to go to the dance with me? We can’t even have a conversation without going off at each other.”

“Because,” She started and then shook her head. She licked her lips. “Because I sort of miss you, you arsehole. I miss being one of your girls. I mean, you barely talk to me at school anymore, you act like I don’t exist.” She wasn’t looking at him now, which allowed Gus to watch her face, the nervous tension in it. “And I see you with that Vic bloody Terrachi, or Liv and Danielle, who you used to think was a total wanker, and I just… I don’t get why you don’t have time for me as well.” She shrugged.

“Oh, Janis. Bloody hell. You’re not going to start crying on me are you?” He said, moving to stand close to her. “Come on. It’s been a bitch of a year, and we’ve all had a lot of stuff going on. I mean, you were with that Mark guy and fucking who knows else, and I’ve been…”

“Fucking men all year.” She finished jokingly and Gus laughed.

“Well, pretty much yeah. And I thought you hated me.”

“Well, I don’t, you big idiot.” She gave him a quick nudge on the chest. “So come to the dance with me.” He paused, dropping his cigarette, and then nodded. She smiled grumpily. “Good.” She sniffed and gave him a quick shove. “And don’t fucking tell Dean bloody Myers we had sex, alright.”

“What, you don’t count that one time in…?” He said, jokingly, and she shoved him again. God, he remembered how fun it was teasing her.

“You passed out before we did anything. You just think we did because you woke up naked. I think I would know Gus,” She said, in a high pitched voice. He laughed as she glowered at him. “Come on, we’ve got to get you to detention.”

“Ah, the best ways to waste my hours.”

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“So, I’ll call you later, and we’ll do something.” She said, lingering at the door. Gus nodded, and wandered into the lab. Mrs Armstrong, the bitch who took detention gave him a dry look and took a sniff of disapproval. Damn, she could probably smell the cigarettes.

“You’re ten minutes late Mr Kinney.” She said, shooting Janis a look at the door which sent her running. Gus nodded and plunked himself down on the chair, and looked over at his fellow inmate. There was only one. It was a Mr Dean Myers. Who grinned at him.

Gus groaned inwardly. This was going to be a long hour.

“So, she’s just buggered off then?” Gus said, looking out the door again. Dean nodded, his feet resting on the table as he leant back his chair. He threw a tennis ball to Gus, who caught it.

“Yeah, she comes back at the end of the hour and ticks us off.” Gus gave a hiss of disgust and threw the tennis ball back. He paced behind the teachers desk.

“Get detention a lot do you?” He said, rather disparagingly. Dean shrugged.

“Yeah. I’m not a favorite with most of the teachers.” Gus nodded, glancing out the window. That was not surprising. He threw himself down in the chair near Dean, and gave him a bored look. God there were so many things he could be doing right now.

“So what stops us leaving and coming back at the end of the hour like her?” He said hopefully. Dean gave him a unexcited look.

“She’s in the staffroom at the end of the hall. She’ll hear us and put us on detention for a week. She’s done it to me before.”

“Great.” Gus clenched his hands. “This is just fucking great.” He pulled out his phone and began typing a message to Justin. This day had proven, what with the intervention from Dad and the weird conversation with Janis, to be horrible, and maybe seeing Justin would improve matters slightly.

Even if it meant breaking his curfew.

And now he had to listen to Dean Myers for a hour and look at his stupid, stupid face. Could this day get any worse?

“Who are you messaging?” Dean said, looking up at Gus, and Gus paused. He reassessed Dean for a minute, and shrugged, looking up again at him through his lashes.

“Someone I know.”

“A chick who gives good head?” Dean joked, drumming his fingers on the table top. Gus suddenly couldn’t get a certain idea out of his head, and there had to be a certain way to arrange it.

“What the hell do chicks know about giving head anyway?” Gus said quietly.

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Apparently not as much as Dean Myers. Gus leant back in his chair, putting is hands behind his head, blissfully happy not only that he was no longer staring at Dean Myers stupid face or hearing him speak.

He wanted to be thinking of Justin, of Justin’s beautiful pouty mouth and his miraculously perfect arse. He wanted to be thinking of Babylon and the dancing go-go boys rather then the heat radiating through their school clothes, and a certain brunette. He groaned as he saw Eli’s face flash through his mind, and closed his eyes. He was so close to coming now.

Some people should just be told at birth that there are better things to do with their mouth then speak. Dean was one of them. Gus’s mouth fell slightly open as he moaned, and then fully open as he gasped.

“What the hell do you think you boys are doing?”

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“Better the devil you know.” Lindsey mocked in a low mumble as she hurried up the school steps. Brian, who had had to lock her old car, ran after her, taking two steps at a time. “Oh, come on Linds, don’t worry about Gus being gay.” She continued mimicking and Brian rolled his eyes.

“Lindsey,” Brian growled. She spun around, stopping midstep, her hand bag hitting him full in the chest.

“What? He’s going to get expelled, Brian. He was being sucked off in the middle of detention. How the hell am I meant to explain that when we try to get him into another fucking IV league, conservative, fucking expensive school without a scholarship?” Brian gave her a despairing look.

They looked up as another set of parents hurried past them, a boy with broad shoulders and a too short hair cut in tow. Brian spun his head round, as the boy averted his eyes.

“Angus Kinney!” Lindsey snapped, reaching the top of the stairs before Brian, where Gus was standing sheepishly next to the vice principal. Gus ignored her looking at Brian.

“Dad,” He murmured, and Brian could see while the boy would act contrite to Lindsey, he thought this was fucking hilarious. Gus looked away, over at the playing fields.

“I’d like you to come in for a parent meeting to discuss this, Mrs. Kinney,” Lindsey didn’t even correct the VP, nor have time to become offended at the slight slur given to the name. “Until then, Gus is not allowed on school property. He is suspended.” She clarified. Lindsey grabbed Gus’s arm, yanking him to her.

“What the hell were you thinking Gus?”

“Mr. Kinney,” The lady nodded at him, and Brian felt suddenly all his old school rebellion swelling up and he was tempted to give the finger to her departing back.

“Oh come on, Mum.” Gus muttered. He glanced over at Brian and Brian sighed at the cheeky grin he was flashed. “Tell me I could not.” He said, as though Brian and him were joking around at a footy match or something.

“What?” Lindsey screeched. Lindsey was pulling Gus down the stairs now, and Brian glanced heavenwards as he followed her. “Of all the embarrassments I’ve ever had, young man, this is the worst. How could you do this, don’t you understand how important this school, your education…” Brian tuned out as he saw a certain car pull up next to Lindsey’s. He felt a confused smile spread across his face.

“Hey,” Gus yelled, as Justin’s blonde head appeared out of the car, staring at the scene with mild amusement.

“Who the hell is that?” Lindsey muttered, trying to pull herself together as they reached the bottom of the stairs. She straightened her scarf, and Brian gave her a wry smile. Forever a WASP.

“That’s Justin,” Gus craned his neck around to look at his father, trying to escape his mothers grasp. “Dad, you told her about Justin right?”

“Uh,” Brian looked at Lindsey who was now looking at him as though he too was incriminated in the crime. “Yeah, but that doesn’t really explain why he’s here?”

“Because I asked him too.” Gus said, finally getting free, and walking over to Justin at the car. Justin, leaning on the car door, grinned as the boy approached, but they didn’t embrace. Gus started talking to him in a fast low voice, and Brian was so enthralled watching Justin’s reactions that he jumped with Lindsey’s fist connected with his chest.

“Ow! What?” He said, defensively, rubbing his chest.

“Who is that?” She said with an angry disbelief. Brian looked over at Justin, and he shook his head, trying to fathom an answer that wasn’t a lie and that wouldn’t sent Lindsey freaking out.

“He’s,” He paused, and it was as though there were a million answers in his head that somehow weren’t translatable into actual words. And they didn’t have much to do with Gus. “Who our son stayed with last night.”

“The one who called you…” Lindsey said, eyes widening and then narrowing as she tried to analyze Brian’s bizarre reaction.

“Yep,” He said, and Lindsey felt like shaking him.

“Enough.” She snapped, shaking Brian out of his spell. “Gus,” She yelled. “Get in the car. We’re going home.”

“But mum…”

“And whoever you are, it’s very nice to meet you, but we have to be going.” She had a hold of Gus’s elbow again. Gus resignedly got in the car, but Lindsey stopped Brian doing the same. She gave him a dull glare that made him back up, and then jerked her head at Justin. “Maybe you should talk to him Brian. And set him straight on a few things.”

Brian was still blinking when she tore off. He looked over at Justin, who was watching him with an air of expectancy, and gave a brief, pained smile.

“So, how old are you anyway?” Justin said, his fingers playing with the fabric of the booth. Brian eyes widened with panic for a second in the face of the pale blonde boy’s scrutiny, and then he blinked, a snarl replacing it.

“Gus is sixteen. I had him when I was seventeen. You do the math.”

“You had him,” Justin grabbed a sugar packet and began fiddling with it. “Sound’s like you’re the one who gave birth.” Brian gave him a dull look, and snapped the sugar packet out of his hand. Justin leant back with shock, and then laughed. “Sorry, I tend to go a bit babbly when I’m nervous.”

“Really?” Brian said sarcastically, but his eyes lingered too long on Justin’s. Both men looked away.

“My, my my,” Emmett purred as he walked into the dinner, his abdomen showing under his skimpy top. Michael tugged at the strap of his satchel. Emmett half turned, raising his eye brows. “The pickings are good tonight. That little accessory of Brian’s just makes him the prettiest boy in all of Kansas, I do declare,” He put his hand over his heard. Michael frowned, hitting Emmett for his exaggerated campness.

“What is he, fourteen? Brian should learn to date men his own age,” He grumbled. Emmett put one hand over his mouth in mock whisper.

“Hon, doesn’t exactly date them.” Emmett made to move over to Brian’s table, to interrupt the romantic conversation, but Michael grabbed his elbow.

“What’s wrong with right here?” Michael said, gesturing to the bar stools. Emmett pulled a disbelieving face.

“What’s wrong with right here is that there is serious man candy over there and this queen ain’t afraid of leftovers, because I have been to the gym.” And with that, Emmett pulled out of Michael’s grasp, and sauntered over to Brian’s table.

He put out an arm, wrapping in around Brian’s shoulder as he sat down, resting his head against Brian’s arm and batting his eyelids at Justin. Brian’s eyes widened with shock and then, on seeing who it was, he rolled his eyes. He shrugged Emmett of.

Michael hovered for a moment, and then, after meeting Brian’s eyes for a moment, sat next to Justin.

“And who is this?” Emmett said, putting his hand across the table, jolting Brian and causing his scowl to deepen. Justin took it hesitantly.

“Justin, this nelly bottem is Emmett. Emmett, Justin, Justin Emmett.” Brian gave Michael a slightly hostile look. He could see Michael’s eyes dripping with judgment from the conclusions he had obviously leapt to. Aw, he thought, there was a time when Mikey wouldn’t look at me without big puppy dog eyes. Guess you have to get over the fantasy sometimes. “And Michael.”

“Hey,” Justin said. “Are you, um, Brian’s…”

“God no.” Emmett exclaimed just moments after Brian’s rather louder denunciation. “Brian doesn’t do boyfriends.”

“Just half of liberty.” Michael added sulkily, looking over at the counter for Deb. Brian pulled a face, tilting his head.

“Wow Michael, you’ve been saying that so long you’re out of date. It must be, what, Em, three quarters, two thirds by now?”

“Hmm, I wonder if we could do a survey to see the proportion of the whole of

Pittsburgh?” Emmett said idly. Justin laughed, glancing at the two of them, and then at Michael, who gave him a dirty look.

“So, you’re picking up boys at Gus’s school now?” Michael said sulkily. Brian gave him a slightly disdainful look. God, he knew that Michael and him had been sort of distant for a while now, but this was getting ridiculous. He opened his mouth to counter, but Justin got in ahead.

“Actually, Brian and I met because Gus picked me up at a club,” He gave a cheery smile, his blue eyes glinted with a flash of anger. Brian looked away for a minute, and then back at Michael who was gasping. Emmett spoke first.

“Gus, as in, I’m Brian’s son and Auntie Emmett used to clean the chocolate stains of my face?” He said in a strained voice. He looked a Brian with distress, who gave a little, almost embarrassed shrug. “Gus is gay?” Emmett, managing to formulate all this in his mind, the broke into a smile.

“Apparently,” Brian mumbled, gesturing at Justin as proof.

“And you’re letting him go out to bars and pick up strangers?” Michael spluttered. “You going show him the back rooms at Babylon next?”

“What was that about the backrooms?” Debbie said, her pencil poised and her gum visible as her jaw opened and shut, the grin still determinedly in place. Michael looked up, cut off from his rant, and Brian wanted to sink lower in his seat.

“Hi Deb,” Emmett preened. Deb gave him a little wave. She looked up and grinned at the sight of Justin.

“Well, you’re a cutie.” She said, and Justin laughed. “Michael, when are you going to introduce me to your beau?” Brian bit back a laugh at this. Michael’s face went a shade of bright pink.

“He’s not my beau mum, apparently he’s Gus’s.”

“Gus who?” She said, blinking, not following.

“Gus, goddamn it,” He gestured at Brian. “Gus Gus.”

“What?” She said, sitting down next to Michael, causing Michael to be squished even closer to Justin. Brian raised his eyes heavenward. “Little Rascal? Why didn’t you me he was gay?” She said, whacking Michael with her chubby arms. Michael raised his hands in surrender, giving Brian another dirty look.

“I didn’t know Ma. Brian just told us.” Debbie looked incredulously at Brian, and Emmett laughed.

“Looks like you just outed your son to the world Brian. Way to steal his show.” Brian scowled, and made a shooing motion.

“Deb, don’t you have work to do? I wasn’t exactly expecting a full family onslaught, if I’d known this was going to come up,” He glared at Justin, who pulled an apologetic face. “I would have written a fucking memo.”

“Then what the hell are you doing here with Brian?” Debbie said, ignoring Brian and addressing Justin. Her eyes darkened and her eyes flicked back to Brian suspiciously, causing him to push his hands through his hair. “Brian Kinney, you may have a rather shady grip of what’s right, but if you’re…”

“Jesus,” Brian exclaimed, shaking his head. “Can everyone just jump to conclusions today? Look, I can control myself and not chase every piece of arse that comes my way Deb, whatever you and my shady grip on might tell people otherwise.” He finished sarcastically. He shoved at Emmett. “Can you please move so I can get the fuck out of here?” Emmett got up quickly, rubbing at his hip.

“Hmm,” He murmured as he sat back down. “Brian certainly reacted strongly to that suggestion.” Emmett raised an eyebrow at Justin, who stared down at his hands. Deb, whose mouth had fallen slightly open as she saw Brian storm off, turned to Michael.

“Aren’t you going to follow him?” She said, and Michael wrinkled his nose, grabbing the menu.

“Ma, I don’t spend my whole life chasing his highness every time he had a hissy fit.” Michael said. Justin, who had so far somehow slipped from the radar sighed.

“Well I’ve got to follow him. We came in my car.” He gave Michael the briefest of smiles, waiting for him to move. For a moment, Michael didn’t react, his eyes perturbed by what he saw. Then he moved quickly, as though woken from a trance, pushing Deb out and standing to let the blonde boy pass. Deb watched him leave, shaking her head.

“That Brian Kinney,” She shook her head. “Wherever he goes, it’s always drama.” She ruffled Michael’s hair protectively, and her eyes become slightly distant, and a little bit sad, her hand resting on Michael’s head a bit too long.

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“Hey,” Justin called out for about the hundredth time while running after Brian, his face slightly puffed. Brian finally heard him and swung around, ready to hurl out an insult which died as he realized who he was looking at. He felt a pang of guilt at leaving Justin there. “I just seem to be running around after you Kinneys today.” Justin joked, and Brian grinned thankfully. Justin wasn’t going to make him talk about what had just went down. To an outsider, that must have looked bloody confusing, there was so much tension on the table.

“Sorry to leave you there.” Brian said, cracking his knuckle through his glove. He grimaced and gave a shrug as an explanation. “Extended family.” Justin nodded, his blue eyes watchful. He dipped his head for a moment, looking at his feet, and then back up at Brian.

“I’ll give you a lift home.” Justin said, shrugging again. Brian paused, and then nodded. Something about this kid made him consent just a little.

“Lindsey, no.” Brian moaned again, wanting to bury his head in the couch. “No, no, fuck no, and no. He can’t. Look, Lindsey, no, uh…” He paused as she talked and her rolled his eyes, his tongue pushed against his teeth in frustration. “This is not a possibility. My place is too small.” He paused again. “Okay, I resent that. I am not just trying to conserve my,” He paused, glancing over at the kitchen. “My fuck pad, it that’s how you want to term it. It’s not logical. How the fuck is he meant to get to school? This place had one bedroom. One. I’m not being selfish Lindsey. He’s… no…. fuck no.” He shook his head, and he groaned again as he realized what he was about to say. “Alright. Two weeks. Till we get stuff sorted out. After that… and you fucking owe me Lindsey.” He hung up, and growled again. “Fuck.”

“So, Gus is causing problems?” Justin said, leaning on the kitchen counter, eyebrows raised. Brian swung his head around to look over at Justin, the phone heavy in his hand, as heavy as the terrible possibilities in the air. He pursed his lips.

“Yeah, what a surprise.” Brian said shortly, opening the fridge.

“Getting into troubles what being young is about,” Justin said, and looked up at Brian slyly to see whether he’d get the joke. Brian handed Justin a beer.

“Really?” Brian said softly, holding onto the beer for a second too long and then blinked. Fuck. He turned, putting his back, and some space, between him and Justin. “Gus is coming here. I guess he’ll be living with me now.” He turned, frowning. God, where was Gus going to sleep? And more importantly, where the hell was Brian going to fuck?

“That’ll cut in on your extra curricular activities.” Justin mused, glancing around the loft. Too small. There would be no way you wouldn’t hear the groans when Brian was fucking someone. And Justin had the hutch that those groans would be loud. Very loud.

“You think?” Brian said sarcastically. He pushed his hands through his hair and groaned. He was too tired for this crap.

“Hey,” Justin said, moving to touch Brian’s shoulder. “I got to go. I’ve got a family dinner.” Brian nodded. He fingered the top of his beer.

“Justin?” He said, calling to the boy who had gone to pick up his bag.

“Yeah?” Justin turned around.

“Are you going to be… well, around…” Brian broke off. Justin tilted his head. “I was wondering if you’re going to become a regular in this little performance Gus has put on.” Brian clarified, changing his tone slightly. Justin bit his lip, glancing at Brian.

“Gus. Right.” Justin tilted his head. “I don’t know. But, I might, you know… Stick around for the climax,” He grinned at Brian and shrugged. He shouldered his bag. “I really have to go.” He moved towards the door, and then, on second thoughts, gave Brian a quick kiss on the lips goodbye. The moment was startling for them both, and happened before Brian could react.

“Well, I better go.” Justin said, averting his eyes, and moved past Brian to the door.

“Yeah.” Brian said, slightly perplexed, not turning around to see the boy leave.

\* \* \* \* \*

“So?” Brett said, dusting his cue. Justin looked up from his shot.

“Well what?”

“What’s going on with you and the squirt?” Brett said, leaning on the pool table, scowling as Justin sank another ball. Justin took a sip of beer and moved around the table.

“Nothing, I think.” He frowned. “He’s just a kid.”

“Hot kid.” Brett said, shaking his head in memory.

“I know. But I’ve had enough of kids for a life time.” Justin said abruptly, missing his shot. Brett laughed, Justin had lined him up.

“Looking for something a bit more mature?” Brett said, his eyes darting to the rather attractive blonde at the bar, whose biceps were practically budging out of his white tee. Justin gave him an appraising glance, but seemed uninterested.

“Yeah. Something like that.” He said, a faint smile coming his lips. “Not, you know, someone boring who wants a white picket fence or anything, but… someone a bit, well, more mature, yeah.” He shook his head, and took another shot. Brett looked at Justin’s face, and grinned.

“Who is it? Do I know him?” Which translated to have I fucked him in Brett’s dictionary. Justin shook his head.

“No. He’s just.” Justin pulled a face, clenching his fists as a burst of excitement over took him. Remembering that kiss. Remembering that feeling of him next to him in the car. The raw goddamn sexuality of the Brian. “Exciting. Like, you know, that buzzed feeling before you go out. Like pills and clubs and…”

“Fucking?” Brett finished.

“Yeah.” Justin laughed. “Amazing, dirty, mind blowing fucking. Or so I’d imagine. Repeatedly.” Justin shook his head again.

“God, who is this guy, and when can I fuck him?”

“It’s stupid though.” Justin lined up the eight ball. “It’s stupid and never going to happen and ridiculous. But…I don’t know. I haven’t felt this excitement, not since when I first met Ethan. I haven’t felt it in ages. This guy makes me think ‘Here we go’ or something. I don’t know.” Justin bit his lip, shaking his head at the words, how they still didn’t quite capture it. Cause it was better then that. It was being buzzed and amazing and fucking fascinated. It was like before going on a trip, that anticipation.

“So, when are you going to fuck him?” Brett said; scowling as Justin finished the game, sinking the eight ball and winning fifty bucks. Justin looked up, a slight look of disbelief on his face.

“I’m not.” He put the cue on the table. “This guy, the whole thing, situation way to hot to handle.” Brett clapped Justin over the shoulder, Justin grabbing his jacket, their night only just beginning.

“God, that’s the way I like it.” Brett said, grinning. Justin smiled back thoughtfully, his mind already drifting to the dance-floor of Babylon and who might be there.

“Justin,” Gus called out again, pushing through the men at Babylon. He ran up the stairs, ignoring the hand that slid down his butt from a casual passerbyer, following that blonde hair that stood out like a halo in the dark night club. He grabbed Justin’s elbow. “Fucking hell,” Gus panted.

Justin gave a brief smile to his friend, who promptly left, and Justin gave Gus an uneasy glance. Gus ignored it, leaning forward to give Justin a kiss on the lips.

“Hey, Gus,” Justin nodded, as though continuing a previous conversation, or following on from a train of thought. He glared down into his drink.

“Hey,” Gus repeated sarcastically, and then shook his head. “So you’re fucking avoiding me?” He said angrily. Justin rubbed a hand on the back of his neck, and glanced around.

“Hey, come over here.” Justin said, guiding Gus to the couches. He lit a cigarette, and then offered one to Gus, who waved it away angrily. “Look I haven’t been avoiding you alright,”

“Um, it’s been a week and a half and you haven’t returned my calls or messaged me back, or anything. And you practically ran half way across Babylon to avoid me.” Gus said with some restraint, but his dark eyes were deep with hurt. Damn those eyes, Justin thought. Gus didn’t know how to cover his emotions as well as his dad.

“I’m sorry,” Justin said, with a shrug.

“You got weirded out, didn’t you?” Gus said stonily. This was the conclusion he’d come to from the long nights of sleeping on his dad’s couch and the long days of channel surfing. “By my family. By the whole coming out thing, and my queer dad and freaky extended family, and getting sucked into my life and …”

“Gus,” Justin exclaimed disbelievingly. “I love your family. God, I wish I had a family like that. That’s totally not it.”

“So there is something wrong.” Gus stately flatly. Justin nodded, glowering down at his fingers as though they were the ones to blame.

“Not wrong, just…” Justin grabbed the younger boy’s hand. “I didn’t know how to say this to you. I don’t think we should sleep together anymore.” Justin looked up, gauging to reaction on Gus’s face to these words.

Gus extracted his hand from Justin’s.

“Why?” He said quietly.

“Oh, shit Gus,” Justin cursed, hating the pained look on his face. “I wasn’t lying when I said I’d be there for you. Because I care about you, and I had a fucking amazing time with you. And I still want to be friends and to look out for you, and go dancing with you, but… you’re not what I’m looking for in my love life right now.”

“It’s because I’m too young.” Gus said angrily, sniffing, and not looking at Justin.

“No. Well, yes, in a way,” Justin grimaced. “Look, Gus, you’re new at this. You’re looking for fun and a good time, and a blow in detention, you know?”

“Is that it?” Gus looked up, something like hope in his eyes. “You’re angry because of the blow job? Because that didn’t mean anything to me. I won’t be with anyone else…”

“Listen to me,” Justin cut in calmly, trying to catch the boy’s watery gaze. “I’m not mad about that. I’ve been in both monogamous and non-monogamous relationships. Gus, you’re not in love with me, are you?” Justin asked, just as calmly as before. Gus pursed his lips, and then looked up, and shook his head, his eyes still teary.

“But why can’t we still…”

“Because I’ve had fuck buddies before. And that’s not what I’m looking for anymore. I’m looking for someone who can give me something more. I’m looking for someone more…” Justin paused before the last word, grimacing sympathetically. “Mature.”

“Mature.” Gus repeated the word, letting it role around in his mouth. He looked at Justin, with his beautiful white skin and golden hair, and he suddenly had an intuitional flash. But he didn’t let it take form, and so he just nodded.

“But I still want to be friends.”

“Then dance with me.”

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“So, yeah, I’m living with my dad now,” Gus said eagerly, bouncing off the couch, and over to where Justin stood in the kitchen, leaving Janis and Eli on the couch. “You should have heard the list of rules he gave me,” Janis hit the next button on the stereo and turned it up slightly. She started flicking through Brian’s cd’s.

Justin poured the cocktails.

“Yeah?” Justin said bemusedly, glancing up. Gus made a suggestive face, and then laughed.

“You heard him right Eli?” The brown haired boy nodded, watching Gus, quiet as usual but unusually morose. “No swearing, no smoking, no sucking.”

“Ah, the golden three S’s,” Justin mused laughingly. Janis got up and joined them in the kitchen, snaking the drink Justin had just poured.

“Yeah, I wonder why my parents haven’t given me those rules,” She joked.

“Because their fucking naïve,” Gus swatted her butt with a magazine, and she gave him a little shove, and then sat in the middle on the floor, pulling her school skirt over her knees, and started sifting through the cads.

“And, I’m not allowed out past three on weekends, and not past one on school nights. And only out once during the week.”

“And you’re complaining?” Janis muttered. “I have to be my parents to let me go to a party three suburbs over, and you’re arguing about only being allowed out to gay bars four times a week.”

“Yeah, and when exactly are you going back to school? Because you’re going to be pretty behind.” Eli imput. Gus whirled around.

“Hey, thanks for the support guys. Whose side are you on anyway?”

“How are you affording it anyway?” Justin said quietly.

“Yeah, all those condoms must be getting expensive.” Janis added, grinning.

“Uh, personal space here people. God,” Gus glared at her. “Don’t know why I put up with you people.”

“That makes two of us,” Brian said, as he stepped into the loft. He frowned. “Could you please close the fucking loft door occasionally Gus? And just because you smoke in the stair case doesn’t mean I don’t know it’s you.” He dropped his gym back next to the kitchen counter. “Deck please.”

“Fuck Dad, you’re worse then Mum.” Gus said, handing it to him. Brian flicked it open and scowled at the three cigarettes left. Too late. Again. He tossed the deck into his brief case, and then glanced around at the rooms occupants. Janis got up from the floor and made Brian a brief wave.

“Don’t you have school?” He said, raising an eyebrow.

“School excursion, we finished early.” Eli said, his hands behind his back like the perfect choir boy. Brian looked at Janis fiddling with her shirt sleeve and Gus’s attempt at a blank face.

“Right.” He opened the fridge, pulling out a bottle of water. “Justin,” He nodded at him, and Justin chewed on his lip, watching Brian walk into his bedroom. Gus stretched, apparently unaware of the tension.

“So?” Justin looked up, his finger tapping the side of his drink. Gus was giving him an expectant look.

“What?”

“We going out tonight? God, you deaf?”

“No,” Justin said, and then blinked, snapping out of it. “You just talk so much that I tend to stop listening.”

“Charming.” Gus said, his tone slightly strained. He turned from Justin and gave Eli a hopeful look. “You coming? Dance, drink…” He paused, playfully grinning. Eli frowned, and rubbed his shoulder. He looked decidedly uncomfortable, and Justin saw Gus’s resolve flicker. “I mean, just for a night out, you know? Janis, your coming right? And um, Carl said he might see me there.” Justin looked away from Gus, and was glad when Janis spoke.

“Yeah, I’ll come. But you better save me if some lesbian hits on me,” She said, looping her arm around Gus’s waist, and giving him a joking sultry look. But Justin could see her hand rubbing Gus’s back comfortingly, and Justin realized there was a lot more going on here then he thought. He looked up, and he saw Brian standing in the arch of the bedroom doorway, his eyes drinking in the scene. As if on cue, Brian looked over to Justin and they exchanged an automatically sympathetic glance. Then, as though shocked by this familiarity or perhaps just in reaction to Justin, something else flared in Brian’s eyes.

“I can’t. I’ve got practice tomorrow morning, and my mum’s not letting me out.” Eli didn’t meet Gus’s eyes.

“That’s cool.” Gus looked over his shoulder. “Justin, I’ll stay at yours?”

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“Well, that’s about it for me,” Emmett said, turning from the bar. “I’m officially broke, and this pink cocktail isn’t going to get me drunk.” He held up the glass, as though disappointed. Then he shrugged. “But it’s pretty and matches my outfit.” He said, giving Ted a fake pose. Ted rolled his eyes. Michael barely even seemed to be listening.

“So, where’s the hubby?” Emmett said, after glancing at Ted. Michael shrugged, and actually scuffed his feet. It was an action more fitting for the school yard then the floors of Babylon at midnight, but some people never change.

“I don’t know, we’re…”

“Hold that thought and bring me something to drool into.” Emmett said, his hand pushing Ted back as he moved forward. The other two men looked over to the dance floor, and saw what had so infatuated Emmett. “Look at that arse.”

Its funny how the beautiful people some how always manage to find the right lights at Babylon. The blonde was dancing, head alternatively thrown back, or moving from side to side, tight white shirt on that showed an almost prepubescent waist and low riding grey jeans that hinted at way too much. And the arse that Emmett had been referring to belonged to the brunette who had their back to them, equally well dressed in a pale green t-shirt, a slightly more grungy vibe. Together, they were fucking hot. Ted looked from his left to right, and saw that a number of the other men by the bar were staring at them, their heads moving in time with the music and the shake of the brunettes arse.

“That’s not…”

“Isn’t that Justin…”

“And that’s…”

“Oh my fucking god.” They said in unison.

“What?” Brian said as he came up, fresh from the back room, looking at their three stunned faces, and then to the dance floor. Gus had turned now, and he ran his hand down Justin’s arm, saying something that made Justin grin, his head tilted to the side. It was as though a bucket of water had been thrown over Brian’s previous elation at his victory. He threw his elbows down on the bar, and gestured to the bartender.

“Uh, Brian?” He looked over his shoulder at the three men who were now no longer salivating over his son’s arse and were now staring at him in shock.

“Yeah, Gus is gay. And he goes clubbing.” Brian said, and then looked up at them. “So what’s your fucking problem?”

“Um,” Emmett said as though about to start, and then blinked. His mind had just gone blank. He looked over at Justin and Gus and then shook his head again. “Nothing I guess.”

“Are you kidding?” Ted said, hitting Emmett. “He’s underage.”

“And you’re over. Over and done, and old.” Brian said with a charming smile.

“So you’re fine with this?” Michael fumed.

“Peachy.” Brian said, and took his shot. He fiddled for the small plastic bag in his pocket, and gave them all a big grin, and made his way to the bathroom. He’d pop, he’d fuck and he’d try to forget the sight of Justin on the dance floor. And the fact that he really really wanted Gus not to be here tonight. And his motives for that were really starting to worry him. He looked over at the dance floor again, watching Justin run a hand through damp hair, the sight of the blonde panting slightly, and then pushed his way into the bathroom.

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“They’re all watching us,” Gus whispered. “They think we’re fucking hot.”

“You’re charmingly modest.” Justin said laughingly. He looked over at the bar, and saw Brian Kinney’s back. He looked away. Gus followed his line of vision, and laughed.

“Dad’s here.” Gus said amused. Then the amusement seemed to fade as he gave Justin a long stare. “Maybe he’ll dance with us later.” Justin gave him a blank look. Gus held his tongue between his teeth for a moment, a mixture of cruelty and mischief in his eyes. “So what did you mean by mature?”

“What?” Justin said, stopping dancing, and staring at the boy. They were eye to eye, Gus maybe half a centimeter shorter.

“What did you mean by more mature?” He said slowly, almost angrily. God he was dangerous, just like his dad. Justin remained silent. Gus leaned across, and whispered lovingly in Justin’s ear. “He’ll never fuck you now, you know that? He’d never even consider it. Because he loves me. And he’d never fuck with that. So he’ll never fuck you.” He said the last few words extremely slowly, each pause making each word more vicious, and then stood back, watching Justin’s face.

“Darling.” Emmett yelled, throwing his arms around the two. Justin physically flinched. Gus was still glaring at him. “Little squishy face!” Emmett said, and proceeded to squish Gus’s face in an embarrassing mum way.

“I’ve gotta go.” Justin said, and it was as if the words burnt him. He pushed his way of the dance floor, heading for the back door, and glad to step out into the night air. There were still lots of people everywhere, looking at him, but in the cold night air he felt less exposed. He shivered, and blinked. Fuck he’d forgotten his coat. He fingered the stub for the cloak room in his pocket, and shook his head, pulling out a cigarette instead, and walking quickly down the street.

“Justin,” Justin turned, hearing the feet running after him, and Gus grabbed his elbow, spinning him around. White smoke billowed between them, and Gus could see how upset Justin was.

“What?” Justin said, sniffing, trying to gain control of himself. Gus cursed himself, and folded his arms across his chest to try to protect himself from the cold.

“I’m sorry.” Gus said quietly. “I was being a prick. Come back in.”

“You’re right though. You’re goddamn right.” Justin said in a choked voice. “And I’m a fucking arsehole.”

“Oh Justin,” Gus said quietly, and put his hand on the back of Justin’s neck, pulling Justin against his body. The blonde rested his head on the brunettes shoulder. “Look you’re not the first one to fall for the Kinney charm.” Gus joked, and Justin laughed, pulling himself together. He whipped his face on his hands, sighing, and glancing down the street to see who had seen him making a fool of himself.

“I’m sorry.” Justin said.

“That you met me and not him that night?” Gus said quietly.

“No, never that.” Justin grabbed Gus’s hand. He closed his eyes. “I’m sorry, that’s all. No one would ever want to loose you Gus.”

Gus smiled sadly at what Justin really meant by those words.

Sad that the blonde had fallen for his father, who didn’t believe in love.

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“Gus getting your fucking arse down here or I’ll beat you within an inch of your life!” Brian yelled into the phone. He glanced at his watch again. The fucking boy had said he’d be downstairs in five minutes. It had now been twenty, and they were going to hit the worst traffic on the way to school. And Brian was going to be late for that goddamn meeting. He’d have to call Cynthia and see if someone else could take it.

“Alright, alright, I’m here. Don’t get your arse in a twist.” Gus said, bounding down the stairs. “I’d say underwear, but I read on the bathroom walls at Babylon you never wear them.” Brian flinched at that, and got into the car with a shake of the head. Those kinds of comments were becoming daily occurrences, and Brian was no longer getting quite as off put by them.

“Just put on your goddamn seat-belt.” Brian muttered as he reversed. “Oh, you’re shitting me: what the hell is this?” Brian said, gesturing at the cd player.

“What?” Gus said, with annoyance. “It’s Jack. You love Jack.”

“I want to listen to the fucking news, Gus.” Brian growled.

“I can’t go to school if I haven’t listened to music first. And I just got the new Jack Johnson.”

“Put on the other one,” Brian conceded, glowering at the windscreen. “Interpol or something semi-fucking decent.” He said begrudgingly. Gus grinned. He opened his cd case, and then sighed.

“Fuck, I can’t. I leant it to Justin.” Gus said, shoving the stuff back in his bag. Brian nodded, silent for a moment.

“So are you two still…?” Brian asked.

“Going steady?” Gus finished bemusedly. Brian rolled his eyes but Gus missed the gesture because Brian was wearing his sunglasses.

“Whatever.” Brian growled. “Are you?” Gus shifted in his seat, fiddling with his seat belt.

“Yeah.” He lied, glancing out the window. “Yeah, yeah we are.” He frowned, and changed the song.

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Gus felt someone poke him in the back, and he turned. Vic smiled at him, and passed him a note. He glanced up at the teacher, who was writing the Spanish vocab for the test on the bored. Nice arse. Mr Briggard had like this perfect arse. Gus had seen him pull up in his motorbike for over half a year, and he wondered why some one so obviously hot and still fucking young would want to teach Spanish at this shitbox of a school. The man looked like that singer, Enrique something. Gus shook his head, and opened the note.

Want to go to the school dance with me? Wb Gus frowned. Fuck.

Can’t. Sorry. He looked at those words. They looked so fucking mean. He grimaced. Me and Eli and Janis are gunna rock up together. You should come He passed it back with a sigh. He heard the paper russling behind him, and was surprised when about a second later he received a jab in the back.

“Didn’t you hear?” Vic whispered. Gus raised his eyebrows. “Eli’s going with Lily. Like going together.”

“What?” Gus said loudly, shocked.

“They’re going out.” Vic said, and then looked over his head at the teacher, who was looking grumpily at them. Gus turned back around, but he didn’t take in the words on the black board, or even write them down. He just stared off into space.

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“Hey, how’s your first day back?” Eli said, grinning. Gus looked up, blinking in the sun light. He ashed his cigarette, and glanced around the oval to see if anyone else was coming, but they were alone on the bleachers. “Thought I’d find you here. Still can’t hack second last period huh?”

“Yeah, yeah, something like that.” Gus said quietly. He glanced up through his longish fringe. “So when were you going to tell me about Lily?” Eli paused, his casual ease dissipating. He seemed to be thinking hard over what to say next, but as though he had expected this.

“I don’t know. Soon.” Eli started rolling up the sleeve of his school shirt so that it rested around the shoulder. “I really like her man,” Gus looked up at him with a sort of disgusted disbelief in his eyes, but Eli ignored him. “And I know you don’t particularly, but yeah. We like each other.”

“Oh.” Gus said, scuffing his foot in the dirt slightly and taking another drag. He looked out across the oval.

“Hey, aren’t you going to be happy for me?” Eli asked coolly.

“No. Why would I be?” Gus said, chucking the cigarette down and standing up. “You’re completely full of shit.” He started walking off, but Eli grabbed his arm.

“Hey, what’s your issue?”

“Nothing,” Gus spat sarcastically. “Why don’t you go fuck some cheerleaders while you’re at it? After touching all those guys arses in footy, it’d make you feel better.”

“Hey fuck you.” Eli said, letting go of Gus. Gus shook his head, and started walking away. “Fuck you Kinney.” Eli called after him, and Gus gave him the finger.

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“You’re not just another lover, baby, you don’t understand,” Gus crooned against Justin’s cheek. Justin smiled forcedly and reached into Gus’s jeans. Gus grinned provocatively, and nearly fell over leaning against the metal door. “You want some, big boy?”

“I want your keys,” Justin pulled them out and waved them in Gus’s face. “Come on Gus, its way past your curfew.”

“Fuck curfew,” Gus pouted, turning his face against the door. “Dad’s probably banging someone in their anyway.”

“Charming.” Justin said through clenched teeth, yanking open the door. He was greeted by the sight of Brian, shirtless and in track pants, waiting at the steps to the bedroom. Justin smiled without knowing it, and then was nearly knocked over as Gus stumbled into the room.

“Oh god, I think I’m going to be sick,” He said suddenly, and half ran, pushing past Brian also, into the bathroom. Justin winced at the retching sound.

“Late night?” Brian asked nonchalantly, stepping into the living room.

“Yeah,” Justin put his hands in his pockets and took a cautious step into the living room. Brian stepped into the living room with a sigh, and gave Justin an inviting wave.

“Drink.”

“A world of no.” Justin said forcefully. Brian glanced over at the bathroom and nodded to himself.

“That better be just alcohol…” Brian said in a mock authority voice, pouring himself a drink.

“So, no big night out on the town?” Justin asked. Brian smiled, and popped a couple of aspirin into his mouth, swallowing it with the whiskey.

“The big night came to me. The big and the fucking small,” Brian said, rolling his eyes. He sat down on the couch, kicking his feet up. He turned his head, lolling it back on the couch. “Now that you’ve dropped my beloved son off, what are your plans for the night?” Brian gave him a long look. Justin felt a sudden rush of nervous excitement, and he wrapped his arms around his chest, then tugged on one of his longs sleeves.

“Nothing.” He said, staring at Brian. Brian nodded, and looked away as Justin sat down, towards the bathroom. It was quiet for a moment, and then the retching continued.

“Will he be alright, do you think?” Justin said, suddenly worried.

“Yeah. Just needs to get it out of his system.” Brian finished his drink. “The number of times he’s thrown up on Linds front hedge you think he would have poisoned the plants by now. Some people just can’t handle their alcohol.” Brian said smugly.

“I guess you learn that with age.” Justin said cheekily. Brian scowled. Brian slumped a little bit down in his seat, and Justin could see drops of water dripping off Brian’s hair run down his body. Brian must have just stepped out of the shower, his hair was still soaking. Justin rubbed his lips together, the pressure from the movement seeming enormous.

“How old are you again?” Brian asked and it seemed like a question from some other conversation that they had somehow accidentally slipped into.

“Twenty one.” Justin said, and he nearly laughed. He was so nervous it sounded like a lie. He remembered all those times when he’d been sixteen pretending he was eighteen, nine-teen pretending he was twenty five, and now when he was actually twenty one, he couldn’t pull it off. “Sometimes I feel older though.”

“Yeah?” Brian said, shifting. He seemed to be analyzing Justin. Justin felt as though his breath was being squeezed out of him. All he could think about was Brian’s leg, so casually resting on the coffee table, so close to Justin’s.

“I’ve dated a lot of older men.” Justin blurted out, aware of the silence. “I mean, one of my first boyfriends was an arts teacher I had one summer, though he wasn’t really my boyfriend,”

“Teachers are always trying to open you up to new experiences.” Brian said, trying to concentrate on what the boy was saying. It was as though their bodies were speaking an entirely different language to their mouths, because even without him intending to, his body was reacting to the physical presence of the boy. Words were fast becoming irrelevant.

“Nothing wrong with new experiences,” Justin murmured. Brian arm stretched out across the back of the couch, his body turned towards Justin, judging his reactions, and slowly, as though casually, he thumbed the back of the boy’s neck. Justin almost gasped from the contact, his words tumbling out as his thoughts became jumbled. “Always up to be taught new things,”

“Really?” Brian said; his mouth slightly open. His hand moved to Justin’s cheek, and then pushed its way back, cupping his face and fingers sliding through his hair. Justin breathed in, and turned to look at Brian, his eyes still paniced, but suddenly sure at the same time.

“Really.” He whispered, almost as though swearing, and Brian nodded as he took on board this information. He paused, and then with the deliberate and specific movement like of all of Brian Kinneys’ movements, he kissed Justin, hands cupping Justin’s face.

Justin closed his eyes, feeling himself drawn into the kiss, drawn against Brian. He could feel Brian’s hands on his face, but then that was gone, and there was nothing but the kiss.

He hadn’t had a kiss like that since high school. He couldn’t remember the last time he wanted to kiss someone with such intensity. He felt their lips break away from each other and then touch again, like the softer ripple after a big wave; these were like caresses.

Brian moved his head slightly, and was looking at Justin, his dark eyes so calm, so beautiful. Justin must have made a slight noise because a smile flickered across Brian’s face and he kissed him again.

With slow, deliberate movements, Brian flicked open Justin’s belt buckle, and then undid those fucking designer jeans. He looked up at Justin, and Justin knew Brian could feel how much he wanted it, how much he needed it, but just the sight of Brian, looking at him, making sure, made him so much harder.

He put a hand on Brian’s cheek, and then as Brian moved further down, slid it through the older mans hair, feeling those locks meshing with his fingers. It didn’t seem to matter that Gus was in the bathroom only a few feet away or any of the arguments why they shouldn’t be doing this. Justin looked down at Brian and could see that one hand, resting on Justin’s stomach, and he let himself be washed away in the moment.

He came silently, Brian cupping his mouth with his spare hand at the moment, an almost violent gesture, and Justin wondered briefly how Brian had managed to coordinate this at exactly the right moment and not ruin the end of the blow job, but then he was too gone to care. He pulled Brian too him, all his reserve gone, and kissed him, feeling himself almost cradled against the other man’s body. Brian leant his forehead against Justin’s head, his lips by Justin’s ear, and Justin could hear the man’s breath. Justin turned to kiss Brian, feeling those lips as though checking they were real. He held Brian’s face for a second, looking into those eyes, and resting, closing his eyes in a post orgasmic swoon.

Brian kissed his forehead, and started untangling himself.

“Justin, sh, Justin. I have to check on my son.” Brian said, and each effort seemed to be torn from his throat, as though he didn’t want to speak.

“Yeah,” Justin said with an equal breathlessness, doing up his pants, and standing, running his hand through his hair, trying to get it together. Brian made his way into the bedroom, and then into the bathroom.

Justin lingered in the room, unsure if he should go or not. He saw Brian leading Gus out of the bathroom, a hand on the young mans back, and Brian let his son collapse on his bed, worn out from the exertions of his body and curling up into a almost fetal position. Brian draped a blanket over him and then came back into the living room. He gestured for Justin to follow him to the door, and he stepped outside, pulling the heavy metal door shut behind the two of them.

Brian leant against the back of the door.

“He’s going to have to go back to his mothers tomorrow.” Brian said, catching Justin completely off guard.

“Yeah.” Justin said, blinking dazedly. Brian noticed the boy’s confusion and he rubbed his own neck. He sucked on his bottom lip for a moment, looking at Justin.

“I love my son.”

“I know you do.”

“I’d kill for him.”

“I know.” There was a pause.

“Good night Justin.”

“Brian…”

“Justin.” Brian said, cutting him off. “Just say good night.” Justin shook his head at the man, but he held back whatever else he wanted to say. He kissed Brian on the cheek again, and Brian caught his chin, kissing him on the mouth for a second.

“Good night Brian.” Justin said with a calm that he didn’t feel. He wanted to ask Brian to come with him, to spend the night with him, to promise him something, anything, to kiss him again.

Brian ran a hand down Justin’s arm, and went back into the loft. Justin was left outside, biting his lip.

“Why the fuck do I have to?” Gus exclaimed and Brian just rolled his eyes. He picked up the boys bag, and carried it to the door. His son followed him, agitation in his every movement.

“Because I say so, alright Gus? This isn’t a goddamn debate. You’re going home. Lindsey’s picking you up in half and hour so get your shit together.” Brian said coolly, used to dealing with his sons temper tantrums.

“What if I go live with Justin?” Gus said angrily. Brian looked at his feet and then at Gus. He did not want to bring Justin into this right now, but he could feel the words slipping out.

“Don’t you think you’re a little bit young…”

“To what?” Gus cut in and he wasn’t backing down now. Though he was quite a bit shorter then his father, he seemed suddenly a force to reckon with. Brian frowned with displeasure. “To fuck? Or to have a relationship with a man?”

“Gus,” Brian said through clenched teeth. “Why have you got it stuck in your head that I’m angry that you’re gay? Why the hell would I care?”

“Because it makes you old news, dad,” Gus spat cynically, and he sat down on his luggage. He wasn’t looking at his father. “Don’t make me go back to the dike house.” Brian decided to let that one go.

“Gus, you knew this was temporary.” Brian shifted. “And anyway maybe it’s best if…”

“Justin and I broke up.” Gus said, and Brian inhaled at this comment.

“When?” Brian tried to remember the mood Justin had been in last night. At the thought a rather graphic mental image rouse in his mind but he thrust it away, along with the desire it inspired in him.

God, last night had been stupid.

“A few weeks ago.” Gus said, and looked up at his father. “It’s not like we were actually going out. And,” He paused, as though seeing how his father was taking this, and then plunged on anyway. “We didn’t even fuck more then a few times. I just think I really wanted a boyfriend dad. Maybe then… but it was really stupid and I think I’ve just fucked everything up. With you, and with mum, and Justin, who I should have just told from the beginning we should only be friends because…, and Eli…” He bit his lip and hung his head, and Brian was shocked to realize his son was fighting back tears. “I just feel so lost Dad. And I’m sick of being angry, because at the end of the day I’m still just as unhappy.”

“Gus, I’m sorry.” Brian closed his eyes. He was so sorry. But he knew that inside him something had breathed a sigh of relief. Perhaps, in some small way, it made last night not so bad. “It’s hard.”

“What is?” Gus looked up, and Brian could see the hint of a small on Gus’s lips. “Being a teenager? Being gay? Living with a lesbian?” Brian felt like saying take your pick, but he ruffled his son’s hair and softened his answer accordingly.

“Life, I guess. Or whatever.” Gus gave him an unconvinced look and Brian scowled. “Look, I’m probably the last person to talk to about this stuff…”

“Relationships…” Gus supplied cheekily, as though teaching Brian a new word.

“But you haven’t you know… fucked things up with me and Linds. You’re going to have to do a lot worse then get suspended and throw up all over my expensive bathroom.” Brian said dryly.

“I’ll keep that it mind.” Gus said with a slightly embarrassed smile.

“Now will you please at least pretend to be happy to see your mother? And give her a hug?”

“Maybe if I develop leprosy.” Gus muttered, and Brian rolled his eyes again.

\* \* \* \*

“Thank you for doing this Brian,” Lindsey murmured as they moved into the kitchen. Brian looked over his shoulder at Gus who was staring icily at this Mel person. Brian had to admit, the short haired, aggressive lesbian was not his cup of tea. He was more of a vodka person. And this wasn’t probably the best way to reintegrate Gus into the household, but anyway.

“Yeah, I think it’s going great.” Brian said with false optimism. Lindsey swatted him and pulled a face. Gus had so far not spoken a word to Melanie, and barely two to Lindsey.

“He hates me doesn’t he?” Lindsey said with a sigh. “Why do you get to be the cool parent?”

“Because we can relate on getting out cocks sucked?” Brian said after a thoughtful pause. Lindsey pulled a disgusted face but let it pass.

“Because you let him go out three times a week.” She said crossly, pulling the apple pie out of the oven. Brian sniffed appreciatively. God, there were some uses to women other then for mass production purpose obviously.

“Four actually,” Brian said distractedly. “Linds, I think Gus is in love with Eli.”

“What?” Lindsey said, dropping the pie on the bench and throwing off the oven mitts, glaring at Brian as if this was his fault. “Eli’s gay too?”

“I don’t think so.” Brian said, and then remembered that kiss on the porch. But he didn’t mention that, noticing how Lindsey was so flustered.

“Oh, our poor little boy.” Lindsey leant against Brian, and she wished she could bury her head in his chest. “I remember all those terrible crushes on straight girls,”

“And on gay men,” Brian added, and Lindsey managed to laugh.

“Um, hi?” Melanie said, slipping into the kitchen. Lindsey broke away from Brian, which just made it look like she was doing something bad. Brian scowled disdainfully. Goddamn women. Now Melanie was glaring at him like some bitch in heat, and Lindsey was fiddling with the edges of the pie.

He could tell him and Mel were going to get on like a house on fire. Especially if she had started the fire. In his house.

“On that note,” Brian said, and for a moment felt guilty about leaving his son here. God, it was the last place he would want to be. Then he thought of his sons underpants stuffed into the edge of the couch and his tendency to leave crumbs all over the house, and he felt better.

And now he could smoke in the loft again.

And do other things too, he supposed.

\* \* \* \*

Brian yawned, logging of the chat website. He hadn’t gotten interested enough in any of the men’s words to even bother looking at their cocks. Funny, usually that sentence was the other way round, but tonight he was tired. And he was relishing being a bachelor again and not a single parent.

At this thought, someone knocked at the door, and Brian hung his head. This was going to be someone trying to annoy him.

Unless it was pizza.

With a hot pizza guy.

Not that he’d ordered pizza, but sometimes god really does like you…

He pulled open the thick metal door, and something flickered across his face before he banished it.

“Justin.” He said, and stepped back, but not far enough for the boy to step over the threshold.

“Hey,” Justin said, and wet his lips. Brian raised an eyebrow. This kid was so transparent. “I was wondering if Gus was here, I uh, need to, talk to him,” Justin finished, his eyes wavering in that way which meant he was lying. Brian rolled his eyes, and took another step back.

“Yeah, good cover.” Brian said ushering Justin. “Especially since I told you that he was going back to his mothers tonight,” Brian said, pulling the door shut. Justin turned and pretended to look dazed.

“I must have forgotten.”

“And Gus messaged you three times at the dinner table at Lindsey’s. I was there.” Brian smiled. Justin had the decency to blush.

“Okay. So I came to see you.” Brian paused at this honest statement, and very slowly he sucked his lower lip in thoughtfully.

But he didn’t want to think.

He pulled the blonde against him, both arms wrapping around Justin’s back so that the boy was flattened into his embrace. Brian looked down at him perplexed for a second, his eyes seeming almost black so savage was his yearning. Then he kissed Justin, crushing that mouth against his.

Justin clung to Brian, and he felt as though he would not have been able to withstand the strength of that kiss if Brian had not been holding him up upright. His heart sounded loud in his chest, and Justin wondered briefly if that was the sound of Brian’s heart mixed with his own, if such a thing could explain this loudness.

Brian lifted Justin’s arms, and, running his hands down them till he got to the bottom of Justin’s t-shirt, pulled it off, over the boys head. Brian grinned lazily at the sight of that chest, those small yet defined muscles. He saw Justin’s lips part, those eyes on him, and he kissed him again, pushing him backwards towards the bedroom, while at the same time trying to discard his shirt.

Justin, stepping out of his shoes into his socks as they went, giggled as Brian threw away his shirt, and pulled Brian too him to feel that skin.

With a gasp of surprise, Justin tripped, his ankle hitting the step. From the force with which Brian was pushing him back, he fell. Hard. His arse hit the floor with a rather loud thud, and he felt like he had been winded, he was so shocked by it. Brian’s eyes widened with concern flicking across his eyes.

“Ow.” Justin said.

“Fuck.” Brian said, sitting next to him. Justin shifted, rubbing his arse.

“That is a really stupid place to put a step.” Justin said angrily.

“You’re the first person I’ve ever had fall over it.” Brian replied cattily. “And of my visitors tend to be intoxicated.” He added as an after thought.

“Great.” Justin said, pouting. Brian rubbed his hand on his forehead, and turned to Justin. His long legs knocked against Justin’s encouragingly, and Justin’s frown gave way under Brian’s persistent stare. Trying again, Brian reached out and cupped Justin’s face with one hand, pulling him into a long kiss. Slowly, they got to their feet, this time doing away with the rather cumbersome pants they were wearing, Justin undoing Brian’s and then in turn vice versa, and there seemed an almost beautiful symmetry in this pattern.

Justin kissed the side of Brian’s mouth, looking over at the bed. Brian followed his gaze, and grinned. Carefully they stepped up the step, a faint blush running over Justin’s skin.

Brian reclined Justin out on the bed, kissing as they moved onto it, his fingers running up the boys thighs, pushing them up around his body so that they were bent. Brian kissed the boy until he felt like kissing would no longer be enough, and then he pulled out the condom. Justin rested on his elbow.

“What no blow job?”

“Fuck foreplay.” Brian said, handing the condom to Justin, eyes still. Justin brought it to his teeth, watching Brian watch him do this. He loved this moment. They both did. “I want to fuck you senseless.” Justin’s face morphed into one of slight confusion, and he took the small snip of the condom packet out of his mouth rather ungracefully, whipping saliva off his fingers onto the sheets.

“Uh, I hope you mean that in a general fuck way,” Justin said. Brian flicked open the lubricant, and sat back on his hunches.

“What?” He said, with a shake of the head.

“This is for me right?” Justin said, waving the condom. Brian tilted his head, still confused.

“I want you to put that on me.” Brian said, wondering what the hell the boy was getting at it. It’s so hard to think with a raging hard on.

“I’m a top,” Justin said, and waved the condom.

“No,” Brian said, pushing one finger into Justin’s chest so that he fell back against the bed. Brian was sitting sort of next to Justin now, one long leg bent. “You’re a bottom.”

“Um, Brian?” Justin said, sitting up, hands hanging between his knees. “I think I’d know.”

“But how can you be a top…” Brian trailed off and looked at the wall with a mixture of disbelief and annoyance; as though this was just another way the world was trying to spite him. Justin blinked, and then he got it too.

“You thought Gus was a top,” Brian closed his eyes trying to block out that mental image, and he shook his head. He swung his legs over the side of the bed, and stood up. Justin was left sitting in the bed a bit of a fool. “Brian?”

“I think the image of you fucking my son killed the mood,” Brian said coldly, pulling on his jeans. Justin looked at Brian as though completely amazed, and his tone became slightly angry.

“But you didn’t mind when it was him fucking me?” Justin said, and then closed his eyes in mortification. Easy Taylor, don’t fuck this up now. But by the looks of Brian’s angry back, he already had.

“Maybe you should go,” Brian said coolly.

“So what? We’re not even going to figure this out? You’re a top, I’m a top and bam: we can never have sex?” He asked in amazement. He flicked the condom away in annoyance. Brian pulled on his jeans, and turned to look at Justin as he zipped them up.

“Well, you know, that’s generally a rule with homosexual sex Justin, one person has to bottom.” Brian sneered. He did up his button. “And I’m certainly as hell not going to bottom for you.” Justin’s mouth dropped open and he would have laughed had he not been hurt by those words. This situation was ridiculous. Brian shook his head, and stalked out of the bedroom.

Justin grabbed his jeans, shoving his legs into them, and he hurried after Brian. He grabbed his shirt too, his feet slapping the wooden floors.

“You’re just pissed off cause Gus is a bottom.”

“Please Justin.” Brian snapped. “The last thing I want to be thinking about when I’m fucking you is that my son has been there first.”

“Well you think you’d be pleased to know that’s not physically correct.” Justin said sarcastically. Brian whirled on him angrily.

“Yeah, that’s right, be a smartarse. Do you think this is some kind of joke? Hit the son and then hit the dad? Two for one deal?” Brian glowered down at Justin and the blonde actually cowered.

“No,” He mumbled.

“Do you think I take pleasure in the fact that I just nearly fucked my son’s ex lover? This,” Brian made an expressive gesture between him and Justin. “Is a fucked situation.”

“Well, you put us in this situation just as much as I did.” Justin managed to say, refusing to back down. Brian remained silent for a moment, and Justin hurried on. “I’m not the one that decided a blow job on the couch was a great meet the parent’s technique.”

“You and Gus were broken up,” Brian snarled. He took a step towards Justin threateningly. “So what’s your story Taylor? Your fucking people too young for you, fucking people too,” Brian scowled at the hole he’d just dug himself but plunged on. “Older then you. Do you ever try fucking someone your own age?” Justin glared back at him, and he could feel his fists itching.

“How about you? How does it feel being the senior in the back room these days?” Justin said icily back. Brian’s face went curiously blank, and Justin realized that it was with rage.

“Get. Your. Shit. Out. Of. Here.” Justin trembled and obediently grabbed his bag, and half ran out of the loft.

\* \* \* \*

“Fuck Justin, you’re really fucking up,” Gus said, with a shake of the head. Justin jolted, eyes widening. Gus gestured at the pool table and Justin groaned, seeing of his own four balls still left and Gus was on the black. And they were fucking gambling on the game, which mean Gus was going to make twenty bucks and Justin wasn’t going to have money for the week.

“I’m just out of it today I guess,” Justin muttered, and took a shot. He was so grateful to see the ball go into the pocket though it had been a pitiful shot, and he surveyed the table, wondering if he could make up the lost ground.

“You’re loss, my gain,” Gus goaded.

“Yeah, yeah.” Justin muttered. He sunk another ball, and grinned despite himself. Gus rolled his eyes. Justin noticed the boy was fidgeting.

“Gus? Do you have something you want to say?” Justin said teasingly. Gus rolled his eyes.

“Yeah,” He looked away nonchalantly and Justin nearly groaned at the teenager-ness of this action. Stupid kids. God, he was getting old before his time. “I wanted to know if you,” The rest was cut of by the lowness of his voice. Justin was suddenly tense. He had a feeling he knew what Gus was going to ask, and he really didn’t want to make Brian any angrier at him by sending Gus on a teenage rampage.

“Huh?” Justin said softly, realizing Gus was looking at him.

“It’s just a dance; it’s not a big thing. But I thought you know, you might like to come.” Justin laughed with relief. He ignored the rather bewildered expression Gus awarded him because of this and took his next shot.

“Are you inviting me to your prom, Kinney?” Justin asked. Gus gave him a sour look, noticing the teasing tone in Justin’s voice.

“Do you remember how old I am?” Gus said scathingly. Justin was suddenly reminded of another Kinney’s words the other day, and he missed his shot. Luckily he’d snookered Gus anyway, and the odds had evened up a little bit.

“I have this dim recollection of school boys and jail bait…” Justin said, feigning amnesia.

“Ha ha, very funny.” Gus growled. He leant on the pool table, halting the game. “So, will you come with me?”

“As your date?” Justin said, looking at somewhere on the floor. Gus noticed this and slowly shook his head.

“No. Just, you know, as a… I have to bring someone.” Gus finished.

“I thought you might be dating someone is all,” Justin said quietly. “From you know, school. Maybe Eli…”

“Eli’s not a topic of conversation right now.” Gus said rigidly, and took a sip of his beer.

“Alright,” Justin said casually. “I guess I could do the high school thing again.” Justin blinked, remembering high school. Ah, so many memories to repress.

“Cool. I’m having drinks at mine before hand, so you can meet the whole gang.” Gus then groaned and sunk the black ball. “And you can meet mum’s new girlfriend. She’s like the wicked bitch of Pittsburg. I swear she looks like a fourteen year old boy. Trust mum.” Gus grumbled.

“Is it serious?” Justin remembered his own parent’s not so lovely divorce, where it was round after round of pin the blame on Justin-and-his-homosexuality fun.

“She’s staying with us.” Gus said gloomily, relenting the pool table too the guys that had been hovering next to it, and moving their drinks too the booth. Justin glanced at his watch. There was actually no way he was going to get Gus home in time for dinner. And he somehow felt Gus’s mum would be less lenient then Brian about drinking on Sunday arvo. “It’s like my mum doesn’t realize the walls are paper thin.” Gus pulled a face. “God, I can’t think of anything more disgusting then lesbians. Oh wait, there we go: my mum and her lesbian lover, which I don’t have to imagine, because I may as well be in the fucking room.” Gus seethed, and Justin laughed at the amount of pent up anger Gus managed to shove into that one sentence.

“Has she had girlfriends before?” He asked, and Gus shifted, leaning his elbows on the table, the anger gone.

“Nah, not really. Dates and stuff, nothing that serious. There were a couple when I was about eight or nine, but I think for a long time she was, you know.” Justin shook his head confused. Gus sighed as he had to elaborate. “Still caught up on Dad.”

“Ah.”

“Yeah. Like he hung around while I was a kid, and I don’t really know what the relationship was like back then, but I’d say they were kind of like a married couple except without the benefits. It’s a bit hard to kill a fantasy when nearly all of it’s right there in your face.” Gus mused, and finished his beer. Justin was still nursing his.

“What about Brian…your dad?” Justin cursed himself, it sounded so awkward in his head. But Gus didn’t seem to notice. “Had many relationships?”

“Dad? Fuck no, unless you count one night stands, in which case I’d say he’s the biggest relationship slut in history.” Gus laughed. “I don’t think Dad’s ever had a relationship, unless you count mum. I asked mum once if like he’d got really broken hearted or something in uni, or had some affair with a teacher, but it turns out there was nothing. He just doesn’t believe in it,”

“Do you think he’s happy?” Justin said, before he could stop himself. Gus didn’t seem to mind talking about it, nor question Justin’s motives.

“I don’t know,” Gus frowned. “Sometimes I do. He’s got a great job and this amazing life, and me, obviously,” He grinned cheekily for a second. Justin slapped him up the side of his head gently, and pulled out his cigarettes. He felt a slight pang of guilt passing one to Gus, and wondered briefly if he should ask Brian if he should stop doing that. Then he remembered the other night, and wondered whether he’d ever have the opportunity.

“But?” Justin said, voicing the unspoken word.

“But, I don’t know. I worry about him. He hasn’t got that many people in his life, you know? Like, him and Michael used to be really close, but they drifted because of me. But then again, he’s doing what he wants, and the way he wants. He doesn’t take any shit from anybody, and maybe he doesn’t need all the bullshit that society tells us we need to be happy,” Gus finished, raising an eyebrow.

“Going all philosophical are you, little man?” Justin joked. “Don’t try to take me on, I did a philosophy elective in first year,”

“Oh, I’m so intimidated. An arts degree. Oh wait,” Gus paused. “No I’m not.”

“Fuck up,” Justin grumbled. “Bet your going to end up a commerce git,”

“Damn right,” Gus grinned, stretching smugly. “And I’ll fuck all my hot university professors and get perfect grades,”

“Gross.”

“You just wish you’d thought of it first.”

“You’re gunna have to be nice to me if you want to come to this dance,”

“What? Offer you free alcohol and you come a running.”

“Coming from the guy who collected fifth-teen different colored condoms from the sex-po last week.”

“Shut up, they’ll come in handy. Maybe I can choke Melanie with them, she’ll have no idea what hit her. What would she know about condoms?”

“Gus! Please, just promise me you’ll be nice to you’re parents.”

“What about you?” Gus asked suddenly. “Will you be nice?” Justin blinked, and he couldn’t read Gus’s expression for a moment. He looked down at the pool table.

“Yeah, I’ll be nice.” But those words were too loaded with emotion and something flickered across Gus’s face that might have been pity.

“Yeah, Dad’s like that,” Gus said, picking up the conversation again. “But you know, maybe he just never found the right one,” Gus smiled at Justin, a wary, half smile, but a smile non-the-less. Justin shook his head slightly.

He doubted he could be the right one for Brian. Brian was in a league of his own.

“They seem to be having fun,” Lindsey said, peering out into the back yard where the girls in formal dresses shivered in the night air and the boys looked uncomfortable in their thick suits, a beer in one hand. Brian frowned, watching the girls swaying slightly as though by the wind, the conversation became more and more animated as the alcohol dwindled.

Thus was the way with kids, he supposed.

Justin was there too, and as though heeding Brian’s thoughts, he looked up to where Brian stood in the house with Lindsey.

He looked good, Brian had to admit. The black suit fitted all too well over the boys arse for a stupid school dance and looked damn too expensive. Brian could see the girls and guys alike checking him out. He did look beautiful, white shirt and loose tie. The girl Janis had her arm around him like she was claiming him as her private property, but Justin didn’t seem to mind. Brian looked away, not wanting to meet the boys gaze, and turned back to the living room, where all the parents hovered, drinking cheap champagne and talking up their children.

“Where’s Gus?” Lindsey murmured knowingly.

“Where’s Eli?” Brian countered. Lindsey tapped her nose.

“Go find them. And if you can, confiscate the weed.” Brian thought about his own depleted stock at home, and made his way outside. He saw Justin’s head swing up, but he avoided the boys gaze, glancing just quickly into the shadows of the garden before making his way around the side of the house. He suddenly got a flash of deja vous, and he paused, rubbing his hands over his face.

It was as though he already knew Eli and Gus would be there, sitting on those steps. For a moment, it seemed like this scene was more important then any of the other moments, seeing Gus in the club, or with a Justin, or getting suspended. This was it. This was crucial.

He heard someone behind him, and, knowing this too, he reached out and touched Justin’s stomach warningly. He put a hand over Justin’s mouth, and Justin obliged without concern, his eyes confused but trusting. Brian pressed his lips to Justin’s temple as some kind of distracted greeting, and moved forward. He could already hear Gus’s voice, and Eli’s lower one.

“That’s such fucking bullshit,” Gus was saying in a fast, angry voice. He was standing at the bottom of the two steps that lead onto the veranda, one foot resting on the step. Eli was sitting, hands resting on his knees which were bent close to his body. Justin moved next to Brian, and Brian could feel his eyes on him. Brian’s eyes darkened at the redness of Gus’s cheeks. His son was close to tears.

“Gus, I don’t know what you want me to say.” Eli said quietly.

“You don’t want to be here with Lily any more then I want to be with Janis.”

“I thought you were here with Justin.” Eli’s voice was calm compared to the passion in Gus’s.

“Fuck Eli.” Gus said, pulling out a cigarette. He lit it with shaking hands. Brian felt Justin move next to him, whether in distress or embarrassment he didn’t know, but he put a hand on Justin’s waist, stilling him. “Just fucking tell me.”

“Tell you what?” Eli said, as if he really didn’t know. Gus took a drag, and he went quiet for a moment. He dropped the cigarette as though it were disgusting, stubbing it out. He paused again and when he spoke it was in a completely different voice.

“You know I’m in love with you.” He said softly, and yet those words seemed to shake through Brian’s son’s body. Eli was silent. Gus looked up, and Brian could see the pain and emotion welling up in his son’s eyes, and he felt like it was his heart that was breaking.

Eli stood up on those long, beautiful legs, and stood next to Gus. He put a hand on each of Gus’s shoulders, and looked long into Gus’s face. What he saw there, Brian didn’t know, because all he could see was the look of pure sorrow and awe on Eli’s face. With an almost beautiful grace, Eli leant down and kissed Gus, his eyes closed as though trying to imprint Gus’s lips on his own. Gus made an almost strangled nose as they broke away, and he pulled Eli to him, those small arms tangling around the taller boy’s waist, pulling him into a long deep pash.

After a moment, Eli dragged himself out of it with an almost sluggish violence, taking a step back into the shadows. Brian head Gus’s breath, short and sharp.

“Gus, I can’t.” That too sounded strangled, and Brian’s brow furrowed.

“But you are, aren’t you?” Gus said almost accusatory. Eli shifted and his face was in the light of the porch again. His soft brown hair fell over his forehead as he looked down for a moment, and then nodded. Gus gave a half laugh with some grim satisfaction. “You like me too, don’t you?”

“Of course I do,” Eli whispered, and he moved as though he was going to touch Gus’s cheek, but he didn’t. He looked almost wistful for a moment and then shook his head. “But I don’t believe in being gay. Not for me anyway.”

“How can you not believe in this?” Gus said angrily, gesturing between the two of them. Eli laughed.

“Gus, I’m catholic.”

“So what? It’s not like your dying.” Gus said with a joking exasperation. “No one has to know. It can just be our secret. No one from your mum’s church will…”

“No, that’s not the point Gus.” Eli did touch Gus now, his hands resting on the boys shoulders again, but this time he did not kiss him. He should him softly, almost affectionately. “You go to church because school makes you, and it doesn’t mean anything more then the lunch lady reading out the menu at lunch time or the weather report on the radio. But for me, it’s important. And for me, it’s not an option, being gay.”

“But you are.” Gus said stubbornly. Eli shrugged as though that was irrelevant.

“But I can choose not to be.” Eli said; a sort of desperate hope in his voice. And that was when Gus realized something terrible, for his shoulders dropped and Brian heard a jagged gasp escape him. For Eli, it was irrelevant. This love the Brian had just seen in his son’s eyes was considered irrelevant.

Brian felt so angry. He wanted to smash a world like that, where these two boys wouldn’t be together, were too caught up in some teenage angst and self doubt to be happy like they wanted.

How often in life do two people who really love each other find each other?

And more ridiculously, nine times out of ten they throw it away.

Gus shoved Eli hard in the chest.

“Fucking pathetic, that’s what you are.” Gus spat at him. “Take your fucking god and shove him up your arse. Maybe it’ll get you off.” He pounded up the stairs, opening the front door and slamming it after him. Brian closed his eyes, and waited until he heard the slower footsteps follow him.

It was then he remembered how close Justin was to him, pressed again him in the thin side path. He had barely noticed his hand on Justin’s waist, it just felt so right.

“That’s so sad.” Justin said softly, and Brian shivered. It was as though that scene had been played out just for him. He felt oddly protective of Justin, and of what had just happened. He wanted to keep them separate, not because he wanted to exclude Justin, but because he didn’t want to have to think about Justin in terms of Gus. And more alarmingly, he didn’t want Justin to be saddened. He took Justin’s hand and gingerly led him out to the steps. The hand dropped almost automatically as they stepped into the light, but it didn’t matter, because it had been there.

Brian eased himself into sitting and Justin did the same.

“Did you know?” Brian said after a while. Justin shrugged.

“I think we all suspected.”

“God, kids are fucked up,” Brian said, pushing his hands through his hair. “If they like each other, they should be together and cut the teenage angst bullshit.”

“Hmmm.” Justin agreed pointedly. Brian scowled.

“What?”

“Nothing. Just you’re right.” Justin paused, licking his lips to gauge Brian’s mood. He plunged on. “What’s that saying though? The pot calling the kettle black?”

“Our situation is completely different Justin.” Brian said quietly. Justin shrugged again, not looking at Brian so he didn’t see the older man analyzing his face.

“Yeah. I know.” He paused and fidgeted with the edge of his sleeve for a moment. “How exactly?” He asked. His blue eyes flickered with uncertainty.

“Because,” Brian started, and then glanced upwards before he continued. He shook his head. “Because, do you really want to be a situation where you can say, ‘you’re daddy does it better?’ or ‘That’s not the way your son did it.’” Brian said with a scowl.

“Shit Brian,” Justin said, hanging his head for a moment. “I thought you were a no bullshit guy.”

“What?”

“Suddenly you care what other people think? What they’re going to think if you’re with your son’s ex?” Justin said. Brian felt like he was reeling now. Justin laughed to see Brian was shocked. “Come on. You would have fucked me against the loft door with those two tricks in the shower.”

“Cocky little fucker, aren’t you?” But it was true, there was no denying it. Brian had wanted to fuck Justin that morning, and it was the simple mortification of realizing that he was Gus’s bed partner that had stopped him more then anything else.

And what was stopping him fucking Justin right now was what other people with think.

“Brian,” Justin said, not looking at him, as one doesn’t look at a dog they are afraid is going to attack. “I don’t want to go to the dance.”

“I...” Brian paused, and then gritted his teeth with a look of thoughtful amazement. “I don’t want you to go.” It was that simple.

“I want to go back to you’re apartment.”

“What about…”

“Sometimes you have to compromise for the things you really want,” Justin said, looking up into the night sky, his hand curling around Brian’s.

Brian looked down at that hand, and at Justin.

He wanted to say this was different. Sure, the reason he hadn’t acted was because of his son. Because his son’s opinion was really the only one he had cared about it so long. He didn’t care who he fucked, who saw him fucking, that was all true. But it was more then that now. Fucking Justin would be different. Because so much time had elapsed. Because it couldn’t just be an anonymous fuck.

Because he had let nothing in the last fifth-teen years compromise his relationship with his son. Not work. Not Lindsey. Nothing.

And now this blonde boy was sitting next to him, threatening to do all that, filled with silent promises, and Brian felt.

That was it.

He felt.

He couldn’t deny it, and he knew, even as this silence stretched out between them, that this was different. He remembered that moment where he’d met Lindsey, their hands brushing, and there had been this feeling then as well. That promise.

Of course, he hadn’t known that Lindsey was going to lead him here when he’d taken her hands. He couldn’t have known.

But in the heart of Brian Kinney which he so often tried to deny existed, deny was beating beneath his chest like a time bomb that never stopped, he felt an instinctual pulse towards this boy. With made him leave his hand where it was.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Liv,” Gus said, licking his lips. She looked perplexed, and locked the bathroom door nervously, running her hands through her long blonde hair that lay in a perfect flat sheath over her shoulders and down her back. Gus blinked, and it was as if he could hear screams behind the music that blared through the house, people yelling at each other much like when he’d been a child and his parents had fought. He shook his shoulders softly, much as Eli had done before, and pulled out the little plastic packet. He waved it at her. She recoiled.

“I’m not snorting it.” She said. Gus rolled his eyes.

“This is mine. I’ve got yours. Do you want to take half now?” He said, passing her the pill. She frowned at the little plastic bag and the off whitish pill. It was already broken up, he did that for her. She tugged at her green formal dress.

“What with Eli? He looks pretty upset,” She said. Gus tapped the white powder out onto a plate on the bathroom counter. He started lining it up into little white lines with the corner of his identification card.

“Good,” He spat angrily. Liv rolled her eyes and filled up her glass with water. With her long fingernails she extracted a quarter of the pill and took it dutifully under Gus’s watchful eye. He made a little humph sound and then snorted a line.

“Gus,” She said quietly, worry evident on her face. “You should go out and talk to him.”

“I’m done enough talking for tonight.” He said. She sat down on the toilet with its lid down, the sound of her heels clicking on the bathroom tiles echoing for a moment.

“What do you mean?”

“Fucking hell Liv.” He snapped, and then paused, carefully snorting another small line. “I’d told him I loved him alright? And he… he.” He paused, grimacing. “He told me he didn’t.” love me. Those unspoken words were heavy on Gus’s lips, and he looked up into the mirror to see if they were etched in his eyes. He could see Liv behind him, her eyes dripping with pity and he gave a wry smile. She came up and touched his shoulders, leaning her chin on one, and looking at him the in mirror.

“You know he cares about you.” She said. Gus leant his head against hers for a moment, feeling his heart breaking. Then he sniffed, feeling the powder seeping into his blood.

“I know I don’t care. I don’t give a shit anymore.” He said, trying to make himself believe it as much as her. She nodded, and pulled out another quarter and took that too. Gus snorted his last line and swept the excess powder back into the bag. He pulled out his wallet and his fingers touched the little pill stuck in on of the card holders. He slipped the extra powder in there too.

“Are you going to be alright?” She said. He smiled carelessly. He touched his cheek.

“Kiss?” She kissed his cheek and he kissed hers back. He took her hand.

“Come on party person,” He whispered. “You look beautiful. Let’s go show the boys,”

\* \* \*

“Hey you two,” Gus said, pulling open the front door. Brian turned around, and stood up, removing his hand from Justin’s regretfully. Justin smiled at the boy, but remained sitting. “Taxi’s are coming. Mum wants to take some more photos but I won’t let her.” Brian’s eyes narrowed at the shifted attitude in Gus, and then he saw his eyes.

“Gus,” Brian said warningly, but then, seeing how hard Gus was trying to hold onto his elation, let it go. Let the boy forget his pain. Brian had done it more times then he could count. It was one of the best forms, and only forms, of pain management he knew, so he could hardly give the boy any advice. Justin shifted, and stood.

“Gus, I think I’m going to…”

“Yeah.” Gus said softly, a smile on his face as he looked at Brian and Justin. He felt a sort of love, probably induced by the drug, but a love anyway, for these two men. He felt himself spiraling, and it was as though the sight of Justin, standing just beside Brian, a step down, was exactly how it was meant to be. The brave brunette whose eyes spoke of haunted dreams, and the dreamer blonde, watching out for him. Gus blinked, and he thought, if only dad could be happy. If only I could bring that about somehow, and maybe I have. He felt something flush through him, even in the cold night, and he swung his head round, to where his gang were hovering in the hall, making their way outside, all so beautiful, all so challenging, all so complex.

He licked his lips.

He was peaking hard.

“You should go.” Gus said nodding at Justin. “I’ll call you later.” He said, words filed with a sort of amazed realization, and Justin frowned.

“Will you be alright?”

“Yes,” Gus said, shaking his head. “Its gunna be fucking awesome. Fucking amazing.” Brian put one hand on his sons shoulder.

“Be safe, alright?” Brian said, and then pulled Gus against his chest. Gus blinked against his father’s chest.

“You too.” He laughed. “What am I talking about? You taught me about safe sex.” He said jokingly and Brian grimace. The others were emerging from the house now. Tommo joined them, followed by Janis and Vic, who wrapped herself in a drunken jubilation around Gus’s waist.

“I’ll look after him Mr. Kinney,” She said and Gus laughed.

“You?” He said, looking down fondly at the little girl. “You going to punch on for me? Huh?” They broke apart, mock fighting. The girl punched Gus’s stomach with must have felt like nothing for Gus just laughed. “Watch out, I’ll mess up your hair.”

“Taxi!” One of the boys yelled out, and Gus looked up, seeing the huge taxi and two others pull up behind. The confusion that followed, with people running in and out, grabbing bags, taking last photos, working out who would go in which taxi, overwhelmed Brian, who Lindsey enlisted to take a few more photos.

Justin and Gus edged to the gate.

“Will you look after him?” Gus said suddenly in the middle of their joking conversation. Justin paused, and laughed.

“I think Brian is the last person that needs looking after.” Gus looked over at his father and shook his head.

“I know. What am I saying? I should be telling you to look out for him.”

“You Kinney’s, you’re heartbreakers.” Justin said laughingly. Gus nodded.

“It’s weird hearing you call him Brian. That’s how I should have known. He kept calling you Justin. He never saw you as just one of the dumb kids I traipsed through the house.” Gus mused, and then shook his head at himself. Justin laughed again and Gus rolled his eyes. “Don’t get cocky though. You’re not special, whatever your mum says.” He said jokingly.

“Gus, don’t over do it tonight, alright?” Justin said worriedly. Gus smiled ruefully.

“I’ll be fine. I’m always fine.”

\* \* \* \*

“They’re gone.” Lindsey said finally, waving at the of the parents cars. Justin and Brian and her stood idly on the steps. She didn’t ask why Justin was still there. Brian turned, and saw Mel at the door. He blinked at her as though he didn’t recognize her.

“Coffee?” She said, her words filtered with aggression. Brian looked at Justin, and on impulse, swung his arm around the blonde’s shoulders.

“Nah. We better be going too.” Brian said, looking at Lindsey. She gave him a long look and then nodded. They both thought of their conversation a few moments earlier in the hall, where Lindsey had asked him if something was going on with Justin. Brian’s silence had been enough for her to know that this something was serious. Just as she loved her son, she loved this skinny man with all his silences and all his banter.

And she knew, more then anyone, how much he deserved to be happy.

She would give him anything, if it would make him happy. She remembered at one time thinking, she would give him her life, if it would make him satisfied. It had taken her so long to realize that it wouldn’t have been enough.

But, seeing the excitement in his so well controlled limbs, she knew that somehow, though she didn’t quite understand how it had happened, Brian should go home with Justin.

Well, that was one way to get rid of the older boyfriend that she hadn’t wanted for her son, though that hadn’t quite been her plan. And she had told Brian this.

“Come on Mel,” She said, taking the brunette’s hand. “I’m exhausted. Night Brian. And goodnight Justin.”

Gus and the boys were in the taxi, and Gus rolled down the window and yelled into the night. Shane, at the other window, gestured obscenities. Gus pulled his head back in, laughing, and put an arm around Janis, leaning his head against hers.

“Well,” Brian said, dropping his keys onto the counter. “Home sweet home.” He turned to see Justin standing in the middle of the room, heavy formal jacket on, a white shirt with the top button undone and the tie loose. Brian contemplated pouring himself a drink, but instead stretched his arms, and cracked his neck.

“Come here.” He said softly, and Justin did. Brian stared down at the boy in front of him. He slipped his hands under Justin’s jacket and slid it off. Justin made a fake shocked face as it fell to the floor. Brian’s expression did not change, and he ran his knuckles along Justin’s cheek. Justin smiled under the caress and Brian tilted his head, infatuated by that smile.

“Do you know how to bottom?” Brian asked coolly. Justin shrugged.

“I haven’t for a while, but I’m sure you can guide me through it.” Brian undid the buttons on Justin’s shirt, and slid that too over the boys white shoulders. They were still for a minute, Brian fully clothed and Justin in just his tight black pants. All that passed between them was breath. It was as if now they were finally here, they didn’t know what to do.

“Come on,” Justin dared him, under Brian’s watchful eyes. Brian looked confused for a second, and then felt Justin’s hand take his. Justin led him carefully up the steps to the bedroom. Putting on hand on Brian’s shoulder, Justin kissed the exposed skin near the collar bone, and then Brian’s jaw, the corner of his mouth. Brian caught Justin’s lips with his own with the last one, dragging on Justin’s bottom lip for a moment, and then pushing the boy’s mouth open. He held Justin’s hips, one hand sneaking to lie flat on Justin’s lower back. Brian arched Justin backwards, Justin gripping to him; bodies flush against one another, poised above the bed for a moment caught up in the kiss.

Justin felt the bed, soft and welcoming, rise up and hit his shoulders. He felt Brian’s weight on top of him, Brian’s arm beside his head as they kissed. Justin grinned as he felt how hard Brian was pressed against him.

“Fuck that was shit,” Shane yelled, and Gus nodded. He dragged hard on his cigarette. Gus felt someone’s nails running along his back and he turned to see Janis and Liv arm in arm.

“After Party?” She asked, and Gus nodded, shivering in the cold. Somehow, the girls weren’t shivering, even though they wore only their thin dresses and their arms were exposed. “Catch a taxi with us.” Janis invited, but Gus grinned, and shook his head. No, they had something better in mind.

“Tommo’s getting his dad’s car. We’re going for a journey,”

“Boys,” Liv said, rolling her eyes.

“See you on the other side,” Gus said, and pressed his lips to one girl and then the other’s cheek. They walked away, Liv turning back and laughing, her lips seeming a too vivid red against the backdrop of her blonde hair.

“Take it easy, okay?” Justin whispered. Brian, poised above him, nodded. Justin shivered from the cold from what Brian was doing, but Brian’s steady eyes on him somewhat helped calm his heart rate. He hadn’t bottomed since he was eighteen. Brian ran his hand up Justin’s chest, and Justin felt the thrill of desire again. He almost blushed as he rolled the condom onto Brian’s cock, and Brian smiled at this.

God Justin was beautiful.

Brian kissed Justin first, hands caressed the boy’s cheek, and then he entered, feeling Justin’s heat engulf him, feeling Justin’s hands scrunch the sheets, feeling Justin’s gasp at the momentarily pain as though it had escaped his own body. He looked down at Justin’s eyes, which seemed such a clear crystal blue as the pain died from them, and he saw the concentration forming on Justin’s face, as Brian surged forward for the first time.

“Fuck yes,” Gus yelled out the window to the car with the other boys in it, the cigarette hanging heavily in his fingers. He took another drag, feeling the night roaring by. He turned around and heard the boys yelling.

“Where the hell are we going Tommo?”

“You gunna miss the turning, now, now, fuck you missed it.”

“Don’t worry boys, don’t worry. Little detour,” Tommo grinned over at Gus who was in the front street. “Let’s go drive past the hookers,” Gus laughed.

“Old women get you going Tommo?”

“Fuck up,” Tommo said, trying to punch Gus and still steer the car. “It’s entertainment.”

“They’re still following us?” Tommo said, looking in his rear view mirror, and saw the Denny’s black car.

“Let’s go,” Eli said from the back seat. Shane was laughing like a hyena and Gus turned around, mischief on his face. He saw Eli, bent forward in his seat, chopping the mix for the next joint. Gus looked over a Tommo, and smiled, slipping out another quarter of his pill, and swallowed it.

Tonight was a night for partying, for uppers and fucking. Even if he had to do it alone.

“Fuck,” Brian said, and came. Justin, posed over Brian’s cock, swallowed the spunk with a certain amount of grace. Brian smiled dreamily, raking a hand through that blonde hair, and pulling the boy upwards across his sweaty body, and kissing him. Justin lay flat on Brian’s chest savoring the moment.

“You know,” Brian said after a moment, “A blow job always gets me started for round three.” Justin looked up with amazement on his face.

“And here I thought I was just returning the favor.” Justin said jokingly. Brian kissed him softly, and murmured something completely un-understandable. Justin smiled, and pulled the sheets over them, so that they were in darkness. He saw Brian’s eyes flash with humor at the gesture, and Justin couldn’t stop himself grinning.

Gus felt himself collide with the floor, and he got up angrily. Shane, worried now, bent down to help him, not realizing his own force. Gus shoved him hard in the chest as he got up. He half ran, half tripped to Graham, yanking the guys shirt at the back, and pulling him away. The hustler was on the ground now, and Gus could see blood at his temple.

“You fucking cunts,” Gus yelled, and he threw his arms out, punching at whatever he could see. He saw Eli sprinting towards him, gaping at the sight. Gus spear tackled Josh who was still kicking the hustler. He felt the concrete connect with his jaw and he spat blood.

He felt his hands touch the wooden bat that had been discarded, and he got up, the wood smooth in his hands.

“I can’t believe you have candy-corn.” Justin said, biting into yet another one of the sickly sweet candies. Brian seemed to be torn between disbelief and disgust.

“And I can’t believe you nearly got through a whole packet in fifth-teen minutes.” He smacked Justin on the butt. “Who’s going to fuck you when you get fat?” Justin rolled over, exposing Brian to the full power of his body. Brian threw the sheet over him, and reclined next to Justin. He started traced a pattern with his fingers on Justin’s stomach.

“Maybe if I get fat enough, I’ll have to be the top,” Justin said, careful to avoid any sign of the word relationship as he had the entire evening. Whatever was going on, he liked it too much to have Brian freak now. Brian rolled his eyes.

“I noticed you had a nasty bruise on that perfect arse of yours,” Brian said, raising his eyebrows. Justin laughed and, discarding the candy corn, wrapped one arm around Brian’s neck, pulling their lips close together, and tilting Brian’s body so that their thighs, and other things, were almost touching.

“That was because some nasty, inconsiderate…”

“Hmph,”

“Amazing fuck, pushed me over his stupid step into his bedroom,”

“Is that right?”

“I’ve got the bruises to prove it…”

“Fuck,” Brian said, as the phone started ringing. Justin fell back against the pillows in dismay and disappointment. Brian groaned at his rolled over, grabbing the phone from Justin’s side of the bed. He stayed leaning on Justin’s chest as he talked, and Justin grunted appreciatively.

“Better be a fucking good explan…” Brian trailed off.

“Who is it?” Justin said as Brian sat up. He pushed himself onto his elbows, and then at the extreme expression on Brian’s face, sat up, and touched Brian’s arm in concern. Brian brushed him off, getting out of bed, and letting the sheet fall obliviously from his naked form.

“Where?” Brian’s brows furrowed. “I’ll be there. Goddamn it, I said I’ll be there.”

“Brian, what’s…?” Brian threw Justin his pants.

“We have to go. Gus is in the hospital.” Brian starting throwing on his clothes, not explaining anymore.

This time there was no jubilation in their expressions as they ran through the halls. Brian’s eyes were dark, but panic drove their bodies into a sort of frenzy, and they shoved past people without stopping, the tails of Brian’s shirt flapping against him, and his hair heavy as it beat against his forehead. Justin, a step behind, thought of how heavy his footsteps sounded in the corridors.

“Fuck,” Gus muttered, shaking. He knew he was still covered in blood. He wondered when his mom would get here, and whether she would bring him some clothes. Bleakly, he realized that his expensive formal shirt was ruined. Then he shivered, as he remembered the worse things that had happened that night. His jaw was killing him. And he couldn’t move his hand.

He looked up at Eli, who was shivering. Eli’s knuckles where bleeding, and Shane was holding an icepack to his head. That must have been from where he fell.

“Who did,” Gus started, and then winced as the pain in his jaw suddenly came back in full force. He gritted his teeth. “Did the police take for questioning?”

“Josh and Luken I saw them putting hand cuffs on, but I heard Tommo shouting at them, so I assume him too.” Shane said, his voice vibrating with anger. “Graham’s in the other room, he’s got some cuts on his face.”

“Can’t believe this happened.” Gus whispered.

“I can’t believe you fucking attacked us over…”

“Shut up Shane.” Eli said quietly.

“You guys had no right.” Gus said after a minute. “If I’d known.” Shane shifted uncomfortably.

“I didn’t know it was going to go that far. But Josh and Tommo just kept pushing him, and then Graham had that bat,” Shane blinked as tears swelled in his eyes. He looked from one boy to the other. “We were fucking high man. I didn’t know they were going to…” He gasped, his voice seeming to rattle in the room. Gus tried to flex his hand but he couldn’t. He realized then it must be broken.

He nearly swooned at the thought, and sat down, feeling light headed.

“Did they find the…” Eli said with a frown, but Gus cut him off wearily.

“Is he alright?”

“Tommo? He’s fucked,” Shane said emotionally. “They would have found the pill and the chuff and…”

“I meant the fucking hustler Shane,” Gus said, standing up. “The fucking hustler you guys were beating the shit out off. You guys must think you’re really something, huh? Bashing a faggot? What was it? He wouldn’t blow all of you for the right price so you thought you’d bust his head in?”

“I didn’t know it was going to be like that,” Shane yelled. “I thought…”

“Boys!” The nurse said, coming into the room. “Either you turn it down a notch or you can go straight to the police station like the rest of those boys.” She said angrily. Her face softened as she saw Gus clutching his hand to his stomach. Her eyes ran over the other boys, but could see little sign of permanent injury. She beckoned Gus.

“Come on. There’s a doctor spare that can see you now. My lord, if I were you’re mother you’d be…”

\* \* \* \*

“Gus,” The white doors swung behind Brian, and for a second, Brian could see Justin and his mother, and others. His hand was wrapped now, but he looked paler then before. Next to him were the two police men looked up, pens poised.

“Dad,” Gus said, his voice wavering. He looked so tired, his face streaked with tears and there was blood on his shirt. Brian looked at his son for a long moment, taking this all in. “Dad they want to question me.” Gus was pleading, and Brian nodded.

“I’ll come with you,”

“Mr. Kinney, it would really be better…”

“I said I’d come with him.” Brian said, staring straight at Gus, who gave a small, broken smile of thanks. Brian put his arm around his son’s shoulders, and walked with him as the police took them into another room.

“You understand that as you were all in possession of illegal drugs, this crime will not be taken lightly?”

“Yes.” Gus whispered in a small voice. Brian had a hand on his shoulder, and Gus looked so very afraid. Brian frowned, hating this. Hating that his son still had blood on his shirt, and that these men were scaring him so badly. This fear for his son overriding the anger at him.

“So take us through it from the beginning, when you decided to…”

“It wasn’t a decision.” Gus said quietly. “No one planned this. You’ve got to believe that.” The police officer frowned, looking at his clip board. Gus glanced up at the blonde police woman who was motionless by the door. He looked back at the table.

“It says here that you were not one of the attackers. Protecting them will make us significantly less lenient.”

“Maybe we should get a lawyer then,” Brian said harshly. Gus jumped.

“No dad,” He straightened his shoulders. “I’ve got nothing to hide. I just… wanted to clarify. We never intended for it to happen, none of us.” Gus saw Tommo’s face as he drove there, and Grahams. He saw them as he had every day at school for the last four years. He shivered.

“Tell us, then, in your own words, what happened?” Gus could hear the click of the tape recorder, and he frowned.

“We left the dance. There were two cars. Me and Tommo, Luken, Eli and Graham in one, and the other boys in the other. We decided not to go straight to the after party, rather to go driving for a bit.” Gus paused, as though dragging the words out. “We decided to drive past the hookers that hang at the red light areas for entertainment.” The police man was looking at his file again.

“It says here that the second car, driven by a Mr. Josh Frensze, had no idea of this direction, rather chose to follow your car.”

“Um, I guess that’s right.” Gus put his hand to his head trying to remember. “Yeah, Tommo said something about a detour and we all agreed to it, and the other car followed us.” There was the sound of pen on paper, and Gus looked over at Brian, feeling sick. Brian didn’t move.

An hour ago he’d been lying with Justin in his arms, talking about candy corn and covered in post orgasm sweat. And now he was here, wishing he could hold his son’s one good hand. His son, who was drenched in blood.

Brian blinked, hearing the words being drawn out of his son’s throat, and it felt like a nightmare.

“We stopped at one corner. A few of us got out. We were just you know, talking to them.”

“Them?” Brian heard the policemen’s voice as though it was miles away. All he could see was his son.

“The hustlers. And the hookers. There were both. We were joking around. There was about nine of us, I think.” Gus took another breath, wincing as he did so. “Um, I got back in the car, with a few of the boys, and we… we had a cigarette.” Gus’s eyes closed, he remembered rolling the joint in the back of the car. Him, Eli, and Johnny Braxter. “I got out, and saw that some of the guys had gone round the corner into this alley. I walked over and I saw that they were shoving this one hustler. They were quite far away, about a hundred meters.”

“Who exactly was there?”

“Um, I don’t know. Some of them.”

“Names would be useful, Mr. Kinney.”

“Shane was there, um, and Tommo, and Graham and Josh, and I think Alex.” Gus said in a deadpan voice. “Rick was behind me, he told me what they were doing. They had offered the guy fifty bucks as a joke, to see if he’d blow them. They got him alone, down the street, and they started abusing him. They were pushing him around from what I could see. Just mucking around, I assumed. I didn’t know whether to intervene, and then Eli came behind me. He…He asked me whether I was going to let this happen. And I said no. And that’s when I realized they had a bat. I saw one of them punch the hustler…”

“Who had the bat?”

“Um, I don’t know,” Gus said wearily. He looked helplessly at the inspector. “It was Graham. Alright?” Gus sighed, and then continued. “I started running, and yelling out to them to stop. The hustler had fallen over and they starting kicking him. Shane tried to stop me, he grabbed me and knocked me over. I got up, and pushed him over, and I tried to pull them off. Eli did the same. I picked up the bat, and I hit Tommo in the arm with it. We started fighting, and I think Shane was trying to break us up, and that’s when the police came. Can I go now?” Gus said softly. The police man looked at him for a long time.

“Alright. You can go, if your father signs these forms. We’ll call you when we need to talk to you again. You’re cooperation however will be remembered.”

“Thanks.” Gus said bitterly, getting up. “How is… the boy?”

“The doctors think he’ll stabilize, though he’s slipped into a coma and there is little they can do for him.”

“Who is he?” Gus asked desperately. The police man started collecting his papers.

“We don’t know. No wallet, no identification.” The man shrugged at looked straight at Brian. “We pull these kids off the street all the time. Hustlers who the world has forgotten,”

“Except as pleasure toys and punching bags,” Brian murmured and put his arm around his son, leading him out of the room.

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“God fucking damn it Gus,” Brian said, punching the wall. Lindsey flinched, but other then that no one moved. Gus shivered.

“Brian, maybe now is not the time,” Lindsey said quietly.

“Brian,” Justin said, startling everyone. Even Gus looked up. “He was protecting the boy, not the one beating him.” Justin murmured.

“And who are you to have authority on the matter?” Lindsey said peevishly. Melanie was hovering somewhere in the background.

“Lindsey,” Melanie said quickly. Justin just shrugged.

“I’d just like to know when was the last time any of us got caught up in a gay bashing,” Brian said in an icy tone. Lindsey folded her arms across her chest, and everyone was silent.

“Maybe he…”

“Maybe he’s right here and you should fucking talk to him,” Gus spat standing up. “Alright? I fucked up. I let my dumb friends take me for a dumb ride, and now there’s some poor boy my age in the hospital with his scull beaten in alright? I get it.”

“What on earth made you do it?” Lindsey whispered. Gus blinked back tears, and he looked at Justin.

“I was just wasn’t thinking clearly.” He said, trying to hold himself together.

“What about the pills?” Brian said, the voice of reason pushing through. “No one made you take them,”

“Look whose talking,” Lindsey snapped again.

“What?” Brian said. “I’m not the one on trial.”

“Maybe no one should be on trial.” Justin said in a low voice. Lindsey flashed him a look that was verging on hatred. She turned back to Brian

“And maybe you should leave.” It took Brian a moment to realize that Lindsey was looking at him.

“What?” He said angrily.

“Maybe you should leave. I think I’d like to talk to my son without your input.” Brian glared at her for a long time. Then he snarled.

“But your dike can stay?” Brian gestured at Melanie who gave him a sneer.

“Maybe I want to teach my son that being gay doesn’t necessarily mean a promiscuous arsehole.” Lindsey yelled, causing Gus to flinch.

There was a long pause, while Brian and Lindsey glared at each other. Brian snapped first.

“Fine.” He snarled.

“What? Dad! I want you to stay,” Gus got up. “This isn’t his fault. Mum, I don’t you to blame Dad,”

“I don’t give a shit about you’re want right now, Gus.” Lindsey snapped. “And you are going to go to that hospital every day until that boy wakes up. And you are going to come home every day after school until I believe you can be out of my sight for three seconds without supervision.”

\* \* \* \*

“Brian,” Justin said, running after him. Brian didn’t turn, just got into his jeep. “Brian, can you give me a lift?” Brian didn’t more, just sat, staring straight forward. Justin pursed his lips, but got in the car anyway.

He moved to turn the radio on, but Brian turned it off with an angry motion, and they speeded into the night.

“This wasn’t your fault.” Justin said, as they pulled up to his apartment. Brian laughed dryly.

“No. Of course it wasn’t,” Brian scoffed. Justin gripped his hand.

“It wasn’t. That boy getting bashed had nothing to do with you, whatever Lindsey might say.”

“No? My son was in hospital pumped full of drugs and that has nothing to do with me? I’m not to blame for that?” Brian shook his head. “It’s completely my fault. We both saw how fucked he was when he left the house. But no, I’m the fun parent, I let him go out clubbing and fucking and sucking, and he…” Brian broke off with a grimace. He clenched his fists and then hit the steering wheel. “Fuck.”

“Brian, Gus didn’t hit that boy, he was defending him.” But Brian wasn’t listening.

“This is my fault. My son could have died while I was chasing a,” Brian looked over at Justin and self-loathing flared in his eyes. “Cheap thrill.” He finished harshly.

“Brian…” Justin whispered. “Don’t make what happened tonight between us responsible for…”

“It is responsible for it.” Brian half yelled. “What happened between us was obviously a huge mistake, and a huge selfishness on my part.” Brian looked over at him, and he sneered. “I was fucking you while my son was getting the shit kicked out of him. How’s that for good parenting?”

“Brian,” Justin said again, marveling at this logic.

“Get out.” Brian said coldly. Justin laughed at the absurdity of this.

“Brian you can’t be serious.”

“I said get out.” Brian snarled, and thrust himself over Justin, opening the car door.

“No!” Justin spat defiantly. He grabbed Brian’s arm. “Don’t do this Brian. What happened tonight was fucked up, but what happened between you and me was amazing. Don’t ruin that. Don’t deny that. Brian, please.”

“Tonight was a colossal fuck up,” Brian hissed, and even as Justin tried to cling to him, Brian was shoving him. “Get out!”

“No.” Justin yelled and Brian growled in frustration. He hit the eject button on the seat belt and physically starting pushing Justin out of the car. “Brian stop it.”

“Fuck off!” Brian said, shoving him hard, and Justin was pushed off the car seat, falling out the car door. His legs splayed across the seat, his arse hit the curb with a jolt. Drawing up his legs, Justin got up, but Brian shoved him hard in the chest with one hand, pushing him away from the door. He grabbed the door handle and slammed in it Justin’s face. Justin stood on the side of the road with complete shock. Angrily, he kicked the car, but Brian just snarled and roared off.

“Fuck you.” Justin yelled out after him, and then shivered. “Fuck you Brian.” He said quietly, and rubbed his hands across his face in dismay.

Gus sat with his legs thrown over the side of the chair, tossing the ball against the wall. He had been doing this for about ten minutes, and then, looking at the boy lying motionless on the bed, he flushed guilty. He got up, stretching his legs, and walked over to the side of the bed. There was another seat there, which he supposed was placed for another family member.

No family had come so far.

The scratches on the boys face were healing, a long neat row of tiny scabs down one cheek and the bruising around his eye had gone down. The cut on his lower lip still looked pretty bad. Gus looked over those fine, almost feline creatures, and the fine blonde hair that the nurses must have washed. He sat down, and, because there was nothing else to do, he took the boys hand in his, running his thumb over the broken skin on those knuckles.

The boy had tried to put up a fight after all.

Gus sighed. He’s been coming here every day for the last week. His mom had repented, and she said he didn’t have to come any longer, but it felt right.

They were all suspended from school till the end of the term. The summer holidays that had stretched out so promisingly now looked surprisingly bleak. Josh was being sent to military camp and Tommo was going to stay with his grandparents in Canada until the end of the summer. Shane’s dad had enlisted him in a community service project for delinquent kids, and he spent every day, nine till five, feeding the homeless and sorting through second hand clothes.

Eli hadn’t been able to leave the house so far. The rest, Gus wasn’t sure about. He’d heard Graham’s parents might be sending him to some east coast school, but the rest he assumed would be back next year.

“It’s pretty fucked up, huh?” Gus murmured, looking sympathetically at the hustlers face. “At least you have a bed, I suppose. I wonder what you sound like.” He said dejectedly. He’d been thinking a lot about what the boys life must have been like, and he felt sick, watching those bruises fade day by day.

The doctors said that he was positive.

The big HIV.

“Only got more bad news to wake up to,” Lindsey had growled when Gus had told her, and that was the last decent conversation he’d had with her for five days. When he wasn’t at the hospital, he was in his room or doing the laundry. He couldn’t even sneak away for a cigarette.

And Brian and his mom were fighting. Each night, Brian would ring, and Lindsey would have a short, tense conversation and then hang up. Gus wondered if Brian even asked to speak to him.

Maybe he’d written him off completely.

“Hey,” Gus’s head snapped up, and he dropped the boy’s hand guiltily. Justin tilted his head. Gus stood up, and he forced a smile, looking back at the sleeping boy for a moment. Justin gestured for him to come outside.

“How’d you know I’d be here?” Gus asked. Justin starting fumbling in his pocket for change for the coffee machine. The white halls were silent at this time of the day, it was nearing five and the weather was dark and sinister outside.

“Deb, from the diner told me. She said you were visiting him every day.” Gus shoved his hands in his pockets.

“Seemed the least I could do. The other boys, Shane, Eli, a few of the others, they dropped in too. Left notes and get well soon cards. I didn’t know what to write, so I thought I might as well stay. Explain it to him when he wakes up.”

“Will he wake up?” Justin asked quietly. Gus shrugged.

“I don’t know. The doctors say so.” They turned a corner and found the coffee machine. Justin put a coin in and lined up the ugly plastic cup. They were silent for a minute as the coffee spluttered out.

“So what’s happening with the police?”

“Hmm.” Gus said, nodding. “The boys all told them the same thing. That me and Eli and Johnny knew nothing about it. That Rick wasn’t involved. That Eli and I were trying to stop them. They go up before a judge next week, but the lawyers say because they are minors and they all admit it, and they were intoxicated, that they’ll just get community service. Tommo’s in shit though about the driving, and Shane got fined for the bud.”

“What about you?” Gus smiled softly.

“They can’t find what’s already in you. I didn’t have anything left on me.” Justin nodded. He took his coffee cup, and they walked out into the small courtyard garden. It was cold, and Gus pulled his jacket tight around him. They sat on the bench under the bonsai.

“Do they know his name?”

“Yeah. They found his mother, but she doesn’t want him. He’s only a year older then me.” Gus said softly. “They say he’ll go into a facility when he wakes up. He’s been in them before. Three times actually.”

“Fuck.” Justin whispered.

“He’s positive, as well. So not only did some private school areholes beat the crap out of him, he’s abandoned, a teenage prostitute and he’s positive.”

“What’s his name?”

“Hunter,” Gus said, and smiled briefly.

“Hunter.” Justin repeated, rolling the word around in his mouth like a marble.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lindsey put a hand to her forehead, blocking out the sun. She’d seen Brian’s car pull up, and she lingered on the curb. She turned to see Gus, box in hand, lingering also. He scurried inside under her frown, and she waited to meet his father alone.

“Oh, you’re here then.” She said, rubbing her hands on her jeans and then folding her arms. Brian nodded, glancing at the disorder of the yard and the moving truck.

“Skipping town on me?” He joked rather grimly.

“Melanie’s moving in with me. For a while.” Lindsey said, and then her resolve broke. “I don’t know for how long actually. Her lease was up and it just seemed easiest.” Brian looked over Lindsey’s head to where Melanie had appeared and was now stalling on the porch. Brian waved but the woman just headed back inside. Lindsey shrugged.

“You might have wanted to let me know about that,” Brian said softly.

“I know. Alright? I’m been a complete bitch. What with Gus and everything, I just, didn’t know who to blame.” Lindsey pulled a contrite face. “I’m sorry?” Brian nodded, looking at the ground.

“Is he here?” He asked, squinting up in the sun. He looked over as the door opened again, and two figures emerged. Gus, with a tentative grin on his face and a dusty blue wife beater on, and Justin. Brian smiled at them both, his eyes taking in the rather cautiously blank expression on Justin’s face. Brian pulled Gus into a hug, his eyes resting on Justin’s for a moment, and then closing them.

“How’s your hand?” Brian asked, trying to be casual, as he released his son. Gus shrugged.

“It’s affecting my leisure time,” Gus said, and then at Lindsey and Brian’s confused faces made a certain clarifying gesture.

“Oh,” His parents said in unison, and then grimaced with disgust. Justin smiled benevolently from behind. There was a long pause.

“So the queen of the dikes is moving in.” Gus said cheerfully. Justin gave him a quick whack on the back, and Brian tried not to laugh. Lindsey rolled her eyes.

“I love that my son has cultivated such a nickname. I’m sure he gets such creativity from your side of the family.” Lindsey said sweetly to Brian. Brian smiled falsely back at her.

“What happened to contrite Gus?” Justin murmured, giving Gus a playful nudge with his elbow.

“What?” Gus said, grinning at the sight of his parents getting alone in bitching about him. “It’s the truth. Anyway, you guys were getting bored with me being too nice…”

“Or a suck,” Lindsey said thoughtfully. “But you’re still grounded. Forever.” She added, grinning. Gus rolled his eyes.

“Well, Dad, nice to catch up, I like your hair cut, not big on the shirt,” Brian looked down in distress. Lindsey laughed. “I’m going back inside.”

“I gotta go,” Brian said, and pressed a kiss to Lindsey’s cheek. Lindsey frowned.

“Stay for dinner, post moving in celebration.”

“No, no. I’ve got some things to do.” Brian waved away her attentions, and he didn’t look at Justin. Justin closed his eyes for a second.

“Something come up?” Lindsey joked and Brian nodded distractedly.

“Yeah. Something like that.”

\* \* \*

“Alright, what exactly happened with you and dad?” Gus said, closing the door. Justin threw himself down on the bed.

“What? Nothing.” He said, looking at the bedspread. Gus twisted his computer chair around and sat on it backwards, resting his chin on the back.

“Bullshit nothing happened.” Gus spluttered. “What the hell did you do then when you left the before party?” Justin rolled over and looked up at the ceiling. He pulled a couple of faces.

“It was…” He paused, and sighed. “I don’t know if you want to hear it.”

“Hear what?” Gus said dryly. “Look Justin, unless your next sentence involves the words roll playing, paddles and diaper, I’ll be fine with it.”

“It was amazing.” Justin breathed. He closed his eyes, and smiled languidly. That night had been like some kind of lucid dream, beautiful and tangible, but then gone. “Everything else just melted away, and I…” Justin broke off again and rolled over to look at Gus. “Long story short? I ended up with a whole lot of bruises on my ass and nothing to show for it.” Justin said bitterly. Gus frowned.

“Not that I really want details, because, ew, dad, but you guys must have been together for ages, because I didn’t get to the hospital till about one thirty, and we left for the formal at seven, so…” Gus looked long and hard at Justin. “Were you together that entire time?” Justin’s eyes surged with latent emotion and then he nodded.

“Yes.”

“So this wasn’t just a fuck?” Gus said, slightly awed, and slightly stricken by the teary state Justin was getting into.

“For me it wasn’t.” He whimpered.

“Shit, Justin,” Gus said, coming to sit next to him. He touched Justin’s back sympathetically.

“I think I love him,” Justin said softly. “Or, more accurately, I really could love him. And then he just… He freaked out about you, and it was like he thought he’d been punished, that it had been some punishment on him what happened to you.”

“Wow,” Gus said, wide eyed. “I really fucked up that night huh?”

“And he acts like I don’t even exist now.” Justin said, and then shook his head. “Which is Brian Kinney right? That’s what you told me. He doesn’t do relationships. That’s what he told me. But, when I was with him…” Justin shook his head, cursing these thoughts, but somehow, saying them would make it better. “I thought, I could be good for this man. And I could love him, really love him. And being with him, it was like I was…like he could have loved me too. That’s what it felt like.” Justin said, almost defiantly. Gus touched Justin’s cheek and sighed. Suddenly a grin broke out across his face, which he tried to hide. Justin looked at him quizzically.

“Oh it’s just… really?” Gus said, wrinkling his nose. “I just always thought dad was more of a stud, not a lover.” Justin blinked for a couple of seconds, and then groaned.

“Gus, I think I really shouldn’t be having this conversation with you. Dad and stud should not be in the same sentence.”

“True.” Gus said. “But, I’m going to give you some advise Taylor. With my Brian, as stud or dad, a little persistence tends to work.” Then he smacked Justin on his bruised butt and started complaining about how bored he was.

\* \* \* \*

Justin slammed the drink down and turned back to look to the dance floor. He knew for a fact where Brian was, his whole body seemed to be aware at all times of that, but he refused to look over there. He knew Brian was at the other end of the bar, surrounded by his so called friends and bored out of his mind. He felt like walking over there and grabbing his arm, pulling him into the spot light. Where he belonged.

But, Justin thought, as he slammed down another drink, with Brian, it was all a game. And generally the house won, but if you somehow managed to play the perfect hand, you could completely spin the odds.

He blinked. That metaphor had gotten too complicated, and that was precisely why he was drinking. So that he could do this night on instincts.

Somehow, he was going to do something about the Brian Kinney problem.

Justin nodded at the guy who had been buying him drinks, and let himself be pulled out onto the dance floor. He grinned as the guys who walked past dropped their eyes to read his shirt, and then dropped them lower to check out the rest of his body. He glanced down at his shirt, the red letters “Nearly Famous” dotted across the white wife beater. He stopped his partner, and pulled him against his body. Glancing around the other man’s arm, he managed to get a glimpse of Brian, a sulk on his face, head tilted towards Emmett, eyes in an expressionless daze. As if sensing something, Brian looked up, but Justin managed to avert his eyes in time, and pulled himself closer to the lean man he was dancing with. He closed his eyes, and tried not to think if Brian was watching him. The idea made his movements awkward, as though his brain could not comprehend that thought and the music all at once.

“Earth to Brian,” Emmett said, snapping his fingers in front of his eyes. Brian growled.

“Something like that,” He mumbled, and ran a hand over his forehead. He glared down at the bar, at his drink, at anything. He finished his drink, and decided to head for the backroom. Emmett was left gesturing behind him.

“Well that was fucking rude,” Emmett said, leaning on Michael.

“What, doesn’t he even need to pick up a trick now? He can just…” Michael fell silent at the trick that suddenly wrapped himself around Brian as he made his way to the back room. “Oh.”

“Some people have all the luck.” Emmett muttered. He looked down at Michael who pouted, and then added for effect. “Lucky enough to have big dicks.”

Justin saw Brian in the back room, exactly where he thought he would be. Leaning back against the wall, dick getting sucked, dark eyes taking in everything but the man that was sucking him off. Justin sucked his bottom lip, and then he straightened his shoulders, pushing his way over there.

Brian’s head lolled to the side at Justin’s approach and he grinned. Justin took in a deep breath.

“Like what you see?” Brian murmured, glancing down at the trick and then back at Justin. Justin raised his eyebrows. Brian rolled his head back on the wall, closing his eyes. “Well, if you want to… ah… blow me boy, you’ll have to get in line.” Brian grimaced, looking down. It would have made that comment so much better if he’d come at the time. Damn it, if only this guy knew how to give a fucking blowjob.

“If there’s got to be a line,” Justin said, stepping next to Brian, putting a hand on the trick’s shoulder, and one on Brian’s chest. Brian looked into those blue eyes with confusion. “I’m going to be at the front of it.” Justin said seriously. He caught Brian’s bottom lip with his mouth, kissing that flesh he’d been dreaming of since he’d seen this man. He pushed open Brian’s mouth, pushing feeling that first electric shock of tongue.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Brian asked him in the lowest possible voice, jerking his head back slightly. Justin exhaled, the breath touching Brian’s lips before he responded. The trick, who was looking up at them like they were on acid (which he was probably on) stopped doing what he was doing but Brian barely noticed.

“Persisting.” Justin said, his head tilted slightly back as he waited for Brian’s verdict. Brian snorted, and kissing Justin, parting those lips with more ferocity that Justin had done earlier.

“Excuse me?”

Brian and Justin looked down at the trick, and Brian frowned.

“You give a shitty blowjob.” Brian said as if firing an employee. He looked at Justin and grinned. “And I just received a better offer.” The trick moved off grumpily, muttered something about selfish pricks under his breath, which seemed to be the name of Brian’s alter ego at the moment. Brian turned to Justin and gave him an expectant look. Justin leaned flat against Brian’s chest with a little groan, and Brian pushed the hair of Justin’s forehead and kissed him for a moment.

“Ahem.” He said and Justin gave him a joking death stare, and then got to his knees.

\* \* \* \*

“Huh?” Emmett said, tilting his head to the side. He hit Ted’s chest repeatedly, even when the accountant had turned around and was looking. Michael too looked perplexed. “Teddy, mathematically how does this work. Brian goes into the backroom with one trick, and after twenty-five minutes of getting his dick sucked, he emerges minus one trick but plus son’s ex-boyfriend.”

“I don’t think that’s an equation we learnt in school.” Ted exhaled disbelievingly.

“That fucking prick.” Michael hissed.

“Now, now boys, lets not jump to the wrong… ah…” Emmett scrunched up her face. “Oh.” Brian pecked Justin on the lips, looked down at the floor for a moment as if torn, and then turned away, leaving Justin standing long faced.

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“Thanks for the half-decent blowjob, you don’t know how hard they are to get these days,” Brian said charmingly, giving Justin an affection kiss on the side of the head. He dropped his arm from around the boys shoulder as they exited the backroom. They stood for a moment, Justin obviously waiting for Brian to say something. Justin touched Brian’s arm hesitantly.

“I didn’t want to leave things such a bad note.” Justin said pointedly.

“Yes, and a blow job is such a better note to end on.” Brian said cheerily. Justin sighed.

“Does it have to be the end?” Justin whispered, and then flinched as he mentally kicked himself. God, he was sounding like a melodramatic drama queen. He saw something stiffen in Brian, and not in a good way.

“What are we, fucking lesbians?” Brian said briskly, but he glanced down at his fingers in a way of apology.

“No, I didn’t say that…” Justin started, his face obviously troubled. Brian gave him a reproachful smile, and pecked him tenderly on the lips. The kiss was a second to short and Justin was left, eyes closed, even as Brian pulled back.

“I’m always valued persistent,” Brian said before he could stop himself, and saw the hurt flash across Justin’s face, before it was swept away. “Right, well.” He paused again. “I’ll see ya later,”

“Yeah, sure. I’ll see you. Or not. Whatever” Justin nodded, scuffing his feet. Brian wanted to pull him against his chest and kill the kid for looking so sad. Maybe kill himself for making the kid look so say. But Justin had looked away, so he didn’t see that rather torn look on Brian’s face. Brian pulled out a cigarette, and tapped in on the edge of the box. He nodded at Justin’s profile and then walked away.

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“What?” Brian scowled, ordering a shot. Emmett, Michael and Ted were all staring at him with open mouths. “What the fuck?” He snapped.

“Did you or did you not just kiss a certain blonde boy on the mouth?” Emmett said in a way like his voice had never broken. Brian glared at him. On second thoughts, the shot wasn’t going to get him through this. He’d needed some drugs. Now. He looked around for a dealer he knew, which at Babylon should have been easier then it was now appearing.

“So what if I fucking did?” Brian said distractedly.

“Uh… Brian?” Emmett started but Michael cut him off.

“Of all the sick low things Brian, this has got to be the worst. There you are, fucking his teenage boyfriend like there’s nothing wrong in the world.” Michael said sarcastically. “God, you don’t give a shit about anyone but yourself. You never have,” Brian turned around, stepping towards Michael so that he looked down at the other man, his eyes dark.

“What else do you have to say Mikey?” Brian said in a low voice.

“Nothing, but that your pathetic. Pathetic and a loser. And Gus would have been better off without a dad than some jerk like you,”

And that was when it happened.

The pivotal moment in the Brian Kinney and Michael Novotny relationship. The moment that every one had the image of in their heads, but never thought would actually happen.

Brian punched Michael in the face.

“You know nothing about me.” Brian spat. Michael straightened himself from the half couching position Brian had knocked himself into, and took a step back. Emmett was behind him, and put two hands protectively on Michael’s shoulders.

“Brian,” Emmett said, with that distressed look on his face. “Apologize.” Brian leant in close to Michael’s face.

“Fuck. No.”

\* \* \* \*

Brian pulled open the loft door, a packet of peas on his eye, and stared at Justin’s face, which was changing from determination to surprise, and then to concern.

“What the fuck happened to you?” Justin blurted out. Brian groaned and lifted the peas from his eyes. A nice black eye was forming. Brian held up his hands for an extra sympathy vote, the knuckles broken.

“I got in a fight.”

“Where?”

“I don’t know. I went to some bar, and drank, and then…” Brian gestured at his face again. Justin made a sympathetic noise. Brian tilted his head wearily.

“What are you doing here?” Justin forced a smile.

“Persisting?” He said hopefully. Brian turned away with a annoyed but resigned look, and let Justin in.

“You know, when I said I’d see you later,” Brian said, slamming the loft door with some difficultly. His arm was all bruised. “I didn’t mean three hours later.”

“Well, you let me in, didn’t you?” Justin said, and Brian conceded the point. He went to get them both beers, and then as a second thought, for his weed tin instead. He crashed on the couch, and watched Justin perch next to him almost awkwardly. Brian started to prepare a joint under Justin’s watchful uneasy eye.

“What? Don’t tell me you’ve never smoked before,” Brian said, pulling out the scissors. “Because I fucking smelt the loft after you and Gus have been at it,” Justin pulled a sheepish face.

“So,” Justin started, changing to subject. He leant across and touched the bruise around Brian’s eye cautiously. Brian stiffened under the tender touch, but allowed it. Justin pulled back, content that he’d made some contact. “How’d you get in a fight?”

“Well, opposed to the misconceptions you might have, not everyone wants to suck my dick all the time,” Brian said, scowling. “I got in a shitty mood, got to a pub, got blown in the bathroom, just in time to get his boyfriend punch me in the eye.”

“You’re getting all the blow jobs it seems tonight.” Justin said, and Brian looked up at him sharply. He hadn’t thought about that. That Justin was maybe a… he wanted to shudder even thinking it… a one man man.

“Not as good as yours though,” Brian said softly. Justin smiled automatically under the praise, and then blushed. This wasn’t high school, and Brian wasn’t going to give him a gold sticker for the best blowjob. Justin realized Brian had finished rolling the joint and was sparking it. Brian took three consecutive tokes to get it burning, and then leant back, his chest slightly raised from holding his breath, and then he released it. He took another toke with a grimace and passed the three paper to Justin.

“Getting stoned on a Saturday morning.” Justin murmured with a grin. “Reminds me off high school. Getting stoned before compulsory Saturday sport,”

“Fuck, that’s what I do when I have to go drop Gus off at bloody middle-of-no-where high school for soccer practice. Little dobe,” Brian took the joint back of Justin clumsily. “Watch him play, and then let him drive home.”

“I remember one time me and Daphne…” Brian grinned contentedly as the boy prattled. He knew, somewhere in the back of his mind, that he should probably tell this boy about relationships, and not fucking the same person twice, some long and probably predictable speech of Kinnism’s mixed with bullshit and being an asshole. But he really couldn’t be bothered, and as he stretched out on the couch, he put the joint in the ashtray and began kissing Justin.

Being kissed by Brian Kinney was often like being attacked. In the best way possible, obviously, but a sort of aggressive violence and dominance coupled with the kiss. This was different. Grins and soft kisses, stoned giggles and hands through hair, across jaws, mesmerizing bits and pieces of flesh, tender moments without a demanding tongue, breaking away, pushing again. They fooled around like this for a while, randomly having bits and pieces of conversations, and occasional tokes. Finally Brian pulled Justin onto his lap, so that the boy was straddling him, and proceeded to suck on the blonde’s neck, wondering if he should leave a hickey, rather then not caring if he did. He almost wanted to. He shucked off the blonde’s shirt and started kissing the flesh of his chest.

It was Justin that reached for the zipper of Brian’s pants, his eyes confident as he pushed Brian’s back against the couch. He smiled shyly at Brian’s long stare.

“What?” Justin said coyly. “Sick of blowjobs?” Brian caught his wrist.

“A little.” He said, and released Justin’s wrist with a flourish. “I feel like fucking.”

“Really?” Justin said, glancing down at a part of Brian’s anatomy that was proving testament to this point.

“I want to watch you fuck yourself on me,” Brian said quietly, his giggles having somehow disappeared. Justin grinned obligingly. He stood up, and undid his jeans, Brian’s hand still resting casually on his thigh. Justin slid them down and stepped out of them. Brian grinned at the fact that he wasn’t wearing underwear. Catholic boys gone wrong. Justin stood for a moment before Brian, fully naked, and Brian took his hand encouragingly.

“Like this?” Justin asked, a smirk on his face. “Why is it that your clothes come off so much later then mine?” Brian grinned, and leant forward, grabbing Justin around the waist and pulling him onto his lap once more.

“Because my clothes are designer, and therefore aren’t as fun to throw into a pile on the floor,” Brian said charmingly. Justin ran a finger down the man’s noise, leaning back from the kiss, slightly offended.

“So you’re saying I have to be naked because my clothes are cheap?” Justin said affronted. “Wow, Brian, you really know how to turn a guy on. Pay out his clothes, pushing him down the stairs,” Justin started listing. Brian kissed him to silence, and paused.

“Hey, and I didn’t push you. You’re just a clutz.”

“Calling me a clutz,” Justin added to the list in a sing song voice, and then grinned under Brian’s nasty glare. “You want to get to the fucking part now huh?”

“Well, we haven’t got all night,” Brian gestured to the window, were it looked like the first hint of dawn. Justin made an effort to hold in his grin.

“Alright, alright” He felt Brian’s hands on his hips, guiding him, as they repositioned themselves, and his grin died away.

They were strangely quiet as they fucked, Justin’s eyes closed as he rose and fell on Brian’s dick. He’d gasped as he’d slid himself down the first time, being a bottom was still rather new to him. What had distracted him from the pain though was Brian’s face. Brian, watching him gasp and twist. Brian watching him fuck himself. The silence somehow made it more intense, more hot, and Justin could feel the perspiration on his back. And Brian’s hands, fingers running up and down Justin’s spine with the movement.

Justin didn’t comment on the fact that cum stains on an expensive shirt were probably more annoying then on a cheap one, mainly because he had no experience in the matter, and because Brian didn’t seem to care. Brian seemed happy to lean his head against Justin in a post orgasmic swoon, his arms wrapped tight around the blonde boy, their sweat sticking them too each other.

“I think,” Justin said, pulling himself up and receiving a groan for his efforts. “It’s time for a shower.” Brian looked down at his shirt, and scowled. Justin giggled, and helped yank it over the older man’s head. Brian shifted Justin off his lap, dropping him on the couch, and let his jeans slide off. Justin watched the beautiful view for a moment, head tilted, before he followed Brian to the bathroom.

After they fucked in the shower, Brian dried Justin’s hair with the towel, and swept the blonde boy under the sheets before him. Skin warm and sated, Brian pulled Justin too his chest. Justin traced a finger across those rock hard abs.

“Brian?”

“Hmm?”

“I don’t want you to think I’m a lesbian or anything…”

“Highly unlikely since I have a detailed knowledge of your anatomy…”

“But, I like this. Being here. And I think I wanted it as soon as I saw you.” Justin said, carefully arranging those words. Because he could have said it differently. Like — I like you, and being with you is amazing and I think I fell in love with you when I first saw you.

Brian wasn’t a fool, so he pressed his lips to Justin’s temple, and closed his bruised eyes.

“I know.” Which of course could be reinterpreted too.

How could he explain to Justin that yeah, there was a time when he could have spouted a whole lot of bullshit. That he had made a promise to himself that he would make enough money to never have to owe anyone anything again. That he would fuck and do whatever he wanted.

But that had all changed with Gus.

And while still he didn’t believe in love, he knew that things weren’t simple.

And that sometimes it’s the unexpected which alters your world in the best possible way.

Instead he kissed Justin, rolling over on top of him, and smothered the boy with his warmth.

Brian was not a morning person.

“Humph?” Brian blinked, looking at Justin in the kitchen. Justin held up the plates of bacon and eggs as a sort of offering. Brian blinked again, and Justin put a cup of coffee in his hand. He patted Brian on his brief clad buttocks. “What are you…? Hmm?” He murmured, and Justin pecked him on the lips. Then Justin took his breakfast to the table, and started eating. Brian rocked his head back from side to side blearily, coffee in hand. Things weren’t apparently explaining themselves, so he did the most natural thing in the situation.

He took the breakfast, seated himself at the table, and tried not to glare at Justin. He watched the boy season both eggs and the bacon with pepper and salt, glancing warily down at his own.

“Where did…?” Brian rasped.

“I went to the local grocery store.” Justin said, taking a sip of orange juice, his eyes filled with a smugness that Brian barely registered. “I figured if I made breakfast, you were less likely to have a morning freak out.”

“Morning freak out?” Brian said, waking up enough to register that.

“You know, who is this next to me, what happened last night, why does my eye hurt…” Justin said, and Brian scowled.

“I remember last night.” Brian picked up one piece of bacon and ate it, staring at Justin. “You thought I was going to kick you out this morning, didn’t you?”

“Were you going to?” Justin said coolly back. Brian sat back in his chair, tapping his foot on the leg of the table.

“Maybe.” He conceded. He frowned at the breakfast. “So this is part of your…master plan?” Brian gestured, making a mental note to tell the boy he didn’t eat eggs unless they were scrambled.

“I like to call it persistence,” Justin said primly, and Brian rubbed his head. Justin was obviously waiting for some sign from Brian, a rejection or an argument that he was predicting at this comment. Brian, being the contrary creature he is, decided that he had already been predictable enough for one morning.

He picked up his knife and fork, and proceeded to eat.

\* \* \* \*

“Wait, you got my dad to eat bacon and eggs?” Gus said, stopping. Justin spun around, his white scarf flapping against his coat, and he nodded, beaming. Gus’s mouth dropped. Justin walked back and passed him the joint.

“I know. It was amazing.” Justin boasted, his feet crunching on the fallen leaves that clogged the park’s path. Gus shook his head with a mixture of disbelief and awe.

“Did he like hyperventilate afterwards, and rush to the gym?” Gus asked. Justin laughed and shook his head.

“Nope. He uh…” Justin did a quick mental clean up of what actually had happened to make it child friendly. “took a shower,” Fucked me over the kitchen table, “got dressed”, personally dressed me “and drove me home” blew me outside my apartment. Justin looked over at Gus amicably. Gus shook his head, taking another toke and exhaling.

“Man, he didn’t even like quiz you on calorie contents? Nothing? Are you sure it was my dad?”

“Unless he had an identical twin…”

“Which would make you a really big Kinney slut…” Gus put in, which Justin ignored.

“Speaking of Kinney sluts, how’s life going with you?” Justin said, almost warily. Gus flicked out the joint and shoved his hands in his pockets.

“Good and bad. Mum’s cooled down, and I can go out again. I’ve seen the girls and had a good chat with a few of the boys, sorted some stuff out. But, you know… Hunter’s still in the coma, though the think he could wake any day now, because there’s been some flickers or some shit. And its still lesbianville at my house,”

“And Eli?” Justin asked, finally getting up the courage. Gus shrugged.

“Eli is no longer in the equation.” Gus said softly, and looked up at Justin. “Dad told me. About you guys overhearing us, on the night of the dance.”

“I’m sorry,” Was all Justin could think of saying. Gus scuffed his shoes.

“Yeah. I’m not really. It was good telling him, and I do think I still… you know… love him or whatever, but life goes on, I guess. And I think what’s best right now if for me not to see him. At all.” Gus said resolvedly. Justin frowned.

“But, he does care about you.” Justin said. Gus nodded, and pulled out his weed tin. They sat down on the park bench. These toothpick joints were getting them no where.

“I know. Everyone keeps telling me that. But, I can’t wait around for him, you know?” Justin nodded. Gus started rolling a thicker joint.

“So when do you think you’ll see my dad again?” Justin sighed.

“That’s the thing. I don’t know. I mean, I put myself on the line, and it worked, but I don’t really want to have to do that all the time.” Justin pursed his lips. “Though, I do kind of like catching him off guard.”

“Well,” Gus licked the tally-hoe. “You could come with me tonight. I’m going to watch movies round there. You me and papa, and a bag of popcorn. Just you know, hands above the blankets at all times.”

“Thanks, I’ll keep that in mind,” Justin giggled, feeling the weed finally kicking in.

\* \* \* \*

“Gus.” Brian opened the door, a smile on his face. It faded slightly as his vision flickered to Justin. He looked back at Gus and raised an eyebrow. So they were in on this together where they.

“Movies,” Gus said, holding up the bag. He pushed past Brian, hitting his chest with his elbow, and Brian reluctantly welcomed them into the loft. Gus kicked of his shoes, one heading under the couch, the other falling not far from him. Justin slid in past Brian, giving him a cheeky knowing look, which received a glare from those intimidating brown eyes. “Mum wouldn’t let me get Pulp Fiction again; I think she got freaked out by the snorting thing,”

“Like she’s never experienced it,” Brian murmured quite audibly, his eyes still on Justin who was unpacking supplies in the kitchen. Gus looked up at Brian curiously, and grinned. He slammed the DVD’s into Brian’s chest to get his attention.

“So I got Donnie Brasco, Memento and uh Interview with the…” Gus mumbled the last one so fast hoping that Brian couldn’t hear, but no such luck. Brian’s face went dead pan anyway.

“No fucking way,” He said, glaring down at the DVD. “I am not watching interview with the fucking vampire again. It was bad enough the first time,” Gus rolled his eyes.

“Come on dad, you loved it.”

“No. I’m not watching Brad Pitt making out with an eight year old girl, it’s gross.”

“They don’t actually make… ah… never mind,” Justin said, receiving a angry glance that made him go silent. Brian was going through the movies again.

“Basically, you just got Johnny Depp, Guy Pierce and Brad Pitt, didn’t you?” He said, turning to his son. “That is the last time you get to pick the goddamn movies.” Brian collapsed on the couch sulkily. Gus looked over at Justin and grinned.

“How’s your eye, Dad?” Gus said, sucking up now that he’d got his way.

Brian tried to concentrate on the movie. The chick from the matrix had just made some revelation to Guy Pierce, which off course he forgot, and Brian felt a flash of annoyance at the movie. They thought they were so smart running it backwards. Like it hadn’t been done a million times before. He found himself looking over again at Justin, and tisked himself.

Gus was curled up on the other end of the couch, covered by the blanket, with Justin sitting on the floor with his back against the couch. When something scary would happen, Gus would nearly knee Justin trying to cover his eyes, and Justin would clutch at Gus’s wrist, which was resting on the arm of the couch. They were, unlike him, completely absorbed in the movie. Brian caught himself just before wishing that Justin were curled up next to him. He’d thought to boy had been about to when they all sat down, but then Justin had gone to get the popcorn, and Brian and Gus had both already been seated, so he’d taken the safe option on the floor.

What annoyed Brian was that he was annoyed by this.

Brian noticed Gus check his phone for the hundredth time, and Gus looked over at Brian, big cheesy grin on his face. The boy was definitely up to something.

As if responding to Brian’s thought, Gus’s phone began chirping. Gus grabbed it off the table eagerly, and disentangled himself from the blanket. Justin looked up surprised confusion, and it was obvious that he wasn’t involved in what was going on. He didn’t have his guilty face on. Brian got the sneaking suspicion that the two of them were being set up by his very cheeky-and-going-to-be-in-trouble-soon son.

“Hey Dad,” Gus said, hesitantly, but with a obvious agenda. “Janis says she’s outside, and she’s going to this band with Liv, and I was wondering if I could go,” Brian looked over at him disbelievingly. Gus already had his coat in one hand. “I’ll be back by twelve.” Brian growled in annoyance, and he felt Justin’s eyes on him. Justin got up nervously, the early mood of casualness between the three killed. Brian thought for a moment.

“Alright.” He said finally. “Just this once. If you don’t tell your mother.” He added, for good measure. Gus breathed a sign of relief, and he kissed Brian’s forehead.

“Thank you!” He said, with such sincerity that Brian felt embarrassed. He pulled out his wallet, and handed Gus a twenty. As Gus left, he shook his head at himself. God, that boy knew how to play him like a fucking fiddle. He looked over at Justin, who was standing meekly by the couch. He extended an arm, and Justin came to it readily, sliding onto the couch, and snuggling up to Brian. Brian hit the play button, and gritted his teeth as the movie continued.

“We both just got played, didn’t we?” Brian said after a moment, hitting the off button again. Justin squirmed, so he could twist his head around and look up at Brian.

“I think so,” He said cautiously. Brian grunted. Justin squirmed again, grinning.

“I was thinking about how we fucked on this couch the entire movie,” Justin said casually. Brian raised his eyebrows.

“Were you?” He started toying with that blonde hair.

“Yeah,” Justin said dreamily. “You’re way hotter then Guy Pierce.” Brian snorted. That much was obvious.

“Justin?”

“Hmm?” Brian shifted very suddenly so that he was lying on top of Justin. He yanked on of Justin’s legs around his waist, hand stroking that thigh.

“Don’t try and manipulate me,” Brian said almost angrily. Justin licked his lips at the dark intimidating look in the eyes of the man above him.

“I wasn’t.” Justin said nervously. Brian put one hand by Justin’s head, and didn’t change his gaze.

“So showing up with Gus to watch movies had no ulterior motive?” Brian asked dangerously. Justin could still feel that hand on his thigh. He lay submissive beneath Brian’s dominance.

“I didn’t know when I’d get to see you next,” He admitted. “I didn’t want to have to show up at Babylon every time I wanted to see you,”

“Justin,” Brian said sternly, silencing the blonde boy’s babble. “You will see me.”

“It’s always me, Brian. Forcing myself on you, into your time,” Justin said almost petulantly. He blinked, and decided to go on, even though the waters was becoming very dangerous. “And if I stopped, I wouldn’t ever hear from you.” Brian looked solemn for a moment, and then, to Justin’s surprise, he kissed him, a soft, sympathetic, almost placating kiss.

“You’d hear from me,” Brian said quietly. “Alright?” Justin nodded. “So no more manipulating Gus,”

“I wasn’t…”

“You know what I mean.” Brian cut him off, gently though. Justin nodded again, trying to look meek. Brian kissed him again, and this time, released his body, so that they were flat against each other. Not a breath between them.

\* \* \* \*

Gus sighed. He fidgeted with the edge of the blanket that covered Hunter, his eyes dark. The concert had been good, if short. He came here, partly because he didn’t want to go home yet, and partly because he wanted to give his dad and Justin some time to have a proper fuck fest.

Someone should be having one.

“Yeah, so I heard from Eli today,” Gus told the sleeping boy. “He called me again, and I didn’t answer, again. He’s keeps messaging me, which it nice, but bad at the same time. I don’t want to be like my mum, pining for her best friend for years and years, and I know that if I don’t cut him off now, even for just a little bit, I won’t get over him. I’ll just keep loving him, and he’ll keep not loving me.” Gus frowned, looking at his hands.

“I mean, the crap thing is that he’s gay. Gay as fucking Elton John. But… uh, obviously hotter.” Gus’s noise wrinkled for a moment. Then he sighed, thumbing the quilt between his fingers again. “And he just won’t… that’s what makes it harder. Anyway,” He looked over at the boy, and his face softened, the anger released. “I wish I could talk to you about people you know.” He paused. “Do you have people? You must have some people that miss you, or are worried about you. Other hustlers or whatever.” He sighed. “I wonder what’s going to happen when you wake up. I wonder if you’re going to hate me. I mean, you should. Me and my dumb friends. Except Justin. I bet you’d like Justin. Everyone likes him. He’s the perfect guy. I mean, my parents really love him.” Gus smirked. Then he sighed, his thoughts drifting back to Eli. “It just sucks, that’s all. Not having anyone to be with, when everyone else is paired up.”

“I’ll blow you for twenty,” Hunter wheezed, the words seemingly loud in the empty room. Gus jumped. He looked at the boy, whose eyes were open, if only just. Hunter tried to moisten his lips, but they remained dry and cracked. He exhaled, and then cracked a brittle smile at the shock on Gus’s face. “So dude, what’s going on?”

“Ah,” Gus said stalling. “You’re in a … were in a coma.” Hunter blinked. He closed his eyes for a second, and Gus almost thought he’d imagined the whole episode.

“For how long?” The boy whispered. Gus released that this probably wasn’t the proper way for this to be happening, and hit the nurse’s button.

“A few weeks.” Gus stood up nervously. Hunter’s eyes batted open again, and he looked at Gus appraisingly.

“And who the fuck are you?” He said, with what Gus was assumed a hint of his old attitude.

Justin threw his jacket on the couch, and flicked on the television in his apartment. He really should take a shower, but for the moment he was content in being covered in Brian Kinney sex smell. Okay, that moment was probably going to be short lived now that he thought about it like that, but he was too lethargic to get up again.

Something started vibrating in his pants, and he muted the television, pulling out his mobile. He barely even noticed that it was a private number, and flicked it open.

“Yeah?” He said wearily.

“Hey, Justin. This is Brian.” Justin reopened his eyes in surprise.

“Hey, uh, Brian.” Justin said, trying to sound casual. “What… what’s ah, up”

“This is me calling you. You hearing from me,” Justin could hear the amusement in Brian’s voice, and he was glad that Brian couldn’t see the huge grin that had just found it’s way onto Justin’s face.

“Oh.” Was all he managed.

“I’ll see ya.”

“Yeah. I’ll see ya.” Justin said, hearing the dial tone, let out a silent scream of excitement.

\* \* \* \*

Lindsey sat down on the plastic seat, and glanced up as Brian arrived. Brian looked over at the room where the hustler was being looked after, and he frowned. He could see Gus’s dark head next to the bed.

“What are the doctors saying?”

“I don’t know.” Lindsey said and smiled at him, that thin smile, where she pressed her lips together. Brian ran a hand through his hair.

“What is Gus saying to him?”

“I don’t know that either.”

But when Brian entered the room, Gus was laughing, and the pale blonde on the bed was smiling.

\* \* \* \*

Hunter was staring at something by the foot of his bed. His body felt sluggish, and he knew that the dark haired boy next to him was watching him. Watching him, worried. That was something he hadn’t had directed at him in a long time. Worried that he was going to steal something, yes. Worried that he wasn’t going to be alright, no.

“So your dad’s fuckable.” Hunter said after a moment. Gus wrinkled he nose.

“Um, he doesn’t do minors. And how the hell do you know if he’s gay?”

“He’s gay as those ass hugging designer pants.”

“Gross. Anyway, he’s… involved.” Hunter wrinkled his nose.

“Gross.” His face cleared. “Anyway, most of my clients are involved.” Gus ate another M&M. He let that comment slide.

“I’m vetoing you fucking my father,” Gus said after a moment. “On grounds of de ja vous.”

“De ja vous? Really?” Hunter said, interested. Anything to take his mind of what the doctors had just told him, and what the hell he was going to do if he couldn’t sell his ass for money anymore. Because there was no way in hell he was staying in goddamn child services. He’d blow every fucking truckie from here to Mexico if he had to.

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“It’s fucking shit, that’s what it is.” Brian muttered. He took another sip of the crappy hospital coffee. Lindsey shrugged, flicking through the newspaper magazine.

“It is. We can only be glad that he’s awake now, and he’ll get the best care he can in child services.” Brian looked at her like she was on crack.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Brian said, rather aggressively. Lindsey raised an eyebrow.

“Are you offering an alternative suggestion?” She snapped back.

“What do you mean?” Brian said, feeling cornered.

“Gus is obviously attached to the boy.”

“More like he’s repenting…”

“Brian, this Hunter kid is well,” Lindsey paused, weighing her words. “He’s likely to end up on the streets again. I was talking to Mel,”

“Dynamo dike,” Brian said, hoping that somehow this would be a new name he could be credited for.

“And,” Lindsey continued, ignoring him. “Even in a home, he’s unlikely to get a new family or anything, because he’s so old, and because he’s…” She faltered, and then shrugged ashamedly.

“Positive.” Brian said angrily.

“Well, even if he does get a new family, he’ll be out of their hands in less then seven months, and then,”

“He’s on the streets.” Brian shook his head angrily. “That’s so shit. And the next lucky asshole who rapes him without a condom will get a free life taking disease,”

“Brian,” Lindsey hissed reproachfully. Brian just shook his head.

“Think if it was Gus.” He said, and the thoughtful silence between them was long.

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Justin sipped his third cup of coffee, sketching. It was nine in the morning, and his class had got cancelled so somehow he’d found himself at liberty diner. He smiled at Debbie as she passed again. He looked down at his drawing of her, badges included, and grinned.

“Well good morning, juvenile.” Justin looked up and smiled almost amazedly at Brian, who was now hovering, paper in hand, above his table. “Skipping school again I see?” Brian slid himself into the booth, and spread out his paper.

“Class got cancelled,” Justin said and shook his head. Brian nodded, and his eyes fell on Justin’s drawings. He smiled amused, and spun the sketch book round to face him. His expression didn’t change, and Justin felt slightly uncomfortable.

“I didn’t know you,” Brian said finally and then broke off. He was going to say he didn’t know that Justin drew, but he knew somehow he should have known that. Someone must have told him. Gus, or fuck, Justin at some point. Hadn’t Gus said that Justin went to an arts school? PIFA? Why the hell didn’t he know this? He frowned at himself, realizing that perhaps he hadn’t bothered to get to know this quiet blonde man before him that well. Not as well as Justin knew him. “Drew well,” He said with a mock jibe to cover his tracks. He passed the book back. Justin flushed.

“Not well.”

“No.” Brian said matter of factly, and Justin gulped. Brian decided not to leave Justin hanging for too long. “They’re good.” He added, as if an after thought. Justin rolled his eyes at his own gullibility. Brian leant back in his chair, staring thoughtfully at Justin.

“What?” Justin said finally, nervous beneath that stare.

“Justin, I,” Brian paused, and took of his sunglasses. He folded them on the table, and rubbed his tongue over his teeth. “I like fucking you,”

“Well, that’s a marriage proposal if I ever heard one,” Debbie said, hand on hip. She gave a big smile and Brian noticed the red lipstick on her teeth. He smiled as though it pained him.

“Deb,” He said with mock sincerity. Debbie raised her eyebrows, her smile, as always, fading when it rested on Brian.

“Kinney.” She said, with such obvious coldness that Justin blinked. “Nice black eye. Michael has a nice one also.”

“Well, your son didn’t give me this one,” Brian said, as though exchanging pleasantries. “Coffee, black. Unless my money isn’t good here?”

“You’re money’s good, but that’s about all when it comes to you,” Debbie said, and then nodded her head, as though she’s filled in the boxes on the how to talk to Brian Kinney card. “More coffee, sweetie?” She asked Justin, and Justin shook his head.

“Surrogate mother,” Brian said, waving it away with any other thoughts he might have about the red haired woman. “A long time ago.”

“Ah,” Justin said, as though this explained it all.

“Where was I?”

“You were saying,” Justin leant forward and smiled even as he said it. “That you liked fucking me.” Brian gave a soft derisive laugh and scratched his temple.

“Oh fuck it.” Brian muttered, shaking his head. “I was never good at longwinded speeches.” Justin grinned.

“Then I’ll just take it as a compliment.” Brian nodded begrudgingly.

“So, what are you doing for the rest of the morning?” Brian said, running his tongue over his teeth now in rather a suggestive way. Taking Justin’s grin as his response, Brian threw a couple of notes down on the counter, and decided that fucking Justin against his new sheets was the best way to work out if he liked red sheets.

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“Yeah,” Brian said, shaking his head. “I might have to keep them,” He stood with a water bottle in hand, next to the bed. Justin, who wore nothing but the red sheets barely covering his ass, was lying on his stomach. He laughed with amusement.

“The cum stains might have made them hard to exchange.” Brian threw himself down on the bed next to him, and pecked Justin on the lips. Justin had pulled out a book while Brian had had some work call, and the boy seemed reluctant to put it away.

“What are you reading?” Brian said, craning his neck. Justin passed it slyly to him, waiting for Brian’s reaction.

“Positive attitudes to being HIV Positive.” Brian said cheerily. He blinked a few times, and tossed the book angrily on the floor. He rearranged himself in the bed, leaning back against the wall and lit a cigarette. “That’s just a lovely book to bring to bed with you, Justin. Want to talk about cancer?” Brian said, offering him a cigarette sarcastically as he did so. Justin sat up, disturbed by how angry Brian was.

“I’m reading it for Gus, Brian.”

“Yeah well, how’s that going to fucking help him?” Brian snapped. “The fucking hustler is going to be back on the streets one way or another, so it won’t matter if he’d got goddamn aids, because he’ll probably freeze to death or overdose or get shot up.” Justin visibly flinched under this onslaught, and Brian frowned at the silence after his violent outburst.

“Fuck this.” Brian hissed, and got out of bed. He walked naked into the bathroom and stared at himself in the mirror for a moment, before climbing into the shower. Justin, still in shell shock on the bed, was staring off into the distance thoughtfully. Finally, he got up, and followed Brian into the bathroom. It was already fogging up, and Justin could see Brian’s naked back, shifting angrily as Brian washed his hair. Justin opened the glass door, and Brian turned his head to look at him.

Justin touched Brian’s arm, and Brian pulled him against his body, kissing him beneath the spray on the water. Justin looked up at Brian as they pulled away.

“You could help Hunter you know.” Justin said, his blonde hair falling flat on his head now, one tendril on his cheek. Brian grunted, and turned the boy around. He began washing Justin’s back, a habit he’d found himself falling into recently. It had its advantages, he thought, pressing his body against that amazing butt. It also meant the boy couldn’t look at him like that.

“I mean, you have the money. You do right?” Justin asked, and Brian grunted in response. Justin continued. “And he doesn’t have anyone. It’s pretty scary, not having anyone you can turn to. Especially for a seventeen year old kid.”

“Hunter seems to be able to handle his own,” Brian said conversationally. “He’s got a fouler mouth on him then Gus and you combined.” Justin smiled, leaning his head back to let the water wash over his face. Brian kept stroking his back.

“I just know that if I were positive, and had no family and was in the hospital from being beaten up, I’d be pretty messed up about now.” Brian stopped washing Justin’s back, and put the soap back in the holder. He pushed the boy against the wall, and then moved away for a moment to get a condom. Justin stood, both hands on the tiles, legs spread like Brian had positioned him, water running down his back. He felt rather then saw Brian come up behind him, Brian’s wet fingers sliding in and out of his hole. He bucked against them slightly as Brian added yet another finger, and Brian put his other hand on Justin’s hip, demanding him to be still.

It was an angry fuck, and Justin felt that anger in each thrust slamming into him. He had to brace himself against the wall, elbows flat against it, to stop himself going face forward into the tile. He felt Brian come a second before he did, and Justin found himself gasping like a fish out of water as he came.

For a moment, all he could hear was the sound of the ringing in his head. Then the sound of the water, and Brian’s breath came back to him. He turned himself in Brian’s arms, and Brian, exhausted now, leaned Justin against the wall, slick and wet with Justin’s cum, and kissed him, and panted into his wet blonde hair.

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“So,” Justin said, trying to avoid Brian’s rather pushy kisses. He miscalculated, and Brian managed to topple him back on the bed again. Brian grinned with satisfaction, and pinned Justin’s hands over his head. “How many men, roughly?” Justin said. Brian gripped the boys hands in one of his bigger ones, and sat back, panting slightly.

“Why the fuck do you care?” He said, and Justin frowned.

“Were you… are you safe?” Justin corrected, persevering with the line of questioning, and Brian frowned. “Because you know, I’d like you to be around for a while too.” Brian reached for a condom.

“I’m always safe.” He said, turning Justin on his back. He slid too fingers into Justin’s ass with the expertise of a doctor. Justin closed his eyes, wriggling to get comfortable.

“I wasn’t.” Justin said quietly, his arms folded under his head. “There’s been one or two times recently… when I wasn’t.”

“Really?” Brian said, his face becoming hard and unreadable. Justin made a small murmur, and Brian stroked those beautiful ass cheeks.

“I was checked, and I was fine. I think what was most scary was when I found out my boyfriend had been cheating on me. We’d barebacked for nearly a year.” Justin twisted again, as Brian ran his hands over his back, stroking the soft white flesh.

“That’s why you never let someone fuck you raw,” Brian said, leaning forward, and biting Justin’s shoulder, and sliding into Justin, soft latex between them, to prove his point. Justin hissed, he hadn’t been expecting it. “Promise me?”

“Never is ah… a strong word,” Justin said brokenly. Brian put one hand on Justin’s hip, getting a better grip.

“Promise.” He repeated. Justin closed his eyes, and felt Brian pushing into him again. “Promise. No one’s to ever fuck this bareback,” He ran a hand over Justin’s arse again appreciatively. “Not to.. ah… fuck mine…bareback, no one,” Brian said, the words tumbling out of him now as his speed increased. Justin gasped again, his forehead grinding against his arm as he arched back against Brain.

“Yes,” He hissed. “Yes.”

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“You want to what?” Lindsey yelled at the same time as Gus yelped.

“Are you for serious?” Brian kicked his legs out onto the coffee table and adjusted his belt. He looked up at Justin, who was hovering with a smug expression in the door way.

“I want us, or rather you, to take Hunter home with you when it’s time for him to check out.” Brian repeated coolly. Lindsey’s eyes were quickly becoming enflamed.

“Don’t you think,” She hissed. “We could have had this conversation in private?”

“Why? This concerns Gus as much as it does you, and well, it was Justin’s idea.” Brian said with a rather charming smile which Justin didn’t thank him for. He received a deathly stare from Lindsey.

“Well, I think that maybe I’d like a bigger say in who moves into my house then Justin or Gus, who by the way, is a minor under my roof.” Justin grimaced. He had no doubt who that was directed at. It seemed whenever she was in a tight spot, Lindsey was going to pull out her biggest guilt trip cards.

“Well, maybe I would have liked to be asked if your girlfriend could move in with my son,” Brian countered. Lindsey snarled.

“That’s not the same thing at all. Brian,” She lowered her voice. “This boy is a hustler. We don’t know anything about him,”

“So what, he’s a write off?” Gus said angrily. Lindsey gave him her best glare.

“Gus, not right now.”

“Mum, listen to me. Hunters a good guy, and yeah he’s had a hard lot in life, and I mean, if we can, shouldn’t we help him out?”

“What happened to your charity spirit, Linds?” Brian said, reveling in her discomfort.

“Charity is one thing Brian. Bringing a hustler into our home is another.” She snapped, and turned to Gus, her voice changing. “Sweetie, I know you think you know this boy, but he must be a very confused young man, and it’ll be best for everyone for him to be put in a place where they know how to treat him.”

“In a fucking home?” Gus yelled, and Justin bowed his head. He knew Gus in this mood. “How do you think their going to react to a hustler with HIV? How do you think he’s going to get treated mum? Do you think he’s going to survive when he leaves? He’ll have no education and no future.” Gus trailed off. “He’s one of us, mum. He’s going to be shoved to the side, buried under paperwork, and forgotten, because he’s not the perfect heterosexual ideal.” Gus finished, and Lindsey buried her face in her hands. She glowered at Brian, and at Justin, but something in Gus’s works had affected them.

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“Well that was fucking tiring,” Brian muttered as they left the house. He smiled briefly at Justin. “I’ll drop you home?” Justin slid his warm body against Brian’s and played with the taller man’s shirt.

“Why? We could go back to yours and…”

“Hmm,” Brian cut him off, looking away, trying not to be mean. “I’m going out.” Justin tilted his head, the humor dying in his eyes, replaced by a sort of angry expectance.

“Where?” He said petulantly.

“Out.” Brian reiterated. “Come on Justin, get in the car.”

Justin was quiet on the ride back to his apartment. When Brian leaned over to kiss him goodbye, Justin pulled him into a long kiss.

“Come up stairs with me. Just for a little while,” He pleaded, unable to sulk anymore.

“I can’t.”

“Why?” Justin felt disappointment filling his stomach when Brian didn’t answer. “Are you going to Babylon? The bathes?” Brian smiled and Justin knew it was true.

“Good night Justin. I’ll call you,” Brian said, with an inflection on the you. Justin laughed, wondering what had changed since this morning.

“I don’t get you,” He whispered. Brian smiled sarcastically, but also sort of sadly. No little boy you don’t. Not tonight. He knew that wasn’t what Justin had meant, but it didn’t matter. The disappointment was too heavy in the air.

“Night Justin,”

“Night.” Justin said bitterly, and slammed the car door when he got out.

“You look like you had a hell of a night last night,” Debbie muttered as she poured Brian his coffee. Emmett chipped in the information that Brian’s groan didn’t.

“Brian went to the baths last night.” Brian looked up. God, did everyone just know his every move. “What? Tod saw you there.”

“Fucking Tod,” Brian muttered.

“Well, everyone else is,” Emmett justified, and poured yet another sugar into his coffee. Emmett looked up to see Justin walk in. Brian was staring rather intensely at the menu behind his big sunglasses. “Hey isn’t that your little love toy?” Emmett drawled with an elaborate wave of the fingers. Brian looked up, and saw Justin just in time to see Justin slide into another booth with some fuzzy haired girl. So Justin was ignoring him.

“Love toy?” Brian repeated sarcastically. “His names Justin anyway,”

“How do you know? He’s not wearing a name tag,” Michael said, and received the famous Brian Kinney scowl.

“Looking to get punched in the face again?” Brian said charmingly. This sort of hostility before breakfast was upsetting his stomach. He couldn’t believe Emmett had forced them to apologize to each other.

“Well, he certainly doesn’t seem to have forgotten you. He’s looking over here every two seconds.” Ted said, staring so obviously at Justin that it made Brian feel sick. Brian pushed himself out of the seat.

“I’m hard to forget, unlike you,” He purred to Ted, and gave a wave of goodbye. He wasn’t sure even as he was walking if he was going to stop by Justin’s table, but then those big blue eyes looked up, those angel lashes, that halo of hair.

“Justin,” Brian said, knowing that the boy was off put by Brian’s sunglasses.

“Hi,” Brian looked at the girl who had just spoken. “I’m Daphne.”

“Daphne just flew in for the long weekend,” Justin said begrudgingly.

“Cute,” Brian said appraisingly, and Daphne blushed in amusement.

“Thanks, I think.” She said, gaping at Brian and shooting a look that screamed ‘oh-my-god’ to Justin.

“But you don’t have to worry, I’m more of a meat man myself.” Brian said charmingly, and Daphne tried to suppress her almost hysterical giggle. Justin was still pouting, and Brian had this insatiable desire to make some sort of physical contact with the boy. He folded his hands in front of himself instead.

“We might be going to Babylon tonight.” Justin said, finally, his eyes darting to Brian’s again, and Brian was glad to be wearing the sunglasses. “Will I see you there?”

“Maybe,” Brian said. He pressed his hand to his mouth and blew a mocking kiss to Daphne. “Ciao, Bella.” He said, grinning, and strode out. He heard Daphne’s giggle again.

\* \* \*

“Tell me that’s who you’re fucking.” Daphne hissed, staring for good measure at the departing Brian Kinney ass.

“Correction. That’s who’s fucking me. Or was. Or has. Whatever.” Justin said with a shake of the head.

“He’s fucking you?” Daphne said, surprised. “I thought you didn’t bottom these days,”

“I don’t. He’s different.” Justin said, glancing longingly at the door. “He’s…complicated. That’s why I haven’t emailed you about him. It’s… different with him.”

“Good different?”

“Strange different.” Justin fiddled with the sugar packet. “You know how after I broke up with Ethan I said…” Justin said quietly, trailing off at the end. Daphne nodded, wrinkling her nose in confusion.

“That you were done with real relationships?”

“That’s not quite how I worded it,” Justin’s mouth quirked into a sort of sad smile. “But yeah. That I wasn’t going to try and make another one of these conventional relationships work. That, I was fine with having,”

“Fuck buddies?” Daphne input happily, having a sip of her milkshake. Justin nodded slightly, again scowling at her phrasing.

“Not just fuck buddies. Open relationships. And yeah, not always emotional.” Justin frowned at his fingers. “But, with Brian,”

“Brian?” Daphne asked, and Justin realized she didn’t even know his name.

“Yeah. That’s his name.” Justin paused again, and Daphne was starting to get frustrated by the low dribble of information Justin was giving her.

“He’s not like that?”

“No, no. He’s totally like that. Open relationships in the loosest sense, all for no emotions, all that. And… I think I kind of want the opposite from him.” Justin frowned, bitterness clogging his throat. “Which is funny, I guess, in a Greek tragedy way. I just started thinking recently, when I was involved with Gus,” Daphne made a who-the-hell-is-that face, but let it go. “that the next time I get serious with a guy, it’d be with someone who would push me into it, someone who’d chase me. Not the other way around. I don’t know, I guess I expected a bit of smooth sailing and all that.”

“And Brian’s got problems?” Daphne said, raising her eyebrow. Justin laughed.

“No. Brian’s perfect. He’s got the perfect job, the perfect family, perfect life.”

“I don’t get it.” Daphne said wrinkling her nose. Justin pouted, waiting for the coin to drop. He flung down the sugar packet he’d been playing with.

“He’s already got the perfect life, Daph. Without me in it.”

\* \* \* \*

Brian slammed the trick against the elevator wall, gripping the Trick’s neck with one hand, and his other was already getting finding exactly what surprise in store for him Translation — his hand down the guys pants. He grinned against the guy’s lips, pushing him hard into the elevator wall. He heard the bing as he got to his floor, and he grabbed the guy by the pants, dragging him onto the landing.

Where he stopped dead.

Gus looked up to see what had stopped Justin, walking into the blonde boy’s shoulder that was slightly in front of him. Brian, with all his shirt buttons undone and his hand in some guys pants.

“Dad!” Gus exclaimed. Brian looked as about as shocked as Gus must have looked, but Justin looked shattered. It was one thing to know that Brian was fucking other men; it was another to him swinging into second base. Justin felt numb. He could only imagine how much worse he would have felt if he’d actually caught Brian mid thrust.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” Brian snapped at Gus, quickly taking his hand out of the guy’s pants. He knew why Justin was there, that was obvious.

“I came to get my goddamn soccer shorts,” Gus said defensively. “I’ve got a game this afternoon, which you’ve obviously forgotten. Justin’s driving me to it.” Gus added.

“Of course he is,” Brian sneered. Justin went bright red, at how obvious his own feelings must be as much as Brian’s comment.

“I’ve got to go,” Justin mouthed, and then repeated it when he realized no sound had come out. He took the stairs two at a time.

“God, Dad, you can be suck a fucking prick sometimes,” Gus said with a shake of the head, and followed Justin.

“Dad?” The trick said laughing, and Brian growled. He strode to the loft door and slammed it open.

“You fucking coming?” Brian said to the trick, and the man hurried to get inside.

\* \* \* \*

“You want some advice Dad?” Brian shook his head. He couldn’t believe his son was yelling at him like this. This conversation was meant to be the other way round. It was Brian that was meant to be disappointed, Brian that was meant to feel let down, not Gus. How the hell had these damn roles gotten so reversed?

“What?” He snarled into the phone.

“You want to keep Justin? Try a little fucking romance,”

“Who the fuck said I wanted to keep him?” Brian yelled as the phone went dead. Gus had hung up on him.

However, Brian wasn’t as good at taking advice as Justin was.

“Justin, you fucking hang up on me one more time…” Brian paused, partly because he couldn’t think of a threat enormous enough to express his rage, and partly because he was listening to see if the line was still connected.

“Alright.” Justin mumbled, and Brian rolled his eyes heaven ward.

“I got fucking yelled at by my son because of you,” Brian roared after a pause.

“Oh.” Justin said, almost meekly. “Sorry. I… I told Gus not to get involved.”

“Well, good one genius. Have you met my son?” Brian spluttered, pacing back and forth in the loft. “He’s the King of being Perverse.”

“He’s the Prince, not the King. Brian.” Justin corrected after a long pause and Brian thought he could hear amusement in the boys voice.

“You think this is funny?”

“I didn’t exactly find if funny seeing you with your hand down that guys pants, so no. So no, funny is not my precise feeling at the moment. More pissed off, actually Brian.”

“You’re pissed off? I had Gus lecture ME on your bloody feelings. Then he hung up on me. Then you hung up on me. Five times. So if I have to feel one more fucking thing about you feelings I’ll…”

“Brian?”

“Yeah?”

“You hurt my feelings.” There was the sound of grinding teeth and Brian clenched his fists.

“What the fuck gave you the idea that I had stopped tricking?” Brian growled. Justin sat on his couch, curling the phone cord around his hand. He waited to see if Brian was going to say anything else, but it seemed not.

“Okay.” Justin said softly, trying a different tactic. “But I have. I just want to fuck you for now. Is that all right?”

“Yes.” Brian breathed the word and Justin closed his eyes, feeling like he’d signed a contract with the devil. Or the closest corporeal form of him.

\* \* \*

“So you made up with him? Just like that?” Gus said, kicking the soccer ball back to Justin. They were in the hospital car park, and Justin, who would rather have been smoking a cigarette, was indulging Gus.

“Yeah.” Justin pushed his blonde hair out of his face. “Sort of. Well, I’ll see him tonight.”

“Tonight? What’s happening tonight?” Gus said hopefully. Justin grinned, flashing some expensive pearly whites.

“Soaps and Studs night at Babylon.” Gus stopped dead, the ball sliding straight past him.

“You’re shitting me.” He said, his eyes wide. Justin shook his head, amused. “Fuck me. I’m so sick of this grounded bullshit.”

“I thought you weren’t technically grounded anymore,” Justin said, glancing over to the hospital entrance as Gus went to get the ball. It looked like it was going to rain.

“Well, I’m not,” Gus said, wiping a hand across his face. “But mum’s banned me from clubbing. And Dad said he’d blow every bouncer in liberty to ban me from any club for life if I even considered breaking mum’s law.”

“Fuck.” Justin laughed. “Do you think he’d really do it?”

“You know my dad.” Justin put an arm around the younger boy’s shoulders.

“Yeah. His blow jobs are that good.”

“Oh!” Gus said and elbowed Justin. “That’s so gross.” They headed back inside, the first drops of rain falling.

\* \* \* \*

Brian was about one of the only dressed people in Babylon that wasn’t a troll or over forty. All the beautiful people were well… there was a reason why it was called soaps and studs night. He stood on the side lines with his drink, his mouth quirked up at the sight of so many gyrating men, naked, wet, and on display for him.

There was only one man who he would strip off for tonight, and he had just seen him. Justin, dancing with a couple of friends, a plastic halo attached to his head, floating dazedly above that thick blonde hair. Brian walked through the mass of bubbles and naked men who were covered in bits of falling confetti and not much else, to Justin.

Justin saw him approaching and threw him a sexy look over his shoulder, and Brian grinned at the sight of those skin tight black briefs he knew so well, the ones that hugged Justin’s perfect ass, just peeking over the top of his jeans. He reached Justin, sliding an arm across that wet and hard stomach.

“Hello,” He crooned in Justin’s ear, and Justin grinned. He didn’t stop dancing; rather let Brian feel the movement of his body. Brian smiled at the boy’s suddenly mischievous attitude. He released him, and Justin turned around, looking at him, still dancing. Brian, fully clothed, surrounded by floating bubbles, a neon spot light, and naked men, looked like the king of Babylon. Justin ran a tongue over his lip, and showed Brian his surprise.

“Like it?” He said, showing Brian his nipple ring. Brian wrinkled his nose, pulling on the metal bolt with his fingers, causing Justin to blush in pain.

“Why a hole in your nipple appeal to me at all?” Brian said, with a smile. But he didn’t let go of it, and thumbed the rather sensitive nipple before releasing. Justin took this opportunity to try and disrobe Brian. He slipped his hands under that black shirt, and yet Brian looked away as though embarrassed.

“I want you to fuck other men,” He said, looking back. Justin stopped, his laughing face becoming mask like.

“Why?” Justin had to yell to be heard over the music.

“Because I’ll be doing so.” Brian said, and cupped Justin’s face, leaning in to kiss him. Justin jolted back.

“I told you I don’t want to do that.” He said angrily. “Right now I only want to fuck you.”

“Justin…”

“What?” Justin took a step back. “I’m not asking you to stop tricking. I’m not limiting you in anyway, or demanding anything of you. I’m just telling you the truth.”

Brian looked a little bit stunned, and he shook his head, as though he couldn’t form his argument properly. He raised one hand defeat and walked away, leaving Justin steaming in the middle of the dance floor.

\* \* \* \*

Brian sat back on the couch, thumbing the two pills he’d just bought in his palm. He gave a slide long thank you glance to his dealer, and, rubbing his jaw, swallowed one. He leant his head back on the couch for a moment, watching all the pretty boys.

Justin was walking towards him, water bottle in hand, still wearing only his jeans and that ridiculous halo. He tilted his head, giving Brian a knowing look.

“What?” Brian said, and Justin shook his head. He saddled the older man, which Brian responded to with pleasant surprise. Justin sat back in his lap, and Brian leaned forward, mouth open.

“Brian,” Justin said matter-of-factly. “You don’t want me to be fucking someone else tonight,”

“What makes you say that?” Brian said, sliding his hand up Justin’s thigh. Justin rested his hands on the back of the couch, their faces very close. “Cocky little boy.”

“Tell me you don’t want me to.”

“What you to what?” Brian murmured, drawing out this conversation. His lips looked so red in the darkness, so dark and Justin licked his own in anticipation.

“Want me to go fuck someone else tonight.” Justin said very lightly, extracting Brian’s hand from where it had been slipping, gripping it with his own, as Brian laughingly struggled against the boy. Their hands wrestled for a moment, but Justin won.

“Ah,” Brian said, sucking in his bottom lip. “Alright. I don’t want you fucking anyone else. Tonight.” He added afterwards with a cheap smile. Justin’s smile faded, and he released Brian’s hand, pushing himself off him. “Justin,” Brian called after him, and got up, grabbing the younger man’s arm.

“No, Brian. I’m sick of these games. I tell you I want to fuck you and only you, and you act like I’m giving you a sexual disease.” Justin said wearily. “You want me to fuck other people? Fine. But you have to do something in return.”

“What?” Brian said warily. Justin’s eyes had gone sort of hard.

“Let me top you.”

“No.” Brian said automatically. Justin raised his eyebrows, and Brian shook his head rather viciously. “Fuck no. Find someone to top in the backroom.”

“Then I’m not fucking anyone else but you.”

“Then maybe you won’t be doing much fucking,” Brian said sweetly. Justin’s eyes flashed with fear for a moment, and Brian immediately felt guilty. Justin had gone slightly pale.

“Fuck you,” He said, and then repeated it louder. “Fuck you.”

“Justin.” He said, grabbing the man’s arm. Justin looked close to tears. “I want you to fuck other men so that you and me are on equal footing. I don’t want you to feel that you are being taken advantage of or vice versa. I want you to… be with me because you want to be, and be with other people when you want to be to.” Brian’s eyes were dark after this admission, and he fought the urge to add a sneer to his comments. He felt suddenly exposed. Justin was silent for a minute, looking at Brian’s face.

“So… we can still do this… you and me thing?” Justin said cautiously. “You haven’t moved on to bigger and better things?”

“Bigger is not always better.” Brian said with a crude grin, which deepened as Justin blushed. “I haven’t yet found a cock better qualified then yours, so, you might have to stick around for a while,” Justin smiled under one of Brian’s more sincere gazes, and pulled Brian into a kiss for the first time that night.

\* \* \* \*

“So, this is your place?” Hunter said awkwardly, getting out of the car. Lindsey nodded, and tried to look modest and hospitable.

“Yep.” She said with one too many nods. Gus got out of the car just behind Hunter, and he could see the tension in the hustler’s back.

“It’s nice.” Hunter said honestly. “Nicer then the crack dumps I’ve been living in.” He said and grinned at Lindsey. Lindsey didn’t exactly know how to react to that, and she forced a smile.

“Well. Yes.” She said, and hurried inside. Hunter gave Gus a worked look.

“I don’t think this is going to work,” Hunter muttered. Gus squeezed his elbow.

“It’s not up to her. Dad’s paying for it all anyway,” Gus said in an even lower voice.

“And why exactly is he doing that?” Hunter was still staring nervously at the house.

“Um. He likes being unpredictable?” Gus said hopefully. “Come on. I’ll show you your room.”

\* \* \* \*

“That’s right,” Brian said, guiding Justin’s legs over his shoulders. He licked his lips and the blonde boy beneath him did the same. “That’s right,” He repeated softly, and hovered for a moment over Justin.

“Brian… I…” Justin said suddenly, and Brian raised an eyebrow.

“What?” He said, stroking Justin as he said so with one hand. Justin’s eyes became thick and heavy, and Brian grinned.

“I… ah…”

“You love me?” Brian said almost wickedly. Justin bit his bottom lip and nodded. Brian kissed him, pushing that mouth open violently, so that Justin’s head was tilted back uncomfortably on the pillow. Then, Brian sank into Justin for the third time that night.

\* \* \* \*

He lit a cigarette afterwards, and Justin was watching him carefully.

“Stop it Justin.” Brian said, taking a drag, and checking if the cigarette was fully alight.

“Stop what?”

“Making this a big deal,” He said, finally looking over at Justin. Justin shifted, and took the cigarette, taking an awkward-private-school-boy drag.

“Making what?” He said hesitantly. Brian rolled his eyes. He said, snatching Justin’s wrist with one hand and extracting the cigarette with the other. Justin resisted for a moment, and Brian’s fingers dug in painfully. He lay back with the cigarette and was looking at some where distant on the ceiling.

“You’re unexpected, Justin.” Brian said finally. Justin sat back on his hunches, his glorious body exposed. Brian looked at him, and his face softened. He reached out, and touched Justin’s face. “But not necessarily unwanted.” He said pulling the man down for a kiss. Justin rested his head on Brian’s chest.

“That’s a comfort,” Justin said rather despondently. Brian laughed at the boys rather melodramatic tendencies.

“I’m going to tell you something which Gus taught me.”

“Yeah?”

“The things and the people you least expect, often become the most important in your life. Like Lindsey. And like Gus. And maybe you. Alright?” Brian said, and took another drag. He released it, and stroked that blonde hair. Justin, his face turned away from Brian, let those words wash over him, and felt that smile grow on his face, felt it shiver up his body like raw energy. Felt how happy that made him.

“Gus is pretty smart, huh?” He said.

“Uh huh.” Justin closed his eyes.

“Thank you,” He whispered, before going to sleep.

“You’re welcome.” Brian said automatically, and smiled at Justin’s sleepy formality.

“Hurry the fuck up,” Brian yelled. Justin emerged once again from the bathroom, grabbing his t-shirt and then disappeared again. “How the hell can it take you so long to get ready?” Justin emerged, still pulling on his jacket, toothpaste on the side of his mouth.

“Well, if you didn’t bury my shit in the bed, or under the bed, or throw it half way across the loft, it might be easier for me to get dressed,” Justin complained, coming to stand before Brian. Brian gave him an apologetic grin, and straightened the boy’s t-shirt. His hands remained on Justin’s small frame, and he kissed the toothpaste off the side of Justin’s mouth.

“Ah...!” Justin murmured, under Brian’s careful attentions. Brian put one finger to his tongue and licked it experimentally.

“Toothpaste.” He said with a cheeky grin. He slid his hands up Justin’s t-shirt and Justin slapped him away.

“Come on, or you’re going to make us late.”

“Oh,” Brian groaned, as Justin begun dragging him to the door. “Now you want to go… Why are we going again?”

“Because we can’t stay fucking for another night… and Lindsey made pot-roast.” Brian blinked and grabbed Justin around the waist, spinning him around.

“Alright, that’s another reason not to go.” He said defiantly, wrapped around Justin’s back, walking the boy back towards the bedroom.

“Ah…” Justin murmured, his mouth going dry at the feeling of Brian pressed behind him again. “And we’re out of lube.” He said and grinned as that produced the expected reaction.

“We could improvise?” Brian said hopefully.

“Nope. It’s my ass,” Justin said, turning around and coiling his hands around Brian’s neck. “Unless you want to offer an alternative?”

“A world of no.” Brian repeated, mimicking Justin’s current favorite saying.

“Then we’re going.” Justin said with a finality that finished the argument and Brian groaned.

\* \* \*

“So.” Gus repeated for perhaps the twelfth time since they sat down. Brian was sulking at the head of the table, scrupulously not looking at Lindsey, who was in turn glowering at him. Hunter too was staring at Brian, but in a way that was making Gus feel nervous, and Justin had also noticed this and was glaring at Hunter. Melanie, it seemed, was the only person actually eating.

“So Gus tells me,” Lindsey said, in the voice she only used for polite company, or when she was really angry. “That you’re having an art show Justin.” Justin didn’t seem to hear so Lindsey repeated herself.

“Huh? Oh, um,” Justin looked furtively at Brian, and then nodded. “Yeah, well, not an art show as such… Just a few of my pieces are being shown.” He looked like he was too hot, and was completely out of sorts.

“Really?” Brian said, in a very pleasant way that was not pleasant at all, and Justin flushed. Gus grinned at his napkin. God, this dinner was going to go up in fireworks sooner then he’d thought.

“Uh, I was going to tell you about it,” Justin said lowly to Brian. “But it was never the right time…”

“Too busy fucking I guess,” Brian said smoothly, causing Hunter to whistle under his breath and Lindsey to drop her fork with a clatter.

“Brian.” She hissed.

“What? Not in front of the children?” Brian said dryly, leaning back in his chair. “Somehow, I don’t think that title’s appropriate anymore.”

“Brian. Kitchen. Now.” She hissed. Brian shot Gus an amused look, and Gus wondered briefly why Brian was in such a playful mood, and why Justin had been so quiet the entire meal. He looked at Justin’s blushing face and down cast eyes, and realized with a disgusted grimace that one of Brian’s hands had not until just now emerged from the table. Once his mother and father were safely our of ear shot, Gus hissed to Justin.

“Was he feeling you up under the table?” Justin shot Gus a shut up look, and Hunter burst out laughing.

“Fuck I knew I should have taken that seat.” Hunter cursed. Justin heard small cough from Melanie and realized that the woman was trying to smother a laugh. He didn’t know whether to glower at Hunter, Gus or be polite to Melanie.

“So,” Melanie said through a choked voice. “I’m assuming that you are now going out with Brian, and not Gus.” Justin realized that Mel, sitting on the same side of the table as him, had probably had a very good idea what Brian had been doing for the last fifth-teen minutes.

“Yeah, well, not going out…”

“We weren’t exactly going out either.” Gus said hurriedly.

“Fuck, you telling me you fucked him too?” Hunter said incredulously to Gus and gave a low whistle. He gave Justin a amazed look. “How the fuck did he manage to pull that off?”

“Um, long story. I’ll tell you about it. Later.” Gus said with a forced smile. Melanie was looking overly interested in her food and Justin was looking embarrassed.

“Well, now that that’s sorted,” Brian reentered the dining room with a cheery smile and Lindsey with a much grimmer one was not a step behind him. “Since Linds has banned me from using half my vocabulary, what do you want to talk about Hunter?” He said as he sat down. Hunter opened his mouth, which Gus quickly covered with his hand.

Melanie let of an almost explosive giggle and Justin found himself sniggering as well.

“So your art show?” Lindsey said desperately to Justin.

“Um, yeah. Its…”

\* \* \* \*

Justin excused himself from the table around the desert time, feeling ready to explode. From Brian’s attentions as well as Lindsey’s cooking. The woman had actually cooked a three course mean. With second helpings of everything. If she wasn’t so obviously a dike, Justin would have thought she was pregnant. Justin shuddered at the idea of Brian and her fucking, and reminded himself that was one conversation he never ever wanted to have with Brian.

And Brian had been… well, busy handed the entire hand. So when Brian had excused himself have a cigarette, Justin had managed to head to the bathroom, to ease his aching dick.

“Want help?” Brian said almost sinisterly as he slid into the bathroom. Justin’s eyes widened.

“Didn’t you just go out for a smoke,” He asked. Brian took Justin by the shoulders, and pushed him up against the sink. Justin’s breath fogged the mirror, and he realized he was staring straight into his own face, as Brian undid his own pants and then Justin’s.

“Ah… Lube?” Justin said. Brian help some up.

“The good thing about dikes. They having all the fucking sex toys and,” He began preparing Justin. “supplies you could ever need,”

“Except condoms,” Justin added. Brian raised it to his lips and then conceded that thoughtfully.

“You’re right. Except condoms.”

“Won’t they hear us…” Justin said, rather half-heartedly.

“At this point I don’t, ah, exactly care,” Brian murmured and slid into Justin for a fast and furious fuck.

\* \* \* \*

Brian was sitting on the steps of the back porch when Lindsey came out. He turned and gave her a faint smile, and she sat on the step next to him.

“The boys are watching a movie,” Brian grinned toothily. He noticed Linds had slipped and included Justin as one of the ‘boys’. Let his age fool her. It hadn’t fooled Brian.

“Including Melanie as one of the boys? Maybe I should give her a closer look,” He laughed. “Ow.” He muttered as Lindsey punched him. Taking a quick look over he shoulder precautionary, she reached greedily for the joint and Brian passed it to her with a certain smug satisfaction.

“And you call yourself a mother,” He joked.

“You try it for a day, and see how smug you are then,” She said and then sighed. “Brian, you were right about Hunter.”

“Was I now?” She glanced over her shoulder again, and nodded. Brian extracted the joint from her fingers and took a thoughtful toke. He’d just been thinking that maybe he’d done the complete wrong thing, bringing Hunter into a house which was already under so much strain.

“He really does need us. And I think this whole experience has matured Gus somewhat.” Lindsey fidgeted. She didn’t want to tell she’d found Hunter crying last night. It had melted her heart to the broken little hustler. She just wondered if she had the strength to pull this odd combination of characters together into a family.

“So you and Justin huh?” She giggled, and Brian hushed her.

“Keep it down,” He muttered disgruntled. She gaped at him.

“My god! You really like him don’t you?” She said, like she was the girl teasing him back in primary school. Brian grunted.

“He’s alright.”

“You liked him enough to fuck him in my bathroom,” She noted with slight reproof, and then giggled again. “And Mel told me what you were doing under the table. No wonder all our dinners are so sexually charged if roast makes you that horny.”

“Um, I think the two horny teenagers might be adding there,” Brian said defensively.

“Three.” Lindsey baited.

“Justin’s twenty one!” Lindsey giggled again at the anger in his face. Brian blinked and rubbed his jaw. “You think you’re funny huh?”

“Uh huh.” Lindsey murmured, nudging his shoulder. Brian finished the joint.

“He’s a sneaky little bastard, I’ll say that much.” Brian said, shaking his head and trying to swallow his smile. Lindsey laughed.

“Has he snuck his way into your heart then?” She asked, her curiosity making her tone quite serious. Brian offered her his arm as they got up.

“Shut up,” Brian muttered.

“And I thought you were just getting a nice piece of ass…”

“Could you please shut up now?”

\* \* \* \*

“You drive.” Brian said, throwing Justin the keys. Justin raised an eyebrow. He waved to Gus who was standing on the porch, scuffing his feet, and clambered into the front seat.

“How many joints did you guys have?” Justin said, wide-eyed. Brian slide further down in the seat, putting his long legs up on the dashboard.

“You guys were watching fucking Daredevil. I nearly popped these, you guys were sending out of my fucking mind.” Brian said, waving four cream colored pills at Justin.

“What are those for?” Justin queried. Brian grinned.

“Babylon. Tonight.”

“Oh,” Justin said, and started the car. Brian frowned at his reaction, and then realizing, rolled his eyes. He grabbed Justin’s chin and kissed him for a brief moment, causing the car to swerve and Justin to swear.

“You and me.” Brian said, waving the bag again. “You and me.”

\* \* \* \*

Gus lingered on the front porch for a moment, and safe in the knowledge that Mel and Linds were upstairs watching TV, he pulled out a cigarette. He lit it, and felt a sigh of relief at the first drag. He leant on the railings, staring up into the night sky, wrapping his spare arm around his chest. He wished he’d put on shoes.

He blinked with shock as he saw Eli approaching. The tall brunette half jogged across the road towards him, his white shoes flashing under fashionable jeans. Gus took a couple of cautious steps towards the door, and then changed his mind, moving back to where he had been standing.

Eli had been the last thing on his mind tonight. No, that wasn’t true. He thought of Eli often, but the way you think of something you refuse to think about. Something which gets pushed to the back of your mind.

“Hey,” Eli said, looking up at Gus. Gus had a mad vision of Romeo and Juiliet. Eli flicked the hair off his forehead and seemed to be waiting for Gus.

“Hi.” He said, licking his lips. He looked so fucking good. But Eli always looked good. “What are you doing here, Eli?” Gus asked wearily.

“I, um, wanted to see you,” Those brown eyes met his and Gus wondered what was behind them. Because all he could see was that simple honesty that he loved, and it tugged at his heart strings. He knew in that instant he was right not to have seen Eli.

“I told you I didn’t want to see you,” He hissed, and was surprised by how angry he sounded.

“Come on Gus,” Eli said lowly. “Don’t be like that,” Gus looked away, not sure of what he was feeling right now, except unstable. “We’ve been through too much. Can’t we just…”

“Be friends?” Gus said laughingly. “You’re a liar, Eli. A fucking liar,” Gus wanted to scream at him, to hit him. He wanted to tell him what had been going through his head the last few weeks, hell this last year. Everything about you is a lie. I can’t spend another minute mucking around with you, watching movies, chatting about school, pretending. Pretending that I don’t love you. Don’t make me do that. I’ll do anything but do that. I’ll lose you, rather then do that.

“Gus,” Eli said, coming up those stairs, onto the porch. Gus didn’t turn to him, and felt the ash blow from his cigarette onto his fingers. He tapped it jerkily, not wanting to look at the man standing next to him.

“I can’t be friends with you Eli. I just can’t.” Gus whispered.

“I’ve missed you.” Eli whispered in return, as though Gus’s words had been something completely different. “I’ve missed you.” He repeated when Gus looked at him, but in a different voice. “You’re my best friend.” He said, awkwardly. Gus’s laughed in disbelief.

“We’re not friends, I just told you that.” Gus laughed again. “God you still don’t get it.” He pulled the taller boy down and kissed him. He felt Eli respond, the touch of that tongue, and he remembered them kissing so softly and sweetly over the summer. Occasional, stolen kisses that they never talked about. He remembered lying next to Eli on his bed, listening to music, and he’d felt so happy, with that boy just inches away. And they had sat together at parties, drinking and smoking, and they would brush lips at the end of the night, as they said good bye. But this wasn’t one of those kisses. Gus kissed him angrily, violently, and then pushed him away. Eli stood, taking the brunt of that shove on his stomach, his head still bent down towards the shorter boy. “That, and this,” He put a hand on Eli’s cheek. His face darkened, even though that touch was soft. “This is why we’re not friends Eli. This is why we can never be friends.” He said, and felt something slipping inside him. Something breaking.

“I don’t want to lose you,” Eli said, almost panicked. Gus paused, feeling that dangerous hope again.

“Then don’t.” He pleaded, but knew, immediately, that that wasn’t the right answer either. “Just let me go, Eli.” He said and tried to move around the taller boy.

“No.” Eli hissed, side stepping so he was in front of Gus. “You can’t just do this… just cut me off,”

“Gus.” Someone said behind them. Eli spun around, and saw Hunter standing at the steps. Gus sighed, and shoved past Eli.

“Goodbye Eli.” He muttered, storming inside and past Hunter. Hunter looked for a long time at Eli, a perplexed hostility in his eyes.

“Yeah. Goodnight, Eli.” He said snidely.

“Who the hell are you?” Eli said, jerking his head up aggressively as he did so.

“I’m the HIV hustler that you guys beat the shit out of,” Hunter said with a pleasant smile which he was learning quickly in the Kinney family off put people when added to a nasty comment.

“Are you fucking him?” Eli said angrily, and Hunter looked at him in amazement.

“I don’t know what page you are on, psycho, but I suggest you fuck off,” He said, and was more amazed when Eli did. He watched the taller boy shamble off into the darkness and shook his head. He saw Gus’s deck resting on the porch railings and took it inside with him, shaking his head at the complications of this family.

“I think someone needs to take Brian home,” Michael murmured, for once with concern in his voice. Emmett too looked over at him warily, where he was sniffing yet again from that small container. Brian leant his head back and Michael could see perspiration on the man’s forehead. Ted frowned, glaring at his drink.

“Drugs may just start of recreationally,” He started, and Emmett rolled his eyes.

“We know, we know sweetie, but for now, let’s cut the spiel and figure out whose going to take the drama princess home. And if you,” He said pointing at Michael who had just opened his mouth to complain. “Say one word about leaving him here, I’ll show you how a queen, rather then the king, throws down.”

“Alright, alright.” Michael grumbled. “Who wants to take him home?” They were all quiet for a long time. Finally, Emmett twitched his nose.

“Rock off?”

“Ew. Emmett!” Ted said. Emmett rolled his eyes, and explained.

“You know, rock, paper scissors?”

“Oh. I just assumed sexual,” Ted bumbled.

“It looks like someone else has solved our problem for us,” Michael said, causing the other two to look up. Michael’s face was curiously without scowl or without anger when he looked at the young blonde boy, first talking to Brian, and now curling his arm around the brunette’s waist, letting the older man lean on him. Michael seemed to be drinking in the interaction between them, and it flickered across his mind in that moment, that there was a time when this would have been without a doubt his job. Taking Brian home. Looking after him. And it would have been him wrapping his arms around the brunette now.

That was one of the many perks he’d lost when he’d moved on from Brian. It was just another sad little reminder of how much he’d lost when he lost that friendship.

“Well, well, well. Justin seems to be shaping up as a perfect wife,” Emmett said, leaning on Michael’s shoulder. Michael smiled automatically, and he nodded.

“I want to,” Brian murmured, leaning heavily on Justin. He was looking pretty fucked right about now, and he was licking his mouth repeatedly. Justin nearly groaned beneath his weight, but Brian turned his head into Justin’s neck, and began kissing the skin there.

“I think I can guess what you want to do,” Justin said, laughing, and waving at the bouncer as they made their way onto the cold Pittsburgh streets. Justin felt buzzed too, and he decided a taxi was the best option, what with Brian apparently capable of doing anything right now. Including…

“Ah…” Justin jumped, as Brian had just grabbed his ass very hard and very suggestively. Brian grinned.

“Come on Blondy,” He said and Justin pushed him into the side of a taxi.

“Get in.” Justin said, leaning against Brian’s body. “And you can fuck me all night when we get home.”

“Puuuurrrfect.” Brian said, and excitedly got into the taxi.

\* \* \*

“Brian,”

“Hm?”

“Brian,” Justin repeated, but Brian was busy kissing his neck, and waved away the smaller man’s objections. “Brian, we’re at you floor.” Brian looked around the elevator, and for a moment didn’t recognize it. He glanced around a couple of times and Justin laughed. “Okay, you’re over stimulated Brian Kinney…”

“That’s why I’ve got these…” Brian said as they got inside. He picked up a deck of cigarettes from the fruit bowl that contained no fruit, and showed Justin the contents. Justin got closer to see and laughed.

There were five fat joints, specially prepared for that evening.

“I like you planning ahead.” Justin said, as Brian pulled him against him. “It’s very…”

“Sexy?”

“I was going to go for anal, but I think that’s close enough,” Justin said and Brian patted him on the butt appreciatively. Justin sighed as Brian took of his expensive shirt and replaced it with an old t-shirt. “I’m so tired Brian. Mine wore off ages ago,” He complained.

“Still got some left,” Brian said remerging, waving yet another little bag.

\* \* \* \* \*

“But I’ve never snorted before.” Justin said again, and Brian ignored him. Using his ID card, he broke the powder up into lines. At the end he made three very small ones.

“Here. I’ll show you first.” Brian said, and sniffed precautionary. He put the rolled note slightly up his noise and leant over, snorting one line. Justin frowned, and Brian showed him again. “You’ve just got to,” Brian wiped his nose, feeling it burning the insides of his nose. “Not blow out. Or you’ll get it everywhere.”

“I put this up my nose?” Justin said dubiously. “Like this?”

“Here,” Brian said, putting his arms around the boy, and guiding him. Justin did one small line with surprising ease, and looked pleased at himself.

“I’m impressed,” Brian said, lying back on the couch.

“Fuck, it hurts,” Justin said, wiping under his nose. “Does it always hurt?”

“Yeah. In a minute you get this gross thing in the back of your throat. I’ll get a drink.”

“Do I have to snort the rest?” Justin said.

“Just eat them with your finger if you want.” Brian called out from the kitchen. When he got back, the other two small lines were gone and Justin passed him the dollar bill back proudly.

“Have a sip,” Brian said, passing him the water. He put a bottle of fizzy drink down as well, and watched Justin take a few sips. Then he kissed Justin, feeling that amazing feeling of skin on skin, of energy passing between them, peaking like a mother fucker.

\* \* \*

“Justin, come on,” Brian said, taking another toke of the joint.

“No, wait, I’ve just got to…” Justin said, doing the dishes, his eyes wide as saucers. Brian was lying back on the couch, laughing.

“Leave the fucking dishes Justin.” He swore, getting up and half falling as he walked into the kitchen.

“Don’t worry. I’ll do them. I’ll just… it’s so messy. It’s not usually that messy. Is it?” Justin said. Brian watched him, unable to contain his laughter. He took another toke, feeling a massive hit of the giggles coming on. “Look at our shoes. They’re just tossed there. They’re so messy.” Justin said, lining them up by the door. He looked at them for a moment. “Don’t we have a shoe rack? Yeah. Where’s your shoe rack,”

“Justin!” Brian said, catching him by the shoulders laughing. “Leave the fucking shoes.”

“I’ll just put them away,” Justin said, ducking away from the taller man, and half running into the bedroom. Brian laughed, and went back to the lounge, and took another drag. Justin reemerged about fifth-teen minutes later, and seated himself very primly on the couch next to Brian. Brian gave him a dubious look, and pulled out another joint.

“If I find you fucking built a shoe rack…” He said and Justin gave him a perplexed look with a big drug induced smile.

“I think I went a little bit cleaning crazy.” Justin admitted. “I just really didn’t like things being messy.”

“Uh huh.”

“It’s hot. Are you hot? I cleaned the toilet.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Brian said, and fed Justin the joint. Justin took in a big toke and then held it in under Brian’s careful supervision. When he finally released it, he frowned.

“Oh. I don’t want that. I don’t want to be down. I like being up.”

“It won’t make you come down. It’ll just make it good,” Brian said, having another drag. He touched Justin’s cheek, rubbing the skin there. It felt so good. “I can’t believe you cleaned the fucking toilet.”

“I nearly rearranged your shirts. But then I thought that was just too crazy.” Justin admitted.

“Good bloody thing. I don’t want you touching my shirts.” Brian said, pausing Justin back the joint. Justin shifted, sitting cross legged. Brian felt his own leg jiggling. He grinned. Fuck these drugs were good.

“I want to tell you something,” Justin said, and Brian grinned at the excitement in the boy’s voice. He was peaking something hard. “I smoke with Gus sometimes, and I get worried that you’re going to get angry at me, which is stupid because…” Justin was talking a lot, and Brian just kept nodding and passing him the joint. He looked at the beautiful blonde boy-man, sitting there, legs crossed, shirtless, so perfect.

“So perfect.” Brian murmured, putting out the joint. “You’re so perfect. That’s what I thought, when I first saw you. So perfect.” He looked up and saw Justin had stopped talking, was staring at him through that mop of blood hair and those beautiful alabaster lashes. “How could anyone ever deny you? Ever deny you anything.”

It was Justin who reached out this time, pulling Brian to him without a moment of hesitation. Just kissing, their bodies still so far away. Brian’s hand swept over Justin’s ear and down his neck.

“You’re right. I wanted you as soon as I saw you.” He whispered.

“Really?” Justin said, grinning.

“Yeah. It was like you just showed up, demanding, demanding to be loved. How could I deny you?” Brian whispered again, as if in awe.

“I hope this isn’t just drug talk.” Justin whispered, their foreheads leaning against each other. Brian shook his head gingerly.

“It’s true. Though the drugs are probably helping,” He said, and laughed. He pushed Justin back on the couch, and lay down on top of him. He caressed the younger man’s face.

“Where you put here for me? I feel like you were put here for me.” Brian said and then laughed. “Fuck, I’m peaking. Are you peaking?”

“I love you.” Justin replied and kissed him so hard. He couldn’t think of anything as beautiful as what Brian had just said, so those words would have to surfice.

\* \* \* \*

“Fuck,” Justin muttered again. Brian swung his arm around his shoulder and shepherded him into liberty diner.

“I know.” He said, kissing his temple. They slid into a booth and Justin winced.

“My teeth are sore, my lungs are sore, my head hurts and my fucking ass hurts,” Justin hissed across the table. Brian adjusted his sunglasses. “Even my eyes hurt.”

“Yeah, well, an all nighter of fucking will do that to you,”

“Your ass isn’t sore,” Justin grumbled.

“Well, you shouldn’t have kept rolling over, should you?” Brian said pleasantly, snatching the menu out of Justin’s hand.

“Great advice,” Justin said. “You can stay the hell away from my ass for the next few days,” He said in a low voice, and then blushed realizing Debbie was standing there. She gave him a big, red painted smile, and tapped her pencil on her pad.

“What’ll it be boys?”

“Coffee. Black,” Brian said with a grimace. Deb rolled her eyes and looked at Justin.

After about a ten minute order, that every form of liquid, coffee, orange juice and exactly zero amounts of food, Debbie left. Justin pulled an envelope out of the pocket of his black coat, and slid it across the table.

“What’s that?” Brian said, refusing to pick it up.

“Just open it.”

“It’s not a marriage proposal is it?”

“No,” Justin said indignantly.

“Plane tickets to Hawaii?”

“No. Just fucking open it.” Brian did so grumblingly.

“It’s an invitation.” Brian said soberly, his face not changing. Justin snatched it out of his hand.

“To my art show. If,” He said with a shake of the head. “You want to come. You don’t have to. I just thought,” He trailed off. Brian put out his hand, and Justin put the invitation in it with a grin. “You could come as my date,” Justin said to seal the deal and he sniggered at the look of mortification on Brian’s face. “Just kidding.”

“I’ll come as your goddamn sugar daddy, since I presume I’m paying for this rather elaborate breakfast you ordered.” Brian said grumpily. Justin leant across the table and took of Brian’s sunglasses.

“Uh huh. You the one that keeps injuring my ass.”

“You and your goddamn precious ass.”

“I’m going to the bathroom, and I hope you sit here thinking about my poor ass,” Justin said, pushing himself out of the seat. Brian sniggered at that, and Justin shot him a dirty look. “I did not mean it like that.”

“Sure, Sunshine. Sure.” Brian grinned. Debbie gave him an affectionate pat on the ass as he slid past her and Brian saw the blonde boy’s whole body tense. Debbie, putting Brian’s coffee and Justin’s assortment of drinks down, looked curious at the rather evil grin on Brian’s face.

“What are you so happy about?” She said, hand on hip. “Last time I saw you grinning like that, you and Michael had hollowed out my water-melon and then glued the two empty sides back together.”

“Don’t worry. You’re water melons are perfectly safe,” Brian said comfortingly.

“And how’s little Gus?”

“Not so little,” Brian said, taking a sip of his coffee. “Not so sweet either,” He grimaced at the bitterness of his coffee, and added half a sugar.

“And Linds?”

“Good, good.” Brian gave Debbie a cautious look. He had expected her to hurl some insult and bumble off by now.

“And you?” She said, sitting down on Justin’s side of the booth. “How are you, Brian?”

“You suddenly seem overly concerned with the world at large.” Brian mused. Debbie snapped out of her rather dreamy state, and blinked down at her chubby hands.

“Not the world at large. Just like to know how you’re going sometimes,” She said, frowning at herself.

“Keeping checks on us?” Brian said, taking another sip, watching the conflict in the old woman’s eyes.

“Well, I’ve always been protective over my brood,” She muttered, as if justifying it to herself. “I heard what you and Linds have done for that boy. The boy with HIV. It nearly broke my fucking heart,” She tapped her chest empathetically with one clenched fist. “Always knew you had a heart of gold, Brian Kinney. I like it when you prove me right.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” He said smoothly, his eyes hidden behind his sunglasses. Deb smiled at him, and Brian dipped his head embarrassed like. She got up, adjusting her clothes as if embarrassed by that over display of emotion.

“Yeah well. Appearances can be deceiving.” She muttered, as Justin came back to the table. He gave Debbie a querying look, and Brian blinked, looking away. Debbie moved to let Justin pass, and looked at the two of them with what Brian disturbingly identified as teary eyes. “He’s a regular Mr. Darcy, this one,” She gestured at Brian with one fat thumb. “Don’t let him tell you otherwise.” She warned Justin, and then walked away, her face deep in thought.

“Alright.” Justin said laughingly.

“Deeply disturbed woman,” Brian said waving the incident away. “Don’t buy her lies.”

“Uh huh,”

Hunter lay with his arms behind his head, staring up at the ceiling. It was eleven o’clock. At eleven o’clock on the streets, the night would have been just starting. He might have done his first trick, or blown some guy outside some club. If they were having a good night, they might have got coffee and tried to get a few clients at some café or another before they got kicked out.

He heard the bedroom door creak open and he sat up. He was still wearing his shoes, and he felt slightly guilty. Gus was standing there, in a big pull over sports jumper and track pants.

“Hey,” Hunter said, and Gus closed the door behind him.

“Hey.” He sat down awkwardly at the foot of Hunter’s bed, looking out Hunter’s window at the dark waving branches of the tree. “That guy, the other day, Eli, he’s…”

“An ex?” Hunter supplied the terminology awkward to him. He knew that was how teenagers were meant to talk; he seemed to remember it from TV when he was younger.

“No, shit no.” Gus said, and looked at Hunter. “He was my best friend. I kind of loved him, and it was a big deal.”

“Oh.” Hunter said shifting in the pillow, wondering what response was expected here. Gus rubbed his neck. “He asked me if us two were fucking.” Hunter said, hoping that was helpful.

“Really?” Gus asked. “Huh.” He lay down beside Hunter, staring up at the ceiling. Hunter gave him a wide eyed look which Gus didn’t notice, and shifted slightly to give the darker boy room.

“So you guys didn’t fuck?”

“No.” Gus said, almost wistfully.

“But you and Justin did?” Gus twisted his head to one side.

“Yeah. But now we’re just friends. Really good friends. He really likes my Dad, and I think my Dad really likes him… so it’s kinda cool. Like, it sort of worked out.”

“I can’t believe your dad’s fucking him,” Hunter said wistfully. “He’s not even that good.”

“Shut up, Justin’s awesome.” Gus said indignantly. Then he shifted, grimacing. “You don’t want to fuck my dad, do you?”

“He’s pretty fucking hot.” Hunter said but shrugged as Gus turned his head to glare at him. “But, not as good as you,” He said, and pecked Gus’s lips, then lay back quickly, almost guilty.

“Oh.” Gus said, a grin spreading across his face. “Good.” He put his hands behind his head, and the conversation turned to other things.

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“Justin, can’t you tear yourself away from your fuck fest for one hour?” Justin blushed at Daphne’s aggravated words. He looked over at Brian unpacking food on the counter, and spoke in low tones.

“Look, I’ll come over tomorrow. Brian’ll be at work, and you and me will have the whole day…”

“Justin! I’m getting back on the plane tomorrow! I thought we could go out tonight. Come on, when do you ever get to see me anymore?”

“I thought you were staying for my show…”

“I can’t. I just couldn’t change the flight.”

“Fuck Daph,” Justin said, looking at Brian approaching him, pulling off his shirt. Justin backed away hurriedly. “Brian, no.”

“What?”

“Nothing, Daphne. I really want to but… uh, Brian! Fuck off,” Justin said, ducking away from Brian’s attentions.

“Justin!” Daphne squealed. Brian wrestled the phone out of Justin’s hand.

“Justin will call you back.” He said, clicking the phone shut.

“Brian!” Justin whined, putting up a fight as Brian tried to pin the shorter boy’s hands. “I told you you’re staying the hell away from my ass…”

“You were serious?” Brian said; eyes wide.

“It’s sore. You fucked it all last night!” Justin said, almost apologetically. Brian collapsed on the couch in dismay.

“Don’t look like that.” Justin said, straightening his shirt. “It’ll be alright soon. Just… I don’t know. Give it a night off. It’ll get better.”

“Humph.” Brian grunted. Justin sat down beside him, trying to withhold his grin.

“Poor little Bwian,” Justin said, nibbling Brian’s ear. “Want me to blow you instead?” Brian narrowed his eyes at Justin’s condescending tone. He pulled a condom out of the pockets of his jeans and passed it to Justin. Justin took it and sighed.

“Wow, you really are deaf when you want to be, aren’t you?”

“If your ass is out of operation,” Brian said seriously. Justin looked confused for a moment and then he blushed furiously.

“Are you for real?” He asked, his jokey tone gone. Brian nodded, gauging Justin’s reaction.

“Come on,” Brian said, taking Justin’s hand, and leading the boy who was too shocked to say anything, into the bedroom.

\* \* \* \*

He had nearly forgotten what it was like to bottom. He had remembered vague things about it. The sound of ragged breath behind him, fingers on hips, being pushed into a wall, while someone moved up and down behind him. His recollections of being a bottom were of brick walls and the lining of couches, the sound of tearing condom packets and hasty, ungentle preparations.

With Justin, it was different. Justin’s fingers were cool and soft on his back, running down the base of his spine, parting his butt cheeks. He felt strange, knowing with the knowledge of years of gay-clubbing and back room tricking exactly what Justin was doing, but not being able to see it was sort of frightening in its own way. He closed his eyes, and listened to the sound of Justin’s breathing. He felt Justin’s fingers pushing against his hole and he tensed involuntarily, but Justin didn’t withdraw, just waiting, and then continued with their ministrations.

“Are you ready?” Justin asked. Brian tensed his jaw.

“Suit me up, Sailor,” He said. He felt Justin press a feather light kiss to the back of his neck, and he turned his head appreciatively. Justin kissed the side of his mouth, those blue eyes soft. It was all Brian could do to stop himself throwing Justin down on the bed and fucking him senseless.

He waited for Justin to enter him, but was surprised by the feeling of the boys tongue on his ass. He groaned, as Justin’s tongue got to work there, and he remembered that for as much as he thought Justin the perfect bottom boy, Justin probably a very skilled top as well. He found himself gasping, thrusting backwards, and gripping to the sheets. All this, caused by the flickering of Justin’s tongue. He knew there was a reason why Justin had been given such a motor mouth.

Hard as hell now, he felt Justin remove his tongue, and Brian nearly shuddered with disappointment. He felt Justin’s cock probing the edge of his ass, and he surprised himself by how much he wanted it at that moment. Though the temptation to flip Justin onto his back and swap positions closely followed that thought.

“Ready?” Justin whispered again, and he must have taken Brian slight shift of the head as an answer, because without further ado, he slid into Brian. Brian gasped at that remember feeling, at how big Justin felt inside him. He heard Justin gasp too, and wondered if he was tight; tight like a fucking virgin. How laughable. Justin ground forward again, and Brian felt the boys face pushing against his shoulder as he did so, the boy’s nose, his forehead. He felt those hands on his hips again, Justin pulling out, and then in again. Brian’s body was automatically responding, picking up the dance from this new position without skipping a beat. He gasped against the pillow, the pain a distant memory.

“Fuck,” He heard Justin whisper. “Fuck your so amazing,”

“Oh god,” Brian said breathlessly.

“Are you alright?”

“Yes, fuck yeah,” Brian replied, and Justin, as if having gained permission, picked up the speed, and Brian was barely holding on for the ride. He felt his breath becoming more and more jagged, and he knew he was going to pop like a goddamn teenager.

“Fuck, Justin, shit,” Brian said. “Like that, yeah.” Was all he could manage to say, and he knew he was saying Justin’s name in his incoherent ramblings, and he didn’t give a shit. The boy was that fucking good.

\* \* \* \*

Shit, look at that smile, Brian thought. They’re all going to fucking know if he smiles like that. Then he shook his head.

“What?” Justin said, turning to him.

“You just look like the cat that got the cream, with that fucking smile.” Justin rolled his eyes.

“Didn’t I?” Justin said, grinning up at Brian endearingly. Brian scowled and lowered his sunnies. Justin bowed his head, trying to contain the amusement. “My ass is still sore.” He added innocently, without even the slightest hint of suggestiveness to his voice.

“Good thing you’ll be using your back to move all Melanie’s shit,” Brian said sweetly. Brian looked up and saw his son loitering on the steps of the house, looking too fearful to go inside.

“I’ll get started huh?” Justin said, sensing this was probably father and son time. He hurried inside, saying a quick few words to Gus, with Brian following him. Brian sat on the step next to his son, and swung his hands idly between his legs. Gus raised an eyebrow.

“I hope you realize I’m just shirking work, not having an emotional crisis.” He warned.

“I know.” Brian said with a hint of annoyance. He looked over at his son and gave him a stern look. “Are you sure though? A lot’s been going on, and I was wondering… how you were coping. And stuff.” Brian added sarcastically, amazed at his sudden incoherence.

“And stuff?” Gus laughed, and gave Brian a well known look followed with a grin. Damn that grin. “Nah, you were just feeling guilty because all you’ve done the last few weeks is fucking Justin, rather then paying attention to your brilliant son.” Gus said. Brian frowned.

“About that…”

“Look, Dad, I’m cool with it. And if I wasn’t, it’s a bit late now, isn’t it?” Brian’s frown deepened. Gus twitched his noise. “Seriously though, I’m glad you guys are happy. And I gave Justin my blessing. Even if I was high as a kite at the time… I still meant what I said.”

“Yeah. That’s been a problem everyone’s been experiencing lately.” Brian grumbled. Gus looked confused.

“Huh?”

“Nothing.” Brian said shaking his head. “I won’t have… you know, if I didn’t…”

“Really like him? Yeah, I know.” Gus sighed. “Come on. I feel bad leaving it all to Hunter.”

“Glad you could bother showing up, Brian,” Cynthia drawled, swiveling her chair as he walked past her. He had the itch to give her the finger because his sunglasses were hiding his current scowl, but he decided against it. That would be Gus’s influence again. That boy had enough influence to power the entire Navy, and probably get half the sailors off as well.

Great. Now he was thinking about sailors.

“Well, you know.” Brian said, picking up his mail. “Can’t be a slave to the grind my entire life.” He tossed a few of the envelopes back onto Cynthia’s desk. “Take these to that prick in accounting.”

“Yes sir.” She said, and gave him a mock salute. He scowled. “But, if you don’t mind me saying, you look like you’ve been the slave to some sort of grind? Who is he? Or should I say, who are they?”

“Who?” Brian said, stalling for time, opening another letter.

“Who ever stopped you putting in your usual overtime. Don’t tell me Lindsay is pulling rank again.”

“Nope. I booted Gus out,” Brian frowned, wondering what she was getting at. Cynthia had a secretive smile on her face. “What? Spit it out.”

“There’s a certain someone sitting in your office. But it can’t be what I think. He’s too young for you,” She said sweetly, holding out a wad of messages. Brian snatched them from her, and, giving her one departing grunt that explained nothing, headed to his office. He hadn’t planned on seeing Justin today, but a casual fuck before lunch wouldn’t hurt.

He opened the office door, and was rather unpleasantly surprised.

“Dude,” Hunter said, spinning around in his office chair. “Nice office. I like.”

Brian shut the door firmly behind him with a sigh of disgust.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” he spat. Hunter crossed his leg, resting it on his knee.

“Just chilling. Thought I was someone else did you?” Hunter leered. Brian, hating to be caught out, changed the subject. He hit the intercom button.

“Cyn?”

“Yeah?” Cynthia sounded surprised. Obviously she thought Brian was fucking the boy. Definitely too young, Brian thought, and then grimaced. What was he saying? Justin was only four years older.

Four years older and a hell of a lot less annoying.

“Can you call Lindsay and tell her I have Hunter in my office, in case she was worried.” Brian hit the off button.

“Hey, she’s not worried. I told her I was going to see some friends in the city. I think she was glad to see me go.”

“Really?” Brian said, sounding even less surprised then he felt.

“So I wanted to talk to you.” Hunter said, kicking his heels up on the desk. Brian raised an eyebrow in distaste.

“So talk.”

“It’s nice, and all, what you guys are doing for me,” Hunter said in a rather serious tone. Brian put his hands behind his back, and rolled his neck. “But I don’t really get why you’re doing it.” Brian sat down in the chair that he usually reserved for people he was firing. He scratched his eyebrow.

“From the kindness of my heart?”

“I learned in my profession that that’s a crock of shit.” Hunter said abrasively. Brian smiled. Be still my heart. Hunter’s mouth was slightly parted in a mixture of tension and anxiety. His façade was fooling no one, not even himself. “So what’s the deal?” Brian ran a hand over his chin, and felt how rough his shave had been that morning. He frowned. It was so much better when Justin had shaved him the other day.

“The deal is this.” Brian said slowly. “You get up. You do what Lindsay tells you. At the end of the summer, you go to school. Maybe you get a job. And you don’t make me regret this.” Brian’s eyes flicked up to Hunter. He felt that the boy was responding to this better than the coddling of Lindsay and Mel. Fucking lesbians, they knew how to fuck everything up. Probably hadn’t explained anything to the kid. No wonder Hunter had turned up at his office wanting straight answers. But the questions weren’t straight, or easy, and neither were the answers.

“It doesn’t sound like a profitable business transaction.” Hunter said carefully. He didn’t want to sound ungrateful… or to fuck up this deal that seemed to require so little of him. Brian, he didn’t get. Lindsay, Gus, yes. The first had a bit of good Samaritan in her, and the second… well, an odd bond had formed between them that had surprised Hunter as much as anyone. He couldn’t remember friendships that weren’t tinged with memories of the freezing cold, hustled companionship, the smell of cum and dirt, and grubby fingers.

“That’s because it’s not.” Brian said coolly. “I’m not looking to make profit off you; otherwise I’d be selling your ass on the street for quarters.” Hunter nearly made an objection at the price bracket but changed his mind. Perhaps this was not the moment for levity.

“My ass isn’t as profitable as it once was.” Hunter said after a pause. The truth of that thought had hit home, and it slipped out of his mouth. He ran his tongue over his teeth.

“Then you’ll have to use something else for profit, and go to school.” Hunter laughed.

“Can still give a fucking awesome blowjob.” Hunter said, and shrugged as Brian barely reacted. “I guess I just don’t get how I fit into this little picture.”

“What, in between the angry teen queer, the lesbian mother and lover, and yours truly?”

“And Justin,” Hunter said, with a sly smile. Brian narrowed his eyes. Maybe he should have continued the severe approach.

“And Justin.” Brian conceded. “So, welcome to the fucked up family, Hunter. I’m sure you’ll fit in fine.” Hunter smiled bemusedly, but then bit his lip, and his grin became genuine. He shifted, standing up, chest puffed out.

“Fuck yeah.”

\* \* \* \*

“How was it?” Brian asked Lindsay as they walked around the gallery. She took another sip of her champagne thoughtfully.

“Taking Hunter to the doctor? Truthfully? Fucking frightening.” She shook her head, and they paused in front of one of Justin’s paintings. “He went so pale. I’ve never seen a seventeen year old look so scared.” She said. Brian stared at the sketch of two men, smoking against a wall. Justin was good.

“These pictures are amazing.” Lindsay whispered. “I had no idea he was so talented.”

“I’ve always had an eye for talent,” Brian smirked. Lindsay gave him a dubious look.

“You’ve always had an eye for something. I think you just got lucky here.” Lindsay turned and seeing someone she knew, darted off, leaving Brian staring at the sketch. He wished Justin was here. Trust that boy to be late for his own fucking exhibition. He moved on to the next picture, which he easily recognized as Gus, sitting under a tree in his school uniform, shirt messed up. Gus’s face was cast in the flickering shadows of the leaves above, and Brian raised a hand as if to touch it, but stopped as someone came up beside him.

He put his hands behind his back, glancing at the thin blonde woman beside him, with an angular face. He noticed her expensive brooch and nice power suit with a skirt to reveal what he assumed were nice legs.

“Hi,” she said, and he smiled back. “They’re good aren’t they?” she continued, gesturing at the paintings.

“Best artist in here, by far.” Brian said with the blunt honesty he found easiest in relating to complete strangers. The woman smiled smugly.

“They’re my son’s.” The woman said confidingly, and Brian laughed.

“Funny. They’re my boyfriend’s.”

“Really?”

“Yeah,” Brian growled.

“Mom!” Brian and the woman turned, and saw Justin just behind them, a sheepish look on his face. He was wearing an old, deep green t-shirt with a long sleeved white shirt underneath and faded blue jeans. He looked about seventeen again, rather than like a professional artist. He’d gotten his hair cut too, slightly shorter, and it just revealed the perfect angles of his face and the pout of his lower lip. “Mom, this is Brian.”

“Your boyfriend?” She said with a charming smile. Justin’s eyes flicked to Brian’s and then back again. He looked nervous, and he shoved his hands into the back pocket of his jeans.

“Uh. Yeah. I guess.” He said, with a small smile.

\* \* \* \*

“So, did you know she was going to be here?” Brian said, lighting a cigarette. Justin took a step back in the side alley, to see if he could spot the people walking at the front of the gallery. He looked back and shrugged under Brian’s apparent scrutiny.

“What, you think this was some meet the parents thing?” Justin said sarcastically. “I didn’t want her here.”

“Why?” Brian said, passing him the cigarette.

“We’re not close,” Justin said softly. He scuffed his shoes on the cobblestones. “I moved out when I was nineteen,”

“I think I’m going to repeat myself, and ask why.” Brian said quietly. Justin gave him a long, slightly sulky look. Then he sighed.

“My dad kicked me out when he found out I was gay, which probably wasn’t helped by the fact that I told him I was going to art school rather than business school.”

“Where did you go?”

“I moved in with my boyfriend at the time. My boyfriend, the one who cheated on me.” Justin said with a bright little smile. “Yeah. That was a great year for me.”

“How do you pay for school? And the apartment?”

“And the car?” Justin closed his eyes for a minute and sighed, tilting his head. “My parents were getting a divorce, mainly because of me, and my dad had completely cut me off. I worked through the first year, but then… my dad got killed in a car accident.” He licked his lips. “He had insurance, and…yeah.” Justin shook his head.

“Fuck.” Brian said, putting his cigarette out on the wall with careful deliberation.

“We never made up, before he died. Which was funny. Because I actually always thought we would.” Justin blinked. “So yeah. That’s my story. I didn’t…” He flicked his head, analyzing Brian’s response. “I didn’t tell you because…I don’t know. I wasn’t hiding it from you, really I wasn’t. I just, it’s not something I really talk about.” Brian’s eyes flicked over Justin’s rather bashful blue ones, and then nodded.

“And your Mom?”

“As I said, we’re not close.” Justin said quietly but with a tone that suggested this conversation was over, and took a step towards Brian. He bunched Brian’s shirt in his hand and pulled him towards him, his body pressed flush against Brian’s, his lips inches from him. “And I think that’s enough of my sob story for tonight,” He said with a hint of humor. Brian smiled sadly, tongue caught between his teeth for a second, as he took Justin in. He kissed him on the mouth for a second, and then pulled the boy into a hung, kissing him on the forehead.

“You’re braver then some of us. You’re braver then most actually.” He pushed his hands through Justin’s new spikefied hair. “When did you get this cut?” Brian asked and Justin laughed at the randomness of that comment.

“Today. Do you like it?”

“Makes you look like a school boy.” Brian commented, sucking on his bottom lip thoughtfully. Justin, liking the look of it, decided to try it, and kissed Brian, first on the bottom lip and then a long, deep kiss. Brian’s hands ran down to Justin’s ass, and when Justin didn’t flinch he grinned.

“Not so sore now huh?”

“Nope.” Justin said. “But I’m sure you’ll think of more ways to injure it.” Brian nodded seriously.

“Come on. We have to get back.” Justin moaned, but agreed, pushing himself away from Brian. As they walked back along the dark cobbled alley, Justin took Brian’s hand. Brian was surprised for a moment, but he didn’t shake him off.

\* \* \* \*

Gus poured himself another drink. He saw Brian and Justin reemerging from the street. He grinned, seeing Brian’s and Justin’s hands connected for a moment, before they reentered the gallery. Grabbing another glass of champagne as it went past, he shook his head.

They were in fucking love. He’d put money on it. Hell, he’d put weed on it.

“Look at the two love birds,” Lindsay said, coming up behind him. He rolled his eyes.

“Fuck buddies I think is more appropriate Mom.” He corrected. Lindsay gave him a disbelieving look. “Fine. Whatever.”

“You alright hon?” She said, reaching out to touch his forehead. “You look flushed. Are you feeling okay?”

“Way to mother the boy, Linds,” Mel said as she came up. “I’ve been watching you Gus, sneaking champagne.”

“And I’ve been watching you stare at the painting of the naked woman all night,” He retorted, and Mel made a face.

“We were just commenting on how Brian and darling Justin look tonight. How lovely,” Lindsay said pointedly.

“Yeah, that’s exactly how I would phrase it.” Gus said snidely. “Mom, I am feeling kinda off, I might get Dad to drop me home.”

“Will you be alright?” Lindsay asked. Gus noticed she was slurring her words slightly.

“Yeah I’ll be fine.”

\* \* \* \*

“Dad, can you drop me at Liv’s place,”

“What?” Brian groaned.

“I just need to talk to her. I’ve got a lot of shit running through my head right now. Please.” Gus pleaded.

“What about Hunter?”

“He’ll be asleep. Please. She’ll drop me home, and Mom’ll never know.”

“Mom will know. Lindsay finds out everything.”

“Come on.”

\* \* \*

Brian scowled as he pulled up at Lindsay’s house. He couldn’t believe he’d dropped Gus at Liv’s. The number of times he broke Lindsay’s rules under the influence of that cheeky grin... Anyway, he figured he’d just make a quick stop at Lindsay’s. Check in on Hunter. He frowned again, drumming his fingers on the steering wheel.

Seeing Eli on the steps of the verandah severely affected how he’d intended this night to go. He reached into the glove compartment and pulled out a new pack of cigarettes. Unwrapping the plastic he patted down his pockets for a lighter. Finding it, he swung out of the car, and headed, head down, to the steps.

Eli looked up as he approached.

“Hey,” he said, almost with a hint of surprise. He pushed his hands over his face, pulling himself out of the personal train of thought that had brought him to the steps.

“Cigarette?” Brian offered. Eli smiled. This was the secret activity that Brian and Eli had always shared. This was why Brian had always valued Eli over all of Gus’s other friends.

“I needed to speak to Gus. But he’s not here, is he?”

“Hunter’s here.”

“Yeah, I fucking know.” Eli snapped, glowering over his shoulder. “He told me to fuck off. Wouldn’t tell me where Gus was.” he said, his voice boiling over with frustration.

“He’s at Liv’s. Justin had a gallery showing tonight.” Brian said softly. He lit a cigarette and passed one to Eli. Eli frowned and lit up.

“Oh.” He murmured.

“You guys aren’t getting along huh?”

“Understatement of the century.” Eli muttered. There was a silence for a long time, and Brian wondered how long the boy had been sitting out in the cold. He took another drag, and heard Eli sigh. “Fuck.” He said, covering his eyes with one hand. “I just… I really need to talk to him.”

“Why?” Brian said, and was suddenly reminded of his conversation with Justin in the alley. Goddamn it, when had he become the counselor in this little group? “Because you’re gay.” Brian said bluntly. Eli didn’t seem shocked, rather just shook his head, looking out into the distance.

“It’s so fucking easy for Gus. For him, you know, he’s gay. He’s angry and he’s loud and he’s fucking proud. But most importantly he’s decidedly queer. But I’ll wake up one morning, and I think, yep, I’m gay, and then two hours later, I don’t know. And then I think I can be whatever I want, and then I think I can’t be anything I want. It’s just fucked.” Eli rubbed his hand over his face again. “And what’s the shittiest, the real shittiest, is that I just want to talk to my best friend about it, but he can’t handle that. He can’t even handle seeing me.” Eli sniffed and flicked his cigarette, which had been burning into a long thing of ash. Brian shifted. He didn’t know what to say, so instead, he sat down on the steps. Eli looked at Brian through the crook in his arm. “Brian?”

“Hmmm?”

“Gus likes Hunter, doesn’t he?” He said wearily, and Brian shook his head, not because he didn’t believe that, but because he couldn’t think of a response, and he couldn’t be sure of anything anymore. But mainly, because Eli really needed him to be shaking his head right now.

Justin looked up and smiled as he saw Brian.

“Hey, stranger. Where have you been?” After four glasses of champagne, he was nicely buzzed, and didn’t really care where Brian had been. He was just glad when he threw his arm around him. Brian shrugged in response to the question and kissed Justin’s temple. Justin smiled happily under the affection. No one was watching them now -- not Lindsay, nor Gus, who had been eyeing them on and off all evening, nor Justin’s mom who was quickly coming round to the idea that Brian was the devil incarnate, no one. So they kissed and Justin leaned his head against Brian’s shoulder, and because no one was watching, Brian stroked Justin’s newly clipped hair.

And when they broke apart, they had goofy secret smiles plastered across their faces.

\* \* \*

“Brian, you’re kind of quiet tonight,” Justin said, coming in from the kitchen with a glass of water. Brian looked up slowly.

“It’s hard to get a word in edgewise when you’re around Mr. Babble.” Justin ignored this.

“Well…” He sat down next to Brian on the bed. “What I mean is you didn’t jump me as soon as we got in the door. Or in the elevator. Or in the car.”

“Maybe you’re getting boring Sunshine,” Brian baited, and Justin felt his mouth fall open in dismay. Brian laughed and took him by the chin, kissing him.

“Seriously though, what’s wrong?”

“Justin, we need to address your clothing crisis. What are you wearing?”

“Brian!” Justin said reproachfully. Brian sighed. He felt Justin’s hand weave through his, and he was surprised that it was actually comforting. God, maybe they’d caught a disease from Lindsay and Mel!

“I don’t really want to go into it. After what you told me tonight…I don’t want to…”

“Steal the limelight?” Justin said, and Brian glowered at him.

“Bring up something stupid.”

“Come on Bri, it’s obviously bothering you.”

“You always do this,” Brian accused suddenly. Justin snapped his head back.

“Do what?”

“You always get pulled into my dramas. It’s always Brian and his problems,” Brian said with a shake of the head. Then he rolled his eyes ruefully. “You make me feel so fucking selfish,” he explained, softening the words.

“I’m selfish with you too,” Justin said softly, gripping Brian’s hand. Brian smiled absentmindedly. He undid his tie before he spoke, and Justin just watched the movement of those hands.

“I talked to Eli tonight. He was looking for Gus.”

“Shit,” Justin said softly. Brian was surprised by this reaction, mildly, and then remembered that Justin had seen everything he had the night of the dance.

“He thinks Hunter is in love with Gus. Or vice versa. Whatever.”

“So?” Now Brian was more surprised. He turned to Justin, slightly angry.

“You knew that?”

“Yeah. I knew that they had feelings for each other. They’ve been through a lot recently, and it’s only natural that since they’re both gay and confused, they’d bond over that,” Justin said, confused by the anger in Brian’s reaction.

“You knew that that boy was in love with my son, and you told me to bring him into my home?” Brian said dangerously.

“In love? No. But I thought that yeah, something might happen. Didn’t you?”

“Of course I didn’t.” Brian extracted his hand. “I don’t want Gus to be with that boy.”

“Hold on. What did you tell Eli?”

“I told him that he should wait till the end of the summer. Know for sure what he wants. That if he really cares for Gus, he’ll stay away from him till then.” Justin’s mouth dropped. He got up.

“You what?” Justin yelled.

“What?” Brian said indignantly. Justin just stood there glaring at him. Brian threw the pillow at him. “What?” he repeated, angrily.

“Are you so fucking arrogant that you think you did the right thing?”

“Justin, what the fuck are you talking about?” Brian said, his voice becoming dangerous. Justin paused for a second at that voice but then just shook his head in disbelief.

“Of course you fucking don’t understand,” he muttered, and walked into the bathroom. Brian sat on the bed completely confused.

“Justin get your ass back here!” he yelled. There was no response. Brian got up, and walked to the door. Justin was washing his face. He glowered at Brian’s reflection in the mirror.

“Justin, do not try and fucking silent treatment me. I’m better at it then you,” Brian warned. Justin turned to him, eyes blazing.

“I can’t even look at you right now,” Justin said, trying to push past Brian out of the bathroom. Brian caught him just above the elbow and shoved him back. Justin made another dive to leave the room, but Brian stopped him. “Fuck you Brian.”

“Justin do not walk out of this fucking room. Stop being so goddamn childish.” He snapped. “What the hell are you angry about?”

“Do you understand how much shit Gus has been through this year?” Justin said, and Brian frowned.

“Of course I do. I know my own son.” His voice had become angrily quiet again and Justin gulped, but held strong.

“Then if you know Gus has gone through coming out, and losing his friends, and being in the hospital, and dealing with his mom’s lover moving in, and his dad hooking up with his ex, and falling in love for the first time only to end up broken-hearted, why the fuck do you want him to be alone right now?” Justin said, panting slightly for breath. Brian’s mouth dropped open slightly and he shook his head, not yet being able to fathom a response. “Because you’re telling me you don’t want him with Hunter, and then the guy he’s been in love with all year finally comes around, you tell him to fuck off.”

“Because I don’t want him to go through any more shit,” Brian blurted out. Now it was Justin’s turn to look confused.

“You don’t want him to be in love?”

“I don’t want him to be in love with them. Either of them,” Brian said, with an angry seriousness.

“Why? What’s wrong with them?” Justin said, hand on his hip. Now he was trying to understand Brian. Brian took in a deep breath and shook his head.

“Fuck this,” he said, and walked out. Now it was Justin’s turn to follow him. Brian went into the kitchen and pulled a bottle of water out of the fridge. He unscrewed the lid and slammed it down on the counter. “Justin I don’t want to talk about this anymore,” he said flatly.

“No, fuck that,” Justin said. “Talk to me. Because right now, I really don’t understand you.”

“Well stop trying to understand me,” Brian snapped. He pushed one finger against Justin’s chest. “The only thing you understand about me is how to get my cock hard,” he sneered. Justin blanched slightly.

“Stop it,” Justin said. “Stop fucking doing that.” He shoved Brian’s chest. “You make it so fucking hard to love you when you do this!”

“Then don’t love me,” Brian said smoothly. Justin’s eyes darted back and forth across Brian’s fearfully, and he reached out to touch his arm but was shaken off. Brian snarled and whirled away. Justin exhaled the breath he’d been holding for what seemed like forever, and when he opened his eyes, he was staring at Brian’s back.

“Tell me why you don’t want Gus to be with them,” he said trying to remain calm.

“Because I don’t want him to have to fucking go through AIDS, or have to be with someone who’s not sure if he’s goddamn gay,” Brian snapped, turning. “I don’t want him to take on all that shit, and not be able to enjoy being young. I want Gus to be happy.” He spat the last world. “I don’t want him...I want him to be able to be a goddamn teenager and go to college and get drunk and fuck and have fun, and I’m not going to let anyone fuck that up for him, alright?”

“You want him to be like you,” Justin said. Brian’s face contorted with rage and he took an angry step towards Justin.

“No. I don’t want him to be like me. I don’t want him to be a selfish prick or to be alone. I want him happy, and in love, and I want him to be a well-adjusted member of society who grows up sure of himself. I want him to be with someone, but not in fucked up circumstances,” Brian finished, and turned his head away. Justin took a minute to understand what he had just heard. Then he laughed. Brian’s head snapped back in wonder.

“I never realized you were so idealistic.”

“What?” Brian snapped skeptically.

“Love is never perfect Brian. It’s always fucked up. The circumstances are never perfect.” Justin couldn’t believe that Brian, at his age, didn’t understand that. Perfection is an irrelevant concept to love. Love is craziness and obstacles and tears, but you know that it is worth all that.

Brian Kinney was so much older than he, had tried everything, done everyone, but knew nothing about love. And Justin realized how far ahead of Brian he really was.

“I can’t believe you don’t know that,” Justin whispered. Brian’s eyes narrowed as if he thought Justin was mocking him.

“What I do know,” Brian said, suddenly grabbing Justin around the waist, his face so close to the boy’s, “is this.” He brushed his thumb across Justin’s lips angrily, grasping him tight around the waist. “I know fucking, and I know sex, and I know something you’ll never know. That fucking and sex and your goddamn love mean shit in the world outside the bedroom. You fucking go to bed with someone and you think it’s all roses. Well guess what, Sunshine? Sex is about pain and manipulation and fear as much as it is about love and caring. Because I’ll fuck someone to close a deal, I’ll fuck someone so I don’t have to feel the bad effects of a pill, and I’ll fuck someone because I damn well want to.”

“And why do you fuck me?” Justin said, their faces so close that he nearly banged his nose against Brian’s as he spat the words.

“Because I’m bored,” Brian said, and released him.

“And because you love me,” Justin said, as Brian turned away from him.

“Listen, Justin, because I’m only going to say this once. I want my son to be with someone who’s not fucked up, who has the best possible chance a person possibly could of making him happy. There’s enough fucked up shit in this world without starting out on a foundation of it,” Brain murmured, and looked up at Justin. Justin looked visibly shaken. Brian watched the boy squaring his jaw, the tired defiance on the boy’s face, and he knew this battle was only half over. And for some reason, he knew Justin wasn’t going to walk to that loft door and leave like he’d expected him to.

Justin took a step toward Brian, coming to stand against the man’s body, inches between them. He closed his eyes.

“You fuck me because you’re bored, because I get your cock hard, because I’m here.” Justin tilted his head and looked up at Brian. “And you say I’m unexpected, and that I’m something that could change your life, and…” He felt his words faltering. “…other things. You love your son, and you love Lindsay, but you act like you don’t know the first thing about love.”

“Justin, you better have a point,” Brian said gruffly. But a sound escaped his mouth after those words, a soft as if pained sound, that betrayed his words, that betrayed Brian’s façade.

“I give up,” Justin said, looking up at him. “I can’t decipher your code, so I’m just going to stick to what I know. That I love you.” Brian let Justin reach up and kiss him on the mouth. And then Brian closed his eyes.

“You find a man that will give himself up to you, completely, with no strings attached, and that’s quite an intimidating thing,” Brian murmured. Justin’s eyes flickered, wondering what he was seeing in Brian’s. He kissed Brian again, cautiously, and this time Brian caught him behind the neck and wrapped an arm around his waist, making him gasp as he pulled him in deeper.

“I guess I should be proud that I intimidate Brian Kinney,” Justin said gutturally, as Brian carried him to the bedroom.

“I guess you should,” Brian confirmed, one hand protectively on Justin’s back.

\* \* \* \* \*

“I feel drained.”

“Fucking will have that effect on you,” Brian mumbled.

Justin gave him an annoyed look. “From the fight we had,” he explained.

Brian shifted burrowing deeper into the pillow. “It wasn’t a fight Justin. Fights are for married couples. Go to sleep.”

“So what just happened?” Justin queried, leaning on one side, a smile teasing his lips as he annoyed the half-asleep Brian, who true to his grumpy form, growled into the pillow.

“We had a conversation and then we had make-up sex,” Brian muttered.

“Make up sex? From our fight?” Justin wheedled. Brian opened one eye. Even in his sleepy state, he managed to narrow it at Justin.

“Is this talkative post-sex thing going to become a regular occurrence?” he grumbled. Justin gave a slightly apologetic smile. Brian caved, and reached out, pulling the smaller man’s body against his, twisting them so that Justin lay in front of him, their legs entangled. Justin could feel Brian’s breath on his neck. Brian fiddled with the blankets for a moment, pulling them over Justin and himself.

“You’re not a selfish prick,” Justin whispered into the darkness.

“I know,” Brian said, and kissed Justin’s shoulder in his own version of an apology.

\* \* \* \*

“Brian, I have to go,” Justin said, for the hundredth time. “I really, no, stop it.” He grabbed Brian’s hand that had once again been sneaking down his pants. He managed to pull away, and make it towards the loft door.

“Justin,” Brian called out to him.

“What?” Justin said, turning. Brian threw an object at him and Justin caught it in one hand. He opened his fist, feeling the cold metal against his palm.

“It’s a key.” Justin said. Brian took a couple of steps into the living room.

“It’s good you have a grasp of the basics,” Brian said, hair still ruffled.

“A key to the loft?” Justin said, a grin on his face. Brian wrapped a scarf around Justin’s neck, and flattened it against the blonde’s chest.

“Sharp little one, aren’t you?”

\* \* \* \*

“So the summer’s nearly over huh?” Brian said, squinting against the early morning sun. Gus nudged the ball with his feet.

“Yeah.”

“Hunter’s getting good,” Brian said, looking at Hunter kicking the ball around with the other boys, warming up. Gus looked at him, and nodded.

“Yeah.”

“Looks like he’ll be the new star player,” Brian baited. Gus rolled his eyes.

“Nah. I’m the star,” he said, puffing out his chest. Brian cuffed him affectionately on the back of the head.

“So. When were you going to tell me about you two?” Brian said, scuffing the dust with his boots. Gus looked up and laughed.

“Fucking Justin. Can’t keep his mouth shut.” They looked over to where Justin was, standing with Lindsay and Mel, ordering ice cream. Brian shrugged.

“I have my tools of persuasion,” Brian leered. Gus rolled his eyes.

“I’m sure you do.” He looked over to Hunter again and sighed. “Well, as for me and Hunter, there’s nothing to tell.”

“I hope you were safe,” Brian said, worrying slightly about his son’s rather amused grin.

“Safest possible. We didn’t fuck.” Gus looked over at the boys playing soccer, and remembered the summer. He remembered making out with Hunter behind the shed in the garden, sneaking into his room at night. He remembered Eli climbing through his window and his shuddering tears putting Gus to sleep. He remembered telling Eli that maybe they shouldn’t be together right now, not just because of Hunter, but because Eli didn’t know where he was at for the time being, and because when Gus did do something about his love for Eli, he wanted it to be right. Maybe when the summer was over…but that had seemed like such a long way away then.

He remembered taking Hunter to some party, and watching him kiss Vic, just like that. And Eli kissing some other boy. Everyone kissing someone else. He walked all that night to Justin’s apartment but of course, Justin wasn’t there. He was with Brian. So he had gotten Liv and Janis to pick him up, and they had driven around the city and gotten stoned on the hood of Janis’ mom’s car, throwing glass bottles down the slopes. And Johnny, whom he’d met at on Gay Pride day had called him at three in the morning, drunk, telling him he loved him. Gus blinked, looking up at the stands where Justin was, and at Eli and Hunter, and he thought, God, these people became such a vital part of my life because I chose to love them. And I’m only seventeen.

“I’ll let you in on a secret Dad -- Hunter’s straight,” Gus said, and tapped the side of his nose. Brian laughed, and then looked astounded as Gus nodded seriously.

“You’re shitting me,” Brian murmured.

“Nope. He’s a boob-groping, booty-loving, pussy-licking heterosexual.” Gus kicked the ball over to where the other boys were playing. Eli ran to get the ball, and started a second game, kicking the ball between himself and two others as a warm-up. Gus watched Hunter tackle Eli to the ground, and Eli laughed, pushing the ex-hustler off him.

“That sucks,” Brian said, looking slightly embarrassed “I’m sorry,” he said, rubbing his face apologetically. He saw Justin shoot a look his way as the blonde boy climbed the steps to his seat with Mel and Lindsay. Brian raised an eyebrow as a response to Justin’s wave, and then looked back at his son. “I know you care about him.”

“Yeah,” Gus said thoughtfully. “But it’s alright.”

“Do you think you and Eli…now that he’s come out?” Eli had been another adoptee to the Kinney family, sleeping on their couch for two weeks before his parents had taken him back.

“No,” Gus said. “Not for now. But maybe sometime later, when he’s gotten his head around some stuff. Truth be told though, I’m kind of glad that I’ll be going back to school single.”

“Yeah?” Brian said amused, wondering if Gus was going to come out with another Kinneyism. He didn’t know if he’d be upset or proud if it happened.

“Yeah. I’m planning on falling in love as much as I can this year,” Gus said with a cheeky smile. “Sorry to disappoint Dad, but I can’t fucking wait to fall in love again.” He kissed Brian on the cheek, and ran off the join the other boys. Brian blinked, and then started laughing. He looked up at Justin, who was staring at him curiously.

Brian took the long walk to join the other proud parents. He seated himself next to Justin, who was proudly holding out a dripping ice cream to him. Brian grimaced as he took it, ignoring Justin’s innocent grin, groaning at the stickiness that immediately transferred to his fingers, and on instinct, catching a stray trickle with his tongue as it threatened to run down his hand. In doing so, he managed to get quite a bit of ice cream around his mouth. Justin, with his plain vanilla, laughed at the chocolate all over Brian’s face.

“You klutz,” he said, and kissed the side of Brian’s mouth. “Mmm. Chocolate and vanilla,” Justin giggled. Brian wove his sticky fingers around Justin’s neck and ran them over Justin’s cheek so that it was covered in ice cream goodness. “You bastard,” Justin swore against Brian’s lips. Brian chucked the ice cream on the ground and proceeded to kiss Justin, smearing more on Justin’s cheeks as he did so.

“Ahem,” Lindsay said, holding out a napkin. Justin giggled, and Brian snatched it, wiping his fingers and then waving it at Justin’s. Justin glared at him, grabbed it, and attempted to wipe the ice cream off his own face.

“That napkin might have been helpful a minute ago, before that crap was all over my fingers,” Brian said, arm once again finding its place around Justin’s shoulders.

“So you wouldn’t have smeared it all over my face?” Justin said sweetly.

“No,” Brian said, and sucked on Justin’s bottom lip for a moment, before he turned back to Lindsay. She was making a disgusted face.

“You guys are disgusting,” she said pleasantly, though speaking her mind. Mel’s grunt beside her seemed to agree. Brian tilted his head.

“Oh, you’re just jealous cause you’re no longer driving a stick.”

“And we wonder where our son gets his vulgarity.”

“And his huge di…”

“Brian!” Justin yelled and covered his mouth.

\* \* \* \* \*

“What about my heart?” Justin whispered playfully, watching Brian get dressed. Wearing a T-shirt and white underwear, he stood up in front of Brian, and slowly started buttoning Brian’s shirt, making it very clear that he would rather be doing the complete opposite.

“Your heart is not the organ that I’m most interested in,” Brian said suavely, a smirk on his face. Justin pecked his lips, and finished the buttons. Pulling on his jeans, he reached for Brian’s tie, then looped it around his lover’s neck. Patting the charcoal gray tie against the shirt, he started making the knot.

“Well lucky for you, you get a two-for-one deal when you shop at Taylor’s,” Justin said, imitating a commercial voice. “You get my heart along with my cock,” he said, pronouncing the words very slowly. Brian bit his bottom lip. Those words would have sent him running for the hills a year ago.

But now, it wasn’t so terrifying.

The words, yes, they were still unnerving. But Justin’s hands on his chest, his legs against his, and the smell of that blonde hair.

No. Not so frightening anymore.

Now there were other things that were more terrifying.

Like the thought of losing him.

“Admit it,” Justin said, straightening Brian’s tie. “Admit it,” he insisted, kissing Brian for a very long time as persuasion.

“I love your cock,” Brian said, and pecked Justin on the lips. “I really, really do. Can I go now?” he said dryly. Justin nodded with amusement at Brian’s obvious avoidance. He knew he’d get Brian to say those words one day. And he was patient. He watched Brian pick up his briefcase and move towards the door. He looked at those long beautiful legs, those well-maintained arms, that hair that took so long to get to look so perfectly imperfect. He could smell Brian all over him, the scent of Brian’s shampoo in his hair, of his cologne on his face, everything. He was covered in him.

“Brian?” Justin called out as Brian swung around.

“Huh?”

“You so love me,” Justin said. Brian, framed in the loft door, jacket thrown over his arm, briefcase in hand, did something unexpected.

He raised one finger to his lips, his eyes on Justin’s. And he was smiling.

I know.

Shh.

**END**