

Tale As Old As Time

by

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Kurt/Blaine || AU || NC-17

*Modern gothic Fairytale based on Beauty and the Beast but a slightly darker more smutty version than Disney. **Burt Hummel gets lost in the snow and stumbles across a dark, brooding building looming out of the shadows. All he wants is to take one white rose back for his son Kurt; a sign of hope for a better future but it turns out Lord Anderson isn't very forgiving and wants to make a devil's bargain for Kurt.....***

WIP (17/?)

www.scarvesandcoffee.net/viewstory.php?sid=5177

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Prologue

Flurries of snow had begun to fall, coating the windscreen of Burt Hummel's Navigator with a fine white power, obscuring his view. The windscreen wipers were failing to keep up with the increasingly heavy storm and anxiety was setting in while he was still a good thirty miles from home. A violent judder ripped through the vehicle as the wheels made contact yet again with the rough, uneven ground and indicated he had veered off the road for a third time. Sighing heavily, his already fragile heart pounding in his chest, Burt pulled over and turned off the engine.

He sat silently for a while, not sure what move to make next. It was obvious that he wasn't going to be going anywhere soon and the snow looked to be getting thicker with each passing minute. He weighed up his options in his head, feeling frustrated at his limited choices: If he remained where he was, he risked becoming snowed into his own car; not a pleasant option considering the below freezing temperatures, but if he left the Navigator in an attempt to find help, he may well risk not being able to find his way back. Eventually the chattering of his teeth and his personal frustration at simply doing nothing, forced him from the car. There had to be some houses nearby and at least then he might be able to call for assistance, or at least let Kurt know he was ok.

After twenty minutes of stumbling blindly along the roadway, Burt had begun to give up all hope of finding any salvation. White clouds blurred the landscape and every time he took a step his previous footprints were immediately blotted out, leaving no trail by which to return to the security of his car. Feeling the wind biting across his cheeks, Burt turned back towards the direction he had come from; disorientated and numb from the cold he whirled blindly on the spot for several seconds before slumping against a nearby tree for support.

Desolation had just started to creep into his skin when he caught a glimpse of a tiny light through the trees in the distance. Relief washed over Burt as he allowed the meagre glow from the shadowy house, discernible through the trees, to seep into his bones and warm him. He granted himself a small smile as he pushed off from the bark beneath his fingers and headed off in the direction of safety.

Intricately carved, wrought iron gates greeted him as he neared the darkened building. Holding on to the curved, freezing metal, Burt peered through the bars to look at the house. It was significantly larger than it had previously appeared; the shadowy outline from the trees had obscured the additional wings that seemed to grow out of each side of the main building and a multitude of blackened windows glared at him

from shadowy alcoves. Only the tiny yellow glow from one of the upstairs windows of the West side of the building gave him the strength to push through the gates and enter the garden that fronted the property.

The snow had eased up slightly now and as Burt trudged towards the impressive double front doors of the house, he was able to discern more of the architecture and landscaping of the garden. He looked to be in a rose garden, large bushes flanking both sides of the path that led to the house. Icicles clung to the delicate petals of the red roses giving them a frosted effect and little cascades of snow dusted the thorns as Burt brushed past.

His mind moved to Kurt, waiting anxiously at home no doubt. He'd not wanted his father to go on this journey; certainly hadn't wanted him to go alone but Burt had insisted. They'd already defaulted on last month's mortgage repayments due to the increasing pressures from the current recession and the garage needed to be open at all times to garner any sort of passing trade. He thought back to Kurt's defeated face as he'd finally relented and waved his father off. Burt loved his son more than anything in the world. Since his mother had died when Kurt was only eight, Burt had fulfilled both parental roles and had spent the last ten years desperately trying to protect his son from the misery of the world. This trip had been Burt's last attempt to expand the business, looking at a larger shop further out of town that would be able to offer more services that Burt currently couldn't accommodate. It was to secure their future.

He paused as a single flower stood out to him, illuminated in the darkness. The petals seemed untouched by the snow, as white as they already were, just radiating an ethereal glow through the frosted tips of its virginal folds.

A single white rose.

Burt reached out his fingers tentatively and stroked the velvety, ice cold petals, thinking again of how much it reminded him of his son, the unearthly pallor reminiscent of Kurt's porcelain features. He wanted to take it back to Kurt, give him at least one token of hope from this trip that would bring a smile to his increasingly tired and all too weary face these days.

He glanced up at the house again, seeing the light flicker slightly in the surrounding darkness before looking back to the flower. Sliding his fingers carefully down, avoiding the sharp thorns that jutted out at him, Burt twisted his fingers and in one motion, snapped the stem.

Chapter One

Kurt paced the kitchen frantically. Where was he? He'd told Kurt he was leaving to drive home hours ago but there was still no sign of his father struggling up the path. Clutching the sink, Kurt stared out of the window once again trying to pick out his father's familiar figure against the white quilt that now blanketed the street. The clock registered another hour had passed behind Kurt's head and the young man swallowed heavily at the realisation that something was definitely wrong. Taking a deep breath and hauling on his warmest coat, Kurt grabbed his keys and hurried out into the darkness.

The roads were treacherous although slightly easier to navigate now that the snow had finally stopped. He struggled to maintain traction, grateful at least that it hadn't yet frozen and turned to ice beneath his tires. He knew the route his father had gone and allowed the sat. nav. to direct him as he concentrated on staying on the road. Eventually he spotted a vehicle, trapped in a sheet of snow, abandoned on the roadside.

Immediately slipping into panic mode, Kurt flung himself from his own car and desperately searched the navigator for signs of his father. There was nothing. The keys were gone as were any signs of tracks left in the snow that his father might have made which would have indicated the direction he would have taken. Forcing himself to think logically and gulping down the nausea that threatened when he thought of his father's ill health, Kurt turned back towards the way he'd come. If his father was heading home, then he would have wanted to continue in the same direction to look for help. Kurt knew he was going to have to complete the rest of this on foot if he stood any chance of finding his father and with his own heart thumping in his chest, he set off through the trees, back vaguely in the direction he'd come.

The house seemed to lure Kurt towards it, despite the light having been long extinguished. He seemed to be able to make out the bulk of a building in the distance from the edge of the woods and hurried towards it as best he could, stumbling through the snow. Everything was silent as he started cautiously up a rose rimmed path towards the house. His flesh crawled as the icy weather seeped into his coat and wrapped around his lungs. There was no sign of his father but something about the house made Kurt continue; it seemed to beckon him towards it and he felt almost compelled forward.

Standing on the threshold, Kurt felt his hand tremble as he reached out for the lion shaped knocked on the heavy set wooden door. The deep pounding of the metal handle reverberated through the house, thundering across the silence and shaking Kurt's tiny shred of remaining control.

There was no response. The house sat silent once again after the echoes died.

Kurt's body ached from the exertions of the hunt and he slumped against the wood in utter defeat. It groaned beneath his weight and swung inwards slightly, making the young man stumbled into the deserted hallway in shock. He looked around him nervously, his eyes widening at the opulence that greeted them. The central hall was wide and grand with an elaborate gilt staircase spiralling up either side of the room to an obscured second floor. What had seemed dark from the outside, was now illuminated by the soft glow of lights that trailed up the side of the banisters and overhead an intricate chandelier hung from the vaulted ceiling casting a warm glow across the marble floor that Kurt was now sprawled across.

"Hello?"

Kurt's voice, already high pitched and breathy, came out as a tentative squeak and he cleared his throat in an attempt to try again.

"Is there anyone here? I...I'm sorry to disturb you but well....um...I'm looking for my father."

He stopped, waiting to see if there was any response but the house remained silent and waiting. Dragging himself to his feet again, Kurt moved towards the staircase, glancing around him for any sign of life. "Hello?" he called again, his voice a little firmer now that he'd composed himself.

Something shifted suddenly at the top of the stairs and Kurt could make out a shape in the shadows. His breath hitched as the figure moved into the light and stared down at him. It was a man, not much older than Kurt, with gel slicked hair and dressed immaculately in a beautifully cut black suit and open necked white shirt. Kurt's breath hitched in his throat as the man stared at him from his lofty position. His eyes were hard and cold, dark brown in the shadows of his tanned skin as he penetrated Kurt with a look of disdain. He didn't speak, just raked his eyes over the pale boy at the foot of the stairs and Kurt felt himself rendered silent by the power of this figure before him.

Slowly and with deliberate grace, the man moved down a step, pausing to cock his head to one side and regard Kurt with barely concealed hostility.

"Umm.... s..sorry to disturb you sir. But um..." Kurt's voice stuttered out between them and he found words failing him as the man moved another step closer, still holding his gaze.

"You've come for your father" the voice was bored, unconcerned as he moved down another step. Kurt's heart leapt at the mention of Burt and he felt himself relax into a smile without really thinking.

"Oh thank god. He's here? Is he ok? Thank you so much for taking him in. God I was so worried.. " he trailed off again as he watched the cold, impassive face stop in front of him, only one step separating them. Face to face, Kurt realised just how young the boy actually was. He was slight of build and shorter than Kurt but neither fact made Kurt feel any more comfortable in his position. Looking into his eyes Kurt felt all further relief knocked out of him. The eyes stared into him; cold, hard and without emotion.

"He was trespassing." The man said levelly and without feeling. "He is being held in a cell until I say what is to be done with him."

Kurt's pale blue eyes involuntarily swam with frustrated tears and anger as he took in the words of the arrogant stranger before him.

"How dare you!" he exploded, annoyed at the slight sob that escaped at the same time. "he's a frail old man and he's got a heart condition. He came here for help because he was trapped in the snow! How dare you.." he sobbed and swiped angrily at the tears that had escaped down his cheeks. He watched a tiny flash of something flit across the other man's eyes before it was replaced by cold indifference once more.

"He stole from my garden. He trespassed on private property and therefore has been arrested." He said simply. "I suggest you leave or else I could say the same for his son."

Kurt's anger was seething through him and he balled his fists at his sides, a motion that afforded a smirk from the other boy.

"I have guards here who will do anything I request at the touch of a button so I suggest you desist with those little notions of violence flirting around that pretty head of yours." He inched another step closer to Kurt and moved his head nearer until only a fraction of air passed between them. "Actually," He paused, moving his lips even closer till he was breathing the words into Kurt's mouth. "I think I'd quite like to have you tied up in a cell next to your father's." Kurt's skin prickled at the words and he felt his own breath catch in his throat before he flicked his eyes up to look into the dark, dilated pupils of the other man.

"Who are you?" he breathed, shuddering at the cold glint that spread across the face, millimetres from his own. A harsh laugh utterly devoid of any humour, erupted from the other man's lips.

"I'm Lord Anderson Mr Hummel. Perhaps you've heard of me? My father was ruler of this city for the last forty years before he died last month. Now it's all come to me. I own this city Mr Hummel and everyone in it."

Kurt reeled backwards away from the man, taking a large gulp of air as his eyes widened in shock. Of course he'd heard of him. Richard Anderson had been notorious for his cruel and selfish rule over the city and it was widely attributed to him that all of its people were suffering from the recession in various stages of poverty and unemployment. He looked around him at the gilded luxury of this house and felt bile rise in his throat. The younger Anderson watched him in mild amusement at the obvious recognition flashing across his face before he brushed past him and moved across the hallway towards another door on the left hand side of the room.

"Of course, I am far more reasonable than my father was, so perhaps we could come to some kind of an arrangement." He threw the words over his shoulder, not even bothering to look at the Kurt, as he entered what looked to be an office. Kurt had little choice but to follow; his father was desperately sick at the moment and prolonged exposure to cold and harsh conditions would undoubtedly kill him. He forced himself to stand up to his full height and confront the other man now sat casually in a large dark green leather chair behind a mahogany desk.

"What sort of arrangement?"

Dark eyes raked over him yet again and Kurt fought the urge to squirm as he felt like a slab of meat ready for dissection. "I'll let him go on one condition."

Kurt sucked on his breath, knowing that the condition was going to be a heavy price; one that he was sure he would have to pay many times over judging by the look of dark victory already spread across the other man's hard features.

"I'll free him, without charge, but you must come and work for me."

Kurt's mouth fell open and he felt the nausea rising in his throat again. He clamped his jaw shut, unwilling to show this man any weakness. "What do you mean work for you?" he whispered, steeling himself against the answer.

Blaine Anderson smiled, a slow and twisted movement that curled his lips up into a sneer.

"You will live here with me. You will have a room here with every luxury you could wish for. In return, I will free your father. I will ensure his business continues and he will have proper medical assistance."

"Why would you do that? You don't know me. You know nothing about me. Why would you want me to live here with you? What will my 'work' entail?" he spat out the last words knowing the answer already from the way that the other man was currently looking at him; devouring him with his eyes.

"You will live here Kurt. You will serve me. You will serve me in any way I require and you will never be allowed to leave."

Tears welled again in Kurt's eyes as the words seared through him. He felt them spill over his cheeks and didn't even bother to brush them away. He'd known life was hard in these times. His father had tried to protect him so many times from the realities of the world and had told him over and over how they would fight the oppression of the people from the ruling classes; the Lords of each city and their tyranny. He had spent so many nights with his father telling him stories of how they were going to be different, live their own lives and now he had to protect his father instead. It was his fight now.

He looked across at the Blaine Anderson's emotionless face, impassive and bored, as his own heart disintegrated into ash at his feet.

"Ok." He whispered, barely audible. "I agree to your conditions."

Chapter Two

The door slammed behind him and Kurt sunk to his knees, buckling under the horror of the situation he had just locked himself in to. He blinked back tears, trying to clear his head and take in the room he had been imprisoned in. It was as grand as the rest of the house, high vertiginous ceilings and exotic patterned flock wallpaper encased him as he buried his face in the plush velvet of the red cushions piled high on the decoratively carved wooden bed. He sobbed uncontrollably, staining the material with his hopeless despair.

The moment he'd agreed to the contract, Blaine Anderson had picked up the telephone and calmly instructed whoever was on the other end of the line to release Burt Hummel without further delay and to return him home. They were to inform him that his son had made an exchange of his own services for the immediate freedom of his father and that he would be living at the Anderson residence from now on. He'd neither looked at Kurt nor made any further comment on the expectations of the arrangement. Instead, he'd simply replaced the receiver, picked up a stack of papers on the desk and said that someone would be in shortly to show Kurt to his new living quarters.

"I need to speak to my father. I need to explain this to him. I need to know he's ok." Kurt appealed to the retreating back of the other man. Lord Anderson stiffened slightly and paused by the open doorway.

"Your father is no longer your concern. You will no longer speak to him unless I allow it. The deal was you remain with me and I will see to it that your father is protected. Uphold your end and I will do the same." He spoke without turning around, the words biting through the air between them and freezing Kurt's already numbed heart. He flinched as the door clicked shut behind him, leaving him sagged against the desk in surrender.

He'd waited twelve minutes in the office before a man had appeared at the door. He was significantly older than Kurt, with wisps of silver streaking the black hair around his temples. He was dressed entirely in black with a leather tie knotted securely around his neck and he appraised Kurt with a slight smirk as he quirked his eyebrow.

"I'm to show you to your room." He said with an obvious sneer and fixing his cold eyes on the pale, delicate figure before him. Kurt's face blazed with his contempt but he pulled himself up to his full height and locked eyes with the older man.

"Take me then" he said trying to keep his voice equally cold and indifferent.

Seth Schoen let his eyes wonder again slowly over the slight man standing oh so defiantly in front of him and felt his lips curl in understanding. When Blaine had informed him of the new agreement, Seth had wondered at why the usually so insular young Anderson had concocted such a punishment, but now, standing before this kid with the fire burning in his eyes, it all made very twisted sense to him.

Seth had been advisor to the elder Anderson for the last thirty-five years; a job that afforded him unquestionable power and considerable wealth in a city that was gradually sinking into the ground. Together, he and Richard had corrupted, exploited and leached every last shred of money and control from the upper echelons of the Lord's Council and had wallowed distastefully in their luxury and privileges. When Blaine's mother had suffered the 'unfortunate accident' two Christmases ago, discovered at the foot of the stairs, blood pooling across the marble, it was Seth that the remaining Anderson men had turned to for support. Blaine's adolescent upbringing had fallen on Schoen with the senior Anderson taken away for business so often, and the trusted advisor had spent the last two years moulding the young Blaine into an exact replica of his father: cruel, ruthless and devoid of mercy.

He'd known Blaine had different tendencies; he'd watched him at functions and noticed his eyes lingering on the men in the room. Seth couldn't have cared less where his perversions lay; as long as Blaine Anderson remained callously focussed on upholding his father's legacy, he could fuck whoever the hell he wanted. He'd even encouraged it at times, offering a delectable selection of young men willing to lay themselves open for Blaine for the right price but Blaine had steadfastly refused. He'd looked of course, allowed his eyes to rake over the exposed flesh as it was paraded before him, but had flicked each one away with a careless twitch of his hand. Seth had approved of the cold manner with which the young man had managed to control his desire. It was the final proof of his ultimate success with his protégée.

But this young man before him was a different creature entirely. He was slightly effeminate in Seth's eyes but clearly beautiful and fragile. His features held a delicacy and almost elfin quality that Blaine would enjoy breaking but what was most striking about the boy was his absolute purity. It radiated out of him from every angle; untouched, virgin flesh as stainless as the white snow that had heralded his arrival. His

smile spread wider as he watched the passion simmering beneath the boy's skin. Yes he could see exactly why Blaine had chosen this one.

Blaine glared at his reflection in the filigree mirror hung ostentatiously above the fireplace in his bedroom. He noticed the tightness to his jaw, the clenched muscles straining in his neck and watched his own dead eyes regarding him back challengingly.

Why had he done it?

He'd spent his entire life closeted in the museum of a house without needing anyone else. His father had spent most of his teenage years away, even more so since Blaine's mother's accident, and the young man had become accustomed to the solitude the bleak place afforded him. Had he ever found himself in need of conversation, Seth, his father's advisor, had always been around, skulking in corners of the many wings of the building, ready and willing to teach Blaine the ways of dealing with people. The ways of the world.

So why had he taken one look at the pathetic, pale ghost of a boy on his stairs and allowed his carefully constructed life to be invaded?

He'd been unflinching in his cruelty; had watched the delicate face as it crumpled and surrendered and felt excitement coursing through him. He'd done that. Had the power to completely destroy this innocent man before him and take away everything he knew.

He was so beautiful.

His startlingly pale eyes had sparked with anger and fury and had burned in defiance and Blaine had felt something stirring in himself at the boy's unwillingness to be broken. He'd stared challengingly at Blaine and the young Lord had felt moved for the first time into feeling something other than bland indifference. The deal had come out of his mouth before he'd had time to even check himself.

And now Kurt was his. Belonged to him.

Blaine, allowed his eyes to rake lower over his naked body as he felt something uncoiling in his stomach and watched his eyes flash with an unfamiliar flame.

Kurt wasn't sure how long he'd cried into the pillows but felt groggy when he eventually raised his head, a sensation indicating he must have slept fitfully at some point. The light had started to appear over the valley and he could see the stunning pristine shroud of snow suffocating the landscape outside the windows when he turned his head. Sliding off the bed, weary and without purpose, Kurt moved towards the en-suit bathroom.

He stood in the middle of the marbled floor, limp and dejected. The gold taps and claw footed bath barely registered with him as he stared wanly around the space that was significantly bigger than his bedroom at home. Thick plush towels hung over the side of the tub and someone had placed a pair of deep navy slippers beside a matching robe folded neatly on an armchair in the corner. Kurt's stomach twisted as he realised someone had been in his room while he'd slept. The bile rose before he had time to even acknowledge it and without warning he clutched his stomach and collapsed to his knees over the toilet. He emptied his stomach violently; body wracked with convulsions as he vomited every bitter, hideous truth out of his mouth and watched it disappear down the gleaming enamel of the bowl. Sagging, exhausted, Kurt rested his sweaty cheek against the soothing cool tiles, curled tightly into a ball and stared ahead of him. There were no more tears now. Kurt Hummel was nothing if not determined and if this was his new reality then he needed to start facing it.

Gripping the edge of the sink, he dragged himself to his feet, taking in his blotched and swollen face in the mirror before him. His eyes flashed harder as he steeled himself, drawing in a deep breath and clenching his lips together.

Kurt Hummel would not be broken.

Chapter Three

He was sitting languidly, half reclining on the chaise longue beneath the window when Kurt emerged from the bathroom clad only in the flimsy bathrobe. Startled but trying desperately not to show any weakness, Kurt clenched his lips together and jutted out his jaw in defiance. He didn't speak but unconsciously pulled the chord on his robe tighter around his narrow waist. Blaine noted the movement, smiling slightly in satisfaction at the other man's discomfort and letting his eyes travel shamelessly over Kurt's slender figure without apology.

"You will join me for breakfast" it wasn't a question and Blaine drew the words out slowly and deliberately, watching for Kurt's reaction to his first ordered command.

"I'm not hungry." Kurt bit back, moving towards the bed and hunting out his clothes he'd discarded there from yesterday. Blaine didn't reply, merely watched Kurt's fruitless attempt to find his things with a quirked eyebrow and an amused smirk twisting his cruel mouth. Flinging his hands up in the air in frustration, Kurt reeled back round to face Blaine.

"Where are my clothes?" he demanded, hating the way his voice quivered slightly higher than normal and betrayed his fear.

Relaxing a little more into the chair and leaning his elbow against the high back, Blaine smiled, slowly and self-satisfied, eyes cold. He gestured to the painted chest of draws with a bored flick of his hand,

"Your uniform is in there"

Kurt swallowed down the bile threatening again as shame coursed through him and turned hesitantly to the draws, fear squeezing around his heart. Inhaling slowly and deeply to steady himself and trying hard not to show the other man his discomfort, Kurt approached the draws and pulled out the top one.

His heart sank. Neatly folded and nestled amongst the silk inlays were rows of black leather; lines of trousers all identical in style and sizing. In the draw beneath, Kurt was greeted by further rows of immaculately pressed black sleeveless vests that looked equally as tight as the trousers threatened to be.

The final draw, presented Kurt with 3 pairs of black knee high DM boots with thick laces running the entire length of the soft leather and harsh silver buckles strapped around the ankles.

Blaine watched each change flush across Kurt's face with a casual air of satisfaction, noticing with each new revelation how the tightly drawn muscles in his back and neck had twitched before sinking a little with increased resignation. Excitement bubbled under his skin again.

"No underwear?" Kurt asked, nervously licking his lips and then quickly pulling his tongue back in when he noticed the look of hunger that flashed across Blaine's eyes. The other man laughed harshly, the sound making Kurt flinch.

"No need in those trousers. Not much room." he paused before running his eyes over him again. "They were ordered last night. They'll fit you perfectly." Blaine drawled out the last line with a lascivious grin that reminded Kurt of a snake eyeing its prey. He gulped down his tears and forced himself to meet the cold face before him.

"Shall I meet you downstairs when I'm done?" He stammered a little as he tried to stand up to his full height. How could this man make him feel so pathetic, so insignificant?

For a moment Kurt thought Blaine wasn't going to leave, that he was going to have to strip in front of him and lay himself entirely bare. They regarded each other steadily, air humming with a strange electricity. Hate mixed with something else. Something Kurt couldn't quite admit.

Not wanting to lose this first battle, Kurt began to untie the belt around his waist, raising his eyebrows challengingly as he moved and started to ease the robe off one shoulder. Watching Kurt's defiant attempt at calling Blaine's bluff made something inside the other man twist and his skin prickled with excitement. His eyes flashed again and he had to take a breath to pull back the control. Sliding himself gracefully from the seat, he moved towards the ethereal man before him, pausing as he reached him and leaned in to breathe low and smoothly in to his ear.

"Don't be too long. I'm hungry"

He emitted one final harsh laugh as he watched Kurt buckle slightly at the suggestion in his words before swishing past and letting the door slam behind him.

Standing outside the dinning room, Kurt let his eyes close briefly, pulling a ragged breath through his tight lips and forcing his shoulders back. He knocked once sharply before entering the door with determination.

Blaine was standing stock still, face angled away from the room when Kurt entered and for a fraction of a second the younger man thought he saw a glimpse of panic etched into the elegant features of Lord Anderson's profile before the man shifted and it was instantly gone. The steely controlled figure was back and Kurt could have almost believed he'd imagined it.

Almost.

They stood, regarding each other in silence as Blaine took in all of Kurt's new 'uniform'. The trousers were achingly tight, outlining the strong thigh muscles in his legs and, Blaine was pleased to note, emphasising the sizeable bulge between them. Roving his eyes higher, he watched with delight as Kurt squirmed, feeling the other man tracing every contour of his firm, pale chest under the flimsy material, stretched taught across it.

Blaine licked his lips, a slow smile spreading over his face as Kurt lay on the sacrificial block.

He hummed a nod of approval before gesturing to the table and the food, Kurt now noticed was spread abundantly across it. A low rumble could be heard from Kurt's stomach, betraying him again, when he realised how long it had been since he'd eaten and the other man noted the obvious lie from earlier.

"Sit Kurt. Eat."

Unnerved by the wolfish smile, Kurt remained silent but relented, sliding compliantly into the indicated chair and reaching for a piece of melon spilling from an over-stuffed bowl in the centre of the table. He nibbled the edge tentatively, refusing to meet Blaine's continued stare.

"We need to go over your expected roles and requirements." Blaine said levelly and sliding into the high backed chair positioned at the head of the table. He rested his palms against the wood and waited for Kurt to look up.

"Last night you signed yourself over to me as my employee." he paused again and Kurt realised he was waiting for confirmation of the statement. Not quite able to find his voice, Kurt nodded imperceptibly. Satisfied, the other man continued in his now typical bored but controlled tone.

"As such, you will be expected to fulfil certain duties."

"Like a butler?" Kurt offered sarcastically, knowing the answer before he'd even asked. Blaine had butlers and maids and waiting staff; he didn't need Kurt for that. His confirmation was Blaine's unnatural laugh,

"No Kurt, Nothing like a butler."

Suddenly the melon felt unnaturally dry in Kurt's mouth and he swallowed it down painfully, hands clenched against the side of the table.

"What then?"

Blaine slid out from his seat and moved to stand behind Kurt, not touching, but close enough to see the sinewy lines of the muscles across his shoulder blades tense and to watch the slightly irregular rise and fall of his breathing. He yearned to touch him. To feel the untainted, unstained white flesh. Wanted to run his fingers over those muscles and feel them switch and change beneath his manipulation. Before he really knew what he was doing, Blaine's hand was reaching out and he wrapped his long slightly calloused fingers around the back of Kurt's neck.

Kurt froze, muscles tense and wound tightly closed to the pressure of the unfamiliar touch. He wanted to shrug him off, fight against the unwelcome grip but he remained utterly immobile. Waiting for the next move; knowing it would come.

He'd imagined Lord Anderson to be aggressive, rough in his possession of Kurt's body, which is why a soft gasp of surprise eased out of his lips when he felt the light, almost delicate, massage of the muscles under the other man's fingers. A gasp that surprised them both in its moan of unintended longing. Blaine was transfixed, the noise shooting directly to his groin and making his pants feel uncomfortable and constricted. He moaned involuntarily and Kurt's head snapped up at the first sign of control slipping from Blaine's countenance.

Neither spoke. Blaine continued to squeeze and mould Kurt's untouched flesh beneath his hand and the other man remained pliant, each point of pressure massaging out another fragment of his defiance.

Blaine was lost in the power of Kurt's skin and Kurt momentarily drowned in it.

Then the door banged open violently and the spell was broken.

Seth stood rigidly in the doorway, filling the frame and regarding the two boys before him, a slight sneer of disgust twisting his features. They'd leapt apart when the intrusion had jolted them out of their strange reverie, but not before Seth had seen the lust blown eyes of the pale innocent creature, sat trembling at the table and the flash of unmistakable guilt that had spread through the young Lord's own figure.

Blaine cleared his throat and dragged his features back into the twisted mask of control and indifference they fell into so easily. He stared back at Seth, irritated at the way the older man was watching him and needing to reassert some measure of authority.

"I was just informing Kurt of his new job specification Seth." he lowered his voice a little, threateningly and looked at him pointedly. "Did you want something?"

The older man continued to hold his gaze, cold and unruffled, before eventually flicking his eyes towards Kurt with a knowing smirk. "Lord Buckley is on the telephone and is demanding to speak to you. I told him you were otherwise engaged" he sneered pointedly before continuing. "but he was very insistent. I can fill our new 'employee' in on the rest of his contract details."

Blaine clenched his teeth, as a flash of something unfamiliar rippled through him at the thought of leaving Kurt alone with his advisor but he clamped it down and turned to Seth. "Bring him to the library after"

Kurt's skin prickled as the door clicked closed and he was left alone with the steely eyes of the other man boring into his skin.

"So; Your 'job'....." began Seth, moving to sit in the chair opposite Kurt. "You have been signed over to Lord Anderson as a punishment for your father's crimes and as such will be expected to fulfil your designated role without question or insolence." He regarded Kurt levelly, watching with pleasure the other man's discomfort before continuing.

"Lords need to have an outward display of their power and control. They are expected to attend certain public events and functions and at these gatherings, are encouraged to demonstrate their level of command to the other Lords. They do this by having Subordinates. These are minions who attend the functions with their masters. They need to look good, be engaging and intelligent but always entirely

submissive to their Lord." he paused, eying Kurt's reaction to the 'job' description and noting his deep flush of shame at Seth's words.

"Lord Anderson has never required a Subordinate before but since his father's death, it is necessary for Blaine to assert some public control in order to maintain his established persona. When you arrived last night, he seized the opportunity to own you." Kurt flinched at the callous and brutal words. "You seem to fit the requirements aptly enough and your pretty little virgin face will look impressive under Lord Anderson's command."

During Seth's explanation, Kurt had remained utterly silent, each word creeping over his skin and making him shrivel and shrink inside. He'd been aware his fate would be something similar to Seth's description but hearing the words spoken aloud and confirmed made it seem all the more degrading. He swallowed thickly and raised his eyes to the other man's cruelly mocking gaze.

"Is it only publicly that I am to fulfil these duties?" he said, trying to keep his voice calm and cold. The wolfish grin was back, making his heart sink, as Seth let his eyes wonder indecently over Kurt's tight fitting uniform.

"No, you will be required to be entirely submissive to Lord Anderson at all times. Publicly and in private."

Languidly, he rose from his seat and moved to stand beside Kurt's chair. Kurt could feel his stale breath on his cheek as the older man bent down and whispered smoothly into his ear, the words twisting Kurt's stomach and making his throat burn.

"You know, Subordinates are *entirely* at the mercy of their Lords. They can be asked to do *anything* to show their obedience. Some are humiliated, some are cruelly punished and some," he paused and licked his lips deliberately. "Some are controlled entirely through sexual domination"

He laughed as Kurt's face bled into snow white marble and moved backwards to stand in the doorway. He narrowed his eyes as he turned back to the trembling, ashen figure sat defeated at the table.

"Come on." he smirked. "Your Lord is waiting."

Chapter Four

Even amidst all of the inner churning fears and shame twisting his stomach, Kurt couldn't help but gasp in reverential awe at the splendour of the library that Seth showed him to. Stretching ten feet above him from marbled floor to intricately painted domed ceiling were more books than Kurt had ever imagined possibly existed in the world. Thick panelled wooden shelves wrapped around the walls, carving sinewy lines of literature into the circular space and spiralling upwards towards the glass panel that nestled in the roof, casting beams of dust laden sunlight onto acres of leather and paper. It should have been claustrophobic and yet Kurt felt a pull on his heart that made his eyes tear for its promised haven.

Seth had left him at the door, motioning for him to continue forward before slipping away again silently. Kurt had spun slowly on the spot, feeling slightly dizzy with the sheer magnitude of the place and its power to calm him instantly. A large oriental rug lay invitingly across the cool marble, making the space seem more welcoming and a beautiful moss green sofa sat waiting in the centre of the room. Kurt's heart soared again as he noticed the deep, rich mahogany grand piano situated alongside the sofa and he couldn't help himself when he stroked his fingers respectfully across the polished wood.

Without thinking, he sat himself carefully down on the music stool and reverently raised the lid, feeling the instant calm that settled over his heart. Music was Kurt's only comfort, had always been the salvation that could sooth even the most hideous of realities in this harsh world and for the first time in twenty-four hours, Kurt allowed a temporary peace to wrap around him.

Resting his fingers steadily against the ivory and pulling in a deep breath, Kurt began to play.

Blaine had been watching the other man from his lofty position on the mezzanine level of the room, waiting patiently amongst the stacks and regarding each change that flitted across Kurt's face from nervous awe to unbridled delight. He'd been about to say something when Kurt had begun to play and the young Lord had been struck utterly silent and mesmerized by the music that flowed out of the instrument and bounced off the volumes that encased them both. Kurt's face had taken on a serene and ethereal demeanour and his eyes were closed as he allowed the soft notes of Chopin to lull him. The exposed muscles in his slender arms twitched and danced as he relaxed into the song and his head swayed slightly with the melody.

Blaine had never heard beauty in his house before.

The piano, like every other possession in the house was decorative and ostentatious but had served no other purpose until that moment. As far as Blaine could remember, it had never been played. Music, serving no money-making exploitative gain for the Andersons, was rendered obsolete and his unaccustomed ears revelled in the innocent purity of the notes that they now were exposed to.

Beauty tugged at the icy core of Blaine Anderson and something began to drip inside him.

He allowed Kurt to play the full piece before finally pulling himself back into the controlled persona of Lord Anderson and wiping away his monetary lapse in steely power. As the silence descended on the room again, Blaine cleared his throat loudly, smiling slightly as the other man below him, jumped and spun around startled.

"I'm s....sorry" Kurt stammered, terrified he'd already broken some unspoken rule in his role as Subordinate and would now face some new cruel twisted punishment. Blaine however, simply held up his hand to silence the other man and smiled at him slowly, the mouth still curled into a sneer but the eyes unable to dull their renewed spark at his playing. Kurt held his breath, his brain registering the almost imperceptible transformation of his Lord's features.

"Actually, I'm quite impressed." He drawled smoothly, moving gracefully along the walkway to pause at the top of the spiralled wrought iron staircase that led to the ground level. "Subordinates are used as display pieces, meant to inspire envy in other Lords when compared alongside each other." Blaine began to descend the steps, Kurt watching as his fingers caressed the banister in a way that seemed highly suggestive, curling his hand around the hard wood.

"I knew you'd be admired of course; your beauty is beyond exquisite.....but I never thought you'd have other talents." He was standing over him now, leaning slightly on the piano lid and running his eyes over Kurt's blushing alabaster skin. "I do believe Mr Hummel, that you may be just what I need."

The temperature in the room seemed to have risen and Kurt felt his skin flush and burn. He was strangely intrigued to find the sensation wasn't entirely unwelcome. He shifted slightly in his seat, ashamed at the stirring in his tight, leather constricted pants at Blaine's weighted words and penetrative stare. The Lord's own face was less controlled now, his lips slightly parted in unchecked desire for the un-tasted mouth. He moved a fraction forward and Kurt flinched violently. He hadn't meant to do it, he wasn't even entirely

sure he could say the heat of the other man's body was unwanted, but the reaction in Blaine was immediate. He pulled back sharply and an oddly hurt look flashed across his face before he had time to correct it.

"Are you frightened of me Kurt?"

Kurt didn't know which answer would stir Blaine the most but decided that honesty was the only way forward. "Yes" he said simply, blue clear eyes holding hazel ones. The other man chuckled slightly unnaturally, attempting to stamp out the little sinking flutter of disappointment he felt at Kurt's admission.

"You do know I am entitled to have you whenever I want, in any way I want don't you Kurt?" he breathed, sliding on to the seat and pressing his thigh against the leather clad muscles. Kurt gulped painfully but forced himself to keep his gaze, not sure whether the fiery heat that was creeping through his body was fear or something else; something much darker that Kurt hadn't known existed in himself.

Blaine was desperate to touch the pale flesh beneath him but he held back, straining to gain the control. Something was throbbing inside him and it was unfamiliar and confusing. Instead, he pulled back slightly, took Kurt's delicate, silky soft chin in his hand and tilted the face up to meet his gaze.

"Are you a virgin Kurt?" The question was simple enough but it made Kurt squirm and flush, desperate to look away. Blaine's fingers remained firm, forcing him to confront the question.

"Yes" Kurt whispered his voice breathy and high.

Feeling a dark heat spread through him at the confirmation of what he already suspected, Blaine smiled dangerously. "Have you ever been touched Kurt?" he stroked his finger down the side of the chiselled cheek and the man beneath him trembled at the sensation. He smoothed the pad of his thumb tentatively over the soft lips and watched in delight as they parted without question and a small gasp of unmistakable lust breathed out. "Have these lips ever been kissed?"

He was so close now that Kurt could see every fleck of changing amber in his eyes and he registered suddenly how beautiful they were. His gaze flicked to his Lord's lips and his tongue darted out involuntarily, catching Blaine's thumb slightly with a tiny lick of heat. Mortified by the wanton groan that spilled from his lips, Kurt wrenched his face away from Blaine's and stumbled back off the stool, shame at

his own body's betrayal making his eyes pool with tears. He couldn't look at him. Couldn't see the hideous smirk of lust and power that he knew would be stretched across the cruelly beautiful face.

"I'm not going to rape you Kurt."

The voice that came out of Blaine was so soft, so utterly different from any sound that he'd made before that Kurt's head snapped up to meet him. Blaine was still sitting calmly on the music stool, regarding Kurt with a slightly quizzical, slightly pained look and it made the other man's breathe hitch. Lord Anderson was looking more human than Kurt had ever seen him and while still irritatingly composed, there was gentleness to him that the other man hadn't thought existed.

For the first time, Blaine Anderson looked exactly like the eighteen year old boy he really was.

Kurt stared at his boots, noticing the light bouncing off the buckles strapped around his ankles.

"I'm **not** going to rape you Kurt." Blaine said again, this time more forcefully and slowly enunciating the words. "In the role as Subordinate you are required to obey me and display yourself to the other Lords by exhibiting your talents, but" he paused. "I will **not** violate you Kurt"

He held his voice steady as he rose from the stool and moved to stand in front of Kurt. He stepped forward again, pressing his full length against Kurt's body and imprisoning him against the bookcase which dug into his shoulder blades. Mouth hovering millimetres away from Kurt's, Blaine breathed long, fluid whispers into the sensitive skin, eyes lust blown and darkly searching.

"Unless...." He licked his lips tantalisingly slowly. "Unless of course, you beg me to....."

Leaving Kurt panting, knees buckled beneath him, Lord Anderson swept out of the room with a low, chuckle that seemed to echo mockingly around the ancient stacks.

When Kurt had finally managed to compose himself and returned shakily to his room, he discovered a typed note carefully presented on his pillow, the words 'Daily Work Schedule' imprinted at the top and a strange sort of timetable beneath. Sighing again at the reality he was now facing, Kurt moved towards the window and the chaise longue Blaine had occupied earlier that day. It seemed so long ago now that he'd

emerged from the shower and discovered the unnerving man sprawled uninvited on his furniture and Kurt shuddered at how quickly he seemed to have adjusted to the place already.

Home seemed a rather distant fairy-tale now.

Settling comfortably into the fabric and angled so he could take in the admittedly spectacular view of the forest, Kurt glanced over the itinerary in his hand. Mornings stated that he was to breakfast with Lord Anderson at eight-thirty and be debriefed on any of the details on events they were to attend that day, if scheduled. He was then given free time to explore the mansion and the grounds, providing he stay within the perimeter of the walls. This time could be spent at his own leisure. Lunch was to be spent again with Blaine in the dining room before Mr. Anderson was to return to his work commitments and Kurt was to be left alone. Most evenings were to be spent at functions with the other Lords and their Subordinates, either in their private homes or at the Council headquarters. On nights when they were not required anywhere, Kurt was still expected to spend the night-time hours with Blaine in the library where Kurt would be requested to entertain the Lord in any way he deemed appropriate.

Looking over the timetable again, Kurt was shocked to see so much of the day could be spent alone and he questioned, not for the first time, Blaine's need of him. He smiled in delight at being afforded so much solitude and while others might have been concerned about feelings of isolation and loneliness, Kurt revelled in it. It had always been his way and Kurt felt most at ease in the familiar comfort of his own presence and calm thoughts.

He let his eyes drift closed quietly and Blaine's honeyed eyes wondered across his mind. Kurt had never been experienced; had spent most of his teenage years alone or with his father and knew nothing of the world really. His father had kept him sheltered and cosseted and while Kurt had thought it protective at the time, he now realised he was woefully unprepared for this new role.

His skin tingled again as he remembered the feeling of Blaine's breath dancing across his lips and the stroke of his thumb, teasing his flesh. He knew about sex of course. The mechanics of it had been explained by his father and the internet several years before, but that was science and biology; it hadn't spoken of gasping breaths and aching pools in the depths of your stomach. On the rare occasions Kurt had explored himself in that way, he had been quick and urgent; he'd not experienced the dark longing and heat of another body pressed into his.

Blaine Anderson had awoken something dark and powerful that day and Kurt wasn't entirely sure he knew how to make it sleep again.

A harsh knock on the door jolted him from his reverie and before Kurt could say anything a young girl entered the room purposefully and strode over to stand in front of him. She was dressed in what looked to be a maid's uniform of a stripped black and white close fitting pinafore dress with black patent heeled shoes and her blonde ponytail scrapped back with a black silk ribbon. Kurt guessed her age to be similar to his own and noted that despite her striking beauty, she carried herself in the same cold, aloof way as all of the other inhabitants of Anderson Manor.

She stared at him appraisingly, running her eyes over his form fitting uniform. Kurt didn't speak; just raised his head in what he hoped was equally cold indifference. Seeming to challenge him with her silence and finding him an equal match, the girl finally relaxed her face into the first genuine smile Kurt had seen in the house since his arrival and he found his body responding instantly to the warmth. She held out her hand gently and motioned for him to take it.

"I'm Quinn." He looked at her quizzically, "I'm the maid." She said smiling in response to his hesitation.

Kurt reached out and took the proffered hand, shaking it smoothly before she withdrew and dug around in her apron, searching for something. She pulled out a piece of thick, gold embossed card which she brandished with a flourish in front of him. He stared at the card before looking up at her with another cocked eyebrow.

"It's your invite." She said simply before noting his still puzzled expression. "For tonight....Wow you really are green aren't you?" She laughed a small trilling laugh that made Kurt relax a little further. "Ok. Look. God I thought Seth had told you all of this. Wow. Right well, you're supposed to be Mr Anderson's Subordinate right?" Kurt nodded, eyes falling slightly at a strangers acknowledgment of it. "Right. So you're supposed to follow him everywhere and tonight he has a function at the Buckley's residence and you're supposed to go so, here. Your invite." She held the card aloft again.

Reaching up tentatively to take it, Kurt couldn't help but smile at her genuine enthusiasm and marvelled at how someone so vibrant could work in such a dower place. "Thank you. I guess."

"You guess? Hey aren't you excited? This is huge? Mr Anderson's never had a Subordinate before...never shown any interest really and so you are like, the first new person to audition for ages." She was gabbling now as she began to pick up the towel from earlier and started to straighten out the bed linen. Kurt watched her enthralled, not wanting to interrupt the flow; thinking he might learn something from her unchecked good-nature.

"Yeah so we were all kinda excited when we heard about you and, you know, wanted to check out the new kid and all that and then, well I got assigned to you and so here I am." She paused in her monologue, turning to look at him again for a brief moment. "I must say I'm not surprised he picked you. You are exceptionally pretty and you'll look amazing together."

Embarrassed Kurt moved to the other side of the bed to help her smooth down the coverlet. "So, Um how long have you been working here?" he decided to side-step the mention of his 'auditioning' and instead found himself intrigued by how someone like Quinn had come to work for Blaine.

"Oh well, I've been here a couple of years now. My parents needed me to go out and work and my father's been working in one of Mr Anderson's factories for like fifteen years and so he called in a favour. It was Anderson Senior that employed me but when he died, well I guess Mr. Anderson decided to keep me. I was lucky. Some of the other Lords get rid of all the previous staff and hire completely new people."

She sounded so genuinely happy to be working in the house that Kurt was momentarily thrown. How could anyone enjoy living in such a controlled and bleak environment without becoming jaded?

"What's Mr Anderson like?" his voice was hesitant but genuinely interested in the response.

Her head lifted slightly and her eyes became serious. Lowering her voice she leant closer over the bed, "Mr. Anderson is not the one you need to worry about. Watch Seth. Always watch Seth." Her eyes had clouded to a darker shade and her entire countenance took on a measure of anxiousness before she grinned again and grabbed at a pillow. "Mr Anderson is O.K really. He seems cold and a bit stiff sometimes but he's fair, leaves us alone mostly and I think that's really important. Plus he's young and is **way** better than his father." She didn't elaborate on the deliberate emphasis she placed when comparing the two Lords but her face clouded again as some darker memory flashed there. She shook herself imperceptibly before carrying on again hurriedly. "Anyway, you know all that right? Otherwise you wouldn't have auditioned to be his in the first place."

She moved off then towards the bathroom, turning on the taps and allowing a thick steam to permeate the room. Kurt stood motionless, thrown by the hurried warning he'd just received and a little dazed by the rapidity of the transformation in the woman who'd delivered it. It took him several moments to register where she was going before he joined her, leaning against the doorframe.

"What are you doing?" he asked, watching her move a little dizzily around the marbled room.

She laughed again and reached for his vest, tugging it over his head before he had time to even protest. "I'm getting you ready idiot." She smiled good-naturedly and lightly smacked his bare forearm, crossed defensively over his now very naked chest.

"Come on, prude. It's nothing I haven't seen before and it's not like I'm going to tap that gorgeous arse of yours is it? You need to be looking the best you've ever looked in your life and it's my job to get you there!" she grinned and winked wickedly before grabbing at his belt.

Chapter Five

The man reflected back in the mirror was so unlike anyone Kurt had ever seen that he took a moment to recognise himself. He had been primped and plucked and buffed to within an inch of his life and whilst he'd always been pretty diligent about his skin-care, Kurt had never managed to make his pale face glow with such polished perfection before.

Quinn was standing off to the side, admiring her handiwork over his shoulder with a look of smug satisfaction as the beautiful man she'd helped to create preened and twirled in the looking glass.

"I don't know how you did this but, my God, you're impressive." Kurt breathed out in a high whispery voice. She laughed lightly again and put her hands on his shoulders to force him to properly take in the full extent of his transformation.

"Honey, I had a pretty impressive base to work with!"

"Are you sure about these clothes though? Won't I be expected to wear a suit or something a bit more conservative?" Kurt turned again, concerned that his current attire was a little risqué for a formal dinner with the other Lords, all of whom Kurt knew were considerably older than Blaine. His hands moved unconsciously to smooth down the tight black T-shirt with mesh panelling slashed in zigzags across it and tugged at the hem which kept riding up and displaying a quick flash of pearly white stomach when he moved. Quinn simply shook her head again at his naivety.

"Kurt sweetheart, do you know nothing about this job you've signed up for? The Lords will be dressed as you expect but your job is to be shown off; you know, like a display piece with a costume and all that! You're supposed to represent Blaine, and as such you need to look deliciously tempting. This." She pointed at the dark silver sprayed-on denim trousers and black biker boots he was currently sporting. "***This***. Will get you noticed by the important people. They'll be drooling into their entrées!" She laughed again but this time there was a flash of something darker in her eyes that Kurt couldn't decipher. He blocked out the quiver in his heart and the bile rising before thinking over what she'd said for a moment.

"But hey, um, won't the...well...aren't the rest of the Lords straight?"

Moving to block Kurt's view in the mirror and standing to face him, Quinn looked up at him suddenly serious. "Kurt, you really don't know much about this world do you?" She picked an invisible fleck off his t-shirt before holding his gaze again. Kurt swallowed and turned an even paler shade of grey. Noticing his distress, Quinn quickly took hold of his hand and pulled him gently to sit on the edge of the bed. She knelt in front of him on the carpet and gripped both his hands in hers.

"Kurt. The Lords...well...they're not really any designated sexuality. They have preferences of course and most are displaying female Subordinates butwell they like everything that is beautiful and exquisite and untouchable. It shows power and wealth and domination and that's way more important than gender." She squeezed his fingers slightly and looked him square in the face. Kurt thought he saw her flinch slightly as she uttered the next words a little more ominously. "They will **ALL** want **you** Kurt. For a start, you're new. You're a new plaything to them. A lot have had the same Subordinates for years. Some alternate but generally they stick to a handful of them which they rotate at different functions. **You**. You're something entirely different. You're Blaine's."

Kurt eyes sparked as he noticed her use of Blaine's name for the first time as opposed to Mr. Anderson or Lord. Her next words sent a chill down his thinly covered spine,

"They're **all** watching Blaine, Kurt. He's too young and he's too new to all of this and that makes him dangerous. He's an unknown. A threat. And **you** Kurt; **you** are the final piece of his power and it will drive them mad with desire to take you."

"Can they?"

"What?"

"Take me. Can they take me?"

Kurt's voice was barely a whisper in the room, his frightened eyes appealing to Quinn. She pulled him into a hug and he collapsed against her warmth, craving the feeling of contact, even if only from this girl who was, until recently, a complete stranger. He found comfort there. She stroked his back gently before moving away to look seriously at him again her voice becoming oddly low.

"There are rules Kurt. They can look. They can admire, but they can't touch you." He sighed out the breath he'd been holding raggedly but froze as she continued. "Unless Lord Anderson says they can."

He'd still not been able to get the ringing of Quinn's ominous words out of his head when he slid into the plush leather seats of the sleek silver Limousine beside Blaine twenty minutes later, the line repeating over and over again. He realised now exactly how much he was at the mercy of the darkly brooding man and it terrified him.

Glancing sideways to take in the profile of his what? Lord? Master?... Lover? Kurt couldn't help but appreciate how stunningly beautiful the man was. His neatly honed and slender shoulders were encased in a simple dark tuxedo that clung to every contour of his sculpted body and his hair curled in softly gelled spirals around his dark hazel eyes. Kurt's breathing was ragged and too fast and Blaine noticed the effect he was having immediately, taking the opportunity to slide his thigh alongside the silver denim and flexing his muscles. Kurt's eyes closed momentarily before he forced himself to focus.

Blaine turned slightly towards him then, shifting his legs so that their bodies were facing each other, his knee pressing more firmly against Kurt's thigh now, and reached for a flat black velvet box tucked in the side pocket of the seat. He held it in front of Kurt expectantly. Pale blue eyes rose questioningly to Blaine's and the other man smiled slowly.

"Open it Kurt. It is for you."

Licking his lips nervously and trying not to quiver at the tingling sensation Blaine's voice stirred inside him, Kurt tentatively reached out and lifted the heavy lid. He gasped. Inside, nestled among folds of crimson satin was a black leather collar, about an inch in diameter and inlaid with a thick silver buckle at one end. Beneath the buckle, Kurt noted a small 'BA' studded in shining metal, discreet but still very much noticeable, inlaid into the strap.

It was at once degrading and disgusting to him, the notion that he was to be collared like an animal..... and yet Kurt was appalled at the small thrill it induced in him. He swallowed nervously and looked up to Blaine's eyes which were now darker than he'd ever seen them.

"It's so people know you're mine." He said low and steady. "You're quite exceptional Kurt, and I need people to see who you belong to. You are my Subordinate, Kurt. Mine."

He knew he should have felt shame at the possessive and sinister ownership of Blaine's words but instead Kurt thought back to the ringing fear Quinn had etched into his brain and felt a strange sort of calm float down over his body. Blaine didn't want anyone else touching Kurt and it made him feel oddly protected.

Taking the collar out of the box and motioning for Kurt to turn around, Blaine moved to place it around his neck. Soft fingers stroked his delicate skin as they wrapped the leather into place and secured it tightly with the buckle, leaving Kurt feeling constricted and shackled but at the same time quivering with heat from the Lord's touch. He swallowed again, feeling the leather pull tighter at his bobbing adams apple and inwardly cringing at how much the motion excited him. Blaine watched his face the whole time, running paths over his flesh and noticing every twitch of desire in Kurt's revealing eyes. He smiled again, almost warmly, as he traced a line across the top of the collar in the motion of a slit across Kurt's throat, the skin prickling beneath his light touch.

"So beautiful, Kurt." He whispered, almost dream-like before turning back to face the front of the car leaving Kurt quivering silently beside him.

The house they pulled up to was similar to Blaine's in grandeur and size but it was newer and somehow seemed more gaudy and obvious than the Anderson's stylish residence. Several sleek black and silver vehicles were parked in the front courtyard, a smattering of chauffeurs leaning against them, smoking and chatting in the cold night air. Blaine felt Kurt stiffen beside him as they neared the property and instinctively moved to still his fingers before registering what he'd done and whipped his hand back again. Gritting his teeth he took a deep breath and turned towards Kurt.

"When we are inside you will only answer when I give you permission. You are to always address me as My Lord and are expected to do whatever I ask of you. None of the other Lords may touch you but they will try to speak to you. Do you understand?" Kurt nodded silently, feeling increasingly small but at the same time hoping desperately that Blaine would stay close to him that evening.

Better a familiar beast than a host of unknown devils.

Blaine suddenly took hold of his face between his hands, thumbs cupping his cheeks and absently stroking them as he connected their eyes. "They will want you Kurt. You can exhibit your talents, speak

intelligently in conversations but always remember you are mine. They cannot touch you. I'm your Lord. Always."

The surge of longing Kurt felt in his stomach bubbled to the surface and he flicked his eyes to Blaine's lips before biting self-consciously on his own. The movement caused a low and dark moan to escape Blaine's throat and he moved forward a tiny fraction, lips hovering over each other but not touching.

"Remember what I said earlier Kurt." He moved slightly, breath trailing over sensitive, throbbing skin and a slight knowing smile playing across his lips. "Only when you beg me to." Kurt's breath hitched and he groaned loudly, no attempt to hide it, as the car door was pulled open and Blaine stepped out calmly into the evening air.

String music was wafting through the entrance hall when they entered and Kurt was struck momentarily dumb by the splendour that greeted them. Chrystal chandeliers were strewn across the ceiling and thick, deep purple velvet drapes hung over the walls of the marbled entrance. They were welcomed by a butler who showed them silently into a larger ballroom, flanked on either side by grand floor-to-ceiling windows which offered impressive views of the painstakingly landscaped gardens, lit up by subtle fairy lights. The room itself was relatively empty of furniture, with the main polished flooring left open for the people casually milling around. In the corner off to the side, the string quartet were playing various background renditions of Debussy adding a dream-like air to the scene, and waiting staff dressed entirely in white were moving seamlessly between groups, constantly filling up glasses and mouths with champagne and canapés.

Kurt allowed himself a moment to take it all in before letting his eyes wander to the people who were dispersed around the room. The Lords themselves were instantly recognisable, all dressed in black tuxedos of varying quality, and Kurt thanked Quinn for her heads-up on the accepted attire that distinguished Subordinates from their masters. They were very much older than Blaine, Kurt noted, understanding now how much they must resent this young, powerfully and broodingly attractive Lord who had entered their sacred fold; Most, he noticed too were generally quite overweight; the trappings of excessive living showing all too obviously on their bloated bodies.

He counted twelve Lords in total, including Blaine, before scanning the room for the Subordinates. These were equally as recognisable for their flamboyant attire, many in various exotic colours, fabrics and in most cases rather revealing clothing, intended to make them stand out and display their best assets. Most were women although a few beautifully carved young men wandered round in clothing similar to Kurt's

uniform. He watched in awed horror as one of the young men, a blonde, tall, chiselled Adonis, dressed only in leather trousers and boots, knelt on the floor beside one of the Lords and proceeded to lick his shoes, slowly and without protest. Kurt's stomach churned as he watched the smug satisfaction spread across the Lords twisted red face as he pulled on a thick silver chain attached to the Subordinates collar.

Blaine's eyes followed Kurt's stare and he felt his own gut twinge uncomfortably at the mortification of the Subordinate. While Blaine knew the necessity of having these servants in order to fully ingratiate himself with the Lord's world, he had never managed to reconcile himself to the cruel and sick ways in which the older Lords exerted their power. Regardless of what Seth told him and trained him to think, Blaine's inner morality struggled with the debased inhumane treatment some Subordinates suffered. Of course, none of this could be outwardly expressed and Blaine allowed an air of detached indifference to settle on his face.

One of the Lords, rather tall in stature and slimmer than most of the others approached Blaine with a grin plastered on his face that Kurt noticed didn't reach his eyes. Almost instantly, Blaine's hand moved to the small of Kurt's back and he pulled him a fraction closer, keeping his hand in place. The warmth from his palm settled something in Kurt that had been jumping nervously and once again he felt calmed by the possessive touch of Blaine Anderson.

"Lord Anderson, I'm so glad you could make it to tonight's soiree." He simpered, a rather limp hand reaching out for Blaine to take hold of, all the while looking at Kurt in ill-concealed fascination. Blaine nodded his head in acknowledgement and pressed a little tighter into Kurt's skin. "Lord Buckley." he said smoothly.

The other man's eyes had not left Kurt, had unashamedly roved across his body, stripping every remaining shred of clothing off him with his eyes, and he licked his lips lasciviously.

"And I see you've finally brought yourself a Subordinate." He said, voice snaking around Kurt and making him squirm inwardly. "He is *quite* delicious, Anderson. You must tell me where you found him." His hand was quivering at his side and Kurt could see how much the older man wanted to touch him, claim him and mark the thing that was Blaine's, but tradition and rules of propriety imprisoned him. He watched Blaine's jaw clench as the other Lord reached out his hand and asked "May I touch him, Lord Anderson?" in a shaky, lust-filled voice.

"No, you may not." Blaine's voice was authoritative and the power of it surged through Kurt and made his legs tremble. "Kurt is my Subordinate only and is not for exchange or hire at this current time." The

response was courteous but firm and Lord Buckley moved back, slightly in cold acquiescence but Kurt couldn't fail to register the glint of anger that flashed across his face. Strike one for Blaine Anderson.

"Does he speak?" he asked levelly, eyes once again falling to Kurt's lips.

Blaine looked to Kurt whose eyes, he noted, were angled respectfully at the floor and pressed a little further into his back. "Of course. Kurt, you may answer this man's questions."

Although his voice was its usual cold and bored tone, Kurt could detect an element of pride in his Lord and there was still an obvious gentleness to the hand that was rubbing tiny circles into the sensitive flesh of his lower back. Suddenly Kurt didn't want to disappoint in his role. He wanted to help exhibit Blaine's power amongst these stuffed and pompous relics and show just how formidable he could be. He raised his eyes and looked the other Lord square in the face challengingly.

As if thrown by Kurt's penetrating blue stare, Lord Buckley stammered a little before he cleared his throat. "Why did you choose to work for Lord Anderson Kurt, when you could have any number of older, more experienced Lords competing to own you?" There was a sneer in his voice as he attempted to belittle Blaine. Kurt tensed and felt a surge of loyalty that took him by surprise. He maintained a passive facial expression but answered clearly and confidently.

"I wanted to work for someone powerful..... and **young**," he said pointedly, emphasising Blaine's youth and angling his face up defiantly, enjoying the flash of anger that he saw in the other man.

"And what kind of talents do you possess, aside from the obvious of course?" Lord Buckley slid his eyes over his body again.

Kurt looked to Blaine for confirmation he could speak and Blaine nodded slightly, the unspoken exchange not lost on the older man who seemed irritated by Kurt's obedience to the young Anderson. "I speak French and Spanish fluently," Kurt spoke calmly. "And I can sing and play the piano."

The older man looked amused by this new Subordinate with his strange submissive defiance, and whilst they'd been speaking a small crowd of three other Lords had circled, interest sparked by the pale faced, ethereal boy attached to Lord Anderson. Another Lord, this one sporting the tell-tale red face of alcoholism, moved forward and addressed Blaine.

"Make him perform for us during dinner. I want to see this new Sub do all that he says he can."

Blaine's eyes flashed with something Kurt didn't recognise before the young Lord flicked his wrist towards the piano and said in a controlled voice "Kurt. Play". Without question, Kurt moved towards the piano before he felt a tug on the back of his collar, choking him slightly. He froze as he heard Blaine's low, mocking voice, the one he used to show absolute control, speaking smoothly behind him. "Take off your shirt." Kurt's heart sank a little as the shame washed over his face and he lowered his eyes to the floor. He'd thought Blaine was in some way protecting him but now he felt the familiar twisting in his gut at the reality of his misplaced trust.

Feeling his eyes start to brim with tears, Kurt forced himself to remain steady. He would not show weakness in this society. Kurt Hummel was better than that. Reaching for the hem of his t-shirt, Kurt kept his eyes levelly on Blaine, who stared back with a practised look of nonchalance, and pulled the shirt over his head in one fluid motion. He breathed in a deep but shaky breath to steady himself and willed his arms to stay by his sides, all the while feeling his skin crawl as several eyes devoured him. With a confidence he no longer truly possessed, Kurt strode purposely over to the grand piano in the corner of the room and positioned himself on the stool, stretching his fingers and rolling his neck slightly, desperately trying to block out the sound of audible moans that rippled across the room at the twitch in his muscles.

This was Kurt's domain; his power, his control, and he mustered the strength that playing usually brought, relaxing his shoulders and allowing himself to drift off into his own fairy tale. Mozart flowed from his fingers and wrapped around the men and women in the room, all rendered immobile by the soft power of the melody.

Something stirred amongst the men and Kurt played on, oblivious.

"Seth was right about you."

An arm reached across him, barricading Kurt's attempt to exit the bathroom and the voice snaked around the enclosed space. They were entirely alone; he'd been granted permission to use the toilet by Blaine during dinner and had found himself in a gaudy, gold and black tiled restroom situated on an upstairs level of the house.

Kurt's heart thumped as he forced himself to meet Lord Buckley's lecherous smirk. The solid bulk of the man blocked his way and Kurt felt claustrophobic, fear fluttering in his chest as he kept his eyes to the floor.

"He said you were a real piece of work, but I hadn't really believed him." Lord Buckley continued, smirking at Kurt's obvious discomfort and refusal to speak. The mention of Seth's name intrigued Kurt but he was too vulnerable and unprotected at that moment to fully understand the implications of Blaine's advisor's involvement with the other Lord. He maintained his assessment of the tiles beneath his boots and tried to extricate himself.

"I have to return to Lord Anderson." Kurt whispered quietly.

The older man laughed, his eyes raking over Kurt and his tongue darting out to lick his lips in a serpent-like movement that made Kurt cold. "Lord Anderson is otherwise engaged." He said, inching closer and pressing his body against the pale Subservient, imprisoning him against the wall, the sink pressing uncomfortably into Kurt's back. He was taller than Kurt and his form loomed over him as he leaned forward and breathed his stale breath onto Kurt's face.

"Your young Lord really should learn to share his things. You are far too delicious an object to not hire out."

His finger traced Kurt's still naked chest, running over his nipple and making Kurt's eyes tear as disgust rolled through him. Kurt longed to push him off, to defend himself as he would normally but he felt lost and broken in this world of Submissives and power and found himself entirely frozen. His eyes stung as he felt his nipple pinched painfully between the fleshy fingers and he felt a wave of nausea flood his stomach.

"Y..y..you can't touch me." He said shakily. His obvious distress seemed to thrill the other man and he laughed cruelly as he pressed his full length against him and moved his lips to Kurt's neck, sucking at the untouched skin as Kurt squirmed in disgust away from him.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?!"

Blaine's voice was darkly violent and sent Lord Buckley leaping back from Kurt's body as if stung. Kurt remained panting and struggling to hold down the revulsion that was twisting his stomach, hand clenching the sink behind him and eyes flickering terrified between his master and the other Lord.

"You were denied permission to touch him and yet you took it anyway." Blaine growled out in a voice that made Kurt's skin prickle with fear. Lord Buckley, however, had since regained his composure, smiling languidly at the younger Lord and straightening his bowtie, feigning indifference to the scene.

"You should control your Subordinate more." He said, eyes sliding to Kurt and twisting his mouth into a distorted leer. "He was just begging me to give him what you obviously haven't yet."

Whimpering in undisguised anguish, Kurt dragged his eyes to Blaine, imploring him not to believe the words of the older Lord and at the same time feeling disgust tug at his heart as he realised he cared that Blaine thought well of him. Blaine didn't look at him, his fixed stare boring in to the taller man's victorious face.

"Kurt, go out to the car." He said gravely.

Without needing any further excuse to leave the stifling room, Kurt pushed off from the sink and ran past the two men, desperate to escape the clawing at his heart and the crawling sensation over his skin. When he finally felt the cool leather against his naked back, Kurt allowed his breath to hitch in a broken sob that wrenched from his throat, and all of the self-loathing of the last twenty-four hours poured out of him in ragged gasps. He clutched at the seat, unable to breathe as he gagged twice, clenching his jaw shut against the urge to vomit.

It was in this condition that Blaine found him, moments later when he slid smoothly into the seat beside him and demanded the driver take them home through gritted teeth. He didn't look at Kurt while the other man struggled to regain his composure, but Kurt could see the muscles in his neck straining against his anger.

"I..I'm s.....ss...sorry" he gasped through his tears. "I didn't want him to....I..I...didn't let him."

Blaine still didn't look at him and Kurt's heart sank in surrender to whatever fate awaited him at Blaine's retribution for his disobedience. "Am...Am I to be punished?" he whispered, tears dried now but staining tracks down his cheeks.

The air in the car was stifling as Blaine turned finally to look at him. He followed the blotched and wrecked skin of Kurt's face with his eyes before reaching up and tracing a finger along one of the tear stains. His face was tense and rigid but his eyes suddenly softened in a way Kurt had never seen before.

"I'm not going to punish you, Kurt." He spoke gently and so unlike the callous figure he'd presented inside that Kurt trembled a little. This man had the power to completely disarm Kurt with a touch and a kind word and the knowledge made the Subordinate dizzy.

"Kurt, I know he touched you without permission. I was expecting it really. I knew they'd want you and Lord Buckley's the worst. I came looking for you for that reason." He still cupped Kurt's cheeks, thumbs stroking the fresh tears that the boy couldn't seem to get under control. "He will not touch you again Kurt." He said, voice steely and hard.

Kurt whimpered a little, not quite able to meet Blaine's searching eyes but longing for comfort, for some form of gentle touch or hold that would eradicate the violation he felt crawling over his skin. Without questioning the fact that such comfort should be sought in the form of Blaine, a man who was both master and jailor to the young Subservient, Kurt flung himself into his arms and curled up trembling against his chest.

Startled for the briefest of seconds, Blaine remained frozen, arms stiff at his sides as the young boy attempted to claw his way into his skin, burrowing in and drenching his shirt with fresh tears. Human contact was alien to Blaine, his upbringing one of awkward shoulder pats and absent affection, and so faced with a sobbing, broken man his initial reaction was to repel the figure from him.

Despite the overwhelming need to flinch away, Kurt's vulnerable form and so trusting display stirred something in Blaine that he'd never experienced before, and with awkward hesitation the young Lord's arms wrapped carefully around the shaking shoulders and held on. The warmth of Kurt's flesh caused an electric reaction in Blaine and he suddenly pulled harder, grabbing the quivering boy into him further and stroking his back, feeling the muscles physically release beneath his touch.

"Please." Kurt's voice was scratchy and he choked out the plea into the darkness of Blaine's chest, not knowing what he was asking for but knowing he needed something. Anything. More. Blaine pulled back sharply and grabbed either side of Kurt's face, wrenching his head up to meet his searching gaze.

"What, Kurt? What do you want?" His voice was low but whispery and for the first time Kurt could detect a hint of vulnerability in the unfamiliar tone. His eyes were dark, pupils dilated and blown-wide as he shook Kurt gently, his fingers burning into the white cheeks. "What do you want, Kurt?" he growled again.

Wrapped in the darkness of his new world, Kurt succumbed entirely to his throbbing skin. A wide cavern seemed to open in front of him, flames licking at his flesh, melting morality and reason. Nothing from his former life seemed to remain anymore. Not his father. Not his home. Not his conscience. Standing on the edge of it all, Kurt stretched out his arms and jumped into the abyss.

"Kiss me, my Lord" he begged darkly.

Chapter Six

"Kiss me my Lord."

The dark pleading of Kurt's voice mixed with the innocent vulnerability of his sparkling eyes that looked up at Blaine through heavy-lidded lashes sent a bolt of heat straight to the other man's groin. Blaine wavered momentarily, caught between wanting desperately to seize the mouth beneath him immediately and the twisted desire to enact his control over his begging Subordinate. Somewhere deep inside him, Seth's voice twitched a muscle and Blaine steeled himself. He dropped Kurt's face from his hands and pulled back calmly, exercising a control he no longer felt. The hurt of the rejection that flashed across Kurt's face almost made him relent but the darker part of him knew that this was what needed to be done.

The fragile, pale boy let his eyes fall dejected and ashamed to his lap and his eyes burnt with self-loathing. Nothing in the last day had made him feel more insignificant, more revolted at himself, than at that moment. He stared bleakly out of the window, visibly shrinking into the leather.

"When we get home you will wait for me in my bedchamber."

Blaine's voice startled him, the words taking a while to sink past his embarrassment and register in his head. He felt his skin prickle as nervous energy sparked through him, fear rippling across his body at what Blaine would do with him under the cover of darkness, having just rejected his such blatant advances. Ever the docile Subordinate, he voiced none of his fears, just kept his head down and whispered, "Of course, Lord Anderson".

Kurt had been standing in the centre of Blaine's room for forty-seven minutes.

When they'd arrived home, the young Lord had immediately entered his study and closed the door behind him, ignoring Kurt entirely. A silent manservant had appeared and without introduction lead Kurt upstairs and showed him to Lord Anderson's room, saying only 'You are to wait here.' before removing himself and shutting the door with a sharp click.

Kurt had never been in Blaine's room before and had taken the opportunity to fully digest his surroundings. If he'd been hoping for some sign of the true nature of his master to be revealed in the intimacy of his bedroom, he'd been sorely disappointed; the room displayed nothing except what Kurt already knew; that Blaine Anderson was a powerful and very wealthy man with very little time or inclination for the personal.

The space was large and rectangular, occupying an entire corner of the East wing of the mansion. Decorated in a rich red flock wallpaper displaying exotic oriental designs, the room seemed stifling and claustrophobic, the designs appearing like scars scratched into the skin of the house and bleeding onto the thick pile of the maroon carpet. Kurt's eyes had immediately fallen on the bed, an enormous, four poster forged out of heavy black iron that twisted into an elaborate pattern of fretwork marking out the headboard. Flimsy white drapes hung from the roof of the bed, and were currently billowing and snapping in the icy breeze that drifted in from the open window, searing goosebumps across Kurt's still naked chest.

Forty-nine minutes ticked by on the clock above the fireplace that he stood in front of, gilded cupids dancing across the face and seemingly mocking Kurt in their cherubic innocence. He hugged his arms across his chest and continued to wait.

Three minutes later the door behind Kurt clicked open and the air in the room sparked with a strange current. The Subordinate didn't move, couldn't turn round, remaining frozen and beginning to tremble with thoughts of what was about to happen. Blaine stood, watching the exposed muscles of Kurt's back clench with each uneven breath and felt his body ache.

He walked purposefully towards Kurt, watching as he flinched when the door snapped shut leaving them entirely imprisoned.

"Turn around, Kurt." his voice growled low and with a hint of threat.

Quivering under the strange spell that Blaine seemed to cast over him with his voice, Kurt obeyed, twisting on the spot until he was face to face with the dark eyes of his Lord. Blaine's hand reached up and he slid his finger underneath the tight leather of the collar, using it to pull Kurt closer towards him. The Subordinate swallowed thickly, struggling under the pressure of the now too tight neck restraint and ashamedly feeling the familiar stirrings of desire pooling in his stomach.

"Ask me again." Blaine demanded, lips hovering dangerously close over Kurt's.

Without thought or reason Kurt heard himself respond, heard the ragged groan ease out of his throat and the same desperate plea spill from his mouth.

"Please...please...kiss me, my Lord."

Hot lips crushed against his as Blaine captured his mouth, slamming the breath out of Kurt as he held him steady by the collar. His tongue immediately pushed against Kurt's closed lips, forcing its way inside and delving into the waiting depths of his wet heat. It was demanding and intoxicating and Kurt felt himself dissolve under the expert administrations of the other man's mouth, moaning wantonly and sliding his own tongue hesitantly alongside the Lord's.

Kurt had imagined his first kiss to be tentative and sweet, a gentle foray into young love and tiptoeing around desire, but this; this heat and need and want and fierce desperation was something he'd never imagined. This was dark and like a drug and Kurt wanted to drown in it. He whimpered needily when Blaine pulled back sharply, trying to nuzzle forward and capture his lips again.

Blaine chuckled darkly. "Be patient, Kurt. Be patient."

He stepped back and let his eyes wander over the now flushed and panting body of the man in front of him. Kurt squirmed under the scrutiny, feeling once again sacrificial and violated, and yet his achingly hard cock betrayed his desire for it all. A controlled smile slid across Blaine's lips as he let his eyes linger on the ill-concealed bulge straining against the silver jeans and felt his own cock twitch in impatience.

"Do you want me to fuck you, Kurt?"

A wave of fear gripped Kurt at the slightly sinister undertone to Blaine's voice, but at the same time a breathy whine escaped his lips and his eyes fluttered closed at the promise of what lay ahead. Blaine smiled again, slow and knowing.

"Do you want me to take you, Kurt? Do you want me to impale you and stab into you and make you feel me deep inside you?"

Kurt was trembling openly now, both terrified of the hinted pain and brutally excited by the filth of the words spilling from Blaine's tongue. Somewhere in the very back of his conscience Kurt could hear his

father's voice and shame surged through him at what he was doing, what he was feeling. He almost managed to pull himself back to morality and reason and sense but Blaine's voice continued and his next line rendered Kurt irreparably lost.

"Do you want me to possess you, Kurt?"

Fire surged through Kurt and he whined low and desperate, his cock now crying out for release and pressing oh so achingly against his too-tight jeans. His knees buckled slightly and Blaine took hold of his hips roughly, spinning him around and sinking his mouth down over the vein throbbing in his neck. He sucked hard against the flesh, feeling the blood drawing to the surface and marking Kurt as his. Always his. The boy sagged against him, wrecked and rolling his neck back to allow Blaine more access, a guttural groan wrenched from his wide open mouth. Licking a trail along the underside of the collar, Blaine drew fiery patterns into Kurt's untouched flesh, searing his mark against the pale skin and biting down hard.

"You're mine" he growled repeatedly against Kurt's ear before wrenching himself off and pushing Kurt against the bedpost, his body pressing its full length against the curve of Kurt's back. Kurt gasped as he felt Blaine's hard length rutting against his ass and involuntarily pushed back against it. He didn't know what was happening to him. Part of him was deeply ashamed for what he was allowing, no - *begging* for Blaine to do to him and the other part, the darker, more vocal part was just screaming out for the touch and the heat and to be claimed. He whined again when he felt Blaine pull back.

"Take your clothes off for me, Kurt."

Shaking fingers moved to the buckle of his belt as Kurt locked eyes with Blaine, now sitting composed on the edge of the crimson silk quilt. He didn't hesitate as he removed the belt and slowly undid the jeans, sighing in relief as he eased them down his thighs and tugged them off along with his back boots, his painfully hard cock springing back up to hit against his stomach.

He'd never been naked in front of another man and the slow and intense slide of Blaine's eyes over his exposed flesh made him feel more shamefully vulnerable. Lord Anderson licked his lips and reached up slowly to untie his bowtie, leaving it draped around his neck but releasing his dress shirt collar. There was something so sinfully indecent about Kurt's starkly exposed, pale flesh against Blaine's fully clothed body it made him shiver with longing and he rose gently, stepping to the side away from the bed and moving behind Kurt.

"Bend over the bed Kurt, with your hands on the quilt." He said darkly, breathing into Kurt's ear seductively. Kurt's eyes slid closed and he felt himself stiffen in fear of what Blaine was about to do. He turned his head slightly, looking nervously around into the Lord's face and was surprised to find warm, lust blown eyes staring back at him. "I'm not going to rape you, Kurt." He said again, repeating the words from the library earlier that day and snaking his hands around Kurt's body from behind, holding him slightly, stroking his sides in an almost gentle caress. Kurt sank back against him and allowed himself to be walked forward and bent carefully over the bed, feeling strangely calmed by the warmth of Blaine's body, hunched over his back and offering no protest when he felt his tongue licking a path down his spine.

Cold air breathed across his skin as he felt Blaine pull away and step back. "So beautiful." Blaine whispered through his now lightly laboured breaths as he let his gaze slide over the tight curve of Kurt's ass, inserting his knee between Kurt's legs and nudging them slightly apart. "Open up for me, Kurt." he said, his voice low and darkly powerful.

Kurt gulped down a nervous swallow as he heard a click of a bottle lid behind him before he felt slick, wet fingers sliding gently up and down between his cheeks. He gasped at the sensation, his body pressing back for more before his brain could really process what he was feeling, and then short-circuiting all together when he felt the swirl of the digit against his tight hole. He moaned brokenly at the gentle pressure, longing for more. "Please.....ungh...please" he gasped, not even sure what he was begging for. It was enough though, as Blaine finally lost his control and an animalistic growl was wrenched from his throat.

Placing one hand firmly against Kurt's hip and holding him in place, Blaine gently eased his index finger into the achingly tight heat of Kurt's ass. The sensation was at once alien and foreign to Kurt and his immediate instinct was to rebel against it and expel it from his body. He moaned brokenly and tried to pull away but Blaine held him firm, leaning over to kiss against his neck again as he waited for him to relax. Gritting his teeth and forcing himself to breathe more deeply through the intrusion, Kurt finally allowed his muscles to relax slightly, feeling Blaine draw the finger out slowly before pushing it back in again. Becoming more used to the strange feeling, Kurt began to keen against the sheet, needing to feel something more; more pressure; more stretch. He rutted back sharply on the digit and whined into the silk. "More Blaine, more" he begged, not even registering that he'd used Blaine's first name, not caring about anything except the other man's ever-probing finger.

Not wanting to admit how much the sound of his own name spilling from Kurt's lips had turned him on, Blaine squeezed tighter on the pale hip he was clenching and pushed back into Kurt more forcefully, this time with two fingers. Kurt yelped at the sudden pain the additional stretch caused him and Blaine stilled

again as he let him adjust, forcing himself to remain in control and not to just plough into the achingly tight heat that was clenching around his fingers. Listening to Kurt's soft whimpers, Blaine began to scissor his fingers, watching intently as the muscle walls contracted and expanded around his administrations.

Without stopping to check this time or wait for Kurt's consent, Blaine withdrew and added a third finger, knowing this would hurt but needing to stretch Kurt fully. His eyes drifted closed against the broken sob of pain that strangled out of Kurt's throat at the intrusion, and he instinctively reached round to grip Kurt's cock, attempting to ease the burn with a few hard tugs. The sudden relief Kurt felt at finally having his neglected cock touched took away some of his attention from the searing pain in his ass, and he let out another wanton groan of longing. Blaine released him again and leant down to nibble at the top of the other man's spine, kissing him with a gentleness that made Kurt's heart flutter and a warmth spread through him. Very carefully, Blaine changed the angle of his fingers, curling them up slightly to drag across the cluster of nerves deep inside him.

Kurt yelped. His entire body jolted with pleasure at the brush across his prostate and he thrust back sharply on Blaine's fingers, fucking himself down on the digits, incoherent sounds tumbling from his lips. The sight was too much for Blaine who increased the pressure of his fingers, sliding relentlessly over the inner wall and shaking with lust at the sight of Kurt's writhing back beneath him.

"Shit...Fuck....I'm going to ...please. More."

Blaine stilled his fingers at Kurt's broken words, the control pouring back over him as he steadied himself. He leant forward and breathed his hot breath into Kurt's ear.

"You will **not** come, Kurt. Not until I say you can. Is that clear?"

Kurt whined again, pushing back involuntarily against the fingers that still refused to move inside him, Blaine's words clawing into his skin. Suddenly and without warning, Blaine withdrew his fingers making Kurt scream out in frustration at the loss and emptiness inside him. The sound of the tuxedo trouser zip sliding down made Kurt flinch and he listened as the pants were dropped to the floor and discarded. The Lord smirked a little, delighted at how easily he could make this untouched man fall apart and reached for the bottle again, sliding on a condom before slicking up his cock and moving forward to position it tantalisingly against Kurt's contracting entrance. Kurt's breath hitched and he tensed in fear, knuckles white against the bed sheets as he felt the now clearly naked form of Blaine bending over him.

"You have to ask me, Kurt. You have to beg me, remember?" Blaine whispered, exercising every shred of control he'd been taught and trembling with the effort not to just force his way through that tight ring of muscle. He knew he could just take him. Knew most Lords enjoyed the ultimate power to take what they needed regardless, but Blaine couldn't do it. There were different ways to control and Blaine wanted to hear his innocent, untouched virgin dragged to the point of begging for his master. Kurt turned his head a fraction, eyes heavy and lust blown, burning with need. He abandoned of all former sense and let go of everything.

"Please..God..Please. Fuck me. Please My Lord," The voice that came out his mouth surprised both of them in its darkly sinful tone and Kurt wondered, in a brief moment of coherence who this man was that was laying, splayed and naked and begging to be fucked. Had this been inside him all along? Blaine paused for the briefest moment, stroking Kurt's hips almost reverently before he surrendered and shoved his cock in with as much force as he could muster.

Kurt screamed. His eyes filled with tears at the searing fire that shot through him, the pain forcing every muscle in his body to clench and intensify the agony even further. Blaine gasped as he buried himself entirely in the too tight heat of Kurt's ass and felt his own cock constricted painfully inside the distraught man beneath him. Without thinking Blaine lay his full weight over Kurt, holding him tightly and pressing his face into his back whispering over and over again "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, Kurt. I'm so sorry."

Both men lay utterly still, ragged breaths dragged out of them as they fought together to relax and ease the pain. Blaine's unexpectedly apologetic words and kisses had a soothing effect and Kurt finally felt his body surrender slightly to the intrusion, reminding himself that he'd wanted it. Had begged for it.

As if registering the slight change in Kurt, Blaine pulled back a little and whispered gently against his ear "Can I move?". Kurt nodded unsteadily beneath him and whimpered weakly when he felt the drag of Blaine's cock easing out of him and pushing back in again, this time achingly slowly. There was an unfamiliar tenderness to the way Blaine fucked him now, slow and gentle and so unlike any of the Lord's previous mannerisms that Kurt felt the initial pain sliding away as he relaxed into the increasingly delicious sensations of the cock thrusting in and out.

They fucked slowly, the cool air of the room humming around them and the drape curtains occasionally brushing against Kurt's sensitive flesh, making it tingle. The only sounds that could be heard were the tiny gasps of pleasure from Kurt as Blaine thrust forward each time and the sinful sound of skin slapping against skin in the darkened room. Reaching forward, Blaine slid his fingers against the collar still

wrapped around Kurt's neck, and tugged gently on it, pulling Kurt up and against his chest, feeling their sweat sliding together as he fucked him from behind.

The change in angle meant that Blaine was now hitting repeatedly against Kurt's prostate with each, increasingly more forceful thrust and Kurt grunted out a string of obscenities as his nerves were assaulted, clinging to the back of Blaine's neck and drawing him even more inside of himself.

They'd become more desperate now, all need for gentleness gone, and Blaine drove forward harder and faster feeling the tell-tale coiling in his stomach as he pushed towards his release. Kurt too was now whining a constant stream of incoherence, his cock leaking pre-cum desperately and straining for the relief that Kurt wouldn't allow. Blaine watched in awe as Kurt clenched his teeth against his obvious need to climax, the sight of his obedient Subordinate drawing the aching heat out of him and pushing him to fuck harder and without mercy.

Kurt was wrecked, quivering and shaking with the constant pressure against his prostate and the tight twisting inside him and he begged Blaine to allow him to come, head flung back against the other man's neck and teeth biting down on his lips in gritted concentration. Blaine reached around and captured his mouth in a kiss again, forcing his tongue into the other man's panting mouth and filthily mimicking the same motion of his cock.

"Come for me, Kurt. You can come now."

The words were all it took for Kurt to suddenly explode, his world turning white and streams of come shooting ribbons across the silk bedcovers as he screamed into Blaine's mouth. Losing all remaining control at the sight of Kurt's utter abandonment, the Lord shoved him over the bed again, holding him down against the stained sheets and pounded into his now throbbing ass relentlessly. It took several more violent thrusts before Blaine was crying out Kurt's name and spilling into him, pumping waves of come deep inside and clutching the white flesh of his hips painfully tight as he shuddered against him.

He withdrew almost immediately, collapsing on the bed beside Kurt who was now lying limp and boneless against the sheets. Kurt had never experienced anything so intense in his life and he panted raggedly into the bed linen, trying desperately to form coherent thoughts. He knew that he would be made to leave. That eventually, Blaine would come back to himself and would become the cold detached Lord that Kurt knew he was, but for that moment he wanted to surrender. Wanted to revel in the gentle touch of Blaine's fingers sliding softly over his muscles in his shoulders.

Blaine had turned onto his side and was unthinkingly tracing patterns into Kurt's soft skin, enjoying the contrast of the beautifully pale body lying starkly against the dark red of the coverlet. He kissed a line down his back, ducking lower to blow softly across Kurt's red and raw looking hole trying to soothe the throbbing pain that he knew he'd caused, before moving upwards again and trailing open mouthed kisses around the collar. Time seemed to stand still momentarily and the entire outside world seemed to disappear as both men lost themselves to their own private struggles. Kurt waited for the rejection that he knew would come. He didn't want to turn his head and face it.

The whisper that came out of the darkness seemed to surprise them both in its unfamiliar gentle questioning.

"Will you stay?"

Kurt turned slowly to look at Blaine, the man almost unrecognisable in his sudden smallness and open vulnerability. He didn't say anything, couldn't actually find the words in his choked throat, just nodded his head a tiny fraction and curled himself into the open outstretched arms of his Lord.

Chapter Seven

The first thing Kurt was aware of when he blinked his eyes back into consciousness the following morning was a deep, painful ache inside him and he winced as he stretched his weary leg muscles. The second thing he was aware of was the fact he was completely alone. Blaine was nowhere to be seen and the side of the bed he had previously occupied was cold. Kurt couldn't decide if he was relieved that they would avoid having to confront the so very obvious change in Blaine and his relationship after the night before, or hurt at the rejection that Blaine's absence signalled.

He wasn't stupid; he understood his role and position in the house and somewhere in the logical part of his brain, Kurt recognised that sex was just an inevitable conclusion of his Subordinate job specification. But despite this, Kurt couldn't help his inexperienced heart from yearning for the man who had taken his virginity; the man who had whispered apologies into his neck when he'd been too rough and who'd kissed soothing words into his skin.

Rolling over to look at the clock above the mantle, the cupids this time winking at him in understanding, Kurt registered that he had only half an hour before he was supposed to breakfast with Lord Anderson and hauled himself out of bed. He sucked in a quick breath as his sore ass burned with the movement, before grabbing his discarded clothes from the evening before and heading back to his own bedroom.

Kurt's heart sank as he pushed into the dining room and was greeted by the sight of Seth rather than Blaine sitting at the head of the table. A flash of irritation surged through him at the man occupying Lord Anderson's position and he narrowed his eyes in suspicion. Attempting to pull himself up to his full height, the effect diminished slightly by his pained flinch, Kurt walked forward, inwardly seething at Seth's knowing, sardonic smirk. He slid himself gingerly into the seat alongside the Advisor and feigned nonchalance as he reached for a croissant from the selection laid out on the table. Seth watched him coolly, not speaking.

"Is Blaine working this morning?"

Seth's smile grew slightly wider, reminding Kurt of the Cheshire Cat in his Alice in Wonderland children's book, his eyes becoming darker at Kurt's words. The younger man mentally kicked himself for using Blaine's first name and showing his weakness. He watched as Seth slowly reached for his coffee, taking a measured sip before replacing it with a sharp clink. He let his eyes drift lazily across Kurt's face before he spoke,

"You know Kurt, **Lord Anderson**" he stressed the name, punctuating it with a sneer. "is your employer, not your **boyfriend**." He laughed mockingly, "His whereabouts are not your concern Kurt. You are only to do as he instructs, not ask questions."

Kurt's face flushed, embarrassed and irritated by his own transparency and how pathetic it made him look in the other man's eyes. He swallowed the now tasteless croissant and gulped down some orange juice in an attempt to avoid the penetrative gaze of the Advisor.

"I see he used you properly last night." Seth laughed, puncturing the stale air and twisting his mouth in ill-concealed disgust. "It's expected that a Lord break in new Subordinates quickly and I'm pleased to see Lord Anderson took full advantage of your position." His eyebrow quirked at the suggestiveness of his last words and he seemed amused by his own joke. Kurt squirmed in his seat, trying not to wince but finding it impossible and making Seth laugh cruelly again. "Oh and I see he really did break you in didn't he? Tell me Kurt, did you enjoy it? Did you whine and beg for more?" he sat back in his chair, running his contemptuous eyes over Kurt with utter disdain for the pale boy, physically withering in front of him. He clicked his tongue slightly, fully emphasising his next words and relishing their effect. "Do you like being his paid whore Kurt?"

Tears stung Kurt's eyes at the disgust and shame that surged through him as the other man's words assaulted his ears. He knew it wasn't like that. He'd been there with Blaine and it hadn't been the debased, vulgar thing that Seth was trying to portray it as and yet the small part of Kurt, the part that niggled constantly in the back of his insecurities was screaming at him that he was an idiot. That he was exactly what Seth was saying he was.

Watching Kurt retreat into himself, Seth felt the smug satisfaction settle back over his body, calming the unease that had been wrestling there ever since he'd seen Blaine scurry, furtively from his bedchamber early that morning. The flustered appearance of his little protégée had made Seth's skin crawl in disgust; after four years of careful tutelage he thought he'd created a beast of his own reflection but seeing the

unravelling boy that had emerged after only one night with this nymph in front of him had cemented Seth's need for intervention.

But Blaine Anderson could wait. Kurt was proving far easier to break.

Standing up and stretching deliberately, Seth wandered to the window, still cradling his coffee and casually admiring the frost covered grounds of the manor.

"Do you know how long I've been with this family Kurt?" His change in conversation startled the other boy from his pit of self-loathing, drawing his eyes up to stare at the broad shoulders of the black suit, silhouetted against the untouched snow of the gardens. Seth carried on despite the silence; he knew he had his attention.

"I remember when Lord Anderson was, hmm ...he must have been about seven years old." He flicked his eyes upwards as if trying to recall the memory. "He came striding over to me one morning and declared that his governess needed to be fired. He was all serious faced and clenched little fists." He chuckled and Kurt's skin crawled again. "So I asked him why he wanted to get rid of his governess and he said very clearly and without hesitation because she had answered him back. You see it transpired that Blaine had been asked to produce a piece of writing on the topic, 'My Ambition' and had simply written a one worded response of 'Power' in his assessment. She had admonished him for his insolence, entirely missing the delicious irony that was about to befall her." He turned round then and smiled with raised eyebrows at Kurt who was sitting pale faced and immobile.

"What happened to her?" Kurt whispered, not wanting to speak but appalled by the twisted childhood memory.

"Blaine's father thought it a valuable lesson in power to have the younger Lord fire her himself." He smiled proudly and Kurt stomach turned. "Blaine conducted himself marvellously for one so young; face impassive and disdainful as he dismissed the sobbing woman before him."

Kurt felt an ache in his chest for the damaged little boy forced to grow up too fast in this household utterly devoid of love or kindness. He saw a flash of the clear hazel eyes that had rested on the pillow, inches from his face the night before and the arms that had cocooned him, stroking his back softly in the half-light. Neither version of Blaine seemed entirely real to him now. He was dragged back into the room by Seth's voice, threatening and cold.

"You see Kurt. Blaine Anderson is used to power. It is all he has ever known and he will ruthlessly ensure he maintains it. Whatever you think happened last night, however you want to see it, it was just another exercise in power for him. You're a business contract Kurt. Nothing more. You are nothing to him. Understand that. You are nothing."

The icy wind bit into his skin and whipped up fresh tears as Kurt wondered aimlessly around the little rose garden situated at the back of the West wing. He'd stumbled out of the dining room moments after Seth had swept out, leaving Kurt's crumpled and worthless body disintegrating on the floor, gasping for the need for air in his lungs and for a way out. Bitterness descended over his heart as he realised he'd sought freedom, something he would never have again, in this tiny, manicured space within his walled prison.

Frost coated the delicate petals, preserving them in its frozen embrace and his boots crunched heavily in the freshly fallen snow as he weaved in and out of the thorny bushes and soft folds. Brushing the light dusting of snow off the bench that was situated deep within the centre of the garden, Kurt gingerly sat down, hissing with relief at the numbing cold that seeped into his leather trousers. He shivered uncontrollably; the degrading 'uniform' he was required to wear served little protection from the wintry elements and Kurt had been forced to grab a fur blanket from the foot of his bed to wrap ineffectually around his exposed arms and torso. He hugged it tighter now, feeling the cold invading his skin and freezing the blood in his veins, suffocating the airways. He closed his eyes, savouring the delicious numbness. Removing all feeling, all shame.

"Kurt can I come in for a moment?"

His father's voice was hesitant, a timid knock accompanying the gentle tone, and Kurt was immediately nervous. His father had always been so gruff and together and to hear the hitch in his voice, seemed to only indicate bad news to Kurt. Memories from years before when a similar hesitant knock had jolted him awake and transformed their lives forever, surged into his head and he swallowed heavily.

The familiar bald head appeared around the doorframe and a tight smile was offered before Burt Hummel finally steeled himself and entered his son's bedroom. Kurt was sitting cross-legged on the bed, surrounded by papers and text books and he pushed some of them aside and indicated that his

father could join him. Burt perched awkwardly on the edge of the bed his head bowed and staring at his fingers, restless in his lap.

"What's up dad?" Kurt's voice came out a little strangled, more breathy than normal betraying his nerves and Burt Hummel looked up sharply, his grey eyes meeting Kurt's in what he hoped was a reassuring look. He coughed uncomfortably and forced himself to continue.

"Kurt. Well. I've...um....you're getting older now and, well I guess I need to umm... your mother always said she'd do this but she's not here and so well, ... I think it's time we had a chat about" he cleared his throat again. "well, about sex."

Kurt flushed crimson at his father's words, instantly hugging his legs a little tighter to his chest and spluttering out a stream of protests as to how unnecessary it was, how he'd already read the pamphlets his father had picked out the year before, outlining the 'science' of gay sex; he tried desperately to look anywhere except at the older man in front of him.

"Kurt the world's not the place you believe it to be." His father interjected a little more fiercely than he'd intended, running his hand over his face and suddenly looking very weary and tired of everything. "I know you want to bury your head in the snow and just live in this little bubble we've created but you can't Kurt. I'm.....Well I'm not going to be here forever bud."

Kurt looked away, embarrassed and nervous at the sudden serious turn in the conversation and felt a coldness settle over his heart at his father's words. He knew that the world outside of their little sphere was cruel and harsh. He knew that from the desperate pleas of the homeless people he passed on the way to the grocery store and he knew it from the hard, bitter faces of the women that populated the darkened street corners when they drove by late at night. He knew it from the peeling paint and violent graffiti that seeped over the cracks of the town and he knew it from the broken faces of the workers as they trudged to the factories. He knew that power had corrupted the cities and that he lived in a world where a privilege few lorded over the masses.

But Burt had always allowed him to block it all out. Had helped to create a sanctuary between their home and the garage and they'd built pretty strong defences against the outside world. Why was he now trying to knock them all down and why did any of it have to do with a discussion on sex?

Burt watched the fear descend over his son and reached for his hands. He squeezed them tightly and softened his voice slightly. This wasn't going to be easy but he needed his son to be prepared. "Look buddy, this isn't THAT sort of a chat ok. Like you said, we did that a while ago and I know you are...um...informed on the specifics of all that." He waved his hand around dismissively and forced himself onwards. "But I need you to know how the world operates. How the Lord's operate."

Kurt looked up intrigued at the mention of the Lords. They weren't a subject often broached in the Hummel household and he watched his father flinch as he said the word through clenched teeth. "What have the Lords got to do with me dad? With our lives? With sex?" he said levelly, fixing his eyes on his father.

Burt shifted again a little uncomfortably. "Kurt, you're special. Of course I'm going to say that, I'm your father, but Kurt you need to listen to this. You're pretty unique" he laughed a little with soft pride, "in every way, and well, people are going to want to take advantage of that. In this world, beauty is worshipped, a commodity, a prize to be obtained or bought and you're going to be coveted Kurt. People will want you." He shifted again awkwardly at the words and Kurt flushed a little darker.

"But dad, I'm not going to be mixing with those people. I live here, with you and the garage and if I'm lucky I'll maybe meet some average guy in town one night who'll work in the factories and...."

"..... no Kurt. You don't understand. Once you're out there. In the real world, as an adult. You won't be protected." His father interrupted aggressively, his voice rising slightly. Kurt flinched, shocked at the outburst.

"I don't think you understand what I'm trying to say here Kurt" he continued a little more gently. "When you're out there. When you're facing all those dark figures that lurk and prey, you need to be strong Kurt. In this world, people will take advantage and they'll offer you everything tempting to bite that fruit. Once they see you Kurt, they'll use every trick in their power to ensnare you and you need to resist them. You need to know you matter more than what they're offering. Every time they make you do something, you'll be losing a little piece of yourself. Always remember that Kurt." He shook his head sadly, squeezing his son's hands again. "I don't want you to be scared of the world" he paused "but I also don't want you thinking that everyone is like you. Not everyone is as good or as pure of heart as you bud"

Tears had begun to sting Kurt's eyes at his father's words, fear of being left alone someday, fear of not being able to trust people around him and somewhere deep down a fear that he wasn't going to be able to be as strong as his father thought he was. He looked up again as his father pulled him into a tight hug.

"Power and wealth is a sickness and it sucks people under Kurt. Don't let them make you nothing. Don't let them take you with them."

A tear trickled from the corner of Kurt's lashes, sliding silently down his porcelain cheek and dripping off his chin into the white snow below. His father's face swam before his closed lids and he shivered once again. Reaching out his fingers he stretched towards the nearest flower, a deep violet rose with heavy set thorns adorning the stem. His father would be so disgusted with him. He'd barely lasted twenty-four hours before he had succumbed to all that he'd been warned of. He'd not *let* them drag him down; he'd jumped, a full body leap into the yawning chasm of power and lies and lust and sex.

Sliding his hand along the brutal stem, Kurt sliced a deep scratch into his palm, watching the blood pool, dark and ominous against the white flesh. It looked black against his skin, against the virgin snow at his feet, where it splashed like tears.

Kurt Hummel watched the black ink inside him seep to the surface and allowed the numbness to shroud his pain. Inside the beast waited.

Blaine slammed the safe door, listening with grim satisfaction as the heavy metal lock clanged back into place and the alarm beeped on again. His jaw was clenched tight and the muscles in his neck were taught and painful as he took the papers he'd removed and slumped back into the leather chair behind the mahogany desk. Placing the documents on the table, he pushed his hand through his unruly curls which he'd forgotten to gel down his morning, such was his hurry to leave Kurt, and sighed. The pale eyes swum into his head again and he closed himself to them, clenching his fists in frustration. The sounds of Kurt breathing his name in panted whispers, clamoured at his ears and he felt the telltale twitch of feeling stirring his stomach again. Pressing his palms more forcefully into his eye sockets, he tried to block out everything he'd done and said the night before.

Blaine Anderson had never lost control.

And yet he had. He'd lost control when he'd heard the darkly wanton words of need spilling from Kurt's lips; he'd lost control when he'd forced his way into that tight heat and felt the delicious clench of the other boy around him, clutching at him despite the torturous pain he'd so obviously caused. He'd lost control when he'd whispered murmurs of apologies into the fragile back of the boy quivering beneath him, his own heart aching with something unfamiliar and unwelcome.

But mostly he'd lost control when he had asked Kurt to stay with him.

Blaine groaned in irritation at his own weakness. He was a Lord. He had a Subordinate and as such was supposed to exhibit absolute power and pursue only his own needs and desires. Blaine had felt nothing; for years he'd felt utterly numb when faced with pleas of workers and sobbing employees. No decision had been difficult, regardless of the morality, because each one benefited him and until last night Blaine had never asked for something from another in his life.

For the last eighteen years, Lord Anderson had been entirely numb and had drowned in the delicious nothingness.

But something was awakening inside him and Blaine didn't know what to do about it or how to close it off again. Once again he felt his eyes drift shut and the beautiful image of Kurt, head resting peacefully against the silk pillow of his bed, arms curled around him, flashed behind his closed lids. He'd woken to the soft downy tickle of Kurt's hair brushing against his shoulder, the other boy holding tightly to Blaine's body as he slept on gently, his naked skin pressed warmly against his side. For a fleeting moment something painful had constricted Blaine's chest as the young boy had nuzzled further into his neck, before the cold horror of what he'd allowed to happen sunk in. He'd been gasping for air when he'd finally clicked the door shut behind him, leaving Kurt curled around a pillow instead of his own burning body.

Growling and shaking his head forcefully, Blaine returned his attention back to the files resting on the desk. His father had been dead several months now but Blaine had yet to get round to sorting out his paperwork, too much of his day spent having to deal with minor problems in his inherited workforce instead. Seth had waved his hand dismissively whenever the young Lord had brought up the subject of reading through all of his father's personal files, always seeming to find some more pressing matter for Blaine to have to contend with immediately and leaving the aforementioned task forgotten. For some reason that morning, Blaine had felt drawn to the safe tucked behind the eighteenth century painting in the study and he'd resolutely settled himself to a morning of legalities and financial documents.

Richard Anderson had been an enigma to his son, rarely present and unconcerned with the expected role of a father. His mother was equally as absent, preferring to spend her time with the other wives of the Lords or at the various functions she was obliged to attend and Blaine had spent all of his young life with a string of governesses and nanny's and maids.

At fourteen, when his mother had tragically fallen to her death down the marbled staircase and Blaine had discovered her crumpled body, head split open and spilling crimson paint across the floor, the situation changed again. The young Lord's later development had become the property of Seth. Governesses were no longer required and the final stages of Blaine's transformation had been scrupulously monitored by his father's advisor. Seth, while completely devoid of sympathy or affection had been the closest thing Blaine had come to a father figure his whole life and as such, the young Lord felt a strange loyalty to the man, despite being increasingly suspicious of his character in the last few months.

Drifting back to Kurt involuntarily, Blaine felt a buzz in the back of his brain, the beginnings of a headache thudding monotonously through his thoughts. He wondered briefly if his father had had a Subordinate. He assumed he must have had, since all of the Lords did, regardless of their marital status, but he'd never recalled any additional female present in the house, his father always being fiercely private and discreet. Until now, he'd thought little of the private affairs of his parents, both being such absently hollow figures in his own life, but suddenly Blaine was intrigued about their situation. How had it worked? Where had the Subordinate been kept in the wandering corridors of the vast house?

Lifting the telephone, Blaine rang for Quinn, asking for the pretty young maid to deliver a continuous stream of coffee throughout the morning; he was going to need it if the thickness of the manila folder before him was anything to go by.

Opening the first page of the heavy document, Blaine settled back against the leather and began to read.

It was time to discover who his father really was.

Two hours into rifling through the deluge of paper his father had left behind had given Blaine little more knowledge of the Lord other than the fact that he was extremely disorganised with his financial records. This disorganisation, Blaine suspected was a little more enlightening about the man than it would appear, as most of the chaos seemed deliberate; a way to cover up what Blaine could see was actually a rather

complicated history of embezzlement and criminality. He casually brushed aside another document pertaining to the laundering of a rather considerable sum of money from another of the Lord's companies and fell back against the chair, irritated. He'd thought maybe these files might hold the key to his father and what he'd been like as a man but Blaine had learnt nothing more than he already knew; Richard Anderson was a corrupt and unscrupulous liar of a business man.

Reaching for another sip of coffee, Blaine felt the precariously balanced papers on his lap dislodge, and the contents scattered across the floor. He slammed his cup down in annoyance and got down on his hands and knees to reorganise them before pausing as something caught his eye. A pocket of the manila folder had sprung open, revealing another compartment of the file and holding several new sheets of paper. The word 'contract' leapt out from the corner of one piece and Blaine settled himself down, resting his back against the desk to read over them.

When Quinn entered half an hour later, she found the young Lord agitated and pale and was shocked at the change in his normally so composed exterior. As far as she could see he'd been sat on the floor of the study, behind the desk and had scrambled up nervously when she'd knocked and come in, sending papers flying in several directions with his sudden movement. He stared at her open mouthed, a look of disgust and horror descending over his features before he spoke to her in a grim and dark voice.

"Close the door Quinn, and come and sit down."

She started a little at the use of her name and his acknowledgement of her, so unused to direct address, and hesitated before sinking gingerly into the seat, back upright and ram-rod straight. She stared at her hands as she felt the air in the room drop considerably and close around her. She could feel his eyes boring into her and picked uncomfortably at a piece of dry, cracked skin beside her fingernail, waiting for him to speak.

"How long ago did you come to work here, Quinn?" He said levelly, his jaw clenched tight. She didn't look up but answered in a barely-there whisper.

"Two years, Lord Anderson."

He couldn't help the twist of disgust that distorted his features as the realisation of what he'd learnt fully sank in. He ran his eyes over the pale blond pony-tail, bobbing a little as she trembled with her head down, and watched her fragile and very young shoulders hunch over as if in silent self-preservation. His voice was cold when he spoke next and he watched as a tear dripped onto her knuckle.

"And how old were you when you became my father's sex toy, Quinn?"

The words were unreasonably harsh and he knew it, chosen carefully to elicit just the broken reaction he got out of the girl sat opposite him. Her whole body visibly shrank in on itself in shame and humiliation, and she sobbed out a strangled cry. Something twitched again inside him uncomfortably at her gasped anguish, but he surged on, ignoring it.

"It's all in here," he continued. "Every sordid little part of your contract as his Subordinate. You must have been what - fifteen? Sixteen?" he laughed incredulously. "I didn't realise my father had such specific tastes."

She was sobbing uncontrollably now, her face blotched and etched with the pain of relived memories but still she said nothing, knowing her position. His face changed slightly as he began to piece things together gradually, dawn lighting on his cold eyes.

"He bought you, didn't he? From your father? You were sold by your own father to become a symbol of power. Tell me Quinn, how did my mother feel about this? Did she help conceal you?" he watched her flinch at the mention of his mother, but pushed it aside. "I must say, taking you on as a 'maid' was a stroke of genius. I never suspected my father was hiding his whore in our own servant quarters."

He didn't understand the emotions that were struggling through him; couldn't make sense of the throbbing in his head and the ache in his stomach at the thought of his father with this woman ... this *girl*. The haunting image of his mother, bent at a grotesque angle, neck unnaturally turned towards him and eyes blankly staring, shot into his brain like electricity. A steely tone crept into his voice, one of bitterness mixed with the sour taste in his mouth which he couldn't explain and he had to force the numbness back over him. Without waiting for a response he stood up, looming over the tiny creature curled up in the chair.

"I want you gone. Now!"

Kurt was just entering, shivering from the garden when a blur of blond hair crashed past him, sobbing uncontrollably and stumbling towards the servants wing of the house. Instinctively he reached out his hands to grab her before she fell and held her firmly in front of him, forcing her to look at him,

"Whoa, Quinn what's wrong? Hey ... steady ... **hey** ... come here. Look at me." One look at her broken and utterly destroyed face had him pulling her roughly and protectively in to his strong arms, her mild struggles useless until she collapsed against his chest. Her body shuddered with the force of her heart-breaking cries as she slumped into his weight. While Kurt hadn't been in the household long, he knew that the pair of them stood in the hallway was leaving them open and vulnerable to prying eyes, and he attempted to manoeuvre the now utterly pliant girl into his room.

Positioning her gently on the bed, Kurt watched as she curled up on her side in the foetal position and continued to shiver, letting out every last shred of pain. He took hold of the blanket he'd had slung around his shoulders and placed it softly over her, lying alongside her body but not touching. He knew he didn't know her very well but in this house he also knew she was the closest thing he'd come to a friend or confidant and her clear anguish was tugging painfully at Kurt's already fragile heart. He reached out and wrapped his fingers around hers resting on the bed sheet and waited.

White flurries of snow had begun to fall outside the large windows when Quinn finally stopped crying, her body exhausted and limp. He stroked her hair softly back from her face and watched her dead eyes raise to meet his own.

"Quinn sweetheart, please tell me what's wrong. I know I don't know you very well but please ... I ... I want to help."

He was surprised at the bitter laugh that echoed harshly out of her mouth, "I think we know each other better than you'd think." She said hollowly.

Kurt's brow furrowed with confusion but he just squeezed her fingers tighter. "What happened?"

Taking a deep breath and closing her eyes briefly, she swallowed before fixing her watery gaze on his. "I have to leave, Kurt. Lord Anderson fired me."

"But, why?" Kurt interjected, surprised at the revelation; despite knowing Blaine's ruthlessness, he couldn't think of anything that the young girl could have done wrong. She'd seemed almost happy to be working for Blaine when he'd last spoken to her. She pressed a shaking finger to his lips, holding it there as she watched him with empty eyes.

"Shhh. Kurt. Just listen. There are things you don't know about me. Things about what I was when I came here. About Richard Anderson. Blaine found out something about me and he wants me gone." At the whispered words, she started to shake again and Kurt wrapped himself more tightly around her, pulling her against him protectively. She continued, speaking into the crook of his neck.

"I was a Sub, Kurt. When I came here, I was Richard Anderson's Sub." A small gasp escaped his lips before he had time to check himself but she seemed to ignore it. "I was only fifteen at the time; well about two months before my sixteenth birthday actually ... and ... he bought me. I came to live here under the pretext of being a new maid because he said he didn't want his son knowing about me." She looked on the verge of tears again and Kurt murmured something unintelligible but soothing into her ear, encouraging her to continue.

"**She** knew about me. Hated me and went out of her way to make my life hell but she couldn't do anything about it. None of the wives can. This isn't their world as much as it isn't ours. I was hidden away most of the time and then just wheeled out in the evenings to accompany him. I only ever saw Blaine in my capacity as maid. He rarely saw his parents anyway and they were completely indifferent towards him so paths never crossed. I wasn't even sure he knew what Subordinates were until his father died and Seth started to make noises on the subject."

"What was he like to you?" Kurt asked in a whisper, not wanting to disturb her further but needing desperately to know the answer for some reason; parallels to his own life now starting to forge painfully close to the bone. "Richard Anderson." He said to her confused expression. "What was he like?"

The memories seemed to stir something dark inside her and she pushed Kurt away from her roughly, standing up and storming over to the window, turning away from him.

"What was he like to me? What was he like? Shit, Kurt ...how can you - **you** of all people ask me something like that? You know what they're like for god's sake. You've fucking seen it." He flinched painfully at the words as if he'd been punched, moving to stand up behind her as she reeled round on him again.

"What do you want to know, Kurt? Huh? What? That he took me out with him that first night in nothing but PVC boots. That he made me wear a chain around my neck as he paraded me around Lord Rutherford's ballroom while everyone was allowed to touch and paw at me! Is that what you want? Or do you want to hear how he fucked me that first night on all fours and how my screams of pain only made him do it harder! Was that what you wanted?" The effort of her harrowing outburst sent her desperately to her knees, body finally giving up the fight and surrendering to the howl of despair that she screamed out. Kurt stood, distraught and utterly immobile as he listened to the stream of anger and pain and hate pour out of her.

Without thinking he sank to the floor, positioning himself behind her and pulling her tightly back against his chest, wrapping his arms around her protectively and rocking her gently, whispering over and over "I'm sorry, I'm sorry ... shhh honey, I'm sorry ... shhh."

His heart ached. A tight pain constricted against his ribcage and he wanted to escape. To fight away from this disgusting world of rape and pain and humiliation and just smash his way out. His blood boiled as rage began to bubble under the surface, blotting out the sounds of Quinn's steadying sobs again. How could Blaine fire her? He knew that he had traits of his father but so far Kurt thought he'd seen some meagre shred of goodness in the man. If not goodness, then certainly a tiny sliver of morality. He'd certainly not **raped** Kurt. He hadn't allowed others to touch and abuse him when they were at the Buckley's house and had even protected him to some extent, in his own twisted way; so how could he fire her for something she had no control over.

He'd done the same thing as his father when he'd bought Kurt.

Something puzzled the young man though as he turned the girl to face him again. He pushed her hair back off her face which had become dislodged from the pony-tail, cupping her tear-stained cheeks between his hands. "But Quinn, you can escape this." He said gently. "You've been let free from this place. What he's done ... it's ... Quinn, you're free."

He thought the words would bring hope into her sad eyes but instead the same dull sheen settled over them and his stomach filled with dread.

"I'm not **free** Kurt." She said bitterly. "Where would I go? At least here I had a roof. I had a job that finally I wasn't ashamed of. Since **he** died, things had gotten better. Where do I go now?"

"You could get a job out there. You've got skills now. You could work for someone else." Even as he said it Kurt knew he was speaking lies. Their world was one of corruption and power and there would be no work for the shunned ex-Subordinate of a dead Lord.

She laughed coldly and Kurt's stomach clenched again, his own eyes stinging with tears at the realisation of his own life, his own tragedy playing out to the beat of the same tune.

"My father **sold** me, Kurt. He sold me to him. To **this**. The only work I'll get is selling myself in the brothels and on the corners of this dead city. I've been ruined, Kurt. They've taken all of me. You can't ever be free of that."

Blaine had his head in his hands when the door flew open and crashed into the wall, shaking the pictures that hung there. Kurt stood, furious, face bright red and eyes seething with uncontained anger on the threshold. Before he had time to react, the Subordinate had marched up to the table and banded both fists heavily down on the mahogany, leaning over and glaring at Blaine, who for the first time seemed to have been rendered entirely speechless. Kurt took the advantage.

"You are such a fucking hypocrite, Blaine Anderson!" he screamed in the other man's face. "You sacked her. You just got rid of her for no goddamn reason! Your father **buys** a fucking **child** and **rapes** her at his will and you fucking sack **her** for it! What the hell is wrong with you?" Kurt stood there panting after his explosion, hands now clenched at his sides and chest rising and falling heavily as he finally allowed himself to look the other man properly in the eye.

He hadn't been thinking when he'd marched down to the office, not about consequences; his mind could only focus on the crumpled figure curled child-like on his bedroom carpet and it was enough to send the red fire surging through him. He hadn't really considered the danger it would put him in, hadn't fully registered the idiocy of what he was about to do until he stood there now, the anger still simmering under the surface but face to face with his Master.

Lord Anderson's initial reaction had been shock at seeing the typically placid and meek Kurt so violently enraged, but this was quickly replaced with his own seething temper. How dare he? How dare his Subordinate speak to him, challenge him in the way he had. Seth had been right when he'd spoken to him earlier about being too soft on the other man. Last night had been a mistake, a moment of weakness

shown, but which could just as rapidly be extinguished again with renewed control. New rules. While the rage throbbed in his veins, Blaine Anderson was able to temper it, swallow it down under his domination. Never show anger, always remain calm and numb. He fixed his face in to its usual narrow-eyed stare.

"Sit down." He said, teeth gritted and voice darkly threatening.

Defiance flashed across Kurt's face before he surrendered, sinking into the chair opposite but still with fight blazing behind his eyes. He remained quiet, his opinion already hanging so ominously in the air.

"You will never, **never**, speak to me in that way again." He began, running his eyes over Kurt and feeling something tighten in his gut at the cruel words he was about to say. "You are voiceless. Do you hear me? You are **nothing**, Kurt Hummel. **Nobody**. What I do with my employees is entirely my business. I will not justify or explain my actions to anyone. **Anyone!**" he repeated, the force of his words making Kurt flinch.

The other boy was now trembling slightly. His rage had all but disappeared and once again he was entirely powerless under the control of the Lord. Fear prickled his skin as he thought of what punishments he had now encouraged with his momentary madness and he thought back to the hideous treatment Quinn had faced at the hands of the senior Anderson with mounting horror. Blaine could do anything with him now.

Blaine was watching him closely, his eyebrows drawn tight at the buzzing that was stinging the back of his head. His lungs felt tight in his chest and his eyes were burning, but he couldn't explain it. Something about the entirely limp and dejected body of Kurt was having a physical effect on him and it twisted somewhere deep inside. A flash of the body wrapped around him the previous evening made his jaw clench again. No. No weakness, no kindness. Kurt had asked for this. He'd done it. It was his fault.

"Quinn will leave immediately as I instructed. You will not speak to her before she leaves." Kurt's heart sank a little further as Blaine turned his attention back to him. "You will go upstairs and get ready for tonight's private function at the Rutherford's. Your clothes will be sent up and you will be called when you're needed." He turned away then, dismissing Kurt without a second glance and shuffling through some papers stacked on the desk. Kurt noticed Quinn's name inked into the top sheet and swallowed painfully. Tears stung his eyes and he felt renewed fear course through him at what he was to face that evening. Clearly the arrangement between them had changed. He'd watched the change in Blaine's face as he finally rejected Kurt fully, the utter disgust and disdain so much more painful than anything he could physically do to him and dousing him in further shame.

Rising unsteadily from the chair and heading towards the door, Kurt paused to look back at the young Lord. He wanted to see it, wanted to find the flash of the man he'd seen the night before, but what he saw made his heart freeze again in his chest.

This man he was now looking at now was simply a beast. No emotion, no empathy, no feeling. Blaine Anderson was as lost and inhuman as the rest of them.

Chapter Eight

The Rutherford's ballroom was a dramatic change from the previous soiree at the Buckley's winter wonderland. Gone were the white chandeliers and immaculately dressed waiting staff, instead replaced by dimly lit corners and thickly draped red velvet curtains. The floor was black marble this time, polished and oceanic and giving a deceptive illusory quality to the reflected figures that floated across its surface. A cloying smell of lilies perfumed the air and the heady scent seemed to suck down into Kurt's lungs every time he tried to breathe.

The collar around his neck had been pulled tighter by Blaine when they were in the taxi, the careless, slightly rough touch of the fingertips being the only attention Lord Anderson had afforded him since the meeting in the study, and Kurt coughed slightly at his restricted airway.

He shifted uncomfortably and felt his skin prickle with goosebumps at the cool temperature in the room which wrapped around his exposed flesh. His 'outfit' that evening was more revealing than the night before, as he'd expected after his insolence, but he was aware it could have been significantly worse. The leather trousers were ripped this time, displaying several rows of taught creamy white thigh beneath his buttocks and groin area, and his top half had been left naked again, save for the obligatory collar. He had been mildly disgusted by his relief at having to wear such an ensemble, and the realisation of how warped his new moral compass had become had crushed him.

They'd arrived an hour ago and so far Blaine had said nothing to him, had thrown no glance, no touch, no order in his direction leaving him mutely trailing behind the Lord as he greeted and conversed with several of the other men in the room. Kurt didn't want to admit to himself how much the cool indifference radiating off Blaine felt like punishment in itself. What was wrong with him that he longed for the Lord's possessive hand on his back or the greedy way that he had looked at him the previous night? He shivered again at his twisted feelings towards the darkly dangerous man and tried to focus on their conversation. It was business mostly from what he could make out; talk about productivity of the workforce and cutting labour costs during the recession. He'd heard Blaine mention earlier to a squat, chubby little Lord with wire-rimmed spectacles that one of the other Lords, a man by the name of Harding, was in financial difficulty and had been forced to sell a proportion of his company to Lord Anderson who was now in the final stages of a full hostile takeover. It seemed that the Andersons were immune to the rest of the country's economic problems, Kurt mused.

While the silence and disregard from Blaine left Kurt feeling empty and cold, it did grant him time to fully study the enigma of the man in his role as Lord. Although Blaine Anderson was only just eighteen and still had all the outward appearances of youth and inexperience, he conducted himself with laudable poise and assuredness. His diminutive stature seemed irrelevant as he stood powerfully in control when conversing with the other Lords and his level, calm and deeply commanding voice left some of the men they spoke to stammering and quite noticeably caught off guard. Kurt felt something like pride bubble inside him and squashed it down again in horror. He realised that he knew nothing about the man he saw in that room; the man he'd allowed into every part of himself and opened himself up to without question or force was an utter mystery to him, and both desire and shame burned under the surface of his skin.

He felt a small tug at the back of his neck, bringing him sharply back into the room. Blaine was looking at him, eyes flashing and probing.

"Lord Sedley asked you a question, Kurt. Answer him." His voice was threatening as he hooked his finger under the band of the collar and pulled it sharply again making Kurt cough with the increased pressure. Kurt looked at the Lord opposite, for the first time taking in his aquiline nose and thin tight lips which were now sneering at the disobedient Subordinate in front of him.

"You've really got to train him to listen better, Blaine" he said darkly, "I'm not used to having to repeat my order to a Sub." The word was spat out in disdain and Kurt knew he was expected to respond, but he had no idea what would appease the situation or what Blaine wanted him to do. Instead his eyes just became wider and a little more panicked at the situation spiralling out of his control. Without warning or words, Blaine yanked on the collar harshly, sending Kurt careering to the floor, his knees connecting painfully to the hard marble beneath. Shame surged through him at the forced position and Kurt looked up to his Lord with tears stinging his eyes. Blaine looked back with something dead and unrecognisable in them, as if he was somewhere else, away from the room and Kurt. His voice was distant and unfeeling when he spoke again.

"He asked you if you liked being a Sub, Kurt. What do you say to that?" his face remained impassive and absent.

Kurt knew he was expected to respond or the humiliation may continue far further than simply being forced into a submissive pose, but his voice seemed caught and trapped in his throat. He tried to speak but all that was produced was a squeak of air breathed out through his bloodless lips. The collar constricted

again as Blaine jerked it yet another time. Swallowing and closing his eyes briefly, Kurt cleared his throat and tried once more.

"Yes." he whispered, his eyes falling in mortification at the lie.

The other man smiled lustily and slid his pink tongue out to swipe grotesquely at his lips. "Would you allow me to touch him, Lord Anderson? In front of you of course and only where you deem appropriate." he said greedily.

Kurt held his breath, not daring to look up at the man above him but knowing that something had entirely shifted between them. A tiny bit more of him broke into scattered fragments on the floor as the bored and harsh affirmation eased out of his Lord's throat. "Do what you want with him." he said, staring blankly around the room, and turned away from the sight with his jaw clenched.

Tears shimmered in his eyes but Kurt fixed his gaze on a distant spot in front of him, refusing to give them the satisfaction of having been broken. He focussed instead on being somewhere else as the wrinkled and chapped fingers of the older man slid dryly across his shoulders and trailed lower over his nipples and ribcage; he closed his eyes and drifted away back to his father's workroom in the garage as someone's hand yanked him back to his feet and gripped harshly against his waist, rubbing along the top of his leather trousers and threatening to reach lower. He sought out the comforting scent of oil and petrol on his father's stained coveralls, pretending he could feel the arms encased in the material wrapping around him instead of the press of the strangers hands on his behind, squeezing and pawing at him. Kurt fixed on the lie, willing it to transport him far, far away.

Once again, Kurt found himself heaving over the golden toilet bowl in his bedroom. His hands gripped the sides of the enamel as he wretched continuously, nothing but bile rising to the surface and his stomach aching with the constant convulsions. He could still feel it, the pressure of the stranger's hands kneading his skin, each touch cutting chunks of his dignity from his flesh and leaving him simply a hollow carcass in human form. Breathing through the final twinges in his belly, he rose unsteadily to his feet and stared at himself in the mirror again. His eyes were dead. There was no trace of his former self imprisoned within the ethereal white face, no sign of his father or his former life. He felt fear grip his insides as his father's words shot through him again.

"Every time they make you do something, you'll be losing a little piece of yourself."

His eyes drifted closed as the face flittered across his vision, calming his heart and settling deep inside him. Don't let them take you. Don't give them all of yourself. Kurt turned on the tap and splashed his face with cold water, watching it drip off his chin and taking the tears with it. When he looked back his eyes had a tiny, distant speck of light glimmering in the depths.

Kurt needed out.

Blaine Anderson once again had his head in his hands as he sat on the edge of his bed. His head swirled with a startling mix of emotions and feelings that he couldn't identify or distinguish, each one jumbled and incomplete. Why was his stomach twisting so uncomfortably? Why did he have such a strong urge to vomit whenever he pictured Kurt on his knees being touched by the other Lord? Why did he feel something akin to pain when he saw the beautiful pale eyes blink out the last of the light they'd previously held? He groaned aloud, pulling sharply on his hair trying to refocus himself. He was Lord. Kurt had needed to be punished and he had done exactly what any other Lord would have. He'd done what was expected.

So why when he looked at himself in the mirror did he feel disgust?

When Seth had mentioned Subordinates several months before, just after his father had passed away, Blaine had felt rather distant from it all and mildly embarrassed. Despite years of tutelage on power and the Lord's business, the young teenager had been relatively sheltered from the additional side of the Lord's adult world and had blushed at the mention of having what Seth had called a 'sexual servant'. Blaine had known which way his preferences lay for several years but had been relatively discreet about it in front of his father and Seth, concerned it might be seen as some kind of weakness in him as a man. The night when Seth had brought him into the drawing room and presented him with six very young, very beautiful and very naked men had left Blaine in little doubt as to the Advisor's views on his sexuality; Fuck who you want but make it impersonal.

He thought back to the faces of the young boys positioned in front of him, eyes down and standing with their legs slightly spread. He remembered their skin standing out harshly against the bright artificial light in the room and the way the whole selection procedure had felt so cold and clinical. Seth had motioned for

him to pick one, having previously explained about how Subs worked and Blaine had finally allowed his eyes to rove over the bodies laid bare before him. He had been irritated by his own blush, the outward mark of the slipping control he usually held so assuredly and poised. He'd been annoyed at his obvious embarrassment and inexperience of sex and how weak that made him look in Seth's eyes, but mostly he'd been ashamed at his own inability to feel arousal at the naked forms before him. Instead of feeling the expected surge of heat and pleasure, Blaine had felt his stomach churn slightly and a sour taste had spread across his tongue. It was mechanical and devoid of anything other than physicality and it had left Blaine cold. He'd forced himself to dismiss them with practiced indifference, pretending they were just not good enough to be his Subordinate, but the reality of his deeper feelings had wounded him.

The self-disgust that had bubbled beneath the skin for days afterwards left Blaine battling with his own emotions. He was to be Lord. He was to be powerful and controlled and respected and yet he couldn't even take something that was offered to him so readily. Having thought little about sex previously, suddenly it became everything to the young Lord. Library books and the internet were devoured for hours; from the romanticism of D. H. Lawrence which left his mouth curling in disdain to the debased practices of Sade, Blaine Anderson learnt everything the world had to offer about sex and domination and the power it could assert. By the end of the week, Lord Anderson stood calm and composed, silk ties in hand and erection straining in his suit trousers as the first young man bent over in front of him.

The meetings were cold and impersonal like Seth had wanted. Blaine felt nothing but the physical pull of the orgasm as they were brought to him. Each one was exquisite in their own way, willing and pliant and always responsive to his touch and caress but he'd shared no kisses, no words, no murmurs of feeling. They were nothing to him. Vessels of empty flesh that had bucked beneath each stroke and allowed him total access before he callously discarded them immediately after.

But Kurt had been so different.

When he'd seen the young, fragile boy on the stairs his heart had pumped faster and he'd immediately felt a surge of heat to his groin, flowing directly from his veins. The flush of shame across the beautiful white cheeks had stirred something inside him, an aching want he'd never felt before and this time his gut had twisted in excitement. He'd needed Kurt as his Sub the moment he'd seen the trembling, yet still passionately defiant eyes flick up to him from the hallway below.

Staring back at his reflection in the mirror again, he dimly registered the slightly colourless pallor of his usually so tanned skin and swallowed another lump that had risen in his throat at the thought of Kurt on that first night.

He'd been so untouched. So entirely at Blaine's mercy and so utterly opposite to the hard-faced youths he'd had before. This boy was fragile and breakable and yet held a fire within him that had sparked a tiny electrical current in Blaine leaving the other man tingling. A possessive need had surged through Blaine when he'd first claimed his Subordinate, and the thought of others touching him had left him growling with undisguised jealousy. When Kurt had turned his tear-stained, lust-blown eyes up to Blaine in the back of the car the night before, the young Lord had started to feel every ounce of control and carefully constructed disdain slip rapidly away from him and just for one night, he'd not cared.

But today he'd clawed it back. The power. He'd let the cold hard truth of day seep into his skin and burrow underneath, and with each new revelation the day had brought, another piece of Blaine's unfeeling resolve had slotted back into its well-conditioned place until he found himself watching, detached and absent while his beautiful Sub kneeled for another.

His eyes stung and he blinked rapidly several times. Downing his second glass of whiskey, Blaine clenched his hands against the sink and hung his head. For the first time since his father died, he felt like a boy again; inexperienced and unsure, and it hurt. A sudden noise startled him from his tumultuous thoughts, sending the glass clattering into the basin.

Seth burst into the room, wildly searching around the space before his eyes lit upon Blaine in the en-suite bathroom.

"Lord Anderson - he's gone!"

Blaine felt the words searing into his head without clarity and moved unsteadily into the main bedroom to face the slightly panicked and very much foreign look stretched across his Advisor's face. "What do you.....who?"

"Kurt. He's run away. The maid went to turn down his bed and he was missing." He ran his fingers through his hair and fixed his eyes solidly on the young Lord. "Blaine," he said sternly, "if he cannot be found we could lose everything. All your show of power will be seen to be weak....the business, the take-over, the house. Everything will be threatened."

Blaine had stopped listening at '*he's run away*', was distracted by the sight outside the window which made his chest tighten in something that felt like fear. A snow storm was whipping up outside the window and he watched in mounting horror as he realised a blizzard was about to strike. Kurt was out there, in that. He swallowed the lump that had wedged in his throat as he realised how unprepared Kurt was for the elements. His clothes, his limited provisions in his room....they'd left Kurt with nothing in order to prevent this exact situation, but now.....

He'd gone anyway.

The mansion was miles from the nearest residence, situated in dense woods, and the road in this snow would be unrecognisable, the forest impassable. Kurt must have known it was suicide to venture out in this. He must have seen what could happen to him. Kurt could die.

But he'd gone anyway.

Clamping his jaw closed at his somersaulting stomach and the raw ache inside him, Blaine pushed past Seth who was still speaking, his words failing to penetrate the white noise that was forming its own blizzard inside the young Lord's head. He didn't think. He didn't have any sense of what he was really doing as he rummaged around in the wardrobe and grabbed his flashlight and thick woollen jacket.

"My Lord? What the ...what are you doing?" spluttered Seth beside him, finally registering that the younger man was not listening to him. He tried to grab his arm but Blaine shook him off, agitated. "You can't possibly go out in this yourself. Get security to go. He'll not have gone far."

"He's my Sub and we need him back. **You** call security, but I'm going." Blaine insisted sharply, once again employing his powerful controlled voice and watching Seth twitch uncomfortably at the tone. Not waiting to see if his orders would be followed through, Blaine surged from the room and down the stairs, hauling on his heavy snow-boots as he went and wilfully ignoring the little voice beating icily in his head repeating the need to remain controlled and that Kurt was nothing to him. Just a lost possession. He meant nothing.

Instead, a heady mantra had seemed to push its way in, one that was more powerful and beat a rhythm against his skull incessantly.

Kurt might die. It's your fault. Kurt might die.

Without pausing to look back, Blaine Anderson wrenched open the front doors and forged his way into the white haze of the night.

Chapter Nine

It hurt. Everything throbbed and stung and ached deep in his very bones. Curled up in the tightest ball he could physically get his body twisted into, Kurt pulled the fur blanket even more ineffectually around him and let the darkness take him.

Blaine felt the cold biting into him as he sent the erratic beam of the flashlight clumsily this way and that, struggling to decipher anything in the swirling white noise of the blizzard. His fingers were numb, red raw from the icy air and clenched painfully around the shaft of the torch as he stumbled onwards through the forest that surrounded the mansion. He'd lost sight of the house several hours ago and was now wandering blindly in whatever direction his body took him. He knew it was lunacy to keep heading forward with no clear plan or any way to navigate, but the tightening in his chest that had taken hold the moment Seth's words had penetrated his brain was now making it difficult to breathe. There was no way he could control his body enough to stop and give in to reason. Kurt was out there. Somewhere. And Blaine had to find him.

He could hear distant sounds of shouts and the barking of the dogs somewhere behind him, unclear and vague through his disorientation, and he registered that the guards had been alerted to the situation by Seth as instructed. They seemed to be searching the woods to the rear of the house if the diminishing voices were any indication, although through the roar of the wind and the blanket of snow that muted all other noise, Blaine couldn't really be sure. What was certain was that at this point, Lord Anderson was very much alone and rapidly starting to need some assistance himself.

Another tree root caught his ankle in the darkness and seemed to wrap around his leg, twisting him unnaturally to the ground and sending him sprawling through the powdery snow. The force of the impact sent a gasp of air whooshing out of his mouth and with it all final resolve seemed to vanish. His leg throbbed painfully, gradually becoming numb from the wet ice seeping into his useless jeans and he continued to lie there. His hands could no longer seem to grip the flashlight and the pain in his lungs now left him shuddering to drag air into his chest. Blaine Anderson lay face-down in the snow and let the fight melt out of his body into the ground below.

The flashlight lay beside him, still partly gripped in his vice-like hand and casting a weak beam across the uneven floor of the forest. From his position on the ground, Blaine was able to follow the flimsy glow as it traversed the undulations in the snow before disappearing into the black nothingness that beckoned beyond. Something caught his eye on the periphery of the beam. A darker shape moved stealthily into the light before lumbering off again into the thickness of the woods. Blaine's heart squeezed up into his throat and a strangled noise died on his lips as he registered what the movement had been. Somewhere, off to his right, an eerie howl seemed to reverberate through the branches of the trees and Blaine closed his eyes as fear clutched at him again.

Wolves.

They were common in this part of the country; especially around the densely wooded pine forests that clung to the uneven ridges forged out of the valleys and mountains of the countryside. Lords had been known to hunt them for their fur, thick pelt prizes bestowed on their wives, and heads mounted on brooding dining room walls were used as visual representations of the Lord's power over nature. Blaine had never felt the need to hunt against nature; he preferred to exert his power over the human world.

"Don't wander too far!"

The warning had glanced off the boy's young ears like an ineffectual blow, failing to penetrate and dampen his eagerness to escape his father and their grim little party. Solitude was all that he sought. All that he'd ever sought really in the oppressive walls of the mansion and to finally be out, amongst the trees and the elements and away from prying adult eyes, felt far more powerful to the eleven year old than any cursory instruction.

Now he stood alone in the small clearing, branches dancing around him in the gentle breeze that had begun to pick up and feeling the thrill of dusk descending. The low whistle of the wind, coupled with the unidentifiable sounds of the forest, called through the trees and he felt the curls on the back of his neck prickle and stand to attention.

A gun shot echoed far off somewhere to his left and he vaguely trailed his eyes in that direction before turning around slowly on the spot, taking in his surroundings. He thought back to his

Advisor's 'hunter' training and felt something instinctual kick over in his chest. Breathing deeply and allowing his eyes to flutter closed; the boy let the senses of the forest absorb him.

Without the distraction of the trees' swaying limbs or the shifting shadows in the encroaching darkness, the boy was able to focus all intuition on the sounds of the woods. Everything felt heightened and each crack of twigs or rustle of leaves assaulted his brain like a whip. Clearing his mind of the obvious noises and pushing further through the layers of sound, the boy waited for the one he wanted. The snarled growl vibrated in the undergrowth beside him.

Flicking his eyes open but remaining absolutely still, he searched the shapes shifting in amongst the trees. A thin whine echoed out of the darkness and the shadow moved forward, haunches raised and black pelt stirring in the frigid air. They moved together at the same time; a small step of withdrawal matched by a bolder step of advance. The wolf prowled carefully into the clearing.

Time seemed to pause momentarily for the boy as his own heart stopped alongside it. The wind continued to drift through the trees and the air hummed around the beast and the boy, but all movement seemed suspended. He knew he should have felt fear but the throbbing in his veins wasn't that of clammy palms and shaking nerves. Instead the skin on his forearms tingled and buzzed with electricity and excitement.

Standing face to face with the beast made the boy feel truly alive.

As the memory slid through Blaine's icy skin, he felt the renewed trigger of adrenaline surge through him and it galvanised him into action. Dragging himself painfully to his feet and wincing as he tested his weight against his sprained ankle, Blaine let his eyes drift closed once again and opened himself to the noises of the forest. Another howl bounced off the bark encasing him and his head darted quickly towards the east. Without hesitation the Lord took off in pursuit of the beasts, knowing in his heart that to follow the calls would be the key to finding Kurt.

Kurt was bound tightly, constricted within an icy prison. His cell was entirely white and the block of colourless light burned into him. Pressing his hands frantically against the slippery ceiling only

millimetres above his head, he tried desperately to push his way out, his breath already rapidly diminishing with each panicked exertion. He splayed his arms out either side of him and found once again his movement was entirely restricted to mere inches to his left and right, and the exploration with his toes afforded no more comforting a reward. His breath hitched again and he gasped out a strangled cry at the realisation of his predicament. A box. A coffin.

With mounting horror, Kurt pummelled against the roof and walls encasing him. His fingernails clawed, chipping and grating through chunks of ice that only seemed to reform into thicker layers, stealing the air and space around him. He screamed. Over and over again he screamed until the noise dragged deep scratches into his own throat to match those of the walls around him.

And then more cries seemed to seep into the prison; cries that didn't sound quite like his own and were coupled with a strange snarling and heavier breathing than his own lungs could afford. The white walls around him started to shift and undulate, sliding backwards and allowing shards of darkness and black shadows to forge in and press down on him. He felt a rushing pressure and a weightlessness surging through his body before the darkness entirely took over and his eyes blinked back into consciousness.

Amber eyes hovered in the darkness of the trees, fixing solidly on rapidly dilating blue ones.

Blaine heard the snarls increasing as he moved closer through the forest. He'd changed from a sprint to a more cautious advance now as he sensed the wolves' nearing proximity and relied entirely on his ears to draw him ever closer. As he navigated another deformed root, a small whimper cut through the air and his chest spasmed again. Kurt. Unmistakably Kurt. With an even greater sense of urgency, Blaine pushed through the final thick layer of the forest and stumbled into a slightly wider clearing.

Three wolves surrounded the base of the twisted tree trunk that spiralled out of the dark earth. Their black fur shone almost silver in the slight moonlight that peeked through the heavy clouds and dense canopy of the forest, and Blaine felt his own hackles rise in response to the sight. Panting steadily, the air humming around them, Blaine heard a second whimper gasp out from the darkness at the foot of the tree. Despite not being able to make out Kurt's body in the gloom, Blaine knew that the three pairs of eyes were trained levelly on a slumped, slightly darker shadow curled into the crawling roots that could only be his Sub. He stifled his own cry of fear. Kurt hadn't seen him; he seemed to be laying under some form of fur

blanket that sheathed his body and his head was curled inwards, seemingly in an attempt to block out the grotesque sight of the beasts advancing on his pathetic form. The sight of his Subordinate so vulnerable and petrified made something dark shift inside of the Lord and wash through him.

Summoning all the strength inside himself, Blaine Anderson let out a gut-wrenching animalistic scream. The visceral pain of the noise bounced off the trees, pounding against bark and mud and shot directly into the boy crouched in the dark. Kurt's head leapt up at the sound, his frantic, pale eyes locking with Blaine's for the briefest of seconds before flicking rapidly back to the wolves. The effect of the scream on the creatures was instant. Turning as one, gleaming eyes fixed on the Lord's own dangerously black stare, they faced each other.

Kurt's terrified expression darted from beast to lord to beast again. As the darkness rolled on into the forest he couldn't see where the true monster lay.

The standoff continued; paused time held with panting breaths and throbbing pulses and the earth beneath Blaine's feet seemed to vibrate with electricity. He wanted to look towards Kurt, to see if he was ok, but the power of the wolves held him transfixed. The light shifted slightly in the clearing, the moon pushing out of the cloud cover and illuminating the snow between them.

Kurt watched as it seemed to cast a shadow directly between the wolves and Blaine, marking a line in the ground and bathing the Lord in an ethereal silver glow. He gasped involuntarily at the glittering light playing off Blaine's dark curls and the tiny sliver of sound broke the spell. The wolves seemed to flinch together, hair standing on end and eyes darting between boy and man before they uttered a wounded whimper and suddenly withdrew, lumbering off into the darkness of the forest.

Silence slid down over the clearing and covered both men who remained immobile, held in the moment with panting breaths. Kurt had averted his eyes now, feeling a strange sense of momentary relief wash over him at the disappearance of the wolves before the icy cold seeped back in again as he felt the shifting presence of the other, more familiar beast. Cold hands grasped at his shoulders as the Lord's body dropped down in front of him and Kurt flinched away from the touch, trying to crawl back into the meagre warmth of the fur blanket, slipping from his body.

"Kurt, please. Are you hurt? Kurt? Can you hear me?"

The voice that came out of Blaine was desperate and choked, panic clearly dragging the sounds out of his throat as he shook his limp Sub, but Kurt remained boneless, a rag doll unyielding to the pleading words of the Lord.

"Kurt? Look at me. Open your eyes." He could feel the command in the voice, the attempt at control but it was so weak, drowned out by the more obvious rasping fear that filled his words. It was new; this sound. It was vulnerable and sounded almost weak and if Kurt had been remotely able to, he might have seen a change in the man's eyes, something real and alive and in pain. But he couldn't do it. Couldn't bring himself to look at his aggressor, his tormentor who had been the reason for his escape in the first place. He'd nearly done it. Nearly made it out of the raging fires of the Anderson hell and into the icy nothingness beyond, but here he was again. In his arms. In his grasp. Listening to the same orders. The pain of his reality shot through him and he was paralysed. Finally broken and completely surrendered to his fate now, Kurt kept his eyes firmly closed and welcomed back the darkness.

Blaine was frantic now. The unresponsive body of Kurt flopped uselessly in his arms as he gripped the boys head, pulling at his face to look at him. He cradled the body against his chest, smoothing the ice soaked hair back from his face and trying desperately to breathe some kind of warmth into the frozen skin. He knew hypothermia was a very real danger at this point and although he could feel the tiny reed thin breath against his cheek when he placed his ear to Kurt's mouth, he found little comfort there. Kurt was almost blue, his lips bloodless and chapped and his skin almost translucent against the snow.

There was no time.

Blaine looked desperately around him, his eyes scanning the oppressive gloom of the dense trees that surrounded them. His own chest felt like he was being stabbed with every breath he drew and his limbs were unresponsive when he tried to move both him and Kurt from their seated position. Twisting his body so that Kurt was positioned between his legs, curled into a foetal position, Blaine painfully slid his arms beneath his Sub's knees and flung his arm around his neck, attempting to hold it in place. He tried to lever them both up from the ground but immediately Kurt's limp arm flopped out of position making it nigh-on impossible to lift him. After three attempts Blaine howled out his frustration and increasing panic into the night, slumping his head against the unconscious man's stomach and letting out an anguished growl.

"Kurt, I can't do this on my own!" he screamed against the frozen flesh. "You have to help me. Please, Kurt. Just wake up and help me."

Resting his head against his Sub, the Lord felt the rise and fall of the boy's chest beneath him, telling him he was still alive, for now. His limbs seemed wasted; all former strength had vanished into the powdery bed beneath them and he curled against the other body in defeat.

Everything was unfamiliar to him. The tightening of his chest when he looked at Kurt. The desperation he felt to claw at the skin and pull against it until Kurt came back to him. The bubbling panic that had rippled under his skin when he'd fled into the night after the strange boy. He'd never cared about anyone else in this world; never had to care about anyone because no one else had ever really been there. He didn't understand why. He couldn't understand what Kurt was, what Kurt had done to him. Nothing made sense and nothing was recognisable to him and everything hurt.

In the frozen, icy caverns of Lord Anderson's heart, the steady drip that had started the moment Kurt had walked into the mansion started to overflow. Laying in the frigid earth, the unconscious boy beneath his head, Blaine began to cry.

Dawn was starting to paint a silvery golden light across the snow when Lord Anderson finally felt the body beneath him shift. Swiping hurriedly at the telling dampness on his cheeks, Blaine pulled his chest up and found himself staring down into Kurt's colourless face. The blue eyes that met his own were cold and lifeless. Allowing himself little time to acknowledge the dejected and unrecognisable face of his Sub, Blaine grabbed at the flesh beneath him, recoiling in horror at the icy skin and the desperately faint pulse flickering quietly inside the limp body.

"You have to move, Kurt. You have to help me!" he urged. There was a forcefulness to his voice that had been absent in his broken anguish of the hours before and seeing Kurt's conscious, albeit blank eyes, had brought a strength back that the Lord didn't think he'd had left. Kurt remained impassive but seemed to make an attempt to lift his head slightly. The effort was fruitless as his frozen body failed to comply and his neck slipped back again into the snow.

"No. No, come on Kurt. I can do most of it; you just need to hold on. Can you do that Kurt? Kurt, look at me." he clutched at the face that was dejectedly turning away from his to stare blankly across the snow. "Look at me, Kurt! You're going to die here. Can you hear me? You're going to die! And I'm not about to just watch! I'm not. Now MOVE!"

He was shouting now, hauling at the inert body beneath him as he yanked him into his tight grip again and forced his arm around his neck like he'd attempted when Kurt had been unconscious. "Just hold on. That's all you need to do. Just hold on, Kurt.....please. Please just hold on."

The desperation in Blaine's voice had fallen on deaf ears as Kurt tried to will himself back into the dark bliss of oblivion, but his head snapped around suddenly at the almost inaudible "please" that his Lord had begged into his neck. Lord Anderson never begged. Never. Blaine had only ever asked two things of him in the short time they'd been twined together.

Both times he'd been pleading for Kurt to stay.

His fingers pressed against the Lord's neck in the gentlest of grips and he slowly turned his body into the arms of his master.

Blaine's reaction was instant. The slight pressure of Kurt's fingers told him enough and with an inhuman groan he hauled their bodies up to a standing position. Teeth gritted against the cold and the screaming in his body, Lord Anderson cradled the fragile body tighter in his arms and turned towards the direction of the mansion. He lurched forward unsteadily a few steps before finally howling out the pain and, gathering everything he had left, pressed onwards into the trees.

Chapter Ten

Something clinked against glass and the sound seemed to ricochet off Kurt's pounding head as he dragged his eyes into focus and glanced furtively around the room. The first thing his blurred vision lighted on was the heavy velvet draped curtains of his bedchamber, drawn but not quite fully, so a shard of white was just visible through the crack, indicating it was still daylight outside. Blinking painfully, the movement sending jolts of fire into his head again, Kurt shifted slightly so his gaze could move further around the room. He knew he was back in the mansion and the gilded furniture he swept his eyes across only served to add to the churning, sinking feeling in his stomach. He'd been so close to getting away. So resigned to a different fate and now he was back. Back where he'd started, with nothing left of himself and a broken body to add to it all. His eyes closed again and a silent, helpless tear dropped onto the pillow beneath his head.

"Sir, you need to be checked out by the doctor!"

The hushed voice coming from the doorway was unmistakably that of Seth, and Kurt kept his eyes firmly shut in an attempt to remain unobserved; the hissed "Sir" was definitely not directed towards Kurt and he wanted to hear Blaine's response.

"Seth, I've told you, I'm fine. Just tired and a bit cold." Blaine sounded irritated and impatient but the rasping quality of his voice indicated he wasn't perhaps as fine as he proclaimed. There was the sound of footsteps coming closer to the bed and Kurt could feel someone looming over him. He stayed still, keeping his breathing regular to suggest he was sleeping.

"What were you thinking Blaine?" Seth's voice was quiet but ominously dark and it made Kurt's skin prickle and crawl. "He's a goddamn Sub for Christ's sake. You could have died, Blaine. For a Sub. For a fucking Sub!" Seth's voice was hard and cold.

"You said yourself that if it had got out that my Sub had escaped, my reputation would have been ruined."

"Yes but Jesus, Blaine, he was damn-near dead! We could have covered it up. He's nothing. We'd have easily got a replacement and come up with a decent story." something heavy slammed against the bedside table making the bed shake slightly. "Why did you go out after him, Blaine!? The guards would have found him. Why did YOU go?!"

A sigh was heard audibly beside him and Kurt felt something shift as an arm lent against the left side of the bed, near his fingers. Blaine's voice was weary and small and so unlike the Lord that Kurt felt his breath stutter slightly in his own chest. "I had to find him, Seth." was all he said.

"My Lord...."

".....go please. Now, Seth. I want to be alone."

The command was firm, but for a moment Kurt wondered if the advisor was about to contest it. He could hear the older man click his tongue in ill-disguised disgust and felt the two men held in silent conflict, before eventually hearing the heavy, receding footsteps of the other man.

"He's nothing, Blaine. Don't forget that. He's nothing...." there was a brief pause where the air shifted suddenly and Kurt felt another chill, totally unconnected to his condition, ripple through him. "He's nothing.....but he could ruin you if you allow it!"

The door slammed loudly and Kurt couldn't help but flinch at the searing pain that pounded into his body yet again. Blaine must have noticed because he felt warm fingers wrap around his wrist before a significantly more gentle voice murmured "You can open your eyes now."

Turning his head slightly, Kurt took an unsteady breath and blinked Blaine back into his eye line. He was momentarily startled by his Lord's appearance and couldn't help it when he reached out his fingers to trace the deep scratches that sliced across the other man's deathly pale face.

"Tree branches and ice are a dangerous combination" Blaine said, shrugging and then wincing slightly.

His lips were cracked and bloodless and his arms were equally as scarred as his face, Kurt noted as he let his eyes glide over the rest of the man beside him. The forest had certainly had its triumph. His hand dropped limply back against the bed sheet as a tumult of emotions poured through him; emotions he had no strength left to deal with or attempt to rationalise at present. Instead, he tried to sit up, grimacing at the throbbing hurt that seared inside with every movement. Blaine moved quickly to aid him, reaching his arms out carefully underneath his shoulders and gently settling him against the pillows.

"How are you feeling?" The question was hesitant and small again. Kurt peered at his Lord quizzically, trying to reconcile this caring and clearly nervous stranger with the callous and heartlessly assured man from the evening before; a man, he reminded himself quickly, who had allowed other men to paw at him

and violate him. He swallowed hard, the coldness seeping back in. Turning away from the open and searching golden eyes, Kurt shrugged off the gentle fingers stroking against his wrist, not seeing the hurt that flickered across his Lord's face.

They sat in silence, both men lost to each other and their conflicted feelings as Kurt let his eyes drift closed again.

Seth was pacing, something he'd been doing far too often in the last two days. He wasn't used to the restlessness; Seth Schoen thrived on order, control and certainty and his usually so malleable little protégée was thoroughly unsettling everything.

When Blaine had fled the house the previous night, Seth had been left with the embarrassing fallout; the house-keepers and servants were already starting to talk and the advisor was under no illusions as to the efficiency of the gossip wires that seamlessly connected all of the Lord's properties. Within hours, Seth was assured that Lord Anderson's pathetic disregard for propriety and his evident weakness for his Sub would be made very much public knowledge, and he alone knew how damaging this information could be in the wrong hands.

"Just find them!" he'd barked in the face of the quickly assembled security team, knowing that time was of the essence if they were to squash this before it got out of hand. As the hours had ticked by however, Seth's expensive bottle of scotch seemed to mirror his rapidly diminishing hope that the two young boys could be returned quickly and quietly. He'd been on the verge of concocting some elaborate spin that might have helped explain the pair's untimely deaths to the elements, when news came of a sighting at the edge of the forest. The staggering form of Blaine, clutching his Sub to his chest and carrying him cradled like a child emerging from the bank of trees made the bile rise in Seth's throat. It was such a pathetic sight and witnessed by so many, Seth seethed with anger and shame.

He'd gritted his teeth; eight hours of exposure should have been time enough to kill them both.

Disgust ripped through the advisor again as he recalled the young Lord's desperate pleas to stay with Kurt and to 'fix him' when he'd collapsed on the marble tiles of the hallway, unwilling to allow the physician to even look at his own injuries. Seth had had to physically pry the limp Sub away from Blaine's arms in

order to allow the doctor to tend to either one, and in doing so had acknowledged the tear tracks and puffed, red rimmed eyes that betrayed the young Lord.

For the first time in the Anderson residence, Seth saw Blaine as the eighteen year old child he really was.

The image both disgusted and terrified him.

Slamming the whisky tumbler rather too heavily against the glass desk in his office and wincing at the echoingly loud clink, Seth snatched at the telephone receiver. His tongue clicked against the roof of his mouth in impatience as he listened to the incessant dial tone before it was finally answered.

"It's time." was all he said before replacing the receiver and reaching once again for the bourbon.

Kurt slept fitfully, drifting in and out of consciousness as the fatigue took possession of his body. The young Lord could only watch helplessly as his pale limbs jerked violently, wracked with shivers but simultaneously slippery with sweat every time he reached to wrap his own fingers around the boy's clammy skin.

"What's wrong with him?" he spat at Dr Reynolds the second time he came to check on Kurt's progress and had simply nodded with an uncommunicative hum that set Blaine's teeth grinding against his jaw. "Why aren't you doing more?"

Reynolds, used to the aggressive nature of the young Lord barely flinched at the disrespectful tone. "Medically, he's stable. He has a slight fever but it could have been considerably worse after exposure for that long. I've given him a slight sedative to allow his body to recuperate but he seems uneasy. It will pass, I assure you sir."

There was a pause where Blaine turned back to Kurt who was whimpering quietly in his sleep, unaware of the doctor's pale eyes taking the scene in. He'd been the Anderson's physician for years; had been there when the young Lord had broken his arm falling down the concrete steps of the rose garden aged five, had treated his father's regular angina attacks in the years before his heart finally decided enough was enough, and he'd been the one to delicately pry the sixteen year old Blaine's clenched white fingers from the already cold body of his mother. He *knew* this household, and for the most part he'd kept a very reserved

distance; the Lords' business was little to do with him and providing he got paid, he remained resolutely silent.

Now though, watching with fascination as the young Lord gently, almost delicately adjusted the blanket wrapped around the fitful Sub, Dr Reynolds didn't recognise him. The only other time he'd ever seen the young boy unravelled like this was two years ago at the foot of the stairs, surrounded by blood. The change in the Lord was unmistakable. The fact that it had been brought on by concern for a Sub was unprecedented. Dr Reynolds stroked absently at the wiry black hairs on the back of his hand, keeping his thoughts firmly to himself. He'd not failed to notice the glint of disgust in Seth's narrowed eyes when the two bodies had been dragged in and a small part of him felt a flicker of fear for the young Anderson.

As if suddenly aware of the unspoken psychoanalysis, Blaine turned and brought his eyes level with Reynolds'. "If there's nothing else you can do, then leave." he ejected coldly, the emotionless glass sheen returning to his face. The physician twitched slightly at the restored familiar countenance of the Lord and then dropped his gaze. "I'll check back in two hours." he said, before clicking the door shut behind him.

Pausing momentarily at the top of the staircase, the doctor felt a chill creep over him that had little to do with the snow and far more to do with the sound of Seth in the study below. Glass clinked against glass and there was the unmistakable sound of a receiver being quietly replaced.

He glanced behind him at the solid wooden door imprisoning the two boys inside the bedroom and drew in a shaky breath. Thoughts whirled in his brain along with the more forceful familiar tone of his wife's voice telling him to stay well out of it. Shaking his head slightly and clutching the leather handle of his bag a little more tightly, he pulled himself away from the door and the voices, and the dark nameless oppression of mansion.

Yes, Dr. Reynolds knew this house better than he'd ever wanted to.

Chapter Eleven

A loud ticking seemed to penetrate Kurt's consciousness and the first thing he noted was the cupid clock swimming before him. He managed to register that they were dancing around three o'clock before he noted the dark shadows sweeping across the carpet. He shifted his body again, feeling relieved when his head didn't explode with pain like before. His bruised limbs seemed to move more easily this time too and he was able to twist himself onto his side slightly more successfully and with noticeably less discomfort than before. Resting his head against the soft pillow, Kurt drew in a quiet, unsteady breath at the sight of Blaine beside him. The Lord was sleeping, uncomfortably curled into the hard-backed chair that had been pulled up to the bedside; his body was quirked at an odd angle, his head resting awkwardly slumped against his unnaturally bent left arm. For the first time, Kurt was able to fully study the young Lord without consequence and he felt a faint flush creep over his skin as he unashamedly raked his eyes over the unconscious form.

The dark curls were ungelled and lay in unruly spirals around his scratched and scared cheeks. The muscles in his jaw were exposed by the angle of his bent head and Kurt stared, mesmerised by the contrasting beauty and frightening power in the sinewy lines of his neck. His tongue darted out to lick his dry lips and he registered with a twinge of fear the compulsion to repeat the action across Blaine's own body.

Swallowing thickly, Kurt tried to decipher the jumbled code of feelings he had towards the man in front of him. He'd not allowed himself to surrender to the chaos in his mind, preferring simply to label it as hatred and disgust and blocking out the other, more complex and significantly less comfortable feelings that stirred in his brain when he looked at the young Lord.

When he'd run the previous night his mind had been clear. Lord Anderson was a monster; cruel, immoral and inhuman. No thought had been given to the snow, the danger; Kurt had thought only of escaping the clutches of the Lord and his soulless house. He'd thought he would be saving a tiny part of himself that he'd believed still existed; a tiny shred of goodness still hiding somewhere. He'd not cared in what form the escape would come as long as he was rid of Lord Anderson.

But it was Blaine who had come for him.

His eyes fell to the soft rise and fall of Blaine's chest, taking in the tiny stuttered breaths of slumber and was startled once again by how desperately young the boy looked to him. As Lord he had always seemed so ageless, his authority irradiating any similarities between the two men but now, as Kurt tentatively reached out and stroked a soft curl around his finger, he felt something tug in his chest. Strange images of dream-like scenes floated in the space between them and Kurt couldn't tell if they were real or imagined. A vision of thick dark fur mingled with glossy curls in the moonlight flashed and then blinked out again as Kurt shook his head, trying to clear the fog of thoughts. He thought he remembered desperate pleas and words screamed into his chest by a figure above him; pressing down and around him. He heard fragments of his own voice as distorted sounds as if he were underwater and being pulled further down into icy depths. He thought he remembered a voice breaking and distant tears but couldn't determine who's they were.....and then he'd remembered feeling weightless and dark and a strange sense of being engulfed.

Thinking back on it all now and wading through the thick plasma of his brain, it ***all*** seemed like a dream; unreal and illusory. His eyes darted once again to the figure beside him. He tried to stir up the feelings of hatred and revulsion from the night before but all he felt was a hallow ache where anger should have been.

It was Blaine who had come for him.

Light played across the scratched cheeks as the soft beginnings of another frozen morning filtered through the gap in the curtains and Kurt watched, transfixed as the tanned skin seemed to radiate and transform before him. The boy existed as two people inside Kurt. His brain knew the Lord, the man devoid of feeling and emotion who bought slaves and took what he wanted without remorse.....but, somewhere, in another part of him, there was...just Blaine. The boy brought up in a place without sentiment, without love, who had been trained and conditioned to a point of utter emptiness. The boy who despite all of that was still able to instinctively whisper words of affection into another man's skin when he thought he'd caused him pain. The boy who Kurt *knew* had cried against his chest and risked his own life for someone supposedly meaningless. The boy who had whispered in a tiny voice for Kurt to stay with him on the very first night. A boy who seemed able to ***feel*** without ever having been taught.

It was Blaine who had come after him and it was Blaine who was with him now, stripped bare. Kurt felt fractured and splintered, allowing his eyes to fill with unexplained tears as he reached out once again. Silence seemed to wrap a comforting arm around him, drawing the two boys into a frozen point in time while the cupids watched on. The light extended a little further into the room and slid down Blaine's exposed arm, dancing across entwined pale and tanned hands. The sleeping man's eyes remained firmly

closed, but the tiny muscles flexed as he unconsciously held on to the warmth of the other body. Kurt looked slowly down at their interlaced fingers and allowed himself the tiniest of smiles. Through his blurred vision it almost looked like their two hands were glowing.

When Blaine finally stirred awake, it was Kurt's probing, ice-blue eyes that greeted him first. As he blinked the other boy into focus, he was momentarily startled by the open and searching look in the pale features of Kurt's face, so used to the guarded hostility normally radiating from him. It took him several more seconds to clear the muzzy shadows in his brain and register where he was as he blinked rapidly a few times and looked dazedly around him. Kurt watched quietly as the confusion of sleep and a restless night dissipated gradually from the hazel eyes and then unconsciously held his breath as his Lord's head suddenly looked down at their interlocked fingers. He wasn't sure what he was expecting in reaction to the voluntary contact, didn't know which man he had woken up with but whatever it was, it didn't prepare him for the wide honeyed eyes that met his questioningly.

"Kurt....?"

"Don't...." Kurt interrupted him quickly, holding up his other hand to stop whatever Blaine had been about to say. "Please let me speak first." His voice was quiet but forceful and he knew that he was breaking all the rules of his position but he also needed to believe he'd woken up with a different version of his Lord that morning. Blaine's gentle compliance gave him strength to continue, holding the other man's gaze as he spoke. He had only one question really.

"Why did you come after me?"

He watched the light start to slide away from the Lord's face; watched with sinking horror the recoil so practised and perfected as Blaine moved to turn away. Instinctively Kurt squeezed sharply the fingers he still held. "No. Don't. Please don't turn away from this...please. Don't go back to him. It's one question. Just one question....I... it's all I'm asking Blaine." The whispered name was his last resort but he felt the air expel out of his chest as the other boy turned sharply back to look at him, his eyes flashing with emotion.

"It's the only question." The Lord whispered brokenly into the air between them.

"Blaine...?"

"What did you mean when you said don't go back to 'him'? Who? What were you talking about?" Blaine continued quietly, still staring at their entwined hands. Kurt studied his Lord silently, watched the way his hand shook slightly and the utter vulnerability that was finally evident in his face. He felt something shift further inside of him and released the last of his fear.

"You're two different people to me." He said simply. "I don't know what to feel...how to be around you...who you are? When you're Lord Anderson.." he felt his voice harden as he said the name and Blaine looked back up at him searchingly. "When you're **him**....and around the other lords, you're...it's like you're dead. There's no light inside you. You shut off, or down, or whatever it is and you're locked away. Its...it's like you feel nothing." Kurt felt the words tumble out of him, as if he'd finally been given free range to speak and the action had sent everything spilling out of his mouth at once.

He paused and looked up, a little frightened to see the other man's reaction to what he was saying but not quite ready to stop completely. Blaine was staring mutely at him, a little stunned and Kurt realised this was probably the first time anyone had ever spoken to him like this his whole life. The thought both terrified him and gave him the strength to carry on.

"But then sometimes you're so different. Sometimes I think you seem alive behind your eyes...like you feel things even though you don't know what they are and sometimes they just get too much and you can't control them like you do everything else in your life. Like sometimes they just spill to the surface without you having any power over them." He squeezed the fingers again, ensuring Blaine was entirely focussed on him. Entirely there. "And you hate them. These feelings. I can see you....you struggle with them constantly and it's like you're battling with yourself and everything you've ever known to be true and real and it's so hard to watch because you disappear again." Kurt hadn't realised how close his voice had been to breaking until the last line fell out of his lips as a sharp sob and tears had welled in his eyes before he could stop them.

The sight of the tears pooling in Kurt's eyes and spilling down his porcelain cheeks had Blaine transfixed. He couldn't work out why his chest was clenching tightly and why he was finding it hard to breathe again at the sight. Lord Anderson had watched people cry innumerable times in his life and remained entirely unmoved by the emotions of others. People cried for their own pain; they cried in desperation and frustration and always for themselves and Blaine deplored it, but Kurt's broken face made it hard for him to swallow and the realisation as to why hit him full in his heart without warning.

Kurt was crying for **him**. In empathy or pity or whatever goodness was inside of him, Kurt was crying for Blaine.

He couldn't look at him anymore. It hurt and he wrenched his eyes away from the sight, pulling himself back and untangling his hand from the other man's body, distancing himself to ease the ache. Kurt whimpered at the loss but fought on anyway, needing to get everything out before it all changed back as it inevitably would.

"You're battling **now**. It's like you're at war with your own heart but you don't realise Blaine. You don't get that every time you squash it....every time you silence the pain or the voices you're killing the best part of yourself." His voice became quieter again as he let the tears flow more freely. Blaine was now standing rigidly against the backdrop of the white landscape outside and his dark silhouette served only to remind Kurt of the hollow little boy of Blaine's childhood.

"I'm not sure I know you Blaine." He continued "I thought I'd seen glimpses of you in the shadows of the forest and the darkness of your bed, thought I'd seen signs of the man you could be...or the man you maybe are underneath all of the guarded control but..." Unsteadily Kurt swung his legs out of the bed and shakily pulled himself to his feet, moving painfully behind the other man but not quiet able to cover the final gap and reach out. Blaine felt the movement behind him but seemed frozen, unable to turn to the comfort that was being offered.

"You've never been shown affection. You've never felt gentle touch or softly murmured words. You've never had a comforting embrace or known the security of unconditional love." Kurt's own heart crumbled a little more at the reality of the words he was saying and he watched the Lord's shoulders hunch over and sink slightly. "...and yet you know how Blaine. Somehow, inside of you, there's something intrinsic, something instinctual. How does a boy who has never experienced love, grow in to a man who can **feel** it?"

The question hung in the air as Kurt covered the last patch of carpet separating them and breathed in unsteadily. The white light had finally pushed fully through the night and Blaine's outline was bathed in an ethereal silver glow as he stood before the window. Taking the final step, knowing that these words would be forever tattooed on their skin and unable to be removed, Kurt took the last breath of courage he needed.

"When you're Blaine..." he whispered, closing the tiny gap and pressing his body against the solid form of the Lord's back. "When you're Blaine, I think you are the hope that's left in this world."

Chapter Twelve

"When you're Blaine, I think you are the hope that's left in this world."

The words hung heavy in the whispery air, paused and charged against the increasing dawn. Kurt stood stock still, his lips brushing against his lord's neck as he breathed his last sentence into the dark curls. He didn't know what the next move was but he knew it wasn't his to make. His last hand had been played.

So he continued to wait, watching intently as the muscles in the other man's shoulders sunk a little lower but the face remained rigidly averted.

Blaine felt like he was dissolving; like he was simply a collection of molecules that had been held together by a flimsy and fabricated membrane all these years and now the seal had broken. Kurt had added the first tear the moment he'd appeared on the stairs and had been gradually slicing away at it inch by inch until this very moment.

"When you're Blaine I think you're the hope in this world."

Hope. Hope was such an unfamiliar word to Blaine. Success. Power. These were words he understood, but hope? Even as a Lord, distant and removed from most of it, Blaine knew the world as it stood was bleak and desolate for the masses. Poverty and desperation clawed at ever door and not even the ice white purity of the constant snow that shrouded their state could mask the rotting decay at the core of their society. He'd seen hopeful faces; had seen tiny flickers of light behind eyes as they appealed to a goodness in humanity that Blaine didn't believe existed. He'd also watched that hope dim and lose its sheen as more and more cruelty was dealt out by the Lords. He swallowed thickly, pain burning in his throat. Cruelty dealt out by his father. His contemporaries. Himself...

"When you're Blaine I think you're the hope in this world."

He wanted to ask how? Wanted to demand an explanation from Kurt. How? How was he 'hope'? What did it mean?....But instead he felt himself crack. At Kurt's final words, Blaine Anderson disintegrated. Every shred of remaining fight, or malice or whatever weaknesses collected together to make up his physiology evaporated into the air as each molecule dispersed. Tears spilled down his cheeks, unhindered and unchecked like melting snow coursing down the window pane.

Kurt watched the shoulders tremble in front of him and felt the sobs that wracked his Lord's body as if they were his own. Instinct told him to reach out, to close the remaining gap that separated them but his damaged heart, damaged from days of neglect and rejection and pain, wouldn't quite give in. Instead he stood, slightly helpless, and watched the other man fall apart from behind. He needed Blaine to make the move; needed Blaine to seek the comfort that he was so willing - so desperate, to give. The fact that he craved the Lord's touch wasn't lost on him. but he'd moved beyond questioning it now. They'd moved beyond everything now.

Feeling like a trail of dominos, delicately constructed and on the edge of demolition, Blaine closed his eyes and allowed himself to surrender to the quiet breaths and ever present scent of Kurt all around him. This was the tipping point; the point of release, and it startled him how much he longed for the loss of control. In his brain, Lord Anderson lifted his thumb and forefinger and flicked at the first domino. Blaine took a deep, shuddering breath and turned around.

Their eyes locked for a second, both watery and bright, blown wide with fear and longing and something that neither man could quite identify but that Blaine thought perhaps might have been hope. Lips hovered inches from each other and short breaths ghosted over tingling skin as they waited., both waiting for the other to make the signal to move. The knowledge that this needed to be a mutual move, needed to be equal, flickered in both eyes silently and feeling like he was standing on the edge of a precipice ready to leap, Blaine moved forward a fraction of an inch before stopping. Waiting. The same fear twitched in Kurt's brain before he swallowed it down. Looking up tentatively through his thick wet lashes, Kurt leaned forward and bridged the final gap.

Their lips were gentle this time. Devoid of the push and pull of dominance that Blaine had previously established, both boys were tentative, exploring the still slightly chapped skin of each other's damaged flesh but feeling it tingle as if charged.

There was so much that still needed to be said, so much to learn and understand but in that moment each man needed skin, and blood and muscle and warmth; words would come later. For now, they let their touches speak, apologies and understanding tattooed into lips and breath and heat pressed against heat.

Blaine was hesitant, kissing back but for the first time reluctant to push forward into the desire. His lips remained closed, pliable and yielding to Kurt's delicious pressure. It was Kurt's tongue that slid across his Lord's lips and gently sucked the bottom one between his teeth, nibbling softly and eliciting a low moan of

need from the other man. It was Kurt's warm thumb that softly traced circles against his cheek and drew Blaine's mouth tighter against him, and it was Kurt who finally, after pulling back slightly and allowing the Lord to see the dark want in his dilated eyes, licked his way between the lips and poured fire into his mouth.

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overwrought tension in his body spilling out into a desperate, anguished groan of need as he allowed the other man access.

The response was immediate and violent and Kurt found himself crushed against his Lord's chest as the other man grasped him in his arms, knocking the air out of his lungs as he clung to Kurt's tingling skin. Blaine's tongue surged against his, pushing both into Kurt's mouth and plunging his way into the aching heat. Something shifted inside Kurt and a dark throb of desire sparked through him. There would be no submission tonight. This was raw and desperate and the newly awakened thirst for pleasure that Blaine promised powered the other man onward. Grabbing hold of his Lord's collar, he fisted the material into his hands, forcing the full weight of his previously hidden muscles against him and propelled them both backwards against the wall.

Blaine hit the crimson plaster with an "ungff", the two bodies slamming against the side of the wardrobe as they clawed at each other's clothing. Kurt's mouth had latched onto Blaine's neck, sucking his pulse into his mouth and staining the skin a wine red. Stuttered breaths were gasped out of his master's lips as the former sub's tongue lathed across fiery skin and each uncontrolled whimper seemed to send a relentless beat of dark desire coursing through Kurt's blood. It compelled him, commanded him onwards with a control he'd never knew he possessed. He felt possessed now; embodied by some strange power that disregarded all logic and reason and as his Lord moaned again under another administration, an alien and animalistic sound ripped from Kurt's throat.

Blaine was consumed; felt like he was drowning under the broken dam of his Sub's unleashed desire. He'd never allowed another to overpower him, had never been trapped, a prisoner in another man's arms - and yet he yearned for this; had surrendered instantly to the force as Kurt mastered him. He panted against the wall, fingers clawing at the embossed paper beneath him as each lick of Kurt's tongue against his neck and lips and jaw sent his body deeper into submission. This was utterly new and terrifying and yet he wanted it all. Every time Kurt forced his body over him, Lord Anderson felt more of his desire pooling at his Sub's feet.

Kurt's hands had now grasped at Blaine's shirt, rucking the fabric up against his back so he could feel the slippery heat of the muscles beneath. Fingernails scratched welts into the pliant flesh and each new drag

elicited a broken gasp from the man below him. Feeling himself beginning to lose a grip on reality, Kurt wrenched his lips away from Blaine's, dragging himself off and backwards until he could feel air between them. He stood, panting; both men's fractured gasps being the only sounds that were audible in the silence of the early morning.

Attempting to get his breath and regain control of his turbulent desire, Kurt watched the other man intently. Blaine's eyes had been closed, head thrown back against the damask wall and body splayed out in unquestionable surrender. He looked wrecked; no semblance of the Lord remained as Kurt roved his eyes possessively across his marked neck and collar, the obvious branding of each suck and bite blending with the bruised colour of the wallpaper.

A strange moment of lucidity washed over him as he wondered whether he'd intended to mark him all along; whether in doing so he'd been subconsciously wanting to hurt his Lord, but as Blaine finally blinked his eyes open in his confused, lust-filled haze, Kurt knew that wasn't it. It wasn't to hurt or punish. It was a way to make sure Blaine couldn't forget. Not this moment, not this surrender, not this change. Even if Lord Anderson returned and all this seemed like a dream, Kurt knew Blaine would only need look in a mirror to remember. Remember that at one point he allowed himself to let go.

The hazel eyes found his, bright and darkly wanton in the filtered light slicing through the curtain. There was a colour in them Kurt had never seen. A current of electricity coursing under the tanned skin making his body seem to pulse with want. There was a question in them now. A searching, slightly vulnerable appeal for more; more of everything Kurt had to give.

Blaine's body felt naked, exposed and raw under the haze of lust and desire as he locked eyes with Kurt's. The other man's pale skin seemed to glow under the ice white illumination from the rising sun and his hair stuck up wildly after their aggressive assault. Blaine found his gaze drawn to the rosy lips, wet and swollen from their desperate kisses and watched in ill-concealed awe as they parted with tiny stuttered breaths as Kurt struggled to gain control. He wanted him. Wanted to crush those lips beneath his again and feel the racing pulse of the other man's blood as it throbbed beneath him. He wanted to feel the press of that body against his, surprisingly strong and powerful and entirely possessive in its need. But none of this startled him. Blaine had known desire before. He'd known want and the aching pursuit of relief; had known men and the longing for the stretch and slide of hot flesh. He'd even known Kurt; pliant and yielding and completely open to be claimed ... but he'd never known this. He'd never known fear mingled with desire; never known how exciting it felt to feel powerless and consumed. Blaine had never known what it felt like to want to give up control and just feel protected, worshipped - loved? And he wanted it

now; looked at Kurt and his quivering body and twitching muscles and truly wanted to feel him everywhere. Fear surged through him as he realised what he was really asking for. He knew he wasn't there yet; couldn't quite take that final step but the realisation that he desired it, yearned for it, made his stomach turn with a heady mixture of trepidation and fiery longing. Instead, he took a shaky breath into his lungs and flicked his gaze up to stare through his hooded lashes.

"Kurt ... ?"

The whispery sound of his name exhaled from his former Lord's lips galvanised him into action once again and he felt a rush of blood to his groin as Blaine's pleading eyes sought his. Stepping forward once more, Kurt pressed into Blaine's chest, pulling the boneless body into his arms and gently manoeuvring him away from the wall. His touch was calmer this time, still insistent in its firm pressure as he pushed Blaine back against the bed, but no longer so urgent and frantic. This time each man seemed intent on exploring and discovering the other, rather than simply the desperate pursuit of release. Bending down, he recaptured Blaine's lips beneath his own, savouring the heady contrast of the distant taste of coffee and something sweeter underneath. His fingers found their way to the buttons on his Lord's now crumpled black shirt, and he paused briefly, toying with the top one and drawing back again to breathe against Blaine's ear,

"I want **'you'** this time." His tongue flicked against the earlobe and the other man shivered involuntarily, "You said last time I had to ask, so I'm asking. For **you**. For all of you."

Fear bubbled beneath his skin as he said the words, his inexperienced anxieties pushing themselves to the surface as he connected his eyes to his Lord's. It wasn't until the words had come out that he realised how true they really were. He willed Blaine to understand what he was asking. He willed Lord Anderson to stay dormant. A tiny flicker of steeliness blinked across the hazel eyes before it vanished, Blaine once again rising to the surface as he pulled Kurt against him, both of them falling backwards on to the sheets. "You have me. You have me, Kurt." He whimpered into his neck, fingers dragging at Kurt's hair as he attempted to crush his lips even harder against Kurt's mouth, rutting up against the other man's hard body, searching for the intoxicating jolt of pleasure as Kurt's cock pressed him down further into the mattress. He didn't want to acknowledge the silent 'for now' that he could hear nagging at the back of his brain, but when he looked up into the dark eyes of his Sub he could see the words hanging there too.

With another forceful thrust against each other, both men let whatever poison possessed them to take over. For a while all they were aware of was the uncovering of skin; as each item of clothing was carefully

discarded they discovered fresh bruises and angry scratches from the night before and Kurt found himself slowing down as he administered tiny licks and kisses to the damaged flesh of Blaine's torso, enjoying the faint gasps and slight quivers each motion brought. He'd not seen his Lord like this; their previous time together had been exciting and dangerous, the thrill of the first-time possession something Kurt would never forget, but this time was so different. Blaine was beneath him, limp and boneless and as Kurt drew each item of clothing away from him, it seemed he was uncovering the boy beneath. As if in the removal of his costume, Blaine Anderson became real to him.

When they were both naked, Kurt moved himself alongside his Lord, both men pressed flush against each other but neither dominant. Blaine ran his hand along the full length of his Sub's side, tracing each rib before smoothing over the soft curve of his waist and resting on his hip. Kurt's eyes had closed under the caress and tiny whimpers breathed across Blaine's face as he dug his fingers in a little tighter, drawing their bodies together until they slotted into place like an erotic jigsaw puzzle. The connection made both men groan into the next kiss.

"I still don't know what I'm doing." Kurt whispered, embarrassment flushing his cheeks slightly. "I want to ... to ..." he trailed off, not sure how to articulate any of the desires running through him. Blaine smiled slightly, the first glimmer of the confident Lord coming back, and moved over Kurt, kissing along his collar bone and sliding his tongue down to lick teasingly into his belly button. Kurt moaned and writhed as Blaine mimicked a fucking motion with his probing tongue before beginning to sink even lower. His head was thrown backwards as he fisted the sheets in his hands, knowing what Blaine was about to do and trying desperately to stop himself from thrusting wildly up into his face. As if reading his mind, Blaine placed a firm hand against his hip before taking a tentative lick at the glistening head of Kurt's cock. The broken gasp that the action dragged from Kurt's throat made him grin, a small knowing smirk before he sank his lips down in one motion, over the full length.

Being a Lord, Blaine had never given a blow job before; he'd received of course. Many times; there was nothing more powerful to Blaine than watching another man sink to his knees in front of him and dutifully take everything Blaine had to give ... but this ... he'd wanted to taste Kurt the minute he'd seen him naked that first night; had licked his lips at the sight of his leaking, hard cock standing out so violently against the alabaster contours of his skin, and thought about what it would feel like on his tongue. It was a new desire for him and, at the time, had frightened him. But now, as he felt the heavy weight of Kurt's thick length filling his mouth, he knew why this was so intoxicating to him. Kurt had lost it above him; was thrashing on the bed and bucking fruitlessly up against Blaine's forceful hand trying to push himself deeper and

deeper into the heat. Blaine hummed gently around his cock for a moment before taking a deep breath and swallowing hard.

"Shit. Fuck, Blaine!" Kurt screamed out a string of obscenities as he felt himself hit the back of his Lord's throat before Blaine pulled off coughing a little. "Fuck, are you ok?" Kurt gasped, struggling to sit up a little and look down at Blaine who was now smiling up at him through thick lashes and pulling him back into place. "Where do you think you're going?" he murmured darkly before licking up a droplet of pre-cum that had spilled from the tip of Kurt's now almost purple cock. Kurt's worried expression vanished as he acknowledged the slightly hoarse croak to his Lord's voice, and the realisation that his own cock had caused it nearly made him come there and then. "Please, Blaine ...oh god ... just, please su -" He was cut off by Blaine sinking down over him yet again, instantly opening the back of his throat and taking the full length down into the dark wet heat. Bobbing his head slowly, Blaine set up a relentless rhythm that had Kurt screaming into the pillow as he bucked up against the seductive lips. The tingling pressure building up in his stomach was little warning for the orgasm that he knew was fast approaching and he tugged, slightly panicked on Blaine's dark curls as he tried desperately to hold it off and warn the other man. The sharp tug on his hair shot a bolt of fire straight into Blaine's own aching hard cock and he let out an utterly broken groan as he rutted against the bed linen. The vibrations of the sound around his already throbbing length was the final push that sent Kurt over the edge, the force of his orgasm rocketing through both their bodies as he exploded into his Lord's mouth. Streams of thick come hit the back of Blaine's throat and he swallowed it down greedily, savouring the taste of Kurt and the wholly unfamiliar viscous slide of it as it trickled down. He hadn't intended to swallow particularly when he'd started; hadn't really thought about anything except his desperation to taste Kurt on his tongue and have him fall apart in his mouth, but when he'd felt the warning tug against his hair, he knew he wanted everything Kurt had to give and had welcomed it hungrily. He's barely even realised he'd come until he began to move back up Kurt's still shaking body and felt the stickiness of the sheets beneath him, his softening cock pressing against Kurt's hip as he collapsed beside the utterly spent man.

Kurt's eyes were screwed closed as the come-down from his orgasm washed over him. His body felt boneless and limp, entirely wasted, but alongside the heavy feeling of tiredness he was filled with a nervous fear. He didn't want to open his eyes; didn't want to see the anger and disgust in Lord Anderson's face that would inevitably be there at having had Kurt come in his mouth. As his breathing became a tiny bit more regular he blinked open his eyes to stare at the ceiling overhead, tracing the light as it glinted across the white plaster. He could feel Blaine watching him beside him, and the fact that he hadn't said anything yet seemed to be a reassuring sign. The fact that he hadn't moved away yet also seemed to

indicate that perhaps Blaine was still there; still the boy that Kurt longed for and Kurt allowed himself a tiny sideways glance at the other man.

Blaine was watching him, softly hooded eyes sliding over his face with intrigue before turning away and fixing on the same spot Kurt had just been staring at. There was no anger there. Kurt wasn't sure what the look was but it wasn't anger that had greeted him. Silently, Kurt moved his arm down between them and felt Blaine shift onto his back. They both watched the morning creep overhead as their fingers sought each other across the sheets.

"I can't decide whether I'm a fallen angel or you're a reformed devil ..." Kurt whispered quietly into the air floating above their heads. Blaine blinked silently, letting the words wrap around them as somewhere below them the breakfast bell rang in a distant corridor. His fingers stroked against warm skin as the cupids ticked on the wall.

"Maybe we're just the space in between."

"What does that make us then?" Kurt murmured sleepily as his eyelids started to drift closed.

"I think it makes us human."

Chapter Thirteen

"Where did you learn to play piano?"

Blaine's voice broke across the comfortable silence of the afternoon, drifting across the library to where Kurt sat perched on the stool, his fingers tinkling over the keys in an arrangement of abstract notes.

The encroaching morning had inevitably separated them. Blaine, needing to deal with the imminent interruption from Seth with work-related issues, had left Kurt's room shortly after the sun had fully risen, leaving the other man to shower and gingerly examine his injuries in the bathroom mirror. He'd been startled by the mottled patterns dotting his skin in a strange marble effect of bruises and grazes from the unforgiving ice, but registering the already diminished colours and their gradual healing.

A visit from a Dr. Reynolds, who by all accounts had cared for Kurt during the fever, had occupied his morning. The obligatory examination was followed by a prescribed dose of heavy duty painkillers and a stern warning never to venture out in a blizzard again unless he wanted to finish himself off. Kurt refrained from telling him that had been the unspoken intention. He'd been embarrassed by the attention at the time, annoyed by the fuss he'd caused and wanting desperately to be left alone, but the surprisingly kindly face and administrations of the doctor had won him over and he'd found himself longing to ask questions about the Anderson family and Blaine's childhood.

He'd refrained of course, knowing that no matter what change had occurred between himself and Blaine in the previous twenty-four hours, the young man was still a Lord and he was still very much his Sub. However, it had been Dr. Reynolds himself who had broached the subject of the young Anderson just as he was packing up to leave. He'd fidgeted slightly with his bag, dancing between clearly wanting to say something but struggling with himself and his duty.

"Did you know it was Lord Blaine who found his mother's body after her fall?" The older man's voice had cut across the room, startling Kurt with the utter randomness of the statement. He'd looked up, puzzled as the doctor continued.

"I found them both at the foot of the stairs," his head shook at the memory, "He was only sixteen, just a boy, kneeling in his own mother's blood as he tried to revive her." He'd kept his eyes fixed on Kurt. "Terrible tragedy for one so young really. I'm not sure a person ever truly gets over seeing something like that." He paused and shifted his bag a little before lowering his voice a little further and looking pointedly at Kurt. "Of course, he had his father and Seth to help him through it....you know Seth was the only other person in the house that night...." He'd trailed off, unspoken meaning hanging in the air between them as Kurt tried to process what he thought the doctor was implying. Then suddenly Dr. Reynolds had smiled and the tension had been broken as he'd gathered up his bag again and moved towards the door. "You're lucky Blaine was there last night. That he found you in time....you should thank him. He saved your life."

Kurt had dozed fitfully for the rest of the morning, the doctor's words infiltrating his dreams and leaving him unsettled. He'd given up on sleep around midday and had wandered aimlessly down corridors before finding himself drawn to the library. It was here he'd discovered Blaine, surrounded by paperwork and coffee, curled up in the soft leather of the armchair.

Kurt had been nervous at first, again wondering which man he was going to be greeted by and had immediately retreated, intending to leave the Lord alone and cautious not to disturb him. But Blaine had smiled tentatively when he'd spotted him before slightly more forcefully telling him to stay and play for him. The Sub hadn't even registered the command until he was midway through the sonata and even then he was startled only by how little it bothered him. Instead, both men let the music waft over them and float around the stacks, dancing in and out of the dust beams the afternoon cast across the ancient volumes.

"Where did you learn to play piano?"

Kurt hovered his fingers over the keys, pausing to look across the top of the instrument at Blaine. The Lord had laid aside his papers now and a soft, almost relaxed look had settled over his features as he regarded Kurt.

"My mother." he replied quietly, his eyes settling on the keys again before he removed his fingers and placed them both in his lap with a sigh. They hadn't done this. Talked ... given details, and Kurt was apprehensive at the increased vulnerability opening up to Blaine would bring, but he also knew that if they were to get past this, if he was asking Blaine to change, to trust, then he'd have to offer the same in

return. His fingers trembled again as he took a deep breath and settled them back against the comfort of the keys.

"My mother was a session pianist at the Opera House. I think my first ever memory is sitting between her knees on the piano stool as she rehearsed...." As he spoke, his fingers automatically began to play a random melody, notes flowing from his hands as the memories guided them. "I used to rest my hands on top of hers so that I could follow the movement as they skittered across the keys. They were always so graceful, her fingers; I think I remember the soft skin of her hands beneath mine more than anything else about her ..." he trailed off as his fingers continued to play, Blaine watching him intently from the other side of the room.

"What happened to her?" he asked quietly, the music lulling him into a strange feeling of openness, a weightless feeling settling over him.

"She died when I was eight." Kurt said so simply that Blaine didn't think he was going to elaborate, but Kurt's voice continued, quiet and almost dreamlike over the soft chords. "She was run over by a limousine walking home from a concert one evening. It was snowing and the chauffeur was rushing; it skidded and..." he stopped playing suddenly, his fingers falling to his lap again as he forced Blaine to meet his eyes and his voice became mechanical and cold. "They didn't stop. Hit her, then just drove off unconcerned. Just another woman. Just another nameless face."

Blaine swallowed thickly; the obvious insinuation that a Lord was responsible for his mother's death hung between them and he felt his stomach twist as Kurt began playing again, this time the notes falling slightly more heavily. Standing up gently and moving nearer, Blaine carefully sat down on the stool beside Kurt, the sub shifting automatically sideways to make room for his Lord.

Their shoulders brushed softly and Kurt watched as Blaine cautiously lifted his left hand and rested it over Kurt's right. He was startled once again by the stark contrast between their skin tones, the tanned fingers of his Lord's hand ghosting over the contours of his own as they drifted across the keys.

"My mother died too." Blaine began quietly, watching their ever moving hands slightly hypnotically. "Two years ago. She fell down the stairs in the entrance hall. Died instantly."

Kurt remained silent, giving Blaine time to speak. It seemed unnatural to him and Kurt wondered if Blaine had ever been able to speak about this; speak about anything that actually mattered to anyone really.

"I found her." He said simply, looking towards Kurt as if to gauge his reaction. Kurt merely nodded, unblinking but hearing Dr. Reynold's words repeating in his head again from earlier.

"My father was away on business as usual and I ... shit - I nearly didn't see her. I'd been out running and ... I was wearing headphones so I wasn't really paying attention and I skidded slightly and well, it made me look down ..." Blaine's face had become strangely immobile, expressionless as the words spilled out of his waxed lips. He seemed so alone with his memories that Kurt was startled when the sound of his own name brought him back into focus.

"It was so red, Kurt. Just ... red, everywhere and I didn't see her until after ... I just saw blood everywhere; all over the marble and my trainers and ... her body. It was so, so twisted. Unnaturally twisted and just kind of crumpled. She didn't look real to me anymore."

Blaine's voice was small now but it filled the silence of the library, the music long since stopped and their hands now resting limply against the cold keys. Saying nothing, Kurt squeezed gently at the fingers he held before slipping himself carefully out from behind the piano and breaking contact.

He gazed out over the frosted gardens, his eyes scaling the peaks of the mountains standing proud beyond the walls and then following the lines upwards into the evaporating blue nothingness above. A faint cloud trail was the only visible signal that life existed beyond the house; beyond the world of unending extravagance and unacknowledged pain.

"When I was little, my father would tell me stories of a little prince who lived in a remote castle hidden away in the mountains. He would point to this range of mountains" he gestured vaguely to the scene outside the window, "and say that up there, in the hidden darker shades of grey, where the snow hadn't quite reached and where the evening light would just touch the shadows of the crags, was a magical world, beyond even our comprehension. A world where people had whatever they needed and all the food and clothes and jewels they could conceive." Blaine's eyes flickered around the room, seeing for the first time the grotesque opulence but remaining silent; just watching the pale outline of Kurt's profile as he stared out over the bleached watercolour outside.

"In these stories, the little prince would have amazing adventures, days spent lost in the caves of the mountains or on expeditions to the great lakes that he told me lay just the other side of the range. He would meet strange and wonderful creatures; wood nymphs and giants and anything else my father could fill my innocent mind with. And I lapped them up. My world was so narrow and sheltered and I wanted so

desperately to be the little prince in his vast mansion." Kurt laughed but the humour lay in the absurdity of it all and both men knew it. He turned back to the young Lord, now looking so fragile, perched on the piano stool and once again registered just how small the other man really was, his narrow shoulders hunched over the instrument as he listened.

"It never occurred to me at the time but as I got older those stories never seemed to sit as easy with me. He was always alone you see. The little prince. He was always on these adventures alone and yes, he picked people up on the way but they never came back with him. When I got to hear the end of the stories, on the rare occasions I didn't fall asleep before my father could finish, the little prince always found his way home and would sneak into the house and back into bed unnoticed by his parents or servants. He was always safe ... but he was always alone." He turned back to the window again, dragging his eyes from the searching honeyed stare. "I think my father used the stories as a way to make me feel better about being alone myself. Gave me an opportunity to sneak away into my fantasy world that was so much more promising than the reality. I always thought that's what it was. A fantasy. A fairy-tale with no connection to my life. That's why it was so exciting. It wasn't real. The prince had his world and I had mine and never the twain shall meet."

"But the problem with fairy-tales, they were never meant to end 'happily-ever-after', were they?"

Kurt smiled wryly, "No, I guess not." The silence wrapped around them chokingly again as all the meaning behind Kurt's story hung heavily in the air. It was too much and Kurt laughed suddenly, the incongruous sound in the silent tension making Blaine's head snap up in confusion. Kurt's face was twisted in an attempt at seriousness again but was failing miserably as he tried to suppress the giggles that were threatening. "I'm sorry" he said before giving in and erupting into a, perhaps slightly hysterical, fit of giggles.

"What on earth could be funny in all of this?" Blaine demanded, trying to sound offended but instead succumbing to the infectious smile on his Sub's face and breaking into a wide smile himself.

Gasping through his attack of giggles, Kurt struggled to speak. "I'm sorry. It ... it's just, I couldn't help it. I just ... I was thinking about fairy-tales and ... well ... trying to think of **any** that end 'happily'. It certainly didn't end happily for the wives of Bluebeard," He smirked again, "or ... or ..."

"The Little Mermaid?" Blaine supplied, as Kurt doubled over again and the Lord finally allowed himself to chuckle as well. The sound was utterly unfamiliar to him and he clamped a hand over his mouth to try and

swallow it down but it was too late. They were both gone, days of tension and misery finally giving way to childish humour and uncontrollable laughing as they ran through the list of dark fairy-tales they could think of.

"Necrophilia in Snow White."

"Infanticide in The Pied Piper."

"Not to mention paedophilia."

"Doesn't Little Red Riding hood die in the original?"

"... and cannibalism in Hansel and Gretel!"

At the last offering, Kurt slumped, exhausted against the window, knees bent and back pressed against the cool glass as his body continued to shake with the aftermath of his giggles. Blaine came over to sit beside him, mirroring his position and bumping their shoulders together as they eventually got control of themselves. Kurt looked at him sideways and smiled. "I think I'm slightly hysterical. I haven't laughed like that for years."

"I don't think I've laughed like that ever." Blaine said, his eyes becoming a little more serious as the reality of the statement sunk in. Kurt nudged him again gently. "You should do it more. It's a good sound." Without thinking, Blaine leaned forward and captured Kurt's lips beneath his in a gentle and soft kiss. It was quick and sweet and when they pulled away both men seemed lighter somehow, as if all of the laughing and silliness had tethered them closer together.

"You've got a sick mind, Mr. Hummel?" Blaine laughed again, jabbing him teasingly in the arm.

"Ha! You, Lord Anderson, bring out the worst in me." The words weren't lost on either of them and they lapsed into thoughtful silence as both contemplated the truth behind the flippant remark. Shuffling a little closer and reaching a little more confidently for his Sub's hand this time, Blaine spoke quietly into the twilight that had encroached into the library.

"I'm pretty sure you bring out a better side of me."

Casual conversation filtered through the library that evening as the two men pushed aside their recent history and offered fragments of themselves. The night had definitely drawn in; shadows danced over the dusty volumes and the warm glow from the table lamp cast a soft play of light and dark over the contours of the men's faces as they talked. They'd long since relocated to the plush leather of the sofa and were now comfortably curled up, knees angled towards each other and feet occasionally brushing as they retold stories and memories. The topics remained safe, both men keeping their distance from the darker pasts that they'd each experienced and both adhering to some unspoken agreement that for this evening, at least, they would just be boys again.

Kurt had done most of the talking. Blaine, still unused to divulging much of himself, was skilful at diverting questions back to the other man, but he remained thoughtful and attentive throughout; seemingly displaying a genuine interest in his Sub's thoughts and opinions and his own eyes sparking with obvious pleasure at the excitement on Kurt's face as he discussed his childhood in a string of amusing anecdotes.

Nursing his glass of red wine, enjoying the intoxicating taste of the heavy liquid as it touched his lips, Kurt smiled gently at the man across from him. The wine had made both of them slightly bolder and their usually present awkwardness had been gradually replaced with teasing banter that Kurt would have almost gone so far as to call flirting. He felt braver now with the cloak of the darkness and the ever present smile on his Lord's face.

"Right, its quick-fire question time! You have been far too quiet all evening Blaine, and there is no escaping me any longer." He waggled his eyebrows in mock seriousness which made the Lord giggle again and kick him playfully with his toes before taking a tellingly large gulp of his own wine.

"Ok ... but you don't get to ask all the questions."

"Of course not! Where would the fun be in that? No, we get to take turns - and you have to say the first question that comes into your head otherwise it doesn't work."

Blaine schooled his face into an overt display of thoughtfulness and sat up pointedly straighter making Kurt laugh again.

"Right, so I'm going first." Kurt began.

"Hang on, why do you get to go first?"

"Because I came up with the game and because you've barely answered anything all evening, Mr. Evasive." Kurt poked him in the shoulder for added emphasis while Blaine 'hurrumphed' in fake irritation. "Hmmm, so ok ... what to ask ... what to ask. Ooh, I know! What was your favourite book as a child?"

"That's it? That's the big insightful thing you've wanted to drag out of me all evening?!" Blaine said in disgust.

"Just answer the question, Blaine. It's supposed to be quick, hence the name of the game. God, you're even deflecting this. Anyone would think you were a politician, **Lord** Anderson."

"Ah, Deflection and Evasion: How to be a Lord - lesson one."

"Still doing it."

"Still fun. OK. OK ... hey ..." he held up his hand in surrender as Kurt threatened to hit him with a cushion. "The Secret Garden. Your turn. What was the first song you learned to play on the piano?"

"Puff the Magic Dragon. Favourite subject at school?"

"I didn't go to school."

"Blaine ..."

The Lord smirked again, taking a long and leisurely sip of his wine and enjoying Kurt's exaggerated eye roll. "Math."

"Math? Who the hell enjoys math, freak?"

"It's not your turn!"

"Ugh - are you always such a rule-tyrant?"

"Only when it's to my advantage. And yes I like math. It's logical and makes sense and is emotionless."

"And hideous, but we'll side-step that one. So whose turn is it?"

"Mine. Favourite quote?"

"Ooh - good question ..."

"Thank you."

"Are you going to continue to interrupt your own questions?"

"If it continues to make you pull that face, then maybe ..."

"The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever to be able to do it."

"Peter Pan?"

"That's a question and it's not your turn. But yes. Greatest fear?"

"You."

The word was out before he'd had time to think and silence crashed down around them both as they stopped laughing and allowed the impact of what Blaine had just said to sink in. Kurt put his glass down carefully on the coffee table and fixed Blaine with open and questioning eyes. "I scare you?"

The Lord's eyes were averted but Kurt reached out gently and stroked his hand softly along his jaw, tilting it up slightly to force them to meet his own. "Blaine..?"

"I'm just not myself when I'm with you." He said quietly but with a flash of irritation which made Kurt's fingers recoil slightly.

"Maybe what's actually frightening is that you **are** yourself when you're with me." Kurt said with a little more bite than he intended, frustrated at himself for asking the question in the first place and having destroyed the peaceful truce they'd seemingly forged. Seeing the flinch and change in Kurt's tone, Blaine reached out quickly and took his hand in his, squeezing almost too tightly but attempting reassurance.

"No. Kurt, I don't mean it as a bad thing ... I don't think. I ... just ... I was always so in control and that felt good to me. It felt safe and like it was supposed to be, and now ... well, I don't feel in control when I'm with you, and that's frightening to me ..."

His voice trembled a little and Kurt watched him take another long swig of wine, draining the glass before replacing it on the table alongside Kurt's. He looked up again, his eyes a little darker and clouded, "You're still my Sub, Kurt and ... well, I'm still a Lord. Even if things have changed between us, and I know they have; I still have to be your Lord in public. I still have to tell you what to do and have to treat you a certain way and you're supposed to do it. You **have** to do it." It was the heavy note of resignation in his voice that made Kurt reach for him and move so his body was positioned over Blaine's, pushing him back a little against the arm of the couch and pressing his lips forcefully against the other man's. It was a kiss full of determination and purpose, closed-mouthed but one which left the Lord breathless when Kurt pulled away. "Wha ...?"

"... I don't care. I don't care, Blaine - what I have to do in public. I don't care as long as I get **you** when we're alone." Blaine looked at him in disbelief and Kurt pressed forward again, laying his weight against the other man's chest and hovering over his lips. "I will be your Sub, Lord Anderson. I will be your Sub in public *and* private if need be ... but you must be **mine** too. I need this in return; conversation, you letting me in, trust." He pressed his lips forward again, stealing the breath away from his Lord and silencing any protests he was about to make. "No retreat now." He licked a strip along Blaine's lips, feeling the man open up beneath him and enjoying the change in status his position afforded him. "I'm yours."

With the final power of the words Kurt whispered against his ear, Lord Anderson surged forwards, plunging his tongue into the enticing heat of his Sub's mouth and giving all remaining control over to their black desire.

Chapter Fourteen

"I will be your sub, Lord Anderson. I will be your sub in public and private if need be....."

Kurt watched Blaine from the threshold of the bathroom, leaning casually against the mahogany frame as his Lord pulled at his cuffs for the seventh time since the sub walked in and smoothing down the already immaculate dinner jacket.

"James Bond called for his suit back." He grinned, his voice light and playful in the gilded bathroom but Blaine only shuffled again and threw a weak smile sideways before his eyes clouded again.

"I'm expected to look a certain way Kurt, and this...." he tugged at the immaculate cuff impatiently, "...this, makes me look like a goddamn penguin." He huffed out a breath and moved to shuck the jacket off, snagging the lapel against his cufflink in the process and emitted a low growl of disgust. Attempting to deflect the ripple of desire that flooded to his groin at the animalistic sound, Kurt leapt forward to stand behind his lord and held his shoulders steady. Stilling instantly at the touch, Blaine sighed and looked up at their reflections in the mirror above the marble sink, taking in his sub's appearance properly for the first time.

Kurt was dressed formally for once; a sleek grey shirt stretched enticingly across his broad shoulders, visible behind Blaine's own, more diminutive form in the glass and the Lord struggled to tear his eyes from the narrow waist and slender white skin of Kurt's neck as he leant his head against the dark, slippery curls and whispered in his ear.

"You look incredible," Kurt breathed seductively, dipping down slightly to lick a slow and deliberate line along the sensitive flesh before adding "**My Lord**" in a disgustingly low and gravelly tone. Reacting with the dizzying speed Kurt knew he would at the words of submission, Blaine spun around and grabbed his waist, lifting him and shoving him with full force against the sink before crushing his mouth beneath his own in a desperate and filthy kiss. The Sub only had time to grunt out a puff of air, the breath swallowed out of him as he felt the full weight of his lord pressed against his cock, already straining in his suit pants and gripping Kurt's long legs tightly around his waist. Growling possessively against his lips, Blaine moved down to nip at Kurt's jaw, rasping his stubble along the tingling flesh and thrusting powerfully once more. He pulled back, grinning wolfishly at the utterly wonton moan of pleasure that escaped his Sub's mouth

and forced his tongue into the wet heat of his open lips again, setting up a relentless rhythm as they rutted against each other.

"Fuck Kurt ... you're so fucking hot for it, aren't you?" The Lord grunted against his skin as he sucked violently on the fiery flesh of Kurt's neck, struggling to control his own screaming erection from erupting in his tailored pants but completely lost in the utterly abandoned noises his Sub was making. "You can't come, Kurt." He whispered teasingly, smiling against the whine that Kurt whistled out in protest at the words. "You can't because we have to ... ugh ... have to leave ... fuck - in about four minutes." He gasped out, as he continued to thrust, knowing Kurt was desperately close. "If you come in those ... ahh ... pants, you'll have to ... to go without any ... and ..." he punctured each word with yet another forceful thrust, "I'm ... not sure ... the ... opera ... lets its patrons ... ugh ... in without ... pants."

Kurt was completely undone, head thrown back and face utterly wrecked as he tried desperately to stave off the rush of pleasure building painfully in his veins. Blood thumped in his ears as he allowed his Lord's words to consume him, his body given over entirely to the pleasure that was being promised and yet cruelly denied. The anguished scream of frustration that exploded out of him when he found himself rutting against empty air instead of Blaine's achingly hard length reverberated around the polished tiles and shocked them both.

"Fuck you!" Kurt growled, his eyes narrowed as he panted violently, slumping in absolute surrender against the welcome cool feel of the mirror beneath his back. Blaine grinned at the desperation in his voice and Kurt allowed himself a small smile of satisfaction as he took in his Lord's equally wrecked appearance; the suit now slightly crumpled and his hair no longer quite so slickly-gelled into place betraying his seemingly controlled exterior.

"I'm not sure the opera lets in Lords who look thoroughly fucked either." He said teasingly, enjoying the effect his cursing had on the other man as he watched his cock twitch again and the glimmer of a smirk tug at the corners of his mouth. They regarded each other for a moment through lidded eyes, desire and want and need bubbling just beneath the surface and licking fire over their limbs as they smoothed down their dishevelled outfits and attempted to fix their hair.

"Come here, let me do it." Kurt said, sighing as he watched Blaine struggle to control his unruly hair again. Moving to stand in front of him, but careful not to touch their still throbbing bodies together, the Sub slid his fingers into the softly-gelled curls and smoothed them back into place. Blaine's eyes drifted shut at the

gentle administrations of his Sub, feeling a warmth spreading through his limbs that had nothing to do with lust this time, but was something the Lord couldn't quite begin to articulate.

When he was done, Kurt bent his head slightly and pressed a light kiss to the other man's lips, soft but with a lingering promise of more later, being careful to lick gently at Blaine's bottom lip as he drew away. Taking one last look in the mirror and readjusting their pants for a final time, both men moved out of the bathroom, Blaine sliding the gold embossed tickets into his jacket pocket as he went.

He paused in the doorway of the bedroom, one hand wrapping around Kurt's waist from behind and pulling his body flush against him, feeling the curve of his ass against his groin as he held him close. He lent forward, keeping the man tightly in place as he breathed against his ear, voice dangerously low and making Kurt shiver with anticipation, "When we get back here, I'm going to fuck you until you can't stand." The Sub's eyes rolled back into his head as he slammed back against his Lord with a wonton moan at the filthy promise. Blaine chuckled softly against his hair before kissing him gently on his neck and pushing him slightly forward to leave the room. Kurt sighed heavily and took in a lungful of air before standing up straighter and gathering himself for the evening ahead.

"You, my Lord, will be the death of me." He groaned, but with a smile as he listened to Blaine's soft laugh as he followed him out.

Gilded angels curved sensuously around cornices and elaborate fleur de lis roamed wildly across the ornate ceiling of the Opera House above Kurt's awed head. He couldn't help but stare at the splendour as Blaine ushered him through the entrance into the open space at the foot of the grand staircase where a plethora of exquisitely dressed Lords and their wives sparkled and shimmered under the twinkling chandelier.

Though his mother had worked here, Kurt had never seen the opening night of a new opera, the rules of the establishment firmly keeping the workers segregated from the upper rungs of society and hiding them away. Instead, he'd been inside the theatre only twice in his life, both times sneaking in the back entrance situated in the dark and crumbling side alley, huddled against the slightly damp material of his mother's old woollen coat. Even then, sneaking around the bowls of the stage and the winding corridors of the grand building, Kurt had been open mouthed in wonder at the fantasy world the opera promised. Rich swathes of taffeta and heavily powdered faces with rouged cheeks like painted dolls twisted and spiralled

in the chaos of the backstage preparations and everything was colour and noise and life; at seven years old Kurt had fallen completely in love with the dream-like world his mother inhabited.

Now though, eleven years after his last visit, Kurt was seeing the world from a wholly different perspective and as his eyes swept over the champagne and diamonds decorating the room he couldn't help but feel a slight twinge of disappointment at the sterility of the air. Voices were hushed and controlled, trilling pleasantries and insincere greetings drifted around him and he found himself longing for the unchecked and unrestrained chaos undoubtedly going on beneath his feet.

Blaine was watching him with mild interest, noting the flicker of emotions that he was unable to conceal dance across his Sub's face before he schooled it into some semblance of detached coolness; Kurt's own painted face ready for his performance. The Lord was nervous. He'd stopped fussing with his cuffs in the car when Kurt had laid a reassuring hand on his wrist and steadied his movements. They'd not spoken but the silent change in Kurt's demeanour as they neared the building reminded him that Kurt was very much aware of the expectations placed on him tonight. It was meant to comfort him but instead he felt the cold chill of fear wash over him at the thought of the evening ahead. He longed for the library and its anonymity from society.

Kurt had played his part well though, had dipped his head respectfully when addressed by the more confident of the Lords who had already approached them, mouthing pointless greetings and inane platitudes at the Lord and his sub before strolling away again to attack the next suited penguin. Blaine was relieved that their delay in the bathroom had led to them having little spare time for small talk before the voice bubbled out of the intercom announcing the need to take their seats. Letting out a soft exhale of breath that he hadn't realised he'd been holding, he reached for Kurt's arm, steering him pointedly away from the groups still congregated and up the spiralled staircase towards their waiting box.

"Do you know the story of La Traviata?" Blaine whispered against his ear as they took their seats, Kurt wide-eyed at the sheer amount of gold drowning the theatre auditorium. The sub nodded slightly, unable to drag his eyes from the dripping jewels and silks of the dresses that were now positioning themselves below.

"My mother would tell me the stories behind each piece of music she rehearsed" he whispered back, finally settling his eyes back on his Lord. "La Traviata was one of her favourites."

"Violetta and Alfredo are so tragic." Blaine countered, his own eyes drifting out over the railing and towards the heavy red velvet of the curtain concealing the stage.

"It's doomed from the start." Kurt agreed, his voice quiet and low, "They should never have been together in the first place; they inhabited different worlds...." He trailed off at the implication of his words and looked down, feeling Blaine's eyes on him. "You can't escape where you started."

Rousing chords of the prelude interrupted whatever response Blaine was trying to construct and the couple were plunged into darkness as the velvet drapes swept aside and light flooded the stage. Kurt's eyes snapped up in wonder, his previous sentence pushed aside as he leaned forward into the opening bars, allowing the music to transport him far away from the box and the situation and himself.

The Lord tried to watch the scenes as they burst into life across the stage, tried to take in the exquisite power of Violetta's achingly beautiful voice as it wrapped around the auditorium, but every time he wanted to get lost in the music he found himself drawn back to Kurt, back to his Sub, where he became lost in his face; the ever changing expressions of awe and empathy and the heavy intakes of breath when it reached it's tragic conclusion. Kurt's eyes were filled with tears and Blaine couldn't work out if it was for the memories of his mother, the tragedy of Violetta herself or the unnerving parallels to their own lives. He didn't want to ask, couldn't find the words even if he had wanted to, so instead sought out his Sub's hand in the darkness and simply held on. The fingers squeezed back tightly.

Concealed by the dark and caught up in the drama playing out on stage, the couple hadn't noticed they'd been joined in the box until they heard an obvious sneer behind them as the final act drew to a close with Alfredo cradling his lover in his arms. The sound made Blaine flinch slightly and without thinking he yanked his hand away from Kurt's, missing the pain that flitted across his face at the violent dismissal but attempting to mask the movement through his enthusiastic applause. Only after the thunderous clapping died down did Blaine turn to the figure behind him, at last having regained his composure and control. Kurt too had steadied himself, both men knowing instinctually that it was Lord Buckley lurking in the shadows.

He wasn't alone, Kurt noted. He was accompanied this time by a woman in her fifties with tight little spiral curls pinned severely off her overly large face and a gaudy dark blue ensemble heavily adorned with crystals and sequins. She was quite clearly his wife and her possessive hand resting against her husband's sleeve seemed to confirm this. Her lips were pinched and narrow when she attempted a polite smile of greeting at Lord Anderson, but she pointedly ignored the existence of Kurt with an overt turn of her head.

Buckley, not sharing his wife's more squeamish temperament, allowed his eyes to run lasciviously and lazily over the curves of Kurt's hips and his defined chest before twisting his mouth into a cruel sneer.

"Did you enjoy the opera?"

His comment was directed towards Blaine but Kurt knew it was meant for him. He looked to Blaine in silent question and raised his eyes to the other Lord when Blaine nodded imperceptibly.

"Very much. La Traviata is one of my favourites." He spoke clearly and with attempted cold courtesy, but Buckley's curled mouth derailed him slightly and he looked down at his feet, irritated at himself.

"And what do *you* know of opera?"

Feeling a flash of anger at the pompous arrogance of the older man, Kurt snapped his head up defiantly and mimicked the Lord's narrowed eyes. "Posso giacere questa musica nel mio sonno lei arrogante fotte" Despite the insult Kurt plastered a smooth smile across his face and watched the other man struggle to interpret the language he clearly didn't understand. Instead of admitting his ignorance, Buckley smiled tightly back before turning away from him and looking to Blaine again, the younger Lord frantically trying to school his face into some semblance of sincerity and control having understood perfectly what Kurt had said.

He bristled though when the older man switched to cool indifference and raised his voice slightly. "Such a *talented* sub, Lord Anderson. Not something you'd want to lose, I suppose." He glanced back at Kurt again quickly before smiling broadly at the Lord once more. "That's a nasty scratch you have there on your face." He reached out to indicate the scar with a flick of his wrist, smirking again when Blaine flinched. His eyes narrowed and his voice became more pointed. "You really should be more careful when you're playing the hero next time, Blaine."

Several heads turned to stare at them at the mention of Blaine's first name, the obvious disrespect lost on none of the neighbouring groups and their vulture eyes devouring the new act of the opera playing out in front of them. Not one had missed the gossip of Blaine Anderson's frantic flight into the blizzard to save his wayward Sub, and while few had had the nerve to broach the subject, all were desperate to watch the young Lord squirm at the hands of Lord Buckley.

Kurt watched with mounting horror as a flush of red swept across his Lord's face at the impertinence and the obvious stares, the lack of control over his countenance giving his feelings away entirely and leaving him vulnerable. He wanted to help him, to calm him, but knew that whatever he did or said now would only add fuel to Buckley's already simmering fire. Instead he brushed his arm a tiny fraction against Blaine's, willing him to feel the heat of his body beside him and his reassurance that none of this mattered and that all he had to do was pretend he was utterly unconcerned. He felt Blaine flinch at the tiny movement before taking a steadying breath and bringing his angry eyes to lock with the other Lord's.

"I would have thought it better to play the hero Buckley, than the simpering coward... don't you think?"

He watched the other man blanch slightly and smiled a little at the indignant gasp sputtered out by his wife at his implication. Buckley's own face grew red, his rage seething under the surface of his waxy face. Drawing himself up, appearing instantly larger than his narrow frame truly was, Blaine brushed past the Lord, ignoring the glances of the rest of the room and walked steadily and smoothly down the stairs, throwing an ordered "Kurt, come!" over his shoulder as he went. Obediently Kurt swept out after him, holding his head as high as he could and refusing to look at any of the faces that he passed. They were nearly out of the building when Buckley's voice, talking loudly and pointedly to a group of Lord's that Kurt could see contained Rutherford and several other more prominent figures, echoed down from the floor above.

"... Yes, yes ... it's disgraceful, really. *His father would be so ashamed of him.*"

Blaine's profile was rigid and devoid of emotion. Angled slightly away from him, Kurt could see his jaw clench and unclench repeatedly as the limousine drove on towards the mansion in the darkness. They'd not spoken since leaving the opera, Buckley's words following them heavily into the vehicle and pressing down on them until all previous companionship seemed squashed out of them and they sat alone again, shoulders touching but acres of leather seat dividing them. He didn't know what to do - the mention of Blaine's father had sent the man spiralling back into the remote coldness he'd maintained for so long before Kurt had managed to break down a little of the masked exterior, and now he felt the familiar fear twisting his stomach.

It was midnight when they finally pulled into the gritted driveway, and without even looking at his Sub, Lord Anderson yanked open the door and stalked into the house, leaving Kurt staring bleakly after him.

The door to the study clicked shut as he entered the hallway and Kurt knew this was a sign that Blaine didn't want to be disturbed, knew that it was a silent warning to leave him alone and that in opening the door he would be greeted with the Lord and not Blaine. He knew the beast that lurked inside him and had momentarily been silenced had once again roared awake - and yet Kurt couldn't stop himself. Something had awakened in him too and while not as angry or bitter as the Lord's, Kurt's beast had its own beauty. Taking a deep and steadying breath, Kurt yanked open the heavy wooden door.

"Leave."

Lord Anderson's voice was ominously low in the darkened room; the only light coming from the small table lamp in the corner of the desk. His back was to Kurt as he stood in front of the painting of his father that hung broodingly above the fireplace, his knuckles clenched against the marbled mantle and his head dipped low. Kurt could just make out the tight muscles of his shoulder blades under the stretched material of his dress shirt and swallowed thickly at the power that the Lord's narrow frame belied. Closing his eyes and levelling his voice, he remained firm. "No." He said quietly.

A dark laugh without humour erupted out of Blaine and Kurt flinched. "And that's what they're talking about, isn't it?" He spat out venomously. "Your fucking disobedience. That's what they're laughing at." He span around and glared at Kurt, a fire behind his eyes that made Kurt edge backwards slightly, shrinking against the door. "I'm a joke, Kurt. You heard them. Pathetic little Blaine. Too young and too naive and can't even control his fucking Sub!" Kurt jumped as the glass paperweight smashed to the floor shattering into thousands of tiny fragments on the cold marble. "And they'd be right, wouldn't they? They'd be fucking right. I *am* a fucking joke. You're a Sub. A nothing. And I can't even get you to obey me. Look at you. You come marching in here as if you're the one in charge and then have the nerve to say 'no'. To me!"

He advanced forward then, crowding in on Kurt who was now cowering slightly, back pressed flush against the rough wood of the door. "Blaine, please. D - don't do this. We ... we were OK. They don't matter, Blaine. They don't ..." Kurt felt the breath smacked out of him when the Lord's hands gripped at his shoulders, pushing roughly against him and squeezing painfully into his flesh.

"Don't matter? **They** don't matter? Kurt, they're the **only** thing that matters - can't you see that?!" He shook him roughly, flames burning behind his eyes. "They're what I am, Kurt." He spat out again, face inches from Kurt's and fingers searing flashes of pain into the bruised skin of his arms. "I am one of them, Kurt. I'm a Lord and ... and maybe I should just do what is expected of me." Panic gripped Kurt as he

watched a darkly brooding determination flash across his Lord's face as the other man crowded in on him even further, smashing him into the doorframe with the full weight of his body and trapping him.

"Blaine, please ... let ... let me go, Blaine." He struggled against the power of the other man, trying desperately to fight against the press of his body and push him off.

"So maybe I should just behave like a Lord should, eh Kurt? Maybe I should just take what belongs to me ..." Kurt motioned to scream but found the sound ripped out of him as he felt the Lord's mouth clamp over his, painfully pushing against his teeth and biting his lower lip roughly into his mouth. Blaine's hands moved aggressively to his waist before sinking lower and pushing harshly against his groin and thrusting his leg up between Kurt's. "Come on, Kurt - I know you like this. You're mine, remember?!" He growled against the other man's lips that were now swollen and bruised.

"Let go of me ... B ... Blaine. Please!" Scrabbling to gain purchase on the Lord's chest, Kurt thrashed around under the other man's weight, pushing with all his might against the tense muscles and pounding his fist violently against his chest. Tears were streaming down his face as he fought against the other man, terror mingling with the fear of his own heart breaking.

"Blaine, this isn't you. You're not them." He screamed against his neck as he was crushed into the sweat soaked skin. Pushing with all his might to free his arms, he managed finally to get some leverage and clawed his hands up to grip the Lord's face, desperate to meet his eyes and find Blaine in there somewhere. His fingers pressed into the burning flesh of his Lord's cheek as he yanked his head up with all the force he could muster and held him firm, shouting forcefully, "Look at me! Look at me, Blaine! This isn't you!"

Breathing heavily and teeth gritted, the Lord finally raised his eyes to lock against Kurt's own terrified blue ones, finally taking in his tear-tracked cheeks and bleeding lip where he'd been bitten. And then suddenly it was as if the sight of Kurt knocked the very air out of his lungs; he let out a terrifyingly pitiful whine like a wounded animal and leapt back away from his sub with a force that sent him tumbling backwards onto the desk, horror etched across his features and his hands covering his mouth in disgust.

"Fuck! Fuck! Oh my god, Kurt - what did I do? What did I do ...?" His voice quivered; a tiny whisper strangled out of his throat. Kurt just watched him, panting to get his breath back and tears still streaming down his cheeks. He was shaking, his legs trembling as he steadied himself against the wall with his hands. Blaine's own eyes filled with tears as he watched him, the full realisation of what he had done finally

seeping over him and burrowing down into his skin until he squirmed in revulsion. "I ... I'm so sorry. Kurt? Please ... I'm s-sorry."

Kurt shuffled slightly, feeling the icy shards of glass crush to powder under his feet like his own heart. He wanted to tell him it was OK. He wanted to reassure him that he understood; that he knew why Blaine had reacted like he did. He wanted to because he *did* understand. He *did* get it. He *knew* Blaine. But he also couldn't do it. Sucking the tender flesh of his bottom lip into his mouth Kurt tasted the fresh blood, metallic on his tongue, and couldn't quite bring himself to absolve the Lord. Not now.

"Kurt?" Blaine's voice was tiny and hesitant and completely broken. Stealing himself against the tears running freely down his cheeks, Kurt turned dead eyes onto him, regarding him coldly. "No, Blaine. No."

A sob escaped the Lord's throat as he saw himself in the glassy eyes of his damaged and battered Sub. A beast stared back at him, drowning in a well of blue. Lowering his eyes from the hideous sight, Blaine slid from the desk, falling to his knees. "I'm sorry," He whispered, head bowed to the floor, unable to meet his Sub's crumpled face. "... I'm so sorry, Kurt."

Staring at his former Lord kneeling at his feet, Kurt felt the thin piece of invisible twine that had held them together spool out away from him further and further. His heart constricted.

"I know." He whispered before turning unsteadily and walking out of the room, closing the door behind him and feeling the painful ache of something snapping.

Chapter Fifteen

Silence. That was all there was. Silence and icy emptiness washing through the mansion for the ensuing days and both men remained wrapped in their private turmoil. Kurt had diligently performed his duties still, attending the dinner party at Lord Sanders' house the following evening after the opera incident and dressing in the required clothing laid out on his bed prior to the car picking them up. He'd played the requested concerto for the guests during the cocktail mingling hour before joining the table for dinner and remaining submissively respectful to the questions thrown his way. It had been a small gathering that evening and although neither man would acknowledge it, they both heaved a sigh of relief at Buckley's noticeable absence.

The Lord and the Sub. performed their roles artfully over the following days.....but everything had changed.

It had changed in the fact that Kurt's costume the night before had been more modest than any he'd previously been issued with; the black suit trousers and matching shirt glaringly respectable compared to his semi nude former attire. It had changed in the fact that Blaine no longer joined him for breakfast but preferred to dine earlier in his study where he remained for much of the day. It had changed in the fact that Blaine had treated him respectfully at the dinner party, asking little of him except what he knew he had to in order to not raise more suspicion...and each request had been done politely and with eyes not quite meeting his own.

But mostly it had changed in the fact that the Lord and his Sub no longer touched.

Blaine had left acres of distance between them in the car, staring at the ground instead of at Kurt's blank face. He'd stood beside him at the party but there was a gaping hole of empty air between them. The gulf was widening with every minute of unspoken thoughts seething beneath the surface and when their legs had accidentally brushed together at the table, both men flinched as if burnt.

It was strange for Kurt, watching his Lord diminish moment by moment. A part of him longed for the closeness of the library only days before, longed for the surge of heat under his skin when Blaine had kissed him or looked at him so hungrily, but something had broken and he didn't know how to fix it; he wasn't even sure if he should try to.

Alternatively, Blaine had shrunk into a hollow shell; no longer arrogant Lord but no longer able to reclaim the hopeful boy Kurt had seen in him. When he'd glanced up to meet Kurt's bruised lips the morning after and noticed the slash of red finger marks branding his uncovered arms, he'd felt his stomach flip in self-loathing. He found himself longing for the numb coldness of his former self, the callous insensitivity....anything to replace the gut churning feelings of shame.

"The Lords need to see you take action Blaine."

Seth was glaring at the limp figure of the young Lord with ill-disguised disgust, only managing to check his face into some semblance of masked respect when the boy looked up through dull and weary eyes. They'd been at this for several hours and still had failed to reach a decision.

"But the workers have been loyal to Lord Lyth's company for many years and have proved effective productivity." Blaine argued again, unable to twist his head around Seth's logic of firing the entire current workforce of the factory in order to assert power and authority. "If we sack them without reason, we'll have an uprising on our hands which will get us nowhere."

"So we add to your already threadbare reputation by going in softly and giving them all a big bonus is that it?"

At the mention of his vulnerable position amongst the Lord's, Blaine looked away, picking at the corner of the file on his desk. He could feel the advisor's judgment, could see in his eyes the pity and embarrassment directed towards him as he struggled to make the decision that Seth so clearly wanted him to do. Again he wondered why it was so hard for him to do it. His arguments were valid but previously he would have had no qualms about ruthlessly dismissing a factory load of workers in order to assert some form of unquestionable power. But now.....Now something didn't feel right and there was something niggling at his brain. He tried again.

"Look Seth. I've already proved my power by taking over the factory. Lyth's empire is shot now that we've taken the last remaining source of production. He's finished as any kind of business power and I'm pretty sure his retirement is the next big announcement. He'll disappear into his family name and we've got the rest. People have seen that. The **Lords** have seen that." He stressed, imploring the other man to listen to him.

Seth pursed his lips, looking down at Blaine's seated form. "But why are you so keen to keep the workers? We could pick anyone off the streets to fill their places for less money and you'd be showing them you're in control from the off. No-one would dare challenge your decisions after that. It's important they see your power as absolute Blaine."

Blaine laughed without humour. "Absolute power?"

"Something funny in that?"

"Only the notion that I need to fire a ton of good workers in order to simply exercise my control. What about other ways of asserting power? What about showing them I have faith in them as workers and fostering an environment where they feel loyalty towards me? Wouldn't that work? Wouldn't that encourage better productivity?"

"You're being naïve Blaine!" Seth slammed his fist on the table in frustration sending Blaine's glass of whiskey slopping over the side with the force. "You think those people give a fuck about loyalty? They don't care Blaine. They ***hate*** us. You. They hate ***you*** Blaine and all the Lords. The only way to control them is through fear! Your father knew that. Why can't you?"

At the mention of his father, Blaine looked up, anger bubbling close to the surface and threatening to spill over, "My father only knew fear." He shouted, fists clenched against the tabletop and his frustration finally overpowering him. "He didn't know loyalty. He didn't care about anything except money and how to find the most corrupt and underhand way of getting it."

"Oh yes and you were so above taking the fruits of those endeavours weren't you Blainey?" The advisor spat back, voice dripping with sarcasm.

Blaine's eyes lowered at the accusation and the reality of the words as he took in his plush surroundings. His fingers gripped the desk tighter as he struggled to form into words the disgust and hatred rolling off him for everything he and the man in front of him stood for. His white knuckles flashed up an image of Kurt standing in the same room, his own face blanched white in fear. He took a steadying breath and released his grip, sitting back slowly in the chair and settling his eyes on his advisor's with steely determination.

"The workers will remain. I don't want a revolution on my hands and any rash actions on my part would galvanise an already dissident group of people. *I* run this company Seth and you would do well to remember that. Your role is to advise, which you have done. The rest is my decision."

He watched the colour rise in Seth's face, his mouth twitching to reply and the enormous restraint it took to hold his tongue. The advisor breathed heavily for several minutes, attempting to collect himself before smiling tightly and standing up to leave. "Whatever you say, *Sir*." He said pointedly before sweeping out of the study. Blaine stared after his retreating back and set his mouth in a grim line. He couldn't help feeling he'd just made a very foolish error in challenging the older man.

He also allowed himself to wonder briefly if Kurt would be just a little bit proud of him again.

Kurt had been ensconced in the library again, trying to lose himself in the difficulty of Liszt's etudes for distraction, when Seth had stormed in. The advisor glared at him, face red and distorted as he loomed over the instrument attempting to intimidate the younger sub.

"I don't know what your game is, but you've certainly got your mincing little claws in to Anderson."

He blustered, pushing at the lid of the piano and slamming it on Kurt's fingers as he yanked them away just in time. Kurt stared at him, confused as to the sudden outburst but mildly glad to see the usually so slimy and controlled Advisor flustered. He looked up calmly, determined not to give him the satisfaction of thinking he'd frightened him and stared at him blankly.

"I don't know what you're talking about but whatever Lord Anderson has done, it has very little to do with me. As you've pointed out so many times, *I* am '**nothing**' therefore you can have no reason to suspect I have any influence whatsoever."

Seth propelled himself forward, his fingers twitching with rage as he came within inches of the other man's face. "You're ruining him, you realise. He's a joke and it's all because of you. And now he's making weak decisions and weak choices and the only thing I can think of when he acts so out of character is that it has something to do with you!"

"I am a Sub. I have no power over anything the Lord does or says" Kurt spat back aggressively, matching the venom of the other man and refusing to be intimidated, "but...." he continued, "....if he's finally making

his own decisions and" he looked at him pointedly "those decisions are ones you dislike this much, then I think perhaps he is significantly less 'weak' than you say he is."

Ignoring the now almost purple hue of the man in front of him, Kurt lifted the lid of the piano again and without so much as a glance, started to play immediately from the point in which Seth had so aggressively interrupted him. He smiled to himself as the door to the library slammed behind him, wondering just what it was that Blaine had done.

Blaine was startled when he opened the door to his bedroom to be greeted by his sub, dressed for bed in a silk navy dressing gown and matching pyjamas. He'd been pacing in front of the window, wearing the red pile down into the floorboards, when he'd heard the tentative knock and thinking it was the housemaid making her last nightly check, had been momentarily thrown by the sight of Kurt's pale and nervous face. The sub coughed awkwardly, thinking again that perhaps he shouldn't have come; it was Blaine's move to make really, after everything he'd done, but Kurt also knew that the Lord had been giving him his space in an attempt to show his respect for the other man. He knew that Blaine wouldn't cross that barrier because he didn't want to make Kurt feel pressurised again.

They stared at each other for a while, neither quite sure how the situation worked, before Kurt took the initiative and spoke, his face neutral. "So Seth came by the library this afternoon...."

Blaine's eyes met his, open and clear. "Yeah?.....We had a bit of a disagreement....." Blaine smiled slightly, looking a little sheepish and scuffing his toes against the doorframe. It was a move that was so bashful and unsure, that Kurt couldn't help but smile back slightly,

"It was a good decision."

Blaine looked up, properly smiling now, "You don't even know what it was.."

"I don't need to. If it makes Seth look like he did when he stormed into the library this afternoon, I know it was a good decision."

They stood grinning at each other for a moment, forgetting everything that had gone on previously, before Blaine caught a glimpse of the blueish, purple bruise on his neck and his face fell.

"Will you come in?" he asked quietly, standing back and gesturing for Kurt to enter. Taking a deep breath, the sub nodded slightly and stepped into the room.

They were awkward again, the silence stretching out around them as neither knew quite where to stand or what to do. Kurt played with the engraving on the post of the bed, before he remembered their first night together and memories of the curled flowers pressing into his naked back made him jump away slightly, embarrassed. Blaine stood by the window again, head bowed and waiting for Kurt to speak. The clock ticked loudly and they both flinched.

"Kurt...."

"Blaine..."

They both spoke at the same time, then laughed at their jittery nerves. Kurt motioned for the Lord to continue and Blaine cleared his throat. "Kurt....I know I've said this already and I know it doesn't change anything or fix it or, whatever, but....well....I need you to know just how desperately sorry I am." He raised his eyes slightly and Kurt noted they were glassy with tears again. He swallowed but said nothing, allowing Blaine to say what he needed to.

"I, well, I know it's no excuse, but I'm not used to this." He flicked his wrist awkwardly between them, "I'm not really sure how to even **do**, this....but I know I want to. I know that I've...well, that **you've** changed me and I'm not sure I can....no, I know I don't **want** to change back." He paused and Kurt watched him intently. He cleared his throat again and smiled ruefully, "I think that was made clear this afternoon when I saw Seth's face. When he was so...so...**disappointed** with me."

"You were glad he was **disappointed** with you?" Kurt asked then, his voice startling Blaine a little in the darkening room. He smiled softly and fully met Kurt's eyes this time.

"It assured me my decision was right. If Seth was disappointed it meant it was a decision my father would **never** have made and that made me.....I don't know really. Happy I guess."

"You're not your father Blaine." Kurt whispered quietly and noting the flash of pain that flitted across his Lord's face.

"My father was a bully Kurt....."

"But you're not. Blaine, you're not a bully." He carried on, ignoring Blaine's incredulous look, "You're *not* Blaine." He insisted. "You were angry and you've got a temper and you've got demons to face but you know what....? We all have. We all have Blaine."

"I hurt you." Blaine reached out his fingers, motioning to the bruise smattering the other boy's skin.

"But you won't again." The Sub insisted.

"How do you know? I'm a monster Kurt. I've been brought up to feel nothing. How do you know I won't hurt you again and maybe next time I won't stop?" He turned away, looking out at the dark forest beyond the walls of the mansion. Kurt stepped forward slightly, moving close behind the Lord and softening his voice.

"I know you won't."

Wrapping his arms around the Lord from behind, Kurt held him close, feeling the tightness in his shoulders stiffen before the shorter man relaxed back against him in surrender. "What did Seth want you to do?"

"He wanted me to sack all of the current employees of the new factory we've just taken over as a method of control. He thought it would show them and the other Lords that I'm unquestionably powerful." Blaine murmured, allowing the silky soft skin of Kurt's body to warm him and lull him. They swayed gently.

"But you said no...?"

"They're good workers....."

"So are most of the people desperate on the streets. Why these workers Blaine?" Kurt stroked his fingers rhythmically up and down the other man's arms as he felt his Lord's weight sag against him.

"It was you." Blaine whispered gently, eyes closed as he swayed. "I kept thinking of your face and what you'd say. I knew what you'd do Kurt."

The arms tightened around him as Kurt pressed a gentle kiss to the other man's neck at his words. "It was a good decision" he repeated from earlier.

Turning slowly in his arms, Blaine smiled up at him gently, wallowing in the shine of forgiveness he saw there but still reticent. Appreciating the hesitance, Kurt determined to close the distance between them, ducking his head down carefully and pressing his lips lightly to his Lords. The pressure was soft as their mouths ghosted together, skin sliding against sensitive flesh and making nerve-endings quiver and spark. Blaine pulled back, his eyes falling to the faintly swollen skin at the corner of Kurt's lips where he'd bitten him in the study and he felt the horror rise in him again. Swallowing heavily, he lifted his thumb up to brush lightly over the damaged area, holding it there almost reverently as he drew his eyes up to join Kurt's again. Without thinking, the sub darted his tongue out and licked at the calloused pad, tasting the slightly salty skin and closing his eyes. The movement drew a shaky gasp from the Lord and in an instant his mouth replaced his thumb and he was kissing him with a desperation he'd tried so hard to contain.

He tried to be cautious, to take it slow and give Kurt the time to adjust but the sub had responded with equal fervour, knocking the breath out of him and sliding his own tongue possessively into the other man's mouth. They swallowed each other's moans as their bodies slammed together, each man holding tighter as if trying to claw their way into each other's skin and sew back together the bonds that has become so broken in since that night.

"Kurt...mmmmm..." Blaine tried to speak but the sub silenced him once again by claiming his mouth, biting soft and tender kisses enticingly along his jaw and pressing more forcefully against his chest as he manoeuvred them both onto the bed; A collective 'umph' burst from the two men as they collapsed heavily against the silk sheets, Kurt's full weight stretched out on top of his Lord and their lips still hungrily devouring their panting breathes.

"Kurt, you...you..don't have to do this." Blaine struggled to get out, concern clouding his face as he broke contact momentarily with the searing heat of his sub's administrations. "I don't expect anything..."

"Shut up!" The other man growled out, the sound low and husky in his lust-filled haze. His teeth scraped along the Lord's neck with just enough pressure to elicit a broken sob of pleasure from the man beneath him, before he latched his lips around the throbbing tendon just behind his ear and sucked hard.

"F..Fuck Kurt." Blaine's backed arched off the bed with a force that sent both men bucking against each other, their already painfully hard erections slamming together violently. Shuddering at the promise of Blaine's cock and how long it had been since he'd felt the possession, Kurt sucked harder before pulling back and admiring the swollen red welt that had flowered so prettily against the tanned exposed flesh. He

looked down through lidded eyes at the figure already wrecked beneath him and licked a trail of fire along his earlobe before dipping his tongue inside and swirling it around.

"I want this Blaine." He said, voice gravelly and low. "I want to feel you like this. Inside me." He thrust his lower body against the other man's length again, stressing his point before straddling Blaine's hips and pinning him down fully, rocking against him rhythmically as he spoke. "I want you just like this, beneath....urg..... me..... b...but possessing me at the same time."

He watched as the Lord's eyes rolled back in his head at the continued pressure grinding against him and grinned as the movements dragged a ragged moan from the parted lips. "Shit Kurt, I want to fuck you. I...god, I really want that." His hands gripped the sub's waist as he rode him more forcefully, attempting to still his hips and ease the mounting wave of heat that was building in his stomach. "Want you to...shit...urg...to ride me Kurt."

Bending down to recapture the lord's mouth, Kurt changed the angle and moved his hips back slightly, knowing that neither wanted this to be over too soon. They'd not been together like this since the first night and the sub's skin tingled with anticipation of the stretch and fullness that he longed for again. His fingers moved to the buttons of Blaine's pyjama top and he looked up at him from underneath his thick black eyelashes as he flicked each one open, before sliding his fingers along his torso and pulling the silken material aside. He felt the other man stiffen beneath him as his hands traced patterns across his ribcage and tweaked first one then the other nipple between his thumb and forefinger. Blaine moaned out his name as he writhed under the sub's touch, his breath coming in stuttered gasps and his lower body thrusting involuntarily up into Kurt's groin.

"I want to see you Kurt....please...please, let me see you."

The Lord's voice was broken and rasping as Kurt's lips sucked at his nipple, pulling the bud lightly between his teeth to draw more and more animalistic whimpers from Blaine. Hands clawed at his back, sliding against the silk of his robe and tugging impatiently at the material in frustration.

"Kurt..take...off." Having lost the ability to even form coherent sentences, Kurt took pity on the man below him and levered himself up, undoing the robe in one go and sliding it seductively off his shoulders to reveal his naked chest underneath. Blaine gasped as he let his eyes wonder over the translucence of his sub's porcelain skin, taking in, again, his fill of the defined muscles and narrow waist. "Fuck Kurt" he breathed, "I'll never get tired of looking at you...you're...you're so fucking perfect." His hands had moved to

caress the sub's slender arms, pulling at them slightly to allow Kurt to fall back over him, covering him with his whole body.

They shifted position then, as their mouths met again, this time in a slower, deeper kiss that made both men moan into the others lips. Kurt thought about how much Blaine had the power to destroy him with just the touch of his tongue, sliding into the wet and open heat of his own mouth; when his Lord's lips were on his, Kurt didn't think he even knew what morality was.

Pyjamas were removed slowly, amongst soft touches and hot breaths until both men were lying naked, Kurt once again stretched out fully against his Lord and their cocks slotted together between their slick bodies. There was no hesitancy now, no nerves, just the quiet rhythm of skin against skin and mouths exploring each other. Blaine locked eyes with Kurt as his hand trailed a path downwards, sliding suggestively over his taught buttocks before slipping between them. He raised a questioning eyebrow slightly as his fingers traced circles around the puckered rim, just applying the tiniest bit of pressure to watch Kurt fall apart little by little. "Are you sure Kurt?" he whispered, knowing the answer already but needing to ask one last time, the bruises still evident on his sub's forearms forcing the question from his lips.

"More than anything....God...please Blaine...just...please."

At the desperation in his voice, Blaine needed no further reassurance. Reaching for the bedside cabinet and scrabbling around inside he produced a small bottle and gently squirted some on his fingers, warming it up slightly before pressing back against Kurt's waiting hole. He continued to trace circles, enjoying the way Kurt's cock would thrust up again at each press of the digit and the wanton groans that were leaking from his mouth. Kurt's head thumped down hard against his collarbone when he finally slipped his finger past the tight ring, feeling the delicious stretch all around him of Kurt's relatively untouched body.

The sub continued to whimper against his neck, hair stuck to his forehead as the Lord gently fucked him with his finger, adding a second and third as he felt Kurt open up to accommodate him more. "Shit...Kurt you feel so fucking good." Blaine whispered brokenly against his ear as the sub continued to babble a string of incoherent sounds and murmurs. Only one sentence managed to break through the litany of nonsense, making Blaine grit his teeth to stop himself from coming and ruining everything far too quickly.

"Fuck me Blaine. Just.....fuck me."

With one final insistent slide against his prostate, Blaine removed his fingers, leaving Kurt clenching the air at the raw emptiness and crying out in desperation. "No please put them back...put them back." Blaine giggled a little, stroking the damp hair from the sub's forehead and bringing his lips down to be reclaimed again. "Patience Kurt. I have to get a condom baby." The use of the endearment that spilled from Blaine's mouth was so out of character that both men paused for a moment, eyes meeting with open, slightly watery acknowledgment before they crashed mouths again and swallowed all the words from each other.

It was Kurt this time who took charge, Blaine watching with lust-blown eyes as he gave his now leaking cock a few hard jerks before sliding the condom down over his length and slicking it up with more lube. The Lord marvelled again at the confidence of the previously so inexperienced sub and how transformed he was from the trembling innocent of the first night. He was still trembling now but it was with need and desire coursing through his skin and the decisive way he positioned himself on his knees, raised above Blaine, took his breath away. It was only when Kurt hovered there for a second that Blaine realised that there was still a glimmer of fear beneath the darkly blown eyes. His hands steadied on the sub's hips, stroking gently at the sensitive skin and holding him in place above him.

"Go very slowly baby." He said softly. "I don't want to hurt you."

At the reassuring sound of his Lord's voice, Kurt nodded slightly before bending once more to kiss the other man again. Blaine held his hips steady as he felt Kurt gradually sink his body lower, his hole opening up to stretch achingly tightly around him and forcing him once again to steel himself against his rising orgasm. Kurt whimpered a little above him, his eyes squeezed together in a heady mixture of pleasure and pain. He'd forgotten the stretch, the utter fullness and the position only allowed him to feel even more owned.

As he sunk fully down on Blaine's cock, bottoming out completely, he paused and let his eyes drift open to lock with the other man's. Their faces were wrecked, mouths hanging open as silent waves of pleasure washed through them and their eyes devoured each other. Kurt felt consumed; felt his Lord inside and all around him and everywhere in between. He looked down darkly as he felt Blaine's cock twitch a little inside him, urging him to move and felt dizzy.

"You possess me."

The words rippled through Blaine like an electrical current and Kurt watched his eyes close in complete surrender. It stirred him, compelled him onwards and he lifted his hips up slowly, dragging off his Lord's

full length before sliding back down smoothly. "Kurt...." Blaine seemed beyond words now as Kurt started to set up a relentless rhythm, sliding almost fully off his aching cock before slamming back down harshly. He breathed his sub's name over and over again as each thrust sent him nearer and nearer toward the abyss. "Kurt...ugh...I can't...I....soon...too soon." words tumbled from his lips as he felt the mounting pressure inside him and he grabbed on to the other man's waist to slow him down. "Please, Kurt...not yet." He moaned.

At the completely abandoned sound of his Lord's voice, Kurt stilled his hips slightly, shifting backwards before taking hold of Blaine's arms and hauling him up to a sitting position with a surprising display of strength.

"You can't come yet." Kurt teased, mimicking the Lord's words from the first night and watched Blaine's rueful smirk of acknowledgement. That had been a night when he'd been so much more in control, when he'd held all the power.

Now though, everything seemed different. The change in position made it all so much more intimate; Blaine's arms wrapped around Kurt, pressing him down on his cock and cradling him in his lap, legs knotted together. Their eyes held firm as they started to rock more slowly, the new angle sending Kurt into shudders of pleasure with each brush against his prostate and building a gradual pressure. Blaine's hands slid into Kurt's hair, tugging slightly as he pulled out, before rocking back in with a slightly more forceful thrust. "You're so beautiful like this." He whispered against his mouth, "So fucking beautiful Kurt."

"I'm yours....." Kurt moaned in reply, fingers clawing at the taut muscles stretched across his Lord's back. "I'm always yours."

For a while nothing could be heard in the room, except panted breaths and swallowed moans as they held each other, locked together as if one entity, not sure where Lord finished and Sub began. They rode each other like a wave, ebbing and flowing as the tide began to crash in around them. Their orgasms built up slowly, flooding them from their toes like water builds behind a dam before it all becomes too much and something has to break.

It was Blaine who came first, taken by surprise by the sudden overflow as he felt every nerve ending inside him tingle and sparked before short circuiting around him. He came inside Kurt with a force neither man had expected and the suddenness of it made him drive up violently into the sub, pushing unrelentingly against the hub of nerves deep inside the desperately tight heat and causing a fire to rage

inside the other man. As the Lord clung on, riding out his orgasm as wave after wave broke over his head, Kurt too felt himself lose control. He ground down harder against his Lord's now throbbing cock, over sensitive but still desperately thrusting forward to push Kurt over the edge.

They rocked together one last time before Kurt exploded between them, come shooting white streaks up both their stomachs as they clung to each other desperately, their names streamed out between them as one voice, one person, as they shuddered back to consciousness; back to reality.

They stayed wrapped together in the silence, their panted breaths becoming steadier; heads buried against each others necks. Kurt licked a line of sweat from his Lord's shoulder blade, before biting down slightly to stabilise himself. Blaine just held on, feeling displaced and scattered in the island of sticky silken sheets. Pulling his head back slowly, he drew in a shaking breath and swallowed tightly. His finger traced the sub's eyebrow, mapping out contours and soft patterns down across his cheek. Kurt watched him silently.

"Thank you." Blaine whispered finally, his eyes more wide and honest than Kurt had ever seen them.

"What for." He smiled breathily, dropping a kiss lightly to the other man's forehead and brushing away a damp curl.

The Lord closed his eyes at the tender touch, feeling so much like he wanted to say more but struggling to find any of the words that seemed to make sense. It was all chaos and jumbled and nothing flowed; his head ducked down as he struggled to squash the words that seemed to be bubbling energetically on the tip of his tongue but seemed so utterly terrifying that he had to swallow them away. Instead he raised his head again and felt Kurt's eyes calm him; he breathed deeply, glanced once more at the tiny cut still just visible on his sub's lip and said simply,

"You forgave me."

Chapter Sixteen

"I want to do something for you, Kurt."

The voice had been muffled slightly, Blaine's head buried into the crook of the Sub's neck as they lay on the dishevelled sheets, and Kurt wasn't quite sure what he'd said. His head quirked awkwardly, trying to see his Lord's face as he felt soft lips press against his collarbone gently.

"Blaine ...?"

"...Give you something ... I - I want to give you something. A present. Anything. What do you want?" The words poured out in a flurry of open mouthed kisses and obvious hesitation and Kurt smiled, wriggling out of his Lord's arms playfully in an attempt to sit up. The progress was made all the more difficult by Blaine's hungry mouth chasing his body up the bed, and he couldn't help but giggle at the petulantly protruding bottom lip and sad puppy-eyes that he received in return.

"Blaine ... ugh ... stop ..." He squirmed, "Blaine! ..."

"I want to kiss you. Why won't you let me kiss you?" he pouted.

"I ... ha ... Blaine ... I ... stop kissing me. That's what I want. You said anything. I want to be able to talk to you without having your lips as an additional appendage." Kurt deadpanned in mock disgust, laughing again when Blaine latched on for a final time before holding him back teasingly at arm's length.

"Fine." Blaine grumbled, sitting back on his heels, muttering "I'll be good." without much conviction.

Kurt smiled at him again, reaching for their boxer shorts that had been carelessly strewn down the side of the bed in the midst of their earlier passion, and flung a pair at Blaine. "Put these on, mister - I can't have a serious conversation with you when you're sat in front of me naked."

"Who said I wanted to be serious?" He retorted, but conceded to struggle into the underwear before sitting back opposite Kurt cross legged.

"You said I could ask for anything ..." Kurt threw back before settling himself opposite, pillows propped behind him.

They sat watching each other for a moment, silly grins on both of their faces as they just raked their eyes across bare skin and still-flushed bodies, before Blaine spread his arms wide and quirked an eyebrow. "So ...?"

"So ...?"

"A gift. What do you want? Anything. I want to give you something to show you ..." He trailed off slightly before Kurt jumped in.

"You don't need to give me things, Blaine. I don't need presents to know that you're sorry."

"It's not that." The Lord shrugged. "I ... I - Kurt, I just want to show you I care. I want ..." He looked down at his fingers, now laced a little primly in his lap, and his voice became smaller. "I want to make you smile again."

Kurt reached over and rested his hand on top of his Lord's in soft reassurance. "I **am** smiling, Blaine." He said gently. He paused to stroke his thumb across the back of the tanned skin of Blaine's knuckles before pulling it back and making an over-the-top display of biting his lip and looking towards the ceiling, seemingly deep in thought. "Anything, huh?"

Flicking his eyes up to take in his Sub, Blaine smirked slightly. "Hmm, am I going to regret that, Mr Hummel? Did I just offer you the keys to the Magic Kingdom?" His eyebrows wiggled ridiculously and Kurt couldn't help but burst out laughing, choking back his face into some semblance of seriousness. "Weeeeelll ..." He stroked his chin thoughtfully. "The Magic Kingdom does sound good. What exactly can one do there?"

"One does not get to find out about the Magic Kingdom until one is granted the keys, and you must wish for that."

"So, are you the Genie now? Am I Aladdin, Blaine?"

"Right here, direct from the lamp. Right here for your very-much wish-fulfilment. Thank you!" Blaine mimed rolling up cuffs and puffing out his chest in a rather too accurate portrayal of the Disney favourite, making Kurt splutter once again. He wondered mildly who would have watched Disney films with the young Anderson before brushing it aside; there was a lot he still didn't know about his Lord and the thought actually made him smile softly at having time to figure some of the new things out. Right now he was just enjoying their childish banter. It had been a while since Kurt had felt young recently.

"You're going to grant me *three* wishes now?"

"Uh ... almost. You're forgetting the provisos. The 'quid pro quos' ..."

"Oh that's right, Mr Almighty Powerful Genie ... what's the catch?"

"You only get one wish."

"What kind of a genie only grants one wish, Blaine?"

"The kind that doesn't want to give his Sub too much leeway to take liberties." He grinned, and threw a pillow back at Kurt who caught it deftly, blowing him a cheeky kiss in return.

"Wait, though ... waaaiitt a minute ... that makes me your *master*. I get to be your master in this Genie/Aladdin role-play here." Kurt was bouncing up and down on the covers, slightly too excited by his newly-granted status, before Blaine stuck his tongue out at him and grabbed hold of his feet.

"For now. For this one wish, you get to be master." He grinned. "But never again!" He mouthed in exaggerated sternness.

"Fine, but I'm basking in the glow of my temporary power for a moment, so don't ruin it." He stuck his tongue out in return and squealed when Blaine launched himself forward, sucking the tongue deep into his own mouth and stealing a moment of Kurt's breath. "No fair." He protested, embarrassed at the slightly high and breathless note to his voice. The Lord just smiled knowingly and sat back again.

"Are you ever going to actually ask for something, because my offer might have a time limit if you keep this up ...?"

"If you would just shut up and let me think." They smiled at each other before Kurt lowered his head slightly, his eyes losing a tiny bit of the playful sparkle they'd entertained moments before.

"What? What is it, Kurt?" Blaine's hand reached across and he was suddenly serious again, concerned about the rapid change in his Sub.

Taking a deep breath, and slightly worried that he might be about to destroy once again their carefully balanced harmony, Kurt looked up and met Blaine's eyes. "There is something I want. Something you could do for me."

"Anything, Kurt - I told you. What is it?" Blaine looked eager to please, face open and sweetly imploring.

"My father. I ... I'm -" He sighed. "I just miss my father. I just want to see him. Know that he's ok ..."

There was a moment of silence as Blaine processed what had just been said. He looked genuinely shocked for a moment, as if he'd almost forgotten that life existed beyond their strangely constructed world. He frowned a little at his Sub in concern. "You know he's ok, Kurt. I made sure he was well looked after. I - I wouldn't harm him. I promised you that."

"I know. I do trust you, Blaine, but ... well, he's my father and ... I just miss him, that's all. I don't know what he'd think of me - of *this* ... but I would give anything to see him and know that he's ok, you know?"

Blaine didn't know, not really; the concept of caring about another human being so much hadn't really been something he'd understood before, and certainly not a parent, but he knew Kurt. He understood Kurt and he felt a flash of pain in his chest as he realised he didn't want to deny him. He knew it was foolish; it was so unlike anything Lord Anderson would do - but that was why it was really quite simple. He took the pale, fragile fingers into his hands and lent forward to press his lips lightly against the beautiful man opposite him.

"I'll make some calls and ... maybe he could come here to visit you ...?"

The last of his words were cut off completely as Kurt flung himself into his open arms, tackling him back onto the bed covers and smothering his face in a litany of kisses. "Thankyouthankyouthankyou!" Blaine couldn't help but grin beneath the insistent affections rained over his flushed skin and they tussled slightly as he gave in to the pleasure of having such an effect on the Sub.

"Well if I'd known you'd be this grateful ..." He smirked against the other man's searching lips, "... I'd have stuck with the three wishes."

Kurt slid his tongue enticingly across the pulse point in Blaine's neck, grinning as the Lord squirmed beneath him, and he felt the tell-tale hardness pressing against his thigh, "I wish to be kissed." He whispered against his ear before slipping his tongue inside the soft shell and swirling it around. "I wish to be kissed." He repeated again before he was grabbed and rolled onto his back with a soft growl from his master.

"No substitutions, exchanges or refunds." Blaine murmured, wiggling his eyebrows once again before swallowing Kurt's laugh with his mouth.

It had been exactly thirteen minutes since he sent Seth away on the errand and Blaine's foot was tapping aggressively beneath the desk, drumming out an incessant rhythm in a nervous action not quite stamped out in childhood. Previously it had been marked as impatience towards his fellow Lords and employees, but recently it had seemed more obviously to betray his confidence.

He wasn't sure why he should be uncomfortable; it had been a simple request for information regarding Kurt's father's whereabouts and contact details, but Seth's silent acquiescence without so much as a tut or raised eyebrow had unnerved him. He was expecting disapproving looks and challenging retorts at the mention of Kurt's family and Blaine's willingness to provide the Sub with information. He'd at least expected a raised eyebrow or smirk of disgust at his obvious weakness for the young man - but all he'd gotten was a small nod and a hurried exit as if the advisor had been anticipating this all along; had in fact been waiting for it.

And that was fifteen minutes ago and still he'd not returned. Lord Anderson wasn't used to waiting. For anything. And the more he was left with his own thoughts, the more brooding they became. He'd not enquired about Burt Hummel since that first night when he'd made the quick and blunt request that the older man was to be removed from the cells and taken immediately to the private hospital in South Telpot in the neighbouring district. Anything that followed had been drawn up in Kurt's contract as part of the terms and conditions, and Blaine had had little more to do with it. Seth had drafted the agreement and Blaine had simply signed what he'd been brought with little more than a cursory glance cast over the document.

When Kurt had mentioned his father again, it had thrown him slightly; he'd forgotten that his Sub, his **Kurt** had existed before, and that alongside that prior life came outside people and relationships and affections. A part of him had wanted to deny Kurt. The Lord that lurked underneath had almost exercised his power again and stamped out the possibility of a father/son reconciliation. But then he'd looked at Kurt; all soft and pliant and sex-mussed, surrounded by silk sheets and the scent of them both, and he'd not been able to deny him anything. It shocked him how little power he had to deny Kurt.

And now he waited, foot tapping, fingers drumming and glass drained, but waiting still.

Somewhere in the distant corridors of the house, dancing around stacks of books before wafting in ribbons down the marbled halls, Blaine could hear the first strains of music from the piano and smiled to himself. His fingers stilled, the drumming turning to softly caressed circles painted into the wood as he allowed his Sub to sooth him from another part of the building. His eyes closed at the memory of his own face buried into the downy soft hair at the back of Kurt's neck as they lay together that early morning and watched the sun rise slowly beyond the mountains. They hadn't drawn the curtains the night before; the hours had merged into a strange rhythm of sighs and whimpers interspersed with moments of lucid conversation and shared slumber. It had been a night of reconciliation which had bled into a morning of giggling and childish banter and tickling fights that ended in hard kisses and heated flesh once again.

The door suddenly banged open and Seth's angular form filled the frame.

Kurt had drifted off into a strange sort of suspended state; that afternoon he'd allowed the music to finally carry him off into his memories and surrendered himself to the warmth of his family home and his father's arms. The soft strains of Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata' transported him away from the austere, brooding mansion; away from the dusty tomes and back into the soft cocoon of his tiny music room back home. He'd not let himself think of any of it since the first night when he'd cried himself to sleep on the plush silken cushions that had felt like they were suffocating him. It had been too painful and he had almost surprised himself with how easily he'd managed to close himself off from that part of him. It was as if the moment he'd stepped into the black leather of the costume he'd been forced to wear, the Kurt Hummel he had formerly been ceased to exist.

But now it was different. Though he still knew his father would never approve, and while he still felt his stomach turn with the fear of Burt's so obvious disgust at what he'd become, he couldn't stop himself from

asking for this one thing from Blaine. His father was everything to him, all that the young man had ever really had as a constant, and the thought of being able to touch him ... to hold him and smell the grease on his coveralls one more time was enough to send Kurt spiralling back into the past and to the memories he'd managed to lock away for the past few weeks.

"Sweetheart, you're trying too hard. The playing should come from here ..." She touched his heart, "... and should carry all the way down to here." She stroked along his fingers slumped unhappily in his lap and lifted them up, placing them back on the piano keys with unfaltering patience.

"It's no good. I suck!"

She smiled at him softly and bent to kiss his forehead, brushing back the bangs that flopped continuously in front of his eyes and which he'd recently taken to stroking to the side every time he was nervous. "Baby, you will never suck at this. This music is in your veins. You already have it right inside you, like the blood in your heart and breath in your lungs. You've got this." She nudged him slightly with her shoulder, bumping them together and making him sigh in resignation. He never wanted to disappoint her, but he knew that not playing would be far worse than playing badly.

"I just can't do it all together ... only in little sections, and then I forget the rest and mess up." His head hung lower and he worried at his hair again before wiping his palms against his trousers and wincing in disgust when he realised what he'd just done. "Ugh! I'm just not cut out for this. Maybe I'm more like Dad than you think. Maybe I should go fix cars with him instead."

"Don't you dare, kiddo!" his father's voice muttered gruffly from the other room before his stern face appeared in the doorway, his inimitable bulk filling the frame. "I love you helping me out, but I think we both know you are not going to be a grease monkey like your Dad. I'm counting on you to make us our fortune when me and your Ma want to retire and escape to our mountain retreat. That's gonna cost, you know, and I'll be sending you out to pay for it all. Got to get something out of this 'having kids' business."

He leaned against the doorframe, arms crossed with a mock serious expression on his face as if he was calculating all of the costs their future life was going to bring, ticking off on his fingers the hours Kurt was going to have to work playing the piano to pay for it all, while his son's eyes grew ever wide in horror. He looked up at his mother, her lips drawn tight to stop her dissolving into laughter at his shocked little face, scrunched up in concern.

"I'll never be able to play well enough to afford all of that!" he exclaimed, the resignation so heavy in his voice that she took pity on him, scooping him up in her arms and squeezing him against her chest. He breathed in the rosehip lotion she always wore and felt himself settle back, curling into the soft skin.

"Don't you worry baby, he's just messing with you." Her eyes flicked up and caught Burt's and they smiled gently at one another, warmth seeping into the room and wrapping around them all. "Your Dad's just jealous because he could never play like you can."

"That's right, buddy." Burt moved closer and sat on the other side of the piano stool, sandwiching the small body of his son between the two of them and feeling the muscles in his frail little back relax as Kurt moved back into place. Whenever they went anywhere outside, whenever they walked along the pavements or journeyed out into the crumbling town, Burt and Elizabeth would always walk on either side of their son, cocooning him in the centre as if protecting him in their own bubble. Loved. Secure. A wall on both sides.

He felt himself relax, the heat of both his parent's bodies warming his skin, and took a deep breath, fixing his eyes determinedly on the sheet music in front of him, scanning the inky black lines dancing across the page and finally allowing them to seep under his skin. He closed his eyes and tried to remember the notes, let his fingers flutter against the keys but not pressing down, his lips moving in rapid whispered chords and sharps.

"From the heart, kid." His father whispered against his ear.

Eyes still closed, Kurt pushed down hard into the first key and felt the music flow from his fingers.

His eyes had filled with tears at the force of the memory, and his chest ached a little with the pressing need to feel the strength of that body beside him. When his mother had died, the safety of that bubble - the cocoon - had collapsed and the wall was no longer impenetrable. They'd tried to keep themselves pressed together and for a time it had worked, but Kurt had grown older and years had spooled away from them, and with no pressing bulk on the other side of him Kurt hadn't been able to protect himself.

He needed to make things right. He needed to talk to him. He needed to show him what he was now but show him that it could be good, that he could be better. He just needed to see him - even if he looked at him in disgust at what he'd become, Kurt needed to feel small again. He needed his father.

Blaine steeled himself against the doorframe and let his eyes flutter closed. His fist clenched; the knuckles blanched white against the mahogany wood of the door as he thumped silently against it. Pressing his forehead into the smooth varnish and feeling his throat constrict painfully, he breathed in deeply before pushing into the library.

Kurt's back was hunched over the piano, no longer playing but head bowed over the keys in silent contemplation. He spun around at the sound of the Lord entering the room and smiled widely, his whole face brightening at the sight of Blaine and his slightly dishevelled appearance.

"Blaine, sit down - I want to play for you. It's something I've not played since I was a little boy and for some reason it came back to me today, and I want you to hear it. My mother used to play it for me and it was the first ..." He trailed off from his enthusiastic rambling as he took in Blaine's crushed face. "Blaine - what is it?"

"Kurt ..."

"What? Blaine, what's wrong? Did Seth do something?" His voice was hesitant, a sickening feeling somersaulting in his stomach as his Lord's eyes failed to meet his own. "Tell me!" He demanded, more forcefully this time as something twisted again in his gut.

Blaine stood in the doorway, unable to bring himself to move closer, his legs unsteady and frozen to the spot as if he was too much of a coward to actually go to his Sub. His arms hung limply at his side as he raised his eyes to latch on to Kurt's pale and quivering face, his lips bloodless and pressed tight in fear.

"It's my father, isn't it?"

He tried to speak but his voice caught in his mouth, his tongue feeling swollen and clumsy. His eyes filled with tears as he watched Kurt crumble in front of him, his face literally cracking as tears spilled silently down his cheeks at Blaine's silent confirmation.

"Is he dead?" Kurt's voice was tiny, a whispered breath that was choked out into the room but felt like a punch to the Lord's own chest. He couldn't answer, but shook his head quickly in an ineffectual attempt to ease the pain.

"No. No, Kurt - he ... he's not ..." Blaine swallowed and tried again, taking a deep breath and forcing himself back together for the sake of the terrified man in front of him. "He's not dead, Kurt - but ... but he's sick. He's very sick."

A broken sob was strangled from the other man's throat at Blaine's words and he leapt off the stool, his eyes wild. "I have to go to him. I have to see him. Where is he? What have you done with him? Where did you take him, Blaine?" He was shouting now, his voice aggressive and high pitched, spat out between gasps of pain. "You did this." He growled. "You put him here. You took me away from him and you locked him up and I told you he was sick and you didn't listen. You promised me he'd be safe. You said you'd look after him if I signed your fucking stupid deal. You promised you would take care of him ... you promised!"

The words spewed out of him into the darkening room and Blaine could do nothing except take them, let each one slap him in the face in an attempt to absorb all of Kurt's pain and fear. Kurt was sobbing openly now, searching frantically around the room as if trying to look for an escape route but finding none; instead he simply collapsed against the sofa, his body crumpled and utterly dejected as the last of his bile left him. With no more words or fight, he simply cried, letting the sobs take over as he curled up into a tiny ball and wrapped his arms around himself.

Blaine swept forward without thinking and dragged the body of his Sub into his arms. Kurt didn't struggle; the energy for battle was long gone and instead he clawed further into the warmth of his Lord's arms. "I'm so sorry, Kurt. I'm so sorry. He was supposed to be protected. I told them to give him the best treatment - I ... I ordered it. The hospital, the care - I told Seth ..."

He had no more explanations. His own involvement in the plans for Burt had been minimal and he knew it. He'd thought of little but getting Kurt - of owning Kurt - and the rest had been shunted over to Seth. His teeth gritted as his mind wandered to his advisor's cold and unfeeling face as he reported the news that Burt Hummel was at the hospital but was in a critical condition and was unlikely to survive the week.

"You might as well tell you little Sub that his father's dead and be done with it."

Blaine stroked Kurt's damp hair and felt his own eyes fill with tears at the anguished shaking of the body beneath him.

He thought about Seth's words. It would have been easier to tell Kurt that Burt had died. That there was nothing they could have done. It would have been easier to let him grieve and turn to Lord Anderson for

support. It would have been easier to let Kurt think he had nothing left to lose and totally embrace the mansion and Blaine as his final home ... and he'd almost done it. But then he'd looked into his pale and pleading eyes; had watched the only hope he'd ever seen seep out of the beautiful man before him and be swallowed up by the walls of the oppressive prison they lived in ... and shook his head. He'd told him Burt was still alive even though he knew what that would mean. He felt something dragging at his heart and struggled to breathe at the realisation of what his words had done.

Kissing his lips to the back of Kurt's neck, bent over in his lap and buried against his chest, he felt the words before he said them. They tasted acidic and poisonous in his mouth, but as he spoke them they became sweet too.

"You must go to him."

Pale blue eyes rose to his, watery but crystal clear. Kurt tried to speak but Blaine stopped him. "Go. Go to him, Kurt. He's your father."

"But ..."

Blaine held his finger gently to Kurt's lips to silence him and shook his head slightly. He was crying now and Kurt's eyes were wide with confusion and something else that Blaine didn't understand. He held his Sub's face between his palms, his thumb stroking circles against his cheek and his fingers gripping tightly as the realisation of what he was about to do settled over his heart.

"Go to him, Kurt. I - I release you. You're free, Kurt. You're ..." His eyes dropped to his lap as his voice left him momentarily. "I release you." He repeated brokenly, with no other way of saying it.

Kurt paused, frozen for the tiniest fraction of seconds as Blaine's words sank under his skin. He didn't speak, simply reached up and held his face between his fingers and pressed his lips gently against the Lord's. They lingered for a moment, tasting salt and shared pain, and Blaine closed his eyes at the touch, feeling something shatter inside of him.

... And then the pressure was gone and all that was left was a cold empty space and a hollow library, and Lord Anderson's heart bleeding out on to the marbled floor.

Chapter Seventeen

The sound of gurney wheels clacking across polished linoleum floors and the overpowering smell of antiseptic invaded Kurt's every waking moment. He was lost in a sea of white tiles and starched uniforms and florescent strip lighting and he felt like he was drowning.

It had been thirteen hours since he'd left the Anderson mansion. He'd been hurried out under the cover of darkness in an unassuming taxi and taken immediately to his father's bedside at the Bryce Howard medical centre at Lord Anderson's request and now he sat, staring absently at the wavering heart monitor.

He hugged his thin grey jumper more tightly around him, yanking it over his fists and huddling down further into the material in an attempt to warm his frozen bones. It felt odd being back in his own clothes. He'd found a small holdall waiting for him in the back of the taxi when he'd scrambled inside, his eagerness to get to his father almost making him miss the unassuming black bag at his feet. Someone had been to his house and collected an assortment of things from his wardrobe. With shaking fingers he'd dragged the first jumper he found over his head, covering his black tank top before yanking off the lace up boots of his uniform and sinking his feet into the comfort of his own soft leather shoes. He'd been so desperate to rid himself of the uniform and transform back into the safety and familiarity of home that he didn't think to question the fact that a stranger had been in his house and riffling through his possessions.

It was only later, in the quiet of the private room, after a string of doctors had patiently explained Burt Hummel's condition and after he'd tearfully thrown himself in the arms of his sleeping father, Kurt finally thought about what had just happened to him.

He was free.

Blaine was everywhere in this hospital. He was there in the pristine corridors and the high tech. machinery. He was there in the constant visits from the specialists and their unwavering patience with Kurt's questions. He was there in the private room on the quiet ward and the achingly beautiful view of the mountains that rose in imposing peaks outside the polished glass window. He was so obviously present in all of the money that the hospital exuded, Kurt still expected to find him standing behind him every time he turned around.

He was free.

He let his eyes flick again to his father's still sleeping form. The doctors had tirelessly explained what had happened to him; how he'd been brought in a few weeks ago with shortness of breath and chest pains and then suffered a major heart attack two days later but the words were jumbled and fragmented as Kurt listened and he'd heard little except the words 'extremely weakened' and 'making him comfortable' and 'not much we can do medically.'

He'd cried uncontrollably against the so solid and familiar form of his father; the bulk of him still there and yet the safety he'd always felt in his father's arms, somehow utterly absent. He'd not woken up yet; the morphine keeping him sedated and at rest and Kurt couldn't bring himself to drag his eyes away from the pale and bloodless lips and the withered looking skin of his father's usually so ruddy and strong face. Gripping the hand he'd not let go of since he'd arrived at the bedside, Kurt prayed for forgiveness from a god he didn't believe in.

He was free.

The words felt strange in his head; they rolled around clumsily, devoid of meaning, and at times he found himself whispering them aloud into the empty walls of the room, just to see if they tasted any more real when spoken. They didn't. He should have felt elated; he'd been released, had been freed from the degrading position of sub and returned to a world he belonged to; a world where Kurt Hummel was, if not a good person, at least a better one.

But he didn't. He felt empty. He felt marooned and displaced in a world where he didn't recognise anything and where he didn't know where he fit and where a part of him, a part that was stronger than he'd ever wanted to admit, longed for silken sheets and soft sighs and ivory piano keys.

He was free.

The hand beneath his twitched slightly and he jumped a little, alarmed at the sudden intrusion of his wandering thoughts. A raspy groan was whispered from the body on the bed and Kurt's head whipped up at the sound, his eyes trained on his father's now fluttering eyelids. He was stirring. His head rolled to the side and his fingers gripped a little tighter around Kurt's pale and cold ones.

"Dad...?"

Burt Hummel's eyes drifted open and he coughed a little, wincing at the obvious pain the motion caused to his chest. A strangled wheeze erupted from his throat and he coughed again.

"Dad...It's me....Kurt." His voice was broken and hesitant, his stomach somersaulting in a sudden wave of nausea. Burt shifted a little to focus his watery blue eyes on Kurt's and a dawning clarity began to light in them. He blinked. "Kurt?"

"Don't talk dad. I...I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. Just..just hold my hand ok."

Slipping a little between muzzy consciousness and sleep, Burt tried to smile, warmth covering his face as he attempted to acknowledge his son's presence. He frowned in confusion, like Alice slipping between reality and fantasy down the rabbit hole and Kurt squeezed again, trying to bring his father back into the present with sense alone. "Dad. I'm right here." He whispered again but firmer this time, more eager to get a proper response. It had been so long since he'd seen his father. Kurt ached for him.

"You're here." Was all his father said before closing his eyes again and slipping back into the morphine.

He was more lucid later, after the effects of the drugs had worn off slightly and the sun had started to climb over the mountains casting shafts of bleached light across the bedcovers. His eyes opened gradually and his gaze swept more clearly over his son's features. Kurt shifted uncomfortably under the scrutiny. Burt's voice was clearer this time too, coming more solidly from the depths of his chest from his propped up position supported by the additional pillows Kurt had fussed around him. He held Kurt's gaze steadily until his son's pale and slightly watery eyes turned away.

"Kurt, where have you been?" He was used to his father's forthright and blunt mannerisms and actually allowed himself a small smile at the familiarity before his stomach dropped at the reality of having to explain to his father what had happened. He looked away and swallowed heavily. Burt said nothing, just watched his son with a slight frown drawn across his pale features.

"I came to find you. That night." His words were met with an even more tightly knotted brow and Kurt struggled to clarify. "You went to look at the new shop. You were heading home in the blizzard and....well I

guess you broke down or something." He looked up for some hint of recognition and saw that Burt's eyes had softened with some level of understanding.

"There was a house."

"Yeah. I...I came looking for you and you were missing and, you know, I was just so worried about you Dad. Your heart.... " Burt stroked his fingers across his son's knuckles as his voice quivered slightly. Kurt closed his eyes slightly unsure how to continue.

"I remember it. The house. I wanted to use their phone. Wanted to call you but.....he...they...wouldn't.." His breath was coming in stuttered gasps again as Burt tried to recall the events after stumbling upon the Anderson Mansion. Kurt reached for a glass of water and handed it to his father, not wanting to push him but needing to know the story. Needing to know what had led them to here. To this point.

"What happened?" he pressed gently.

"It was that stupid damn rose. I..I..it just reminded me of you and I kept thinking that if I could take back one thing good and pure that this whole stupid trip wouldn't have been a complete disappointment. Just one stupid rose. I thought...I just wanted to show you that there are still things that are beautiful." His head had turned to stare out of the window, the shadowy mountains brooding over them. "They locked me up." Steeliness came into his voice and his eyes remained averted. "Just wanted to use the goddamn phone and they....." His body was suddenly wracked with coughs and he doubled over, clutching at his chest as Kurt leapt to his feet looking panicked.

"Dad. Stop!" his hands clutched at his father's shoulder through the thin material of the hospital gown and he stroke rhythmic circles against his back attempting to sooth the sudden attack. Burt settled eventually but his eyes remained closed as he struggled with laboured breaths. "Dad, please, you're sick, you need to rest. Stop now....stop." Tears stung Kurt's eyes as he eased his father back against the pillows and then sat back himself in the chair.

"Where were you?" Burt whispered again, the words all he could manage before he sank into the cushions.

Kurt steadied himself, taking another long breath and once again swallowing down the rising bile in his throat. "I came looking for you and....I guess.....Blaine found me."

"Blaine?"

"Lord Anderson. He's the Lord of the house. You didn't meet him?"

"Guards. All I met were guards and an older man. Maybe that was the Lord? Asshole. Carted me off and locked me up without a word." Burt's fist clenched again.

"Sounds like Seth. Blaine's advisor" Kurt clarified at Burt's puzzled expression.

"He an asshole?"

"Yeah fits the description."

They fell silent again, both not sure how to continue. Burt suddenly cleared his throat again. "Kurt. They told me you signed some kind of contract..."

The boy's eyes closed again and the tears that had threatened spilled over his cheeks. Burt studied his son. "Kurt?"

"I had no choice!" Kurt blurted out, voice cracked and broken. "They had you locked up and you were sick. What was I supposed to do? He wouldn't let me see you and he...he....told me that if I just signed to work for him..then...then they'd let you go and I...I..." he was sobbing openly now, fear of his father's reaction to what he'd done and fear for the unstable condition of his heart and his own self-disgust tumbled from his mouth in a stream of explanations that made sense but at the same time sounded so shallow in the pristine hospital room. "I had no choice Dad." He whispered eventually, his head hung low.

"What did he make you sign Kurt?" the words were bitter and hard edged.

"I worked for him. I...I just worked for the.....Lor.... Blaine."

"What work?"

"I...um....I had to go to functions and things with him. You know, just play piano and stuff. That's all....." his eyes didn't meet his fathers. Burt's expression was pained as he took his son's hand again. His voice quivered as he spoke but not through pain this time.

"Kurt...please...It's my fault. I'm..I'm so sorry Kurt." He had tears in his eyes and Kurt looked up startled at seeing his father so vulnerable. Burt Hummel hadn't cried in front of his son since the funeral and Kurt had never seen him look so utterly small and frail.

"No Dad. I ..It wasn't your fault. They locked you up and I ...I just...they promised you'd be safe and Blaine said he'd look after you and get you medical help and IIt wasn't your fault." Kurt's eyes were harried and frightened. "It wasn't your fault dad."

Burt turned away again, unable to meet his son's desperate eyes. "Kurt...I know. I know what they do to boys like you. I know....".

"It's ok Dad. It's ok. I ...I ." he stopped, searching for the words that would make this better, that would reassure but he knew they wouldn't make sense to his father. Burt's eyes were already starting to close again and his chest wheezed with the strain of their conversation. He squeezed the cold hand beneath his fingers and took a steadying breath. "It doesn't matter now." He whispered to Burt's half-lidded gaze. "I don't work there anymore Dad."

His father's voice was almost inaudible in its breathy question, the beep of the monitors drowning out the laboured cough that followed. "did...did you escape?"

Kurt watched his father's eyes properly close then, flickering still with the effort to cling on to consciousness but surrendering to the ease of the darkness and quiet of the room. He didn't know if he could even still hear him, but Kurt leant forward and brushed his lips along his father's clammy forehead, lingering there for a moment to savour the familiar smell of home. When he spoke the next words he wasn't sure if they were for himself or the man beneath him.

"He let me go."

Wheels clacked past once again in the corridor outside. A clock ticked blank and busy. Moonlight slid across snowy peaks like sinewy arms engulfing the landscape.

Yes, he was free.

But he wasn't sure he wanted to be.

Seth Schoen was an observer; it was what he did. It was what he was good at. Seth was well practised in all methods of quiet voyeurism.

He'd been watching Blaine Anderson for years; since birth, the young master had been catalogued, charted, filed and organised in the Advisor's head, each new discovery about the emerging young personality, directed and forged down well constructed and carefully established paths until, aged fourteen, Blaine Anderson was exactly the right fit for Seth's purpose. He'd eased up on the watching over the last few years; the early socialisation and psychological damage was well cemented by young adulthood. Life had been taken up by more pressing matters in the latter years; when there were companies to ruin and people to be erased, the small minutiae of a teenage boy's development was low on the list of things to observe. Blaine had been an amusing subject for study, a passing interest, an experiment of sorts. Blaine had never been anything Seth Schoen spent much time worrying about.

The Advisor spent hours observing him now.

In the three days since the sub had left, Seth had watched Blaine Anderson and felt like he was observing a stranger. There was so little of his former protégée left in the pale skin and haunted eyes that locked themselves away in amongst the stacks in the library, or sat gazing listlessly into the amber liquid cradled in the crystal cut glass in his hands. Dark circles etched night time stories beneath his eyes like bruises and he suddenly seemed small and transitory; blurred around the edges and indistinct. This Blaine had deviated so dramatically from the path Seth had set him on and for a short while the change had unsettled him. The Sub had unsettled him. But the sub was gone now. As had the former Lord. And suddenly change wasn't such an unnerving prospect. Seth was nothing if not adaptable and resourceful.

Seth Schoen watched him stamp documents and make phone calls and process numbers and graphs of profits, watched him file and make decisions and direct orders. He watched Blaine Anderson do all that was required of him diligently and methodically and professionally. But he watched a shell. He'd thought Blaine had always been a shell but one that was cold and calculating and without feeling; characteristics he admired and encouraged. This Blaine was still a shell but he was fragile and hunted....

.....and breakable.

So Seth watched and waited and noted everything. He was an observer after all.

At 4.27am Burt Hummel went into cardiac arrest.

Kurt's world exploded into a cacophony of defibrillators and shouting doctors, the hiss and suck of air in too tight lungs and clattering resuscitation carts. For four minutes the narrow hospital room was suffocating with noise, chaos bouncing around the reflective white walls.....but all Kurt could hear was the deafening silence of the heart monitor and the constant levelled line on the screen.

When reality finally poured back in, Kurt found himself huddled in the corner of an empty room. He stared listlessly at the space in front of him; the void where a bed had previously stood gapped openly. On the wall the ticking of a clock counted out time.

A numbness crept over his heart and insinuated itself in his brain.

He was free.

At 4.28am, Blaine Anderson watched the whiskey tumbler drop from his fingers, the glass shattering into a sea of diamonds trailing across the marble of the office floor. His hand shook as he knelt amongst the ruins and ineffectually tried to draw them back together. Soundlessly he watched a shard bite his finger and a well of blood pooled against the calloused flesh. Transfixed, he brought the digit to his lips and sucked hard, relishing the metallic taste on his tongue and *feeling* something for the first time in days.

His eyes refocused at the taste and in doing so, caught a glimpse of something attached to the underside of the desk. He ran his fingers along the runnels in the dark mahogany before feeling around a slight catch in the veneer, barely visible but slightly discoloured and rougher than the rest of the wood. Feeling around the raised circular disk, Blaine pushed against it experimentally. There was an almost imperceptible click before a panel, previously concealed in the underside of the desk, slid out smoothly.

It was a draw; thick enough only for the slender yellow document it held. It was a simple cardboard file, thin and unmarked. Blaine's slightly woozy head reeled. His fingers reached out to cautiously lift the flap of card, the document seemingly unassuming and yet clearly important enough to conceal in a hidden draw.

Sliding down against the wall behind the desk, the young Lord took the file into his lap. Marooned in a sea of glass, Blaine began to read.

At 5.12 am Kurt finally hauled himself from the ashes of his father's hospital room. The light had risen slightly over the mountains and dawn had drenched the room with an icy whiteness that clawed its way into his skin, resting there, prickling beneath the surface. Behind him, he dragged a small holdall; a pair of navy coveralls were slung over his shoulder, the material brushing against the bone-pale flesh of his cheek with the movement. A nurse stopped him on the way out, her fingers gripping his limp wrist. His eyes fell to her hand and she dropped his immediately, stepping away slightly.

"Mr Hummel, Where can we reach you after the autopsy?" Her voice was tender, slight and quiet in the early morning calm of the hospital lobby. She filled the gaps with muttered apologise, as empty and meaningless as her sympathetic touch. Kurt's eyes raked over her pleasant face, her prettily made up mouth twisted into a sensitive smile. He stared impassively and watched her squirm slightly in discomfort. He didn't answer.

"Mr Hummel?"

Ignoring the questioning, tiny voice that became distant the minute he moved away, Kurt walked soundlessly out of the hospital. He stood on the front steps, ambulances and cars jostling before him in the steady rhythm of the morning routine. The sun had slipped higher, blinding him momentarily and forcing him to shield his eyes. Snow glistened in the trees and he could make out the vaguely muted sounds of life existing; carrying on.

For a moment he seemed to stop, paused without purpose. His eyes swivelled slowly from right to left; from peak to identical peak. No direction. No past. No hope, he thought listlessly. A blonde ponytail and startling blue eyes saturated his vision quickly before he blinked and she was gone again.

They take all of you. You'll never be free of that.

The sudden urge to laugh bubbled inside him at the truth of her words. Dark curls brushed against his memory.

Holding his bag a little higher and lifting his arm to hail a taxi, Kurt allowed the sun to sooth his face. Sliding against the plush black leather, Kurt instructed the driver to his destination, voice smooth and level. There was really no place else to go.