**What We Break For**

**By Tinkabelle**

Brian and Michael are in a relationship then Justin comes along.

WARNING: B/J with B/M

‘I like to break the rules, even my own’

Brian thought moodily, his eyes on the dance floor of Babylon. He leant against the railing, his drink hanging dangerously over the edge, and as he sipped the sound of the rattling glass was lost amongst the music, the very pulse of the place. He licked his lips, tasting the mixture of sugar and alcohol. And of course lust.

‘Why be anywhere, anywhere else, when this place was so full of the young and the beautiful, the experienced and the deliciously inexperienced?’

His eyes hadn’t left the boy. The pale skin, the bare chest. The arms slightly raised as he danced. The forever pubescent frail frame. That ass, hugged tight in too fashionable grey jeans. The hair almost razor short around his ears, growing longer as it reached the front. The hair cut of a teenager. That blonde hair.

‘Because you could fuck anyone here, fuck and fuck and fuck until the unthinkable happens and you’re fucked out. Wasn’t that the motto?’

Brian sighed.

‘And there’s always tomorrow, and these dancing men will still be here, still be waiting, ever available. Easy, uncomplicated, satisfying.’

How the fuck had it come to this? Watching this boy. Wanting this boy. He could be fucking anyone, getting blown, getting high. Fuck he could even crawl into bed with the hubby. But no, here he was, at two fucking o’clock on a Saturday morning, watching some fucking teenager dance.

‘Fuck.’

Watching Justin.

It’s funny how moments can change everything. A snap decision so long ago can just twist things and they’ll never be the same again. You can never go back; all you can do is hope that wherever the hell you are getting swept to won’t disappear like everything else. That one day, again, there will be calm. Even if it is just the eye of the storm.

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“Brian? I’m going to go.” Brian looked up from the sofa. The laughs from the sitcom punctured the quiet of the night. Brian had just been rolling another joint, and his fingers still fiddled with the edge of the rolling paper. Michael was standing; a back pack slung over one shoulder. His hair cut, just as it had been when he was twelve, was the same. Even though now they were in college, Michael would always be the same. Brian lay back on the couch.

“No your not. Come back. Watch the end of the show with me.” Michael licked his lips, something conflicted in his eyes. He walked around the sofa, so sit on the edge of the cushion, his back against Brian’s hip.

“Good boy.” Brian murmured, ruffling Michael’s hair. “I haven’t even told you how huge this guy was.”

That was when it happened. Just as it had happened a million times for the past god knows how many years. The moment when he almost had the courage to tell Brian. To tell him everything. When he so wanted too that it over consumed his thoughts and struck him dumb.

But this time it was different.

This is when he changed things.

“Why do you want me to stay Brian?” Michael said, staring straight ahead. Brian pulled him self up, throwing an arm around Michael, his face that little bit to close to Michael’s neck. Michael shivered.

“Because you’re my besty Mikey,” He said absentmindedly. Michael turned his face to him, scanning Brian’s expression.

“Am I?” He said softly. Brian leant back slightly, confusion and automatic anger spreading across his face.

“What the fuck do you think you are Mikey?” He said equally softly. Michael sighed as though already regretting what he had said, his lips curling into a pout. But now it didn’t seem right to go back, though it would be so easy. He raised a hand, and placed it on Brian’s cheek, his thumb so close but not touching Brian’s mouth.

“Why isn’t it ever me?” He whispered, his eyes closing without him even thinking. “Why don’t you ever choose me?” He felt how still Brian was beneath his hand, and tried to imagine Brian’s face. Anger. Or sadness. Or surprise. Maybe ever embarrassment. Disgust. But he kept his eyes closed.

Of all the things he imagined of that moment, when he finally told Brian, even without the words, how much he loved him, the touch of Brian’s lips on his exceeded them all. They blew everything anyone had ever said about Brian Kinney, or had written about him on bathroom walls, completely out of the water.

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Brian Kinney was the king of Babylon. Unofficially maybe. He didn’t have his naked body on a poster, or a crown or any fucking day of the year. There was no Brian Kinney night like the annual soaps and studs. But he was the king non the less. There was nothing hotter, harder or sleeker then Brian Kinney. And like all advertising executives know, the hotter, the sleeker, the bigger, the fucking better. Or the better fucker in the gay world of Pittsburg.

He could walk through the crowed dance floor shirtless and every hand would touch his chest, every hard on be for him, and everyone would watch.

Which made his hard on even harder.

Michael leant against the bar, smiling at Brian’s little display. Smiling because

everyone wanted Brian. Because everyone was thinking about fucking him. And because at the end of the night, Brian would crawl back into bed with him and fuck the daylights out of him.

“If Brian is the King, does that make me the Queen?” He said with a grin to Emmett, not removing his eyes from Brian. Emmett followed his gaze, his pinky hanging in the air near his glass. He leant in towards Michael conspiringly.

“Honey, I think we all know who the biggest Queen in this circle is.”

“Hear, hear.” Ted murmured, as at that moment yet another beautifully sculpted and perfectly packaged would be model sauntered past, causing all three pairs of eyes to swivel.

“Damn.” Emmett murmured.

“So how many years is this anniversary?” Ted called out above the sound of the music.

“Nine years tomorrow. Of and on. But nine years.” Michael said with a grin. “But don’t call it that.”

“Brian Kinney hates the idea of an anniversary.” Emmett drawled, stirring his drink, his eyes on the dance floor, where Brian had managed to find two beautiful creatures to grind with. “So this is the anniversary off…?”

“When we first…” Michael paused and made an elaborate hand gesture. Ted and Emmett both followed this gesture with a level of confusion.

“When you first fucked?” Emmett said after a pause.

“Yes. If you want to put it that way.”

“And I thought I was the romantic in the group.” Emmett said dryly. “Honey, if you’re old enough to be doing it, you’re old enough to say it.”

“Fuck. Oh fuck.” The trick muttered against Brian’s neck. Brian pulled back with a scowl.

“I’d like you to shut the fuck up.” He muttered, yanking at the man’s pants. The man made to kiss Brian on the lips, but Brian leant back, leaving the trick confused. The tricks pants fell to the floor, the belt clanging. Brian spun the trick so that he was, as probably he was every Saturday night, pressed up against the dark walls of Babylon.

“I don’t kiss on the mouth.” Brian murmured. His hands were quick and well practiced and he slid into the trick with a soft groan of satisfaction. Then it was the familiar dance. He closed his eyes and it could be anyone. Anyone of these groaning men in this room. Anyone.

“Why?” The trick gasped between thrusts. “You’ve got a mouth made for kissing.”

“And you’ve got an ass made for fucking.” Brian growled back. “And a mouth that should shut the fuck up.” He repeated slowly.

Afterwards, once the trick had pulled up his pants and Brian lit another cigarette, the trick gave him is number.

“It’s Rick. We should do it again some time.” Brian smiled, and then let the paper fall to the floor.

“I’m can’t.” Brian said with a leer, pushing himself away from the wall with a dismissive smile. “My partner doesn’t allow it.” Brian exhaled, and stole out of the backroom, already bored, already forgetting the trick’s name. It didn’t matter. They were all the same. He saw Michael by the bar, as always checking his watch, looking for Brian. Brian smiled and made his way to him, leaving to men moaning in the darkness to their darkness.

They walked out, Brian’s arm slung over Michael’s shoulder, Emmett and Ted not a step behind. Outside, as there had been inside, there were dark corners where the young and maybe not so young gay men of Pittsburg grinded to their own music. Brian was whispering something in Michael’s ear, his lips brushing then edge of his ear lobe. It seemed that Michael never got sick of Brian’s dirty talk.

Someone knocked Brian’s shoulder as they walked past, causing Michael and Brian’s path to veer to the left. Brian looked up angrily, and he caught for a second a pair of blue eyes, blonde hair, and the soft padding of a thick jacket. Brian’s head swung around, and for a step or two their eyes locked, their step faltering. Michael tugged him on, and Brian swung his head back around.

“That was fucking rude.” Michael said.

“No, that was the new bartender as Woodys, and more accurately, that boy was fucking hot.” Emmett called out from behind. Brian glanced around at the retreating figure.

“Oh yeah?” He murmured.

“To bad he’s a big nelly bottom like me.” Emmett said in a sing song voice. Ted laughed, and muttered something that Brian didn’t catch. Michael squeezed Brian’s arm.

“Well him I definitely veto you fucking him.” Michael murmured. Brian smiled and kissed his cheek absentmindedly.

“Nine years today, lover.” Michael murmured, kissing Brian’s lips. Brian woke groggily, and leant up on his elbows, as Michael placed a tray on his lap. Bacon and eggs, scrambled, orange juice, coffee and a fucking flower in a vase. Brian scowled at it.

Michael lay down on his stomach next to him, still naked, his childish ass exposed to the early morning sunlight.

Brian sighed. From the eager to please look on Michael’s face, Brian could tell it was going to be another two hour session at the gym to get rid of all this food. He managed to force a smile, and kissed Michael lightly on the lips.

“But Michael, you know I don’t eat before ten.” He murmured through his bared teeth. Michael looked down at the pillow, a lost puppy look forming on his face.

“I know. But I felt like doing something special. Something for you from me.” He said quietly. Brian sat up more fully, careful not to spill the orange juice or the coffee.

“What’s it for again?” Brian asked. Michael’s face became outraged, and he sat up, not so careful not to spill the liquids. Brian had to grip to tray in order to stop it toppling.

“Brian I told you two weeks ago it was our anniversary, remember, at Woodys and you said…” Brian caught Michael’s face in his hands, kissing him into silence.

“Michael,” He said after a moment. Michael looked up at him, a pout evident on his lips. “I know. I was just joking.”

“You arsehole.” Michael murmured. Brian lifted the tray of his lap and carefully, with as little movement from Michael’s naked body as possible, placed it on the floor.

“But Brian…”

“Michael, there’s something I desperately want to eat this morning, and it’s not on that plate.” Brian said pushing Michael back against the pillows.

“Oh yeah, and what would that be?” Michael said with a half smile, his arms already curling around Brian.

“A much better anniversary present then bacon and fucking eggs…” Brian murmured, already getting to work on the smaller man’s body.

“His name is Justin, and he’s from Pittsburg, and he’s an arts student at some university or another, and he’s…” This tread of conversation from Emmett went on for some time. Apparently, Emmett’s friend who wasn’t fucking Matt (who ever the fuck Matt was, Brian though absentmindedly, and wondered also if he had possibly fucked Matt), yet had fucked him once (which seemed to make Brian’s thought quite plausible) even though he was in a steady relationship, had fucked the kid over the weekend. Brian treaded his fingers though Michael’s hair carelessly. Michael grinned at this affectionate gesture, but disappointingly did not kiss Brian, rather turned back to Emmett’s story. Brian sighed. Maybe he should go play pool and see who cruised him.

“And why the fuck do we care?” Brian said after what seemed like an appropriate interval. Emmett frowned.

“Because he won the king of Babylon contest, and he’s one of the most fuckable and wanted guys at Babylon, which sure changes every week, but…” Ted cut of Emmett’s ramble.

“Yeah Brian, I’m surprised you haven’t fucked him.”

“Not as surprised as I would be if you ever got a fuck, Theodore.” Brian said cruelly. Michael rolled his eyes.

“Brian hasn’t fucked him because I vetoed him.”

“You vetoed him?” Brian said perplexed. He gave another glance at the bartender, and remembered. “Ah, the blonde.”

“Yeah the blonde.” Michael mimicked.

“Or maybe I just haven’t got around to it yet.” Brian murmured.

“That sounds more likely.” Ted said dryly.

“And I am taking this fairy home.” Ted said, Michael’s arm around his shoulder. Michael blinked blearily. Brian swooped down and gave him a kiss on the lips.

“Make sure you tuck him in real nice Theodore.” He murmured, giving Ted also a mocking kiss on the cheek. Ted glanced at Emmett, who was half sitting on the lap of a basketball he had managed to catch.

“And you are going to?” Ted asked, trailing of. Brian leant back against the pool table and shrugged.

“Play pool. Sink some balls.” He said slowly.

“Brian, don’t be home to late.” Michael mumbled as Ted led him away. Brian waved to their backs, a fixed smile on his face.

“Sleep well Mikey,” He said almost sarcastically. Then he glanced over at the bartender again, who at that moment looked up, and caught what can only be called the Brian Kinney look.

Justin Taylor.

Over the next few months Brian would not only curse the first time he’d heard that name, but moan it in the back room of Babylon, in the alley behind Woodys, in the bathroom at the diner, and most memorably on his own kitchen floor.

Now at the bar, Brian tapped two fingers on the counter, chewing slightly on his bottom lip, looking from his left to his right, even over his shoulder, but not at the bartender. He ran his tongue over the edge of his teeth, before glancing up, to where Justin was waiting.

White shirt, tight black pants, with one of those black band chokers that Brian loved to pull on as he fucked. But more noticeably, two fucking huge blue eyes and that hesitant expression that made Brian grin and dip his head. He was definitely, no questions about it, in.

“What can I get you?” The voice, like the expression, was hesitant though like all barmen also tinged with a hell of a lot of boredom, almost lost in the bar talk. Brian savored the words, this moment before the kill.

“A beer,” Brian said so casually, followed by that intense look. “Unless you can recommend me anything else.” Justin dipped his head at that one, a smile involuntarily breaking across his face. He reached for a glass before looking up. Brian leant forward on the bar.

“Do you know how many guys I’ve heard that from tonight?” Justin said with an almost mischievous grin.

“Yeah?” Brian murmured. He weighed up the look in the blondes eye, and knew that his instinct was right. “And how many of them did you give your number to?”

“None.” Justin said, still grinning. He put a napkin and a beer in front of Brian. Brian tossed a note on the counter, not giving it or the drink a second glance. Justin passed him his change, and taking another order, was gone for a minute. Brian waited. He could nearly count the seconds.

“Well? Aren’t you going to ask me?” Justin said, pouring two shots of vodka and putting them on the counter. Brian tilted his head slightly, his tongue darting out from between his lips for a moment to catch a drop of the liquid there.

“Ask you what?”

“My number.” Justin said, for a minute a rich properly brought up brat coming through. Brian reshuffled his thoughts. The kid was younger then he’d thought. Couldn’t be over twenty three.

“I was thinking about more when do you get of.” Brian let the innuendo hang in the air. Both men registered it, and Justin bit the skin on the inside of his mouth for a second in thought. He didn’t need more then a second though.

“Two.” He bowed his head again. “I get off at two.”

“I’ll be back at one fifty then. Don’t want to miss the show.” Brian murmured loud enough for the boy to hear, and, taking his beer, made his way to the pool table where a muscular brunette was giving him the eye.

“I lost my virginity in a car like this.” Justin murmured. The windows of the car were fogged and Brian lit a cigarette. Fuck quitting. Brian had once, some years ago, fallen in love with the only thing he had ever fallen in love with, a black jeep. He’d bought it, and managed to keep it for two weeks before Michael made him return it. He could still remember the feel of driving it, the power, the goddamn sex appeal of it. It made him hard just thinking about it.

Now he drove a goddamn family car. You might as well strap in a baby seat and you could call him Mr. Joe Regular Kinney.

“Yeah?” He said distractedly, the window electronically winding down. He tapped the ash out the window.

“Yeah.” Justin said, running his hands through his short hair. He’d taken of his apron, and Brian half-heartedly wished he was still wearing it. It was two thirty, and under the bright light of the street lights, Brian had suddenly felt tired. Now that he had the trick in his car, the arms distance between them seemed long.

And yet, there had been a certain electricity in knowing that this kid, so young, so hot, so tantalizing was going to get into this car, knowing, would fucking sit there knowing. Anticipating.

That they were going to fuck.

He was cute too. Brian watched him moisten his lip, the sound ringing out in the car like a bell. Brian took another drag, savoring this moment. The moment at the beginning, the moment were they still hadn’t fucked, were the tension was still visible in the air, the excitement. The beginning, where he could talk and flirt, the build up which sometimes seemed nearly as good as the fuck. Because the fuck was final. With that first thrust, it was over. With that first thrust, the trick’s name would be lost among the moans, the flirtations mingling with a million other nightly encounters where the innuendos and pick up lines flowed together like too much tequila.

It wasn’t just the chase that pulled him back every time. Or the kill for that matter. It was this. This moment, before it started, when the flesh was tingling but not in control. The beginning.

Before it was over.

“It was at this work function of my dads. I’d just graduated, and this guy,” He tilted his head, his lips almost pouting as he remembered his eyes on the floor. He reached out, his hand held out and Brian looked confused at the gesture for a moment. Then he exhaled, passing the cigarette. Their fingers barely touched, but Brian almost felt rather then heard the boy inhale. God he loved it when they reacted like that. “This guy, he was like twenty five of something, and he just…” The boy broke off, taking a drag and blowing it up towards the ceiling. Fucking little shit, Brian thought angrily. Michael would smell it now for sure.

“Popped your cherry?” Brian said mockingly. The boy grimaced.

“You could say that. It felt like he’d popped something.” He passed back the cigarette. “No, he followed me out to garage, and asked for a smoke. We ended up in the back seat of this car, just talking, me waiting for him to make the move. I remember just sitting there, listening to him get more and more nervous, listing the things I wanted him to do to me in my head.” Justin looked up at that, his lips curved in a smile, a flash of teeth for a moment dazing Brian.

Brian threw the cigarette out the window, hitting the button to put it back up. He leant across very slowly and deliberately, his thumb and finger first stroking and then tugging almost roughly at Justin’s lip; the gesture so rough and yet Justin had to bite back a groan. One finger slid inside Justin’s mouth, and he almost nipped it with his teeth.

“So what were they?” Brian said leaning back, one foot resting casually on his own knee. His arm rested on the top of the seat.

“What were what?” Justin said slightly breathlessly, his mouth still throbbing from the touch.

“The things you wanted him to.” Brian said with a suggestive smile. Justin grinned, a small laugh escaping him for a moment. He raised an equally suggestive eyebrow, his eyes tracing the full (and I mean full) extent of Brian’s body. Brian covered his mouth with the edges of his fingers for a moment, then grinning that Brian Kinney smile.

“Do you want me to show you?”

“I somehow doubt that you first fuck went exactly like that.” Brian said, his body off the seat as he strove to redo up his pants in the squashed space. Justin pulled his white singlet back over his head, a half smile on his face.

“Not exactly. We got half way through and my dad came searching for us. You should have seen how fast this guy pulled out of me. Anyway, turned out the car was my graduation present, and my dad presented it to me while this guy who’d just been doing me up the ass in the back seat is standing there, his arm around his wife to be.” Justin said all this quite quickly, and Brian nodded.

“How old are you anyway?” He asked nonchalantly. Justin stiffened, like a rabbit caught in headlights.

“Twenty.” He said hopefully. Brian gave him a questioning glance. “In a few months. Say six.”

“How’d you get the job at Woody’s?” Brian asked pulling on his boots. Justin tilted his head.

“For some reason they never asked.” Justin said with another smile. “The clientele at Woodys tend to buy me a drink and themselves another twenty, so the managers figured I was worth it.”

“You’re modest too.” Brian murmured.

“The price the fucking hot pay.” Justin said, though his tone was becoming more serious. “So that guy,” He started. Brian looked up defensively, his face immediately becoming unreadable. Already he was feeling detached, and wondering how he was going to get rid of the kid.

“That guy you’re always with.” Justin said quietly, his head leant against the leather of the back seat. “He’s your…?” The question mark was unmistakably in the air. Brian glanced to his fingers.

“Yes, if that answers your question. He’s my partner.” Brian said calmly, not looking at Justin.

“How long?”

“What is this, the fucking Spanish inquisition?” Brian snapped. Justin gave him a dubious look. Brian sighed. “For about nine years now.”

“Fuck.” Justin gasped; disbelief covering his face. “And he knows you…?”

“Fuck randoms?” Brian said almost cruelly. “Yes. He knows. He hates it. But he knows.” There was a silence, and Brian realized it had started to rain. When, he could not have said, but the sound hit the roof of the car, slow and steady, calming his speeding heart from his previous activity. He glanced at the boy, who like he had been, was staring at the window.

“Do you love him?” Brian almost laughed at the question. Anyone else, he would have kicked them out of the car and relished driving off leaving them in the rain. But the innocence of that question demanded a less dramatic response. And maybe a little less bullshit. He shifted, pulling out another cigarette. Fuck the car.

“Sure.” He said with pursed lips. “Whatever love means.” Justin smiled and Brian gave him a perplexed look. Justin leant across and kissed him on the cheek. Brian sat still beneath this affectionate gesture, the cigarette still drooping unlit on his lips.

“I better go.” Justin murmured. “I’ve got meet some friends.”

“Do you need a lift?”

“No.” Justin said with a quick shake of the head. He gave Brian one more look. “And he doesn’t let kiss, but he lets you fuck?” Brian looked up, a glimmer of shock in his eye. Justin touched his own lips thoughtfully. “You must be an amazing kisser, if he thinks that kissing you is better then being fucked by you.”

And with that, Justin slid out of the car, and into the wet night.

“Thanks for the compliment.” Brian murmured with a small wave of the fingers. He sat there, in the back seat of his own car, thoughtful. He sighed, pulling out his tin of weed, his fingers going to work while his mind was far away. He’d smoke it on the steps to the loft. He’d smoke it and think about the amazing ass on that kid, before he’d go upstairs, and fuck the day lights out of Michael. A four in the morning fuck.

What was his name anyway? Jason, or Justin, or JD or some shit.

Great ass though, Brian thought with a shake of the head. Great ass.

Babylon on a Saturday night. In gay Pittsburg, it was the only place to be. Well, the only place to be if you wanted to be seen, seen and lusted after. Justin tossed back another vodka, bored. He fiddled with his glass of coke and vodka. So bored. He glanced once more longingly at the dance floor, tuning out for a moment. God, he wanted to dance. More then that, he wanted to fuck. Or more exactly, to be fucked. Even more exactly, by Brian Kinney, who had fucked him on his last count just over twenty hours ago.

“Oh, and I definitely fucked that.” Daniel murmured. Tyler gave the man who had just walked past an appraising look.

“I’d go for a pash and a hand job if I were you.”

“Really?” Daniel said affronted. Tyler leant his chin on his hand.

“Did you see that saggy ass? I wouldn’t go near that it you paid me a hundred bucks.” A hundred because Tyler was cheap, Justin thought with a smile. There wasn’t much that Tyler wouldn’t do for a hundred bucks. Make that five bucks. Like all students, Justin and his friends were probably the most broke people in Pittsburg.

And they were playing the dream-fucked game. It was Tyler’s favorite, of who the queen of gay dream fairies brought into their fantasies. Or more basically, who they would and wouldn’t fuck.

“Oh and I definitely fucked him. In the bathroom, in the back room, hell I gave him a blow job in the middle of the dance floor.” Daniel murmured. Tyler hummed an agreement. Justin turned his head, and smiled. He leant forward, fiddling with his straw.

“Yeah, I fucked him.” Justin said, grinning.

“Oh, so someone’s coming to the wet dream table.” Tyler said with a smile. “Glad to have you on board Justin.” Justin flicked some of his drink at Tyler with his straw.

“No I actually fucked him. Last night. In his car.”

“Justin, one,” Daniel started. Justin sighed. “I know you were working last night. And two, that is Brian Kinney. Brian Kinney is…” He broke of, a long in took breathe exhaled in explanation. Justin gave him an unimpressed look. Tyler rolled his eyes, and leant into to explain more accurately.

“Have you ever been to the bathroom here?”

“The bathrooms tend to be a bit busy.” Justin said dryly.

“Well I have. And in cubicle two, if you ever want to try it, there are fucking love sonnets dedicated to Brian Kinney.”

“But more noticeably there is a rather impressive drawing of his cock.” Daniel added. “If you’d been fucked by Brian Kinney, you would know.”

“I know. And I have been.” Justin said only to receive more dubious looks. “He waited for me after work. What? He did.” Justin said indignantly. “Fine. You don’t believe me? I bet I can get him to fuck me again.”

“Brian Kinney doesn’t double fuck.” Tyler said. “He’s got a partner. He is the ultimate of unobtainable dream fucks.” Tyler trailed off, watching Brian make his way to the dance floor. Justin finished his drink, and stood up. He pulled off his blue tee-shirt, leaving only his white singlet and unbelievably tight jeans.

“Just watch.” He murmured, and made his way to the dance floor.

Under the blue strobe lights, Justin was quite the sight to see. That luminous skin crowed by the blonde hair. He was fucking wet dream himself. And he was unavoidable.

There was no end to the number of partners. He only had to dance by himself for a second, a second on display. He felt hands on his hips spinning him around. A beautiful black top, who dragged Justin’s hips to his so that they were dancing together, arms gripping his ass, but only for a moment. He kept dancing, pushing them away, teasing them all. He got hotter, stripping off his white singlet, the skin on his chest and his goddamn nipple ring exposed to the world. He flung his head back as though for air, his arms above his head for a moment.

If there was a moment frozen in time of Justin, and of what pulled him towards him, Brian knew this was it.

Of course he was watching him. Even with his hands full, his body pressed against some tricks, he could literally taste the sweat dripping of Justin. And the boy had pushed past him as though he hadn’t seen him. He tilted his head, tugging on the tricks ear with his teeth as he watched the boy.

Putting a show. Brian laughed, and moved the trick so he couldn’t see Justin.

Justin glanced over, and saw Brian still dancing with someone else. But the night was still young. And so way he. He’d made his point. He pulled the nearest trick, that first black one, dragging him by the tee-shirt, into the back room.

Brian opened his eyes, and involuntarily glanced around to see if the kid was still there. And he wasn’t.

“Fucking little shit.” Brian stopped dancing, craning his head. He blinked, and returned his gaze to his partner. “Fuck off.” He muttered. He dragged his hand through his hair. “Fuck.” He shook his head, and strode off the dance floor. He headed to the bar. Michael and Em were home tonight, and who the fuck cared where Theodore was. Probably with that little trick. Blade or Brad or whoever the fuck.

“Vodka.” He said without glancing up. The guy next to him grinned, and Brian looked up, appraisingly. Brunette. Green eyes. Cute. He leant back glancing indifferently to the right and left and then checked out the guys butt. Double cute.

“Hi,” He said, his tongue darting out over his lower lip, a motion the guy watched with a sigh. “I’m Brian,” He said with a merciless grin.

Ten minutes and two vodka shots later, Brian pushed Craig up against the back wall of Babylon. He kissed his neck, tugging at his shirt. Craig swung him around so that Brian was flat against the wall, and with a grin, proceeded to go down on him. Brian leant his head back and grinned, closing his eyes for a moment. He gripped Craig’s hair in his hand, glancing down.

“Fuck yes.” Brian’s head lolled to the side, a drunken and lustful haze over his eyes. And he half groaned half smiled at that sight of that familiar blonde head. Justin, getting fucked over the couch. Brian could see the boy’s hands gripping the fabric that was covered in god knows what.

Justin looked up, and their eyes met. Brian bit his lower lip, watching his moment, the boy getting fucked, how close the boy was, waves of pleasure contorting his face. It made Brian closer.

“Fuck you’re good.” He murmured, breaking eye contact with Justin for a moment, but after a moment looking back again. Justin’s eyes didn’t move from Brian, and Brian could have sworn that over the moans and the music, he heard Justin cry out as he came.

“We saw you pull someone, but it wasn’t Brian.” Daniel murmured. Justin leant against the railings of the balcony, his back to the dance floor.

“The nights still young.” He murmured. “I’m taking a break.”

“Sure,” Tyler murmured. He glared down at the dance floor. “And there’s Freddie.” He said, pointing to one of the dancers. Justin glanced around almost reluctantly.

“And Freddie is…?” He murmured. Tyler sighed.

“He is the hottest thing I ever had my hands on. For one weekend where we…”

“Fucked until you couldn’t fuck anymore and then you found out he had a boyfriend.” Daniel said tiredly. “I know. You’ve only told me twenty times since we got here.”

“Sorry for asking.” Justin murmured. With his back still to the dance floor, he glanced once more at the couch Brian was sitting on, and swung around to face the dance floor. He leant on the railings with the base of his arm, grinning at the idea of Brian staring at his ass.

“Anyone want a drink?” Justin murmured.

“Could you stop grinning to yourself? Just because you got fucked tonight,” Daniel said gloomily. Justin patted him on the arm with little compassion, and headed towards the stairs. He wasn’t grinning because of the trick in the backroom. He was grinning because he thinking about what it would be like to be fucked by Brian Kinney again.

And was hoping to god he could pull this off.

He smiled momentarily at the bartender, fobbing of the guys on his left and his right. He cracked the knuckle of one of his fingers, feeling not a little bit drunk and tired. And thinking about his next move. He could work the dance floor again. Or he could just try talking to the bastard, though that felt a little bit pre-emptive.

“Hard night?” He heard, and glanced to his left. Brian stood next to him, one elbow leaning on the bar. Justin couldn’t suppress a grin. He gave a thankful nod to the bartender, and took his drink.

“You could say that.” He responded coolly. Brian nodded, his lip caught in his teeth. Justin tried not to think about how very, very good Brian looked.

“Well you put on quite a little show.” Brian said, hands enfolded in one another, his tone a mixture of sex and formality.

“Well it got you here didn’t it?” Justin said taking a sip cautiously. Brian smiled, but not with a hint of humor.

“To what purpose?” Brian said equally coolly.

“I can think of a few.” Justin murmured, leaning closer. Brian did not move.

“I think I should tell you that I don’t do encores.” Justin grinned at his drip.

“That said,” Justin paused, still looking down. “Since it’s technically the same day, do you want to go now? Because I’m done dancing.” There it was. On the table. Justin looked up, all blue eyes, still fucking hot. Whatever comment was on Brian’s tongue at that moment died as he actually considered the offer. He tilted his head, his eyes holding Justin’s.

“Yeah. I’m about done dancing.” The words hung there for a moment, and then Justin grinned. He finished his drink, and put it down on the bar.

“Then let’s go.”

And before they did, Justin gave a wave to Daniel and Tyler, who made rude gesticulations down at him as they watched him and Brian leave.

Brian rolled over on the sheets, pushing his slick hair back off his face and staring up at the chipping paint on the ceiling. He heard Justin groan as he shifted, still lying on his front, his face buried in the pillow. Brian turned his head to stare at the boy, the gleam of sweat on his shoulders, on his neck, through his golden hair. Justin turned his head in the pillow to face Brian. He smiled drowsily. Brian pushed his fingers through the hair on Justin’s forehead, a murmur escaping his lips involuntarily. Or was it a groan. Justin grinned, but lay still beneath the gesture.

The taxi ride there had been nearly unbearable. Unable to kiss, or ease the growing discomfort of their mutual hard-ons, they had had to resort to a comfortless sort of touching which had nearly driven Brian and quite possibly Justin, completely mad. Brian traced the swollen mark on Justin’s neck with a wince. That would be hard to hide tomorrow.

Justin got up, pushing the sheet of his boyish body, and opened the window. The room was small, and with the door close had gotten too hot too quickly. The freezing night air was for once welcome, refreshing. Brian flung an arm out behind his head, lying there, complete and satisfied in his nakedness. Justin fell down on the bed beside him, resting on his elbows.

“Do you even know my name?” Justin asked after a pause. Brian gave him a long look.

“Justin, I know your name.”

“That was fucking amazing. I’ve never been fucked like that.” Justin said quietly. Brian shrugged. He wished he had his cigarettes. He wondered if he could smoke in the apartment or if some landlady bitch would burst in on them, waving a broom or some shit, like out of a crappy teen movie. A faint smile traced his lips, and he sighed, content for the moment not to know what the time was.

“Well, you’re still young,” Brian said carelessly. Justin ignored the condescending tone, instead just nuzzling his head in his arms, staring at Brian.

“And how old are you?” Brian winced, and gave Justin a disgusted look.

“How old do you think I am?”

“Thirty something?” Justin said with a small shake of the head, completely oblivious to Brian very obvious dislike of this subject. “Thirty five.” He guessed. Brian shut his eyes momentarily with disbelieve.

“I am not thirty five.”

“Older? Because you don’t look older, I mean some men look young for their age but…”

“Justin.” Brian cut him off. “I’m not older then thirty five.”

“Oh.” Justin said, his eye brows raised. He shrugged. “It’s alright. Most of my boyfriends have been older.”

“Really,” Brian said with dry sarcasm.

“How old is your partner? What was his name again?””

“You ask a lot of questions.” Brian said, disgruntled now.

“And you don’t answer very many. Or ask many.” Justin added and rolled onto his back.

“He’s my age. We were in school together.”

“Shit. So you guys have known each other…” Brian nodded.

“Yeah. Forever.” He ran a hand over his temple. It was strange that it wasn’t strange talking about Michael here. For years, Michael and his extra-curricular activities had remained completely separate. But here he was, in bed with this boy, talking about Michael. “Michael has been in all the parts of my life that I care to remember.” Justin mouthed the name. Michael. He pursed his lips at this, and at the sudden change that had overcome Brian. A quietness he hadn’t suspected.

“And he understands this…” Justin waved a hand at the bedroom, the crumpled sheets and all they insinuated.

“No. He accepts it. But doesn’t understand it.” Brian glanced at his hands. “And that’s the end of your question time my boy.” Justin smiled again.

“You got to go?”

“Yeah. I’ve got a mother fucking curfew.” Brian swung his long legs over the side of the bed, and Justin let his head drop into to the pillow. He watched Brian dress with a blissful indulgence.

“If you ever want…” Justin started as Brian patted his pockets for his keys. He’d have to catch a taxi, but he’d call one from the street.

“No.” Brian said quickly. “You can’t see me again. Well, actually,” He grinned, and gave Justin a slap on the ass. “I’m sure I’ll be there, in your fantasies.”

“Bastard.” Justin said with a grin, his butt stinging slightly, a red mark forming across that pale skin. “Brian?”

“Yeah?” Brian said from the door.

“What’s one more time? If you ever want to again,” He trailed off. Brian started at his fingers for a moment and shook his head again.

“No, once is an accident, and twice, well,” He glanced around the bedroom. “It’s just a coincidence.” He gave Justin a sad look. “And I’m too,” He paused, his brow furrowed for a moment. Age suddenly didn’t like a problem. This kid wasn’t some virgin, he knew what he was doing, fuck, he knew with quite some skill actually. “I’m too complicated.” And that was more honest. There was so little room to be honest in his life.

“Really?” Justin said, kneeling up, the sheet slipping away, so that Brian nearly had to shut his eyes at the sight to the beautiful creature. Fuck, the boy was gorgeous. “Are you complicated, or just compromised?” Brian pushed his tongue against his cheek for a moment, feeling the friction, feeling anything, anything that could drag him away form this moment. He tossed his head, his eyes on the dusty window.

“Maybe a little bit of both,” He said, his eyes dark, his mouth set. “I’ve gotta go.” He repeated, a shake of the head again, and a confused, almost disorientated look on his face, as though he’d seen something out that window that had shaken something in him. He gave Justin a mocking wave, and left, the door shuddering silently to a close.

Justin through himself down on the bed, and stared at the window. He could see the retreating shadow making his way through the apartment building’s courtyard, and small bright red light of the cigarette, and the flicker of the lighter illuminating the dark head for a moment. Justin wrapped his arms around the pillow, and anyone who knew him well would have known his look as one of determination.

“You’re late.” Brian leant against the door frame. Bloody hell, Michael looked cute in his big flannel dressing gown.

“I know.” He put on a face of mock contrition, and slunk into the loft. Michael closed the door behind him, and he very nearly completed the scene by putting his hands on his hips. He probably would have too if Brian hadn’t spun around, pushing Michaels dressing gown of his thin shoulders, kissing his lips eagerly. He half dragging half pushed Michael to the kitchen, where he picked him up, setting him on the kitchen counters.

“Brian…” Michael hissed between the kisses. Brian groaned a response, sliding Michael’s boxers down. “Brian, seriously, stop.”

“Why, Mikey?” Michael turned his head. Brian nearly gritted his teeth. “Come on Mikey.” He cajoled him, but only half heartedly. He knew he’d already lost.

“Where were you?”

“You know where I was. I was out.” Brian said, and pushed himself away from the counter. He went to the fridge, and pulled out a bottle of water. He took a sip, his face defiant. “Do you want the details of something?” He snapped, breaking the silence.

“I just don’t understand why you had to stay out tonight…” Michael started, and Brian snapped. He grabbed Michael by the shoulders, their faces not inches from one another, just as they had been a moment ago, but this was a much more violent embrace.

“Because I bloody well want to, and I bloody well can.” He hissed. “Alright? Because I choose to.” He let go of Michael with a flourish. The look of fear on Michael’s face nearly softened him but he closed his eyes to it. He turned away. “I’m going to bed. Are you coming?” He said half looking back over his shoulder.

“And you’ve been smoking again.” Michael murmured. Brian nodded, as though this had confirmed something for him.

“Goodnight Michael.” Michael sat there for a long time, listening to Brian getting undressed; biting back the words that always seemed to bubbling up at the moment. Finally, with some difficulty as it was cold and he was tired, he pushed himself off the kitchen counter, and slid back into bed. Brian’s back seemed huge in the small space of their bed. Michael took a breath and stroked the skin there, beneath the shoulder blades. Brian shuddered slightly against the touch. Then he rolled over, an arm thrown across Michael’s chest, his head resting against Michael’s neck and the pillow.

And thus they slept, Brian away from the world with its complications and its compromises, and Michael, awake for a long time, smelling the smell of some other man in Brian’s hair, the smell of sweat, and something else. He glared up at the ceiling and wondered. Wondered, that was all.

“Coffee, Deb, Coffee.” Brian said, readjusting his shades. He had winced at the sound of the bell on the door, and winced at the voices of the other occupants. Fuck, he’d even winced at the sight of Debbie but that was normal. No one’s hair should be that color, unless they want to be mistaken for a rodent. He read the slogan on her t-shirt. This was nearly a daily ritual, like some strange sort of star signs.

“Gay is another word for happy?” He said wearily. Debbie glanced down at her shirt. She poured the coffee.

“Got a problem with that?” She said; one hand on her hip. Brian raised his hands in defeat.

“I just want my coffee.” He opened the paper.

“Then shut the fuck up and drink it.” She said with a hesitant defiance, as though unsure of her point. Brian gave her a cheery smile.

“My, my the hospitality here is marvelous.” He murmured, but Debbie ignored him.

“Sunshine!” She yelled, causing Brian to wince again. She waddled to the edge of the counter, leaning on it, her face a glow. Brian looked up, and nearly groaned. No bloody way. “How have you been?”

“Good.” Justin said, with a smile, kissing Deb on the cheek. “How have you been?” She battered away the question, and moved to pick up her pad and pen. Justin took of his scarf, and his gloves, and met Brian’s eye with a knowing glance. He walked past Brian’s seat on the stool to keep up with Debbie. “Sore.” He added as he slid behind Brian. Brian kept his eyes on his paper, his eyebrows only jumping a centimeter or so.

“I bet you are, so young, so hot.” She squeezed his cheek affectionately, while Brian had to try not to gag. “Now what can I get you?”

“Everything. I’m staaarving.” Justin said dramatically.

“Bacon and eggs…” She said slowly as she wrote. And your friends.” She said, gesturing to the booth where Daniel and Tyler sat.

“Same.” Justin said nonchalantly. Debbie nodded, not looking up and strolled into the kitchen. Justin, still grinning, turned to Brian, who was staring at him with a look that was torn between anger and shock.

“Hi,” Justin said, grinning, biting his lip to stop from laughing.

“Come here often?” Brian said, his smile equally as big, but without a trace of humor.

“Sometimes, the morning after. Deb’s the best.”

“I know.” Brian said with a shake of the head. Fuck, fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck, was about all that was running through his head. Just then he felt an arm slide around his waist, and a kiss on the cheek. Double fuck.

“Hey, morning. You got up early.” Michael said. Brian looked down at his paper, and didn’t see the smile on Justin’s face fade, as he looked from Michael to Brian and back again. “So who’s this?” Michael said; his own smile fading. He held out a hand.

“I’m Justin.”

“Michael.” Michael’s eyes thinned as in thought. He gave Brian a very dry, unsurprised look. “And you guys know each other how?” Brian looked at Justin, an eyebrow raised. Justin moistened his lips with his tongue, and then gave a tiny shrug.

“I was just hitting on your boyfriend.” Justin said with a forced expression. He gave Brian a dead pan look.

“And I was turning him down.”

“Good because he’s too young for you.” Michael said giving Brian a chastising tap on the nose. He pulled out the menu, though he must know it by heart. Justin stood there for a moment, a look exchanged between him and Brian over Michael’s head. Justin made to walk away and then turned, his grin returning.

“By the way, do you have the time?” Justin said playfully. Brian looked down at his wrist, where his a thousand dollar watch was not and nearly groaned. Justin gave him a little wave, and Brian just shook his head again. Michael, still glaring at the menu in thought, missed the interchange, and glare of realization from Brian and the mocking grin from Justin. As Justin made his way back to his table, Brian wondered how in the hell was he going to get himself out of this situation. He put away the newspaper, gauging Michael’s reactions.

“Mikey?” Michael was now looking over his shoulder at Justin.

“Yeah?” He said, glancing back. He patted Brian’s arm at his concerned look. “I really didn’t like him.”

“I can see why.” Brian said slowly, casting around for another subject. It was at that moment that Deb returned, equally oblivious as Michael to the tension in Brian. He could hear Justin talking in a low voice behind them.

“Michael!” Debbie cried, planting a kiss on her son’s cheek.

“Hi mum.” He said with that controlled grin and bear it grin.

“What are you having? And whatever it is its on me. I’m getting paid today.” Debbie said cheerfully.

“Why Deb, you never offer me free meals.” Brian murmured.

“Because you can afford it arsehole, sitting there in your Armani.” She gave someone a wave who had just entered, her face brightening even as she insulted Brian.

“Yeah, Mum you really shouldn’t, on your pay check.”

“I can do what I damn well want with my paycheck thank you very much Michael, and a good morning to you too.” She said, reproached and slightly offended at Michaels’s serious mood. She looked from one man to the other, to Michael who was glowering over his shoulder at Justin, and to Brian who was sulking.

“Justin? I’ve heard that name before.” Michael looked to Brian who was suddenly very interested in the paper or the front page of it anyway.

“What, Justin?” Debbie cut in. “He’s a regular. Always comes here with his new trick. Great ass, like you two wouldn’t have noticed, am I right?” Debbie said with a laugh, her illuminated face making the crudeness bearable. Michael looked at Brian again, an angry, knowing look. Debbie after a moment of complete mystification at her son’s surly mood and his lover’s complete silence, two plates in hand, trundled off, leaving Brian and Michael alone.

“Brian.” Michael said reproachfully.

“What Mikey?” Brian said, his voice sickeningly sweet.

“You fucked him.” Michael said in a low voice.

“I didn’t.” Brian denied with the tone of stating a fact, quickly and as though he had already predicted this conversation.

“You did, didn’t you?” Michael gave Justin on more look over, and then turned to Brian, his face shocked. “Brian, he’s just a kid. He looks barely eighteen.”

“Michael, I did not fuck him. But who and when I fuck is my business. We have an arrangement Michael.” Brian said levelly. He took another sip of coffee, glancing around as though they were not on the brink of fighting.

“Look at him Brian. Look at him. He’s so young. Young and beautiful, the only things you need right?” Michael hissed. “When are you going to stop doing this? Fucking every piece of ass that comes your way. Your not twenty two anymore Brian.” He scanned Brian’s expression but it was blank.

“Michael, I don’t want to have this conversation here.” Brian said back coolly.

“Well, when can we have it? Certainly not when your coming home drunk hours after three. Or when you’re working till eleven o’clock. So it just seems were never going to talk about anything.” Michael hissed.

“Maybe that’s the way I want it. Maybe I’m sick of saying the things you want to hear Michael. And you don’t want to hear anything else.” Brian said, finishing his coffee. “I’m going. We’ll talk when I’m ready.” He put back on his jacket, and Michael shoved him, not hard, but on the shoulder, enough to startle him.

“What about me? What about when I’m ready?”

“Michael, it’s not always about you.” Brian said coldly.

“Well, when has it ever been about me, Brian? Answer me that. When are you going to choose me over all this…” He broke off. Brian’s face darkened, just as it had last night.

“I did choose you. Fuck you. I did choose you.”

“What the hell was that?” Daniel asked as Justin slid into the booth.

“That was the famous Brian Kinney, and the more famous Brian Kinney brush off.” Justin said gloomily. He looked over at Brian and Michael, who were talking together in low voices. He couldn’t see Michael’s face, but he could see Brian’s, and he was pissed.

“That does not look happy.” Tyler murmured.

“When I saw the guy put his arm around Brian, I thought you were a dead man.” Daniel added.

And when I saw it, Justin thought, it felt like hell. Even now, watching the lovers spat between the two of them, Michaels face so close to Brian’s, he could see it. He closed his eyes to try and stop the images, but he couldn’t. Them touching, them holding hands. Michael. And Brian. In bed together.

“It was only a fuck.” Justin said with mock indifference. “It’s not like we’re married.”

“It looks like they are though. Poor Brian.” Tyler joked. “That man should be considered public property, and not be defiled by private ownership.”

“It was only a fuck.”

“You keep telling yourself that honey.” Daniel said, putting his arm around Justin’s shoulder.

“Oh, our little boy’s in love. Again.”

“I don’t do love anymore.” Justin said, his eyes still on Brian, who was pushing roughly past Michael, not even glancing at them as he slunk past.

“Honey, all you ever do with men is love.” Daniel said, giving him a kiss on the cheek. “That’s why we love you so much.”

“What? Who the fuck is it?” Justin rubbed the back of his neck sleepily. The banging on the door continued. Whoever the fuck it was could get the key. Hell, it could be burglars and at that moment he’d even give them the key. Hell he’d give them a hand job if they’d just stop hitting the goddamn door. His foot connected with the step up out of the pit of a lounge room. He stumbled, putting one hand on the wall to steady himself. “What?” He repeated again as he opened the door. He looked up, and rolled his eyes.

“You’ve got something of mine.” Brian said, arm on the door frame. He rubbed his chin, smooth shaven. Justin looked him up and down in his Armani suit and fuck, were they Gucci shoes?

“Do you want to scrap it of the sheets?” He said dryly.

“Very funny. Where’s my watch? Brian clicked his tongue and pushed past him into the room. He wrinkled his nose in disgust. There were not only more then a few empty beer bottles, but there was also the lingering smell of cigarettes and weed. And in the middle of the living room, a canvas propped up against the sofa. Sketches covered the floor and there was what looked like paint on some of the walls.

“What the fuck happened in here?” Justin scratched his head again, slamming the door, almost shuddering at the loud noise. He stepped into the lounge room and glanced again, wincing as he tried to remember.

“Big night.” He rubbed his face in his hands. “Big, big night. Big men. Big hangover.”

“It’s three in the fucking afternoon. On a Friday.” Brian said. Justin leant against the one arm of the sofa that was free. He raised his hands indifferently, and pulled out his deck. “Where’s my watch?” Brian repeated. Justin lit the cigarette with a wince.

“You waited till Friday.” He exhaled. “That’s five days.”

“Good, we can all count.” Brian looked around, scanning the surfaces. “That’s an a thousand dollar watch. Have you even ever seen a thousand dollars?” Justin snorted.

“Hell, if you’d told me that I would have sold it to buy crack.” Justin said sarcastically. “What do you think I can’t read the goddamn brand? I’m not retarded. It’s in the fucking bathroom. Where you left it.” He added as an after thought to Brian’s retreating back.

Justin took another drag and then flicked the cigarette into a half full beer glass. He still had paint on his elbows, some on his chest. Fuck, he was tired. And he was horny. The party had left about five, and he’d painted till about nine. Six hours sleep, and he was ready to fuck.

“Thank you very much.” Brian said, fixing the watch to his wrist. “I half expected it to be on route to Mexico by now.” He looked up at Justin, and paused. Justin stood up, hands on the string of his track suit bottoms which were already hanging low on his hips. Very slowly, Justin pulled it, and let them fall to the floor. He tilted his head, his eyes still soft and heavy lidded with sleep.

“Anything else I can recommend?” Justin murmured. Brian paused, cracking one of his knuckles, a faint smirk forming on his lips. He allowed his eyes to wander, over those small hips, over everything really. He remembered why he had fucked this kid twice. And god, a nipple ring had never looked so good before. But what flashed through his brain for that moment wasn’t that. It was how small the boy looked. How slim. He hadn’t noticed before, that the boy was actually sort of short. Brian bit the end of his thumb, and once again, made that stupid Brian Kinney decision.

He closed the distance between them, his hands pulling off his tie, his top button, and leant his head back, letting Justin devoured his neck. He pulled Justin’s head back slightly, looking into the boy’s eyes. He licked his lips, and Justin, seeing this, leant in to kiss them. Brian tilted his head away, and pushed the boys head down, further. Justin undid Brian’s pants, and the two of them staggered backwards so that Brian could lean against the wall.

Brian leant back, his hands running through Justin’s hair, digging into the skin and guiding him, back and forth, so hard and so violently. For that second, no matter how many times he had been given head before by the thousands of countless men, for Brian the feeling of Justin’s warm mouth around his cock was the best feeling in the whole world. There were more skilled men, more experience, fuck, there were probably even hotter men if you could be bothered comparing and making a tally sheet, but at that moment, Brian knew he would never get better head. He opened his mouth, his face contorting with the pure hedonistic pleasure of it, and came.

Justin sighed with Brian, his own hard on seeming nothing to the sudden release from Brian. He looked up with a pleased smile at Brian, who in a moment of tender amazement stroked Justin’s forehead, and the path of his jaw line.

So caught up in the moment, neither heard the click of the key in the lock and the sound of the feet.

“Justin, mate.”

“Fuck.” Justin hissed. He had only time to look up at Brian, pure panic written on his face.

“We thought we’d come over and celebrate…” The speaker broke off. Justin stood up, stark naked, turning to see the seven people who had just walked into his apartment.

“Justin!” One girl said, her mouth dropping. Justin dived for his pants, leaving Brian momentarily exposed as he too grabbed for his pants which were around his ankles.

“Haven’t you heard of knocking?” Justin said, his trackies now on. He glanced at Brian who was buckling up his belt.

“Uh, you gave us a key.” Daniel said, his eyes still on Brian.

“Yeah, Jus you gave us all keys. Half of Pittsburg has a key.”

“Uh, Brian this is Daniel, and Tyler.” Justin said wearily. Brian gave a almost mocking smile, adjusting his shirt, and then picking his tie up off the ground. “And Daphne and Janis, Brett, Greg and Lily.” Brian gave them all the once over, looking from Justin to the kids, most of whom were carrying some sort of alcohol or food.

“So what are we celebrating?” He said, with him most hospitable grin on.

“Man, Justin’s a genius.” Daniel said to Brian, who was flipping through the stacks of canvas. He tilted his head at one, and glanced over at Justin.

“You painted this?” He asked. Justin nodded. He was fully dressed now, his hands in the pockets of his jeans. The others were drinking in the other room, but Daniel had insisted on showing Brian Justin’s pictures, which Justin kept in the second bedroom that he used as a studio.

“I painted all of them.”

“You’re good.” Brian murmured. Justin waved this away.

“What do you know about art?” Justin said flippantly.

“A lot.” Brian said with a touch of seriousness. “For one thing I’m gay. And secondly, my best friend ran an art gallery for most of her life, so I know a thing or two.” He gave them another look. “And you’re selling paintings?”

“He’s showing in a gallery. That’s what we’re celebrating.” Daniel imputed.

“Hey Dan,” Someone cried from the other room. “Where the fuck is the corkscrew?”

“Hold on,” He yelled back. “Well, nice meeting you Brian.” He said, but Brian didn’t look up, still staring at the painting.

“Yeah, you too.” He murmured. Daniel left, leaving the two alone. Justin fidgeted and took a step closer.

“I’m sorry about this.” He said quickly. “I didn’t know they were coming. I seriously didn’t know.”

“Who is this?” Brian asked. Justin touched his forehead for a moment, pushing back his hair. He glanced at the painting.

“That’s an ex. That’s Tom.”

“You painted all your ex’s?” Brian said with a soft laugh. Justin gave a half grin.

“Only the important ones.” Brian frowned at this comment, scanning the portrait again. It was mostly blacks, dark greens, grays and pale blues. It was beautiful.

“How long were you and him…?” Brian trailed off.

“Um, about two weeks.” Justin said with a pained smile. Brian laughed, and shook his head at the picture.

“Um, and again, why was he important?” Justin tilted his head at the picture, giving it a long look. He shrugged.

“Because I was a little bit in love with him. That’s why he was important. I paint the ones that I was in love with.” Brian looked up quickly, his eyes troubled. Justin gave another little shrug. “Sort of a keepsake.”

“There’s only ever been one for me.” Brian said quietly. Justin gave him a quizzical look. Brian let go of the painting, and glanced around the room, at the dirt where the wall meet the ceiling and the dust on the one big window. “One important one.” He clarified.

“Well,” Justin said with a lighter tone. “I’m on number nine. And I don’t think I’d have it any other way.” He said, and Brian laughed again, looking at his hands. God this kid. So soft and so strong. So strong willed and yet not a fighter, not with his fists, and not with his words.

Because he knew what he wanted.

“Well I don’t really believe in love.” Brian said with an equal hardness.

“Then how can anything be important?” Justin asked.

“We’re closing early. Sorry. You’ll have to come back Monday.” Michael said, not looking up from the counter of the comic book store. It was five o’clock and it was freezing outside. Michael had about a million things to do before he could even think of going home.

“Michael.” Brian said, his face and tone serious. Michael looked up shocked.

They had barely spoken the whole week. They had been avoiding each other. For Michael, it had been something that resembled hell. Brian would get up early and leave, and they’d both always have something to do at night, dinner, clubs, movies with friends. And suddenly it had been nearly a week, and they were barely speaking. Michael couldn’t work out if he was angry at Brian anymore or if Brian was angry at him.

“Wow, I thought we were going to avoid each other forever.” He joked. Brian pulled off his gloves, and placed them on the counter. He stood in front of Michael his hands clasped.

“Michael,”

“Wait,” Michael darted from around the counter. “Look, Brian, I’m sorry. You’re right. We have an arrangement. You can fuck who ever you want. I love you, and I want you to be happy, and though,” He looked past Brian for a minute. “Though I might not always like it, and I might get jealous, I want to be with you, and this is how that’s possible. I’ve got no right to…” Brian kissed him softly, his arms pulling the small brunette to him, and then releasing him.

“Michael, let me talk.”

“Alright.” Michael said, his hand automatically going to his lips, which were curling into a smile.

“I’ve known you since you were fourteen, since I was fourteen. You’re my best friend. And you’re my partner. And I love you. And this is the truth: You’ve been in all my life I choose to remember. And you’ll always be in my life.” Michael smiled, his eyes growing softer. Brian put his hand on Michaels shoulder and shook his slightly. “And don’t forget it you idiot.” Michael smiled, almost crying.

“Don’t get angry at me like that again,” Michael said, pointing a warning finger. Brian grinning and started to pull him into a bear hug. “And how do I know you’re not just saying what I want to hear, huh?” He was half joking, and only half still mad.

“Because,” Brian looked over Michaels head, casting around. “Because I’m not going to quit smoking, and I hate the picture frame you bought me for Christmas, and because…” He stroked Michaels cheeks, growing serious again. “Because what you want to hear is how I feel. And that, I just told you.”

“I love you Brian.”

“And I love you. I do. I really do.” Brian said it with all the determination he had in him.

“Michael?” Debbie set down two shopping bags at the door, looking around the loft. Brian’s head poked up from over the couch and he muted the television. He stood up, whipping his hands on his pants.

“Uh, he’s out with Ben. They’re seeing a movie.” Brian said, giving Debbie a not so inviting look. Debbie nodded, and picked up her shopping bags again. Unfortunately, she didn’t leave, rather busied herself in the kitchen. Brian clenched his hands for a moment, and then followed her. Debbie wasn’t the type to pick up on the more subtle side of life.

“That’s alright. I just thought I’d drop over this stuff. You know, I’ve haven’t been up here in ages.” She said, glancing around the loft. Brian forced a grin.

“Really? I hadn’t noticed.” He said, with his characteristic tongue in cheek tone. Debbie pulled a face at him.

“I can tell you’ve really missed me.” She said sharply. Brian shrugged. She put her hands on her hips, and frowned at him, his lean body slouched against the counter. “You’re just who you are, aren’t you?”

“Are you going to translate that rather cryptic comment for me Deb?” Brian said dryly. Debbie paused, examining him, as though unsure of her course of action. Then she tossed her head as though to say to hell with it.

“For five days, I watched my son miserable because of you. Hell, to tell you the truth, I’ve watched him be miserable over you for half his life. I’ve known you since before you were in high school Brian Kinney.” Brian raised his eyebrows, a bored expression on his face as though he was already steeling himself to a litany of insults. “I think I know you pretty well.”

“Really?” Brian said as though he rather be saying fuck you.

“Yeah, really you selfish prick.” Debbie said, her eyes wavering slightly. “I watched Michael, I’m his mother goddamn it, and right from the start, I knew you were bad for him. He barely stood a chance with you.”

“Meaning?”

“He’s in love with you. Always has been. And you’ve encouraged it.”

“Has it ever occurred to you that I might be in love with him too?” Brian asked with a quiet anger. Debbie examined her nails for a moment, glancing around the loft.

“It has. And maybe you are. In your own way. For a long time I wondered if you were even capable of love.” She held up a hand, cutting of Brian’s angry comment. “No, listen to me Brian Kinney, for once, you’re going to hear this. You may love him, in your own way. I don’t know. But you’re not capable of loving him in the way he needs to be loved. And you know that. Hell, you’ve always known that. That’s why it took you two so long to get together. Mikey, he can’t see straight with you. But you’ve always known.” She glanced around the loft, as though lost for words for a moment.

“Are you done?” Debbie glared at him after this comment, and her anger came back in full force. She strode into the centre of the room, raising her arm, gesturing around.

“Look at this place. Just look at it Brian.” She paused, glaring at him.

“What?” He snapped acidly.

“I don’t see one trace of my son in this apartment. Where are his action figures, where are his clothes, where is he?” She looked around.

“Maybe he grew out of those things. He’s not fourteen anymore Deb.”

“And neither are you. And you’ve got to take consequences for your own actions.” She looked over at Brian again, shaking her head, and Brian nearly shuddered at the sight of tears in her eyes. “When are you going to let him go Brian? When are you going to give him the chance to have the life he can’t have with you? Tell me this: do you really believe he can ever be truly happy with you? That you can give him what he needs?”

The answer was all over Brian’s face. He looked shattered, his brown eyes looking almost bruised. He pushed his hand through his hair, almost gasping. Deficient. That what she was saying he was. Not that Michael wasn’t happy. That he couldn’t be happy. With him.

Because who the hell could be?

Was he even capable of love?

“Get out.” He half whispered. She just stood there, and her expression wavered.

“Brian, I’m only saying this…”

“GET THE FUCK OUT.” He roared, looking as though he wanted to hit her. She jumped, and held up her hands in defeat. As she reached the door she turned, looking almost pityingly at Brian’s profile.

“He has a real chance with this Ben. We all can see it. Let him have that chance. Just let him go.” Brian jutted out his jaw, but said nothing. When he heard the door slide close, he bobbed down so that he was crouching, his hands covering his face. The growl like sound he emitted filled the apartment, and Brian felt like it should smash all the windows, leaving broken debris over what had been his and Michaels home for so long.

And apparently too long.

“God, look at him. Big black and handsome.” Emmett said, toying with his drink. “I think he is possibly the hottest thing I have seen not on the pages of a calendar. He’s even hotter then the blonde surfer. Brian is barely giving him a second glance.” Michael smiled happily.

“I know. Isn’t it great?” Emmett shrugged, turning back to Michael.

“So, who wants to hear about my love life?”

Justin stood behind the bar, watching Brian play pool, barely hearing the orders, mixing them all up, and overfilling the beers so that the froth spilled all over his hands. He was a jittering wreck.

He could see Brian’s partner in deep conversation with someone, and decided to put and end to this. He slipped out from under the bar, hell it was time for his break anyway, and sidled up to Brian. He stood by the hole Brian was aiming for, one eyebrow raised questioningly. Brian gave him a cursory glance, and took the shot. He pushed past Justin to take another after sinking the ball.

“So, I assume you haven’t come over to take my order?” Brian said, taking the next shot. Justin smiled, glancing at his hands, which he traced on the smooth wood.

“Depends on what you’re ordering.” He said softly. Brian gave him a dead pan look and sighed.

“Look, I’m not interested.” Brian murmured.

“You were interested the other morning.” Justin whispered, glancing over his shoulder cautiously. Brian looked up, something flickering though his eyes, and he half grimaced.

“I think I’ve given you the wrong idea.” He started, and Justin shook his head impatiently.

“Look, I don’t want to hear that. I understand that you have a boyfriend.”

“Do you Justin?” Brian said coolly. “Because I don’t think you do.” Justin looked hurt, and almost angry in the face of Brian’s indifference.

“I want you.” Justin said lowly, so vulnerably and to truthfully that it made Brian close his eyes.

“You want love. Which I’m not capable of. And not with you that’s for sure.” Brian stated when he opened his eyes.

“How do you know,” Justin’s words were becoming choked with emotion now. “that I’m not just out for a fuck?” Brian shook his head, smiling. He sunk another ball. “Fuck you. I could get it from anyone.”

“Oh,” Brian said with mock hurt. “And I thought you said I was amazing.” Justin opened his mouth, but nothing came out. He stared at Brian, but Brian’s eyes didn’t crack, and Justin lost. He dropped his eyes, and rubbed his neck.

“Fine. I don’t care. God, I don’t care.” He said, and walked away, his eyes downcast, his lip wobbling with repressed emotion. Brian stood for a moment, his cue lying idle in his hand. He pursed his lips, a frown forming across his face.

“And then he goes, you have to be quite, because you might wake my mum’s boyfriend. This little old lady that I’ve just met, in a pink fluffy night gown, has a boyfriend. I could have died right there,” Emmett’s voice droned on and on, but Brian was barely listening. Michael brushed his hand.

“You okay?” He whispered. Brian nodded and gave him a comforting smile. Brian turned his head as though scanning the room, but really, his eyes were on the blonde at the bar. He could barely see Justin behind the men at the bar, and yet his whole he could feel himself being drawn to him. Goddamn that kid.

And he felt guilty.

Guilty for what? Snubbing of some trick. That was all.

But the boy was looking hot tonight. Very hot.

He tried listening to the story. God he tried. He tried focusing on his beer, and on the ass of the guy playing pool. But there was this itch, this craving, that wouldn’t go away. Like that unbearable and yet unquenchable need for a cigarette, that won’t stop until you just do it. Take it. Relent.

He glanced up at the bar one again.

Justin was making for the back door, hands already pulling out a cigarette, and Brian had had enough.

“I’m going for a smoke.” He said, brushing Michael’s lips with his. “I know you hate me smoking around you.”

“Alright,” Michael grinned, and then turned back to the story. Brian made for the back door, the bar, the pool table, everything disappearing. There was just him, and the distance between him and the door.

Then he crossed the threshold.

It was a dingy place for a smoke. The bar backed onto a small car park for the employees, a dumpster and empty crates. Justin was leaning against the wall right next to the door and jumped when Brian pushed through it, nearly dropping his cigarette.

“Hi,” He said, his face slightly confused. Brian grabbed his hand almost viciously, the hand with the cigarette, so that Justin dropped it. With his other hand, he covered Justin’s mouth, and started kissing his neck. Justin gasped against Brian’s hand, and Brian grinned. He released him for a moment, leaving Justin nearly breathless.

“Come on.” Justin in tow, he walked round the dumpster, to the safety of the shadows, the dark calm of them. Taking both Justin’s hand, Brian with lazy enjoyment pushed Justin against the brick wall. He slowly undid Justin’s pants, yanking the apron off with one fluid motion and dropping it to the floor. “Come for me,” Brian said darkly. He moistened his lips, his hand on Justin’s shaft, moving faster now, faster. Justin groaned, and Brian covered Justin’s mouth with his hand. Brian could feel Justin’s mouth opening and closing against his skin, his body shaking in time to Brian’s skillful strokes.

“Come for me.”

The door from Woody’s opened, and someone called out Justin’s name. Justin’s eyes flickered open, and Brian’s hand movement faltered. Then slowly, his eyes on Justin’s, he continued moving, Justin breathing heavily now. Whoever it was went away, the door clattering.

“Are you going to come for me?” Brian whispered again. Justin nodded suddenly, almost violently, and Brian watched Justin’s eyes soften, his body start to jerk. He grabbed the apron, catching Justin’s spunk in the black material. Justin was acutely aware on the material wrapped around his dick. And Brian’s hand that held it there.

Brian leant forward, as though to kiss Justin, as though forgetting his hand still holding Justin’s mouth. Justin’s eyes widened, his breathing calming, his lips parting for the kiss. The fucking kiss he wanted so bad it nearly made him hard again.

Brian kissed the back of his own hand, the gesture some sort of mockery, of what Justin couldn’t tell.

As Justin’s body calmed, Brian tossed the apron down again, and with the same careful authority, he zipped back up Justin’s pants.

He pulled out his own deck, and handed Justin a cigarette.

“I ruined your other one.” He said in explanation. Justin sagged back against the wall as Brian lit it for him. He grabbed Brian’s hand as Brian turned to go, expecting to be violently shaken off. But Brian just smiled, his head tilted. He held up his fingers, making a frame around Justin’s’ face. He laughed, and the sound sounded suddenly very loud.

Justin finished the cigarette, long after the door had clanged behind Brian, dropping the butt between the rough cobbled stones. He picked up the apron, holding it clenched in his hands as some sort of proof. As he walked back into the bar he felt liberated, somehow powerful, the defiled apron, the treasure he had bought back.

The sight of Michael running his hand through Brian’s hair deflated the moment slightly, but as Justin closed his eyes to this sight, he could hear Brian’s voice. For me. Come for me. That’s what was important. That’s what the moment had been. Proof. Of him. For Brian.

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“God Daph, you don’t understand what its like with this guy,” Justin ran his hand through his hair, stretched out on the couch, his feet pushing at one of the cushions. His leg swayed from side to side at the idea of Brian, and Justin sighed. “Seriously, I think I’m going crazy over this guy. He’s just… oh you wouldn’t understand.”

He tilted his head as the girl on the other end of the line said something.

“No. God no.” He said angrily, sitting up. “Aren’t you listening. This is nothing like it was with Harry. Or Dommi. This is totally different. He’s amazing. He’s everything.” He nodded, listening to her.

“I know.” He sounded sad suddenly. “I know. Nine years. That’s not just some weekend fling. God, it you could be me though. If you could see what he’s like, when he’s with me. I feel like we’re… I don’t know.” He pushed his tongue against the side of his cheek. “It’s like we’re acting out some scene from pretty woman and dear god I’m not Richard Gere in this situation. I’m not the one in control Daph. But I want to kiss him so bad.” He paused again. “And I know he wants to kiss me. He wanted to so bad. You could see it, how bad he wanted it.” He rubbed his back. “You saw how beautiful he is right?” He tilted his head again, and a smile curled on his lips at her answer.

“What do you mean too skinny?” He said laughingly. “Oh shit, that’s the door. I’ll call you back later. That’ll be Tyler. Him and Luc, again, yeah, I know.” He hung up, tossing the phone on the couch. He got up, pulling his trackies up higher on his hips, and made towards the door.

And on the other side of it, stood Brian.

Hair tussled, straight from Babylon, eyes fucked up from god knows what, and that smile. That fucking Brian Kinney smile. Justin could feel the metal of the door knob still beneath his hands, but that was all. Everything else was numb, as though an electric shock had passed straight through him.

“Hi,” He managed, and closing his eyes, half laughing at the complete inadequacy of that comment. “Hey,” He said with a soft shake of the head. “What the hell are you doing here?”

“I’m,” Brian said, and then paused, his tongue moistening his lips, his eyes looking to the ceiling for a moment to try and discover an answer that encompassed the feeling that had driven him to direct the taxi here. He came up short, and leant against the door frame for a moment, letting his body do the talking where his mind could not follow. “doing I don’t know what. But I’m here.” He said slowly, his hands traveling from his own stomach, to Justin’s. And like some sort of magnetic pull from his belly button, Justin responded.

Brian stumbled through the door, and Justin closed it with some righteous sense of satisfaction behind him. Brian pulled off his jacket, tossing it on the couch, and made for the bedroom. Justin followed him, half stunned and half savoring this moment. He entered the bedroom, Brian already stripping off; t-shirt pulled over his head and tossed on the floor. Justin stood for a moment, watching Brian watching him watch Brian pull of his pants. Brian’s belt buckle hit the floor with a clang.

And there he was. Naked to the world. Naked, here alone in Justin’s room. Naked for him.

Then Brian beckoned and Justin came to him as though he had never had a second thought. And maybe he hadn’t. Brian could make even the most level headed person throw caution to the wind.

Brian craned his head, rubbing his thumbs over Justin’s cheeks. Justin nearly swooned beneath the touch. Brian kissed the soft stubble of his jaw, and the dangerous side of Justin’s mouth. He pulled Justin closer, their hips grinding against one another, Brian’s lips on Justin’s temple as Justin made himself busy with Brian’s neck.

“I want to kiss you so bad.” Justin murmured against Brian’s neck. Brian growled in response, and threw him down on the bed, the animal in the man taking over.

It was all the same. The same as always. The trick. The overpowering need to fuck. The rip of the condom. The coolness of the lube on his hand. The groans, the growls. The smell of sex in the air, a mixture of sweat and something sweet, something indescribable.

Justin was saddling him, his legs bucking against Brian’s thighs, the heat of him surrounding, engulfing him. Absolving him. He could see the perspiration in the boys hair, and his own face was contorted in the savagery of this dance. He wanted more though, the need to fill and to fuck was suddenly made stronger by the need to touch. To touch all of Justin. To be closer to that blonde hair, to that gasping breath. To hear the jerkiness of that breath as Justin came, just as he had felt against it his hand in that alley.

With one savage motion his back came off the bed, grabbing Justin’s hips, controlling the moment, his chest against Justin’s. The boy’s head, which had been flung back, leant forward, so they were forehead against forehead, Brian could feel Justin’s breath on his lips. In, out, in out. Breath.

Skin on skin.

Brian growled, his own breath spasming

And what passed through Brian’s mind in that second, that second where Justin’s eye’s flickered open, before closing again in an almost orgasmic swoon?

Why the hell not?

And suddenly they were kissing. Justin rose up and down, his arms wrapping around Brian’s head, crossed across his shoulder blades, holding the embrace in the moment of climax. Brian tugged at Justin’s lower lip with his teeth, and then he came. His tongue pushed at Justin’s, shuddering, and then he fell back against the pillow, his mouth open, a long groan escaping him.

“Fuck,” Justin collapsed beside him, rolling onto his front. “Fuck.” Brian looked over at him, noting the boys reaction to what had just happened. Expecting, he didn’t know what. Reprisal? Satisfaction? Fear? But there was only amazement and a soft tiredness.

“Well, that definitely makes it three. Or a very strange coincidence.” Justin said after a moment. Brian grinned despite himself.

“Shut up.” He murmured, not cruelly though. He threw an arm over that frail chest protectively, his face half in the pillow. He felt Justin watching him, and he opened one eye grumpily.

“And you kissed…”

“I know.”

“I thought you weren’t going to do that.”

“Well. I like to break the rules.” Brian murmured, on the edge of sleep now. It had been a long night.

“Even your own?” He heard Justin ask, and he groaned, kissing the boys temple.

“Sleep Justin. Sleep.”

Brian slid out of bed; Justin was still sleeping soundly, one arm flung out across the bed. Brian paused, his eyes marveling at the beauty of that naked form, the quiet perfection of it. He sighed, pulling on his jeans, his fingers stumbling with the course fabric. His shirt he found stuffed between the bed and the wall. Justin still hadn’t woken, but Brian had to go. He had lain awake, feeling the bar like rays of sun that penetrated the blinds warming slices of his body. He had listened to the rise and fall of that chest that was not Michaels, and allowed himself a moment to linger in the warmth of this bed, shared with someone else.

He stretched gingerly, and padded softly to the bathroom. His reflection was not the prettiest, and he could feel the grime on his teeth. What had he been on last night? He tried to remember. Pink Smileys? Pink doves? Green dragons? Some kind of animal. Whatever it was, it had only whet his appetite for what he knew the dancers at Babylon were not going to satisfy, not last night.

He was surprised that his lips weren’t red a puffy, stung by what… his betrayal? Was kissing worse then what he had already done?

Fucking a vetoed?

Double fucking?

Staying out past curfew?

No.

Kissing the boy had made what he had already done so very very much worse. Now it was truly betrayal, more then breaking a promise or an accident. Now it was what… a thing he’d had had with this boy?

Goddamn it, even as he was standing here, examining his face in the boy’s mirror, he was already putting it in past tense.

He looked in the mirror, and thought what had been passing through his head, round and round like a broken record, never leaving, never changing, just like him.

If he couldn’t love Michael, he couldn’t love anyone.

And what was he doing with this boy, if not proving that?

What indeed.

“Lindsey, is he meant to be doing that?” Brian said, glaring worriedly at Angus who was not only rubbing his food encrusted hands all over his own face, but also busily picking his nose. Angus was also two years old. Lindsey looked up from the stove, her spoon and apron making her the image of home domesticity. Too bad I’m a faggot, Brian though glumly.

“Brian, stop him. Angus, no. Bad.” She said directly to her son. Brian grabbed the little mite’s hands and pulled a face at him. After a moment of apparent confusion, Angus busied himself with the crayons in front of him, content for the moment to sit on Brian’s lap. Brian on the other hand looked highly uncomfortable, leaning back as far as he could in the seat. But this was perhaps only for show, for one hand held the two years old around the stomach with a domineering protectiveness.

“Now Brian,” Lindsey said turning back from the cooking, now that the small crisis was under control. “What the hell are you doing here?” She raised an eyebrow. Brian threw up his hands defensively.

“What can’t a man visit his ex and his son?” He said mischievously. Lindsey scowled, and looked out the door, to check if Mel was in hearing.

“You better not call me that in front of Mel.” She hissed.

“Ah yes, Uber dike has stolen my hetreo life, isn’t that right Gussy?” Brian said squeezing the toddler slightly. Lindsey pursed her lips. “I know,” Brian said before she started. “Angus. You both agreed on Angus.”

“Brain, not that I don’t love you here, but you’ve go to admit you rarely visit Angus,” She said clearly and loudly, possibly for the child’s purpose who was intent on slobbering on the blue crayon. “Since you gave up your paternal rights.”

“Ah yes. Since little sonny boy was saved from the big bad faggot.” He said the last word staring straight into his son’s face, Brian’s eyes darkening with a mixture between confusion and anger, and almost sadness. His tone was flippant, as always, but Lindsey’s concern was sparked.

“Can you stop calling her that, the Uber Dike?” She said with a faint smile, lifting her son from Brian’s lap to place him somewhere safer from obscenities. Brian folded his hands in his lap. “Is it Michael? Is he…” She paused for the word, but Brian did not help her. He just muttered under his breathe. She raised a querying eyebrow, content to let the meaning of her words be endless. Brian shook his head slightly at her, his eyes narrowing.

“Why is it always Michael? Huh?” He waited, but Lindsey didn’t respond, her brown eyes unreadable. She ran one hand through her too blonde hair nervously. “Why is it always whether Michael is happy or not? Huh? Everyone’s always watching to see how Brian Kinney fucks up this relationship. Poor little Mikey, brave little Mikey for putting up with the fucking bullshit.” He spat the last words so viciously that Lindsey leant back slightly. There was a silence, and the sounds of the cars and the noise of the suburbs suddenly seemed very loud. Angus beat his hand on the floor, rhythmically making little bubbling noises to accompany it. Brian was still glowering out the window, his jaw protruding as though he were having a silent battle.

“Alright Brian,” Lindsey finally ventured. “The lets ask the question. Are you unhappy?” Brian snapped his head up, his eyes scanning her face for some… what? Knowledge? Fear? Contempt? God, he didn’t know what he wanted from this people. From any of them. Sometimes he didn’t feel like he knew them, or how they saw him. Lindsey’s face shifted into concern at the lack of answer. She knelt down by Brian, her hand leaning on his knee, trying to look into his face. “Brian, tell me you’re not unhappy.” Double negative, he noted.

He looked up, staring into her face. His dark brown eyes showed nothing but that haunted look that drew men and women to him a like in droves. The look that Lindsey had never really understood and Michael have never really been able to banish.

“I’m not unhappy.” He almost breathed it.

“Then what’s going on?” She said lowly, not moving. Brian licked his lips.

“Nothing. I just,” He shook his head. “I don’t think I’m cut out for it. Love, marriage, and a white picket fence.”

“Your afraid that you won’t be able to give Michael all that? Brian you know he only wants you.”

“I’m not fucking talking about Michael. I’m talking about me.” He pushed her off, and stood with his back to her. She remained perfectly still for a second still crouching by his chair. “I don’t think I could do it with anyone. I mean, if I couldn’t do it with Michael, I couldn’t be with anyone, right?”

“But you love Michael.” Lindsey said softly, standing up straight. “And he loves you.” She pushed her hair of her face, and waited for Brian to turn around. “So who is it?”

“Who’s who?” Brian looked confused. Lindsey gave him a long look. Brian glanced down at his hands. “No one. He’s no one. Just… a momentarily lapse in concentration.” He looked up at her, shaking his head again. “I’m a fucking faggot Lindsey. I fuck, and I’ll keep fucking till the day I die, because that’s what I am, a fucking cocksucking arse packing faggot. Where are the marriage bells there, Linds? Where the hell is there love?”

“God, Brian,” Lindsey snapped, then her voice softening. It was always like this with him. Once again she cursed his parents, cursed Jack Kinney in his grave and Joan in her fucking church. “When are you going to stop this? You’re a faggot? Guess what? So is Michael, and so is Emmett, so is Ted, and so am I. And I still want it all. Being a faggot doesn’t make you any less human Brian, you of all people should know that.”

“I know that.” He said almost as an apology, leaning on the kitchen table. Lindsey picked up her son and hefted him in her arms, pulling on his warmth for comfort.

“Then stop using it as a fucking excuse.” Brian took in a breath, pushing his hair off his face. He looked up at her, that perfect domestic vision, this woman who’d walked into his life and somehow found a place in it. Hadn’t they all done that somewhere along the line, these people he could no more get rid of then he could bulldoze the dinner or shut down Babylon. Michael, Lindsey, Gus, now Justin? They were important; each a landmark in the city of Brian Kinney, and no drinking or drugs could change that.

“Am I capable of love Lindsey?” He whispered, staring at the grooves in the table top.

“Of course.” She answerer immediately, almost passionately.

“Am I? How do you know?” He asked with a quick desperation.

“Brian, how can you ask that?” She walked over to him, and touched him on the arm. She passed him Gus, and stroking her sons head, she looked up at Brian. “I would never have given my son a father who couldn’t love.”

Brian sat on Lindsey and Melanie’s porch, and rolled a cigarette. The sun was going down now; it would be dark by the time he drove home. Michael would be starting to cook the dinner. If he were cooking a roast, it would already have been in the oven for some time. Soon, he’d call Brian’s cell and when he found that was turned off, he’d call the Linds’ phone.

The paper crackled, and Brian had to hold the flame long over the cigarette to get it alight. He felt the first drag, dry and crackling against his throat. He coughed, and spat on the grass. His fingers fiddled with the paper.

Enough was enough.

These people, like Lindsey, like Michael, like Gus, where well… he didn’t fucking deserve them. He knew it, he felt it every time he was with them. And he couldn’t squander such a gift. He’d stop fucking the boy, that much was obvious, and he’d… At that his mind went blank.

All he knew was that it had to work with Michael. It had to. He’d make it.

It could never be over.

Justin pressed his palms into his eye sockets. He leaned forward on his knees, the completeness of his misery overwhelming for a moment, sobs slowly starting to escape him again. He pushed his hands through his hair, trying to stop this, trying to think logically.

It was only a kiss.

But it made it so much worse.

To kiss him, and to be kissed by him, to be kissed as though kissing him, Justin Taylor, was the greatest need Brian had ever had. Whatever had been consented on Brian’s side in that moment had been nothing to the complete and utter surrender in Justin.

He wanted him so badly that it hurt. He wanted Brian to need him, to crave him, to fucking love him. That was why he fucking wept into his hands, clenching his fists, and hissing and gasping. Because he knew how stupid that was. How stupid he was being.

He was just a convenient fuck. The flavor of the goddamn week.

And what was worse, was that Brian loved his boyfriend. Justin knew he did, he knew that whatever Brian might say or do, that in some way he would never completely betray Michael. Never love someone else.

“Fuck love, fuck it, fuck it, fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck.” Justin growled it his hands, and then started sobbing again. Soon he would pull himself together, and this sadness would disappear into the recesses of his mind. But right now, he couldn’t stop thinking about kissing Brian. Kissing him. And it had only made Justin want more.

He wanted it all now, and that hurt. He wanted it all, and when he closed his eyes he could imagine it all. Waking up in the morning with Brian beside him, showers together, brushing their teeth, watching TV, all together. Fucking on the kitchen floor, kissing in the hallway, surprise visits, hot sex in public places, painting Brian, fucking Brian against his paintings.

He wanted it all now.

And it hurt.

It hurt because he had nothing to bargain with, no leeway. Brian held all the cards.

It was not a pleasant feeling for Justin, to feel so helpless. So utterly, utterly helpless.

So utterly utterly in love.

“I like this.” Brian ran his finger down the curve of Michael’s back. Michael grinned, staring at Brian, who lay on his side, the sheet barely covering his nakedness. Brian kissed Michael softly, pushing him back on the pillow, bodies taunt against each other. Then they relaxed into the pose. There was no rush. It was Friday afternoon, and they both had left work early, to do this. To fuck in the dying afternoon light, closes strewn across the floor in their frantic transition from the living room to the bedroom. “If I could brand one bit of your body, it would be that.”

“Really? I always thought you were rather attached to my cock,” Michael said cheekily, and kissing Brian again. Brian rolled his eyes, a grin tracing his lips, and he ran his hand through Michael’s clipped hair, settling next to him, his arm behind Michael’s head. Michael turned to look at him, and ran a finger down Brian’s bicep, feeling the formation and the end of the muscle. He traced one spindly vein.

He knew every inch of Brian’s body, and felt for that moment as if he were touching every bit, by touching that vein. And in a way he was. Like the ocean which is still the ocean in Japan and in America, which connects the continents as one fluid mass, the blood in Brian’s vein went everywhere. It pumped through his heart, drove his brain, hardened his cock.

“Hey,” Michael said, tapping Brian on the chin. “Where’d you go?”

“When?” Brian said with a soft intensity. His brown eyes shifted like murky water, and Michael wished that he could see through that water more often. Not just when Brian wanted to show him.

“Last week. You disappeared on me.” Brian nodded, his lips pressing softly against Michael’s fingers which dragged over his lips as an apology. “Don’t leave me like that, alright?” He was half joking, but half serious now. “I love you too damn much Brian. Too damn much.” Brian leant his head against his arm, looking up at Michael from a different angle.

“You do really love me, don’t you?” Brian said, almost with shock.

“Yeah, I do you bastard.” Michael said, and kissed Brian again.

If anyone asked Brian why he was with Michael, out of all the beautiful boys of Babylon, and all the men that drifted in and out of his life, important or unimportant, he would say this (and he would say it with a Brian Kinney smirk) : That when he was fucking Michael he was in another world.

And for Brian Kinney, that was as close a concession as he was likely to make to the truth. That inside Michael, not just when he was fucking him, but all the time, when he thought about him, when he saw him, there was a calm. The simplicity of Michael, who had never changed since Brian met him as that dorky kid so many years ago, who fought his way through life like some comic book character, where black and white were so clear. A world where he was loved and he didn’t need to love in return, though he could. A world where it was quiet, and away from his mother who wouldn’t stop yelling and his father who wouldn’t stop drinking, and his job which was so boring and his life which seemed sometimes so tiring. In Michael, there was another world.

It was a world without complications.

And perhaps without choices.

He had avoided Justin for a full week.

He had avoided him, but hadn’t completely been able to shut him out. He knew he should call, or should do sometime for the kid. He imagined taking the kid out for dinner, to some fancy restaurant where there were people hired to polish the wine glasses, and tell him it was over. That they couldn’t continue, that he loved his boyfriend and that the whole thing had been a sort of momentary madness. He could imagine the boys face, the pouting lips like a child, told it couldn’t have something it wanted, those eyes.. .god how to describe those eyes. They were the kind of eyes that demanded something of you. What Brian was afraid of was what he had already relinquished.

In the fact that he felt obligated at all to the boy.

It felt cruel to leave it. To just break it off without any closure, like a book put down before the end and never retrieved.

He found himself drive past the apartment once. Outside Woody’s once. He even picked up the phone to call him, but then had remembered he didn’t have the little bastard’s number.

So he left it.

But he toyed with the idea, of how to tell the boy they couldn’t be together anymore.

Justin stirred in the bed next to him, and Brian glanced over his shoulder at his sleeping form.

Alright, so he hadn’t exactly told him.

It’s just, that it had seemed somehow right and logical at the time, to come over and tell the boy to his face.

It was that damn model in that Bendons advertising campaign that did it. This beautiful blonde with longish ice blonde hair, and big blue eyes that looked damn like a young version of Matt Dameon, except cuter. And spoke, and acted just like goddamn Justin.

If the stupid model hadn’t been so straight that Brian wondered how he tied his shoelaces, this might not have happened. He would have just been able to fuck the stupid little blonde idiot (Craig? Charlie? Bradley?), and forgotten about the whole thing. But he hadn’t been able to, nor had he been able to take his eyes off the sight of this model without his shirt on.

He had looked so like Justin. It was remarkable.

It was hot in Justin’s bedroom. So hot that Brian could feel the sheet sticking to the sweat on his back, and that his hair felt damp on his forehead. For a second, it reminded him of the dance floor of Babylon, and the pulsing music for a moment seemed to fill his ears. He dug his chin into the pillow more firmly.

This would be the last time he came here.

All the plans, all the words he had thought up all week of how to get Justin the hell out of his life, seemed to fade when the door had swung open. And Brian had kissed him, kissed him again. To prove that he could. To prove that he was still young and hot. To prove that he had no master. Hell, just to prove something

And because he wanted to.

Brian had all his life succumbed to the more hedonistic pleasures. Or to phrase it another way, the fight and the fuck.

Brian examined his fingernails, refusing to turn around and look at Justin. Who he knew was watching him. Finally he relented. He rolled over onto his back, and stared at the ceiling.

“How do you afford this place?” He asked suddenly. He propped himself up on his elbows. Justin, back against the wall, shrugged. He too looked distinctly hot, his cheeks flushed, his blonde hair thick and heavy.

“My parents pay. Well, more accurately my mum,” He paused, waiting to see if Brian was even listening before plowing on. “My dad’s pretty homophobic, and when I came out, he pretty much disowned me. This was the compromise.” He saw Brian’s disgusted look.

“Fucking breeders.” Brian murmured.

“You don’t understand.” Justin shifted uncomfortably. “I’ve got a younger sister. If I’d stayed, my family would have fallen apart. So, they pay the rent, and I live out my disgusting lifestyle away from prying eyes.” He nudged Brian with his foot as example A. Brian fell back, and pursed his lips at the ceiling.

“I never told my dad.”

“Never told him what?” Justin said confused.

“That I was gay.” Brian said as though Justin was an idiot.

“No shit, really?” Justin leant forward. “I couldn’t not tell my parents. It like…” He started but Brian cut him off.

“The only thing on you tongue, so that you couldn’t say anything else, couldn’t even hold a conversation because when ever you were with them it was on your mind, this big dirty lie that killed every other thought?” Brian said quickly and then grinned falsely at Justin. “I know.” God did he know. He’d been feeling it with Michael all week. He wanted to tell Michael everything, so that Michael could tell him it wasn’t betrayal.

But it was.

“You think you know everything don’t you?” Justin said, pushing himself out of bed. Brian sat up.

“Huh?” He said it response to the boy’s obvious anger. Justin stopped at the door and spun around.

“You think I’m just some dumb kid who you can fuck, who will never catch on. Well guess what, Brian, I’m not. And I know what you’re doing. You’re using me.”

“Did I ever say I was doing anything else?” Brian said softly, his dark eyes calm. Justin pulled a face of disbelieve and shook his head.

“God, but you don’t even know what you’re using me for. You’re using me to break up with Michael.” He said this very slowly, anger swelling on his lips. Brian blinked. It sounded so strange hearing that name come from Justin’s mouth. “I mean, if I actually thought you wanted to be here, wanted to know anything about me… but that’s not the point. I’m not going to be what breaks up your relationship.”

“Good. I’m glad we’ve got that sorted.” Brian said, and beckoned to Justin. Justin stood, arms crossed, a glory in his nakedness. “Now are you going to fucking get back into bed?” Justin’s face was stripped momentarily of all his boundaries, and that naked longing sent a shudder down Brian’s back. Brian licked his lips, and beckoned again.

Justin slid back under the sheets without another noise.

“And for my darling in red,” Michael sang, passing Brian his drink. Brian took a sip and grimaced. That first sip of alcohol was never nice, under no circumstances he always found. But maybe that was only with spirits. His thumbed the ecstasy in his left pocket thoughtfully. If he dropped half a tablet now, and then a full tablet in just over an hour, he could be pretty fucked if Cameron’s tablets were good.

Which they might not be.

Fuck it. Tonight he didn’t care.

“So, who are fucking tonight?” Michael whispered, toying with his straw. Brian scanned the dance floor with an apparent lack of lust. He dropped his eyes. Michael pulled a face and gave him a concerned look. Brian sighed.

“What?” He snapped. “I’m just not in the mood Mikey.”

“That’s a first. Usually I have to fight you to spend five minutes with me.” Michael said and then, as an after thought, gave Brian a kiss on the cheek. Brian acknowledged the gesture with a small forced grin. “What is up with you? You’ve been really low all week.”

“I know. I know. I just,” He turned to Michael, trying to phrase the words. “Do you…”

“What?” Michael said softly, rubbing Brian’s arm with concern.

“Are you…?” Fuck, this was so much easier on ecstasy.

“Fucking worried about you? Yes, we all are. We were all commenting on it. Mum’s even biting back the bitchy comments I noticed.”

“We? Been talking about it have you? The whole gang?” Brian said mockingly, but with a hint of steel in his voice. Michael gave him a little shove.

“We’re concerned for you.” Michael put his hand on Brian’s head jokingly. “Are you sure you’re not sick? I’ve barely heard an innuendo from you all week.”

“I’m fine.” Brian said grimly, turning again to the dance floor. “I’m always fine.”

In bed again.

The sheets were pushed back to the edge, and the bed looked vast. And vastly empty.

“What are you doing?” Brian said. He didn’t even have to look at Michael, who was leaning against the wardrobe, arms crossed. Brian unbuttoned his shirt, his feet flat on the floor, the bed soft and giving beneath him.

“Waiting.”

“For what.” Brian said with a sneer, and then stopped himself. This was not a night to fight. The air was hot, and it made him unkind. And horny. His dearest wish was to sink into Michael, and absolve himself in this ritual of the flesh. But first there would be questions, a sermon, and a confession. Brian hung his head.

He heard Michael behind him, the softness in Michael that had changed the hardness of that word, waiting. The love in that voice. He felt the love as instinctually as he predicted the hand that rested now on one shoulder, the chin that rested on the other.

“For you. To tell me what you want to tell me.”

“What you want to hear.” Brian said softly, the sarcasm not quite leaving the words. They were harsh, even in their quietness.

“No.” A kiss on the cheek. “For what you have to tell me.” And with that Michael sat back, his knees bent under him, waiting, staring at the creases on Brian’s back.

“I don’t have anything to say.” Brian said almost angrily, and pulled off his shirt. He stood up, rejecting the bed, rejecting the soft forgiveness of Michael. He sprung around, glaring at him. “You want a confession? Fuck you. That’s my confession.”

“What are you guilty for?” Michael said suddenly, his eyes sharpening. Brian pulled off his shoe.

“Nothing,” He growled, leaning on the bed for support. But it gave way beneath him, and he nearly fell.

“What are you guilty for?” Michael repeated, faster now. “Brian. Tell me.”

“Nothing.”

“Stop lying to me.” He said through ground teeth. “Stop treating me like a child.”

“Then stop acting like one.” Brian went to the bathroom and spat in the basin.

“Why are we always fighting?” Michael called out.

“Because you won’t stop pushing.” Brian said angrily, coming back into the room. He was just in his pants now, his belt undone. He through a hand out to each side. “What do you want from me Michael?”

“I want you to stop calling me Michael. I want you to get into bed and talk to me. I want you to tell me what’s wrong, and maybe for once let me try and fix it. Then I want you to fuck me. Is that too much?” He said, their eyes locked.

“I’ve got nothing to say.” Brian repeated.

“Then fuck me.”

“I know every bit of you.” Michael murmured, his hands meshed in Brian’s. “I don’t want to forget, though. What you look like now. What you looked like then. I get to watch this body change.”

“And grow old and ugly.” Brian joked. Michael half smiled, pressing his lips against Brian’s experimentally.

“You do love me don’t you?” Michael asked it much as Brian had just days before. Brian sighed, and rolled over. Michael sat up, looking over Brian’s turned back to his face.

“Of course I do.” Brian said after a moment.

“Sometimes I feel like I’m in bed with Mr Scrouge, I have to fight to make you part with your love.” Michael said sadly, his tone half light, but cutting all the same. Brian sat up on the side of the bed, pushing his hands through his hair.

“And sometimes I feel like I’m in bed with a fucked up version of Peter Pan, who won’t grow up and won’t stop demanding, day in, day fucking out.” Brian spat. He got up, and pulled out a cigarette pack out of the draw. He lit one and stood by the window, his profile cruel against the lights of the city. Michael pulled the sheets over his knees, and leant forward through them.

“That’s the nastiest thing you’ve ever said to me.” He said quietly. Brian looked up, and he licked his lips reproachfully. But the words didn’t come.

“But not the nastiest thing I’ve done.” There was no innuendo to it, no Brian Kinney-ism. Just a plain comment, said in the early hours of the morning.

“No, no indeed.” Michael leant his head on his elbow. “I’m being unfair to you.” Brian chuckled and looked down at the ground.

“How are you being unfair?” Brian said, his emphasis on the you. “I’m the prick here remember?”

“I don’t know. But I feel like I am.” Michael sighed. “Are you sorry?”

“About what?” Brian said roughly.

“About everything. About choosing me.” Michael said it, and Brian knew now why there were so many questions. What he had let slip the other day hadn’t disappeared with a sorry.

“No. No, never that.” He glanced at his hands again. “I’m going to go get a paper.”

“Alright.” Michael said softly, letting go, watching Brian dress. As he was ready to leave, Brian stopped in the door way, and knocking his palm against it once or twice, he paused.

“I’m sorry.” He looked up, at Michael, his eyes blissfully hidden by shadows.

“For what?” Michael asked, trying to lighten the mood but his smile failing on his lips.

“I’m sorry for all sorts of things.” Brian said with a sad shake of the head, and left.

It was getting light outside. Brian lit another cigarette, his perpetual addiction, and pulled out his mobile. He scrolled through the names, and sighed even as he hit the green button.

Justin jerked awake, his head spinning. He pushed Daniel’s arm off him, and hopped out of bed, searching for the phone. What the fuck had he been doing last night? He remembered going out with the boys, and drinking a lot. Fuck, he had defiantly drunk a lot. They had been dancing in a club, and then they were on some friend of a friends roof, drinking and singing.

And he had ended up coming home with Daniel and getting fucked senseless. Literally. Again. It happened, what, once every month or so. Sometimes they’d fuck, or pash at a party, and that was it. For Justin anyway.

He knew he was being a little bit cruel, a little bit selfish every time he fucked Daniel. He knew it wasn’t just a fuck for Daniel, but sometimes, he couldn’t seem to care.

And the fucking phone wouldn’t stop ringing. Daniel covered his head with a pillow while Justin searched through the pockets of his coats. Fuck it was in his jeans. He pulled it out, and standing, one hand on the top of his head, he answered.

“Hi Brian. What’s up?” Daniel’s head jerked off the pillow, and he craned his neck around to watch Justin. Justin raised one finger to his lips violently, and bit his lip.

“We’ve got to talk. Today.”

“Today?”

“What are you doing right now?”

“Nothing. Nothing. Do you want to come round?”

“No. Do you know Baltinos? It’s a coffee shop just a block from Liberty Avenue.”

“Yeah.”

“Meet me there.”

“When?”

“Now.”

Brian had already ordered and drunk his first coffee by the time Justin got there. He had the paper spread out in front of him. Justin pulled of his gloves and tossed them down on the table to announce his presence.

“What’s up?”

“Nothing.” Justin gave a disbelieving look and sat down opposite Brian. Brian finished the last line of the article he was reading, and then put away the paper. He ordered another coffee.

“I have an issue.”

“An issue that is so pressing that it has to be explored at seven in the morning?” Justin said with a dry grin. Brian ignored this.

“I don’t want to give you the wrong impression of who I am. Of what this is.”

“Alright.”

“This is, and this is all it can be, a convenient fuck,” Brian smiled at the waitress, barely pausing. “An enjoyable fuck, otherwise I wouldn’t bother. But what happens between you and me in the bedroom cannot affect the world outside it.”

“Alright.” Justin was staring at the table, but he was listening. What Brian was saying was logical, hell it was even reasonable. Yet Brian didn’t understand in the few weeks Justin had been with him, Justin’s entire world had shrunk to the size of that bedroom. To that bed. To that body.

“Why me?” Justin said after a moment.

“Because you were there. And because I wanted you. You’re a beautiful creature Justin, don’t let...” What? The world change you like it inevitably would? Don’t let me fuck up your perfect, brittle innocence? Don’t let anything happen to you? “Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.” Brian said, and then shook his head breaking off that tangent, but his tone had the same seriousness he had given the rest of the conversation. Justin smiled, briefly, his teeth flashing for a moment.

“That’s the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me.”

Nicer then I love you? Brian wanted to ask, but couldn’t. That was an issue between him and Michael, not here, at this table, where the day was still early. He opened the paper again, and Justin took a sip of his coffee. And they sat in silence, a silence that was unaffected by the unspoken words, just silence, bearable because there was two of them in it.

“Michael and I would like to thank you for coming,” Brian said, standing up, raising his glass of red wine. “This is our fifth year in the loft, and though I’m not in favor of big deals, Michael is,” He looked down affectionately at Michael, who beamed up at him. “And so, I want to say thank you for coming, for eating Michael’s dreadful cooking and for drinking all my wine you cheap bastards.” He said with a charming smile, and gave Michael a ‘What?’ look when he received a sharp shove.

“Here, here.” Emmett said, clinking his glass with Ted and then Deb’s. Brian raised his glass to Deb, giving her a long look before drinking. Deb, to her credit, adjusted her wig as though a little uncomfortable.

“And I would like to say a much better speech,” Michael said, pushing Brian into his seat as he himself stood up. “To my friends, in my life, because while there are ups and downs in life, and while we never know what’s coming, I’ve got you guys, and I’ve got my best friend here, to face everything with.” Brian rolled his eyes. “And though he will never admit it, I will. We are both so thankful to have you all in our lives.” Deb and Emmett applauded. Brian finished his wine.

“Oh, and it would have been beautiful if Brian hadn’t rolled his eyes.” Mel chipped in. Brian leant forward and half yelled to her down the table.

“What was that child snatcher?

“Nothing, Brian, nothing at all.” Mel called back, as Lindsey stroked her hand.

“Aw, that’s love for you.” Emmett said still grinning.

“Ah, Michael, I don’t mean to insult your cooking, but what is this capsicum thing stuffed with…”

“Ma, that’s not stuffing, it’s the dish. It’s how its meant to be prepared…”

“Are you all right?” Lindsey said, collapsing next to Brian. Brian rolled his head towards her and gave her the thumbs up.

“I’m just peachy. How about you?” He said sarcastically.

“Brian…” She started in a low voice, but Brian was having none off it. He leapt over the back of the couch, and pulled Michael out of conversation with Ted and Deb, and made him dance with him. Their foreheads close together, Michael grinning, his hands moving between them, as Brian put one of his hands on each of Michael’s hips. Lindsey allowed Mel to pull her up too, and she tried to watch Brian between the dancing, as Mel spun her in a mock old ballroom style.

She was looking for some sign of the unhappiness she had seen in her kitchen, but all she could see was Brian pulling Michael closer to him, grinning, holding his body with that intensity of lust and passion, the ultimate predator, that oozed out of every pore of Brian.

“Fuck, that was amazing.” Brian pulled out of Michael and collapsed against the pillow. He wiped the sweat off his forehead, and grinned.

“Yeah it was at that.” He sighed, his eyes closing. “Amazing.” He let the word roll around in his mouth. He felt the heat of Michael’s skin, and kissed the top of that black head. He felt, and indeed was, intoxicated. He saw the dance floor of Babylon on the back of his eyelids, Lindsey as she danced with Mel. Emmett’s mouth brushing the edge of Ted’s. Michael dancing, first out there, and then beneath him. His arm around Michael on some dark street, fucking in the backroom of Babylon, kissing Michael on the steps downstairs as the others drove off, his shoulder connecting with some one elses and that retreating blonde head, Justin calling him amazing, Brian’s rude reminder of that in Woodies. You said I was amazing.

“Amazing.” He repeated, his eyes flicking open.

“Yeah.”

“Justin, where are you going?” Brian murmured into the pillow. Justin jumped, as though he had been caught in some grievous act. Brian’s eyes flickered open and he gave the boy a dubious, but sleepy, look. Justin gave an apologetic smile.

“It’s been two hours, and I’m still can’t sleep.” He whispered. Brian groaned, and moved deeper into the blankets.

“Try harder.” He growled. Justin lingered for a moment, and then quietly fled the bedroom, slipping through the door and closing it nearly soundlessly behind him. He stood in the lounge, waiting, unsure of what to do. Then he went into the kitchen, rubbing the back of his neck, clicking the jug on to boil the water.

He poured himself a cup of tea, and glanced out the window. It was still dark, only about two thirty in the morning. Brian would have to leave by four, to be back for curfew. He knew that he should relish these moments with Brian in his bed, but he had found himself too restless.

He pulled out his art books from under the coffee table and with his knees bent, made himself comfortable on the couch and started to draw. He took a sip of his tea, feeling the hot water burn the skin on his tongue.

He barely shifted when Brian stumbled out of the bedroom, wearing only Justin’s grey trackies, and collapsed on the end of the sofa beside him. Brian slumped down, getting himself comfortable before he spoke.

“I can’t sleep either.” Justin murmured an agreement, still sketching, biting the bottom of his lip in concentration. Brian stared into space. He said eventually. “I feel a bit lost Justin.”

“What do you mean?” Justin murmured, tapping the end on his pencil on the page, trying not to sound too interested. Not wanting to break the mood.

“Just what I said,” He paused and looked over at the blonde with dull clarity. “Forget it.” His eyes cast around the room, and then at the boy again. “Have you drawn me?” He asked quietly.

“No,” Justin cast his eyes to his paper, where the sketch of Brian’s profile had begun.

“Do you want to?”

“Yes.” Justin whispered. He raised his eyes slowly, caught again by the intensity of Brian’s stare. Brian sighed, and looked away.

“I don’t know anything about you, do I? Not really.”

“I’d say we know a bit about each other.” Justin murmured.

“I know your name, age and bloody rank. I know your address and where you go to university. I know your mothers name, though I’ve forgotten it. I know your kid sisters name is Molly. I know you fuck Daniel. Is that all there is to you?” Brian said quietly. Justin looked up perplexed.

“Do you really want to know anything else?”

“Is that all there is to you? This limited, constricting view.” Brian repeated sternly.

“No,” Justin said angrily. “Of course not.” Brian nodded, as though proving a point. He let his eyes drift back to the ceiling.

“Sometimes,” Brian paused. Why was he doing this? But he wanted Justin to know. He wanted him to understand. Hell maybe if he could say it out loud, he himself would understand. “That’s what it feels like being with Michael. He knows all that crap, but he doesn’t know me. He knows the details, and thinks therefore he knows me. And he loves that me, the idea of me he has.” Brian said this all with a factual business like manner. Justin’s mouth dropped slightly, he barely caught his own laugh of shock.

“Is it over with him then?” Justin asked curiously. Brian gave him a confused look.

“No.” Brian stood up, and went to the window, pushing at the blinds to check the night outside. He leant against the windowsill, and smiled, pulling out a cigarette. “Do you still think about your ex’s?”

“Yes. Sometimes.”

“Do you love any of them still?”

“Some of them. A little.” Brian dropped his head.

“Your love is a different type of love from Michaels then.” He said quietly.

“How?” Justin shifted, placing the art book on the floor.

“It’s funny though,” Brian said, as though Justin hadn’t asked a question. “You both want it so badly. And from me. Of all people.”

“I never said that.” Justin said quickly. Brian gave him a knowing look. Justin felt like his head was spinning. That entire conversation had gone too fast for him to follow the hidden meanings in it.

“You don’t have to. Come here.” Brian beckoned him. Justin got up, and came to stand in front of Brian. Brian put his hand on the side of Justin’s face, his thumb resting on the top of Justin’s collar bone, his palm flat against the boy’s neck. He ran his lips over the boy’s forehead, and the corners of his eyes, to the corners of his mouth. He kissed him for a moment, chaste, skin on skin then pushed open those lips, and finding a way in. They kissed for not ten seconds, but it was enough to leave Justin breathless. Brian leant his forehead against the shorter blondes, and then pulled him closer, his lips on the top of Justin’s head, as Justin leant against Brian’s chest.

“Why isn’t this enough?” Brian pulled Justin’s chin up. “Huh?” But Justin had no response. “I never should have let it get this far. How many times has it been?”

“Twenty two.” Justin said softly, a grin forming on his lips. Brian kissed him hurriedly, as though to kiss away that smile. Then Justin sobered. “What would you say, to Michael, if you could?” Brian looked at Justin, his eyes openly troubled.

“That you are wonderful, and whenever I am with you, I am filled with wonder.” He said it, his thumb stroking the side of Justin’s face almost violently. Justin shuddered slightly at the words. Brian frowned, and turned, so that Justin was standing behind him, only by an inch or so. “And what would you say to me, if you could?” He asked. Justin leant his chin on Brian’s shoulder, staring out the open blinds with him at the dull little courtyard below.

“Hello stranger.” He murmured. Brian turned his head, and kissed Justin for a moment.

“Hello stranger.” He whispered back. He turned, and wrapped his arms around Justin’s waist. He kissed the boy, but with more urgency now. The night was growing old. He pushed his hand under the white t-shirt, and felt for that delightful nipple ring. His other had curved around Justin’s shoulder blade. God, kissing him was a blissful sin. He started to kiss the boys neck, hard and long enough to leave a hickey. Then he pushed Justin back, one careful step after another, never breaking contact, until they reached the couch. Justin waited, like a dutiful schoolboy, as Brian pushed Justin’s pants down to the floor, and then dropped his own. Justin wrapped an arm around Brian’s neck, and pulled him into another kiss, as Brian reached for the condoms and lube that Justin thoughtfully kept under the sofa. He pushed Justin down on the sofa, and stood over him for a moment, absorbing the beauty of that ivory body.

He pushed Justin’s legs over his shoulders, a ungentle motion, but necessary. He stroked Justin’s thigh for a moment before entering, a gasp escaping both men, and a small shot of pain flaring in Justin’s eyes. Brian leant forward, deepening the thrust, and kissed Justin on the lips, who for a second was frozen, before him melted into the embrace. Then the motion overtook them both, and Brian moved back, in, out, in out, until all Justin could hear was the sound of his own breathe mixed with Brian’s.

Justin came only a second before Brian, his own cum un-captured and smeared between them, as Brian collapsed on him a second later, a sigh escaping both lips. Justin’s eyelids felt heavy, and he smiled indulgently as Brian kissed him one more time, whispering against his lips.

“Who’s little boy are you?”

They took a shower together, the two of them crapped under Justin’s small shower head. Brian lathered soap on Justin’s back, and ran his hands over his own face, apparently relishing the water. Justin closed his eyes, memorizing this moment. Where there was nothing but the water and the heat of Brian’s body. He wanted to say something, anything, to mark this point, to make Brian mark it to.

My world is reduced to your body, he wanted to say, and if I lose you, I’ll lose my world.

Even being with Brian sometimes caused Justin to feel this unbearable sadness that gripped at him.

“You have to go home soon.” He said, glancing over his shoulder, but seeing only Brian’s own shoulder. Brian pressed his face against Justin’s wet hair.

“I know.”

Sometimes it felt like there was a third person in bed with them for Justin. Like he was taking Michael to be with him as much as he was taking Brian. Because Michael was never far from the surface, always able to be conjured at a moments notice. Sometimes Justin felt he knew Michael better then he knew Brian.

More intimately.

“That one goes on the fourth shelf.” Michael called out, pointed to the shelf that housed the newest volumes of Spiderman. He glanced around the comic book store, and smiled to himself. He glanced up as the bell over the door clanged, and he saw a pretty blonde walk in.

“Hi,” Michael jumped, and looked up again with a start. The blonde was leaning on his counter, gum in mouth, a satchel slung over one shoulder.

“Hi. Can I help you?” Michael said almost rudely. He suddenly had an intuitional idea that he’d met this kid before and hadn’t liked him much.

“Maybe.” The blonde was chewing with his mouth open. Michael nearly ground his teeth, but was also memorized. The boy was beautiful, and though he obviously knew it, it did not detract from the fact. “I’m looking for a present. For a guy about your age.”

“Does he have any preference in comics?” Michael said, pulling over his computer screen and opening the database.

“Not really.” Justin said indifferently, and then catching Michael’s affronted look, added. “You know, he likes it all. A bit of this and that. I’m not really sure.”

“So are you looking for a comic book exactly, or some collectors item?”

“Maybe I’m not looking for a comic book. Maybe I’m just looking for an excuse to talk to you.” Justin lowered his eyes, and bent forward on the counter. Michael let out a soft shocked exclamation. Justin glanced up through his lashes. Michael rubbed his hand over his forehead.

“I’m flattered…”

“But you have a boyfriend?”

“Yes. We’ve been together nine years.”

“Does it ever get boring, fucking the same person?” Justin said it lowly as though he was indifferent, his fingers playing with his ring, but he looked up suddenly, his eyes like blue crystal.

“That’s not really…”

“My business? It is if I want to fuck you. And you want to fuck someone new. Someone different. Someone young.” Justin said each word slowly, but it was the word young that really brought it home. Because he was that. He was the embodiment of youth. Of sex. Of the anonymous stranger you wish you had fucked and forever regret not reaching out a touching that incandescent skin.

Unless you’re Brian Kinney.

“I’m sorry I can’t.” Michael said, his grin not fading. Justin pushed himself off the counter. He glanced around the store, almost dismissively, as though checking for other candidates.

“That’s alright. Worth a shot,” He gave Michael a winning smile. “What’s your boyfriend’s name anyway?” Michael gave a little shrug.

“Brian,”

“I’ve been cheating on Michael.” Brian lent forward on the park bench, his elbows on his knees, his hands locked together. Lindsey ran her hand through her blonde hair, her arm resting on the back of the bench. A couple walked past them, dressed in joggers outfits. The man had a sweat patch on his back, and Brian squinted his eyes in disgust.

“What do you mean?” Lindsey said carefully. Brian growled.

“I mean I’ve been seeing and fucking someone else Lindsey. What the fuck do you think I mean?” He glanced over at her, but his eyes were calm though his words were heated. Lindsey thumbed her own ringed finger and sighed.

“What I mean is, haven’t you always sort of been cheating on Michael.”

“Not like this. Not with feelings involved.” Brian said soberly. He heard Lindsey’s intake of breathe and corrected himself. “Not mine. His.”

“Who is he?”

“He’s no-one. He’s just,” Brian ran his hands through his own hair and shook his head. He pulled out a cigarette. Goddamn it, he seemed to be chain smoking these days. “He’s just a kid really.”

“How old is he?”

“Nine-teen or something.” Lindsey drew in a breath through her teeth, and grimaced.

“That’s pretty young Brian.”

“Does it matter how fucking young he is?” Brian snapped, lighting his cigarette, bending his head towards the flame, feeling it against the skin on his thumb. He shook the lighter in the cool Pittsburg air after, letting it cool before he shoved it back in his pocket. He took a drag.

“Is he… attractive?” Lindsey said after a moment. Brian gave her a funny look and then shook his head again, a smile on his lips.

“Well he’s definitely not ugly.”

“Does he know about Michael?”

“Yes.” Brian dipped his head again, his throat filled with smoke. “I just can’t seem to end in Linds. He’s just so,” He looked to Lindsey for help, but she had none. Brian shook his head again. “Convenient.”

“And he loves you?”

“Maybe.”

“Who wouldn’t love you, Brian?” Lindsey said, ruffling his hair. This wasn’t the time to condemn or chastise him. He was torn up enough, by his own beatings. “I mean, wasn’t that the reason you didn’t double fuck anyway? So that they wouldn’t have time to fall in love with you?” Brian looked up at her, his expression completely serious, scanning hers. She didn’t say anything else, just let him look for some clue of what to do in her face. She wondered what he saw.

“Not smart Justin. Not fucking smart.” Brian spat. Justin fell on the bed, leaning his forehead against the mattress. He could feel his pulse running from his heart to his wrist and back again in the flash of a second. He had opened a window moments earlier, letting out the thickly smell of marijuana and the air seemed to surround him, running lightly over his skin. He opened his eyes and looked up at Brian, a grin forming on his lips.

“You’re fucked.” Brian said with a shake of his head. “Do you understand what you’ve fucking done?” He yelled, leaning forward, trying to get a reaction. Justin sighed as he leaned on the mattress, his hands going to his temple and running lightly over his face. He couldn’t stop grinning. And Brian was yelling.

“He didn’t know it was me.”

“This isn’t a game Justin. This is my fucking life.”

“Yes, your fucking life.” Justin grinned again, and giggled. He closed his eyes. “That’s what I am. Your fucking, cuming, kissing, life” He trailed off, and after a moment rolled his head to the side, to stare at Brian. Brian was rolling a cigarette, his fingers fumbling with anger. Justin licked his lips.

“You make it less possible for me to see you, do you understand?”

“Do I understand, fuck I understand.” Justin murmured, closing his eyes again, that smile forming again. “You tell me again and again, and yet it still doesn’t change anything and you still know, you know. You do know don’t you?”

“What?” Brian sat on the edge of the bed, slightly defeated. His back to the boy, he lit up, tilting his head back as he took a drag.

“Know that I love you.” Justin murmured, rolling onto his back, his hand resting just on the waist band of his pants, the other on his naked chest. He sighed happily. Brian looked round at him, his eyes troubled. Then he turned back, staring at the floor for a minute.

“Love is bullshit.” Brian said defensively. Justin giggled again.

“And I do love you. I love all the time, but with you, I can’t control it. I can’t stop it. I love you, and you know what I hate as much as I love you?”

“What?” Brian asked resignedly. He deserved this. He deserved to feel this guilty. Not just betraying Michael, but to fuck up Justin’s life too.

“I hate the idea of you going home to him. After. Of him being your home. I don’t care about the fucking, well, I do,” He corrected himself, his face almost drained of expression now, as moving it was too much effort. “But I hate the idea of the two of you brushing your teeth, and eating dinner, and watching movies.”

“What, functioning as normal humans?”

“Of you two together. Sometimes I can’t get the image of it out of my mind.”

“Justin,” Brian said quietly, and Justin managed to open an eye. “You fucking go near Michael again and I’ll kill you.” Then he beckoned, and grinning, Justin went to his hand, which cupped around his neck, and pulled him into a vicious kiss. And it was vicious, as though Brian was trying to purge those words from Justin.

“Well, there’s a familiar blonde head.” Emmett murmured, stirring his drink. Ted looked around confused, and he had to have Justin pointed out to him. Justin was by the bar, ordering a drink, but glancing over his shoulder at the dance floor of Babylon. He turned back to Emmett, confused.

“Where have we seen him before?” Ted said, pulling a face, checking out Justin’s ass to see if that jolted his memory.

“Well, let’s just say that he certainly seems to be hanging around a certain person a lot.” Emmett made a mock whisper. “A certain Brian Kinney.” He took another sip of his vodka and raspberry. Ted chortled.

“Has Brian got himself a stalker then? Wouldn’t be the first. Lucky bastard.” He added regretfully, still thinking of Justin’s ass.

“I wouldn’t say stalker,” Emmett said, and tilted his head. At that moment, Brian sidled up to the bar, right next to Justin, as though by accident. His hand brushed Justin’s hip, and the blonde gave him a small smile, his head tilting towards Brian. Even though Brian nonchalantly ordered a drink, and glanced back over at the dance floor, the whole exchange made Emmett frown.

“What?” Ted murmured. “He’s cute. And definitely Brian’s type. I’m surprised he hasn’t already had him.” Ted tilted his head. “Isn’t he the bartender from woodies?”

“Teddie,” Emmett said quickly, ignoring the question. “When was the last time we came here without Michael?”

“Last Thursday.”

“And before that?”

“On the Saturday. Oh, and the Friday. Michael was feeling unwell.” Like the good little accountant, Ted had an impeccable memory. “Why?”

“Because I swear I’ve seen Brian talking to that blonde a number of times at Babylon, and…” Emmett trailed off, as Brian leant in, now in sort of conversation with Justin, and Justin gave Brian a little playful shove with his hip. From this angle, they could just see Brian’s profile as he smiled, and dipped his head.

Ted stepped in front of Emmett.

“Em, what are you thinking?” Emmett craned his head, to try and see around Ted. “Em! Brian already fucks around on Michael, do you really think he’d start an, I don’t even know what it’s called in the gay world,” He turned his head, to look at the pair of them one more time. Brian gave a little shrug, and finished his drink, leaving Justin at the bar. Justin pouted, and ordered another drink, glancing over his shoulder longingly at the dance floor.

“An affair?”

“Em! No. That’s ridiculous!”

“Is it? Teddie? How do we know? How would anyone know if Brian was, well, not just fucking strangers? I’m sure no one keeps a record of each and every fuck.” Emmett hissed. Ted grabbed his shoulders and shook him softly.

“Snap out of it Nancy Drew. This is Brian Kinney we’re talking about.” He gave Emmett a knowing look. “You know, the man who can’t commit to favorite brand of cereal, and barely a relationship with his best friend of nine years. Who has trouble saying the word relationship, and not just when he’s drunk.” Emmett pulled a face. Ted had a point. “And secondly, Brian and Michael have been together nine years.” Ted’s voice became a little sad at this point, and Emmett suddenly was wishing he hadn’t brought it up. Ted really needed to get over this crush on Michael, but he wasn’t going to be the one to tell him to do it. “Let’s give them some credit, please.”

“Alright, alright. I’m just saying, that blondes becoming a regular part of our nights out.”

“And so is you bad taste in clothes. Where in the hell did you get that shirt?”

Fuck Brian. Justin downed the drink, and scowled to himself. He couldn’t goddamn dance if he wanted to, and he’d dance with Brian too before the night was out. Who would see? Who cared? They were just another pair of half naked bodies in the darkness.

Even if he had to gyrate with half the guys, fuck it, all the guys in the goddamn place, he’d dance with Brian.

No one was watching.

He pushed himself off the bar.

Towards Brian.

“Fuck.” Brian swore. His phone was ringing. He pushed Justin off him, and on seeing the number, started doing up his pants. Justin shifted, and sat up in the car. He pulled out a cigarette and lit it, winding down the window and letting the warm day in. Brian scowled as the sounds of the city also crept in. He snatched the cigarette of Justin and took a drag before answering. “Lindsey, what’s up?” Brian put a hand on his forehead. Justin tried to look uninterested in the going’s on.

“Really, I can’t Lindsey.” Brian murmured looked strained. “No, its not, I know, its just I’m sort of in the middle of something. I know. I know its important to you and Mel. I know. Angus is important to me… No, I meant that. Fuck, Lindsey, it’s just… No, I’m not at home. I’m, fuck, I’m out alright. No, look, fucking hell Lindsey, Alright. Alright. I’ll be over in half an hour. That’s the best I can do. Fine. Fucking hell. I’ll be there in five. Yeah, yeah.” He clicked the phone shut. “Fuck.”

“What?” Justin said, tossing the cigarette out the window. “What’s up? Who’s Lindsey?” And who’s Angus? He wanted to ask but didn’t. Brian hit the steering wheel.

“Fuck. You have to get out.”

“What?” Justin asked, bewildered and sort of angry. “Why?”

“Because… fuck I got to go do something.”

“Where the hell am I meant to go?” Justin said quickly. “How the hell am I meant to get home? I don’t even know where we are.”

“Justin, seriously, just…” Brian leant across and pushed open the door. “Go, get the fuck out.” He yelled. Justin didn’t move, and watched Brian seethe. Brian stared at the window screen, and finally snarled. “Alright. You stay in the goddamn car.”

Justin was surprised when they pulled up outside this house which must have been placed smack in the middle of suburbia. He made to light another cigarette, but Brian snatched the lighter out of his hands, and jammed it in his pocket. Brian got out, and went round to the boot. He came back in about five minutes, and opened the passenger seat. Justin’s face literally dropped at Brian attached a baby seat to the back. Brian pointed a finger at him.

“Just shut up. And don’t get seen.”

Justin watched Brian make his way to the entrance. A blonde woman opened the door. She was pretty; he assumed that quite a few of the male hetero’s would consider her fuckable. She also held a baby under her arm. She gestured to Brian to pick up something in the hall, and while Brian wasn’t looking, she glanced over at the car. Straight at him. Justin could see her face tighten, and she stared at him for a few seconds that seemed like minutes. Justin sank lower in his seat.

So much for not being seen.

“So this is Angus?” Justin asked once Brian had put the kid in the back seat. Brian turned the key, and glancing again at the house, nodded. “And she’s your… sister?” Justin said hopefully. He glanced around at Angus.

“Lindsey is definitely not my sister.” Brian looked slightly displeased at the idea. Justin laughed.

“What?”

“We used to fuck back in college.” Brian said after a moment.

“And she gets to use you as a baby sitting service? Wow, she must have been a pretty good fuck.” Brian shot Justin a dirty look.

“It’s a bit more complicated then that.” He said mildly, and let the subject drop.

“Here you go Gussy, you like that, yeah you do,” Justin murmured, rubbing the infant’s hair as he feed him the bottle. Brian watched the scene with arms folded. Justin looked up warily but then returned his attention to the child, tapping Gus on the nose, and watching the kid laugh.

“You’re good with him.” Brian said after a moment. Justin grinned at Gus at this compliment.

“You hear that?” He said, and then set Gus down on the floor, with the toys Lindsey had packed. He threw his arms out to the side and with a shrug brushed it off. “Well, I’ve got a kid sister.” Brian bent down next to Gus, watching him play.

“Well, I’ve got a kid.” He put his hand on the top of Gus’s head. “He’s mine Justin. He’s me and Lindsey’s baby.” Justin blinked, confused. He sat down on the arm of the couch.

“But what about Michael?”

“And the fact that I’m gay? It seems lesbians also want children.” Brian said with a grin.

“That’s pretty amazing.”

“What is?” Brian said, looking up from Gus.

“Having a kid.” Justin was staring at Gus. “It’s pretty amazing.”

“You fucking like that word don’t you?” Brian said and made his way to the bathroom. He washed his hands, and stared at himself in the mirror for a moment. He tilted his head from side to side, checking his hair line. Checking for grey hairs. As he walked out, Justin’s phone started ringing. Brian picked it up from where it lay on the bed, and yelled out.

“Hey, you want me to answer that?”

“Who is it?” Brian looked at the name. It was just one initial.

“M?”

“Nah, let it ring out.” Justin called back. Brian shrugged and tossed the phone back on the bed. He stood watching it vibrate, and waited for Justin to come.

“Who was that?” He asked when he did.

“Just someone I don’t want to talk to.” Justin said with a slightly worried tone. “Are you angry at me?” He asked, trying to look into Brian’s face.

“You get a lot of calls from people you don’t want to talk to.” Brian said sharply. And it was true. It seemed countless the number of times that they would be in bed, only to have Justin’s phone ring. He rarely ever answered it, usually just hitting the hang up button. Or turning it on silent. Sometimes Brian would lie there after climax, listening to the sound of that phone vibrating.

“Why would I want to talk to anyone else when you’re here?” Justin said sweetly. Brian looked down at him, and put a hand on Justin’s hip.

“Do you have a secret life, Justin Taylor?”

“Yes.” Justin said, with a satisfied look. “You’re it.”

“And your other life? Whose M in it?”

“Someone unimportant.”

“Unimportant?” Brian repeated.

“Unimportant.” Justin confirmed. They were very close to each other now, and Brian couldn’t stop thinking about that interrupted blow job in the car.

“What’s Angus doing?”

“Drawing.” Justin said with a little grin.

“For how long will he be doing that?” Brian asked almost innocently.

“I’d say about a minute.” Justin replied as Brian undid Justin’s pants. Brian started stroking Justin’s cock, and leant over to whisper in Justin’s ear.

“Then I suppose you’ll have to be very very fast.”

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“Michael, we have a guest for the weekend.” Brian said, and passed him Gus.

“Oh, little Angus.” Michael said, smiling at the baby. Gus gurgled. Brian stripped off his coat.

“Lindsey and Melanie are going to this counseling thing, and their sitter fell through.” He said as explanation. He dropped the bag of toys and medical supplies next to the sofa. Michael was barely listening.

“We don’t mind, do we, little Angus?” He said in baby talk. Brian pursed his lips.

“Michael?” Michael looked up.

“What?”

“Just don’t get attached okay?” Brian said, looking down at the bag as though it were a terrible inconvenience. “He’s only my kid in DNA, alright?”

“Brian,” Michael said reproachfully. “I know you and Mel don’t get on, but he’s your…”

“My sonny boy?” Brian asked; the words bitter. “Yeah, I know. We’re not part of his life and he’s sure in hell not going to be part of ours. Alright?”

“Alright. Sheesh.” Michael murmured, holding Gus slightly uncomfortably now. Brian nodded, and went into the bedroom.

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Brian rolled over, and his arm automatically went around Justin’s body. The closeness, the heat of him, made the near waking bearable. Justin could feel that Brian was near waking and shifted slightly.

Just then, his phone began to ring.

Justin leapt out of bed, though the actual physical withdrawal woke Brian more then the sound of the low ringing. Justin grabbed it from the floor, and answered. He crouched by the foot of the bed, as he heard Brian groggily wake up, leaning on his elbows.

“What? What do you want Luke?” There was a long pause. Justin pulled a face, and Brian threw a pillow at him.

“What the hell are you doing?” He said grumpily. Justin closed his eyes.

“Luke I gotta go. No, I don’t want to hear that. Look, I don’t… no. Yes, there is someone here. No, look… No. I gotta go. No I won’t. I can’t see you. I’ve gotta go.” Justin clicked the phone shut, and looked up at Brian.

“An ex?”

“Yeah.” Justin climbed back over the covers. “One of the important ones.”

“I’ve got to get going.”

“Why? I thought you told him you were working late.” Justin said, sitting up.

“I did. But I’m going to go home now.” Brian said in his no argument voice. He pulled on his shirt. Justin paused for a moment, and watched Brian get up, check his hair in the mirror. Justin, still naked, got up too. He stood behind Brian, about a step, and waited. He ran his hand down Brian’s forearm. Brian turned very slowly, and he glanced up and down Justin. His eyes seemed to melt for a moment.

He pushed Justin back on the bed, his thoughts of home banished. He ran a finger down Justin’s chest, and hooked the boy’s legs over his shoulders. He reached for a condom. Fuck everything else, fuck rimming, fuck kissing, he wanted to be buried up to the hilt in Justin again.

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“Just leave me alone.” Justin yelled, storming towards his car.

“Justin, please wait.” Jennifer was running now. The perfect house wife look was in disarray, and she looked on the verge of tears. She grabbed Justin’s arm, and he shook her off so violently she gasped. He turned, almost sorry.

“Please, just go!” He yelled. “Let me go.”

“Justin, wait. Your father didn’t mean it…” She started begging, but Justin cut her off.

“When are you going to understand he does fucking mean it?” Justin yelled. “Huh? He hates his faggit son. He hates me.” Justin’s eyes drained of anger for a second, and his face went curiously blank. Then he put his hands to his face, pushing in on his temples.

“Justin, come back in,” Jennifer said quietly. “Please, we’ll talk this out.”

“I can’t. I just can’t.” Justin opened the car door. “Don’t call me. Just… don’t.” He held out a hand as though blocking her emotions from affecting him, as though blocking her out of his life with his very body.

“Justin.” He slammed the car door, and started the engine. He was crying now. Just like her.

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Brian scratched his chin. He glanced over his shoulder, back to where Em, Michael and Ted were waiting. He was craving badly for a cigarette, and some how another shot of vodka probably wasn’t going to help.

He carried the drinks back carefully.

“I’m going to dance.” The vodka was still burning on his throat, but Brian was wondering if he could find some place out of sight and have a cigarette. Michael was really getting onto him again.

“I’ll come find you once I’ve finished my drink.” Michael said, and they brushed lips. Brian made his way onto the dance floor, his eyes lazily moving from side to side to find a guy, any guy. He found one. He grabbed the man’s belt, and pulled him closer; dancing so close he could nearly lick the sweat of the man’s chest. Hell, if the pill he’d dropped kicked in he might just do it. His forehead against the man’s, his hand pulling at the tight jeans, over that ass, a fumbled groping in time to the music.

He felt the lips against his own, and the tongue pushed into his mouth. He grinned, biting the guys lip momentarily, before kissing him again.

He broke away.

“Fuck.” He murmured, whipping his hand across his mouth. The man gave him a strange look.

“What? Did I bite you?” He said, and Brian blinked rapidly. “Mate are you all right?”

“I need another drink.” He pushed his way through the crowd, back to the bar, taking a route away from where Michael and that were, away from the light. He ran his hand over his forehead, and it was dripping. He ordered a drink, and then, taking a step back and leaning against the wall, lit a cigarette. The world seemed to shudder around him, and he blinked again, dragging heavily on the cigarette. It was just a bad side affect as the pill kicked in. He shook his head from side to side, and then shivered. He took a drag. He grabbed his shot and downed it.

“Fuck.” He hissed again.

“Would you like to?” He heard someone ask.

“Not fucking interested.” He spat. He took another drag, and felt himself calming. Felt the pleasant affects of the drug. His eyes half closed he dragged long and hard on his cigarette. When he opened them, he saw a familiar face. He grinned, and checking both ways for Michael, went to stand behind the blonde.

“The terrible things the youth of today get up to,” He growled in Justin’s ear. Justin looked up startled and then gave Brian a sour look. He licked his wrist, which was covered in salt, and shotted a shot of tequila, his head falling back almost melodramatically. Brian grabbed him, and Justin seemed about to fall over. Justin shot him a black look, and bit down hard on the lemon, grimacing. He raised his eyebrows in thanks to the bartender. “You trying to drink yourself onto the floor literally?” Brian said worriedly, already forgetting his own little dangerous episode moments before. Justin pouted.

“You look like I feel.” Justin grumbled, leaning on the bar and ordering another.

“Then you must feel absolutely fucking amazing.” Brian said cattily, his expression almost angry.

“Haven’t you got your boyfriend to go back to?” Justin said scathingly. Brian pulled a face.

“What the fuck is your issue?” He said angrily. Justin rolled his eyes, and downed another shot. Brian grabbed his hand. “Will you fucking stop drinking and talk to me?” He raised an eyebrow. Justin’s looked up at him, and Brian’s face dropped. The boy was close to tears now, his bottom lip quivering.

“What’s my issue? When the fuck did you ever want to talk about my issues Brian Kinney?” Justin shoved past him, and went out the back door. Brian bit his lip, casting a look around, and made his decision. He followed Justin.

Justin could barely walk straight. He put his hand out on the crumbling brick wall to steady himself. He pushed his other hand through his hair and over his forehead drunkenly. He tried to avoid the eyes of the other men walking past.

“Justin,” Brian said, grabbing his elbow, and yanking him down one of the side alleys. They stumbled along, Justin’s knees buckling, till they were far enough into the shadows. Brian slammed him up against the wall, his face taunt. “Are you alright?”

“No,” Justin said, and he felt his eyes stinging. He in took a sharp breath, and cupped his hands over his noise and mouth, letting them flatten to cover his eyes. Then he pushed them through his hair again. Brian didn’t move. “He called me a faggot. Right to my face. Called me sinful. Sinful?”

“The bastards always have god on their side.” Brian murmured, pulling out a cigarette. He lit it and then passed it to Justin. “So you thought you’d solve you problems with the wonders of tequila?” He said mockingly. Justin took a drag and let it out, tears still wet on his face. Brian took the cigarette, and took another drag before dropping it. He took a step closer to Justin, and placed his hand on Justin’s jaw, the softness of his neck beneath his hand, Brian’s thumb just resting on Justin’s jaw-line. “Do you know what I say? Fuck them. Fuck all of them.”

“It was my dad. It was my fucking dad.” Justin whimpered, and he felt his whole body convulse. Brian put his hand behind Justin’s neck, and pulled him against his body, letting Justin cry on his shoulder. After a moment, Justin calmed, and Brian moved so he could see into the boy’s face.

“My dad used to beat me so bad that sometimes I couldn’t walk straight.” Brian said, his jaw jutting slightly at the memory. “Their just arseholes like everyone else.” Justin’s face seemed to collapse, and he cried again. Brian closed his eyes. He couldn’t bear this. He leant forward and kissed him. He pushed open Justin’s lips, and felt their wetness, from the tears. The kiss tasted of salt and sadness, and Justin’s body shook between them. Brian put a hand on the wall to steady himself, and he kept kissing him, just kissing, while another tear slid down Justin’s face, and skimmed the skin on Brian’s cheek, nestling between the two men’s cheeks.

“Brian?” Someone called. “Brian, are you down there?”

“Fuck,” Brian murmured against Justin’s lips. “Fuck me,” He glanced over. He could see Michael standing in the light of the street, swaying slightly from the alcohol, but scanning the shadows of the alley.

“Brian? Hurry the fuck up. It’s freezing.” Brian automatically started to pull away from Justin, but Justin grabbed his shirt.

“Don’t. Don’t go.” He said quickly. Brian looked torn.

“I have to go.” He murmured. “I have to.” He gave a little shake of the head as though to quell some argument in him that proved otherwise.

“Please.” Justin almost sobbed it. “Please don’t go.” He buried his face in Brian’s shirt. “Please. Please please please please don’t. I can’t do this. I can’t, I just can’t. I can’t breathe, Brian, I can’t.” Brian caught his chin.

“I have to.” He said almost violently, the tenderness from a moment before gone. “I have to.”

“Don’t pick him; please don’t pick him right now. I need, I need,” Justin broke off, and he kissed Brian, kissed him with all the intensity which had been welling up inside him, all the sadness, everything. He put everything into that kiss, everything and anything if only it would keep him. What he needed, he couldn’t even manage to think about. But he knew without this, without Brian, it would be worse. So much worse. He gripped at Brian’s warmth like comfort in a storm. He broke the kiss, and hand on each side of Brian’s face. “Please don’t. I need you. I do. I’m sorry. But I do.”

“Brian!” Michael yelled, and Brian’s head flicked around. Justin grabbed his hand.

“Stay. Please please, please stay.” Justin said but Brian shook him off, almost violently.

“I can’t. I have to go.” He almost growled it. He ran a hand through his hair, and for a second Brian couldn’t work out if he was angry at Michael or Justin. Or at himself, for not being able to do more. Not being able to help, in anyway. There was nothing he could say that would help Justin and he didn’t have any time. He kissed Justin once more, violently and savagely. The boy arched beneath him, gripping him with his hands. Then Brian pushed away so strongly, that he put his hand out on the other wall to stop himself from hitting it, scrapping the soft of his palm. “Are you going to be alright?” He said, not looking at Justin, who had turned his head away.

“Yes,” Justin murmured, defeated.

“Brian?” Michael’s voice sounded closer now, more quizzical.

“Damn this to hell.” Brian growled, and half stumbled on the cobbled pavement, making his way back towards the light, back towards Michael. Justin closed his eyes, listening to Brian’s footsteps fade, his head pulsating. He bent over, his hands on his knees, and threw up. But there was nothing to throw up, he hadn’t eaten, so just liquid came out, the vodka and tequila resurfacing. He wiped his hand across his mouth, his chest feeling exhausted. He turned his head to face the street they had come from, and he could hear the pulse of the music from the club beneath the screaming voices and the sounds of the night.

He walked gingerly back up the alley, his hand on the wall. Then he straightened, his eyes dark, and walked back onto the street. He stood there for a moment, lost, his eyes readjusting.

Out here, there was nothing, just people going home, people just like there is on any other street in the world. And Brian had been sucked up into it, and was gone.

Justin made his way back into the club, his head hung. In the club, there was dancing, and there was music, there was drugs and alcohol and all the pleasures of the flesh to dull the mind. To dull the senses. And to hopefully dull the bitterness in his heart that was doubled now, his fathers rejection made complete by Brian’s walking away.

Brian’s refusal to stay.

“What the fuck were you doing down there?” Michael shoved his chest. “God, fuck.” He ran a hand through his hair. “I thought you were dancing. But no, you slipped off to have a quick fuck. It’s not even twelve. Couldn’t you have waited till I left?”

“When are you going to leave?” Brian snarled, and walked off down the street. He spun around when he realized Michael was not following.

“Aren’t you coming?”

“What about Ted and Emmett?”

“Fuck Ted and Emmett. I want to go home.” Michael glanced once more down the alley, and then hurried after Brian.

“What’s wrong?” He asked, but got no answer.

Brian was suddenly tired. So tired he could barely move. He tossed the keys to Michael and climbed into the passenger seat. He turned to see if he could see that blonde head emerging, but he couldn’t. The street was dark and busy.

“Come on, come on.” Brian muttered, hitting redial again. “Answer your fucking phone.” This was around the twentieth time Brian had called Justin this morning. He ordered another coffee, and gave Deb the quickest of brief’s smiles.

“Looks like someone had a late night.” She murmured.

“Actually it was remarkably early.” Brian growled. “But your son kept me up all night since we fucked till three, thanks for asking.” Deb pulled a face, but seemed remarkably unruffled by this.

“That’s my boy,” She said cheerily, and moved on. Brian shot her back a deathly look.

He threw the phone down on the table with disgust, and wondered if maybe he should go round to the boy’s apartment. God he felt guilty. He never should have left him there. He never should have… hell there were too many things he never should have done to start counting them now.

He looked up as he heard a familiar voice.

“Coffee. And something with bacon. The bacon sandwich? No, um, wait, yeah.” Brian looked up. He couldn’t believe this. There was the little shit, sitting bold as brass and without an apparent care in the world.

With another guy.

Brian got up slowly, as though he didn’t believe what he was seeing.

“Justin?” He said as he approached the table. Justin glanced up with heavy bags under his eyes. He gave Brian a dull look and sighed, glancing down at the table. “Can I talk to you for a minute? Outside?”

“Alright. I’ll be back in a minute, Vince yeah?” Justin said, sliding out of the booth. Brian could feel the anger brewing in him and grabbed the boys arm as they got out of the café, pulling him a bit down the street so they were out of view.

“So what you don’t check you’re fucking phone? I’ve been calling you all morning.” Brian snapped. Justin sighed, and glanced down at the pavement.

“I can’t do this anymore.” He didn’t look up, didn’t want to see Brian’s reaction. “And I know there’s no this, that this is just fucking or whatever. But I can’t do it. I can’t fuck you anymore Brian. I really needed you last night, and you just, you just left me.” It was an accusation, and Brian closed his eyes.

“Well, you certainly found someone else to fill your needs.” Brian said, and hated it. He hated how jealous and petty it made him sound. But he didn’t like the idea of that guy picking Justin up, not in the state he’d been in, and fucking him. Fucking his boy.

“Please don’t do this Brian. Please.” Justin bit his lip, and he was nearly in tears again. “Please just end it, okay? Because I won’t be able to, and I can’t bear it anymore. Can’t bear you going home to him, to fucking him, and kissing him, and I can’t stop myself from wanting you. From imagining us together. From wanting there to be an us. So please, end it. End it with one of us.” He looked up, and stared at Brian’s face. There was still the longing, that glimmer of hope. Brian saw it, he saw it all. “Please.”

And this time, Brian listened to his begging, and he gave in.

He walked away.

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“This is good. Did you try some of this?” Michael gestured at the noodle box he was eating out off. Brian looked up, and then nodded.

“Yeah, that’s the beef. I’m not big on it.”

“Brian, not like meat?” Michael said in mock surprise. He held out a piece to Brian, who swallowed it. “But you’re the meat lover in the house.” Brian rolled his eyes.

“I don’t think I’m the sole person in the house with that trouble.” He said, and gave Michael a quick slap on the bum. Then he relaxed on the bed, taking a sip of his beer.

“It’s Gus’s birthday next month. Have you gotten him a present?” Michael asked rather slyly, taking up another box, and passing Brian his.

“A month in advance? Not very likely.” Brian muttered.

“Are you going to get him anything?”

“No,” Brian scowled. “What? And when did we start calling him Gus all of a sudden. Mel seemed so stuck on the idea of Angus.”

“I thought that would be just another reason why we should call him Gus.” Michael put down his food, and came and sat in Brian’s lap. Brian smiled, and kissed him on the lips.

“Anyway, I don’t see why I have to get him a present. Firstly, he’s two, so he’s really not going to remember if I don’t. And secondly I already pay all their stupid bills,”

“Because you offered to and you’re a generous soul?” Michael asked, playing with Brian’s hair.

“Exactly. And three, I’m not his father anymore.” He shook his head slightly at Michael. “I’m just the sperm donor.”

“You keep on saying that, but I know that there is a big box in the bottom of the wardrobe, and I really don’t like plastic toy cars that you can ride around in. And I don’t think my butt is going to fit in it.” Michael said happily. Brian stared at Michael and then at the empty couch in shock, his mouth dropping open.

“Damn, I knew I should have hidden it somewhere else.”

“Under a whole stack of porn? And you didn’t think I was going to find it?” Michael said, and kissed Brian lovingly. “You see, my darling Kinney, you really do have a lovely soul under your armor of insults and shady moral ethics.” Michael said with a grin. Brian gave Michael a doubtful look.

“And were did you learn the term shady moral ethics?”

“From Ben. He’s smart you know.” Michael said teasingly.

“Hmm.” Brian murmured dubiously.

“But you’re prettier.”

“What am I, a goddamn princess?” Brian said affronted.

“Uh-huh.”

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“Justin, I want to say I’m sorry. I’m sorry for everything that happened, everything that went wrong.” Justin looked down at his hands, at the walls of the stupid café, anywhere but at the man in front of him. “I can’t stop thinking about you, about how good we were together. I miss you. I miss fucking you. Sometimes it hurts how bad I miss it.”

“Is it over with him?” Justin spat the last word. He didn’t know why he did. Why he was so venomous about it. Maybe he wanted to see if he could hurt this man. To see if he could hurt anyone. Affect anyone.

“Yes. You know that. It’s been over with him for so long. Because all there is you. I want to give us another try. What do you say?” Justin looked up, scanning that face he knew so well.

“Alright, Luke, one more try.”

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Three weeks. He didn’t call him. He didn’t see him.

Things with Michael were better. They weren’t fighting, mainly because Brian was giving in. Consenting. Hell, he didn’t care. He just wanted Michael, to stay with Michael. He didn’t think could ever stop being sorry, but he sure as hell could stop feeling guilty.

He had been given a second chance, by Michael not finding out. He’d been given a chance to prove them, Lindsey, Debbie, hell even Michael, all of them wrong. That Brian Kinney wasn’t going to fuck this up.

And then he got really drunk and wound up on Justin’s door step.

Justin just stared at him. Brian tried to straighten himself up, his tongue pushing against the side of his cheek before it ran across his teeth. He tilted his head, and smiled. Justin’s face remained passive, his eyes dull.

“Hi,” Brian said, putting his hand on the door frame to steady himself.

“Hi.” Justin said without thinking, and then he cursed himself. His eyes dropped to the floor, because looking at Brian was too much at this moment.

“Aren’t you going to invite me in?” Brian said, his hand trailing over his own stomach, his eyes a dark blur of alcohol and drugs and lust. Justin’s lips parted and he felt the air escaping from him. And being sucked in by Brian.

“You can’t be here.”

“What not?” Brian asked, his look to Justin long and blunt. Justin could feel without even needing to be told all the things Brian was offering to do to him. He felt his body responding, his resolve beginning to melt away.

“For a million reasons Brian, for a million reasons.” Justin said, still not looking at him. Brian closed his eyes for a minute.

“I don’t care. I want you.” Justin pushed his lips together, trying to hold back something that felt like tears.

“Brian I can’t. I have someone here. Someone…” He glanced over his shoulder. “You can’t be here.”

“I don’t care.” Brian repeated, and he opened his eyes, and suddenly they were unclouded. Lust had dispelled any clouds in Brian’s eyes. “Get rid of him.”

“I can’t.” Justin murmured, leaning against his door, his face showing the internal fight that had besieged him and held him rooted to this spot. When he should slam the door closed. “We’re trying to make it work Brian. I’m seeing someone.”

“You’re seeing someone?” Brian whispered and then laughed. “Fuck that. Fuck seeing someone. Get rid of him.” Justin felt his mouth open to protest this, to protest everything Brian was saying and everything he had done, and everything, to protect his new relationship with Luke, the bright promise it held. But it all faded to dust before Brian. It all sounded like bullshit.

He wanted to tell Brian in that moment, at four in the morning, when the harsh lights of the outside lamp lit up Brian’s every feature that he was with someone who wasn’t Brian Kinney. And that was what was right about him and what was wrong about him.

“You shouldn’t be asking me this.” He whispered. Brian sighed.

“But I am.”

“No.” Justin said, darting his head away from Brian. Brian looked down at him, his eyes slightly fogged from alcohol, confused. “Don’t kiss me.” Brian ran a hand along Justin’s thighs, which were hooked over his shoulders. He leant down again, so close to penetration, his thoughts racing, and he wanted to kiss Justin so badly, just for a second before he drove himself home.

Justin clutched Brian’s head to his neck.

“Don’t kiss me. Fuck me like he’d want you to.” Justin guided Brian’s cock into him, gasping at the moment that never stopped being painful, his spare hand gripping the sheets, the other still resting on the back of Brian’s neck.

So they fucked without kissing, the room oddly quiet. With each thrust, Brian would lean his forehead against Justin’s, and they fucked like that, eyes open, and nothing hidden.

Brian cursed as he came, and Justin clutched Brian’s head to him, his own body shaking out of control. By then he barely noticed Brian’s lips brushing his, not intrusively, just a brief press as though confirming a memory. Justin let Brian lean his clammy forehead against his own, and for a second they stayed like that, shaking and sharing the warmth from the moment that had just passed, before Brian pulled out of him.

“How do you do it?” Justin asked afterwards. Brian put his arm behind his head.

“What, fuck you senseless and look this great? My secret is cheerios, eat em every morning.” Brian grinned, and smacked Justin on the bottom. Justin smiled but faintly, and his eyes were distant. He opened his bedside draw and pulled out his cigarettes. He offered one to Brian but Brian shook his head.

“I’ve quit.” Justin gave him a dubious look. Brian shrugged and took a cigarette.

“You know I’m in love with you.” Justin said, almost as an after thought, the flame dying as he finished lighting his cigarette. He shook the lighter and passed it to Brian. “And yet for you, this can still be meaningless.” Brian pursed his lips at this accusation.

“I never said you were meaningless.” He said defensively, not meeting Justin’s eye. Justin watched him, and then sighed. He leant across Brian, and yanked open the draw in the bedside table on that side. Brian grunted, startled. Justin waved a hand, as though in explanation.

“What the fuck?” Brian said angrily, wiping ash of his leg. He half sat up, pulling the sheets over his knees.

“Do see that?” Justin asked, his eyes not leaving Brian’s face. “That’s Luke’s stuff. His book, his aspirin and his condoms.”

“So what? Now you’re regretting kicking him out? Sorry Justin, I don’t play the blame game.” Brian raised an eyebrow at the kid.

“I’m not blaming you. But you see; I don’t have your skill for duplicity Brian. Or maybe I don’t have the stomach for it. I had to tell Luke. Tell him everything. I couldn’t do what you do. So that’s what I want to know. How do live day in day out lying to him?” Brian leant in very close to Justin, his face dark.

“You think you don’t have the skill for it? The stomach for it? Guess what? You would.” Brian looked away, and climbed out of bed. Naked, he grabbed his clothes from the floor. “It’s the natural bastard in us all.”

“I couldn’t do it.”

“Get off your fucking high horse Justin. You fucking could and you probably fucking will.” Brian said and then spun around. “And didn’t you just fucking kick Luke out on his ass because I called? We’re both a glutton for the fucked up-ness of this situation. You’re just not going to admit it.”

“I love you. That’s why I did it.” Justin said, that same passionate naïve kid. You could never dissuade him without destroying everything he held dear. And only a real bastard would do that.

“Then your love is just an excuse.” Brian snarled.

Brian let himself into the loft, a bag of groceries under one arm. The door was open, which was strange, but he didn’t close it. He just glanced around confused. He nearly called out to Michael, but the voices stopped him.

“Michael I’m sorry. I’m sorry if you didn’t want to hear that.” It was Ben. Brian who had put the groceries on the kitchen bench didn’t move, his head slightly bowed.

“Ben, what am I meant to say?” Brian could hear the slightly muffled quality to Michael’s voice because it was choked with emotion.

“I love you too would be something.” Brian blinked, a smile forming on his face. Fucking Teacher. Fucking Debbie. Smart little bitch.

“Ben, I’m with Brian.”

“Fuck him.” There was the sound of movement, and Brian wondered if it was Michael pacing, or Ben moving to crouch before him. “There are a million guys out there who can treat you as bad as he does. I want to take care of you Michael. I love you, and I would never hurt you like he does.” Brian made a face at this, a mixture of amused disbelieve.

His expression faded though at what he heard next.

Michael was crying.

Brian crossed the floor in a few steps. Michael was sitting on the bed with his back to Ben, and Ben was holding him, his huge hands on Michael’s back. Michael was crying. Ben rubbed his back.

“I don’t want to ever see you hurt.” Ben murmured, and Michael leant his head on Ben’s shoulder.

“I love Brian.” Michael said, but not as a defense or as the clinching point in the argument. But as though that was what Ben was taking about, what hurt Michael.

“Well, I’m glad that we’re all on the same page with that one.” Brian said. Ben looked up startled, but Michael physically jumped of the bed. He quickly wiped his eyes with his sleeve. Ben slowly stood up. “What?” Brian held out his arms innocently. He stepped up into the room. “Don’t let me interrupt this touching scene.” He put his hand over his heart mockingly.

“Brian, it’s not like that…” Michael started.

“Brian, whatever you heard, Michael loves you and that’s what he was saying. That’s what’s important.” Ben said, holding up a hand protectively. Already he was standing slightly in front of Michael as though to protect him from the brunt of Brian’s rage. Brian’s smile became even more dangerous looking then before.

“Thanks Teach,” Brian’s voice was dripping in sarcasm now. “So can you go over again the part where you’re telling Michael that you love him and he should leave me? Because I would love to see you talk your way out of that.”

“That’s between me and Michael.” Ben said, his chest puffing up. Brian scoffed. He tilted his head to look at Michael.

“What? You’re not going to say anything then? Stop being a coward Mikey.”

“Hey, don’t you talk to him that way.” Brian laughed outright at this.

“What are you his protector? Why don’t you get the hell out of my apartment?” Brain said with a tone of fake hospitality. “Say something Michael.” He spat. He waited. But Michael wouldn’t say anything. “Well,” Brian said again laughingly. He took a step back. “I hope you wear a condom when you fuck him. I don’t want my boy tainted.” Brian said the last word with such cruelty that Michael’s head snapped up

“Brian…” He managed to gasp, before Ben’s fist connected with Brian’s face. Brian staggered backwards, clutching his right cheek. He nearly fell as he tripped down the stair. He started laughing again, shaking his hand that had been holding that cheek.

“You’re just an arsehole who doesn’t give two shits about anyone else but himself.” Ben said, flexing his hand. Michael was looking at Ben stunned. “You don’t understand or love him at all, do you?”

“I understand him like you never will.” Brian snarled.

“Brian,” Michael suddenly seemed to be shaken awake. He ran down, grabbing Brian’s arm. “I’ll get you an icepack,” Brian shook him off with a growl. He glowered at Ben, and then grabbed Michael suddenly around the waist.

“Enjoy yourself Michael.” He said and gave him a violent kiss. Michael staggered as Brian pushed him off again. Michael was still regaining his footing when the metal door slammed behind Brian.

“Here.” Lindsey put the peas on Brian’s eye. Brian scowled, and stared straight in front of him. Lindsey sat down on the couch. “So, who socked you one?” She asked. And when Brian didn’t answer, she leant closer, temptingly. “Must have been quite a punch.”

“Just some fucking arsehole.”

“What did you do?” Lindsey asked; fussing over him like a protective mother.

“Why is it always what I fucking did?” He snarled and then shook his head. “It was fucking Ben.”

“Ben? Michael’s Ben?” She asked, and then immediately knew this was wrong. Brian hurled the peas across the room.

“Michael’s fucking Ben? Well I assume it was him because I don’t know any Ben from the gym or the fucking golf circuit, so it must be Michael’s fucking Ben!” He spat angrily. Lindsey moved away from his slightly to sit on the chair. She saw Mel appear at the door way but she waved her away. Mel gave a look of concern but destroyed it by rolling her eyes at Brian.

“What happened? Why would Ben hit you?” She asked, confused. Then she bit her lip knowingly. She could guess why.

“So did everyone know but me that Ben was in love with Michael?” Brian asked, ignoring her questions. He looked up from the floor, and saw the answer written on her face. “Fuck me.” He murmured.

“Brian, language.” She whispered, and pointed upstairs, as though the baby could hear through the roof.

“Are you fucking kidding me? Did Michael know?” He asked, and Lindsey shrugged. She picked up her tea cup and took a thoughtful sip.

“You know Michael never notices anything that doesn’t involve you Brian. I’m surprised you’re so mad. You might think you were jealous…” She gave him a furtive look. Now it was Brian’s time to roll his eyes.

“Jealous? Of what?” But his heart wasn’t in it. He pursed his lips. “I keep wondering if it’s my fault.” He said, his thoughts flooding out of his mouth.

“What?” Lindsey leant her head in her hand, and she reached out to stroke Brian’s hair. “That Ben loves Michael? That’s nothing to do with you.” Brain nearly laughed. No, he couldn’t be blamed for that.

Not that.

“No, nothing at all.” Brian said sarcastically. He got up, and gave a bitter smile. “What do I do now?”

“You go home. And you work it out.” Brian nodded, but his eyes were distant.

“Home.”

“Luke I’m sorry. It wasn’t fair, the whole situation.” Justin tossed the tennis ball against the wall, cradling the phone with one hand. “I know. I shouldn’t have said yes when I was still in love with him. I’m sorry. I know. I know, this time it’s my fault. No, no, I still… You haven’t met him. I love him. No. He doesn’t. No, he doesn’t. No, he doesn’t love me. No, it’s not just… look I don’t want to talk about this. This is my decision.” He waited for a moment and then nodded to himself to whatever he heard. Then very slowly and almost sadly he pressed the end button.

He threw the tennis ball at the wall again.

Fuck he needed a cigarette. More then that, he needed to go for a walk. The walls of his apartment seemed to be closing in on him. Luke was gone. His mother was calling him like ten times a day, but he couldn’t speak to her. Daph was angry at him, they had gotten into a fight over the whole Brian thing. But she couldn’t understand. Daniel too was being distant, and Tyler hadn’t called him all week. Fuck them. Fucking arseholes.

He grabbed his winter jacket and chucked his deck in his pocket, checking first that his lighter was nuzzled next to the cigarettes. He really needed to buy a zippo or something. He was always losing lighters these days.

He wrapped his scarf around his neck, and grabbed his keys. Right now he just needed to cool off, he was too stressed even to paint. He just needed…

Brian was standing at the top of the stairs, leaning heavily on the railing, finishing a cigarette. Justin stopped at the sight of him, frozen, just watching him. Watching the way his hair brushed his forehead, the downward curve of those cruel lips. Just watched.

“Hey,” He said after a minute. Brian looked up, his brows furrowed. “What are you doing?”

“What the fuck does it look like I’m doing?” Brian asked, and dropped his cigarette. He advanced on Justin. “I’ve come to fuck my boy.” He made to kiss Justin. Justin allowed it for a minute and then pulled out of the embrace, his eyes never having closed.

“Brian, what’s wrong?” Brian pushed his hand through his hair, and his front was disappearing fast.

“Nothing. Nothing at all. I’m fucking a nineteen year old while an HIV positive teacher propositions my long time partner, but other then that…” He gave a bright little smile. Justin looked at Brian face, and then sighed.

“Brian, as much as I would love you to come in a fuck me,” He gave a little grin at this to prove his point. “You don’t want to be here with me. And I don’t want you to be here if you don’t want to be here.”

“What the fuck do you mean? I just told you I was here to fuck my boy.” He repeated the last words slowly, pushing Justin up against the hallway wall, his hand finding its way under the boys clothes, feeling the warmth of his skin. Justin closed his eyes, feeling Brian’s hand on his back, his lips on his skin. But he lay stiff, and eventually Brian pulled off him annoyed.

“What?”

“Go home to him.” Justin uttered the last word nearly with disgust. “Go talk to him. Then come back and fuck me.” He pushed Brian off, and didn’t look at him while he opened his apartment door again. The keys shook in his hands and he fumbled. God, he wanted to fuck Brian now. He wanted to so bad.

Brian leant against the wall, watching the desire pulling at Justin. He folded his hands in front of him, and waited. Waited for the boy to look up, those eyes so naked as they always were, the lust and desire mixed with a little bit of fear.

“Are you sure?” Brian asked, tilting his head. Of course he wasn’t. And he saw the wavering in Justin, which allowed him to close the distance between them, with the surety that Justin would grab at Brian’s shirt, and pull him closer. He moved in as though to kiss Justin, their lips only millimeters away. Justin almost panted, though it seemed Brian was waiting for some kind of sign from Justin. Justin let out a small moan, almost a whimper, and that was enough.

Brian caught Justin’s bottom lip in his mouth with an almost cobra like grace, sliding his hand up the boys shirt and pushing him hard against the door.

“Brian. Stop.” Justin murmured, as Brian pulled his harder into the kiss. “Fucking hell Brian,” And he shoved him hard in the chest. “Stop.” Brian stared down at Justin, his eyes darkening.

“You want me to go?” Justin closed his eyes.

“Yes.”

“Fine.” Brian hissed in Justin’s face. He turned his back on Justin, and Justin immediately felt remorse. He leant forward as though to touch Brian’s back, but he couldn’t and his hand fell limp beside him. He looked away.

“Go home Brian.” He said so dully, and Brian flinched at the terrible desolation in Justin’s voice.

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“Where the hell were you last night?” Michael said, pushing himself of the couch. He was still wearing the same clothes from yesterday. Brian tossed his coat of and ignored Michael. He stood by the kitchen counter for a moment, going through the mail. “Huh? Answer me?”

“I went round to Lindsey’s.” Brian started coolly.

“Bullshit. I called her. She said you were there for half an hour.” Michael cut him off. “So were in the hells name were you the rest of the night?”

“I was at a friend’s.” Brian said angrily. He gave a toothily smile. “I was getting a rim job, a blow job, a hand job and fucking myself senseless until the wee hours of the morning. Is that what you want to hear Mikey, huh? Old buddy old pal?” He said with his usual snaky sweetness. Michael flinched visibly.

“I was worried.” He said, slightly deflated.

“Oh, were you baby?” Brian asked sarcastically. “Did Ben come over a comfort you? Hope you wore a condom,”

“I could say the same for you,” Michael yelled at Brian’s back, who was making his way into the bedroom. “Huh? You think you’re the only one who ever has doubts? Who ever wonders what else is out there?” He yelled, and then looked slightly taken a back. Brian came out of the bedroom, his shirt unbuttoned, anger obvious in his face. His bare feet made the floor boards shudder.

“Doubts Mikey? Doubts about being with me? Is that what you’re saying?” He accused angrily, and his face went livid in Michael’s silence. “Well, to tell you the truth,” He glanced down at the floor at this point in mock contrition. “I’ve never had any fucking doubts about us. So, no I would actually say you were the only fucking one.”

“Well, you’re the one,” Michael’s voice was unsteady now, and Brian’s scowl glaring down at him nearly reduced him to tears. “out every night, fucking and sucking and god knows what else,”

“God, Michael,” Brian turned away from him. “Are we still back at this? Why can’t we talk about the truth, rather then this bullshit?”

“Fine. What’s the truth Brian?” Michael asked, with more courage then he felt, and he flinched again as Brian spun back round to face him.

“The truth is that…” Brian broke off. He glanced around the apartment, looking for answers. “I hate having bacon and eggs unless it’s a splurge day. And that I hate our bed cover because it’s cheap and your fucking mother gave it to us. I hate the shampoo you buy. The truth is,” He paused again for inspiration. “You never go to that comic book convention that you talk about every year, yet every year something comes up. And I don’t go to studs and spuds night. The truth is that you didn’t see X-Men gold class and you didn’t take you mother on that trip to Hawaii like you wanted to, and you never smoke with me anymore. The truth is that we’re always going for dinner, cooking dinner, ordering food, going grocery shopping…”

“That’s life Brian. That’s what life is about.” Brian nodded as though expecting this answer.

“Right, because life is complicated right?”

“Yeah, life is complicated.” Brian blinked as though in disbelief.

“No, we’re compromised. We’re not complicated. You and me, we’re not complicated. We’re far fucking from it. We’re fucking compromised.” He waved his hand between Michael and himself as though the void were immense. Michael grabbed his hand. He turned his back on Michael, shaking him off, and he hated this. It was that kid. It was Justin, getting into his head.

But he was right.

“I don’t understand.” Brian felt like yelling. Instead his in took a breath through his teeth.

“I want to walk around the apartment barefoot everyday. I want you to have read all the newest comics. I want us to go on that road trip we’ve always been talking about. I want to make time for Gus, fuck Melanie and fuck the name Angus.” He paused and his face hardened. “And I don’t want anymore rules.”

“What do you mean?” Michael asked slowly.

“I mean that break the rules and I double fuck and I’ll stay out past curfew, and I’ll get drunk and smoke and fuck in the car. And I want to be able to talk to you about it. I don’t want my fucking other men to be this secret life Michael. I want to talk to you. God,” He pushed his hand through his hair again. “I feels like its been fucking forever since we talked.”

“You double fuck?” Michael almost whispered, as though he could barely understand what those words meant.

“Yes.”

“Do you fuck guys I’ve vetoed?”

“Sometimes. I don’t know.” Brian licked his lips, watching Michael. “But they don’t mean anything. And either you trust me, or you don’t. We can’t keep circling this issue. I fuck other guys Michael. You’ve known that since the beginning. What made you think I was going to change? Why do you think it now?”

“Love. I thought love would change it.” The words escaped Michael’s mouth so brokenly that Brian had to take a minute to understand it.

“Love?”

“Yes. I thought if you loved me, that if you truly did,” Michael looked away. “How can you be mad at me about Ben? What you do, every night when you go out, its so much worse.” He was sobbing now. Brian pulled him to his chest.

“No. It would be worse if it was love. It is worse when there’s love involved.”

“Well, there’s a happy couple.” Emmett gazed at Michael and Brian dancing together somberly over his cup. The way Michael’s hand clung at Brian’s waist, and their sickening grins. “Whatever their love spat was, they certainly seem to be over it.”

“Well, maybe Michael put some things behind him finally.” Ted murmured.

“Some things, as well as maybe Brian’s thing,” Emmett added and gave a nonchalant look at Ted’s wrinkled noise. “What? A good make up sex can cure any relationship ails.” He took another sip, and his smile dropped. Luckily Ted was too busy checking out the beautiful body builder now standing shirtless at the bar. “And this little laddie will be right back.” Emmett murmured, and Ted barely waved in the right direction, his eyes distracted.

Emmett made his way around the dance floor and to where Justin sat. He pulled up a stool. Justin looked over, ashing his cigarette as he did, and then back at the dance floor.

“Not interested.” He muttered.

“Well, isn’t that fabulous, because neither am I.” Emmett gave Justin a bright smile, and set down his drink. “What I am interested in is a friend of mine. You see the short brunette dancing right there with a tall, skinny arsehole of a guy?” Justin looked up at Brian and then at Emmett, his eyes hardening.

“Look, I really,”

“Don’t know what I’m talking about?” Emmett finished chirpily. “Well, you see I really think you do. But that’s not the point. The brunette, dancing with Brian, you did know his name was Brian right? Well, he’s a good friend of mine, and I would personally cut Brian up into tiny little pieces with my two hundred dollar letter opener then see that brunette get hurt.” Justin was silent. Emmett leant forward. “So whatever you’ve got going on with Brian is going to stop, alright?”

“Brian can fuck who ever he wants to.” Justin said after a moment.

“Who ever, whatever, hell I’m sure there are inanimate objects that have had the pleasure. But Michael is special. No one is going to replace him. So let’s just save everyone a lot of heart ache, and end it.” Emmett grinned again. He finished his drink and stood up. “Well, I’m going to go dance.” Justin grabbed his arm.

“Wait.”

“Honey, if you want me to get you a drink, because you look very underage…” Emmett started. Justin shook his head.

“I really love him you know. I really do.” Emmett paused, and he finally actually took Justin in. The young blonde who was sitting on the side of the dance floor, waiting. Waiting for anything Brian would throw to him.

“Then so much the worse for you.” Emmett said, looking at his fingers. “Because Brian doesn’t love anyone. Not anyone but himself.”

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“Hey,” Justin swung his legs out the window and stepped onto the little balcony in Daphne’s apartment. With effort he pushed the window closed, blocking out the majority of the music, and juggled the phone to his other ear. “What’s up?”

“Not much.” Justin smiled at Brian’s tone. He leant against the railings.

“What are you doing?” He asked cautiously.

“Having a cigarette on my steps. Where are you?”

“At a friends. She’s having a bit of a housewarming party.”

“Ah,” Justin could see Brian in his minds eye, lolling against the stair way, cigarette in one hand, phone in the other. He loved this phone calls. Not because of what was said, but because Brian made them. Just little snippets, just occasionally, and Justin would know that Brian was… well, maybe thinking of him.

Sometimes he thought Brian was just letting him know he was alive.

And Brian wouldn’t really say much, he would just leave the silence for Justin to fill. Making room for him.

“Are you going out tonight?”

“Yes,” And there was that reserve. Justin closed his eyes.

“With him? To Babylon?”

“Yes Justin.” And Brian sounded tired, so tired. That’s what upset Justin the most, and killed the elated mood. How tired Brian sounded.

“That’s him?” Justin looked over his shoulder, and glared at Brian. With Michael. He shot his tequila with a wince.

“Yeah.” Tyler leant on the bar, and shrugged.

“You’re way hotter then him.” Justin rolled his eyes, and help up his hands to Tyler drunkenly.

“Nine years. Can’t compete with that.” Justin signaled to the bartender for another. Tyler squinted.

“Yeah, but where were you nine years ago? Still playing cowboys and Indians.” He slipped an arm around Justin, leaning his chin on his shoulder, not letting Justin look away from Brian. Dancing with Michael. His arm around Michael’s shoulders, his lips against his ear, his hips against Michael’s hips. Justin blinked, his bottom lip falling away from his top slightly. “Your youth is your greatest weapon Justin. You’re beautiful. How could he resist you?” Justin felt Tyler’s lips on his cheek, and Justin turned, gripping Tyler’s arm

“Thanks.” He murmured. Tyler shrugged. “And what about you?” But Justin knew. Hell, he’d always known. “Daniel’s not coming is he.” Tyler shook his head, a rueful smile on his lips. He took a sip of his rum and coke.

“Who wants to see the one they love in love with someone else?” Tyler said, his eyes resting on Brian and Michael again. “Brian with him, you for Brian, Dan for you, and me for Dan. Seems everyone’s in love with someone they can’t have.” Justin kissed Tyler on the cheek, holding the embrace for a moment.

“Hell with that.”

“To hell with that.” Tyler echoed, holding up his glass as Justin made his way onto the dance floor.

“What about him?” Michael whispered, his eyes wide with the pills, his forehead slightly sweaty as he leant in against Brian’s. Brian turned his head and laughed. He gripped Michael’s waist harder.

“Would you like him? I could get him for you,” Brian licked his lips as he said it. He could feel the music pounded in the air and it felt as though he drew it in with each much needed breath of oxygen. And everywhere there was flesh.

“What makes you think I couldn’t get him myself.” Michael said, grinning dreamily. “I’ll have you know Mr Brian Kinney that many men find me attractive.” Brian grinned somewhere over Michael’s head for a moment, a soft laugh escaping him. He kissed Michael for a moment, his grin never fading.

“I know Mikey, I know.”

“Good, and don’t you forget it.” Michael said, pointing at Brian’s chest. Brian laughed, and loosened his hold on Michael, glancing around the dance floor.

And straight at Justin.

The beautiful blonde hair seemed luminous in the flashing lights of Babylon. Brian mouthed the words to the song for a moment, but his dancing was slightly off, and Michael followed his gaze. Brian’s eyes were dark.

“Hey,” Michael tapped Brian on the cheek. “Thought you were dancing with me.” Brian shook his head at himself, and turned back to Michael. But Michael was watching Justin now, and Brian almost immediately looked around again, at Justin, with his arms raised above his head, his tight pink shirt showing a flawless midriff, his expensive jeans.

“Do you want to fuck him?” Michael asked, turning Brian to look at him. Brian stared down at Michael for a second, and then shook his head slowly. “Go on. Go dance with him.” He was just another blonde, after all.

“I want to dance with you.”

“Alright.” And Michael let it drop.

Brian tried to focus on dancing with Michael, but Justin always seemed to be in sight, getting hotter and hotter dancing with some random guy and then another. He recognized one of Justin’s friends from that day they had been interrupted, but mainly he just saw Justin.

Michael was dancing with Emmett and Ted now, and Brian gave one quick glance over at Justin, their eyes meeting for a second. Justin shifted where he was dancing, so that he wasn’t an arms span away, his back to Brian. Brian bit at his cheek in a thought, his eyes stroking the soft flesh of Justin’s forearms. He put a hand to his forehead for a moment, his head lolling back as it pushed through his damp hair. The esc was buzzing through him, and it seemed like nothing to reach out and pull Justin to him. Justin smiled happily, allowing himself to be drawn in. Brian gazed somberly into Justin’s eyes, slowly hooking his arms over Justin’s shoulders, his expression not changing, his body moving against Justin’s.

Michael rolled his eyes at the sight.

“Brian will be Brian.” He said, and Ted nodded in a bored, wide eyed way.

“The younger the better it seems.” Ted yelled over the music.

“Young, blonde and stupid more like it.” Michael replied, and they laughed. Only Emmett watched them, his eyes growing darker by the minute. He watched Brian kiss the boys neck, and the way Justin put a hand on the back of Brian’s neck, one of Brian’s hands cupping the boys neck, thumb on his cheek.

Then Emmett turned and left, the heat almost making him swoon. He shoved through the half naked guys, out the side door, and into the cool of the night. He closed his eyes, seething for a moment.

“Em, what’s wrong?” Michael said, slipping out after him. Emmett spun around.

“God don’t you see? Can’t you see him dancing with that blonde?” Michael gave Emmett an odd look, and waited. Emmett shook his head, his bottom lip thin. “I can’t watch him do this to you Michael. I can’t bear it.”

“He’s just dancing.” Michael said almost uncomfortably. Emmett laughed, looking around in disbelief as though for proof that this was a joke, that this wasn’t real.

“And soon they’ll just be fucking in the back room. How can you just stand by idle?” Michael’s face hardened.

“This is how we are. It’s not your place to judge.” Emmett paused, and then stepped forward, so that he was face to face with Michael.

“It’s not my place, but don’t make your place his side kick. Fight for him. Make him know it’s you that he wants to fuck. Make him know it, even when he’s with the others. Fight for him Michael, or you’re just as bad as him.”

“What would you suggest I do Emmett? I can’t change him.”

“And you shouldn’t want to,” Emmett shook his head, as though giving up. “Go in there Michael, and make him want you again. Play his game and win. Don’t just stand on the side lines like the kid last to be picked.” Emmett turned, his eyes welling up.

“Em,” Michael said, touching his arm. But Emmett shook his head again.

“No, Michael, don’t.” And he walked away. Michael waited, replaying what had just happened in his head, and then glared at the alley floor, troubled.

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“Leave him.” Justin said, crossing his arms. Brian leant against the wall, the pillow molding to his body, the crumpled sheets between them.

“You know I won’t.” Brian said sternly, watching Justin. Justin flung out his arms, his head turning this way and that in his naked glory. Brian watching, feeling the hardness of the wall behind him.

“Then put me out of my misery.”

“Do we have to play this scene out again?” Brian said coolly. Justin’s resolve broke, and he came to Brian, his fists clenched against the cool sheets. Brian was unmoved. Even Justin’s desperation was beautiful. So beautiful

“Tell me something.” The boys face was so desperate. Yes, that was the word for it. There could be no other. “Tell me why you’re here.”

“You know. Justin why can’t you just… God,” Brian was suddenly angry. He shook the boy again. “Don’t you understand? You fucked up again. I told you. There was one rule. Stay the fuck away from Michael. And you blew it. This is goodbye.”

“Fuck goodbye.” Justin pushed Brian off him. But Brian grabbed him again, and pushed him down on the bed. Justin’s snarl broke into a sob. “Why won’t you leave him?”

“Because I am with Michael. I will never be the one to end it.” Brian said slowly, one arm on either side of Justin’s head.

“So what am I?” The boy said, his voice wavering with emotions he couldn’t quite restrain. “Just something to pass the time.”

“Yes.” Brian hissed. “Yes goddamn it.” And he pushed himself away for Justin, to sit on the edge of the bed, his back towards the boy. Justin sat up gingerly.

“And that’s how it’s always going to be?” Justin asked, suddenly angry. “You with Michael and miserable, feeling you owe him because he has to love you? You think it’s a chore to love you?” Brian was silent. “And you’re never going to change that? You’re never even going to try?” Justin’s voice rang with disbelief. Brian shook his head. No matter what, the kid never lost his naivety. Never would relent.

“Not until they put me in the earth.” He spat, and turned, pushing the boy against the mattress with all his force, his hands pinioning Justin’s, leaving the boy helpless. Justin kissed him with such a passion if only to try to change his mind.

Justin was quiet after. He sat, hugging his knees, the sheets covering most of his flesh, and watched Brian dressed. He hung his head against his arm. Brian paused, and tossed the boy an almost cursory smile.

“So how do you normally do this?” He asked, as Brian pulled on his jacket. Brian looked up, his eyes dark and questioning. Justin gave him an angry but almost resigned look. “Well,” He held out his hand, but Brian didn’t take it, just looked from it to Justin’s face again. Justin let his hand fall back against the sheets by his thigh. “We should do it again some time. I’ll give you my number.” He said as though reading from a script. He didn’t move, nor did he break eye contact with Brian. There was a long pause. “Well?” Justin said, almost cruelly. Brian finally managed to wake himself into speech, but it took a long time. His pushed his tongue against his teeth angrily.

“I can’t. I have a boyfriend.” He said, calling Justin’s bluff. Justin nodded, glancing away for a moment, so that Brian wouldn’t see the tears. Then he looked back, letting Brian see them. Let him see it all.

“And he knows? Knows that you fuck randoms?” They were Brian’s words. Brian’s lips curled into a unhappy smile at the sound of them. He remembered this. From the car. Were they should have left it. He opened his mouth, knowing what came next. Knowing it all.

“Yes.” He couldn’t manage anything more. He wanted to stop Justin. To end this game.

“Do you love him?” Justin said with the same determined tone.

“Justin,” Brian shook his head, and took a step towards him.

“Do you love him?” Justin repeated, angrily now.

“Yes, goddamn it. Whatever the hell love means? That’s my line right?” Brian yelled, glowering at Justin. Justin didn’t even flinch, just squared his jaw, glaring right back at Brian.

“So you fuck, and you kiss, but you won’t love?” Justin asked, each word broken by emotion. Brian closed his eyes for a moment. “Well, your love must really be something Brian. It must be fucking amazing.” Justin’s eyes were stinging now, but his voice didn’t stop. Brian looked up at him, and shook his head.

This wasn’t what he wanted.

God, he didn’t now what he wanted. But it wasn’t this.

“Thanks for...” He said, and then broke off. There was nothing to say, nothing to sum it all up. Nothing to make it better. Nothing he could give Justin as a consolation prize.

“The compliment?” Justin asked, and then turned his head, away from Brian. Brian waited. Waited for Justin to say something else. Some consent, some softening in Justin.

Anything to make him feel less guilty.

“This is your cue,” Justin said after a moment. Brian still didn’t move. “You have to go.” He snarled the last word. Brian pulled at face, and then shook his head again. At who, Justin or himself he wasn’t sure.

And he left.

It ended just like all the other hook ups, all the other meetings of the flesh, all the other drunken nights.

Just another name to be forgotten, just another inconsequential moment, a random and brief meeting, nothing important, just another, another, another, another.

But it sat heavy on Brian’s shoulders as he walked away.

How could something that meant nothing feel so damn heavy?

“I’m not fucking going alright Michael, and that’s the last of it.” Brian threw his jacket on the bed. “I’m not going to fucking Gus’s birthday party, I’d rather be shot.”

“You’re going.” Michael repeated for what must be the hundredth time. Brian gave him a deadly look. He had his stubborn face on now.

“Look, the little brat is two years old, alright? It doesn’t take brain surgery to know he’d not going to remember shit all about the party, and I would rather not be stuck in a house full of dikes and two year olds, alright?” Why are we talking in circles, was what he wanted to scream. Brian looked up and realized Michael had walked away.

“Do you want lamb for dinner?” Michael asked, and Brian could already feel the words forming in his mouth. Some retort, or banter. Another conversation that he didn’t want to take part in. Brian went to his desk, turning on his computer.

His head was bowed in thought when he realized Michael had been talking. He looked up and nodded, as though to answer a question or to respond to an anecdote, and Michael seemed satisfied.

Satisfied.

Brian looked up and for a second he saw Justin. Justin in the kitchen, opening the cupboard draws and darting back and forth to the recipe book. He tilted his head and the blonde faded.

Goddamn it.

Brian opened the bottle of scotch on his desk, and poured a glass. He didn’t even hear Michael’s sigh of disapproval. He closed his eyes again, trying not to listen to the talk of comic books and petty arguments that Michael was rambling about. He tried to imagine himself in another moment, another inevitable night out, at Babylon, the strobe light behind his head, the sweat from the drugs and the sex and everything he needed pouring across his forehead, his head flung back, forward, back. He imagined the burn of cigarettes on his throat, the bongs and weed of his college days. Another drug induced haze. The taste of alcohol.

The things he put his faith in.

In the back room, the strength of his hand on some trick’s hip. The beat. Another trip to the calm of Justin’s bedroom, running his hand over the frail back, across that skin, the boy’s giggle. The taste of the boy in the shower, the sight of him covered in paint, those trusting eyes. He frowned. No, that wasn’t another moment to look forward to. That wasn’t part of his life. The others, they were a comforting surety. They would happen again, inevitably happen again.

He felt a strange hollowness as he knew he could never be in Justin’s bedroom again, wasn’t even allowed to imagine it. To retreat to it. He pushed the image of Justin curled up on the couch from his mind. The drugs, pull them back, the feeling of the coke in his nose, fucking some trick in the bathroom at work, watching Ted squirm. These things were certain.

But for some reason he couldn’t force himself to believe that he would never be touching that blonde again.

He saw Justin’s smile in the car that first early morning, that soft smile, and he bit his lip until it hurt.

Yes.

He blinked, eyes flickering open, and shook his head. He could still taste the scotch in his throat, but he poured another. He tried to focus on what was before him, on the movement of his hands. It was as though there was a dull roaring in his ears, like he’d been standing next to the speakers at the club for too long. The movement of his hands felt surreal, and he tried to concentrate on them, on anything.

Tried not to think.

After a while, Brian felt a small arm wrap around his waist. He leant back against that body, so thin and frail. He knew it was Michael, but for a second he could smell that fruity cheap shampoo and feel the indent of the boys nipple ring against his back. He knew if he turned his head fast enough he might just catch a glimpse of that blonde hair and those forever trusting and, when it came to him, forever hurting blue eyes. His jutted out his jaw for a second, letting the image of the young boy form and wither in his mind as he smelt Michael’s cologne, and he felt the scratching of Michael’s jumper against his Armani suit.

He closed his eyes as he turned to embrace the man, his hands tracing the face that he knew his eyes would be disappointed by.

Later, as the day drew to a close and invited the night it, Brian stared out the window at the dusty cityscape. He wondered what had changed in him, what had caused this heavy silence that had settled on him the entire day. What had caused this restlessness. The world of Michael and Debbie and Gus and Lindsey and all of it’s details seemed just that, details. Small, insignificant. He thumbed his cigarettes, but he couldn’t be bothered lifting one to his lips. He looked out into the city, and wondered what had changed. He hoped somehow that with the settling night, the discontent suddenly so irrepressible in him would fade, like everything else. Would be drowned beneath flesh and drink and the burn of cigarettes.

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“You look beautiful.” Justin said, leaning his head against the pillow, the joint between his fingers burning softly and the smell of it mixing with the perfume scented room. He smiled as he watched Tyler apply the eye make up, thick ice green eye shadow, and then white powder drawn up to the eyebrows. Justin took another toke, his eyes getting hazy and his smile unrelenting.

Tyler added a golden hue to his cheeks, turning from one side to another.

He thought about Brian as he exhaled. Beautiful, those beautiful eyes that were never really brown. Only those too stupid to know any better would say there were brown. They were beautiful, flecked with gold, a swollen hazel color like the richest chocolates when he was lusting, when he was fucking, when he was drunk or drugged or angry. They could be pale and almost transparent, like glass, mixed with grey and circled in green and then he would push Justin against the wall, or against the kitchen counter, or onto the bed and kiss him slowly, so slowly it was torturous. Or when he would smoke, his eyes distant, his hands sometimes shaking slightly as he tried to hold the cigarette steady.

Tried to hold everything steady.

Justin got up, and put his hands on Tyler shoulders. Tyler adjusted the blonde wig, pouting his painted lips. Justin kissed his cheek and passed him the joint. He tilted his head, and looked at them both in the mirror, and for a second him seemed to be just a shadow compared the brilliance of Tyler. Just the same old school boy, thirteen with a grazed knee and unable to comprehend anything, like why his parents were fighting or why he didn’t want to kiss the girls or scrawl graffiti over the bathroom walls.

“Dance with me Justin.” Tyler said, and Justin laughed, twirling the smaller man, listening to the clicking of the heels on the floorboards. Tyler sat down on the bed, checking his panty hose for runs. He looked up at Justin, a slightly sad look on his face.

“Fuck him.” He said seriously. “Fuck him, and forget him.” He stood up and kissed Justin on the cheek, leaving a bright red mark. Justin whipped it with a giggle. “You can have a million times better then him a million times over.”

“Thanks.” Justin murmured.

“Are we ready, boys and girls?” Daniel said from the door. Tyler gave a mock curtsy and Daniel extended an arm, the mockery of the perfect gentleman and perfect lady. Justin took Daniel’s other arm, and leant against the muscles as they made it out of the apartment, trying to be content listening to Tyler singing his best Kylie impersonation and listening to Daniel’s calming breath.

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Justin was dancing, hell everyone was dancing. Liberty Avenue was clogged with people; every fag in the Pitts had come out for Gay pride. He took a sip of beer, and let the man he was dancing with kiss him. He giggled and pushed him away. He turned, making his way through the crowd, his mind far away. He found a step and sat on it, lighting a cigarette. He could see Tyler and Dan, and he could feel the buzz of the alcohol. He wanted to be drunk, so drunk that he wouldn’t have to think.

He watched two drag queens pashing; then turned his face away. That was a sight that he didn’t actually know if he was meant to see. And that’s when he saw Brian. Arm around Michael, kissing the brunette’s temple, leather jacket on. He saw the other taller brunette that had warned him away from Brian dressed up to the nines in pink satin just behind them, with another boring looking brunette. He took another drag, watching Brian pull Michael into the circle of his arms and kiss him, confetti falling down on the pair. He took another sip of beer, watching Brian’s lips pound Michaels, and Michael push away a hair that was tickling his forehead. Brian’s hands clutched the back of Michael’s shirt possessively, and their hips started grinding in time to the music.

It was like a train wreck, he couldn’t tear his eyes away. God did he want to, but he couldn’t. He felt hollow, hollow in his chest, and drained, as though his very blood was seeping out of him, spilling all over the pavement of liberty avenue.

He got up slowly, pushing through the crowd, pushing past one man, another man, past the drag queens and the fag hags, the daddies and the twinks and the all the dancing bodies. He grabbed Daniel’s arm, and pulled him against his body, feeling his warmth, pulling him closer, dancing, drowning in the warmth. He saw the hurt look on Tyler’s face, he saw everything, but he couldn’t get the image out of his mind of Brian, his Brian, so oblivious to him. He pulled off his t-shirt, and let it all be exposed, his skin, which had enticed Brian so completely, and yet hadn’t be able to hold him. He felt the pain welling up inside of him, but also felt the sound of the music in his feet. He heard the calls of the men in the crowd, the queers and queens singing to the music or to the music they heard in their heads. And somewhere, Brian was kissing. Kissing, his hands touching another man’s jaw, tracing another man’s lips, hands pulling someone else in. Someone else, and someone else, and someone else. He felt Daniel kiss him and he didn’t care, he didn’t care, his body falling backwards, supported by Daniel’s arms.

They danced, with the confetti falling down on their heads, getting caught on their shoulders and their hair, and felt the heat of being surrounded by a million bodies, all wanting the same thing.

You. Or any other you.

Daniel was getting dressed when Justin woke. Justin gave him a long look as he remembered what had passed the night before. He saw Daniel wince as he pulled on his trousers. Justin didn’t top very often, but when he did, he was relentless. He felt his mouth dry, from a million cigarettes, a million drinks and a million kisses. He grimaced as he sat up, his head spinning. Daniel bit his lip, and then sat next to Justin, not looking at him, one leg crooked up on the bed.

“I’m in love with you Justin,” Daniel said quietly. Justin nodded grimly, and sighed. Daniel gave a dry laugh at this reaction. “And I keep coming back, again and again. Hoping, that if I can somehow get under your skin, I’ll find a way to make you love me.” He shook his head.

“I’m sorry,” Justin murmured.

“I can’t do it anymore Justin,” He said quietly. “I love you, but I can’t just keep waiting and waiting and wishing. I have to get over you. I have to learn to say no to you.” He bowed his head and looked up at Justin. He put a hand out and touched Justin’s cheek. “You’re so beautiful. I knew, as soon as I saw you, how dearly I would love you. And every day it grew stronger. For so long,” He glanced at his hands again. Justin knew those hands, he knew each ring on them, knew how they felt on his skin, how they felt in him. “I was just glad to have a piece of you, any scrap you would throw me.”

“I would, if I could Dan, I’d love you. God, I wish I could,” Justin said, breaking into tears. He hissed, biting his lip, and it was worse when Daniel put his arm around him, pulling Justin close. “You should hate me.”

“I can’t. I wish I could.” Daniel replied, clinging to Justin as much as Justin clung to him. Justin dried his eyes on the corner of the sheet, pushing Daniel away slightly.

“You know Tyler is in love with you.”

“I know.” He said quietly. “And just like you, I wish I could. But I can’t.” Daniel got up, rubbing his hands over his face. “Last night, you were thinking about him though weren’t you? That Brian guy.” He said calmly. Justin shook his head.

“No, I was thinking of everything but him. And it hurts, it hurts so much.”

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Justin put on his apron, and grabbed a cloth. He had to wipe down the tables before the bar started filling up. He checked his watch. Only six. He’d have time to duck out for a cigarette hopefully before the usuals showed up and things started getting busy. He tried not to think about Daniel, who he hadn’t heard since that night last week. And Tyler wasn’t speaking to him. And last night, at Babylon, well, it hadn’t been great. He’d gotten pretty fucked and brought some random guy back to the apartment, after getting fucked in the backroom, his hands pressed up against the crude love poems on the bathroom walls, dedicated to Brian Kinney and his huge cock. He’s just read his name over and over again, each thrust bringing the crude scrawl in and out of focus. He felt so tired and as though he had been beaten, but more then anything, after four weeks, it was still Brian he wanted.

And it had been four weeks.

Four weeks without a call or a word, just glimpses of him at Babylon, or at Woody’s, but nothing else.

And sometimes he felt so weak that he would call Brian’s cell, prepared to beg Brian to come over and fuck him till he passed out, but no one would pick up. And the one time Brian had, Justin hadn’t been able to say anything, all his words slipping away.

And it was with these thoughts that he saw a familiar brown head slide into a booth at the back. Brian had a bottle of whiskey in one hand, and a shot glass in the other, and seemed to be planning to get himself solidly drunk before seven.

Justin hesitated.

What could he say that he hadn’t already said?

He glanced over his shoulder to his boss, who was watching the game on the TV screen, and slid into the seat opposite Brian. Brian looked up, and then down again, un-shocked, as though expecting Justin.

“So what’s the occasion?” Justin asked, gesturing at the bottle of whiskey. Brian smiled almost angrily. He held it up, as though examining it, and then poured himself another glass.

“My boy. My boy,” He repeated, and downed the shot. “He’s two today. Two. My little Gus.” He said quietly. Justin pulled a slightly confused expression.

“I thought his name was Angus,”

“I’ll call him Gus if I bloody well want to,” Brian snapped angrily, slamming his shot glass down and pouring another. “Two, the little prick, and he’s just going to keep on getting older and older, and then, he’ll be all grown up and all fucked up, and he’ll blame it on them, the dikes, just as much as he’ll blame it on me. That bastard sperm donator.” He shot another. “I mean,” Brian leant forward conspiringly. “If my parents could fuck me up so royally, how could I raise a kid? No, he’s better off without me. Better off not to expect anything,”

“You don’t like people expecting things of you, do you?” Justin said quietly. Brian looked up at him and scowled. He pointed a finger at Justin.

“You did and look where it got you. Disappointed. No, my boy’s better of knowing from the start what a selfish prick I am.” He sighed. “Everyone’s watching me Justin. Everyone. They’re all just waiting for me to cock up, with Gus, and with my job and with Michael. Because they all secretly know I don’t deserve it.” He grabbed Justin’s hands, and his words were slurring now. Justin blinked, and took in how much of the bottle Brian had drunk. It was well over half.

“Don’t deserve what? To be happy?”

“My cross to bear,” Brian said, falling back in the seat and laughing. “My bloody cross to bear that’s what the old bitch said. She thinks she knows god and she thinks she knows life, but she doesn’t know shit. She never knew shit,” He was babbling now and Justin was having a hard time following him. “Dad was right thought, right about a lot of things. I look at my life, and I see him all over it.” He sighed, and looked sad for a moment. “How could he do it though? Hit his little boy? I could never hit Gus, never.” Justin smiled at those last words, and felt like laughing at how cute and lost Brian looked at the moment. Like a little boy himself. He didn’t want to think about the implication of the other words.

“They all expect me not to go, expect me to be a cold hearted bastard.”

“Go where?”

“To his party,” Brian slurred and tried to pour another shot, but the alcohol spilled over the table. Justin rolled his eyes, and took the bottle of him.

“Whose party?” He asked distractedly.

“Gus’s,” Brian said forcefully as though Justin hadn’t been listening. “My baby boy,” Brian smiled, looking at Justin, his head tilted. He put his hand across the table and stroked Justin’s cheek. “My beautiful boy.”

“If they expect you not to go,” Justin said slowly. “Why would you start living up to their expectations?”

Justin pulled up outside Lindsey and Mel’s house. He didn’t know how he’d gotten himself into this situation. Somehow he had found himself getting Brian into the car, and driving over here. Hell, he could never say no to a beautiful man, even if he did threaten to throw up on his shoes.

To hell with work, they’d just have to cover for him.

“I’ll just drop you here,” Justin said nervously. Brian shook his head and half fell half climbed out of the car. He leant against the side of the car with one arm, the other hand on his forehead. Justin jumped out and ran around the car to help him upright. Brian groaned.

“You’re coming in with me,” He said, with sudden clarity. “Sonny boy and Sunshine, right?”

“Right,” Justin agreed without thinking.

“And this one’s from you father Angus, do you like it?” Michael said, hunkered down over the child. Gus looked up from his trunk and gave Michael a toothless grin. Mel and Lindsey stood behind Michael, gazing down on the child proudly.

It was Emmett that first saw Brian, slung over Justin’s arm.

“Oh, my mothers balls,” He cursed quietly, nudging Ted, who stopped talking to Ben in mid-sentence. All of them went quiet, as Justin met each of their eyes warily.

It wasn’t until Debbie stepped into the lounge room, looking ready to cudgel Brian that all hell broke loose.

The silver tray she was carrying dropped out of her hands.

“What the hell is he doing here like that?” She exclaimed, her hands on her hips. Lindsey and Mel both spun around, as did Michael, Gus and his presents forgotten.

“Brian?” Lindsey said, taking a step forward. Brian blinked and then pushed himself off Justin, leering around the room. He stumbled slightly sideways and then straightened himself.

“Came to see my boy, the little ticking time bomb,” He cursed, trying to peer around Michael to see Gus. “Where is the little fucker?” Mel flinched with disgust. Lindsey caught Brian by the arm.

“Maybe you should go lie down for awhile,” She said quietly. Her eyes went to Justin, and she added with a hiss. “Alone.” Brian’s head swung around to Justin.

“What him?” He slurred. “I’m not going to fuck him, right Michael?” He advanced on Michael. “Because, I love Michael, just like,” He swung around and seemed surprised to see Ben standing there, a beer in hand. “Ben, and if I’m not mistaken, Ted, right? You love him don’t you?” He said conversationally. Ted blushed and looked away, whereas Ben had frozen. “Actually, everyone seems to love him, isn’t that right Debbie?” He said loudly, as though she were hard of hearing. “Except me, because, what was it you said? That I was incapable of love. Right? That I was a selfish prick?” He grinned, and waved an arm around, as though surprised by the shock on the others faces. “What, we’re all friends, no secrets between friends?’

“Mum, did you really say that to him?” Michael said indignantly, turning round to face his mother. Deb narrowed her eyes, pushing past him.

“Yes, and I would again. Look here you little prick, how dare you? Selfish? That’s not the beginning of the names I’m going to call you. You ungrateful, uncaring, twisted, sick little…” Ben caught Deb by one arm.

“Deb, don’t.”

“Oh, don’t defend me, Teach,” Brian slurred contemptuously. “You’d love for me to be out of the picture wouldn’t you? I heard you, all of it, did Michael tell you that? I heard your sad little scene where you unveiled you heart to him and he shot you down.” Brian smirked drunkenly.

“Brian, that’s enough,” Michael said quickly. He glanced at Ben, who wouldn’t look at him.

“Come here Gus,” Brian said, crouching down, ignoring Michael. “Come to your Daddy.” Melanie, who was nearly shaking with rage, picked Gus up, and stood glaring at Brian, who slowly got to his feet.

“How dare you come into this house like this? How dare you come near my son?”

“Your son?” Brian said, tilting his head back as though to protect his eyes from her. “Didn’t know you had the balls.” He muttered. Mel seethed.

“Mel,” Lindsey said quietly.

“How can you let him get away with this?” She said, turning on her lover. “He traipses in here, bring some trick he’s picked up, so drunk he can barely stand, and we are meant to just accept it? Look at the way he treats Michael, how little respect he has for him. For all of us. How can you defend him Lindsey?” Her hand held Gus’s head protectively. Emmett looked over at Justin, and then at Lindsey. They both knew.

Not just a trick. It was worse then that.

Brian laughed, and threw his arm around Michael. Debbie grabbed him and pushed him off. He hit the wall and started laughing again.

“Damn right,” Debbie spluttered. “From the first moment I saw you, I thought, this boy is the worst kind of creature. You’ve got no morals, no character,” She paused as though out of breathe. Justin looked around the scene in disbelief. He made a scoffing sound. All eyes turned to him.

“How dare he?” He murmured. “How dare all of you? This is his child too, whether you like it or not.”

“Stay out of this, Justin,” Debbie said, her use of his name startling him. He blinked.

“If you knew how worthless he is, how cruel and manipulative and,” Mel started, but Justin cut her off. He was looking directly at Michael now.

“Defend him.” He said angrily. Brian turned his head to look at Justin, and Justin blinked. “God, defend him. He’s your partner. How can you let them say this to him? You’re meant to know him better then anyone. You’re meant to love him,” Michael looked at his feet.

“Don’t bother,” Brian said with a laugh. He seemed more sober now, his eyes taken on a steel aspect. Lindsey, who perhaps knew this expression best, closed her eyes for a moment. “They’re right. Worthless selfish prick who doesn’t deserve anything right?” He pushed himself off the wall. He put a hand to his head, and for a second something hard and truthful rose to the surface, and the affects of the alcohol seemed to fade in its wake. “Go on Deb, bash away, bring up my every failing, but you seem happily ignorant that it’s me that pays your bills because Michael can’t pick up the slack. Forget that I got you a job when you got fired for jerking off,” He pointed at Ted. “And my little boy,” He advanced on Mel who was holding Gus. “What did you have to do Linds, to get me to agree? Huh, Linds? Did you bribe me and blackmail me? Did you jerk me off while I was asleep, because I’m such a heartless bastard? What did you have to do?”

“To ask.” She whispered, and then looked up, at the group. “All I had to do was ask.” The room was frozen, everyone frozen, except for Brian. Justin watched him, watched the words spilling out of him, and he knew why they all had been able to blame him so much. He knew right then.

Because Brian Kinney had never said anything. Not to each accusation, not to each misplaced blame and cruel remark.

Not to each blow.

He had taken it, taken it all.

Like a man. Right?

“And Mel, good old Mel, you hate me so much, but I gave up my rights so that you and Lindsey would work out together, to get rid of that foreign bastard, remember?” Lindsey jolted, looking at Melanie with a mixture of awe and rage. Melanie shifted uncomfortable. “And Michael, Michael, Michael, I must have disappointed you most of all huh? Because you can’t even find one word to contradict them, to protect me.” He smiled and nodded. “But that’s all right. I know it’s not easy, being with someone like me. And you’ve had suffer through it, right?”

“Yes,” Michael hissed. Brian looked down at him, his eyes suddenly clear. He started to laugh.

“I glad you all think so highly of me.” He turned, some of the rage in his voice dying, glancing at each person. “There isn’t one of you in this room that I haven’t given what you’ve asked me too.” His eyes turned to Justin, and his expression wavered. Except you. Justin shrugged. It didn’t matter.

Brian laughed again, and reached to touch Michael’s face. Ben jolted, as though to protect him. Michael still wouldn’t look at Brian, his eyes on the floor. Brian took him by the chin, and forced him to look up. He tilted his head, staring down at Michael, his pupils soft with alcohol and something that on anyone other then Brian Kinney might have been mistaken for pain.

“My little coward. I love you,” He murmured, and tried to kiss him, but Michael pushed him off. The little brunette stood for a second, under the shocked gaze of Brian, panting, not looking at anyone. Then he strode out of the room and out the front door. Brian stood frozen. There was almost a deafening silence, and then Brian snarled. “Fuck you all.” And he turned, going to the back door and slamming it shut so loud that Lindsey jumped, a hand over her chest as though for protection.

Justin followed him after a moment, leaving the room in absolute silence.

“Brian?” He said quietly, as he pushed open the screen door. Brian was sitting on the steps to the verandah, a joint already lit. He glanced over his shoulder, and motioned for Justin to follow him. They moved off the verandah, away from the spotlight of the out stairs light, Justin waiting in silence, trying to decipher the shadows on Brian’s face. They stood on the grass, and Brian blew the smoke up at the clouds.

“They don’t know you.” Justin said, touching Brian’s arm. Brian laughed, his head falling back slightly drunkenly, but he was calmer now.

“They’re my friends. Of course they do.” Justin shook his head defiantly.

“They aren’t your friends. They don’t love you, none of them.” Brian looked sadly down at Justin, and as though as an after thought, fed him the joint.

“I love Michael,” Brian said quietly. “We’ve been through everything together,” He took another drag. “Losing jobs. Losing parents. Losing lovers. Everywhere I’ve ever gone, college, overseas, to Liberty avenue, he’s been there with me. He’s my Michael.” And that’s love.

“And he couldn’t say one word to defend you.” Justin said passionately. “He couldn’t’ say anything.”

“Because he’s a coward. Because he loves those people in that room, and he wants them all to love him back. And they do. See,” Brian bowed his head, a sad smile etched on his face. Justin took another toke. “I don’t expect them to love me, Justin. That’s the difference. I’m content loving them without them loving me. But he needs their love, and he can’t bear to lose it. Not even to protect me.”

“That’s terrible. Can’t you see how terrible that is? He’s your partner.” Brian turned his eyes on Justin, illuminated for a second in this angle, and they seemed to be so near lifeless that it chilled Justin.

“And you’re nine-teen. What do you know?” He said without cruelty. He butted out the joint, and straightened Justin’s scarf. “You have to go.”

“But after all that…”

“I choose Michael. I’ll always choose Michael while I have breath in my body. I owe it to him,”

“What do you owe me then?” Justin said, grabbing Brian’s arm. “Huh? What do you owe me?” Brian sucked in a breath and then laughed with a shake of his head.

“To walk away Justin. That’s what I owe you. Right?”

“Is the world still spinning Brian?” Justin asked, breaking the mood. Brian shrugged.

“I think most of the drunkenness wore off in that little scene back there. It certainly was a bit of a party killer.”

“Are you going to go back in?” Justin asked, and they both looked apprehensively at the screen door. Brian shook his head.

“Let’s go round the side. I’ll drop you home.”

Brian took Justin down the pebbled side path, one hand on the brick wall to steady himself. Both were quiet, and Justin stared at Brian’s back, willing him to turn around, to kiss him and fuck him like they used too. Willing Brian to change his mind, and to choose him. He wanted to tell Brian that he didn’t owe Michael anything, to ask him when would he understand that there shouldn’t even be any talk of putting up with him.

That whatever price, Brian was worth in a million times over.

“Brian,” He whispered, but Brian stopped, putting a hand on his chest, holding him back just as they came to the corner. By the gate, Michael was waiting, his arms wrapped around Ben, kissing. Brian drew in a breath, watching Ben smooth Michael’s hair, and then a finger tracing the paths of tears up Michael’s face. He watched Michael lean into that hand, and to kiss him again.

“I’ve missed you Michael.” Ben said, kissing his forehead. “I’ve missed holding you like this.” Justin looked to Brian, his eyes widening with shock. Brian’s face, half cast in shadow, was unreadable.

“Brian,”

“Shh…” He said, his eyes still on the pair. Ben was stroking Michael’s back.

“Every time you push me away Michael, I wonder to god if I can survive. I want to be in your life, in your bed again. I can’t do another year of this.” Michael burrowed his head into Ben’s chest, and Brian turned his face away.

“Brian, you knew.” Justin whispered.

“Fuck this.” Brian growled. He looked at Justin for a minute, and then he stepped out of the shadows, and started clapping. The pair by the gate looked up startled, and the absolute shock on Michael’s face was a sight to see. Ben on the other hand just scowled. “Bravo Mikey, bravo. You played the part of innocent little victim so well, and the whole time you’ve been, well, I guess fucking isn’t the right word, is it Teach? You’ve been in love.” Brian paused, his smile growing bigger if that was possible. He laughed. “You’ve been loving him.” He shook his head as though he finally got the joke.

“Brian,” Michael said, stepping towards him.

“No. I think there have been enough dramatics tonight.” He said softly, as though laughter might overpower him again him at any moment. “I’ll,” He held up a hand, and shook his head. “Later, Michael, later.” Brian shoved past the pair, and Justin ran to keep up. Michael gave him a shocked but uncomprehending look. Justin barely managed to clamber into the passengers seat before Brian pulled off, screeching, into the night.

“Brian, where are we going?” Justin said, gripping the seat. Brian’s face was set, and he was silent. “You’re going a hundred in a fifty zone.” He added. Brian spun around another corner.

“How long? Deb must have known. They must have been fucking all this time. And everyone must have known. Except me. I thought it was just… I didn’t know they were... I must be the village idiot, god, I must be the fool,” He muttered.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to drive?” Justin said quickly, taking in breathe as they bounced over a speed bump.

“A year. A fucking year. And they’ve been… god, fuck, and I felt so guilty. I felt so guilty about you, and about everything. I thought I was, I thought.” He broke off and pulled into a parking spot, much to Justin’s relief.

“You thought what?” Justin said, taking in his second breathe in what felt like hours.

“I thought it was me.” Brian said, staring at the windscreen. “I thought I was fucking it up.” He glanced over at Justin, and he must have hated what he saw there. He pushed open the car door, and climbed out.

“Brian, where are you going?” Justin grabbed the keys from the ignition, and when he looked up, he saw Brian running. He jumped out of the car, and locking it, pelted after him.

He followed him for about three blokes, and then Brian slowed. He came to a stop in front of a church, and he walked in. Justin bounced up the steps behind him, and he entered not a step behind him.

“Brian? What are we doing here?” He muttered. The church was empty, though white candles glowed at the end. Brian didn’t stop to make the cross; he just lingered in the back, moving behind the pillars, as though stalking his prey in Babylon. Justin’s heavy breathing sounded loud in the silent church.

“My mother used to bring me here.” Brian said, his hand running over the cloth of the confession box. “She used to come here to repent for her sins. And for my fathers. And for mine. She would bring me here, and tell me that god would smite me if I didn’t wash my hands before dinner, or if I made father angry.” Brian turned his face to the cross. It was small and wooden and not worth the look of hatred that Brian gave it. Justin shivered. “She was such a hypocrite. She wouldn’t let me come when I was covered in bruises. She didn’t want the community to see. She prayed because it made her self-righteous. She prayed because my father took everything else away from her.” He shivered. Justin touched his back, reminding him of his presence, and Brian started. He stared at the boy as if for a second not recognizing him.

“You have nothing that needs forgiving.” Justin whispered. Brian blinked and then laughed.

“Maybe it’s not what I’ve done.” Brian said and shook his head. He pulled Justin against his body, pulling in all that warmth and hiding those eyes from view. “I don’t think that her god was ever home.” Brian murmured against Justin’s hair. “Not in my house or this house.” He put a hand on Justin’s hip, and positioned him against the brick wall, beneath the huge stain glass windows. He kissed him, kissed him softly.

“We can’t do this here.” Justin said, and took Brian by the hand, leading him back on to the street. Brian nodded, and they walked in silence, through the silent street, away from the bright street lights, into a back alley. Brian turned Justin towards the wall, his hand on the back of the boy’s neck as he readied himself and Justin. Justin waited, his eyes open, listening to Brian.

He’s going to take up all of my love, and I’m going to give him all of my love, Justin thought with such fierceness, a promise or perhaps a challenge to all those bastards who had done this to Brian. Michael, Ben, Debbie, Mel, his parents and all the others lost along the way.

He clenched the brick wall as Brian entered him, and he felt Brian’s hands come up to rest on his. He waited for the second thrust, and then the third, anticipating each movement of Brian’s. He felt Brian’s face on the back of his neck, his breathing heavy. Brian leant his forehead against Justin’s hair as he ground into him, and Justin felt the dampness on his neck and his hair that he knew wasn’t just Brian’s sweat.

It was his tears.

There was a sort of choking sound in his breathing, which each thrust, Justin heard the jaggedness to his breathing. He felt Brian’s fingers wrap about his hand, and he listened to Brian’s swallowed sobs as he fucked him in the darkness of an alley.

“I’ll talk to you later.” Brian said soberly. Now, in the car, he wouldn’t look at Justin, just waited. They had walked back to the car in silence, and Brian had driven Justin home. Justin waited for something, some change or some promise, but none came. And he was in no mood to extract them. He pushed open the car door, but then turned back.

“Will you go back to him?” He asked calmly. “If he wants you?”

“Yes.”

“Then you’re the coward.” Justin said with equal calmness, and slammed the door to the car. He waited till the car pulled off, the first tears falling down his face. He walked quickly to his apartment, his arms, folded tightly across his body, feeling like the only things stopping him falling completely to pieces.

He was sitting curled up on the couch when there was a knock at the door. He jumped up, whipping his face on his sleeve.

“Brian?” He said, yanking open the door.

But it wasn’t Brian. It was Michael.

“So it is you.” Michael said; a bemused expression on his face. “You’re who I’m losing him to.” He looked like he wanted to laugh. Justin, still holding the door in his hand, was tempted to slam it shut.

“I don’t know,” He shook his head.

“I followed him. Did you know that? I’ve followed him here a number of times. I’ve heard his phone calls, but I didn’t know it was…” Michael shook his head. “Could I come in?” Justin blinked and then nodded. Michael pushed past him. He walked into the lounge room and looked amused at what he saw. Justin put his hands in his pockets.

“I’m doing an art show. I was picking my pieces.” He said in explanation.

“They’re of Brian.” Michael said, picking up one of the sketches. It was Brian asleep, one arm extended, the other thrown across his face. He tilted his head as he looked at it, and then held it up. “Does he know?”

“No.” Justin sat on the arm of the couch. “I haven’t, I want you to know that I haven’t seen Brian for over a month, that tonight was the first…” He broke off, but Michael wasn’t listening. He was looking at one of the big paintings of Brian.

“You love him.” Michael said, turning to look at Justin. Justin shrugged.

“Yeah.” He didn’t know if it was a statement or a question, but it was true none the less.

“God, I thought you’d be,” Michael looked around, shaking his head. “Big and strong and older and smarter, someone who could show Brian another world, of something cultured and different, exciting. Someone who had what I lacked, who could excite him.” Michael looked at Justin bemused. “Some I couldn’t compete against. But you’re just a kid. You’re some university student in a crummy apartment with cute ass. You’re not special; you’re not any different from all the other tricks. You’re just like any of them.” He looked confused. Justin remained quiet. “I can smell him on you. I can smell him in this apartment, isn’t that weird?”

“I can too.” Justin said after a pause. They exchange looks again, but Michael seemed unsure, as though he had lost track of his thoughts.

“How many times has he fucked you?” Michael said suddenly and then shook his head. “I don’t want to know. What does it matter, how many times he fucks you? You don’t know him, you haven’t been there, you haven’t held him together like I have, you haven’t seen him fight his way through life to get to where he is. You haven’t seen him at his best or at his worst. You don’t even know him, do you? You couldn’t know him, not inside out like I do.” He said with such bafflement. He looked at Justin again, as though trying to solve a difficult puzzle. “He can’t love you, can he?” But this was a question, not a statement. Justin wondered why Michael thought he had the answers.

“No.” Justin laughed sadly. “He can’t. He chose you. He loves you.” Michael blinked. He looked around the apartment once more, shaking his head. Then without another word, he left.

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“Ben and I were together when you went on that conference to New York. And we were three weeks after that together again.” Michael leant back against the pillows, watching Brian at the other end of the bed, trying to read his expression. “I slipped again at Emmett’s Christmas party, and once at the comic book store. That was it. I swear it.”

“Emmett’s Christmas party?” Brian said, slightly shocked. “But we fucked…”

“Remember when you went out to buy alcohol and everyone was decorating the tree, except me and Ben went upstairs to sort out the decorations in the attic? Then.”

“That was before we…” Brian wrinkled his nose in disgust.

“Yeah.”

“And that’s it? That’s it with him?” Brian said roughly. Michael nodded feverishly.

“That’s it. I swear it.”

“Did you blow him?” Brian said, staring at the windows. Michael frowned.

“I don’t…”

“Did you?” Brian cut him off.

“Yes.”

“Did he blow you?” Michael shook his head angrily.

“Yes.”

“Did he fuck you from behind the first time, or facing you?”

“Facing me.” Michael said quietly. “Brian, why are you…”

“Did you kiss him?” Brian said, looking over at Michael now, even though he already knew the answer. Michael sighed.

“Yes.”

“Did you love him?”

“What? Brian you know…”

“Even a little bit.” Brian said slowly, not violently or angrily. “Did you love him even a little bit?” Michael closed his eyes.

“Yes. Of course I did.” Brian nodded, but Michael didn’t see. “What about you, you and that boy Justin or whatever the hell his name…”

“I haven’t been seeing him for a year Michael,” Brian said wearily. “I thought we were falling apart. I thought it was me. I needed to believe it was my fault, not yours. I needed to believe that there was a reason, not just that we were two fags in a failed relationship. So I created a relationship with him.” He said, steeling himself to anything else. This was the justification for it, this explained. But even as he said it he knew it wasn’t right.

But this would have to be the truth; he would make it the truth.

There could be no alternative.

He looked at Michael. “But I always told him I loved you. He knew, from the beginning that it would be you, no matter what.”

“No matter what?” Michael said, looking at Brian almost strangely for a second. For some reason it didn’t sound like a romantic promise. More like a curse. From Brian’s mouth it sounded something like an obligation. Brian closed his eyes, forcing himself through this moment, trying to stop whatever was threatening to over power him at the moment. Pushing it way.

“Yes. He knew. Did Ben?” Brian gritted his teeth spoke.

“Yes. Part of him did.” Michael almost whimpered this. Brian motioned him over.

“Come here.” Michael scrambled across the bed and leant his chest on Brian’s.

“Are we going to be alright?” Michael craned his head up to look into Brian’s face. Brian kissed him briefly comfortingly, but he looked forward into empty space, his eyes dull.

This too he would bear.

This too would pass.

Because you had to have a plan right. You had a path, and you have to follow it, and if you were strong enough, you didn’t let anything derail you. You didn’t give into temptation, did you?

“Yes. We’re going to be alright.”

- - - -

They walked into the diner, glad for once that Debbie wasn’t working. Brian saw Justin only a moment before Michael, and cursed. Justin looked at Brian’s arm thrown over Michael’s shoulder, and looked away in disgust.

“Let’s get it to go.” Michael whispered. Michael ordered, while Brian flipped open the newspaper on the counter, and pretended to read. He could feel Justin’s eyes drilling into him.

“Don’t look at him.” Tyler warned. Justin looked up from his coffee, and was unable to stop himself glancing at Brian. Thank god Tyler had forgiven him, because at the moment he felt like all the world was against him.

“I can’t.” He groaned. “I can’t just watch him walk out with Michael like nothing happened.”

“What are you going to do then?” Tyler said, alarmed. Justin gritted his teeth, and then nodded.

“This.”

He got up, sliding out of the booth, and strode as though to walk past Brian. Brian looked up, but gave Justin a blank look. Poor kid, Brian thought, this is the cruelest thing I’ve ever done. He looked back at the paper

As Justin slid past him, he hooked his arm around Brian’s waist, spinning him, and pulled him against his body, pulling his neck down, pulling him to him. In surprise Brian didn’t react, and automatically responded to Justin’s embrace. It was electric. Brian’s hand automatically lifted to Justin’s neck, framing his face, his tongue responding. It lasted maybe ten seconds, before Brian pulled away in shock.

“What are you doing?” He said angrily, pushing Justin off. Justin was breathing heavily, determinedly. Brian looked to Michael, who had watched the scene, and then made towards the door. Brian shoved past Justin, and followed Michael outside. He grabbed Michael’s elbow, spinning him around.

“Where are you going?” Brian said. “I didn’t know he was going to do that.”

“You’ve kissed him before I take it?” Michael said, biting his lips.

“Yes. Alright, yes? I broke all the rules Michael. I broke them all.” He grabbed Michael’s hand. “But so did you.” Michael looked through the glass window to where Justin was, still touching his lips, leaning over the counter, his beautiful face flushed.

“So now I’ll ask you.” Michael said, his voice wavering with emotion.

“Ask me what?”

“Did you blow him?” Brian’s face went blank. “Did he blow you? Did you kiss him? And now, for what’s really important,” Michael paused, sniffing back the tears. “Did you love him? Even a little bit?” Brian felt each breath he took, felt in drawn in and it drawn out, and he knew, he knew even as he listened to them that he had waited too long.

“No.” He whispered. “I didn’t.”

“You’re such a shit liar, Brian Kinney. Did I ever tell you that?” Michael took in a breath sharply, his eyes swollen with tears. He turned his face away from Brian’s, towards the cold streets. “You may not need all my love, you may be fine with a little bit of me loving Ben, but I can’t. I need it all. Most of it isn’t enough.”

“No.” Brian said fiercely. He grabbed Michael behind the neck, making him concentrate, pulling him closer. “I will always love you.”

“Perhaps. Perhaps one of your self’s will Brian, but there are many parts of us, and we can choose which ones we are. Part of you loves this kid. Part of you that maybe you want to be. Maybe. And perhaps it’s a younger version of ourselves that we’re holding on to in this relationship.” He smiled faintly, as he realized what he was saying and who he was saying it to. His eyes traced Brian’s face, those beautiful dark eyes, that face he’d watch change over the years into someone he nearly didn’t recognize. He looked at Justin again, who had gone to sit back with his friend. “We’re not those two boys who can ride their bikes around, who never had fathers, not anymore.”

“You’re my best friend Mikey. Nothing, nothing is more important then that.” Brian said violently. He kissed Michael, pulling him against him, but he knew he was right. Even as Michael had said it, Brian had known it was true. The Brian who loved Michael no longer really existed. He had changed too much. He wasn’t the sniveling boy who needed stitching back together, he was Brian Kinney. Brian Kinney, stud of Liberty avenue. Brian Kinney, top advertising executive. Brian Kinney who should be doing whatever and whoever he wanted.

Should be doing what he wanted.

“I’m sorry.” Brian murmured, touching Michael’s face. “I think I’ve held you back from your life.”

“No. You’ve made me live it.” Michael laughed, the sound sharp and brittle, and Brian frowned. Michael took a step back, away from the touch of the man he’d spent most of his adult life completely obsessed with. “I had Brian Kinney and lost him, but I had him. Who else can ever say that?” He laughed, looking at Brian as though confirming him to memory. Brian smiled faintly at Michael’s words, turning his head to the diner for a moment, and then at the ground. At the steps that had brought him here.

“Are you still watching him?” Michael said, peering over Brian’s shoulder at Justin, dancing on the dance floor at Babylon below them. Brian shook his head, shaking away those somber thoughts.

“No. I’m just looking for fresh meat,” He said, but Michael looked unconvinced. Hell, there were a million men who would come at his beck and call, hell they’d come if he just looked in their direction. A million different mouths to explore, a million different skins and bodies and another and another and another.

“Hmm, honey, I’ve heard that before,” Emmett joined them. He rubbed Michael on the back comfortingly. They were trying at least. Michael had moved in with Emmett. He wasn’t seeing Ben but maybe it was only a matter of time. Brian felt slightly queasy at the idea. He wasn’t sure if he was ready to see Michael with anyone else.

“Well, he looks like he’s having fun,” Ted added, causing Brian to scowl. Brian leant on the railing, thoughtful. Emmett pursed his lips.

“If I were you, I wouldn’t let the chase go for too long.” Emmett gave Brian a cheerful grin, and Brian finished his drink with a growl. These guys were worse then Dr Phil. Michael gave him a pat on the arm.

“He won’t.” He rested his cheek on Brian’s shoulder, watching what he was watching. Watching Justin. “He loves the kill as much as the chase. Don’t you?” Brian’s eyes flashed to Michael’s for a second, and then back to the dance floor. Unthinkingly he gave Michael a quick peck on the cheek. Michael stiffened for a second, and then he nodded. Brian closed his eyes. This was never going to be easy.

Then again, little in life is. Hell, it was some of the hard things that are loved the most. Brian smirked at this thought. Yes, yes, all the hard things.

“I love it all.” He said, and grinned possessively down at Justin.

He had marked him, visibly or invisibly.

He made his way down the stairs, pushing away the waiting tricks, the half naked men, the millions of possibilities the nights held, all the ways to whittle away his time, the young and the beautiful and the deliciously inexperienced, all the promised fruits he had always told himself like a mantra that the night’s of Babylon offered.

And he found Justin.

He slid a hand around his waist, turning him away from the two men he was dancing with, pulling him against his body. Justin locked his eyes on Brian’s, wide with caution and uncertainly. Brian pressed his hips to Justin’s, moving with him to the music. Justin swallowed, and leant his forehead against Brian’s, staring into his eyes as they danced. Brian pulled Justin up around his waist, a smile appearing on the boy’s face, echoed in Brian’s as he stared down at him. Forehead on forehead, skin on skin, their lips only millimeters away, Justin’s eyes drawn unstoppably to Brian’s as he licked his.

“What about Michael?” He asked, hesitantly, as if not sure if he cared. Tonight he didn’t want to care. He wanted it to just be him and Brian, and no one else, even here where it was nearly impossible to be alone.

“What about me?” Brian said, and kissed him, pulling him deeper and deeper. Brian turned his head up towards the balcony, where Michael stood alone, leaning on the railing. Justin looked up too, and saw Michael watching. For a long time, they danced, focused only on the sound of the music, their bodies against one another’s again after so long, and the sight of Michael, accepting it.

“So this is all about you?” Justin murmured, unable to stop grinning. Brian shrugged nonchalantly, his smile once against mischievous. He kissed Justin again.

“Well, your mine, so, yeah, it’s all about me.” He said, and Justin laughed, his head falling back as Brian kissed his neck, watching the strobe lights that flared overhead and the confetti that graced the dancers who tomorrow would still be here, still be waiting, ever available, forever easy, forever uncomplicated forever satisfying, with Justin bound up possessively in Brian’s arms.

And behind Michael, the TV screens showed Brian and Justin, their bodies locked together, their mouths barely brushing each others, their eyes open, caught up in the hunt and the kill.

**END**