

Young Brian

By Julesmonster

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Brian was lost in a daydream. In his mind, he was fucking a blond man, hard, up against his desk. The shorter man was groaning with every thrust of Brian's hips as the desk rocked with the force of their movements and Brian could feel the man's ass clenching around his cock. The fantasy was so vivid and real, he never noticed when his art teacher actually came up to the table where he was sitting.

"Brian Kinney!" Mr. Frye said loudly in his ear. He was way too close and had obviously been calling Brian's name for some time if the smirks of the other students in the art class were any indication. "I would appreciate it if you refrained from daydreaming when I'm trying to introduce the guest lecturer. Now, would you like to tell me why the neo-realism movement was so important to the art world? No? Then I suggest you pay attention."

Brian tried to dutifully listen to the lecture while he attempted to get his libido under control. He wasn't about to have to resort to holding his books in front of himself in order to hide his hard on. That was something Mikey was famous for, but Brian was cooler than that. When Mr. Frye told them to

take a look at the paintings on display around the room, Brian was glad that he'd been able to use thoughts of His mother and Debbie having sex to dispel his erection.

"His stuff is really good," Mikey whispered. "And did you hear? He's the graphic artist for that new comic? You know, The Butterfly?"

Brian snorted. "The Butterfly? Who names a superhero that?"

Mikey laughed. "He didn't name it. He just draws it. And he's really good. He's won tons of awards for the work he's done on that comic. And he's supposed to be working on a graphic novel."

"At least his paintings are better than most of the shit Frye makes us study," Brian said. "And he's pretty hot."

"Is that why you were daydreaming before?" Mikey smirked, though it wasn't nearly as effective as the smirks Brian usually gave him. "He is rather sexy. I wouldn't mind letting him have my ass."

Brian shook his head. "You're so off base. He's definitely a bottom."

"You think everyone is a bottom," Mikey said.

"Brian, isn't it?" The very man they had been speaking about was suddenly there, right behind them. Brian flushed as he wondered how much of their conversation the blond had heard.

"Um, yeah," Brian said. "What can I do for you, Mr. Taylor?"

Justin grinned, "A lot, I'm sure. But I actually came over to talk about your interest in advertising. Jonathan told me you're looking for an internship this summer before you start college in the fall. Is that right?"

"Yeah," Brian said with a rare genuine smile. "It's what I've always wanted to do."

"Well, this is your last class, right?" Justin asked and Brian and Michael both nodded. "Why don't we go get some coffee afterward? Then we can talk."

"Yeah, sure," Brian agreed with enthusiasm that was totally out of character for the normally cool teen. "There's a diner on Liberty Ave. I often go there after school."

"Let's say four?" Justin said with a smile.

"I'll be there," Brian said.

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"Do you think he'll sign my comic book?" Mikey asked. He and Brian were making their way to the diner where Mikey's mom worked. "I found my copy of Butterfly in my locker. It would be really cool if he signed it."

"I'm sure he will," Brian said, tongue in cheek. "Listen, Mikey, you can get your autograph, but then you've got to leave us alone for a while. We're going to talk business."

"You're going to try to get into his pants," Mikey teased.

"That too," Brian smirked. "Did you see the way he looked at me? He wants me."

"I don't know about that," Mikey said. "He's a lot older than us. And he's probably really experienced. Why would he want a teenager?"

"I'm not just any teenager," Brian said. "I'm Brian Kinney."

"Which means that every girl at school wants you, and about half the guys," Mikey said. "That doesn't mean that a man who could have anyone he wants would want you."

"Trust me on this, Mikey. I have more experience with this sort of thing," Brian said with confidence. "This man wants me."

"More experience?" Mikey scoffed. "Just because you blew the gym teacher and exchanged a few hand jobs with David Marcel doesn't make you some kind of expert."

Brian rolled his eyes. "Don't forget mutual blow jobs with Tim, and Alex, and Sam. Or hands jobs with Marty, John, and Calvin. Then there were a few others I didn't tell you about. And how do you think I knew that all those guys would be up for fooling around?"

Mikey shrugged. "Fine. You win. You always win."

They arrived at the diner and Brian saw that Justin was already there, holding a booth towards the back. He was speaking with Debbie and they were laughing like old friends. Brian walked up to them with as much bravado as he could muster.

"Baby! Brian!" Debbie greeted them in her usual over-the-top manner. "You want the usual?"

"Yeah, Deb, thanks," Brian said and turned to sit across from Justin.

"Thanks, ma," Mikey said and, when Debbie left to put in their orders, turned to Justin with a hopeful expression. "Um, Mr. Taylor? I know you're here to talk to Brian, but I was wondering if you might sign my comic? Then I promise to leave you alone."

Justin gave Mikey an indulgent smile. "Sure. If you're really interested, maybe I can bring over some drafts from the new graphic novel I'm working on sometime. I'd love to get a little feedback from our main demographic."

"Wow, that would be really great!" Mikey said. He handed the comic to Justin along with a pen, and soon the autograph was done and Mikey went off to sit at the counter.

"I didn't realize you were a regular here," Brian said.

Justin shrugged. "Every gay man in Pittsburgh is a regular here. I just don't usually come in this early. Or this late, depending on how you look at it. So Debbie is Michael's mother?"

Brian nodded. "Yeah, she takes care of me when we come in. It's nice. Better than going home."

Justin didn't seem to know what to say to that, but since Debbie came back to give Brian his turkey sandwich on whole grain bread with a side salad, Justin didn't have to say anything. Brian dug into the food like he hadn't

eaten in forever. Justin smiled. The appetites of teenage boys was legendary, but Brian seemed very health conscious. When Debbie came back a minute later with a large chocolate shake, Justin laughed.

"What?" Brian asked.

"With that meal, I half expected you to get a diet soda to drink," Justin said.

Brian shrugged. "I hate diet soda. I usually drink water or coffee, but I like a shake in the afternoon to boost my energy. It's my treat."

"Well, I guess we should talk about why I asked to meet with you," Justin said.

"Besides wanting in my pants?" Brian said baldly.

Justin rolled his eyes. "Yes, besides that. I do some freelance work for Ryder, one of the local ad agencies. I was in last week, and Marty asked me to keep an eye out for potential summer interns. They've got a few positions open. Jonathan Frye told me that your talents don't lie in the arts."

Brian snorted at that. "Fuck no. I only took his class because I want to understand what the art guys have to do. I want to know what's possible, what mediums are available, timelines, all that shit. That way, when I open my own agency, I'll know what the fuck I'm doing. I'm pretty sure I can sell just about anything, but I'll have to rely on artists to do the visuals."

"Ambitious," Justin said with a smile. "Somehow, I believe you can do just about anything if you set your mind to it."

"So you'll recommend me to this Ryder guy?" Brian said. "What's the catch? You want my ass in return?"

Justin laughed. "No catch. I just like you and I really think you could do well in the internship. As for your ass, whether or not you give that up is totally up to you. However, I am interested in other parts of your anatomy."

Brian gulped down the bite of his sandwich he'd been chewing on, his mouth suddenly dry. "Really?"

Justin nodded. "I'll give Marty a call today, give him your name and contact information. After that, it's up to you to sell yourself. As for the other, think it over. I'll be at Babylon tonight. I'm there most nights. Find me if you're interested." Justin handed Brian two small cards. They were membership cards for Babylon. With these, the bouncer wouldn't even bother to check their i.d.'s. "One for you, one for Michael. But, please, if Debbie finds out, you didn't get them from me, alright?"

Brian had a huge grin on his face when he nodded. Justin stood up and gulped down the last of his coffee. He went to the counter and paid for his coffee and Brian's meal and then walked out the door.

Mikey waited until the door closed before rushing over and taking Justin's empty seat. "Well?"

Brian handed him the cards and smirked when Mikey's eyes widened comically. "Wow!"

"I told you he wants me," Brian said smugly.

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It was Friday before Brian and Mikey were able to come up with a good enough excuse to get away from Debbie and head to Babylon. Brian had spent all the money he had saved from doing yard work for the neighbors to buy the perfect outfit for the evening. He wore a tightly fitted black short-sleeved button-down shirt and tight black jeans. They weren't the designer labels Brian coveted, but they were better than most of the clothes Brian owned and they showed off the body he worked so hard to create. Even at seventeen, he knew that a gay man's position on the social ladder was dependant upon three things, body, clothes and sexual prowess, and he was determined to have all three.

Mikey, on the other hand, didn't seem to have a clue about how to dress or carry himself. He was such a twink. He was wearing a plain green t-shirt and the same jeans he'd worn to school that day. He was a mess. But then again, his look could draw a daddy-type who wanted to look out for him. Brian wasn't looking for a daddy. He wanted to be the top, in bed and out of it. He needed to be in control more than he needed the air he breathed.

"I can't believe we're actually here!" Mikey said in awe as they looked around the huge club. There were so many people there, it seemed like all of Pittsburgh had come out to dance. Or at least the gay male portion. The sweaty bodies undulated and slithered against each other to the beat of the music.

"Hear that?" Brian said, his face alight. "That's the thumpa-thumpa. That's the rhythm of life and sex and joy and everything good in this world."

Mikey rolled his eyes. "Come on, Shakespeare. Let's go get a drink."

Mikey dragged Brian to one of the bars and bought them the cheapest beers they could buy. Being poor sucked. They watched others dance while they drank, but eventually, Brian could resist the music no longer and dragged Mikey to the dance floor. Once there, Brian lost himself in the rhythm and movement. Mikey tried to keep up with him, but Brian was a force all unto himself. Mikey didn't know much, but watching Brian that night, it was like his friend had finally found his home, the place where he could be himself without worry or care.

They danced for what seemed like hours. Eventually Mikey, who didn't have the physical stamina that Brian did, had to take a break. He dragged Brian back to the bar and bought more beer. They had been standing there for about five minutes when Mikey saw Justin slide up behind Brian and whisper in his ear. Then the two were moving to the dance floor and Mikey sat on an empty bar stool and just watched. They moved perfectly together and everyone in the club seemed to be enthralled by them. Mikey looked down at his empty beer bottle and sighed. Maybe he should have just stayed home. Brian didn't need him.

"Hey, don't look so blue, sugar," a man with a southern accent said. Mikey looked up to see two men standing over him. They were both dark haired, but the taller of the two was dressed flamboyantly in a shirt covered in sequins and tight purple leather pants, while the shorter one was dressed more conservatively in Dockers and a polo shirt. "You're Brian's friend, aren't you? Justin asked us to keep an eye out for you. Make sure you don't get led astray by some wolf looking for a tender lamb."

"He's not a piece of meat, Em," the other man said. "Sorry about him. I'm Ted and that's Emmett. And we aren't trying to baby-sit, in case that's what you were thinking. Justin simply wanted to make sure you were safe."

"And entertained," Emmett said. "And we are nothing if not entertaining."

Mikey laughed and gave them a dimpled grin. "Yeah, I think you are."

"Ooh, look at that face, Teddy!" Emmett cooed as he pinched Michael's cheeks. "Isn't he just yummy?"

Ted rolled his eyes. "Yes. Wanna dance?"

Mikey let Ted and Emmett lead him to the dance floor and forgot all about Brian for the rest of the night.

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"What about Mikey?" Brian asked Justin between kisses. The blond had led Brian out of the club and they were now standing beside Justin's classic mustang. They had been making out against the car for almost ten minutes now and Justin wanted to go someplace more private, he'd said.

"My friends are watching out for him," Justin aid before stealing another kiss. "They'll make sure he gets home okay."

"Then what are we waiting for?" Brian asked.

Justin smirked and let Brian into the car. The drive to Justin's home was a short one. He lived just across the river in the South Side in a small old brick church that had been renovated. What had once been the chapel was now converted into a single living space. Where there had been pews, a kitchen and living area now made their home. The bed was nestled into the raised alcove that had once held an altar of some sort. On either side of the platform area was a walled in section with a door. One led to the bathroom, and one to a huge walk in closet. Brian smirked. His mother would be outraged if she ever saw this place.

"My studio and office are up there in the old choir loft," Justin said as he pointed out the open area above. "And you can see the stadium and Point

Park from the steeple. It's a great place to watch the fireworks in the summer."

Justin grabbed two bottles of water from the fridge and handed one to Brian. Brian opened his and downed half of it in one drink.

"Have you ever done this before, Brian?" Justin asked casually.

Brian smirked but didn't answer, so Justin laughed. "You play it so cool Brian Kinney. And I'm sure that you are able to fool most people with your bravado, but I'm not most people. I see things. I see your hands shaking, just a slight tremor, but enough to tell me what your mouth refuses to say. I see the look in your eye that says you want me more than you have ever wanted anything in your life."

"So let's get on that altar up there and do something about it," Brian said, uncomfortable with the turn in their conversation.

"We'll get to that," Justin promised. "But before I hand my ass over to a novice, I want to be sure of a few things first."

"Like?"

"How good are you at following directions?" Justin asked as he stepped forward towards Brian. "Because you don't really seem like the type to take instruction very well. And I very much want to *enjoy* that cock of yours."

"I suck at following orders," Brian admitted. His hands were still shaking so he set the water bottle down. "I like to be in control. But I'm smart enough to realize when I don't know something and I'm willing, just this once, to take direction."

Justin set his water aside and pulled at the hem of his shirt. Once it was off, his hands skimmed down his chest to the fly of his pants. Brian watched in amazement as this man, this fucking hot man, stripped for him. He couldn't help himself; he had to touch and taste and *feel*. He slid his hands up Justin's chest and over his tight nipples. Then he grazed his shoulders before his hands wrapped around the nape of Justin's neck and the back of his head and pulled him into a fiery kiss that wanted to consume them both.

"You have on too many clothes," Justin murmured against Brian's lips. Brian stepped back and quickly shed his shirt and jeans, careful not to rip them, but eager to have them off. "God, you're perfect."

Brian smirked. He'd worked very hard to be perfect. Then Justin's hands were on him and he couldn't think clearly enough to be smug any longer. They stumbled towards the bed and Justin laughed when Brian pushed him over to land in the center. Brian followed him down, lining up their bodies and cocks, thrusting with vigor against Justin.

Justin let him for a time, enjoying the feel of Brian's cock sliding smoothly against his own almost as much as the teen, but he eventually grasped Brian's shoulder and said, "Stop. Brian, you need to stop. I want you inside me when you come."

Brian looked at Justin with eyes dazed by lust and nodded slowly. "Right, inside. Right."

Justin grinned at him. "Get the lube from the nightstand."

Brian sat up in his knees and reached over to open the nightstand drawer. He rummaged around for a minute before finding the tube of lubricant. Turning back to Justin, who was spread out before him with his legs spread wantonly, Brian fumbled with the cap and squeezed out a dollop onto his shaking fingers.

"Here, let me help," Justin said as he used his hand to spread lube over both of their hands. He entwined their fingers and guided Brian's hand to his

opening. Brian watched, transfixed as Justin guided their fingers inside his hole. He felt the slick heat of the tight channel, smoother than he had expected. His cock twitched, imagining how amazing that heat would feel wrapped around his dick. Justin guided their fingers in and out, slowly increasing the rhythm until he let out a long low groan. Brian, curious, took over the motions and found that when their fingers rubbed over a certain bump, Justin inevitably moaned, and his cock leaked precum.

"Enough," Justin panted. "Get the condom."

Brian's shaking had subsided, but returned full force now. He grabbed the condom, but for the life of him, couldn't get the fucking thing open. Justin laughed almost hysterically before taking the wrapper and tearing it with his teeth before handing it back to Brian. Brian muttered a distracted thanks before slipping the thin latex over his aching flesh.

"Go slow at first," Justin said in a voice raspy with need. "Give yourself and your partner time to adjust. Otherwise it will be over far too soon and I won't have enjoyed it at all."

Brian nodded, too aroused to speak. He lifted Justin's leg over his shoulder and was pleased when Justin wrapped the other leg around his waist. His cock lined up with Justin's hole, Brian pushed forward tentatively. For a brief moment, it didn't seem like the muscles would give way, but then he was sliding inside and Brian groaned loudly at the feeling of searing heat and taut muscles and sex. He wanted to shoot his load, but desperately held back, thinking of unsexy things, like algebra or his algebra teacher, old Mrs. Kearns.

It worked and soon Brian felt ready to move a bit deeper. Slowly, in this halting fashion, Brian eventually bottomed out, his legs shaking from the exertion. Justin wrapped his arms around Brian's neck and pulled him down for a scorching kiss.

"Move," Justin whispered in Brian's ear, and the teen followed the command without thinking. If feeling that heat wrapped around his prick was good, the friction of moving in and out was absolute bliss. It was like nothing existed beyond his cock and that wonderful feeling. Some part of his brain registered Justin's demands for harder, faster, a different angle, and he must have complied, but he was on a whole other plane of existence. Only when Justin's short fingernails dug into his back did he register anything beyond his own pleasure. He realized that he must have hit that spot inside Justin and tried to stay coherent enough to hit it again. After that, there were only whispered words, sweaty flesh on flesh and the sounds of their moans echoing through the huge space like prayers to heaven. And when Brian came with a hoarse shout, he was pleased to feel that Justin was coming too.

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Brian woke up with Justin still in his arms. Last night had been the most passionate and most pleasurable of his life. Rather than being a turn off, Justin's hoarsely whispered instructions had made the entire experience more intense, more erotic. By their third round, Brian felt like he knew Justin's body better than he knew his own and he was much more confident in his ability to give the other man pleasure.

Justin was amazing. Despite being more than ten years older than Brian, he had more than kept up with the younger man. In fact, Brian suspected he had passed out first in the end.

"Morning," Justin said sleepily. Brian leaned over and kissed the older man hard.

"Good morning," Brian said with a smile he couldn't quite rein in. "Last night was..."

"Pretty fucking hot," Justin finished for him. He shifted into a sitting position. "Want some breakfast?"

Brian thought about it but shook his head. "I should probably get back. Mikey's probably worried about me."

"Not your parents?" Justin asked.

Brian snorted. "They never notice if I'm there or not. Debbie on the other hand..."

Justin nodded. "She's like a lioness. And not just with Michael. She seems to adopt all the lost souls on Liberty Avenue."

"Including you?" Brian asked, interested to know more about Justin.

Justin nodded again. "Including me. My father was... well, let's just say he didn't like the idea of having a fag for a son. My mother tried, but she had to do what was best for Molly, my younger sister. So, like you I guess, I spent more time at the diner through high school than I did at home. Then I went to PIFA, despite my father's objections that I should go to business school, and he cut me off. So I worked at the diner through college."

"She calls you Sunshine," Brian said. "She asked me what we talked about the other day, asked how I'd met you. She said you have a bit of a reputation."

Justin chuckled. "She was warning you away from me. Well, that's understandable. I'm quite a bit older and more experienced. But I'm not a bad guy, really. I simply enjoy the delights of being a gay man."

"Meaning?" Brian frowned.

Justin shrugged. "Meaning that most gay men aren't looking for deep and meaningful relationships. There are some that are, but they don't usually seek those things out at places like Babylon. I take what's on offer and don't look for more."

"I'm not looking to be tied down either," Brian agreed. "What's the point of being gay if you just act like a breeder?"

"Well, I agree with you to a point," Justin said. "Men weren't made for monogamy. It's a biological imperative. We are genetically designed to plant our seed in as many willing receptacles as we can find. Gay or straight, men like to fuck. Having said that, there is something to be said for companionship and having one person to come home to at night."

Brian thought about that for a while. "My father... well, he's been fucking around on my mother for years. They both know it and they both make each other miserable. That's why they both drink. That's why my dad..."

Justin silently filled in the blank and kissed Brian's cheek. "It doesn't have to be that way. If both people know and accept that sex is sex and love is something else entirely."

"Maybe," Brian said. "This shit is too deep for this early on a Saturday morning. How about I fuck you one more time before you drive me to Mikey's?"

Justin grinned and said, "Sounds like a plan to me."

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"So, is he your boyfriend now?" Mikey asked. They were walking back from the grocery store, having offered to run the errand so they could talk without Debbie eavesdropping. Mikey had already told Brian all about his night dancing with Emmett and Ted, and Brian had told him about his amazing night with Justin.

Brian shrugged. "I don't think so. I don't think he does boyfriends. I'm not sure that I do either. It's not a good idea to get too attached to someone."

Mikey knew what Brian meant, but he didn't agree. "Not everyone is out to hurt you. Did Justin say anything about seeing you again?"

"Well, we did talk about meeting at Babylon again tonight," Brian said with a smirk.

"Lucky," Mikey pouted. He'd been grounded when he was late for curfew and wasn't allowed out of the house except to run errands for Debbie, hence the trip to the store. "You'll tell me all about it, right?"

"Yeah," Brian said. "I'm going to go home soon. I need to scrounge up a few bucks to buy another shirt for tonight."

"Hey, Emmett works at that shop on Liberty. Torso?" Mikey said. "He told me last night if we ever need anything he'd give us the employee discount."

Brian wasn't all that impressed with the line of clothes that shop carried, it was too flamboyant for his tastes, but it was better than paying full price. Though if he couldn't lift a couple twenties from his dad's wallet while he was passed out, he'd have to shoplift something, which meant going someplace away from the Avenue.

"You'll be careful, right?" Mikey asked. "Ma told me some pretty scary shit goes on in Babylon's back room, and there were loads of drugs being passed around last night."

"Well, Justin promised to show me the back room tonight, so I'll let you know how scary it is," Brian leered. "As for the drugs... I'm not going to do anything that will get me addicted, but that doesn't mean I won't take E or something if it's offered. Besides, I've never heard you complain when I bring over a bag of weed."

Mikey couldn't argue with that.

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Brian looked at himself in the mirror later that evening. He really did look hot. He hadn't been sure when Emmett had talked him into buying this shirt, but it really did look great on him. He'd been lucky and found two twenties in his father's pant's pocket in the laundry. Brian was pretty sure it hadn't been enough to pay for two shirts from the little boutique where Emmett worked, but the man had talked around the price and had refused to let Brian protest. So he had walked out of the shop with two shirts, this one and another.

This shirt was a silver sleeveless button down that clung to his chest while it shimmered and showed off every hard earned muscle and his trim waist. The second shirt was a simple black mesh tank top. Both were quite masculine, despite being flashier than he would ever have chosen for himself.

A few minutes later, Brian was climbing out his bedroom window and shimmying down the tree, ignoring the drunken voices raised in anger that echoed through the house. He didn't have the time or desire to think about their problems. He had a bus to catch.

Babylon was already crowded when Brian arrived. He looked around for Justin, but didn't find him, so he decided to hit the dance floor. He had no shortage of men vying for his attention tonight. Dancing with Mikey had obviously held them at bay, but Brian was alone tonight and they were eager to gain his attention, pressing into him on the dance floor, whispering offers to go to the back room in his ear, offering drinks and drugs and anything else his heart could desire.

Too nervous to take any of the men up on their offers, by the time Justin cut a path through the throng Brian was ready for something—anything—to happen. Justin insinuated himself into Brian's arms, displacing the hot little twink with whom he had been dancing.

"I thought you'd never get here," Brian smiled. "I was tempted to take up one of the many offers I've gotten since I got here."

"I can imagine," Justin smirked. "I'm glad you waited for me. I'd hate to have to hurt one of these twink."

"Jealous?" Brian teased. "Would you really hurt them?"

"Nah," Justin said with a smile. "I'd just wait until you were done and drag you away after."

"Twinks weren't the only ones vying for my attention," Brian boasted. "And sex wasn't the only offer."

Justin raised an eyebrow and grabbed Brian's hand. He led him to the bar and bought them each a double scotch and a bottle of water. "Don't take drinks or drugs from anyone you don't know or trust."

Brian rolled his eyes. "I'm not an idiot. I would only take something if you gave it to me."

Justin tilted his head and stared at Brian. "Do you want to take something?"

"Maybe."

"Alright, give me five minutes to find Anita," Justin said. Brian was left standing at the bar and sipping the scotch. It was much better than the shit his parents drank. He and Mikey had gotten drunk off their cheap liquor more often than Brian could remember. They were always so drunk, they never knew if they had drunk it. This wasn't cheap bourbon, though. This was scotch. Good scotch that cost more than Brian wanted to think about.

Justin returned and placed a pill on his tongue before kissing Brian. It was hot and sexy and Brian swallowed the little pink pill without thought. "I want to dance," Justin said. "And then I want to watch you fuck that little twink you were dancing with while some trick blows me."

Brian swallowed hard at the erotic image Justin's words conjured and nodded. Justin smiled and took Brian by the hand, leading him to the dance floor.

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It was Sunday a week later and Brian was back at Justin's home. He'd woken up to Justin's mouth on his cock and the sun shining through the stained glass windows on either side of the space. Then Justin had pulled out a condom, rolled it over Brian's cock and impaled himself. All in all, it was a great way to wake up in the morning.

When they were lying back against the pillows again, Justin turned to Brian. "Come on, no time to laze about in bed all day."

Brian raised a single eyebrow. "What are we doing?"

"We're going shopping," Justin smirked. "Now, get in the shower and get dressed. We'll have breakfast at the diner."

"Deb's working this morning," Brian warned. "If we show up for breakfast together, she's going to know that we slept together."

Justin chuckled. "Give the woman some credit. She saw us together last week, and we've been together at Babylon several times since then; I'm sure she's heard reports and already knows something's up. She just hasn't said anything yet. And this way, she'll get it all out of her system at once instead of torturing us both for weeks."

"If you say so," Brian said as he got up and headed for the bathroom.

An hour later they walked into the diner and took a booth near the back. Mikey was busing tables and he waved at them with a happy grin before turning back to work. When Debbie arrived with their menus, she did not greet them with her usual enthusiasm. Instead, she gave Brian a small smile and scowled at Justin before slamming the menu on the table in front of him.

"What can I get you Brian?" Debbie asked. Brian meekly ordered his favorite egg-white omelet and turned to Justin.

"I'll have—"

"You'll have what I give you, asshole," Debbie muttered and walked away.

"Well, that went better than I expected," Justin grinned. "She didn't hit me once, and there were no raised voices. She must be in a good mood."

"You're an idiot," Brian smirked. "I thought she might be mad at me."

"Nah, you're the innocent lamb I'm leading astray," Justin teased. "I'm the big bad wolf. But she'll forgive me. She always does. Besides, you're legal."

Brian frowned, "Do you often pick up younger men?"

"How young?" Justin teased but could tell as soon as he said it that Brian wasn't pleased. "No. I don't make a habit of picking up teenagers. In fact, you're the first since I was a teenager myself. Having said that, I don't usually worry about how old a trick is."

Brian was still frowning but he nodded. It really shouldn't matter to him if Justin preyed on high school boys, but it did.

Debbie brought back Brian's omelet and multi-grain toast and placed it on the table in front of Brian. Then she slammed down a plate of what might have once been eggs and potatoes, but were too burnt now to tell for sure.

"Thanks, Deb," Justin smiled. "Can I get a little ketchup, and maybe some coffee?"

She grunted and walked away. Brian looked from Justin's plate to his face and back again. When Justin picked up his fork to break off a bite, Brian cringed. "You don't actually intend to eat that, do you?"

"If I don't at least make the attempt, Deb will hang onto her anger," Justin said. "This is part of my punishment, and I'll take it like a man."

"I just don't want to spend the day at the hospital because you got food poisoning," Brian grimaced.

Justin laughed and looked up to see Debbie coming back with the requested coffee and ketchup. At least it would be more palatable with a little red sauce. Or make that a lot of red sauce. He actually only managed about half of what was on his plate, more so because he was full than because it was making him sick. When Debbie came over to check his progress, she looked him over and huffed a bit, but he could see her relaxing.

"So what are you boys up to?" Debbie asked, her tone a little lighter than it had been.

"We're going shopping," Justin said.

"You never did tell me what we're shopping for," Brian pointed out. Justin grinned but didn't answer. Debbie snorted and left.

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"You can't buy me clothes," Brian protested loudly as Justin piled clothes into his arms. "Seriously Justin!"

Justin grinned at Brian. "Sure I can. I have more money than I know what to do with. Ask anyone. And if I want to share a little of my good fortune, then it's my prerogative."

"I don't take charity," Brian growled, though he didn't even consider dropping the clothes. They were all fucking designer labels, and that would just be sacrilegious.

Justin stopped and frowned at Brian. "Is that what you think this is?" When Brian nodded, Justin sighed and took the clothes from Brian and set them on a chair near the fitting room. He took Brian's hand and looked him directly in the eyes. "Brian, this isn't charity. And this isn't some sort of payment for services rendered, in case that was going to be your next argument. I like you. I consider you a friend. And I help my friends when I see they need help, even if they are too stubborn and proud to ask for it. You are going to need clothes for your internship. And I'm pretty sure from the things you've said and haven't said that your parents aren't going to provide them."

Brian flushed and looked away. "I'll figure something out."

"What? A five finger discount?" Justin asked. "And if you get caught, you can kiss the internship goodbye. Brian let me help you. I would do the same if it was Emmett or Ted in your position. Hell, I have once or twice."

Brian sucked in his lips and thought it over. He did need clothes for the internship, and god, the designers Justin was picking out were some of his favorites. "Alright. I'll accept your offer of help. But I want a full accounting, and when I'm rich with my own ad agency, I will pay you back in full."

Justin grinned. "We'll keep a notebook. That way we can add to it later. After all, you'll need new clothes for college this fall too."

Brian laughed and looked at the pile of clothes on the chair. "I suppose I better go try these on."

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When Brian didn't show up for school on Monday, Mikey didn't think much about it. When he didn't show up on Tuesday, he got a bit worried. When there was still no sign of Brian and still no word on Wednesday morning, Mikey panicked. He knew that calling the Kinney house would be a waste of time. Brian's mother hated him and usually just hung up as soon as she heard Mikey's voice. Instead, Mikey called Emmett and got Justin's number.

Justin answered and Mikey quickly reminded him of who he was. "I remember you, Mikey. Brian talks about you all the time. What can I do for you? I thought you would be in school?"

"I am," Mikey said. "But Brian isn't. He hasn't been all week, and I'm worried. I wondered if you had seen him or heard from him?"

There was a silence that stretched too long. "I haven't seen or talked to him since Sunday. Listen, Mikey, I'm going to make some calls. Can I reach you at this number?"

Mikey said, "This is my cell. I'll have to go to class soon, but text me if you find out anything. I'll call back between classes."

Mikey hung up and tried to calm his fears. If something had happened, Brian would call him, right? Assuming that he could call, that was. That didn't make him feel any better. Turning his phone on vibrate and putting it into his pocket, he went to class, knowing he wasn't going to be able to remember anything the teacher said.

Across town, Justin tried Brian's cell phone first; when that went directly to voicemail, he called Marty Ryder to see if Brian had been in touch at all. He wasn't supposed to start the internship until next week, but he thought there might be a chance that Brian would have gone in to fill out paperwork, or something. Marty said Brian had done all that the week before and hadn't heard from Brian since. Then Justin got desperate and called the Kinney house.

"Mrs. Kinney?"

"Yes?" came the slurred reply. Justin looked at his watch. It was only nine o'clock in the morning and Brian's mother was already slurring?

"My name is Justin Taylor," Justin explained. "I am working with your son Brian on securing a summer internship. He was supposed to call me this morning, but he hasn't and I haven't been able to reach him on his cell. Do you—"

"I have no son," the woman said angrily, cutting off Justin's question. "Don't ever call here again." Then she hung up.

"Fuck!" Justin swore. Now what? Some gut instinct told Justin that something was very wrong here. Shaking his head, Justin pulled out the phone book and looked up the number for the hospital closest to Brian's house. The switchboard operator answered on the third ring.

"Um, yes, I'm looking for a friend of mine, Brian Kinney," Justin explained then spelled out the last name.

"Just one moment while I look that up." Justin paced the length of his living room while he waited. "I'm sorry sir; access to Mr. Kinney has been restricted. There is no phone connection in his room. You'll need to get permission from the Pittsburgh PD to visit. A detective Carl Horvath would

be the one to contact.” She gave him that number and he thanked her before taking a deep breath and dialing again.

“Horvath.”

“Detective Horvath, I’m a friend of Brian Kinney’s,” Justin explained. “I hadn’t heard from him in some time and began to worry. So I started making some calls. When I spoke with the hospital, they told me that I would have to speak with you. Please, can you tell me what’s going on? Can I see Brian?”

There was a deep sigh, but Horvath said, “Mr. Kinney, Brian, was involved in a domestic abuse situation. His father beat him up pretty badly, before disappearing. That’s the reason we’ve restricted access to him. From what I understand the mother blames the poor kid for the whole mess and has refused to even acknowledge him. The guards on duty have told me that no one’s been to visit him. To be perfectly honest with you, that kid needs as much support from his friends as he can get right now. I’ll make a call to the officer on duty and tell him to expect you. Give him your id and he’ll let you in.”

“There are a couple other people who should be added to that list,” Justin said. “His friend Michael Novatny and Michael’s mother Debbie Novatny will want to see him as well. I promise you, between the three of us, he’ll have support. Can I ask why nobody called us to let us know?”

"No idea how to contact anyone," Horvath said. "I've been too busy with a double homicide to get to his school to try and find any of his friends, and his phone was destroyed in the attack. He's been unconscious for the last three days."

"Shit," Justin muttered. "Thank you detective. I'll be going to the hospital as soon as I can."

"Good. I'll make that call." The detective said.

Justin hung up the phone and sank into the sofa. Shit, shit and double shit.

Shaking off his worry, Justin texted Mikey. "Brian in Hospital. Will be at school in 15. Be ready to go." Next he called the diner and got Debbie. As predicted, as soon as she heard what had happened, she was raring to go see Brian. She promised to call the school and let them know that Mikey should be released. Justin would go pick him up before swinging by the diner to get Debbie.

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The uniformed cop outside Brian's room checked their IDs before letting them go in the room two at a time. Justin let Mikey and Debbie go first while he went to the nurses' station to check on his condition.

"Are you family?" the nurse asked. Justin could read in her eyes that she wanted him to say yes, even if it was a lie. He knew that they were restricted in what they could tell to non-family members.

"He's my half-brother," Justin said easily. "Please. What can you tell me?"

She smiled gently at him. "Brian has a broken wrist and several bruised ribs. Those are healing nicely and the wrist has been set. What is worrying us is the concussion he suffered. He has yet to regain consciousness. His father used a bat on him. The swelling has gone down, and there is no reason for Brian not to wake up, but he hasn't yet. The doctors are afraid that if he doesn't wake soon, that it might be an indication of brain damage. He could also slip into a coma."

Justin flinched at that. "What can we do?"

She patted his arm. "Stay with him. Talk to him. Give him a reason to wake up."

Justin nodded. "I won't be going anywhere until Brian does."

"I'll have housekeeping send up a cot," she said. "As his...next of kin...we can get around visiting hours, but only for you and only if you've been cleared by the police."

"Detective Horvath has cleared me already," Justin said. "His friend and his friend's mother are in with him now."

"Well, with your permission, I can tell them about his condition when they come out," she said. "But they won't be allowed to spend the night."

Justin nodded. "Okay." He walked back over to the door where the guard was stationed and waited for Debbie and Michael to emerge. It was probably only a few minutes later, but felt like a lifetime. Debbie had tears in her eyes, and Michael's eyes were red and puffy. Justin led them a little ways away and whispered, so as not to be overheard. "The nurse will tell you what's going on with his condition. I'll be staying with Brian. I had to tell them I was family to get any information. The nurse knows it's bullshit, but her hands are tied by hospital policy. So I'm now Brian's next of kin."

Debbie nodded. "They probably won't let us stay, but I'm glad you'll be here."

"He looks so weak," Mikey said. "His dad... fuck. He's going to wake up, right?"

Justin nodded. "He will. The nurse said he's just sleeping. He can probably hear when we talk to him, so when you go back in later, you need to make sure you talk to him. Encourage him to wake up. He needs to know we're pulling for him."

"I can do that," Mikey said.

"I'm going to go in for a while," Justin said.

"We're going to go down to the cafeteria and get some lunch after we talk to the nurse," Debbie said. "Call us if anything changes."

"I will." Justin didn't wait any longer; he strode up to the hospital room and went inside. Brian was lying on the bed, completely still. He had an IV in the back of his right hand and wires connected to a monitor which was beeping steadily in the corner. His face and body were a maze of bruises. His left wrist was encased in a plaster cast. Justin saw that Mikey had already signed it and it made him smile.

Justin sat in the chair on the right side of the bed and carefully clasped Brian's hand in his own. "Brian? It's me, Justin. You're safe now. You're going to be just fine. I'm here and I won't let anybody hurt you again. You hear me? But you need to wake up, now. Debbie and Mikey are both really worried about you."

Justin continued to talk to Brian. He told him about Mikey calling him, about talking to his mother and what a bitch she was. He told him about the detective. And when that tale was finished, he told Brian about the comic he was working on, and the painting he was doing for a show that summer. He talked about tricks he'd had, and things Brian would want to try out. He talked about the fall lines that had just been released, and told Brian about the clothes he thought each of them would look good in. He was still talking when Debbie and Mikey came back two hours later.

Then he took a turn getting something to eat. While he was gone, he made a few calls. One was to Marty Ryder, letting him know what had happened, in very general terms, and telling him that Brian would most likely not be able to start the internship next week. Marty had assured him that he had been very impressed with Brian and that they would hold the position until Brian was ready to start. He also called Emmett and Ted, to let them know where he was and what was going on. Emmett, the soft hearted queen he was, cried for the "poor, poor boy." Justin almost smiled at Emmett's predictability. Almost.

He arranged for his two friends to stop by his place to pick up a few things for him, and to drive Mikey and Debbie home later.

He went back upstairs and Debbie went to the waiting room so that Mikey and Justin could sit with Brian for a while. Then Mikey traded off with his mother. Sometime that afternoon, the housekeeping staff rolled in a fold up cot and left a stack of linens on top. The nurses changed shifts and the new nurse came to introduce himself.

Once he was gone, and Mikey and Debbie had gone for dinner, Justin leaned over to Brian and said, "Now you really need to wake up, Brian. Your male nurse is really hot. I bet you could get him to give you a sponge bath. Think of how much fun that would be."

Brian's eyelids fluttered and Justin held his breath. Brian blinked a few times, adjusting to the light in the room and then he looked at Justin. "H-how hot?" Brian's voice was raspy and weak, but he was still Brian.

Justin laughed and wanted to hug Brian. Instead he said, "Give me a second to call him and let him know you're awake and you can see for yourself."

The nurse came along with the doctor and they shooed Justin from the room while they did tests to make sure Brian's mind was working properly and assess his pain. Justin took the opportunity to call Debbie and let her know Brian was awake.

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Detective Horvath stopped in the next afternoon. "We caught Jack Kinney. He's in lock up, awaiting arraignment. The prosecutor's office will want to speak with you about your testimony, Brian."

"Is that necessary?" Justin asked. "I don't think Brian's really up for that."

Brian shook his head. "No, I'm fine. Really. I'll talk to whoever they send."

Justin shrugged. "They're releasing Brian tomorrow, assuming all his tests come back okay. He'll be staying with me for the time being, so you can let the prosecutor know he can reach Brian through me."

Horvath nodded. "I'll do that. And if Brian gets a new phone, make sure we get that number as well."

"We will," Justin said.

Horvath turned to leave, but paused in the doorway. "Can I ask you something, completely unrelated to the case?"

Justin and Brian looked at each other and shrugged. "Sure."

"That hot little redhead in the waiting area, who is she?" Horvath asked.

Brian nearly choked on his tongue, but Justin was a little better at hiding his amusement. "That's Debbie Novatny, Brian's friend Mikey's mom. I told you about her the other day."

"She single?"

"Yep," Justin smiled. "Mikey's dad died before he was born and she's been single since."

"Good to know," Horvath said with a nod and then he left.

"Oh Christ!" Brian exclaimed. "That guy was panting over Debbie. Debbie! And you! How could you just calmly answer him like that, like it wasn't the most bizarre question ever?"

"I was biting my cheek the entire time," Justin admitted with a laugh. "He seems like a nice enough guy. Maybe he'll be good for Debbie."

"And Maybe Mikey's going to kill me," Brian said. "He's not going to be happy about this at all."

Justin shrugged. "He'll get over it."

Brian nodded and was quiet for a while. Justin could tell there was something on his mind, but he waited for Brian to get his thoughts

together. "Do you really... I mean were you serious about me staying with you?"

Justin looked steadily at Brian and asked, "Would you rather stay with Debbie? She offered, but I thought you might prefer staying with me. I like having you around, Brian." Brian swallowed and nodded. Justin got that feeling that not many people had told Brian that. "So, if that's settled, I'm going to ask Horvath to go over to your mom's house to pick up your things with Debbie. That will give them a chance to get to know each other, and give Carl a chance to ask Debbie out. What do you think?"

"I think Mikey's going to kill you," Brian said. "But the rest is fine. I'd rather not go back there. Ever."

"What about your sister?" Justin asked. "Don't you want to see her?"

Brian shook his head and stared out the window. "No. She hates me as much as the rest of them. There's no reason to ever go back."

Justin sat on the edge of the Bed and took Brian's hand. "You don't need them. You have made your own family." Brian looked at Justin warily. "Blood doesn't mean shit. Debbie and Mikey are your family. They love you. They would do anything for you."

Brian nodded slowly as he absorbed the idea. "What about you? Your family?"

Justin wanted to shrug off the question, but he owed Brian more than his standard avoidance. "Emmett and Ted are my family. And now you."

Brian nodded solemnly before getting a mischievous smirk on his face. "My half-brother. Considering what we've done in your bed, I think that's a little kinky even for me."

Justin laughed and smacked Brian's arm. "They wouldn't let me stay otherwise, smartass."

"Abuse!" Brian called out through laughs. "You hit me! That's abuse!"

"Watch it, or I'll spank you when we get home," Justin threatened.

Brian's eyebrow shot up. "Hmm, I don't think you actually could. I outweigh you by quite a bit, and I have no doubt that I'm stronger, too. But that does bring up interesting possibilities."

"Brian! You are not going to spank me!" Justin huffed. "Just get that idea right out of your head. Find some twink who likes it rough if you want to spank someone."

Brian laughed. "If I do, you wanna watch?" Justin's flush was answer enough.

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"A lot of Brian's things were destroyed," Debbie said quietly the next evening. Brian was sleeping on Justin's bed, tired out from the long day of tests and getting checked out of the hospital. Justin, Debbie and Carl Horvath were sitting in Justin's living room, speaking quietly. "That bitch took a knife to most of his clothes. But we found bags of brand new clothes under his bed that she hadn't found. And most of his books were okay. Not much else could be salvaged."

"God," Justin muttered. "It's not bad enough that his father tries to kill him, but his mother wants to wipe out all traces that he ever existed. Even my family wasn't that bad."

"Bad enough," Debbie murmured as she put a hand on Justin's. "I remember how bad it got in the end. If anyone can help Brian through this, it's you."

"You got me through," Justin reminded her. "Have I thanked you for that, lately?"

"All the time, Sunshine," Debbie smiled. "We should get going. I'll stop by tomorrow after my shift and see how things are going. You'll be okay?"

"We'll both be fine," Justin smiled. "Carl, thank you for doing this. It's definitely above and beyond the call of duty."

"That kid deserves a bit of a break," Carl said with a smile. "And I got a chance to convince Debbie here to go to dinner with me this weekend, so it wasn't all altruistic."

Debbie blushed, but Justin laughed. He showed them out and went to check on Brian. The pain pills the doctor had prescribed kept him pretty out of it

when he deigned to take them, and Justin had insisted after the long day, so Brian was sleeping peacefully.

Justin went back to the bags that Debbie and Carl had brought over and recognized almost all of the clothes that he had bought for Brian less than a week ago. Another bag held some personal items, and the few books that had been spared. Brian's backpack with his school items had the strap cut but was still together enough that Debbie had been able to bring over his texts and notebooks. There were no socks or underwear, no toothbrush, no computer, nothing but the books and the clothes. It looked like they would need to go shopping again.

Justin picked up the bags of clothes and went to his closet. It was a rather large space and Justin never had come close to using it all, so it didn't take long to rearrange space for Brian's things. When he was done, Justin admired his work and realized he liked the way Brian's clothes looked hanging next to his own.

Tomorrow, he had a lot to do. Call the school to get Brian's homework was top on the list. So close to graduation and with the summer internship coming up, there was no time for Brian to fall behind now. He had also promised Brian that he would take him to get a new phone so he and Mikey could keep in touch. Justin knew it was hard for the friends to be out of contact for very long. And soon they would need to fill in the gaps in Brian's wardrobe.

It was still early, so Justin started up his laptop and went online. Some of the things Brian would need, he could order. Brian was getting around okay,

but he was still in pain from his bruised ribs and doing too much wiped him out. The doctor said another week and he would be fine to go back to school and to work. In the meantime, Justin knew Brian would go crazy if he had to stay home all the time, so he planned short trips that would get Brian out, without overtiring him.

Two hours later, Justin shut down his computer and went to join Brian in bed. As soon as he slid under the sheets, Brian rolled over and wrapped his arms around Justin, never once waking.

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"That is not another delivery," Brian said, his tone held a warning that Justin completely ignored. They had run errands on Friday morning, including stopping by the school for Brian's make-up assignments, and then spent the afternoon at home. On Friday, there had been three deliveries: the desk for Brian, which Justin had set up in one corner of the living area; the book shelf, which had gone right beside the desk; and the iphone Justin had ordered for Brian. After each delivery, Brian had protested that Justin was spending too much money on him, but Justin had ignored his protests and told him to write it down in the notebook, because he wasn't sending them back.

Now, Saturday afternoon, they had already received three deliveries and Brian was getting frustrated. The treadmill, Justin had argued, was for him though Brian didn't really buy it. Justin didn't run. But there was no way that the game system—with a dozen games—DVD player and television were for Justin. Justin didn't watch television, as his lack of ownership attested.

"Last one I promise," Justin said as he walked to open the front door. He signed for the package and was back in less than a minute. He handed the medium sized box to Brian who sighed before reaching for the knife he had placed on the coffee table after opening the last box. Brian's eyebrow shot up when he saw what was inside. It was a laptop, top of the line, with some of the latest software already installed.

"Christ Justin," Brian muttered with a frown. "I really can't..."

"You'll need it for school now and for college this fall," Justin said. "This way you won't need to borrow mine."

"God, you are so full of shit," Brian said with amusement. "Fine. But no more without talking to me first. I won't refuse everything out of pride, I would just like a say in what is important. And I don't really think the treadmill was all that important. Or the game system. And don't try to pull that shit that you bought them for you. If you had wanted those things, you would have bought them long before I showed up."

Justin raised his hands in surrender. "Okay, okay. Any future major purchases, we'll discuss. But I reserve the right to buy something that catches my eye."

"If you keep it under twenty bucks," Brian said.

"Under one hundred bucks," Justin negotiated.

"Under fifty dollars—a day, not per item—and that's my final offer," Brian said stubbornly.

"You drive a hard bargain," Justin chuckled. "But you have yourself a deal."

"You are insane," Brian said in retaliation. "You know that right?"

"I do," Justin said unrepentantly. "Now get back to your homework."

"Only if you get back to yours," Brian retorted. Justin grinned and went up to the choir loft to work.

BJBJBJBJBJ

Brian went back to school the next week and started his internship the week following. Brian was rather surprised to discover how easy it was to fall into a routine with Justin. Justin got up to make them breakfast each morning before pulling on his sweats and driving to school. Then Justin would go home and work while Brian attended his classes. After school, Brian would take a bus to the agency and work for a few hours, learning everything he could about the business that fascinated him so much. Then Justin would pick him up and they would either go out to eat or pick up take-away for dinner. Afterward, they went home and inevitably fell into bed together. Brian used every spare moment during the day to keep ahead of his homework, and the weekends were filled with more homework. But the weekends were also filled with trips to Babylon and Woody's.

There was a part of Brian that said that this was just too good to last. He never got anything good in his life, and if he did, it always turned around to bite him in the ass. At the same time, Brian wasn't going to go looking for ways to end it either. He liked Justin—a lot—and he wanted to spend as much time with the older man as he could.

Some part of him had always thought that he couldn't have a relationship. Not a normal one at any rate. He'd expected that he'd spend his life alone, going from trick to trick, but Justin was showing him that normal was overrated and that there were other options. Even if this thing between them didn't last, he was starting to believe that maybe, just maybe, he wouldn't have to spend his life alone.

Of course, just when he was getting used to this new life, everything changed again. Finals snuck up on Brian and then it was time for graduation and he no longer had school to worry about, at least not until September when he started college. Debbie and Carl had come to see him and Mikey graduate. Justin had brought Emmett and Ted, whom Brian had gotten to know pretty well over the last weeks. Afterwards, they had all gone out to dinner to celebrate.

And the next day Brian and Justin had another fight about money. Again, Brian had eventually given in. This time, Justin had insisted that Brian should accept a car as a graduation gift. Brian had won a small victory by convincing Justin that a new car was just too much, and so they had gone together to shop for a used vehicle. Brian ended up with a ten year old Jeep that he'd fallen in love with at first sight. Justin paid for the jeep, put it Brian's name, and added Brian to his insurance.

The very next week, his father's hearing was scheduled to start. Brian hadn't really talked about what had happened to anyone but Carl and the prosecutor, and he was not looking forward to having to talk about it in front of a room full of strangers and his mother's disapproving gaze. Worse, he didn't really want Justin to know. He already felt like everyone pitied him; he really didn't want to see pity in Justin's eyes.

"If you don't want me to be there, I won't come," Justin said as they lay in bed together the night before the hearing. Brian hated it when Justin seemed to be able to read his mind. "I don't want to make things harder for you."

"You make things hard, that's one of the reasons I like you," Brian teased, trying to deflect the seriousness of the conversation.

"Brian."

Brian sighed and bit his lips. "Okay, yes I'm nervous about having you there. But no, I don't want you not to come. As hard as it will be with you there, I think it would be worse if you weren't. Okay?"

"Then I'll be there," Justin said. "And Debbie's taking the day off to be there as well."

Brian groaned. "That's great. Just what I need. Debbie and my mother can't be in the same room together without causing a scene."

"Hey, your mother needs telling off," Justin said as his arms around Brian tightened. "If Debbie doesn't do it I will. The woman is a first class bitch. It still amazes me how great you are considering the crap they put you through."

"Can we not talk about them?" Brian asked.

"Okay," Justin agreed readily enough. "Let's talk about something else. I know, I can tell you a bedtime story."

Brian groaned. "I'm not three."

"Everyone could use a good bedtime story every once in a while," Justin countered. "Feel free to reciprocate whenever you want. Now, where to start? That's right; these things always start with 'once upon a time'. So, once upon a time, there was a young prince. He was doted on by both his mother and father. He had everything a young prince could want, both emotionally and in the way of personal possessions. He had every advantage in life that the king and queen could give him.

"But as the prince grew up, he wasn't exactly what the king and queen had expected him to be. He didn't want to go slay dragons or fight wars, like his father had done. He didn't want to marry a pretty princess like his mother. One day, his father cornered him in the garden in front of the royal court; they were having a very important picnic to welcome a royal visitor from another kingdom. Instead of playing manly games and telling dirty jokes with the other young men of the court, the prince looked over the royal visitor and liked what he saw. It didn't take long for the prince and the royal visitor to wind up in the prince's bedroom playing a completely different sort of game.

"The king, who had noticed his son's disappearance, went looking for the prince. When he entered the prince's rooms, he found his heir getting fucked up the ass by the royal visitor, who, by the way, was at least twice his age. The king lost his mind. Rather than confronting the very important royal visitor, who could bring further prosperity to their kingdom through a trade agreement, the king waited until the visitor had fled and beat the shit out of his heir.

"'What good does a pansy assed faggot boy do me?' the king shouted loud enough for the entire party to hear. He dragged the young prince out of his bedroom, still naked, by his hair and tossed him out of the castle for all of their neighbors and subjects to see his shame. He banished his son from the kingdom. The prince was horrified and sobbing and shivering with shock."

"Is this supposed to make me feel better?" Brian asked. "Because this story sucks."

Justin smiled sadly. "It does suck. But it's not over yet. Gotta wait for the end."

"Well, it better get happier," Brian grouched.

"The prince was left out on the steps of the castle for a very long time. Or at least it seemed like a long time to him. Eventually, however, the queen snuck out of the castle and brought the prince some clothes and a few gold coins. She told him to leave and not come back. She wouldn't be able to keep him safe if he returned. So the prince left his home and wandered for what seemed like forever. Eventually found an enchanted kingdom where everyone was like him and loved rainbows as much as he did. He wandered into a little shack of a place and met a very friendly witch with red hair who offered the prince a job and helped him find a place to live.

"The queen eventually searched out the prince and tried to help him as much as she could, which wasn't terribly much," Justin said. "He forgave his mother for her weakness, but they were never close like they had once been. But the prince found friends and a life that suited him much better than the one the king had planned for him all those years. And even though it was hard and lonely at times, he survived and he found his own young prince many years later. The end."

"Did she really try to help you?" Brian asked. Despite his complaints earlier, he knew that this was more than just a fairytale.

"As much as she was capable," Justin shrugged. "My mother is weak. She didn't hide in a bottle like yours, but she let my father dictate everything. She saved up her pin money and gave it to me every month until I graduated college. I don't think my father ever found out. If he had, I doubt she would have continued. I forgave her, but we don't really have much contact. It's too hard for her to have to choose between me and my father, so I don't make her."

"What about your sister?" Brian asked.

"She just graduated from Pitt last year," Justin said proudly. "She works for a local company in their finance division now. She keeps in touch with our parents, but they aren't close. She never forgave them for tossing me out. We try to get together at least once a month."

"I'm sorry you went through that," Brian said.

Brian felt Justin shrug in the darkness. "I just wanted you to know that you aren't alone. And that I do understand how much this hurts you. We might want to hate our parents, but there is always some part of us that feels like it was our fault somehow. But Brian, it wasn't your fault. And tomorrow isn't going to change anything between us."

Brian swallowed hard and kissed Justin's shoulder. "Thanks."

BJBJBJBJBJ

"Mr. Kinney, can you tell the court exactly what happened on the night in question?"

Brian took a deep breath; this was the moment he had been dreading. He looked at Justin, who gave him an encouraging smile and he suddenly felt stronger, more able to cope.

"I had returned from spending the day with a friend," Brian said. "We had gone shopping for clothes for my new internship which I was supposed to start the following week. I took the bags to my room to hide them. I knew that if my father saw them, he'd be pissed. Sorry, angry. I went back downstairs to get something to eat a little later. My father was in the living room and saw me. He called me to him, and I went reluctantly."

"Why reluctantly?" the prosecutor asked.

"Because I could tell he'd been drinking, and things were never good when he'd been drinking."

"Not good, in what way?" the lawyer pressed.

Brian closed his eyes to reign in his emotions. Getting pissed wt the lawyer wouldn't do anyone any good. "He liked to hit me when he was drunk. Not all the time, but often enough to make me leery of going anywhere near him."

"Go on."

"So, um, yeah, I went into the living room and my father stood up and grabbed me by the scruff of my neck and got into my face. He started shouting about some money that had gone missing. He saw that I was wearing a new shirt and tried to rip it off of me. I shouted back. I told him that I took his money to buy clothes because if I didn't, he'd drink it all away and I'd never have anything."

"Then what happened?"

Brian took a deep breath. "He smacked me around a bit. Nothing unusual there. When I fell after a particularly hard hit to the face, he started shouting about my faggot boyfriend. He meant Mikey, my best friend. He kicked me a few times, yelling for me to admit it, over and over again. So I did. I told him I'm gay, but Mikey's not my boyfriend."

"And how did he react?"

Brian snorted. "He grabbed the bat from the corner by the fireplace and used it on my head. I don't remember anything after that. I woke up in the hospital a few days later."

"Thank you, Brian," the prosecutor said and then it was the public defenders turn.

"You admit to stealing from your father, Mr. Kinney?"

Brian shrugged. "That's how I get money to pay for things. I do yard work on the weekends for some of the neighbors, but that's not enough to buy clothes and school supplies. So yeah, I take money sometimes. Dad's usually too drunk to notice."

"And you don't think that your father has a right to be angry that you would steal from him?" the lawyer pressed.

Brian glared at the man. "Most kids get grounded for taking money to buy video games or some other crap. I get the shit beat out of me for taking

money to buy necessities that my father has a responsibility to provide in the first place. So no, I don't think he has a right to be angry with me for stealing. And I don't fucking think anything I might have done or said justifies taking a bat to my head."

"Mr. Kinney," the judge warned mildly, but Brian could tell he wasn't all that upset. "Please control your language."

"Yes your honor," Brian said meekly.

"Isn't it true that you often go out for days at a time without informing your parents of your whereabouts?"

"Yes."

"Where do you go?"

"Usually to my friend Mikey's," Brian shrugged. "His mom, Debbie, likes to feed me, which is more than I can say for my own mother."

"Please stick to answering the question asked," the lawyer frowned.
"Besides Mr. Novatny's house, where do you go?"

"The Liberty Diner where his mom works, the library, the mall," Brian listed.
"I go a lot of places. Is there someplace specific you were looking for?"

"Isn't it true that you often spent the night with your boyfriend?" the lawyer asked. "The man you are currently residing with?"

"Justin?" Brian laughed. "When this happened, we had spent a total of three nights together."

"What about other boyfriends?"

Brian shrugged. "Never had a boyfriend before Justin. Never spent the night with anyone before him either."

"But you did have encounters with other men?"

"I object!" the prosecutor shouted before Brian could answer. "Your honor, I don't see how this young man's sexual experiences have anything to do with this case."

"Objection sustained," the judge ruled. "Please stick to the facts at hand counselor."

"Yes your honor," the public defender nodded. "Mr. Kinney, have you ever raised your hand to your father?"

"Once."

"No further questions."

"Redirect, your honor?" The judge nodded and the prosecutor stood up again. "When did you hit your father?"

"A few years ago," Brian said. "It was a typical skirmish, but I was finally big enough to defend myself, or so I thought. When he hit me, I hit him back. Thing was, that just pissed him off more. I realized that I might have been as big, but I wasn't as strong as my father yet. And when he locked me out of the house for three days, I realized I didn't really have any place else to go, so I stopped fighting back."

"Thank you."

And that was it. Brian walked off the witness stand and went to sit between Debbie and Justin, who held his hand and gave him a smile. "You were good up there."

"I'm always good," Brian smirked. "And when I'm bad, I'm better."

They listened to the testimony of the ER doctor who had treated Brian. They listened to the testimony of the paramedics and the police officers. They listened to the crime techs that processed the scene. The only people that didn't testify were Brian's mother and sister. They swore up and down that they hadn't seen or heard anything. Brian knew it was a lie, but there was nothing the prosecutor could do to make them tell the truth, and he was afraid of the lies they might come up with if he tried to force them on the stand.

The trial went quickly, faster than Brian had expected, and had concluded before lunch. The jury took almost no time to deliberate before returning with a guilty verdict. Justin hugged Brian when the verdict came down. Brian, who was watching his father being led away, seemed numb. He didn't even respond when his mother hissed at him on the way out of the courtroom.

"Hey, you okay, kiddo?" Debbie asked with some concern.

Brian nodded as his father was finally taken from the room. "Yeah. I think I am. I just... I didn't think I'd feel like this."

"Torn?" Justin asked and Brian nodded. "He may be a bastard, but he's still your father. It's okay to feel torn."

"Come on kiddo," Debbie said with a smile. "Let's get out of this place and celebrate the fact that you never have to go back to that hell hole. And then we're going to have a little talk about why you didn't think you could just come and live with me if things were so bad."

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"What's that?" Justin asked one evening a few weeks later. Brian was sitting at his desk going over some forms that Justin hadn't seen before.

"These came from Carnegie Melon," Brian said. "Forms I need to fill out. This one's six pages and has to do with my scholarship. This one is for meal plans. This one is for housing. Then there are the instructions for signing up for courses online and the booklet telling how to choose the best courses for my major. Then there are the freshman orientation forms. And the text book grant forms. And the forms for a parking permit. I'm not sure, but there might be forms to request permission to use the rest room as well."

"Oh."

"What?"

Justin hesitated. "Well, we hadn't really talked about what was going to happen once school starts, but I was sort of hoping you might like to stay here. Commute to school. It would save money in the long run." Justin knew Brian's scholarship only covered his academic costs, not room and board. He had to apply for loans and grants to cover the rest of the cost.

Brian raised his eyes to look at Justin. His older, confident lover looked more than a little nervous. Brian took a deep breath. What Justin was asking for was about more than convenience; it smacked of commitment. Was he ready for that? Would he ever be? In his family, commitment meant putting up with the all shit those who were supposed to love you put you through. But things hadn't been like that with Justin. Not yet at least.

"I don't know," Brian said. "That seems pretty...serious."

Justin smiled anxiously. "It doesn't have to change anything. I mean, we've been getting along great, haven't we? And we still have a great time in bed. And I'm not asking for monogamy. I mean, I think we both like going out and picking up tricks. It would just mean that you wouldn't leave when the summer's over."

"I'm not sure if I can promise forever," Brian said truthfully.

"I'm not asking you to," Justin said. "I'd just like to enjoy this while we can. Okay?"

Brian got up from his desk and walked over to Justin, who was standing nervously by the sofa. He wrapped his arms around his lover and kissed him. "Okay. I'll fill in the form for a commuter student, and get the declining balance meal plan for lunches while I'm at school. I'll still need a

parking permit though. And my grants should cover pretty much everything that isn't covered by the scholarship if I'm living off campus."

They held each other in silence for a long time before Justin leaned up and whispered in Brian's ear. "I love you Brian Kinney."

Brian looked down at Justin with fear and hope and adoration. "I... I think I might just feel the same way."

"Let me know when you know for sure," Justin smiled up at Brian. "In the meantime, do you need any help choosing your courses?"

"Sure. And then you can help me fill out the other forms. But all that can wait. I want to celebrate our new arrangement right now."

"Lead the way," Justin smiled and let Brian pull him over to their bed.

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Epilogue

Justin watched Brian sit behind his desk, yelling into the phone at some hapless employee who had obviously screwed up in some way. Justin smiled. Brian was made for this. And the fact that his fledgling advertising agency was already cutting a swath through the local market after only six months in business was a testament to that fact. Only three years out of school, and Brian was on his way to being one of the best in the business. Just like he had predicted the day they first met.

Brian hung up the phone with a slam. "That fucking moron sent the wrong boards to the client. Now, instead of nice *family friendly* presentation for their *family* run chain of restaurants, they have boards we did for a beverage company. With very suggestive images."

"You'll fix it," Justin said with confidence. "I take it our dinner date is going to have to be postponed?"

Brian glared at the phone one last time, as if he could kill the incompetent employee by thought alone. Then he looked up at Justin and sighed. "No. I can't do anything about this mess until morning. Their staff has all left for the day. Now I'm going to do the same."

"Great," Justin smiled. "I made reservations at Magnolia."

Brian rolled his eyes. "We don't really need reservations, you know. We own a percentage of the business, and even if we didn't, it's not like Emmett would ever turn us away."

"It's polite to let him know we're coming," Justin said. "Besides, he's been really busy since hiring that new chef. I think it was genius to open a restaurant serving gourmet southern cuisine. Combining his grandmother's recipes with a nouveau cuisine presentation."

"That's why we invested," Brian agreed.

"Really? I thought it was because Emmett's our friend," Justin mused. "Like when we invested in Mikey's comic book shop that will never make a real profit."

Brian flushed and bit his lips. "Yeah well... At least it's doing well enough to support him."

Justin decided to let that go. "So how's Ted doing as your CFO? Have you tried to kill him yet?"

"Came close to strangling him the other day, but I kept my urges in check," Brian smirked. "Actually, he's been great. A lot better than I would have thought he'd do after some of the screw ups he's made over the years."

"Ted's a good guy," Justin defended. "He's just got...self-esteem issues."

"Well, good thing he's got Mikey now," Brian said dryly. "They can commiserate."

Justin laughed. "Hey, don't be like that. They love each other and they are good for each other. And we are going to be late for our reservation."

Brian stood up and grabbed his suit jacket from the back of his door. He pulled it on even as he escorted Justin out of his office. They went to Brian's Aston Martin, which had replaced the jeep just last year, and left Justin's latest classic Mustang in the parking lot; he could pick it up in the morning.

Emmett greeted them at the door, "I'm sooo glad you made it. You are simply not going to believe what miracles Tony's been performing in the kitchen."

Brian eyed Emmett closely and poked his tongue in his cheek as he followed Emmett to the semi-private booth he had reserved for them. "How long have you been sleeping with him?"

Emmett flushed, completely destroying any attempt to deny such a thing. "I... Shoot, Brian! Can't you ever let me have any secrets? I swear!"

Justin laughed. "If he hadn't asked, I would have. You are just too easy to read, Em."

"Okay, okay!" Emmett huffed. He waited for them to be seated and then sat himself on the edge of the circular booth's seat. "Since his interview. I know. Totally unprofessional. But I had already offered him the job and he was just so grateful... And hot. How could I pass up the opportunity? And he's a real dream in bed too. But I stand by my decision to hire him. He's a god in the kitchen."

"I'd rather have a god in the bedroom," Justin teased.

Emmett narrowed his eyes at his old friend. "Well, not all of us have the chance to train our lovers up from infancy."

Brian smirked. "I was never an infant where sex is concerned."

"He's right about that," Justin said. "He has a natural talent that even inexperience couldn't damage."

"You two are just plain sickening," Emmett laughed. He stood up and offered them menus. "Tony's added a few new dishes. From his grandma's recipes. Did you know he's from Mississippi? Just a few towns over from where I grew up. Anyway, try one of the new dishes. They're spectacular."

He left them alone and the two men spent a few minutes going over the menu. When their waiter came by, they placed their orders and sipped on the wine Emmett had sent over.

"I found the check," Justin told Brian after a few minutes. "It's kind of pointless to pay me back now."

Brian shrugged. "I made a promise. To myself more than you."

Justin laughed. "I can't believe you kept that damned notebook all these years."

"I pay my debts," Brian said with pride.

"Even if we have joint accounts now?" Justin teased. "And my name was on the account you paid me from?"

"Even then," Brian said seriously. "I never could find a way to tell you..."

Justin smiled fondly at his lover. "I know. I've always known."

"Emmett was right in a way," Brian said. "You made me the man I am today."

Justin snorted. "That is so not true. I simply recognized the man you were becoming and snatched you up before anyone else could. Completely selfish of me, I know, but there you go. I'm a selfish bastard."

Brian chuffed a laugh. "There's not a selfish bone in your body."

"Sure there is," Justin said semi-seriously. "I'm very selfish when it comes to sharing you."

"You share me all the time," Brian smirked. "In fact, I distinctly recall you sharing me with some redheaded twink just a few nights ago."

"Ah, Yes. I'll share your body," Justin admitted. "But I'll never share your heart. That's all mine and I'm going to be a selfish prick and keep it that way."

Brian hesitated before he said, "What about... Would you share me with a child?"

Justin's eyes widened in shock. They had never discussed anything like this before.

"Because I've been thinking about it, and Lindsey and I were talking the other day..." Brian trailed off.

"What did you talk about?" Justin asked once he got his shock under control

"Well, she offered to carry a child for us," Brian said. "And in exchange we could donate sperm for her to have a child later. Then our kids could be siblings and family, and we'd still be parents. It sounds pretty weird, I know, but it makes a kind of sense if you think about it."

Justin blinked. He had thought about having a child some day, but he hadn't thought Brian was ready to even think about it yet, so had never brought it up. Now, here Brian was, not only bringing it up, but he had a plan in place and a way to make it all happen.

"You are incredible," Justin said with a blinding smile. "We'll need a bigger place if we're going to have a kid around."

Brian nodded. "Something with a yard. Gotta have a swing set. Every kid deserves a swing set."

Justin smiled at the wistfulness in Brian's voice. He didn't talk much about his childhood, but Justin doubted Brian had ever had such a luxury. "We'll spoil him or her rotten."

Brian shook his head, as though dispelling a daydream. "I never thought I could do this."

"Do what?" Justin asked.

"A relationship, love," Brian said. "A kid. I thought I'd be the worst kind of lover and father. After all, I had a pretty shitty role model. But you... you make me see myself differently. Even if we aren't the Cleavers, I'd really like to try this."

Justin laughed. "I don't think we'll ever be anything as boring as normal. But I like our way of doing things better."

"We should probably discuss that commitment stuff if we're going to have a kid together," Brian said. They hadn't really talked about it since Brian decided to stay with Justin when he started college. Even when they joined their finances and signed medical proxies, it had been more a discussion of convenience and tax benefits.

"Brian, believe it or not, we've been committed for a while now," Justin laughed. "Just because we never discuss it, doesn't make it less true."

Brian nodded. "True. But our kid deserves something a little more official than an unspoken agreement, don't you think?" With those words, Brian pulled out a small velvet box and handed it to Justin. Justin opened it to find two wedding bands. "I was thinking something very small. Just our closest friends. What do you say?"

Justin's heart melted. He may have been the older of the two of them, but somehow Brian always seemed to know how and when to take the lead. "Sounds perfect."

Brian wrapped his arms around Justin and kissed him soundly. "I love you, Justin Taylor."

Justin smiled adoringly at his partner. "And I love you, Brian Kinney."

THE END