

Truth in Advertising

by scoobygang8



I suppose if I wanted to be really mysterious and dramatic, I could say that it all started with a phone call. And, who are we kidding? This is me we're talking about, I crave drama, otherwise this whole thing never would've happened. So yeah, it all started with a phone call.

“Justin, where are you?” Daphne's voice said rushedly as soon as I picked up.

“I'm just grabbing dinner on my way home. Why?”

“There's a letter for you here from VanGard. I've got Ben and Jerry's in the freezer for celebration, so hurry the fuck up!”

I was in my second year of PIFA, which required an internship. I'd applied for a few, but this one was the only one calling out to me. It was the top company in the Pitts and their stuff was exactly the way I liked it; edgy, funny and sexy. I didn't make any show of rushing home, and pretended to wait patiently for my Thai take-out, when in actuality I was pretty sure I might say “fuck the food” and bail any minute now.

The envelope was open within 5 seconds of me getting in the door. Damn right I got in. But of course. Was there ever any doubt?

Ok, there was. Which probably explains Daphne and I jumping around like idiots before she tore off to grab the Ben and Jerry's and a couple of spoons.

We celebrated my success with the ice cream and her DVD of Pride and Prejudice. I have a deep passionate love for that movie, with the clothes and the dancing and the romance...that's probably the gayest thing about me, other than the fact that I enjoy fucking men. Anywho, I

was due to start the following Monday, so around 11 when the movie was over, Daph and I were still pretty wired, and somehow came to the decision to go dancing, since it might have been one of my last nights of freedom.

“Daph, you actually wanna go to Babylon?” I raised an eyebrow.

“YES!” she exclaimed in a pitch I thought only dolphins and maybe Mariah Carey were capable of. “Of course, it only sounds like the funnest place on earth! Flashy lights and costumes, hot horny guys...”

My God, she really was the ultimate faghag.

“Daph, you do realize that Babylon is a homosexual establishment, and in that, the hot horny guys won't have any interest in you, in fact they'll probably just wonder why you're there...”

“Whatever, it doesn't matter! We're celebrating you! Come on, get your sluttiest club clothes on and I'll see if I can find my boa...” and off she scampered.

Oh, this was going to be delightful.

An hour later, somehow miraculously the velvet rope was being pulled back to admit me and a glittery, practically-vibrating-with-excitement Daphne. Must've been a slow night.

I'd resolved to stick to dancing with Daph rather than cruising guys, since it wasn't exactly as if any other guys here would be asking her to dance, and this was her fantasy night, not mine.

“Isn't this amazing?” she squealed into my ear.

No.

“Yeah! It's pretty great!” I gave a huge smile.

In case you haven't figured it out yet, this isn't really my scene.

That is, it wasn't until I looked across the dance floor at the bar, at a tall, slender brunette that might have been the most gorgeous man I'd ever seen. And what's more, he was staring right at me, practically penetrating me with his eyes. God, it was like for that moment, there was no one and nothing else...it was really weird. But even from across the room, I could see the curve of his lips and I was having trouble breathing just from thinking about where I wanted them. I felt a bit dumb staring at him so unabashedly slack-jawed, but he kept on staring at me anyway, without any apprehension in his eyes, just an invitation.

A firm smack to my shoulder jolted me out of my thoughts. Oh, right, Daphne.

“What's your deal, crazy?” she said, looking at me like I'd just proclaimed my love for pussy.

I didn't fully realize what she meant until I realized I'd stopped dancing. “Oh, um sorry...”

“Don't be sorry, I was just a little freaked out. You looked like you'd seen the mother ship or something.”

I looked back, and I saw the back of his head as he walked away toward some other guy. Fuck.

“It was nothing” I yelled over the music, shrugging. We danced for a while before deciding it was way past our bedtime, and heading home. I didn't give the brunette another thought, and I certainly didn't wonder who he was.

I certainly didn't briefly picture him while jerking off in the shower that night.

“Blue angora, or Hollister button-up?”

I held the sweater and the shirt on their hangers side by side in front of me. Daph stood in front of me, hair pointing in seven different directions, clutching a cup of coffee and looking like a serial killer. Clearly not a morning person.

“Sometimes I wonder if being that gay is bad for your health.” She put down her coffee, walked over and slumped onto the couch.

“Ok, but that doesn't answer my question.” I called after her.

“The blue brings out your eyes. You could always wear the shirt under the sweater.”

“Good point...” I muttered.

I threw them on, combed my hair, grabbed a travel mug and my bag, and hurried out the door in five minutes. The transit system in Pittsburgh sucked a big fat juicy one, and I wasn't gonna risk being late on my first day at VanGard.

“Thanks Daph! Later!” I thought I heard a grumble that sounded like “Good luck” on my way out.

I arrived and was immediately greeted by this guy named Ted, who took me over to this guy named Marc, who was the head of the art department. He was a really nice, smart guy, and from the looks of the other people and the facilities, I could tell I was going to enjoy myself here.

After touring the art department, I was introduced to one of the partners in the agency, and clearly its namesake, Gardner Vance. He was suave, British, and I got this weird vibe like he was a gourmet chef in another life. Nonetheless, a very nice, charming man.

This “Brian Kinney” guy, on the other hand, didn't seem as much. Marc took me over to his assistant who called him up on her phone-intercommy thing.

“Brian, Marc would like to introduce you to the new intern in the art department.”

“Cynthia, what the fuck do I care about some kid who's probably the newest reject from the cast of Zoom? I'm trying to work. Call me when you have something to tell me that matters.”

I tried to keep the indignation off my face, and gave Marc a small smile, who returned an apologetic one.

“Sorry, Justin, that's...well, that's just Mr. Kinney for you. I'm sure he's just stressed over some campaign” Cynthia said soothingly.

“Oh, don't worry about it” I said with a small, jovial laugh.

Inside, I was putting “Mr. Kinney” on my list of grade A assholes.

My first week at VanGard was pretty great, actually. The work was challenging, but not overwhelmingly so, and I was kicking ass, if I do say so myself. I hadn't had a run in with the Asshat-extraordinaire yet, though I think I heard him yelling at that Ted guy once, with pretty unprofessionally colourful language.

Until one day...

“Justin, could you take these boards in to Mr. Kinney and get them approved?”

Marc handed me a stack of black foamcore, and I stared back at him with what must have been terror in my eyes. He laughed.

“Don't worry, I'm fairly sure you'll make it out alive” in a tone I'm sure he intended to be joking, but I had my doubts.

“Sure thing, Marc.” I said, trying to keep my voice from squeaking.

I walked down to his office and Cynthia buzzed me in.

“This better be fucking important.”

He didn't look up from his paperwork, but I could tell from my view of the top of his head that he was a lot younger than I thought he'd be. God, he couldn't be much over thirty.

“Um, Marc just wanted to make sure that the greens in this were alright with you, or if you wanted something lighter.” I tried to sound professional and casual, rather than like a 4th grader in the principal's office. Annnnd then he looked up. God, he was gorgeous. He had the most wonderful, sketchable jaw bone and the most intense, penetrating hazel eyes-

OH.

MY.

GOD.

It was the guy from the other night. It was the fucking guy from the other fucking night. I was pretty sure my stomach was attempting to leap out of my mouth. He looked at me confusedly, and I swear to God, I caught the faintest glimmer of recognition in his eyes, but in a flash, it was gone.

“Who the fuck are you?” he asked, less curious than annoyed.

“I-I...” he looked at me like I had waltzed into his office in a full-blown Kiss costume. I somehow managed to get my voice back. “I’m Justin, the new intern in the art department.”

He rolled his eyes. He rolled his fucking eyes! The douchebag! “Right, right, the new whiz kid. Give me those.” He held out his hand for the boards, and I edged forward and held them out at arms length. He yanked them unceremoniously out of my hand.

“You can tell Marc that if I had wanted this shade of green, I could’ve dropped the fucking copy into the nearest sewer rather than paying him one more paycheck, and if he doesn’t get his fucking act together, he and the rest of the art department will be doing ten-dollar caricatures at the carnival for a living.”

Ok, any glimmer of physical attraction I had for this guy had disappeared about four words into that spiel of his. Who the fuck did he think he was?

“A simple ‘no’ would have sufficed.”

Did that just come out of my mouth? I always was a cocky brat. And stupid. I think I actually took a step back, anticipating some sort of explosion. Instead, he just leaned back in his chair and smirked at me.

“What’d you say your name was again?” he said quietly.

“J-Justin.”

He leaned forward again and folded his hands on his desk. “Justin. Justin, get the fuck out of my office,” he said, still smirking. I abruptly headed for the door, before he called after me, “Take these with you”, holding out the boards.

“Oh, uh...” I grabbed the boards from him and hurried out.

As much as his yelling and swearing had me freaked out, I was pretty sure his calm demeanor and sexy smirk- I mean, his smirk- was a much bigger reason to be afraid. This was the eye of the storm, wasn't it?

If only I knew then what I was in for.

Brian's POV

Michael was making noises that I didn't pay much attention to while I stood at the bar, contemplating the night's conquests.

Had him.

Troll.

Had him.

He's kinda hot- oh wait, no, not with that face.

Had him.

Maybe that one- oh wait, had him, he just got a haircut.

Is that a chick? Oh God, some pathetic hag, oh look, she even has a boa and everything...I felt sorry for whoever her dancing partner was...

Actually....

Hmm. Not usually my type, but a rather fit, lithe little frame and a hell of an ass....

And then he turns around...

Oh.....

His angelic, perfect, boyish features...rather entrancing, especially when combined with the look of masked disdain...and then his friend says something and he smiles....and damn, does he ever smile...

What the fuck is this? I'm getting turned on by a smile?

And then he looks at me. He looks right at me and within a minute, his features are clouded with unmistakable lust. I've gotten that look many times, hell, many times tonight, but never like that. I couldn't even break the twink's gaze, it was like I was in a fucking trance or some shit. And then his friend yanks on his shirt sleeve and he turns back to her and it's like nothing ever happened. Too bad, it doesn't look like he'll be ditching her any time soon.

And I look to my right and....hello. Fresh meat. Not too bad, either. We don't even need to exchange words before he follows me to the back room.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't look out for him the next couple of nights at Babylon. Why not? I hadn't had him and he was hot. I was curious. Sue me.

The last thing I was expecting was for the twink to show up at my office, in an outfit that was a far cry from the muscle shirt and tight jeans I'd seen him in the previous Thursday. He was all cute and nervous, and I could see the shock on his face when he realized exactly who he was talking to. That was amusing.

Actually, no, scratch that. The *very* last thing I expected was for the little twat to talk back to me. Ooh, Kittie's got claws. Most partners in a top advertising agency would be offended by some snot-nosed little intern in his first week would already by calling them on their shit, but

I saw this for what it was; a brilliant opportunity to wield my power and put this kid in his place. Preferably in the most creative way possible. God, I love my job.

The next day I took a stroll down to the art department, and found that Justin was the only one there. Most excellent!

“Intern!” I said merrily, taking a chomp out of my granola bar. “What’s the story? Where is everyone?”

“It’s *Justin*, and everyone’s gone to lunch.” Mrowr! I sat on a stool across the table from him.

“Why didn’t you tag along with them, Jason?” I ask concernedly.

“I’ve got to get these prop art graphics done and then write Marc a memo about them and then I can go home, so I stayed behind.” He didn’t even look up from his sketching. How rude, indeed.

“What’re you doodling?” I inquire. He looks up.

“The rough prop art graphics.” he says, and I can detect a hint of “duh” in his voice, but to his credit, it seems like he’s holding his anger back. And I thought this was going to be a boring day.

“Oh, right. Is this your computer?” I asked him, examining a new macbook.

“Yes...” he said tentatively, as if I was going to steal it or something. Please.

“Is it the newest?”

“...Yes...”

“You know, I was thinking about getting one of these. Do you mind if I peruse it a bit?”

He hesitated, then gestured for me to go ahead, and went back to his drawing, silently.

“You ok, Jesse? You don't seem too happy to see me.”

“It's *Justin*,” Ooh, he was this close to steam coming out of his ears, “And I'm pretty busy, to be honest, I really don't have the time to chat with you.”

“Hmm, funny, that's not the message I was getting from you at Babylon last week...”

That got him. His head shot up and he fumbled his pencil, with such witty retorts as “I- what- I don't-”

I gave him a “continue” kind of hand gesture, imploring him to elaborate.

“Not only is that completely irrelevant, but I have no idea what you're talking about.” He said, blushing.

“Oh, I think you do.” I smirked, continuing to explore his computer. “I recognize a longing, lustful stare when I see one, Jasper, I've gotten enough of them.”

And the stammering began again, only much more indignant now.

“I cannot believe you are this unprofessional! What, so I saw you at Babylon? Most functional adults would have enough maturity and dignity to get over it and forget about it, so I really don't know what you're trying to accomplish-”

“Man, what are those called?” I interjected, completely ignoring his tirade of insults, which had only solidified my determination in my plan.

“What?” he said, baffled and clearly still pissed.

“Those things, those breakfast pastries...I have such a craving for one, and I feel so stupid that I can't remember...you know, they have jelly inside and icing...”

He looked blankly at me. “Pop tarts?”

“Pop tarts!” I exclaimed triumphantly, smacking the table with my hand. “Thank you! Oh, sorry, I wasn't listening to your rant-thingy, what were you saying?”

He let out a weird grunt/growl thing, before throwing his pencil down. “Could you just give me my fucking computer back and leave so I can do my work?” he spat.

“Oh, wow, ok.” I handed him the laptop. “You know, you should really learn to mind your manners around the boss. That's not a very good workplace attitude you got going there. Well, good luck with your prop art thingie.” I strolled out, suppressing a giggle. If he was pissed off now, give it 24 hours.

Yep, nearly 24 hours on the dot before Cynthia buzzed me, telling me Justin Taylor needed to see me, urgently.

“Send him in” I said sweetly.

5 seconds later, my door slammed behind Justin and I swear, he was actually disheveled with anger. One of his collars was sticking up and his hair was kinda messy, and I'm pretty sure I saw flames in his pupils.

“WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU??” he somehow shout-whispered, with that “I’m going to unleash the hounds of hell on your soul” kind of charm.

“Why, whatever do you mean?” I said, feigning confusion.

“Mocking me and badgering me is one thing, but fucking with the auto-correct on my word processor is another!”

I shrugged helplessly. “Again, I surely don’t know what you’re referring to, Jackson.”

“Oh, you don’t? Then explain why every use of the term ‘prop art’ in my memo to Marc was somehow miraculously replaced with ‘*pop-tarts*!’” He thrust a memo at me with many question marks hand-drawn by Marc next to nearly every sentence. I took it, and cleared my throat before reading an excerpt.

“The use of pop-tarts in Stockwell’s upcoming campaign will set his image apart from the overdone tactics used by every other politician running for mayor.”

Oh, life was beautiful.

I stifled a giggle. “You know, this is a perfect example of why you should always review your work before handing it in.”

“If I bother you in some way, if you have a problem with me, then why don’t you just tell me, or tell Marc, or hell, fire me!? It’d be a lot more productive than this!” he snarled.

“Oh, on the contrary, I would never fire you. That would take all the fun out of it, wouldn’t it?” I gave him my best triumphant smirk. He grabbed the paper back from me.

“Just so you know, this is *not* over.” He started out of my office.

“I certainly hope not.” I called after him. This was promising to be a very fun spring.

Justin's POV

Who the hell did he think he was?!?! Now, Marc thought I was either obnoxious or crazy, or probably both, and I had to try to explain to him that my auto correct had gone haywire, but of course I couldn't tell him what had actually happened.

Fucking Daphne laughed her ass off when I told her.

“Oh my God I have to meet this guy!” She squeals, gasping for breath.

“Daph! *This guy* tried to sabotage my internship and made me look like an idiot without any provocation whatsoever! He's a total asswipe!”

“Justin, come on.” she put her hand on her hip and gave me this look like I'd just claimed to know everything about football. “Sabotaged your internship? You're being overdramatic, though that's to be expected. Plus, you can't really say it was unprovoked since you gave him sass in his office the first time you met him and called him immature and unprofessional. The fact is, the guy's a genius and this is the funniest fucking thing I've heard since you got punched in the face by that crazy homeless guy.”

“Ok, a) That was a traumatic experience and I took a big risk telling you about that, so don't mock my pain.” I said defensively, pointing a finger at her nose. “b), I was *provoked* to say those things because he *was* being unprofessional and immature to the extreme, and c), It's not funny, I look like an idiot and it was totally unprofessional, and not that smart.” I took a deep breath. Daphne looked at me.

“You done?” she asked sarcastically. I nodded.

“Ok, you know what you need to do now, right?” I gave her a blank look. “Get him back. Get him back even worse and even craftier than he got you!” She was practically bouncing with

excitement. I never knew living vicariously through someone else could bring someone so much joy.

“What- No! I can't! Even if I did wanna be unprofessional and childish....which I kind do,” I muttered toward the end, “He's the boss. If I were to do anything destructive to him even in the least, he would fire my ass, no questions asked. I'd have to find something where even he wouldn't know I did it, and if he didn't know I did it, then there's no point!”

“Correction”, Daphne pointed out, “You have to find something where he wouldn't be able to logically *prove* you did it.”

I pondered that thought. “That's....that's very interesting, Daph. But what?”

She shrugged. “I dunno!”

“Oh, that's very helpful.”

“Just take some time to construct a plan... when the time is right, it'll come to you.” She patted me on the back, then chuckled yet again as she headed to her room. “Pop tarts...”

Turns out, the right time was two days later. I was dropping off some boards in Vance's office when I caught sight of Brian leaning against Cynthia's desk talking on his cell phone. Man, it was a shame he was the spawn of Satan, because he really was one of the most gorgeous men I'd seen. Regardless of any sexual attraction, because, please, that had ceased to exist after his behavior....um....what was I saying? Oh, right, regardless, I definitely would have asked him to sit for me for my art. He was an absolutely perfect subject, his strong lines and soft hazel eyes and full lips, and hey, he has the same cell phone as me-

Hey.

He has the exact same cell phone as me.

Oh, this was all kinds of perfect.

I took this information home to Daphne and after much discussion and going through her dance mix CD's from the nineties, we had fabricated a complete plan.

I was all smiles when I went into work the next morning. As if on cue, Brian strolls into the art department. The stars have aligned for me today. God is on my side.

“What's up, Mr. Kinney?” I ask chipperly. That threw him off.

“Just coming down to check out the layout for the Remson Pharmaceutical campaign. And how are you this morning, Jameson?” he smirked. I narrow my eyes at him, smirking in return.

“Do you get out the big book of baby names and look under the J's every morning just to keep stock?” before Brian could reply, I was chuckling merrily. “I'm just joking ya, Mr. Kinney. Actually...”

I turn my spinn-y chair so I'm facing Brian and rest my elbows on my knees, looking straight at him. “I wanted to apologize for freaking out in your office the other day. You were just playing a practical joke and I took it way too seriously. I really need to loosen up sometimes. I mean,” and I chuckle again, “Pop tarts? That was pretty hilarious.” I laugh again, and he laughs uncertainly, looking at me in a “back away slowly” kind of way. “So let's just forget the whole thing. I'm totally over it. You?”

He hesitates. “Uh....yeah.” Yeah, try replying to that, big boss man.

“Great! Well, I'd better get back to work. Good talk.” I turn back to the drawing board, and I can see him in my peripheral looking at me for a moment before turning to walk out.

“Oh, Brian?” He turns back, too phased to even notice I called him by his first name. “Is that your phone?” I ask, pointing to the phone on the island in the middle of the room.

“Oh...” he looks confused for a moment, and I know exactly what he's thinking. Something like “Oh, I don't remember putting my phone down, but I'm just so scatter brained by Justin being seemingly taken by body snatchers that maybe I suppose I did, because that's definitely my phone, I'm a big pompous bag of stupid.”

But all he said was “Yeah.” and picked up the phone, sticking it in his jacket pocket and walking out.

All systems go.

Brian's POV

Cynthia's giving me my brief but glowing introduction, with Mr. Remson and his team sitting across from us at the table, and already I'm bored. The guy's wearing a paisley tie. Paisley! In my mind, Paisley = dead inside, and definitely not getting laid, and I really hope that doesn't make him unable to see the advantages to marketing antidepressants with sex.

Cynthia's in the midst of her spiel when suddenly, all I hear is the chorus of that obnoxious Spice Girls song...the one with the “lover” and “friends” and “friendship never ends” thing. Oh God, it's someone's cell phone. Wouldn't it be golden if that was Mr. Remson's ringtone? And better question, why isn't anyone answering it or turning it off? It just kept repeating over and over and over again, and it was getting pretty fucking irritating.

It took me a moment to realize that everyone in the room was staring at me. Even Cynthia.

“Brian....you wanna....” Cynthia cocked an eyebrow at me. I raised my eyebrows at her.

“That is *not* my phone...” I tried not to laugh. She just kept looking at me, her eyebrow still raised. That's when I realized...the sound...was coming...from my pocket.

And I swear it was in slow motion and there was that scary violin screeching music from Psycho playing in my head, but I reached into my jacket pocket and pulled out my phone, and pouring out of it was the musical stylings of the Spice Girls.

“Wh- that- I don’t-” I stuttered. I actually fucking stuttered.

“Brian!” Cynthia hissed at me.

“Really, it’s alright, you can take it Brian,” Remson offered kindly, with only a hint of judgement.

“No no, I-”

“I insist. Please.” Remson graciously made a hand gesture toward the door.

I walked out of the board room, in a similar manner to that big guy near the end of The Green Mile, and the minute I stepped outside, I flipped open the phone and hissed “Who the *fuck* is this?”

There was a moment of silence, then- “....*Mr. Kinney? Is that you?*”

“Justin?!?”

“*Oh wow, you remembered my name for once!*” FUCK. “*What are you doing with my phone?*”

“What the hell are you talking about?? This is MY phone and who the fuck do you think you are fucking with my fucking phone??”

“I have no idea what you're talking about, Mr. Kinney. What you're holding in your hand right now is definitely my phone though. I just called it trying to find it, and you picked up. Look at how the antennae is broken off.” I held it away from my ear. Broken antennae. Shit.

“The real question is, where's your phone?” he said a little too innocently in my ear.

“If you did something with my phone, Taylor, I can assure you you'll be fired before you can finish the first verse of Wannabe.”

“What? No! You mean you don't have it?”

“I-” I instinctively felt my pants pocket. Oh God. I pulled out my own phone, and held the two identical phones next to each other. Sweet Jesus.....How?

“Oh man, you know what? You probably grabbed my phone by accident when you were in the art department this morning.”

I DID grab a phone off of the table in the art department this morn- WAIT.

“YOU told me that was *my* phone, when I didn't even take my phone out when I was talking to you!”

“Oopsie, my mistake. I can be such a scatterbrain sometimes. Anyway, I'll come pick up my phone on my lunch break. I hope I didn't interrupt anything important. Sorry for the mixup, Mr. Kinney.” **click.**

That. Little Twat.

I sauntered back in and I suffered through the rest of that meeting and I did the pitch with my face the colour of raw meat, and then I went back to my office and I sat and I waited for him.

Around 11:30, he stuck his head around the corner of my door and knocked on the open door.

“Knock knock!” he said merrily.

I looked at him long and hard. And intimidatingly, I hoped, but it didn't seem to sink in. “Sit down, Taylor.”

He strolled in and sat across from me, crossing a leg over the other confidently, giving an oblivious shrug.

“Can you give me one reason why I shouldn't fire your ass?”

He widened his eyes. “I don't know what you-”

“Don't bullshit me, Taylor, I know you planned that whole thing. Just give me a straight answer.”

The oblivious look vanished from his face, replaced by a look of condescension and confidence, and he settled back further in his chair. “I think the better question, Mr. Kinney, is can you give me one reason why you should fire me, simply because...*you* mistakenly took *my* phone out of *my* work space and put it in *your* pocket before waltzing into a meeting with Remson pharmaceuticals?”

I opened my mouth to speak before realizing I had no retort for that. The kid was completely right; there was no way of nailing him for this. After a moment of my slack-jawed silence, he got up, grabbing his phone off my desk.

“Well, if that's everything, I should definitely get back to work. Oh, and Brian...” he turned to face me at the door. “When I say it's not over, it's not over.”

“Well that's good, because it's definitely not over until I say it's over, and I say it's not over!” I retorted, hoping to God that made sense.

He nodded. “Well then we're agreed.”

“Indeed.”

“Good.”

“Good.”

And he was gone.

I...

Dammit!

Justin's POV

It took about a week for the next prank to come my way. Or at least, that's when I was made aware of it. I found a mug in the break room with my high school graduation photo on it, with “property of Justin Floyd Taylor” written on the bottom. I really hoped that hadn't been there too long, and I *really* didn't want to know how Brian had found my high school graduation photo, complete with mortarboard and diploma. And Floyd is *not* my middle name, for the record.

The good thing was, I'd managed with my adorable charm to get Brian's secretary on his side, who seemed to have an equal enthusiasm for his public embarrassment (She loved the Spice Girls thing when I confessed it had been me), and it was handy having someone with access to his office.

Retaliation time.

Brian's POV

I thought it was odd the first time. The second time, I was confused. By the fifth time I had gone to dial a phone number, had been redirected to the Gay Crisis Hotline and hung up on them, I knew it was Taylor. He fucked with the speed dial on my office phone. The highlight was when the Gay Crisis Hotline called *me*, claiming they had a policy that if they got a certain number of calls and hangups from the same number they had to call and investigate. Furthermore, they had caller ID which informed them of my name, so having some do-gooder twink saying “Brian, I think you made the right decision by calling us, and I know it's a scary one to make, but please, find the courage to stay on the line with me. Start by telling me: do you ever feel like you're alone in the world?” was not the highlight of my day.

Well played, Justin, well played. But everyone knows you don't fuck with the master. Unless of course, you're into S&M.

Justin's POV

“Justin, you left your notebook in the breakroom.” Dan handed me my green notebook with a cocked eyebrow.

“Thanks, Dan.”

I realized where the eyebrow came from when I turned it over to the front.



The best part was the repetitive “Justin Swayze” and “Mrs. Patrick Swayze” written on the inside cover in cursive.

If he thought he was getting to me, he was so, so wrong.

Playing pranks didn't come naturally to me. Luckily, I was a fan of The Office, and I was inspired by one Jim Halpert, king of pranks. I hoped to God Brian wasn't also a fan, otherwise I'd lose all credibility.

Step 1: Find two small high-powered magnets. Thank you, Home Depot.

Step 2: Buy Cynthia coffee. Well, actually, buy Cynthia AND Brian coffee, get Cynthia to give it to him, and put blue food colouring in Brian's so that his teeth turned blue, just for good measure. Yeah, that was all me.

Step 3: Get into Brian's office, and place one magnet in the mouthpiece of the phone, and the other in the cradle of the phone.

Step 4: Remove magnets at an opportune time.

Cynthia came rushing into the art department, and stopped in front of my desk, trying to appear calm and casual in front of my desk.

“Justin, Mr. Kinney has stepped out to lunch with a client, but he will be meeting with Mr. Vance immediately upon his return.” She looked at me pointedly. Perfect.

“Right. That sounds perfect. It's go time.” I said quietly. She smiled and walked out.

“Oh my God.” whispered Dan, who was sitting next to me, as he watched Cynthia leave. “You're sleeping with him, aren't you?”

I laughed it off convincingly, though something about that remark pissed me off. Dan was an idiot, anyway.

It didn't matter. If this went as planned, it would be legendary.

An hour later, I was waiting alone in the break room, when Cynthia came running in laughing hysterically, closing the door behind her.

“How'd it go?” I asked her, grabbing her by the forearms as she nearly collapsed in laughter.

“Perfect...nailed himself...right in the forehead...” she simulated someone forcibly hitting themselves in the head with a phone receiver complete with a cry of pain, before dissolving into more raucous laughter, which I joined in on.

“Did Vance see?”

She nodded, laughing. “He's still in there with him.” I let out an even louder bark of laughter, and had to grab onto the counter to steady myself.

“I'm in here to get him an icepack!” she squealed.

“Oh God...Oh God, I'm crying” I whimpered.

That was probably my best day at VanGard so far.

Brian's POV

I had people asking me about the bruise on my forehead for the next few days. I knew Justin had something to do with this, I just couldn't figure out how. I was still stewing over it one late night at the office when I ran into him in the hallway...literally.

“Gosh, sorry about that, Mr. Kinney.” he said, leaning down to pick up the folders he'd dropped. For a total twat, he still had a pretty fuckable ass. Focus, Kinney.

“Yeah, I bet.” I sneered back. He straightened back up and looked at my forehead. “Wow, did you hit your head or something?” I could see him suppressing a grin.

“Don't play the innocent, Taylor. I know it was another prank of yours.”

He headed toward the art department. “Wait, so you're telling me it's somehow my fault that you managed to hit yourself in the head with your phone?”

I followed after him into the art department which was, thankfully, empty. “If you had nothing to do with it, how do you know what happened?”

“Because I've been told by multiple people about it.” he smirked, sitting down at a drawing board and picking up an exacto-knife and ruler and going back to preparing a board.

“Bullshit.” was the best response I could come up with. He just smiled that smile of his at me and looked back down at his work.

“Sorry, Brian, you're just gonna have to deal with the fact that it's impossible to prove I had anything to do with it. Just like it's impossible to prove you had anything to do with a picture of Patrick Swayze on my notebook, or my grad picture on a mug in the breakroom...by the way, Justin *Floyd* Taylor? Really?”

I grinned. “Well, I figured Phillip is an embarrassing middle name, but just not embarrassing enough.”

His head shot up to look at me. “How did you- aah, shit!”

The next thing I knew, he was hurrying away to the sink in the corner, clutching his hand, and I noticed a couple of drops of blood on the drawing board next to the exacto-knife. Ok, lesson: no surprising him while he's holding a razor-sharp tool. Now I felt kinda bad. I looked over to him running his middle finger under the cold tap while he tried to open the first aid kit with one hand. Damn you, guilt.

Justin's POV

Great, I'd managed to slice my hand open while trying to look all intellectually superior to him. I didn't notice him walk over until his voice was right behind me.

"You ok?" he said quietly, with only a hint of sarcasm in his voice.

"Yeah, it's fine. Just a scratch." I tried to get the other clasp to the first aid kit open, only succeeding in pushing it further back on the counter.

"Here." he sighed, opening the first aid kit and pulling out one of those finger bandages. He opened it and held it out. I looked at him bewilderedly, before drying my hand on some paper towel and giving it to him. He touched my hand gently as he carefully wrapped up my injured finger, a concentrated look on his face. Hold the phone. Was he being...nice? He was. He was being nice, and tentative, and...taking care of me. Taking care of me. He finished with the bandage, but didn't let go of my hand right away. I looked at him, and saw him looking at me. The superior sneer was completely gone from his face, and it was the first really good close up look at his eyes I'd gotten, and they were a combination of all my favourite hues. That was a weird coincidence. It only lasted about 2 seconds, but it was heavy, and undeniable. Nonetheless, within the two seconds, the cocky eyebrow and smirk was back in place.

"You're really not giving up on this, are you?" he purred.

"Are you?" I countered. He snorted.

"Because you know, if I've kept count, the playing field has been leveled, so whenever you give the white flag, this'll be done." he replied, turning to leave.

"Keep dreaming, *Mister* Kinney." I called after him.

And I was left alone, to finish the boards and shake off the uneasy feeling in my gut.

I felt a bit bad that this was the first time I'd been to Lindsay's since the school year started. After all, she'd basically punted me into the art world, including getting me my first show and recommending me for PIFA. But, I'd been busy with school and my internship and whatnot, and I knew she understood.

“Dus'n!” was the first thing I heard when Lindsay answered the door; at her feet was a 2'8” brunette monster sometimes referred to as Gus, or-

“Mr. Bongohead!” I exclaim as Lindsay steps aside to let me in.

“I not Midder Bongohead!” Gus exclaimed in mock indignation.

“Oh, really? Then how come it sounds so nice when I play your head like bongoes?” I tapped his head with my hands and simulated bongo noises, much to his amusement. Oh, right, my other friend.

“Hi Lindsay”, I smiled, kissing her on the cheek.

“Hi Justin” she reciprocated. “How are-”

“Dus'n bing num num?!?!?” Gus exclaimed very loudly at our feet. I turned to Linds and muttered “Swedish berries ok?” She nodded.

“As always!” I replied to Gus, pulling out a bag of gummies and handing him a couple.

“How are you, Justin? School going ok?” Lindsay asked while leading me to the dining room. She'd already set up coffee on the table, like a good lezzie homemaker.

“Yeah, school's going great. It's been really busy, though, I'm sorry I haven't been able to visit with you-”

“Oh for goodness sakes, stop apologizing already, it's good that you're busy!” Lindsay waved her hand at me as she handed me a cup of coffee.

“Yeah, I haven't had that much time to just create on my own though, between school and my internship.”

“There's always summer. Now's the part where they stuff your brain with all the technique so that it becomes second nature and you have all of it in your toolbelt to create the art you want to create.”

“That's a much nicer way of looking at it than mine.”

Linds laughed softly, clutching her coffee mug gently. There was something so soothing about her presence, motherly yet non-judging, like I was always safe. Gus was one lucky kid. And Mel evened them out nicely with her tough-as-nails demeanor; she was the one he went out for an occasional smoke with at all the art gatherings, while they bitched about the hypocritical art snobs and cheap booze.

“How is the internship going, anyway? Where is it again?” Lindsay asked me.

“Dus'n, look!” the toddler launched himself at my legs and I put my coffee on the table to keep it from spilling while he thrust a piece of paper in my lap. It was a crayon drawing of what appeared to be a clock tower, a lamp, a christmas tree and some sort of insect.

“Da's Mama,” he pointed to the lamp, “da's Mommy,” he pointed to the christmas tree, “da's Daddy”, the clock tower, “an da's me!” he pointed to the little bug.

“Wow, Gus! That's amazing, it looks just like them!” I held it up to Lindsay. “If you're not careful, you'll have another artist in the family.”

“All the art lessons tutored by you must have paid off” she said sweetly. Gus was holding out his palms to me and stretching his fingers expectantly. I sighed and reached into my sweater pocket.

“You're only interested in my candy, aren't you?”

I handed him a few more and he ran off to goodness knows where.

Lindsay asked about my school and mentioned some shows she was working on at the Bloom gallery, when I heard the front door open. I figured it was Mel until a male voice called out.

“Where's my son?”

“DADDYDADDYDADDYDADDYDADDYDADDYDADDY!!!” Gus tore through the dining and living room to the front door. I heard them conversing in the front hallway.

“Dus'n's here!” Gus squealed.

“Your artist friend? It's been a while, huh?”

“Yeah!”

“That must be Brian” Lindsay muttered to me. I'd managed to piece that much of the puzzle together myself, the famous proxy father I'd heard so much about.

“Ah, finally we meet.” I joked.

I heard approaching footsteps, one light and quick and the other heavier and slower. Gus ran in, tugging by the hand oh my god it was my boss.

“Is Daddy!” Gus gesticulated at Brian fiercely. We gaped at each other for a moment.

“What're you doing here?” he asked me blatantly.

“I'm Dus'n.” I said, pointing to myself. He let out a laugh, and shook his head.

“You're the one who's been drawing with him and giving him num nums for the past couple of years?”

I smiled weakly as I pulled the bag of Swedish berries out of my pocket. Gus reached desperately with his free hand, and I shook out a couple more berries and gave them to him.

“You two know each other?” Lindsay said suspiciously. I knew exactly what she was thinking, and I could tell from the skeptical look on Brian's face he did too. Hey, don't look that skeptical, you nearly did me, I thought at him.

“We work together” he said pointedly. “He's an intern in the art department.”

Lindsay gasped. “Is he the one who did the thing to your forehead?”

He told her about that? “Yeah, that may have been me.” I said sheepishly.

She chuckled, “You're evil. I didn't understand why he didn't fire you.”

“He did plenty to earn it.” I assured her, looking at him. “And,” I added quietly, “I didn't mean for him to hit himself that hard.”

“Oh, I don't doubt either one” she said. “But he certainly hasn't hesitated to wield his power over others before. He must want you around for some reason or another.” I didn't miss the mischievous look in her eye. I looked at Brian, who was looking at the floor.

“Hey Sonny boy, wanna go try out your new swing set?” Gus tore off, giggling, and Brian followed after him.

“So you're the famous intern?” Lindsay asked me, smiling.

“I can't believe I never made the connection...he's my boss at VanGard...what do you mean famous?” Was he making fun of me to his friends or something? The bastard.

“He mentioned the phone thing when I asked about the bruise, and I asked why anyone would do that and he mentioned he had started a battle of office pranks with one of the interns. As I said, I'm really surprised he didn't just fire you. I mean, I know Brian. If you had actually bothered him in any way, he would have, no matter how good you were. He doesn't put up with shit like that.”

I scoffed. “If I don't bother him, then why does he feel the need to make my life a living hell?”

She snickered. “It sounds like he's enjoying it more than anything else. In fact...if I didn't know better, I'd say this is his weird twisted way of flirting with you...except he's never really been known to flirt.”

What? What?? “Are you serious? How could you say Brian doesn't flirt? I thought he was a walking sex God or something.”

“Exactly” she sipped her coffee. “That's why he doesn't need to. Men just gravitate towards him, and he takes his pick. I mean, have you seen the guy?”

I looked at the table cloth. “Yes. Yes I have.” Lindsay smiled knowingly.

Lindsay and I got back to talking art for another hour or so, before Gus came tearing back inside, sans Brian, covered in mud.

“Mommy, I fell!” He held out his arms triumphantly to demonstrate his filthiness.

“I can see that, Gus. Where's Daddy?”

“He sucking fire.”

“Smoking” Lindsay informed me quietly. “Alright, big guy, let's get you cleaned up. Justin, do you mind if I abandon you for a couple minutes?”

“Not at all.”

She wandered off with the muddy Gus. After a minute of sitting at the table, I got up and wandered out to the back porch. Brian was sitting there, his jeans and the front of his shirt smattered with mud, smoking a cigarette.

“Bum a smoke?” I asked tentatively. He looked up at me, assessing the situation, then handed me a cigarette. Even lit it for me.

“So” I said, taking a puff. “You're Gus' Dad?!” I said incredulously.

He smiled and nodded, and added “And you're Dus'n, with the candy and the drawing. He talks about you sometimes.”

That made me smile. “He talks about you all the time.” I took another drag. “So how exactly did you manage to completely coat him in mud?”

“That.” He pointed with his cigarette to an enormous mud puddle just to the right of the swingset. “I swear to God, I turn around for one second...I bet he told you he fell, right?” I nodded. “Yeah, more like took a running belly flop into the mud puddle and rolled around oinking. Fucking kid.” He was chuckling lightly, and I didn't miss the pride glistening in his eyes. Were Brian Kinney and I having a conversation? It seemed a bit easier than it should have been.

“I wouldn't have pegged you as the family man, Brian.”

“Me neither.” He agreed. “I was just the sperm donor. Or at least, that was all I was supposed to be.”

“So what changed?” I prodded. He shrugged.

“He was born, and...I dunno, things were different than I thought they would be.” He rolled his cigarette between his fingers. I smiled.

“You loved him.”

His fingers stopped moving. He sighed. “A knack for fatherhood doesn't really run in my family.” he added casually, but the weight of that statement wasn't lost on me.

“I don't think it's a trait that's inherited, Brian. For example, my Dad disowned me when I was sixteen for being queer and kicked me out of the house, but I don't think that's something I plan on doing to my kid one day.” He was looking at me. I looked away, and inhaled deeply from my smoke.

“That's fathers for you.” He added, chuckling bitterly while smoking his cigarette.

I studied him for a moment, the look on his face when talking about his son, his expensive clothes covered with mud that he hadn't even thought to complain about...

“You're a good Dad, Brian.”

“You don't know me, Taylor.” he countered quickly. I smiled.

“But I know Gus. He's the coolest kid I know, and you're his idol. So you must be doing something right.” I decided that was enough “on a very special episode of *Blossom*” for one day, so I stood up and stubbed out my cigarette. “Thanks for the smoke.” I called over my shoulder as I headed back inside.

Brian's POV

Imagine my fucking surprise when I decided to spend my Saturday afternoon with my son, and the intern was sitting at Lindsay's dining room table. I came pretty close to laughing out loud when I made the connection, but I was pretty glad that I didn't. Fucking Lindsay and her wise-ass comments about keeping Justin around. My job could be boring as hell, was it such a crime for me to have something (someone) around for my amusement? Besides, it was true, he *was* doing fucking amazing work, it'd be stupid for me to fire him...

Anyway, I figured that was my cue to exit. I took Gus to the backyard and pushed him a few times on the swing set. I thought back to everything I'd heard about Justin over the past couple years as Gus swung back and forth and giggled at me. Whenever Gus brought me a picture he'd drawn of me (which always looked like a big clock for some reason) he'd always talked about how he'd drawn it with his friend Dus'n. Lindsay mentioning this extraordinary young artist who had been planning to go to Dartmouth until Lindsay introduced him to PIFA, who had- oh shit, he was the one who'd drawn that portrait of Lindsay and Gus in her bedroom. I didn't like those maudlin sketches that people always had of old men feeding birds on the street, and women nursing their babies, but that one I'd always thought was ok, because it somehow really looked the way they looked together. I'd been looking at that picture for years. I remembered sitting with Lindsay on her bed while she held that sketch, her face tear streaked because-

Holy shit.

Justin was the one who'd been bashed by that homophobe at his high school prom. The one who'd been in a coma, whom no one had known if he was gonna live or die...shit, I'd even seen a picture of him in the fucking paper. He'd looked different then, so young and happy. I remembered looking at that photo, and even feeling a pang of sadness for him myself, which wasn't normal. I always thought of myself as

one of those people who could read people like a book, but I never would have thought the kid had been through something like that. I thought I held the torch for having a shitty childhood and getting through it, but...Shit, he was a strong motherfuck-

I was jerked out of my thoughts by a loud splash. Gus was laughing loudly, and I cringed as I looked over. He was rolling around in the giant mud puddle.

“GUS PIGGY!” he proclaimed, oinking and giggling. Lindsay was going to have my balls for this.

I walked over to the edge of the puddle.

“Well that's just beautiful, Gus” I drawled. “You know your Mom's gonna blame me when she has to do your laundry.”

He ignored me, of course, and leaped from the mud to throw his arms around me in a bouncing hug. Great. My fucking new CK jeans, I should know better than to wear designer clothing before coming here....then again, I don't think I own any non-designer clothing. I patted him resignedly on the head, then made him take off his shoes before going inside to get cleaned up. I needed a smoke.

Within minutes, he was standing next to me, asking for a smoke. He practically looked different now that I knew. How could he be so normal?

As we talked in what could be considered our first actual conversation, I retracted that statement. He wasn't normal. Not at all.

Shit, this was getting weird.

I got the phone call 5 days later, while one guy sucked my dick and another ran his tongue across my nipples and jerked himself off. Mom's voice was stern, but I could hear a slight quiver as she told me when the funeral was, and I told her I'd book it off work, and be by tomorrow night to help pack up Jack's things. And then I tried my hardest not to lose my hard-on, and focus on the two naked men in my bed. There was no fucking way that fucker was messing with my sex life, even if he was...dead....

Oh Christ.

Work was shittier than average the next day, especially since it was the second last place I wanted to be. The very last place I wanted to be was where I was heading that night. In the middle of a bitch of a finance issue, Taylor knocks on my door.

Justin's POV

I saw him twice in the next few days, and after the first time, I could tell things had changed. He was totally gonna let things change and get weird just because we'd actually had a fucking conversation. I anxiously awaited his next prank, but it never came. Neither did the teasing, or calling me by the wrong name. I passed him in the hall on Monday, and he just nodded and said “Taylor” like a fucking work associate. A couple days later, he came into the art department to talk to Dan, and I was hoping he'd wander over to my desk and ridicule me in some way...wow, did I just say hoping? I was *expecting* him to wander over to my desk and

ridicule me in some way. He called my name from across the room and I looked up expectantly, and he just said “Good job on the eyeconix campaign” and left. What the fuck?

I thought about spicing things up with some uber-prank, but that would be stupid and childish, since he was the one who had to get his revenge on me for the last one.

I'd had enough. I was confronting him on his wussy backing down on the prank war. I said once, it wasn't over until I said it was over, and he said the same, and he had yet to say it was over.

I knocked on his open door.

“What?” he snapped, without looking up.

“Mr. Kinney?” I said. He looked up, and with an annoyed look on his face, he gestured for me to come in, and went back to whatever he was reading over. I closed the door behind me.

“What is it, Taylor? I haven't got time to chat.” still looking down at the files. I sat across from him, crossing my legs.

“Why haven't you been pranking me?” I asked bluntly.

“Are you fucking kidding me?”

I shrugged, and tried to continue with confidence that was dwindling. “We had an agreement. Now, I understand if you feel you've been defeated, all you have to do is say so. But, even though I've got an unbeatable prank up my sleeve, it would demonstrate a lack of sportsmanship if I pranked you twice in a row, so I feel it's necessary for you to do your worst.”

He hung his head frustratedly and threw his pen down on the table. “God, Taylor, do you hear yourself? You sound like a fucking eight year old. This is an office, a professional company, and I'm a fucking partner in the company, your boss, not your fucking rival schoolmate. Now, I excused your acting like a child for a while because you basically are one, and for all your immaturity you're doing a good job at your position, but I'm done with it, so you can either act professional or go back to fucking art school, do you understand?”

I gaped at him. Who did he think he was? Who started this whole thing? Oh, no fucking way was I being belittled like that by an asshole like him.

“You can't be serious, Brian. I'm immature for *my* age? Need I remind you that you're the one who started this whole thing, and went through a lot more trouble and invaded my privacy multiple times to pull pranks on me and try to sabotage my internship? Jesus, don't call *me* immature, I mean look at yourself! You're a thirty-something-year-old ad-exec with a son, who's resorted to pulling immature pranks on a student intern because you know I can't do anything to stop it!”

“And need I remind *you* Taylor, that whatever your personal opinion of me, this is your boss you're talking to, and you should be gone by now with all the shit you've pulled, so why don't you get the fuck out of my office and get back to your *job* before I fire your ass?”

I stared at him, shock likely plastered across my face. Did Brian just threaten to fire me? Like legitimately? After...everything...I shook my head at him, and got up and walked out. I didn't slam the door, because that would be fucking *unprofessional*. Asshole.

As I walked back into the art department, Marc caught a look at my face, and said concernedly, “Jesus, Justin, are you ok?”

I shook my head dismissively. “I'm fine.” I plunked myself down at the drawing board. I stared at the blank piece of paper that was supposed to become a layout for the final eyeconix boards, and I couldn't figure out where to start.

Justin's POV

About an hour later, I hadn't gotten much farther in my layout, when Cynthia came in and was talking to Marc, who was across the table from me. So it's not like I was eavesdropping or anything, they were right there....anyway.....

“Marc, Mr. Kinney needs the boards for Eyeconix today, preferably before four.”

“Brian told me he wouldn't need them until tomorrow!” Marc said, slightly flustered. Yeah, that sounded like Brian, just doing what he wanted without any consideration for anyone else. And shit, I'd barely made enough progress to have them done for tomorrow!

“Well, that was the case, but he's going to be out of the office tomorrow due to...family matters” Cynthia said quietly.

Huh?

“Family matters, there's one I haven't heard” snickered Marc bitterly. Yeah, you tell her, Marc. While you're at it, tell *Mr. Kinney* where he could put the boards for Eyeconix as far as I was concerned.

“Actually Marc, his father died last night. The funeral's tomorrow.” Cynthia said with just a hint of venom in her voice (I could always tell that she and Brian were friends on some level).

Wait.

His...Dad....

Oh shit.

His Dad was dead, and he came to work anyway, and I waltzed in whining about playing pranks on each other, and called him immature, and stormed out, and I was sitting here thinking *he* was the douchebag?

And it was his Dad....and he's sitting in there with no one right now, trying to work while his asshole father's lying in a morgue somewhere, I thought...I couldn't even imagine...

So, I'm a total shit.

And I have three hours to get these boards done.

Brian's POV

God, I can't express how much I didn't care about fucking Eyeconix at that moment (what a stupid name, anyway). It was nearing 4, and if I didn't get the boards by 4:05, I was probably going to fire someone, because I needed to get at least one drink in my system before heading to Mom's house at 6:30 and I'd be damned if I was gonna be stuck here because of some slow art department employees.

I'd abandoned my desk and my shoes, and was now sitting sock-footed on the couch in my office, one foot propped up on the edge of the seat, flipping through the numbers for what seemed like the thousandth time. Finally, at about 3:45, there was a knock at the door. I grumbled an invitation to enter, and- surprise!- Justin saunters in with the boards and a tray of Starbucks. The faint glimmer of jealousy at his coffee was overtaken by the immense desire not to see him right now. I'd been a downright asshole last time I'd seen him, and when he left I figured that was the nail in the coffin of any hope of amicability between us. I was prepared for him to shove the boards in my face and leave, and that was probably for the best.

“Here are the eyeconix boards you asked for” he said quietly.

Oh God, this was even worse. He wasn't even mad at me, he'd gone back to the scared little intern he was when he walked in here that first day. I looked him in the eye, with as much enthusiasm as I could muster, and thanked him. What he did next was unexpected. He sat down shyly next to me on the couch, and watched as I examined the boards.

“Are they what you asked for?” he asked tentatively.

“They're great. It's really good work, Taylor.” Why the hell did my voice sound so tired?

He nodded. He looked me up and down, inspecting me. I hated it. He voiced exactly what I was thinking:

“You look like shit, Brian.”

I raised an eyebrow at him.

“Mr. Kinney” he corrected.

Oddly enough, that comment coming from him didn't bother me as much as I thought it would; on the contrary, it coaxed the ghost of a smile out of me. He reciprocated, and then handed me one of the big cups of coffee.

Why the hell was he being so nice to me?

“Thanks.”

“Anytime.” he said softly, and a corner of his mouth turned up. I took a sip, and tasted a very familiar but unexpected bitterness. I must have visibly winced a bit, because I swear I saw him blush.

“Justin, is there whiskey in this!?” He blushed a little bit more, grinned a little bit more, and muttered,

“Maybe.”

Ok, this was spooky. How did he know exactly what I needed better than anyone else, when he didn't even know what was wro-

Oh.

“Cynthia told you, didn't she?” I muttered. He looked at his hands folded around his own coffee cup.

“I overheard. I figured you could use it.” He gestured at my cup of coffee. I swear to God, I don't get the urge to hug very much, but at that moment I really had to keep myself in check in order to not throw my arms around him in gratitude. Instead, I settled for the snide remark.

“That's pretty risky behavior for the workplace, Taylor, spiking your co-worker's coffee.” I smirked with all my might, which probably just came out as simpering.

He scoffed. “I guess you should just fire me, then.”

Ok, I deserved that. I stared into my Irish coffee for a moment, then came up with “I was an asshole.”

I felt him touching my shoulder, and looked up into his eyes. He had a small, comforting smile on his face.

“Yeah, you were.” I snickered at his bluntness. It was kind of adorable, really. “So was I” he continued. “But at least you had reason to be.”

I tried not to lean into his touch. This was getting a little too comfy for my liking. I stood up and went back to my desk, placing the boards across it.

“Well, you should be heading home, everyone else has. Thanks for the coffee.”

“Um, Brian...” Justin said my name uneasily, and it made me nervous as to where this was going.

“I still have a whole bunch of work to do for school, and it's too weird doing it in the empty art department...” He looked up at me hesitantly, and continued, “Would it be alright if I stuck around and set up camp in here? I won't bug you, provided the sound of a pencil on paper doesn't annoy you.”

I tried to come up with a reason to say no, for probably a good five seconds, before I realized I didn't even really have any urge to say no. So, I just shrugged and sat down at my desk, and continued working. He unpacked his bag, and within thirty seconds I heard the scratching of his pencil across the page (it was oddly soothing), while I gulped my coffee. When I looked up, he had this look of complete concentration on his face, like he was performing brain surgery, like what he was doing was the most important thing in the world right then. He even had the tip of his tongue wedged between his teeth, kind of like when Gus is trying to build a tower with his blocks without knocking them over.

He seemed to have everything figured out. How was that? He'd been attacked, and abandoned by his Dad, and he really seemed to be ok with all of it, with himself. He'd had the courage to stand up to his father that I'd never had. I didn't move out of that fucking house until I went to college, even if I did spend most of my time hiding at Mikey's. God, I couldn't even tell my Dad I was gay. Where did this unassuming, innocent-seeming white bread kid keep all that strength hidden?

“So, are you glad you told your Dad?” I blurted it out before I even realized it. Fucking whiskey. I was sure he'd ask me what I was talking about, and I'd just tell him to forget it, but somehow, he just sighed, put down his pencil and looked up at me.

“For a while I regretted it, mostly while I had to work to pay for a studio apartment while studying for my SAT's.”

Oh, for fuck's sake. Was there anything that could bring this kid down?

“I take it from you asking that you never told your Dad” he said softly. I cleared my throat and adjusted my papers as I shook my head.

“Well, I'm happy with where I am right now. I got through what I had to get through, without his help, and without compromising who I am. I think that's ultimately what matters, so as long as I've done that, I don't have anything to regret. And Brian...” He waited for me to look up. I eventually did. “From the looks of things, it doesn't seem you have anything to regret either.”

He held my gaze for a long moment, until I was the one who felt the need to break it. I looked back down at the file in my hands.

“You're rather eloquent when I've been drinking.” I muttered. He laughed, and went back to his drawing, back into the comfortable silence.

Justin's POV

I was just about done perfecting the sharp curve of his jawbone when he dropped his pen with finality. I knew he'd noticed I was glancing up at him every once in a while, and I didn't know which of the reasons he might have guessed would have been the worst. I hadn't wanted to leave him alone, but I knew it was no use offering him a shoulder to cry on or someone “if he just wanted to talk”. So I sat and sketched, and halfway through my sketching I realized- he was, if inadvertently, sitting for me. Anyway, he dropped the pen and I could tell something was up.

“Listen...I- I just-”

He was struggling with words, which must've been a first. I was getting more and more nervous by the second.

“I'm not the most-”

Where was this going?

“I fuck a lot of guys, I'll be the first to admit-”

What. The fuck?! I'm sure the look on my face mirrored the thoughts in my head. Wherever I thought this was going, this wasn't it.

“But I don't fuck co-workers. Ever.”

I stared at him.

“Alright?” he looked at me as if he'd just proclaimed his undying love for me or something, and I'm pretty sure this was the polar opposite of that. I stifled a snicker.

“Alright.” I answered matter-of-factly, and went back to my drawing.

I'm sure this random outburst of a lack of attraction to me would have been somewhat offensive to anyone, in any other situation. I however, was merely amused, because it seemed to me that the only person he was trying to convince was himself. Nice try, Brian. You totally want me.

Oh...wait a second...

Oh dear.

This was not good.

Justin's POV

Lindsay was taking me to tour a gallery where there would be a student art exhibition that I was being considered for. We stopped at this diner on Liberty Ave. for lunch beforehand that I'd noticed, but never been in before.

“So, how many artists are gonna be in this thing?” I asked her as we sat down.

“Oh, five, maybe six” she replied, shrugging. Five or six?!

“And how many students are they choosing from?” I asked apprehensively.

“About a hundred, I'd say” she said just as flippantly. She must have sensed my panic, and placed a hand on my arm. “Don't worry, Justin, you're a shoe-in. Your work is amazing. And I wouldn't say that if I weren't sure of it.”

“Hi, honey!”

I looked up at the loud voice addressing Lindsay, and I was surprised to see Debbie Novotny cracking her gum looking down at a notepad.

“Deb?” I asked incredulously.

“Yeah, hon, what can I getcha?” she asked, not looking up from her notepad. Hmm. Well it had been nearly two years.

“Um, I'm not sure if you remember me, I'm Justin. Justin Taylor?”

When Debbie had heard about my bashing from Lindsay and on the news, she organized rallies with PFLAG, came to the hospital to visit, and brought me food from “her diner” which I suppose would be this place. Despite the blinding qualities of her wardrobe, she'd always made me feel cared for and her presence had been comforting.

She looked up, then reached out and smoothed the hair out of my face. “Holy shit, Sunshine! I didn't recognize you under all that hair! Oh, honey! Where have you been hiding yourself all this time?!” She smacked my cheek affectionately. Or, at least what I think was affectionately, it kinda hurt.

“PIFA, mostly” I grinned, and looked over at Lindsay, who was smiling amusedly.

“Justin is interning at VanGard this semester.” Lindsay said with a significant eyebrow-raise at Debbie.

“VanGard? Really? So I assume you're acquainted with Brian Kinney then, eh?” she said, with just a hint of exasperation in her voice.

“Brian? Um, yeah...how do you know him?” I asked, trying to sound casual. What am I saying, trying to? I was casual, because there was nothing to be non-casual about.

“Michael, my son, is Brian's best friend. Have been since they were fourteen.” she turned back to Lindsay. “Oh, that reminds me, you're still coming to dinner on Sunday, right?”

“Wouldn't miss it. And I'll bring Gus if you'd like.” Lindsay replied. Debbie smacked me on the shoulder. Hard. Why'd she have to do that?

“Sunshine, why don't you come along too? It's a bit of a tradition, a big Italian dinner at our house every Sunday night. I make a mean cannelloni, and you're practically family anyway! Provided, of course, that you're willing to risk the possibility of sitting through dinner with your-” she cleared her throat- “boss.” What was she insinuating?

“Oh come on, Deb, what are the chances of Brian turning up at the family dinner?” Lindsay scoffed.

“He turns up every once in a while” Debbie reassured her. “Anyway, it's possible.”

A family dinner with Brian? I'd have to be crazy to-

“Sure, Deb, I'd love to!” I answered.

Mouth, what are you doing?! Brain says no, Brain says no-

“Great! 7 O'clock sharp, Sunday, Lindsay will give you directions. So good to see you again, Sunshine. I'll get you a burger.” and with that, she hurried away.

Noooo! Bad idea! What was I thinking? Maybe this was like Invasion of the Body Snatchers or something...except I'd never seen that movie, so maybe I was just being stupid.

“To be honest, I'm a little surprised you said yes.” Lindsay said confidentially, leaning over the table. “I thought you and Brian didn't get along.”

“Uh...eh....it's complicated.” I replied, before realizing how bad that sounded.

“Uh oh...” she groaned. “It's complicated, now? Wanna tell me about it?”

“There's really nothing to tell, I'm just not sure whether we do get along or not” I tried to simplify. Mission failed.

“You're not sure...” Lindsay sighed. “Justin, listen. Brian's a wonderful guy in his own way, and you're wonderful in a much more...obvious way, but he's not...he...” I could tell she was searching for words that were kinder than what she was trying to say.

“He's a slut?” I offered. She smiled and nodded imperceptibly.

“Well, that's a bit more blunt than I would have said it, but...he's not the type to settle down, or get into relationships or...care about other people. I mean he does, but he won't admit it, and...he's pretty complicated, but altogether-”

“Lindsay.” I interjected. “I'm not trying to date him or anything. There hasn't even been any indication of anything like that at all...he just...I...I dunno. I don't know if he's my friend or my boss or my office enemy or what.”

“Ah, I see so he's been friendly with you...”

Friendly? I dunno... “I...guess so...sort of...”

She nodded. “Listen, Justin, I know this sounds...well, anyway, just don't let him use his power over you or anything...he's one of my best friends, but he can be a bit manipulative at times, and like you said, he can be a bit...”

What was she talking abo- oh, what?!

“No, no, Lindsay, he wouldn't!” I shook my head furiously.

She shrugged and raised her eyebrows. “There isn't a lot Brian wouldn't do...”

“No no, he wouldn't. I mean, he won't. He even told me himself, he said outright, 'I don't fuck co-workers, ever', not that I did anything to make him think I wanted to, but we were talking about his Dad and he just blurted that out...” Oh God, now I was rambling. Oh God, and now Lindsay was looking at me like I was a crazy person.

“He talked to you about his Dad?” she asked quietly.

I nodded and shrugged. “It was just after he died, I bought him coffee.”

She didn't say anything else. She just furrowed her brow and stirred her straw in her drink. After a moment she just let out a “hmm.”

“What?” I prodded.

“Oh, nothing, he just doesn't talk about his Dad much...or at all...” She looked up at me, and she had a slight ghost of that knowing smile of hers, and shrugged. “Anyway, I guess he's not planning on doing anything if he said that. Now, where are those cheeseburgers? I'm starving.”

And that was it. Something I had said had ended Lindsay's rant just like that, which was fine with me, except...

I dunno, there was something unsettling about how she looked...like she suddenly had some secret about me, or him, or us...

Eugh.

Brian's POV

For fuck's sakes, what is the thing with people just walking into my apartment without knocking? If there is one person's apartment who people shouldn't just barge into, it's mine. And yet, people treat it like a fucking open house or something.

Yeah, I was watching Rebel Without a Cause (luckily) when Lindsay strolled in with Gus in tow. With Gus!! What kind of parenting was that?

“Look who it is, Gus!” Lindsay pointed and the toddler launched himself across the room towards my calves.

“Hey, Sonnyboy!” I picked him up and mouthed “what the fuck” to Lindsay.

“We came by to see if you could give us a lift to Debbie's Sunday dinner” she said jovially, grinning like the cat who got the cream.

“Don't you have a car of your own?” I asked with a big fake smile on my face.

“Well yes, but I figured we might as well save on gas if you're already going.”

“Who said I was going?” I scoffed as Gus yanked on my ears playfully. I gently swatted his hands away and he giggled.

“You haven't been to the last few, so I thought maybe it was about time you'd turn up. Besides, your friends will be there, your son will be there, your...intern will be there...”

That got my fucking attention. I looked at her blankly.

“Justin's gonna be at Debbie's Sunday dinner?” I went for a sarcastic tone. She nodded.

“Why the fuck would he be there?”

“Debbie invited him!” She said as if this was a pleasant little bit of news. “Anyway, I'm sure he'll be happy to see Gus...gosh, it almost seems like he's been seeing more of him than you have.” She raised her eyebrows at me. Oh for fuck's sakes...

“Fine, whatever. You're lucky I happen to be starving.” I put Gus down to get my jacket. Grabbing my keys, we all headed downstairs and out to the car.

“If it's any comfort, I'm sure he'll be happy to see you too.” Lindsay grinned.

“Gus?”

“No, Justin.” she rolled her eyes at me.

“Why the fuck would he be happy to be having dinner with his boss? And why the fuck would that be any comfort to me? It's not like I wanna fuck some intern from my work.”

“I dunno, Brian, I think he's pretty attractive. And he's not a complete asshole, you know.” she drawled at me, still wearing that shit-eating grin. What was this all about?

“I didn't say he wasn't attractive, and I didn't say he was a complete asshole, I said I don't wanna fuck him.” I clarified.

“And that's not unusual for you?” she asked, “seeing a gay man whom you find attractive who's relatively tolerable to be around and not wanting to fuck him?”

“Look, I told the kid I don't fuck people I work with.” I simplified, exasperated. Thankfully, she refrained from giving me the lecture on swearing in front of Gus.

“Why'd you feel like you had to tell him that?” she countered. Fuck. I couldn't come up with a simple answer fast enough.

“You like him, don't you?” She damn near giggled. God, I might have to kill her.

I laughed. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

“You do. I can tell. And Brian, I gotta say, I think he's good news.”

“You can't tell shit, because I don't *like* him, that's fucking ridiculous.” I fumbled with my keys in the car door.

“Why is that ridiculous? It may be a bit dusty from lack of use, but last time I checked, you have a heart.” she smirked. A heart?! She really didn't know me as well as I thought she did.

“Are we really having a conversation about my heart? This is me we're talking about.”

“But if you care about him, you should tell-”

“For fuck's sake, Linds, would you shut up about the fucking intern? You sound like some giddy teenage girl.” I didn't mean to sound that pissy. She shut up.

Great, now I was in a really bad mood.

Justin's POV

I arrived at Debbie's on time, and the only people I knew there were her and Mel, and that guy Ted from the office that I'd met about twice in total. Then there was Michael, who seemed nice, if a bit whiny, and Emmett, this tall flamboyant guy who seemed to have taken a liking to me in a very “mother hen” kind of way. Everyone was really friendly, and I was beginning to think that the evening would turn out well even if Lindsay and Gus never actually did show up.

About two seconds after I thought this, the front door opened and I heard Lindsay's soothing voice and Gus' excited shouting and...a man's grumbling. Yep, Brian was here for sure.

“We're in here!” Debbie practically screamed from the kitchen, where we were sitting. They all walked in, Brian carrying a dancing Gus.

“Brian?! What are you doing here?” Ted asked incredulously.

“I believe I was invited” he drawled, pulling up a chair for himself, and a chair with a phone book on it for Gus.

“Hello munchkin!” Debbie cooed at Gus. He giggled as she poked his nose, and he crowed out “Hi Auntie Deb!” I will never understand how a kid that friendly is the son of Brian Kinney.

“So does this mean since Gus is here, we can't talk about cock?” Ted droned, to which Gus replied exultantly, “cock, cock cock!” bouncing up and down in his chair. Lindsay groaned and Brian laughed triumphantly.

“Look at that, he takes after his old man after all!” he snickered.

The night was surprisingly non-awkward considering the circumstances, but that could have been because Brian hadn't said a word to me the entire night, or acknowledged my presence. He didn't even seem surprised when I was sitting in his best friend's mom's kitchen, so he must have known I'd be here. I stuck to conversation with Debbie and Emmett, and studying Brian from afar (ok, 6 feet away). It was interesting watching him outside of work, teasing Michael and talking to his son. He still seemed like kind of a shit-stirrer, but there was an affection behind it. I tried to focus on Emmett's tales of his teenage years in Hazel...something, Mississippi, something about chickens and Aunt Lula's pie...

The conversation got a bit more uncomfortable when Mel started talking to me.

“So Justin, how are you enjoying working at VanGard?” she asked politely. I avoided Brian's gaze and stared at my plate as I answered.

“It's really good, the people are nice, and I've already learned more than I would in a semester at PIFA.”

“You know, we've got an intern in our office, Tom, he's about your age, really nice guy...”

And I care because? “Oh, really?” I glanced over at Brian, who was twirling his spaghetti on his fork like it was the most fascinating thing in the world.

“Yeah, cute too. And single.” Oh for God's sake...

“Is that right?” Shut up, Mel. I don't want another “Oh, you're gay? He's gay too! You should go out!” blind date, I'd had enough of those in first year.

“Yeah, I should introduce you two.”

“Yeah, wouldn't that be adorable?” Brian cut in. “And then you two could talk about interning, share interning tips, and maybe someday have little intern babies of your own...”

“Oh, real mature, Brian” Mel sneered. I remembered her saying she wasn't too fond of him... “We're trying to have a fucking mature conversation if you don't mind.”

“Mature conversation...” he laughed bitterly. And the asshole rears its ugly head. “Yeah, I need a smoke.”

He got up from his chair, pulling out a pack of cigarettes and tucking one behind his ear, and went out to the back yard.

Oh shit! What the fuck was that?!

Afterwards, there was bit of mumbling around the table, questioning “what's up his ass?” and the like. Lindsay caught my eye, and she raised an eyebrow and nodded subtly toward the back door. Once conversation started back up, I murmured, “Shit, now *I* want a cigarette. I'll be right back, Deb.” and headed outside.

He was standing with his back to me, and practically shivering. After all, it was late October and he hadn't bothered to grab his jacket.

“So...what's up, Brian?” I ventured. He turned to look at me, and then turned back. I noticed his cigarette was still behind his ear.

“My fucking lighter died.” he grumbled.

I walked up and stood beside him, watching him shuffling his feet, his hands stuffed into his pockets. I figured now was as good of a time as any. Actually no, it was a horrible time, but I didn't care.

“What is it that you want from me, Brian?”

“A light, if you've got it.” he shot back at me. Alright, apparently confrontation was not going to be a theme for tonight. It was worth a try.

He placed his cigarette between his lips so I held out the lighter and lit it for him. He blew out smoke rings, which was *so* cool.

“How do you do that?” I asked in wonder. He smirked.

“Practice.” he said simply. I tried to puff out a couple of rings that looked more like blobs, and he snickered.

“Keep practicing, Sunshine.”

“Shut up” I laughed and elbowed him in the ribs. We smoked in silence for a minute, before he stubbed out his cigarette and headed back inside without another word.

“Brian...” I called out after him, but he didn't even turn around. It's just as well, I didn't know what I would have said.

A minute later I headed back in, and the night continued as normal, save for a few curious glances from Lindsay and a slight kicked-puppy glare from Michael. Brian didn't even look at me for the rest of the night. That shouldn't have bothered me. Why the fuck did that bother me?!

By the time the night was winding down, my cheeks were warm from a few glasses of wine and Brian was looking more and more attractive and less and less asshole-ish from across the table, and I had to excuse myself to the washroom for a breather, and to banish the less-than-christian thoughts that were plaguing my mind.

I stopped in front of the mirror, saw the burning in my cheeks, and splashed some cold water on my face. Jesus Christ, what was I doing? *Don't get into this*, I chanted quietly to my reflection.

Brian's POV

I'd gotten enough wine into my system that I hadn't noticed until now that my bladder was most likely going to explode sometime soon. I went to loiter outside the bathroom door, where "Sunshine" was taking his sweet-ass time.

I was walking determinedly down the narrow, dark hallway when I crashed head-on into a small figure, finding myself with an armful of blonde.

"Whoa..." I said eloquently.

"Jesus" he murmured in surprise. He'd almost fallen backwards from the force with which he hit me, and my hands went instinctively to his upper arms to steady him, and his arms had fallen around my waist. I'd expected him to jump back and apologize before rushing away, but he didn't. He just stood there, not removing his arms from around my waist. I thought this was odd, until...I realized I hadn't moved either. Uh oh.

I told myself to take a step back but... his body radiated this amazing heat...and my nose was in his hair...and he smelled so fucking good...and felt so fucking good...and...it was so much....and I couldn't see anymore, and it took a second to realize that it was because my eyes had drifted closed...

I realized in the back of my mind that I had about 5 seconds to pull away and make some snide remark like "watch where you're going" before this became something else entirely...I really should soon...

5....

4...

3....

Then, I felt it. His lips gently feathering kisses against my neck. And fuck me, if I didn't emit a shuddering gasp, which I knew he heard...and my dick rock hard in my pants, which I knew he felt...and...fuck, I was dizzy...

I felt my hand slide up slowly into the back of his hair, so soft....what the fuck was going on?

Suddenly, heavy steps pounding up the stairs and Debbie's voice hollering "I'M SERVING THE PIE!"

Justin jumped out of my arms like they'd burned him, right before Debbie appeared on the landing.

"What on earth is taking you boys so long? You need someone to hold it for ya?" she scolded us.

"I gotta take a piss, if that's kosher, Deb." I heard a nervous, forced laugh from Justin as I pushed past him to the bathroom. I shut the door behind me and leaned against it, out of breath, heart pounding...

And with a turbo boner that even thoughts of Mel's twat couldn't will down. Fucking perfect.

Justin's POV

Why?

Oh, sweet Lord Jesus, Why? Why did I do that?

Ok, the first bad move was even going to Deb's in the first place, but no, I just had to go, just in case the douchebag was there. And somehow, I took his blatantly ignoring me as some sort of come-on, and then he accidentally runs into me and I kiss his fucking neck? God, it was just...he wasn't letting go, and he was so close, and his skin was warm and soft...

Fucking wine.

I didn't see him for three days. I was beginning to think it was a bit odd that I hadn't even seen him in the hallway or anything, but I got the wonderful opportunity to go into his office and talk to him when Marc needed some boards approved. Lucky me.

I went up to Cynthia's desk to let her buzz me into Brian's office.

“Oh, I can take those in to him” she said quickly, holding out her hand out to take them.

“Actually, I need to get his notes on what he wants changed so I can take them back to the art department.”

“I can get him to write them down and get them to you” she smiled at me. She seemed a little uncomfortable.

“Why don't I just go in there and get them first hand?” I reasoned.

She shifted in her chair and looked away. “Um...”

Ok, what the fuck? I put my hands on her desk and leaned closer. “Cynthia...what's going on?”

She hesitated for a minute, before leaning closer. “Ok, Justin, I don't know what happened between you two, but he requested that I not send you in to see him.”

“What?!” That self-righteous, insolent asshat! Oh man, I could write my own dictionary with the number of obscene adjectives and names I had for him right now. No fucking way was I being sent away like some irritating intern.

“Is he talking to someone right now?” I asked Cynthia.

“No, but he's-”

“Right.” I walked away and knocked on his office door.

“Justin!” Cynthia hissed after me. I ignored her.

“What is it?” I heard him bark through the door. I opened it and entered and closed it behind me.

He was glaring at me. “I don't remember Cynthia buzzing you in.”

“Uh, yeah, that's because you told her not to let me see you, so I didn't really have much choice. What's with that, by the way?”

He sighed, as if my presence were some annoying inconvenience. “Well, first of all, I'm allowed to decide who I want in my office, secondly, there are plenty of people in the art department capable of bringing me the boards who are not you.”

“Yeah, but why? What problem do you have with me? I've never been anything but efficient and professional at this job!” I exclaimed indignantly. He scoffed at that, and looked at me, chuckling at me, mocking me.

“Oh, yeah, you've been nothing but professional. Weren't you the one who was playing pranks on me, insulting me to my face, asking me about my personal life, and then to top it all off, the one who was practically sucking on my neck at Deb's dinner?”

Oh, what?? I felt as if someone was inflating some sort of...balloon....of anger...in my chest....ok, shut up, there is no simile for how pissed I was.

“Um, weren't you the one who also did all of that, and the one who had his arms around me at Deb's dinner and his fucking hard-on digging into my thigh?” Ha!

I was pretty satisfied to see him stammer a bit at that, all flustered like, and he finally stood up, came out from behind his desk to grab the boards out of my hand and spat out, “You say something like that and then wonder why I call you unprofessional, Taylor? I think it's pretty clear that your personal feelings for me are affecting your job, and if you want to keep it, you should really avoid barging into my office in a fucking rage.”

My personal feelings? MY personal feelings?

“Yeah, ok, I've been unprofessional, so have you, but you know what? It's not about that, because we've moved past that. Our personal lives are intertwined, boo frickity hoo, but if we're talking about professionalism here, then you're the one who's being unprofessional if you can't even be in the same room as me!” By the end of my rant, I was almost yelling. At my boss. So, obviously sensible-Justin has long since left the building. I started towards the door when he yelled this back at me:

“God, you- you know what your problem is?”

Oh, this ought to be good. I turned back to him.

“Oh please, enlighten me.” I sneered, with a sweeping, inviting gesture.

“Your problem is you're a spoiled, stubborn little art school intern who feels so entitled that he can just waltz in here and just have everything the way he wants, like he owns the place. I hate to cut the fucking umbilical cord from your upper-class, white bread childhood, but in the real adult world, you can't just have whatever you want, there are rules and standards you have to live by, especially working in an office for a major company. Whatever you wish was going on between us, *isn't*. I'm your boss, you're an intern, it doesn't matter what you want, so just fucking grow up and deal with it.”

“Oh, so this whole fucking thing is just about my wishful thinking, is it?” I shouted at him.

“The truth hurts, Sunshine!” he sneered at me mockingly.

“You honestly think that this, *this* scenario is my fucking wet dream?” I was about ready to smack him.

I opted for more yelling. “This stupid, ridiculous mess that is us? I hate it! I’ve never been more angry, and confused and frustrated over anything, and you just oversimplify that this is what I want?”

He didn’t say anything, but I could tell he wasn’t backing down either. He just stared at me, hard and angry.

“You know what *your* problem is, Brian? Your biggest problem, beyond all the Daddy issues, and the arrogance and the promiscuity and selfishness, is that deep down, you don’t even *have* a clue what it is that *you* want.”

He let out a frustrated growl, his hands scrubbed his face, and he shot back at me defeatedly, “No, Justin, my biggest problem is that I know *exactly* what it is that I want!”

Whoa.

What?

...Whoa.

...What?

And just like that, I understood. Everything. It was all so fucking simple now, he'd made it simple. Or, maybe it wasn't, but in that moment, it certainly seemed that way.

I instantly, without any hesitation, knew my next move.

Brian's POV

There is no way I just said that out loud.

I had gotten to the state of delirium where I thought that maybe if I just didn't acknowledge it, or say anything about it, or...move, maybe I could make it so it never actually happened. I refused to believe that the thought that had briefly run through my head inexplicably had somehow managed to come out of my mouth, audibly, in Justin's direction. And now he was staring at me. This was bad. He didn't look angry anymore. I couldn't tell whether that was good or bad. I figured the latter.

If I thought I was feeling dread when he was standing there staring at me, I didn't truly know what dread was until he was walking slowly but surely towards me. All I could think was, if he got close enough, something could happen that we couldn't gloss over...whatever would happen, there was no going back to pretending everything was fine.

"Justin..."I said, and I hoped I'd sounded as foreboding as I'd intended to. He didn't stop. I said his name again in a slightly more forceful, warning tone, and I'm sure if I'd said "stop" or "don't", he probably would have stopped, turned around and walked out of my office. But for some reason, those words seemed to have just dropped out of my vocabulary at the moment.

As he was taking those few steps towards me, my mind and my body were screaming two different things at me, but by the time he was within two feet of me, my body had drowned out my brain and decided on complete, wholehearted surrender.

I grabbed his wrist in one hand and pulled him toward me, and the other hand took a fistful of the blond hair and pulled his face to mine. His arms went around my waist without hesitation and then our mouths were on each other, his hot breath and soft lips and hair under my hands and...

It was so much more than I thought *perfect* would be.

His hands grazed up my back and fingers clutched the back of my shirt and then one hand came around to tuck my hair behind my ear and his fingertips were scratching along my scalp and it was *so* good and then I felt his tongue run over my top lip and I opened my mouth and met it with mine and god, *yes*...

Justin's POV

Oh God oh God oh God, his arms were crushing me and his breath was rushing past my cheeks in hot bursts and his fucking *tongue* was in my mouth...my knees had become useless and I was pretty sure that if he let go of me I'd probably crumple to the floor, and somewhere in the back of my mind I was aware of the fact that my shirt had ridden halfway up my torso, and I really didn't care, and I knew any hope of being independent and unaffected was long gone because he owned me right now, and again, I didn't care...I was holding back a loud moan until I heard a guttural growl rumble out of him, which nearly undid me, and he pushed his thigh between my legs and there goes any hope of holding back whimpers and moans, and he was panting against my mouth and I knew, even before, that if this ever were to happen, I'd be a desperate, needy mess like I was now, but what I didn't anticipate was him being just as reciprocal, clutching me to him and pulling my hair and groaning and struggling for breath, ohfuckohfuckohfuck....

My hand, of its own accord went to the front of his pants as he kissed down my chin to my neck, where he was sucking and licking and he let out a moan. I gripped and rubbed him through his slacks as he kneaded my ass and this was getting to be too much as he smashed his mouth back onto mine and hands were everywhere and he was biting on my earlobe and then...

"Brian? Brian..." A tinny voice came from his desk. I felt him pause before licking down my neck again.

"Brian, Leo Brown is here for the meeting, can I send him in?"

He stopped, and his head dropped down to my shoulder defeatedly. I reluctantly removed my hand from his crotch, but didn't move away.

“Fuck.” I heard him mumble. Then, he yanked himself away from me, and pushed the button on his intercom.

“Yeah. Just give me a minute.”

I raised an eyebrow at him. “A minute?”

He sighed and leaned against his desk, looking at his shoes. “This...”

Oh shit. This moment is the exact reason why we didn't do this a month ago.

I nodded. “This isn't gonna happen, is it?”

“Not...” he ran his hand over his face, then pointed to the door, clearing his throat. “I really have to do this meeting, so...”

“Yeah, of course, I'll let myself out.” I shook my head, walking to the door. I stopped to say something, but what do you say? So I left. I left and went back to work like nothing had happened. This was turning out to be a pretty shitty day.

I gave serious thought to going home sick, but a part of me would never forgive myself if I let the cocksucker get to me that much. Wasn't that my motto to begin with? And this was exactly why. I knew full well what would fucking happen if I let myself go there and I did it anyway and there was no undoing it. So I fucking sketched, and fucking cut paper with a fucking exacto-knife, and discussed fucking fonts with Marc and fucking fuck fuck fuck. Fuck!

Head, have you met desk?

About two hours later, Marc dropped the boards I'd brought to Brian's office on my desk, and there was a note attached with a piece of tape to the upper left hand corner.

Justin,

The boards are perfect, don't change a thing.

PS:

fuck being professional. 66 Fuller, Corner of Tremont, top floor. 8 o'clock. No Debbie walking in, intercoms, or any other interruptions will be able to find us there. I'll even lock the door, just to be safe.

Oh my god.

My heart was racing, and my ego was trying to get a word in. *After reaming you out and then ditching you like that in his office? Why don't you just let him wait for you all night. He deserves it.*

Yeah, right. Like that was gonna happen.

Though I might make him wait an extra fifteen minutes or so.

If I could wait that long.

I figured I'd just Googlemaps it just in case.

Brian's POV

First order of business: get out of this suit.

I yanked the tie off of my neck viciously, and reveled in the air hitting my torso when I pulled off my button-down shirt. Within 30 seconds, I was in a t-shirt and loose jeans.

Second: a drink.

Shit, I'd been so fucking thrown off all day, I couldn't wrap my brain around simple tasks, and every slight imbalance had left me all pissy. Probably more than one drink would be necessary right now. I just took the bottle over to the couch, and sipped it while I looked out the windows.

Why the fuck did I tell him to come at eight? It showed the extent of my insanity that I didn't think to wonder why I'd told him to come at all; because the reality now was that there was no way I wouldn't take him if he wanted to give himself to me. The reality now was that I knew he was the best thing to come around in a very long time. Sex-wise, I mean. That sounded more lesbianic out loud.

I was feeling a bit better after a few gulps of Beam, but not entirely better. However, I decided to put it away, since it would be a little uncouth for me to be completely smashed if he were to show up.

God, what if he didn't?

In complete honesty, that was the precise thought that had been plaguing me all day, that had made me take 20 minutes to write that note start to finish, that had driven me to drink. What if he didn't come? What would happen then? I'd never thought to doubt a guy taking me up on an offer of sex, but I'd also never let things get so fucked up between myself and someone I wanted to fuck, I'd just fuck them and be done with it. God, what *was* going on with this?

I checked my watch.

7:53 pm

This was a fucking stupid idea. Maybe I should...what? Call him and tell him not to come? That'd be ludicrous. Maybe not answer the door when he buzzed? Even I wasn't that much of an immature asshole.

There was nothing to be freaked out about. I wanted to fuck him, so I'd fuck him. Just like always. Well, not quite, but close enough. And I wasn't freaked out.

7:58 pm

Shit. I needed more Beam. Just one more. Then I'd brush my teeth...for some reason, even though I shouldn't care if my breath stinks...but I did. That was reasonable though, most people don't wanna fuck someone with stinky breath. Maybe I'd settle for mouthwash, since there was only a minute a half until he got here. That is, *if* he gets here....

8:04 pm

The term “worst case scenario” was starting to run through my mind. How was work going to...work, if he flat out rejected me? That would definitely be a first. Maybe he got stuck in traffic, or he forgot to set back his clock for daylight savings time...

Oh for the love of fuck. I was being a pathetic little fag.

8:13 pm

When the buzzer sounded, I nearly jumped out of my skin. I leaped to my feet and stared at the intercom from across the room, probably for about 10 seconds until I realized he'd think I wasn't answering or wasn't home, or something, and leave, so I paced over to the intercom and pressed the button.

Justin's POV

I heard the click of him answering his intercom.

“Brian?....it's me, I-”

But I didn't get to finish the sentence I started that I didn't know how I was going to finish anyway, because he just unlocked the door to let me up.

I wouldn't have expected him to live in some old warehouse-y building, where you had to take a rickety freight elevator to get to his apartment...it was interesting. I tried to focus on how interesting that was instead of the fact that my hands were shaking and I really hoped they would stop shaking for when I had to touch him and Jesus, I was gonna touch him and oh God, what was I doing here?

The lift shuddered to a stop and I lifted up the grate and stepped up to this big, steel sliding door. I was looking for a doorbell or buzzer, or telling myself that's why I wasn't knocking, when it slid open, suddenly, making me jump, and I was face to face with him, in a v-neck undershirt and jeans. I put my hand to my chest and let out a breath.

“Jesus, Brian!” I said nervously. He smirked, and walked back into the apartment, leaving the door for me. I stepped in tentatively, to the most amazing, spacious, one-big-room-style loft. It was absolutely incredible.

“This place is gorgeous...” I commented. He was looking around at it, itching his arm, blinking a lot...There was something different about him.

“Yeah...” he replied noncommittally. Now he was itching his neck.

Oh God.

He was nervous.

And for some reason, that made me more calm. I almost wanted to laugh.

“D-do you want anything...?” he motioned towards his liquor. That time I did laugh a little bit.

I walked up behind him. “Yeah...”

He turned around and he was inches away from me.

Brian's POV

He was standing so close, and his hands went around my waist and he smiled up at me.

“Brian...” he whispered it so calmly, like this was exactly what was supposed to be happening. God, I wondered if he even comprehended how beautiful he was. Beautiful enough to intimidate even me, and yet...

I ran my fingers through his hair and brought him closer and his smile faded into hooded eyes and slightly parted lips, and suddenly we were kissing and it was practically like we had started from exactly where we left off in the office. I tangled my fingers in his blond hair that had become my new obsession and his hands were on my neck, and I moved my arms to wrap around his back and pull him so close to me he was nearly off his feet. He huffed against my lips and made this “nnngghh” sound, and thrust his soft tongue into my mouth, and I massaged it with mine and how was this so good? When I put a thigh between his legs, he was already hard and his arms wound further around my neck. I bent my knees and wrapped my arms around his ass and lifted him off his feet. His legs went instinctively around my waist and his hands were in my hair, and thankfully, as I neared the stairs, he started to kiss my neck so that I could see enough to get up them. Near the bed, he dropped back down to his feet and I pulled off his long-sleeved t-shirt and...fuck...his body was lithe, his skin creamy and pale, and just the faint outlines of abs appearing and disappearing as he panted. I wanted to put my mouth all over that skin, mark it...and I would.

He yanked off my t-shirt and stopped a minute to run his lustful eyes and his hand down my abs, to the fly of my pants, and he undid them and pulled them off in one fluid movement. His eyes ran up and down my body as his breath quickened, and suddenly I didn't like the fact that I was naked and he wasn't. I looked him in the eyes, put a hand in the middle of his chest and

pushed him backwards onto the bed, where he bounced and laughed a little bit, and I never thought I'd consider a giggle sexy, but he made it, and I undid his pants and he lifted himself up so I could pull them off, and I crawled up his body, kissing his skin, which wasn't warm, it was hot, literally hot to the touch, and flushed, and he had his head thrown back and by the time I got to his collarbone he grabbed onto my arms and pulled me the rest of the way up to his mouth, moaning into the kiss as our cocks brushed together, and god, I had wanted this ...

Justin's POV

Oh Jesus, this was intense. He kissed me like he'd kissed me in the office, only with more intention, and God, his *body*....when I saw it, all of it, I thought I might come right there. Thankfully he distracted me by shoving me onto the mattress, and then kissing up my body with those ripe lips, swollen from vicious kisses and eventually I couldn't take it anymore so I pulled him up to my mouth. I couldn't figure out what I wanted to do to him first, I wanted it all so bad...

His long hands were running up and down my torso, pressing into me, and he took my nipple into his mouth, that made me throw my head back and let out an "Oh God, Brian" which he responded to with a moan and the tip of his cock leaving a wet trail on my leg, mine undoubtedly leaving one on his stomach. He leaned across me to grab a condom and lube from the nightstand and Jesus Christ, this was actually gonna happen...

He coated his fingertips in lube and brought it down to my hole, kissing my neck...God, it had been a while since I bottomed...he placed a digit at my entrance and stroked it and oh *fuck*, as he entered me with one finger, then two...I must have been a moaning, writhing, incoherent mess...but fuck, it was good. I wanted him in me, I wanted it more than anything in that moment, it was like every ounce of want that I'd felt for the past couple of months that I'd tried to push away was all coming to a head right now, as if to say "you thought you could deny this?"

At some point, he'd put on a condom, and he stopped kissing my neck to look into my eyes, for some sign of permission. I wrapped my legs around his waist, offering myself, and he leaned down and kissed me deeply as he entered me...oh..ohhhhgoddd....

And from here on in, coherent thought ended.

All I remember is the sound of his breath against my ear with the occasional surprised-sounding exclamation, and the feeling of my entire body thrumming and toes curling and fingers clutching and oh. my. god. And fuckfuckfuckfuck and sounds that I didn't even realize were coming from me, and more than I ever thought existed and moremoremore and his skin slipping under my fingers and against my thighs...

One thing I remember loud and clear was when he was close and gasped and said, “Uhh, Justin...Justin...” and that was what drove me over the edge of oblivion, and I was falling...falling....

Brian's POV

Oh fuck, he felt good. He felt nothing but good, yet wrong in an off-limits kind of way that made it so much better. His skin was so soft, and his chest was all flushed and his cheeks were pink and there was this bead of sweat just resting along his hairline and he was so incredible with his lips wide open and gasping and his eyes blazing and when the fuck did I become a fucking poet? Simply put, it was the first time a fuck had felt really and truly satisfying and yet there wasn't enough of him to satisfy my need for...more of him.

I kissed his lips over and over again, because they were so amazing, and I thought just kissing them might be hotter than some of the hotter fucks I've had, and the sounds he was making, fuck...

Have I mentioned the feel of his ass around my cock? Because that was fucking good too. His ass...god, his ass must have been the nicest I'd ever seen, felt... Where did this kid come from? It was like he was tailor-made to be fucked by me...Taylor-made. Ha. Puns?! Puns at a time like this?!

Weird thing: when I came, I said his name. Twice. I guess there's nothing *wrong* with that, except I've never done that before. I decided not to get introspective, because this was the first really good fuck I'd had in...a long time, and I didn't wanna ruin it.

I collapsed, my face smushed in the crook of his neck, I could feel his pulse racing against my forehead. I rolled partially off of him and got rid of the condom....somewhere in the direction of the floor, without removing my face.

“Huh...fuck....fuck...” he huffed out, running a hand through his hair. We just puffed for air for a few moments. He hummed and dipped his fingers in the pool of spend on his abdomen curiously, before wiping it on his leg.

“Brian” he whispered, lifting my head up between his hands and looking me in the eye. Oh boy. Here comes the confrontation. What'll it be? “This was a mistake”? “What are we”? “We should be together forever”?

He looked at me and grinned that fucking grin. “We should've done this a long time ago.”

I blinked at him and felt a grin spread across my face.

Justin's POV

I'd imagined it beforehand like some huge monumental thing, like the whole build up, then we'd have sex, then it'd be over. In reality, we fucked, I think 3 more times, not including hand-jobs, blow-jobs, and general rutting. We fucked until about 4:45 am, or at least that was the last time I checked the clock, before finally just passing out, laying sideways in his bed.

We woke up to his alarm blaring in the most irritating way. My face was stuck to his left ribcage and his arm was slung across my shoulders, and I wondered how we managed to sleep in the most awkward position possible. Then I tried to move.

“Ow.”

“What?” He muttered sleepily. Oh goddammit, how'd he manage to look so fucking perfect, even in the morning? I didn't want to imagine what I must look like.

“My back.” I explained, flopping back onto the bed. I looked up and glanced around the room, the stained sheets, the floor a minefield of used condoms...gross. “Man, this place is disgusting.” He laughed a lazy, closed-mouth laugh. Then I looked down at my chest. “Oh God, I'm disgusting. Can I use your shower?” He nodded into the sheets, and I heaved myself onto my feet and padded off to the washroom. I could feel his eyes on my retreating ass, and I kinda liked that.

His shower was one of those big glass ones that probably doubled as a little steam room.

“This is a really nice shower” I shouted to him over the running water. Half a second later, he came in and closed the door behind him, making me jump. I hadn't even heard him come in. He smirked at my jumpiness.

“Thanks.”

“Come to stare at my ass?” I asked him slyly. He scoffed.

“It's called water conservation, brat.” But he smacked my ass lightly nonetheless. I took the bar of soap and ran it over his chest, lathering with my palms. He grabbed my wrists and pulled me to him, and kissed the be-jesus outta me for a couple minutes, before dropping to his knees before me, which was just such a good thing that I actually had a goofy grin on my face. If someone had told me 24 hours ago that this was where I'd be right now, I'd tell them to stay the fuck out of my dream journal.

Brian's POV

Last night the kid had proven that he was born to suck cock, but it turned out that he was equally good at receiving it. I couldn't believe it had taken me this long to get my mouth on his dick. I didn't frequently administer blow-jobs, usually couldn't be bothered, but...Jesus. His fingers in my hair, his parted lips, his moans...It didn't take long to finish me when he pulled me back up to my feet, then dropped to his knees and reciprocated. Contrary to popular belief, the best part of waking up is *not* Folgers in your cup. When we finally got down to actually getting clean, I was washing his hair and in my mind, I changed the jingle to “The best paaarrt of waking up, is JustinTaylor'scum in your moooooouthh” and then I started laughing, and he was looking at me funny. I cleared my throat and said “nothing.”

We got dried off and dressed, and while I was in the bathroom shaving, the little twat changed my sheets, which I didn't realize until I walked out and he was stuffing the dirty ones into a hamper.

“You know, I have a cleaning lady” I quipped at him. He raised an eyebrow at me.

“If I was your cleaning lady and I found this waiting for me, I'd quit on the spot. I'm just saving you the trouble of finding a new one.”

“Coffee?” I pointed toward the kitchen. He balked at me.

“What, so now I change your sheets, I have to get you your coffee too? Would you like some breakfast as well, your majesty?”

For christ's sake, what a princess. “The coffee's already made, twat, the machine has a timer. I was asking if you wanted some. But if you're offering, I take whole wheat toast and an egg-white omelette.”

He walked over and shoved me in the chest, then retreated to the kitchen. I turned to the closet to pick out a shirt and tie, and when I came down, he had 2 cups of coffee and a plate of whole wheat toast.

“Christ.” I chuckled.

“You didn't have any eggs” he grumbled.

“You really need to learn how to take a joke.” I said, stuffing a piece of toast into my mouth.

“This is good coffee.” He said, sipping it. This was kind of weird. We were just looking at each other and trying not to smile, and I knew that he was thinking what I was thinking; just reflecting on what a fucking good night this was. It *was* a really good night. He drained his cup then glanced at the clock on the stove.

“Shit, I gotta go, I've got class in 40 minutes.” He shrugged on his jacket, grabbed one of my pieces of toast and leaned over the counter at me.

“I hate to have to ask this, but, does office protocol...” Oh jeeze, here we go.

“...permit blowjobs?” he smirked, but I could tell he was asking it a bit tentatively, and see the question he was trying to ask beneath it. I couldn't help but smirk back.

“Only on lunch breaks. And, preferably not in the break room.”

“Well, there goes my plans. See you at the office.” And without another word, he was walking out of my loft.

I could tell work was gonna get a lot more interesting from here on in.

Brian's POV

I didn't see him until the next morning when I passed him in the hallway. Though no one else was right there, he didn't proposition me, say hi to me, or even look up from the paper he was reading, just bumped my shoulder with his while he chewed on his thumbnail. I may or may not have discretely stopped to examine his retreating ass.

Other than that, everything was business as usual. Remson was reaming my ass (and not in the way I preferred) about finding a way to get into May's issue of *About*, though that was, oh, two weeks away, and Cynthia, using her subtle maternal instinct, brought me a venti instead of a grande, and I subtly shifted some of her duties onto the underlings so she could have Friday off for her (shudder) hetero date.

I stopped by Marc's desk to get an update on the layout for Remson, and Justin was at the big island discussing something with that Dan guy. I saw him glance up at me briefly, but he didn't falter in his discussion. But he *did* lean a bit further over the island to point something out on the boards, accentuating his ass. Don't think I didn't notice that, Taylor. And don't think that I'm...practically salivating right now...because I'm not.

Still no propositioning yet, though. And there was no way I was initiating it.

A while later I was dropping something on Cynthia's desk when he walked up, coffee in hand.

“Hey Cynthia, how's it going?”

She smiled warmly at him. “Not bad, how about you? Long time no see, huh?”

“I know, eh?” He replied a little too emphatically and I could tell something was up. “Oh, hey, did you hear about the men's room on the fourth floor?”

Cynthia looked at him blankly. Fourth floor was finance, and had basically nothing to do with any of us. “Um, no...”

“Yeah,” he continued emphatically, “apparently someone tried to sit on one of the sinks and knocked it down and broke a pipe or something. The whole washroom's shut down and the repair guys won't be there to fix it until tomorrow.”

“Wow, what an idiot.” Cynthia chuckled.

“Isn't it a shame though? There's an entire washroom down there that no one's in, that won't be fixed until tomorrow. Completely unoccupied.” And with the last part of the sentence, his eyes flicked up to me, and I understood. The sneaky little fucker. I suppressed a grin, and looked back down at the file in my hand.

“Uh...yeah.” Cynthia still looked confused.

“Oh, just because I used to always sneak down there whenever there was a line up here. Anyway, I won't interrupt you anymore.”

As he was walking back toward the art department, I casually fell into stride with him.

“Five minutes.” I muttered in his ear, before veering off toward my office. I heard him call “Is it ok if I take my lunch now, Marc?” and I smiled.

I snuck into the washroom (ignoring the “out of order” sign) ten minutes later, just to make sure I didn't get there before him.

When I stepped in, I didn't see anyone, and one moment I was pissed off, the next I was nearly jumping out of my skin as he magically appeared from behind a corner and grabbed me by the lapels of my shirt.

“Jesus Christ, what took you so long?” he huffed.

“I'm a very important person, with important things to do” I drawled, dipping my head down to kiss him. He reciprocated hungrily, sucking my tongue into his mouth and groaning. He pulled away after a moment, breathing hard. “God, I've had such a hard-on for you all morning” he growled. Christ. I've heard more flattering and graphic things from tricks, but coming from him, nothing was hotter.

“I'm touched.” I chuckled, a tad short of breath myself. He smiled wickedly.

“You'll be a lot more than touched by the time I'm done with you.” And with that, he dropped to his knees and undid my fly, and it's a good thing that no more conversation was required because I wouldn't have been able to form a coherent sentence to save my life. I couldn't tear my eyes off of his head bobbing up and down on my cock, his soft hair twisted between my fingers. Usually blowjobs weren't particularly passionate or, well, noisy occasions for me, but I could only suppress about half the moans that he was forcing out of me. I felt that familiar tingling in my balls, but I felt like more than just a 5 minute bathroom stall blowjob, amazing as it was. I pulled him back up to his feet, connecting my lips to his and tasting myself on his warm lips. I undid his pants and spun him around, sheathing and lubing my dick and preparing him with lube slicked fingers in record time while he cursed and bucked back into my hands. Before long, he was spread-eagle, his hands clutching the top of the stall wall and legs apart. I had my hands on his hips as I fucked him hard and fast. Not to mention loud, probably audible to the people outside. Whatever, it was just finance. Besides, I wasn't even thinking of that as I pressed my clothed chest to his clothed back, feeling overheated between our layers of office attire. One of his hands reached back and grabbed the back of my neck as he turned his head and pulled me into a sloppy, moaning kiss before he cried out something along the lines of “Fuck! Briiiian” and his spend covered the wall in front of him. I pumped through his orgasm before reaching mine, and had to splay my hands on the wall to hold myself up as we both groaned and cursed and gasped.

I was really starting to enjoy my job.

Justin's POV

The next few weeks went on like that. We were only able to use that washroom for a couple more days before it was fixed, but we found new and creative places to fuck. An empty boardroom. The basement. We even fucked on the roof once, and *shit*, was that hot, with our moans echoing across the gravelled rooftop and the spring air on our skin... only we discovered later that we were fully visible to the surrounding buildings, which gave us a good laugh.

The day things started to shift was one day when my stomach growled embarrassingly loudly, and I quipped that “fucking away lunch breaks doesn't leave much time for actually getting lunch.” He made some remark about the high-protein lunch he supplied every day, as to be expected. The next time we met up, he greeted me with a carton of Chinese food, and we ate with chopsticks on his couch for about five minutes before he ducked his head under my carton of crispy won-tons and started blowing me. I asked if he was trying to make me choke and he responded that he was the only one who should be worried about doing that at the moment, and needless to say the won-tons were abandoned.

Every day after that he brought me lunch, and by the end of a couple weeks I'd sampled food from basically every Asian country at least once. And when, one day, I tried to think of the last time I'd bought my own lunch, I realized that Brian and I had been having lunch- and sex- with each other every day for a month, not including weekends...and that didn't seem so casual.

Then one day we skipped lunch entirely due to some unholy fuckfest. I was walking to the bus stop, and he pulled up next to me in his corvette and asked if I'd managed to get something to eat. I shook my head and he gestured for me to get in.

“What?” I asked blankly.

“Well I can't help but feel at least partially responsible for your malnourishment, so the least I can do is make sure you ingest something in solid form.”

Works for me I thought, and I hopped into the passenger's seat. He spent the first half of the drive ordering Thai food and the second half inching his hand up my thigh, a mischievous smirk spreading across his face until I was beet red.

By the time we got to his apartment, the Thai guy was already there and Brian paid him quickly. When the door was closed I got up on my tippy toes and attacked his mouth. He reciprocated, huffing a laugh before pulling away. "Are you sure you wouldn't rather eat first, Sunshine?" I sunk back down onto my heels and raised an eyebrow at him.

"Brian, I'm pretty sure that eating spicy peanut sauce and then sucking you off would result in some horrible dick rash." That made him smile.

"Good thinking." And he kissed me again.

Half an hour later, we were eating on the fouton we'd just fucked on. I had pulled on my undies because I felt odd about eating naked, and apparently Brian did too because he was wearing a loose pair of jeans with the top button undone, looking like a levi's ad even in his most comfortable, at home state. I liked seeing him in his own life as opposed to a high-powered businessman. It made me feel like more than the slutty intern from some cheap porno.

"So this is different, eh?" I commented after thinking about it for the minutes before. His chopsticks stopped moving but he didn't look up.

"What's different? You've been here before."

"Yeah, but that was like a month ago, the one time."

He threw his chopsticks into the carton and looked up. "We're two people who happen to enjoy fucking at the office, nothing more. I go home at the end of the day and fuck other guys, don't you?"

I couldn't help but harumph at that thought. "Well sure...except for today, of course. But apparently that's not any different from usual." I tried to hide a smirk.

"Listen, if you don't shut the fuck up and stop being a dyke, I'm gonna flip you over and fuck you 'til you squeal like a pig."

"As if." I shot back.

"I will." he raised his eyebrows at me.

"Oh Brian" I wailed in a high-pitched voice. "What am I to you? I need to know you care-"

And the next second, my face was stuffed into the fouton, my noodles knocked out of my hand and I didn't have a tangible thought until I woke up the next morning in his bed. He drove me to work, letting me off a block away so we wouldn't be caught going into the office together at 9 am.

When it really started to get weird was when Emmett invited me out dancing a few nights later.

I met him outside, and when we got in, the entire gang from Debbie's was already there, and I wondered...

"He's over there" Michael said into my ear, gesturing over to the dance floor where Brian was...I wouldn't really say dancing, I guess more like rocking forward and back on his heels, like the music was pulsing through him, kind of primal-like. His eyes were closed and there was a guy in front of him, but it was like Brian didn't even know he was there. It was sexy as hell.

I tried not to pay any attention to him, 30 feet or so away, and join in the shallow conversation that the others were having while I knocked back a few single malts. The more tipsy I got, the warmer my cheeks got and the itchier my fingers got and the harder it got to ignore a dancing

Brian. I excused myself and ignored the knowing looks the others exchanged, and headed over to the dancefloor to stand in front of him.

“Fancy meeting you here...” I purred in his ear. He opened his eyes and grinned goofily. Yeah, he was on something.

“Fancy that. Seems to me I've seen you here before, Taylor.”

I laughed as I wound my arms around his shoulders, and his went around my waist. We swayed back and forth to the thumpa thumpa and kissed deeply and slowly.

“Take me home” I said in his ear after God knows how long. “We all know you're gonna end up going home with me anyway.” I smiled. He snorted.

“A little presumptuous, don't you think?” he replied.

“What, so you're saying you won't go home with me then?” I tried not to sound too miffed.

“Well, maybe if nothing better comes along...”

What?! Bastard!

“So I'm a last resort?” I raised an eyebrow at him.

“I'm considering my options.” He shot back. Fine, if he wanted to play that game...

“Me too.” And with that, I pulled away and sifted through the crowd looking for a worthy candidate. I found some guy and fell into a rhythm dancing with him, kissing him sultrily. And yeah, maybe I did make sure that I was within Brian's eye line, but I still enjoyed myself.

Hell, he was hot. He made me hard. After a few minutes, I tucked my fingers into his belt loops and pulled him toward the backroom, and I fucked him. It had been a while since I'd topped someone, since it'd been a while before Brian since I'd gotten laid at all, and God knows I wasn't topping Brian any time soon. It felt good to have that sense of power over someone again. When I walked back out, Brian was nowhere in sight.

Brian's POV, earlier that day.

I knew I was kidding myself. I was purposely not examining this...thing that Justin and I had going, but I had long since decided not to delve into it. I was doing what I wanted, because I only do what I want, whatever that might be. Besides, it's not like Justin was my fucking boyfriend or some shit. We were fucking, and eating lunch. That's all. Occasionally, it happened at my loft instead of the office, but so fucking what? Maybe we had a few good conversations over chow mein, but where's the shame in that? He happened to be an intelligent, witty person as well as having a great ass and a sexy smile...

The smile was getting to me more and more as of late.

Case in point: The other day, we were on the fouton again eating Vietnamese in a pretty comfortable silence. He had abandoned his weird shrimp paste thing and picked up my vermicelli while I worked on the bean sprouts.

“Hey twat, that's my vermicelli.”

He shrugged and continued to dig in. “You're not eating it.”

“Well I was going to.” I said indignantly.

“Did you miss the day in kindergarten where they talked about sharing?” he smirked at me like the little smartass he was.

“Very clever. The vermicelli's my favourite. Give it back, asswipe.”

“Make me.”

“Oh, very mature.” I scoffed at him.

“Euuhh, veewwy matuuure” he mimicked. Ok, that was it. Time for the magic fingers to do their wonders. I pounced and tickled the hell out of him.

“Put down the rice noodles, junior” I sing-songed. He giggled and panted for breath.

“No...way-hee- Grandpa-aah!-They'll ruin your false teeth-GAAH!” I climbed over top of him and went for the armpits and he started squealing like a fucking spooked guinea pig. I was embarrassed for him, really.

“Resistant is futile” I growled at him, grinning like an idiot. His eyes were watering and he was getting short of breath.

“Never, you senile vermicelli scrooge!”

It's funny. Of all the things for him to say to set off that little...**click**...the moment of “*holy shit, just...look at him.*” and how my heart was hammering and my face hurt from smiling because I was making him laugh...

Yeah, didn't think it'd be “never, you senile vermicelli scrooge.” Then again, since when do I do anything the way everyone else does?

It took me a moment to realize that my fingers had stopped moving and he'd stopped laughing, but he was still smiling and panting a bit, we were just staring at each other and he tucked a piece of hair behind my ear...*God.*

And this was getting a little too much, so I pulled myself off of him and grabbed the vermicelli out of his hand, digging in. A moment later, I felt his breath against my ear and he started feathering kisses across my jaw and neck, and my mind went back to that night at Debbie's and I had to fight to keep my eyes open. He bit my jawbone lightly as a hand slid down to the front of my pants.

“Did you want something? I'm sorry, it's just this vermicelli is *so* tasty.”

“Fuck the vermicelli.” he breathed huskily in my ear as he gave my package a squeeze. My own words came back and smacked me in the face.

Resistance is futile.

Brian Kinney only does what he wants.

I put the vermicelli down and turned to kiss him.

“That sounds tempting, but I think I'd rather fuck you.” I purred, and he laughed again as he pushed me down onto my back, kissing and licking down my chest and pulling off my sweatpants so I was completely naked. He stripped out of his clothes and started sucking me off, before moving down to my balls, down...down...

His tongue was on my perineum when I felt him pause tentatively. Usually I didn't really go for this kind of thing, but all I could think, beyond all logical thought of lines being crossed, was *don't stop*.

He seemed to get this message and when his tongue touched my hole I bucked and gasped, and his hands went to my hips to hold me steady while he tortured me in the most amazing way, and I wouldn't be held responsible for the noises coming out of me. Before I knew it, I needed something more, I felt like I might die without it...

“Justin...”

“Hmm...” he reciprocated.

“Justin...” I said more urgently. He looked up at me and said my name softly. I looked back down at him, and snapped back into reality. Jesus, I was about to ask him....

No.

Fuck no.

I sat up and pulled him to me, flipping him onto his back, retrieving a condom, and I fucked him. Hard.

I bit his shoulder, and I didn't kiss him. I did lave the bitten mark on his shoulder with my tongue and afterwards, pulled his shirt on for him and he kissed me quickly and left. And thank God for that.

Mikey swung by a couple hours later, before we went out to Babylon. I had barely mentioned the whole *fucking-Justin-at-my-office-on-a-regular-basis* thing beyond “that intern gives one hell of a blowjob”. So when he found Justin's motherfucking cell phone on my motherfucking counter, I knew I was in for it.

“Care to explain?” he said with that stupid grin on his face. I raised an eyebrow nonchalantly at him.

“I brought him back here to fuck him, as I do with many men.” I shrugged, digging in the fridge for some poppers.

“Except, it seems to me that you have some sort of rule about not fucking anyone twice.” he pressed on obnoxiously.

“Well everyone knows how much I love breaking rules, Mikey.” I shot back at him.

“Not your own-” he interjected, but I continued, “Besides, it's purely convenience. He's got a damn hot ass and he's right there in my office. And to top it off, he's even tolerable to be around.”

“So if it's purely convenience, then why are you inconveniently bringing him all the way back to your apartment to fuck him, instead of finding someone else to fuck outside of work? It seems pretty fishy to me...”

“It's not like I'm bringing him home every night. He's a good quality fuck, which is hard to come by these days.”

“You wanna know what I think?” he grinned.

“I think we both know the answer to that question.” I drawled.

“I think you *liiike* him.”

“Oh, excuse me, my watch is broken, are we in seventh grade?” I spat at him. “Jesus Mikey, you're going on like some lovesick twelve year old. This is me we're talking about. If I wanna get my rocks off with some hot blond twink at work, that's my business, and it definitely doesn't mean that I *liiiiike* him.”

“Brian and Justin sitting in a tree-”

“If you don't shut up, I'll kick you in the balls so hard you're gonna *really* sound like you're in seventh grade. Now I'm going to Babylon, to find some hot anonymous guy to fuck, as usual. You coming?”

And of *course* he was at Babylon. Of course.

And as if I could resist dancing with him, the way he was swaying his hips and putting his arms around me... Pretty soon I'd be dragging his ass back to the loft, then fucking it for the rest of the evening. His mouth tasted like whiskey, which was unexpected but just made him that much hotter.

And then he started talking. And as soon as he mentioned something about everyone knowing I wanted to take him home, something snapped and I realized- from the outside, it really looked like Mikey was right. I'd been fucking him every day, eating with him, talking to him, joking with him, and now I was even dancing with him and only him at Babylon and ready to ditch everyone else and take home the one guy that I happen to fuck every other day of the week.

Well, fuck that.

I told him I was gonna find someone else, and I don't know what I expected, but he ended up doing the same. In fact, he ended up doing it quicker than I did, and before I knew it, I was watching him dancing with some scumbag with his tongue down Sunshine's throat. I was still watching when Justin pulled him into the backroom, smiling that wicked smile of his. Maybe it was just the lighting, or the drugs in my system, but the smile didn't seem as bright as when he was with me.

I ended up going home completely alone that night, to a bottle of beam, because the urge to pick up some guy was overpowered by the urge to not be there when Justin came out of the backroom. I wasn't quite sure if I wanted to punch something or just throw up. Maybe it was the drugs. Maybe it was the kick to my ego.

Or maybe-

Fuck.

Justin's POV

It was weird when I got to the office the next Monday morning. He was basically ignoring me, didn't give me that mischievous grin he usually does when he passed me in the hall, and

when I gave him a suggestive “Good morning, Mr. Kinney” he just replied with a curt “Taylor.” Didn't even look at me.

I grabbed some proofs and walked into his office, shutting the door behind me. He was sitting on his couch, reading a magazine (though I think he was just looking at the ads in them for business research or whatever). He looked up as the door clicked shut.

“Taylor, can I help you?” He said ever-so-professionally. What was this about?- Ohhh, he's pissed off about the other night. What a baby. Well, I'm pretty sure I can figure out a way for him to get over that.

“Actually, I was about to say the same thing.” I say in my best “I'm-so-gonna-blow-you” voice as I pull off my angora sweater and kneel between his knees, pulling the magazine from his hands. I look up into his eyes and grin like the cat who got the cream (or was about to) as I undo his belt, but he's just looking down at me with this rather intense, slightly troubled look on his face. Um....that's not what I expected.

“Brian?”

Next thing I know, he's hauling me up by my arms to straddle his lap, and kissing me like it was the last kiss of his life. He flips me until I'm lying length-wise on the couch and he's over top of me, and I'm expecting him to shove a hand down my pants, or start stripping me, but he doesn't. He's usually so straight-to-the-point, but now, he's just kissing me and kissing me and kissing me, his fingers in my hair and across my face, like he's fighting for oxygen or something. And holy Jesus, it's better than some of the better fucks I've had, and it brings around all those feelings I try to pretend don't exist beyond my animalistic lust for him. I can feel his hard-on through his undoubtedly Armani or Dolce and Gabbana pants, grinding against mine and his groans in my ears and oh God...I've unbuttoned his shirt almost all the way and it's hanging open and pulled down around his shoulders and he's growling into my mouth and I feel so lost to him... now we're full on rutting against each other like teenagers while his tongue explores my mouth and there's that delicious tingling feeling in the small of my back...

“Brian...” I gasp, gripping his biceps. He doesn't stop, just moans in response, rubbing faster against me and grasping my hair and pressing our lips together again.

“Oh God, Brian, Brian, I'm gonna...” And he still doesn't stop. And sure enough, he presses his hips extra hard against mine and I lose it, shoot into my pants like a fourteen year-old and I'm embarrassed about it for about 5 seconds before he digs his forehead into my shoulder and cries out and comes...and slumps down on top of me, gasping for breath.

...Well that was something.

He stayed against me for a couple of moments before the logic of the situation occurred to me, and I grabbed a couple of kleenex from the side table next to his couch and stuffed it in my underwear to keep from getting a wet spot on my pants. Brian, I had previously learned, had a couple extra suits in his closet, so he'd be alright. I wrapped my arms around his back and lied there with him for what had to be 3 full minutes of silence, his fingertips running back and forth over my scalp, and I placed kisses against his neck periodically, and it was all...really affectionate for a few minutes...until that very thought seemed to occur to him and he lifted himself off of me and handed me my sweater off the floor, re-buttoning his shirt. I took that as my cue and got re-dressed, and he walked over to the door with me and I got up on my tiptoes to kiss him one more time. I knew not to say anything about what had just happened, so I just said "lunch?"

And he said softly, "yeah." and it was the quietest thing I'd ever heard him say.

What was that about?

Brian's POV

So, I figured, that was it. I'd pushed him, and he'd listened. I thought, if I was right there, and he walked away to find some other guy, perhaps he'd finally had his fill of me. It was understandable, it'd been over a month of fucking every day, and just because, as some random fluke, I hadn't tired of him yet, didn't mean he felt the same way. If this was dwindling, I'd be damned if I was gonna cling to it like some desperate queen. I hated how pathetically disappointed I was about it, as if something had been taken away from me, like I didn't have that thing to look forward to...but what the fuck was that about? I could still get laid basically any time I wanted, and food wasn't anything hard to come by...so...what the fuck was I even bothered about? *I'm not. I'm not I'm not I'm not.* If that was the way he wanted it, that was a-ok by me.

I didn't proposition him, I didn't flirt with him, I didn't even fucking wink. When he came into my office, I treated him like an underling. And that was right about the time he got on his knees and started taking my pants off.

I didn't expect that, but what I *really* didn't expect was the overwhelming relief that flooded my body, right then and there.

He still wants me. It isn't fucking over, he had his share of door number two, and he still *wants* me. Fuck. The...gratitude I felt...and when he looked up at me and said my name like he always does, well...before, I'd known that I was disappointed by it being over, as much as I pretended I wasn't, but I didn't *know* how much I missed it until I got it back. It's like the reverse of “you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone”...you don't know what's gone 'til you get it back?

All of this, really, was freaking me the fuck out.

I yanked him up onto my lap and just fucking kissed the hell out of him. I didn't wanna stop for anything, just... that mouth...I wanted to make him come without ever taking my lips off of his, and the sounds pouring out of him made it hard for me to hold out even until then. And fuck it was good.

And afterwards, I knew I should just get up, flash him an evil grin and get back to work, but...I don't know. I don't *fucking* know. His hair and his skin and his breathing, it was too good. The only thing in my head was...

Just let me have this. Just for a moment.

And I knew when the moment had gone on too long, and I hauled myself up and ended it. This part was the reason I knew not to do this. Either he was weirded out, and would never speak to me again, or on the other extreme, he'd take it as a declaration of my love and want to be all huggy kissy marriage and babies about it.

But he didn't. He quietly redressed himself and just...kissed me, and said “lunch” like always and he knew. He knew exactly what to do. And for that, I loved-

Whoa.

That thought did NOT just enter my head, even for a second. It. Did. Not.

It was his fault anyway. With all his lovey-doveyness and talk of relationships and love and “what are we, Brian?” and....

Oh fuck. No, that's not right. He's never asked those questions, not once.

This wasn't what it was supposed to be. It was an arrangement, a convenient office fuck, not.... it needed to go back to the way it was. Immediately.

The fucker was one step ahead of me. Cynthia let him in with three colour swatches for the Brown Athletics new sneaker ad background and he walked right in, leaving the door open, 100% professional, asking me to choose between kelly green, charcoal grey and burnt sienna, and when he showed me the sienna last he pointed to a sticky note and asked “And what do you think about this idea?”

I'm thinking, bento boxes, following the janitor's closet on the 8th floor? It's roomy and has a sink.

He was leaning across a little to point at it, and he was close enough I could smell his shampoo, his gum, *him*. He looked me straight in the eyes, the tip of his tongue sitting on the edge of his bottom lip and god *damn*. I couldn't help the little grin that ran across my lips. I nodded curtly.

“Looks good. I'd say the charcoal, though.”

He smiled conspiratorially. “Charcoal it is. Thank you, Mr. Kinney. I'll get back to you around 1.” And he left.

And the text came at 1 pm precisely: “I'm on the 8th floor. Come find me.”

He was sitting on a pile of boxes of paper towel, stroking himself through his wool slacks when I opened the door to the janitor's closet. If that wasn't a sight for sore eyes...

“Lock the door.” he demanded. I turned to find that the door had one of those heavy-duty sliding locks, though I wasn't sure why. When I turned back around, his sweater was already off and he was toeing off his shoes and unbuckling his pants. When he was down to his black briefs (which were my favourite on him...we'll disregard that comment.) He strode over and made quick business of my pants and shirt, taking them all the way off...we didn't usually bother with stripping down completely, with such time constraints. As if reading my mind, he purred “I wanna see all of you.” and licked a stripe up my neck, resting his lips on the jugular as he drove his pants into my boxer briefs and pulled on my dick. Uh...fuck.

I bent down to retrieve the condom from the pocket of the pants resting around my ankles. I fucked him, grunting, swearing, bent over the pile of boxes roughly, animalistic, pornographic. Fucking beautiful.

Justin's POV

It turns out that the student exhibition was a bigger deal than Lindsay had let on, and that graduate students from across the state had applied. It was eventually narrowed down to me and *three* other artists. Three. I had a whole fucking wall to myself. I'd found out over a month ago, but it had sort of overlapped with the whole “actually-being-fucked-by-Brian” revelation. Since, I'd been painting better than ever, and though I thought I'd have to fill at least half of the wall with some older paintings out of my portfolio, I'd been working like a...well, like an actual artist, and I'd produced more work in that month than I had in the year before...

No comments as to why.

It turned out to be one of the most fucking exciting evenings of my life. People were packed into the gallery, critics and reporters were there, there was wine, like the good stuff, and live musicians and people congratulating me and asking about my work...it was just fucking exhilarating. All I kept thinking was, this is what I *want*. This is what I want my *life* to be. This is the reason I was at art school, and not at Dartmouth. This *could* be my life.

Oh, and Brian wasn't there. I'm not gonna pretend like I wasn't disappointed by that; he knew about it, I knew he did, not because I'd told him, but because I knew Lindsay would, and when I mentioned it in passing he didn't question it and he didn't ask if I was free tonight. It's just...dammit! I'm always in his shadow; he's the CEO of his own company at thirty...something...he's a millionaire, he's the king of the castle, and what am I? College student/intern? And the one *fucking* night I can actually say “hey, I'm kind of impressive too”, he's nowhere in sight. That's just like him.

Of course, not that it was expected of him to come. Not like I even asked him. I had no right to be mad. And I wasn't mad! Just...disappointed.

Anyway, the next time I saw him was when I was looking after Gus. No, he couldn't see me when I was being interviewed by various art columnists, it had to be when I was fucking babysitting his son.

Gus had fallen asleep during *Beauty and the Beast*, curled up against my ribcage, and it was at that part where the furniture barricaded itself in the castle and it's all quiet, when Brian strode in the front door and I swear I nearly shit my pants I was so startled. My heart stopped for a moment as I waited to see who had just walked in through Mel and Linds' door 3 hours before they were supposed to be back from the Centre benefit. I sunk back into the couch and clutched Gus closer to me for the 5 seconds before Brian's head poked through the door. I let out a breath and rested my hand on my chest as I shook my head at him. He looked confused as to why I was there, and started to question before I pointed to Gus' sleeping form and put a finger to my lips. He sat down on the couch beside Gus carefully, and placed a hand on top of his head gently.

"Where's Linds?" he whispered.

"A benefit at the Centre." I answered quietly. "He told me this was the best movie ever, and then passed out about 20 minutes in." I saw him glance at the abandoned bowl of popcorn, and picked up the remote to turn off the tv. "I guess he tired himself out by tackling me repeatedly and screaming."

Brian smirked proudly. "That seems to be his pastime of choice." He checked his watch. "It's almost his bedtime anyway. I'll put him to bed." He scooped up his son gently and held him soundly to his chest. Gus stirred and pushed his face into Brian's neck, and I heard a soft muffled "Daddy?" as Brian stood up.

"Yep, come on Sonny Boy, time for bed..."

"No..." came the sleepy, half-whispered response.

“Yessir, now come on, you'll be comfier tucked into bed...” and his soft murmuring continued as he tiptoed up the stairs.

You're damn right the sight of that made me all mushy and it would do the same to you too.

10 minutes later, he came back downstairs and leaned against the doorway.

“Gus all good?” I asked, smiling.

“All tucked in and off to dreamland.” He pushed himself off the doorframe and threw himself onto the couch beside me.

“How'd your thing go?” He asked in a low voice as he put his feet up on the coffee table and rested his head on the back of the couch.

“Good. Really good. There are even a couple people interested in representing me.”

He tilted his head to look at me, where I was sitting against the end of the couch facing him, my sock feet tucked against myself. “La dee da, Mr. Taylor. Be sure to remember us when you're rich and famous.”

I couldn't help but grin at his badly veiled compliment. “You don't have to worry about that.” I replied softly.

Whoops. Ok, how do I cover up sentimentality again? Right, change of subject. “You seem tired.” I commented. Hopefully that'd be enough.

“Try fucking exhausted. Just spent 20 hours crouched over my desk for this stupid Brown Athletics campaign, my back is killing me.”

“Well that's what you get for becoming a big fat fucking success, come here.” I didn't know what I was doing, but I seemed to be confident in doing so. I reached out and placed my hands on his shoulders. He raised an eyebrow, and I tilted my head imploringly and he submitted to my shoulder rub like some sort of big sacrifice, turning to face his back to me on the couch. I placed one foot on either side of him so he was sitting between my legs, and I kneaded the tense muscles in his shoulders, dug my thumbs into the muscles on either side of his spine, under his shoulder blades, and after a few minutes of feigning indifference, he started purring like a cat. I'd forgotten how good I was at this. His muscles had mollified everywhere else, and I was working on his neck when I noticed his head had fallen forward and he looked half asleep.

“Come on.” I breathed, and crossed my arms over his chest and pulled his back against mine, lying us both back against the side of the couch. He was now lying between my legs like a rag doll, breathing deeply in and out as I stroked his stomach soothingly.

“Shitty day.” He mumbled.

“It's over now. Sleep.” I tried to coerce him. Truth be told, I was pretty exhausted too after the day I had. Sleep was looking better than anything else.

“Wanted you to be there.” He murmured. My heart stopped for a blissful moment. Sleepy confessions were my favourite.

“Here now.” I whispered back. He placed a hand over mine on his stomach. My heart was just about to explode in my chest at the...fucking...sight and sound and feel and smell. He was asleep, in my arms, his weight on top of me better than those huge fluffy comforters, and it was just pure...love. And in accordance, just before I drifted off to sleep, I whispered this:

“Mmmlove you.”

Ok, sleepy confessions were no longer my favourite.

I started immediately assessing the situation. He didn't flinch. He didn't jump up and start cussing me out and storm out of the house. He didn't respond in any way. So he didn't hear

me. Right? Right? Of course not. Of course he didn't hear me. Ignorance is bliss. Everything is fine.

Once my heart rate got back to normal, I drifted off to sleep, and only woke up when the door opened and Lindsay walked in to find us in that position. She smirked as I blushed, and Brian didn't even stir. He must have been really tired. Luckily she walked into the kitchen, giving me a chance to rouse him before she got back. He drove me home, in semi-comfortable silence.

Brian's POV

I don't think he thought I heard him, but I did. I was freaking out now, alone in the loft, because I didn't freak out then. It didn't bother me or scare me or anything, I just fucking snuggled into his chest...and...a part of me even wanted to say...

Something had to be done about this. Fast.

2 Days Earlier

I decided that showing up at Justin's show would have been a little too faithful-husband of me. As hard as it was to admit, even to myself, though, I wanted to see his stuff. I knew he was a talented little shit, but I'd never seen anything he'd done in his own style. I decided that taking Lindsay out for lunch the next day was a good enough excuse.

I strode into the gallery at around 11, and it seemed like I got there just in time, because they were taking down some of the other artists' stuff, but Justin's wall was still intact.



And...fucking christ, he was incredible. I never would have known. It was strange, looking at these and seeing where his hands had moved across them...I pictured him locked away in some studio somewhere late at night, his hand frantically moving across the canvas and creating...these. These were his thoughts. They were like reading his diary or something. And Jesus, this kid could make me maudlin. I jumped a little when I felt a hand on my shoulder.

“He's remarkable, isn't he?” Lindsay said quietly, a knowing smile on her face.

“Pretty good.” There was this piece I couldn't stop staring at...dark green and red and blue, with two white figures intertwined...I just couldn't stop staring at it.

“Has this one been sold?” I pointed to it. Lindsay shook her head.

“I want it.”

She stared at me. “Brian...” she started questioningly.

“What? I like it. It's beautiful. I want it in the loft. I've bought art before, you know.” I said a bit snippily at her. She just smiled again.

“Alright. It's seven hundred.” I nodded. She kept looking at me with that fucking smug grin on her face. I sighed and closed my eyes. Fifteen years later, and she could still see right through me with so little effort.

“I know.” I said quietly. “We're not going to talk about this, you know that, right?” She let out a small laugh, and nodded. I slung an arm around her shoulder and led her out of the gallery. “Good. Now let's get some lunch.”

Present Day

Justin's POV

I finished the last day of the internship on a Thursday. School would be done another week after that, once I'd finished my exams. I wasn't sure just what the hell I was going to do with my summer; Debbie had mentioned that I was welcome to work at the diner, and that was beginning to look like an option...

Until this phone message I got on Sunday made things interesting.

“Justin Taylor? It's Suzie Zapishny from Atelier Gallery. We met at your show last month. We've been reviewing some candidates for an internship program, and we'd like to offer you a position over the summer, paid, of course. It's a great learning experience, let me know what you think. My number is...”

I was holding the phone receiver about 5 inches away from my head in shock. Like, being paid for doing work with art? I did a mini-happy dance, and I was pretty disappointed that

Daph wasn't there to do it with me. Her boyfriend had surprised her with a weekend trip to Vermont...who the hell would want to go there anyway? It's cold as fuck. Where was I?

Wait...Atelier Gallery....wasn't that the one...?

Oh shit.

**

“What?” He answered the second time I called him a few hours later. He was clearly in a mood.

“Hey, it's Justin.” I said tentatively.

“What's up?” He asked, sounding bored and pissed, like how dare I call him? Or something.

“I was wondering if maybe I could come over?”

“Right now?”

“Yeah.”

“I'm not even home right now.”

“Well, when will you be?”

“Look, I don't know, I've got fucking errands to run.” He snapped at me. I'd learned not to take his bad moods personally, but they still gave me a bit of a headache.

“Ok, fine, why don't you just come over here when you're done, my roommate is gone for the weekend anyway.”

“What for?”

“I wanna talk to you about something?”

I heard the heavy static as he sighed into the phone. I know, Brian, talking to me can be such a horrible chore. “Fine.” he grumbled. I gave him the address and hung up. It hadn't occurred to me that he'd never been to my apartment before.

And it's not like I frantically cleaned my apartment in the hour before he arrived. Not at all.

He knocked on my door about an hour and a half later. I got out a “hey” before he launched himself at my face.

“Hi”, he growled between kisses. Damn, he was good at that. Wait, no, there was a purpose for asking him here!

“Bria-mmph...” He didn't let up. Oh heck, there wasn't any harm in letting this go on for a minute or two. Nnnnggghgnnghh.... this really never got old. He started undoing my pants and I ran my hands down to his chest- wait! Task at hand!

“Brian Brian Brian, hold on, I wanna talk about something.”

“Fuck that.” He smashed his mouth back onto mine.

“Brian, I...mmmm...I'm serious...”

“What the fuck...could be more...interesting to talk about than this?” He pulled my hips into his and ran his tongue down my neck.....my brain was fighting to function.

“Brian...” He still wasn't letting go. This was starting to piss me off. I had to shove him away from me.

“What the fuck is with you?” I panted.

“What the fuck is with *you*??” He replied indignantly.

“I told you I wanted to *talk* to you!”

“Since when do you want to *talk*?” he said disgustedly.

“Since I have something I want to talk about-”

“No, Justin, for fucks sake, we don't *talk* about shit. That's not who we are.”

Wow, he was being a shit today. “Oh, because what could be worse than talking to me?”

He laughed humourlessly. “Pretty much.”

“What the fuck, Brian?” I gaped at him.

“Look, we don't have *talks* because we're not in a fucking relationship. We're in a *fucking* relationship. Just fucking. That's it. Even if *you'd* like it some other way.”

“And what the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

He ran a hand over his face. “Whatever you think this is, it isn't. I'm not interested in anything but fucking you, and *that* does not require any kind of talk, got it?”

Ouch. Even though I knew that he was full of shit, that still got me in the gut. He was SUCH a shit.

“That's bullshit, Brian and you know it. And you can stop treating me like the doting housewife, I didn't ask you here to talk about how we should go get our photos done for the Christmas card or some shit.”

“And what *did* you want to talk about, Justin? Is this where you start the 'what am I to you?' or where you tell me you're suddenly in love with me or some shit?”

“Oh, because that would be *so* pathetic, wouldn't it, Brian?” As if he wasn't as far gone in this thing as I was....wasn't he?

“Yes, it would be.” He said that with such conviction...Fuck. No, I wasn't taking this.

“You know what else is pathetic, Brian? Somebody who is so fucking chickenshit afraid to even admit that he might give a shit about someone other than himself, because that would mean actually making an effort to show the other person some fucking respect, maybe even give up his place as the superior, because by the way Brian, you're not my boss anymore, you're just the guy I'm fucking, and if you really didn't give a shit about me, you wouldn't even answer the phone when I called, much less have any interest in seeing me. So yeah, the whole nonchalance bullshit? *That's* pathetic.”

He didn't say anything after that. He just glared at me, but I could see the glint that told me that he knew that what I was saying was true. This was *so* not how I pictured this going. I turned away with my hand on my forehead, scrunching up my face. Then I realized, he was listening. He was finally listening for what I had to tell him.

I turned back to him, scrubbing my face with my hands, and dropping them to my sides. Here goes.

“Brian, I’ve been offered a paid internship for an upscale gallery from next week until September.”

He blinked a couple times, and craned his neck forward, expecting to hear more. “...And?”

I took a deep breath. “It’s in Vancouver.”

He was silent for a moment. “Congratulations.” I shrugged. “So what’s to discuss?”

I laughed a little. It seemed so fucking ridiculous now. “I just...I just wanted to see what you thought...whether you’d be upset, or...”

“What the fuck for? And even if I was, what the hell difference would that make?”

Great. Back with the not-caring bit. “Well, if you were to ask me to stay...I would consider it, ok?”

He stared at me with this look that I just....really didn’t like. Like, disappointment, or maybe even disgust.

“Why the fuck would I want to do that?”

I sighed and closed my eyes, shaking my head. “I can’t imagine.”

“Ok, Justin, we're gonna discuss this. Here's the discussion, ok? You're gonna go to Canada, maybe fuck a few mounties, and you're not gonna sacrifice everything for some ridiculous fuck buddy arrangement. End of discussion.”

Oh, great. Here come the waterworks. I could feel my throat tensing up and I couldn't even swallow. I just kept thinking, *please please please just keep it together, you fucking sissy.*

“Ok.” I said. I hated that it came out as more of a whisper. Ok, let's go for unaffected. Like that was gonna happen. I nodded, mussed my hair, cleared my throat and walked over to the couch and scratched at a wax candle drip on the arm. I couldn't look at him. “Well that was all I wanted to tell you, so...”

Out of my peripheral vision, I saw him hesitate, before he opened the door and strode out. As soon as I heard the door shut, I collapsed onto the couch, and covered my face with my hands, feeling tears seep through my fingers. I felt like such a little girl, but I didn't fucking care. How could he just fucking shoot me down like that? Actually no, that wasn't that much of a surprise, even if it was incredibly asshole-ish. What did I think he was going to do? Profess his undying love and beg me to stay? God, I was so fucking stupid.

This was over. I'd be damned if I was going to chase after him like a puppy, and it's not like he was going to lift a finger to show he cared whether I lived or died.....

Yeah, tonight was a night for brownie ice cream, cigarettes and Yellow Submarine on loop. Fuck, I wished Daphne was here.

**

Daphne returned from her trip, and I told her the good, the bad and the wretched of her time away. She gawked at me and said something along the lines of “I leave this place for one fucking weekend...”

I spent a lot of time alternating between sulking, talking to her and packing. I couldn't believe everything had just ended like that. I thought that maybe this thing with Brian would eventually grow into something...I guess that was pretty naïve, but I didn't expect it to just drop off like that. But what was I supposed to do? Soon I'd be in another country for several

months, and I wouldn't even be able to see him. I knew he cared about me, and he didn't want me to leave, but it wasn't as if he was going to chase after me, or even call or email while I was gone.

....

Soon I wouldn't even be able to see him. I know we were in some stupid fight or whatever you could call it, but how was I gonna be able to forgive myself if I spent a week in the same city with him and didn't see him? I was leaving for the airport in 12 hours. I could hop a bus right now and be at his place in less than half an hour. Or I could leave things the way they were and have the last time we fucked be...the last time we fucked, ever. The last time I saw him and we fought and I cried and he told me he didn't give a shit about me be the last time I ever saw his face...

I changed from my pj's into jeans and a sweater, and slammed the apartment door behind me.

Brian's POV

I shouldn't care. I shouldn't fucking care. I should be happy for him, if anything, for getting out of this pitiful burgh, and making something of himself. But when he told me he was going to fucking Canada, the other side of the continent, it was like a punch in the gut. I managed to keep it together relatively well, but now I was giving a pretty good Brando impression, sulking on the couch, bourbon in hand and staring at his fucking painting sitting on the chair across from me, basically what I'd spent most of the past few nights doing, since he told me. I still hadn't figured out a spot for it yet. What the fuck was I planning on doing with it, anyway? It would probably sit on that chair until I freaked out and threw it out the fucking window. Eventually, when I felt my brain starting to turn to mush, I decided to just go to bed. Pissed, brushed my teeth, fell into bed alone. I'd pretty much stopped bringing tricks back to the loft. Somewhere along the way I'd started associating sex in my bed with Justin, and where it had felt odd before with someone else, now it would just feel depressing.

I had finally been dozing off when I heard the door slide open. It took a moment to register that this wasn't normal, and another moment to glance around for a good bludgeoning instrument, before I heard it. The squeak of his old converse sneakers on the hardwood. What the fuck was he doing here?

I heard him toe off the shoes, and I heard a flump that sounded like fabric hitting hardwood, and when he got up to the top step of my bedroom, he was wearing only his jeans. He crawled across the down comforter to where I was sitting up in bed, sure of all his actions, like what he was doing was perfectly normal.

“Justin, what...”

“Shut up.” His mouth was now inches from mine. He straddled my legs and kissed me slowly, his hands in my hair. I wound my arms around his back and kissed him back fervently. Fuck, I didn't deserve this. Not with the way I left things. Yet, here he was, and now he was unbuttoning his jeans with nothing underneath, and he rolled onto his back and pulled me on top of him, still kissing me as he shuffled out of his pants. Everything was so slow, the kisses, the movement of our hands, touching everywhere...it was strange. It didn't feel like a fuck, and yet it was, because he pressed a condom into my hand and brought me to him and I felt his groan as I pushed inside and *God*, he was so exquisite...

I didn't even realize immediately that I was whispering his name into his neck, over and over, and he was saying mine as he gasped and mewled, his lips poised in a permanent gasp. I ran my tongue over his top lip, and he kissed me, bringing his hand to the back of my neck and holding me there, as if I'd want to leave...

Things finally sped up, neither of us could control it, and it was too much, then it was heaven, then it was quiet. I could feel his heart hammering against my chest and his breath whooshing against my ear. I rolled off of him, discarding the condom, and running my fingers down his abdomen, memorizing, feeling everything I could, because he was fucking getting on a plane tomorrow and flying out of my life, and there was only so much ignoring the pain of that I could do. He was looking at my face, and so I looked at his, and...why. Why the fuck did he have to be so...why the fuck couldn't he just be like every other nameless, faceless trick? Everything would have been so much easier, I wouldn't feel like someone was twisting my insides with a corkscrew right now. He turned over and slung an arm over my ribs. That wasn't really something he'd done a lot before, but I didn't stop him. I hated how comfortable this was, and how easy it was for me to fall asleep with him wrapped around me.

And when I woke up to the sun pouring in the windows, hitting his painting on the chair perfectly, he was gone.

A/N: Art is actually taken from the Atelier Gallery Website and is done by Peter Mintchev and David Antonides.

Justin's POV

“Justin?”

Dammit, I hate when someone calls me while I'm hanging a painting. “Just gimme one second.” There. Don't fall don't fall don't fall.....good.

“What's up, Suzie?”

Suzie was actually pretty awesome. She had an eclectic style and always had some sort of weird accessory, like spoon bracelets or paper clip hair clips. Kind of like an art-nouveau Debbie, only a lot easier on the ears. She was always really good to me, and practically all the little jobs she had for me were way cooler than the photocopying and data entry Bradley made me do. Fucking Bradley.

“We're having the benefit for PWA the friday after next, and we need to start doing the marketing.”

Oh. Boring. “Great! Did you want me to print off some posters or something?”

“Um, maybe later....would you....maybe wanna design one first?”

I think this warranted a 'say whaaaaat?' I opted for “Sorry?”

“Would you be interested in designing the poster?”

“Pff- absolutely! I'm just...you'd trust me with something like that?” I sputtered, before realizing how sketchy that sounded.

“Shouldn't I?” She cocked an eyebrow, her mouth playing at a smirk.

“Yyyyeah!! No, totally! I'd love to! Thanks, Suzie!”

“Great.” She walked away, smirking at my asshat-ish behavior. Why'd I have to be like that?

I'd been there about a month now, and it was a very enriching life experience. That was the term I'd chosen to describe it in emails to my Mom. Don't get me wrong, it really was great; the work was really interesting and satisfying, and exciting to be affiliated with such a prestigious gallery, and Vancouver was great...it was just a bit lonely is all. I didn't give much thought to going alone to a city in a different country. Mind you, it isn't Taiwan, but still, Canada had its different ways. Like, toonies?! What the hell is that? And people kept asking me if I wanted to come with them on a Timmy's run, and I was too afraid to find out what that was...maybe something to do with tobogganning...

And then there was Brian. Or, the lackthereof. I wasn't thinking about him constantly anymore, and that was a plus, but every once in a while, I'd see someone with a Prada belt, or pass a Thai place...you know, the average constant reminders of his absence. It wasn't supposed to hurt this much, yet here I was. I tried to placate myself with the thought that I was much better off without him. Every time I wished he was around, I just focused in on the way he hurt me, and how it would never work in a million years. It almost worked.

Brian's POV

It started at the grocery store. I put a box of whole wheat pasta in my basket, and I heard his voice saying “whole wheat pasta upsets my stomach”. I really heard it, clear as that one day he told me that months ago, like he was standing beside me. And to top it off, I nearly put the fucking pasta back.

The next day, I was in the shower when I was about to use one shower gel then remembered how he used to love the smell of the coriander and brown sugar scrub, and used it. My mind went back to that little noise he made in the back of his throat as he inhaled the scent from the crook of my neck.

The day after he left, I found a sketch of me that he'd done, that he'd left for me before he went to Canada. I recognized it as the day at the office after Jack died. I hated looking at the expression on my face he'd captured, all vulnerable and confused. I didn't like to think he'd ever seen me like that. The sketch stayed on the counter where he'd left it for a long time afterward.

Now, it was a month and a half later, and he was still following me in my head, making suggestions for dinner or colour schemes.

Lindsay stopped by unannounced for the first time in a few weeks. This time, she didn't bring Gus with her. Instead, she brought bagels with that tomato feta cream cheese I pretend I can resist. As always, though, she knows me better than that. I was about to learn that lesson thoroughly.

It didn't take long for her to pry into my personal business. "So, Justin's doing pretty well with his new job, huh?"

I flipped the page of the Arts and Leisure section. "How should I know?"

"Haven't you talked to him?"

Next page. "What for?"

She gives this big suffering sigh. "Brian..."

I decided to try and nip this in the bud. "Lindsay, what does it even matter to you?"

"It matters because I care about you. I care about both of you."

"Well, then you'll be happy to know that I'm doing just fine, and so is he."

"And how would you know?" She countered.

“Because why the hell wouldn't he be? He's making a career for himself doing exactly what he wants to be doing, in a city where he's been legal drinking age for over a year.”

“God, I forget how young he is sometimes.” Lindsay sighed. I almost laughed. Me too, Linds. Me too.

“But the fact is, Brian, it isn't that simple.” She gets up from the couch to put the bagels on plates.

“Says who?” I sound jovial, at least in a sarcastic way. My voice sounds alien to me.

“Hmm.” Ok, here we go. “What's this, then?” Huh? I turn around and- oh fuck- she's holding up the sketch. I reeeeeaaaalllllly shouldn't have left that sitting there. Busted.

“It appears to be a drawing of me.”

She starts moving back towards the couch, sans bagels, holding up the sketch. “And is there any point in even asking who drew this, and why it's sitting on your kitchen counter?”

“He left it there the last time he was here.” I shrugged. I was quickly sensing there was no easy way out of this.

“Two months ago. And you've left it there this whole time?”

“What was I supposed to do with it?”

She sat down across from me on the coffee table (the fucking expensive plate glass coffee table) and dangled the drawing in front of me between her two thumbs and forefingers. She hung her head and sighed dramatically.

“Alright, Brian. I know you're new at this so I'm going to try and make this easy for you to understand. This thing you and Justin are going through together, it's a special brand of mental illness that occurs in most people's lives at one point or another. It's called love.”

I scoffed and even laughed a bit for good measure. Her facial expression didn't change. I knew she knew everything. I was beginning to think that there was no point in putting up an argument.

“You can laugh all you want, Brian Kinney, but you're not gonna convince me otherwise. I saw you with him for months, and I saw you without him years before, and I saw you without him after, and there's a distinct difference between all three. The bottom line is, the only time I've known you to be really, genuinely happy, and much more tolerable to be around, may I add, was when he was around. I know you love him. I know it, so you can argue and waste energy if you want, but it won't change anything, so we might as well just move past it and try figuring out what to do about it.”

I debated putting up a final argument, but I was just so fucking exhausted and I knew she would just keep arguing with me, and way in the back of my brain I knew she wasn't 100% wrong about *everything*. So I decided not to comment either way, but just argue about something else.

“What do you mean, what to do about it? There's nothing to be done, he's in a different country now. Whatever this was, it's done with, there's fucking borders between us.”

“Well that shouldn't be a problem, provided you have a passport and don't stash illegal substances anywhere on your body.” She retorted as if it were common sense.

“You mean go to Vancouver?” I said skeptically.

“Why not? It's not like you don't have the time or the money, or the excuses, hell, I'm sure you have clients out there. Go pay them a visit.” Hmm. She had a point there. Well actually not really, I don't have any clients in Vancouver, but she and everyone else don't have to know that.

“Look, the way you're handling this is very Brian Kinney, what with the stoic indifference and all. But at the same time, it's not. And it's worrying me.” I looked at her, my confusion reading clear on my face.

“The Brian Kinney I know, knows what he wants and goes and gets it, no apologies, no regrets. That should apply even if what you want is Justin. It's what I love so much about you.” She puts a hand on the side of my head and I can't help but press back into it. I've said it before and I'll say it again, she knows me too well. I forced the words out.

“What if...” And that's all I could get out for the time being.

She didn't inquire, or wait for me to finish the question. She just picked the drawing back up, and held it up to me. “What if he turns you down? Finds someone else? Well, love's always a bit of a risk, but if it's any consolation, I know he cares just as much about you as you do about him. I bet he's even got the balls to admit it, unlike you.” I smirked at that, and shook my head. She put the sketch carefully down on my coffee table, then placed both hands on either side of my head, kissing me on the forehead. “Now that that's settled, eat your bagel. You look like a skeleton.” She picked up her purse and headed for the door. “See you around?”

“Yeah, I guess.” I muttered. She chuckled softly and slid my door shut.

Within 5 minutes I was matter-of-factly booking a ticket for the next day to Vancouver. It was a nice time of year to go, and I'd never been to the city before. As I was clicking the “confirm” button for my plane ticket, It hit me like a ton of bricks exactly what I was doing, that I'd never before considered a possibility.

I was going after him.

Justin's POV

There was a look of bewilderment on his face as I crawled across the comforter toward him, but when I told him to shut up and I kissed him, he accepted me without hesitation. His arms wound around me and he was so beautiful, and it was almost like in that moment he finally accepted how beautiful he was, almost. He made love to me, I used to hate that term but it

feels like the only way to phrase it....why did it all finally have to be so perfectly honest when I was getting on a plane the next morning? Maybe that *was* why.

When it was over, and silent, he kissed me. I was drifting off when he whispered it. “Stay.” My eyes shot open. “Please.”

I felt myself nodding, a smile spreading across my face. The next moment, my eyes were closed, though I didn't remember closing them. So I opened them. I was in my room in my apartment in Vancouver. Again. For fuck's sake.

The dream always crossed from the way it really happened to the way I'd wanted it to happen. It had gotten to the point where I wasn't sure what was real and what was just part of my dream. One part that felt so real was one of my paintings sitting in the living room, but that didn't even make any sense. It was always in my peripheral while we were having sex, but I was always too distracted to focus on it. It was just always there. Probably some strange psychological thing.

It was getting a little pathetic. I think in his absence, I had put Brian up on a pedestal, because he was all I could think about. Every movie I saw, I thought about how Brian would make fun of the leading lady and make homoerotic predictions about the leading man. All the takeout I'd eat, how he'd complain about the freshness of the rice, or go silent when eating the teriyaki chicken (that was how you knew he really liked it). As I said, a little pathetic.

Sometimes I felt like I'd just turn around and see him, like he was right behind me.

When the PWA benefit finally came along, things fell to a new low. Or, so I thought at the time.

I was talking to one of my co-workers, Tess, and I got that feeling again, like he was right behind me. I turned, as I always do, and I swear, I saw him standing right there. Oh, great. Now it's full- on hallucinations.

'Til Tess whispered in my ear, “Ooh, check out tall, dark and handsome in the navy shirt.”

Wait, what? She saw him too? That means he-

Holy shit.

He was walking towards me.

The actual him.

He was here in Vancouver and holy shit, please, Justin, please don't freak out, just stay calm.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” were my first words to him. Shit.

“Well hello to you too, Mr. Taylor.” He was smirking. The fucking bastard.

“Hi. What are you doing here?” I reiterated. Ok, so I was a little pissed. Wait, I was a lot pissed! What fucking right did he have strolling in here with a smirk on his face after the way he treated me?

“Well, I was in town visiting a client and thought I'd stop in and see how our favourite artiste was doing.”

“Just fine, thanks. Is there anything I can help you with?” He was gonna have to do better than that.

“Help me with?” he looked at me like it was a ludicrous question.

“Are you interested in buying any art?” I clarified. The more I thought about it, God! I was pissed at him! How dare he waltz in here and act like everything is cool, and act confused when it's not, like he doesn't even fucking realize what a dildo he is! He can go fuck himself. That's what dildos are for anyway. Ha!

“No...”

“Ok, well I'll just be getting back to my job...” I turned to walk away.

“Justin...”

I turned back.

“Yes?”

I waited, and he just stood there. Seemingly, dumbstruck. He's got three more seconds to give some half-decent reason for me to ever speak to him again.

2....

1...

“Right.” And I left him standing there as I went back to selling paintings to wealthy Canadians.

To be honest, I felt pretty damn proud of myself for standing up to him. Or at least I thought I did. So, if I was so proud, why did I feel so guilty when I saw him standing there alone?

He stayed at that fucking art show for the rest of the night, by himself, knocking back free glasses of red wine like one of the Beverly Hillbillies. Finally, once I'd sold my artist's paintings I asked Suzie, who excused me and I got the hell out of there.

I went home, and got out of my formal attire and into painting clothes for the piece that was laid out over the large desk in my apartment/studio-type arrangement. I hadn't even reached for my brush before I heard the knocking on my door. Three guesses as to who it was, all pink cheeked from too much wine but holding himself together fairly well regardless.

“Why won't you talk to me?” His jaw was set and his face was amusingly similar to Gus' when I cut him off the chocolate milk.

“How'd you find my apartment?” I shot back at him.

“I asked you first.” Yep, basically a 6'2” Gus standing in front of me.

“It's my apartment and I can damn well kick you out of it. You first.”

He sighed, tilted his head back and closed his eyes. “I may have asked my cab driver to follow your cab home.”

“Stalker.” I walked back into my apartment, leaving the door open for him. He walked in tentatively and closed it behind him. He walked up to me and slipped his fingers into my hair, like he was going to kiss me. It took some willpower, but I yanked myself away.

“Fuck off.” I said quietly.

“Then answer my question.” he demanded, like he had any right to demand anything from me.

“It's pretty fucking obvious, isn't it?”

“Not to me.”

“Why do you care?” I countered. “I thought fuck buddies weren't supposed to talk. That's what you told me last time we talked, along with how pathetic I was for loving you and that you basically didn't give a shit about me.”

“You're still mad about that.” He didn't ask, he just stated quietly.

“What the fuck do you expect?”

“After the last time I saw you, I thought you'd gotten over that.” He stared at the floor.

“Jesus, Brian, that wasn't a forgiveness fuck, that was a goodbye fuck! Or it was supposed to be.....”

I didn't realize what I was saying until I saw the look on his face afterward. There was a quick flash of kicked puppy before total blank.

“Brian...”

“Fine. Fine. See you back in Pittsburgh, I guess.” And he walked out the door. And out of my life, as I figured it. Or, wait, maybe not-

He strode back in through the door thirty seconds later, just as I was moving to close it.

“No, fuck that, fuck you, Justin, for being such a flaky little twat!”

“WHAT?!” I'm pretty sure Mrs. Sullivan, my hermit downstairs neighbor was woken by that exclamation.

“You don't get to just end it like that! Because of one stupid queen out?”

“I didn't end shit, Brian!”

“You fucking left the country!”

“What was I supposed to do, turn the job down so you could act like you didn't give a fuck about me and then have me on your beck and call for fucking?”

“I wouldn't tell you not to go, but here I am, in your fucking apartment, trying to fix this shit! Doesn't that count for anything?”

“According to you, there's nothing to fix! So what exactly have *I* done wrong?”

“Jesus Christ, I did *not* fucking fly here for this shit.” He murmured angrily, about three milliseconds before it hit him what he'd said exactly. I let the silence hang in the room for a moment. Then-

“What *did* you fly here for, Brian?”

He looked at me, then looked away. “I told you, business.”

“Bullshit.” I'd known it from when he'd told me. You don't work in someone's office for three months and not learn how things are done. The real question was what he'd tell me.

“What are you-”

“Brian, you don't even take clients from foreign countries.”

“Canada's hardly a foreign country, Sunshine.”

“Brian!” I gave him ten seconds, in which he said nothing. Ok, chance over.

“Alright, if you can't even tell me-”

“You.”

Whoa.

“What?”

“I came here for you, you little twat.” He was holding his left bicep like he sometimes does, staring at the floor.

“Holy sh-”

“I work better. And I sleep better. When you're around. I *am*...better. Ok?”

He said it. He actually said it. Or, sort of....he said *something*.

“Alright. That's a start.”

He looked up at me, and I got from my position to my tongue down his throat in two strides.

Brian's POV

I found myself suddenly with my arms full of him, kissing me, and fuck, it was... I don't know what it was. I'd given up some control, and I wasn't sure I'd like where that put me. But he wasn't hurting me. At least not yet.

He backed me up against a support beam next to that huge painting of his that I'd caught a glimpse of. His hands were everywhere, and so were mine, and it occurred to me; I didn't know if I could give this up again. It was just...too *good*. I was positive in this moment that he could do anything to me, and I'd let him.

Justin's POV

His fingers found their way under my paint-stained t-shirt, and when our lips parted to pull it off, I found his ear with my mouth. I needed to make sure this wasn't going in circles. We were panting into each other's ears. He stopped to listen to what I had to say. That was a good sign.

“This is more than just a fuck.” I whispered it harshly. He started kissing my neck, so I held him still. “Say it.”

I pressed my forehead against his and stared into his eyes. He seemed almost a bit scared by my new-found control. But-

“This is more than just a fuck.”

Oh fuck. He'd never said anything hotter. He whispered it, and I could sense an inkling of fear behind the words, and that was how I knew he meant it.

Our mouths crashed together and fuck, I was so hard, so I pressed it against his and he groaned softly into my mouth and I undid his pants as he undid mine, but instead of pulling them down, I found myself sliding my hands down the back of his pants to cup his ass, as he slid mine off my hips. My fingers parted his cheeks, what the fuck was I doing? And my index finger found his hole, what the *fuck* was I doing?? And he didn't stop me, he just dug one hand into his back pocket to retrieve the condom and lube, and he held the packages against my shoulder, the foil scratching my skin, and as my naïve finger found its way into his hole, he still didn't stop me, didn't stop kissing me, just breathed harder through his nose and I could feel his hands shaking a little against my shoulders. His hands slid up to my hair and clutched onto it desperately as a second finger joined my first, and I had no clue where this was going, what the fuck I was doing, until he found my free hand, pressed the condom and lube into it, turned around and clung onto the support beam for dear life.

Oh my fucking God.

I couldn't miss a beat. I couldn't. He'd freak out if I hesitated even a little bit. He already seemed to be freaking out just a little. I prepared myself and briefly prepared him, not enough, but there wasn't time for that, and I kissed the nape of his neck as I guided myself into him.

He breathed out a quiet, desperate “oh God...” and it was the most beautiful sound...I kissed and licked his shoulders and held still as he struggled to find his breath. As I started moving in and out of him, my brain started to short circuit into animal mode. I was growling in a voice that wasn't my own, and every unfamiliar sound that came out of him egged me on more. My hands joined his on the beam and I felt the muscles straining in his hand, gripping the metal so hard. I realized I needed to find a way to do this in a more comfortable position, so in the back of my mind I just logically thought I'd move him to the desk that was right beside us. Only, I forgot that my half-finished painting was on said desk. I heard the wet sound of his chest hitting wet paint, and for a second I cursed myself, but then I realized in this moment I really didn't give a shit, not while he was moving under me and moaning loudly, and I swear I even caught a whispered “fuck me.” His hands clutched, and paint slid between his fingers and across his skin, my art, my work, covering his skin and it was so hot and wrong and probably very symbolic, but mostly just fucking beautiful. I loved him.

Brian's POV

I couldn't even comprehend what was happening. I knew it was the one thing I'd completely forbid from happening, the one thing that seemed like a nightmarish, humiliating scenario, the one thing I *hadn't* done since I was...what, 19? And God, it was so. Fucking. Good. It was kinds of good that I didn't even know existed. I was perfectly aware that I belonged to him, that I was completely out of control of myself, but I didn't even care as long as he didn't stop. He shifted us and I found myself chest down on one of his paintings. The paint smelled and slid against my skin, and he touched that spot in me over and over again, and my skin was so oversensitive, and then I came, harder than I could remember ever, his name a strangled gasp forced from my mouth. I couldn't breathe, and I heard and felt him come moaning my name over and over, accompanied by numerous curses. His arms went around my waist, fingers running through the paint on my abdomen, pressing his chest and mouth into my back.

He separated us and turned me around, and I was sort of nervous as to what would happen now. What the fuck was there to say?

But he didn't say anything. He just grabbed onto the sides of my face, getting a bit of paint in my hair (like there wasn't enough already) and pressed his forehead to mine, eyes closed. I listened to his breathing, still a bit unsteady, and eventually my eyes closed too. He kissed me

gently, and I kissed him back, and wondered if getting what you want most was always this scary. I deepened the kiss, but when I tried to move closer, he pulled back, whispering ,

“Easy...”

I pulled back to look at him, and he was grinning.

“The shower's only big enough for one.”

I finally looked down at myself for the first time, and-oh jesus- I was covered in swirls of navy blue and emerald green. I huffed out a laugh.

“You should *really* wash that off before it dries” he said apologetically. He turned me by the shoulders and pointed me in the direction of the bathroom. I crammed myself into his shower stall, and watched the paint swirl down the drain as I wondered what the hell I was getting myself into.

I wrapped a towel around my waist and strode back out to his living room, and saw him sitting in a kitchen chair, in nothing but sweatpants, one foot propped on the edge of the chair, smoking a cigarette. Just seeing him, there was no regret or dread in my mind, just a sort of awe.

He had propped the enormous painting up against the opposite wall and was staring at it. It was an intricately composed impressionist piece of a dark city lit by streetlamps...except with a giant messy body print near the top right hand corner. You could even see two scratchy blobs on either side where my hands had been clenching and unclenching.

I walked up behind him and ran my hands from his neck to his shoulders and back.

“Sorry about your painting” I murmured. He paused, inhaled from his cigarette, craned his head to look at me, and gave me a shit-eating grin.

“I like it.”

Justin's POV

He was a little bit freaked out, I could tell. We went to sleep not long after that. We were facing each other, but I didn't want to get too snuggly with him and freak him out more, so I just laid there and closed my eyes, and he gingerly rested a hand against my chest, which I placed my own on top of. And that's how we stayed. I could tell he didn't go to sleep for a while, at least not before I did. However freaked out he got, he never freaked out on me, and for that I was pretty grateful. I was a little jarred myself, and I didn't know if I'd be able to take one of his queen outs. The next morning, he sat cross-legged on my couch reading my newspaper while I sketched. The silence was actually pretty comfortable, if tentative.

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Brian's POV

I'll never understand how he knew exactly what to do and what not to do. He didn't try to maul me or kiss me to death or snuggle or any of that shit. He let me read the paper while he sketched halfway across the room. I found myself staring at him patiently drawing whatever he was drawing. He looked up at me, and smiled calmly, and went back to his sketch.

I swear I'll deny I ever said this, but in the following years when I try to come up with the exact moment I fell, it was that smile.

He looked up again a couple minutes later, and fuck if I know what look I had on my face, but he sighed with a mix of amusement and exasperation and plunked down on the sofa next to me. Kissed my forehead. Stroked my wrist. I had to touch him, in a way that I'd never felt any desire to touch anyone before. I'd never been amazed at anyone else's beauty before, it was always the other way around. So I touched his cheeks, studied his face, kissed his mouth...he had to know. How could he not know?

“Justin...”

He opened his eyes and looked at me expectantly.

Of course, it's not as if *I'd* ever tell him.

So I just kissed the hell out of him until he begged me to fuck him.

**

Justin's POV

He had to get back on a plane the next day, in the morning before I left for work. We had a goodbye kiss, which turned into a goodbye makeout session and then a goodbye mutual handjob- well basically, he nearly missed his flight. I called him that evening, which went to voicemail, but I didn't leave a message, and I didn't hear from him for three days. Finally on the third day, I got a drunken call from him at 11 pm. (I was surprised he was already drunk, but then I remembered it was 2 am where he was). Among the “Sunshine” this and “these drugs are for shit” that was:

“So when the fuck are you coming home, anyway?” he said quietly.

“A month.”

“*Shit.*”

The month went unsurprisingly slowly, with phone calls every few days, intermittent with phone sex.

After a particularly epic phone sex session, he finally asked me.

“So Justin...”

“Mmm?” I grunted, half asleep.

“I’ve been meaning to ask you for a long time now...”

I opened my eyes and sat up a bit. “What is it?”

“How exactly did you manage to make me hit myself in the head with my phone receiver?”

At which point I flopped back down and started giggling. I could sense him smiling wide on the other end, no one around to see it. “That was one of my favourites. I really didn’t mean for you to hurt yourself, though.”

“Just tell me, twat.”

“Ok, I took a couple of high powered magnets and put one in the cradle of your phone and one in the receiver, to add resistance, and after a couple weeks, once you got used to the resistance, I had an accomplice remove them from your phone, so you would pick it up with more force than needed.” I finished quietly, but rather proudly. There was a quiet pause, when I started to get a little nervous. It was a little mean of me...

“Fucking brilliant.” he muttered.

“I was pretty proud of it mys-”

“WAIT. Accomplice? You mean Cynthia??” Oh shit.

“Ummm I don’t know?”

“I should fucking fire her ass.”

“But you won't.”

It was as if he was going to argue, but he just muttered a defeated, “Fuck.”

I arrived in the loft at 7pm on a Wednesday, while he was coming up with an outfit to wear out that night. We hadn't come up with a specific arrival time, he just knew wednesday was my last work day. Not that my work day was done at noon and I'd be taking a red eye home right away.

I dropped my bags with a thud and stood in the doorway and huffed out a sigh.

“Hey.”

He suppressed a smile. “Hey. You're early.”

“Yep.”

His smirk had grown into a full-blown grin in the time it took him to cross the loft and pin me to the door, whereas I was full out laughing.

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Brian's POV

Really, not that much has drastically changed. He's been hanging around for quite a while now, and it wasn't really much of a transition. He moved in about 6 months after he got back from Vancouver, for purely practical reasons, which oddly enough, hasn't really bothered me. I managed to drop the l-bomb unwittingly while we were eating japanese food a year later. I was eating my edamame with dignity, while he was tearing the bean pods to shreds and dangling shards of the skin into his mouth, licking his fingers. I gave him a “what the fuck?” look, and he tried to explain that more parts of the edamame were edible than just the bean, you just had to know how to separate the inner membrane from the skin, “comme ca”. He was loudly sucking the salty slime off of a bean pod when I blurted it out. He looked at me like I'd

started preaching the benefits of abstinence or something. I probably looked like I'd seen a ghost. I...it's hard to explain.

The day I knew that he was a permanent facet in my life was the day Gus asked him if he was his second Daddy, like he had 2 mommies. I found myself not even remotely jarred by this, only laughing hysterically at Justin's look of horror. This was about two years in. A few months later I gave him a ring.

As of this moment, he's halfway off the couch, asleep and snoring quietly, and I'm waiting for Mad Men to come back from commercial. Right now it's some lame-ass commercial for laundry detergent, with a girl lending a guy a cup of Tide, flirtatiously in a laundromat. (oh yeah, that's hot.)

“Sometimes love turns up where you least suspect it. So always be prepared”

I looked at Justin, sprawled out and drooling, hair splayed, sock half dangling off his foot.

How about that. Maybe there is some truth in advertising.

Oh my God, we're gonna pretend I didn't just say that.