

Chapter 8

She got up from the bed and grabbed her shopping bag, ripping the tag out of one of the tees and a pair of jeans. She undressed and re-dressed and somehow it felt akin to putting on armor. One look in the mirror solidified the change in her demeanor—at least aesthetically speaking, she wasn't that same old girl anymore. The thought made her smile.

She tugged her door open and slid out to the hall, noticing for the first time how gaudy and unnecessarily ostentatious her surroundings were.

"Hello Quinnie," her father was coming up the stairs as she was going down them.

"Hey." She didn't want to stop, but he did so she did too.

"You're looking pretty interesting today. Is that some sort of glee club costume? What is that Schuester fellow's fascination with dressing all you kids up like homeless lesbians?"

"It's not a costume, dad. I like these clothes."

"Oh—well then...just what is it that you're trying to say with these clothes, Quinn?"

She sighed deeply, "Well...I suppose this shirt says "The Smiths were a really great band" and I suppose these jeans are saying "Hey ladies—check out this tight ass" and I suppose these shoes are saying—"

"Fair enough Quinnie," he smiled, "The Smiths...I've never heard of them."

"I suppose you haven't. One would need a soul, I think, to relate to their lyrics."

He laughed and patted her on the back, "Good one, kiddo...I doubt your mother will let you get away with looking like that, though."

"Yeah," she shrugged albeit imperceptibly, "Where is she, anyway?"

"Oh, I don't—a rally or something? Something about abortions equating to genocide on babies and how God's going to rain down fire on America."

"Oh...so she'll be gone a while huh?"

"I believe so, yes."

"Good."

"Quite. See you later, Quinnie."

"Bye dad."

She whistled down the stairs and went into the kitchen to put on some tea while she waited for the doorbell to—

briiing!

It was cool that Brittany only lived two houses away—and it was really cool that she didn't get lost on the way here anymore.

She opened the door and hugged the tall, diminutive blonde, "Hey, B."

"Hi, Quinn!"

They walked inside and settled on the expansive living room couch, "What's up?"

"Something really weird."

"Oh yeah? Like what?"

"Santana just texted me that she thinks her parents are coconuts."

"Like—wait—oh, like brown on the outside white on the inside?"

Brittany stared blankly back at her.

"I don't think Santana means they've physically transformed into coconuts, B. It's a stereotype that plays on the idea that to be successful in this country you have to sell out and be white-washed."

"Or they have."

Quinn quirked a brow, "Yeah—or they've turned into coconuts."

A buzzing came from Brit's purse and she reached inside to check her cell.

"You were right—but it's even scarier that they might be white people wearing brown people suits. I mean...where'd they get the suits?"

"Again—metaphor that doesn't imply any literal transformation. But—hey—you're not telling Santana where you are, are you?"

"Umm...yes?"

"Don't—if you tell Santana you're here she'll get all faux gangsta like— 'T'mma go Lima Heights on you for trying to steal Brit from me' when we all know she lives in our school district and therefore the center of monotonous suburbia."

""I know. I won't—I just hate lying. But you love lying Quinn—why? Why do you love lying?"

"I don't love it, B. I just felt like I had to do it to preserve my image. And I thought that was more important than everything. Even me. The real me behind the image who was...just suffocating to death under everything. You know?"

"Yeah," Brittany smiled at her, "I think I like the new Quinn."

"It doesn't even feel like I'm 'new Quinn,' it's like I'm finally just Quinn— period."

"Yeah...before you were all Quinn question-mark. Like: Seriously, Quinn? Seriously?"

Quinn snorted, "Yeah...something like that."

"Are you scared about school on Monday?"

Quinn shrugged, "A little, I guess. More scared of backing down now and I dunno...going back to denial and depression with a vengeance."

"Well, don't."

"Okay, sounds good."

The wail of the tea kettle interrupted the smiling looks they shared. Quinn got up to get it.

"Peppermint?"

Brittany gave an emphatic nod that Quinn didn't have to see to guess her answer, "And sugar."

"Well, duh." She poured the boiling water into Brit's cup with the peppermint tea bag in it, and hers with the earl grey. The distinction in color marking which was which.

"So how's the vicious vanilla/caramel swirl going?" It's what she called her and Rachel's relationship after Quinn tried to explain it as a sick cycle that kept perpetuating because blah blah blah...too many big words for Brittany to remember now. She liked her description of them much better—hers was delicious.

"It's—I think I'm asking her out tonight. On a real—on like a date."

"No freaking way," Brittany deadpanned, her eyes widening comically.

"Yeah...I am." Quinn looked down and tried to pretend that she wasn't blushing.

"That's like the best news I've gotten since I found out my cat wasn't pregnant but just getting really fat."

Quinn bit her lip, as she carried the steaming tea cups over to the couch and sat them down on the living room table. "I'm kinda worried about it."

"Why?"

"It's not like I have experience in asking people out. It's not like I have experience asking people anything. I mean—I'm Quinn Fabray. But...what if I'm so bad at it that she laughs for ten full minutes then says no? What if she hates my new hair cut? What if Finn asks her out like two minutes before I do, the utter asshole. What if I ask her out and she says yes and the day of the date I snap out of this

brand-new enlightened Quinn mode and go back to being this scared little kid and I stand her up and she never ever talks to me again and I die alone as a very successful and unhappy Republican Senator like my dad and my only moments of happiness stemmed from you-tubing clips of her Broadway performances while I shot back cartons of Ben & Jerry's...and I got really really fat?"

"She won't laugh or say no... 'cause she loves you. Your new hair is so hot I have to physically fight the urge to try and mack with you right now. Finn is boring and looks like the Pillsbury boy if he was bit by a radioactive building and grew to be like a thousand stories tall. And...just don't. Seriously...don't, that all sounds so sad."

"Okay."

"Cool."

Quinn sipped her tea in the hopes of being less of a mess about this and put the cup back on table seconds later in futility. "...Are you sure?"

"Look Q—I'm not like, a person that understands math or anything...but the ratio of Rachel saying yes to a date with you is 1."

"What?"

"X equals Rachel's totally in love with you."

"If you don't understand the things you're alluding to...why use them?"

"Rachel times a date with you, divided by sweet lady kisses equals cuddles squared."

"Okay—I get it. She'll probably say yes, but that doesn't mean there's not a lot of pressure on me to make things special. I've never done anything like that for her...everything between us has always been unplanned and passionate and just...nothing you'd see on a romantic comedy or something."

"Those are fun—but relationships aren't like that. You can't plan love, Q. The first time I told Santana I loved her we were twelve."

"Oh Jesus fucking..."

"There were monsters under my bed but my parents didn't want to look for them anymore because they said I was too old to still be scared of that stuff. I told Santana about it and she said she'd climb under my bed and slay all the monsters and come back out. I was so scared she wouldn't—but she was so brave, Quinn—she promised she'd beat them all up. And she went in and there were all these scary dying monster sounds like 'arghhh oh no' but she came out and I was so happy I just hugged her really really hard and told her I loved her...and there were never any more monsters, so happy ending. I just think... so what if it wasn't in some restaurant where the waiters are all dressed nicer than you and they serve slimy snails on a silver platter and you have to pay ninety bucks for it like in the movies? It was how it happened, and it's still special."

"But that's a nice story, B—you have to understand, no matter what I do after this all of my firsts with Rachel are like planets orbiting around a sun made up of my fucked-upedness. And I can never go back

and change it. I can never just rewind everything and ask her out two years ago before I did all that...before I was such a mess."

"Yeah—you can't. So whatever, why let it ruin the future too? You did it, you have to deal with it. The important thing is even though you tried really hard to stop it, Rachel still wants you to be the soft plushy teddy bear she holds at night."

"Yeah...you're right. I can't believe I didn't push her away. I'm so lucky."

"You are," Brittany's eyes hazed over, "I mean—it's not like Santana's ever asked me out before, or ever will. We're friends who 'can kiss and whatever but nothing gay.' At least you and Rachel are going somewhere."

Quinn nodded contemplatively, "Santana and I are alike in all the wrong ways."

"Seriously...the pressed lemon epidemic is out of control. Lesbians age 14 to 17 are the most at risk...and many of them don't even know they have it. Or the hazards it presents to their partners. I made a PSA about it and put it up on you-tube...the first ten minutes is just footage of my cat I thought was pretty cute."

"As long as the message is reaching the masses..."

"It has 41 views."

The sharp quirk of a brow, "Are 40 of them you?"

"Mean."

Quinn rolled her eyes, "So I'm not completely rehabilitated...I'm trying."

"Shouldn't you be asking Rachel out right now?"

"That's what I called you over for actually. I was thinking all morning about it and—how do you ask out Rachel Berry? I know it's super-obvious but the thing that seems most fitting is serenading her you know? And you're starting to get all tight with Artie—is he still in that jazz band?"

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"Oh my God—it's like watching a slow motion parade of lame."

Artie's jazz band—The Heart Break Review—sauntered over to Brittany's garage, where they'd decided to meet, from their mostly broken-down van that still managed to miraculously putter around from point A to point B.

"Q, you said you'd be nice."

"Right—yes, okay. Hey guys! Nice fedoras! Totally not lame! And pork pie hats? I'm like—why did those ever go out of style?"

"Hey Quinn. Sup girl!" Artie rolled over to where the two girls stood and gave Brittany a nod and a quick wink.

Quinn straightened her back just as if she'd been wearing her Cheerios uniform, "All right losers—first of all, let me preface this by saying that if word ever gets out about any of this, you'll devolve back into fish to better survive in the all-slushie environment you'll come to know as natural—"

"Q—bad Q. Very bad."

Quinn caught herself and nodded slowly, "Right—sorry. Okay, look you guys... I'm about to tell you something and I'd like it if you kept it under wraps because I'm not ready to be all out and proud about anything just yet..."

"You have our word as gentlemen and scholars—plus it's not like anybody listens to us anyway," Artie shrugged.

"Well—I'm about to ask someone out on a date. And she's a...a girl." She waited with baited breath for the response.

"Wow—" one of the band members spoke up, "You're like...way more freaked out about this than we are."

"Seriously Quinn...I'm in glee club. I ran the numbers and by my calculations it's at least 70% gay. Way over average. Soon you'll all start to admit it, fall like dominoes, and I'll be the only straight guy in glee and have Tina, Mercedes and Brit all to myself. I'm going to be—in a word—balling." Artie nudged his glasses higher onto his nose, but they slid back down again a second later, despite him.

"Wait...you're all really cool? I mean, I'm Quinn Fabray...and I'm a homosexual," She shook her head at them like they were freaks for not falling over dead at the very thought.

"That's a way bigger deal to you than it is to us." Their drummer shrugged and expertly twirled around a drumstick. "Anyway, why are we here?"

"Um, okay," Quinn exhaled the breath she'd been holding for minutes now, and felt herself relax...relax around a group of people who knew she was gay. She smiled, it was easy for once, "So, I want to serenade her. But you know...I don't wanna go all Say Anything with a boombox and a trench coat and whatever because it isn't the 80s anymore...and an i-pod doesn't have much theatricality to it. I want a live band backing me up...and you guys are my only real option so...in or not?"

Artie looked around at his only friends before deciding they were, "So in."

"I love it when a sinister plot starts falling into place," Quinn smirked, a tad too evilly not to cause several shivers down several spines.

"Q—this plot...it's not sinister. It's cute, like a kitten nestled inside a basket of kittens."

"You are too damn cute not to be dating me right now..." Artie stared dreamily up at Brittany who stared into space, imagining a kitten nestled inside a basket of kittens.

"Okay, Artie—introduce us so we can get to work." Quinn felt a little bad for the mess that the Artie/Brittany/Santana triangle was about to unleash on glee club, but right now it was all about her and Rachel and the real beginning to a real relationship between them. Some bisexual teenage drama was not about to fuck that up.

Artie spun his wheelchair around to face Quinn, "All right—first of all you can call me Thrills on Wheels from now on, I'm lead guitar. That's la muy linda Princesa Karlita on the keyboard, Dances With Bears on rhythm guitar, my homey Rebeliz on the trumpet, Snakey Ninja on the tenor sax, Eolian on the stand up bass, and Dare 121 on drums."

"So you all have bad-ass nick names like in gangs?" Quinn asked, "Except that you're actually a high school jazz band nobody's ever heard of? How freaking cool," she turned to Dare, "What's the 121 for? Number of times you've been kicked in the face?"

A snort, "No...that's how many fan-girl hearts I've broken."

"Wow—intense." The tone of Quinn's voice spoke volumes which were only about boredom.

Artie (or rather, Thrills on Wheels) interrupted, "That's how many fan-girl hearts you think you've broken. We don't—y'know—actually have any fans yet."

"I'm a fan" Brittany deadpanned.

"Yeah" Rebeliz nodded, "Brit's a fan."

"So?" Quinn quirked a sardonic brow, "Brit's a fan of Hello Kitty—that doesn't make it hard-core."

Brittany shook her head, "Hello Kitty is so underrated."

"I mean—have you guys ever even had a gig?"

Dances With Bears shrugged, "We're regular entertainment at the stairs in Building 4 so...there's that."

"You mean the abandoned stairs in building 4 that don't even lead anywhere anymore because some kid hung himself or whatever?"

Princesa Karlita nodded slowly, "That...would be the one. We practice there because then no one's around to hear us and beat us up."

"Oh, fuck" Quinn slapped a hand to her forehead.

Snakey's eyes rolled, "Dude okay...stop stressing out. Trust me, we're good enough to serenade your little girlfriend."

"Yeah, my 'little girlfriend' is Rachel Berry."

The Heart Break Review gasped collectively, "So not in my contract."

"There aren't any contracts," Artie spoke drolly.

"Whatever," Eolian spoke up with a sharp shake of the head, "The one time Rachel Berry listened to my demo she said it sounded like I'd let Brittany's cat walk on the piano keys and that it was 'an experimental and albeit ludicrous method of musical production that wouldn't sell a single copy if it was free and attached to a good CD.'"

"Lord Tubbington's musical talent is also totally underrated."

"Look you guys," Artie told them, "This is our first paid gig—"

"I'm not paying you." Quinn crossed her arms.

"And it's gonna be tough, but at the end of the day, when we finish this and Quinn hands us all twenty bucks—"

"That's not...at all true."

"—we'll be professional musicians. The dream my brethren—the dream."

Everyone nodded, "Let's kick this song's ass!"

Brittany turned to Quinn, "You haven't picked a song yet."

"It's cool, I'll pick something off my 'Rachel' playlist."

Rebeliz's eyes widened in Quinn's direction, "You're so gay right now it's like your body's 75% glitter. I think I might be seriously blind right now, you guys..."

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Leroy and Hiram Berry sat down on the couch across their daughter who was sat on an ottoman and leaning excitedly into their space. The youngest Berry had laid out a spread of all their favorite treats on the living room table. Something she only ever did when something was up.

"So what's up?" Leroy decided the best way to break the ice was immediately.

"Okay" she clasped her hands together, "So as the two of you know I am deeply in like with a certain Quinn Fabray whom you've both now met and who has had dinner with the family, which is one of the requirements you outlined for any potential suitors that might—"

"Baby," Hiram interrupted, "What's up?"

Rachel took a deep breath, "Quinn will be asking me out on a date sometime within the week and I think the most scrupulous thing to do at this point is to schedule an appointment with my gynecologist and start me off on birth control, I've taken the liberty of compiling a book listing copious information on several different brands—their pros and cons and—"

"Whoa whoa whoa whoa," Leroy put his hands up, "I'mma need you to back up at least fifty paces."

"Certainly—Quinn will, hopefully within the week, be asking me out on our first official date, and while I don't expect to fully consummate our relationship until she puts a proverbial ring on it and I've won at least five Tony awards, one can't predict the ebb and flow of teenage hormones and if we do have...a moment of...well, passion I suppose, then I want the assurance that it won't result in a life-altering pregnancy that would make all of my immaculately planned future successes suddenly unreachable...or at least much, much, much harder to reach."

"Oh honey..." Hiram's eyebrows knit together in sudden pity, "We...we've explained to you how pregnancy works. And while it'd be a scientific miracle and a welcome phenomenon to many same sex couples if it were a possibility— it's just...well not..."

"Quinn is intersex." Rachel crossed her arms, "And she can probably get me super pregnant."

Hiram's eyes grew three sizes that day. "Oh...well then. Different story."

"Quite," Rachel nodded, "I'll give you a second to recoup."

"Thanks, sweetie," Leroy patted her knee, "Hey—maybe you can get her to come to a meeting of 'spectrum.' We don't have any intersex members yet, but there are three trans kids about Quinn's age and I think it'd be good for her to meet someone—"

"Well, no daddy—" Rachel interrupted, "It's a secret. I probably shouldn't have told you, but since Quinn is practically my girlfriend now, I thought it best to be open with the two of you. That said, I doubt Quinn has progressed to the point where she'd want to talk about herself in a group of people, even if they're empathetic."

"Wait—can we—back up," Hiram stared incredulously at his husband, "This isn't about Quinn right now—she's, look Rachel, I like her. If she can put her bullshit bully years behind her, I'm willing to give her a shot at the coveted daughter-in-law title, fine. Yes. But...I mean birth control? What's—what's going on? You're sixteen."

"Do you want me to get you a glass of water Dad?"

"I want you to get me a glass of vodka."

"Hiram!" Leroy laughed, "This is so unlike you, boo."

"Yeah well my sixteen year old daughter, who still wears knee socks for Moses' sake, is sitting in front of me, asking me about birth...oh my God...what's going on? This has to be a bad dream."

"Hiram...babe, calm down," he put a broad arm around his husband's shoulders, "We can handle this like adults..."

"My baby," tears sprang in the corners of his eyes.

"Or not..."

"Rachel, baby," Hiram's voice broke, "Have you two done...you know..."

Rachel shrugged, "A few things."

"Oh God."

Leroy shook his head at her, "You could've lied...lying was totally an option."

"You always tell me not to lie!"

"Well sometimes it's okay!"

Rachel shook her head, "I can't believe you two—you always tell me to be open-minded and all that stuff and then the minute I let you in on the fact that I'm growing up and becoming a woman...a sexual being—you—"

Leroy put the hand not busy stroking his crying husband's shoulder, to stroke his enraged daughter's shoulder. "Yes, Rachel...fine, you're right. This is a lot to process, but we're not dealing with it the right way. And I don't want you to think that we're angry, or that what you're doing is wrong...what you're doing is normal. It's fine. But you're still our kid and you gotta understand things from our point of view too. And please...for the love of everything good on this planet, never refer to yourself as a sexual being in my presence again."

"Fine." Rachel replied curtly, before picking up the binder she'd let fall into her lap, "Do you want to flip through birth control options with me?"

"Please," Hiram moaned, as if weak and wounded, "Put the big birth-control binder away. It's like kryptonite to me."

"Hiram, babe, maybe you should go lie down for a bit? Look at old baby pictures? I'll make the appointment and we can resume this dialogue when you aren't so frazzled."

"Yes...good...baby pictures." Hiram sniffled and made his listless way into the master bedroom. "My baby..."

Leroy turned to look at his daughter after his husband was safely in another room, "Guerrilla tactics for telling your dads that not only do you think you might need birth control soon, but you've done a 'few things' with a girl we only just met a few days ago, are not exactly the best course of action for this sort of thing, sweetie."

"If you would've allowed me to get to the PowerPoint portion—"

"Nope—just want to hear 'sorry daddy, you're right'"

Her shoulders slumped and she bit her lip, "Sorry daddy, you're right."

He shook his head and his hazel eyes grew wistful, almost lime green, "You used to be this little girl who tugged at my hand because she needed me to tie her shoes. And now you're this young woman tugging at my hand because she needs me to buy her birth control—and I want to be this cool, hip dad that thinks 'no big deal' but part of me wants to board up all your doors and windows so nothing ever has a chance to hurt you."

"I know Daddy."

"Okay princess— so that's my freak out. How'd you like it?"

"It rates about a three in the Rachel Berry scale of theatrics. Tears would have helped. Perhaps some mournful wailing. If you had fallen to your knees and cried at an overcast sky as droplets landed sporadically on your cheeks—"

"I get it sweetheart. I'm going to go make sure your father isn't stressing too bad. I'll make your appointment in the morning."

"Okay. I love you Daddy."

"I love you too sweetie. Oh and by the way—I want you to know that my attitude towards Quinn is one of understanding and empathy and that I support your decision to forgive her and because you have, I have too. But if she does a single other thing to hurt you ever again... even just once—I will go all Papa Bear on that skinny little white girl and maul her bony ass."

"Oh—I know Daddy."

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Only three miles away from Rachel's house now, on the back of The Heart Break Review's van, Quinn felt a shiver go up her spine.

"You okay?" Princess Karlita frowned worriedly at her.

"It's like...I just felt the Fates hold the string of my life taut and just sort hover over it with their scissors."

"Pretty scary stuff."

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A/N: So...anyone that guessed (and hopefully I haven't forgotten anyone) got a little guest spot on this chapter and the subsequent one. I'm like that soccer coach who hands out trophies to everyone, champions and fatties alike (channeling Sue). I just wanted to know what you all thought in terms of who Quinn has that she can be close to. One of my biggest Glee pet peeves is that it doesn't seem like Quinn has an actual best friend. I think they tried to make it happen between her and Mercedes, but they never really went anywhere. And they don't have the chemistry that Kurt and Mercedes do, or Artie and Puck, Rachel and Kurt/Puck (admittedly, Rachel had no one in season 1 except sleazy Jesse St. James). It seems like Quinn always gets stuck filling the antagonizing role for other characters' plots and it sucks so bad in my opinion. I always thought her and Brittany could be close, because Brittany strikes me as very open and not at all judgmental, and I think Quinn needs someone she can trust not to judge her. A friend who can see past the icy veneer and not comment on what's beneath it. And Brittany is just strangely wise and perceptive enough to do it.

I hope you liked your guest spots—I'm sorry I made Quinn be so mean to you all, but I figured if I had

the choice between Quinn being nice to me and Quinn being mean, I'd pick mean every time...but that's between me and my therapist.