

Rubbed Raw By Kamikaze_Redux

Justin's POV...

"Justin, JUSTIN"

I hear him screaming my name and I try to pretend as if I don't hear him but I do. Maybe this time if I don't answer he will just leave me alone. I hear him come up behind me and before I can completely turn around I feel it, the blow to the back of the head. My head snaps forward. I fall off the stool and hit the floor. Blood pours from the new gash on my face and runs onto my canvas that he knocked over.

"Did you hear me calling you?" He screams. I try to hold back the tears but they fall free. "Why the hell haven't you started dinner yet? Get off your fucking ass, put that paint down and make me some goddamn food," he shouts. "And you better not bleed on the fucking floor."

I am shaking as I try to pull myself up off the floor. He insists on hitting me in the head knowing that I cannot take too many head blows. I wipe the blood off my face quickly and realize that he has added another wound. I do not dare to drop blood on the floor. I go to the kitchen and wash my hands while he watches me. I know he knows that I hate him. I start dinner and his eyes never leave me. I can feel them burning into me with every step I take.

"I know you're thinking about that asshole," he spits out. "I wonder what he would say if he saw you now... just a scared little bitch," he says and then he smiles.

"He wouldn't wonder anything because he would be kicking your ass," I say under my breath. It is the last thing I can say as he slips his hands around my neck and holds on for dear life. I didn't see him coming. We drop to the floor and I kick my legs and grab at his wrist, searching frantically for a pocket of air.

"Et...han stop. Plea...se," I try to say. 'Oh God, Brian... please help me,' I think. I am struggling to breathe and fighting the blackness. Then I slip.

I feel myself swimming under a weight of water with only the sound of Ethan screaming my name and sirens in the background flooding my hearing; this peace is wonderful.

"Shit, Shit, Shit, Justin wake up, wake up," Ethan screams. He calls 911 and the paramedics are here in a heartbeat. "Justin, Justin Can you hear us?" One of the men shouts.

I can hear my name being said and I fight to come back. In my head I can only think one thing, "Brian," I say as the hazy cloud that is engulfing me lifts just a little. Ethan hears the name and his body becomes tense. I can see the hate flash in his eyes.

Across town Brian sits straight up in the bed, one thing going through his mind.

"Justin," he whispers to the emptiness.

Brian's POV...

My skin is covered in sweat and I know something is wrong, I can feel it. I get up out the bed and grab my cell phone. I take note of the time and I know that I should not call but I have to. I press the speed dial button and hang up before even one ring registers. It will be a call I will always regret not making.

Justin's POV...

"Mr. Taylor," the doctor says as he waits for me to respond. "Mr. Taylor, can you open your eyes for me?" He asks me.

I slowly open my eyes and blink; it's so bright in here. The events of last night come rushing back to me and I am suddenly in a panic. I sit up quickly and my head spins as it adjusts to the movement. "Yeah, I can hear you doc and you don't have to talk so loud," I tell him and he gives me this look as if to say 'I am not talking loud.'

"Where's Sam?" I ask as I realize that I am in a hospital and not at home. "Where is he?" I repeat as I start to panic.

"Mr. Taylor, please calm down. Who is Sam?" He asks and I just look at him.

"He is my son," I tell him. He looks at my chart and some notes that he has written there.

"Oh, he is with his father. Do you want me to get them?" He asks and he is so polite that I can hardly look at him.

"NO," I shout. I take a deep breath and calm down. "No, umm could you just send him in alone?" I ask him.

"Sure Mr. Taylor," he says and I am glad that he doesn't ask too many questions. Before he leaves he turns and looks at me. "I know what he does to you. I have seen these bruises many times before," he says as he gives me his card. "If you need me call me, day or night," he says and he is gone.

Five minutes later I see the door open and a little brown head with hazel eyes pops through. Every time I see him I see his daddy I'm reminded of how stupid I was to leave him. It has only been six months but it feels like forever.

"Come here Sam," I tell him. Brian decided to name him Sam and I didn't object. I had a son so I could care less what his name was. He is only two years old and full of life, when Ethan is not around. Now he is just scared that Ethan will hurt me more or turn on him so he has become very clingy.

"Daddy, what happen to you?" He asks and I start to cry.

“Daddy got hurt baby boy,” I tell him. He looks up at me with sadness and tears misting his hazel eyes.

“Daddy no hurt wif dad,” he tells me and I know I have to call Brian. I cannot let Sam go with Ethan alone. Brian is going to be pissed enough when he sees me. I don’t know why we cannot just work it out. I know there I so much love between us.

I pick up the phone and start to dial when I feel a hand on my wrist. The pain is intense and when I look at Sam I see the tears silently falling down his face. He is as close to me as he can get.

“I would drop that fucking phone right now if you know what’s good for you,” he says. I drop it fast and pull my son to me.

“Ethan, please let go of me,” I squeak out and he does. He sits in the seat next to the bed and looks at me.

“You were gonna call that asshole weren’t you? I knew it, I let you out of sight for a few minutes and there you go being unfaithful,” he says as he gets up and pulls me close to him so he can whisper in my ear. “I told you Justin, if I cannot have you I will slit your fucking throat and put your ashes in my violin,” he tells me. He releases me and sits down.

“I...I was just calling Brian to come get Sam,” I tell him.

“Why? The doctor said you can go so he is coming with us,” he says. I just nod as I try to think of what to do. It’s time for me to go; it’s long past time to go.

Brian’s POV...

I am never going to be able to go back to sleep; I pace and pace around the room knowing that something is wrong. I cannot take it anymore, I have to call. “Hello,” the voice on the other end answers and it is Slimy Ethan Gold. I hate him so much it hurts.

“Let me talk to Justin,” I say coldly.

“Justin is unable to be reached right now,” he says.

“Where is Sam?” I ask trying to be calm.

“He is here with me,” he says and hangs up.

“Fucking SON of a BITCH,” I scream.

I know something is wrong. There is no way that Justin would leave Sam with Ethan, ever. I start to think of all the times in the past four months that I have seen Justin. I remember him always with an excuse as to why he had hurt himself. I remembered having Sam and him not wanting to

go back to Ethan's. Something is wrong and I am going to find out. I put on a pair of jeans and a shirt as I grab my wallet, phone and keys and leave the loft.

"Open this fucking door," I yell. I can hear Sam inside screaming. "Open this door before I call the fucking cops," I shout and that does the trick. The door opens and I see my son in the corner balled up with tears and snot pouring down his face and a huge red bruise on his left cheek. "What the fuck is going on?" I say as I push past Ethan into the apartment. "Did you hit my fucking son?" I ask him as I pickup Sam from the corner.

"That little shit needs to learn to keep his hands off of other people's stuff," Ethan says. I grab him by the neck and push him up against the wall. "YOU need to learn to keep YOUR hands off other peoples stuff, THIS boy does not belong to you," I say. I let him go and punch him in the jaw. "Tell Justin I took him with me," I say as I leave the house. I cannot shake the feeling that something is wrong with Justin.

Justin's POV...

Ethan picks himself up off the floor and goes into the bathroom. He steps over my legs; I just keep running into his fist. "You know Justin I will hold you responsible if this bruises, I have a photo shoot tomorrow," he says and I just look. He stoops down in front of me. "Are those handcuffs and gag comfortable?" He asks. "If you would not try and run away you would not get yourself into such situations... by the way Brian took Sam."

"Please Ethan please, take these off," I plead with my eyes, my voice muffled by the gag. I got out of the hospital three days ago and today I told Ethan that I had to call Brian for the baby. He blew up and punched me while Sam watched from his crib and cried. I felt so small as he dragged me by the hair into the bathroom, cuffed me to the toilet and then gagged me. I have been here for four hours. I am tired and hungry and Brian was five steps away. Tears fall from my eyes and I cry hard which is always my big mistake.

"SHUT UP," he screams. I hold as many of the sobs in as possible. He starts to undo the cuffs but not the gag. I kick and scream. "Stop it Justin, if you're going to cry and make all that goddamn noise you might as well be fucking."

I shake my head back and forth to say no but he wants what he wants, whether I am willing or not. "Come on Justin," he says as he pulls me by my hands and cuffs me to the bars he has hidden on the bed frame. He strips off my pants and underwear without the slightest bit of love. I feel him get behind me and I tense up immediately. He pushes into me without any preparation and despite the gag I let out the loudest scream I have ever heard myself make. He pumps in and out of me hard and fast and I can feel the blackness again.

"Oh, no you don't, I want you to stay awake for this baby," he says and unhooks my arms before pushing me up against the wall and pounding back into me. My knees are giving out as he comes hard and fast inside of me. I cry silently thinking of Brian. He pushes me onto the bed. "Now, tell me what I like to hear," he says with all the cockiness in the world.

“BRIIAAAN,” I scream hoping that he is still lingering outside the apartment door. I know that the possibilities of that are slim to none.

“Wrong answer,” he says as he moves to his toy chest.

Brian’s POV...

I slide the door to the loft open and close it behind me. I throw my keys on the bed and get my son some juice. He drinks it greedily and I’m reminded of how small he is. I remember when Justin told me that he was pregnant. My whole world had changed for the better and then six months ago Justin admitted to cheating and we parted ways. I refuse to call it a break-up since to me we are just on pause.

“Daddy, me wan Daddy,” Sam says and starts to cry, big huge tears that make my heart break.

“I want your daddy too,” I whisper.

“Papa in da baffum,” Sam says through sniffles.

“What? Dad does not understand you,” Brian says as he places the boy on his two shaky legs.

“Dad, daddy in baffum,” he says again with more conviction.

“Okay,” I say, hoping that will calm the boy. I pick up the phone and start calling everybody that we know. By the time I get to Daphne, Sam is sleep and I am getting more and more worried about Justin. “Where in the hell are you? You never leave him for this long,” I say to no one in particular.

“Hello,” Daphne says in her sweet tone.

“Hey beautiful,” I answer her. I have always loved Daphne, more than I will ever tell her.

“What’s up Brian? Is something wrong?” she asks. Now she is worried. She knows I never call. It’s always Justin who calls.

“I was going to ask you that. I cannot find Justin anywhere and I found Sam with Ethan all alone,” I tell her. I did not want to tell her that Ethan hit him because Daphne loved her little nephew about as much as she loved Justin and I did not need to bail her out of jail.

“I haven’t seen him Brian. Do you want me to go over there?” she asks.

“No, you don’t have to. I will just keep looking for him. Thanks,” I say and hang up.

My next step is calling the police and hospitals and I really do not want to do that. I put Sam in his crib in his room. We had long ago bought the lofts above and below and renovated. I watch him sleep for awhile as I wonder where Justin is. “Daddy in baffum,” I repeat softly to myself. I

still have no idea what he was talking about. I go back downstairs to wait for a sign of life from Justin. "If another two hours pass I'll call the hospitals," I say.

Justin's POV...

"Oh my god," I breath out lightly. My body aches all over and I feel like if I move I will stop breathing. I can see Ethan on the bed asleep and I move to try and get up. My obviously broken ribs and bruises plus the numb ache that is coursing through my ass makes me think twice about it. I lay there on the floor glad that Sam is not here to see me. I know that Brian is probably worried about me. I have never disappeared before, especially without Sam.

"Get up Justin, get up," I tell myself. I can't move. I lay here and eventually darkness falls over me and I sleep peacefully. When I wake up Ethan is moving around but I cannot see him. I have to pee so badly but I cannot get my limbs to work with me. I notice that I am in the bed, Ethan must have done that. It's the first time I have been in the bed in two weeks. He normally dumps me on the floor and leaves it at that. Hopefully he is through with the torture for this evening because I can't take much more. I know he is pissed that Brian showed up here.

"Well hello sleepyhead," he says and climbs up to me and kisses me on the lips. I tense up and he makes the kiss deeper and more painful. He moves away from me and I am so glad. "I was thinking that it's time you became mine in a more permanent, visual way," he says matter-of-factly. I struggle to sit up and make it so that I am halfway propped on the headboard. I am aching all over and he wants to do more, he really was full of shit with all that love and caring bullshit he was spouting.

I see him come from the stove and I am terrified. He has always said that he would make me his and mind goes crazy with what he has in mind. "I am going to brand you," he says. Then I see it, the long iron branding stick with a big E on it, blazing red from the fire of the stove. I cannot move away because of the pain that I am already in. I try, oh god I do, but I cannot move. I am half in pain and half terrified.

He does not wait for anything, he just presses the brand to my upper back and I wail like a banshee. The sound wakes the neighbors and Ethan just laughs and laughs. I think he has finally truly lost it. I knew he was abusive but now I know he is plain crazy. I hear the neighbors pounding on the door and I scream louder and harder than I ever have before. My throat is raw by the time I hear the police sirens in the distance. I just pray they get here in time.

Brian's POV...

"Hello, is this Mr. Kinney?" I hear a voice ask into the phone.

"Yes this is him, who in the hell is this?" I ask. I am so irritated that Justin has not called. Sam has been up for hours and keeps asking about his daddy.

"Mr. Kinney this is Dr. Henderson down at County General. We have a Mr. Taylor down here and he has asked us to call you," he says. I can feel the breath catch in my throat and I have to

remind myself to keep breathing.

“What happened? Is he okay? What’s going on?” I spit out. My mouth is flying faster than my brain.

“Mr. Kinney we can explain all that to you once you get here. For now it is best if you make it down to the hospital as quickly as possible,” he tells me.

“Okay I am on my way.” I say. I hang up and pause for a second as my brain computes what it just found out. Okay Kinney move, you have to get Sam dressed and then go find out what is wrong with Justin.

An hour later I am at the front desk of the hospital and I am waiting impatiently for the nurse to find out what room Justin is in and on what floor. She finally finds Justin’s floor and room number. She writes it down and hands it to me. I take it and shift Sam to my other hip as I walk to the bay of elevators that will take me to intensive care. “Holy shit sunshine, Intensive Care? What the fuck is going on?”

The doors open and I find himself walking slowly as I read all the room numbers. Before I can get too far down the hall a nurse stops me. “Excuse me sir, may I help you?” She asks sweetly. I smile weakly. “Yeah, I am looking for room 380A, Justin Taylor.”

“Oh, are you Mr. Kinney?” she asks as her eyes show all the concern she feels.

“Yes... I am Brian Kinney,” I tell her.

“Mr. Kinney, the doctor wanted to speak with you before you saw Mr. Taylor, I’ll go get him,” she tells me as she takes off down the hallway.

“Okay Sam, I guess we are supposed to wait here,” I tell my little boy as I bounce him on my hip.

“Wan see Papa,” he says.

“I know baby boy, I know,” I say as I smooth his hair and kiss his cheek.

I see the doctor coming down the hall and I braced myself for what I might hear. I am so scared that someone has attacked Justin again. I never once think about Ethan as the one who would abuse Justin. Even after him hitting Sam the thought of him hitting Justin never entered my mind.

“Mr. Kinney, I’m Dr. Henderson. I wanted to speak with you before you saw Mr. Taylor. Let’s step in here for more privacy,” he says as he gestures to an empty room. I go in and sit Sam on the bed. “Mr. Kinney, Mr. Taylor was brought in by ambulance to the emergency room after having been severely beaten and raped. He has bruises and broken ribs. His arm was dislocated and he has a large burn on his upper back,” he tells me. “I saw that you were Mr. Taylor’s POA

so I have no problem telling you. He has old bruises and this is not the first time we've seen Mr. Taylor," the doctor tells me and I know exactly what he is trying to say.

I take a deep breath as I take in the information and will my tears to stay back. "Umm...Do you know who did it?" I ask. "No sir I don't. You would have to ask Mr. Taylor. I am aware that someone was placed under arrest but I am not sure who it is or where the attack occurred," he tells me. "Also Mr. Kinney, he appears to have been kicked repeatedly and we have detected some internal bleeding. We are monitoring it but if it does not stop we will have to operate," he says. "I also would not recommend that you take the baby to see his father. He is very open to infection. You can leave him in the hospital daycare while you visit with your boyfriend. If you need me I will be in the hospital just have a nurse page me, okay," he says.

"Okay, thanks doc," I tell him as I pick Sam up so that I can take him to the daycare.

I find the daycare and surprisingly it looks pretty nice and cozy, for a hospital. I speak to the attending volunteer quickly and put Sam down to go mingle with the other kids. I make my way back to Justin's room and breathe deep before pushing the door open. I see him looking at the window and he looks so small in the big bed. "Hey babe, you know, if you wanted to get my attention you could have just called and said you were ready to get back together," I tell him.

I see his head slowly turn and he looks at me before he breaks down in body shaking sobs. I quickly walk over to him and wrap my arms around him, mindful of all the bruises and breaks. None of which compare to the emotional pain he is probably feeling. "You were right," he says. It's the first thing he says when he is able catch his breath.

"Right about what?" I ask as I sit down in the chair and hold tight to his hand, running my finger over the ring I gave him that he has never taken off.

"You were right about love. I should have been happy with what you gave me because I knew that you loved me even though you never said it. But no, instead I go with Ethan and end up here," he says as tears begin to fall from his eyes again.

"Ethan... Ethan did this to you?" I ask as the anger wells up inside of me. "He fucking did this to you? How long has this been going on?" I ask him.

"It has been happening for a while now. I should have told you. The cops arrested him for assault, battery, assault with a deadly weapon and... rape," he says so softly that I have to strain to hear.

"Justin, you should have told me," I say as I pull up close to him and rest my forehead on his "I think it's time we stop fucking around and you came back home, don't you?" I say. Someone had to end the stalemate and if it had to be me then fine.

"Yeah, I think that would be a good idea," he says as I wipe the tears from his eyes.

"I am sorry that he hurt you," I tell him. I have never been more pissed at anyone than I am at

Ethan. “Do you want to talk about it?” I ask him, I don’t want to hear it but if it’s what Justin needs then I will listen harder than I ever have.

“No, not right now, right now could you just hold me?” he asks. I climb into the bed as carefully as possible and we lay face to face.

“I am sorry that I left with him Brian, I really am,” he says softly.

“I know you are, but I am sorry I was too fucking stubborn to beg you to come back. And I am sorry that I did not know sooner,” I tell him.

“I hid it well plus I am glad you didn’t know.”

“Why do you say that Sunshine?”

“Because, I can’t raise my son alone while trying to explain to him why his dad is in prison for murder,” he says with a smile. I know that once the shock fully wears off he will be in tears.

We lay together for a couple of hours until the doctor comes in to check the bleeding. “Well Mr. Taylor, it looks as if the bleeding is under control, once you are feeling a little better we will be able to get you home,” the doctor says.

“When do you think that might be doctor?” I ask him.

“I am guessing that maybe by Friday he can go home. Two days should be plenty,” he says as he leaves us alone.

“I cannot wait to go home I miss Sam so much,” he says as he leans against my chest.

“Yeah he keeps asking about you. He misses you. You have never been away from him this long,” I say. “Justin... Justin... Sunshine,” I say softly but I hear the familiar deep breathing and I know he is asleep. I gently ease from behind him. “Sunshine baby, I gotta take Sam home but I will be back tomorrow, okay,” I say as I touch his face.

He opens his eyes for a moment “Okay, tell him I love him,” he says as I lean in to kiss him.

“I love you Sunshine,” I whisper to him.

“I know you do, I’ve always known,” he tells me.

Brian’s POV...

Six weeks have gone by and the farthest that Justin will allow himself to go is to the edge of Tremont and back and even then he holds onto me so tightly that my arm starts to lose circulation. I took off for a week when he was able to come home and he would never let me leave his side. He would even sit by the bathroom door until I came out. He was paranoid that at

any moment Ethan would be let out of jail. I told him that he had nothing to worry about and I meant it.

I push the door open and find him on the sofa with tears streaming down his face, shaking and holding the phone in a death grip. Sam is screaming for all his worth from his room. I close the door to the loft as quickly as I can and race up the stairs. If Justin hears me then he is making no move to acknowledge my presence.

“Justin Jesus, don’t you hear the baby screaming?” I ask him as I go past him and into Sam’s room and lift him up over the gate. He lays his head on my shoulder as his sobs quiet down. I walk back toward the living room and Justin is still in the same spot.

I go to get the baby some juice and a cookie before approaching the sofa again. “Justin, Justin what’s the matter?” I ask him. He doesn’t answer but the tears continue to fall. I take the phone from his hand. I have no idea what is wrong but he is starting to scare me.

“Phone Daddy,” Sam says as he takes the phone and tries to press the buttons. “Hello Gamma Den,” he says, playing with the phone.

I put Sam down after taking the phone back and watch for a moment as he finds his footing before walking off.

I reach out to touch Justin and I see him jump. He had no idea anyone was in the house with him. He looks at me as if he finally recognizes me. “Brian, when did you get here?” He asks me as he tries to calm his trembling and wipe his tears. “I must have zoned out for minute,” he tells me.

“Bullshit Justin, what happened? Who called, you were gripping that phone tight enough to break it.”

Tears come back to his eyes again and before I can speak again he stands up. “Nobody called I... umm...” he says as he begins to walk away. In less than four steps he is on the floor throwing up everything he has to offer. I catch Sam just as he is about to come flying through the mess.

“Papa sick,” he says.

“It’s okay, breathe baby, take deep breaths,” I tell him as I rub his back and he continues to throw up.

Justin is so exhausted that he just collapses on the floor next to the vomit. “Okay baby just hold on a minute,” I tell him as I go put Sam back in his gated room and change out of my suit and put on some jeans and a white t-shirt. I come back out and Justin is laying there with his eyes wide open staring into nothingness. I walk over and pick him up. After washing him and placing him in bed where he quickly falls asleep, I clean up the mess and feed Sam. I put him in bed and come back to find that Justin is now awake and staring again.

I crawl up beside him. “Are you ready to tell me what is wrong?” I ask hoping that he does not

shut down again. “We cannot face things together if you don’t tell me things I should know,” I tell him as I put an arm on his shoulder and feel him tense up. “Come on Justin.”

“Detective Horvath called and said that...he said that... because I could not testify against Ethan he was unable to be charged. Ethan said that everything was consensual and since there was no one to prove otherwise the judge had to dismiss the case,” he says. I can feel the effort it takes for him to say that and now I understand why he is acting this way.

“I was such a fucking coward, I should have gone to the hearing,” he says as he pulls himself into a tight ball and begins to cry and shake uncontrollably.

“You had every right to be scared. He did awful things to you for a long time. But you are strong and you are going to get over this,” I tell him. He turns into me and the tears flow freely. I hold him all night and in the morning I only leave when I hear Sam start to wake up.

“Dad, dad I wan some breakfast.”

“Okay Sonny boy, what do you want, toast and coffee?” I ask him and he points the bedroom.

“Wan my daddy,” he says.

“Daddy is sleep but maybe he will see you later,” I tell him as I make him some oatmeal.

Two hours later I have gotten myself and Sam dressed and Justin has still not moved. I walk toward him and sit right in front of him. “Please don’t leave me Brian, please,” he pleads. “I don’t want to be by myself, please don’t leave me,” he says.

“Justin, I have to go to work I have a meeting and a presentation scheduled but I should be back before it gets too late in the afternoon. I am going to take Sam and drop him off with Emmett. They are going to make brownies or whatever the fuck,” I say as I lean forward and kiss him “I’ll be back before you know it.” I gather up Sam and head off to drop him off before my meeting.

“Well Hello Brian and Sam, are you ready to make brownies?” Emmett asks him.

“Em make brownies wif Sam,” he answers. You have to love Emmett, he loves to spend time with Sam and Sam loves him.

“Hey Em, are you going to drop him off or do you want me to swing by and pick him up?” I ask as I hand him over to Emmett.

“I don’t mind dropping him off Brian,” he says as he plays with Sam’s cheeks.

I smile and wrap my arm around him as we walk to the door “Actually Em, what would you and Ted say to watching your favorite nephew for an entire evening?”

“Hmm...we could be persuaded to watch the handsome Mr. Sam, why, you and Justin going to

venture out for a change?” he asks with a cheer in his voice.

“No, you know that Justin hasn’t gone out past the corner since he was released from the hospital and it’s a miracle to get him to go there,” I tell him as I stand at the door.

“I don’t know why he won’t just relax, that asshole is in jail,” he says.

“You mean was in jail. Horvath called yesterday, Ethan is getting released and it is hitting Justin pretty hard so I want to spend a little time with him and be able to actually focus on him without Sam running around,” I tell him and he nods that he understands. I never would have thought that being normal could go hand and hand with being a hot, fuckable stud and ruthless ad exec.

“Well sure I don’t mind and I am sure Ted doesn’t mind. Do you want to stay with your Uncles sweetie?” he asks turning to address Sam.

“Thanks Em, I’ll come back over later and drop off some clothes, just try not to cover him in make-up and shit this time.”

“It was one time and it was Halloween asshole,” he says, defending himself.

“Yeah, yeah Bye Sonny boy,” I say kissing him before I leave.

“You know Sam we never thought that your daddy would grow up, but I guess time and a nice piece of ass can change everything,” Emmett says to the boy.

“Nev gwo up” he repeats smiling.

“You know that smile comes straight from your Papa,” he told him “Let’s just hope we see it again one day.”

“Brownies,” he screams and claps.

“Okay baby boy let’s go make brownies.”

“Cynthia, where in the fuck are the layouts for the kitty litter campaign?”

“I put them on your desk Brian. What is wrong with you today?” she asks.

“Never mind could you just get Justin on the phone for me,” I tell her ignoring her question. I know that I will feel a lot better once Justin is on the phone and I can hear his voice. He has become so paranoid and scared and the doctor says that it is normal with all he went through and the fact that he did not tell anyone, and not to push but I am wondering if he is getting worse. Ethan getting out can not possibly be good for him.

Five minutes later Cynthia comes into my office and hands me a cup of coffee. It is past noon now and I have finished with both my meetings and only have a few more things left to do

before I can call it an early day. I have been trying to get to Justin on time these past couple of weeks. “Cynthia, I thought I asked you to get Justin on the phone like five minutes ago.”

“Yeah, I was coming to tell you that I called and there was no answer, I called back two more times but no one picked up,” she says as she collects the items that are waiting for her on the desk to take them to their appropriate departments for the changes that I want.

“Are you sure?” I ask getting a little nervous. I grab my coat and head toward the door. “You know everything that I want done today, handle things and don’t set up any meetings until you talk to me,” I tell her as I leave the office to go make sure Justin is okay.

Justin’s POV...

‘Just answer the phone you fucking coward,’ I tell myself. Cody was right all those years ago, I was a coward, a pussy.

I sit in the bathroom almost tucked completely behind the toilet as the ringing fills the air. I cannot bring myself to answer it, and I cover my ears to drown it out. Ethan may be calling he may have gotten our number out the phone book. ‘OH GOD and our address,’ I think.

I am stronger than this but I just can’t move. I can only just barely bring myself to breathe. My vision is tunnel now and I cannot really see anything. ‘You’re going to have a panic attack you stupid shit, snap out of it,’ I can hear my brain practically scream, but I still can’t move. I am not in control. The phone just keeps ringing and ringing and then I feel it, strong arms trying to grab me.

‘Fight him back,’ my mind says. ‘Make him stop, move your limbs. Fight, fight, FIGHT,’ my brain screams at me and I can feel myself shaking with fear as the arms pull on me and before I know it I can feel my bladder release and the warmth on my skin. The heat seems to awaken my limbs and I begin to kick and punch and scratch at anything. I feel the arms let go of me and my body move without my command. ‘Find the door,’ I think as I scramble on all fours through the tunnel that is my vision but the arms catch me before I can reach it. They began to shake me violently and as they do the haze starts to lift and my vision seems to be clearing. I focus on the person shaking me as they abruptly stop.

“Je...sus...Chriiiiist Sunshine, you scared the fucking shit out of me,” he says as he holds me tight and I feel my body lose all its strength. He holds me so I don’t hit the ground and pulls me over to the bed. He looks in my eyes as the tears fall and I can finally see him clearly as my breath starts to even out and my heart beats starts to slow down.

“Brian,” I say with a whisper.

“Yeah Justin, it’s me. I was calling you and calling you but you did not answer the phone I was fucking scared to death.”

“I’m sorry I, I thought that you were Ethan calling and when I heard the footsteps I started to

panic more and I just couldn't see or think. I had a full on panic attack like I used to have long ago," I tell him as the tears fall silently.

"It's okay, let's get you cleaned up and then we can talk about it," he says. I cannot believe that Brian Kinney is willing to go through this shit with me, and he says he doesn't do love.

I sit quietly as I watch him change out of his suit and put on his jeans. "Where is Sam?"

"He is spending a lovely evening with his uncles," he tells me and I know he arranged that for my benefit, "I hate having other people watch him, he is our responsibility," I say.

He stops his movements and bends down to look me in the eye "What the fuck good are you if you fall apart? We have to take care of you too," he tells me. I just nod my head because he is right. He helps me up from the bed and helps me strip. I step into the shower and the hot water soothes my muscles. When I come out the sheets are changed and all the results of my panic attack are cleaned up. I put on some sweats and a sweater and head out to the living room.

Brian sees me sit on the sofa and I am doing everything in my power to stay where I am. I know that I have been very clingy with him lately and I know that it must be working his nerves. I watch him move around the kitchen and I want so much to be back to normal. I can feel it in my bones but my brain and body won't let me get over the abuse that Ethan caused. Brian always wants to talk about it but I just can't. I can never tell him all the things that Ethan did to me, he would never be able to forget and he would never look at me the same.

He doesn't want to know that I was forced to eat soap and that there were many nights that I was made to stand naked in the shower stall forbidden to use the bathroom. He doesn't want to know that I only had sex willingly with Ethan three times and he doesn't want to know that I have had my jaw wired shut and a rib cracked. He doesn't want to know that on more than one occasion Ethan brought friends over to fuck me. 'We used condoms,' he would always say.

I know he wonders and I know that telling him would be a step toward making things better for me but I just can't.

Brian's POV...

I watch Justin watching me and I know that he wants nothing more than to come over and stand right next to me. He thinks that he is getting on my nerves. I know that Ethan did more to Justin than he is telling me and it kills me that Justin won't talk about it. I know the doctor said not to push but I think I might have to. I finish with what I am doing and I go over and sit right next to Justin, so close that our bodies are touching. I feel him relax into me and soon his head is on my chest and I know he is listening to my heart.

I smooth the hair off his face and take the plunge "We're all alone tonight, you talk and I will listen and I promise that at the end I will love you no less than I do right now," I tell him. He is silent for a moment and as the minutes roll by I am starting to think that I pushed too much. I hear him take a deep breath and exhale.

“Okay, but do you promise?” he asks. I tell him yes and settle in for what appears to be a long night.

Justin’s POV...

I tell Brian everything, he never moves from my side but I know that the wheels in his head are turning. I take a deep breath as I prepare to tell him the rest. He took the news of Ethan abusing me with a straight face; he never moved. He just sat there staring out the window with his arm touching mine. I know that he loves me but I also know that he has a temper at times and I hesitate before telling him about all the people that Ethan allowed to violate me. Several minutes’ pass and the only audible thing is the beating of two hearts that were trying desperately to match each others rhythm.

“Justin...you haven’t said anything for fifteen minutes,” Brian says and his voice quickly snaps me out of my thoughts. I stare straight ahead and I can see him looking at me out the corner of my eye. Tears fall down my cheeks and I can’t really see but I can feel Brian slip his arm around my body. “I meant what I said Justin, I won’t love you any less,” he tells me. Before I can answer there is a knock at the door. Brian gives my shoulder a squeeze and goes to answer it. I can hear Emmett at the door and then in the loft.

“Sorry to interrupt boys but I cannot maintain a wonderful evening with my favorite young lad without the necessary equipment,” he says.

“Oh shit I was supposed to bring you some stuff. Hold on and I’ll get his bag,” Brian tells him and I hear him walking to Sam’s room. I can see him gesture to Em to leave me alone. I stare at Emmett’s reflection in the window glass.

“Emmett if you are going to stare at me you could at least say something,” I tell his reflection.

“Sorry sweetie,” he says and I can hear him approaching me. He comes around and stares in my face and I know that my tears are clearly visible. “I just guess I didn’t know what to say,” he says and I am glad that he is honest.

“You being honest is good enough,” I say as I wipe the tears from my face. I see Emmett move to sit next to me but when my body tenses he sits on the other end of the couch.

“Sweetie I may not know everything...but I know this...yesterday was more fucked up than today but tomorrow is full of possibility,” he says as Brian comes out the bedroom.

He gets up and joins Brian at the door. I listen as they talk until my own thoughts crept into my mind. Brian sliding back into the space next to me brings me back to reality. “Okay Sunshine, tell me the rest.” I take another deep breath and start telling Brian more about my time with Ethan.

“Do you remember when I told you that I only had sex with Ethan three times willingly?” I start

as I look over at Brian to see him shake his head. "Well... Ethan felt that it was not enough that he raped me... so... he had other people come over and fuck me too," I tell him in one breath and then I exhale as the image becomes clearer.

"Yeah you can do anything to him and he isn't gonna do anything," I hear Ethan tell this guy.

"How much is it to fuck him?" The man asks and I watch him as his eyes glide over my body as Sam starts to cry from his spot in the bathroom.

"I will give you a bargain since you are a new customer. How about 75 bucks and that is with no bruises left behind?" Ethan tells him and I want so badly to say something but the gag on my mouth prevents that and the handcuffs on my arms and legs ensure no movement. I can only feel the tears as they run into my ears. As the man strips and climbs on top of me I let Sam's screams fill my mind as I try to block out what is happening to me. I feel my body moving up and down with every thrust that the man gives and I feel a little bit of myself die.

After the man finishes I see him walk over to Ethan and they exchanged more money and then I see the beginning of what is about to become very painful play for me. The silver of the razor blade catches the light and under any other circumstances would have been beautiful. The man gets on top of me and runs his hand down the side of my face. He takes the blade and pushes the edge down into my stomach very careful. I can feel the blood as it flows to the surface.

"Relax beautiful it makes it better for both of us and I promised no bruising," he says as his breath washes over me and mingles with the smell of alcohol; a smell that I had come to fear and always with good reason. He continues to cut at my skin until slowly the blackness kisses my lips and I slip away. When I wake up he is gone.

Ethan let me loose from the cuffs and made himself a drink. Sam was now quiet and drinking from his sippy cup. I pull myself to a seating position and freeze as I noticed all the blood that is covering the bed and my body. I start to shake as Ethan walks over with a bottle of hydrogen peroxide. And that was just the first time, I will always remember that.

"Justin...Justin...JUSTIN..." I hear him scream more forcibly and I did not even realize that I had actually been talking. I thought that I was telling myself that story, reliving it in my brain but I realize that my body is shaking terribly in Brian's arms. "Shhh...your okay baby its okay," he tells me.

"It's not okay, I was weak and stupid and I put my son in danger," I say as I look at him for the first time since I started talking. "I don't even know how you can stand me, I cling too much and I freak out when you touch me, not to mention the scars that Ethan left both emotional and physical. I can't even watch my son and I haven't painted in days," I say.

We sit silently and before Brian can open his mouth I go to the bathroom and close and lock the door.

Brian's POV...

I am trying so hard to process what I just heard and it is all too much, I cannot even bear to hear it. I am amazed that he was able to live through it. I watch him as he walks away from me and closes the bathroom door I hear the lock click into place and I know that he is gone for now. I cannot believe that Justin went through so much and in such a short amount of time. He is trying so hard to be strong and I know that he is barely holding it together. I wish that I could do more for him but I can't.

A few hours later I am still waiting for Justin to come out of the bathroom. I am so glad that we installed another one or else I would have been in a butt load of trouble. He always locks himself in the bathroom now when he is feeling anxious. I walk over to the door and knock softly. "Justin, are you okay in there?" I ask him. I wait for a second and I don't hear any movement. "Justin, Justin, are you okay?" I ask again and this time. I hear some movement and my breathing turns back to normal. "Are you coming out?"

"Umm yeah in a little while," he says in a soft voice.

When he finally does emerge from the bathroom another three hours later I am already lying in bed and pretending to sleep. I open my eyes a little and watch as he undresses and puts on his sweats and a shirt and gets into bed curling to the edge. I say nothing about this; it took two weeks for him to even agree to sleep in the bed. When he is up and about he is fine with me but when he sleeps he is afraid. I think he has nightmares about what happened.

I watch him as he falls into a peaceful sleep, well it's peaceful right now, and when his breathing is evened out I let myself fall into oblivion.

The next morning I wake up and Justin is gone. I look all around until I notice that the bathroom door is closed again, he must have went in there sometime during the night. I get out of bed and go to the bathroom door. I try the handle and he must have forgotten to lock it. I push it open and there is Justin on the floor curled up into a ball. I lift him up and put him back in the bed. I have no idea why he runs to the bathroom but it seems to make him feel better.

I go and make us some coffee and call Emmett to tell him that I will pick Sam up on my way to work. When I finish I take the two cups to the bedroom. Justin is up now and sitting quietly on the bed. "Brian, I am sorry that it is taking me so long to recover from this," he tells me and I stop him right there.

"Don't you dare apologize to me for things that you had little control over," I tell him.

"How am I supposed to get through this? I cannot run to the bathroom every time something happens. I am so afraid, I feel like I am starting to unravel," he says as he lets himself lean into my chest.

"Well. I think that the first thing we do is get dressed and then we pick up our son and then you can come into work with me and together we can look for a counselor or psychologist for you to see. I know you don't like them... neither do I but this time maybe they can help," I tell him.

“Yeah,” he replies.

“We will just take it one day at a time,” I say as we lay together, both knowing that it is going to take a lot of time and effort to move on.

Justin's POV...

It's been a year since Ethan was released from jail and I have not seen him once. Brian finally decided that I should really try therapy and I did. It was a long road back to a 'normal' feeling but I finally feel like I can breathe now. I went back to my job as the Art Director and Junior graphics designer at NUwave Graphics and Animation. Brian was very proud that I was able to associate with the real world again. I never thought that my life would have been so wild before my twenty-sixth birthday.

I am sitting on the floor now as I watch Sam walk around the room picking up his toys. There are boxes everywhere and the last thing we need are toys laying everywhere. We finally bought a house not far from Lindsay and are moving in a couple of weeks.

"I got 'em all daddy," he says, running to me with all his cars in his arms.

"Nope, cause I see some under the table over there," I tell him as I point to the toys that have avoided capture. He takes off running for them and scoops them up and brings them to me. I put all the cars in the bin and close the lid.

"You did a very good job baby boy," I say as I kiss his head and struggle to get up off the floor. When I was finally able to start having sex with Brian again we did not stop and unfortunately we were not always prepared when the mood hit so we are now waiting for this baby to be born. Sam is so excited that he is going to be a big brother. I am 8 months along and already I cannot get up off the floor. Sam is looking at me like I am going to explode.

"Daddy, you duck on the floor?" he says and you can still hear his speech problem. Brian swears up and down that it comes from my side of the family. I grab the back of the sofa just as the loft door slides open.

"I have no idea why you even bother getting all the way down onto the floor, you know you cannot get back up," I hear Brian say as he walks over to help me the rest of the way up.

"Shut Up asshole," I say as I take a deep breath kiss him and move to put the toy bin away.

"Careful Sunshine we already have one bun in the oven," he whispers as he runs a hand over my belly.

"Dad, Dad, Dad."

"Hey Sonny boy, what did you do today?"

"Me and daddy went to da pawk and den we draw pictachs at Papa work," he tells Brian happily.

"Wow, it sounds like you had a busy day for someone whose daddy has a doctor ordered bed rest," he says looking at me with a raised eyebrow. Sam is mesmerized at that moment by the cartoon on the TV and Brian puts him down so that he can come over by me.

"I thought the doctor told you to stay in bed Sunshine," he says. I hate bed rest it is so boring and impossible when you have a two year old running around and you have a job.

"Brian I promise that I am not doing anything too strenuous and that I just went to the office to get some of my work out the way, I am going to be on pregnancy leave for four months and I don't want a whole bunch of crap that needs to be done," I tell him.

"Umm...yeah ok," he says as he grabs the take out menus and after looking at my face orders some pizza. "You know that those eyes will not always work," he says.

"Yeah right," I tell him as he goes to change his clothes and I go sit on the sofa with Sam.

I wake up from my space on the sofa and I can hear Brian in the bathroom with Sam trying to get him in the water. He fell in once and now bath time is a war, with lots of kicking and screaming. I groan and hold my back as I make my way to the bathroom. After relieving myself I go sit on the bed and wait for my little wet one to emerge from the bathroom. "Jeez Brian, who took the bath you or him?" I ask as I see Brian come out the bathroom soaking wet. He looks at me with daggers in his eyes.

"Next time you're gonna be the one to give him a bath," he says as he plops him down in front of me, the tears and mucus all over his face are particularly attractive.

"Oh Sam, you know that nothing is going to happen to you in there with Dad right?" I ask him but the tears still come as I pick him up and carry him to his room. We converted the storage room into a bed room for him before he was born and now it is way too small. I get lotion on him and dress him in his pajamas. He runs to say goodnight to his dad and I put him in bed. Two stories and a flick of the night light later and he is knocked out.

As I walk out of the bedroom I felt a chill run up and down my spine and I freeze in my tracks. "What's wrong?" I hear Brian ask me from his spot behind the computer.

"Nothing," I say as I walk over to the window and look out. "Something is not right," I whispered to myself.

Ethan's POV...

I can see Justin as he looks out of the window and I get this feeling that he knows that something is wrong. He hasn't seen me since I got back in town but I have seen him. I watched him today while he was at the park with that little brat and I saw that he is now knocked up again. I hate

that he is so fucking happy and has moved on. I can feel the hatred burn inside of me. I told him that I loved him and all he had to do was do what I fucking told him to do. We could have been so happy and we will be happy once I make him see that I am the one for him.

I watch the window until I see Justin step away from it. I cannot wait to get him back in my arms. 'I will have to punish him for leaving and then we will be happy,' I think as I go to get on the approaching bus.

Justin's POV...

It was hell moving into the new house but with everyone's help we finally got settled. That was three lovely weeks ago. Brian is at work; Kinnetik is really doing well and Sam is taking a nap while I finish up some of the art design for the new Linkin' Park video. I am glad I can at least do that. I hear the doorbell ring and I dread getting up, everything hurts and staying as still as possible whenever possible seems to work best.

"Coming," I say to whoever is there but when I opened the door no one was there. I am about to close the door when I look down and see the long white flower box. I squat down as slowly as I can and pick it up. I put the box on the counter and open it. Black roses are inside wrapped with twine with thorns that seemed sharp enough to pierce metal. I carefully pick up the card and open it. Inside written in blood was:

Justin I love you. I have always loved you.

I know you did not mean to hurt me so I forgive you.

I am waiting for you to come back to me, and if you don't come back I WILL come and get you...and then you will be punished.

Next time the blood may be yours.

Love Ethan

I felt the old feelings that I had suppressed come to the surface as my hands begin to shake but this time I realized that I was not afraid...okay I was a little afraid...but, more than that I realized I was pissed. Really fucking pissed. My blood boiled knowing that Ethan said he loved me and it made me angrier the more I looked at the letter and the flowers. I heard Brian's car pull into the driveway and I put the flowers and the letter in the trash and shut the lid. I sit down at the table and will my heart to slow down. Brian comes in the door and I know he can feel that something is wrong.

"You look like you just saw a ghost," he says as he pulls me in for a kiss.

"No, no ghosts yet," I say as calm as I can "The baby is just really active today and its killing my bladder," I tell him, well at least that is half true.

He comes and wraps his arms around me. "Well, at least you still look sexy," he says as he starts to kiss my neck and run his fingers down my arm.

"Mmm...like a whale. Don't start what you can't finish," I tell him as I turn in his arms.

"What makes you think I won't finish?" He asks me with his voice oozing sex. I smile my brightest sunshine smile and turn him around to see a freshly napped boy standing behind him in the kitchen doorway rubbing his eyes.

"Shit, remind me again how we ended up with kids instead of fucking everything in the backroom at Babylon," he says as he moves to pick up his son. I smile at him because I know that Brian will never trade this for the world.

"We ended up with that kid because you and I were flying high on ecstasy and fucked through the night without a condom and we got caught by the pregnancy fairy," I tell him laughing.

"And that kid," he says pointing at my stomach.

"Oh this kid, I tricked you into fucking me and got pregnant," I tell him and we both start to laugh. "Why don't you go change while I feed Sam his dinner," I tell him. I watch him walk around the corner and I watch as his son follows right behind him on still shaky legs. I am halfway through with Sam's dinner when I feel a sharp pain, I dismiss it because I have been having pain all day but it won't go away.

Brian plays with Sam long past his bedtime and then finally I have to be the mean one and say it is time for bed. I kiss him goodnight as I watch Brian carry a now very sleepy boy to his new room. The babies' rooms have been done in all white with splashes of color everywhere. Brian comes back and sits next to me on the sofa, wrapping his arm around me. "You know when we decided to be together officially I never thought that I would like it but I do," he tells me.

"I am glad you do because I am not going anywhere," I tell him as I lift myself up and straddle his legs.

"Are you trying to break my legs?" He says with a smirk.

"Never, but I am horny and I would not mind breaking something else," I tell him as I capture his lips in mine again. We get up and move the show to the bedroom and as I am taking off my clothes I feel the sharp pain again and I freeze knowing that this time it is something. "Brian."

"Yeah."

"I think that you should call Lindsay," I tell him as another pain hits.

"Why, we are about to fuck. Why would I..." he pauses as he finally looks in my direction and sees me breathing hard and rubbing my stomach. "Oh man, okay you're okay," he says as he starts to move fast.

"Brian, Brian, Brian, BRIAN," I say raising my voice sharply to grab his attention then drop my tone back to normal as I return to my breathing exercises. "Stop moving all around and pick up the phone and call Lindsay and then call the doctor and then we will go to the car." He does what

I ask and as soon as Lindsay arrives we get in the car and start toward the hospital.

The doctor meets us at the entrance and I am immediately rushed into the operating room for a C-section. I hold on to Brian's hand as the doctor makes the first incision and I don't feel a thing except pressure. Brian stands up to get a better look and less than two minutes later the doctor holds up a beautiful, healthy baby girl. I blink away the tears that form as I hear her cry for the first time and I am relieved that everything is alright when I hear the doctor and Brian start to laugh.

"What is it?" I ask because I am at a visual disadvantage. Brian looks at me with the biggest smile on his face.

"Nothing, it's just that we may have to get another crib because there was another one in there," he tells me as the doctor holds up a quite healthy looking baby boy.

"What...what?" I say as I try to comprehend what I just heard and saw.

"That would explain why you were so fucking big," Brian lovingly announces. The doctor sews me up as I watch Brian hover over the babies and take pictures. I cannot believe people thought he was an asshole. He is great when you know how to deal with him.

Brian's POV...

I cannot believe that we had twins. If anybody had told me this shit years ago I would have kicked someone's ass. I could not be happier. I look over at Justin as he sleeps and I am so happy that he was able to bring himself back from the edge of the cliff. I know that it was not easy for him but he did it. I walk over to him and crawl in bed next to him. "Be careful," he whispers.

"I thought you were asleep," I tell him.

"No, just laying here thinking of how much I am going to hate you leaving on that trip," he says as he looks at me "And I am also thinking that I have three kids now and just a couple of years ago I was the king of Babylon," he says and we both start to laugh. We still go to the clubs and bars but we had to grow up a little at some point and focus on other things.

"Well, you could still win that title hands down although not right now cause you're a little loose," I tell him with a smile and he smacks my arm.

"I just had your kid's, asshole," he tells me. I lean in to kiss his lips.

"Thank you," I say.

"For what?"

"Loving me," I whisper in his ear. "I have to go, we still have a kid at home and once he is up and dressed we will come see you and he can meet his brother and sister and we can pick out

names," I say as I kiss him one more time grab my jacket and go. I hate to leave him but Sam is still our responsibility.

I walk in and see Lindsay on the sofa curled in a ball with Sam snuggled against her chest. I go to pick him up and put him in his bed and when I do Lindsay stirs a little. I take Sam to his room and lay him down in the bed, making sure that he has his nightlight and his teddy bear. When I get back to the living room it is then that I even notice that the dawn is breaking and Lindsay is sitting on the sofa. "How is Justin? What did you have?" she asks all excited.

"Actually..." I say as I hand her the pictures "We had one of each."

"Are you kidding? Twins? Oh my god that is wonderful! Congratulations," she says while hugging me and kissing my cheek.

"Thanks, and to answer your first question Justin is great," I tell her. I tell her to go back to sleep and I move to my room to catch a couple of minutes sleep until Hurricane Sam wakes up.

I am standing in the kitchen six hours later drinking coffee with Lindsay when I hear little feet coming down the hall. Sam turned the corner into the kitchen and before a word could leave my mouth he ran to Lindsay.

"Mommy, I thawd you was a dweem," he says. I am seriously considering speech therapy but Justin says 'he will grow out of it he is just a toddler.' I remember when he first called Lindsay Mommy, the other kids he knew had Mommies so he wanted one too, and one day he called Lindsay Mommy and it stuck. Then as if he finally took in the situation he realized that someone was missing.

"Where's daddy?" he asks.

"Sam, daddy went to the hospital to have the baby that was in his tummy. But you know what, he had two babies instead," I tell him.

"YAY, two babies one for Sam and one for Daddy and Dad," he says quite proud of himself. Lindsay laughed at his excitement.

Justin's POV...

I see the door start to crack open as I finish changing my daughter's diaper. I see a little head peek in and I smile as he pushes the door the rest of the way in and comes running over. Brian is right behind him and he closes the door as he walks through. "Baby boy, hello," I say as I hand the baby to Brian and he puts her in the little plastic bed. He lifts Sam up and sits him on the bed and kisses me in one swoop. It was on its way to being long and deep until a little voice interrupted.

"Daddy, I wanna see da babies," he says.

"Okay," I say pulling away from Brian.

"You better rest up Sunshine cause when I finally get a chance to pound that ass I am going to set a record," he tells me in my ear before moving away and handing me our son. He picks up our daughter and Sam is in love from the start.

"I like my broder and sisder," he says as he yawns. After being with the babies for two hours he is finally pooped. He curls up next to me in the bed and falls asleep. I look at Brian as he holds our baby girl. "So, do you know what you want to name her?" I ask quietly.

"How about... Mya," he says and I think about it for a minute.

"I like it, now what about him," I say as I look at the baby I am holding.

"Tristan," he announces. I look ay him and smirk. "Tristan, Brian really," I say. I like Tristan but he knows what I want.

"Okay then, you name him," he says and I am beaming. We had agreed that Brian could name them but he is giving me a chance.

I look at my baby boy and he had brown hair and hazel eyes. He looks like Brian if he was shrunken. "I like Tyler," I say and watch Brian roll it around in his head.

"Very nice Sunshine, Tyler it is," he says. We sit together in the room and talk forever about everything. It is so different from when he used to not tell me anything. Oh, he still puts up walls but the foundations are not as strong.

Ethan's POV...

"Ethan come up here and take out the trash."

"In a minute mom, gosh," I say. Doesn't she know that I am trying to plan a fucking romantic getaway for me and Justin?

"No not in a minute, NOW Ethan," she screams.

"Give me a goddamn fucking minute, you stinking... BITCH," I yell and she is finally quiet.

My friend that works in the hospital told me that Justin had his babies the other day and I am so happy that he is okay and that our family is going to be together soon. I put on my nicest clothes and head out the door to go and visit Justin. I grab the trash on my way out and look at my mom. The black eye that she is wearing is finally turning back to normal. "I have the fucking trash now are you happy?" I say as I leave.

"Ethan, where are you going?" I hear her ask after me.

'None of your fucking business bitch,' I think.

I hope that Justin is happy to see me. I cannot wait to visit him and see our new babies, but first I have to take care of that asshole Brian Kinney.

Justin's POV...

I am standing in the living room and I cannot believe the amount of work it is going to take to get everything organized and put away, especially when it still hurts to move from the C-section. I am halfway finished with the kitchen stuff when I hear a cry erupt through the baby monitor. "Shit, well I guess it is so much for finishing this right now," I say to no one as I put the plates down and head toward the steps. When I reach the twins bedroom I see Mya with her mouth wide open and screaming her lungs out.

"Hello Mya, what's wrong baby girl?" I say as I pick her up and look over into Tyler's crib where he is fast asleep. I carry Mya down the steps and heat up a bottle. I look over at the time and realize that Mel is going to be bringing Sam home in a few minutes. He loves his 'mommies' and since they could not have children they have adopted ours as their own. I take the heated bottle and move to sit on the couch.

"Hey sweet face, that's my little girl," I say as the bottle empties and her eyes begin to close. I am almost home free when the phone starts to ring and I immediately hear the shrill cry from the bedroom as Tyler wakes up. "Goddamn fucking shit," I say quietly to no one in particular as I move toward the phone, I pick it up just as it is getting to its fifth ring. "Whoever this is better have some important shit to say," I almost scream into the phone.

"Well, hello to you too sunshine. How is everything?"

"Just peachy, although your little phone call has woken up your son. Your oldest son is due home pretty soon and I am pretty sure that he will be wired and your daughter was going to sleep but now I am not so sure," I tell him. He laughs and tells me that he will be here soon. I hang up the phone after being assured that Brian is on his way.

"Let's go get your brother since daddy woke him up," I say to Mya as I burp her and walk up the steps to their bedroom. Tyler is more like Brian than anything; the one strong scream to get attention is all he feels the need to produce. When I walk into the room he is silently sucking his thumb, I take it out of his mouth and pick him up using a move that I learned quickly with twins. I carry them to the changing table and placed them down and began to change them. Right when I finished I heard the front door open and close.

"Justin, are you home?"

"Yeah, I am upstairs in the babies room," I yell and I can hear the frantic steps of Sam as he tries to get up the steps as fast as possible.

"Daddy, daddy my school is goin' to the zoo on the freeday," he says. He is always so excited.

“Hello to you too Sam,” I say as I bend down to kiss him on the cheeks. He giggles like crazy, another trait that Brian swears comes from me, ‘I now and never have giggled’ was his exact reply.

“Lo Papa, we goin’ to da zoo,” he says as he waves the paper in the air for me to see. “I can go Papa, I can go?”

“We’ll talk to daddy about it okay,” I say as Mel makes her way up the steps.

“Hey Justin, how are my babies today?” she says coming over and talking and playing with both the babies.

“Thanks for picking him up Mel, I hate not being able to move as freely but it’s one of the joys of the C-section,” I say as I take the paper from Sam and start to look it over.

“You don’t have to thank me or Lindsay, you know that we have no problem spending time with our babies,” she says as she picks up Tyler. I pick up Mya and we move downstairs with Sam not far behind. I watch as Mel heats up a bottle and start’s to feed Tyler.

“So what are you and Lindsay up to tonight, gonna get some good loving in tonight?” I ask her with a sneaky smile.

“I hope so; we are going to dinner at Lucindisa’s, the little Italian restaurant. After that I better get some loving,” she laughs as he finishes his bottle and she burps him.

“Yeah, that’s the restaurant that got me knocked up for the very first time,” I say as I remember back and smile.

“Are you serious?”

“Yeah, Brian took me to that restaurant after we had had a few hits of ecstasy, when we left there we took a couple more hits and were basically floating. We fucked all night and then two months later we found out we were fucked,” I say and she burst out laughing. I look down at Sam who is trying to play peek-a-boo with his brother and sister and smile. “I would not have it any other way.”

“I bet you wouldn’t,” she says as she kisses me and all the kid’s goodbye and starts toward the door.

“Mama, are you weaving?” Sam asks as tears well up in his eyes.

“Yeah baby boy, I have to go home now but maybe you can come and stay over with me and mommy someday this week, okay,” she says as she looks at me. I nod my head ‘yes’ and she kisses him again and walks out the door.

An hour later I am knee deep in toys, crayons and throw-up. The twins are in their bassinets and Sam is playing with his cars on the kitchen floor. I am finishing up the kitchen and family room when I hear Brian come in the door. "Sunshine, how's it hanging?"

"Hey Brian," I say as I kiss him.

"Dad, dad we goin' to da zoo on the freeday," he tells Brian proudly.

"Really, wow," Brian says as he scoops him up and walks over to the bassinets. I watch him look over and touch the babies and I smile. In my head I remember what Brian used to say when we first got together, 'Nothing is ever easy for us, we always feel safe too soon' he had said in the early stages of our relationship and he has never been wrong. I can't stop the chill that runs through my body.

Ethan's POV

I spend all day camped outside me and Justin's new house. I don't know why he did not tell me that we were moving. I was too late to see him at the hospital; I don't know why he forgot to wait for me. I told him I was coming. I saw the babies once when they went to the doctor for the checkup last week and they are beautiful, they look just like me. I keep seeing that Brian guy come and go but Justin says that they are just friends, I don't believe him.

I think that Justin is cheating on me with him. I get on the bus and head home. I love to see the babies' everyday and once I figure out a way to stop that Brian from coming around we can be a real family. 'What can I do to get him out the way?' I think as I walk into the house.

"Ethan, where have you been?"

"I went to see my family," I tell her as she steps in front of me.

"What family Ethan? Have you been taking your medication?" she asks. Why is she always asking me questions?

"What medicine? I don't need any medicine," I say. I am getting so agitated. I hate when she asks me about medicine, I never have any idea what she is talking about. I push past her and head for the basement.

"You're such a crazy bitch," I say to her as I go down the steps, stopping halfway down to address her again. "You know what happens to crazy people mom?" I ask her.

"What?"

"They end up six feet under." 'Along with stupid, gorgeous men named Brian who steal people's boyfriends away' I think as I continue down the steps to sharpen the blade on my knife.

Brian's POV...

“How long do you have to be gone?” He asks me as I pack my clothes into my suitcase. I know he is watching me as I walk over to the closet, grab my suits and start to put them into my suit bag. “Brian, how long do you have to be gone?” He repeats. I know he is pissed, I can hear the pent-up anger in his voice. I put another suit in the bag and look over at him. He is sitting on the bed, leaning against the pillows with his arms wrapped around his legs.

“A week, maybe two,” I say as I go into the bathroom to get my things. He doesn’t move and I know that he is between crying and screaming at me. “Look Justin, this trip was planned for months. You knew I was going,” I say. I put my toiletry bag in my suitcase and stop to look at him.

“Yeah, I know it was planned Brian but you were only supposed to be gone for three days before and now you are talking about a week, maybe two,” he says. I look at him and cross my arms over my chest.

“I can’t just not go,” I tell him.

“Send somebody else,” he says with a shrug of his shoulders. I bite the skin on the inside of my mouth, just under my bottom lip to keep from yelling at him.

“Justin, I can’t just send someone else. We are talking about a multi-million dollar account here. I can’t just shift it over to someone else and risk losing it,” I tell him. I know my argument is bullshit but I throw it out there anyway.

“Bullshit Brian, you have three...THREE multi-million dollar accounts. You don’t have to go if you don’t want to but then maybe that’s it. Maybe you want to go,” He says as he unfolds himself and puts one foot on the frame surrounding the bed. “I mean really, who would want to be here with kids, puke, ear infections and all the other everyday stuff,” he says wildly. I squeeze down the anger in my body because I know that he has been tired and stressed lately. “I don’t understand why it has to be you,” he screams.

“Because it is a fucking important account,” I scream. I see him recoil slightly at my tone. “I told you that I was going on this business trip months ago. It’s been set up for the longest time and now you are picking the night before I fucking leave to have a fucking drama queen moment,” I yell at him. “If you want someone here while I am gone then fucking call Daphne or someone to come over and stay here with you,” I tell him. He jumps up from his spot on the bed and comes to stand across from me.

“I don’t want a fucking replacement. I WANT *YOU* TO BE HERE,” he shouts and places his hand on the side of his head, rubbing away an impending headache.

“WHAT THE FUCK IS YOUR PROBLEM JUSTIN?” I shout to match him, my hands fly up with the force of my words and time they leave my lips I regret them. I hear a loud scream and then an eruption of tears and wails. We both turn our attention to the door. Sam is standing covering his ears and shaking like a leaf in a strong wind.

“No, hit... no hit daddy,” he screams as his body shakes. We both watch him in confusion. We can see the front of his pants start to change colors as his bladder releases. Justin looks over at me, his hand still in the same place on his head. I look at him and then back at Sam. I drop my hands.

“Justin, put your fucking hand down,” I say to him softly. He looks at me in confusion and then quickly puts his hand down as he realizes what Sam must be thinking. I walk over to him and pick him up. I feel him tense in my arms and I could kill Ethan in this instance. “Sam, I didn’t hit daddy. We were just having a little fight. Daddy was rubbing his head, I didn’t hit him,” I try to explain to my three year old. He fights to get out of my grasp and runs over to Justin.

“Sam, dad didn’t hit me. See,” he says showing our son the side of his face. “I was just rubbing my head but dad didn’t do anything. Dad would never hit daddy, we were just shouting,” he explains. Sam buries his face into Justin’s chest and cries. I come over and rub his back. He lets me touch him but when I try to take him from Justin he starts to shake. “I’m gonna go and clean him up,” Justin tells me as he walks out of the room.

Justin’s POV...

“Sam, you know that I love dad right?” I ask him. He shakes his little head yes and wipes his nose with his hand. I scrunch up my nose and wipe his hand off. “Dad doesn’t hit daddy. He would never hit daddy,” I tell him, hoping that he understands me. I know what it will do to Brian if his own son looks at him the way he used to look at his father.

“Da bad man hit daddy,” he says as I put him into the bathtub. I sit him down in the tub and start to wash him up. “Da bad man hit daddy and deen daddy went to da pital,” he tells me as I wash his hair. I never thought he saw the things that Ethan did to me but I should have known better than to think he didn’t see. I can hardly see him because unshed tears are blocking my vision. I blink my eyes, sending them over the edge. “Don’t cry daddy,” he says as he reaches up a little hand and touches my face. I smile at him and before I can stop myself I am crying hard and deep.

I feel Brian place a strong, comforting hand on my back and I wipe my eyes with my wrist, avoiding the shampoo that still stains my hands. “Why don’t you let me finish washing him,” he says softly. I nod my head and move to get up. “Sam is it okay if dad finishes giving you your bath?” he asks him. Sam says yes and I rinse my hands in the tub water before leaving as fast as my legs can carry me out of the bathroom.

Brian’s POV...

I hear Justin slam the bedroom door close and I close my eyes tightly. I take a few breaths into me and finish giving Sam his bath. “Ok, you’re all wrinkled now so let’s get out the tub,” I say to my oldest son. I lift him up and wrap him in a big towel. I pull the plug in the tub and move with him to his bedroom. I grab his lotion and pajamas off the dresser and sit down on his floor to get him all moisturized and dressed.

“Sam, you know when dad goes to his meeting tomorrow you are going to have to be a big boy and help daddy with the babies, ok,” I tell him. He looks at me as he tries to put his underwear on all by himself. I grab the elastic and help him pull them all the way up.

“I can be the big boy dad,” he tells me as I slip the shirt over his head. I get up from the floor and grab his towel and the lotion. I turn around in time to catch him before he runs out of the room. “We godda go watch da teebee dad,” he tells me. I laugh as I pick him up and carry him to bed.

“I don’t think so, you are going to bed. It is 10 o’clock and little boys should have been sleep long ago,” I tell him as I place him in his bed and put the covers over him. He starts to turn over and over in the bed, twisting the sheets around him tightly. I smile slightly, Justin does the same thing. I bend down and hug him when he shoots his arms out demanding a hug from me. I kiss his hair and watch as he turns over a couple more times. I turn the nightlight on and close the door slightly. I look in on the twins before going to check on Justin.

Ethan’s Mother’s POV...

“He hasn’t been taking his medication,” I tell the doctor as I twirl the phone cord around my fingers. The black eye that he gave me has now faded to a distant memory but I am getting more and more concerned about my safety. “I try to get him to take them but all he does is stay in the basement for hours and hours,” I tell the doctor.

“Do you know what he is doing down there?” the doctor asks me. I sit down at the kitchen table and pull a cigarette from my pack as it sits on the table.

“No, I never go down there. I know he leaves the house everyday early in the morning and he comes home around six in the afternoon and then he goes straight into the basement until the early hours of morning,” I say as I light the cigarette and take the smoke into my lungs.

“Do you know where he is going everyday?” he asks me. I drop the ashes from the cigarette into the ashtray and take another pull.

“No, I don’t know exactly where he is going but I do know that he says he is going to see his family. I have no idea what he is talking about because he doesn’t have any family in this area,” I tell him.

Ethan’s POV...

I smile as I put my picture over Brian’s. I love the picture of us at the park. I think we look wonderful. I told Justin that it was a little too chilly to have the babies out in the cold but he said that is was fine. I smile as I look at my little boy and my little girl. They really look like me. Justin and I really have beautiful children. I hear my mother upstairs on the phone and I drown her voice out with the stereo.

“Those really are some cute kids,” I hear a voice say. I smile as I look at the picture.

“Yeah, they really are,” I say as I get up and add the picture to my wall. Pictures of me and my family are all over the wall. Announcements of private galleries where Justin showed his work in the last year, parties, functions, and lots of private pictures of us at our house litter my walls and create a wonderful mural.

“Too bad that Kinney keeps hanging around,” it says to me.

“Justin told me that he had to stay with Kinney because he didn’t want the man to think he was using him but he told me that he loved me,” I say. “He loves me and he want to be with me. We are going to be together, me and Justin and our kids.”

“Yeah right, I bet Justin doesn’t even love you,” I hear the voice say.

“He does love me, you don’t even know what you’re talking about so JUST GO AWAY,” I yell. I listen for the voice to start talking again as I look at my wall. When I only hear the music from the radio I sit down and turn on my computer. I have the house surrounded with video cameras so I can watch over my family morning, noon and night. I see the light in the back turn out, leaving only a soft glow in the darkness. I am so glad the sales boy recommended night vision.

Ethan’s Mother’s POV...

“I don’t know what you want me to say Mrs. Gold. It is almost 11 o’clock at night and Ethan is a grown man. I cannot make him take his medication,” he tells me. I blow another cloud of smoke into the air and strain to hear him against the stereo that Ethan is blasting.

“Well, I am his mother; can’t I give you permission to make him take his medicine?” I ask him. I put out the cigarette and pinch the edge of my nose.

“No Mrs. Gold. If you want Ethan to be forced to take his medicine against his will then you are going to have to commit him,” he tells me. I really don’t want to commit him but I am starting to think that that really is my only choice. “My suggestion is that you try and stick it out with him for one more day and I will come over tomorrow to at least see if he should be placed back on medication or committed into a facility,” he tells me.

“Thanks doctor Henry, I really would appreciate that,” I say as I hang up the phone and walk over to the basement door. I crack it open just a little and I can hear Ethan down there talking to himself. I close up the door and walk up to my bedroom. I turn the deadbolt that I placed on the door and crawl into bed to get some sleep.

Brian’s POV...

I grab the handle to the bedroom and turn. I open the door and close it behind me. I look around and I don’t see Justin anywhere. I move from the door when I hear a cough and a whimper come from the bathroom. I walk in and Justin is on the floor by the toilet, kneeling over the bowl and throwing up the contents from his stomach and from the sound of him that’s not much. “Are you

okay?" I ask as I grab a towel and wet it for him. I bring it over to him at the toilet and place it on the back of his neck after wiping his face.

"I wasn't ready for that," he manages to say. I help him to his feet and we walk back into the bedroom. I watch him as he lays down on the bed and pulls his legs into himself. "I think I knew that one day he would say something about the times that he saw me all battered and bloody but I didn't think that that day would be today and I didn't know it would bother me so much," he says as he lies on the bed with his back facing me. "It was my fault. I should never have let him see me like that," he says and I hear the hitch in his voice as the sobs rock through his again.

"It wasn't your fault Justin," I say. I take my luggage off of the bed and crawl in behind him. I press my body into his until I feel like we may weld together from each other's body heat. I grab him and turn him body, forcing it to move until he is facing me. I watch the guilt as it pools in his eyes and I pull him close to me. "We are more than a year past Ethan. He isn't here now and what he did was not your fault," I say and the tears fall from the orbs of blue with sadness and regret. I pull him close into me and I can feel the heated tears staining my chest and piercing my heart. He shifts more in the bed and presses his body closer into mine, wrapping his arms around me and holding on.

"He is here Brian, don't you see?" he asks as he breathes into my chest. I smooth my hand over his hair and wait for him to continue. "He is here. I think about him all the time, everyday of every minute. I can't just let him go. I have thought about him everyday since I found out that he got out of jail. He, he... sends me things," he says and I almost fling him off the bed with the force of my movements.

"WHAT?" I scream as I push back from him and look into his eyes. "What do you mean he sends you things?" I ask. I watch him flinch slightly and I calm myself immediately. Now I know why he doesn't want me to go. He is scared, scared to be alone. I thought we had moved past this but I should have known that it wouldn't be swept under the rug and forgotten easily.

"He has sent me flowers and cards a couple of times he sent gifts and things for the babies," he says. I run a hand over my face as he wipes the tears from his eyes and cheeks. "I threw them all in the trash," he says. I put my hand on his face and press my lips to his lips. He folds back into me and I can feel the slight trembling in his body as I hold onto him. I feel him relax and I know that he has fallen into a fitful sleep. I lay there staring up at the ceiling as I run my left hand through his golden locks, twirling them in my fingers. I move him off of me and get up to finish packing.

I don't want to go, especially now but it's too late to get someone else to go. I finish packing and set my suitcase over by the closet where my suit bag is hanging. I go to take a shower and when I come out I see Justin's blue eyes trained on my naked frame. I walk over and slide into the bed next to him. He must have woken up and took his clothes off and gotten under the covers while I was in the bathroom. "I still don't want you to go..." he says softly into my face as we lay together in the darkness. "... but I don't want you to feel like you have to stay," he finishes.

"I know, I still have to go but now that I know he has been so close to the house I am not so sure

I feel safe leaving you here alone,” I tell him. “I think maybe you should have someone come over and stay with you or you could go and stay at your mom’s house until I get back,” I tell him. I watch him shake his head and I look into his eyes as they cloud over and sleep takes a hold of him.

Justin’s POV...

“Justin, I really wish you would go and stay with your mother,” he says as the airport shuttle cab driver puts his bags into the trunk. “I would feel a lot better,” he says to me. I look over at Sam as he tries to ride his tricycle in the driveway.

“Brian, I’ll be fine. We have three kids and two of them still have a hard time sleeping through the night, no one wants me at their house,” I tell him with a smile as I hold onto Tyler. “Now, hurry up and go so that you can hurry and come back,” I tell him as I smooth his tie and give him a weak smile. He grabs the back of my neck and I melt into him. I feel his tongue snake into my mouth and I wrap my free hand around him, deepening the kiss and holding onto him. I let him go when the shuttle driver reminds us of the time. He hooks onto my hand and we walk from the porch to the curb together.

“Sam, come and say goodbye to your dad,” he calls out and Sam runs over. Brian picks him up and hugs him tightly before kissing him and putting him down. “Love you sonny boy,” he says.

“Luv you dad,” he throws behind his back as he runs back to his tricycle. Brian kisses Mya and hands her to me. He leans over and places a kiss on Tyler’s forehead before he kisses me one last time and gets into the shuttle cab and closes the door. I look down at the two babies in my arms as they look up at me, smiling. “Daddy, we can eat some breakfast now,” Sam asks me as he comes over and grabs onto my jeans.

“Yeah, let’s go and get some breakfast,” I say. He takes off in front of me and I follow with the two babies. I just hope that Brian has to stay less time than he thinks.

The Doctor’s POV...

“Thanks for coming doctor Henry. Ethan isn’t here right now but I would really like for you to come in,” she tells me. I follow her into the house and look around for signs of distress as I enter the house but there is nothing that feels off. It seems to be a loving environment so far.

“It is really no problem. I have been treating Ethan for some time now but I have never been to your home. It is very nice,” I tell her honestly.

“Thank you,” she says as we walk into the kitchen and she serves me a cup of coffee. I drink the cup lazily as I question her about Ethan’s latest behavior. When she mentions the basement I feel the urge to see it.

“Do you think I could see the basement?” I ask her. As much she wants to help her son I see a little hesitancy in her eyes.

“Yeah... sure,” she says as she leads me to a door off of the kitchen and I walk down first. I find the light switch and when I turn to her and look at the wall behind her back I have to will my jaw to stay attached. The whole wall is littered with pictures of a blond and his family. Ethan has placed himself in all the pictures and there are numerous cut out heads of a very handsome brunet man. I watch Mrs. Gold as she looks at the wall in awe and as she backs up to get the full spectrum of the wall she bumps the computer desk.

The display quickly changes from a harmless screensaver to numerous surveillance screens. All of the cameras are aimed at a rather nice, big house. The address and street name were not visible anywhere in the cameras or the pictures. “Oh my god,” Mrs. Gold says as she covers her mouth with her hand.

Ethan’s POV...

Brian just left. I watched him leave and then I rode the bus back home. I am so happy. Sam was in the driveway riding his tricycle. He is getting so big. I saw that asshole holding my daughter but I managed to stay calm. “You should have just knocked on the door when he went inside,” the voice said as it came out of nowhere.

“No, I want to surprise him. I want to look really nice when I see him again,” I say. I open the front door, taking one last glance at the car that’s parked in the driveway. I close the door behind me and walk through the house to the basement. I hear the voices before I get all the way to the bottom.

“I think you have a serious problem,” I hear a man say. I move down another step and look at them.

“Yeah, I think we do,” I hear my mother say. I come down the stairs all the way and cross my arms.

“Yeah... I think we do have a problem here,” I say as I pull my knife from my pocket.

“Sam, if you be quiet for at least ten minutes I will play any game with you that you want,” I say. I am trying to feed Tyler and burp Mya at the same time. “I know, why don’t you come over here and feed your brother,” I suggest. He throws his blocks on the floor and comes running over.

“I... I can do it standing up daddy,” he says. I watch him as he scrambles onto the sofa and sits back, holding his arms out.

“No, you are too little. You can feed him sitting down,” I say sleepily. He sticks his tongue out and pouts. ‘I have got to stop letting him hang out with Michael,’ I think as I hand Tyler to him and give him the bottle.

“See daddy, I am a big boy,” he says. I smile at him and yawn.

“You are a big boy and do you know what big boys love to do?” I ask him. I watch as he looks at Tyler, trying to move the bottle in and out of his mouth to get him to suck. “Big boys love to take naps,” I say. He starts to laugh and looks at me.

“No daddy, I don’t like naps,” he whines. I hear the doorbell ring and I put Mya in the bend of the sofa and take Tyler from Sam so I can go and answer the door without fear of one of my children hitting the ground. I open the door to find a very happy Lindsay and Melanie on the doorstep. Lindsay kisses my cheek and takes Tyler from me as Sam pulls Melanie into the house. I roll my eyes and close the door behind me.

“So, how is it going?” Melanie asks me as she sits on the sofa and picks up Mya.

“It’s going pretty good. I think my head may just pop in about another hour if I don’t go to sleep,” I tell them as I sit down on the other side of the sofa. “Brian called last night and got him all excited, so he was up practically all night,” I tell them.

“Isn’t he due to come home soon?” Lindsay asks me. I let out a sigh and lean back, resting my feet on the coffee table. “I take that as a no.”

“So far they only want him to stay two extra days,” I say as I role my eyes and pull at invisible pieces of lint on my shirt. “He has only been gone for two weeks and I feel like it has been forever,” I say as I close my eyes.

“Well, if you need a break from the kids Mel and I are happy to take them,” Lindsay tells me. I cover my head with a pillow and cross my arms over the top of it.

“The kids, who’s talking about the kids, I am so fucking horny,” I say. I pull the pillow off of my face and look at the T.V. If I watch one more episode of Dora the Explorer I may kill someone. I yawn and move my leg as Sam comes to stand in front of me. I can’t really tell what the thing in the picture is but I smile anyway. I watch the girls get up but I have lost the ability to hear in my sleep filled glaze.

“Ok, we are going to take the babies and you are going to have a night all alone to do whatever

you want,” Melanie tells me.

“You guys don’t have to do that,” I say. They are grinning like two school girls. They put the babies in their swings and move toward the stairs. Sam is right behind them.

“We know we don’t have to, we want to,” they say as they go upstairs to gather some things for the kids. I barely hear them say their goodbyes as I sleepily wave everyone goodbye before hearing them close the door.

Ethan’s POV...

“You are going to get in so much trouble,” the voice tells me. I shake my head and finish making my sandwich.

“No I am not. You have to get caught to get in trouble,” I tell the voice. He is so stupid. I wish he would just shut the fuck up sometimes. I sit down at the kitchen table and start to eat my sandwich.

“You are going to get caught. Everyone is going to know what you did and then Justin is not going to love you anymore.” I tune out the voice as it gets louder and louder. If I ever figure out where it is coming from I am going to teach the guy a lesson. “They are going to find the bodies and they are going to come for you.”

“Shut up... shut up... SHUT UP!” I throw the rest of my sandwich on the floor and storm downstairs into the basement. I glance over at the closet door where my mother and the good doctor are dreaming eternal dreams of happiness. I sit down in front of my monitors and watch the house that Justin and I are going to share. After a few minutes I see two women leave.

“Hey, where are you two going?” I ask out loud. I watch as they get in a car and drive off, taking my kids with them.

“You are going to get in trouble,” the voice says again. I get up and walk up the stairs to the bathroom. I open the shower curtain and turn on the water, scalding hot.

“You don’t know what you are talking about. Justin called the babysitter’s so that we can spend the night together alone without having to worry about any children interrupting us,” I tell the voice as I strip and step into the water. I barely feel it raining down on my skin, turning my skin red. “We are going to have such a romantic night. Maybe some dinner and dancing; followed up of course by a nice round of lovemaking. It’s going to be great.”

Brian’s POV...

“Melanie and Lindsay took the kids with them so I could get some rest,” he tells me. I am packing up my things as I hold the phone to my ear.

“Yeah, that’s good. I have good news. I am going to be coming in earlier than expected,” I tell

Justin. I hold the phone away from my ear a little as I listen to him scream in excitement and then talk quickly. “Justin, if you don’t be quiet I cannot tell you my flight information.”

“Oh, yeah, sorry,” he says as I tell him all my information I am flying in on the afternoon flight and should be in Pittsburgh by eleven.

“I’m going to take a cab from the airport.”

“No, I’ll come and pick you up,” he tells me. I knew he would object to the cab.

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah, I want to.” We stay on the phone talking for another hour and a half. I smile when I hear him softly breathing on the other line.

“Justin... JUSTIN,” I say loud enough for him to hear me and wake up. I hear him grunt at my loud voice as he moans a tired ‘yeah’ into the phone. “Go to sleep.” I hang up after I hear his phone click and the dial tone start to sound.

Justin’s POV...

I wake up on the sofa with the phone pressing into my side. The house is pitch dark, the only light I see is coming from the full moon that is lighting up the sky. I get up from the sofa and stretch as I walk up the stairs and into my bedroom, pausing to turn the light on. I look at the clock next to the bed and see that it is only eight at night. I must have slept for a couple of hours. I go into the bathroom and turn the shower on before turning around to grab the cordless. “Hey Lindsay, I was just calling to check on the kids,” I say as I strip out of my jeans.

“They are fine Justin. We are actually about to give them all baths. Stop worrying, go relax,” she tells me with a laugh and hangs up. I press the end button and place the phone on the countertop as I open the shower door and step under the water.

Ethan’s POV...

I walk up to our backdoor and smooth my hair down. I knock firmly and wait a few minutes. Justin doesn’t come to the door and I swallow my anger. “He is hiding from you,” the voice tells me.

“Shut up, he is probably just asleep and can’t hear us. He just forgot to leave the door open. I thought he knew we didn’t have a key,” I say. I punch my hand through the thin glass on the door and reach in and unlock the door, stepping inside. It’s so dark in here. I walk carefully through the family room and through the hallway, toward the stairs.

I get to the top and when I walk into the master bedroom I hear the shower running. I step in front of the mirror and straighten my tie. I make sure that the flowers I am holding are still nicely arranged before sitting down on the huge bed.

I hear the shower turn off and I immediately sit up straight. “Hey,” I say as Justin comes out of the bathroom. He stands staring at me and I smile at him. I jump up and throw my arms around him. “I brought you these. I saw the babies, they are beautiful. You should have told me you were going to have my kids, we are going to be so happy together.” I grab his hand and pull him over to the bed. I look over at him and he is just looking at me. “Justin, say something.”

“What the fuck are you doing here?” He asks me. I wasn’t expecting that. He pulls his hand from mine and gets up off the bed, walking backwards toward his closet.

“Justin, I came to spend a night with you. Don’t you want to spend a night with me?” I ask him and I see the look of fear come over his face.

Justin’s POV...

He is fucking crazy. “Ethan, we are not together and my kids are not yours... they are Brian’s,” I tell him as I try to shake off my fear. It’s not working and I see him flinch at the mention of Brian’s name. I quickly grab some jeans and a shirt. I slip into them quickly and stand flush against the closet.

“I don’t want to hear that FUCKING NAME,” he screams. I jump at his yelling and press my body closer to the closet. At this point I should be a part of the wood grain.

Ethan’s POV...

“You’re losing it,” the voice tells me.

Justin’s POV...

I stand staring at my former boyfriend and suddenly he moves forward and pulls me close to him, pressing our lips together. I push him away but he keeps his grip firm.

“I am FINE,” he yells as he breaks our kiss. I am not sure if he is talking to me. He stops and takes a deep breath. “Come on Justin.” He keeps a hold on my arm as he leads me out of the bedroom and down the hall toward the stairs. We are almost there when he pauses in front of the twin’s door. “Justin, you did a really good job on these rooms,” he tells me as he lets go of my arm and moves into the darkened room.

He almost stumbles on a toy as he moves across the floor. I back away from the door slowly as he gets to the first crib. I pause when he stops moving and when he reaches into the crib to touch the soft pink bedding I take off down the stairs. “JUSTIN, come back here!” I can hear him screaming behind me but I don’t stop to think of how close or far away he may be. I step off the steps and turn down the hallway, running full speed for the front door.

“Stay away from me Ethan,” I scream. I grab for the doorknob and as my fingers wrap around it I feel his body slam into mine. I can feel the hardness of the door as my face slams into it and for

five seconds I curse Brian for wanting the reinforced steel, and then... I see nothing.

Justin's POV...

I open my eyes and the first thing I see is the ceiling. I can see the world swirling back into focus and I move to sit up. "Fuck," I say as the pain runs through me. I sit myself up and realize that I am on the floor in front of the sofa. Blood is on my shirt and still coming from somewhere on my face that I can't see. I reach up and touch a hand to my face and when I look down at my hand I see blood. I touch my nose gently and realize all too quickly that it is broken.

"You never could do things the easy way." I jump as Ethan comes into the room and walks into the kitchen.

"Ethan, what are you doing?" I ask. The pain that shoots through me is blinding. I feel the blood from my face pool into my mouth and I swallow it down, wincing as the thick liquid rolls down my throat.

"We are going to have dinner and then... we are going to have a little fun," he tells me.

Brian's POV...

"Brian, are you ready?" I look up Cynthia and hold my finger up to tell her to give me a minute. I listen to the steady ringing of the phone, waiting for Justin to pick it up. I cannot shake this feeling I have that something is wrong. I flip my phone closed after a few more rings and move into the conference room. "Is everything okay?"

"Yeah, let's go," I say as I usher her into the conference room and close the doors behind me. I push the uneasy feeling I have to the back of my brain. I have been gone for a little more than two weeks and I think it is starting to get to me. Justin is fine, at least that's what I tell myself. I say it to myself as I give my presentation. The trouble is that I don't think I believe it.

Forty-five minutes later I am shaking the hands of the representatives for Imation Computer Graphics. I watch them leave the conference area and I quickly pluck my phone from my pocket. I call Justin again, his cell and the house. When he doesn't answer I flip my phone closed and tap it against my lips as I think. I make a decision and grab my jacket and my briefcase. "Brian, where are you going? You have one more meeting scheduled today," Cynthia says.

"Reschedule it," I say as I make sure that I have everything and make my way out of the room.

"What am I supposed to say?"

"Tell them I had a family emergency." I get into the elevator and after a quick stop at my hotel room I catch a cab. I am going home and I am going now, something is wrong. I pull my phone out again and dial Debbie's number.

"Hello."

“Deb, it’s me Brian. Have you talked to Justin today?” I wait for the lady to tell me if there is a spot available on the plane that is about to depart for Pittsburgh.

“No sweetie, I haven’t,” she tells me. “Is something wrong?”

“He is not answering the phone,” I say as I am handed a new ticket and told to go and check my bags. I move toward baggage check and hand over everything but my laptop.

“Melanie and Lindsay took the kids home with them last night, maybe he unplugged the phone to get some rest,” she says.

“Yeah, well, I gotta go.” I hang up the phone before she can protest and move to the gate. The plane is boarding and I get on with the rest of the passengers. “Something’s wrong,” I say quietly.

Justin’s POV...

I am so fucking scared that I can’t move. Ethan is sitting in front of me. He has placed a whole picnic of food in front of me and he keeps trying to get me to eat it. I just stare at him. I cannot believe that there was a time when I thought that I could love him. “Ethan, I need to go to the bathroom,” I say softly. He glares at me before sitting up straight.

“Make it fast.” I got up to move past him and I am almost free of him when I feel his hand clamp down on my calf. “Don’t try any shit,” he says and I feel my body stiffen as I feel cold steel trace a thin line up and down my leg. He lets me go and I walk as fast as I can to the bathroom and when I get there I slam and lock the door behind me. I lean back on the door and close my eyes.

When I look in the mirror at the dried blood on my face and my obviously broken nose I feel a white heat trickle up my spine. I stand there staring at my face and I realize that I am more than a little pissed. Ethan, my nightmare, has come out of the shadows and is in my house. My house, that I live in with my family, my kids. I try to wash the blood off my face and close my eyes. “Justin, open the fucking door.”

I jump almost as high as the sky and with one last look in the mirror I move to the door, unlocking it. Ethan doesn’t wait for it to open he kicks it in as the lock comes undone and I jump back. “What the fuck are you doing in here?”

“I should be asking you that question, this is my fucking house,” I say. The words are a little slurred from the broken nose and the swelling. I don’t know where that came from. I have not said anything like that to Ethan and remained unhurt. I see his mask slip all the way off and before I can blink he has a hold of my neck, trying in earnest to barrel my body toward the wall opposite the bathroom.

I see the wall and put my hands up, turning myself as my body makes contact. I don’t think, I can’t think. If I stop and think now I will die. I reach back and punch with everything in me, and

place a right hook square in the middle of Ethan's jaw. He has a few seconds where he looks stunned. He is amazed that I hit him back. While he is still wondering what's going on I kick him in the balls and turn to run. "Motherfucker," he says as he slams into me. I feel my lip bust open as I come in contact with the pot that he had placed on the floor.

I throw my elbow back and connect with his chest as he hits me in the back. "Ethan... get... off me," I say as I try to buck him off. He is pinning me to the mat, holding me tightly as I try to struggle. I feel his hands roaming over me, touching me. The panic that goes through my body is all I need.

When he tries to turn me over I let him and push him off. He is shocked, but when I feel his body shift I take the opportunity to flip us over, now I am on top. I let go of all the years of pain and hatred.

"Justin," he breathes out through the blood that streaks his face. He is choking on blood as he lies under me. I can hardly hear him. I don't hear the banging at the front door. I don't hear the police yelling for me to open up.

"Pittsburgh Police, open the door. Open the door." I stay on top of Ethan, raining down punches on his face and chest.

"I should have killed you," Ethan chokes out. All I can see is my son's face as he stood in the hallway, scared. I can hear his screams as he thought that I was being hurt and I know that it is all... Ethan's... fault. I can't stop my hands from wrapping around his neck. I hear the phone ringing, one more noise in the bunch.

Brian's POV...

I have never been more grateful that we live so close to New York than I was when that plane touched down. "Answer the phone," I say as my cab makes its way through the streets of Pittsburgh toward my house. I hang up the phone and reach for the door handle as the cab comes to a stop in front of my neighbor's house. I pay the driver and get out of the cab as fast as I can, leaving the cabbie to pull my bags from the trunk. "What the fuck is going on?" I ask one of the officers.

"Sir, I am going to have to ask you to step back."

"The fuck you are, this is my house," I tell him. He looks at me and asks for some identification, satisfied when he sees my address. He tells me that the neighbor's heard loud screaming and noises coming from the house and called the police. I watch the cops at the door, shouting for someone to let them in. "I have a key," I say. He takes the offered key from me and moves to give it to the officer at the door. I stand there on the sidewalk waiting to see what is going on in the house.

"Open the door," the officer says one more time. "We're coming in." He puts the key in the lock and unlocks the door, making sure to keep his gun trained in front of him. They move into the

house and time seems to stop. I wait and after what seems like an eternity I see the same officer that I had talked to before motioning me over.

“What is your relation to the man in this house?” He asks me. I almost give a smart ass comment but I stop myself.

“I’m his husband,” I say. He doesn’t even flinch and I am surprised.

“We need you to see if you can calm him down.” It’s all he says as he leads me toward the house. I step through the front door, moving past the officers. I enter into the living room and all I see is Justin, sitting on top of someone.

“Justin,” I say as I enter the room and move around so that I can see his face.

Justin’s POV...

I can hear Brian but he sounds far away. “Justin, the police are here. You need to let him go,” he says. I slowly look up at Brian, my fingers still wrapped around Ethan’s neck.

“He’s going to hurt me,” I whisper but I let my grip on his neck loosen.

“No, no you’re safe. The police are here, nothing is going to happen to you. Let him go... let him go.” I let him go completely as I look down at him. I move myself off of his body and go to lean up against the sofa. The police swarm the room along with the paramedics.

I wince when I feel the paramedic touch my face, checking my broken nose. “We need to take you to the hospital.” I let the paramedics lift me to my feet and as they lead me outside I grab onto Brian’s hand.

Brian’s POV...

“What happened?” The officer asks. Justin seems to finally be letting it all hit him. He does not answer the officer he just stares straight ahead. The doctor tells the officer that Justin is most likely in shock and to give him some time to process everything. The officer hands me his card as he leaves the room, finally allowing us some peace.

“How bad is it?” I ask the doctor as Justin just sits there, slowly turning black and blue. He probably doesn’t even remember some of the punches that caused the bruising.

“His nose is broken and he has a gash on his forehead, a couple stitches on that and he should be fine. He has some other bruising but the only thing we can give for that is time,” she tells me. Justin is still just sitting there.

The doctor leaves to get some more supplies and when she does I move in front of Justin and make him look at me. “It’s okay,” I say to him and finally... he starts to cry.

Ethan was in the hospital for a little over a week. The police raided his house and discovered the bodies of his mother and his former doctor in a room in the basement. The doctor had been stabbed to death multiple times and his mother was found bound and gagged. The coroner listed her cause of death as blunt force trauma to the head.

Upon his release from the hospital Ethan was arrested. He faced two charges of murder in the first degree, assault with a deadly weapon, breaking and entering and numerous other charges.

The judge ordered a psychiatric evaluation after Ethan attacked his lawyer after hearing the man refer to his mother, Mrs. Gold. One court appointed therapist and two independent therapists were brought in to evaluate Ethan. They all deemed him unsuitable to stand trial.

The doctors' testimonies combined with the records of Ethan's late doctor all led the judge to agree with their assessment. Ethan was admitted into Bellevue Hospital center and placed on medication.

Brian's POV...

I sit quietly next to Justin as the cops ask him question after question. They want to know if Ethan ever showed any signs of having a mental disorder.

That's funny as hell, if they want to know if he showed any signs of a mental disorder I am sure Justin could show them the fucking brand on his back. Why not, hell, I have to look at it every time we fuck. Justin answers every question like he is on autopilot.

"No!" Justin answers roughly to one of their questions and I am suddenly snapped out of my thoughts.

"We don't mean to offend you Mr. Taylor, but we have to ask," Officer Henry says. His partner sits next to him on the couch, absently looking over at the kids on the floor. I stay silent since I really have no idea what they are talking about.

"No, I did not have any desire to see Ethan again," Justin answers. He is not comfortable. He is threading one of the baby blankets between his fingers. "Why didn't you tell your husband about the letters and the gifts that you had been receiving from Mr. Gold?"

Justin doesn't answer; he just looks at the officers for what seems like an eternity. "If I had told Brian that Ethan was sending me presents and gifts and poems and shit," Justin says his voice shaking. "He would have killed him, as it is he is lucky I didn't." Justin got up off the couch, picked up Mya and Tyler and walked out of the room. I hear him as he ascends the stairs. The closing of a door in the distance tells us that he is not coming back down.

"Well, I guess that means you can go now," I say as I lead the two cops out of the house. I feel a small hand on my leg and I look down. "Hey," I say as I pick Sam up and close the door. "Let's go see where daddy ran to."

Justin's POV...

"I want to see him," I say. I have no idea where that came from but I needed to get it out. Brian is standing just inside the door. I can hear the police car as it drives away. I finish changing Tyler and sit him on the floor. I cannot believe how fast they are growing.

"What the fuck for?" Brian asks. We hear a loud 'fuck' from down the hall and I glare at Brian. "Shit," he says.

"You are going to have him saying more curse words than any other kid in the world," I say. Brian comes over to me and wraps his arms around my waist.

"Answer my question," he says as he places kisses on my jaw and down my neck.

"I just feel like I need to see him. I have to," I tell him. He doesn't want me to see him. He wants me to just leave well enough alone, but I can't.

"Are you fucking kidding me?" Daphne asks as she sits across the table from me. We are eating lunch at the diner, waiting for Brian to show up. He took Sam to the doctor today.

"No, I am not kidding you," I tell her. She keeps staring at me.

"Brian is okay with this?"

"Fuck no, he doesn't want me to go... but I think deep down he understands that I need to go." Daphne smirks and takes a sip of her iced tea. "I just think it'll be good for me, to see him and know that I won't fall apart," I tell her.

"What if you see him and nothing changes? What if you see him and you still come home and check every door five times, or constantly look out the window? What happens if you still rub your skin raw in the shower after you wake up from a nightmare?" She asks.

"Damn, does Brian tell you everything?" I ask trying to lighten the weight of her words. She smiles.

"He needs to talk to someone and I am your best friend. I am actually a little hurt that the news did not come from you," she tells me. "Come on, let's go outside." We pay for lunch and head out of the diner. Daphne holds the door open for me as I maneuver the double stroller out the door.

We sit on a bench and Daphne lights a cigarette. She sits on my right so that the babies are not in the path of the smoke. I look down and both of them are sleeping soundly. I take the cigarette from her and inhale. We sit in silence for a few minutes, just enjoying each other. "I am terrified," I tell her.

She looks over at me, grabs my hand and holds on tight. "I know you are," she says. "But, if you

think that you need to see him... then you should try to see him. Plus, Brian will be there with you. You two can fuck in New York. It'll be just like old times." She starts to laugh and choke on the smoke at the same time.

"Fuck! Yeah, you spend too much time talking to Brian." She composes herself and drops the cigarette butt to the ground, smashing it with her shoe.

"Are you going to take the kids to New York with you?" She asks. I see Brian's car pull up and I watch as he gets out and starts to cross the street.

"No, we are leaving them here. I don't think I want our first family trip to be to Bellevue," I say.

"Yeah, guess not. Are you leaving them with Lindsay and Melanie?" She asks. She is looking at Mya and Tyler asleep in their stroller.

"No, not this time," I say. "Melanie and Lindsay are going to some spa thing."

"Oh, so who are they staying with?"

"Well, we were hoping they could stay with Aunt Daphne," I say with the biggest smile on my face. She looks over at me and rolls her eyes. "Please... please... please," I beg.

"Oh fine, you are so going to owe me for this," she tells me. I plant a big kiss on her cheek and she giggles.

"She must have said 'yes'," Brian says as he gets to our bench. He leans down to kiss me, the small show of affection quickly deepening.

"Mmmm, yeah she did," I say as I pull away from him. I am not averse to fucking in public, but fucking in the middle of the day on the sidewalk in front of the Diner is going to take a lot more influence than nicotine.

"Thank you Daphne," Brian says as he kisses her. He sits down next to me and hands me some papers.

"What are these?" I ask. Daphne leans over and gives me a kiss before announcing that she'll call us later and taking off down the street. I move over to give Brian more room. I start looking at the papers in my hand.

"These are all the papers that we have to have filled out before we register Sam for school," he says motioning to all the papers. I sigh. "I cannot believe that he is going to school already." Brian nods his head and looks over at Mya and Tyler.

"I can't believe a lot of shit," he says as he digs in his pocket for his cigarettes.

Brian's POV...

“Sam, stop moving.” I am going to get him into these shoes if my life depends on it. It has become my own personal mission.

He is reaching for his toys on the floor as I twist his body to get into the shoe. Justin finally went back to work, which would be great, if it did not mean that three out of five days I am left to fend for myself in the morning... with all three kids.

He has been working non-stop. I think he loves the feeling of being back at work and out from under the kids all day, but I also know that our impending trip is weighing heavily in his mind. We leave in a week and I am hoping that this trip will see the end of our Ethan days.

“Ouch, Dad, you’re hurtin’ me,” Sam says. I look at the shoe and down at his foot. I can almost swear I just bought them, or Justin did.

“Sorry.” I get up off the floor and walk over to my bedroom to grab the cordless phone. Mya and Tyler are mobile now and I can hear the moving of hands and knees on carpet as they follow me. I dial the number and listen as the phone rings and rings. I am about to give up all hope when I hear Justin’s voice.

“Justin Taylor,” he answers. I watch Mya as she stands up besides the bed and falls back down.

“Hey,” I say. I can hear the smile as it spreads across his face.

“Hey.”

“Sam’s shoes don’t fit,” I say. He lets out a laugh and tells me that he knows that already.

“Well, didn’t you just buy some?” I ask. He tells me to look on the dresser. I walk out of our room, Mya and Tyler hot on my trail, and back into Sam’s room. I see the shoebox on the dresser and when I open it I almost faint.

“Did you find them?” He asks after I am silent for too long.

“My son is *not* wearing these shoes. There is a big red fucking dog on the side and.... HOLY SHIT! They light up.” I am not going to even attempt to touch the shoe.

“What’s wrong with them?”

“Are you serious? Did you not *see* them?” I ask. He laughs and hangs up the phone after telling me that if I don’t like them I can go buy some more. “Fuck,” I say. “It’s a good thing that dad is the owner of the company, cause we are going to be late.” I finish dressing the babies and grab their bag. I fix them all breakfast and call Cynthia while they eat.

“Is everything okay?”

“Yeah, I just need to go to the shoe store. I won’t be too late,” I say and hang up the phone. I pick up everything and when the door is locked and everyone is in their seats we’re off to the shoe store. I end up buying three pairs of shoes for Sam and two pair each for Mya and Tyler.

“What’s his name?” The secretary asks. Sam is sitting on the floor trying to tie his shoe. I dropped Mya and Tyler off with Michael. He watches them on Fridays.

Oh Friday, I cannot wait for it to be over.

“Sam Kinney, he is in Mrs. Walter’s Kindergarten class.” She looks up the information, marks him down as tardy and escorts him to his classroom after I tie his shoes, again. He keeps untying them.

“Cynthia, would you please bring me some aspirin?” I ask as I settle into my chair. I boot up my computer and finally lose myself in work.

Next week we are preparing for our trip and I know that it’s going to be stressful. I just hope that Justin is able to get it out of his system.

Ethan’s POV...

“You don’t know what you are talking about,” I tell the doctor. She keeps telling me that my mother is dead, that I killed her. She is crazy. I love my mother.

“I want to talk to my mother, NOW!” She doesn’t understand that I don’t belong here, this is all a mistake.

“Look, just let me call my mother, okay?” I say. “She’ll tell you that this is all a mistake. I play the violin. CALL HER... CALL HER... CALL HER!” I scream.

I see the nurse come into the room and hand a syringe to the doctor. “Okay Ethan, this is not going to hurt.”

“What in the fuck is that? What is that?” I ask. I feel the hands hold me down and the needle as it injects the medicine into my system. I see the doctor looming over me right before all the lights... go out.

Ethan’s POV...

“Well, well, well, look who finally decided to wake up.”

I hear the voice ringing in my ears as I regain consciousness. I wait for my eyes to focus before swinging my feet off the bed and standing up. “You sure were knocked out for a long time. They must have given you some pretty good stuff,” the voice tells me.

“What’s going on?” I ask. I hold my hand to my head and try to stop the spinning. The room is

empty, minus the bed and the toilet. “Where are we?”

“We’re in the crazy house; Yup, they put us away,” the voice says. I look out of the small window inside the door and as I watch for any sign of movement I feel hot air on my arm. I turn slowly and look into a face that is very much like my own. “Hey.”

“Holy fucking shit,” I say as I move quickly back to the bed, trying with all my might to get as far away from the person in front of me as possible. I close my eyes and count to ten. “Who are you? You’re not here, you’re not here,” I say.

“Oh please, you know who I am. Now, we have work to do. I don’t want anymore drugs and I am sure you don’t either, so, we have to make sure that you act as normal as possible.” I listen to the voice as it talks to me.

“But I am normal,” I say, my voice dry and cracking.

“Ha, yeah... sure,” my mirror image tells me as it paces around the small confines of my room. “You’re so fucking normal that they took you away and locked you in a hospital full of crazies.”

I don’t say anything as the delusion continues to pace, hands clutched loosely behind his back. “I’m not crazy,” I mutter as I close my eyes and take some deep breaths.

“Yeah, you just keep telling yourself that,” he says as I hear footsteps stop outside the door.

Brian’s POV...

“You’re going to wear a hole in the floor if you don’t stop,” I say as Justin walks in front of me for what seems like the thousandth time. He stops pacing and looks over at me as he leans against the wall.

“What the fuck was I thinking?” he asks as he leans his head back and closes his eyes. I clasp my hands together and look toward the door that the doctor went through over half an hour ago.

“That if you came to see him you could walk away completely, instead of always having it somewhere in the back of your mind,” I tell him. He sighs and looks over at me as he pushes off of the wall and walks over to me, sitting in the seat next to me.

“But that’s just it,” he says as he looks at the door and then at me. “I don’t think I’ll ever be able to leave it all behind. It’ll always be there, always.” I don’t get a chance to respond. The door opens and the nurse comes into the room.

“Mr. Gold is ready to see you now. If you’d just follow me,” she says. I hear Justin take a deep breath and I stand.

“You sure you want to do this?” I ask him, again.

“Not at all,” he says with a smile as we follow the nurse into the hall.

Justin’s POV...

I cannot believe I’m doing this. We are getting closer and closer to the meeting rooms and all I want to do is turn around and run away. I tighten my grip on Brian’s wrist and swallow down the lump in my throat.

“Mr. Taylor, are you ready?” The doctor asks as he comes around the corner, a file tucked neatly against his body. I shake my head, too nervous to talk. “This is it,” the nurse says and I brace myself as I feel Brian gently tap my hand and then slip his arm from my grasp.

I have to go alone, all alone. “I can do this,” I whisper to myself as the door starts to open. Brian stays back, lingering in the hall as I step into the room with Ethan. He looks so different, but exactly the same.

“Myself, and three orderlies will be outside this door the entire time that you’re in here. If, at any time, you feel uncomfortable or threatened just press the red button on the table. Are you sure about this, Justin?” He asks me, again.

Everyone keeps asking me that. “Yes,” I tell him and before the word is out my mouth the door is closed and Ethan and I are all alone.

I don’t leave my spot by the door. I wanted this. I am the one who needed to come here and now I can’t speak. I can’t move.

“I’m glad you’re here,” Ethan says as he looks up at me. I swallow hard and force myself to take a step forward.

One step becomes two and soon I am sliding into the seat across from him. I place my arms on the table and flinch when he reaches for me, only to be stopped by the cuffs that restrict his movements.

“I wish I could say the same,” I say as I look into his eyes for the first time in forever. He rests his arms on the table, moving closer to me.

“They’re telling me some pretty fucked up shit, Justin. I mean, some of the things they are saying are... crazy.” He looks at me, burns his eyes into me, waiting for me to tell him that what they are saying is all lies, not true. I can’t do that for him. I shift uncomfortably in my seat and take a deep breath.

“It’s true,” I say quietly. “It’s all true. The things that they’re telling you are true, Ethan,” I say. It is not what I want to say but it’s the only thing that I can manage to make come out of my mouth.

He shakes his head. “No, I’m not a, a... killer. We’re together. I love you and you love me. We

have a family,” he tells me as he looks around the room, as he tries to wrap his head around everything. I move slightly and glance at the door behind me before quickly placing all of my attention back on him.

I don’t even realize I’m shaking my head, just slightly, from side to side.

“No, Ethan. We don’t have a family. *I* have a family, with Brian. I don’t love you,” I tell him, my voice calmer than I ever thought it could be.

“No,” he whispers. “I saw you. I saw you at our house. I saw you with our kids. I saw you come home from the hospital with my son and daughter.”

“Those aren’t your kids Ethan. They’re mine, and Brian’s.”

“DON’T YOU SAY HIS NAME,” he snaps, throwing off his demeanor of calm. I move back, on instinct, at the tone of his voice. My heart is racing as he leans into the table. “Don’t you fucking say his name around me, DO YOU HEAR ME?” He screams. “I love you. I want to be with you and raise our children together, but all you want to do is talk about that fucking ASSHOLE.”

“You loved me so much that you beat me on a daily basis? You loved me so much that you raped me? You loved me so much that you let others in on the fun? You love me? BULLSHIT!” I yell, anger pumping through me. “You love me so much that you locked me in the bathroom while my son sat in a corner crying his eyes out?”

“He wouldn’t be FUCKING QUIET,” he screams as he suddenly lunges forward, the lightweight restrains giving way to his anger. He crashes into me, sending both of us crashing to the cement floor. “You always loved him more, didn’t you?” He asks, his fingers held tightly around my neck.

He wants the old Justin, the Justin that he remembers. He wants me to stroke his ego and make him feel better. I won’t do that. “Yes, I did,” I say as I bring my knee up and hit him square in the crotch. He moans in pain as I roughly push him off of me. He knocks into the chair, the metal sending a loud noise throughout the room.

Brian’s POV...

I hear a loud crash and we all perk up, our ears trained on the room in front of us. Ethan moans and then there is the sound of another crash. “Open the door,” I yell and the doctor rushes forward, opening the door with an ease practiced many times over.

Justin is on the floor and Ethan is sprawled over the chair, his back on the floor and his legs tangled with the metal. “Justin, are you okay? What happened?” I ask. Justin doesn’t answer as he stares at Ethan. The orderlies pick him up and carry him out of the room. Justin doesn’t even look his way.

I knew this was a mistake, I knew it. I lean over and help him up off the floor. “Justin, what

happened?”

“Are you alright?” The doctor asks. “I’m very sorry. I know how important this was to you. If you’d like to come back, maybe after he’s been here a while longer and is more stable we’d be happy to....”

“No,” Justin says as he stares at the table where he and Ethan had been sitting only moments before. “I’m not coming back.” He pushes past the doctor, leaving no other words in his wake. I thank the doctor, shake his hand and follow Justin’s path out of the hospital.

“You walk fast,” I say to Justin as I reach the car. He is leaning against the passenger door, looking down at the ground and waiting for me to unlock the car. He stays silent as I open the door and we leave the hospital.

“I want to go home,” he says as he stares out the window. I look over at him as I maneuver the car through the dense traffic.

“I thought you wanted to stay for a few days,” I say as I make a right. He sighs and looks over at me, finally.

“I want to go home.” I nod my head and make my way toward the highway. I guess we’re leaving sooner than expected and the load on his shoulders looks just as heavy.

Justin’s POV...

“It was a waste of time. A fucking waste of time,” I say, breaking the silence that has been riding in the car with us for the past three hours. Brian doesn’t refute my claims. He doesn’t yell, ‘I told you so.’ He just slides his hand from the gear shift onto mine, linking our fingers together.

“I’m sorry,” he offers and it’s enough. It has to be. I bring our entwined hands to my chest and hold them close as I turn my gaze back to the window. It’s time to leave the past in the past.

It’s been months since we came back from New York and there is not a moment that goes by where Ethan is not in my thoughts. The thought of him has turned from one of anger to a sort of strange comfort.

“Daddy, hold this,” Sam screams as he comes running over, a baseball held tightly in his outstretched hands.

I take the ball and smile as he runs back out to the yard, Tyler following behind him on shaky legs. Mya is sitting in my lap as I watch them from my spot in the shade. “Hey,” Brian says as he walks out of the house.

“Hey,” I say as he lowers himself to the grass, pressing his lips to mine before sitting completely. Mya wobbles her way over to him and crawls into his lap. “They got so big so fast,” I say as I watch our two boys playing in the yard.

“Yeah,” Brian agrees as Mya pushes herself out of his lap and onto her feet. She balances herself and shakily makes her way across the yard and over to her brothers.

“I like this,” I say as I look up and down the street. “I like the quiet.” Brian nods, expecting me to go on, but I don’t. I move over and rest my head on his shoulder as we watch our kids play.

No cameras watching, no videos recording, no peeping.

It feels nice not to have to look over your shoulder. I sigh contently as I let my eyes close, the sounds of my kids playing drowning out my thoughts. “I think we should get a puppy,” I say out of the blue.”

“A puppy?” Brian asks looking at me. “As if we don’t have enough to take care of,” he says with a motion to the kids. I shrug.

“What’s one more thing?”

“A puppy, huh?”

“Yeah,” I say as I sit up and look at him. He sighs and runs a hand over his face.

“Fine, but I get to pick and I’m not cleaning up after it,” he tells me. I smile and kiss him deeply.

“Deal,” I tell him. I lean back into him and relax in the calm and the quiet. The kids are running around, relentlessly chasing a red ball.

I look up at Brian and for the first time in forever, Ethan... doesn’t exist.

The end