

The Pretty Boy in the Straight Jacket Chapter 3 : You're A Star, a glee fanfic

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Chapter 3

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Judy stared at her son. You give the boy some tea with honey and buttered toast and he's appeased for a lifetime; reading the paper with his father's vague expression on his face.

He sat as he did in a pew; with his knees pressed close together and his hands clasped between his thighs. Every now and then he would look up, rub his jaw, and shoot an esoteric look out the window.

"So who is she?" Judy asked, and plucked coyly at half a piece of blueberry scone; her nails looking like a baby bird's beak.

He turned to her with the deadpan countenance of a natural charmer, "Oh Mother—I don't even want to *ask* what you're on about *now*."

"She must be *something*," she kept a steady focus on his face, interrupting him, "To drive you to distractionlike this."

Quinn shrugged.

Judy squinted her eyes, very nearly affronted by his silence. She addressed him sharply: "You need to shave. Unless you're growing a beard now—are you growing a beard?—because that isn't a *real* beard, it's *stubble* —and it has no business on your face."

He spoke in dwindling, listless notes, "I'm *tired* this morning."

She scowled: the only thing worse than a boy in a grey flannel shirt was a boy with a precocious non-beard on his elfin baby-face (and a grey flannel shirt). "Well, you're going to give this young lover of yours stubble rash, just so you know."

Barely audibly, Quinn scoffed, and in a single abrupt move, slid his chair against the tile (noisily) and was up without a word.

"Are you heading out?—because you haven't excused yourself."

He shook his head, albeit emphatically, "Yes mom, I'm heading out."

"Well wear your scarf— it's *cold*, Quinn."

"That scarf is nothing but trouble, trust me."

Judy stood up then, trapping him in the smooth crooks of her arms (crossed at his midsection), "Well you can't walk around dressed like the nineties all day. It depresses me. It depresses your father—it's *why* he left early for work this morning."

"He had an early meeting."

"*Lies*," she tickled him expertly, holding him tighter as he started to fidget, "To spare you."

"*Mom—haha!—stop it!*"

She did—waiting until his hiccupping, hectic giggles subsided softly. Her arms stayed locked happily around him, "So you need new clothes—do you want to go to Saks? Does Lima have a Saks?"

"No," he scoffed, "Lame."

"Oh—so what's *cool* then, Quinn?" her blue eyes grew stupendously wide, "Enlighten your aging, decrepit mother—BUT SPEAK LOUDLY!"

"Will you stop?"

She slid a hand into his waist-band—shocking him significantly—and tucked his loose (slightly wrinkled) shirt tails in for him, "Will you shave?"

"Yes."

"And put on a sweater?"

"Whatever."

"A nice cardigan, maybe?"

He turned to her, seriously, "Don't push your luck, Ma."

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Once out of the house (in his pea coat now, for his mother's sake) he slid a rebel hand into his jeans; un-tucking his shirt. It fell just below the seam of his zipper, a little baggy for him.

He didn't feel much like going to school this morning—it was a Friday, and it was sure to rain. The paper had said so. It made the miserable act of 'going to school' seem drearier than it'd been yesterday (but just slightly more so).

He gripped his front pocket reflexively—coarse denim against the palm of his hand—caught himself, and laughed a little as he swung his car door open.

He slid in and twisted the key into the ignition immediately.

This past week he'd taken out and read the girl's note with frightening frequency—whenever he had a private moment—until he noticed it was starting to become worn from constantly being folded into his jeans' pocket (no matter how diligent the execution) and moved it, with forlorn resolve, into his dresser drawer.

He still reached for it—like some phantom limb, legs blown off at the thighs; whenever he needed to draw comfort from somewhere.

He sort of wished it were here right now—sometimes just a glance at the pastel pink paper and the curve of a few well-meant, thought-out words was enough.

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Boys and girls hung around in softly chattering groups of twos and threes while Quinn stood outside the bustle—the new boy. Newer than even the freshmen, who had last year just been everyone else's little brothers and sisters *anyway*.

He was careful to stand out of the range of conversation. He just wanted to observe—figure out the best way to go about being nondescript in these hallways.

It wasn't *too* hard. Mostly these kids were staring into phones or mirrors.

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His fingers twitched into a half-fist almost imperceptibly—some hulking mass was hovering quite suddenly over him.

"Hey man!"

A large palm struck him on the shoulder-blade like a pallid flash of lightning. It was sort of painful. He turned and immediately had to glance upwards, "Finn—what's up?"

Small, brown hands tugged at his bicep as forcefully as they could (they were quite pretty and delicate), from his opposite side. A nose buried itself into his shirt collar.

"Do you smell that, Finn?—that's cologne. It's much more subtle and pleasant than the 3.99 dollar 'deodorant sprays' you tend to favor. And as an aside—you should be aware by now that those things are in no way meant to *replace* deodorant, especially when a good ninety-five percent of your life is spent sweating over various *fields* and *courts*. Okay?"

It was a genuinely sweet voice in a sea of cracking, adolescent dissonance. Easy to listen to, Quinn noted with a smile (as the girl flittered several steps backwards to give him unnecessary space).

Finn hovered over them, confused. "Yeah Rach—totally. I'll do it tomorrow."

She nodded contentedly and pulled him down by a light blue flannel sleeve; granting him a cursory kiss, before letting go (and watching him swing comically upwards, back to his natural height). "I've got to go, I have AP Human Geography. Quinn has it too—and he'll be punctual, but just *barely*."

Finn nodded, "Yeah, Quinn's messed up like that."

He smiled lopsidedly at Quinn's soft snort, and watched Rachel march quickly away with her hands knotted at her sides.

He rolled his eyes, good-naturedly, and scratched at his nape, "Sorry man—she's *nuts*." Quinn shrugged.

Finn looked into a watch whose face was several times too small for the width of his wrist, "She's always 'at least seven minutes' early to class. In case of—I dunno—*something*."
"Yeah, I've noticed."

"And she's always *talking* about something—like, every memory I have of her is with her mouth open talking really fast and angry, or closed in this straight line that means she's waiting for me to say something. If I couldn't choose to stop listening, I'd probably choose to fall off a cliff. Like seriously?—if I tried to understand everything she said my brain would probably explode all over the place or something. So I always just sorta nod and say: 'Yeah Rach—totally, I'll do it tomorrow.' It usually works—except for the one time she asked me to buy her tampons. I probably should've listened then. I regretted it later."

Quinn shook his head. "She wants you to wear deodorant."

"What?"

"She just wants you to wear deodorant. Maybe some cologne too."

"Oh," Finn rubbed his jaw with the flat of his hand, "I can do that, yeah."

Two girls—arms intertwined like red and white DNA strands, walked easily past them.

"Finnessa. Quinnifer. Good morning. You two girls sure look cute in your matching flannel shirts. You'll be the prettiest dames in the Paul Bunyan appreciation parade by a *landslide*."

Quinn's jaw set—his mouth a firm, stern pout. An infamous brow quirked in Santana's direction, "What the *fuck* did you just call me?"

Santana rolled her eyes—regarding him coolly for perhaps a second before turning to saunter away, "Get your panties out of your ass, Quinnie. Not everybody can pull off a thong like I can."

Quinn's eyes swerved over the hallway self-consciously—nobody had been looking at them, really. "Fuck is her problem?"

"She just hates me—she," Finn blushed—automatically—as if the subject itself required it, "She was my first um—you know, *time*—and then I guess she sort of," his tone flowed seamlessly into a soft hush between the two of them, "Became—or, or figured out she was gay. And I guess I disgust her. Like I was that guy that...*turned* her. Like I was the last straw," his eyes turned earnestly to Quinn, as if trusting him to be the nice guy he'd hung around all week, "It feels kinda shitty."

Quinn's demeanor turned calm and kind, quite abruptly—his anger cut short by an immediate, objective understanding of everyone's circumstances. "Oh."

"Yeah," Finn shrugged, without much conviction, as if deciding suddenly that pretending not to care was the wiser thing to do, "Whatever, I guess."

Quinn reached a hand up—passed it through wild, blonde filaments so that his eyes were no longer curtained by them—and looked at Finn fully in the eyes, "I can assure you—this has nothing to do with you. Her being a jerk, I mean. I think you probably remind her of a time when she couldn't—you know—admit to herself who she was. And you sort of represent all of it for her—this period of time in her life when she tried to make herself like guys. And that's why looking at you upsets her. And it's why she fucks with you—and it's a little understandable too, even if it is an awful thing to do."

Finn nodded slowly, "So I'm *not* fat and like, repulsive?"

Quinn shook his head 'no' with astounding patience.

A lanky, 'Mr. Fantastic' sized arm (sharply scented with what was clearly an off-brand deodorant-spray) wrapped around Quinn's slender neck, "Dude—you are like a freaking *decoder ring* for the women in my life. How'd you get so smart?"

Quinn smirked wryly.

I've spent my entire life being mistaken for a woman and have subsequently gained an acute intuitiveness and appreciation for their subtle signals, which guys like you swat away at—as if they were gnats or mosquitoes threatening your personal space.

No, no—that wasn't it.

"Um—I was raised by a strong-willed woman."

A completely true—albeit irrelevant—statement.

"Oh—cool."

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Quinn slid into his seat (to Rachel's direct right) just barely on time.

"You're flirting with disaster, Quinn Fabray," Rachel spoke, in that piercing, pretty upper-register of hers.

"I'm reckless," he nodded, swiping a bead of sweat off his brow because he'd had to jog from Finn's locker, where the boys had stood shooting the shit a little; waiting for the warning bell.

He glanced at her fleetingly—long enough to notice and grow grateful over how splendidly straight she sat in her seat, the way in which she aligned her pen and pencil with her trapper-keeper, the way she clasped her hands together near the very edge of her desk, and what color headband she was wearing today—before turning back to the blackboard; eraser marks evident all over it. He aimed his blush at them.

"Quinn," she told him, "May I have your attention for a fraction of a second?"

He turned to her slowly, obliquely, "Sure."

"I began a correspondence with you at least a week ago and you've yet to send any sort of response. You should've at least penned a response to let me know that no response would be forthcoming."

He watched crimson indignation paint her cheeks cutely and smirked, "That doesn't seem a little redundant to you?"

She placed the flats of her hands on the desk, as if steeling herself—reigning in the rant he sensed she was on the verge of falling into, "Cordialities can *be* redundant, Quinn—it doesn't mean they're not the right thing to do."

He nodded, conscious of her seriousness and absolutely charmed by it. "I haven't responded only because I'm not sure how to respond, Rachel."

"Can I make a suggestion?"

He hummed in response.

She started: "Dear Miss Rachel Barbra Berry. In the first place I owe you my deepest apologies—a gentleman should never, ever make a lady fret over a letter. It was an absolutely despicable display on my part. I suppose the sort of boy who's always *just barely* on time for class is prone to tardiness in other, less demanding facets of his life. In any case, I've reviewed my options. On one hand, I can be another bland teenage shell—albeit a handsome one—harboring a sensitivity I'm too scared to let the world see. On the other hand, I can take your invaluable advice and become a part of something special—be *made* special by my participation in this one, wonderful thing. Oh Rachel! What a fool I've been. And what a *wise*, prudent, sensible, and—pardon my candidness—*beautiful*—"

He sighed at her—regarding her with immense lashes, and handsome, deadpan eyes.

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The bell rung without regard as to the outcome of the War of 1812.

Rachel always took a while to gather all her things—Quinn always struggled with the urge to wait for her and walk with her. He willed himself to sling his backpack over his shoulder. He had PE with Finn now—Finn his friend—Finn Rachel's boyfriend. These were things he inexplicably reminded himself of often.

He walked at the exact pace and tempo any individual on their way to a boys' locker room would—slow dread masked with apathy.

It was warm, dirty, and raucous—as per usual—when he arrived on the scene. Men handled being partly nude around each other awkwardly—Quinn often speculated that locker room

talk was a lot more about the need to establish heterosexuality in a forcibly homoerotic situation than it was about pussy and all that.

Finn turned to him, smiling wide, "I'm so fucking glad to be out of Algebra right now!"

"I have AP Calc after this. I must be a fucking madman." Quinn removed his coat carefully, folding it so it'd fit in his locker shelf. He slipped it in diligently.

Finn turned away when Quinn started plucking at his shirt's buttons, "Yeah, for real."

"Your girlfriend really wants me in that glee club thing." It was (objectively) pretty heterosexist of him to refer to Rachel that way constantly. But it was also absurdly necessary whenever one was referencing another guy's girlfriend—whilst in the high-school arena of life, at least. Quinn had learned that lesson the 'hard way.' "Is it really all that great?"

Finn shrugged, "Sometimes it feels like it's worth the hassle. And sometimes I want to kick a piano bench from here to next Sunday."

Quinn worked at his belt; rolling his jeans down over the soft swell of his packer. He was particularly efficient when he got to this part—he had his shorts on in a matter of seconds. "Do you think I should join?"

Finn regarded him with a bit lip. They needed a new member—and this guy could sing; could probably dance too. He could also either be insanely popular at this school or glee fodder for bullies. "Dude—if you want your life to become super complicated, then yeah. If you want to have *fun* and not have to worry every five seconds about standing up to something that's *always* going to be bigger than you—then I say join the baseball team. Party with Cheerios. Win the big game. Have like, a threesome or something." They burst into stupid laughter.

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Quinn watched the keys reflectively—touched them with reverent gentleness. When he pressed against them, they would respond with kindness. They'd sound coyly beautiful—as if whispering coquettish nothings in his ear.

"You play the piano," Rachel spoke—walking wide-eyed through the curtains— and it was immediately a fact. He acknowledged it with a slight bow of his head.

The notes stilled—left awkward silence in their wake.

"Is this where you spend lunch periods?"

He nodded.

She smiled, "Finn thought you must be making out with a Cheerio in a closet somewhere—but you never seemed like the sort to me," she sat beside him on the bench, "It's funny—because you *do* seem like the sort to spend your lunches in an empty auditorium. I used to too." Self-consciously, Quinn took his hands off the piano keys; and folded them onto his lap. "I'm not joining glee, Rachel."

She shrugged, "I figured."

"It's just—"

She shushed him by smoothing his pea-coat's lapel (it had become a little wrinkled in his locker). When it laid flat against his chest, she pressed a brass gold-star pin against it—piercing it without permission, until it was hooked onto the fabric. It gleamed at them both.

"What is that?" He watched it curiously; jaw slack as if Rachel had smacked his mouth.

"I made it for you—or well, I turned it into a pin for you," she twirled a finger into the wavy ends of her hair, albeit anxiously, "I—it was a button, on an old cardigan my parents had bought for me a very long time ago. The cardigan itself was ruined during my initiation into slushy bully tactics. I kept it because of sentimental reasons. And I'm giving it to you because of sentimental reasons."

Rachel rose then—with that calm, deliberate poise she could always pull off when the moment called for it. Quinn looked on as she left—her little ballet-style slip-ons had hardly reached the shadows the rafters made when he called out softly, "What reasons?"

She looked at him over her left shoulder, hair falling along the line of her jaw, "Trust me, Quinn—it takes one to know one. You're a star."