

End

by yoursweater

When Brian Kinney dies, he isn't thirty one years old.

He isn't young and beautiful anymore, and he is no longer the King of anything. He doesn't die by overdosing on sleeping pills with a pink fedora tight around his neck, splayed across his mattress of satins and silks with a smirk on his face – finally happy to be gone, gone after so many empty years of sticking around. He isn't anything, because he's everything he never thought he'd be.

Brian Kinney phoned a self-help line that was marketed to teenagers when he was twenty five years and three months old. He'd cried and he'd dug his nails into the skin of his left wrist, curled in the corner of his brand new loft's bathroom, and he'd been more scared than he ever had been in his entire life.

Scared because he was so sad – so fucking *sad* – even after getting everything he had ever wanted. Scared because when he was ten years old, he'd daydream about being richer than both his parents and his grandparents combined, and back then, he thought he'd be happy with a fat bank account to his name. He had been ten years old and more wrong than ever.

In the end, he'd hung the phone up, and never told a soul about it. He didn't tell Mikey or Linds, and back then, that'd been his everyone. What he had done was crawl to his knees with the phone still in one hand, and he'd forced himself to throw up the thirty sleeping pills he'd swallowed. He'd been hung over the toilet for the better part of that afternoon, too scared to sleep, too scared to answer his constantly ringing phone.

So Brian Kinney never committed suicide.

He'd tried too many times, just because he could. Every time, every single time that he'd do something, someone he knew would save him in the end. They always did. And when they caught on and started to time the months in-between the episodes, when they started showing up early to his impromptu performances, he'd stopped.

And the alcohol never killed him. The drugs never twisted his body into shards. He never picked up a trick that had a hidden gun in their pocket, and goddamnit, he'd had Cancer, but he beat that too.

But, like the everyone else he never wanted to be, one night he falls asleep.

One night he falls asleep, and the next morning, he just doesn't wake up. And he isn't sick – he hasn't even had a flu in twenty years. It's just time that's getting to him, time that's slowing his breath down, slowing it until he just doesn't breathe anymore.

It's Justin who finds him.

Rolls over to touch his shoulder, and feels the cold skin on the tips of his fingers. But he doesn't scream, and he doesn't really even cry. He doesn't do much of anything. Can't.

He does get out of bed, though. And he does pad over to the phone and pick it up, listens to the dial tone droning through the line until an operator starts to talk in his ear, giving him options and everything else that won't help right now. After the operator comes the beeping, the beeping to let him know the phone has been off the hook too long, and his chance is over.

After the beeping becomes one long programmed note, he takes the phone and walks across the bedroom, steps into the bathroom and closes the door behind him. He slides down the back of the door, he slides down the back until he's sitting on the floor in a crumpled old mess, and he cries.

He cries until he's puking, then crawls across the floor so he can grip at the toilet, phone in his right hand, fingers stiff and white and skeleton-like, like Brian's probably are – and Justin would know for sure, if had dared to touched them. Every time he thinks about Brian, Brian's body or Brian's hair or Brian's breathing, his stomach knots and tightens, knots and tightens until there's nothing left.

The first person he phones is his sister. But she's in London, somewhere she can't help him, even if she tried to. He phones Debbie next, but remembers her funeral all those years ago. Her number isn't in service anymore.

Then he phones Gus. He phones Gus because he doesn't know what else to do.

So he comes over, he comes over and he takes care of it. Steers Justin into the kitchen so he doesn't have to watch as the funeral home comes to get Brian's body, to collect it.

And Justin can't even say his goodbye because he's scared of so many things.

Scared he'll push each medic out of the way and hold Brian's hand until it's pink again, scared he won't let them take the body away at all – because that's all it is now, a body, not a real person, not Brian – he's scared his sick stomach will protest, and he'll throw up all over what remains of his life.

So that's how it is, and that's how it goes. Justin curls up in the corner of their kitchen, and he hides his body, pushes it back until it's between the end of a counter and the wall, where no one can see him. Where he can see no one else.

And he wonders, wonders if Brian is going to crawl out from under the kitchen table opposite him on his hands and knees with a wicked grin on his face, twenty eight (twenty nine!) *alright, twenty nine...* all over again. Justin wonders when Brian's going to choose to come out of hiding and whisper to him how it was all just a ploy, how he's really a secret CIA agent – a double agent – and they both need to run, to run away right now.

Justin stares hard at the table, but all he can see are chairs, and Brian's suit jacket thrown over the back of one. That's when he closes his eyes and presses his head against the side of the counter. Tries not to think about funerals and coffins, and how all of his and Brian's relatives will tell him how sorry they really are, a scene fifty years in the making finally executed in their very own

neighborhood.

He presses his hands against his forehead, and he cries.