### South of the Border

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### South of the Border

by **gallavichfanfic**

**Summary**

Chronicles the series of events leading up to and following the reunion of Mickey Milkovich and Ian Gallagher after their painful goodbye at the Mexican border. Can they be happy again, despite Mickey's fugitive status and Ian's fragile mental state? Is love enough to get them through all of the bullshit that will undoubtedly come their way? Follow their magical relationship through all of its twists and turns as it struggles to stay alive and free.

**Notes**
There is a sequel to this work, called "The Milkoviches." Please let me know what you think!

I would like to thank ElleGum (a.k.a. liza1510) for her tremendous dedication and hard work in completing the translation of South of the Border to Russian! She has plans to translate my other works as well! Kudos to you!

Link to Russian site:
https://ficbook.net/readfic/6798289

Great YouTube channel for people like us, FYI:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqzVvg5qxJfF4uzuTKDC3Pg

Check it out! You won't be disappointed!!

See the end of the work for more notes.
Mexico Mick

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Mexico was an adjustment for Mickey, but in the six months since that fateful day at the border crossing, he had worked hard to reinvent himself, to move on and build a life. He had avoided getting caught up in all of the chaos and violence of the border towns—too risky—and managed to settle in the small village of Boca del Rio. There he set about building as legitimate a business as possible...for a Milkovich. He needed to go semi-legit since he couldn’t afford any negative publicity or entanglements with the law that might expose his true identity. Since an American with a little money and some street smarts can really flourish in Mexico, Mickey was a shoe-in for business ownership. Mickey had encountered little to no resistance as he made his way deeper into Mexico, other than his recurring thoughts of his goodbye with Ian at the border, which tugged relentlessly at his heart-strings, despite his earnest efforts to erase the whole heartbreaking event from his mind. It had taken nearly all of his strength of will just to continue across the border after tearing his lips away from Ian’s, the salty taste of Ian, mixed with his own tears lingering for what felt like an eternity. Sometimes when he closed his eyes at night, Mickey relived the entire experience—the sweet aroma of Ian’s essence, the softness of his lips, the solid feel of his chiseled physique under his trembling hands, the profound sadness in Ian's eyes as he ripped himself away, the searing pain that tore through Mickey, from his gut, straight up through his heart, and the anguish of realizing that he would never see, hear, or feel Ian again. This was what kept him up at night.

Mickey worked diligently, despite his bouts of insomnia and melancholy. His business took some time to build, but compared with the typical economics of a new business, he enjoyed a rapid ascent, turning a profit within the first six months, “Ojos Azules” becoming a well-known brand in the surfing community of Boca del Rio, which was comprised mainly of surfer tourists and ex-patriots who had relocated to the area specifically for the waves and the laid-back atmosphere. Mickey’s idea for the business was born out of his first trip to the beach, an excursion he had always envisioned with Ian. Nonetheless, he didn’t let Ian’s absence keep him from his sandals and tequila on the beach. Instead, he went with a thirty-something Mexican man, Manuel, whom he had met in a Cantina outside Mexico City, where Mickey had stopped for dinner and a drink.

Manuel had just come from work in a Mexico City factory, the dirt that adorned his gray uniform and coated his coal black hair and face not detracting from his overall charm. Manuel had a bright smile that lit any room he entered, and the body of a surfer, which was not immediately evident upon their meeting since his uniform covered much too much of him. He sat down at the bar next to Mickey, who was choking down the first meal he’d been able to manage since leaving Ian. After a few drinks, Mickey was receptive to conversation and Manuel was eager to learn about this mysterious young American man with the saddest, but most beautiful blue eyes he had ever seen.

Although Manuel worked in Mexico City, he lived closer to the beach and had picked up a good bit of English over the years as a result. He had frequent interactions with American tourists and had become somewhat of a friendly ‘guide for a fee’ when he wasn’t busy working at the factory. Factory work was steady, but the pay was poor and required supplementation. In addition, there had been recent rumors that the boss might be ‘retiring’.

The conversation between the two men began simply, with Manuel buying Mickey a drink and saying hello. He explained that he didn’t normally look as he did, but that he had just come from work, which was a pretty dirty place. As the drinks flowed, the subject turned to what brought Mickey to Mexico. Of course, Mickey wasn’t going to give his whole sordid history on a first day
meeting, so he just kept it short—he was in Mexico to pursue business opportunities, a venture capitalist of sorts.

Over time, the two began spending more time together, discussing possible business ventures, one of which involved capitalizing on surf tourism. Since Manuel already had some connections by this time, and his boss was actively attempting to sell off his factory, the idea of surfboard manufacturing was born. Of course, this enterprise would require some real money, more than Mickey had remaining of what Ian had left for him in the car at the border. Mickey hated using that money because all he could think about when he did was the fact that it was all Ian had, and that he had given it to Mickey, rather than keeping it and coming with him to Mexico as they had planned. He was haunted by this, reliving the heartbreaking scene nightly in his dreams, awaking with tear-stained cheeks and a sour lump in his throat. To spend all of that money, even on a worthy opportunity, meant losing his last remnant of Ian and their time together. Mickey decided to set some of Ian’s money aside, using only the bare minimum to attract more customers for Manuel’s tour-guide business, the proceeds from which they planned to ultimately finance the purchase of the factory and other start-up costs.

Manuel was a natural. His shiny black hair, deep brown, beckoning eyes and smooth English talk, peppered with his authentic Mexican accent, attracted customers from all walks of life: male, female, young, old—anyone! Manuel turned on the charm and Mickey handled the business end, negotiating prices, package deals and the occasional unpublicized extras. It wasn’t long before these “extras” became the mainstay of their business, providing the bankroll needed to purchase the factory and begin the manufacture of surf boards. Extras entailed anything outside the realm of tourism, but were predominantly reverse coyote maneuvers, orchestrated by a wealthy customer from the States with underworld connections. Mickey did the preliminary negotiations, but left the logistics to Manuel, who clearly knew the ins and outs at the border crossings, having been a lifelong resident of Mexico with relatives who had crossed into the US illegally. He was not, however, too keen on getting involved in reverse coyote transactions, as he felt it was too dangerous, particularly because of the types of people they might be helping—criminals fleeing the United States.

By this time, Mickey felt comfortable enough with Manuel to let him in on one of his biggest secrets, that he was an escaped convict from the U.S. Much to Mickey’s surprise, Manuel had assumed as much, based on the type of business expertise that Mickey had, and his obvious avoidance of any police presence at all costs. With that monkey off Mickey’s back, he felt free to divulge the details of his plan to staff their surfboard factory with Americans that they helped to successfully cross the border into Mexico. It would cut costs, allowing the pair to purchase the factory outright, which left banks, mortgage companies and inspectors out of the scenario as well. These American fugitives and their connections were key to keeping the reverse coyote business alive, also allowing Mickey and Manuel to operate it from a distance over time.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you are gearing up for a Shameless tale. Remarks welcome!
Mickey and Manuel enjoyed a good business relationship that occasionally extended into the bedroom. It was a ‘no strings’ arrangement that worked for both of them, since Manuel was a man-whore who bedded more tourists than Frank Gallagher drank beers, and Mickey was Ian’s emotional hostage, an eternal slave to the memory of their intense, impassioned love. During one night of drunken debauchery, Mickey had breathed Ian’s name repeatedly into Manuel’s ear, after which Mickey’s secretly desperate longing for Ian was no longer something that could be kept from Manuel.

Mickey broke down as his alcohol-laden tongue spewed details of his relationship with Ian and their undying love. Even Manuel was hard-pressed to maintain his composure after hearing the heart-wrenching tale, described with such intensity and angst. It was that night that Mickey officially got the nickname ‘Ojos Azules’ (blue eyes, in English) because of how beautiful his eyes were that night, shimmering in the moonlight as they drowned in their own tears. Manuel could have seriously fallen for Mickey, despite his own slutty tendencies and penchant for exotic women, but Mickey was clearly emotionally unavailable, so he took what he could get, and clung to his playboy lifestyle for comfort. So this was to be the extent of their romantic involvement.

As the surfboard business took off and the border business continued to prosper, Mickey’s life fell into a more predictable routine, and he began to have a bit of down-time during his days, which he often used for catching up with current events in the U.S., more specifically his hometown of Chicago. He started reading the online version of the Chicago Sun Times just about every day, to learn about the latest in the gentrification of the Southside, any new political leaders who were making a name for themselves, and any familiar names on the police blotter. It made him feel at least a tiny bit connected to his past, his family, his home, and, if he was honest, Ian. He knew that Ian was somewhere in Chicago, doing his EMT thing, and this newspaper somehow brought him just a little bit closer. One morning the front-page headline read, ‘Man Falls From Bridge Into Lake Michigan!’ ‘Crazy Bastard!’ Mickey muttered to himself as he began to read the article. After the first line, the coffee cup in his hand fell to the floor and shattered. His hands started to shake and he could feel the stinging pressure of tears building up in his eyes. He rubbed his eyes with the palms of his hands, half to wipe his eyes, half to be sure he had read correctly. The man who had been pulled from Lake Michigan was Ian! An icy chill shot down his spine, and his stomach started to churn. He skipped to the end of the article to read that Ian was taken to Chicago Memorial Hospital, then went back and read the details.

Man Falls From Bridge Into Lake Michigan

Ian Gallagher, 22, of Southside, Chicago was pulled from Lake Michigan last evening after what police and eyewitnesses have described as an unfortunate accident. The man was seen exiting a vehicle on the bridge, followed by a second man from the same vehicle. A police officer, directing traffic nearby, responded to the situation as Gallagher neared the edge of the bridge. Chicago Metro Police Officer, Tony Markovich, was able to successfully handcuff the agitated man to the bridge, in an effort to prevent a fall or other injury. Attempting to flee, Gallagher was able to slip his right wrist from the handcuff, causing him to lose his footing on the bridge’s edge and plummet into Lake Michigan. An aqua rescue team was dispatched to find him. He was retrieved from the lake nearly an hour later, unresponsive, his lungs filled with water. Gallagher was then rushed to Chicago Memorial Hospital. No information on his condition is being released at this time.

Mickey wasted no time finding a drop phone to make a call to Chicago Memorial Hospital. He inquired about Ian’s condition, but was told that HIPPA Privacy Laws prevented them from sharing
any details on the condition of a patient, without their consent. He asked whether they could just ask Ian to give permission, but they told him that would be impossible. Mickey was upset after first reading Ian’s name, but now he was absolutely distraught. When Manuel arrived for a pre-planned meeting to discuss some business pertaining to the factory, he was greeted by a Mickey, the likes of which he had only seen once before since he met him, the night Mickey told him all about Ian.

Mickey paced the floor like a caged animal, muttering under his breath, “Don’t fucking tell me what’s impossible!” and taking swings at the air, finally putting his right fist through the wall, near his front door. He continued to unravel, ranting and raving about fucking hospitals and their stupid rules. Manuel set about trying to calm Mickey down before he completely tore his house apart. He poured him a drink and used it to lure him to the couch, where Mickey finally sat down. “What the hell is the matter with you?” Manuel asked. Mickey shoved his phone in Manuel’s face, the front page of the Chicago Sun Times still open on the screen. As Manuel finished reading, Mickey was finally settled enough to speak, shouting, “And the fucking hospital won’t even tell me anything about him!”

Manuel interrupted, “Calm yourself and we will work out a plan. Is there anyone in Chicago that you trust enough to call and ask them to go to the hospital for you?” “Maybe my sister,” Mickey sighed. Obviously, they weren’t going to be having a meeting, so Manuel put away the paperwork he had brought with him, mixed himself a drink and sat on the couch next to Mickey. He wasn’t about to leave his business partner and friend in this condition. He quietly suggested that Mickey call Mandy right away so he could get this matter resolved, and hopefully, get some good news. It was killing Mickey not to know what was up with Ian, but he was not fully convinced that he should contact Mandy. What if the cops were still surveilling her? Tapping her phone? He definitely didn’t want to put her or anyone else in his family in the hot seat with the cops for his own purposes. He had cut all lines of communication with everyone from his old life in the US, to protect them from any negative consequences associated with his escape.
All was dark. Everything black.

Feeling as though he were waking deep underwater, Ian slowly opened his eyes and tried to get them to focus. His vision was blurred, and all he could make out was the stark brightness of the room in which he found himself. His first real impression was that he had broken the surface of the ocean, only to find himself being suffocated by a giant white cloud.

A minute passed — perhaps more, maybe less — before he realized that, through the muffled ringing in his ears, he could hear the murmur of hushed voices, coming as though from far in the distance. Indistinct and unrecognizable, these voices were punctuated only by the intermittent whirring and beeping of machines. Another moment passed, but as his sense of awareness slowly improved, he began to feel a numbness in his right arm, followed by a throbbing pain in his left leg — dull at first, but quickly intensifying.

He strained his eyes again, trying desperately to get a clearer picture of his surroundings, but it was no use. Maybe if he could call out and ask where he was, someone would answer? He formed the words in his mind, but could give them no voice. Instead, he found himself gagging on something rough and plastic, which he only noticed now as he struggled to swallow. A knot of panic began to form in the pit of Ian’s stomach and quickly threatened to consume him. He began to writhe in what he realized must be a small bed; the hauntingly familiar feel of linen restraints pulled oppressively at his wrists and ankles, denying him the greater degree of movement he was reflexively craving.

Just then, a low male voice, much clearer than those he had heard before, interrupted his struggle. “Mr. Gallagher, please don’t try to move or speak. My name is Dr. McKay. You are in Chicago Memorial Hospital. We have you intubated and a ventilator has been helping you to breathe. Please blink twice if you understand.”

Still unable to focus entirely on the face he could now sense was hovering just over him, Ian slowly, and with much greater difficulty than he would have thought possible, lowered and raised his eyelids once, twice.

With the first mystery of where he was now solved, Ian was faced with the greater question of how he came to be in a hospital, on a ventilator, and in significant pain. He was alive and appeared to be safe, but for some reason, this did not provide him with any sense of relief. The knot of panic which had formed in his stomach had loosened for now, only to be replaced by a horribly raw and growing aching in his chest.

With his sight steadily improving, Ian watched as the middle-aged doctor, who first spoke to him, began moving about the room, checking his vitals on the nearby machines and making notes on his metal clipboard. Though everything around him seemed to be moving in slow motion, inside, Ian’s mind began to race with newfound clarity. Why am I in the hospital? How did I get here? Where is my family? Where’s Mic—

Suddenly a torrent of clamoring voices descended upon his wing of the ICU. “Ian!” a chorus of Gallaghers shouted in excitement and relief. In an instant, Ian found himself being bombarded with kisses, affectionate pats, and attempted hugs from each of his five siblings. The bed’s restraints and all of the equipment in the room made any real, prolonged contact difficult, but that hardly stopped his brothers and sisters from impatiently jostling one another in an attempt to get in as close to his side as possible.
Amidst the sudden chaos, Ian could feel a greater sense of calm begin to wash over him. He wasn’t alone. Looking up at the smiling faces of his family, but still unable to speak, Ian willed for someone – anyone – to tell him what had happened to land him here. But before anyone could even begin talking, the doctor reappeared with a team of nurses in tow to usher his family back out into the hallway; they had come to extubate him and needed the room.

While two of the remaining nurses bustled about readying the equipment, Dr. McKay explained to Ian that his vitals had stabilized and, since he had now regained consciousness, they were eager for him to try breathing on his own. Ian nodded his understanding. Although the ankle and wrist restraints he could still feel pressing against his skin hardly made this necessary, Ian resolved to endure the extubating procedure with a soldierly bearing. He knew the quicker this tube was out, the sooner he might begin to get some answers.

As the medical team began the process of removing the tubes and wires that had connected his body to the life support machines, Ian closed his eyes and, in the darkness of his mind, desperately tried to recall the events leading up to his hospitalization.

Certain things came back easily enough. The memory of leaving Mickey at the Mexican border was the first to resurface. The dry heat of the desert, the cool touch of Mickey’s hand on his cheek, the bittersweet taste of his lips... ‘Stop!’ Ian chided himself. That was months ago. He couldn’t let himself be completely consumed again by the pain of that parting just now. Struggling to ignore the sharp sting of tears welling up behind his closed eyes, he pushed his emotions down and his thoughts forward.

Ian remembered standing at the side of the road with baited breath as Mickey pulled up to the border crossing, and then watching with tears in his eyes as the love of his life drove on into Mexico and out of his life. He had continued to stand there numb and rooted to the spot, long after the taillights on that stolen green station wagon had faded from view, but eventually he had summoned the will to go in search of a bus station, using the last $50 he had to his name to buy a one-way ticket back home. It was during this agonizing ride back to Chicago that he had also received the news of Monica’s death. Despite the complicated relationship he had with her, Ian was immediately consumed by guilt because he had missed his last opportunity to go out with his mother. Instead, he had sent Trevor and then taken off for Mexico with Mickey, never to see his mother alive again. Sitting listlessly with his head pressed against the window of that Greyhound bus, Ian had come to the painful realization that, in a single day, he had effectively lost the only two people in the whole world who he felt had ever really understood him at all.

It was then easy to recall just how difficult it had been trying to return to his regular routine after his all-too-brief reunion with Mickey and his mother’s funeral shortly thereafter.

For the three days he had been caught up in Mickey’s intoxicating whirlwind, he had been riding such a high that all thought of the medication that kept his moods so delicately balanced had been forgotten. When he came crashing back down to reality, he tried to get back on his prescribed regime, but in hindsight, he knew that it had already been too late; he found himself trapped by his regrets and grief in a dark abyss without end. For days, he had been unable to pull himself out of bed. He had no need of food, no desire to return to the job he had once loved, no wish to see or to talk to anyone. As he systematically closed himself off from the rest of the world, he recognized all the signs of a major depressive episode playing out, even if he could do nothing to stop it. He had, after all, been here before; but where last time there had always been that small, steady light to help guide him, now there was just him, alone in the abyss, groping blindly in the dark.
Mickey. He couldn’t help himself. As the doctor and nurses continued their work, Ian’s thoughts kept returning to Mickey. In those days following Monica’s funeral, it had been the same. When he lay in bed awake, his brief time with Mickey replayed in his mind on a continuous loop. Like re-watching a favorite movie he already knew by heart, Ian could recount every word the two had exchanged, every look that had been stolen, every touch they had shared.

When he slept, it was worse. Each and every night, he had the same recurring dream: he and Mickey, together, on the beach. Little details might change – they could be simply sitting together with their feet in the water, sipping margaritas; sometimes Ian was laughing out in the waves, trying to entice Mickey to join him; other times he might be rubbing suntan lotion all over Mickey’s beautifully pale skin, using his fingers to trace lines between the freckles on his back… But the end result was always the same. Ian would wake up alone, the smell of the ocean and the memory of Mickey’s familiar scent seeming to linger in his nostrils, taunting him, rebuking him for what he had done at the border, and bringing him to tears before he could even peel open his eyes.

Thinking back, Ian still wasn’t sure how she had done it, but eventually Fiona had been able to convince one of the doctors from the free clinic to make a house call to help straighten out his meds, so that, little by little, he was able to reenter the world, if only at the most rudimentary level. He returned to work, but trudged through his EMS shifts without any real satisfaction; more often than not, he came home from an 8 or 12 hour shift without any distinct recollection of the events of the day. It had felt as though his flame had been forcibly relit but was now suffocating without enough oxygen.

As days turned to weeks, and weeks turned to months, Ian remembered not being able to shake the feeling that he was simply going through the motions on auto-pilot; he was a worker bee, laboring through life without any real purpose, direction, or enjoyment. He seldom went anywhere besides work, and when he did, he almost immediately wished he was somewhere else. After Carl returned to the military academy, he stopped going for runs and completely lost interest in staying fit. He once tried checking out a new club that had recently opened downtown, but felt sick to his stomach almost as soon as he had walked out onto the dance floor. He even stopped making regular visits to check up on Yevgeny, whose wide, innocent, blue eyes had always made Ian feel just a little bit closer to his father. Despite everything, Ian had needed this during the year Mickey had been locked up, but now those same baby blue eyes only caused a dull, beating ache in Ian’s chest, a reminder of everything he had chosen – again – to give up.
Ian gripped the coarse sheets beneath his fingers as he felt the doctor finally getting ready to remove the large tube from his throat, and continued to force his mind to recall its most recent memories. He remembered that when his meds went missing one day back in February, after a particularly long and tiring double shift, he had impulsively made the decision not to get his prescription refilled. At the time, he had simply been too exhausted by the monotony of his life to really care what happened next. But as it turned out, everything seemed to get better! Within a few days, he felt more alive than he had in months. He had almost limitless energy, and his mind was once again abuzz with new ideas and interests. He hardly noticed that he had virtually stopped sleeping, but why did that matter anyway, if it meant avoiding the recurring dreams of Mickey that had made waking up such a nightmare?

Life became a blur of activity that easily allowed him to repress the past. On his partner, Sue’s recommendation, he started taking several of the prerequisite courses he would need in order to eventually become a paramedic, and on the nights when he didn’t have class, he made his way down to his old stomping grounds in Boys Town, where he never had any trouble making a new friend to distract him for the night. It was really only for those few minutes in the early morning, after he’d made a quick exit from whatever strange bed he happened to find himself in, that his mind might yet try to betray him. Sitting alone on the still near empty train as it rumbled into the Southside, the bright morning sun breaking over familiar houses and streets as they rolled past, Ian would often unintentionally call to mind some moment he had once shared there with Mick; the baseball diamond where they had played little league together as kids, the shortcut he would take under the tracks to get to Mickey’s house, their spot under the bleachers behind the high school, where they knew to find one another…

But these moments were brief, and the hurt they caused, only fleeting. For the most part, Ian felt too buzzed to ever consider going back to the heavily medicated, drone-like existence he had been living the past few months, and the pain and regret that had kept him trapped in a dark abyss before that, now seemed like nothing more than a distant memory. He recalled even beginning to think that the whole bipolar nonsense had just been a misdiagnosis!

At this point, however, his memory started to fail him. Try as he might, he could not remember anything that would help to explain his waking up strapped to a bed and on life-support in the ICU at Chicago Memorial. The last thing he really remembered was leaving a trashy Westside club he usually liked to frequent on Thursday nights, so that he could get a few hours of sleep in his own bed before his regular 6 AM shift the next morning. He couldn’t call to mind the face of the beautifully-toned stranger he remembered having to tear himself away from in the alley behind the club, though this was hardly anything new. More concerning was that he couldn’t really remember getting on the train, or whether or not he had actually made it home to bed. Had he gotten into some sort of accident on the way?
So how did he go from being on top of the world, to being in the ICU at Chicago Memorial? He was about to ask. The doctor had just removed the last bit of machinery and told him to try to sip some water. Once Ian could swallow, he could attempt to speak, although the doctor warned that he might be hoarse for a bit following the extubation. The obtrusive din of the Gallagher clan was easily audible as they once again approached Ian’s room. The nurses had retrieved them the moment the extubation was done, and they were chomping at the bit to see their brother. Ian had barely sipped his first taste of water when his siblings once again descended upon him, overwhelming him with their affection, laced with that characteristic Gallagher sarcasm. From what he heard amid the hubbub, he had been rescued from Lake Michigan after falling from a bridge! Holy shit! What the hell was he doing near the edge of a bridge in the first place and, more importantly, why couldn’t he remember anything about it?

“What happened to me?” he whispered hoarsely, after most of the Gallagher excitement had died down. Lip’s first instinct was to make a smart-assed comment, but after seeing the look of terror in Ian’s eyes, he decided against it. “Well,” Fiona began thoughtfully, “You came out of your room after everyone was asleep, screaming that border patrol had taken Mickey. You had everyone up out of bed, even Frank, who was in a drunken stupor on the living room floor. No one could calm or console you; you were completely irrational and incoherent.” Lip then interjected, “I was somehow able to get you into the car, and we headed to the Cook County Psych Ward, where we hoped the doctors would be able to calm you down and help you adjust your meds.” Ian’s memory of the event was coming back in intermittent flashes. He now remembered feeling trapped in the car, dizzy and nauseous. He was reliving the physical discomfort of the ordeal, a feeling of suffocation rolling over him like thick, heavy sludge. He now understood, much to his displeasure, that he must have been experiencing delusions, incident to a manic episode. After all, how could Ian possibly know what was happening to Mickey in Mexico when he was himself in Chicago? And yet, his fears and the whole scenario seemed real at the time.

Each Gallagher shared a detailed account of what happened, complete with their role in the fiasco that led to Ian’s current condition. Ian had abruptly leapt out of Fiona’s SUV as it was inching slowly across the bridge behind a line of cars, bound for the Cook County Psych Ward. He then made his way to the side of the bridge, shouting nonsensically, which attracted the attention of a police officer, who was directing traffic in a construction zone near the far end of the bridge. As Ian began to climb over the side of the bridge, trying to escape his family, the officer, who turned out to be Tony, from the neighborhood, closed in on him and managed to handcuff him to the bridge in one felled swoop. Traffic was now at a complete standstill, onlookers rubbernecking from their cars. Lip had exited the car shortly after Ian, following him as best he could. While both Lip and the officer tried to calm a frantic, inconsolable Ian, Ian himself was busy yanking against the handcuffs in an attempt to free himself. Ian continued to shout expletives and other random phrases, all the while wriggling his captive wrist and hand. Suddenly, his hand slipped through the handcuff, sending him plummeting into Lake Michigan, after which an aqua rescue team was called out to find him. He was retrieved from the lake nearly an hour later, unresponsive, his lungs filled with water.

By the time they all finished, Ian was completely tapped out, too exhausted to even think. Finally realizing their brother needed some rest, the Gallaghers left quietly so as not to disturb him, since his eyes had been closing frequently and for longer stretches of time over the course of their visit. Just after the room cleared and Ian began to drift off, his main nurse and an orderly entered, the nurse explaining that, since he was stable now, he was being moved to a regular hospital room. “Great,” Ian mumbled absently. This awakening brought with it a flood of anxious thoughts. How long would he take to heal? What would happen with his EMS position? Would he be able to retake the
paramedic course he had started, but was now missing? Where would he go to live? He shook his head from side to side in an attempt to erase his worries, like an etch-a-sketch. As the orderly trundled Ian down the hall and into the elevator, he noticed for the first time that he could move his right arm, despite the numbness he felt. His left leg, immobilized by an air splint, still throbbed, but he took comfort in the fact that he could feel pain in it.
Protective Measures

At long last, Mickey and Manuel decided that Manuel would call Mandy from one of his drop phones, ask her to call him back on another from a public land-line, and only then would she know the call was actually from Mickey.

The plan worked. Mandy was devastated to hear about Ian, and left Indiana immediately, heading for Chicago Memorial. Within hours, Mandy called back from the hospital to break it to Mickey that she was unable to talk with Ian because he was unconscious and on life-support. Mickey completely lost his shit! He hung up on Mandy, pulled a decorative surfboard off his wall, and started swinging it around the room, smashing everything in its path. This time Manuel had to physically restrain Mickey, for his own protection. Manuel was much taller than Mickey, about Ian’s height, but bulkier. He held Mickey down, while Mickey fought with everything he had to get free, swearing and sobbing intermittently.

Finally, Mickey was so exhausted, he just stopped. He made Manuel promise to create a passport for him with an identity that would allow him to fly into O’Hare International in Chicago. Manuel agreed, just to calm him down and shut him up. There was no way in hell he wanted Mickey risking his freedom and their business by returning to the US, especially Chicago, where law enforcement knew he was most likely to return. Manuel stayed with Mickey for the rest of the evening, making sure he was safely in bed, before heading home himself. Once he got into his car, Manuel called Mandy again. He asked her to call him on this number with any news on Ian and encouraged her to visit the hospital regularly to be sure Ian was still alive.
Setting the Trap

It was only a few days after their last communication that Mandy called Manuel to say that Ian was awake! She had actually talked to him, since he was no longer in the ICU and could receive phone calls. She shared the consequences that this incident had for Ian, from his injuries to his job loss, to him basically being broke and homeless. Manuel and Mandy talked for over an hour, Manuel sharing with Mandy the details of Mickey’s life in Mexico, including the fact that, despite his success, he could not get Ian out of his head and missed him terribly. They discussed their concern for both Ian and Mickey, agreeing that they needed each other. Manuel told Mandy that Mickey was planning to return to Chicago to see Ian, but that he felt this was far too risky. By the end of their conversation, they had concocted an elaborate plan for reuniting the couple in Mexico.

They decided it would be best if Ian didn’t know he was going to see Mickey because, even though there was nothing he wanted more in the world, he might not agree to go if he didn’t know ahead of time that Mickey wanted him there. Mandy would have to tell Ian that she had a lucrative job in Mexico, and that she was even able to take a friend. She would be responsible for convincing Ian to go, under these false pretenses, but Manuel would handle the rest. It was very important that Mandy not have any contact with Mickey before their arrival because, if Mickey caught wind of what was about to go down, he would be furious. He would never sanction Mandy and Ian’s travel into Mexico, for fear that they would somehow be implicated as accessories to his escape.

Everything was set. Mandy took a few days to spin her tale and draw Ian in. She actually had a pretty easy time, since everything in Ian’s life had gone to hell in a handbasket and he basically had nothing left to lose. Manuel had the more challenging task of stalling Mickey’s scheduled departure until the day Mandy and Ian would be flying in. He manufactured a story about having trouble getting a Social Security Number that Mickey could use for his passport. Mickey was really pissed off over the whole thing and didn’t mind telling Manuel so. He was practically homicidal, fearing that he would not make it in time to see Ian. He couldn’t eat, couldn’t sleep, couldn’t even get a hard-on. All he could do was worry.
Ian’s new room was in the latest addition to the hospital, its walls brightly painted and adorned with framed photographs of Chicago, all of its equipment, state-of-the-art, including a bed that made the one in the ICU feel like a concrete slab. At long last, Ian’s weary body again began to acquiesce to sleep, when he was jolted awake once again, this time by a ringing telephone. In his exhausted condition, he first opted to ignore the call, in favor of returning to sleep. The phone just rang and rang, until Ian surrendered himself to the idea of maneuvering into a position to answer it. As he turned in his bed, looking for the phone, he read the caller ID: M Milkovich. ‘Mickey!’ Ian’s brain screamed, shockwaves reverberating through his skull. His tingling right arm flailed wildly in a desperate attempt to grasp the receiver and bring it to his ear. “Hel-Hello?” Ian panted breathlessly, once he finally rested the receiver against his ear. A dial tone. He was too late! He couldn’t believe Mickey was actually trying to reach him, after all this time. And how did he know where he was anyway? Since his fancy room afforded him a phone with caller ID, he was able, with great difficulty, to dial the number back.

His heart raced. Boy, was he glad he was no longer on a heart monitor! His palms were moist with sweat and his throat was dry. One ring, two rings, three rings, then finally, a voice. “Hello, Ian?” It was Mandy! Not Mickey! Ian felt lightheaded and a little woozy. “Mandy, hi,” Ian whispered softly, a simultaneous feeling of disappointment and relief washing over him. “Ian! Finally, you are awake and you have a phone! How are you? I want to come and visit! What the hell happened? I came to visit you in the ICU, but you were unconscious and they wouldn’t tell me anything! I’ll be in Chicago again on business this weekend. Can I come to see you then?” Mandy stopped briefly, coming up for air, giving Ian the opportunity to finally speak. “I...I thought you were Mickey,” Ian spoke a bit more loudly, but still with great hoarseness. “Sorry to disappoint you!” Mandy quipped, showing off her patented brand of smart-assed sarcasm.

Ian settled into the familiarity of Mandy’s friendship, slowly answering all of her questions and listening to the latest news in her life. She was still doing well as an escort, living in Indiana. She hadn’t been romantically involved with anyone since Kenyatta, and she confided in Ian that she still hadn’t met anyone as special as Lip. She was financially secure, and was enjoying some opportunities to travel, treating herself to some of the finer things in life. As Ian and Mandy talked, all his exhaustion and anxiety seemed to melt away. Mandy really was a great friend, and Ian missed her. They ended their conversation with a plan for Mandy to visit Ian on Friday afternoon, before her weekend engagement in Chicago began.
Friday morning was a blur! News had come that Ian would be released later that day, so he set about attempting to organize his affairs the best he could. He contacted his employer to make them aware of his condition and how it might temporarily impact his ability to work. Apparently, they already knew. In the course of the conversation with his supervisor, he found out that it was protocol for his EMT license to be under suspension for one year, pending a satisfactory psych eval. In his case, this incident would also impact his ability to return to the Chicago EMS Service, even after the year, because this most recent event was strike three for Ian. Since the start of his employment, Ian had been written up for lying on his application, removing the restraints from the young woman, who ended up jumping out of the moving ambulance, and now, jumping out of a moving car and off a bridge into the lake. To make matters worse, Fiona, expecting Ian to be getting his own place as he had planned, had sold the Gallagher house in order to use the proceeds to buy another property. With all of the Gallagher siblings moving on in different directions with their own lives, and since they all wanted to get rid of Frank, once and for all, selling made sense and the closing was set for this coming Saturday, the day after Ian had just been scheduled to leave the hospital.

Ian wracked his brain, trying to think of where he could go. He knew that sleeping on the couch at Fiona’s apartment or bunking with Liam was an option, but he wasn’t too excited about that prospect. For one thing, he would have to go up and down a steep set of stairs, just to get into the building. Lip was back in college, and Ian recalled, all too vividly, Lip’s reluctance to have him stay for more than a night at a time when he was there before, so he didn’t want to impose. Carl was still in military school and then planning to go into the service, so living with him was completely out of the question. Debbie was married to and living with Neil, along with her screaming, insomniac daughter, Frannie. No thanks! Maybe he could crash at Kev and V’s for a few nights until he figured something out. There was still a chance of screaming children, but at least they had fewer stairs leading up to their house than at Fiona’s. Ian dreaded the prospect of having to use crutches in general, let alone having to navigate stairs.

Ian was feeling overwhelmed and more than a little bit depressed. The only good thing about being so overwhelmed was that, for the first time since he had left Mickey at the border, Ian was free of the recurring thoughts of leaving him that had plagued him daily. Instead, he was focused on the wreckage that had become his life. He called Mandy to ask what time she was coming to visit, since he was to be released at some point later that day. He tearfully shared the news about his job, as well as his living situation, or lack thereof. Mandy tried to console him over the phone, but it was no use. She promised to get there as soon as possible.
Mandy’s visit did little to cheer him at first, though he was very glad to see her. She breezed into the room, the beauty of her brightly-colored floral dress overshadowed only by her radiant smile and crystal blue eyes. She was her usual bubbly self, sharing the details of her life the same way she had back when they were in high school together. Over the course of their visit, he learned that she would be going away after this weekend for a ‘destination escort’ gig. The wealthy gentleman she was going to be with wanted to have the ‘girlfriend experience’ and requested that she role play. She would be flown to his location and provided with a beach house, food and an entertainment allowance. Her task was to have a ‘chance encounter’ with him on the beach, pretend to fall for him and spend an undetermined amount of time getting to know him. She was going to make bank on this one and was even allowed to bring someone with her, since her quarters would be large enough to accommodate up to six people. She would be getting all of the details before the end of the weekend, and would be flying out on Monday.

Who would have thought that Mandy would become such a jet-setter! Normally, Ian would have been ecstatic over Mandy’s good fortune, but hearing about it today stung him like salt in an open wound. It seemed that everyone, even Mandy, was getting their shit together while his was falling apart. The irony of it all was that he had left the love of his life at the Mexican border because he didn’t want to give up all that he had accomplished in the year that Mickey was inside. Now all that he was so worried about coming home to was gone: his job, the Gallagher house, his family. And to make matters worse, he knew that to try to find Mickey after all this time would be tantamount to finding the proverbial needle in a haystack. Mandy claimed not to have heard a single word from him since the last time she had visited him in prison. The police had interrogated her as part of their search after his escape, but she knew nothing more. Ian confided in her that he had accompanied Mickey all the way to the Mexican border, but then decided at the last minute not to cross over into Mexico with him. It was the most difficult thing Ian had ever done, to watch Mickey drive across without him, and there hadn’t been a single day since he awoke in the hospital, during which Ian didn’t, at some point, mentally kick himself for doing it.

Recalling the foolishness of that decision caused Ian to seriously entertain the offer Mandy was hinting at. He could tell that she was going to ask him to be her ‘plus one’ for this upcoming destination gig. The only trouble was that he was still very weak from being on life support for the better part of a week, and he would also have to get an emergency passport if this ‘destination’ gig ended up being in an exotic location outside the US, which would be costly--and he was broke. Mandy had done a much less elaborate gig in Virgin Gorda once, so she already had hers.

Ian and Mandy’s visit was cut short by the news that Ian’s discharge papers were ready and he was free to go. He needed someone to meet him at the hospital entrance to pick him up, since he was going to be leaving in a wheelchair. Once he got home, wherever that turned out to be, he could use the provided crutches. This worked out perfectly because Mandy was already there with a car and had just enough time to drive him to Kev and V’s, where he had ended up making arrangements to stay temporarily, before heading out for her weekend ‘date’.
Kev and V’s place was just as he had remembered it, with the exception of the mountainous stacks of toddler toys that were now littered across the entire first floor. Trudging through this mess was going to be a real challenge for the newly crutch-wielding Ian. The environment was definitely less than ideal for Ian, but it still seemed like the best of the few shitty options he had. Kev and V were kind and welcoming, as always, and tried their best to make him feel comfortable and at home. It wasn’t long before Kevin left for work, his shimmering gold, crotch-hugging short shorts in hand. He and Ian laughed together about their common practice of never putting the damn things on until they arrived at the club because of the way the shorts crawled up their asses and made their balls sweat.

With Kevin gone and Veronica heading out for ice cream with the twins, Ian had time to just sit and think. After seeing Kevin and his shorts, memories of his time as a dancer at the Fairy Tale came flooding back. Sure, he had done some things he wasn’t proud of in association with that God-forsaken place, but he had some good times too! The bittersweet memory of the first time Mickey came in looking for him after he went AWOL and he had charged him for a lap dance, the passionate kiss that Mickey planted on him after first pulling away out of fear, the after-party Mickey had reluctantly agreed to attend with him, and of course, he would never forget the night he left the club ‘sick’ with Mickey so they could con some old rich dude out of some money without Ian having to even do anything for it--all of these memories made him want to laugh, smile, and sob, all at once.

Ian’s ringing cell phone provided a much-needed break from his solitary thoughts. It was Mandy. She was calling to say that she had more details on her upcoming destination escort gig. She would be flying into the Mexico City International Airport, where she would be picked up in a limo and taken to a beach house one to two hours away. She begged Ian to go with her, citing to his current lack of job and living quarters as the perfect scenario to just take off for a while. As tempting as it all sounded, Ian had decided, before she even called, to say no, thinking about the prospect of having to get an emergency passport. He had about $200 to his name, his savings completely depleted after his trip with Mickey and his recent registration for his paramedic class. He just couldn’t justify using it on a passport, given his current predicament. But when Mandy said her boss was going to take care of it, Ian felt a rush of energy surge through his body, and he couldn’t say no.
Finally, the day came! Mickey was going to be flying out of Mexico City to Chicago, or so he thought. He had dyed his hair blonde for the passport picture and had to touch up his roots before he left, giving his newly-grown mustache a quick grooming as well. He was also under the impression that he had to escort a mother and daughter, who were fleeing a domestic violence situation in the States, an all too common scenario in their business, to their limo before he boarded his flight. Therefore, in addition to his luggage and paperwork, he carried a sign that read, “Mandy and Ani.” The worry that had plagued him for the past week mixed with nervous excitement. This whole situation had brought such a whirlwind of emotions; sometimes Mickey felt like he couldn’t breathe.

No sooner did Mickey enter the airport, than Manuel texted him, saying that his flight had been cancelled, due to high winds. Manuel warned him against attempting to reschedule in person, as it could raise red flags. Besides, Mickey needed to escort their clients to their limo. Mickey’s face was on fire! He could feel the blood rushing to it as his anger swelled. He found the nearest restroom, hoping to compose himself enough to meet the clients, who were quite possibly already looking for the sign that he had now thrown on the restroom floor, freeing one hand to splash some cold water on his face. “FUCK!!!!” he screamed into the mirror in utter defeat. As he wiped his face dry, he caught a glimpse in the mirror of someone else entering the restroom. His vision was still blurry from rubbing his eyes, but he did notice that this guy’s hair was bright orange-red, just like Ian’s. Wow! This must be my karma or some shit! My flight to see Ian gets cancelled and I have to run into some dude with Ian’s hair! What the fuck?

Mickey bent down to pick up the sign on the floor, grabbed it and looked up to see the guy, whom he now saw was on crutches, staring at him from the other end of the bathroom. As he stood up and refocused his eyes, he could not believe what he was seeing! It couldn’t be, but it was! It was Ian! He rubbed his eyes again, certain that he was seeing things. Ian, thrown off by Mickey’s blonde hair, was staring hard. This guy had Mickey’s exact build and even looked like him. As he tottered toward the man on his crutches, closing the distance between the two of them, he got a good look at his pale blue eyes and a brief whiff of the scent he would know anywhere, a scent that had taken up residence in his sinuses in the months since he had last breathed Mickey in.

The look on Ian’s face was a mirror image of Mickey’s, both men in complete shock over what they were seeing. Ian’s lower lip started to quiver, his eyes filling with tears. “Mickey!” he sobbed, hobbling over to him. Mickey dropped everything from his hands and wrapped his arms tightly around him, Ian’s nose finding its home in the crook of Mickey’s neck. He inhaled deeply, rejoicing in the fullness and satisfaction he felt in his chest with each delicious breath. They held each other in blissful silence for what each hoped would last forever, until a voice cut in. “Ian!” Mandy yelled, “Are you okay?” “I think so,” Ian answered, still shaken by this turn of events. “I’ll be out in a few minutes,” he smirked, raising his eyebrow at Mickey. “Come here,” Ian whispered in Mickey’s ear as he turned toward him, his mouth completely enveloping Mickey’s beautifully formed, full lips. Mickey returned Ian’s kiss ravenously, the passion between the two as intensely overwhelming as ever. “I missed you so much, Mickey!” Ian panted between kisses. Mickey pressed his body firmly against Ian’s, pushing him backward toward the stall, nearly knocking him off his crutches. Each could feel the other’s manhood rubbing against his own, both struggling for freedom from the clothing that held them captive. Mickey pulled at Ian’s belt hungrily, unhinging it in seconds flat, then moving on to the button and zipper of his jeans. He pushed Ian further backward into the stall, again nearly knocking him over, all the while devouring his sweet lips and caressing his long, lusciously pale neck.

Once Ian was safely pinned against the back wall of the stall, Mickey fell to his knees, yanking on
Ian’s belt loops to loosen the jeans’ grip on Ian’s hips. As he began to slide the jeans down, rubbing his face over Ian’s now half-exposed, fully erect package, Ian moaned softly, sending ripples of desire through Mickey’s body. ‘This won’t take long’ was the last coherent thought Ian’s brain processed before surrendering itself completely to his body and its base cravings. Suddenly the door of the Men’s room swung open. “Is there an Ian Gallagher in here?” “Yes,” Ian stammered, annoyed, as Mickey rose to his feet and both men fumbled to adjust themselves and their clothing. “Sorry to bother you,” the man cleared his throat, “but there is a young woman outside who is very concerned about your safety in here.” “I’m fine,” Ian answered, slowly regaining his composure, “Please tell her I will be right out.” As Mickey came back to his senses, he realized that taking things too far in a public restroom might have led to both of them being arrested for indecent exposure anyway. “Let’s get outta here,” Mickey growled sensually into Ian’s ear, instantaneously inducing goosebumps over every inch of Ian’s flesh.

Ian was navigating his way out of the stall, while Mickey picked up his belongings that he had dropped and now lay scattered across the restroom floor. “Mandy and Ani, huh?” Ian laughed, reading the card in Mickey’s hand. Clearly, he thought Mickey had orchestrated this whole trip. Little did he know, Manuel, having quite the sense of humor, thought it would be funny to use a mixed up version of Ian’s name for their reunion. Manuel knew Mickey wouldn’t look at the sign ahead of time. He was far too focused on checking in for his non-existent flight. “What the fuck are you laughing at?” Mickey snarled. “Well, that’s pretty funny, you mixing up the letters in my name like that when you came to get me, like you were really expecting one of Mandy’s girlfriends,” Ian answered. “When I came to--what? I didn’t come here for you,” Mickey said quietly. “I came here to catch a plane.” By this time, Mickey’s wheels were turning; he was starting to think Manuel was behind this whole bizarre turn of events, and maybe even Mandy was in on it. But how could she have been? Just then, Mandy came up behind the two of them, putting one arm around each. “Mandy, what the fuck?” Mickey snorted, not sure how he should be feeling at this point. A mischievous grin spread slowly across Mandy’s face, one that tipped both Mickey and Ian off that she was up to something. They both glared at her, awaiting an explanation. “Ok,” she finally responded, “So what if Manuel and I were so worried that we got you two back together in the safest way possible? Is that a fucking crime?” They looked at each other, then back at Mandy. Each of them thought of reaffirming the fact that he had not planned this in order to see the other, but what would be the point in that? After their restroom reunion, there was no denying that they had wanted to see each other and now could not wait to spend the next several hours doing unspeakable things to one another. They would get all of the gory details of Mandy and Manuel’s deception over drinks, after enjoying the much-needed release of some pent-up tension.
Homeward Bound

Mickey ushered Mandy and Ian into his car, throwing Ian’s crutches and their luggage in the trunk. On the drive back to his house, Mickey spoke honestly of his plan to fly to Chicago to see Ian, since he was told Ian was on life support and he didn’t want to lose his last opportunity to see him. Ian told Mickey about all of the recent changes in his life, and how lost he had been feeling in the short time since he had awakened from his coma. Mandy fessed up to Ian that there wasn’t really an escort job for her, and that Manuel had paid for their transportation down, as well as a place for them to stay. By this time, Ian was starting to wonder who the hell Manuel was, and why he would pay to have them come to see Mickey. He held back from questioning Mickey about this, so as not to alter either of their moods in a way that might jeopardize the colossal fuck-fest he was determined that he and Mickey were about to have. Ever since that fateful day that he left Mickey at the border, he had yearned to experience Mickey’s beautiful, sexy body again. He had spent many a night alone in his bed (and sometimes not alone) imagining all of the ways he wanted to have Mickey, and now he was going to take his time acting on each of them, ensuring it would be a night neither of them would ever forget.

When they pulled up to Mickey’s house, Manuel was waiting outside. He introduced himself and explained that he was ready to take Ian and Mandy to their beach house. Mandy hadn’t bothered to inform him that their scheme had been exposed, thanks to a chance meeting in the Men’s restroom at the airport. Mickey just rolled his eyes and made his way to his front door with his and Ian’s luggage. “No fuckin’ way! He’s staying with me,” Mickey insisted, pointing in Ian’s direction. Ian nodded sheepishly in agreement and, without another word, Manuel pulled Mandy’s luggage from Mickey’s trunk, put it into his trunk, and opened the passenger-side door of his car for her. She got in without hesitation, a half-smirk forming on her face as she got a good look at Manuel’s ruggedly handsome face and strapping physique. Mickey helped Ian in the door with his crutches, then came back for both suitcases. As the two men entered the house, both knew they were home.
Men of Few Words

Mickey dropped both pieces of luggage and scanned the inside of his house, looking for Ian. He guessed Ian had gone to the bathroom, so he picked up the luggage to carry it back to the bedroom. Upon entering his room, he was surprised to find that Ian had made himself at home, his clothing and crutches strewn across the floor, his naked body gift-wrapped in Mickey’s bed sheets, his pale smiling face peeking out over the top of the covers. As Mickey approached the bed, Ian stretched his long arms out, aching to feel Mickey’s beautiful body against his own. “Come here,” Ian commanded, raising an eyebrow with a seductive smirk. Mickey obeyed, kneeling onto the bed, taking care not to put any undue stress on either of Ian’s injured limbs, bending to plant a tender kiss on Ian’s perfectly full, crimson lips.

Ian pulled Mickey into him forcefully, his tongue exploring the inside of Mickey’s mouth expertly. The kiss deepened, becoming rough with unbridled passion, tongues clashing wildly as the pair struggled to free Mickey’s body from his confining garments. Ian wasted no time in beginning to fondle Mickey’s sweet, round ass, reaching for the lube, which he had conveniently removed from its storage place in Mickey’s nightstand earlier. Mickey was already breathless with anticipation and desire, the feel of Ian’s sensually slippery fingers delving methodically into his expectant hole in preparation for the entry of his sizeable, throbbing member, coupled with his steady grinding against Mickey’s own rigid manhood, driving him even further into ecstatic oblivion with each move. “Want you now,” Ian breathed huskily into Mickey’s ear, sending a shiver up his spine, goosebumps forming over his entire body, a low moan escaping from deep in his throat as Ian slipped a third digit into him. “All yours,” Mickey panted in something close to a whisper, Ian’s already engorged erection growing and stiffening more as those two words fell from Mickey’s puffy, pink lips.

Ian removed his hand from Mickey’s bottom, sliding his own lube-slathered hand up and down his showstopper of a unit, readying it for his grand entrance. Ian guided Mickey onto his big, salaciously into his pale blue eyes, his good hand gripping Mickey’s hip tightly as he compelled Mickey to sit on him. Ian let out an audible gasp, his breath catching in his throat, as Ian pushed further up into him, Mickey simultaneously descending onto Ian’s substantial, swollen shaft. The degree of penetration increased steadily until Ian’s balls were flush with Mickey’s ass, the occasional “Fuck!” escaping Mickey’s lips as he rode atop Ian’s insanely magical member. Ian now began using even his injured arm to increase the intensity, driving hard and fast up into Mickey, while pulling down unyieldingly on Mickey’s hips, denying him control of both speed and depth, despite his superior position. “So fuckin’ good, Ian,” Mickey hissed under his labored breath. Ian pulled Mickey on and off of him with an ever increasing rhythm, slamming up into him while also continuing to pull down hard on his now bruising hips, eliciting a long string of unintelligible grunts and groans from Mickey’s throat.

Mickey sucked his lower lip into his own mouth, wedging it tightly between his upper and lower teeth, his eyes squeezed tightly shut, his breath ragged as he relinquished all control, allowing Ian to dominate him completely, freeing himself to roll through the experience under Ian’s capable command. Mickey was putty in Ian’s skillful hands, succumbing to Ian’s every wicked whim, each bringing them both closer to their inevitable climax.

Mickey tried to warn Ian of his impending orgasm, but all that came out was another series of ecstatic moans as Ian continued to pound away, knowing just how Mickey liked it and delivering it to a tee. Anticipating Mickey’s need, Ian encircled Mickey’s cock with his good hand, sliding his fist over it repeatedly as he thrust them both ever nearer to their apex. “So fucking perfect for me, Mick!” Ian whined, amid his monumental explosion, a rough growl punctuating the words as he sunk himself deep into Mickey’s sexy, tight ass for one last earth-shattering time. With that, Mickey unloaded
instantaneously into Ian’s hand with a colossal wail and, still unable to speak and now completely spent, rolled off of Ian and lay on the bed, his muscles convulsing wildly.

Mickey’s eyes were still closed tightly and he was literally seeing stars, his head spinning as electrical currents of gratification pulsed through his drained body. Ian relaxed into the bed, his own body buzzing and tingling from head to toe in the afterglow. The magnitude of this whole experience was off the charts for both men. How either of them had survived this long without one another was...well, it was a matter of mere survival, rather than actually living.

Ian and Mickey breathed life back into each other, a renewed passion for all that the world has to offer, a rejuvenated longing to love and be loved, an understanding that there was still someone else in this world who loved them more than they ever thought was possible, and equally important, who was their sexual and spiritual soulmate. The connection they both felt was undeniable and had, if anything, only become stronger through their separation and reunion. Not a single word was spoken before they slipped into slumber; there was nothing they didn’t both already know. Their entangled bodies maintained open lines of communication, dispelling any insecurities and providing continual reassurance in every possible way all night long.
As Mickey’s mind slowly emerged from the deepest, most restful sleep he’d had in forever, he was certain that he had woken from the most fantastically erotic dream ever. In his half-dream state he recounted the carnal anticipation that raged from within his body and mind, all of the positions that he and Ian had explored, the waves of pleasure that reverberated through every fiber of his being, and the pure satisfaction and bliss that he felt afterward. Tenderly lulling him back into the now, Ian kissed his neck lightly from behind, arching his back and gently rubbing himself against Mickey’s sunny side. Mickey grinned, stretching his arm out to reach for a cigarette. He could definitely get used to this.

When they finally got out of bed, it was close to noon. Mickey made coffee and they sat across from each other, gazing into each other’s eyes in utter amazement. Mickey wanted to know more about Ian’s medical condition and Ian needed to know the role this Manuel character played in Mickey’s life. And yet, the two sat silent, sipping coffee, their eyes riveted to one another as if starved for their visual essence, tracing every detail of each other’s faces, familiar, yet magnetic. Ian finally broke the silence, fearing that if he didn’t, they would be spending the rest of the day in the bedroom, opting out of the conversation they needed to have, surrendering to their insatiable appetites for each other.

“So, tell me about your life here in Mexico. What have you been doing with yourself?” He wanted to say, ‘Who have you been doing?’ since he was certain that Manuel was that kind of friend, based on his body language when they met the day before. But he refrained and left it to Mickey to share the details of his life. Mickey explained that he was basically the co-owner of two businesses, both of which were pretty much ‘off the books’, yet very successful, nonetheless. This was the reality in Mexico; many businesses flourished without being sanctioned or traced by the government. This sounded like the perfect scenario for Mickey in his situation, and Ian, all at once, felt 100 times better about his role in helping Mickey to cross into Mexico, even if he had fucked up by not going with him.

The air of confidence that Mickey had always exuded now seemed real, instead of the flimsy front that he had invented as a barrier to the bullshit that was Southside Chicago. The subject of Manuel came up naturally as part of the business story, which should have allowed Ian to avoid sounding like a jealous asshole when he asked about him. “I couldn’t have accomplished any of this without Manuel’s help,” Mickey started, “And you should know that we are close friends, who have hooked up on occasion, but…” Ian stopped him. “So you and Manuel are like a casual thing. Kinda like we were in the beginning,” Ian quipped, trying but failing to sound nonchalant. “We’re friends and business partners. Ian, Manuel is a great guy, but he isn’t the love of my life; you are! Manuel knows that. Why do you think he arranged all of this? He knows how much of a struggle it has been for me, moving on with my life without you.” Ian’s angry expression softened a bit, but his body was still rigid.

Maybe Mickey thought the thing with Manuel was just a friendship, but what was Manuel thinking? “So you expect me to believe this guy did all this for you, but he only has feelings of friendship for you? Oh Mickey, come the fuck on! The guy brought me here to clear the way for himself. He figures if you can see that I am nothing but a washed-up, busted up, bat-shit crazy piece of Southside trash, then you will wise up, get over me and you’ll be all his! I might as well pack my shit and go now if he’s gonna be your ‘business’ partner,” Ian whined, using air quotes for emphasis.

He took a deep breath, holding it in anticipation of Mickey’s response. “Why you bustin’ my balls, man?” Mickey replied, trying his best not to laugh at the insanely inaccurate impression Ian had of Manuel. At this rate, Mickey would never find out what the fuck medical problems Ian had. He
would have been frustrated if he wasn’t enjoying this whole jealous streak Ian was on right now so much. A knock at the door interrupted them.
Mickey welcomed Manuel and Mandy, offering them coffee and taking a box of donuts from Mandy’s hands. Ian rolled his eyes, stiffening his body and pulling at the bright orange-red locks that jutted wildly from the obviously still ungroomed crown of his head. “The crullers are mine, assface!” Mandy warned Mickey before the box was even open. She then walked up to Mickey, threw her arms around him and gave him a kiss on the cheek. She had missed the closeness she once had with her big brother. She knew that a lot of the distance between them, as well as the waning interaction with Ian, had more to do with Kenyatta than anything else. She had tried not to make any waves, knowing that if she did, Ian and Mickey would have wound up in prison for murdering him. Now that Kenyatta was out of the picture permanently, she was eager to resume those relationships. Mickey hugged her back, resisting the urge to give her a titty twister, as he had frequently done when they were kids.

Mandy was glowing. She chattered away, describing the house where she was staying, the seagulls and other birds she had seen on her early morning beach walk, and the warmth of the Gulf, compared to Lake Michigan. It was what she wasn’t saying that was of more interest to Mickey. Although Mandy looked quite beautiful, nearly flawless, he couldn’t help noticing a red, mouth-shaped mark on the side of her neck that had not been there the day before. He also sensed a certain electricity in the air when Mandy brushed past Manuel to grab another donut. The expression on Manuel’s face was confirmation; these two had gotten it on the night before. It wasn’t long before this became obvious to Ian as well. No one said a word, but the immediate change in Ian’s demeanor spoke volumes. ‘Even if this was a one night stand, Manuel would never have done something like that if he had an interest in anything more than friendship with Mickey,’ Ian tried to convince himself. Ian and Mickey exchanged knowing glances, Mickey’s with a hint of ‘I told you so.’ As any remaining tension slipped from the room, the four spent some time catching up.

Everyone had things to share that no one else in the room knew about. Finally, Mickey found out the extent of Ian’s injuries. He had sustained a concussion from the impact with the water, what everyone hoped would be temporary nerve damage in his right arm, and some ligament damage in his left leg, probably from getting twisted up by some unknown object beneath the water’s surface. Basically that was it! Part of the reason for the life support machines was to keep him stable while the doctors worked to re-establish his medication blood levels. Ian now understood the importance of keeping his meds in balance at all costs and, to that end, he had packed his entire month’s supply that the doctor at the hospital had prescribed for him. Mickey shared the details of his travel across the border into Mexico, allowing Ian to give the highlights of their time together on the road, then picking up where he left off. He described the feeling of dread he felt crossing that border, intensified by the fear of being stopped and arrested. He said he had nearly pissed himself when one of the border cops asked him what his intentions were in coming to Mexico. First, he had to come up with a female voice on the fly. The rest was easier. He had planned to say he was going on vacation, although the idea that he was going alone seemed a bit of a stretch. But they bought it and there he was—in Mexico.

He glossed over most of the anguish he had felt, leaving Ian behind, honing in on some of the positive aspects of the trip, including the feeling of utter relief that he felt after successfully crossing into Mexico. He paused at the point where he stopped at the Cantina and met Manuel, allowing Manuel to pick up the story from there. Manuel, sensing Ian’s uneasiness with him, focused on the birth of his business relationship with Mickey, enlightening both Mandy and Ian as to the nature of both businesses, how they came to be and how they were interrelated. All was well until Manuel divulged the name of the surfboard business—Ojos Azules. Ian didn’t even need to hear the translation; he also didn’t need to be told who the business was named after or who came up with the
idea. He knew damn well that Mickey would never name his business ‘Blue Eyes’ just for shits and giggles. It had to be a nickname—and what kind of friend gives someone a nickname like that? Mickey’s eyes caught Ian’s and that was all it took. Here we go again! “Can I see you for a minute?” Ian tugged at Mickey’s shirt, dragging him out of the kitchen toward the bedroom, one crutch under his right arm.

Before Ian could say a word, Mickey started, “Look, you left me at the border six months ago. I thought it was goodbye, never thought I’d see you again. I never stopped missing the fuck out of you, and it was hard for me. Now you’re here and we should be happy, but you keep thinkin’ stupid shit! So whatever it is you’re about to say, just don’t…” “Don’t what?” Ian snapped. Mickey lunged at Ian, smashing him between the wall and his own body, and kissed him roughly. Ian could feel the blood rush to the surface of his skin. He felt so alive when his skin touched Mickey’s, like all of the nerves in his body were reacting at once to some sort of cosmic force. Yes, this was Mickey’s effect on him and he had to live with it. But so did Mickey. Ian knew he felt it too. ‘He wants to be with me. You can’t fake that!’ Ian told himself as he began tearing wildly at Mickey’s clothes with his free hand. Meanwhile, Mickey was making quick work of Ian’s belt, button and zipper, all the while licking and biting at Ian’s neck. Ian moaned softly, pulling down hard on the waistband of Mickey’s sweatpants, desperately seeking access to Mickey’s luscious, round derriere. “How ‘bout if we take this to the bed before you fall over, tough guy?” Mickey breathed huskily into Ian’s ear. “Mmmm Hmmm,” Ian replied, burying his nose in Mickey’s neck and inhaling deeply.

Mickey’s scent was enough to put Ian over the edge, even without any real contact, so the combination had him ready to explode at any moment. He steadied himself on his crutch, woozy and completely under Mickey’s spell, and managed to get close enough to the bed to fall onto it, Mickey following after him. Ian and Mickey couldn’t rip their clothes off fast enough, each panting with frenzied anticipation. Mickey fumbled for the night-table drawer handle, grabbing the lube and handing it to Ian, who carefully warmed it with his hands before applying it so slowly that Mickey thought he would have to beg to be fucked. ‘What the fuck?!’ Mickey thought impatiently. Ian sucked hard on the side of Mickey’s neck as he continued with his slow, torturous fondling of Mickey, Ian’s rock hard cock pressing firmly against Mickey’s left asscheek. Ian had managed to turn the tables on Mickey and he knew he had him right where he wanted him now. “Please…” Mickey pleaded. “Please, what?” Ian grinned maliciously, stretching Mickey at a snail’s pace while lightly grazing his dick with his other hand. “I want you so fuckin’ bad!” Mickey growled. “You sure?” Ian was toying with him, but Mickey was in no position to protest. “Yessssssss!” Mickey hissed, his frustration matched only by his arousal.

Ian’s cruel torture continued for what seemed like forever, his meandering fingers slowing to the point of becoming nearly motionless. Mickey huffed and squirmed, trying anything and everything to hasten Ian’s pace, biting, licking and sucking on any part of Ian’s body he could latch his hungry, desperate mouth onto. A low, evil chuckle rattled from the base of Ian’s throat as he continued to drive Mickey completely insane with want. “Ian! …the fuck you want from me?!” Mickey stammered, gnawing on his flawlessly full lower lip in desperation. At long last, after Mickey’s incessant pleading, he relented, “I’m gonna give you what you want so bad.” he began, “Are you gonna give me what I want?” he asked, again slowing progress, bringing a sigh of resignation out of Mickey. “Yeah…anything, for fuck’s sake!” Mickey yelled. “Okay, then,” Ian shorted wickedly as he entered Mickey from behind. Mickey gasped sharply in reaction to Ian’s sudden, substantial presence inside him, gripping the pillow in front of him tightly. Ian’s first few thrusts were slow and strong, gradually increasing momentum and depth until Mickey began moaning with each movement, feeling himself about to cum far too quickly.

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Ian was also close to his limit, this whole encounter at one point having been in jeopardy of ending prematurely at his hands. Ian slowed his pace, pushing more deeply into Mickey, sparks of electricity shooting through his entire body with each painstaking stroke. Mickey bit down harder on his lower
lip, savoring the moment, yet anxiously awaiting his eruptive release. Ian could not hold back any longer and sped up again, aggressively pounding into Mickey. “Just like that!” Mickey shouted, partially muffled by the pillow beneath him, his breath quickening. Ian could feel the characteristic twitching surrounding his cock. Mick was gonna erupt! This brought Ian back to the brink just in time for them to climax simultaneously with one final thrust.

Ian collapsed completely into the bed, exhausted, utterly spent and beyond fulfilled. Mickey turned to him, his gorgeous ivory skin glowing with sweat, his pale blue eyes glistening, and kissed him passionately. “I love you and only you, Ian! I know that’s what you wanna hear, but you should already know it, bitch!” he said with a smile that made the corners of his eyes crinkle. He rumpled Ian’s hair and kissed him again, this time more lightly. “I love you too, Mick!” Ian replied, “And I don’t ever wanna be without you again,” he said, his voice cracking as his eyes filled with tears. Mickey pulled Ian in close, wrapping him firmly in his embrace, then softly stroking his face, wiping the tears from his cheeks and kissing them away.

As reality crept in on the blissful couple, the low rumble of voices, interspersed with Mandy’s giddy laugh, now permeated their once-airtight bubble. “Sounds like someone’s having a good time,” Ian commented, looking in the direction of the door. “Yeah, Mandy always giggles like that when she first starts to hang out with a guy she’s really into,” Mickey said matter-of-factly. “I know!” Ian laughed, “She used to be into me back in the day, if you remember,” Ian continued, raising his eyebrows for effect. “Yeah, ’til you hooked up with the right Milkovich!” Mickey retorted, raising his own brow salaciously. “We better get our asses back out there before I change my mind,” Ian smirked. “Oh yeah, firecrotch?” Mickey quipped, pulling Ian in for a soulful kiss. “To be continued!” Ian shouted backward as he moved toward the kitchen, anxious to see what kind of behavior was ensuing there. He still had his doubts about the sincerity of Manuel’s interest in Mandy, and wasn’t yet ready to dismiss his hunch that there was more to Manuel’s concern for Mickey than just friendship and business partnership. Sensing Ian’s concern, Mickey followed quickly after him. As they turned the corner, they caught sight of Mandy sitting on top of Manuel on the couch, the two embroiled in a passionate kiss. Mickey and Ian exchanged looks, both grinning ear to ear, and slipped past them out the front door.
“C’mon, Gallagher!” Mickey yelled, running around the back of the house. “…wanna show you the water!” Ian toddled behind, his crutches sinking into the sand, substantially impeding his forward movement. “Wait up! I’m a little slow on these things!” he stammered, struggling to get his footing with his good leg. Mickey ran back at Ian, scooping him up, carrying him to the water’s edge and depositing him on the warm, gritty sand. Ian refocused, looking back at the house, the back porch complete with an outdoor bar and firepit. “Dumb ass, look this way,” Mickey muttered, turning Ian’s head in the direction of the ocean. The waves rolled in gently, the reflection of the sun glistening off their rough edges, the foam of the receding water fizzing softly in contrast with the strident squawks of seagulls in the distance. Ian sat silently soaking in the serene splendor of his surroundings, overshadowed only by the captivating allure of Mickey’s shining face, his glimmering eyes peering back at him in impatient anticipation. “Well? You like it?” Mickey finally asked breathlessly, unable to wait any longer for a response. “I couldn’t imagine a more breathtaking scene, Mick! Especially since you’re in it!” Ian responded, soaking up the warmth of Mickey’s mesmerizing smile.

“Well, just so you know, people like us gotta wear a lot of sunscreen! Your white ass will burn like a motherfucker!” he called back to Ian as he ran back to the porch to retrieve the sunscreen, a bottle of tequila and the rest of the fixins for margaritas. And here it was, the stuff Ian’s recurring dream was made of! He couldn’t wait to squirt the sunscreen onto Mickey’s beautiful body and rub it in, his fingertips taking in the vibration of every tensed muscle, the texture of each individual goosebump that rose to his touch, the twitch of surprise in Mickey’s stomach as Ian massaged him along his tender, ticklish sides.

The reality was all he had dreamt it would be and so much more! Mickey made them both the best Margaritas Ian had ever tasted, sweet and salty like Mickey’s sweat-soaked upper lip, which he suckled on between sips. They took turns titillating each other with their erotic sunscreen application until each could take no more, the electricity of their passion surging to the point of no return. Ian lowered the focus of his lotion-laden caress, prepping Mickey’s posterior for his much anticipated entry. Mickey groaned softly and reached for Ian’s cock, which was protruding from the top of his shorts expectantly. Ian kissed lightly along the side of Mickey’s neck, flicking his tongue intermittently. Mickey encircled Ian’s shaft with his fist, drawing him closer to his ass with each pump and positioning himself to provide his injured lover with easy access. Ian leaned heavily on his good knee, blasting into Mickey with a quickness that made Mickey’s breath catch in his throat, then pounding him with a ferocity Mickey hadn’t experienced since the church basement before his wedding to Svetlana.

This was the realization of the dreams that had tormented Ian for months and he was going for it, full throttle. Everything, from the private beach to the way the sun reflected off Mickey’s pale skin, to the aroma of suntan lotion mixed with the heavenly scent of Mickey, was precisely as Ian had dreamt it every night since he had left him at the border. Mickey braced himself and fell into Ian’s vigorous rhythm, countering his every thrust with wanton desire, their mutual excitement building exponentially with each movement. Mickey knew how to please his man and, before long, both men were dangerously close to combusting. Ian reached around to massage Mickey’s manhood, eliciting a deep, throaty moan that signaled Mickey’s and hastened Ian’s release. Together they climaxed, both bodies shaking wildly with a pure, unadulterated pleasure unlike any either had ever experienced without the other. Completely worn out, the couple collapsed onto the hot sand, their hands and bodies still lovingly entangled. “Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey breathed huskily, “You’re fuckin’ amazing!” “C’mon Mick! It was all you!” Ian panted. Mickey’s eyes twinkled, his cheeks blushing at the compliment. Ian just stared into those beautiful baby blues, wondering how he had
ever thought he could live without them.

Just then, Mickey sat up and pinned Ian between his own body and the beach, planting sloppy wet kisses all over Ian’s beautiful, porcelain face and taut, muscular body. “When you heal up, you’re really in trouble, tough guy!” Mickey mumbled between kisses. “We’ll see about that!” Ian answered, mustering all of his strength to flip Mickey over onto his back. “I love you, Mickey Milkovich!” Ian confessed passionately, peering down at the sheer perfection of Mickey’s finely-chiseled face and deliciously plump lips. “RIght back atcha!” Mickey replied with a sexy wink. It wasn’t long before they were both asleep, baking in the hot Mexico sun.
Chapter Notes

Manuel chuckled as he caught sight of Mickey’s lobster-red body walking into the factory. “Little too much sun there, Ojos?” Manuel shouted over the din of the machinery. “Fuck off!” Mickey yelled back, striding toward the office for their scheduled meeting. Production costs were up and sales had become stagnant, so Manuel had called a meeting to discuss new money-saving measures and marketing strategies. Upon entering the office, Mickey was shocked to see his sister sitting at the head of the conference room table, perched behind a laptop and a steaming cup of coffee. “I invited Mandy to sit in with us today,” Manuel whispered as Mickey brushed past him. “Oh yeah?” Mickey answered, raising his eyebrows as he looked back at a grinning Mandy.

“Hmmmm…” Mickey puzzled, glaring over his shoulder at Manuel. It wasn’t that he minded Mandy being there; it was more troubling to Mickey that Manuel hadn’t consulted with him first. Now he knew for sure that, despite its seemingly innocuous beginnings, whatever was happening between Manuel and Mandy was getting serious. The plan, as Manuel and Mandy had made it, was for Mandy and Ian to visit for a week and then return to the States. Of course, Mickey imagined that Manuel expected Ian to end up staying, but Mandy? That possibility had not occurred to him until now. And what really pissed him off was that he had held off on broaching the subject of Ian getting involved with the business, out of respect for Manuel and their partnership, only to have Manuel waltz Mandy right in behind his back! Manuel sensed that Mickey was upset and attempted to calm him by trying to explain. “She had a few marketing ideas, so I brought her along to share them. That’s all!” Manuel spoke softly. “Well, ya coulda given me a heads up!” Mickey replied. “I’ve been wanting to talk about having Ian come in, but didn’t want to rush things. So you can see why this shit feels like a slap in the face!” Mickey snarled. Before Manuel could say anything else in his own defense, Mandy piped up,

“Shithead, if you’re gonna be pissed at someone, it should be me! I insisted on coming here with Manuel today because I care about your business and thought I might be able to help you increase your sales. He didn’t talk to you about it first because we had our first conversation about it late last night. I was so excited that I was up practically all night, preparing my presentation, and was waiting in the car when he went to leave this morning. So cool your jets and just give me a minute of your precious time. I’m telling you, you will not regret it.”

If Mickey allowed himself to be totally honest, he knew Mandy had brains and a creative spirit, and this newfound confidence she was exhibiting made him happy and proud to be her brother. He quietly took the seat to her right, motioning for Manuel to join them. Mandy proceeded to share her presentation, complete with video, with the partners, highlighting the human aspect of marketing. She intended to have attractive women promote each surfboard model, essentially becoming models themselves for the product. Their clothing and makeup would be color-coordinated with the boards they represented. Each board-woman pair would be given a female name that would serve as the new model name that fit the design of its board and the style of the corresponding woman. And of course, all surfboard models would retain the trademark blue eyes that had become synonymous with the brand. Mickey had to admit, he loved the idea and, judging by the look on Manuel’s face, he either loved it too or he loved Mandy, or maybe both.

Chapter End Notes
Last chapter for tonight. More to come!!
Scattered beams of sunlight invaded Ian’s peaceful slumber through the slatted blinds that hung loosely over Mickey’s bedroom windows. Ian squinted, blindly feeling for a sheet to shield his face. Slowly, his eyes adjusted to the brightness. He reached for his phone to check the time: 11:30! He couldn’t believe how long and soundly he had slept. He must have slept like a log because as soon as he rolled over, he felt a searing pain shoot across his back and shoulders. Now he remembered that he and Mickey had fallen asleep on the beach the day before and were both burned to a crisp! Mickey! Where was he? Oh yeah, he went to the factory today. Ian had the house all to himself for the first time and decided to have a look around. He wondered what he might find. Perhaps some clues as to the true nature of Mickey’s relationship with Manuel.

He canvassed the bedroom, looking for any personal items that might belong to Manuel, searched all of the drawers in the house for any cards, letters or other written communication that might hint at some type of relationship beyond that of friendship and business partnership, checked out all of the closets for any clothing or shoes that were too big for Mickey, but nothing, not a single shred of evidence that Manuel was a frequent flyer at Mick’s place. Was he just being completely ridiculous? Was it possible that there really was nothing? ‘No, MIckey and Manuel had sex, and on more than one occasion!’ Ian’s inner voice of negativity taunted. ‘And right now, while you are lying here in bed, they are together!’ Ian could feel his jealous anger bubbling up inside him, like bitter, putrid waste in a clogged sewage system. He might have vomited right then and there, had there been anything at all in his stomach. Instead, he struggled to rise from the bed without the aid of his crutches. He simply couldn’t allow himself to be physically crippled any longer. He had to get back into shape and regain his self-esteem. How could he compete with Manuel’s exquisitely muscled, buff body if he was gimping around on crutches? Ian willed himself to walk from the bedroom to the kitchen, unaided, only to fall short, grabbing desperately for the wall before falling unceremoniously to the floor with a loud thud.

As he lay there, dazed and in great pain, he heard the front door swing open. “Gallagher! You up? It’s almost noon! Time for lunch! I brought sandwiches from my favorite deli down the block. You up? Hungry?” Mickey called out as he entered. When he saw Ian on the floor, he immediately dropped the food on the counter and rushed to him. “Ian! What the fuck happened? You alright? -- the fuck are your crutches?” Ian couldn’t get a single word out, for fear of breaking down. He struggled to get up off the floor on his own, but Mickey wasn’t having it. “Gallagher! You’re gonna make things worse! Let me help you!” Mickey yelled, frustrated with Ian’s bullheadedness. Ian could feel the stinging heat of his tears as his eyes betrayed him, allowing them to trickle down his cheeks faster than he could wipe them away. “Jesus, Mick! Would you leave me the fuck alone!?” Ian roared, his hands wiping furiously at his face. “No, I won’t,” Mickey answered calmly, forcing Ian to lean on him as he pulled himself up from the floor. “Never again! I should never have left you here in the first place! I missed you so much, I couldn’t get through the day without coming back to see you, and when I do, you’re on the fuckin’ floor, hurt!!” Ian’s face twisted into a snarl, “I told you before, I don’t need a fuckin’ nurse!”

“Don’t worry, I ain’t no fuckin’ nurse! I’m the guy that’s gonna kick your ass if you don’t stop with all this stupid shit!” Mickey raised his voice playfully, feigning anger, then smiling broadly at Ian. Ian wanted to calm down, but he couldn’t. “Fuck off!!” he screamed, hugging the wall back to the bedroom, where he retrieved his crutches. With crutches in tow, he headed for the front door. “What the fuck?!” Mickey screamed, traipsing after him. At this point, he really was becoming annoyed
himself. After all, he had driven a significant distance, just to come home and have lunch with Ian, and this was the thanks he got?! “Just please let me go;” Ian said in as calm a voice as he could muster. “Go where?!”? Mickey snorted angrily. “Out!” Ian blasted back, slamming the door on his way out.

Mickey threw the sandwiches in the fridge and sat on the couch for what felt like hours, puzzling about what had just happened. What the fuck is Ian’s problem? Where the hell did he go? Is he even coming back? Mickey could feel a growing lump in his throat and a sick feeling in his gut, reminiscent of that fateful day when Ian left him at the border. No fuckin’ way could he let this happen again! He could not survive without Ian, now that he finally had him back, “No fuckin’ way!” he yelled out loud to himself as he picked himself up off the couch and headed for the door. He had no idea where Ian had gone, but he was determined to find him, even if it meant traveling to the ends of the earth!

Chapter End Notes

Comments and feedback welcome!
Mickey walked from one end of town to the other, stopping in every single bar, restaurant and shop along the way. When he came up empty in his search, he began stopping random people, showing them Ian’s picture and asking if they had seen him. He walked and talked for hours, desperately pleading with people to just take another look. It was as if he were a little boy who had lost his puppy!

As the streets of town became busier at day’s end, the search became more difficult and Mickey became more distraught. Since it was now the end of the work day, he decided to call Mandy to see if she had heard anything from him. No answer. What could this mean? Surely, she would have called him if something had happened to Ian and she knew about it. What if he had gone back to the house? Ian hadn’t taken his phone with him, so there was no way for Mickey to even attempt to make contact. Mickey rubbed his wet, stinging eyes with the palms of his hands in frustration, sweat from his brow adding insult to injury. ‘...the fuck did you do?! How can this even be happening right now?’ Mickey’s mind scolded. He sat down on a curbside bench to breathe and think, then resolved to continue looking in town, leaving a message for Mandy to check the house for Ian and get back to him.

As Mickey resumed his search, now doggedly exhausted from walking all afternoon in the Mexico heat, he began to worry about Ian’s health. Had he taken his medication? Was he staying hydrated? Had he fallen again and really hurt himself this time? His mind raced, conjuring up countless horrifying possibilities. He decided he would stop at the town medical clinic, in case he had been injured further and taken for treatment. It was a bit off the beaten path, but Mickey was far enough from his house that going to get the car would be a colossal waste of time.

When he arrived at the clinic, the place was overrun with sick children and the elderly. There was no sign of Ian in the waiting room; so Mickey rushed the appointment window, barking out a description of Ian and his previous injuries and pleading with the receptionist to check all of the exam rooms for him. “Sir, please calm down! I can already tell you that he is not here. We haven’t seen any patients with red hair all day! Now, if you would excuse me, we have a waiting room full of patients and we close in less than an hour!” the receptionist answered, annoyed by Mickey’s abrupt manner.

Offended, but too worried to be confrontational, Mickey left the clinic and headed back into the main part of town. He trudged on for another hour or so, now full-on sobbing between conversations with any and all people who were willing to stop and listen to him.

Finally, he was so damn thirsty that he had to stop for a drink. He ducked into a cantina and ordered a beer. The place was dead, no one to talk to, so he turned to check out the TV. A news commentator interrupted with breaking news. A drowning victim had been pulled from the ocean at Boca De Rio! A reporter was on the scene as the incident continued to unfold. Mickey’s stomach dropped. After all this time, he hadn’t thought once about looking for Ian on the beach. He had seen how difficult it was for him to navigate it on his crutches and figured he wouldn’t go there alone! What if he had, and had gotten swept up by the waves? He couldn’t swim with his injuries! Mickey began imagining the worst-case scenario. Ian was dead! Oh God!

He peered at the TV through his teary eyes, awaiting confirmation of his worst fear. As the reporter approached the scene, the camera zoomed in on the rescue attempt in progress. Mickey caught a
glimpse of someone with bright orange-red hair. “No!” he screamed in the middle of the cantina. The bartender and his one other customer rushed over to join him under the TV.

As the camera panned in further, Mickey could see that the victim was a small boy, maybe five or six years old, who had just regained consciousness and was looking around, disoriented. Mickey guiltily breathed a sigh of relief. The camera panned right and, kneeling next to the small victim was Ian, his air-splinted leg jutting out awkwardly as he seemed to be rendering medical care.

The boy’s concerned mother emerged from the crowd that had formed around the scene and a siren whined with increasing volume in the background. Police dispersed the crowd, making way for the approaching ambulance. The boy was quickly tended to by EMS and was loaded into the ambulance. The reporter then rushed over to Ian, struggling in the soft sand with her high heels. “Sir, you are a hero! Can you tell me how it was that you came to save that little boy’s life?” “Well, some swimmers spotted him floating in the ocean and were able to successfully drag him ashore. They are the real heroes. Anyway, I watched it happen and, since I am a trained EMT, I figured I was probably the best person to render emergency aid,” Ian answered, a glint of pride shining from his gorgeous green eyes. “He wasn’t breathing, so I administered CPR until emergency medical personnel arrived,” he continued. “You look like you have some injuries yourself! How did you manage to do this in your condition?” she asked. “I guess you could say that, when something like this happens, your adrenaline just kicks in and you can do things you never thought possible,” Ian answered, a sheepish grin now creeping across his face. By this time, the crowd had them completely encircled again and had grown in number, looking on with curiosity and admiration. “And what is your name, sir? I’m sure the boy’s family and the community want to know who to thank,” the reporter questioned. “My name is Ian. Ian Gallagher,” he responded, looking into the camera. As Mickey watched in reverence, he breathed a sigh of relief in the knowledge that Ian was safe, and apparently now a local celebrity! He chugged the rest of his beer and headed toward the beach to join Ian’s throng of admirers.

Mickey kept his distance while onlookers approached Ian to shake his hand, among them the local fire chief, in uniform, who had arrived at the scene with the police. With the reporter and her microphone gone, and so many people milling around, it was difficult for Mickey to hear the conversations between Ian and his newly found fans, but as he watched him talk with the fire chief, he could see Ian nodding his head and accepting a business card.

At long last, the crowd died down and Ian caught sight of Mickey. He made his way slowly over to Mickey, struggling once again with the sinking of his crutches into the sand. Mickey closed in on him, meeting him halfway.

“Hey Mick,” Ian began, “I’m sorry for being such a dick earlier today. I just can’t stand feeling helpless, like some charity case or something. I never want to be that to you. That’s why I broke up with you when my bipolar was so bad. I wanna…” Mickey silenced Ian quickly, enveloping his mouth with his own as he pulled Ian up against him in a tight embrace. Ian returned his kiss intensely, tugging at his belt. “C’mon, let’s go home,” Mickey breathed between kisses. “I’m not looking to get any more sand in my ass crack today!” he added. Ian chuckled, re-steading himself on his crutches. So they set off on their way, Mickey’s arm around Ian’s shoulders.

Ian limped along with a new confidence, comforted by the knowledge that he had saved someone today. He got the same warm feeling of contentment as he did when he made successful EMS runs in Chicago. ‘Emergency medicine was what I was born to do. That and fucking the hell outta Mickey!’ he thought to himself, snickering out loud. “What’s so funny?” Mickey asked. “Nothing, just happy to know I am where I belong!” Ian answered, smirking evilly as he imagined his next romp with Mickey.
As the two made their way back through town toward home, they were spotted by Mandy and Manuel, who were driving home from the factory. Since they could see that walking home with Ian on crutches was slow going, they stopped to offer them a ride. Ian protested at first, not wanting to look like he couldn’t handle the walk, but was quickly persuaded when Mickey opened the car door, pushed him toward it and said, “Get in!” He could see that Mickey was tired, and that his sunburn had gotten worse, probably from him traversing the town on foot, looking for Ian all day.

As soon as they were both in the car, Ian leaned over to plant a firm kiss on Mickey’s sultry lips, while trailing his fingers lightly over his cock. “Mmmm…” Mickey mumbled, instantly aroused. He turned and leaned into Ian, kissing him hard as he lifted his ass up off the seat to increase the friction between Ian’s hand and his now fully erect member.

Meanwhile, the front seat was abuzz with surfboard-related chatter, interspersed with Mandy and Manuel’s own erotic touching. As the car approached Mickey’s house, he thought briefly about possibly inviting them in for drinks, which would have been the polite thing to do after being driven home, but dismissed the idea in favor of having Ian’s beautiful ass all to himself. He thanked Manuel quickly, ushering Ian in the door in front of him, following behind as closely as possible so as not to put the throbbing bulge in his pants on display for Manuel and his sister.

Chapter End Notes

Wow! I have one more complete chapter that I have yet to publish and am working on the one after that. Thought it would advance the plot more straight out of the gate, but then they got their freak on instead. Hot stuff! Really gets me, and I'm the one who wrote it! Wondering if I will affect any of you the same way. I plan to publish it and the one that precedes it by the end of tomorrow.

Feedback and suggestions always welcome! Thanks for reading!
Once inside the house, Mickey considered pulling the sandwiches out of the fridge since he had eaten nothing all day and suspected the same to be the case for Ian. But before he could give it a second thought, Ian had wrapped his good arm around Mickey and, using him as a crutch, headed straight for the bedroom. Ian pulled Mickey onto the bed with him, again fondling him lightly over his clothing. Mickey pulled away, taking a moment to peel the clothing, first off Ian, then himself, Ian all the while maintaining some bodily contact with Mickey’s swollen shaft. Once Mickey had removed every stitch of clothing from both of their bodies, Ian slid down the bed, taking Mickey into his mouth quickly and sucking intensely. Mickey drew his breath in sharply and held it, staving off the moan that was now safely trapped in the back of his throat. Ian licked and sucked up and down the entire length of Mickey’s delicious dick, detouring intermittently to lightly feather his asshole with his wet tongue.

As Ian continued, he relaxed the back of his throat, engulfing Mickey’s full length, while rubbing his moist anus with his equally saliva-soaked fingers, Mickey releasing his pent up moan from his now gaping mouth. Mickey arched up off the bed in ecstasy, pulling recklessly at Ian’s fiery locks as Ian inserted his fingers into him, while still sliding his mouth up and down his rock-hard rod. “Gall-agher! I can’t…” “Can’t what?” Ian asked, flipping Mickey over as he grabbed the lube to prepare Mickey more fully for what was coming next. “Can’t stop!” Mickey wailed, taking a deep breath and holding it in an attempt to slow his burgeoning arousal. “Oh, no need!” Ian replied as he quickly and expertly applied the lube liberally to both himself and Mickey.

He slipped himself in slowly, rubbing Mickey’s balls softly from underneath. “Fuck!” Mickey bellowed, pulling his lower lip into his mouth and biting down hard, in a further attempt to restrain himself. “You feel so fuckin’ good, Mick!” Ian whispered in Mickey’s ear, gradually increasing the speed and depth of his penetration. “You are so damn hot! I’m gonna jerk you off and you’re gonna cum for me all over this bed while I do it in your ass! Then we’re having dinner! You got that?” Ian hissed into his man’s ear, biting at his tender earlobe, while tightening his fist around Mickey’s molten manhood. “Mmm hmmm,” Mickey mumbled compliently, his teeth sinking further into his sexy lower lip, drawing blood, his breathing ragged with impassioned lust. Mickey surrendered himself to the rapture of Ian’s potent dominance, his head dizzy with desire. “You are so fucking fine, Mick, I can’t help myself!” Ian moaned, speeding up both his thrusts and his hand movements, ramming himself hard into Mickey for a final time as he found his release, Mickey shattering underneath him, crying out in euphoric satisfaction. Even their quickies were amazing!

The two men lay in silence, basking in the afterglow of their frenzied union. “Fuck, I missed you!” Mickey finally said. “You did?” Ian asked, knowing full well the answer before he even asked. “Yeah, man,” Mickey answered, “You’re the best fuck I ever had! But that’s not all! You make my life worth livin’, man! So I really hope you’re done with all the stupid shit!”

A genuine feeling of peace and contentment settled over Ian. He loved to hear how Mickey felt about him as much as he enjoyed the way Mickey’s body responded to his own. He remembered a time when he could only guess because Mickey’s fear forced him to bottle up most of his feelings. There were even times when Mickey had lied to him and to himself about how he felt, just to protect them both from the world they lived in. Ian rejoiced in the idea that those days were over, pushing his lips softly against Mickey’s forehead. “I need a shower, man,” Mickey said, pulling Ian up off the bed with him and heading toward the bathroom. “Me too!” Ian replied, leaning on Mickey as they walked.

Mickey opened the shower door, turning on the water and setting the perfect temperature. He then
carefully removed Ian’s air splint and guided him slowly in, as had become the routine since his arrival, stepping behind him as Ian leaned against the shower wall, the falling water streaming off his glistening frame. Mickey stood frozen in awe for a moment, his piercing blue eyes drinking in Ian’s incredible beauty. He then made quick work of lathering every inch of Ian’s impressive form, giving extra time to his flawlessly beautiful phallus. Ian shuddered, his package still sensitive from their recent session.

Once Ian was soaped up from head to toe, Mickey pushed his index finger against Ian’s sudzy chest, tracing a heart into the layer of soap, adding an “I” before it and a “U” after. As Mickey finished the last part of the “U”, Ian looked down lovingly at Mickey, whose bleach-blonde hair was now growing some dark roots. “I love you, too!” Ian proclaimed, squeezing the shower soap onto Mickey’s chest and spreading it over as much of Mickey’s torso as was possible without prompting a serious shower accident.

As he attempted to reach down and wash Mickey’s dick, he felt himself slip and had to stop to steady himself against the wall. “It’s ok,” Mickey said softly, “I can wash my own junk. Besides, shower sex is off the menu ‘til you heal up, firecrotch!” Ian looked dejected. His injuries made him feel like less of a man and he hated it, especially since Manuel was such a perfect specimen. He just couldn’t keep the idea of Manuel and Mickey together out of his head. Seeing that Ian was feeling low, Mickey reached up and held Ian’s sad, yet stunning face between his hands, pressing his exquisitely molded mouth softly against Ian’s before locking his brilliant blue eyes on Ian’s glowing green.

“Look, I don’t know what it’s gonna take, but I plan on spendin’ the rest of my life makin’ you realize how much you mean to me and how perfect you are to me. I’ll be here through everything, no matter what. You being hurt doesn’t change a damn thing about how I feel about ya, or how I see ya. You’re my hot tamale, man, so fuckin’ sexy, the only lover I ever want. No one can replace you and nothin’ will ever change how I feel.”

Mickey pulled Ian’s face gently down toward him for another slow, tender kiss, which Ian returned, sucking Mickey’s pretty, pillowowy lower lip into his greedy mouth, just the way he had always done and had dreamed of doing daily while they were apart. Even when sex wasn’t an option, a constant undercurrent of subatomic attraction kept the couple on the edge and at the ready any time they were in close proximity. Their love was an obsessive addiction that controlled their every move, drawing them together like two powerful, unrelenting magnets.

When they finally got out of the shower, Mickey went to the kitchen to prepare dinner, which ended up being the corned beef sandwiches he had brought home for lunch, served with pork rinds and beer. This was a gourmet meal for Ian, who was accustomed to eating whatever he, Fiona or any of his other siblings could scrounge up in the Gallagher kitchen. Ian complemented Mickey on his impeccable taste in food, then pulled the fire chief’s card out of his wallet with a smile. “I think today’s rescue may have earned me an EMS job here in town,” Ian boasted. “I am supposed to call Chief Chavez first thing tomorrow morning.” Mickey nodded his head in approval, trying his best to look pleased. “That’s great!” Mickey replied with much less enthusiasm than he intended.

While he made a valiant effort to appear happy for Ian, in his mind all he could hear was the reporter, ‘And what is your name, sir? I’m sure the boy’s family and the community want to know who to thank.’ Mickey’s mind raced, conjuring up numerous fictitious, but plausible scenarios where Ian’s newly found fame and job opportunity could impact his relationship with Ian, his business and even his freedom. Mickey bit his tongue, choosing to listen quietly as Ian mused about his future in Emergency Medicine, the opportunities he might have to treat wealthy tourists who could afford to reward him with tips and gifts, and the exhilarating feeling he got every time he saved a life.

Mickey loved seeing Ian so happy. It was as if a missing piece of him was all at once snapped back
into place; the light in Ian’s eyes made Mickey’s heart leap in his chest. He loved Ian too much to even think of denying him this fulfillment. Still, Mickey worried about Ian being in the public eye. In particular, it was the high-profile tourists from America who posed the biggest risk, as Mickey saw it. If one of them was impressed enough with Ian to carry tales of Ian’s talents back to the States, there was a chance that the international attention he could receive might cause problems for Mickey.

He told himself he was being paranoid, that he would know in advance if anyone was on his trail. After all, he did have some pretty important American connections through his reverse coyote business, the kind of people that kept tabs on federal investigations through insider information. He resolved to contact some of his guys first thing in the morning.
Morning Mischief

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The sweet scent of chocolate chip pancakes, mixed with strong coffee, wafted into the bedroom as Mickey rubbed the sleep from his tired eyes, shielding them from the bright rays of sun as they slipped through the cracks between the slats of his window blinds. As the alluring aroma of breakfast coaxed Mickey’s mind to wakefulness, he reasoned that Ian must already be up and cooking, despite his injuries. Mickey dragged his caffeine deficient, naked ass out of bed, hoping Ian was safe, and anticipating a nice breakfast with his gorgeous guy. “Mornin’,” Ian chirped. “Yeah, somethin’ smells real good!” Mickey replied in a sing-song voice, bouncing into the kitchen for a good morning kiss, his eyes beaming as he took in the glorious sight of Ian, wearing nothing but his boxers and a smile.

He stood on his toes and leaned into Ian, locking their lips together tightly. Ian nipped at the perimeter of Mickey’s mouth sensually, settling in on his luscious lower lip with his teeth, pulling it fervently into his mouth. “Mmmm,” Mickey moaned, “You’re gonna burn the pancakes.” Ian shrugged, indicating his lack of concern for the pancakes, and continued to nibble at Mickey’s pouty lips. Mickey pulled away abruptly, reaching over to flip the pancakes, which were quickly approaching well-done status. “Tease!” Ian shouted playfully, pulling the pancake turner from Mickey’s grip and smacking him on his bare ass with it.

At that moment, a switch somewhere inside Mickey flipped. “That’s it!” Mickey growled, rubbing his reddened left ass cheek with one hand and wresting the pancake turner away from Ian with the other. He lifted the pancakes off the griddle onto a serving plate, then turned his attention to Ian, who was making his great escape, crutches and all!

Mickey gave chase, quickly closing the gap between himself and his wounded beloved, doing his best to tackle him to the bed without inducing any further damage to Ian’s arm or leg. “Okay! Okay!” Ian yelled as he covered his ass with his good hand in an attempt to protect his thinly clad posterior. “No fuckin’ way you’re getting out of this that easy!” Mickey snarled, pinning Ian’s good leg to the bed with his knees as he wound up with the pancake turner. “I’m sorry!” Ian stammered, truly beginning to fear Mickey’s wrath. “Oh, you’re gonna be!” Mickey retorted, coming down hard on Ian’s quivering bottom repeatedly with the pancake turner, eliciting one loud smack after another. Ian winced at the pain of the first few strokes, attempting unsuccessfully to wriggle free of Mickey’s hold on him. Mickey was unrelenting, forcing Ian to settle into his punishment. As this continued, Ian found himself to be increasingly aroused, despite the pain of the brutal blows Mickey was exacting upon his tender buttocks, his swelling cock pressing into the bed with each new swat delivered by Mickey’s unwavering hand.

“What is THIS?” Mickey chided in mock disgust, as he took hold of Ian’s now fully engorged instrument. Ian just buried his face in the pillow, denying Mickey the answer that he surely expected. “What? No answer? OK!” Mickey continued, resuming the spanking, while fondling Ian from underneath. A series of muffled moans rose from Ian’s buried face. Mickey laughed and continued, quickening the pace of the paddling and the fondling. “Roll over!” Mickey commanded, finally too exhausted to continue to hold Ian down and accomplish all of these tasks simultaneously.

Ian obediently acquiesced, struggling to do so quickly enough to suit Mickey. Ian’s backside was on fire, along with his throbbing, rock-hard cock. Mickey bent down over Ian’s plump package, taking it gradually into his mouth, swirling his tongue over it ever so slowly. “Fuck, Mick!” Ian whimpered, floating in the no-man’s land between pleasure and pain. Mickey continued with his slow, torturous
blow job, flicking his tongue lazily over the slit, then back down the shaft, all the while digging his fingers into Ian’s red hot rump. “Oh fuck! Mickey!” Ian was screaming by this time, begging for his release.

“Tell me you’re mine!” Mickey breathed before descending onto Ian’s manhood forcefully, taking it all deep into his hot, wet mouth, then slowly sucking his way back up to the tip. “Yes! Yes! All fucking yours, Mick! Please?!” Ian pleaded in desperation. “Mickey formed a satisfied smile around Ian’s cock before doubling his efforts, sucking ardently as he inserted a slippery, saliva-covered finger into Ian’s puckered hole, angling it to press against Ian’s prostate with each entry.

“Mmmick! So fucking good! Gonna...cummommmm!” Ian moaned, thrusting up into Mick’s mouth strenuously as he shot his molten load down Mickey’s throat. Mickey swallowed every last drop of Ian’s salty discharge, grinning like a cheshire cat, a fire ignited and escalating exponentially inside him as he led Ian through his cataclysmic climax.

Ian reached into Mickey’s boxers, encircling Mickey’s begging meat stick. Mickey groaned in appreciation. “Way too hot!” Mickey growled, rocking his hips feverishly up into Ian’s hand. “So close!” Mickey breathed, Ian hastening the tempo and intensifying the grip of his hand on Mickey’s now twitching tool. Ian lowered his head, wrapping his moist lips around Mickey’s package tightly as he literally sucked the semen right out of him. “Goddamn Gallagher!” Mickey shrieked, his body bucking wildly, head reeling violently back and forth on the bed.

And then there was silence, the winded and worn out couple quietly returning to reality as their bodies reassumed a sense of normalcy.

The pair regained their composure and returned to the kitchen to finally partake in the now room-temperature pancakes. “Thank God for microwaves!” Ian exclaimed, throwing the plate of pancakes in for 30 seconds. Mickey poured two cups of piping hot coffee, two glasses of orange juice and pulled a chair out for Ian to sit on, carefully placing a throw pillow for a cushion. “Fuck off!” Ian chuckled, rubbing his ass for effect before taking a seat. Mickey pulled the freshly heated pancakes from the microwave, serving them up on two plates, which he carried to the table, along with the butter and syrup. The two sat across from one another, just staring in wonder at their mutual good fortune, much as they had the morning after Ian had arrived in Mexico.

Mickey’s first bite turned his lips upward, his eyes sparkling. “These are real good, man,” he complimented. “Yeah, well, you’re not so bad yourself,” Ian replied, raising an eyebrow and sporting a matching grin as he recounted the morning’s events. “Mmm Hmm,” Mickey mumbled, his well-formed mouth now overly stuffed with fluffy, delicious pancakes.

“So I’m gonna go see that fire chief this morning,” Ian began, pausing to swallow, “...see how soon I can start. Can you give me a ride?” he finished. “Sure,” Mickey answered, the thought of Ian possibly blowing up their life together jabbing at his mind, body and soul, as if he just got punched in the gut. “Have to get to the factory soon,” Mickey added, looking at the time on his phone. “Missed call from Mandy,” Mickey mumbled as he scrolled through his notifications, “…and a text message, too. Says they are stopping by on their way to work,” he sighed, rolling his eyes. “Sure hope they didn’t stop earlier!” Ian giggled.

There was a soft knock on the door and then it banged open, Mandy waltzing in with a drink carrier full of lattes, a giddy laugh escaping past her toothy grin. “Hey, I tried calling you, but no answer. So I just came here to see if we can take Ian with us to the factory today. I have an idea…” Mandy announced with excitement as Manuel pushed in the door behind her.

“Look,” Mickey began in an irritated tone, “we already had breakfast and coffee, but still gotta shower. Ian is goin’ to the fire station today to talk to the chief about an EMS job, so....” Mandy
interrupted, “No! He can’t do that! I want him to be our model for the new surfboard line I am proposing. It will be for female surfers, so we will need male models and Ian will be perfect!” “Mandy…” Ian began before being cut off. “Ian, I know you will try to be modest and say you aren’t good enough, but let’s face it, you’re hot! I would totally buy a surfboard if you were modeling for it...and I don’t even surf!” Mandy exclaimed jubilantly. “And besides, you need a job, right?” she added. “About that,” Ian began again, “I really think I should talk to this chief today. EMS is what I do. I’m good at it, and it makes me feel like I’m doing the right thing when I’m out saving people, or trying to, at least,” he reasoned.

Dejected, Mandy plopped down on the couch, pushing the full drink holder onto the coffee table in front of her. Manuel walked over, sitting next to her, so close that their legs touched. “Why can’t Ian do both?” Manuel interjected. “I mean, we could offer flexibility as far as what hours we would need you,” Manuel continued, glancing over at Ian with a slight smile.

“We can talk more about this another time,” Mickey spoke authoritatively in his all-business voice. “We gotta get ready! I got some important calls to make at my office and I still have to drop his ass off!” He stomped off toward the shower, turning to look back at Ian, who grabbed his crutches and followed as briskly as possible.

Mandy rolled her eyes, reaching for her latte and handing one to Manuel as she rose from the couch. “Guess we’ll talk to my asshole brother at work and try Ian again after his thing with the chief today,” she sighed in resignation. “Don’t worry,” Manuel spoke softly, his sexy accent driving her wild, as always, “Whatever happens, your new line will be a success, even if I have to model for it myself!” he finished as he kissed Mandy lightly on the forehead, gripping her hand firmly and leading her out to the car.

Chapter End Notes

Really wanting some feedback as I am entering a pivotal point in the story. If you're out there reading, I'd love your opinions!
Ian shifted his weight in his seat, attempting to minimize the discomfort in his still stinging ass, his right leg steadily bouncing up and down off the ball of his foot. He was nervous, despite the fact that he had had a very positive interaction with Chief Chavez following the drowning rescue at the beach. In Ian’s mind, there was no question that he could do the job, and do it well. His concern involved the possibility of a background check, one that might reveal his psychiatric history. He knew from experience that EMS services shied away from hiring people with mental health illnesses, and that his recent hospitalization and subsequent release from his employment in Chicago could really shine a light on his condition and keep him from working in an EMT capacity in Mexico, too.

Chief Chavez’s voice interrupted his self-defeating thoughts, giving him renewed hope. “Mr. Gallagher!” the chief said with a smile. “Chief Chavez,” Ian replied, “Nice to see you again! Thank you for seeing me.” The chief nodded, ushering Ian into his office and showing him to a much softer seat than the one in the waiting room, which was a blessing for Ian’s tender bottom.

“Boca Del Rio was fortunate to have you yesterday, Mr. Gallagher. You saved that young man’s life and there are plenty of people who want to see you be rewarded for that,” Chavez began. “Your quick thinking and actions, despite your current physical condition, turned a prospective tragedy into a great human interest story, one that has received international attention already!” Chavez exclaimed. “International?” Ian gulped, his mind racing, wondering how he could keep a lid on his history in Chicago. ‘Why did I give my real name? Mickey could have set me up with a new one! Damn! I’m so stupid!’ Ian thought to himself.

“Yes, the mother of the boy you saved, Joanna Bigley, is the daughter of a wealthy Manhattan businessman, Bruno Bigley. The entire Bigley family is flying in from New York to meet you, and I want to be sure you are a card-carrying member of the Boca EMS Department before they get here!” Chavez explained, essentially offering Ian a job on the spot.

Now Ian had a problem. Should he come clean with Chavez and ask him to use a different name for his employment? Of course, the news footage, were it to be reshown, would clearly reveal his name as he divulged it yesterday. Should he just roll with it and hope Chicago EMS would stay quiet about his history with them? Or should he just politely decline the position and avoid the limelight altogether? Ian was beginning to feel nauseous, the once-delicious pancakes his had enjoyed earlier that morning now threatening to revisit in a much less appealing way.

“Wh-When will they be here?” Ian asked, stalling for more time to think. “Should be landing later this afternoon and getting into town by nightfall. Are you available for dinner and a press conference?” the chief replied.

“I should be,” Ian managed to choke out over the ball of nerves that was rising up from his stomach into his throat. “What kinds of questions will they be asking me?” he wondered, not realizing he had asked the question out loud until Chief Chavez began to answer. “Well, I imagine they will ask many of the same questions you already answered for the on-scene reporter, and they will probably want some details about your past EMS experience, where you are from, why you are in Mexico now, stuff like that.”

Ian nodded silently, hoping he could avoid having to provide these answers until later so he would have time to come up with something and maybe talk to Mickey and Mandy about it first. “So, what EMS service did you work for in the States?” Chavez asked. Ian swallowed hard, taking a deep breath in anticipation of having to completely destroy his chances of getting his dream job in Mexico, “Uh…”
The blaring of the fire whistle interrupted Ian’s reply, Ian silently thanking his lucky stars as Chief Chavez waved him on to follow him into the firehouse, where he joined other firemen who were boarding the fire trucks. Ian struggled, his crutches and limitations putting a serious damper on his ability to maneuver himself up into the truck. Somehow, he managed to accomplish this feat, his effort causing him to break into a slight sweat.

The call was a house fire. Chief Chavez explained that Ian should remain in the truck while the firefighters bring the blaze under control, but that, should there be any injuries, Ian should help tend to the victim(s) once they have been safely removed from the house.

The chief showed Ian where the emergency medical equipment was stored on the truck. It was definitely scaled down, compared to everything that was available to him in the back of an ambulance, but he could make it work. It was a step up from what he had to work with yesterday at the beach, which was essentially nothing, other than his own professional knowledge.

Upon arrival on the scene, the entire house was ablaze, one injured man, who was reported to have jumped from a second floor window, lying in the street in front. Ian climbed down from the truck, leaning heavily on one crutch, while also carrying the medical bag. He yelled for one of the fireman to bring an oxygen tank, which he used, along with a nasal cannula from the bag, to provide oxygen to the injured man, while visually assessing the damage to the man’s left leg. He determined, after talking with the victim, that he had jumped and hit the ground upright, his left leg bearing the brunt of the impact with the ground, giving out under him as he landed. Ian splinted the leg and waited for EMS to arrive, assessing the man’s pulse and breathing periodically, and checking his pupils for good measure.

When EMS arrived, they took over medical care, leaving Ian to return to the truck and wait for the firefighters to contain the blaze, a process that seemed to take forever and a day. Ian wasn’t used to this. He wanted to be in the back of that ambulance where he belonged. He decided right then that he would do whatever it was going to take to get himself there.

The ride back was filled with the chatter of firemen telling their stories, each recounting his most heroic actions, embellishing as needed. Some spoke entirely in Spanish, although most knew English, as was the case for many Mexicans living and working in this town, largely inhabited by wealthy American tourists and transplants. Ian felt comfortable joining in their conversations, sharing some of his stories from his days with Chicago EMS, although he didn’t mention what city he had worked in. He was still hoping to find a way around sharing that with anyone, but didn’t have a clue of how he might pull it off.

Ian reached for his phone, feeling it buzz in his pocket. “Need a ride home? Going there for lunch,” Mickey’s text message read. “Went on a call. Headed back to the station. Meet me there in 10 minutes? Need to talk to you,” Ian sent back. “I’ll be there!” Mickey answered.

Ian felt a tiny measure of relief from his nervousness. He wasn’t sure if it was the successful run, the fact that Mickey was coming to pick him up or a combination of both, but, whatever the reason, this was the calmest he had felt since leaving the house that morning.

When the truck pulled up to the firehouse, Ian managed to extricate himself a bit faster this time, taking a minute to say his goodbyes, explaining that he had lunch plans and promising to come back before the press conference. By the time Ian made his way out to the street, Mickey was already there waiting, his window rolled down, the bright sunlight reflecting off his shining blue eyes, making him shimmer even more than usual. ‘God, he’s fucking stunning!’ Ian thought to himself as he carefully made his way to the car, more slowly than he would have liked.

Ian fought to dismiss all of the filthy thoughts he was having about Mickey, feeling the need to focus
on how he should handle the press conference he had already promised to attend. "Mick, I really need your help with something," Ian began. "OK..." Mickey breathed, his heart started pounding, anticipating a major problem of some type. "How 'bout if we pick up some lunch and take it home so we can talk," Ian suggested. "That's what I was thinking, so I ordered some tacos," Mickey smiled, pulling over in front of the restaurant. In a matter of minutes, Mickey had the food and they were home. Mickey helped Ian out of the car, opened the front door, then set about unpacking their lunch at the kitchen table. Ian limped in, Mickey noticing that he was becoming less and less reliant on his crutches.

“So, what did you want to talk about?” Mickey asked, arching his eyebrows. “Well,” Ian began as he took a seat at the table, using the throw pillow-cushioned chair he had sat on for breakfast, much to Mickey’s amusement. “Chief Chavez wants me to attend a press conference tonight. The mother of the boy I helped on the beach is from a wealthy New York family, and they are all flying in today to meet me!” Ian could hardly contain his excitement. “And the chief wanted to make sure I was gonna be working for Boca EMS so he could be there with me to promote Boca’s name in the international community.

“So where do you see a problem?” Mickey asked, clearly seeing one for his situation, but wondering what Ian was worried about. “Well, of course this is a really great opportunity for me, but I know they are gonna ask me about my past experience,” Ian paused, looking down at his uneaten taco. “And, well, I didn’t really go into detail about this with you when I first got here, but things didn’t end so well between me and Chicago EMS. They basically fired me after the bridge incident.” Ian looked up at Mickey, who was staring back, a genuine look of worry painted across his face, partially for Ian’s predicament, but also because of what he perceived to be his own.

Ian continued, “Since this will be televised in the States, I know people from Chicago EMS will see me and could say something, but I’m more worried that Chief Chavez might contact them to check my record and find out everything that happened. If he does, I don’t have a snowball’s chance in Mexico of keeping the job he offered me,” Ian continued, his voice straining.

“You mean Chavez hasn’t asked you about your background yet?” Mickey questioned. “Well, he asked, but before I had the chance to answer, the fire whistle went off and, next thing I know, we are climbing into a firetruck!” Ian explained.

“Oh, saved by the bell, huh?” Mickey chuckled. “I guess you could say that,” Ian smiled weakly. “So, what the hell do I do?” Ian appealed to Mickey, his voice cracking. Mickey sat quietly, a pensive look on his face. Inside his head he was thinking Ian should avoid the whole situation and model for “Ojos”, like Mandy and Manuel had spent the morning trying to sell him on. But he knew Ian would never be happy doing only that, especially after having his hero experience and now having gone on a run with the fire department.

MIckey sighed deeply, then began, “I think maybe you should say you have been outta the business for a while, like maybe goin’ to school or some shit. Talk mostly about your experiences when you did work. If they really push it, just say near Chicago if you have to, I guess,” Mickey really had no idea what was best and secretly hoped the whole thing would end up being cancelled. He wanted to beg Ian not to do this at all…

"Ok," Ian smiled, “Sounds like a plan! Thanks so much for helping me figure this all out. I’m still a little worried, but after hearing how calm you are about all of this, I feel better!” Ian rose from his chair, leaned across the table and planted a kiss of gratitude on Mickey’s ever-sexy lips. Mickey returned the kiss absentely, his mind still mulling over Ian’s predicament and the worst case scenario--not getting this job and having his mental illness exposed here in Mexico could really fuck Ian up. He might not even want to stay if that ended up happening.
Mickey was so worried about Ian that he all but forgot about all the gloom and doom he had discussed with his guys earlier. They had, of course, agreed to keep Mickey in the loop if they caught wind of any possible investigations pertaining to him or his whereabouts; they had been doing that already. What was of concern to them was how well-known Mickey’s connection with Ian might be in the States. They confirmed that anyone who had seen the news story on the Bigley boy, which was highly publicized in the States due to the prominence of the Bigley family, would definitely now know that Ian Gallagher was in Mexico. Mickey knew the Chicago Police had seen Ian’s name on the visitation list at Cook County Correctional and had questioned Ian before about his whereabouts. Everyone Mickey had talked to agreed that he was at risk already, so adding tonight’s press conference to the mix would only make things worse.

“So, what do you think I should wear?” Ian’s voice brought Mickey back to reality. ‘...the fuck should I know?’ Mickey thought to himself. ‘I don’t have time to think about that. I’m too busy trying to keep myself out of prison, thanks to you.’ Of course he couldn’t say that, so instead, Mickey said, “Well, you look so fuckin’ sexy in everything you wear that it doesn’t matter, but if I had to pick, I would say wear some khakis and a polo. That’s always a safe bet, and you’ll look fuckin’ hot as hell!”

Thanks, man!” Ian sighed in relief, taking a bite out of his taco. “Good?” Mickey asked, genuinely interested. “Yeah, man, you are the fucking best!” Ian smiled, his green eyes lighting up as he took another bite. “Ok, good,” Mickey started, “cause now I gotta ask you somethin.” “Sure! Anything!” Ian replied.

“Will you please come with me to the factory this afternoon? Mandy and Manuel cornered me in the office all morning, tryin’ to convince ME to convince YOU to model for the new female surfboard line that Mandy wants to start. I’m not tryin’ to tell you what to do, but I told them I’d try to get you to come in and hear them out. So, will you? “It’d make my life at work a fuck ton easier if you did,” Mickey explained.

“Sure, but only if you let me finish my taco first, and you promise to get me back here by 4:00 so I have time to get ready for tonight,” Ian answered with his mouth full of taco.

“Alright then, I’ll text them that you’re comin’, but can’t stay late, And, just so you know, I agree that you would be the perfect person to model for the new line, so I’m hopin’ you’ll think about it so they don’t end up having fuckin’ Manuel do it!”

Ian gave Mickey a puzzled look. “Don’t need him doin’ that; our reverse coyote clients from the States might not think we are safe to use anymore if one of our main guys is on fuckin’ billboards all over Mexico!” Mickey muttered, obviously aggravated. “Makes sense,” Ian nodded, “i’ll listen to them and think about it.”

Mickey and Ian finished the rest of their lunch, Ian sharing details from his morning run with the fire department, and Mickey watching his boyfriend come alive as he did so. Mickey was so incredibly happy to see Ian this way, but worried at the same time that this brief happiness could bring a world of hurt down on both of them. For now, all Mickey could do was wait and see...
Hurricane Ian

The sky had turned dark and ominous by the time Mickey and Ian arrived at the factory, despite it being the middle of the day. The wind was blowing fiercely and it was starting to rain. Mickey could see Mandy standing at the main entrance, motioning for them to come in. “Alright, let’s get in there before it really starts to pour,” Mickey said, taking his right hand off Ian’s left leg, where it had been resting for the entire trip. He loved touching Ian’s body, even when it didn’t lead to anything more. There was just something electric about it that made his heart race every time.

Somehow they managed to get in the door before the deluge started, giant raindrops pelting the tin awning just as they got under it. “Better get your asses in here quick,” Mandy yelled over the noise as she opened the door for them. “Yes, the storm is going to be a bad one!” Manuel added from over Mandy’s shoulder, “And there’s talk that we might be in the hurricane’s path! Well, not here really, but at home!”

“I’m thinkin’ we should have our little meeting here and then, if the forecast doesn’t change, we cut this shift short and get everyone the fuck outta here so they can get home safe,” Mickey reasoned as the group made their way back to the conference room, Ian lagging only a few paces behind the rest, using his crutches sparingly. “What d’ya think, Manuel?” Mickey asked, looking up at him as he sat down at the conference table. “I think that’s probably a good plan there, Ojos,” Manuel replied matter-of-factly.

Ian cringed at the use of the nickname, eyeballing Manuel menacingly from across the table. Ian could feel his anger ignite, his face flushing, his blood rushing through his veins, his pulse thumping at all of his pulse points. Mickey, instantly picking up on Ian’s growing animosity, slid his hand onto Ian’s leg from under the table and squeezed it lovingly, this time more to calm Ian, than for his own pleasure.

Mandy, also a pro at gauging Ian’s moods, did her part to distract Manuel, hoping to keep this whole situation from blowing up over something that was, in her mind, so trivial. She was also praying Ian wouldn’t just walk out, refusing to do the modeling for them. “Let’s, uh, go get some of the material samples we were lookin’ at, babe,” Mandy whispered to Manuel softly, pulling him toward the door leading to the factory floor.

Mickey, seizing the opportunity to de-escalate Ian’s ass, rubbed a bit further up his leg, gently massaging near his groin area. He leaned over to kiss Ian, but Ian turned his head away in a huff, “Damn it, Mickey! I can’t even focus on you, or anything else for that matter, when I’m so fucking pissed!! That motherfucker is in love with you, but you can’t see it!” Ian yelled, his face now beet red. “Woah! I think you’re way off base!” Mickey raised his voice a bit, but not nearly as loud as Ian’s. “I really don’t think…” Ian cut Mickey off mid-sentence. “Tell me he never called you that in bed!” Ian whined, staring over at Mickey, his eyes filling up with tears at the very thought of Mickey and Manuel in bed together.

“Ian, look, if you’re gonna sit there and act like no guy up in Chicago ever called you anything besides ‘Ian’ in bed in the six months that we were apart…”Not like that!” Ian interrupted Mickey again, “Maybe some generic shit while I was fucking them, but I don’t even remember! It’s not the same thing! I didn’t give a shit about anyone after I left you at the border. I basically told Trevor to fuck off and only picked random guys up for sex when I got so horny I couldn’t take it anymore! I always thought of you, Mick! And now that I have you back, I can’t stand seeing another guy, one you have obviously spent a fuck of a lotta time with, pining after you, calling you his pet nickname...How would YOU feel?”
Mickey had to admit, he would probably have been jealous at first, too, but he felt he more than explained this whole Manuel thing to Ian enough that he should be cool at this point. And he definitely thought Ian should know how much he loved him by now! How could he not? “Ian, maybe I would’ve been jealous at first, but Jesus, I’ve told you there’s nothin’ there but friendship, business partnership, and now I appreciate how good he's treatin' Mandy. And, as much as I hate to admit it, I really like the fact that their relationship might keep her here in Mexico. I really missed my little sister, pain in the ass that she can be!” Mickey explained, trying to lighten the mood and make Ian see reality.

Mickey could tell by the look on Ian’s face that he still wasn’t buying it, and he hoped Mandy was working some kind of magic with Manuel out in the factory. “Ask her!” Ian stammered after a brief lull in their conversation, as if he knew Mickey had just been thinking about her. “Ask her what?” Mickey sighed, beginning to get pretty irritated at this point. “Bet he does her in the ass a lot and fantasizes about you!” Ian spat through his clenched teeth in a low, angry whisper.

The door from the factory floor pushed open and Mandy sidled in, explaining that Manuel was handling a situation on the floor and would be in shortly. As she neared the table, it was evident that Ian’s frame of mind had only gotten worse since she had left the conference room. She sat down next to Ian, wishing she could talk with him, one-on-one, but realizing that sending Mickey out onto the factory floor with Manuel would only piss Ian off more.

“So, here’s the thing,” Mandy began, putting her hand on top of Ian’s, “I don’t know why you seem not to care much for Manuel, but the fact is that I’m really into him and, with you being my best friend and all, it’s real important that you give him a chance. You’ll see he’s a really great guy! I mean, he was so worried about Mick when he found out what happened to you. He’s the reason you’re here! He brought you here so Mickey wouldn’t have to risk going to Chicago to see you. Did you even know that?” Mandy paused, finally coming up for air.

“Yeah, I know that, Mands,” Ian answered, biting his tongue. He wanted so badly to share his theory that Manuel only brought him to Mexico to make Mickey realize that Ian wasn’t all that anymore, and that Mickey should be with him instead, but he didn’t have the heart to do that because he could tell Mandy was really falling for him. Deep down, Ian wanted to believe he was wrong about Manuel. Nothing would make Ian happier than to see his best friend in a loving relationship with someone who treated her the way she deserved to be treated, and he had to admit, from what he had seen so far, Manuel seemed to be doing that. ‘Maybe I was over-reacting,’ Ian told himself, taking a deep breath in an attempt to relax himself. “Ok, Mands, I hear ya. I’ll try my best. Can you go get him so we can talk business? I have a lot going on today and don’t have much time,” Ian caved, putting as close to a smile on his face as he could manage.

“Sure! That’s great, Ian! Thanks!” Mandy bubbled, kissing him on the cheek before heading back toward the door. Ian marveled at how easily Mandy was able to manipulate him into doing what she wanted. It had always been a gift of hers, since they were kids. She had that way with Mickey, too. She could always make both of them believe they were wrong about something, whether they actually were or not.

As the door closed behind her, Ian turned to Mickey and said, “I still want you to ask her.” “What the f--I’m not asking my sister about her sex life! It’s none of my fuckin’ business!” Mickey replied angrily. “Fine! Then I will!” Ian huffed, reaching into his pocket to fish out his buzzing phone. Mickey looked up in anticipation.

“Text from Chief Chavez: ‘The press conference for tonight is postponed indefinitely. All flights into and out of Mexico City for today have been cancelled due to inclement weather,’” Ian read aloud. “Shit!” Mickey exclaimed, “We better get the fuck outta here before the weather gets too much
“Hey, Manuel is sending everyone home! The storm is getting really bad!” Mandy yelled as she came bursting into the room. “Turn on the TV!” Manuel called as he neared the door, material samples in hand. Mickey reached for the remote and clicked the TV on. “...Hurricane Ian is expected to make landfall near Boca del Rio within the next hour. All gulf coast residents in the Boca area are advised to evacuate their homes immediately!”

“Holy shit! I have a hurricane named after me!” Ian mused. “No, you ARE a fuckin’ hurricane!” Mickey laughed, thrilled to see that Ian’s mood had lightened, even if, at the moment, it sounded like they could end up homeless!

“So, you guys aren’t at all concerned about the fact that we can’t go home?!” Mandy screamed in a panicked tone, “And that our houses could be destroyed by the hurricane?”

“Naw,” Mickey reassured her, “We got everything we need here for now,” he continued, pulling Ian’s chair closer to his own. “Besides, this way we have time to talk about Ian’s modeling career!” Mickey was suddenly so at ease, secure in the knowledge that there wasn’t going to be a press conference, at least not today, and that he and all of the people most important to him were far enough inland to hopefully be safe from the storm. And if they weren’t, at least they would be together.

Manuel dropped the samples on the conference table and pulled Mandy close to him, wrapping his arms around her tightly, a calm smile on his face as he nodded his head in agreement. “Let’s talk!” he said.
Mandy buzzed around the conference table, serving wine to everyone as Manuel pulled up the schematic for Mandy’s new surfboard design on the computer, projecting it for all to see. “Introducing Fuego!” moved across the screen in fiery red letters as the video presentation began. The board shape had a feminine look to it. It was smaller, overall, than the male designs and was also more slender and rounded. The schematic did not bear the signature “Ojos Azules” trademark blue eyes because Mandy and Manuel had worked to remove them from the presentation just moments before, fearing they might set Ian off again. They had resolved to leave them off the prototype Ian would ultimately pose with as well, although they would, of course, be present on every board that was manufactured for sale, once mass production began, and would also be photoshopped into the photos after the fact.

As Mandy began explaining her rationale for all of the subtle differences between this new board and all of the boards that had been designed for men, Manuel geared up for the materials portion of the presentation. As each type of material was shown and described in the presentation, Manuel passed a sample around the table. There were three possible material options and a large number of color selections on a color palate that Manuel circulated after the material samples.

Mickey spun the stem of his wine glass nervously, glancing over at Ian periodically to be sure he was still calm. No one made any further mention of the hurricane. They all knew it was beyond their control and were trying to keep their minds busy with business. Mickey, having already seen the presentation early that morning, concerned himself with marking possible colors for the board on his notepad, most of them being a hue of red or orange to complement Ian’s vibrant locks. He held the color palate up against Ian’s hair a few times, earning himself an eyeroll from Mandy each time. She wanted Ian’s undivided attention to be on her and her presentation, but Mickey’s color matching routine was a huge distraction. Each time Mickey put the palate to his head, Ian turned toward Mickey, and away from the presentation. Even Manuel spun around in his chair at one point, commenting on the options Mickey had selected and the way they brought out Ian’s gorgeous green eyes. Ian, already feeling the effects of his first glass of wine, batted his eyelashes and smiled, eating up all of the attention.

‘Born to be a fuckin’ model,” Mickey thought to himself as he watched Ian, suddenly feeling a pang of jealousy in the pit of his stomach. Not jealous of the prospect of being a model; Mickey knew that wasn’t for him. It was the thought of other men ogling his man, scantily clad, in magazines, on billboards, at surfboard trade shows, and just in general. His face and body would become familiar to the entire community and he would be recognized wherever he went. The whole idea was starting to make Mickey insanely jealous, but also ridiculously aroused at the same time.

“So, what do you think, Ian?” Manuel asked, infringing on the hot surfer boy fantasy that was playing out in Mickey’s mind. “Looks great! I love it!” Ian answered jovially, pouring himself another glass of wine and topping everyone else off. “Here’s to ‘Fuego!’” Manuel held his glass up to toast with everyone. “To Fuego!” Mandy, Mickey and Ian shouted, clinking their glasses all together. “So you’ll do it?” Mandy squealed, looking for confirmation from Ian that he would, in fact, be the Fuego model. “You’ll model for us?” “I’ll certainly do my best!” Ian said with a wide smile.

Manuel’s chocolate brown eyes sparkled as he shook Ian’s hand, pulling him in for a hug, as is Mexican tradition among friends. He looked over Ian’s shoulder at Mandy and Mickey, who were
both giving him a thumbs up, Mandy grinning from ear to ear. “Let’s celebrate!” Manuel cheered, putting on some Latin dance music and opening a second bottle of wine.

The festive atmosphere, combined with the flow of alcohol through his already-medicated veins and the presence of the love of his life, had Ian feeling happier, more relaxed and more pain-free than he had felt in a long time. He pulled Mandy up to him and initiated a little salsa dance with her, leading her expertly through the moves, his hips gyrating sensually, showcasing his dancing chops and giving Mickey the mother of all boners. Manuel looking on, impressed with Ian’s salsa skills and Mandy’s raw talent, was also sporting a major woody.

Manuel cut in, raising a flirtatious eyebrow at Ian as he did, then grasping Mandy’s waist, dipping and spinning her like a pro before grinding himself against her lustfully. Mandy melted into Manuel’s embrace, her eyes rolling back in her head as they moved against one another like satin on silk. The look on Mandy’s face was one of pure ecstasy, like she could get off at any second. Manuel leaned down, taking her lusciously plump lips into his ravenous mouth as they continued to dance, their bodies dissolving into one heaving mound of flesh.

“Yeah, Ian, I’m sure he’s fantasizing about me right now!” Mickey chuckled, looking away in embarrassment from the steamy display of sexuality his sister and his friend were putting on right in front of his eyes. “I am!” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear lustily as he moved his hands slowly over Mickey’s torso, pausing to trace every contour with his long fingers, before planting them firmly on his perfectly rounded ass cheeks. “The dirty things I could do to you right now…” Ian growled, wheeling Mickey around to face him and capturing his lips in a rough kiss. Ian pressed Mickey forcefully against him, deepening the kiss as he gripped Mickey’s buttocks tightly, swallowing his ragged moans voraciously.

Manuel and Mandy disappeared up a set of stairs, heading to the crow’s nest of the factory, Manuel leading her by the hand. Upon reaching the top of the staircase, Manuel hoisted Mandy up over his shoulder, whisking her down the hallway with purpose. He bypassed five open doorways, each with a bed, shower and toilet inside, finally stopping to open the second to last door in the hall. As he pushed the door open, Mandy noticed that it looked much different than all of the rooms before it. She had never seen this room before. In fact, she didn’t know it existed until now.

“What is this place?” Mandy implored, her ice blue eyes gazing up into Manuel’s ruggedly handsome face as he lay her down gently on a king-sized pillowtop mattress, adorned with the finest of designer linens. “It’s one of two rooms that were designed specifically to house our most special American clients, people who need to stay hidden away and have the means to pay for luxurious accommodations. We haven’t had any in need of this service in a while, so this is available to us. We will have privacy, and the thick, cement block walls will protect us from even the highest of winds. It is like a fortress and I am your protector, my beautiful princess!”

Manuel concluded his story with a sultry kiss, moving his molten mouth over every inch of Mandy’s exquisite form as he exposed it ever so slowly, Mandy’s body writhing under him in wanton impatience. Mandy’s breathing quickened as she fought to tear every stitch of fabric from Manuel’s brawny physique, thrusting her hips upward, desperately seeking that divine friction. “Need you now!” Mandy begged breathlessly. Manuel, giving in to their mutual desire, thrust himself full bore into her, driving a sharp gasp from deep within Mandy’s chest and swallowing it as their lips and tongues clashed feverishly. Mandy ran her fingers through the shiny, black strands of Manuel’s hair fervently, pulling wildly at the ends as Manuel moved expertly in and out of her. Their bodies rocked into one another in perfect harmony, each bringing the other to new heights of carnal pleasure with every move. Groans of ecstatic pleasure echoed throughout the room, reverberating within each of them as they reached the apex of their passion. “Oh God! Cumming!” Mandy screamed.

“Mandy,” Manuel panted, “I’m falling in love with you!”
“Wrong room,” Mickey whispered. “Sorry,” Ian giggled, pulling the door shut as quickly as he had opened it. “Dumb ass!” Mickey laughed, looking up at Ian after witnessing far too much of Manuel and Mandy’s encounter. “Let’s go,” Mickey said quietly, leading Ian to the next door.

Mickey pushed the heavy door on the last room in the hallway of the crow’s nest open. The room was aglow with dozens of candles, their sweet, seductive scents permeating the air. “This place is beautiful, Mick!” Ian marveled, his eyes taking in his illuminated surroundings. “What the hell is this for?” he continued, smirking at Mickey. “Play palace for you and your Mexican mambo man?” Ian slurred.

“Actually, if you must know--and you’re killin’ the shit outta the mood here, too, by the way, Firecrotch---this room and the one Manuel and Mandy are fucking in---missionary, by the way, just so ya’ know----are used for our big time American reverse coyote customers. Like, say a rich doctor is fleein’ the feds and has to get into Mexico and hide out for a while. We get him over the border and charge him extra to stay here. The walls are thick cement block and the rooms themselves are well-hidden inside the building, so we make big bucks renting them out! People who stay here live in style, as you can see by the stuff that’s in here,” Mickey explained, pointing out the luxurious bed, furniture, and hot tub, all sitting in a lavishly decorated room. It reminded Ian of some of the penthouse apartments he had visited during his days as an exotic dancer at the Fairy Tale, but even nicer.

Ian nodded, appearing to believe Mickey. “So, where are these big-wigs now?” Ian asked. “We haven’t had anyone stay in here for a while, so I figured I could surprise ya. You like it?” Mickey asked, the reflection of the candles’ soft glow dancing in his glistening eyes. “I love it, Mick! And I love you!” Ian murmured. “I get jealous because you are so amazing! Anyone who knows you would have to be nuts not to see that and want you as much as I do!” Ian finished, pulling Mickey down onto the bed and into a fully body embrace. “Careful of your leg…” Mickey began. “Shut the fuck up and take your damn clothes off! All of them!” Ian demanded, the alcohol clearly dulling his pain and sharpening his tongue. “Yes, sir!” Mickey laughed, leisurely removing his clothes. “Faster!” Ian prompted, reaching over to pull Mickey’s boxers the rest of the way off, freeing Mickey’s fully erect, overwhelmingly perfect cock.

“So fucking gorgeous!” Ian stared in awe, his misty green eyes tracing every contour of Mickey’s candlelit silhouette, his lush lips finding their way to Mickey’s glistening eyes. “I love it, Mick! And I love you!” Ian murmured. “I get jealous because you are so amazing! Anyone who knows you would have to be nuts not to see that and want you as much as I do!” Ian finished, pulling Mickey down onto the bed and into a fully body embrace. “Careful of your leg…” Mickey began. “Shut the fuck up and take your damn clothes off! All of them!” Ian demanded, the alcohol clearly dulling his pain and sharpening his tongue. “Yes, sir!” Mickey laughed, leisurely removing his clothes. “Faster!” Ian prompted, reaching over to pull Mickey’s boxers the rest of the way off, freeing Mickey’s fully erect, overwhelmingly perfect cock.

Ian started at the tip, gradually making his way down Mickey’s stiff, hot shaft, all the while sliding a slippery, lube laden finger in and out of Mickey’s ass, carefully selecting his angle for optimum pleasure. Ian knew Mickey’s body better than he knew it himself, which translated into tremendously intense pleasure for both of them. Ian bobbed up and down, squeezing Mickey’s sweet stick between his lips, then hollowing his cheeks to further heighten Mickey’s arousal. Ian had reduced Mickey to a moaning, begging, writhing slave to his own desire in a matter of minutes.

Ian continued with his torturous routine a bit longer, stretching Mickey amply and sucking him expertly, but denying him his release. “Ready for it?” Ian finally hissed, flipping Mickey over and putting him on all fours. “Yeah, man,” Mickey answered, his eyes squeezed tightly shut as he reared himself back against Ian’s deliciously swollen cock. Ian countered his movement, pushing into him slowly at first, Mickey moaning loudly with each thrust. “Yeah, Mick, you feel so fuckin’ good and tight!” Ian growled into Mickey’s ear, raising goosebumps over Mickey’s entire body. “Fuck me harder!” Mickey whined between moans. “Fuck, your dick feels so fuckin’ unbelievable, Ian!” Mickey’s words had Ian ready to explode at any second. He reached around to grasp and stroke...
Mickey’s member while steadily increasing the speed and ferocity of his fucking.

Within seconds, Ian and Mickey were enraptured in the most mindblowing, simultaneous orgasm of their lives. “Fuck! That was good!” Mickey breathed. “We’re good...together!” Ian added, pulling Mickey into him. “Yeah, so you done bein’ jealous of fuckin’ Manuel? He’s just my friend and, did ya hear? He fuckin’ said he loves Mandy!” “I love YOU!” Ian answered, kissing Mickey above his ear. “Well, then quit bustin’ my balls,’cuz I love you, too.”
Ian woke suddenly, disoriented. Other than Mickey, whose sleeping body he was curled around, nothing looked familiar. The flickering of candlelight created bouncing shadows of the room’s strange contents on the walls and it was deadly silent, other than the occasional breathing sounds that escaped Mickey’s slightly parted lips. As the alcohol-induced fog slowly lifted from his brain, Ian remembered that he had come to the factory to see Mandy’s presentation, gotten drunk, had outrageously gratifying sex with Mickey and passed out in a lavish bedroom, spooning with him. He was hungry, thirsty and worried all at once, struggling to extricate himself from Mickey without waking him. Ian rose from the bed slowly, careful not to disturb Mickey, and reached for his phone. ‘Six O’Clock,’ he read to himself, assuming he had slept through the night until he realized it was 6 PM. He also noticed that he had no text messages, no notifications, NO SERVICE! ‘WTF!’ Ian thought to himself as he made his way to the door gingerly, his leg throbbing a bit as he put his full weight on it without the aid of crutches or alcohol.

As he pulled the door open, the pounding of a torrential downpour on the factory roof, interspersed with vicious howling winds, assaulted his ears. As Ian traversed the hallway, headed for the stairs, he searched for a lightswitch, his phone providing insufficient light to navigate the unfamiliar territory ahead. He flipped the first switch he came to---nothing. He was running his hand along the hallway wall, feeling for another switch when he ran into Mandy, who must have been doing the same thing.

“Ian!” Mandy yelled, “You scared the shit out of me!” “Sorry,” Ian mumbled, still feeling for light switches. “We must have lost power!” Mandy added, “Guess we need some candles. We should conserve our phone batteries. Who knows when we will be able to leave here with this fucking storm!”

“What do you mean?” Ian asked, panicked. “I thought we would be leaving here by morning. Can’t watch the news to see what is going on in Boca. Can’t even look anything up on our phones!” Ian was starting to spiral. “Fuck, I don’t even have my meds!” he yelled. “You don’t have your meds?!” Mandy freaked, a worry line forming in the center of her forehead. “Fuck no!” Ian answered angrily, “I was only supposed to be here for a few hours! Then I was leaving to go home and get ready for a press conference!” “Oh my God, Ian! What are you gonna do?” Mandy questioned, her voice wavering. “I’ll be ok for a while. Just don’t worry about it. Hopefully, the storm lets up soon and we can get home,” Ian said, trying his best to calm Mandy, and himself, as they inched their way down the stairs in the dark.

“I’m really hungry! Is there anything to eat in this place?” Ian asked. “Probably some leftover subs in the employee fridge,” Mandy replied, heading toward the breakroom. “Manuel ordered lunch for the guys today to show his appreciation for their hard work,” she explained as she opened the refrigerator door. “Better close that door quick! Gotta try to keep all of the food cold for as long as possible,” Ian warned. “Good idea!” Mandy called back to Ian, grabbing four sandwiches and slamming the fridge shut.

“I’m gonna fill a pitcher of water and find some candles for upstairs. Here. Take these,” Mandy instructed Ian as she handed him a bag with the subs in it. Once the pitcher of water was full, Mandy started looking around for candles, using the flashlight on her phone. “Turn that off!” Ian chided. “You need to save the battery! Besides, I think Mickey already has every candle in the fuckin’ place! Our room is lit up like Christmas!” Ian snickered. “Great. Ok, let’s go,” Mandy sighed, heading for the stairs, following the wall with her free hand and encouraging Ian to do the same.

By the time Ian and Mandy were nearing the upstairs rooms, Manuel was standing at the end of the hall, shaking his head. “Um, there is a fully-stocked kitchen in the room Mickey’s in, you know?” he laughed. “No, we didn’t know that! But did you know the power is out?” Mandy retorted. “Yes,
baby girl, but we have enough ice to last a long time, and we also have a gas stove that we can light,” he smiled. “Ok, then,” Mandy began, setting the water pitcher down in the middle of the hallway, “Ian and I risked our lives in the dark for no reason!” she finished, glaring at Manuel. He took one look at her and charged at her, lifting her up and cradling her in his arms. “I will make it up to you!” he promised, his smouldering dark eyes melting her instantly. And with that, Mandy and Manuel vanished behind their door.

Ian slipped quietly back into the room where he and Mickey had, just a a few short hours ago, had the most fucking amazing sex of their lives. He told himself that Mickey was the only thing that mattered in his life. And, for the most part, he believed it. He was finally convinced that Mickey loved him and only him, and that they could build a happy life together in Mexico. But what if this storm had destroyed their home, ruined his chances at working as an EMT, caused him to go without his meds for too long? What then? He picked up a candle off the dresser to light his way to the kitchen he had, only a moment ago, learned existed. Just as Manuel had said, there was a full kitchen with a stocked fridge and pantry, a gas stove and a stand-alone freezer, which he assumed was packed with ice. Ian sighed in slight relief, resolving to refrigerate the subs and cook fresh food for a party of four. He set about boiling water for the fresh pasta dish he was planning to cook, then began slicing vegetables for a salad.

Mandy and Manuel sat on the couch in their room in stony silence. Mandy, too upset to allow Manuel to make anything up to her, had confided in him about her concerns for Ian and the fact that his meds were probably floating somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico by now. Mandy was insisting that she take the car and try to get to a pharmacy. Manuel refused to let her go out into the storm...and so they sat rigidly, locked in a stalemate, avoiding each other’s gaze. Mandy couldn’t bear to think about Ian losing his shit again, or Mickey losing Ian again. Her chest heaved as she let out a low sob, tears flowing from her brilliant blue eyes, staining her immaculately sculpted cheeks. Manuel leaned over, pulling her close to him. “I will go,” he comforted softly, kissing her lightly on the forehead, nose, then lips, lingering for a moment to breathe in her sweet essence. “You are the most beautiful creature in this world,” he sighed, “and I will protect you at all costs.” He stood up, fumbling in his pocket for his car keys, and then he was gone...
Mickey awoke to the aroma of Italian food, one of his favorites. He followed his nose to the kitchen, where he found Ian busy setting the table for four. “Mmmmm...something smells incredible!” Mickey called out as he closed in on Ian from behind, wrapping his arms around him and planting a sweet kiss on the side of his neck. “You know this reminds me of the morning…” Ian began, “I mean, I really did like when you…” Mickey, anticipating what Ian was going to say, interrupted, “Fuckin’ right, you liked it! You’re horny ass shot off like a goddamn rocket! That’s what you get! Definitely gonna hafta beat that ass again!” Ian grinned sheepishly, taken aback by how well Mickey could read him. “I’m gettin’ hard just thinkin’ about it,” Mickey added. “Me too!” Ian said softly, spinning around to kiss him, hungrily biting at Mickey’s lips, then pulling his whole mouth into his own. Mickey leaned into Ian, pushing him up against the table and laying him back onto it, silverware scattering beneath them. Mickey’s cock raged with desire as he pressed it against Ian’s equally aroused manhood. “So fuckin’ hot,” Mickey breathed between kisses, the heat between the two lovers growing more and more intense.

A knock on the door interrupted them. Mickey pulled his body up off of Ian’s, unsuccessfully attempting to will away his erection as he walked toward the door. He swung the door open to find Mandy standing there alone. “The fuck do you want?” he snorted, much to Mandy’s surprise. “Wow, so that’s how you greet your sister?!” she responded. He could see she had been crying, so he decided to give her a break, his hard-on finally beginning to subside. “The fuck’s wrong?” he asked as Ian headed over toward them, a look of concern on his face. “Uh,” Mandy struggled for words. She didn’t want Mickey to know that Manuel had gone to get meds for Ian because she didn’t know whether Ian had told Mickey he didn’t have them. She was trying to avoid drama, not start more. “Manuel and I had a disagreement,” she finally decided on. It was true, after all. “Bout what?” Mickey asked, scanning her face and body for marks, out of habit. “Well, I don’t really wanna talk about it,” Mandy looked down, avoiding Mickey’s eyes. “Jesus Christ, Mandy! You come in here all upset and then you won’t tell us what’s wrong?” Mickey was really getting pissed.

Mandy stood silently for what seemed like forever, then finally said, “Mick, if you don’t mind, I’d rather talk to Ian about it.” Ian approached Mandy, hugging her into him and walking her slowly over to the couch. “Mick, can you stir the sauce for me, please?” he asked. “Sure,” Mickey answered, trying to keep his anger in check. He knew that Ian and Mandy were close, and that she preferred not to discuss her love life with him, mostly because he had always shied away from that subject with her since they were kids. So it only made sense for her to choose to talk with Ian in this situation. What bothered him was the timing of it all, and the fact that she was so slow to open up even to Ian about it. He was really hungry, horny, irritated and, to top it all off, he had just realized that the power was out, along with phone service. Now he had the problem of employees possibly still trying to report to work, risking their lives in the storm when there would be no work for them. He paced back and forth in the kitchen, running his hand roughly through his hair as he scavenged for a cigarette.

“So, you wanna tell me what’s got you so upset?” Ian spoke softly, rubbing Mandy’s shoulders. “Not really, but I will,” she replied. “Okay,” Ian paused, “Are you physically hurt?” he finally asked. “No!” she yelled back. “It’s nothing like that! It’s...well...I kinda told Manuel…” she paused again, putting her head in her hands. “Told him what?” Ian asked, raising his voice a bit in frustration. She continued, “Well, I was really worried about you not having your meds, and…” Ian interrupted her angrily, “Mandy, what did you do?!”

By this time, Mickey had smoked a cigarette, stirred the sauce about 80 times and was standing outside Mandy and Ian’s field of vision, but doing his best to eavesdrop, after hearing Ian raise his
“Well, I said I was gonna go to the pharmacy to try to get your meds and…” Ian cut her off again, “Why the fuck would you risk your safety for MY meds? I told you I would be fine!” “Well, Manuel wouldn’t let me go anyway, so we got in a fight and he ended up going,” Mandy finished. “What? You’re both nuts! How long ago did he leave?” Ian demanded. “That’s the thing,” Mandy whispered, “It’s been over an hour!” Mandy sobbed. “I can’t believe this! How far away is the pharmacy?” Ian was really yelling now. “I don’t know!” Mandy answered, now also raising her voice.

“The fuck are you two screamin’ about?” Mickey asked, walking out of the kitchen to approach them. “Manuel is out in the storm!” Ian blurted out. “What the f--- Wny?” Mickey questioned, trying to remain calm, although he felt his blood pressure rising by the second. “Mandy sent him to get my meds,” Ian volunteered, throwing Mandy under the bus. “And where the fuck would he be getting meds in this weather?” Mickey asked. “The pharmacy,” Mandy sighed. “I didn’t tell him to go. He just went.” “How the fuck would he…” Mickey stopped short. “OK, how long ago did he leave?” he asked instead. “A little over an hour ago,” Mandy sobbed.

“FUCK! FUCK! FUCK!” Mickey exploded. “Ya know, for all we know, Manuel is dead in the road somewhere and I have fuckin’ meds here for you, Ian! Just picked ‘em up today, just in case!” Mickey screamed, the veins in his neck bulging. “How was I supposed to know that?” Mandy asked. “Well, you wouldn’t have known anything if I hadn’t opened my big, fat mouth! I’m sorry!” Ian wailed, looking over at Mickey through glassy, tear-glazed eyes.

“I just don’t understand why the fuck you didn’t come to me!” Mickey yelled. “It wasn’t like that,” Ian began, “You were asleep and I woke up hungry. Thought it was morning at first cuz there are no windows in this room. Anyway, I ran into Mandy in the hall and that’s when I found out we had no power and we were probably gonna be stuck here for a while. I freaked and told her I didn’t have any meds. That was it!” Ian finished.

“Then I was the one that told Manuel, only I was planning to go for the meds. He wouldn’t let me and said he was going. Before I knew it, he was gone! No one asked him to go!” Mandy wailed between sobs.

The look on Mickey’s face signaled both Ian and Mandy to stop talking. He was obviously ready to flip on someone. “Well, I gotta go look for him. I’m the only one here who knows where the fuckin’ pharmacy even is! Don’t know how the fuck you were gonna find it in the storm, Mandy! Good thing you didn’t go. Then again, NO ONE FUCKIN’ NEEDED TO GO!!” Mickey screamed at the top of his lungs before grabbing his keys off the dresser on his way out the door.

“Wait!” Ian called out in desperation. “You’re not going anywhere without me. This is all my fault!” Ian went after Mickey, coming as close as he could to running, given the terrible pain he had in his leg after being on it all day. “Can I go, too? I don’t wanna be here alone!” Mandy begged. “No fuckin’ way! Someone’s gotta stay here in case Manuel comes back while I’m gone!” Mickey snapped, moving toward the door, Ian still doing his best to follow.

“Can you both just stop for a minute?” Mandy yelled. “I’m worried about Manuel too, but if you leave right now, I’ll just be worried about all three of you! Can we just have dinner and wait a little longer for him? I don’t want the two of you to leave me here!” Mandy cried. “You two can have dinner and I’ll go find Manuel,” Mickey said stubbornly.

“Please Mickey,” Ian pleaded, “Don’t go without me. I don’t ever want to be separated from you like that again!” The look on Ian’s face was the same as the first time he saw it on the other side of the glass when he was in juvie, and it tore at his heart. “OK, let’s eat, but if Manuel ain’t here by the time
we’re done, I go ALONE!” Mickey commanded. Ian nodded in agreement, although he was nothing close to being okay with it. He just hoped having dinner would put Mickey in a more pleasant mood, making him more open to taking him along.

Ian smiled slightly as he served up the pasta dish that he had taken such care to prepare, hoping the sauce didn’t burn while they all had their discussion. It still smelled heavenly, he thought. He really wanted Mickey to enjoy it, but now he questioned whether that was even possible, under the circumstances. Mandy sat quietly, looking down at her plate as if she could start bawling again at any moment. Mickey, obviously still pissed, stared down at his phone, as if doing so would magically restore his service. No such luck. His mind turned briefly to thoughts of his house, destroyed by high winds and flooding, then to Manuel turning up dead, a victim of the storm. He shook his head slightly, trying to erase those possibilities from his mind.

Ian finished serving everyone pasta, salad and drinks, then took a seat next to Mickey, who was picking at his salad half-heartedly. “C’mon, Mick,” Ian pressed, “Try the pasta. I made it just how you like it!” Mickey took a small bite of the pasta and his face seemed to brighten a bit. “Good?” Ian asked, “Yeah, it’s real good. Thanks. I just feel like shit cuz I shoulda told you I had meds here for you. Then we coulda all had dinner together like you planned. And Manuel would be fuckin’ safe right now!” Mickey said sadly. Ian reached over to grasp Mickey’s hand, running his fingers softly over his tattooed knuckles.

The trio finished their dinner in silence, Mandy leaving the majority of her pasta on her plate. Mickey rose from his chair, stopping to press his lips softly into Ian’s hair before clearing the table. Ian swallowed hard, trying to muster up the courage to bring up the topic of going with him to look for Manuel. He knew the dinner had softened Mickey up a bit, but wasn’t sure that asking to go with him wouldn’t set him back to square one.

“Mickey, I…” Ian began, “I...sometimes can’t believe we’re really together again and...I can’t imagine my life without you…” Mickey stopped him mid-sentence. “Can’t take ya with me. Someone has to be here with her,” he pointed at Mandy, who was still sitting at the table, staring off into space in the general direction of the door, a frozen frown formed on her tear-stained face. Ian glanced over at Mandy, then back to Mickey, Ian’s face looking exactly as it had at the border just after their heart-wrenching goodbye kiss there, tears rolling down his delicately chiseled cheeks. “Christ, Ian! You’re so fuckin’ beautiful, I can’t fuckin’ say no to you!” Mickey snarled, disappointed in his own weakness.

“Let’s go,” he said, motioning for Ian to follow him. “Mandy, stay here!” Mickey yelled back at her. Mandy let out a whimper and stood up to follow them out of the room. “You ain’t comin’!” Mickey yelled. Mandy pushed past them both, maneuvering the hallway as best she could, carrying a candle to light her way out. As she reached the top of the stairwell, she heard a loud crash from somewhere downstairs, followed by a muffled groan. “Manuel!?” she shrieked, rushing down the stairs. Ian and Mickey followed closely after her to investigate.
“Ian! Mickey! Help! Hurry up!” Mandy screamed as she caught sight of Manuel, lying bloody and semi-conscious on the floor near the front entrance of the factory, the main door still open, allowing water and debris to collect around him. “Mick! Keep his face up out of the water!” Ian yelled as he made his way carefully over to the door, forcing it shut against the rising water level with great effort. Once Ian had secured the door, he shuffled through the muck and water to help Mickey, who was attempting to lift Manuel out of it. “Let’s do this together,” Ian suggested. “I’ll support his head and lift him from the top; you go grab his feet. We will lift on the count of three and try to get him to the table in the conference room. OK, ready?” Mickey nodded. “One, two, three, lift,” Ian called out. Mickey lifted with all he had from his end, while Ian did his best to lift on his torso while keeping his head as stationary as possible. Manuel seemed completely incoherent, only the occasional unintelligible moans rising from his lips. “Mandy, go into the office and look for the first aid kit!” Mickey yelled, “Meet us in the conference room.”

Manuel, being Ian’s height, but much heavier, was quite the challenge for Mickey and Ian to move, in his current condition. He was dead weight, which made lifting him difficult in and of itself, but the task of keeping his head from moving made it even more daunting.

Once they finally managed to get him up onto the table, Ian began to assess his injuries. From what he could see at first, the main injury appeared to be to his head. Ian guessed that he most likely had run into something in his car, smashing his head either into the windshield or the steering wheel. Following this theory, he surmised that Manuel either was not wearing a seatbelt or wore one with only a lap restraint, allowing his upper body to move unrestricted in response to the impact. This meant he could possibly have damage to his torso, including his major organs. Ian opened his shirt to look for bruising as he listened for his breath sounds.

Mandy stood silently next to Ian, first aid kit in hand, watching him work, afraid to ask how bad off Manuel was. “Anything we can do?” Mickey asked, rubbing Ian’s back as he moved to Manuel’s head to apply pressure to the gash in his forehead. “Yeah, keep pressure on this while I look through the kit to see what I can use to close this wound,” Ian answered calmly.

“He’s fuckin’ amazing!” Mickey thought to himself as he held pressure on Manuel’s head and watched his boyfriend work to save his friend’s life. “Mandy, can you please go and fill a container with ice?” Ian asked, giving her a sympathetic look. He could tell she was truly shaken by all of this. “Sure,” Mandy replied, heading for the door. “And if you can find a blanket, that would help, too!” Ian added.

From the looks of Manuel’s chest and the way he was breathing, Ian was fairly certain that at least his lungs were functioning properly and, although his pulse was a bit fast, it was still easily palpable. Stopping the bleeding from the head, he felt, was the first step to preventing shock, so he pulled out the only materials he had to work with: butterfly closures. He had hoped for some thread for stitching, but found none.

Mandy returned with the ice and a blanket, so Ian added some ice to the compress Mickey had on Manuel’s head, hoping to slow the bleeding further while he continued to open the individual wrapping for the butterflies. “OK, Mandy, take Mickey’s place holding pressure on Manuel’s head. Mickey, cover his legs with the blanket, then go look for some super glue,” Ian barked, as if he were a drill sergeant. “Super glue?” Mickey questioned, a puzzled look on his face. “Yeah! In case these don’t work! Gotta close this wound!” Ian explained, a bit annoyed at Mickey’s questioning his methods. “Ok, ok!” Mickey responded, heading out to the factory floor, flashlight in hand. “Like
“Perfect, Mands!” he answered.

Once Ian had all of the butterfly closures laid open, he excused Mandy from her duty and prepared Manuel’s head for the work he was about to do. He cleaned the wound, then set about pulling it together, fastening the sides to one another with the butterflies. He then applied the super glue, which Mickey had only seconds before laid on the table, sparingly to areas of the wound that he could not successfully close with the butterflies alone. He was leary about using the glue so near to his eye, but felt it was the best option, given the amount of blood Manuel had already lost and the difficulty he was having in getting the wound to close fully. As Ian worked, Manuel groaned occasionally in response to the pain he most certainly was feeling at Ian’s hands. He was too weak to move much, which worked to Ian’s advantage and, before long, Ian was done and the bleeding was stopped.

Ian then checked Manuel’s pupils, which were equal and reactive to light. This was an excellent sign. Manuel most likely suffered a severe concussion, but Ian was nearly certain that there was no skull fracture. Manuel’s ribs, however, were another story. Ian knew he should have x-rays to check out all of the possibilities, but in particular, to check for fractured ribs since that area of his torso had already begun to bruise. Ian checked Manuel’s vital signs again, all of which were within normal limits at this point, so he took a moment to breathe, looking down on Manuel’s beautiful olive complexion, the cuts of his muscular chest and arms, and his six-pack abs. He was a very beautiful man, to say the least. And as he had come to know him only recently, he seemed to be kind, caring, and trustworthy, someone definitely worth saving.

Mickey approached Ian, coaxing him to a chair to sit while he rubbed the tension out of his shoulders. “Oh, that feels soooo good,” Ian sighed, his body relaxing under Mickey’s capable touch. “How ‘bout if you go get a little rest, Florence Nightingale!” Mickey chuckled. “You were incredible, the way you took care of him,” Mickey praised Ian, “But now you need to get some sleep.” It had been an extremely long and stressful day, but Ian wasn’t ready to leave his patient just yet. He wanted to be certain that he was stable before passing the responsibility of his care to someone without any medical background, although Mickey and Mandy had both proven to be pretty quick studies, under the circumstances. He sent Mickey and Mandy upstairs to rest for a bit, promising to wake one of them to relieve him, once he felt it was safe to do so.

As Ian continued monitoring Manuel by himself over the next few hours, his mind turned to a feeling he was beginning to have that he, Manuel, Mandy and Mickey were somehow becoming a little family of sorts. The more he thought about it, the more he enjoyed fantasizing about the possibility of the four of them working together blissfully, making millions and enjoying each other’s company.

Part of monitoring a concussion victim is waking them periodically to be sure they are able to be roused. So far, Manuel had not spoken, but was able to open his eyes in response to his name. This was the beginning of him regaining full consciousness, so Ian was pleased with that. He was fast becoming exhausted and just begun to consider having Mandy relieve him when she showed up in the conference room. “Is it time for us to switch? I would like to spend some time with him now, if you think it’s safe.” Mandy requested. “Yes, I think Manuel is doing pretty well, but I need you to stay awake while you are with him, and to call out his name every once in awhile to see if he will respond. You should at least see him open his eyes when you talk to him,” Ian instructed as he prepared to go upstairs.

“Manuel,” Ian spoke firmly. Manuel’s eyes flew open, and this time he spoke. “Yes! Where am I? Who are you?” Manuel breathed, a look of panic etched into his face. Mandy looked on in terror. “Everything is fine,” Ian reassured him. “You are at the factory and I’m Ian. You were in an accident and I have been taking care of you.” “Ian?” he asked, confused. “Yes, and this is Mandy,” Ian said, walking Mandy over to the table. “Do I know you?” Manuel asked.
Mandy started to bawl, her eyes overflowing with tears. “He doesn’t remember anything!” she cried. “Mands, it’s ok,” Ian began to explain, “This happens sometimes when people have a head injury.” They forget things, but it doesn’t last forever. They almost always just snap out of it after a bit. Please stay calm. Manuel needs us to be stable for him.”

“OK, Mandy agreed, sitting down where Ian had been, looking down at the most gorgeous man she had ever known in her life, worried sick that he would never be the same. Suddenly, Manuel opened his eyes on his own and stared up at Mandy. “Ian!” she yelled, “He’s awake!”

Manuel spoke softly, “Mandy and Ian, do I know you? And where is Mickey? I need to see him...PLEASE!”
Mickey stood next to the conference table, rubbing his stinging eyes in an attempt to gain some semblance of wakefulness, enough to process all that was happening. He gazed down at Manuel, who had faded back into unconsciousness in the short time between his brief exchange with Ian, and Mickey’s arrival.

Only moments before, Mandy had rousted Mickey from his peaceful slumber tearfully, begging him to come and talk to Manuel, who was asking for him. “The fuck’s goin’ on?” Mickey finally managed to get out, trying to focus on Ian’s candlelit face across the table as he struggled to clear the cobwebs from his fuzzy, sleep-deprived brain.

Ian looked down, averting Mickey’s eyes and shaking his head. “What?!” Mickey was starting to get freaked out, wondering what this was all about. He knew it was supposed to be Mandy’s time to sit with Manuel, so why were all three of them there? “Well,” Ian began slowly, “To make a long story short, Manuel has spoken, twice. Once when I called his name, as I had been doing every hour or so, and again on his own. Both times, he was disoriented, first questioning where he was and who we were, then asking whether he knew us.” Ian paused, taking a deep breath.

“He gonna be like that forever?” Mickey asked, swallowing hard, trying to rid his throat of the lump that was forming. The thought of Manuel being anything less than what he was before this disaster scared the shit out of Mickey! In the nearly seven months they had now been working together, Mickey had come to rely heavily on him to keep the business afloat and, if he were entirely truthful with himself, to keep him sane. ‘Who knows where I’d be if Manuel hadn’t brought Ian to me after HIS accident,’ Mickey thought to himself.

“Probably not,” Ian’s voice jolted Mickey back to reality, “but I can’t be sure about anything just yet. This memory loss is something that does happen to some people after a head injury. It usually gets better over time, although events leading up to the injury might never really become entirely clear,” Ian explained, trying his best to ease Mickey and Mandy’s worries at the same time.

“So, why am I here right now?” Mickey asked, his gaze now fixed on Mandy, who was resting her head next to Manuel’s on the table. “Cuz he asked to see you!” she blurted out, Manuel’s eyes fluttering open in response to Mandy’s loud voice being in such close proximity to his head.

“Thought he didn’t remember anything?” Mickey asked, feeling confused and frustrated. “Ojos!” Manuel spoke louder than before. “Yeah, man, I’m here,” Mickey answered, the furrows in his forehead all but disappearing with the realization that Manuel did, in fact, know who he was. “You remember what happened?” he asked. “I have a headache,” Manuel said, reaching up to touch his head. “Please don’t do that,” Ian warned. “You have an injury there and touching it could make it worse.”

“What?” Manuel questioned, trying to sit up. “No, no, no, please don’t get up!” Ian raised his voice in concern. “Respectfully, I don’t even know who you are, and yet you are giving me orders,” Manuel hissed at Ian. “Ojos, just please talk to me. What’s going on?” Manuel’s face twisted up in fear and confusion.

“You went out in the storm to get Ian’s meds, don’t you remember?” Mickey started. “I was gonna go, but you insisted on going instead,” Mandy added. “And I think you probably had a car accident, trying to drive in the storm,” Ian finished. Manuel stared up at Mandy, then shifted his eyes over to Ian, finally allowing his gaze to fixate on Mickey’s face, a slight smile coming over his own for the first time since he had woken up. “I don’t know this story you are telling me,” Manuel answered
Mickey. “You will,” Ian assured him, “Just try to rest for now.”

“You guys good to hang with him for a while?” Ian asked, “I’m fucking exhausted!” “Sure,” Mandy responded for both of them, reaching over to grasp Manuel’s hand, Manuel giving her a bewildered look. “I’m sorry, but I don’t know you. Can I please talk to Mickey alone?” he pleaded. “Come on, Mands,” Ian interjected, “I wanna talk to you before I go to bed anyway.” Mandy’s sobs echoed into the hallway as they exited the conference room.

“What the fuck?!” Mandy screamed into Ian’s sturdy chest. “Mandy, please give this time. I truly believe he will be okay,” Ian spoke calmly, trying his best to alleviate her concerns, while hiding his own. In his mind, he wondered why Manuel would remember only Mickey. He told himself it was because he had known Mickey longer, which seemed to make sense. The idea of a memory-compromised Manuel being a reality, he had to admit to himself, was starting to become a scary possibility, one that he hoped he wouldn’t have to deal with for long.

Meanwhile, in the conference room, Manuel and Mickey were rehashing the details leading up to the accident, Mickey filling in the blanks as best he could. He tried telling Manuel that he had been with Mandy just before he had left, and not him, but Manuel couldn’t seem to accept that. “Why would I be with anyone but you, Ojos?” he asked Mickey every time he tried to explain. “Don’t you remember? Mandy is my sister. You know, the one you been bangin’ for over a week now? Told her you were falling in love with her,” Mickey explained matter-of-factly. “Oh, your sister is HERE? How did she get here?” Manuel asked incredulously.

Mickey sighed, frustrated, “You brought her here with Ian, my boyfriend, to see me, remember?” he asked. “Boyfriend?” Manuel looked like he was about to lose his shit. “What the hell are you talking about? Can’t we just go back to your place? I just want to go to sleep with you,” Manuel pleaded, looking up into Mickey’s eyes in a way Mickey had not seen for months.

Mickey stood frozen, wishing the storm would sweep in and swallow him up. His eyes met Ian’s for an instant, before redirecting his focus on Manuel, who was now lifting his upper body up off the table as he swung his legs down over the side to stand. “Ian!” Mickey begged, “Please help me!” Ian rushed to Mickey’s aid, speaking calmly to Manuel, explaining that he needed to rest and was not ready to move just yet, while helping Mickey push him back onto the table.

“The fuck are we gonna do?” Mickey implored, wide-eyed. “Wish there was a way to safely sedate him, but...” Ian paused, a light-bulb going off in his head. “What did you do with my meds?” Ian asked. “I put ‘em up in the dresser in the room,” Mickey replied, “I’ll go and get ‘em.” “No, wait!” Ian spoke as coolly as possible so as to avoid riling Manuel up again. “Let’s try to get him up to his room, where he might feel more comfortable; then I will give him one of my mood stabilizers. They really knocked me out when I first started taking them, and should allow him to rest comfortably, hopefully until we can get him seen by a doctor, or least until he regains his memory.”

“Mandy,” Mickey said slowly, gauging Mandy’s state of mind as he studied her expression, “Can you please go open the door to your room and get the bed ready for Manuel? Me and Ian are gonna bring him up.” “Okay,” Mandy answered, the blank look on her face matching the monotone of her voice. She was definitely traumatized by all that had happened within the past day and was functioning on auto-pilot at this point, her brain needing protection from the painful reality that
Manuel had a head injury and didn’t even know her right now.

“OK, Mick, I need you to explain to Manuel that we will be helping him to his bed so he can rest up and get well. Just get him to go willingly with us. We can walk him up the stairs together,” Ian instructed. “Ok,” Mickey breathed a heavy sigh, worried about the direction this might take and how Ian, Manuel or even Mandy might react. He bent over Manuel’s face, speaking softly, “We’re gonna get you off this table and into a comfortable bed, ok? So you can rest and heal up. Sound good?” Manuel started off simply, hoping to avoid too much conversation. “Are you going with me?” Mickey asked, his eyes silently beseeching Mickey. “Yeah, you’re gonna lean on me and Ian, so we can help you up the stairs and into the bed. Think you can do that?” Mickey asked. Manuel nodded his head slightly, grimacing from the resulting pain in his head and neck.

“OK, let’s do this!” Mickey asserted with confidence, summoning Ian to Manuel’s other side. The three made their way slowly out the conference room door and to the foot of the stairs, Mickey holding a flashlight in his free hand. Stairs were still difficult for Ian on his own, so this was going to be a real challenge for him. Mickey was also dreading the stairs, fearing that, if Manuel could not navigate them himself, they would be stuck lifting him, at least partially, which he and Ian both knew from experience was a formidable task.

It was very tough going at first, but once they all fell into a rhythm, the process became smoother and they were able to reach the top of the stairs without too much difficulty. Getting down the hall was a piece of cake, compared with the stairs, and they found themselves in the room fairly quickly, considering. Mandy was waiting, the door open, the room well-lit with candles. Ian and Mickey deposited Manuel carefully into the bed, propping his head, with virtually no resistance from him. It was only when Mickey tried to leave the room for Ian’s meds that he protested, lifting himself off the bed, intending to follow him. “No, Manuel, you need to stay in the bed,” Ian called to him. “Mick, stay here with him. I’ll go find the meds,” Ian insisted as he bypassed Mickey and headed out the door.

“Lay down with me, Ojos,” Manuel appealed to Mickey, his eyes filled with terror. “I...I can’t,” Mickey answered uncomfortably, appraising Mandy’s reaction to what he knew she had just heard. “But I am afraid and I need you!” Manuel pleaded, his eyes beginning to fill up with tears.

“Here’s the fuckin’ pill, Mick!” Ian growled after entering the room at the perfect time to hear Manuel’s most recent utterance. “Get him to take it and put him to fucking sleep!” he finished, glaring over at Manuel, his face beet red. Mickey knew how upset Ian and Mandy both were. He wished he could change what he knew he was about to do. “Manuel, you gotta take this pill; it’s gonna make you better,” Mickey explained. Mickey lifted Manuel’s head, pushing the pill past his lips, then tilting the glass of water to get him to swallow it. Manuel rested his head against Mickey’s chest and whispered, “Please don’t go, Ojos.” Mickey cradled Manuel’s head in his arms and spoke softly, “I’m not goin' anywhere.”
Ian lay across the bed, naked and fast asleep, his brilliant orange-red locks contrasting sharply with the stark white pillow they rested upon. Finally too exhausted to keep his eyes open, he had succumbed to sleep after punching and screaming into said pillow for the better part of an hour. Mickey tiptoed into the room, closing the door gently behind him, so as not to startle or otherwise disturb Ian. He was aware that Ian had basically asked him to do whatever it was going to take to get Manuel to sleep, but he also understood that Ian was furious, nonetheless. And to make matters worse, he knew that Ian had overheard a few statements from Manuel that supported his long-held theory that Manuel was in love with him, which would definitely be a topic of heated discussion at some point.

Mickey stood silent and motionless beside the bed, taking in Ian’s stunning beauty. From his vibrant red hair and flawless porcelain complexion to his finely chiseled facial features, Ian was sheer perfection. The love Mickey felt for this man was so much deeper and more intense than any other feeling he had ever experienced in his life, it was overwhelming at times. He wanted nothing more than to slide into bed next to Ian and give him everything, just the way he knew he liked it. His heart raced as he envisioned all of the ways he could please his lover, his cock twitching with desire. Mickey took a deep breath, contemplating how to make things right between the two of them again. He knew how tired Ian had been, and he was pretty worn out himself. None of them had slept much at all since Manuel had shown up. He decided it would be best for him to just get into bed and try to sleep.

Mickey had been in a deep sleep for a few hours when he woke to feel Ian’s warmth against the back side of his body. Ian wrapped his arms around Mickey’s waist, pressing his stiff dick into his left ass cheek as he breathed huskily into his ear, “You. Are. Mine.” Mickey shivered with excitement, his body instantly reacting to the sultry tone and feel of Ian’s words reverberating against his eardrum, igniting a fire that engulfed every fiber of his being, body and soul. Mickey let out a low groan, grinding his sweet ass against Ian’s rock-hard package. Ian buried his face in Mickey’s neck, inhaling deeply, his senses tingling with erotic passion. Ian nipped softly at Mickey’s neck before settling in on the first of many sweet spots, pulling the deliciously delicate skin into his hungry mouth and sucking hard. Ian flicked his tongue over his handiwork before moving on to a fresh canvas. Ian hummed against Mickey’s tender nape, raising goosebumps over the entirety of Mickey’s quivering flesh as he advanced across his territory, leaving his signature on every square inch in his wake. He trailed his hands from Mickey’s waist down over his hips, slowly working his way around to Mickey’s swollen cock, grasping it tightly, then leisurely pumping it with his fist. Mickey countered Ian’s hand movements, thrusting himself through Ian’s hand urgently. “No!” Ian hissed sadistically into Mickey’s ear, removing his hand from Mickey’s aching member. “You’re killin’ me, Gallagher!” Mickey cried out, stretching his arms to reach for Ian’s protruding package, Ian having strategically positioned it just out of Mickey’s reach.

Mickey endured at least a dozen hickies, stretching from his neck, to his collar bones, to his chest. No one could possibly be left guessing about his relationship status, his body so blatantly branded. Ian licked a stripe from Mickey’s right nipple down his torso, all the way to his hips, where he paused to slowly and painstakingly mark up the skin covering his hipbones. Mickey wrinkled impatiently, completely at Ian’s mercy. Ian’s magical mouth meandered its way down to Mickey’s member, at long last, his talented tongue flicking furiously over the tip, absorbing Mickey’s beads of
liquid longing as he lowered his mouth onto Mickey’s stiff shaft, his lips reaching its base. “Fuck! Gallagher!” Mickey yelled, pulling savagely at the bright red tufts of hair atop Ian’s head as it bobbed up and down feverishly, sucking ravenously at his throbbing manhood. “I’m gonna…” “No!” Ian interrupted, Mickey’s pleasure parade coming to an abrupt halt. Ian was determined to make damn sure that Mickey knew what he would be missing if he ever decided to leave him. “Gonna fuck you now! Get yourself ready for me!” Ian commanded.

Mickey complied, turning over to reach into the nightstand drawer for the lube. He squeezed out a generous portion, slathering it onto his waiting opening and spreading it with his slick fingers, praying for Ian to grant him his release as he did so. “Please…” the word escaped Mickey’s lips before it even registered in his conscious mind, a message emanating from the basest, most primal part of himself.

Ian slicked up his colossal cock, a muffled moan escaping from between his parted lips as his eyes took in the magnificent sight of Mickey’s taut, round ass bouncing on his own fingers. Ian grasped Mickey’s hips, slowly guiding Mickey onto his waiting wand, bit by bit, Mickey steadily moaning his name ecstatically with each lengthening stroke, his voice thick with want. Ian moved haltingly, savoring the feeling of his boyfriend’s gorgeous ass taking all of him, over and over, so tight, so perfect. Their bodies moved in concert, their burgeoning passion overtaking them. Ian grasped Mickey’s divine dick, stroking it unwaveringly as he pushed harder into him, shooting his load into his exquisite ass as Mickey erupted all over his hand, bawdy, guttural moans of pleasure filling the room.

The lovers collapsed onto the bed, a sweaty ball of intertwined body parts. “Damn, Gallagher! You sure can fuck!” Mickey sighed, his head still dizzy with pleasure. “Yeah, I bet you say that to all the guys!” Ian responded, only half joking. “Nah, no one but you,” Mickey whispered softly in Ian’s ear. “Oh yeah, so you never got it like that from Manuel?” the question flew out of Ian’s mouth before he could stop it. The last thing he had wanted to do was ruin the afterglow of such a fantastic session, but he feared that now it was too late.

“No, dude! No one but you!” Mickey repeated. Now Ian was annoyed. He knew damn well that Mickey and Manuel had fucked, and figured Mickey was hiding the fact that Manuel was good. “C’mon, Mick, I know you fucked him!” Ian raised his voice. “Yeah, I fucked him, and lots of other guys in prison, too. So what? That’s nothing like what we have,” Mickey said matter-of-factly. “Yeah, but you said you always did all the fucking in prison,” Ian countered. “Yeah, and I did all the fucking with Manuel, too!” Mickey dropped the bombshell, “Ian, I never bottomed for anyone but you, and I’m pretty sure you have ruined me for anyone else,” he chuckled, pulling Ian’s face to his, kissing him lovingly.

Ian’s eyes welled up with tears of joy, the realization of what he was to Mickey slowly sinking in. He kissed every inch of Mickey’s exquisite face, finally settling on his luscious lips. “I love you so much, Mick!” Ian breathed between kisses. “I. Am. Yours,” Mickey breathed softly into Ian’s mouth. Suddenly, Ian felt he had the strength to deal with the Manuel situation, regardless of how it turned out, secure in the belief that, even if Manuel loved Mickey, it was Ian that Mickey loved, and nothing would ever change that.

“Think I should go check on Manuel?” Mickey asked as he walked to the bathroom in search of a towel to clean up a bit. “I’ll go,” Ian answered quickly, throwing on a pair of boxers and a tank top. “Okay, I’m gonna get a shower then,” Mickey called out from the bathroom.

Ian opened the door to Manuel and Mandy’s room quietly, hoping they would both be asleep so he could go back to his room and spoon with Mickey until they both drifted off to sleep. As the door clicked shut behind him, Ian heard Manuel say, “Ojos, is that you? Why did you leave me?” Ian’s
face flashed hot with anger, “No, Manuel, it’s me. Ian. Are you feeling any better?” He made his way over to the bed to check Manuel’s vitals, finding that he seemed to be only semi-conscious, probably from the medication. His pulse and respirations were good, so he decided to head back to his room. “Ojos...please don’t go,” Ian heard Manuel mutter sleepily. Ian turned and walked out the door.
Under Pressure

“Mickey! Ian!” Mandy yelled, pounding on the door to their room. Ian’s eyes fluttered open in surprise. “Get up! Hurry!” Mandy’s voice trailed off. “Mickey!” Ian shook Mickey, jarring him awake. “What?” he jumped up, startled. “Mandy came to the door, calling for us! Sounds like something is wrong!” Ian explained, leading Mickey to the bathroom with him. Mickey flipped the light switch on the way in, out of habit, and the light went on. “Hey, we have power!” Ian commented. “Yeah, the storm must be lettin’ up,” Mickey mumbled, still half-asleep. “This means we can find out what happened in Boca now,” Ian said, running to grab his phone. “Mickey!!!” Mandy screamed, clearly in a panic. “I’m comin’!” Mickey answered, throwing on his boxers and hauling ass out the door, leaving Ian behind.

As Mickey pushed Mandy and Manuel’s door open, he could hear Manuel mumbling some sort of gibberish, completely unintelligible. “The fuck’s he sayin’?” Mickey asked. “How the fuck should I know?!” Mandy shrugged.

“What I do know is he was just trying to leave! When I woke up, he was in the bathroom, so I went to make sure he was okay. I found him on the floor in there! I thought I heard him say the word ‘dizzy’ so I told him to stay put, and that’s when I came to your door. While I was waiting for you to answer, I heard him yelling something, and when I came back, he was like this, only trying to get out the door. Somehow I managed to get him back to the bed, just now, but I can’t handle him if he changes his mind!”

Before Mickey could respond, Ian walked in, looking up from his phone. “Doesn’t look good down at the beach,” he remarked, surveying the situation in the room after seeing the looks on Mickey and Mandy’s faces. “No shit?” Mickey barked, “Well, it doesn’t look good in here either! Need your help, Ian!” “Yeah,” Mandy chimed in, “We don’t know what happened, but Manuel is much worse!” Ian walked over to the bed, checking Manuel’s vital signs and assessing his level of consciousness. He seemed to be attempting to respond to some of Ian’s questions, but his speech was garbled and his answers weren’t making sense. Ian was beginning to believe Manuel’s head injury was much more severe than he had originally thought. “I think I know what’s wrong! We learned about this in my paramedic class,” Ian began, pausing to type into his phone. He read silently for a moment. “Yes, I’m pretty sure I’m right. And if I am, we need to get Manuel to a hospital!”

“I gotta get my phone,” Mickey said, turning to leave the room. “What is it?” Mandy asked, looking up at Ian. “Well, I think it may be a subdural hematoma,” he said quietly. “A sub--what?!” Mickey yelled over his shoulder as he stopped short at the door. “Subdural hematoma, Mick,” Mandy repeated. “Yeah, it’s a brain bleed. It causes pressure to build up inside the skull. I just looked up the symptoms and I really think that could be the problem. It causes headache, memory loss, dizziness, confusion, change in personality—all symptoms he has been having, don’t ya think?” Ian asked looking at Mickey, then Mandy, then back at Mickey. “Yeah, so now what? He gonna die?” Mickey questioned, his beautiful blue eyes brimming with concern. Mandy looked down at Manuel, who lay motionless in the bed. “Oh my God!” she screamed, shaking him vigorously, his eyes opening slowly. “Thank God!” she cried out, bending over to kiss Manuel’s head, “Sorry, I thought…” “Shut the fuck up, Mandy!” Mickey interrupted., his own fear overtaking him and sapping him of all of his sympathy for his sister.

Ian let out a deep breath, “If I’m right, he needs surgery right away! Mick, where is the nearest hospital?” he asked. “I gotta call someone,” Mickey spoke quickly before running out of the room. “What are we gonna do?” Mandy screeched, “We don’t even know if it’s safe to travel!” “Put on the TV!” Ian responded, looking down at his phone. Mandy clicked on the TV as a weatherman
outlined the current situation.

“Hurricane Ian made landfall yesterday at approximately 2:15 PM in the resort town of Boca del Rio, destroying countless businesses and homes, and stranding hundreds of residents in its wake. High winds and heavy rains have brought flooding and power outages over a one hundred mile radius. It is not known at present how many deaths and injuries there are associated with the storm, but there are certainly a large number of people still unaccounted for. Major roadways have been clogged with emergency travelers trying desperately to get further inland. Rescue efforts are underway. Hospitals are overcrowded, with standing room only in the Emergency Rooms. Anyone in the viewing area who does not have an absolute emergency is urged to stay indoors until the storm has completely passed.”

“Dr. Montemurro said to meet him at the clinic,” Mickey yelled as he ran back into the room with his phone. “Wait, who?” Ian asked, puzzled. “He stayed with us, in the room we’ve been using, actually, about four months ago after we helped him get outta the States,” Mickey explained. “Oh yeah? What’d he do?” Ian asked. “He helped some really sick people die cuz they were gonna anyway and didn’t wanna suffer,” Mickey answered, “But the State of Texas says that’s illegal, so they revoked his license and threw him in jail. When he made bail, we got a call and took care of getting him here. So now he takes care of us—set up a small clinic in town here to see our people when we need him. He’s the one that got me your meds, Ian. He’s a good guy.”

“Can he perform brain surgery at your little clinic?” Ian asked sarcastically. “Guess so, since that’s where he said we should go. I told him it was a subdural...whatever you said,” Mickey said, his inner smartass coming out in response to Ian’s sarcasm. “Ok then, lead the way,” Ian retorted, “But getting him to the car in his condition is gonna be tough, especially since I suck at steps right now myself.”

It was slow going, but Ian and Mickey managed to get Manuel out of the factory and to the car. The rain was still quite heavy, the winds more than they bargained for, but after about a half hour, everyone was in the car, riding on some pretty heavily puddled back roads. “Think this is safe with all the flooding, Mick?” Mandy questioned, thinking about the weatherman’s warning to stay inside if at all possible. “Don’t think we have a choice if we want Manuel to live,” Mickey responded, hitting a large water-filled hole in the road.

After nearly an hour of driving, buckets of rain falling from the sky, disabled vehicles strewn about like scrap metal in a junkyard, they finally arrived at a dilapidated old building. “This is it?” Ian asked, wrinkling his nose. “Yeah, It’s not Chicago Memorial, but it works for us,” Mickey said flatly, hopping out of the car and running for the building. Ian and Mandy eased Manuel out of the car just in time to deposit him in the wheelchair that Mickey had just rolled up. An older gentleman held the clinic door open as they entered, Manuel demanding to know where he was and trying to get out of the wheelchair.

“Manuel, you’re at the clinic,” the older man spoke calmly. “You were in an accident yesterday. Do you remember?” he asked. Manuel shook his head from side to side. “Do you know who I am?” he questioned as he began to examine the wound on Manuel’s forehead. Manuel didn’t answer, his eyes falling abruptly shut, his head dropping so his chin rested on his chest.

“I’m Dr. Montemurro,” the man introduced himself, shaking Ian’s hand and acknowledging Mandy with a smile. “And you are?” “Ian. Ian Gallagher. And this is my best friend and Mickey’s sister, Mandy,” Ian answered. “Nice to meet you,” Mandy chimed in.

“OK, enough chit chat. Let’s get Manuel better,” Mickey interjected. “Let’s take a look and see what’s going on,” Dr. Montemurro began. “I’ll get a CT to see if there is a bleed and, if there is, where it is coming from,” he explained. Ian followed them into the X-Ray room, filling the doctor in
on the symptoms Manuel had displayed over the past two days. Dr. Montemurro set up the
equipment, then he and Ian positioned Manuel to take the scans. “You did a pretty nice job of closing
his wound with what you had to work with,” the doctor remarked as he adjusted the machine over
Manuel’s head. “I did what I could,” Ian shrugged. Manuel and Ian headed for the tiny room that
housed the controls, Dr. Montemurro snapping the scans. Once he finished, he and Ian worked
together to get Manuel onto a gurney, securing him with a belt around his middle and wheeling him
up next to the door of the room. He went into the hall to summon Mickey and Mandy, then returned
with them to the small room, pulling the scans from the machine and tacking them up to the
illuminated rectangle to his right.

“Manuel is very lucky you discovered this,” he said, turning from the scan to look at Ian. “See here,
this is the origin of the bleed,” he said, pointing to the top right of the scan, “and this,” he continued,
moving his finger over a large area near the top, “is the resultant blood, or hematoma, that is trapped
between the brain and the skull, putting increasing pressure on the brain, the more it continues to
bleed.”

“So can you fix it?” Mickey asked impatiently. “Well, it will require surgery. I need to make an
opening in the skull to remove the blood and relieve the pressure. I will also have to stop the
bleeding. This is a difficult surgery to perform, even for the most skilled brain surgeon. Under normal
circumstances, I would send you straight to the nearest hospital. However, since there are countless
people in his condition or worse flooding every hospital in the area, and the road conditions would
prevent a timely arrival anyway, I believe that attempting the surgery here is our best option. This is
not my area of expertise, but I will do my best. I don’t have any staff here, which will make
everything even more difficult, Ian, I’m going to have to ask you to scrub in and be prepared to act as
my nurse, if you don’t mind. I will also need you to monitor the anesthesia level.”

Ian’s face flushed. His love for emergency medicine made him really want to do this, but the
seriousness of the situation, coupled with the relationship of the patient to both Mickey and Mandy,
made him very uneasy. “Sure!” he answered with a forced smile, avoiding eye contact with both
Milkoviches. He didn’t want to see their faces at this point. He knew they would look even more
worried than he was imagining, which was pretty damn bad.

Dr. Montemurro began explaining to Manuel that he was going to be put to sleep to have a
procedure done. Manuel was confused, fading in and out of consciousness and babbling
incoherently. Mandy and Mickey each took their turn, reassuring Manuel and kissing him on the
wound-free side of his forehead. Ian took note that Mickey’s eyes closed for just a little longer than a
blink as his lips touched Manuel’s head, which felt like an eternity to Ian, but he took it like a man,
taking a deep breath before grabbing an end of the gurney to wheel it to the operating room.
Mickey stood outside the operating room, typing furiously on his phone. He wanted all of the factory workers to know that they shouldn’t endanger their lives for work. In his mind, there was no reason to manufacture a bunch of surfboards for a beach town that was in shambles, and the safety of his employees was his biggest concern, as always. He knew Manuel felt the same way and would be in no condition to argue if he didn’t, so he made the executive decision to close until further notice.

Mandy was busy reading reports of the damage done along the beach, shouting out locations, death tolls, and numbers of people injured and missing, becoming more and more distraught with each announcement. Mickey wanted to tell her to shut the fuck up again, but he resisted the urge, walking toward the door to the operating room and opening it enough to stick his head in.

He saw Dr. Montemurro and Ian standing over Manuel, the doctor using some type of silver instrument that was only half visible to him, the other half buried somewhere inside Manuel’s head. Ian, who was literally six inches away from Dr. Montemurro, was holding what looked like a needle and thread in his gloved hands. He also noticed some of Manuel’s hair on the floor, surmising that they had to partially shave Manuel’s head in order to make the opening for the surgery. The more Mickey watched and thought about what was happening, the more lightheaded and nauseous he became. He turned and walked away, searching his surroundings for a place to sit down.

No sooner did Mickey sit down than there was a knock at the clinic door, followed by a cry for help. Mickey jumped up and ran for the door. As he opened it, he could see an American woman holding a small child, crying. He held the door open wide, allowing her to carry the child inside. “What’s the matter?” Mandy called out as she ran over toward them. They were obviously both upset, but neither appeared to be injured in any way, although they were soaking wet. “Our car...my husband,” the woman began, breathing heavily between sobs. “Where’s your car?” Mickey asked, looking closely at the child, who was still screaming. “Follow me!” the woman screamed, handing the child off into Mandy’s outstretched arms.

Mickey followed her out the door into the storm, catching sight of a mangled car on the other side of the road, partially submerged in water. “Holy Fuck,” Mickey muttered under his breath, wondering how the hell he was supposed to help. He crossed the road and ran over to the far side of the car, hoping it was up out of the water enough for him to open the door.

Once he got there, he could see that a tree was preventing the front door from opening. “My son and I made it out the other side just in time!” the woman told Mickey. “I didn’t have the strength to pull him into the back seat to use the back door.” she explained pointing to her husband. “Can you slide back here if I recline your seat?” Mickey asked the man. “My leg...I think it’s broken,” he answered. “Shit,” Mickey breathed to himself. “Gonna have to pull you back here then,” he told the man. “Probably gonna hurt, but it’s better than bein’ stuck in here,” he explained. “The man nodded his head in agreement, wincing in pain as Mickey pulled him into the backseat. He thought of the wheelchair, but there was so much water in the road, he figured he’d be better off just carrying the dude. After all, he had carried Ian enough times, and he was taller than this guy. He wriggled the man out of the backseat, hoisting him over his shoulder, the man moaning and grimacing in pain as he did.

Once he made it back out to the flooding roadway, he moved as quickly as possible, his feet submerged almost entirely, slowing him down significantly. As he neared the clinic, completely soaked, exhausted and out of breath, he could see that other cars had accumulated along the road, some empty, some with people still inside.
Mandy stood at the door, holding it open for Mickey, the small child still in her arms. “Mick,” she began as Mickey carried the man in, “There’s a lot of…” Mickey cut her off as soon as he got a look inside the clinic. “What the fuck?” he yelled, gently dropping the man off his shoulder and into the only available seat. There were at least ten people there now, all sopping wet and some injured as well. “What are we gonna do, Mick?” Mandy asked, her eyes wide with worry. Mickey shrugged as he looked for something the man could rest his leg on, settling on a cement block that he found just outside the door of the clinic.

“Can I have everyone’s attention?” Mickey yelled over the buzz of conversations that filled the room. “Just want everyone to know that I’m not a doctor. There is one doctor here and he’s doin’ surgery right now so if you can tell me your name, if you need medical attention and what you think is wrong, I will put you on a list to see the doctor when he’s available.”

Mandy stood staring in complete awe of her brother, taking charge in a situation where he knew basically nothing and offering to help total strangers. He had certainly come a long way since his Southside days, and she was proud of him. She handed the child off to his mother and walked over to talk to Mickey. “Wow, Mick! This is out of character for you, but in a good way!” she laughed. “Anything I can do to help?” she asked. “Yeah, go over and talk to the guy I just carried in here. Need to make sure it’s just his leg that’s bad.”

Mandy headed over toward the man, leaving Mickey to make his list as more people continued to pour into the clinic. Mickey, looking up periodically to assess the length of the growing line, started to worry about the severely injured people there who were not getting any care. “Hey!” he yelled, “Anyone here have any medical experience?” “I’m a nurse,” a young woman at the back of the line answered. “C’mere!” he motioned for her.

Once he had her in front of him, he directed her to an exam room. “There are some medical supplies in there, so I’m hopin’ you can maybe look at my list and start workin’ on some of these people who are real bad off,” he suggested, his eyes pleading. “Okay,” she answered, taking his phone and heading into the room. “Mandy!” Mickey called out. “Need you and your phone back over here. You gotta take the names of the people who are still in line and any others that come in the door. Gonna go check to see what’s up with the surgery,” he finished.

As Mandy headed over, he walked toward the Operating Room door. Just as he was ready to go in, Ian pushed the door open. “Mick, it looks like Dr. Montemurro was able to stop the bleeding, so we will see how Manuel is when he wakes up.” Mickey stared up into Ian’s glowing green eyes, “Thanks, man! Thanks for everything! Ian, I love you!” Ian smiled brightly, his eyes twinkling as he leaned down to give Mickey a quick kiss, “Love you, too, Mick! So much!” Mickey started to tear up, but quickly wiped his eyes and continued, “Got a surprise for you. I don’t know how you’re gonna feel about this…” “Mickey,” Mandy interrupted, running over to them, “There’s a lady that just passed out and…” “Where?” Ian asked. Mandy turned and ran, Ian following her.

Once Ian was on the scene, the triage of patients went more smoothly, the nurse handling minor injuries, with Mickey assisting, and Dr. Montemurro taking on the more challenging cases. Ian rendered emergency care to those who were waiting to be seen and Mandy helped to keep things organized, fetched needed materials and checked periodically to see if Manuel had woken up.

During one of her routine checks, Manuel stirred, his eyes blinking open. “Manuel!” Mandy sighed, looking down at him through tear-soaked eyes. “Mmm...Mandy,” he mumbled. “Yes! Yes! I’m Mandy! You remember!” she squealed, bending down to kiss him. “Where are we?” he asked. “You are here for Dr. Montemurro. He…” Manuel interrupted, “I never got Ian his meds. Is he alright?” “Yes, HE has been taking care of YOU!” she answered, still beaming. “Stay here, ok?” she grinned. “I am not going anywhere,” he responded, pulling on the belt that was still fastened around him.
Mandy laughed as she walked, almost skipped, out the door.

“Guess what?” Mandy asked as she approached Ian and Mickey, who were together working with a patient. “He’s up! And he’s normal! And he knows who I am!” “Really?” Mickey said, jogging toward the Operating Room. “Dr. Montemurro did such a great job,” Ian said to Mandy, trying to ignore the wave of jealousy he could feel bubbling up inside him. The way Mickey just took off to see Manuel like that, in the middle of helping him dress some wounds, was making his stomach churn. “He sure did!” Mandy agreed, watching reverently as Ian finished his work on the patient in front of him.

Dr. Montemurro, having just finished with the last seriously injured patient, walked over to check in with Ian. “Looks like you have everything under control here,” he complimented, admiring Ian’s work. “It’s going fine. And Mandy just told me that Manuel is awake and seems to be doing well, too.” Ian spoke with an official tone to his voice.

“Thanks for all of your hard work today, Ian! You are a talented medical professional,” Dr. Montemurro began. Ian smiled modestly, blushing as he said, “Thank you.” “Mickey tells me you are going to work for Boca EMS,” Dr. Montemurro continued. “I wish you the best and I hope it’s all that you want it to be, but I want you to know that there will always be a job for you here at the clinic, if you want it. And I think you should consider nursing school sometime in your future, too. You are far too intelligent and gifted to stop at being a basic EMT.” “Thank you, sir! I’ll think about it,” Ian responded, a look of sincere gratitude and respect on his face.

As Mickey pushed the door to the Operating Room open, Manuel called out, “Ojos, is that you?” “Yeah, It’s me,” Mickey answered, walking up to the gurney. “How ya feelin’?” he asked, looking down on the bandage that covered the newly stitched incision on Manuel’s partially bald head. “I feel like I’ve been asleep for a week!” Manuel answered. “Well, ya know, you haven’t been yourself these past few days and…” Mickey stopped as the door swung open again, Ian and Dr. Montemurro trudging in, both clearly exhausted.

“How’s our patient?” Dr. Montemurro asked Manuel. “I’m feeling better,” he answered with a weak smile. “Thank you for helping me, both of you. I know I owe you both my life, and I am forever in your debt,” he finished. “You are most welcome, Manuel!” the doctor responded, “If it weren’t for you and Mickey, I would be in prison! I am so grateful to be here in Mexico, helping people, and there’s no one on this earth who I would rather help than you!” “Yeah, you’re welcome,” Ian added half-heartedly. It had been a hellaciously long day and all he wanted to do was get into bed, curled up with his man, and sleep. “Ian! Doctor!” Mandy called from the main room of the clinic, “We really need you both out here! Mickey, too, please?” She sounded desperate. They all turned and left, Mickey promising to send Mandy to sit with Manuel.

“Mandy!” Manuel sang, his eyes sparkling, she thought, although they may have just been glassy from the anesthesia. She rushed over to him, wrapping her arms around him as best she could, considering the position he was in. “I missed you!” Manuel breathed into Manuel’s mouth as she bent down to kiss him. “So glad you’re getting back to your old self! I was beginning to think you would never know me again,” Mandy explained. “I could never forget you, my beautiful baby girl!” Manuel responded, returning her kiss, his lips parting to accept her eager tongue. The kiss deepened and, all at once, Mandy all but forget all of her feelings of worry and insecurity, falling so deeply again for this gorgeous man, who had been through so much over the past few days, all to keep her safe and ensure that Ian would stay healthy. How could she ask for a better man than Manuel?

She unbuckled the belt that had been holding Manuel captive and slid up onto the gurney next to him, moving her hands over his body, longing to touch every flawless square inch of him. She slid her hand into his boxers, breathing huskily into his ear, Manuel’s manhood responding instantly,
despite his still semi-sedated state. She slowly and methodically began to jerk him off, careful to keep her hand under the sheet, just in case someone happened to walk in. Manuel writhed and moaned in pleasure, her hand taunting him with each leisurely stroke. “Mandy!” Manuel groaned, pulling at her lips with his teeth. “I want you to cum for me, baby,” Mandy whispered into his ear as she sped up the strokes, rubbing herself against his hip rhythmically, then finally taking her free hand to finish herself as she did him. She couldn’t help it. He was so fucking hot, his sexy body, those salty lips, the noises he made---too much! She let out a squeal as she reached her orgasm, feeling Manuel’s cock spurt onto her hand as she did. “Wow!” Manuel breathed, “Mandy, I love you!” “I love you, too!” Mandy whispered so quietly that Manuel was left to wonder if he actually heard it or not. Mandy rose from the gurney, finding a towel and a clean sheet to clean up with, then returning to lie down next to Manuel, where they both fell asleep.

Meanwhile, the makeshift medical staff worked for hours, well into the night, tending to dozens of injured travelers who had been caught in the storm. Dr. Montemurro, Ian and their nurse helper, who they found out was named Claudia, worked together like a well-oiled machine. Mickey, despite his lack of medical training, was becoming adept at wound care and had even administered a few injections, under the guidance of the others. Every one of them was dog-tired, but worked until the last patient had been treated, each of them personally satisfied in the knowledge that innocent lives had been saved today at their hands, in their clinic.
By morning, the rain had lightened up and the water on the road was draining into the adjacent landscape, allowing many patients and their families to get underway, headed to who knows where. Most were fleeing the utter destruction that had previously been their homes, their vacation houses or their places of employment. Mickey, Ian, Manuel, Mandy and Dr. Montemurro had the luxury of returning to safe places, far enough away from the coast to have dodged the worst of the storm. Granted, the factory was nowhere near as homey overall as the beach houses that Mickey and Manuel had, but it was a far sight better than what most people had. Mandy had asked if any of the patients could come to stay there, but Mickey and Manuel decided that, if they were well enough to leave the clinic, they needed to find their own places to go. The factory was not equipped to provide overnight accommodations and food for a large number of people over an extended period of time.

Since everyone had taken shifts, monitoring the severely injured patients that had to remain at the clinic, by morning everyone had gotten some sleep, but no one had gotten enough. Dr. Montemurro volunteered to stay, citing his experience and expertise as his official reason as to why he should be the one who stays. He had, however, pulled Mickey aside to explain that he felt Ian needed to sleep and get back on schedule with his meds in order to avoid problems. He insisted that Mickey take him back to the factory, feed him, give him his meds, and get him to bed. Mickey was more than happy to oblige him. In fact, he was so exhausted himself and longed to hold Ian so badly that he was looking forward to it, miserable road trip aside. Claudia, the nurse who had already given so much of her time, agreed to stay to help Dr. Montemurro so Ian would not feel as if he was abandoning the doctor and his patients.

Mandy refused to leave Manuel’s side, so she was given the responsibility of finding something in the clinic for all of the people who remained to eat. She went into a small break room, where there was a refrigerator, a microwave and a few cabinets. She didn’t want to chance using anything that had been in the refrigerator through the power outage, but there were a few items in the freezer that had thawed, but were still cold, that she decided to serve. She microwaved those items and added some snack foods that she found in the cabinets to assemble something close to a meal for each person at the clinic.

Dr. Montemurro and Claudia were grateful for her help and told her so. Mandy also wound up checking on patients periodically, including Manuel, of course, and checking new patients in, once they began to arrive. Dr. Montemurro had hoped that, with the roads clearing, he could just finish treatment for the patients he already had, but, as it turned out, the better roads just brought more injured people, those who had been turned away at one of the hospitals and had somehow caught wind of a little clinic that was seeing emergent patients. The clinic staff was definitely in for a long, busy day. Dr. Montemurro began to wish, selfishly, that he hadn’t sent Ian back to the factory. He could really have used his help, so much insight and talent wrapped in one young, hardworking individual! He really hoped that Ian would consider working with him at the clinic on a regular basis after everything returned to normal.

Once Mickey and Ian left the clinic, they made decent time getting back to the factory. Mickey was getting pretty good at dodging the giant puddles in the road’s divits, and clearly was pushing it a bit to get there ASAP. “Geez, ya driving fast enough there, Ojos?” Ian smirked at his own use of Manuel’s nickname for Mickey. “Just tryin’ a get your ass back and into bed. You need some fuckin’ rest after playin’ hero all night. You were fuckin’ unbelievable. Dr. Montemurro loves your talented ass,” Mickey responded, ignoring Ian’s choice of nickname for him. “It was fun and I’m fine,” Ian said, trying to downplay the whole thing, “I think it’s you that needs the rest.” “Oh yeah, tough guy? We’ll see who needs rest,” Mickey chuckled, raising an eyebrow suggestively. “Oh, okay. Yeah,
we’ll see there, Ojos,” Ian retorted, putting emphasis on the word “Ojos”.

Mickey pulled into the factory parking lot quickly, making a beeline for the parking space closest to the door. He put the car in ‘park’ and hopped out so fast that he made it to Ian’s car door before Ian could even open it. Mickey opened it for him, helping him out of the car, even though he really didn’t need it. They made their way in the door and up the steps pretty smoothly, Mickey pulling Ian along anxiously. They traversed the hallway to their room in the same fashion, Ian stumbling a few times, trying to keep pace with Mickey.

“Finally, I have him all to myself,” Mickey thought as he opened the door to their room. Once inside, he led Ian straight to the bathroom. “I don’t have to go,” Ian mumbled, turning to head toward the bed as he peeled his shirt off, exposing his sexy pecs and outstanding washboard abs. “That’s good cuz I got other plans for you,” Mickey hissed as he turned the water on in the hot tub. “Hmmmm…” Ian hummed, a sly smile playing at his lips as he approached Mickey from behind, grabbing him by the hips. “What kind of plans?” he breathed into Mickey’s ear, pulling his ass up flush against his body, his ever-ready cock pressing against him. “That’s for me to know and you to find out there, Doc Johnson,” Mickey chuckled, tearing his pants off and grinding his bare ass against Ian’s package. “You gonna leave those pants on all night?” Mickey asked, reaching back to pull down on Ian’s belt loops.

Ian dropped his pants and, in one smooth, continuous motion, reasserted his position behind Mickey, his soldier standing at complete attention, wedged between Mickey’s asscheeks. “Mmmmmmm…not so fast,” Mickey chided, pulling away, stepping into the hot tub and reaching a hand out to Ian to help him in.

“You ever been in one of these before?” Mickey asked, holding Ian’s hand as he stepped in. “No, you?” Ian asked. “Well, yeah. This one,” Mickey answered, wishing immediately afterward that he had not asked Ian that question in the first place. “Oh, guess I don’t have to ask who you were in here with, huh?” Ian said, his feelings obviously hurt that Manuel had shared this experience with Mickey first. Ian’s face fell. He looked as if someone had just punched him in the gut.

“C’mon,” Mickey tried to smooth things over by motioning for Ian to sit next to him in the hot tub. “When I was in this thing before, all I could think about was how much I wished you were in here with me. I never thought it would actually happen, but here you are,” Mickey was trying his best to make Ian understand how it really was for him before he came back into his life, without managing to piss him off more. It didn’t work.

“Mick, I just can’t fucking stand the idea that Manuel was in this tub with you before me, that you and Manuel built all of this together, that you topped for Manuel…All of these experiences you have had with him, instead of me! And the fact that you are business partners and will continue to spend more time together every day than you will with me, well, that’s just really fucking hard to take!” Ian stopped to take a breath and began to sob. “Mick…I just…I want you all to myself. Period.” Ian continued. “And then there’s the whole nickname thing and the fact that he is obviously still in love with you! It’s just too much!” he finished.

Mickey shook his head, doubting his ability to remedy the situation, but refusing to give up, only because it wasn’t in his nature. “Ian, you gotta understand that you were the one I loved, the one I wanted, but also the one who left me at the border. Manuel was there for me as a friend when I needed one. I don’t know where I’d be right now without him. It doesn’t mean I’m in love with him. You know damn well who I love. But you left me, and I had no choice but to move on with my life. Manuel always knew where he stood with me. I wasn’t willing to give my heart to anyone else. Ian, he knew all about you. You wouldn’t even be here if it wasn’t for him, for fuck’s sake. Bottom line is, he’s my friend and that’s not gonna change. You’re in this tub, so there’s one thing off the list of
stuff I’ve done with him and not you. If you want me to fuck you in the ass, I’m down for that, if it will shut you up about this Manuel shit,” Mickey smiled, hoping he was getting through to Ian.

Ian sat quietly for a minute. Mickey could see the wheels turning inside that head of his, and he was worried. ‘The fuck is he thinkin’ now?’ Mickey wondered. He waited for Ian’s response for what seemed like forever. “Whatcha thinkin’?” Mickey finally asked, putting his hand on Ian’s submerged inner thigh and rubbing it slowly with his fingers. “I want you to tell him you don’t love him, only me. I want…” Mickey stopped him, taking note of his growing erection. “I know what you want,” he breathed huskily into Ian’s mouth as he enveloped it in his own, thrusting his tongue forcefully inside as he continued to massage Ian’s sensitive inner thigh, moving his fingers ever so slightly closer to his cock. Ian shivered, biting at Mickey’s lower lip and pulling it into his mouth hungrily.

Mickey turned on the tub jets, positioning one so its bubbles grazed Ian’s swollen shaft in a continuous pattern as he slid a finger between his ass cheeks to gently fondle the rim of his anus. He moved his sultry lips from Ian’s mouth to his tender neck, teasing it with his teeth and tongue, a low moan floating from deep within Ian’s now heaving chest. He gradually slid a finger into Ian’s extraordinarily tight hole, Ian letting out a slight gasp as he did so. Mickey used his other hand to fondle Ian’s now rock-hard cock under the water as he slowly stretched Ian, extending the depth and horizontal movement of his finger gradually. The water’s warm effervescence, coupled with Mickey’s titillating massage, sent powerful electrical currents through Ian’s body, eliciting a series of deep, sustained groans.

By this time, Ian’s level of arousal had Mickey’s cock so fucking hard, he thought he could explode at any second. It made him absolutely crazy to witness Ian getting this worked up. He was so fucking sexy, a beautiful blush to his exquisite face, his eyes squeezed shut in ecstasy, his flawless, water-soaked skin glistening. Mickey could look at that shit all day! He wanted him so fucking bad, to flip him over and just fuck the shit out of him, but he knew Ian wasn’t ready for that, so he would need to take it slow.

He reached for the tube of lube that he had left near the hot tub for just such an occasion, easing Ian up onto his knees as he slid a small, inflatable water pillow under them to protect his injured leg. He squirted ample lube onto his hands, rubbing them together to warm it. He then slicked his cock up, slathering the excess onto Ian’s waiting hole, pushing inside with two fingers to stretch him a bit more. ‘Fuck, is he tight!’ Mickey thought to himself, giving himself an even bigger boner, if that was even possible. He continued stroking Ian’s massive cock with his other hand as he fingered his asshole, pushing in more deeply with each stroke and eventually adding a third finger.

“Ian, you ready?” Mickey spoke softly into Ian’s ear at last, his voice thick with lust. Ian, completely losing his mind in the throes of passion, nodded, unable to speak, but ready to give himself freely and completely to his lover, trusting him implicitly. He knew Mickey would never hurt him and, besides, Trevor had done him with a dildo once, a fact he didn’t feel compelled to share with Mickey at this point. So he wasn’t technically a bottom virgin, although he knew Mickey’s cock was a far sight bigger than Trevor’s fucking dildo. “Oh!” Ian managed to push from his mouth as Mickey entered him gradually, still stroking him from underneath as he did. Mickey’s dick felt so wonderfully warm, so perfectly right inside him. Mickey pulled back out slowly before reversing direction to sink just a little deeper, driving a choked moan from between Ian’s clenched teeth,

He continued this painstaking process, determined not to hurt Ian, but rather show him how much he loved him by making him feel as amazing as Ian always made him feel. Each time Mickey pushed in more deeply, Ian moaned louder, raising goosebumps over Mickey’s entire body and driving him closer to climax. “So fuckin’ tight, Gallagher!” Mickey breathed heavily into Ian’s ear as his cock finally reached ‘balls deep’ status in his ass. “So fuckin’ good!” he grunted as he picked up speed and intensity, pulling a loud “Fuck!” from Ian’s steadily moaning mouth as he continued to jerk him
off while fucking him. “I fuckin’ love you and your sweet ass!” Mickey breathed, trying desperately to control himself.

Mickey slowed his movements, savoring the feeling, Ian falling into to Mickey’s slow, steady rhythm as Mickey’s dick nudged his prostate over and over, Ian becoming deliriously enraptured. The lovers moved against each other adeptly, their positions different, but their chemistry the same, intense and undeniable. ‘Real close,’ Ian tried to say, but instead, all that came from his mouth was a low whine, almost a sob, punctuated by the relentless entry and exit of Mickey’s insanely satisfying manhood. Ian exploded all over Mickey’s hand, sending Mickey over the edge instantaneously. Mickey buried his pulsating cock deep and hard into Ian’s phenomenally taut ass one final time as he shot his load into it. “Ian...Ian...Ian,” Mickey chanted into Ian’s ear as waves of pleasure resonated throughout his body.

As the two men sat in the hot tub, slowly regaining their composure after such a ridiculously rewarding romp, Mickey finally spoke. “Damn, that was good! Never knew fuckin’ a guy in the ass could feel so fuckin’ amazing! You are a goddamn sex god, Gallagher!” “Fuck! I could say the same about you! Holy shit, Mick! You’re were incredible!” Ian replied. They turned to look at each other reverently and fell into a passionate kiss, Ian pulling at Mickey’s bottom lip fervently. He always loved Mickey’s full, sexy-as-fuck lower lip, and would be happy to have it in his mouth all day, if it were possible.

The pair took turns caressing and washing each other’s bodies between kisses, Mickey finally suggesting that they dry off, living for the moment when, at long last, he crawled into bed with his ravishing red-haired lover to spoon the night away. He craved the comforting warmth that only Ian’s body could provide, wrapping it around his like a cocoon, closing his eyes softly, an unparalleled feeling of utter peace coming over him as they drifted off to sleep.
When Opportunity Knocks

Chapter Summary

The remainder of the week had gone by in a blur, hectic clinic shifts interspersed with bits and snatches of sleep and the occasional meal becoming the norm. Manuel was feeling much better with each passing day, and Mandy was loving every minute of having become the doting girlfriend, seeing to his every need before he even knew it existed. Ian and Mickey were inseparable, Mickey learning far more than he ever cared to know about emergency medicine. He had never imagined he would ever be involved in the medical field, but now, after watching Ian in action, he knew it would be a part of his life as long as Ian was, which he hoped, with everything in him, would be forever. He was addicted to the excitement of watching Ian save lives, not only with his able and caring hands, but also with that quick-thinking, problem-solving mind of his. It never ceased to amaze him. What a rush! He could see that Ian was born to do this. The crazy thing was that there were so many instances of Ian appearing to be born to do things, like the modeling, his care of Yevgeni, his making love to Mickey, for fuck’s sake...Ian was just a fucking miracle on legs and Mickey loved him so deeply he wanted to be by his side 24/7, whatever that took.

For Ian’s part, he was loving his work at the clinic under the tutelage of Dr. Montemurro. He was learning even more than he had in his paramedic class, and the respect and appreciation he got from him was a huge ego boost. Ian felt he was finally coming into his own, realizing his potential. Who would have thought he would end up accomplishing so many of his goals in Mexico, the place he had been afraid to go, for fear of losing all that he had worked to build for himself? In the short time that he had been in Mexico, he had regained all that he had lost via the bridge incident and so much more. And most importantly, he had Mickey back, the love of his life, the beautiful, sensitive, caring boyfriend who had taken care of him when he was sick, put up with his crazy, self-destructive moods, endured his psychotic behavior, protected him from the prospectively catastrophic consequences that could have followed some of his actions, and loved him unconditionally through it all. Ian tried to put what he had done to Mickey out of his mind, chalking it up to a mistake that he had fixed, but, if he were to be honest with himself, he had to admit that Manuel and Mandy, as well as Mickey, indirectly, were the ones responsible for his reunion with Mickey, not him.

Sometimes he didn’t think he deserved Mickey, masochistically reliving their goodbye at the border crossing, the devastated, tearful look in Mickey’s stormy blue eyes, the velvety feel of his soft, thick, sensual lips that he could scarcely drag himself away from, the expression on his gorgeous, painted china-doll face that screamed, ‘I love you; don’t leave me’, while from his delicious mouth came, “Fuck you, Gallagher.” He really screwed up, and Mickey was a fucking saint to forgive him. He should’ve gotten in the goddamn car when Mickey told him to. Hell, if he had, there would be no Manuel, or if there was, he’d sure know his place a fuck of a lot better. Most days he drove these thoughts from his mind, choosing to revel in the unfathomably fantastic life he was blessed to be building with Mickey now. He was simply in awe of the fact that a Gallagher and a Milkovich could ever be this happy.
It was the first Saturday morning since the storm hit. Ian was up early, getting ready for a shift at the clinic. He had decided to let Mickey sleep since they had been up late the night before, fucking each other every which way until they were so exhausted that they fell asleep, mid-fuck. If he didn’t have to be at the clinic, he’d still be zonked out, Mickey wrapped tightly in his arms. He was looking forward to a lighter day since the storm had pretty much run its course by this time and some of the areas that were further inland, like the factory and the clinic, were beginning to function with some sense of normalcy. In fact, Mickey was considering calling his men in for work, starting Monday. He had wanted to discuss it with Manuel, but Ian figured he could do that over the phone if he didn’t end up being sent home later that day, which Ian thought was a real possibility, based on his progress. He really was doing quite well; Mandy wouldn’t accept anything less and consistently gave anticipating his every need her all.

Ian showered, grabbed a quick breakfast and was ready to head out when his phone buzzed. It was a voice message from a strange number. The call must have come in while he was in the shower. He opened his phone to listen to it:

“Hello Ian Gallagher, you don’t know me, but we were supposed to meet before this terrible storm hit. My name is Bruno Bigley. You saved my grandson’s life on the beach a few weeks ago. I understand you were to begin working for Chief Chavez when all of this happened. I got your number from his replacement. I wanted to let you know I will be arriving in your general area early next week to assist the Red Cross and some other humanitarian agencies in the rebuilding of Boca del Rio and would love nothing more than to meet you. Please call me back so we can make plans. Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.”

Ian’s body flooded with adrenalin, a thousand thoughts swirling in his head. ‘What should I say? What will he say? Why does Chief Chavez have a replacement? What happened to Mickey’s house? Will we rebuild it or live in the factory forever? What will Dr. Montemurro say if I decide to leave the clinic to work for Boca EMS?’ One simple phone message had opened the floodgates for all of the concerns Ian had locked away somewhere in his subconscious while he dealt with all the emergency situations he had been forced to handle, and there was no closing them. Ian’s stomach churned as he fought against himself about when and if he should return the call. He knew he should talk to Mickey first, but he felt pressure to be prompt with a reply. After all, Bigley was a bigwig businessman from the States. He could probably help if Mickey wanted to rebuild the house and, with his connections, he would definitely be an asset to have as an acquaintance in any number of situations that could arise. He figured Mickey would see it his way, but Mickey could also be paranoid, and Ian knew from experience that Mickey didn’t like to be blindsided. He appreciated knowing what was going on ahead of time and, the more Ian mulled it over in his mind, he knew that talking to Bigley before Mickey would definitely cause a shitstorm. He thought about waking Mickey up before he left, but as he gazed down upon Mickey’s peacefully sleeping form, adorably snuggled up in the blanket, he didn’t have the heart to disturb him. He slipped quietly out of the room, hopping in the car and heading to the clinic.

Ian arrived at the clinic to find that many patients were set to be discharged, including Manuel, who was up and around, helping Mandy with patient check-in and discharge. There had been some new ones trickling in, but the severity of the injuries was beginning to lessen, on average, giving the staff, which now included some of Dr. Montemurro’s regular employees, a well-deserved break. Ian smiled, giving a warm hello to the doctor as he awaited his assignment for the day. Over the past week, Ian had learned to take X-Rays and CT Scans, suture and/or glue wounds (actually he had already taught himself how to glue a wound on Manuel), insert and remove a catheter, drain an infected wound, and he was in the ongoing process of learning the names and uses all of the surgical implements used in the operating room, adding to his list of devices each time he worked as Dr. Montemurro’s scrub nurse, which he had now done for six surgeries. Ian marveled about the level of trust the doctor had in him. It was as if he knew, as Ian often felt he did himself, just what he was
capable of, and confidently allowed him to proceed, unchecked. Ian had to admit, the autonomy of this position reminded him a lot of being an EMT, and the hours were definitely better.

“So Ian, have you decided to join us on a permanent basis yet?” Dr. Montemurro asked. “We really need you!” he added enthusiastically. “I’ve been thinking about it,” Ian responded noncommittally. “There’s a lot someone with your brains and talent can learn around here. What if we could get you into nursing school and pay you nurse’s wages while you went? You could work part-time until you finish, and I could arrange for the school to give you your clinical hours for your work here,” Dr. Montemurro smiled, seeing by the look on his face that Ian was now giving this serious consideration. “Well, I would have to talk to Mickey about it and…” “Already done! I talked to Mickey after the first day I worked with you. He loves the idea!” the doctor gushed, interrupting Ian mid-sentence.

“It’s just that I told Chief Chavez I would work for him in Boca and I just don’t know where we are even going to be living. And I got a voice message today from Bruno Bigley…” The doctor interrupted Ian again, handing him some gauze to dress the wound he had just debrided as he spoke, “You mean the CEO of Bigley Enterprises Bruno Bigley?” “Yes,” Ian answered, trying not to grin at the doctor’s recognition of the name. “And why was he…” Dr. Montemurro stopped talking as he connected the dots in his head. “Ohhhh, you were the young man on the news that saved his grandson from drowning on the beach a few weeks back! I heard about that! Wow! So is he flying you to New York to attend the University of your choice or what?” the doctor said, all at once feeling outclassed. “No, he’s actually planning to come down here with some humanitarian aid agencies to help rebuild Boca, and he wants to meet me while he’s here,” Ian explained. “Oh, so he just hasn’t offered YET,” the doctor corrected himself.

“So, since you know about this now, and you know Mickey pretty well, how do you think he would feel about my meeting Bigley?” Ian asked. “You mean you’re considering telling Bruno Bigley ‘no’?” the doctor asked incredulously. “Well, I don’t want to put Mickey in any danger. It was a concern right when Bigley was supposed to fly down and there was going to be a press conference. Then the hurricane happened…” Ian spoke nervously. “Well, with all the press wanting to get a piece of all the damage and devastation from the hurricane, I think you’re off the hook there. And as far as Bigley causing Mickey a problem, that won’t happen. Bigley is a business mogul in New York, but he funded most of his success through illegal activities here in Mexico, and people down here know it. Believe me when I tell you, he will not cause Mickey, you, me or anyone in Mexico any problems. Why do you think he wants to help rebuild? He feels a sense of responsibility to our communities here. You would do well to get back to him as soon as possible,” the doctor advised Ian.

A huge weight was lifted off Ian’s shoulders after his conversation with Dr. Montemurro. He worked the rest of his shift with a smile on his face and a spring in his step, enjoying his work, but looking forward to its end so he could get back to the factory and tell Mickey all the great news! Of course he would wait until after Mickey and Manuel had their discussion about opening the factory on Monday, but he doubted Mandy would let that conversation go too long. She would be counting the seconds until she could get Manuel’s hot, sexy ass into bed with her. It had been a long week!

As Ian, Mandy and Manuel headed for the car, Ian’s phone buzzed. It was a text message from Mickey:

“So you decided to spend the whole day without me? You’re gonna to live to regret it. I’ll be waiting for you…(devil face emoji).” Ian smirked, a whole host of sordid scenarios scrolling through his mind. “On my way…(heart eyes emoji),” Ian texted back, his heart fluttering, his stomach trembling, his dick growing more engorged by the second. He got in the car and stepped on the gas, his body swarming with desire. ‘God, I love him,” he thought to himself as he drove as quickly as he could to
the man that was his home, regardless of location.

Chapter End Notes

Wanting to hear what readers are thinking. Favorite chapter(s)? Love getting comments:)

Fifty Shades of Mick

How Ian envisioned his evening and how it turned out couldn’t have been any more different. First of all, he had expected Mickey and Manuel to have a discussion about opening the factory right away so they could act on their decision. As it turned out, they had been texting about it all day and had already contacted the employees about reporting back to work on Monday. Second, he figured he would be sitting down with Mickey to tell him all about Bigley, the phone message he received and the information he had gotten from Dr. Montemurro. He had been so looking forward to that ever since his conversation with the doctor. He had also wanted to tell him about his day and the procedures he had done. Instead, he came home to an envelope on the front door to the factory with his name on it. He opened it to find a note scrawled on lined paper that read:

“You were very selfish today. You know how much I hate being without you, and you left anyhow, without even telling me. You never even called. You been very bad and you deserve to be punished. Get that sweet ass up to our room NOW or it will be even worse for you.”

Ian felt a tingle run down his spine and straight into his stiffening cock. He had hinted to Mickey about how much he enjoyed the morning with the pancake turner, but they had been together and done so many things since then that Ian figured Mickey had forgotten about it or didn’t want to engage in a repeat performance of anything like that. He couldn’t have been more wrong!

When Ian pushed the door open to their room, it was dark, with the exception of a few small candles on the nightstand. On the bed, Ian could see that Mickey had laid out handcuffs, a riding crop, a pencil-thin cane, clothespins, a sleeping mask and a ball gag. “Holy shit, Mick!” Ian exclaimed upon catching sight of these items. “Did I tell you it was okay to speak?” Mickey hissed, grabbing Ian roughly and throwing him onto the bed. “No,” Ian answered reluctantly, not sure if he had permission to answer. “Well,” Mickey began, with an evil tone, "I need to know one thing before I can punish you. D'ya think ya deserve it?” he finished, looking down lustfully at Ian, whom he now had pinned under him, his wrists held tightly against the bed in Mickey’s hands. Ian nodded his head silently, swallowing hard. “Okay then,” Mickey grinned devilishly, “What d’ya think your punishment should be?” he asked. Ian paused, thinking about all of the torture implements Mickey had amassed on the bed. "Whatever you deem necessary,” Ian finally decided to say, finding himself incredibly aroused by this whole scenario.

"Well, well, well,” Mickey pulled at his chin for effect, “You sure are givin’ me a lotta leeway. I could really fuck you up!” he snarled, handcuffing Ian to the headboard, then lifting his shirt to pinch one of his nipples between his fingers, all the while rubbing himself all over Ian’s crotch. “So you’re gonna trust me to do whatever I want to ya, huh?” Mickey growled, biting playfully at the top of Ian’s right ear as he spoke. Again, Ian nodded in agreement, not saying a word. Mickey twisted Ian’s right nipple hard, Ian letting out a sharp gasp as Mickey reached for a clothespin and clamped it onto the nipple.

“You sure ya trust me now? Mickey asked as he repeated the process on the left nipple. “Cuz I gotta know if you don’t. I mean, this punishment’s gotta be fair,” he sneered as he flicked the clothespins with his fingers, one at a time, sending waves of intense pain, and just a hint of pleasure, through Ian’s whole body. “Fuuuuuck!” Ian yelled. “Now, if you’re gonna do that, you'll hafta wear this,” Mickey chided, holding up the ball gag. “You wanna wear this?” he asked, bringing it up to Ian’s mouth. Ian shook his head. “Okay then, ya gotta be quiet and take your punishment like a man,” Mickey warned, pulling at the clothes pins and rubbing Ian’s package with his other hand. Ian struggled to stay quiet, overwhelmed by the intense polar opposite sensations that were reverberating through his body simultaneously.
"One other thing ya should know," Mickey breathed sadistically into Ian's ear as he bit and sucked on it hard. "All this shit is for you. Never done this to anyone else. You got that?" he asked, checking for affirmation. Ian nodded, a tiny grin forming on his face. "And now I'm gonna teach ya not ta be so damn selfish." Mickey announced as he pulled lightly at the clothespins, still fastened to Ian’s nipples. Ian wriggled wildly under him, his movements hindered by the force Mickey’s body exerted on his, the bulge in his pants growing even bigger and harder as Mickey teased him intermittently.

Mickey lifted himself up off Ian's writhing, goosebump-covered body, taking a moment to remove Ian's pants and boxers as Ian lay on his back, his wrists still fastened to the headboard above his head. "Hmmmm..." Mickey hummed as Ian's rock-hard cock slapped against his lower stomach, finally free of its cumbersome, constraining clothing. "Somebody excited?" Mickey asked, feigning surprise. Ian squirmed as Mickey traced the lines of his chest and abs with the riding crop, slowly making his way down to Ian's now moist manhood. He paused briefly, lowering his head to lick the pre-cum off Ian's slit, tracing up from Ian's cock to his still-pinned and now blood-engorged nipples. He flicked them with his tongue, twisting the clothespins slightly as he did. Ian saw stars, his nerve-endings again flooding his system with conflicting sensations. Ian squeezed his eyes shut tightly, focusing on his struggle to silently endure, when he felt Mickey slip a mask over his eyes, instantly throwing Ian into irrevocable darkness.

For what seemed like forever, there was no contact. No instructions or explanation from Mickey. Nothing. This was freaking Ian out. He could handle pain; it was not knowing what was coming next that was really getting to him. Finally, he heard something, a noise he couldn't identify, then a cold, moist feeling flooding his package. Was Mickey going to shave him? 'What the fuck?' Ian screamed inside his head. 'Ohhhhh! Whipped cream!' Ian thought to himself, smiling slightly. Mickey licked lightly at the sticky substance for a while, focusing on the flawless line that ran up the center of Ian's sensitive ball sack. Ian pulled in a deep breath and held it, trying like hell to swallow the moan that he knew was fighting to free itself from his throat. Then Ian felt Mickey's mouth on his stiff, whipped cream-covered cock, making its way down to the hilt, taking all of him deep into his throat, then bobbing up and down, sucking hard.

"Fuck, Mick!" Ian bellowed as Mickey simultaneously released Ian's nipples from their captivity. "So fucking intense! I'm gonna cum!" Ian bucked spasmodically, completely losing control of his brain, his body...everything. "Oh no ya won't," Mickey corrected him, immediately pulling the plug on all stimulation, much to Ian’s displeasure. "And who said ya could talk?" He asked angrily. "Now you're gonna hafta pay for that. Ya know that, right?" Ian nodded his head, bracing himself for the next phase of the wicked rollercoaster ride he'd been on for what seemed like forever.

Mickey freed Ian's hands and implored him to turn over. Ian complied, lying down on his stomach as Mickey grabbed his wrists, cuffing him to the headboard again. "Up on your knees!" Mickey demanded. Ian, still blindfolded, had no idea what to expect next, but his dick was getting hard again, maybe in reaction to Mickey's authoritative manner or maybe it was the thoughts of all of the possible directions Mickey could be going with this.

The sound of something moving swiftly through the air suddenly broke the silence, Ian's cock twitching with excitement. He imagined it to be the sound of Mickey swinging the riding crop, but after the first two practice swings, Mickey made solid and painful contact with the bottom half of Ian's derrière, where his thighs and ass met, leaving no doubt that it was the thin, whip-like cane he was using. Ian winced at the searing pain, biting down hard on his lower lip to keep from screaming."You get ta talk now," Mickey announced. "You're gonna count the lashes," he added, grasping Ian’s cock from underneath his body with his free hand and pumping it a few times. Ian felt Mickey pull his hand away, then bring it back, this time with what he was sure was lube on it. "Ready?" Mickey asked, still stroking Ian’s cock. Ian nodded nervously, biting his lip in anticipation.
The first lash lit into Ian’s ass cheeks like a hot poker. “One!” he cried out, thankful for the permission to do so. No sooner did he get his first number out than Mickey brought an even more severe stroke down across Ian’s already red and welted ass. “Two!” Ian screamed, tears trailing down his cheeks, Mickey now pumping harder on Ian’s cock between lashes. This pattern continued until Ian had counted his fifth stroke, amid sobs, and could scarcely stay up on his knees any longer.

“You want more?” Mickey wheezed, winded himself from the flogging he had just administered. Ian was at a loss as to how he should answer. He certainly didn’t want any more, at least not with the cane, but he didn’t want to piss Mickey off by answering wrong. “Do you think i need it?” he finally went with. “Think you should know that better than me. You gonna leave me here alone again without tellin’ me?” he inquired, jerking Ian at a brisk pace now, Ian feeling himself getting closer and closer to climax again. “Never!” Ian promised. “You gonna take good care of me tonight?” Mickey added, slowing the pace of his hand on Ian’s cock. “Of course,” Ian breathed, half-delirious with anticipation and want. “Let me free and I’ll do anything you want,” Ian finished.

“You do know that, even if I don’t uncuff you, you’re still gonna do anything I want, right?” Mickey clarified, a depraved glint in his icy blue eyes. “Yeah Mick, I know,” Ian replied, enjoying Mickey’s whole act, but trying not to smile. “I just want you so bad, Mick! Can’t wait to touch you! Not being able to do that is is the worst punishment of all!” Ian admitted, tears spilled out from under his blindfold.

A lightbulb went off in Mickey’s head, a wide grin stretching across his face. “Naw, gonna leave you like that for a while. Turn your head this way,” he called from Ian’s left. Ian obeyed. Mickey pulled the mask off Ian’s eyes and let his right hand free, turning himself on the bed so his ass was at the top end of the bed, clearly in Ian’s view. After he was sure Ian was watching, and he was, his eyes riveted to Mickey’s glorious round ass, he squirted some lube onto his hand and began fingering himself, stretching as he went. After just a few minutes of this, Ian was begging to fuck him, his ample shaft throbbing to the beat of Mickey’s finger-fucking.

“Oh no, not yet,” Mickey breathed, “First, you’re gonna see what I did to myself after ya left me at the border, when I really missed you and couldn’t take it no more,” Mickey said sadly, pulling an Ian-sized dildo from his nightstand drawer. He slicked it up with lube and slowly began to sink it into his own ass, pulling it out, then pushing it back in, a little deeper each time, a collection of deep sighs, moans and curse words falling from his sexy, pouty lips, all of which were threatening to put Ian over the edge. Mickey sped up his self-fucking pace, while also moving his head over toward Ian, so close to his painfully erect cock that Ian could feel him breathing, or rather panting, over it. “So close!” Mickey moaned. “No!” Ian yelled. “I wanna do it!” Ian rolled around, yanking against the handcuffs with his free hand and wriggling his other wrist until he freed himself.

Ian jumped up off the bed, ignoring the pain he felt over various parts of his body. He grabbed the lube, slicking up his member, then pounced on Mickey like a cat in heat, pulling the dildo from his ass and replacing it abruptly with his own authentic, 100 percent irresistibly perfect penis. He moved it in and out of Mickey’s deliciously tight ass, the pair moaning ecstatically in unison as they rejoiced in their glorious union, body and soul, the likes of which neither had ever or would ever experience without the other.

“So fuckin’ perfect!” Mickey breathed, “Gonna cum, Gallagher!” he shrieked as he rammed his ass against Ian’s body, helping him to bury his cock deep into his ass, Ian counteracting his movements.

“Mickey! I fucking love you!” Ian yelled as they climaxed together, Ian gripping into Mickey’s hips harshly as they did.

The couple lay still and quiet, their bodies wrapped up together like a deformed pretzel, as they recuperated from their evening activities. “Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey exclaimed, breaking the
silence. "The fuck you get outta those cuffs?" "Don’t you remember how I ended up in Lake Michigan?" he asked, laughing. "Yeah...guess I do," Mickey chuckled.

“So was your punishment how you hoped it would be?” Mickey asked, a reluctant smile forming on his face. “You are one hell of a Dom, Mick!” Ian responded. “I have trouble giving up control in most situations in my life, as I’m sure you’ve noticed, so I think it’s good for me to give it over to you sometimes. And there’s no one else in the world that I would ever trust to do that, so thanks a lot, Mick! It was great and I love you for setting that all up, just for me,” Ian gushed, leaning into Mickey’s face to kiss him. Mickey returned the kiss passionately, causing the beginnings of a boner to form between Ian’s legs. He fought to will it away, relishing the conversation he had waited all day to have with Mickey.

“Mick,” Ian began, staring into the most beautiful blue eyes on the planet that just happened to belong to the love of his life, “I got a voice message today from Bruno Bigley, the businessman from New York whose grandson I worked on at the beach.” Ian continued. “You mean the little kid whose life you saved when he almost fuckin’ drowned?” Mickey corrected Ian. It really bothered Mickey sometimes, how humble Ian could be, refusing to accept the credit he deserved for so many of the great things he had done in his life.

“Yes,” Ian answered, proceeding to give Mickey the details about the purpose of his upcoming visit, as well as his desire to meet Ian. Mickey seemed okay with all of it and agreed that his visit was a great opportunity for people who lost everything in Boca, a group that he considered himself to be part of, based on the reports he had gotten so far. He and Manuel had talked, and both planned to return to Boca to survey the damage as soon as the area was cleared for people to return.

As for Mickey’s prior concerns about Ian meeting Bigley, they had been founded in the fear that the press conference, which would now never happen, could have gotten international attention. Doctor Montemurro had already, unbeknownst to Ian, texted Mickey, explaining Bigley’s reputation in Mexico and allaying any fears he had about Bigley causing problems for him through Ian. Mickey smiled sweetly at Ian, “So you gonna take me when ya go to meet him?” he asked. “If I wanna be able to sit down, I guess I better,” Ian giggled, rubbing his bare ass lightly, so as not to start it burning again.

Ian and Mickey talked and laughed late into the night, Ian sharing some of his work experiences at the clinic, Mickey discussing plans for the reopening of the factory. “Your ass better still model for us,” Mickey reminded Ian. “I know everyone wants your ass, but your ass is mine first,” Mickey grinned. “Oh definitely!” Ian assured him, kissing him gently on the lips. “So I’m gonna call Bigley, first thing in the morning. You wanna be there?” Ian asked, already knowing the answer. “I’ll be there,” Mickey answered, wrapping his arms around Ian’s waist and pulling him close. “Love you, Ian...so fuckin’ much,” Mickey’s voice trailed off as he dropped off to sleep.
Ian had slept like a baby, completely exhausted after the day he had put in at the clinic on short sleep from the night before, only to have come home to quite the physically demanding situation, one that kept him going until late into the night. None of that mattered now though, Ian having slept in, secure in the knowledge that Dr. Montemurro had given him Sunday off. He woke up to the smell of strong coffee, the kind Mickey was known for making, mixed with another scent, sweet, but not quite like pancakes, maybe even a hint of a fruity aroma. Whatever the basis of the fragrance, it was divine, lulling Ian into consciousness and pulling at him to leave their marshmallow of a bed. Ian had swung his legs over the side of the bed and was just about to get up when Mickey sauntered in from the kitchen, carrying a tray with coffee, orange juice, a plate with crepes stacked four inches high, a collection of freshly-cut fruit and a can of whipped cream on it. “Get your ass back in that bed!” Mickey called out, upon seeing Ian about to stand up. “You’re havin’ breakfast in bed with me today,” Mickey continued, beaming at the sight of Ian’s gorgeous self pulling his legs back up onto the bed and under the covers.

Sometimes Mickey couldn’t believe Ian was really there with him in Mexico. It all seemed to be such a dream come true that Mickey felt he should pinch himself just to be sure it was all real. This was one of those days, and Mickey literally couldn’t take his eyes off Ian. “What?” Ian smiled as Mickey set the breakfast tray on the nightstand, full-on staring at Ian as he sat down on the edge of the bed. “I just…” Mickey broke down, unable to get another word out. “What’s wrong?” Ian asked, pulling Mickey’s head into his chest and planting a kiss on the crown of his head as he cradled it. “Feel like a fuckin’ pussy!” Mickey finally managed to spit out as he tried to compose himself. “Just sometimes feels too good to be true! Milkoviches ain’t never this happy,” he added. Ian couldn’t help but laugh. “And you think you’re the only one who feels this way sometimes? I AM a Gallagher, ya know, “ Ian chuckled a bit more, grabbing Mickey at his ribs to tickle a laugh out of him. “Guess I’m just thinkin’ about this Bigley phone call. Everything’s so good right now. Afraid somethin’s gonna fuck it up, ya know?” Mickey explained. Ian nodded in understanding. “Well, I’m not gonna let that happen. This Bigley meeting is supposed to be a good thing. Hoping he’ll help with the rebuilding of our place on the beach,” Ian spoke optimistically, Mickey smiling at Ian’s use of the words, ‘our place’.

“Yeah, I hope you’re right. And if he’s comin’ to rebuild Boca, that will do wonders for our surfboard business. Been real worried about that since the hurricane hit, ya know?” Mickey seemed to have gotten over his emotional outburst and began preparing a plate of crepes for Ian, making sure to give him a sampling of each of the fruit varieties. Ian nodded in response to Mickey’s comment, although Mickey’s partnership with Manuel still rubbed him the wrong way; he had just made a conscious decision not to ‘go there’ with Mickey anymore, since it always led to an argument.

“This is amazing, Mick!” Ian declared, taking a second huge bite of his breakfast. “See, Mick! I’m feeling like you were this morning. Like, how could such a beautiful, smart, enterprising guy also fuck like a porn star, cook like Wolfgang Puck AND be in love with me?” Ian’s laugh was infectious, his smile, bright as the sun. Mickey couldn’t help but smile back and give Ian a kiss, mouthful of food be damned. The vibe for the morning was mellow and peaceful as the couple finished their meal, snuggling in bed together, eating whipped cream from the can, and occasionally squirting it at each other.

Ian cleaned up the breakfast dishes and poured Mickey and himself another cup of coffee before picking up his phone. “You gonna call Bigley now?” Mickey asked, sipping his coffee. “Yeah, I’ll put him on speaker,” Ian answered, sitting across from Mickey at the table, coffee in hand. He pulled
up the number on his phone and hit 'send'. The phone rang three times before someone answered, “Good Morning!” Ian easily identified the voice on the other end of the phone as the same gruff voice on the message he had received.

“Uh, Good Morning, Mr. Bigley,” Ian began nervously, “This is Ian Gallagher, returning your call,” he continued.

“Hello, Ian! Thanks for getting back to me so quickly! My plans have become a bit more definite since I left your message, so I am hoping we can arrange a time to meet this coming Tuesday or Wednesday,” Bigley explained.

“That would be great! I’m working at a small clinic about 30 miles inland, so I would need some time to get to you, if you’re gonna be in Boca,” Ian replied, winking at Mickey, who was staring at him again, hanging on his every word.

“Nonsense!” Bigley growled, “You’re busy! I’ll come to you. Do you get a lunch break? Maybe you could suggest a place for us to meet in your area.”

Ian looked at Mickey, who shrugged his shoulders, then mouthed the words ‘Ask Manuel’. Ian rolled his eyes as he scrambled to come up with something to say.

“Uh, can I text you an address? I, uh, have to see which restaurants have reopened and which ones serve lunch. Before the hurricane, I had never been in this area, so I don’t know much,” Ian stammered, feeling very much ‘on the spot.’

“Don’t give it another thought! Text me the address of your clinic. I’ll find a place nearby, make reservations and text the address to you. What time is your lunch?”

“I usually just eat when things slow down, but let’s say 11:30,” Ian said, feeling a bit more at ease with the conversation.

“Ok, we’ll do Tuesday at 11:30 then, Ian. I’m looking forward to meeting the guy who saved my grandson’s life!” Bigley confirmed, his booming voice rattling the speaker in Ian’s phone.

“And I’m looking forward to meeting you, sir,” Ian spoke enthusiastically, “I’ll text you the clinic address now, then I’ll wait for your text then as to the location for lunch.” Ian said, looking up to see Mickey raising his eyebrows as his kicked him under the table, like ‘WTF?’ “An...and would it be alright if I brought my partner to have lunch with us?” Ian added, although he thought it was a bit forward. Mickey instantly flashed that adorably endearing, wide grin that Ian had fallen madly in love with back in the day, the one that made the corners of his eyes crinkle.

“Sure, sure!” Bigley bellowed, his thick New York accent fitting the tone of his voice perfectly. “I’ll be in touch, Ian. See you soon!” he finished and the phone call ended.

“Well, that went well…” Mickey leaned over and gave Ian a passionate kiss before he could finish his thought, the kind of kiss you don’t turn away for small talk. “You are IT for me,” Mickey breathed into Ian’s mouth between kisses. “Want it to always be just like this,” Ian sighed contentedly, brushing Mickey’s cheek softly with his fingers.

A knock at the door interrupted their blissful encounter. Mickey got up to answer. It was Mandy. He hadn’t seen hide nor hair of her or Manuel since they had ridden home from the clinic together on Friday night, probably because she was screwing the shit out of Manuel’s still-recovering ass, if Mickey knew his sister, which he did. “Too busy to say hello for the past two days?” Mickey questioned with a raised eyebrow and a slight smirk. “Yep!” Mandy answered, staving off a giggle.
“So, what can I do for you this fine Sunday morning?” Mickey asked, hoping she would get to the point and go the fuck away. He loved his sister, but he really valued his off time with Ian and didn’t like having it interrupted. “Well, I was wondering if we could borrow your car or, actually, if you could go with us to find Manuel’s car. He doesn’t remember where he left it and we need it,” she explained.

“I’m sure I can,” he paused, “but it might be better if I take Ian with me,” he spoke, thinking out loud. Mandy rolled her eyes, thinking how dick-whipped her brother was, but then said, “Sure, let’s take Ian!”

“Ian, c’mon, gotta take Mandy and Manuel to get his car,” he called in to Ian as he slipped on some shorts and a muscle shirt. “Okay,” Ian responded, throwing on yesterday’s pants and a fresh t-shirt. “Not how I envisioned my day, but I’ve been running into that a lot lately,” he said with a smile, blushing and feeling a twinge in his cock as he remembered his Saturday night as a Sub.

The four piled into Mickey’s car, Manuel sitting up front, at Ian’s suggestion, because there was more headroom, which he needed, due to his surgical wound. “So you woulda been coming back from the pharmacy, right?” Mickey asked Manuel. “I honestly don’t even know if I got there,” Manuel replied. “I don’t remember much of anything about that day,” he added. “Okay, I’m just gonna drive the route to the pharmacy slowly. You guys look for the car and let me know if you see it,” Mickey instructed.

Over the course of their expedition, the subject of Boca and the beach houses came up. “Heard on the news that most of the houses on the beach in Boca are completely destroyed,” Mickey commented. “Yeah, that’s why Bigley’s coming down here. To help rebuild,” Ian added. “Think there’s any hope that either of our houses survived the storm?” Mickey asked Manuel, who had some experience with hurricanes. “It’s really hard to say. I’ve seen some strange things when it comes to these storms,” Manuel explained. “There could be ten houses in a row, completely destroyed, then there could be one left standing.”

“They’ve cleared the roads enough to allow people to travel back into the area, ya know?” Mandy spoke with authority, scrolling through her alerts on her phone. “Oh yeah, well, maybe we should…” “There it is!” Mandy interrupted Mickey upon catching sight of Manuel’s car. The front end was crushed against a tree, but it looked to be alright, other than that. “Gimme the keys and I’ll go see if I can start it,” Mickey said, looking over at Manuel. “I don’t have the keys!” Manuel raised his voice in panic. “Relax! You probably left ’em in the car,” Micky said, trying to calm Manuel.

Mickey actually had a spare set of keys to Manuel’s car on his ring, just as Manuel had a set for Mickey’s car. Mickey just didn’t feel he wanted to broach that subject with Ian in the car. His stomach was starting to knot up, just thinking about being less than honest with Ian after such a great past couple of days, but it was that very peaceful happiness that he had been enjoying lately that made him not want to ruin everything with something so stupid and insignificant.

He turned off the ignition in his car, taking his keys as he hopped out of the car to check out Manuel’s. “Hey! It’s hot in here! Give us the keys!” Mandy yelled as she opened her car door. Mickey ignored Mandy’s request and quickly jumped into the driver’s seat of Manuel’s car. There were no keys in it, so he used his set to try and start the car. It started right up, no problem, and he was able to quickly back it away from the tree. He put it into ‘drive’ and hit the gas. All seemed to be in good working order. He pulled the car over, put it in ‘park’ and began trying to remove the keys to Manuel’s car from his key ring so both cars could be driven. He heard a tap on the window, so he looked up. Mickey opened the car door. “I figured I’d offer to drive one of the cars since Manuel can’t drive and Mand…” Ian stopped mid-sentence as he realized what Mickey was doing with the keys.
“Get in,” Mickey said softly. I’ll drive this over to my car and give Mandy the keys. Then we can ride to the beach together in my car and talk, just the two of us.” Ian looked down, a lump forming in his throat, not just because this was another example of what Mickey and Manuel had together, but also because Mickey had tried to hide it from him, and because, damn it, everything had been so fucking perfect! He got in the car and they drove, together, back to Mickey’s car.

After switching everybody around in the cars so that Mickey and Ian were now in Mickey’s car, and Mandy and Manuel were in Manuel’s car, the foursome went their separate ways, Mandy and Manuel headed for the factory, and Mickey and Ian, the beach.

“Look,” Mickey began, “I can’t do this again with you today,” he continued impatiently, “I know I shoulda fuckin’ told you I had keys to Manuel’s fuckin’ car, but this reaction, this shit right here that I’m dealin’ with right now is the reason I didn’t. Damn it, Ian! I can’t rewrite history. Things are what they are, as far as my past goes. Same is true for yours.”

Mickey was getting far too upset to drive at this point and pulled the car over, turning to look at Ian, his magnificent blue eyes glistening with tears. “What I can do is fuckin’ promise you that there ain’t no one else but you and, if I have my way, there never will be,” he took a deep breath, wiping his eyes. “And I don’t know if you remember me sayin’ I had a surprise for you last week when we were workin’ at the clinic or not, but I do, and I need to know if you’re ready. So please, can we just go see if our fuckin’ house is still standin’ and not have another stupid fuckin’ fight about nothin’? Cuz I’m ready...ready to…” Ian smashed his mouth against Mickey’s, slipping his tongue between Mickey’s swollen lips, devouring his entire mouth as if their lives depended on it. “Okay, okay, Gallagher,” Mickey pleaded, pulling away from Ian, “For Christ’s sake, really don’t wanna hafta fuck in this car in the middle of the road, and you’re gettin’ me to that point, so let’s save this for later. Right now, I really wanna check on the house. There’s somethin’ real important there, and I gotta find it.”
Words cannot describe the devastation that was Boca del Rio. Entire streets of houses and storefronts—leveled, while others remained partially underwater. Debris and personal items littered the shore and floated in the water. The first wave of clean-up crews, dressed in orange for visibility, had only just begun to organize their efforts, the prospect of actually clearing water and debris, so completely overwhelming.

Mickey and Ian passed by Manuel’s house first. It was still there, but the roof had blown off, exposing all of its interior and contents to the full brunt of the heavy rains. It was probably the closest thing to a total loss that was still standing. The only remedy for that house would be to completely gut the inside and remodel it. Mickey got out of the car to take pictures for Manuel and Mandy, wading through nasty, waste-contaminated water to do so, then got back in the car and drove to his place. When he pulled up in front, he couldn’t believe his eyes! Mickey’s house, although a beachfront property, sat further from the ocean at the longest vertical point of the beach, which was to his advantage in this case. Some of the windows were broken, but not completely blown out, and many of his shingles were missing, but the house, as a unit, was completely intact! Mickey jumped out of the car, Ian tailing him, and ran to his front door. It was still locked, just the way he and Ian had left it the last morning before the storm.

Mickey unlocked the door and they walked in. The house was definitely damp and some of the furniture had gotten wet from roof leaks and the broken windows, but when compared with Manuel’s house, it was a palace! “Grab our suitcases and fill ‘em with some clothes for us,” Mickey called out to Ian as he headed for the kitchen. “You gonna help me?” Ian asked. “I gotta get some other stuff together,” Mickey answered, opening the cabinet under the kitchen sink. Mickey pulled out a mini safe, twisting the combination lock and pulling it open. Ian walked up behind Mickey with the suitcases just in time to see him take a bunch of stacks of money, American money, out of the safe. “Holy Shit! That’s a fuck-ton of money!” Ian yelled. “No shit!” Mickey answered. It’s our rainy day fund. “Ours---as in yours and Man…” “Ours---as in ours…you…me…us!” Mickey cut Ian off.

“And while I’m on that subject, the subject of ‘us’,” Mickey clarified, “I have another surprise for you. You ready for it? Or should I wait?” he asked. “Well, that depends on what it is. You should tell me,” Ian answered. “Dumb ass, If I tell you, it won’t be a surprise!” Mickey yelled. “If it’s a surprise, how the hell am I supposed to know if I’m ready for it?” Ian asked, trying not to smile. “Fuck off! Nevermind, I’ll show you later,” Mickey muttered in frustration. “Anything else you wanna grab while we’re here?” Mickey asked in an irritated tone of voice. “Just you!” Ian said with a song in his voice as he pulled Mickey into him by the waist, wrapping his arms tightly around him and kissing him softly on his lusciously full lips, then his elegantly pale neck, then lowering his mouth onto his provocatively prominent clavicle, pulling on the tender skin with his mouth. “The bed wet?” he asked as he munched on Mickey’s lower lip again. “You tell me! You were in there!” Mickey responded. “Didn’t check it!” Ian called out as he turned and headed for the bedroom, Mickey following like a lost puppy.

“Not too bad,” Ian said, pressing down on the bed with his hand. “Kinda miss fuckin’ you here,” Mickey said, biting at his bottom lip as he looked Ian up and down. “Really…” Ian growled, grabbing Mickey and throwing him on the bed. “Wait! There running water in this bitch?” Mickey asked, springing up from the bed before Ian could stop him. Mickey ran to the shower and turned it on. “Shower sex! Been waitin’ for your ass to heal up and now it’s time!” Mickey grinned devilishly as he stripped his own clothes off, then started on Ian’s. “Felt kinda gross after bein’ in that water over at Manuel’s place, so the shower will work two ways,” Mickey said as he pulled Ian’s t-shirt off.
over his head, then knelt down to undo Ian’s pants, rubbing his package sensually as he did.

When the last thread of clothing was off both of their bodies, Mickey led Ian into the shower, impressed by Ian’s independence, relative to the last time they had showered there together, not even a week before, when Mickey had to help Ian both in and out of the shower. Still he wondered if Ian’s leg was up to the task of straight up fucking and trying to balance in the shower. He decided to take things slow, allowing the water to cascade over them as they embraced and fondled one another, embroiled in a passionate, all-consuming kiss.

Mickey decided on a method for testing Ian’s stability. He began at the curve of Ian’s lightly freckled neck, just below his Adam’s Apple, leading down over his shapely torso, kissing and lightly biting at Ian’s tender, ivory skin, bringing a beautiful blush to it, focusing on each individual nipple, sucking and biting until Ian began to moan with pleasure. Mickey continued heading south as he knelt down, lightly caressing Ian’s balls as he licked and nipped at the delicate skin covering his hip bones. ‘So far, so good,’’ Mickey thought to himself, realizing that even he would be weak in the knees if he were on the receiving end of this treatment. He continued, licking a stripe down over Ian’s red-carpeted pubis, finally addressing the impressively rigid cock that begged his attention. He ringed the thumb and fingers of his right hand around the base, while gently stroking Ian’s delicate ball sack. He then sucked the tip of his cock into his naughty mouth, steadily tightening its grip and making the occasional swipe of the tongue over his sensitive slit.

He slowly and methodically made his way further down Ian’s throbbing manhood, swirling his talented tongue as he stroked the base between his thumb and index finger, and continued to massage his jewels. “Mick!” Ian screamed, his legs shaking, his fingers haphazardly woven into Mickey’s thick, two-tone locks, holding on for dear life, “Wanna fuck you NOW!”

Mickey released Ian’s raging hard-on from his mouth, continuing to stroke it with his right hand as he reached for the lube with his left. Ian was so completely delirious with desire that Mickey was tempted to have mercy and just finish him off, but he knew that Ian would give him hell later since he had already made it clear that he wanted to fuck.

Mickey handed the lube to Ian so he could resume teasing Ian’s cock with his mouth, while Ian took care of Mickey. Ian squeezed and dispersed the lube to all of the right places, then took Mickey’s sweet shaft in one hand, pumping it slowly as he began fingerling his asshole. Mickey moaned loudly, already overly aroused by Ian’s reactions to his foreplay. Ian wasted no time getting Mickey fully prepared and sinking his monstrous member into his ass, bit by bit, shaking gasps and guttural groans loose from deep within Mickey, the feeling so intense that Mickey felt he might topple over. The hot shower water rained down on them, stimulating their every nerve ending and coaxing them closer to climax.

Ian lifted Mickey up, depositing him on the shower ledge, bending him over to angle for deeper penetration. “Whoa!” Mickey hollered in surprise, the sudden feeling of fullness overwhelming him and causing a slight burning sensation. Ian backed off the severity of his thrusts until he got Mickey moaning again, grabbing his glorious cock from underneath to pump it as he continued to fuck him. Finally, they fell into that consistent, familiar rhythm that took them both into blissful oblivion every time, their bodies crashing together, a chorus of curse words and moans filling the shower as Ian exploded into Mickey, Mickey shattering underneath him, the water from the shower still drizzling over their bodies.

They took turns, each lathering the other up, kissing, laughing and enjoying the deep, heartfelt connection that only true love can bestow upon two people. Then finally, after their leisurely shower, they got dressed and were headed for the car, suitcases and safe in tow, when Mickey stopped dead in his tracks. “What’s wrong?” Ian asked, spinning around to look at Mickey. “I...uh... we...I gotta
do somethin’ before we leave,” Mickey spoke very seriously, “And I don’t wanna wait, cuz one thing I learned when this storm hit is that tomorrow ain’t guaranteed. So I gotta do this shit today, alright?” Ian nodded pulling Mickey over to sit with him on the couch, which fortunately wasn’t too damp, a look of concern on his handsome face.

“It’s...uh...I...uh...you remember when you spent that night with me in the van after we hooked up at the south shore docks?” Mickey asked, looking into Ian’s loving eyes. “Yeah, Mick, I do,” Ian responded, grinning a little as he thought about it. “Well, that day, after you left, I went and picked something...I had something...I got this for you,” he finally said, fumbling in his pocket a bit before pulling out a ring, a single gold band. He opened his hand, revealing it to Ian as he continued his story.

“I held onto it for the whole trip down to Mexico cuz I wanted to give it to you after we crossed the border...together,” Mickey took a deep breath, his eyes welling up with tears at the memory of leaving Ian behind in the States as he traveled into Mexico, alone.

“So now,” he continued, choking back tears as he attempted to compose himself enough to speak, “Now that we are here together, in the house I always dreamed I could share with you one day, I hope you will accept this and we can be together…” Ian kissed Mickey’s face, absorbing his tears with his lips. He pulled Mickey into him, squeezing him tight, “I’m so sorry, Mick! I should never have left you there!” he sobbed, taking the ring from Mickey’s hand.

As Ian held the ring in front of his eyes, he noticed an inscription inside. The first thought that ran through his mind was that it had probably been someone else’s wedding ring that Mickey had picked up in a hurry at a pawn shop, but upon examining it more closely, he could read what it said,

‘Ian---’Til Death Do Us Part---Mickey’

Ian read it out loud and started to bawl. It was the last part of what Mickey had started to say to him on his porch on the day he broke up with him. Who would ever have thought that a badass street thug, a Milkovich no less, could have such a tremendously big heart, could love so hard and be so committed to one person.

“So, Ian,” Mickey said, taking the ring back into his hand as he knelt in front of him, “Will you marry me? Cuz I fuckin’ love the shit outta you and don’t ever wanna be without you again.” Mickey stared up at Ian, his beautiful blue eyes burning into Ian’s, begging for an answer. All at once Ian was completely overcome with emotion, pulling Mickey up to him as he sobbed like a baby, bringing him in close and breathing over and over into Mickey’s ear, “Yes yes yes yes yes.”
The drive back to the factory was bittersweet. Mickey felt such a sense of peace and happiness, secure in the knowledge that Ian loved him enough to commit to a lifetime with him, and that the ring was a perfect fit. At the same time, he was on edge about having to share the bad news about Manuel’s house with him. He really had no idea how Manuel would handle it, and he felt a certain degree of responsibility to support him through it, both financially and emotionally. Of course, he knew Ian would not be in favor of him getting involved, given Mickey and Manuel’s history and Ian’s feelings about Manuel, in general.

Ian was also feeling conflicted. While he was touched by Mickey’s long-held devotion and his clearly undying love for him, he also knew that Mickey was going to end up involved in Manuel’s shit again. Ian just couldn’t seem to get Mickey to let go of his emotional attachment to Manuel, however innocent Mickey claimed it to be. On the plus side, Ian was absolutely giddy about the prospect of a wedding with Mickey, a real one, unlike the sham he had witnessed with Svetlana and Mickey, the one that had devastated him and had led to so many other unfavorable occurrences in his life. He wanted to scream in front of God and everybody that Mickey was his man and he loved him to the moon and back.

So it seemed the couple were on the same wavelength, both choosing not to broach the Manuel subject, opting instead to stay quiet for the first part of the ride and then to focus on what they thought were to be the more positive aspects of the week ahead.

“Gotta get a haircut,” Mickey muttered, looking in his rearview mirror at the bleached ends of his hair and the increasingly prominent dark regrowth. “Can’t handle this blonde shit anymore,” he added, pulling at the ends of the hair on the top of his head.

“I don’t know,” Ian smirked, “You get it cut too short and you won’t have enough for me to grab onto when you’re driving me out of my mind with that sweet fucking mouth of yours,” Ian whined. “Yeah, well I wanna look respectable when I go to meet this Bigley character,” Mickey explained. “Yeah, I guess I should, too,” Ian agreed. “Hey, there’s a barber close to the clinic. How ’bout if I pick you up for lunch tomorrow and we can stop on the way to get haircuts,” Mickey suggested. Ian agreed, loving the idea of going out for lunch two days in a row with his ‘fiance’ (Wow! He loved how that sounded in his head!).

“Bigley ever get back to you with a restaurant for Tuesday?” Mickey asked. “Yeah, a place called, ‘Sur de la Frontera,’” Ian replied, reading from his phone. “You serious?” Mickey asked, apparently surprised for some reason. “Yeah, why?” Ian asked. “Just surprised someone outside of the coyote business would even know about it. Good food, but it’s really a front, ya know?” Mickey answered. “A front for what?” Ian asked, his interested piqued. “Just stuff for clients from the States—money laundering, domestic servants, adult companions,” Mickey said, matter-of-factly. “Really?” Ian laughed, a twinkle in his eye. “Yeah, well, this joker’s from New York. Maybe he knows some of our clients,” Mickey chuckled, but was only half-kidding. “I guess we’ll see!” Ian roared, full-on laughing at the absurdity of Mickey’s insinuation.

“So, I wanna get you a ring, Mick!” Ian changed the subject, “Want it to be just like the one you got me! It’s so perfect! Where can I go to have one made? Dr. Montemurro is gonna pay me this Friday,” Ian announced with excitement. “Let’s just get through the week and we can go look around, okay?” Mickey answered, putting his hand on Ian’s leg the way he always did in the car, making small, light circles with his index finger that gave Ian an instant hard-on. “Fuck, Mick! Wondering if I’ll ever have any control over my cock when you’re around,” Ian commented. “Don’t
Mickey pulled into the factory parking lot and Ian literally pounced on him, kissing him hard and sucking ardently on his bottom lip. Mickey reciprocated, moving his hand over to graze Ian’s throbbing cock, and sprouting his own boner, which Ian promptly began to rub briskly with his left hand. “Ian,” Mickey breathed, “We gotta go in and…” “Shut up!” Ian interrupted, biting down on Mickey’s lip a bit harshly, instantly wondering if he drew blood.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, there was a knock on the car window. It was Mandy. Mickey opened his car door, “Yeah, we know! We’re comin’! Relax!” Mickey responded to the scowl on Mandy’s face, although she hadn’t spoken a word. That Milkovich Mean Mug required no words to convey the message, ‘I’m pissed at you and you better fix it or I’ll fuck you up!’

Mickey and Ian hustled up the stairs, Mandy following after them, headed for Manuel and Mandy’s room. “He’s in there!” Mandy called to them. Just as they were nearing the door, Manuel opened it. “Do you have news about the beach houses?” he asked, a look of desperation in his eyes. “Yeah, man,” Mickey began with a deep sigh, “Got some pics of your place so you can see the damage,” he finished, opening up his phone to show him. Mickey handed the phone to Manuel. Mandy ran behind him to look over his shoulder. “This is good! The house is still standing!” he said, checking out the first picture. Manuel’s face fell as he scrolled to the next picture that clearly showed the roof had blown off. “So, the inside?” Manuel looked up at Mickey, his eyes becoming moist as the severity of the damage started to dawn on him. “It’s gonna have to be pretty much gutted,” Mickey said, avoiding eye contact. “So, you have insurance, right?” Mandy asked. Mickey wanted to laugh at her assumption, but couldn’t, considering the situation. Mickey and Manuel had bought their houses, which were partially built, with cash, and had paid as they could to have them finished. Mickey hadn’t wanted any kind of paper trail for the government to track their activities, so he decided against insurance and advised Manuel to do the same.

“So, what about your house, Ojo...er...Mickey? What condition is it in?” Manuel asked, earning a glare from Ian for the slip with the damn nickname again. “It’s got some broken windows, some missing shingles and some light water damage, but not too bad, considering,” Mickey answered, finally meeting Manuel’s eyes with his own.

“We really need to get the new surfboard lines out and selling,” Manuel said optimistically, looking at Mickey for a response. “Yeah, well Boca is a shithole right now, so I don’t see many people comin’ down to surf any time soon. Hopefully, after the clean-up efforts take off, things will get better, but it’s gonna take time,” Mickey said, trying to be realistic without being too brutal. “You got any money saved?” Mickey asked Manuel. “A little bit. Not enough to completely gut and rebuild a house,” Manuel sighed, looking dejected. “We’ll figure something out,” Mickey reassured him, looking over for Ian’s reaction, but Ian was just staring down at the floor.

“How about if I cook us all some dinner?” Mandy asked, trying to lighten the mood. “Sure!” Mickey responded, jumping on her bandwagon. “Whatcha makin’?” “How ‘bout some stir fry?” she suggested. “You gonna put any meat in it or just rabbit food?” Mickey teased. “Very funny, assface!” Mandy snapped back. “It’s gonna be shrimp stir-fry, if that’s okay? Manuel likes shrimp,” she said, smiling at Manuel. Manuel grinned back, his chocolate brown eyes glued to her. Even Ian noticed the way he looked at her, like he wanted her right then and there, and didn’t care who knew it. Ian and Mickey excused themselves, heading back to their room, Mickey requesting that Mandy text them when dinner was ready.

Once back to their room, Ian looked at Mickey in disgust, “We’ll figure something out? What the fuck does that mean? You give me this ring, ask me to marry you, saying that ‘we’ means ‘us’---you--me, then you say that to him?! Just what does it mean?” Ian’s voice was going up in volume and
pitch with every word that shot from his lips. “It means that Manuel is my best friend and business partner, and I will help him figure a way to fix his house!” Mickey yelled back at Ian, frustrated to be dealing with this so soon after the engagement, although he knew there would be problems as soon as he saw the condition of Manuel’s house.

“So you gonna give him that money you said you had stashed for us? Our rainy day fund?” Ian asked in a snarky tone of voice. “Not unless I have to,” Mickey answered. “Why the hell would you have to?” Ian demanded. “Well, if Manuel couldn’t get enough from his end of the business...Ian, I told him NOT to get insurance, and look what happened. I feel responsible! Don’t worry, I’ll figure a way that won’t fuck with us!” Mickey spoke loudly, still annoyed with the whole situation. “Fine!” Ian replied, “I’m working now, so I can take care of myself anyway!” “The fuck you mean by that?” Mickey asked, visibly upset. “I mean I don’t need your money,” Ian said flatly, walking away, looking at his phone.

“Yeah, well I didn’t need yours either when you stuck it in the car at the border, but I was sure glad to have it. And the fact that you gave me a year’s savings, all you had, really kept me going when I started to think you didn’t give a shit about me. That’s why I’m gonna do all I can not to touch the money I have saved. Some of it’s yours, ya know?” Mickey spoke seriously.

“Well, you said it was ours so...” Mickey interrupted Ian, “No, man, I mean yours, as in the money you gave me at the border. I saved it cuz it was all I had left of you,” Mickey finished, feeling his eyes begin to sting. “Are you kidding me?” Ian asked incredulously. “Why would I fuckin’ kid about somethin’ like that, Ian? I swear you’re never gonna understand how much I love you,” Mickey said, shaking his head.

Ian walked over to Mickey and kissed him slowly, passionately, the way you kiss someone you can’t live without. “I love you, too,” Ian breathed, “Just having a hard time sharing you with anyone.”

Their kiss was interrupted by the sound of a text coming in on Mickey’s phone. “Probably Mandy about dinner,” Mickey said, grabbing his phone to check it. “Yup! Let’s go eat! And promise you won’t get bent outta shape over there. I wouldn’ta given you the ring if you didn’t come before anyone in my life. Know that and fuckin’ chill...please,” Ian nodded and they headed to dinner.

The couple knocked on the door and were welcomed by Mandy, who was holding a bottle of wine, Mexican dance music playing inside. “Come in!” she said, smiling, her face a bit flushed. She rushed over to Manuel, who grabbed her waist and spun her around, moving his body to the music. If it weren’t for the bandage on his head, no one would ever know he had had brain surgery the week before. “Take it easy, Mands, you don’t wanna kill the guy! He just had surgery!” Ian said with a chuckle. “I am fine,” Manuel said seriously, before dipping and spinning Mandy again, making her giggle. Mandy gave Manuel a quick kiss, then broke away to pour wine for her guests.

“Naw, no, no...we need four full glasses!” Mickey called out enthusiastically. Manuel went to retrieve the glasses he and Mandy had already been drinking from. “What’s going on?” Mandy asked, looking at Mickey. “You’ll find out in a minute! Geez!” Mickey answered, picking up one of the freshly poured glasses and handing it to Ian before grabbing the other one for himself. “Okay!” Manuel said seriously, before dipping and spinning Mandy again, making her giggle. Mandy gave Manuel a quick kiss, then broke away to pour wine for her guests.

“Here! Here!” Manuel said, clinking his glass into the other three, then taking a big gulp of his wine..
“Congrats! Let’s celebrate!” Mandy cheered, downing her wine and throwing her arms around Mickey, and then Ian, who spun her around, pulling off some dance moves, wine glass in hand. Mickey couldn’t take his eyes off Ian, feeling such deep affection for him that he could scarcely keep from bursting into tears. He was having one of those moments again, when he couldn’t believe his good fortune and wondered whether he could ever be good enough for him. Ian seemed to notice and pulled away from Mandy, allowing Manuel to cut in. He made his way over to Mickey, dancing all the way, then pressing himself against Mickey’s body, rocking up and back, then finally settling into a firm embrace, whispering into his ear, “Yes, ‘til death do us part. Mickey, you are my everything!” Mickey grinned widely, goosebumps covering his fast-flushing skin. Ian was like a drug to him, able to instantaneously cure anything that ailed him.

The four spent a festive evening together, eating drinking, dancing, (even Mickey danced a little with Ian) and talking. Despite the misfortune of the hurricane, everyone was still alive, well and in love. The storm had given all of them a new appreciation for life, and they all, in their own way, were taking steps to make the best of their lives for as long as they were blessed to have them.

Just before Ian and Mickey left, Ian heard a phone ringing, but it wasn’t his. On the kitchen island, he saw a phone lighting up. It was Manuel’s, the caller ID showing ‘Big Lee’. Ian got Manuel’s attention and he immediately took the call, leaving the room. “Who the fuck is Big Lee? Ian asked. “Fuck if I know,”: Mandy answered. Mickey shrugged his shoulders. “Must be important,” Ian concluded. “Not as important as you,” Mickey breathed into Ian’s ear as he whisked him away to their room. “And I plan to take my time showing you just how fuckin’ important you are to me, tonight and for the rest of my life.”
**What's In A Name?**

Mickey was up at the crack of dawn, getting himself ready for the reopening of the factory. He needed to have things up and running smoothly before he could leave to get Ian for lunch, and he still had to ride him to work before he could get started. The lack of windows in their room really made oversleeping easy because it always felt like it was the middle of the night. The only way to change that was to turn on a light, which Mickey didn’t want to do until he had at least given Ian a chance to wake up nicely. He sat down on the bed next to Ian and rubbed his back gently, avoiding any and all body parts that could cause arousal because, unfortunately, there was no time for that this morning. Ian moaned softly, turning to face Mickey, a small smile forming on his lips as his eyes opened and came into focus. “Look at you,” he mumbled, his eyes still heavy with sleep. “Lookin’ so fucking hot!” he continued, wrapping his arms around Mickey’s neck and pulling him down for a soft kiss. “Thanks,” Mickey said, blushing a little. “Look, sorry but you gotta get your ass outta bed,” Mickey said hurriedly, “I got a real busy day and gotta get you to the clinic before I can start.” “Alright,” Ian pouted, dropping his arms from Mickey’s shoulders as he sat up in the bed.

“Coming,” Mickey said in response to a knock at their door. “Mickey, I had to set up a meeting for this morning. Sorry for the late notice, but it’s the only time I could arrange,” Manuel said from the crack that Mickey had opened the door. “What time?” Mickey said, trying not to seem agitated, even though he was. “9:30,” Manuel replied. “What the fuck?” Mickey responded out of stress more than anger. “Mandy up?” he asked. “Not yet,” Manuel answered. “Well, get her ass up! She’s gonna hafta take Ian to the clinic. No way I can get all this shit done myself! And I gotta be done with this shit by 11:00. I’m meeting Ian for lunch and a haircut.”

Ian had headed for the shower, but stopped to listen to the exchange between Mickey and Manuel. He had been a little bit pissed that Mickey was pawning him off on Mandy for a ride to work, but quickly got over that when he heard Mickey place so much importance on their lunch date. He proceeded to the shower, humming contentedly as he looked down at the beautiful ring that now graced his right ring finger. He had decided to wear it there until the wedding, when Mickey would put it on his left ring finger. He hoped that, by the end of the week, Mickey would have one to match.

Ian was ready and waiting by the time Mandy came to the door for him, having grabbed two bagels and two of cups of Mickey’s strong-as-fuck coffee for the road. Mandy smiled as she happily accepted her breakfast, especially the coffee since she had basically been woken from a dead sleep to throw clothes on and drive Ian. “Thanks, Mands,” Ian said, “I appreciate you giving me a ride. And it will give us a chance to talk. I have an important question to ask you,” he said, smiling as they headed down the hall together. “Wait!” Mickey called down the hall as he ran to catch them. “At least let me walk you out,” he said, wrapping an arm around each of them. They headed down the stairs together, like the Three Musketeers. When they reached the front door of the factory, Mickey turned Ian toward him, pressing his lips against Ian’s softly. “See you at the clinic at 11:30?” Ian asked, his eyes brimming with excitement. “I’ll be there,” Mickey answered. “Better be!” Ian shot back, beaming.

Ian and Mandy got into the car together, stowing their coffee in the cup holders and munching on the bagels. “What’d ya hafta ask me?” Mandy inquired, her mouth stuffed full of bagel. “I want to know if you’ll stand up for me,” Ian answered, sipping his coffee. Mandy’s eyes got as big as saucers, her grin, ear to ear. “Of course I will!” she squealed, squeezing his knee. “I would be honored. What are you gonna call me? Maid of honor? Best Man?” she asked. “How about Best Friend?” he suggested. “Sounds perfect to me,” Mandy said, agreeing to her new title, which was actually the same title she had from Ian for years.
“So, did you ever find out who Big Lee was?” Ian asked. “Huh?” Mandy questioned, looking puzzled. “The phone call that Manuel took last night that no one recognized. Wondered if he told you who it was,” Ian clarified. “Oh, yeah. Some client or something. He’s coming to the factory for a meeting today,” she explained. “Oh, Ok,” Ian said casually. “Why?” Mandy asked. “Just curious. Sounds like a porn star’s name,” Ian snickered. Mandy started laughing her ass off. “Yeah, maybe Mickey and Manuel are getting a visit from a porn star today!” she said, laughing so hard that her coffee almost came out her nose.

Mandy pulled up to the clinic and gave Ian a goodbye hug. “I’m so happy you asked me to be your Best Friend for the wedding. I am really excited! I’ve known for a long time that you two belonged together. I’m glad you guys finally figured it out,” she said as Ian grabbed his coffee and headed for the clinic entrance. “Thanks again,” he called back to her before disappearing into the door.

When Mandy arrived back at the factory, Manuel rushed her in the door. “Finally, you’re back! We need you to set up the ‘Fuego’ presentation for that client that’s coming in to see us today,” Manuel explained. “Really?” Mandy asked, excitedly. “Yeah,” Mickey answered, “Hurry up! He’s gonna be here any minute!” “Okay, Okay!” she said, scrambling to get everything together. Once everything was ready, she shared her news. “Guess what?” she started. “We don’t have time for fuckin’ guessing games. Just say it!” Mickey snapped. “Well, now that you’re yelling at me…” “Mandy!!” Mickey raised his voice. “Well, Ian asked me to be his Best Friend in the wedding!” she spat out, completely devoid of any joy, thanks to Mickey’s mood. “That’s great!” Manuel said with a smile, trying to lift the tension from the room.

“Mickey!” a worker screamed as he opened the door between the conference room and the factory floor. “Come quick!” he screamed, full of panic. Mickey ran for the door, Manuel letting out a “Fuck!” under his breath. Just then, the front door buzzed. Mandy rushed over to open the door, greeting their guest with a “Good Morning!” and a warm smile. “My name is Mandy. Right this way!” she continued, ushering him into the conference room. “And you must be Manuel! It’s nice to put a face to a name” the gentleman said, extending his hand and introducing himself in a thick New York accent, “Bruno Bigley,” “Thanks so much for coming!” Manuel said politely. “And where is your partner? Mickey, was it?” Bigley asked.

“Yes, unfortunately, he is out on the factory floor right now, handling an issue. I expect he will be joining us shortly. In the meantime, would you like to see our promo presentation for the new line we plan to market in the near future?” Mandy asked, flashing a bright smile and flaunting her feminine charms. “Certainly!” Bigley responded, eyeing Mandy up big-time, much to Manuel’s chagrin. “It is a surfboard designed for women, called ‘Fuego,’ she finished, just as the video began.

While Mandy was sharing the presentation, Manuel’s mind wandered. Although Bigley seemed nice enough, he was still apprehensive about the whole thing. He had contacted Johnny J, his and Mickey’s wealthiest and most connected American coyote client, out of desperation the night before, after seeing the pictures of the extensive damage to his house. He needed to come up with a large sum of money very quickly, and hoped he might be able to help him achieve that goal in as legal of a way as possible. If it was going to involve “Ojos Azules,” it had to be semi-above-board or Mickey would never go for it. It seemed to Manuel that, ever since Mickey found out about Ian’s accident in Chicago, he became suddenly more concerned with his reputation, with what happened to him and with taking risks. It was like a switch flipped inside him and he started to give a shit about everything, all because of Ian.

After Manuel’s conversation with Johnny J, he got the call from ‘Big Lee,’ who turned out to be Bruno Bigley, someone he had, up until now, only spoken with over the phone concerning certain American clients. He wanted to meet right away because he was going to be in the area on business.
As Mandy wrapped up the presentation, Manuel handed the material samples and color swatches to Bigley, explaining that the colors they had selected really set off their model’s hair color beautifully. “Do you have a photo of this model?” Bigley asked. “Not yet,” Manuel responded, “but I can have one to you by day’s end, if you are interested. “He’s the perfect model!” Mandy interjected. “Gorgeous!” she added with a sight smirk. “Well, I’d like to talk to you about possibilities. Will your partner be available soon? If not, I will need to share my idea with you two and be on my way. I have an appointment in Boca in less than an hour with a relief agency I am coordinating with,” Bigley spoke earnestly.

“Actually, I expected him by now. If you will allow me a moment, I will go and see if he will be available soon,” Manuel said, excusing himself. As he disappeared through the door into the factory, Mandy asked, “Would you like to see some of my ideas for another new line of surfboards I am working on?” “Yes, that sounds wonderful,” Bigley replied.

Manuel popped back into the conference room five minutes later, making his apologies for Mickey, who had gone to pick up an essential part for one of the machines. He wouldn’t be back for at least half an hour. “That’s fine,” Bigley said, “I understand things happen when running a business, but I really need to share my ideas with you and head out for my next meeting. It has significance to what we may be doing here!” he explained with a smile.

“One of my main reasons for my being in Mexico right now is to help the victims of the hurricane regain some kind of normalcy in their lives,” Bigley began, “After so much devastation. I am spearheading an initiative involving several foundations and agencies, who will all be working together to clean up and rebuild Boca del Río,” he paused, taking a sip of his coffee, Manuel smiling widely at the thought of Boca being rebuilt.

“This is where your company comes in,” Bigley went on. “I’ve done some research on the recycling of debris from natural disasters and, as it turns out, there are plenty of uses for what most people think of as mere wreckage. I have also researched the use of recycled Styrofoam in the manufacture of surfboards. There is a company in California that has a patented process for using it, and has begun successful production of quality boards.”

“You said they have a patent?” Mandy interrupted, Manuel giving her a look. “Yes, but it is a U.S. Patent and you are in Mexico. Besides, you would be doing this, in part, for charity, donating a percentage of the purchase price to the victims of the storm, so anyone who tried to sue you would look really bad and probably lose business themselves,” he smiled at Mandy before continuing. “You would only really need to use a tiny amount of the recycled material to make it a legit ‘green’ product. It’s a gimmick that I think would sell very easily and to large numbers of people in the target market, which is the wealthy, environmentally-conscious do-gooders in the States. They eat this shit up! And they are ready, willing, and able to spend big bucks, which translates into bigger profits for all concerned.” Bigley spoke confidently.

“So, what do you think so far?” he asked, looking at Manuel. “Sounds good,” he replied. “So how do we market to them?” “Well, we really want to get their sympathy, so we would include footage showing the destruction, people who lost their homes, people who were injured. And this is why I wanted to discuss your choice of model, too. It would be great if we could somehow use someone with a significant connection to the hurricane, perhaps a victim or, even better, a hero, if we can find one. “Our model is a hero!” Mandy exclaimed. “Yes,” Manuel began, “Our model is an Emergency Medical Technician, who volunteered at a clinic that was actually closed at the time, due to the storm. He saved many lives, including mine,” Manuel spoke passionately, a lump forming in his throat as he recounted how close to death he had come.

“And talk about connections to the storm,” Mandy jumped in, “He shares his name with it.” “Wait,
Ian?” Bigley asked. “I am having lunch with an EMT named Ian tomorrow. He saved my grandson from drowning on the beach about a week before the hurricane.” “Same Ian,” Manuel said, shaking his head in disbelief. “Ian Gallagher.” “I can’t believe it!” Bigley said, shocked. “Yes, and he’s beautiful. The perfect model for the boards!” Manuel bragged. “Yes, I know he is beautiful. I saw him on TV with my daughter,” Bigley replied. Bigley looked at his watch, “So do you think we have a working plan? I gotta get going.” “Yes, I think Mickey will love the idea, actually,” Manuel answered. “Can you have an answer to me by the end of the week? I would like to get the ball rolling as soon as I return to the States,” Bigley inquired. “That shouldn’t be a problem,” Manuel said, nodding his head.

“Can I ask you a favor?” Bigley asked. “Sure,” Manuel agreed. “Please don’t tell Ian about the business plan until after I have lunch with him. I don’t want him to think that is why I am taking him to lunch, because it isn’t. What he did for my family can never be repaid. There is nothing I wouldn’t do for him to show our gratitude. I want him to know how special he is for what he did, both for my grandson and for all of the hurricane victims he helped,” Bigley paused, his eyes glistening with what Manuel was sure were tears, despite his tough persona. “No problem. I won’t say a word,” Manuel promised.

Bigley turned and walked toward the door, Manuel following him to shake his hand before opening the door for him. “Thank you, sir! I will be in touch soon,” he said happily.

Manuel closed the door and his phone went off. It was a text from Mickey starting a string of replies:

Mickey: “On my way back,”

Manuel: “Take your time. Bigley had to go.”

Mickey: “Bigley?”

Manuel: “Yeah, I’ll explain later. Just keep it to yourself for now. The meeting went well. I think we are about to make a lot of money, but I will know more tomorrow.”

Mickey: “OK, gonna drop the part by the back door…late for Ian…gtg.”

Ian (to Mickey): "Where are you?"

Mickey (to Ian): "Be there soon. Sorry I'm late...TDDUP (heart emoji)
Ian and Mickey had done all they could to be prepared for the meeting with Bigley. They both had their hair cut, and were sporting nearly military length hair. Mickey looked so fresh and smoking hot now that all the blonde was gone, that Ian just wanted to jump his bones. Ian’s look hearkened back to his ROTC days, giving Mickey instant wood. One of his best memories of Ian was the time he showed up at the baseball field after getting out of juvie early, busted Ian fucking some random cadet and ended up doing him in the dug-out, which had become their ‘spot’. Just thinking about that alone got him hard every time, so seeing Ian with the haircut really put him over the edge. They were both so turned on, they ended up jerking each other off in the car between haircuts and lunch.

Lunch went well, despite Mickey having to spend a good part of it explaining why he had been late to pick Ian up at the clinic. Mickey had had a rough morning, to be sure, but as soon as he laid eyes on Ian, it all just faded into the distance, insignificant in comparison to this lunch date, this small slice of heaven he got to enjoy with his fiancé. Just holding his hand across the table, his ring snugly hugging Ian’s finger, was fucking everything, and he savored every sweet second of it.

They discussed briefly what they should wear for lunch the next day. Ian had pretty much decided to go with a short-sleeved, plaid button-down shirt and some khakis, which he sometimes wore to the clinic. He and Dr. Montemurro had talked about him starting to wear scrubs, but he had been wearing a lab coat over his street clothes so far. It did seem to be turning into a more permanent gig for Ian, although he still hadn’t ruled out the possibility of Boca EMS, once he and Mickey got settled back into the beach house.

Mickey, on the other hand, planned to wear a short-sleeved, pastel blue Henley and his favorite pair of dark blue Dockers. Ian had suggested the shirt, loving the way it brought Mickey’s eyes out. He could get lost in those eyes, an effect that never seemed to diminish, no matter how many times he looked into them.

They had also gone over the topics Ian wanted to be sure to bring up, among them, how Bigley planned to help get Boca back on its feet and how he could possibly help. He was also very curious about why Chief Chavez had been replaced. Finally, he wanted to get an update on Bigley’s grandson’s health. Mickey had suggested that he also ask specifically about the repair and rebuilding of beach houses, which Ian agreed was important, especially given Manuel’s situation. The last thing Ian wanted was any kind of long-term co-habitation with Manuel. He was trying to be civil toward him, but still didn’t get a warm and fuzzy feeling when he was around Mickey alone.

After their lunch excursion, Mickey had taken Ian back to the clinic and returned to the factory, where Manuel gave him a very basic idea of what he and Bigley had discussed. He also told him that Bigley had asked that he not share anything with Ian yet, since he didn’t want Ian to think he was having lunch with him as part of the business plan. He wanted it to be clear that he was there to show his appreciation for what Ian had done for his family. Mickey was uneasy about agreeing to keep from Ian the fact that Bigley had come for a meeting at the factory, but he agreed out of respect for Bigley, as well as the promise Manuel had made to Bigley.

The remainder of the day had proceeded without incident, Ian and Mandy taking some time to look at wedding themes and clothes online. Mandy had so many great ideas and Ian was excited to hear all about every single one. He truly felt blessed to have his best friend so close by. He really had missed her terribly, he now realized. He would probably have recognized that fact back in Chicago if he hadn’t been grieving the loss of Mickey so hard and going through his own private, bipolar-induced hell.
Ian knew that Mickey would also want to have his best friend stand up for him and, as much as he hated to admit it, that person was Manuel. After all, he had been there for him after Ian had chosen to leave him, a painful fact that had helped to shape the reality within which they all now lived. He knew he bore a great deal of responsibility for that, so he was bracing himself for the day when he would hear the inevitable news.

As evening rolled around, Ian had asked that they keep everything low-key, just the two of them. For some reason, the closer this lunch meeting came, the more nervous he got. And he wasn’t alone. Mickey was also uptight about it, in large part because, in his heart of hearts, he knew he should be sharing the news about Bigley’s pending involvement with the new surfboard line, only Manuel hadn’t even given Mickey much to go on. He was caught in a sticky situation with no easy escape—a typical Mickey pickle. He found himself in them all the time, so often that he started to wonder if he brought this shit on himself.

Ian wanted to have pizza and beer for dinner, and watch a movie, something they hadn’t done in forever. Mickey jumped at the chance to get back to their roots. He wanted to feel like a teenager again. They had both been forced to grow up too fast, and the idea of chilling out and just enjoying each other’s company sounded amazing, especially since they were both feeling their nerves about the next day.

“Hey,” Ian yelled from the kitchen, “How ‘bout if we watch ‘Double Impact’? It’s on Netflix,” he finished. Mickey immediately started to laugh, remembering an argument that he and Ian had years ago about who was a bigger badass, Steven Segal or Van Damme. Ian obviously liked Van Damme, but Mickey had opted for watching Segal that night instead, since they were at his house. “Sure, whatever you say, tough guy,” Mickey hollered back, grabbing the remote to get it set up. Ian walked in from the kitchen, carrying a six-pack of beer. “Did you order the pizza?” he asked. “Yeah,” Mickey answered, still fiddling with the TV. “Should be here in ‘bout a half hour."

“Perfect!” Ian growled, as he closed the gap between himself and Mickey, pulling Mickey into him and kissing him hard. Mickey returned his kiss, happy that Ian was in the mood. He had been trying to give him the relaxing evening he had asked for, knowing he was stressed about the meeting with Bigley. He guessed maybe this was his way of relieving stress, which was fine by him.

Ian’s new haircut was doing a real number on Mickey. He had wanted him in the worst way all day, fantasizing about him doing the sultriest of Army crawls up onto his bed, then commanding him to do anything and everything he wanted. The quickie lunchtime hand-job definitely hasn’t sated his desire. If anything, it had fanned the flames that were burning Mickey up from the inside out. “Bed. Now!” Ian breathed into Mickeys mouth, fondling Mickey’s package over his clothing. Mickey’s dick immediately stood at attention. He jumped up off the couch, making his way over to the bed, Ian following behind, grabbing at Mickey’s perfectly round rump all the way. “On your back, soldier!” Ian called out as he stared down into Mickey’s dazzling, crystal blue eyes, which were looking back up at him in anticipation.

‘Really?’ Mickey thought, ‘Is he readin’ my fuckin’ mind?’ “Yes, sir!” he replied, his rock-hard cock straining against the zipper of his pants. Ian made short work of removing Mickey’s pants, along with his shirt and all of his own clothes, although he had stuck a camo hat on that he had packed from the house. “Spread ‘em!” Ian commanded as he pushed Mickey’s legs up and back, nearly folding him in half, his ass presenting itself beautifully in Ian’s face. Mickey grabbed his ass cheeks, pulling each to the side so his hole was easily accessible to Ian, who laid his torso on the bed below Mickey and began licking tiny circles around his anus, pausing briefly to lift his head into Mickey’s view, sucking on his fingers, slowly and sensually, then resuming licking in circles, slipping his tongue into Mickey’s hole after about every third circle.
Mickey moaned and writhed under Ian’s capable control, Ian commanding him to “Stay still, soldier, and keep your mouth shut!” as he added a slick finger and the occasional cock rub into the rotation. Every nerve ending in Mickey’s body was on fire! He was trying like hell to contain his excitement, but didn’t think he could hold out much longer without screaming out in ecstasy. It was so intense!

Again, Ian, reading his fiancé so accurately, flipped around to continue teasing Mickey over top of him, his knees straddling Mickey’s face as he began his assault on Mickey’s cock with his mouth, all the while continuing to fondle his asshole, adding a second finger as he stretched and finger-fucked it. “I’m trying to make this easy on you, soldier. Now you have something to put in your mouth to keep you quiet!” he hissed as he teased the tip of Mickey’s cock with his talented tongue.

Mickey took Ian’s massive, throbbing member into his mouth, sucking hard, his muffled moans vibrating through Ian’s body, raising goosebumps over every inch of it. Despite the illusion of complete composure that he was putting across for Mickey’s benefit (and fuck if it wasn’t turning him on, just as Ian knew it would), Ian was coming apart at the seams inside. Mickey’s fucking beautiful mouth sliding up and down his swollen shaft felt like fucking heaven, and he wanted, with everything in him, to just fuck it until he exploded down his throat, but he needed to finish this the way he planned.

Ian licked up and down Mickey’s magical cock, then took his entire length into his mouth, bobbing up and down on it with increasing speed, as he continued to bury his fingers into his asshole, trying with everything he had to focus on what he was doing and not what was being done to him.

“On your knees, soldier!” Ian demanded, dropping Mickey’s now twitching cock from his mouth. Mickey complied, his heart pounding wildly. Ian began a slow, painstaking entry into Mickey, wanting to bring nothing but 100% pleasure, no pain, but maybe a touch of torture, the kind that makes a person want to scream, to beg to get off. Ian loved to keep Mickey, and himself, hovering at that point for as long as possible. It made the eventual climax just that much stronger.

And Mickey was begging, soldier or not, by this time. “Ian, please just fuck me already! I want you so fuckin’ bad, it’s not even funny,” Mickey pleaded. “This isn’t behavior becoming of a soldier, soldier. Guess you need your ass reamed!” Ian said with a small giggle as he finally entered Mickey fully, still taking his time. He nudged at Mickey’s prostate intermittently, driving Mickey absolutely insane, his fingernails clawing savagely against the bed sheets as he let out a gut-wrenching moan. “Ian, please!” he managed to spit out between the string of grunts and groans that were falling from his mouth.

Ian, quickly becoming overly aroused, watching and listening to his man coming completely undone beneath him, reached for Mickey’s cock, jerking it rhythmically and matching the pace with his fucking. “Mickey, you feel so fucking ridiculously good! I can’t…” Ian continued to increase his pace, Mickey meeting his every thrust, pushing back hard against Ian’s hips as Ian held fast to his. Their passion increased exponentially with every thrust until they both exploded, their bodies rocking violently against each other as they experienced an earth-shattering orgasm. It couldn’t even be considered to be two separate orgasms because it was such a collective, interwoven experience. It was nearly impossible for either man to determine where he stopped and where his lover began.

Ian lay there, stomach growling, arms wrapped around Mickey, waiting for his breathing to slow before he spoke, “Wonder what happened to our pizza? The guy never called to say he was here!” “Yes, he did,” Mickey answered breathlessly, looking at his phone. “About 20 minutes ago!” Ian laughed. “And I have a text from Mandy. When we didn’t answer, they called the business phone, which was forwarded to Manuel’s phone.” “So they have our pizza?” Ian asked. “Yeah, what’s left of it,” Mickey answered, throwing on a pair of boxers. “I’ll go get it,” he said. “No, I got it,” Ian countered, “Go ‘head and get a shower. I’ll be back.”
Ian walked up to the door and knocked, although the door was partially open. He could hear Manuel on the phone,

“Yes, we are very interested, as I said before. Mickey is on-board and, once you meet Ian, you will see he is going to want to be as involved as possible. If you will excuse me, I have to go. Someone is at my door. We will be in touch.”

“Ian! Your pizza is here on the island. Come in! I’ll get it,” Manuel said with a smile. “Thanks,” Ian responded, biting his tongue. He really wanted to ask Manuel what gave him the right to speak for him and how he would know what he would want to be involved in. And what was it that Mickey was on board with? And why didn’t he tell him? Ian’s head was spinning. “Should he ask these questions? Should he ask Mickey?”

Manuel came back into the room, carrying a large pizza box. “We had a couple of pieces since you didn’t answer. We didn’t want to disturb you,” he said with a slight smirk.

“Thank you,” Ian said, turning to leave, but then stopped. “Manuel,” he said, turning to face him again. “Can I trust you?” he asked, a sick feeling settling in the pit of his stomach as he spoke. “Of course, Ian, with anything,” Manuel replied sincerely. Ian stood silently, looking at this handsome man, still wearing a bandage from the brain surgery Ian had helped to perform on him, and sporting a healing wound that Ian had fastened and glued shut. Manuel had certainly trusted him, although, under the circumstances, he didn’t have much choice.

“Is there something going on that I should know about?” Ian asked, trying to be vague so he didn’t have to admit to eavesdropping. Manuel looked down, sighing deeply. “What?!” Ian inquired nervously, sensing that Manuel was, in fact, hiding something. “All I can say is that there is something that you will know about very soon. I have been asked to wait with any information until tomorrow afternoon,” Manuel explained, trying his best not to break his promise to Bigley. “Ian, just know it is a very good thing, and you and Mickey will be happy when you learn more about it.”

“Okay,” Ian said with a half-smile, wanting to believe and trust Manuel, but still finding it difficult. Maybe the call had something to do with his engagement. Maybe Mickey was making plans for the wedding. The last thing he wanted to do was to ruin anything for Mickey, after all he’d put him through. He decided to take what Manuel said at face value and just wait.

“Thank you,” Ian said again as he turned to leave. Before he could twist the doorknob, the door opened, and Mickey, squeaky clean and smelling absolutely divine, strode in. “The hell’s takin’ so long. I’m losing weight here,” he said with a silly smile that made Ian swoon. “I was just talking to Manuel here,” Ian answered. “Yes,” Manuel added, “I told him I have some news to share with both of you tomorrow after work. So, would you two like to have dinner with me and Mandy again? This time I will cook. Authentic Mexican! You will love it!” Ian looked at Mickey. “You gonna be up for that tomorrow? I know tomorrow is already a busy day,” Mickey said, looking back at Ian. “Sure!” Ian answered. I guess we have a lot to talk about. Ian smiled, turning to follow Mickey’s sweet-smelling ass out the door.

Ian and Mickey got back to the room and immediately began devouring their cold pizza. They both had been hungry before their tryst, and now they were famished. As they sat, eating pizza and drinking beer, Ian was deep in thought. Maybe he did have Manuel all wrong. And if he was completely honest with himself, he owed Manuel some measure of respect for helping Mickey keep his shit together when he was so fragile in the beginning. Ian had ditched Mickey, leaving him essentially to his own devices, save for a wad of cash, to survive in a foreign country, alone, not knowing anyone. Of course, he became attached to Manuel! Manuel had been kind enough to help a total stranger, to trust him to go into business together, to fly his boyfriend and sister into Mexico to save his sanity when Ian had gotten hurt. This was a good guy, even if he did, at one time have deep
feelings for Mickey. Ian was actually starting to see that he now had them for Mandy. And that was understandable. I mean he loved both Mickey and Mandy himself! Fuck! They were both so fucking loveable! All that they had both managed to overcome in their lives and end up being two truly fucking incredible people.

“Hey Mick,” Ian broke the silence, downing the rest of his beer as Mickey fumbled with the TV. “Just want you to know that, if you want Manuel as your Best Man for the wedding, I’m good with it,” Ian said softly. Mickey turned around, a look of total shock on his beautiful face. “You sure?” he asked. “Yes,” Ian answered, pulling him down onto the couch next to him. “I know he took care of you when I should have been,” Ian admitted. “Wish to fuck I could change that, that I could have been here with you. But I can’t,” he said, frowning. “It only makes sense for him to be your Best Man, and I don’t want my jealous bullshit to stop you from having the person you want for our special day. I love you so much, Mick, and I’m trying to be a better person for you, wanna make up for all I put you through,” Ian said, his beautifully sad eyes tearing up.

“Ian, you’re already the best person in the world, to me!” Mickey said, kissing him lightly on the forehead, then pressing play. “Let’s watch this and get some shut-eye. Don’t wanna be yawning at our lunch date with Bigley,” he said, smiling brightly. “Right,” Ian said, settling in next to the love of his life, a feeling of relaxed calm falling over him like a warm blanket, the feeling of ‘home’ that he had missed for far too long.
Both Ian and Mickey had slept remarkably well, considering all they had on their minds. This was their way. Each had this uncanny ability to calm the other in even the worst of situations, often without having to say a word. There was something about their togetherness, the warmth of a smile, the comfort of that familiar scent, the tender touch of a hand, the even, restful sounds of breathing, that soothed them. They woke up feeling fresh and ready for the day, opting to shower separately, since Ian couldn't afford to be late for work, and showering together was a sure-fire way to make that happen. "Lookin’ gorgeous, Gallagher," Mickey complimented Ian after he was dressed and ready to go, although he thought it first when he saw him getting out of the shower. "You're looking fine as hell yourself!" Ian said, his eyes moving over Mickey from head to toe, then back up, pausing to inspect his package; Ian loved the way Mickey's Dockers hugged him there. Their eyes met and they fell into a passionate kiss, taking the opportunity to press themselves against one another, if only for a moment.

“Okay, let’s go, Gallagher,” Mickey said, breaking away before it was too late. Ian let out a sigh of disappointment and followed Mickey out the door and down the hall, coffee in hand. The ride to the clinic was quiet, Mickey resisting the urge to fondle Ian's leg as he usually did, once again, to ensure their timely arrival at the clinic. If Ian expected to leave by 11:15, he had to be on time.

Mickey pulled up to the clinic, pecking Ian on the cheek as he opened the car door. “See you at 11:15,” Mickey smiled warmly, his eyes drinking in Ian’s sheer perfection as he got out of the car and walked toward the door.

The morning moved quickly for both men, each embroiled in their own brand of ‘busy’, both anticipating their lunch together with the mysterious Bruno Bigley. It seemed like only a moment had passed since Mickey had dropped Ian off, when he pulled up to get him for lunch. Ian strode out of the clinic, still flawlessly gorgeous, seemingly untouched by the rigors of his morning, the sunlight reflecting beautifully off his vibrant red hair. “Damn!” Mickey muttered under his breath as Ian got in the car. “What?” Ian said, a slight smirk forming on his lips. “Can’t even talk about it,” Mickey answered, adjusting himself in his snug-fitting Dockers.

Mickey drove for about ten minutes, careful not to touch Ian at all. It was just more than he could handle at the moment. He pulled up in front of what looked like an authentic Spanish home, with a terra cotta roof and a stucco front. A valet met them at the car, ushering them out and toward the door, where a doorman waited, opening it as they approached. The inside was decorated in a Mediterranean style, reminiscent of a scene out of The Godfather, the aroma of finely-prepared Mediterranean food filling the air.

The host, a strikingly handsome Mexican man, who could have been Manuel’s long-lost brother, approached the couple as they arrived, leading them to a private alcove where Bruno Bigley was waiting. As soon as he caught sight of them, he stood from his seat, extending his hand, first to Ian, then Mickey, shaking their hands firmly. “Bruno Bigley,” he introduced himself. “I am honored to meet you, Ian…and your partner?” “Mickey. This is my fiancé, Mickey,” Ian announced proudly as Bigley shook his hand. Bigley had a look of refinement, his hair and mustache immaculately groomed, his fingernails manicured, his suit, tailor-made. And yet, there was a certain quality about him that screamed ‘Mobster,’ despite his obvious efforts to wipe himself clean of that image.

Bigley did a double-take upon hearing Mickey’s name. It had just dawned on him what Ian’s connection was with “Ojos Azules.” Bigley had been under the impression that Manuel and Mickey were partners in every sense of the word. In fact, many of their business associates probably assumed
that to be the case as well. “Mickey, it is my pleasure to meet you,” Bigley said, opting not to mention that misconception he apparently had.

Bigley opened the wine list, “What kind of wine do you prefer, Ian?” he asked. “Oh, thank you, sir, but I can’t drink. I have to go back to work at the clinic after lunch,” Ian responded, a bit uncomfortable. “Mickey?” he said, looking up from the list. Obviously, this guy wanted a drink and Mickey wanted to be cordial, “What do you suggest, sir?” Mickey asked politely. “Well, the fish is excellent here, so if you both like fish, I would recommend the salmon, and a nice Chardonnay to go with it. “Sounds good,” Mickey said. “You want the salmon, Ian?” “Sure,” Ian replied quietly, suddenly wishing he had the afternoon off to have a leisurely lunch with some wine. Just then, as if the powers that be had heard what he just thought, his phone went off; a text from Dr. Montemurro, who was aware of his lunch plans:

“We aren’t very busy, so don’t feel compelled to come back this afternoon. I appreciate all of your hard work. Enjoy the day!” (smiley emoji)

“Mr. Bigley,” Ian began. “Please call me Bruno,” Bigley interjected. “Bruno, is it too late to ask for a third wine glass? I just got the afternoon off and would love some wine,” Ian said with a smile, looking out of the corner of his eye at Mickey, who was playing with one of the buttons on his shirt nervously. “it’s never too late,” Bigley said with a smile, as he gestured to the waiter, holding three fingers up.

“So, Ian, I don’t think you quite understand how grateful my family is to you. What you did for my grandson, Cole, on the beach that day. Amazing and so heroic,” Bigley spoke as he held his freshly-poured glass of wine up to toast Ian. “Here’s to you, Ian, and to many more years of life-saving heroism,” he toasted, clinking his glass against Ian’s and Mickey’s. Mickey took a big gulp from his glass, trying to settle his nerves. He had been to this restaurant with Manuel before, and there were plenty of people there who knew that. He was just hoping against all hope that no one said anything to him that might upset Ian, especially on his special day.

“I only did what anyone would do in that situation,” Ian responded. “We have a son back in the States, who is a little bit younger than Cole, and I can’t imagine how scary it must have been for your daughter to see her son that way,” Ian continued. Mickey’s jaw dropped in utter disbelief that Ian had mentioned Yevgeny at all, let alone calling him ‘his.’ Mickey had fought hard to put Yevgeny out of his mind, once he made the decision to go to Mexico, fully believing that he had seen him for the last time when he had visited him at the prison last.

“Well, I am eternally grateful and would like you to know that your wish is my command. Anything, and I mean anything, that you want or need, just ask!” Bigley promised, his eyes kind and sincere. “I am here all week on business, as I told you over the phone. I will be spending a good bit of time in Boca, organizing clean-up and rebuilding efforts. Our family is deeply ingrained in the resort community there and I have cultivated special relationships with many of the business owners in and around the area. It is my hope to have it up and fully functional again by high season,” he said confidently.

“That’s all I would ask for, really, is to help to rebuild our home. We love Boca, too, and would love to help,” Ian said, speaking for both of them again. Mickey just smiled, loving how invested Ian had become in the community, in his new home, in them as a couple, all in such a short period of time. “What can we do?” Ian asked enthusiastically, pouring himself another glass of wine and digging into his salad. “Well, it’s funny you ask,” Bigley began, “and I was going to hold this for a later discussion, but I have an idea that I discussed with Manuel yesterday…” Ian interrupted Bigley, “Wait! You know Manuel?” Ian asked, his mind racing, trying to make sense of all of this. “And you two know each other?” he added, looking over at Mickey incredulously.
“I just met Manuel yesterday morning. I was supposed to meet Mickey as well, but didn’t have the opportunity because of a problem in the factory that he was handling. I asked Manuel not to discuss anything with you until after we met because I didn’t want you to think I was taking you to lunch just to pitch the idea. I wanted this lunch to be in honor of you and your heroic efforts on my grandson’s behalf.” Bigley explained briefly, recognizing that Ian was quickly becoming very upset.

“So you have an idea that involves Mickey’s company and it somehow also involves me?” Ian was still confused, trying desperately to make sense of it all, hopefully without losing his temper, which tended to flare at any mention of Manuel’s name, for the most part. But that was the old Ian. He wanted to accept Manuel as Mickey’s best friend and business partner, as Mandy’s boyfriend, to trust him, and to put an end to all of the tension between them, once and for all. He owed it to Mickey. He knew that. And yet he could feel his blood boiling in his veins. He took a deep breath, looking at Bigley, awaiting his response.

“How about if I give you the short version for now. There are still a lot of details to work out and, Mickey, I want to hear your opinion as well,” Bigley suggested. “I’m all ears,” Mickey chimed in, smiling at Ian as he put his hand on his leg, making small circles with his index finger. This was becoming Mickey’s go-to trick. He could distract Ian or change his mood 99 out of 100 times with this one simple move. “Yeah, I want to hear all about it,” Ian said, a feeling of relative calm coming over him as Mickey worked his magic.

Ian and Mickey both listened intently as Bigley laid out the plan, just as he had for Manuel, and adding a retelling of Manuel’s sales pitch for using Ian as the model. Ian was astonished to hear the glowing terms in which Manuel had spoken about him. Mickey just smiled, nearly wearing a permanent circle into Ian’s Khakis with his finger. By the time Bigley had finished his description, Ian and Mickey both had ideas about how to capitalize on things even more, bringing up publicizing the damage to both houses, Manuel’s in particular, in Boca as motivation for helping others in need, which was Mickey’s idea, and possibly including a story about Dr. Montemurro’s clinic, although his name would need to be omitted in order to protect him from extradition. In that same vein, both Mickey and Manuel would have to be kept anonymous, merely being referenced as business and home owners generically. Ian, on the other hand, would be made into somewhat of a celebrity, showcasing his heroism in helping to run a closed clinic during the height of the storm, seeing people around the clock, saving lives while risking his own.

“I haven’t mentioned this to Manuel yet, but how about that beautiful darling you have working at the factory? I understand she also helped in some capacity at the clinic. What do you think about having her be the female model for the board? “That’s my sister,” Mickey laughed. “Well, she’s beautiful!” Bigley said, raising his voice when he said the word, ‘beautiful’. “And has a good head on her shoulders, too. Great business sense!” he went on. “That’s Manuel’s girl, you know?” Ian spoke up, feeling his third glass of wine. “Really?!” Bigley said, surprised. “Oh yeah,” Ian said, “She’s really into him!” Ian revealed. Mickey shot Ian a look, like, ‘Why you tellin’ him all this shit?’

The food came, and not a moment too soon. The wine was really going to Ian’s head, and Mickey was starting to think it would only be a matter of time ‘til the shit hit the fan, if he kept drinking. Mickey knew how much Ian could drink on an empty stomach on his meds, and he had exceeded his limit.

“The salmon is delicious, Bruno,” Ian complimented. “Goes well with the wine,” he continued, pouring the last of the magnum into his glass. “So, what happened with Chief Chavez? You mentioned that he had a replacement. “Oh, you didn’t hear?” Bigley asked. “Hear what?” Ian asked. “He was killed in the hurricane, trying to save a family from drowning in their car,” Bigley explained, a look of sadness on his face. “I would like to honor him with this project as well, but don’t want to capitalize on his death by using his story to sell boards.” And there it was, the moment
that Bigley won the respect of both Ian and Mickey. The guy was legit. He really wanted to help the people of Boca. He didn’t care if he bent the rules when it came to making big bucks off wealthy Americans, but when someone deserved respect, he was the type to give it, even if it cost him some money. Lord knows he had enough of it.

The trio had finished their second bottle of wine and were singing show tunes by the time Manuel and Mandy joined the party. “Thought I might find you guys here,” Manuel laughed, looking at the empty wine bottles and then at the group of tipsy gentlemen at the table. “Manuel!” Ian called out, getting up to greet both he and Mandy with sloppy hugs. “We were just talking about the deal you and Bruno set up yesterday. I’m all in! When do I start?” Ian slurred. Manuel looked at Mickey, shaking his head. “And Bruno wants Mandy to be a model, too, cuz she’s so beautiful!” he added loudly. Manuel looked at Bruno, who nodded in acknowledgement.

“Now that Manuel is here,” Bigley said, changing the subject, “we can talk some specifics, like the time-frame for starting production and, more importantly, we need to set a schedule for creating the ads. I am leaving for New York on Friday and would like to take our two models with me for a weekend photo shoot. I will need the color palate for both boards, as well as your current manufacturing materials list. I will have one of my chemists look into adding Styrofoam. The clean-up crews that are already at work in Boca are sorting all recyclable materials as they remove the debris, so there will be a ready supply, once production is set to begin.

“We have the manpower to start production whenever the materials are available,” Manuel spoke confidently. “And for the sake of the community, I say, the sooner the better. What do you think, Mickey?” he asked. Mickey sat dumfounded, like someone just knocked the wind out of him. He knew he couldn’t go to New York with Ian, but didn’t want to keep him from going either. He knew that Dr. Montemurro could do without him for one Saturday, so that excuse wasn’t going to fly. He absolutely loved the whole idea of raising funds for victims of the storm through the sale of his products, and he knew Manuel was going to get his house rebuilt through this deal as well. He could also tell that Bigley knew what he was doing. This wasn’t his first rodeo, and this thing was going to be a big success. He and Ian would probably be financially secure for the rest of their lives if they took this opportunity to work with Bigley.

“It sounds really great,” Mickey finally answered, reaching for Ian’s hand under the table. Ian grabbed onto Mickey’s hand, holding it tight against his leg, squeezing it hard. This was a lot to digest so quickly for everyone concerned, but it was also the chance of a lifetime.
Runway Runaway

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sensing that Mickey's mood had taken a nosedive, Manuel and Mandy did their best to wrap things up with Bigley for the time being, ushering Mickey and Ian both out to the cars. Mandy drove Mickey in his car, and Manuel drove his own, a buzzed-up Ian getting cozy in the passenger seat. Manuel was anxious to get home and put the finishing touches on the evening meal he had planned for the four of them. He had spent his lunch hour preparing authentic homemade stone ground tortillas for the various dishes he would serve.

"Do you like chimichangas, Ian?" Manuel asked after about ten minutes of silence in the car. Ian, having started to doze off, was startled awake and disoriented. "Hmm? Where's Mickey?" he muttered. "Mickey is riding with Mandy. I was just asking if you like chimichangas," Manuel repeated. "I don't think I've ever had one," Ian responded, becoming more alert, but still a bit under the influence. "Well, I'll bet you are going to love them!" Manuel said, smiling brightly.

Ian, now awake and replaying the afternoon's events in his mind, sat quietly for a few minutes, then finally broke the silence. "Will you be going to New York with us?" he asked. "I would love to go, but I am afraid I cannot get a passport quickly enough," Manuel replied. Ian sighed heavily, settling back into his seat and leaning his head against the window. "Why? Were you expecting me to go?" he asked, reading Ian's discontent. "I don't know," Ian answered. "This might sound crazy to you, but I am very uneasy about traveling without Mickey, so I guess I wondered if you were feeling the same way about Mandy," Ian added. "That's not crazy!" Manuel said, validating Ian's feelings. "After all that you and Mickey have been through, I can understand why you would be uncomfortable. And yes, I am not happy about Mandy going without me. Promise you will keep her safe. Bigley seems like a good guy, but he looks at her a certain way..."

Manuel hesitated, clearing his throat. "And I have something I want to say to you, while we have this time alone," Manuel paused, taking a deep breath. "I know you have been troubled by my friendship with Mickey, and Mandy has told me about the way I acted toward him when my brain was bleeding. I just want you to know that, whatever was causing that, it wasn't me. I care very much for Mickey. He is a very important part of my life. But I understand my role--I always have. Mickey made it clear to me very early on in our friendship that you were the man for him, even when he thought he might never see you again. Ian, I have never seen anyone love someone so deeply as Mickey loves you! He was a complete wreck when he found out about you falling from that bridge. You have no idea what I went through to keep him from risking his freedom to go to Chicago to see you!" Manuel spoke in a worried tone, as if he were reliving the experience as he told about it. "At one point, I had to physically restrain him!" he added.

Ian smiled slightly, imagining Mickey in a full-on rage, trying to fight Manuel. He was still struggling with the idea of being separated from Mickey. It wasn't about Mickey being in Mexico with Manuel. It was the idea of Ian being back in the States, so far away from Mickey. The very thought of it made his stomach twist into knots. All he wanted right now was to get back to the factory and hold Mickey, to let all of this fear and anxiety melt away, as he knew it would if he could just get to him.

When Manuel finally pulled into the factory parking lot, Mickey and Mandy weren't there yet. Ian refused to get out of the car until Mickey arrived, causing Manuel to feel obligated to wait with him. This was not something Manuel had planned on, since he had plenty of dinner preparations to wrap up, but Ian seemed to have literally crawled inside his shell, his chin resting on his knees, which were
pulled tight against his chest, his arms wrapped snugly around them.

Mandy had, at Mickey's request, stopped to pick up some smokes. Mickey had not been smoking too much lately, but was feeling stressed and really needed some. She had expected that he would be quickly grabbing a pack and returning to the car, but he had been in the store for about ten minutes already. When he finally came out, he was carrying a carton of cigarettes, a six-pack of beer and a flat, brown bag. "Took ya long enough," Mandy said, annoyed. She was anxious to get home to Manuel and find out exactly what he was thinking about her upcoming trip to New York. She wondered if he would go, if she asked him to. There was no way she had wanted to bring that up at the restaurant, knowing that Mickey definitely couldn't go.

"Had to get some shit," Mickey said matter-of-factly. "Got a pen?" he asked, even though they were in HIS car. "I might have one in my purse," she said, trying to dig through it as she drove. "Here ya go," she said, handing him a pen.

"Whatcha writin' anyway?" she asked curiously, although she guessed he might have a card inside the flat bag. "Nothin," he said, turning away from her as he wrote. "C'mon, Mick, it's me. You don't have to hide anything from me," Mandy said softly, looking over at him as he wrote. She caught a glimpse of the front of the card. It said, 'You and Me Always', the 'You' in red, the 'Me' in black and the 'Always' in an alternating combination of the two. "It's somethin' for Ian," he finally said, looking up from the card to answer. "Cool!" she said as she pulled into the factory lot, taking the space next to Manuel's car. She was surprised to see Manuel and Ian still sitting in the car. "Fuck!" Mickey said under his breath as he hurriedly scrawled the rest of what Mandy thought was an unusually long, for Mickey, piece of writing. He quickly shoved the card into the envelope, wrote Ian's name on it and crammed it back into the bag.

Mickey opened his car door, awkwardly trying to balance the carton of cigarettes on top of the six-pack, instead of putting it under his arm, where he had stowed the card bag. Ian rushed over, grabbing the beer out of his arms and dislodging the bag, the card sliding out of it. As it fell to the ground, Ian saw his name on it and reached down to pick it up. Mickey looked down, even after Ian had retrieved the card, not wanting anyone to see his face, although, at this point, all eyes were on him. "C'mon, let's just go in," he said, his eyes still downcast.

"Mick!" Ian called out to him from behind as they approached the door. "Go ahead in," Mickey told Manuel and Mandy. As Mickey turned around, Ian sat the beer and cigarettes down in the gravel, enveloping Mickey in a desperately tight embrace, still holding the card in his left hand. "I need you!" Ian whispered into Mickey's ear as he let out a soft whimper. "I'm afraid," he added, completely unraveling into full-blown sobs. Mickey clung to Ian's quivering body, as his own shook with the release of emotion. They held each other until tears turned to laughter, separating only long enough for Ian to open his card. Mickey stood motionless, biting his bottom lip nervously as Ian read the inside:

"Ian, I don't know how you feel about this trip to New York, but I want you to know that I trust you. The rest of this week is gonna be real hard for me, and I'll probably be an asshole once or twice, but I know you're gonna do great and I don't wanna hold you back. You are everything to me and I want you to be happy.---TDDUP, Mickey"

Ian kissed Mickey's lips softly, tasting the salt from his tears. Once he started, he couldn't stop. He pushed Mickey against the building, kissing him hard, sucking on his bottom lip and thrusting his tongue deep into Mickey's mouth, moaning a barely discernible 'I want you...' between kisses. He rocked himself against Mickey's frame, "...to come with me," slipping from his mouth as their tongues danced over each other, the perfect pair becoming one, like matched parts of a whole.
As the meaning behind what Ian had just said registered in his deliriously distracted mind, Mickey pulled away, looking up into Ian's gorgeous green eyes as they implored him to answer. "I can't," Mickey breathed, his chest heavy with sorrow, a sinking feeling in his stomach threatening a revisitation of his salmon. As he looked into Ian's incredibly sad eyes, he saw something new and disturbing. Ian seemed to be losing his confidence, not overall, but as it pertained to this situation. Mickey hoped he wasn't responsible for this. Ian had always been so fiercely independent. It was one of his most attractive qualities. All at once, Mickey understood why Ian hated the part of him that felt the need to be his nursemaid when he was sick. It just seemed to be somehow unnatural. Mickey understood that Ian wanted him to go because of his feelings for him, but he still didn't like to see him this way. "Ian, I love you and really wanna go, but it's too dangerous for me to do that. I just can't," he explained, taking Ian into his arms as he began to kiss him, slowly, tenderly, breathing him in with each movement.

"I'm not going," Ian hummed into Mickey's mouth. "Take me up to bed," he added, gripping Mickey's hand tightly. "Gotta get the beer and smokes," Mickey said, letting go of Ian's hand to adjust his manhood within the tight quarters that were his Dockers, before grabbing his groceries. "C'mon!" Ian yelled, opening the door for Mickey. The pair ran up the stairs, Ian racing to open the bedroom door. "You do know we have dinner with Manuel and Mandy tonight, right?" Mickey asked. "Yes, and?" Ian answered. Mickey smirked as he headed for the kitchen to unload his arms, freeing them up for Ian.

"So...we have an hour or so," Mickey began, a sly smile overtaking his stunningly beautiful face, "and I wanna see your walk," he finished. "My wha..." Ian started to ask before Mickey cut him off. "You're runway walk!" Mickey snickered. "Gonna be a model, right? Gotta work on that strut!" Mickey was straight up laughing now, not because he thought Ian couldn't do it, but because he knew he was embarrassing him. He couldn't wait to see Ian get shy about it and look absolutely fuckable the whole time. "C'mon, Mick!" Ian whined, doing his best to distract him by rubbing his hard-on against Mickey's ass cheeks and sucking on his neck.

Mickey was already hard, just thinking about Ian's walk, and this was only making it worse, but Mickey restrained himself, demanding that Ian remove all clothing other than his boxers, to simulate being on the beach in a swimsuit. "And start over there," Mickey commanded, motioning toward the door. "Can't be shakin' that shit like when you were 'dancin' either," he said, setting off the word 'dancin' with a air quotes. "Gotta be a classy, I'm better than you' kinda walk. You know, like all models do," Mickey said, looking down his nose at Ian as he did his best catwalk saunter imitation, which had Ian cracking up. "I really doubt I'll have to do much walking," Ian said casually as he peeked his clothes off, letting them fall and land beneath him. "Well, let's pretend you will," Mickey said, raising his eyebrow provocatively.

"Okay, here it goes," Ian said quietly, his cheeks blushing pink. 'Damn!' Mickey thought as he admired Ian's beautiful body, sashaying across the room, his hips swaying from side to side. It was as if he were made to do these things; it came so naturally. By the time Ian reached the end of his imaginary runway, Mickey had conjured up dozens of fantasies in his mind, all involving Ian dancing on his dick in some form or fashion. Mickey made his move, grabbing Ian around his waist and pulling him toward him as he laid back onto the bed. "Sit on me," he whispered into Ian's ear as he bit the top of it lightly. Ian straddled Mickey, rubbing his sweet stuff all over Mickey's as he toyed with Mickey's nipples. Mickey grinded himself against Ian, lifting his ass off the bed and moaning loudly as his eyes feasted on Ian's breathtakingly beautiful look, his long, pale neck, his impeccably-placed freckles, the way his eyelashes curled up away from his glowing green eyes. He was sure he could shoot his load at any moment if Ian moved too quickly, even for a second. As Ian looked down into Mickey's magnificent, ice blue eyes, he felt himself being drawn in so
deeply, it was as if he ceased to exist for any reason other than to fall hopelessly in love with Mickey, over and over and over again. "Mickey...so fucking beautiful...wanna ride you," Ian sighed, breathing heavily as he dry-humped Mickey's swollen package. "Take 'em off," Mickey more begged than demanded. Ian rolled over on the bed, stripping his boxers off, while Mickey moved toward the nightstand to grab the lube. As he turned over onto his back, Ian shimmied Mickey's boxers down over his hips, his ass, then his legs and threw them on the floor, resuming his position over top of Mickey. Mickey lubed up his hands and began to slowly stroke Ian's cock with one hand, as he gently fondled Ian's hole with the other. Ian closed his eyes tightly, letting out a soft, sexy moan that made Mickey's dick tingle.

Mickey drew tiny circles around the perimeter of Ian's anus, slowly making his way inside with one, then two fingers, as he continued his pumping motion with the other hand on Ian's dick. Mickey took his time preparing Ian, being careful not to cause even a hint of discomfort. "Okay," Ian breathed, breaking contact so he could grab the lube and slather it onto Mickey's rock-hard cock, Mickey arching up into Ian's hand reflexively. "Gonna do this now," Ian whispered huskily as he lowered himself onto Mickey, little by little, Mickey resisting the urge to thrust just yet, giving over control to Ian. "Slow, slow," Mickey breathed looking up at Ian's flawless face, now glowing with sweat, reading his tense expression. Mickey grabbed Ian by the hips, adjusting his angle and slowing his entry until the look on Ian's face was one of pure, blissful pleasure.

"No hurry," he spoke softly as he slowly rocked his hips upward, pushing gradually into Ian, then pulling away, Ian adjusting to Mickey's rhythm. It was a slow, gentle ride, sending intense waves of pleasure through both bodies as they moved so perfectly together. "Feels so fuckin' good, Ian, so tight, so fuckin' sexy," Mickey moaned. "Love how you dance on my dick!" The friction between Ian's cock and Mickey's stomach added to Ian's arousal; he couldn't get enough of Mickey, quickening the pace, bouncing on him like a pogo stick until he exploded onto the bed, Mickey screaming his name he shot his load up into him. "Fuck!" Mickey panted as Ian collapsed on top of him, resting his head on Mickey's chest.

A knock at the door disrupted what was almost a nap. "Dinner!" Mandy called through the closed door. "Coming!" they both answered, laughing. They took their quickest shower ever, got dressed and headed for Manuel and Mandy's place.

They weren't even out their own door, and already they could smell the heavenly aroma. Manuel had spent hours preparing a variety of authentic Mexican dishes, and was pouring wine when Ian and Mickey walked in. He handed a glass of wine to each of them, and one to Mandy, before making a toast. "Here's to our newest business venture! May our models burn up the runway this weekend!" "One already has," Mickey whispered into Ian's ear with a snicker. Ian gave a small half-smile, thinking again about how much he dreaded leaving Mickey. But this was important for Mickey's business, and for Manuel and Mandy's house. Besides, it seemed like Mickey thought Ian should go, even though he admitted it would be hard for him.

The couples enjoyed a superb dinner, good wine and even better company. They laughed, danced and shared stories, the way close friends and family do, well into the night. When everyone was finally too exhausted to move, Mickey hoisted himself up off the couch, pulling a half-sleeping Ian by the hand. "C'mon, let's get your runway weary ass to bed," he said quietly. "Okay," Ian responded, his eyes only half open.

Mickey undressed Ian and tucked him into bed, kissing him lightly on the forehead. "I left my smokes over there. I'll be right back," Mickey said, walking toward the door. Mickey knocked at Manuel's door, calling in, "Left my smokes in there!" Manuel opened the door a crack, handing the cigarettes out to Mickey. "Hey," Mickey whispered, "Tomorrow I gotta talk to you. It's about this weekend." Manuel nodded and shut the door.
Just made a quick revision to the first version of this chapter, so if you read it as soon as it was posted, you might want to reread. No huge changes, but some things that I felt I needed to tweak.
Hopes and Fears

Wednesday morning began much like any other work day, all four temporary factory residents readying themselves for whatever the day might bring for them. Ian, feeling a little out of sorts after missing the second half of his shift the day before, was trying hard to focus on his upcoming day at the clinic and put his pending trip to New York out of his mind for the time being. He had plans to talk with Dr. Montemurro some more about Bigley, but wasn't sure how he would broach the subject. Mickey wanted to get Ian and Mandy out of the factory so he could talk with Manuel about the NYC trip. Manuel was waiting for an email from Bigley regarding the chemical content of the new surfboards so he could have the prototypes made for the NYC photo shoot. And Mandy was looking for a way to ask Manuel to go with her to New York. She had planned to discuss it with him the night before, but he had been so wrapped up in his preparations for dinner, that she didn't feel the timing was right for such a discussion.

"Ian, you mind riding into work with Mandy again today?" Mickey asked as he poured fresh coffee into Ian's travel mug. "Sure," Ian said absently as he reached for the bagels on the island. "You don't mind?" Mickey asked again, surprised by Ian's answer, given how upset he had been the night before. "Nope," Ian responded, spreading a huge gob of cream cheese over his bagel. "Okay, good," Mickey sighed in relief. "Gonna try to drop Manuel's car off to be fixed, so Mandy can meet me there after she drops you off. Manuel needs to be at the factory to talk to all the guys at the beginning of their shift. "Whatever," Ian shrugged, heading for the door with his coffee and bagel. "Okay, is she ready to go?" Ian asked, heading down the hall. "Ian," Mandy called from behind him, "Got some coffee for me?" Ian turned back to grab Mandy a coffee, bumping into Mickey at the door. Their eyes met briefly, Ian averting his to focus on the task at hand. "The fuck?" Mickey finally asked, following Ian over to the coffee pot and spinning Ian around to look at him. "Last night you're bawling your eyes out about goin' to New York without me and this mornin' you're slippin' outta here with a fuckin' attitude and don't even say goodbye?" Mickey raised his voice a bit, staring into Ian's eyes, looking for an answer. "No attitude. Just gotta get to work. Need to focus on that for now," Ian replied, pecking Mickey on the cheek as he brushed by him again.

Mickey shrugged his shoulders in disbelief as Ian headed back down the hallway, now with two cups of coffee. As soon as he disappeared down the stairs and he was sure Mandy was gone too, Mickey turned and headed for Manuel's room, two coffees in his hands. "Hey," he called into Manuel's partially-open door. "Gotta talk to you," he continued as Manuel opened the door further, grabbing his coffee from Mickey's left hand and heading for the couch. "Come, sit," Manuel motioned for Mickey to join him on the couch. Mickey sat down, taking a sip of his coffee. "This won't take long. I know you gotta get down to meet the guys and I gotta meet Mandy at the car place," Mickey began. "Just need to know the details of Ian and Mandy's travel arrangements. Did you and Bigley talk about that?" Mickey stopped as Manuel began to answer. "Bigley flew here in his own private jet and has offered to fly them back with him, if they can leave by noon on Friday," Manuel explained.

"Hmmm..." Mickey hummed into his coffee cup. "So, do they even need their passports?" he asked. "I don't know, but my guess is that they won't, if they are taking off from and landing on private property," Manuel began to smile as he answered, realizing what Mickey was getting at. "So you want me to go with them," Manuel stated. It wasn't a question because Manuel already knew for sure that was what Mickey wanted. When it came to anything concerning Ian, Manuel could read Mickey like a book. Over the course of their friendship, he had spent hours listening to Mickey talk about him, trying to help him to survive the heartbreak of losing him when he first came to Mexico, and finding a way to get Ian to Mexico after his bridge accident, since he knew Mickey's ass would've been flying to Chicago otherwise. He knew how deeply Mickey loved and cared for Ian, and he
knew how worried he was about Ian going to New York without him, whether he admitted it to Ian or not.

"I will see if I can arrange this," Manuel promised. "And how well do you trust this Bigley?" Mickey asked. "Do you trust Johnny J?" Manuel asked. "Course I do," Mickey responded. "Been workin' with him for a while now," he added. "Well, Bigley is basically his boss, so I have no reason not to trust him. The only worry I have is the way he looks at Mandy. Did you notice?" Manuel asked, a look of concern on his face. "Maybe a little," Mickey answered as he thought about it. "If you would have been here for the first meeting, you would have seen it for sure," Manuel said with an edge in his voice. "This is why I will be happy to go," he smiled at Mickey. "Do not worry, my friend. Your man will be safe with us!" he assured Mickey. "I will call Bigley after I meet with the guys," Manuel promised. "Okay, thanks! Gonna take your car now," Mickey said, grabbing the keys as he walked out.

Meanwhile, Ian was having an emotional ride to the clinic, breaking down pretty much as soon as his ass hit the car seat. "What's wrong?" Mandy asked, putting her hand on Ian's thigh. "I'm trying not to bother Mickey anymore with how worried I am about traveling without him, but it's so hard," he explained, tears welling up in his eyes. "I couldn't even look at him this morning," he continued. "I know he thought I had an attitude, but I was just trying to keep from breaking down in front of him again. I know we have to do this for the business and for Manuel's house, and I know Mickey wants me to, but I just..." Ian swallowed hard, wiping the tears from his face before continuing,"I don't know if I'm strong enough to leave him again."

Mandy pulled the car over to the side of the road, reaching over to wrap her arms around Ian, pulling him in for a hug. "We will be fine," she assured him. "And I've been thinking of asking Manuel to come with us. What do you think?" she asked. Ian pulled away from her, looking into her eyes. "You think that's possible? What about a passport?" he asked. "I don't know, but remember how fast my old boss was able to get yours? Maybe Bigley can do something," she suggested. "Yes, maybe he can," Ian said slowly, the wheels turning in his head as he spoke.

Mandy could see that their quick discussion had made a world of difference in Ian's mood. She smiled, kissing him on the cheek before pulling back onto the road, hoping in her mind that Manuel would actually be able to go, and that they could keep Ian sane throughout this trip without Mickey. She recognized that Mickey was also apprehensive about all of this, but he would be okay. She knew how tough her big brother was--absolutely unbreakable. Growing up, she watched him lose their mother, (of all of the Milkoviches, he had the closest bond with her), suffer terrible abuse at the hands of their father, probably because he looked the most like their mother as a child, and land in juvie, and later prison, enough times that she was confident he could survive the apocalypse. She had to admit that Ian had cracked Mickey's tough, protective shell enough to make him fall for him, but he was still a fucking rockstar when it came to handling stress and anguish. He felt it, but could deal with it far better than Ian could, especially since Ian's diagnosis. Ian was fragile and she knew it.

The remainder of the ride to the clinic was quiet, Ian thanking Mandy with a smile and a kiss on the cheek before he got out of the car. Mandy headed for the auto body shop, hoping that she wasn't keeping Mickey waiting, since she had stopped briefly to calm Ian. She wasn't sure whether to talk to Mickey about Manuel going to New York on their way back to the factory, or to wait and talk with them together, once they got back there. As she pulled into the auto body parking lot, she could see Mickey standing near the open garage area, talking to a technician and smoking a cigarette. She parked the car near Manuel's and waited.

After about five minutes, Mickey walked over to the car and got in. "Hey, Manuel's gonna talk to Bigley about goin' to New York with you and Ian. You like that idea?" he asked with a grin, knowing damn well how much she would. Mandy smiled back, nodding and laughing out loud at
how much everyone was on the same page about this. "Good, cuz I'm thinking Bigley can make it happen. I talked to Manuel about it this mornin', but I'm thinkin' now, that he should have a reason he needs to go, other than just to watch over you guys. Don't want him to think we don't trust him, ya know?" Mickey explained, although the look on his face clearly revealed that his trust hadn't yet been won. Mickey was the type of guy that didn't trust easily, for obvious reasons, but once someone made it into his inner circle, they were there for life, unless they really fucked him over, and there was nothing he wouldn't do for them.

"We can talk to Manuel about that when we get back," Mandy suggested. Mickey nodded, lighting another cigarette. "So, Ian seem weird to you today?" Mickey asked, putting Mandy on the spot. She knew Ian didn't want Mickey knowing how upset he was, but she also didn't want to lie to her brother. "Well, I just think he has a lot on his mind," she said, adding, "We all do." Mickey shrugged his shoulders, opting to stay quiet for the rest of the trip.

As Mickey and Mandy arrived at the factory, Manuel was just walking in from his meeting with all of the employees. "Mickey!" he smiled widely, "I shared the plan for the surfboard fundraiser. All of the guys are really excited to be a part of such a mission. Some of them actually volunteered to work overtime without pay to help ensure our success. Of course, I told them they would be paid well for their extra time, but their willingness to give their time really touched me," Manuel exclaimed. "That's great, Manuel. We need to talk though. We gotta get this shit lined up with Bigley, if you're gonna go to New York. I was thinkin' maybe you could say you wanna meet with his chemists. What do ya think?" Mickey spoke in a serious tone. "That would be great! Think they work weekends?" Manuel asked. "I'm thinkin' that anyone who works for Bigley, works when he says so," Mickey answered. "So, you gonna call him?" Mickey asked. "Yes," Manuel said, walking into the office.

Just then, Mandy's phone went off. It was a text from Ian:

Talking to Dr. Montemurro about some important stuff. He knows shit about Bigley and some of his guys. Says they might be able to help us with a lot of things. Bigley told me if I ever need anything, just ask...

Mandy to Ian: What kind of shit? What kind of help? Can we trust him for sure?

Being a Milkovich, Mandy also had trust issues, and talking with Mickey only made them worse. As she waited for Ian's reply, Manuel walked out into the conference room. "He says he will line up a meeting with the chemists and that I can go over the materials list with them. And I won't need a passport, but he can get me one quickly, in case I would need to fly back commercially." "Sounds like a plan," Mickey responded, the reality of everyone leaving him at once just hitting him like a ton of bricks.

Ian to Mandy: We can talk later, but yes, I know we can trust him.

Mickey to Ian: Miss ya. Have time for lunch today?

Ian to Mickey: Having lunch with Dr. M. Sorry.

Mickey to Ian: (Sad face emoji) Dinner then? Just you and me?

Ian to Mickey: Sure

Dr. Montemurro had asked Ian to have lunch at Sur de la Frontera, in part because he wanted to discuss Ian's ultimate plans regarding employment at the clinic, especially in light of the recent commitment he made to modeling for Ojos Azules, but also because he knew Johnny J might be
there, and could have answers to some of Ian's questions pertaining to whether Mickey could ever possibly travel safely into the States. As the two walked into the restaurant, Dr. Montemurro pointed out a portly middle-aged gentleman, dressed in a Hawaiian shirt and Bermuda shorts, who wore more jewelry than anyone else in the place. "That's Johnny J, Bigley's right-hand man," the doctor whispered as he discreetly directed Ian's attention toward him. "Okay," Ian responded. "So, do I just walk up to his table and start asking him questions?" Ian asked, not sure why the doctor pointed him out right away, unless this was what he expected him to do. "No, but I wanted you to know who he was in case he decides to approach us to talk," he explained. "If he doesn't, I will buy him a drink and he will come over," he added.

Ian nodded, eyeing him up, but trying to be nonchalant about it. He, like Bigley, had that mobster look, but it was more prominent on him, as though he wasn't trying to hide it like Bigley seemed to have been. "So Mickey knows this guy?" Ian asked. "Yes, very well," the doctor answered.

"So, tell me how you are feeling about your work at the clinic?" he asked, changing the subject. "I absolutely love it!" Ian answered. "I miss riding in an ambulance, but I feel I can always pursue that as a volunteer in the future," he added. Ian felt safe continuing to work there because he didn't have to worry about his past catching up with him, and he really got along well with the staff, especially Dr. Montemurro. "And what about your modeling career?" he asked with a slight smirk. "Well, I am hoping that, under the circumstances, you might be flexible with my schedule when I have responsibilities relating to that. I would never ask, but it seems this new line of surfboards is very important to Mr. Bigley, being for fundraising and all, so I want to be as helpful as I can," he explained.

"If it is primarily the weekends, I can cover your Saturday shifts for now. I do want you to get into nursing school as soon as possible though. You will be an even bigger asset to us at the clinic after you have your nursing license. Bigley will pay. He came to see me after your lunch with him, asking questions about your role in the emergency care of the many hurricane victims you helped to save. He wanted details, I think to sell you as a hero for the fundraiser. And after he got them, he wanted to be sure you pursued further schooling," he explained. "Wait, you mean in New York?" Ian asked nervously. "No, no, he mentioned that, but I said I needed you to continue at the clinic, part-time, while you went to school, but if you want to go to New..." "No!" Ian cut him off. "I don't even want to go this weekend," he admitted. "Why not?" the doctor asked.

"Before Ian could answer, Johnny J sidled over to their table. "Michael!" he said with a boisterous, New York accent. "Johnny! Great to see you, as always," Montemurro responded. "This is Ian Gallagher, a new employee of mine, Bigley's and also Mickey's finance," the doctor spewed a somewhat lengthy introduction rather quickly. "Wow! Important guy!" Johnny said, shaking Ian's hand as he sat down next to him. "So, I'm guessing you are in the medical profession, but what are you doing for Bigley?" he asked curiously. The doctor began to answer, "He's going to be the model for the new 'green' surfboard Bigley is having made at 'Ojos' to fundraise for the rebuilding of Boca," he explained. "Really?" Johnny responded, looking at Ian more closely. "Yes, I can see how that could work," he commented. "That's a beautiful ring," he added, glancing down at Ian's hand. "I'm a jewelry guy, so I notice that stuff!" "It's from Mickey," Ian volunteered. "We just recently got engaged. I am actually in the market for one just like it that I can give to him," Ian said proudly, a small smile curling up the sides of his lovely lips. "Might be able to help you with that, actually," Johnny replied. "Oh, well I probably need to save a few paychecks before I can actually buy it, but..." "Nonsense!" Johnny said. I know from the company you keep that you are good for it. If you give me the particulars, I can probably have it to you by tomorrow or Friday," he spoke confidently. "That would be great! Thank you so much, sir! And I will pay you every week until it's paid off," Ian responded reverently. "Call me Johnny," he growled, correcting Ian's formality with a smile.

"And while you're here solving all of Ian's problems, he has a question about Mickey flying into the
States," the doctor began. "Go ahead, Ian," he finished. Ian took a deep breath, not feeling entirely comfortable with having this discussion with someone he had just met. He told himself, 'Mickey knows him very well. It's okay,' but he still felt uneasy. Ian cleared his throat and began to speak. "I know that, as much as I might not like it, my role in this surfboard fundraiser is going to force me to travel to the States. I need to know if there is any way possible that Mickey can safely return to the States. I don't know if you are aware of..." Johnny interrupted Ian. "Yes, I am aware and actually had one of my attorneys look into the possibility of appealing Mickey's conviction." Ian's jaw dropped in utter disbelief. "Was it Mickey's idea?" he asked. "No, Mickey has always, since I've known him, accepted the idea that he will never be able to return to the States," Johnny answered. "So there's no hope?" Ian questioned. "I wouldn't say that, but it could be expensive," he began. "What if money wasn't an issue?" Ian asked, an expression of reluctant hope on his face. "There is nothing money can't buy," Johnny replied reassuringly. Ian nodded triumphantly, his mind scrolling through all of the possibilities for his and Mickey's future together if he could make this happen.

Ian floated through the rest of lunch, high on the notion that Mickey's name could be cleared and that they could possibly be together wherever they wanted, maybe even get married in Chicago! His heart leapt with joy! He could scarcely stop himself from jumping up and down like he was a winner on 'The Price Is Right'! He felt like a new man and couldn't get Mickey out of his mind, not even for a second. He shared the inscription and size for the ring with Johnny, thanking him profusely once again before heading back to the clinic with Dr. Montemurro, whom he also thanked at least a dozen times. He sent Mickey a text:

Mickey, I love you sooooooooooo much! Can't wait to get home and see you!!! (kissy face emoji, heart emoji, heart emoji, heart emoji)
Ian wasn’t sure who would be coming to pick him up from work, but he hoped to fuck it would be Mickey. He had literally been hard for him all fucking afternoon. He got a boner every time he thought about him, which was about every two seconds! Thank God for his lab coat, which he had opted to button up to his waist for the afternoon. He was giddy with excitement at the thought of just laying eyes on him. ‘Fuck! I love the shit outta that fucker!’ he thought to himself, spinning his ring around on his ring finger with his thumb. ‘A perfect fit!’ he thought. ‘Yes, he is!’ his dirty mind answered him back. And this was how his thoughts of Mickey ran full circle, over and over again until his shift was finally ending.

‘Let it be Mickey’ was Ian’s mantra as he hustled toward the door to look for his ride. ‘Let it be Mickey...Let it be Mickey ...Let it be Mickey’... and it was! Ian didn’t see anyone at first; Mickey must have arrived early, having pulled the car around the side of the building to wait. Ian ran to the car, barely able to breathe, he was so keyed up. “Hello gorgeous!” he sang to Mickey as he opened the car door.

He slid into the seat, leaning over to give Mickey a soft open-mouthed kiss. Mickey pulled Ian in closer, sliding his tongue between Ian’s inviting lips as Ian wedged his hand between Mickey’s legs, sliding it up to massage his package. As their passion grew, Ian worked at unbuttoning and unzipping Mickey’s pants for better access, all the while continuing to kiss, lick, suck and nip at his lips and his heavenly-scented neck with reckless abandon.

Mickey returned the favor, dropping Ian’s pants down to his knees, freeing his molten manhood. “Want you so bad,” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear as he licked and bit at it. “‘Bout to throw your ass in the backseat,” Mickey growled in response. “Mmmmmmm…” Ian hummed into Mickey’s ear, raising what little hair Mickey had, up off the back of his neck and sending shivers throughout his body.

“We really gonna do this here?” Mickey asked breathlessly. “Oh yes, we are!” Ian replied enthusiastically, turning the ignition off and leaning Mickey’s seat back. He took Mickey’s rigid cock into his hand, pumping slowly as he lowered his mouth onto it, licking around the head and swiping his tongue over his slit slowly, stoking Mickey’s smouldering fire. Mickey reached for Ian’s cock.

“Now, just you now,” Ian breathed sensually. He gradually made his way further down Mickey’s cock with his mouth, sliding his hand under his balls to fondle them gently as he sucked with increasing ferocity, dragging moan after moan from Mickey’s quivering lips as he threw his head back against the headrest forcefully.

“Fuck, Gallagher!” he managed to squeeze from his throat between rapturous moans. “Love you so much,” Ian purred, sending ripples of sweet vibrations through Mickey’s delicious dick as he continued to suck him off unmercifully, pressing rhythmically on the small area between his balls and his asshole, stimulating him to near climax. “Oh fuck yeah! Gonna fuckin’ cum, Ian!” he all but screamed ecstatically. Ian sucked harder, drawing Mickey’s cock deeper and deeper into his mouth until he felt his sweet release trickle down his throat, Mickey thrusting up out of his seat as he yelled Ian’s name three times in rapid succession.

After witnessing Mickey’s unraveling, Ian’s magnificent cock was rock-hard and waiting, just begging for Mickey’s luscious ass. “Get in the back! Been waiting all day to fuck you!” Ian growled, reaching for the lube that Mickey kept in his glove compartment for just these types of situations. Mickey crawled into the back seat, presenting his mouth-watering ass so temptingly that Ian had to taste it first. He wriggled himself into the back seat behind Mickey, biting playfully at Mickey’s
impeccably round globes as he pulled them apart, exposing Mickey’s taut opening, which he teased lightly with his tongue.

Mickey pulled his bottom lip into his own mouth, biting down on it to keep from squealing as Ian broke the barrier, inserting his tongue, then a finger, into his anus, then licking all around it, as if it were ice cream. Ian continued to tease and finger Mickey until he had him on the edge again. Ian lubed himself and Mickey up, knowing full well that this wasn’t going to take long. Mickey was so fucking sexy, and that ass—this was why Ian was hard all afternoon. He knew this is what would be waiting for him, and he fucking loved it!

How the hell did he ever get so lucky? He wondered that a lot. Not only was Mickey an amazing person and the love of Ian’s life, but he was also a phenomenal lover, a top-notch piece of ass that anybody would die to fuck on the regular. Too beautiful for words, even.

“Fuck! You’re gorgeous!” He breathed into Mickey’s ear as he began to sink his cock into him, slowly at first, then quickly picking up the pace, meeting Mickey’s ass firmly each time it bounced back against him. “Damn, you feel so fucking good, so tight for me, Mick!” he whispered raspily as he proceeded to fuck Mickey into oblivion. “Damn, Mick! Love you AND your sweet ass!” Ian yelled as he blasted his load deep into Mickey. Mickey formed something close to a smile, his lower lip still pinned firmly under his front teeth, chuckling a little bit at the realization that Ian told him he loved his ass, no, his ‘sweet ass’, quite often.

“I’m good,” Mickey said, reaching for his pants. "Gotta get home and shower before dinner.” “Yeah?” Ian asked, wondering what was up. “Yeah, thought we could go out for a change. We always have dinner at home. I’m taking you out for steak. We never did get to go to Sizzler, so we are finally gonna have some steak together. It’s about time,” Mickey said as he finished putting his pants back on. “Plus, I wanna spend time together before you go,” Mickey added, a small frown beginning to overtake his face. “Don’t talk about that!” Ian yelled. “I just can’t think about that right now. I just want to focus on being with you.”

Mickey stayed quiet for the entire drive home, feeling badly that he had mentioned the trip and upset Ian. He rested his right palm on Ian’s thigh, tracing his index finger in that familiar circle that always seemed to bring Ian some measure of peace. Mickey could hear it in his breathing, could sense it in the vibe that came off Ian’s leg as he did it, could almost feel it in his own bones. Sometimes it seemed as if Ian was nothing more than an extension of himself, and, truth be told, Ian felt the same way about Mickey They could feel each other’s pain, worry, and sadness, and also their lust, excitement, pleasure and happiness; their connection was that overwhelmingly strong.

Once they arrived at the factory, they noticed an extra car in the lot. “Great. Wonder who the fuck this is,” Mickey whined. He wasn’t about to let anything stand in the way of them going for their steak dinner this time, his mind immediately flashing back to the night Sammi had the MPs waiting for Ian. ‘Fuckin’ bitch from hell!’ he thought to himself as he opened the door, holding it for Ian. “Johnny!” Ian called out in surprise, upon seeing Johnny J standing next to Manuel as he walked in. “Hey Ian! How are you?” he asked. “Great!” Ian responded, smiling as he recalled some of the details of their lunch conversation. “So you two have met?” Mickey asked, puzzled. “Yeah, today at lunch with Dr. Montemurro,” Ian explained. "Oh okay,” Mickey nodded in understanding.

“Johnny stopped by to drop off a passport for me!” Manuel exclaimed. “So now there is no doubt that I will be going to New York with you and Mandy, Ian!” Manuel could hardly contain his excitement. “That’s great,” Mickey said with less enthusiasm than he had intended. “Ian and I have dinner plans and hafta get ready, so I’ll catch ya later?” Mickey spoke quickly, attempting to extricate himself and Ian from the situation before Ian could get too upset. “Sure,” Manuel answered.
“Ian,” Johnny’s voice boomed, halting Ian’s progress on the stairs after Mickey had run ahead, most likely to get the door for Ian and start the shower. “I have something for you,” he continued, shuffling through a briefcase that was now sitting open on the conference table. Ian turned on the stairs, heading back down into the conference room. “Here is some light reading that you might find interesting,” Johnny said with a smirk, handing a thick accordion folder to him. “And this might come in handy tonight!” he added, handing him a small black plastic bag with a tiny square bulge inside. “Wow!” Ian began, “I don’t know what to say...I can’t p…” Johnny cut him off, “We discussed this. It's not a problem. Enjoy your dinner and we will talk soon,” he said, waving Ian off. “Thank you, Johnny, “

Ian beamed as he opened the box to reveal a shimmering gold band, the perfect match for the one on his finger. Tears welled up in his eyes as he read the inscription, “Mickey---’Til Death Do Us Part---Ian”. “Thank you so much!” Ian repeated, looking back at Johnny as he turned and headed for the stairs.

“Gallagher! You comin’ or what?” Mickey yelled from their room. “Yeah, on my way, Mick!” Ian called back, his voice dripping with pure joy. “Damn, someone sounds happy! You okay, Ian? Your moods been all over the place today, man,” Mickey questioned, a look of genuine concern on his face. “Never felt better in my life!” Ian assured Mickey, rubbing his back in a circular motion and kissing him on the cheek before nonchalantly setting the bag and folder down beside the couch. “Okay,” Mickey answered, a look of worry still etched into his face. “C’mon, let’s get cleaned up! Got a hot date!” Ian said as he pulled Mickey toward the shower, kissing his lips lightly along the way. Ian quickly stripped his clothes off, starting on Mickey’s next.

“I can’t wait, Mick! I just can’t fucking wait! I love you so much! You just have no fucking idea. But you will!”
Chapter Notes

Sorry for the break in my writing and if this chapter is only so-so. I couldn't keep my eyes open. Traveled to West Virginia and met Noel! Couldn't eat or sleep right! Very exciting! Hope you enjoy the chapter. I should be back to normal after this.

Ian fought hard against the urge to take a huge bite out of Mickey’s gorgeous neck as he stood, gloriously naked, in the shower, eyes closed, the water cascading over his beautiful form. “You’re damn lucky I really wanna have some steak with you right now!” Ian said, laughing as he rinsed the shampoo from his own hair. Mickey’s body was entirely off limits to him right now, in the name of actually leaving to have dinner. Mickey smiled, avoiding eye contact entirely, focusing on the steak dinner date they had missed out on before, all because he had asked to borrow a shirt. ‘Fuckin’ bitch, Sammi!’ he thought to himself. Right now, he was all about having that special dinner. Hot shower sex could wait.

The two finished showering in silence, then went about selecting some nice clothes to wear, trying not to look at each other or ask for opinions. Once they were both dressed to the nines and ready to go, Mickey couldn’t find his shoes. As it turned out, he had left them next to the couch, where they ended up buried underneath the large accordion folder from Johnny that Ian had stashed there.

“What’s this? Mickey asked, holding the folder in his hands. “I...I don’t know yet. Haven’t had a chance to look at it. Got it from Johnny today. Probably nursing school info or some shit,” Ian came up with quickly, although he knew damn well that was not what was in there.

Mickey looked up at Ian and knew he was lying. Ian also knew that Mickey knew he was lying. “Damn it, Ian! Just when I think everything is goin’ so good, you gotta lie to me!” Mickey yelled. “I’m not lying to you!” Ian yelled back. “I haven’t looked at anything inside there!” “And what’s this?” Mickey asked, holding up the small, black bag. “That...that is...” Ian paused and reached quickly, trying to grab it from Mickey’s grasp, but Mickey was too fast, shifting it around behind his back. Ian wrestled Mickey to the ground, still trying to get possession of the bag. “C’mon, Mick! Don’t!” Ian pleaded. “Don’t what?” Mickey asked, still keeping a death grip on the bag, despite being fully pinned by Ian at this point. “Mick, you’re...you’re gonna ruin everything,” Ian grunted as he pried the bag from Mickey’s clenched fist. “Now can we just get in the fucking car?” Ian sighed, out of breath, holding the bag tightly behind his back. “Please?” he begged Mickey. “Arright, but you’re not off the hook about this folder,” Mickey answered, still obviously a little bit pissed over the whole thing. “I know you’re hidin’ somethin’, Ian, and I don’t like it!” he added, walking toward the door.

Mickey was quiet all the way to the restaurant. He had an idea of what might be in the black bag, but wasn’t sure since he knew Ian wouldn’t get paid until Friday. The black bag really wasn’t bothering him. Now, the folder? That really had him bugged, but he wasn’t going to chance ruining this dinner for anything! Finally, Mickey arrived at the steakhouse he had chosen for their dinner. As they entered, Mickey stopped at the host’s station to give his name. He had made reservations! Ian was impressed. This was a far cry from the old Mickey who would buy at the hot dog shop once in awhile. The host escorted them to a nice corner booth, secluded enough to have privacy, but public enough that others could and did notice how attractive they both were.
Soon after they ordered, Mickey went to use the restroom. Ian smiled as he watched a table of young women checking out his ass, knowing that shit was all his! He couldn’t wait to give Mickey his ring and, now that he had gone to the restroom, it seemed the perfect time to plan something cool to do! But what? Mickey had already proposed to him, so he didn’t really need to do that, but he wanted something special to happen. He finally decided he would put Mickey’s ring on his left hand and wait to see how long it would take for him to notice it, then give it to him.

When Mickey came strutting back to the table, his eyes were locked on Ian, shining bright as the sun. He sat down to his salad and Ian put his left hand out to hold his hand across the table. Mickey grasped his hand, catching sight of the ring right away. “You decide to wear your ring on your left hand before the wedding?” Mickey asked, surprised. “Nope!” Ian answered, flashing HIS ring at Mickey, still, of course, on his right hand. “This one is for you!” Ian said, slipping Mickey’s ring off his own left ring finger and onto Mickey’s right.

“Mickey Milkovich, you are my world! I want you to feel that every time you look at that ring, no matter if we’re together or apart. I’ve been having a lot of trouble with the idea of going to New York without you, so when I got the opportunity to get this ring for you before I had to...to get this ring now, I had to do it.” Ian said, his voice cracking as he spoke, his eyes filling up with tears. “I love you so much!” he whispered softly as he leaned across the table to kiss Mickey’s plump, pink lips. “I love you more,” Mickey breathed into Ian’s mouth as he returned Ian’s kiss, tears rolling down his cheeks.

Their steak dinners arrived, forcing them to regain their composure and eat. The food was spectacular and they both ate until they were stuffed, smiling at one another and looking at their matching rings. “Take it off and look inside,” Ian finally said to Mickey, who complied, reading the inscription aloud, “Mickey--’Til Death Do Us Part--Ian.” Mickey squeezed Ian’s hand, “It’s perfect!” he said, “and I can’t wait to get married. But before we do, you’re gonna tell me what’s goin’ on with that big folder you have.”

Ian stared down at his ring, spinning it around on his finger nervously. “Mick, I told you, I haven’t looked at it yet, and that’s the truth; I promise you that. Whatever is in there is from Johnny, and is meant to help us,” Ian paused, looking up at Mickey for the first time since he had broached this subject. “Us?” Mickey asked, “So it’s not nursing school shit then, is it?” he continued, knowing the answer before he got it. “No, it’s not, Mick,” Ian confessed. “So why you gotta lie, Ian? You know how I feel about that!” There was a hurt in Mickey’s eyes that went far beyond the current situation, a look that ripped Ian’s heart out, just to see it.

“Mick, I’m sorry, It’s just that Johnny said some stuff today that got me thinking, and we talked about…” Ian’s voice trailed off as he spun his ring some more, choking back tears so hard that he couldn’t speak.

“Ian, you can tell me, whatever it is,” Mickey spoke softly, grabbing for Ian’s trembling hand. “Okay, I want to...to appeal and have your conviction overturned so we can go back to the States when we want to, without worrying about you getting arrested. I didn’t want to say anything because I don’t even know if it will work,” he continued to explain.

“Stop right there,” Mickey interrupted in a sharp tone. “I already know that I will end up back in prison if I try to do that, so please just leave shit alone. I made it here for a reason. ‘Cuz it’s where I’m supposed to be,” Mickey spoke, the venom in his voice diminishing a bit by the time he got to his last sentence. “But Mick…” Mickey cut Ian off, “No, Gallagher, believe me, it’s not worth the risk. If you wanna be in the States again so bad, all you gotta do is stay there after this weekend. I’m sure Bigley will take care of you. You don’t need Mexico, but I do. If goin’ home is more important than bein’ here with me, then please just go. Don’t fuckin’ get me put away over wantin’ to go back
to that Southside shithole we use ta call home,” Mickey was really getting pissed, and his feelings were more and more hurt as he realized how much Ian had been thinking of going home. Mickey had stopped thinking of it the minute Ian came to Mexico. He had all he needed, or so he thought.

“Mick, can you just please let me look into it? In case there’s a way you can stay one hundred percent safe and…” Mickey interrupted again, “Ian, stop! I’m not fucking up my situation here! I know I said I wanted to know about the folder, but if it’s all just stuff about an appeal, I don’t need to know any more. I’m not interested,” Mickey finished, looking up at Ian through his damp, yet incredibly beautiful lashes.

“Mick, going home is NOT more important than you. In fact, the only reason I’m going to this thing in New York is cuz you want me to, to help your business and for Manuel and Mandy’s place. I’m fine with being in Mexico with you. Mick, I want our life together so bad. I would do anything! I just really think we can have everything! Johnny said, well, would you at least sit down with Johnny before you decide for sure?” Ian pleaded with his most pitiful looking puppy dog eyes until Mickey agreed. “Look, I’m basically doin’ this to shut you the fuck up! I talked to Johnny before and he knows I ain’t interested, so don’t get your hopes up!” Mickey said frankly. Ian just smiled, the same smile he gave Mickey when he came into the Kash ‘N Grab and said, “You got any slim jims in this shithole?” It was a confident smile, almost a smirk, but it was happy at the same time. He was getting a chance and he knew it. It didn’t matter that Mickey believed he was just doing it to shut Ian up. Everything would change after they all talked, Ian just knew it.

“I love you so much, Mick! One of these days you will understand just how much. I’m gonna make sure!” He popped over onto Mickey’s side of the booth and planted a big sloppy kiss on him, throwing his arms around him as he did. “I love you, too, Ian! And I know you know how much already!

The two finished their beers, laughing and talking about old times, steering clear of the topics of the trip and the appeal, in order to keep their evening pleasant. They both knew there would be plenty of roadblocks for them to handle in the near future, but for now, they were gonna celebrate their love, their engagement and the magical force that managed to get them back together again. They really needed to acknowledge how that had happened.

Manuel and Mandy deserved a big ‘thank you’ for their part in it, and they resolved to figure something out, a way to repay them for all they did. Each of them also took time to reflect on all that each had done for the other. They sat in their private corner booth, sucking each other’s faces off until they were the only table left. Mickey paid the bill and they headed for the door, drunk on each other’s love and looking forward to all that their life together could hold, their rings, both shining reminders of their promise to one another, a life filled with love and affection, with blissful happiness and the kind of passionate lovemaking that only soul-mates can share.
Powers of Persuasion

It wasn’t the way Mickey wanted to spend his last day with Ian, but since he had promised, he was on his way to pick Ian up at the clinic to meet Johnny for lunch at Al Sur de la Frontera to discuss the appeal. To Mickey, this was a complete waste of time, something made necessary by Ian and his stubborn unwillingness to take ‘no’ for an answer.

Mickey knew, however, that it was that same trait of Ian’s that had led to the two of them actually forming and maintaining a real relationship, so he would have to be careful not to be sucked in by Ian’s powers of persuasion. After all, he was the man who was essentially responsible for Mickey’s decision to come out at the Alibi in front of everyone he knew, including his homophobic, piece-of-shit father, who had nearly killed him when he caught him in a compromising position with Ian before. Let’s just say there wasn’t a whole lot that Ian couldn’t convince Mickey to do, and if anyone knew that as well as Mickey did, it was Ian.

Mickey pulled up to the car and Ian hopped in, buzzing about his busy morning at the clinic and how much he loved working there. Mickey had had a pretty uneventful morning, since the production of the new surfboards was being held up, pending Manuel’s meeting with Bigley’s chemist, so he was all ears, enjoying the excitement in Ian’s voice as he talked shop. ‘How the fuck am I gonna handle not havin’ him around for a whole weekend?’ Mickey thought to himself, an empty feeling growing in the pit of his stomach.

When Ian’s storytelling finally died down a bit, Mickey said, “Ian, I love you. You fuckin’ know that, but this lunch meeting today, I need ya to know, it ain’t gonna change anything, okay?” Ian nodded in understanding, although in his mind, he thought, ‘We’ll see about that!’

Once Ian and Mickey arrived, the car was valet parked and they were met at the door to be led to the same private alcove where they had met with Bigley. Johnny was already there, waiting. Ian was carrying the folder that he had asked Mickey to bring with him, but Johnny had another smaller folder at the table. He stood to shake both men’s hands heartily, greeting them with a raspy, “Good to see ya!” All three men sat and a large bowl of salad was delivered to the table, along with sparkling water and a cheese platter. “I thought we could snack while we review this stuff, then order,” Johnny said, grabbing a piece of cheese. “Sure!” Ian said enthusiastically.

“So, Mickey,” Johnny began, “I know we have discussed the possibility of an appeal before, but as your circumstances have changed and you now find yourself poised to begin to engage in business relations in New York, and possibly elsewhere in the States, you might want to reconsider…” Mickey interrupted, “Ain’t no way I’m riskin’ my freedom for business!”

“I understand, but Ian wanted me to look into your options. I’m not asking you to risk anything at this point. I would like to take Ian to meet with the attorney who compiled the information in that folder,” Johnny said, pointing to the folder Mickey had sitting next to him. “Have you taken a look at any of it yet?” “No, I haven’t,” Mickey sighed, taking a bite of his salad. “Well, here’s my proposal. Ian can meet with the attorney and have the appeal filed without you needing to be there,” Johnny explained. “But eventually I would have to go to court, which would mean turning myself in, right? No fuckin’ way!” Mickey said, looking to shut the whole idea down ASAP. “I can’t answer that right now. The attorney can though, after he reviews the whole situation. Sometimes things change,” Johnny added.

“Mick, I just want your permission to meet with the guy while I’m in New York. That’s all!” Ian explained, attempting to disarm Mickey with a sweet smile and an under-the-table leg rub. “Fuck no!” Mickey yelled. I’m not puttin’ your ass in any more danger than it already is!” “What do you
mean? I won’t be in any danger,” Ian replied, still rubbing Mickey’s leg. “You don’t know that!” Mickey answered. “Who knows what the fuck they have on us from our first trip down here! Ian, I’m worried about you! I think Bigley can keep you safe, but not if you’re out meetin’ with lawyers and stirrin’ shit up!”

“Mick, this attorney is Bigley’s attorney. Everything will be handled with the utmost discretion,” Johnny explained, attempting to calm him. “Please!” Ian begged. “No one will be in any danger, don’t worry.”

“I wanna talk to Bigley,” Mickey snapped, glaring at Johnny. “Why the fuck’d you ever bring this shit up again, Johnny?” he continued, shifting his eyes over toward Ian’s direction. “He ain’t ever gonna shut up about it now!” “Calm down, Mick,” Ian spoke in a silky, relaxed voice that did things to Mickey. He let out a deep sigh and nodded his head, repeating, “I wanna talk to Bigley.”

“I will arrange that for later today then,” Johnny replied, reaching for the folder he had brought. “Let’s order some lunch and we can go over just a few things,” he appealed to the newly calmer Mickey. “Sounds great!” Ian said, smiling. Mickey nodded again, his eyes focused on Ian’s smile. He was going to have to go along with this, against his own better judgment, and all because of that fuckin’ smile! ‘Fuck, I’m so dick-whipped!’ Mickey thought to himself.

The trio ordered eggplant parmesan. As they waited to eat, Johnny questioned Mickey on the facts of the case, as well as the presence or absence of any witnesses. He wanted to be sure he had all of this information correct because Ian didn’t know it, since he had been in military prison when the crime was allegedly committed. Johnny had always wondered how the fuck Mickey ever even got put away with such a lack of evidence. His Public Defender must have been a real winner. From what the attorney had said before, Mickey clearly should have been able to appeal his conviction. The biggest thing standing in his way at this point was his fugitive status, a fact he was well aware of, and the reason he did not want to pursue an appeal.

The rest of lunch was uneventful, except for Mickey’s rising anxiety level. He couldn’t stop thinking about Ian being in New York without him, nor could he shake the feeling that Ian might be putting himself in danger by pursuing this legal shit. Ian, for his part, was doing well by avoiding the thought of being without Mickey, instead choosing to focus on getting Mickey’s conviction overturned. Oh, how he wanted Mickey to be able to visit Yevgeny, and for them to be able to marry in Chicago. As fucked up as they all were, his family was important to him, and he wanted to share his wedding day with them.

The drive back to the clinic was quiet. Mickey had decided to completely disengage until he could regroup, rather than risk an argument with Ian so close to his departure for New York. Ian stayed quiet too, mostly because he wasn’t sure how on-board Mickey was with this whole thing and didn’t want to chance him changing his mind. He hoped that talking with Bigley would help Mickey to relax a bit and embrace the opportunity.

Mickey pulled up to the clinic, turning toward Ian and stretching to give him a kiss. “Ian, I love you,” he said. “I love you, too, Mick!” Ian smiled as he got out of the car. “See you soon!” he added before closing the car door.

As Mickey drove home, he recounted the sequence of events that had landed him in prison. He had never meant to kill Sammi, but she didn’t know that. She had definitely tried to kill him! Debbie knew the plan was just to scare Sammi, but Mickey didn’t want to get her involved. Protecting her was probably part of the reason he had ended up in his current situation. He could have asked her to corroborate his story, but she might have ended up doing some time if she had implicated herself at all, and he didn’t want that. And now that she had a child, he would never think of involving her.
Really, it seemed the biggest contributing factor in his conviction was Sammi’s testimony, as far as he knew. It didn’t even make sense that the court believed her, a crazy woman who had chased him around the block, shooting at him, but that was what happened. Mickey’s attorney had recommended that he not testify, which was probably yet another reason he was convicted. With him pleading the fifth, there was no one to testify to anything other than the story she was spewing.

Ian was right. Getting this thing overturned should not be a problem, but Mickey was a Milkovich with a record, and he wasn’t used to anything going his way, especially when it came to court. He resolved to talk things through with Bigley and try to be as open-minded as possible. He just didn’t want to go back to prison, away from Ian. He knew Ian wasn’t good about visiting him there because it freaked him out, and couldn’t bear the thought of not seeing him for any length of time. And God forbid if things got fucked up in court and he had to stay in prison! It all just seemed so risky to him.

When Mickey got back to the factory, Manuel and Mandy were sitting in the conference room, looking over some of Mandy’s clothing selections for the photo shoot. They had received a few options via e-mail from Bigley’s fashion people in New York and were checking them out. “Hey Mick!” Mandy hollered across the room as he walked in. “How was lunch?” she asked. “It was okay, I guess. Just all about appealing my conviction and shit,” he answered. “Yeah?” she spoke excitedly. “So, they gonna get you off?” she wondered out loud. “Jesus Christ, Mands! I don’t fuckin’ know!” he yelled. “Chill out, Ojos!” Manuel yelled back. “She’s only asking because she loves you,” he finished.

“I fuckin’ know that!” Mickey spoke in an irritated tone. “I just feel like it’s too risky! I mean, things are good with me here in Mexico, so why fuck with it?” Mickey reasoned. And this was what he couldn’t get past, no matter how many times he tried to open his mind to the possibility. “I’m gonna talk to Bigley later, so can we please not talk about it ’til then?” he asked. “Okay, sorry,” Mandy said in a near whisper, looking over at Manuel to keep him quiet.

The remainder of the afternoon passed by quickly, Mickey finally managing to busy himself with some accounting, which he usually hated and pawned off on Manuel or Mandy as often as possible. But today, it was a much-needed distraction. He was just about to head out for Ian, when Bigley called. “Mickey!” the gruff New Yorker’s voice poured into Mickey’s ear. “Bruno!” Mickey answered, doing his best to sound at ease, even though he wasn’t. “Johnny told me you wanted to talk about your case.

“Yeah,” Mickey answered, “I’m not comfortable with puttin’ Ian at risk by havin’ him meet with this lawyer. Ian’s safety is the most important thing in the world to me. You gotta understand that. Ian was involved with helpin’ me get to Mexico and some shit went down on our way. I don’t need him gettin’ nailed for anything. That’s why I prefer to just leave shit as it is,” he explained.

Bigley sighed deeply. “I understand your apprehension, but there will be absolutely no risk involved with Ian meeting Cogswell this weekend. I can promise you that!” he assured Mickey. “As far as you are concerned, if you win your appeal and have to be retried, then your sole worry would be whether you would be acquitted or not. And I can already tell you, Cogswell doesn’t lose!” Bigley spoke confidently.

Mickey breathed a sigh of relief, safe in the knowledge that Ian would not be at risk this weekend. The rest could be handled on an ongoing basis. “Thanks for explainin’ all this to me, Bruno. I’m trustin’ you to protect my interests in New York. I’m lookin’ forward to getting this new surfboard line for the fundraiser off the ground, so I’m all in, as far as having my people in New York with you, ‘long as I know they’re safe.”
“I promise you, you are all in good hands! Smile and get ready to make lots of money!” Bigley exclaimed. “Okay, thanks again, Bruno!” As Mickey ended the call, he noticed that he was late for Ian. “Shit!” he yelled. He sent a quick text:

“Sorry I’m late. Just talked to Bigley. On my way! (heart emoji)”

Mickey wasted no time getting into the car and speeding down the road to get Ian. He couldn’t wait to see him! And now, with the Bigley phone call out of the way, he and Ian could spend their entire evening together, relishing the time they had left before Ian would be leaving for New York. Mickey was going to make sure Ian knew how ‘well-loved’ he was.
Mickey arrived at the clinic in record time, whisking Ian away to the deli down the road. “Wanna stop and pick up some dinner, cuz there ain’t no time for cookin’ tonight,” Mickey said, eyeing Ian up with a slight smirk. Ian looked back at Mickey, a grin forming across his lips and a bulge growing in his pants. Mickey, getting an instant read on both developments with his man, reached over to begin his signature circling on Ian’s inner thigh. “Mmmm…Mick, not now, if you want any hope of getting dinner,” Ian said with a small chuckle, although he was actually serious. “I’ll take my chances,” Mickey replied, continuing to tease Ian with that talented finger of his. “I could really give a fuck about food right now anyway,” Mickey growled as he pulled up to the deli. “But I know your ass is always hungry, so I want you to eat so you won’t be distracted,” he finished, still stroking Ian’s inner thigh in a soft, methodical circular pattern.

“So, what do ya want?” Mickey asked Ian. “You,” Ian breathed huskily as he turned to lay a passionate kiss on Mickey’s beautiful lips. Mickey fell into a deep kiss with Ian, moving his hand up to massage Ian’s stiffening cock as their tongues slid over one another expertly. After ten minutes of intense making out and fondling, Mickey piped up, “Let’s get the fuckin’ food and get on our way. I want the bed for this tonight. All the shit I wanna do ain’t gonna happen in this fuckin’ car.” Ian snickered, adjusting himself before announcing that he would like to have a turkey sub and some soup.

Mickey ran into the deli to order, his package also in need of adjustment before he was fit to enter. When Mickey returned to the car five minutes later, Ian was on the phone. Mickey got in and started driving, listening to see if he could figure out who was on the other end. “I really appreciate that!” Ian said with a smile on his face. Then, “I’m sure it will be a long day…Okay, thanks again! I’ll be back for work on Monday.” Mickey figured it must have been Dr. Montemurro, but he asked anyway, “Who was that?” “Dr. Montemurro. He said I could have tomorrow morning off to get ready for my trip,” Ian said, arching his eyebrows up flirtatiously at Mickey. “Oh, you’re gonna be ready, don’t worry,” Mickey said in his sultriest, most velvety voice, sending a shiver up Ian’s spine, dispatching goosebumps out over his entire body and giving him a painfully stiff cock, all within the two seconds it took him to say it.

By the time Mickey and Ian hit the door to their room, each was tearing his own clothes off, their passion and want for one another reaching epic proportions. Once they were both free of all of their clothing, they collapsed together onto the bed, kissing and sucking at each other’s lips, necks, clavicles, nipples, licking each other from head to toe, basically doing everything short of eating each other alive. Neither could get enough of the other. They were like two starving animals, feasting on what they believed would be their last meal—ever.

“How do you want it tonight, Mick?” Ian asked breathlessly. “Oh, I’m gonna have it every way possible before your sweet ass leaves me,” Mickey growled, biting down hard on the top of Ian’s ear. “Ow!” Ian yelped, responding to the intense waves of pain that were now pulsating through his entire head. “What was that for?” he asked. “You’re leavin’ me!” Mickey answered, licking over the freshly-bitten ear in an attempt to ease the pain. And damn, if it wasn’t turning Ian on even more! “Fuck, Mick!” Ian squealed, rubbing himself against Mickey’s body like a dog in heat. “That’s right,” Mickey growled, “Gonna make you work for it tonight.” Mickey slapped Ian’s hand away from his asshole. “Nope, not yet,” Mickey teased, lying flat on his back, forcing Ian to basically hump his hip to get any kind of sustained contact since Mickey was being so stingy with himself.

Ian decided the best defense was a good offense, so he slowly traveled down Mickey’s torso, licking, kissing, sucking and biting all the way, until he reached Mickey’s swollen shaft. He pulled the tip
into his mouth roughly, sucking hard until Mickey started to moan. Then he lowered his mouth over his cock, relaxing his throat to accommodate Mickey’s full length. Mickey gasped at the sudden feeling of warmth tightly enveloping all of him, Ian’s hips rocking, his ample, rigid member rubbing desperately against Mickey’s pelvis all the while. “Mick, I want you so bad!” Ian breathed as he pulled his mouth off Mickey’s now throbbing cock. “Please!” Ian begged. “What’s your big hurry?” Mickey whispered into Ian’s freshly bitten ear as he closed his lips around Ian’s tender earlobe, tonguing it playfully. “We have A-L-L night!” Mickey laughed menacingly as he brushed his hand over Ian’s rock-hard cock, on his way to squeeze his buttocks firmly with both hands, then proceeding to take his turn sucking Ian’s cock like there was no tomorrow because, in his mind, there wasn’t. Ian writhed and moaned uncontrollably, threatening to cum if Mickey didn’t let him have his ass right away. Mickey just chuckled, the vibrations of his laugh reverberating through Ian’s cock as he slowed his speed, swiping rings around his shaft and over his slit at a torturously snail-like tempo. “Damn, Mickey! I can’t…” Ian spewed some random gibberish, to which Mick responded, “Mmmm hmmmm,” his mouth still stuffed with Ian, making the projection of actual words nearly impossible. Mickey sustained his painfully slow pace until he himself was having trouble holding back, given the movement and sounds Ian was making.

“How ‘bout if I fuck you first?” Mickey asked, not really meaning it to be a question. Ian nodded. He would have agreed to anything if it brought with it the promise of getting off, he was so ridiculously aroused. Mickey spun Ian around, lifting him to his knees before reaching for the lube from the nightstand. Mickey had been gentle with Ian each time he topped with him, and this would be no exception. He knew Ian would be able to feel him for most of the weekend afterward, but he didn’t want him to be in any real discomfort that might hinder his modeling abilities.

Mickey began by slowly tonguing at Ian’s asshole, while continuing to stroke his stiff dick. He gradually began inserting his tongue and a finger, alternating, until Ian’s hole became progressively more stretched and ready to receive Mickey’s girth. Ian was so horny before Mickey began fondling his backend that this additional stimulation was driving him absolutely nuts. “Fuck me, Mickey!” Ian pleaded. “Bring your sweet ass back onto me,” Mickey commanded in a low, sultry voice. “I’m ready for you. I’m right here,” he continued, grabbing Ian by the hips and guiding him onto his waiting cock. Ian let out a sustained hiss as his hole stretched to accommodate the tip of Mickey’s dick. “Oh fuck, this tight ass of yours,” Mickey grunted as he eased himself out, then back in a bit deeper, reaching around to massage Ian’s cock. “Oh fuck yeah, Mick!” Ian spat through clenched teeth as he met Mickey’s thrusts, driving his own hot ass further down onto Mickey’s plump pole. “Easy, Gallagher, I’m not goin’ anywhere. Take your time,” Mickey said, pulling back a bit to even out their rhythm. Ian rocked and bucked against Mickey insatiably, Mickey finally burying the full length of his glorious cock in Ian’s ass. “This what you want?” Mickey breathed huskily into Ian’s ear as he slowly and tenderly gave Ian every magnificent inch of himself. Ian pulled his lower lip into his mouth, keeping a steady pressure on it with his teeth, managing to squeeze the word ‘yes’ out, and repeating it each time Mickey thrusted into him. Their lovemaking was magical, the two connecting on a spiritual level, while experiencing the ultimate in carnal pleasure. “Fuck!” Mickey yelled. “You feel so fuckin’ good,’” he groaned as he thrusted himself into Ian one last time, exploding inside him.

Ian, still rock-hard and insanely aroused, wasted no time getting started on Mickey’s ass, slapping and pinching it as he pulled his cheeks open, tonguing his asshole, then lubing it up quickly. Mickey’s mind and body were still reeling from the phenomenal climax he had just experienced, his body reacting instinctively to Ian’s prep work, his beautiful ass lowering itself down over Ian’s practiced fingers slowly as he moaned. “You ready, Mick? Can’t wait,” Ian panted breathlessly as he lubed up his mammoth cock with one hand while continuing to finger fuck Mickey with the other. “Mmmm Hmmmm,” Mickey responded, that puffy pink lower lip of his already securely pinned under his top front teeth. Ian growled sensually as he eased himself into Mickey’s beautifully presented ass,
“So fucking fine, Mick.” Ian gradually added more to each thrust until Mickey’s hole was accepting his full magnitude, balls deep. Mickey’s breath caught in his throat at the first full penetration. “Fuck!” Mickey whined. The lovers matched one another perfectly, falling into that familiar rhythm, belonging only to them. Ian kissed and licked up the side of Mickey’s delicate neck, nipping and suckling on it as he continually adjusted the angles of his penetration to hit Mickey, just so. “You’re fuckin’ amazing, Gallagher,” Mickey whispered under his breath as he rocked his ass back into Ian’s every thrust. Ian wrapped his gorgeous frame around Mickey’s, nestling his nose into the crook of Mickey’s neck, once again breathing in Mickey’s intoxicating aroma. “Damn, Mick! I honestly think I could eat you up, you’re so fucking sweet!” he breathed into Mickey’s ear between the kisses he planted along his neck and shoulder. “Yeah? Well, let me know when you’re ready, cuz I ain’t even close to bein’ done with your ass!” Mickey replied, grinding himself against Ian.

The lovers enjoyed one another into the wee hours, relishing every touch, every kiss, every moan, until sleep finally overtook their exhausted, entangled bodies.

Ian awoke the next morning to the pleasant smell of chocolate chip pancakes and Milkovich-style coffee, the sound of Mandy’s giggle also making its way to his ears. He yawned, rolling over to reach for some boxers to slip on before following his nose to the kitchen. Mandy was pouring coffee and Mickey was flipping the pancakes; seeing him with the pancake turner in his hand gave Ian a half-chub in his boxers, so he sat down quickly, before Mandy could notice.

“Ian’s voice trailed off as the reality of his leaving fully hit him. “Let’s just sit down and eat, aye?” Mickey said, serving Ian a plate of pancakes and sitting down next to him with his own. Mandy put two more plates down, then brought four cups of coffee to the table before sitting down and sending a text to Manuel to get his ass over for breakfast.

“Bigley wants us waiting outside at 11:30,” Manuel said as he walked in. “This is all so exciting!” Mandy piped up, prompting an evil look from Mickey. “I’m sure it will all go fast,” Ian added, having caught the expression on Mickey’s face after Mandy’s comment. The room got suddenly quiet, the only audible sounds being those of forks and knives scraping against plates. Mickey finished first, reaching under the table to stroke Ian’s thigh with his index finger one last time before…He couldn’t bear to even think about what was about to go down. The thought of losing Ian again, even for a weekend, was far too painful. He could feel the sting behind his eyes already as he drew his circle, over and over again, perfect and never-ending, like his love for Ian.

Mickey rose from his seat, pausing to kiss the top of Ian’s beautiful, bright orange bean, before clearing their dishes. “That was delicious! Thanks again, Mick!” Ian smiled, although there was a forlorn look in his eyes that contradicted it. Mandy and Manuel bussed their own dishes, disappearing back to their room to gather their travel bags.

“I still have to get a shower,” Ian said quietly. “C’mon, I’ll wash your back for you,” Mickey said, ushering Ian into the bathroom and turning on the water. They each dropped their boxers, hopping in quickly since it was almost time for Ian to leave. Ian stood under the water first, allowing it to trickle over his head just enough to wet his hair before lathering it up with shampoo. Mickey spun him around so his back was facing him and squeezed body soap onto his bath sponge, rubbing the suds onto Ian’s back in a slow, tender, circular motion, tears rolling down his cheeks as he did. Ian, sensing Mickey’s anguish, turned to him, kissing away his tears and pulling Mickey’s body against his own, pressing his lips to Mickey’s forehead softly. “I love you, Mick! And I can’t wait to just get
back home to you,” Ian breathed into Mickey’s wet hair. He tightened his grip on Mickey’s body, squeezing him firmly against his own as he began to sob. And so they stood, motionless in the shower, the water cascading over their bodies as they held each other in silence, never wanting to let go.

Once Ian was out of the shower and dressed, he gathered his things for the trip: the travel bag and a briefcase containing the accordion folder that Johnny had given him, along with the second folder Johnny had brought to their lunch. He trundled down the hall with these items in tow, Mickey following behind with a drop phone. “Ian, take this with you! I’ll use this and one I have here to stay in contact with you. It’ll be safer. Don’t call me on your regular phone!” Mickey called out. “Okay,” Ian said, continuing down the stairs, Mickey still following. “C’mon, Ian! I wasn’t planning to come outside,” Mickey explained, still trailing behind him. “You have to come out!” Ian pleaded, turning to face Mickey as he neared the door. “I can’t get in that car if your face isn’t the last thing I see!”

Mickey opened the door for Ian as he rolled his travel bag out toward the waiting limo. Mandy and Manuel were already inside. The trunk popped open and Mickey helped Ian stow his things inside. The limo driver had stepped out, prepared to load Ian’s bags, and was now waiting for Ian with the back door to the limo open. Mickey looked in at Mandy and Manuel. “Please take care of him!” he implored them. “Don’t worry, Ojos! I will keep them safe!” Manuel promised, putting his arm around Mandy. “I believe you,” Mickey said, dipping his head down to kiss Ian one last time as he sat in the limo. “I’m gonna miss your ass!” Mickey said softly, choking back the tears that were welling up in his eyes. “Promise me you’re coming back!” he begged. “I promise I’m coming back,” Ian replied, squeezing Mickey’s hand before he pushed the limo door closed. “I love you,” Mickey said, as he watched the limo pull away with his whole fucking life inside.
The flight in the private jet had been pleasant, all things considered. It certainly was nice not to have to go through customs or TSA, and the food was a far sight better, too. Mandy and Manuel had enjoyed a gourmet lunch, consisting of seafood alfredo, fresh greens tossed in a citrus vinaigrette and chocolate mousse for dessert. Bigley and Ian chose a lighter lunch, a turkey club and soup, one of Ian's favorites, although he wasn't very hungry. His mind was stuck in Mexico with Mickey and the mound of pancakes he had made him. He tried his best to get excited about the opportunity to visit New York with his best friend and her guy, to keep in mind the idea that his going there was good for Mickey’s business and could also mean his exoneration, but no amount of positive thinking could stave off the stabbing feeling in the pit of his stomach that threatened to tear his guts out with every breath he took.

He knew this feeling; he had experienced it all the way back to Chicago from the Mexican border seven months before, and it became his wake up call every morning until the day he finally laid eyes on Mickey again in the Mexico City Airport bathroom. Mickey was life, his sunrise in the morning, his joy on a beautiful day, his comfort in a storm. ‘God, I might lose it right now in front of Bigley.’ Ian thought to himself, just before Bigley interrupted his solitary melancholia, ‘So, after we land, I have made an appointment for you, Manuel, to meet with our chemists, so the limo will stop at the lab before taking you two to your hotel rooms, where there will be a collection of clothing options for each of you to try on. The photo shoot will begin promptly at 10:00 AM, so please be down for a light breakfast in the hotel restaurant by 8:30.’

“Sounds great, Bruno!” Mandy exclaimed, no longer attempting to mask her excitement now that they were outside of Mickey’s company. Manuel looked over at her, then back at Bigley warily. Ian smirked, having caught the jealous vibe from Manuel’s look. He laughed to himself, thinking, ‘Now you know how I felt, motherfucker’, although he did feel some sympathy for him, understanding where he was coming from himself. Ian decided to watch the non-verbal interactions among his three co-passengers for the remainder of the flight, since it served both as entertainment and as a distraction from his own misery. God, how he missed Mickey already! How the hell would he last an entire weekend? He hoped he would hear from him as soon as they landed, but he knew Mickey wanted to keep their communication to a minimum for safety’s sake. He was very paranoid about making any direct contact with anyone in the States, especially Ian because, even if he was gonna go down, he didn’t want to drag Ian with him.

Bigley sat, for most of the flight, looking either at his phone or at Mandy, who was absolutely glowing. Ian had to admit that Mandy was definitely one of the most beautiful girls he had ever seen, and that, if he weren’t gay, he would have loved to be her actual boyfriend. She was the perfect combination of beauty, street smarts and business sense, just like her big brother. Once he started to think about it that way, it was easy for him to understand how Manuel was attracted to them both and, at this point, he no longer questioned Manuel’s motives where Mickey was concerned. He knew Manuel loved Mickey, but could also see that Mandy was the object of his affections at this point. Manuel had also gone out of his way to reassure Ian that he was no threat to their relationship. The truth was, Manuel knew Ian was Mickey’s world and he loved him enough to bring him to him. ‘He’s a bigger person than me’, Ian thought to himself. He would NEVER give Mickey up for ANYONE or ANYTHING--EVER AGAIN! ...And why was it, Ian wondered, that, no matter what he tried to focus his attention on, it always led back to Mickey? God, it was going to be a long weekend!

Once they finally landed in the private airfield, belonging to ‘Bigley Enterprises’, it was less than thirty minutes before Manuel was being escorted from the limo to an office to meet Bigley’s
chemists. As he got out of the limo, he gave Mandy a quick kiss and Ian, a worried look that said, ‘Watch out for her!’ Ian smiled and nodded. Manuel was able to communicate very effectively, both with and without words. Ian could see why he and Mickey made such good business partners. They definitely balanced out each other’s strengths and weaknesses, in much the same way he and Mickey did in their relationship.

The Soho, a trendy hotel in the Soho section of uptown Manhattan would be Ian, Manuel and Mandy’s home away from home for the weekend. Bigley had rented out the penthouse suite for them since Mandy had requested that all three of them be housed together. The penthouse would allow for some togetherness, while also affording privacy, with separate sleeping quarters at opposite ends of the floor. The view from the south window was absolutely breathtaking, akin to those Ian sometimes saw at after-parties he attended, following his shifts at the White Swallow. He loved the New York skyline, but still thought Chicago was even more beautiful. If he was entirely honest with himself, he would have to admit that he still loved Chicago, and that returning to it, even just for visits, was a motivating factor in his big push for Mickey’s appeal.

Everything about this place was ritzy, from the hot tub to the bedclothes, to the marble flooring. It was very nice, but Ian preferred their place on the beach to anywhere he had been in the world. He had felt at home the instant he entered that place a month before, and he couldn’t wait until they could fix it and move back in. That was another one of Ian’s major motivations for this trip. He knew that this new surfboard line stood to increase the worth of ‘Ojos Azules’ astronomically, which would mean financial security for Mickey, Ian, Mandy and Manuel. In fact, every time he started to get squirrelly about the trip, that was the thought that kept him grounded.

Once Ian and Mandy got settled in, they began looking through some of the clothing options that had been left for them for the photo shoot. Most of Ian’s were in the red family, which was no surprise to him. He preferred more muted tones, like rust and wine shades, but he was open to anything that complemented the color of the surfboard, since the whole purpose was to attract attention to it. Mandy’s board was to be a blueish-turquoise to bring out her gorgeous eyes so, likewise, her clothing was all from the blue family. All of their choices were swimsuits, but there were many different types of bikinis for Mandy to choose from and about half as many different cuts of swim trunks for Ian. The two spent about an hour trying on the various options, practicing their poses and walks, and having a good laugh. They had opened a bottle of wine about ten minutes into their little fashion party and had all but finished it by the time Manuel got in.

“Hello!” He called in as the elevator opened. He could hear Mandy giggling and immediately wondered if Bigley was there with her. He wasn’t usually the jealous type, but Bigley had shown signs of being a creep, as far as he was concerned, and he didn’t like him around Mandy, outside of his presence. Like Ian, Manuel was biting the bullet in the name of success and prosperity. He didn’t trust Bigley with Mandy, not one bit! He did, however, admire his wealth and business sense, easily recognizing the benefit of the business relationship they had recently formed.

“In here!” Mandy called back to him, still laughing. Ian had just demonstrated his runway walk for her, but he was turning it into an exotic dance, just for fun. Ian and Mandy had always had that kind of fun together, enjoying each other’s sense of humor and getting a little bit crazy together. After some wine, Ian was able to enjoy himself a bit, which made Mandy very happy, since he had been pretty miserable for the entire flight. Manuel walked in before Ian realized, so he was still gyrating his hips wildly. “Ian!” Manuel said with a huge smile on his face. “Are you trying to seduce my woman?” Of course, he was kidding and Ian knew it, so he messed with him a little bit, dancing his way over to Mandy, pushing her into a chair and proceeding to give her a lap dance. She was laughing the whole time, naturally, and as crazy as it sounds, Manuel was relieved to see that it was Ian, and not Bigley, that had been making her laugh. The dance lasted about 2 minutes before Ian, seeing his drop phone light up, sashayed over to check it out. It was Mickey.
“Hello,” Ian answered, still chuckling a bit. “Ian! You’re okay? Why didn’t anyone let me know you got in safe?” Mickey asked, sounding concerned and a little pissed. “I...I didn’t think you wanted me to call a lot,” Ian stammered, suddenly serious. “How the fuck is calling to let me know you’re alive, ‘a lot’?” Mickey demanded. “Sorry, Mick. We just got in and started trying on some suits, then we opened a bottle of wine…” Mickey cut him off, “And you forgot about me,” he finished for him. “No, Mickey, that’s not even possible! I was just trying to stop missing you so much! I was getting physically sick, thinking about spending this whole weekend without you, but Mandy helped me lighten up and deal with it a little better, that’s all,” Ian explained, the alcohol clearly loosening him up. “Okay, well please don’t forget to take your meds and make sure you get enough sleep and…” Ian interrupted Mickey’s list of instructions, “I know, I know, please don’t worry, Mick. I’m fine. I love you.” “Love you, too, Ian. I’m just havin’ a hard time and I needed to know you were safe, alright?” Mickey asked, his voice a bit calmer. “I get it, Mick. I’m sorry I didn’t call. So is it okay to just call as much as I want then?” Ian asked. “Yeah, go ‘head,” Mickey answered. “Just don’t let that phone out of your sight EVER! And if anyone tries to take it, get it from them at all costs.” “Will do!” Ian responded. “I’ll call ya on the way to the shoot tomorrow then,” he added. “I’ll be waiting by the phone,” Mickey whispered into the phone, his voice thick with emotion. “Love you so much, Mickey,” Ian spoke softly before ending the call. “I love you, too,” Mickey said into the dead phone.

After the phone call, Ian didn’t feel much like goofing around anymore, and Manuel seemed to be wanting Mandy’s attention, so Ian excused himself, heading toward his bedroom. He was still a little bit buzzed from the wine he drank, so he pretty much fell asleep as soon as he hit the bed, but then ended up awake in the middle of the night, after a dream he had about Mickey being hauled back to prison. He had coaxed Mickey to come back to the States for a new trial and, as soon as he walked into the courtroom, they handcuffed him and took him away. Ian woke up with tears rolling down his cheeks. It was all so real. And once he was awake, he couldn’t stop worrying about whether this whole appeal idea was the right thing. Would it really be putting Mickey’s freedom in peril? Mickey had said that, but Ian couldn’t understand why...until now.

Ian felt around on the side table next to his bed, picking up the drop phone. The time on it said 2:15. He knew Mickey was probably asleep, but he couldn’t stop thinking about him, missing him... worrying about him. He pulled up the number Mickey had called him from earlier that night and pressed ‘send.’ “Ian!” a panicked Mickey said as he picked up the phone after the first half ring. “Yeah, Mick, I’m okay. Are you?” Ian asked. “Yeah, I’m alright. Just can’t sleep is all,” Mickey answered. “I miss you,” Ian whispered softly. “Wish you were here so I could wrap myself around you and put you to sleep,” he added. “Mmmm...” Mickey mumbled into the phone. “Mickey, whatcha doin’?” Ian asked curiously. “Thinkin’ ‘bout you putting me to sleep,” he said. “Hafta get me good and tired first,” he breathed. “How you gonna do that?” he asked, beginning to breathe heavily into the phone. “Hmmm...let me think about that for a minute...” Ian replied seductively, an evil smile spreading across his face, one that Mickey could almost hear over the phone, and it was getting him hard just thinking about it.

“How about if you take that gorgeous cock of yours into your hand and lube it up for me?” Ian asked, although it was more of a command than a request. “Way ahead of you, firecrotch,” Mickey panted into his phone. “Is that right?” Ian growled, grasping his own instrument and slicking it up. “Uh huh,” Mickey hissed as his breathing quickened. “Well, how about if you imagine my mouth all over your sweet stuff, licking and sucking it off until you can’t handle anymore. You know how much I love to watch you arching up into my mouth, like you can’t help yourself. Yeah, I got you right where I want you. You’re so fucking hot! I’m ready to explode just thinking how fucking beautiful you are right now, stroking your own cock.” Mickey could hear Ian getting more and more excited, which took him up another notch. He was so close, just trying to wait for Ian. “Ian!” Mickey moaned into the phone, “Hope you’re gonna fuck me hard when you get back, cuz I fuckin’ need it bad.” “Mickey!” Ian called out as he erupted all over himself, a collection of random moans.
following Mickey’s name. “Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey exploded the second he heard Ian cumming on the other end of the phone. He sounded so incredibly sexy, he couldn’t hold off for another second.

And then they both lay there, panting into the phone, sharing an orgasm across the miles, and an amazing one for both, at that. “I gotta go to sleep now,” Mickey finally said quietly. “I love you, Gallagher.” “I love you, too, Mick,” Ian responded. “I just can’t wait to come home.” “Good luck tomorrow. Call me when you’re done. G’night,” Mickey said, getting ready to hang up, when he heard Ian say, “Can’t do this without you. We gotta get you off so you can travel with me or I’m quitting.” “Get some rest and we’ll talk about it tomorrow,” Mickey replied. Ian and Mickey both drifted off into a peaceful sleep, dreaming of the time when they would be together again.
Ian woke up early, showered and was all set to go downstairs for breakfast, his garment bag full of swimsuits in tow. He went to knock on Mandy and Manuel’s door, but stopped short when he heard something banging rhythmically against the wall, likely the headboard, and Mandy moaning Manuel’s name. ‘Shit!’ he thought to himself, ‘She’s really cutting it close!’ They were supposed to be at the restaurant by 8:30, and it was already 8:15. She still had to shower, fix her hair and, if he knew her, pack her shit. He waited five more minutes and listened at the door again. No change. He decided to head down on his own and order for both of them. He didn’t know if Bigley was going to be down there or not, but he thought at least one of them should be on time. He could always make an excuse for her. He supposed Bigley would be very forgiving of anything, where Mandy was concerned.

Ian called the elevator and stood waiting. The Soho had 35 floors, so it took some time for the elevator to reach the penthouse. He looked down at the drop phone. The time was 8:25. He knew he wasn’t supposed to call Mickey until he was done with the photo shoot, but he also knew Mickey was up, making his strong-ass brew—alone. He could almost smell the pungent aroma as he imagined himself back in Mexico with Mickey, sitting at the island next to him, sipping on his potent potion, glancing over occasionally to catch a glimpse of his mesmerizing, ocean blue eyes. He felt the phone buzz in his hand, jerking him back into reality.

“Hey Mick,” he said, picking up the call. “I was just…” Mickey cut him off. “You were just thinkin’ of me,” he began, “About us…havin’ coffee together. Ya knew I was up and you wanted to call me, so I saved ya the trouble and called you instead,” Mickey laughed. “Are you a mind reader?” Ian asked. “No, I could just feel it, Gallagher. It’s fuckin’ weird, can’t really explain it, just knew,” Mickey mumbled into his coffee cup. “Yeah, I guess that’s kinda what was happening on this end, too,” Ian surmised. “Waiting for the elevator to go to breakfast. Mandy isn’t…uh…ready,” Ian stumbled over the words. “She bangin’ Manuel, huh?” Mickey laughed. “How’d you guess?” Ian chuckled. They both knew those two liked it in the morning. They had run into the situation enough times when trying to set up rides for Ian and meeting plans for the business. “Well, if I was there, you’d be runnin’ late, too,” Mickey said, smiling, with an emphasis on the word ‘late’. “Elevator’s here! Gotta go!” Ian said quickly. “Call me after…” Mickey said, ending the call.

When the elevator finally reached the lobby, he could see Bigley sitting in the restaurant at a corner booth. He was alone and looking at his phone. Ian strided over, carrying his garment bag over his shoulder. When Bigley caught sight of Ian’s bright red hair out of the corner of his eye, he looked up. “Good Morning, Ian!” Bigley growled. “Sleep well?” he asked. “Pretty well, considering,” Ian answered. “Considering?” Bigley asked. “I guess I just have a lot on my mind, with the photo shoot and the meeting with Cogswell. That’s still happening, right?” Ian asked, wanting to confirm. “Yes,” Bigley answered, “I have it set up for first thing Monday morning. He gets in at 9.” Ian’s heart sank. Of course, he wanted to investigate Mickey’s appeal. There was nothing he wanted more, except maybe to have his ass back to Mickey on Sunday, like he thought was the plan. “Great!” he smiled, trying to look grateful and enthusiastic, while feeling like someone had just stabbed him.

“So, you’re here, looking the part, I might add. Where’s our gorgeous female model?” Bigley asked, looking around the lobby. “Uh…she’ll be down shortly. I think Manuel is planning to eat with us, too,” Ian responded, trying not to sound panicked. “Great,” Bigley replied, glancing down at his watch. “The limo will be here at 9, so we really need to put an order in,” Bigley said in somewhat of a clipped voice. “Of course!” Ian responded. “They gave me their orders so we wouldn’t be held up. We all want oatmeal and coffee. We figured that would be quick. Just let me text Mandy to see how soon she will be down.”
Ian fired off as quick of a text as was possible on a drop phone, saying, “Get your ass down here! Bigley is waiting. Hope you like oatmeal. We don’t have much time!” There was no immediate response from Mandy, so Ian put the phone in his pocket. “That phone,” Bigley began, “It’s an old one. I’m assuming you are using that to communicate with Mickey. I hope you haven’t used it to text him at all, and that you don’t answer any calls from anyone other than him. “No, I haven’t,” Ian answered. “You shouldn’t be texting Mandy on it either. And did you bring your regular phone?” Bigley asked. “Yes,” Ian answered. “Where is it?” he asked. “It’s up in the room,” Ian answered, starting to feel sick. “And are there text messages on it between you and Mickey?” Bigley questioned, lowering his voice to a near whisper. “Yes,” Ian gasped, swallowing hard as he felt his throat tightening. “You need to get that phone right now!” Bigley said under his breath.

Just then, the food was delivered to the table. “Go now and get it,” Bigley said, motioning toward the elevator. “And please tell Mandy and Manuel they have 15 minutes to eat and then we have to go.” Ian headed for the elevator, grasping the drop phone tightly in his hand. The elevator came quickly, beginning his trip up to the penthouse. He had an access card he had to use in order for the elevator to travel beyond the regular floors, but it didn’t stop people from getting on and off in between, which ended up taking some time. His heart was racing. Bigley had him really spooked, and Mandy’s tardiness only made everything worse. Finally, after what seemed like forever, Ian arrived at the penthouse floor. When the doors opened, Mandy and Manuel were standing there, ready to go. “Hold this for me, please!” Ian called out as he ran toward his room, “I gotta get my phone! And you guys should bring yours!” Mandy and Manuel looked at each other, wondering what the fuck Ian was talking about. They both had their phones, so they just waited.

Ian came running back toward the elevator, a phone in each hand. “Let’s go!” he said, pushing the button for the lobby. “We’re late!” “What the fuck, Ian?!” Mandy yelled as the elevator door closed and they began to move. “I think Bigley wants my phone so he can erase all messages between me and Mickey, so I figured he might want you to do that, too,” Ian spoke quickly before charging out the elevator door, just as it opened into the lobby. “Slow your roll, Ian!” Mandy called to him, “You’re gonna have a coronary!”

Ian scampered over to the table where Bigley was still sitting, waiting. “Okay, give me your phones,” he said to Ian as he sat down. “Both of them?” Ian asked, truly about to start dry-heaving any second. “Yes,” Bigley hissed. “I will get them back to you by day’s end. It is important that we do this now since I won’t see you again until we meet in Chicago,” Bigley explained. “Chicago?” Ian could feel the blood draining from his face. He stared at Bigley, and the next thing he knew, he was waking up to a crowd of people staring down at him, including Mandy and Manuel, who looked especially worried. “What happened?” Ian asked, bewildered. “You passed out,” Mandy replied. “Probably low blood sugar. You haven’t eaten much since we left….” Bigley cut her off, “Ian, how about some oatmeal? Let’s try to get your strength back up. You have a big day ahead of you.” “Okay,” Ian replied, visibly shaken. “Please, will all of you eat quickly? The limo will be here in five minutes,” Bigley began, “And Mandy, I will also need your phone,” he finished. “What about mine?” Manuel asked. “You don’t have any known association with Mickey here in the States,” Bigley spoke in a hushed tone, “But if you’d like, I will be happy to take care of yours as well.” All three of them handed their phones to Bigley, including Ian’s drop phone.

“What exactly will you be doing with the phones?” Ian breathed, still feeling weak as he attempted to choke down a bite of oatmeal. “I will be wiping them of all contacts and cleansing them of texts and other messages. It will be as if they never existed,” he explained. “How are you able to do that?” Ian asked. “Just trust me,” Bigley croaked.

Ian put another spoonful of oatmeal into his mouth, but couldn’t bring himself to swallow it. He sat, in a daze, with a lump of oatmeal on his tongue, staring into space until he heard Bigley say, “C’mon, limo’s here.” The group got up from the table in unison, Ian and Manuel carrying the
garment bags and Mandy traipsing behind them. “Do you mind if I go along, Bruno?” Manuel asked, although he didn’t intend to take ‘no’ for an answer. “Do you have any appointments made with any of the chemists today?” Bigley asked. “Sam is supposed to call me about the grade of styrofoam that will be acceptable for the surfboard formula,” Manuel answered, “That’s all.”

“Okay,” Bigley responded, “since I will have your phone, I will text Sam and ask that he correspond with you through me until you get your phone back, if that works for you,” Bigley suggested. Manuel agreed to that, loaded Mandy’s bag into the trunk, and hopped in the back of the limo with Bigley and the two models. “So, Mr. Bigley, are we all going to Chicago on Monday?” Mandy asked.

“Please, call me Bruno. And no, there is no need for you and Manuel to remain here past Sunday, as things stand right now. I will send the two of you back to Mexico in the jet on Sunday, once things are wrapped up here in New York. Ian, you are gonna have to fly commercial into O’Hare, and either Cogswell or I will meet you at his office. There will be a limo at the airport to pick you up. You have your passport with you, right?” Bigley asked. “Yes, but…” Bigley cut Ian off. “Listen, I know you want to get back to Mexico, but trust me when I tell you, this appeal needs to be filed ASAP. We can’t afford to wait.” Ian nodded, a lump growing in his throat as he thought about having to tell Mickey that he wouldn’t be coming home with Mandy and Manuel. And how would he even be able to tell him? “When will I be able to get the drop phone back to call Mickey?” Ian asked. “I highly recommend that you not call him at all until after you leave Chicago,” Bigley replied. “I have to!” Ian yelled. “He’ll go nuts if he doesn’t hear from me! I’m supposed to call him after the photo shoot today!” “Ok, I’ll see to it that you are able to contact him one last time today, but that’s it. There is a lot in the works and we can’t afford anything to go wrong,” Bigley explained.

The rest of the ride to the agency was silent, the trio taking in the sights without making comment, mostly because they were in shock over the news of them being split up, but didn’t know what, if anything, they should say about it.

The agency was on the top floor of a newly refaced building on Long Island, overlooking the water, so the scenery in the area was breathtaking, and Bigley remarked that they did many of their shoots outside. In fact, he anticipated them doing a majority of the surfboard shots on the beach. The group exited the limo, the driver handing the garment bags to Ian and Manuel before speeding away to his next destination.

“Come on in!” Bigley called out in excitement as he opened the door to the building. Mandy’s smile was broad and beautiful as she took in her surroundings, marveling at her good fortune. In just over a month, she had a fantastic new boyfriend whom she loved to death, a new career, well, actually two, both of which made her old job look like what it was, that of an expensive prostitute, and she was reunited with her best friend and her big brother. How could life be any better for her? She honestly didn’t see how it could.

Bigley made the introductions quickly as Ian and Mandy were whisked off in different directions for make-up and wardrobe. They both emerged within half an hour, looking too fucking stunning for words, Ian’s striking red hair being accentuated by the first swimsuit they had chosen for him and, likewise, Mandy’s eyes popping in combination with the shade of blue that had been selected for her to wear first.

The shoot began inside with a series of head and full body shots set to different backgrounds, both with and without the surfboard props. The camera loved Mandy! She was a natural! So much so, that the indoor portion of her shoot was done half an hour before Ian’s. He, of course, looked amazing in his swimsuit, his toned body reminiscent of a Greek statue, but none of the photographers could get a good face shot. Ian looked worried or scared in every single picture, and furthermore, the production
supervisor came in and immediately asked why Ian had his hair cut so short, pretty much demanding that the shoot be redone in a week, after his hair had some time to grow in a bit.

Ian was beside himself, regretting ever having agreed to any of this shit, even wishing he had never pushed for Mickey’s appeal. He was beginning to feel like he would never get back to Mexico, and that he had put Mickey in danger by setting up this meeting about the appeal. He tried taking deep breaths, but nothing seemed to calm him. Once they were outside for the beach shots, he was so distraught that one of the photographers finally decided to slip him a Xanax, crushing it into a smoothie he was given for the purpose of keeping his blood sugar up, after his fainting episode at the restaurant that morning.

Finally, Ian was workable. He smiled, he flitted around, he shook his hips and, most importantly, he was pleasant and took direction well—at first. Then, once he was feeling the full effect of the drug, which was intensified by his bipolar meds, he became woozy and unable to follow instructions properly, which frustrated those who were attempting to work with him. “You on something?” one of the photographers finally asked. “Just my bipolar meds,” Ian slurred. “Wait! You are on bipolar meds?” the photographer who had put the Xanax into his smoothie asked. “Yeah, why?” Ian asked, speaking very slowly and deliberately.

The photographer whispered something to the one who had asked the question, and he began to shake his head. “You talkin’ about me?!” Ian asked, becoming very agitated and closing in on them as if he might try to hit someone. “What did you do to this poor kid?” Bigley piped up. “Well, I was just trying to loosen him up,” the photographer answered, shrugging his shoulders. “Oh, well, I hope you got what you needed, because he’s done for today. If it’s not good enough, book some time for tomorrow. If you need the longer hair, he’ll be back next weekend. In the future, please refrain from drugging my hero model. He can’t be replaced, and you put him in danger,” Bigley huffed, picking up his phone to call his limo service.

“Bruno,” Ian said, his voice still garbled, “You said I could call Mickey one more time...and I really...really need to talk to him,” he stammered, nearly in tears. “Of course,” Bruno replied, pulling the drop phone from his pocket. He pulled up Mickey’s number and hit ‘send’ for Ian. It rang once, twice, three times...no answer.

“It’s okay, Ian,” Mandy, who had walked away from her shoot to be by his side, assured him. “We will get in touch with Mickey. Just go and get some rest.” “I want you to come with me,” Ian whined sloppily. “How much longer will I be?” Mandy asked the photographer she was working with. “About ten more minutes,” he answered. “Bruno, can Ian lie down in the limo and wait for me?” Mandy asked. “Of course,” he replied, settling Ian into the back of the limo. “Just go to sleep, Ian,” Mandy said in a soothing voice. “Manuel, go sit with him. I’ll be right there,” she finished. “Will do!” Manuel said with a smile. Manuel sat down next to Ian, speaking softly to him, “Do not worry, Ian. Everything will be okay.” “I wanna talk to Mickey...” were Ian’s last words before he succumbed to the sedative effects of the drugs that were mixed inside his body.
Mickey’s afternoon had been hectic. He had called in a Saturday shift to complete an expedited order for a surf shop in Cancun. There was a mechanical breakdown in the factory that had him running in circles, ripping the machinery apart, performing internet searches for machine schematics in order to determine which part needed to be replaced, giving the employees something to do in the interim, then finally calling in a repair person to deliver and install the part, since leaving the employees in a dangerous situation to get the part himself, in his mind, was not an option. Managing the factory without Manuel was proving to be difficult already. He had texted Manuel about the problem early on, but got no response, so he attempted to troubleshoot on his own. He thought it was strange that he hadn’t heard back from him, but figured he must be thinking that all communication needed to go through the drop phone, which was probably for the best anyway.

Mickey had tucked his drop phone away in his pocket earlier in the day, not expecting to hear from Ian until later, so when he finally fished it out of his pocket after the factory closed for the day, he was surprised to see a missed call from Ian from 1 PM. He sat down on the couch with a beer, hitting ‘send’ on Ian’s drop phone number. The call went straight to voicemail, which had intentionally not been set up. He tried again with the same result. He assumed Ian must have just called him on a break and might still be working. Maybe he needed to turn the phone off during the shoot.

He put a frozen pizza in the oven and sat down to finish his first beer, scrolling through his old text messages to and from Ian. They made him smile, a pleasant reminder of how deeply in love they were with each other. By the time Mickey’s pizza was ready, he had downed three beers and had started on a fourth. He was really beginning to wonder why he hadn’t heard from Ian. After all, it was 6:30 PM and his shoot was scheduled to start at 10:00 AM. Even someone as beautiful as Ian didn’t need to be photographed for a full eight hours. Mickey ate some pizza, had a few more beers and decided to try calling Ian.

Again, his call went straight to voicemail. Now Mickey was beginning to worry. He had already tried contacting Manuel, with no luck, and he knew he shouldn’t attempt to call Bigley or Mandy. He had been warned against that by Johnny J. He was pretty much told not to communicate with any of them while they were in the States, and had taken it upon himself to set up the drop phone situation with Ian, since he couldn’t bear not to hear his voice for an entire weekend. He was beside himself and beginning to become agitated to the point that he might start to throw and break things since there wasn’t anyone around to beat up.

He had a couple more beers to try and calm down, then decided to call Johnny, who answered him right away. “Can you meet me?” Mickey asked. “Where?” Johnny responded. “Don’t really care. You in the area?” Mickey questioned. “Yeah, how ‘bout if I stop over? From the sounds of you, driving a car probably isn’t your best bet right now,” Johnny offered. “Sure, okay,” Mickey answered, cracking open another beer.

By the time Johnny arrived at the factory, Mickey had a full-on drunk going and was pacing the floor sloppily by the front door of the factory like a caged animal. As Johnny pulled up, Mickey opened the door and stood staring out into the lot, waiting for him to come to the door. As soon as he got about five feet away, Mickey yelled, “The fuck’s goin’ on in New York? Ian tried calling me earlier and when I tried to call back, it goes straight to voicemail! And Manuel isn’t calling or texting me back either!” Johnny quickened the pace of his approach, pushing past Mickey to sit at the conference table, cell phone in hand. “I just got a text from Bigley around 7. Says he wants to FaceTime. Figured I could do that here,” Johnny responded. “Okay…” Mickey sighed, sitting down next to Johnny so he could see his phone screen.
Johnny!” Bigley’s voice came booming over the speaker as his face filled the screen. “Hey, Bruno, I’m here with Mickey. Hope you don’t mind. He missed a call earlier from Ian, and now his phone seems to be turned off. He’s concerned,” Johnny explained. “Ian is fine,” Bigley answered, “He’s resting,” he added. “Resting?! What the fuck?!” Mickey’s temper flared, a combination of fear and alcohol putting him over the edge. “Relax, Mickey. I promise you that everything is fine. I have taken some steps toward protecting you. It is essential that no current connection between you and Ian or Mandy is traceable while they are in the States. So I have everyone’s phones right now and am wiping them of all messages and contacts,” Bigley paused.

“So you’re sayin’ I can’t talk to Ian?” Mickey blurted out. “Well, he’s asleep now. You can probably talk on Monday since I’ll be with him again then,” Bigley replied. “The fuck you mean he’s sleepin’? It’s fuckin’ 7:30!” Johnny gave Mickey a look, gesturing for him to calm down. Even Johnny didn’t speak to Bigley the way Mickey was right now. “No worries,” Bigley spoke calmly. “He is asleep because he was a bit nervous at the shoot, so one of the photographers gave him a Xanax and…” Mickey interrupted him. “They gave him a fuckin’ Xanax! He’s on medication that can’t be mixed with that shit! He would never take that! What the fuck? Is he okay? I wanna see him RIGHT NOW!!” Mickey exploded. “Mandy and Manuel are with him and are checking on him often,” Bigley reassured him. “That’s not fuckin’ good enough! He could fuckin’ die!!” Mickey was going fucking ballistic, up on his feet now, pacing and ranting.

“I’m headed to my daughter’s to have dinner with her and my grandson right now. If you want, I can call over to the Soho and have them ring the room. Then I can call you back to update you,” Bigley suggested. Mickey froze in his tracks, clenching his fists and biting at his lower lip. “How soon you gonna do that?” he asked, slurring his words slightly. “I need to discuss a few things with Johnny on my way and, as soon as I get there, I’ll call the Soho,” Bigley spoke in as comforting of a voice as possible for someone like him. Clearly, his appreciation and admiration for Ian, combined with Mickey’s long-standing business relationship with Johnny, had earned Mickey some leeway with Bigley. “Fuck,” Mickey said under his breath, resuming his pacing, now breathing heavily and rubbing his eyes with the palms of his hands.

“Johnny, I need to speak with you in private,” Bigley said more softly than Mickey had ever heard him speak before. “Okay,” Johnny answered, “Give me a sec to get to my car. I’ll be right back, Mickey!” he called back in Mickey’s direction as he neared the door. Mickey walked over to the door, watching as Johnny got into his car. He reared back and took a swing at the wall, his fist leaving only a small imprint in the steel-reinforced wall, his hand definitely on the losing end of that connection. “Fuck!!!!” Mickey screamed, looking at his bloody, swollen fist. He stood in front of the door, frozen, waiting for Johnny to return so Bigley could call the Soho. The longer he stood there, the more his hand began to throb and the more distraught he became. Finally, Mickey could see Johnny getting out of his car, still holding the phone in front of him.

“Hey, Mick!” Johnny yelled as he neared the door. “He’s on the phone with the Soho. They just connected him with the penthouse.” Mickey stared at the phone, Bigley’s face still there, big as day, but now with a home phone perched on his shoulder. “Manuel,” Bigley began, “How’s Ian?” “He has been sleeping. Would you like me to check on him?” Manuel asked. “Yes, please,” Bigley answered, “Mickey is very concerned about Ian’s health, and I’m on FaceTime with him right now.” Mickey heard Manuel set the phone down and walk away. A minute later, he picked up the phone in Ian’s bedroom. “He’s still asleep. Should I wake him?” he asked. “Please!” Mickey responded from his end, Bigley relaying the message and putting the home phone on speaker.

“Can you hear him, Ian?” Bigley asked. “Yes, I hear him. Mickey, I wanna come home. I fucking miss you so much. I don’t have my phone and I have to go to Chicago on Monday and I have to come back next week and…” Ian’s rambling trailed off as Manuel took the phone back from him. “He is very upset right now. Calm down, Ian. It’s okay,” Manuel reassured him.

“’The fuck’s he talkin’ about?” Mickey demanded, feeling the pain and swelling increasing exponentially in his injured hand. Bigley began to explain, “I will be getting everyone’s regular phones back to them tonight. Ian should not continue to use the drop phone to communicate with you. In fact, there should be no direct communication between you two until Ian is safely back in Mexico. We can pass messages, but please trust me, it is in the best interest of all concerned that you two follow these instructions.” “What the fuck!?” Mickey screamed, still obviously under the influence. “Mandy and I will be home tomorrow and can help you through this,” Manuel said kindly. “Help me through what?” Mickey asked. “Well, Ian has to go to Chicago and…” Manuel stopped talking, once Mickey erupted. ‘No fuckin’ way! No fuckin’ way!!! He wasn’t supposed to be in any danger!”

Bigley sighed deeply, “Mickey, I give you my word that no harm will come to Ian. You have to trust me. Some very good results are on the horizon, but only if everyone does as they are advised. Please, Mickey. Ian wants this for you, and I promised him that if he ever needed anything, I would do it. He saved my Colby’s life and I am forever indebted to him.”

Bigley began to tear up, uncharacteristically. “Manuel, can I please have Ian back on the phone for a minute?” Bigley requested politely. The sound of the phone being passed could be heard over the speaker-phone. “Hello,” Ian’s groggy voice cracked with emotion. “Ian, I need you and Mickey to trust me. Please do as I am recommending and you will be pleasantly surprised with the results. Can you do what I am asking? I really want to help you with this, like you requested.”

Bigley’s words seemed to do more to calm Ian than Mickey, Ian agreeing to his arrangements readily. “Now, Ian, if there’s anything else you need to say to Mickey, do it now and plan on seeing him in Mexico late Monday,” Bigley instructed, setting both phones down to give them some privacy.

“Mick? Can you hear me?” Ian spoke more loudly in an attempt to have his voice reach Mickey’s ears. “Yeah, I hear ya, Gallagher,” Mickey answered. “I really do wanna come home, but I trust that Bruno knows what he’s doing, so I’m just gonna say right now that I’m okay, I love you and I’ll see you soon. When I miss you, I’ll spin my ring on my finger to remind me of us, a perfect circle with no end, ‘til death do us part,” Ian spoke softly, trying to prevent his voice from breaking.

Johnny had walked back outside to smoke, leaving his phone with Mickey so that he, too, could speak freely. “Ian, I busted my hand up pretty bad. Why did you take Xanax? You know that’s dangerous with your meds.” “Mick, I didn’t TAKE anything. Someone put it in my drink so I would calm the fuck down. I’ve been a mess since Bruno took the drop phone and told me I’m staying longer. How’d you bust up your hand, or do I even have to ask?” Ian sighed, already fairly certain as to what had happened. “Yeah, I punched the fuckin’ wall,” Mickey admitted. “Thought you were in danger and I was powerless.”

“Well, I’m okay, and I figure we have to trust Bigley at this point. He seems like a straight-up guy, who really wants to help us. It’s gonna be hard not talking, but now that you know what’s going on, I feel so much better. Hope you are wearing your ring,” Ian said, smiling into the phone. “‘Course! Why the fuck wouldn’t I?” Mickey questioned. “Uh, cuz your finger is probably swollen from punching the wall, dumb ass!” Ian answered. Mickey looked down to see that his knuckles were bloody above the ring, but it was still on, and his ring finger didn’t look too bad, considering. “Nope, not takin’ it off for nothin’” Mickey replied. “Ever…” he added.

Mickey still wasn’t feeling comfortable with this new plan Ian had agreed to, but he wasn’t going to voice his concerns when Bigley could possibly be listening, so they said their goodbyes and ‘I love
yous’ tearfully before Bigley took the phone back, explaining that he needed to make another call before dinner. Bruno and Johnny wrapped up the call, Johnny taking one look at Mickey’s hand and starting to text. “Who you textin’ now?” Mickey asked. “Montemurro. Your ass is goin’ for an xRay at the clinic. Looks like you busted a couple of bones,” Johnny said matter-of-factly. “Nah,” Mickey replied, “I’m good.” “Get in the fuckin’ car, asshole,” Johnny commanded. “Told Ian I was gonna take care of you while he’s gone, and that’s what I’m gonna do!”
Ian was up at the crack of dawn, gazing out his bedroom window, which faced east, taking in the beauty of it all. He snapped a couple of pics with his newly cleansed phone, determined to show Mickey how beautiful the sunrise had been and tell him how much it reminded him of the one at their beach house. He legit could not wait to move back into that place, his and Mickey’s little slice of heaven. God! How he loved it, and how he cherished every moment he had spent there with Mickey; even their fights he recalled with a warm nostalgia. They had made so many beautiful memories in the short time they had been there together. He spun his ring on his finger, breathing in sharply, imagining his nose pressed against Mickey’s sweet neck as he held one of Mickey’s t-shirts up to it, inhaling his intoxicating scent. “Mickey,” he breathed, exhaling slowly, savoring each and every pheromone-laden air molecule as it left his body. After about twenty minutes of this ritual, Ian heard movement in the kitchen area of the penthouse and went to investigate.

Mandy was up making coffee in her underwear, the familiar aroma of Milkovich-style coffee permeating the entirety of the penthouse, rousing Manuel from his sleep to join them. “‘Morning!” Mandy announced in a sing-song voice. “Are you feeling better?” she asked Ian. “I was worried about you yesterday,” she finished. “Yeah, I’m okay. When are you guys leaving?” Ian asked. “Limo’s coming at noon. You’re going back to Long Island and we’re flying out from Bigley’s airfield,” Mandy answered, pouring three cups of coffee. “Wait, why am I the only one going back to the agency?” Ian wondered out loud. “My shoot wrapped yesterday, but yours...uh...well, they need a little more. And Bigley’s gonna go with you,” Mandy put it as delicately as possible. “Yeah, well, this is it then! Not coming back in a week, not unless Mickey is with me,” Ian whined, twisting his ring on his finger again. Mandy and Manuel just looked at each other, neither saying a word.

“You guys wanna get breakfast before we split up? Mandy finally asked, trying to be upbeat. “You really should eat something, Ian. You need to keep your strength up,” she added, angling for the ‘yes’. “Okay, I’ll go sit with you guys, but I’m not very hungry,” Ian replied, looking down at his boxers, which were Mickey’s, with a slight smile. I’m gonna go get a shower,” Ian said, excusing himself. Once Ian was out of earshot, Mandy said, “I don’t feel good about leaving him here on his own, Manuel. The last thing I want is to be separated from you, believe me, but I just don’t think I can bring myself to leave him in this condition. I think he needs someone here with him,” Mandy explained.

“Then how about if we both stay?” Manuel suggested. “No, and I thought about how you like your independence,” Manuel covered quickly. “And why were you talking about that?” Ian asked suspiciously. “Ian, I’m not gonna lie to you. I wanna go to your shoot today and to Chicago with you tomorrow,” Mandy admitted, running

“Ian doesn’t like what kind of attention?” Ian asked, walking into the room, clean-shaven and dressed to kill, his smoldering green eyes looking right through both of them. “The kind where people take care of you. I was just talking about how you like your independence,” Mandy covered quickly. “And why were you talking about that?” Ian asked suspiciously. “Ian, I’m not gonna lie to you. I wanna go to your shoot today and to Chicago with you tomorrow,” Mandy admitted, running
over to hug him. “I don’t want you to go through this alone. Mickey would be with you if he could, but since that’s not possible, I wanna be there,” Mandy spoke with great emotion, holding Ian in a tight embrace. “So, will you ask Bigley if I can be with you?” Mandy asked, pulling away enough to look up at Ian with her most pitiful puppy dog eyes. “Sure, Mands, I’ll ask, but not cuz I need a babysitter or anything, just because I really like having you around,” he said with a smile, kissing her on the top of the head.

Mandy had always had a way of getting what she wanted from Ian, or about anyone, for that matter. Manuel just grinned, admiring the ease with which she had manipulated the situation to her favor. He was also impressed by her deep concern and caring for Ian. She truly was a remarkable human being, and he felt blessed to have her in his life. She shared so many of Mickey’s positive characteristics, plus had a few that were unique to her, like her capacity to be open to new people and situations. She wasn’t as jaded and wary of others as Mickey was, which was refreshing. In the case of Bigley, however, it concerned him. She didn’t seem to realize how Bigley stared at her, hanging on her every word. Manuel had a front row seat for that the first time they all met and she was sharing the Fuego presentation.

Manuel resolved to talk with Ian about not leaving Mandy alone with Bigley, but wanted to time it right. He really didn’t want to bring it up in front of Mandy, but he didn’t have much time. He was also sensitive to the fact that Ian had been dealing with a lot and probably didn’t need any additional pressure put on him. Bottom line: Ian wouldn’t let anything happen to Mandy on his watch. Manuel just needed to put him on notice that Bigley might take this opportunity to try something, and that he should try to stick close to Mandy. Maybe he could be a bit clingy himself, insisting that Mandy go everywhere with him. Manuel was just looking for some reassurance.

Ian had decided to save his request for when Bigley came to pick them up, hoping to spring it on him emotionally, appealing to his sympathy. He really and truly did love the idea of Mandy being with him for what would probably be one of the toughest 24 hours of his life. Going through any trauma without Mickey would be horrible, but making decisions about Mickey’s future without him was downright nauseating. If Mandy were there, he would have her help and support, which he desperately needed.

Manuel was getting hungry and wanted to get something to eat soon. He reminded Mandy and Ian of the time, prompting Mandy to head for the shower. This gave Manuel the chance he was waiting for to talk to Ian about the Bigley/Mandy situation. It didn’t take long for the two men to agree that Ian would stick to Mandy like glue and use his fragile mental state as an excuse to not let her out of his sight. Since their talk was short, sweet and to the point, Manuel took the opportunity to join Mandy in the shower for a goodbye session, leaving Ian to wonder if he would end up getting anything to eat because, as luck would have it, he was actually starting to get his appetite back, now that he knew Mandy might be staying with him.

Manuel stripped off his boxers and snuck up behind Mandy, who had her back turned to him and her eyes tightly closed as she rinsed the shampoo from her hair. He pressed his stiff cock up against her sexy ass as he reached around her torso, cupping her breasts in his hands and kissing her neck tenderly. As she finished rinsing her hair, he spun her around, tilting her head upward as he lowered his to bring their lips together in a passionate kiss. He lathered up the bath sponge, focusing his attention between her legs, working up a good lather, then substituting his bare hand for the bath sponge. Mandy moaned, pushing herself down onto Manuel’s soapy fingers, and grasping Manuel’s beautiful cock with her right hand. As their desire piqued, Manuel lifted Mandy up into his arms, pinning her against the shower wall, her arms encircling his neck, legs wrapped around his waist, feet locked together. He pushed the tip of his magnificent manhood into her waiting opening, slowly sliding it further into her, Mandy gasping as he finally gave her his all. And then they were like rabbits, ravenously feeding on one another. Mandy bounced up and down on his cock at a frenetic
pace, Manuel countering her motion by lifting and pushing in opposition, the two racing to the finish line that was their climax, a chorus of moans escaping the confines of the bathroom and wafting into the main living area.

Under normal circumstances, Manuel would have taken his sweet time, driving her absolutely insane with want before giving Mandy her satisfaction, but today, it was a race against the clock. If Manuel had a prayer of getting breakfast before the limo showed up, he had to get it done, so that’s exactly what he did. And Manuel was never one to disappoint. Mandy left the shower well-fucked and with a smile on her face, the kind that says, ‘Yeah, I just got laid, and it was gooood!’.

Ian read that message loud and clear as she passed by him, grabbing some items from the kitchen to pack. He felt a twinge in his own cock as he thought about fucking the shit out of Mickey, which he planned to do as soon as he got home. He spun his ring on his finger, daydreaming about the sheer perfection of Mickey, his naturally-toned body and the way it moved under his own, the beautiful bone structure of his angelic face, the sky blue eyes that Ian could get lost in every time they looked up at him, the warmth of his embrace, the passion in his kiss, the unconditional love he always felt from him. Fuck, he loved every single thing about him, inside and out. He couldn’t wait to be his husband and to share everything with him for the rest of their lives.

Ian was actually able to enjoy some breakfast, feeling that his chances of convincing Bigley to let Mandy go with him were probably pretty good. The three talked and laughed over their breakfast together, Manuel making the most of each remaining moment he had left with his love.

It wasn’t long before the trio were on their way back to the Soho to pick up their things and then down to the lobby to meet Bigley and the limo. Ian admitted to Mandy and Manuel that he was a bit nervous about asking for the change in Mandy’s plans, but he was still planning to do it. No sooner had they exited the Soho than the limo pulled up and parked, the driver hopping out to load luggage and open doors for them. All three had to agree that they were receiving the royal treatment, and that none of them were accustomed to that.

“Bruno,” Ian began as he sat down in the limo next to Bigley, “I have a favor to ask, and I hope you will not find me rude for asking.” “No worries,” Bigley responded. “There is nothing you could ask of me that I would consider to be rude. After what you did for me and my family, you could be asking favors daily and I would be happy to accommodate you. What is it, Ian?” Bigley’s response gave Ian the confidence to go for it. “I’ve been struggling with the idea of staying in the States alone, especially since I can’t even talk to Mickey. Mandy talked to me this morning about coming to my shoot and to Chicago with me and I really…” Bigley interrupted Ian, “Say no more! That’s not a problem, but you two have to follow instructions in Chicago, to the letter, in order to protect Mickey’s interests. I know you both will, but I want to impress upon you just how critical it is.” As Ian listened, he started to get a bit freaked out. What the fuck was going on? He sensed that there were secrets he might never know about, and that this whole venture was riskier than Bigley was letting on, but he had no solid basis for his thoughts, just a feeling that he couldn’t shake. He wanted to ask what all of the mystery was about, but was afraid. After all, he just got Bigley to make a major change in their plans. He didn’t want to push things.

Ian sat quietly with his thoughts for the remainder of the trip to Long Island, Mandy and Manuel kissing and cuddling for their last moments together. As the limo pulled up to the agency in Long Island, Mandy and Manuel shared an emotional goodbye, taking comfort in the fact that they would only be apart for a day. Ian, Mandy and Bigley exited the limo, leaving Manuel to travel alone to the air strip.

Ian’s shoot could not have gone better, the photographers remarking that he was like a different person. Mandy was there for the whole thing, egging him on, just the way Mickey would have done.
Ian was positively glowing, the image of his beloved set permanently at the forefront of his mind throughout the entire event. He was especially animated and photogenic in the beach shots, focusing his mind on his beach escapades with Mickey, back home in Mexico. If Mickey were to ever come to a photo shoot, Ian imagined he would be rockin’ it like a superstar. Mickey, or even the thought of him, just seemed to make Ian better, physically, mentally and spiritually, no matter what the situation. It was really pretty amazing to Ian that someone else could have such an impact on him and he wouldn’t trade it for the world.

Once the shoot wrapped, Ian and Mandy were anxious to get back to the penthouse and relax. It had been a long day and they were both exhausted. Bigley had been there for part of the shoot, but had disappeared, showing up in the limo to pick them up just as they were walking out. As the driver opened the limo door for them, Bigley called out, “Change of plans. We are going to fly into O’Hare tonight. I have accommodations arranged for us at the Waldorf Astoria. That way, we will be within blocks of Cogswell’s Chicago office and can be there easily by 9. He has a number of developments to discuss with us and a rough draft for the appeal.

“Developments?” Ian asked curiously. “Yes, new information that will be useful for Mickey’s appeal. By the way,” Bigley said, changing the subject, “I heard you had a phenomenal shoot today, Ian! I knew you would be perfect for this! The marketing team has been working on your backstory, too. They should have a rough for that available to us soon,” he finished. Ian smiled weakly. He was happy that everyone was happy with the shoot, primarily because he hoped it meant he was done and wouldn’t need to return in a week, like had been mentioned the day before. He was, however, quite concerned with Bigley’s evasiveness when he asked about these ‘developments’ he had mentioned. Bigley seemed so tight-lipped about what was going on, pertaining to Mickey’s appeal, and it made Ian uneasy. He wanted to talk to Mandy about it, but that would have to wait until they arrived in Chicago and got settled into their room, and by then, they would likely be too exhausted to have that heavy of a conversation.

Ian spun his ring around his finger nervously while Bigley made small talk for the remainder of the limo ride to the airport. Someone had taken the liberty of packing all of Ian’s belongings that he had left at the Soho, Bigley told him. ‘Good thing Mickey and I weren’t traveling together or whoever it was would’ve found our lube,’ he thought to himself, holding in a chuckle.

The plane ride was smooth and fairly quiet. They were served a much-needed, yet miniscule snack on board the plane, then grabbed a light dinner at the Waldorf before retiring to their two-bedroom suite for the evening. Bigley, who had his own suite, had told them to dress nicely for the appointment with Cogswell and to be ready for breakfast by 8. Ian, although completely worn out from the day’s events, was too wired with anxiety to fall asleep, so after attempting to unwind for an hour in his bed, he got up to see what Mandy was doing. He found her awake, looking through her phone at pictures of herself and Manuel. Ian remarked that all of his pictures with Mickey had been removed from his contacts and messages were wiped. She scrolled further back into hers to find that any and all pictures of her and Mickey that had been taken in Mexico were also gone. “This guy really is thorough,” Ian said to Mandy. “Yep!” she smiled at Ian. “Aren’t you worried that he’s so secretive?” Ian asked nervously. “No, Ian, I think he knows what he’s doing. We have to trust him,” Mandy answered.

“I can’t sleep,” Ian said to Mandy, his eyes filling with tears as he spun his ring around his finger again and again, without deriving the usual calming effect. “C’mere!” she said, lifting the covers on her bed. Ian slid into the bed next to her, still visibly upset. Mandy rolled over toward Ian, so she was within inches of him. He hugged her body into his, closing his eyes, the warmth emanating from her body lulling him to sleep.
Mandy woke to the feeling of a stiff cock pressed against her left ass cheek, which was typical. In fact, she and Manuel started most days with a morning romp, so she was more than a little bit aroused herself. Ian was still asleep, but as she stirred, he pulled her in closer to him, nestling his nose in the crook of her neck. She pushed her ass firmly against his morning wood, not yet awake enough to realize her mistake. Thank God that Ian, slowly joining the conscious world, mumbled Mickey’s name, Mandy’s eyes opening wide all at once as she realized who she was in bed with. “No, wrong Milkovich,” she said politely, quickly separating her ass cheeks from Ian’s suddenly waning woody. “Geez, Mandy, I’m so sor…” Ian began before Mandy interrupted. “Don’t be. I made the same mistake before I was really awake. Let’s just never speak of this again,” she giggled, instantly putting Ian at ease. “Sounds good,” Ian responded, turning away from Mandy to hop out of her bed as quickly as possible.

As Ian neared the door to Mandy’s room, he was surprised to find it was already open. “Did you get up during the night?” he called back to Mandy as she headed for the bathroom. “No, why?” she replied. “Because I am one hundred percent sure that I closed your door last night. “Are you sure?” Mandy asked. “That’s weird!” she added. “Yeah, I’m positive. I never leave doors open. It’s a security thing for me. Probably got its start after the psych ward. Don’t like the idea of people looking in at me,” he explained. “Well, I have no explanation for it, unless I sleep-walked,” she laughed. “Well, I’m gonna have a look around, just in case,” Ian said, sounding quite paranoid. “You do that!” Mandy said with a giggle.

Ian walked around the suite, checking his room and bathroom first. When he got out into the sitting area, he noticed that a light in the entryway had been left on. He thought that was very strange, especially because he and Mandy had practically gone straight to bed as soon as they got in. He decided to get his shower before he approached Mandy with more weird shit. He knew they needed to be ready early, and he wanted to be prepared. Mickey’s future was at stake and, to him, there was nothing more important in the world.

As he stepped into the hot shower, his mind was flooded with memories of hot, steamy shower sex with Mickey. He recalled the last time he and Mickey had fucked in the shower at the beach house, the night Mickey proposed to him. He got goosebumps all over his body as he recounted all of the events of that day in perfect detail. The way the water beaded up all over Mickey’s body, a large droplet resting above his upper lip until Ian had sucked it into his own mouth, along with both of Mickey’s irresistibly sexy lips and his magical tongue. He had literally wanted to eat his fucking face off, he was so hot!

Ian’s dick was as hard as a rock, thanks to this memory, and there was no way that was gonna change unless he took care of business. He grasped his cock in his right hand, slowly pumping it as he recalled the dirty details—lifting Mickey up onto the shower ledge, his own legs shaking with anticipation as he prepared Mickey’s fine ass for his grand entrance. In his mind’s eye, he could see and feel every thrust, every moan, every tensed muscle, Mickey’s ivory skin shimmering with moisture as he took in every inch of him, bucking against him wildly, full of lust and longing. “Mickey!” Ian yelled, moaning uncontrollably as he succumbed to his own manipulation, lost in the fantasy of having Mickey, of being inside him, a part of him, loving him so wholly and completely. God, how he missed and wanted him!

Ian stood still, allowing the shower to rain down on him, rinsing away the intense feelings of pleasure and comfort that his memories had given him, if only for a brief moment. He finished washing up, toweled off and began the task of dressing for this appointment. Ian wasn’t much for
business attire, but rose to the occasion, wearing a shirt and tie with khaki dress pants. And oh, did he wear them well! Mandy catcalled as he walked out of his room. He looked and smelled absolutely heavenly, so much so that she had a fleeting thought that maybe she should have feigned sleep and disorientation for just a bit longer that morning.

“Mandy, I gotta tell you something,” Ian said seriously, wiping the lingering smirk from Mandy’s face. “Yeah?” she said nervously, wondering what was up. “When I came out into the main room this morning, the light in the entryway was on. I know all the lights were off when I went to bed last night and you already said you didn’t get up during the night. Mandy, I really think someone was here last night.” “Anything of yours missing?” Mandy asked. “Not that I could see,” Ian responded. “Well, then how ’bout if we just chalk it up to being a stuffy-ass, weird place! We’re leaving today, so what does it matter?” Mandy reasoned, her silly smile disarming Ian, as usual. “Okay, Mands,” he agreed, walking back to his room to grab his travel bag. “You ready?” he called to Mandy from his room. “Yeah,” she answered trundling her bag down the hall.

The pair made their way down to the cafe to meet Bigley for breakfast, each hoping the other would be able to eat something, despite being incredibly anxious about the appointment they were heading to afterward. Bigley greeted them with a hearty, “Good Morning!” He had an odd smile, or more like a smirk on his face as he looked at them, but neither had the balls to ask why. Instead, they each returned his ‘good morning’ with bright smiles. Mandy ordered scrambled eggs, her old stand-by, and Ian ordered baked or “puffy” eggs, something he had learned to love during his and Mickey’s time living with Svetlana. They each ate fairly well, considering, and all three of them were finished in plenty of time to get to Cogswell’s office.

The building that housed Cogswell’s office was nothing short of a masterpiece, a combination of Corinthian pillars and polished marble, standing 40 stories high. It wasn’t the Waldorf Astoria, but it ranked a close second, as far as Ian was concerned. ‘This guy is obviously very successful to afford an office in this building,’ Ian thought to himself as they entered and Bigley called the elevator. Cogswell didn’t just have an office in the building; his firm occupied the top three floors, his personal office sitting at the center of the penthouse office suite. “Holy shit!” Mandy said under her breath as the elevator door opened, an administrative assistant standing at the ready, waiting to escort them personally to Cogswell’s office.

“Come in! Come in! Sit, please,” Cogswell said in a welcoming tone as Bigley, Ian and Mandy were delivered to his office. The trio sat down, each in his own plush leather chair, after which they, along with Cogswell, were offered coffee, tea or any other beverage of their choice. After everyone was done ordering drinks from Cogswell’s assistant, Cogswell began the conversation. “Ian, Bruno has told me all about all of your heroic efforts in Mexico. It’s quite an honor to meet you! And Mandy, you are every bit as beautiful as Bruno has described. It is truly my pleasure to meet you as well!” Ian and Mandy both smiled humbly, each offering a, “Pleasure meeting you, too,” in response.

“Okay, well, enough small talk then. I’ll cut to the chase. I know you have a flight to catch later this morning,” Cogswell began. “I plan to file an appeal in Mikhailio’s case. I believe there are multiple bases or grounds for an appeal, but feel the strongest one, at this point, is legal error. I will also, however, file based on ineffective assistance of counsel, since it is the only way to file, despite the deadline having already passed. I will essentially argue that his former counsel’s ineffectiveness in failing to file an appeal in a timely manner deprived him of his right to appeal, and thus, he should be allowed to appeal nunc pro tunc. Once we are granted an exception to this time constraint on that basis, I can go about making all of my arguments for his appeal, the most important of which will fall under the legal error category, more specifically lack of sufficient evidence to support a guilty verdict.

I’ve been over all of the ‘evidence’ in this case and, the fact is, there IS NO evidence. Mikhailio was
convicted on the testimony of his alleged victim alone, a woman whose credibility is highly suspect, given the fact that she chased Mikhailio around your block, shooting at him with a handgun with no real reason to believe he had been the person responsible for her waking up inside a moving crate. It’s absolutely absurd that he was convicted, based on this ‘evidence’.” Cogswell paused, sipping his coffee and lighting a cigarette. “How his family and his attorney allowed him to rot in prison for this without trying to get him the justice he deserves, I can’t understand,” Cogswell took a long drag off his cigarette, before setting it in his ashtray.

“I will, once the appeal is granted, be submitting an amicus brief, which will explain the broad factual background of his case, including the lack of evidence against him, as well as some new information that has become known through some fellow inmates of Ms. Slott. Apparently, she has been bragging to anyone who will listen about how she got you, Ian, sent to military prison, and Mickey put away in Cook County, all to avenge her son’s incarceration, which she claims to the fault of your brother, Carl. Sounds like the rantings of a crazy woman, if you ask me, and I might even go so far as to have her competency to give reliable testimony determined by a psychiatrist. With all of that said, is there anything else you think I should know that might be helpful in filing the appeal?” Cogswell asked.

“Well, did you know she shot our dad?” Ian asked. “She shot your dad?” Cogswell said with surprise. “Yeah, she said she had to ‘train the dog,’” Ian recalled. “Wow! This is pure gold! And would your dad be willing to testify to this?” Cogswell asked. “If you can find him, and if you pay him enough, I’m sure he would ‘remember’,” Ian chuckled. Cogswell looked at him as if he were joking. “I’m serious, Mr. Cogswell. Our dad is a real piece of work.” Ian clarified. Bigley watched and listened to this exchange, a look of utter disbelief on his face. Bigley had grown up rough and had earned his way in life through the school of hard knocks, but he was surprised at how similarly he and Ian and Mickey must have grown up. This just made him love Ian all the more, becoming even more determined to set things straight for him and, of course, for Mickey.

“If you provide me with your father’s address and the addresses of any of his friends…” Ian interrupted Cogswell with a hearty belly laugh, followed by, “Frank has no friends! But you can look for him at the Alibi Room if he’s lucky enough to have any money to spend on drinks there. Oh, and sometimes he’s been known to run a tab, but I have a feeling the current owner would not allow that, so…” Ian trailed off, smiling as he thought about what an ass his father was, and how glad he was to be living in Mexico, far out of his reach. The only one worse than him in the entire Southside was Mickey and Mandy’s dad, Terry Milkovich, who was currently incarcerated, a fact that made Ian smile as well.

I’ll get one of my P.I.’s on this Frank situation ASAP. Do you have any other information you feel might be helpful?” Cogswell asked Ian, then looked over at Mandy. “I don’t think so, other than to say that Mickey didn’t try to kill her,” Ian answered. “It’s good to know I am representing an innocent defendant,” Cogswell said, grinning at Ian. “I do have a question, though,” Ian began. “Doesn’t Mickey have to be in court for his appeal?” Cogswell cleared his throat, then replied, “Some appeals are decided solely through the submission of appellate briefs, in which case not even I would be required to go to court. However, if testimony is to be heard, then yes, we would both need to be present. It is also at the court’s discretion to deny an appeal, based on a defendant’s fugitive status. My recommendation would be for Mickey to turn himself in prior to the appeal being heard, with the understanding that, once the appeal is won, he would be a free man, able to travel whenever and wherever he desires.”

“Wait!” Mandy interjected. “You mean he has to go back to jail?” she yelled. “Only for a short time, until…” Ian cut him off. “No, I’m sorry if you wasted your time on this, but Mickey going back to jail is unacceptable, so we aren’t going to pursue this, okay? Sorry,” Ian spat out in an agitated voice, more at himself than anyone else. “I’m afraid with all of the international attention his business is
beginning to get, with the upcoming release of the surfboards for the hurricane fundraiser, it will be very difficult for him to maintain his anonymity and, therefore, it would be only a matter of time before INTERPOL tracks him down. Even without the publicity, I would say his chances were 50/50, probably less since you and Mandy went to Mexico to visit and stayed. Trust me, turning himself in and filing the appeal is his safest option. I will get him off. I have a few other tricks up my sleeve and I’m quite confident,” Cogswell finished, putting out his cigarette.

“Okay, I’ll talk to Mickey, but I know he won’t like this,” Ian choked out in a near whisper, his throat closing as the lump in it grew. “I need you to sign some preliminary paperwork for him, and I will be sending some other things with you for him to sign. ‘Blah Blah Blah’ Cogswell droned on as Ian’s mind began to spin, his brain incapable of focusing on anything other than the complete destruction he had levied on Mickey’s life. ‘Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!’ he said over and over in his head as he felt his eyes begin to sting from the inside out.

Cogswell finally stopped talking, Ian signed some papers absently and Bigley ushered Ian and Mandy out of this office and into the limo. Ian was literally swallowing vomit back down his throat as Bigley detailed their travel plans home. They would fly from O’Hare to LaGuardia, ride via limo to Bigley’s airfield, where they would board his private jet, bound for Mexico...and Mickey! Ian couldn’t wait to hold him in his arms, but at the same time, he was dreading the conversation they would have about the appeal and Mickey having to go back to prison. Just hearing that word in his mind made Ian’s stomach roll. It was gonna be a long trip home.

Manuel was greeted by Johnny, who drove him back to the factory after his flight into Mexico, filling him in on Mickey’s many recent difficulties, including the three broken bones in his hand that had to be set by Dr. Montemurro the night before. He warned Manuel that Mickey was on some pretty heavy pain meds following the surgery, and that he really wasn’t himself. Nothing, however, prepared him for the Mickey he was about to see.

As Johnny pulled up to the factory, Manuel attempted a quick goodbye, grabbing his travel bag and opening the car door to leave. “Not so fast!” Johnny shouted, “I’m coming in with you.” “Really, we will be fine, but thanks, Johnny!” Manuel said politely as Johnny proceeded to follow him anyway. “I’ve been staying here with Mickey,” Johnny called after Manuel as he ran up the steps toward Mickey’s room. “I really don’t think you underst…” Johnny was interrupted by the sound of Mickey, howling in pain as Manuel opened the door to his and Ian’s room. “Fuck!! I can’t get…” Mickey’s slurred voice trailed off as Manuel and Johnny caught sight of him lying on the floor amid half a dozen beer cans and a broken glass. His hand was bleeding (again) and he was too intoxicated to get up. Johnny and Manuel helped him up and got him into his bed, Johnny calling Dr. Montemurro, whom he had on speed-dial. “Michael!” he belted out in his raspy voice. “He’s at it again! Busted it open and drinkin’ with his pills!”...“Yeah, about six beers!”...”Okay, will do. Please keep your phone handy, just in case!”

“Okay, Manuel, Montemurro says he’s safe if we can stop the bleeding and make sure he doesn’t drink anything more. We also gotta keep him awake for the next four hours while the medication wears off, which is gonna be miserable since he’s in a lot of pain, but we have to do it since the asshole won’t leave the alcohol alone,” Johnny explained. “That’s easy enough,” Manuel reasoned, “I’ll just dump or hide all the booze in the place, then I’ll stay up and make sure he doesn’t fall asleep.” “Sounds good, but I’m staying, too. I promised Ian I would look out for Mickey while he was gone,” Johnny said solemnly.

The next several hours were not pleasant. Mickey was constantly begging for more pain pills and, when he took a break from that, he was either begging for beer or falling asleep, which Manuel and
Johnny would both have loved to allow him to do, but couldn’t. Then there was the incessant questioning, “Where’s Ian?” which they had already answered at least twenty times, but that didn’t stop Mickey from asking again and again. The only good thing that came out of this evening from hell was that they were able to stop the bleeding from his hand, and his stitches were still intact.

Finally, after the four hours had elapsed, Johnny checked with Montemurro, who confirmed that it would be okay to give Mickey his next dose of pain pills, after which he finally fell asleep, Manuel by his side, dozing off himself.
Reunited!

As Bigley’s jet landed in Mexico, Ian and Mandy were flooded with emotion, both giddy with excitement about seeing their lovers, but Ian also filled with dread over the conversation he knew he had to have with Mickey about his appeal and all of the information he got regarding the threats to his continued freedom if he chose not to file one. Ian turned it over in his mind for most of the plane ride, resolving to wait to discuss it with Mandy until Manuel was there. He hoped Manuel would be the one picking them up alone from the airfield, even though he really wanted to see Mickey, but knew there was a possibility it would be Johnny. He already knew where Johnny stood with regard to the appeal; he supported it completely. He really wanted Manuel’s opinion as Mickey’s business partner, his best friend, hell, as someone who loved him, which Ian now accepted, by some strange miracle.

As Mandy and Ian stepped down from the jet, they could see Manuel’s car waiting for them. Mandy’s heart leapt in her chest, a day apart seeming like an eternity for her. Ian was also quite pleased to see Manuel. They both raced for the car, dragging their travel bags across the rough terrain recklessly.

As they approached the car, Manuel stepped out, opening the trunk for their bags. Mandy dropped the handle to her bag and ran full-force at Manuel, jumping into his arms. Ian grabbed the handle to Mandy’s bag, dragging it the rest of the way to the car and loading both bags into the trunk, while Mandy covered Manuel’s entire face with kisses. Once Mandy pried herself away from her man, she and Ian got into the car, allowing Ian to broach the subject of the appeal.

“Manuel, I really need your advice on how to handle this appeal situation,” Ian began. “Cogswell seems to think Mickey has to appeal or he will be in danger of being tracked down by INTERPOL, and it’s all because I came down here and because we are involved in this international fundraiser!” Ian exclaimed in despair. “Ian, listen, you can’t blame yourself for any of this. If you hadn’t come down here, Mickey would have gone to Chicago to see you! That would have most definitely ended in disaster, so, if anything, Mickey is very fortunate that we were able to arrange for you to come here!” Manuel explained, doing his best to relieve Ian’s troubled conscience.

“But even if it’s not all my fault, I still have to convince him to file the appeal, and the worst thing is, he will have to turn himself in, or the appeal will most likely be denied. How the hell am I supposed to convince him of that?” Ian was starting to cry now, just imagining the way that conversation would go, the look of hurt in Mickey’s eyes as the reality of the situation hits him.

“And what is the deadline for filing this?” Manuel asked in earnest. “I don’t know. Cogswell said it was already late, but he was filing it based on Mickey’s first lawyer being ineffective for not filing it for him. He also has some new evidence that is helpful to Mickey’s case. And he said there wasn’t any real evidence against Mickey. He can’t even understand how he was convicted, based on nothing but the testimony of my nutbag half-sister.”

“I’m going to suggest that you not bring this up to Mickey right away, even though I can see that it has you quite upset,” Manuel advised. “Mickey is just not ready for this...uh...this kind of news right now. He’s...uh...he’s...” “He’s what?!” Ian interrupted. “He’s not himself. He just had surgery to repair his hand and...” Ian interrupted Manuel, ”Surgery?! What the fuck? Is he okay?!” Ian started to tear up again. Mandy turned around to look at Ian, then took his hand, squeezing it between her own. “We’ll get through this, Ian. I promise. You are the best friend anyone could ever ask for, and I’m gonna see you through this. You and Mick are gonna be happy and living in that beach house!” Mandy smiled back at him, reaching up to his face to wipe his tears. “He will be okay,” Manuel
answered, “but it will take time.”

As Manuel pulled up to the factory, he turned to face Ian, addressing him again. “Ian, I know you wanna get this off your chest, and it’s gonna bother you to keep it from Mickey, but trust me, he is not ready for this. Let him heal a bit first. Be with him, spend time, assure him of your feelings for him, but don’t put this on him right now. I think when you see him, you will understand my reasoning.” “Okay, Manuel. I never thought I would say this, but I do trust you. Just promise me that you and Mandy will help me when the time is right,” Ian responded. “Of course we will,” Manuel reassured Ian. “Let’s go in and see him!” Manuel said enthusiastically.

The three exited the car, Manuel and Ian dragging the travel bags, then lugging them up the stairs after entering the factory. Once they reached the top of the stairs, Ian dropped his bag and ran for the door to his room, Mandy grasping the handle to Ian’s bag to roll it down the hall for him.

Ian sprinted into his room, stopping short as he realized that Mickey must be in bed. His heart sank. He had expected to find him standing at the door, or at least sitting on the couch waiting anxiously to see him after all this time apart. Ian walked into their bedroom, took his clothes off, and approached the bed. Mickey was sprawled out on his stomach, his injured right hand resting flat in the top corner of the bed. No ring! Ian felt sick! What happened to the ring he had given to Mickey just before he left? Had Mickey changed his mind? Maybe his hand had just been too swollen to keep it on. Did they cut it off for the surgery? Why was he out cold in the middle of the day, in such a deep sleep that he didn’t even stir when Ian walked in? How could he ever tell Mickey all that he found out from Cogswell?

Ian’s stomach was churning. He ran to the bathroom, bending over the toilet to vomit, but nothing came out. He hadn’t eaten since early that morning, so all he could do was dry heave. His forehead beaded up with sweat as he wretched from deep down, becoming increasingly dizzy the longer this continued, until finally, he staggered back to the bed, trying to squeeze in beside Mickey, despite Mickey’s centralized position. He slipped in on his side, barely balancing himself on the very edge of the mattress. He wanted to move Mickey, but was afraid of further injuring his hand. ‘My poor baby!’ Ian thought to himself as he rolled Mickey over his good hand, taking care to move the broken one safely as he did. Once he got Mickey flipped around, he could see that his ring was on his left ring finger, completely intact, just as perfect as the day he had given it to him. He turned Mickey onto his left side, stretching his right arm out to protect his hand from getting smashed under his body. He pressed his body against Mickey’s, burying his nose into the hollow at the base of Mickey’s neck, just behind his clavicle. That scent! Fuck, if it didn’t turn him on instantaneously! He breathed it in so deeply, he felt his lungs might explode in sheer ecstasy, being filled with such an incredibly intoxicating aroma. He pressed his throbbing member against Mickey’s shapely bottom, eliciting the first sign of life from Mickey as he mumbled Ian’s name softly. “That’s right, Mick. It’s me, and I’ve missed the hell out of you. I’ve been waiting for this moment for what seems like forever. I love you so much,” Ian whispered through his tears as he continued to rub himself against Mickey’s lusciously plump derriere. “I want you so fuckin’ bad, Mick,” Ian whispered into Mickey’s ear, nibbling on it between words.

Mickey was now fully awake, his injured hand thumping to the beat of his heart, which had increased in speed dramatically over the last five minutes. “Can’t move, Gallagher,” Mickey groaned, obviously in terrible pain. “Still wanna fuck though...real bad,” he added. “I gotcha,” Ian responded, reaching carefully into the nightstand to retrieve the lube without jarring Mickey’s hand, then proceeding, with even greater care, to gently fondle Mickey’s asshole, slowly penetrating it with his fingers as he stroked his perfectly formed pernis, its rigidity doubling by the millisecond. Mickey moaned with pleasure, moving his ass ever so slightly to take Ian’s fingers more deeply into himself. “Ready for you,” he breathed after a few short minutes, his heart pounding in anticipation.
Ian obliged him, both men lying on their sides, Ian parting his ass cheeks to ease his entry, which he took painstakingly slow, making certain not to cause Mickey to jerk or flinch. Ian’s motion was so fluid, so smooth, that he had Mickey moaning incessantly within seconds. “Fuck! You feel so damn amazing, Ian! I never wanna be away from you again, not even for a second,” he spoke softly before passion overtook him completely, rendering him unable to speak intelligibly. All that came out were moans and incoherent ramblings, peppered with the occasional “Oh fuck yeah!”

Although Ian had envisioned fucking Mickey hard when he got back, like Mickey had asked for during their phone sex session, he loved slow-fucking Mickey just as much. The feeling was fucking fantastic, the way it was drawn out so he could feel every last one of his nerve endings fire with every single tiny movement and let it reverberate throughout his entire body, and the nonsense that spewed from Mickey’s lips as he was being fucked so righteously just turned him on even more. He grasped Mickey’s already lubed-up cock, stroking it haltingly, heightening Mickey’s arousal, yet denying him release. Ian wanted to savor this connection, this feeling of intense love and interdependence for as long as possible. He didn’t want it to end, or to ever feel separate from Mickey. He longed to be in him, a part of him, their bodies and souls inextricably united into one heaving mound of flesh and spirit.

“Wait for it, Mick,” Ian breathed as Mickey did all he could to hasten their climax. “Wanna feel you some more,” he added, his ragged breathing torturing Mickey’s delicate ear. Mickey shuddered as the warmth of Ian’s breath reached his eardrum, sending him further and further toward the inevitable. “I...can’t!” Mickey screamed, finally acquiescing to his body’s base cravings, despite Ian’s efforts to prolong the process, his cock exploding like a volcano all over Ian’s hand. “Damn, Mick!” Ian yelled over Mickey’s mantra, “I love you... I love you...I love you...” Ian bottomed out one last time, his body convulsing wildly as he shot his load deep into Mickey’s insanely tight ass. “You feel so fucking fine!” he breathed as the last of his cum gushed from him.

Ian, still in the daze of their afterglow, lifted himself from the bed, throwing on some sweats and heading for the kitchen. He could see from all of the take-out containers strewn about their room, that Mickey had not had a good meal since he had left. He pulled out the ingredients for Mickey’s favorite pasta dish and began cooking. He resisted the urge to open a celebratory bottle of wine to go with dinner since Mickey was on pain meds that shouldn’t be mixed with alcohol, although, by the looks of the place, Mickey had been testing that quite a bit, which worried him.

After beginning to prepare enough food for four people, Ian texted Mandy to let her know that she could come for two plates of his fine pasta. He had thought of inviting them to eat with him and Mickey, but decided Mickey was probably not going to feel up to sitting at the table, or even the island. He planned to bring him dinner in bed, and didn’t think Mickey would appreciate company for that, even if it was his sister and his best friend. If he ended up wanting them over, he could certainly invite them.

After everything was on and cooking, Ian went back to the bedroom to check on Mickey. He was surprised to find him sitting up in bed. “Smells so fuckin’ good, Gallagher!” he said, a hint of a smile creeping across his lips. “There’s no end to the benefits of havin’ your ass around,” he added, raising an eyebrow. Ian was so happy to get a glimpse of the real Mickey. He only hoped he would stick around. “Guess you’re feeling better?” Ian asked happily. “Took me some more pain meds,” he grinned, getting up out of bed and approaching Ian. “How many did you take?” Ian asked, chuckling slightly, although he was concerned. “Two,” he answered, pulling Ian in, kissing him softly at first, then biting and sucking on his lips before sliding his tongue adeptly into Ian’s waiting mouth. Ian moaned softly, smashing his body firmly against Mickey’s, his heart racing just as it had the first time they ever fucked. Mickey could do things to him, and with next to no effort. Sometimes all it took was a glance, a touch, the raise of an eyebrow. “Fuck, Mick! Gonna hafta do ya again if you don’t stop!” Ian yelled, pulling away to stir the sauce. “Fine by me!” Mickey responded, edging up behind
Ian at the stove and pressing his raging hard-on against his ass. “Can we eat first?” Ian asked, “I’m starving!”

“No,” Mickey snapped, spinning Ian around, but not before Ian got his hand on the stove knob, turning the heat down on the sauce. Using his left hand, Mickey yanked Ian’s sweats down off his hips, after which they fell down unceremoniously around his ankles. Mickey pushed his own boxers down over his hips, stepping out of them as they hit the floor. He took a step in toward Ian, kissing him with reckless abandon as he pulled his and Ian’s penises together in his left hand, stroking them as if they were one. He paused momentarily to grab the cooking oil from the counter, slicking both cocks up nicely before resuming his rhythmic massage of them. “Fuck, Mick!” Ian yelled as Mickey sped up his manipulation, the erotic friction between the two dicks sending fiery electrical currents surging throughout both of their bodies. Ian slid his hand over Mickey’s, mimicking the motion until Mickey, whose hand was beginning to cramp up, relented, allowing Ian to take over. Ian maintained the vigorous pace Mickey had set, balancing himself on his now shaking legs as he neared the point of no return. “So fuckin’ hot, Gallagher!” Mickey chanted repeatedly as both throbbing cocks erupted in unison, spewing cum all over the kitchen floor.

Both men immediately headed for the chairs at the island, their legs wobbly following their simultaneous explosion. “New trick?” Ian asked Mickey with a sly grin. “Been watchin’ some porn while you were gone,” Mickey admitted. “Looked like a good time, so…” he shrugged. Ian just chuckled, recalling that he had jacked off in the shower and wondering where, when and how many times Mickey had done it in his absence. He decided to leave those questions for another time, choosing instead to focus on cleaning up their mess and finishing up their dinner.

Mickey was feeling so good that he suggested Manuel and Mandy join them for dinner. Ian was more than happy to send a second text, inviting them to stay, rather than taking their dinners to go. The quartet enjoyed a superbly prepared dinner and great conversation, the travelers artfully avoiding the subject of the appeal, opting instead to provide details of all of the fancy, high-class places where they had stayed and visited. There was plenty of laughter and love to go around, and also a good measure of gratitude. They had all been there for one another in recent times of need, proving their loyalty and love. And that meant more to each of them than anyone could ever imagine.
Mickey had had a restless night, waking frequently to a swollen, throbbing hand. Ian had done his best to comfort him, and had re-dosed him with his pain meds more often than he would have liked. He just couldn’t bear to see Mickey suffering like that. It was as if Ian could actually feel his pain. When Mickey hurt, Ian hurt; it was as simple as that. He held him close through all of his fits of insomnia, whispering calming words in his ear, rubbing his back, dressing his forehead with cool compresses—anything and everything he could do to ease the abominable discomfort Mickey was experiencing.

By morning, both men were beyond exhausted and Ian had all but given up on sleeping, anticipating his alarm going off since he was finally going back to work at the clinic. Ian got out of bed early, showering and dressing quietly so as not to disturb Mickey since he was actually getting a bit of rest. Ian had lay still as a statue for over an hour after finally lulling Mickey to sleep, so he didn’t want to wake him with the sounds of his morning routine.

He crept from their bedroom into the kitchen area, debating whether or not he should make coffee. He surely didn’t want to wake Mickey this early since he knew Manuel was planning to handle the start of the morning shift at the factory, so he opted not to make it, even though he was in desperate need. He thought of hitting Mandy and Manuel up for some, but he knew he risked interrupting their ‘morning routine’ if he did. Better to wait until a bit later. Ian yawned as he sat, basically waiting to be able to get his ‘go juice’, when his alarm went off. “Shit!” he called out in surprise, compounding the auditory disturbance he had been trying his damnedest to avoid. As he reached for his phone to shut the alarm off, he heard Mickey calling him. “Ian, what happened? You okay?” Ian ran to the bedroom, hoping to stop Mickey before he tried to get up to check on him. “I’m fine. Sorry about the alarm. I was trying really hard to be quiet so you could sleep,” Ian apologized. “It’s okay. I got somethin’ you can try really hard to do,” Mickey smirked, lifting the covers to expose his fully erect, flawlessly beautiful cock.

“I won’t let up rest and…” Ian began. “You gonna get your ass over here, or do I hafta get up outta this bed?” Mickey threatened. Ian walked past the bed, heading for the hot tub. “Hey!” Mickey yelled. Ian turned the water on, then circled back toward the bed, kneeling next to Mickey and lowering his mouth onto his sweet shaft. Ian absolutely loved the feeling of Mickey’s delicious cock in his mouth. It was so fucking responsive to every little tongue movement, to changes in suction, to how deep into his throat Ian took it. And Mickey’s body, the way it reacted, his movements, the way his body hair all stood on end amid a sea of goosebumps and freckles, the sexy sighs and moans that dripped from his lips…Ian could practically get off untouched, just from the excitement that sucking Mickey’s dick elicited in him.

Ian slowly and gradually took more and more of Mickey’s glorious cock into his mouth, occasionally grazing it lightly with his teeth, which drove Mickey completely nuts. Ian continued his progression until his mouth and throat were at full capacity, having sucked down every scrumptious inch. Mickey’s head was rolling from side to side, his ass and lower back arched up off the bed, yearning for the ultimate satisfaction. Ian slid his tongue up and down the sides of Mickey’s solidly stiff shaft slowly, lingering on its tip before resuming his slow sucking, fondling his balls lightly as he sucked on his fingers, preparing them for Mickey’s hole. Mickey moaned softly as he pushed himself onto Ian’s slick fingers, releasing a dew drop, which Ian sucked away in an instant. Ian continued to slowly push his fingers in and out of Mickey as he sucked him with increasing ferocity, Mickey’s body tensing up, his mouth wide open and panting.

All at once, Ian stopped. “Tub’s ready. Gonna help you in. You’re gonna get on your knees inside
the tub. I’ll help you get there. Gotta keep your upper body leaned over the edge to protect your hand. This way you won’t be putting any pressure on it,” Ian explained, stroking Mickey’s cock occasionally to keep it hard throughout his tutorial on hot tub sex positions. “Jesus, Gallagher! You given this some thought, huh?” Mickey remarked with a laugh. “Fuck yeah!” Ian replied. “This is serious business!”

Ian led Mickey over to the tub, holding his good hand as he stepped in and lowered himself onto his knees. Ian wasted no time, angling one of the jets so it would massage Mickey’s cock throughout the session, then pushing Mickey’s chest down onto the platform surrounding the tub, stretching Mickey’s right arm out straight to protect the hand that he so often would hold under his own during sex. That would not be possible for a while. “Ready?” Ian asked breathlessly, ripping his own clothes off quickly, exposing his massive hard-on. “Giddy up!” Mickey chuckled.

Ian stepped into the tub behind Mickey, turning on the jets, then dropping to his knees and maneuvering himself into fucking position. He had engineered a scenario where Mickey’s hand was protected from further injury, and he couldn’t wait to take full advantage. Mickey looked so fucking gorgeous, as always, his ass presented beautifully for Ian’s taking. Ian guided Mickey backward by the hips until the tip of his cock touched Mickey’s asshole. “You start,” he whispered into Mickey’s ear, wanting to be sure Mickey was in a comfortable position before he got too far in. Mickey pushed and pulled on and off of Ian’s ample rod, slowly at first, gasping and biting down hard on his bottom lip as he neared the nine inch mark.

“Fuck!” Mickey said under his breath as he rocked back and forth, Ian letting him do the fucking. “So incredibly fuckable,” Ian breathed as Mickey took it all, over and over, maneuvering himself expertly on Ian’s massive dick. Finally satisfied that Mickey was in an enjoyable position, Ian began to counter his movements, grasping Mickey tightly by the hips and thrusting into him furiously. “This what you asked me for on the phone the other night?” Ian asked, raling him with all he had. “Oh fuck yeah!” Mickey yelled, his ass slapping wildly against Ian’s hips, ass cheeks jiggling like fucking jello from the sheer force with which their bodies were connecting. Sexy moans and ecstatic squeals escaped through the tiny opening at the corner of Mickey’s mouth with every thrust, despite his bottom lip being trapped firmly under his teeth. Ian kept it coming so hard and so fast that Mickey was seeing stars, and yet he couldn’t get enough, the tub jets making their contribution to what was definitely the mother of all fucks, a fuck to remember! Damn, he missed this!

Ian could feel the tiny contractions of Mickey’s hole that meant he was gonna blow any second, which brought him to the brink. “Mickey,” he breathed raggedly into his ear, “I love you so fuckin’ much...You and this sweet as fuck ass...You have no fucking idea!” Mickey detonated, sending a massive puddle of cum into the bubbling water, Ian following suit, blasting his seed into Mickey’s amazing ass as he slammed it to the hilt one final time.

The two men took a moment to recover, Ian helping Mickey to turn around and sit comfortably in the tub without dunking his broken hand. They kissed passionately, sucking the salty sweat from one another’s upper lips fervently, their tongues swirling together until they virtually became one. Never in their lives had either of them felt such passion, love and acceptance. Without a single word being spoken, both knew what they had, how the other felt, how deep their connection was.

Suddenly, Ian became aware of the time. He was going to be late, and he still hadn’t had any coffee. He quickly helped a wobbly Mickey out of the tub, depositing him into their bed far more quickly that he would have liked, redressing himself, then saying a quick goodbye and asking for the car keys. There was no chance of Mickey driving anywhere today, so he figured he might as well drive himself. “Manuel has ‘em.” Mickey mumbled, still feeling the buzz in his mind and body from their intense union. Ian looked back at Mickey’s handsome, but exhausted face and ran back over to the bed, kissing him one last time before leaving their room. “I love you,” Mickey said softly as their lips
met. “I love you more, and you know it,” Ian replied with a smile.

Ian ran down the hall, banging on Manuel and Mandy’s door as soon as he got there. “Yes,” Manuel said as he opened the door. “G’Morning! I’m late! Need Mickey’s keys and a cup of coffee, if you don’t mind,” Ian said hurriedly. “Sure,” Manuel said with a smirk. He had been in this situation more than a few times. “Morning session run overtime?” he teased. “Yeah,” Ian answered with a nod, his face blushing red as he held back a grin. Manuel’s comment brought the morning’s events back into the forefront of his mind, where it would likely remain all day, like a video looping on replay. “Fuck!” he thought to himself as he envisioned it all happening again, feeling it as if it were happening, his body beginning to react. “Here you go,” Manuel snickered, handing the keys and a travel mug full of coffee to Ian, who was sporting a noticeably growing bulge between his legs. “Gotta go!” Ian yelled back as he scampered off. “Thanks!”

When Ian arrived at the clinic, ten minutes late, everyone was thrilled to see him. Friday and Monday had been tough without him. Even though he was still considered to be a new employee, the newest at present, in fact, he had become an invaluable part of their team. Dr. Montemurro smiled widely as he entered his office. “Ian!” he called out enthusiastically, “Welcome back!” “Thank you, doc! And thanks for giving me the extra time to...uh...take care of our business,” Ian responded, looking down. “What happened?” the doctor asked, sensing Ian’s upset. “It’s a long story. Do you have time for lunch today?” Ian asked. “I should,” Dr. Montemurro replied, “barring any catastrophes. Speaking of which, how is Mickey’s hand?” He really did a number on it! Took an hour and a half to fix, and I had to put him under! Did he tell you?” This was all new information to Ian, and it wasn’t sitting well with him that these details had not been disclosed to him. His head started spinning and he could feel himself getting angry.

Then, all at once, he thought about all that he was currently keeping from Mickey and it made him feel sick. Maybe he and Mickey weren’t as perfect as he had thought. They had secrets from one another, and it didn’t feel right. Even if the purpose of withholding the information was to protect, wasn’t it still wrong? “No, he didn’t tell me,” Ian mumbled, looking down at his shoes again. “Well, I’m sure he’s pretty out of it, with the pain meds he’s taking.” Montemurro said in defense of Mickey’s silence on the subject. “Yeah,” Ian replied absently, his mind now wrapped up in the whole appeal situation and how he would tell Mickey. “Can you assist with a casting in Room 3?” Montemurro asked, returning their conversation to the professional realm. “I’m on it,” Ian replied, pleased to have something else to focus on for the moment.

Manuel’s day was off to a hectic start. It was the first day for manufacturing the surfboards, using the new formula he had devised with Sam in New York. As luck would have it, the new part that Mickey had had installed was not working properly, so Manuel had to tear the machine apart, first thing. He was up to his elbows in grease, tools and machine parts when Mandy yelled into the factory for him, “Manuel, Bigley’s on the phone. He wants to talk to both of us! He has an American distributor on conference call. “Damn it!” Manuel exclaimed, letting the tools fall from his hands and running for a sink to wash up. “Where’s Mickey? Is he okay to come down and help out today?” he asked. “I’ll call him,” Mandy answered, picking up her cell phone, “but please come and answer Bigley...quick!”

Manuel ran for the office, his hands still dripping wet and stained with oil. “Good morning, Bruno!” he said, more enthusiastically than he felt. “Good Morning, Manuel!” Bigley’s surly voice exploding through the small speaker. “Sorry to keep you waiting,” Manuel continued, “I was busy on the floor and needed a moment to clean up.” “Everything okay?” Bigley asked. Manuel considered explaining the problem, but decided against it, not wanting to alarm the prospective client, who was also on the line “Yes, sir! What can I do for you this morning?” Manuel asked in his polite business voice. “I’d like to introduce you to Cain Fleming, CEO of Surf and Sand. Surf and Sand is a publicly traded
distributor of surf products, licensed to do business in twenty American States and five Canadian Provinces.

“Hello, Manuel! Bruno has told me of your fundraising effort and also of the quality products you produce. I am very interested in distributing the boards for the hurricane fundraiser, and might want to expand our business relationship to include other “Ojos” products in the future, provided things go well. I’ve seen the draft of the marketing plan and would like to begin publishing an ad in my online catalog as soon as possible. The North American surfing community is anxious to take an active role in funding relief efforts, so time is of the essence.” Cain explained.

“That sounds terrific!” Manuel exclaimed with great excitement. “The Boca community is our home and we are honored to have the opportunity to help in this meaningful way.” “Excellent! Then I await the final version of your ad. I will have it loaded onto our website in the online catalog as soon as I receive it, so we can begin to earn money for the relief effort right away!” Cain finished, Bigley chiming in with a raspy, “Wonderful!”

Manuel ended the call, only to have the phone ring again. He sighed in disgust, wanting to get back to the problem in the factory, which was holding up production. Keeping production numbers high was now more important than ever, with the Surf and Sand deal on the horizon. Manuel picked up the phone, trying to hide his aggravation, “Hello,” he said, putting it on speaker so he could hunt up the schematic for the machine he currently had torn apart. “Manuel,” Bigley’s voice boomed over the speaker. “Yes, Bruno,” Manuel answered, putting on his polite business voice once again. “You do realize that, with the ad being published within the next few days, this appeal will have to be filed. Once the feds put this all together, Mickey will be in real danger if it hasn’t been done. And Cogswell says he will definitely have to turn himself in,” as Bigley paused, Manuel looked up to see Mickey walking into the office, clearly buzzed up on pain pills and more pissed off than he had ever seen him, which was saying a lot.

“What the fuck!?” Mickey yelled at the top of his lungs. “Bruno, can I please call you back? I have an emergency situation here.” Manuel said abruptly, taking the phone off speaker as quickly as possible. “Sure, Manuel, but this is important. We can’t afford to dicker around with this,” Bigley warned. “Okay, we will talk soon. Thank you,” Manuel said, again ending the call.

“The fuck is Bigley talking about, gotta turn myself in? Turn myself in where?” Mickey demanded, his face bright red with anger. “I...I don’t know all of the details, but I guess, well, I really think you should talk to Ian,” Manuel suggested, not wanting to be the guy giving out second-hand information without Ian’s knowledge. “Ian?!” Mickey asked incredulously, pacing back and forth in the office like a madman. “Yes,” Manuel answered, “he knows more than I do.” “Oh, he does, does he? Funny I haven’t heard any of this from him! You know what? That’s fine. Give me your keys. I’m goin’ to see Mickey walking into the office, clearly buzzed up on pain pills and more pissed off than he had ever seen him, which was saying a lot.

“You can’t drive. You’re on strong pain medication,” Manuel objected. “I really don’t give a fuck! When I hear I’m gonna hafta turn myself in, and my fiance knows and hasn’t bothered to tell me, that’s a fuckin’ problem, one I intend to resolve right the fuck now!” Mickey screamed. “Ojos, calm down,” Manuel tried to convince him. “We can all talk about this over dinner when he gets home.”

“No fuckin’ way! His ass is getting a visitor for lunch, whether you like it or not! Now give me the Goddamn keys!” Mickey howled, going completely berserk at this point. “Please, Mick…” Manuel stopped as Mandy walked back into the office. “Mandy, can you please take Mickey down to meet Ian for lunch?” he asked calmly. Mandy took one look at Mickey and started to shake her head. “He wants to drive himself, but I’m concerned about him driving while medicated,” Manuel explained. “Oh...Okay. What’s the fuck’s goin’ on?” she asked. “That’s what I wanna fuckin’ know!” Mickey bellowed, the tone of his voice causing Mandy to jump, it sounded so much like Terry. “Maybe you
should ride with us,” Mandy suggested. “I can’t. I still have to finish repairing that machine or we won’t finish a single board today,” Manuel said softly, trying to comfort her in some way. “I will put a call in to Johnny. Maybe he can meet you guys there. Mickey, I think he is someone else you should hear from,” Manuel continued, speaking in a calm, low voice, hoping to relax Mickey, if even just a little bit.

“C’mon, Mick! Let’s go,” Mandy directed, pulling him by his good hand. He followed, a string of expletives shooting rapid-fire from his mouth. Mandy turned, mouthing the words, “Help me,” to Manuel as she opened the factory door to leave. Manuel sent Ian and Johnny a group text:

“Mickey knows!! He’s pissed and on his way to the clinic with Mandy. Johnny, can you head him off? Ian, so sorry. He overheard Bigley talking to me. There’s a lot I need to catch you up on, but I’m tied up with a mechanical failure at the moment.”

As Mickey got into the car with Mandy, he pulled his phone out, attempting to call Ian without success. He sent a text:

“On my way. We are spendin’ your lunch together. Need to talk to you.”
Micky Meltdown

By the time Mickey arrived at the clinic, Johnny was waiting outside in his car, planning to run interference if there ended up being a big scene. Ian was completely unaware of anything; he had spent his morning casting patients and, most recently, was trying to control the bleeding on a child’s head wound enough so he could stitch it up. He hadn’t checked his phone since just after he had arrived at work. Johnny had put Dr. Montemurro on notice, however, calling the clinic phone and saying it was urgent that he talk to him. He had gone to the room Ian was working in, planning to tell him, but then saw that he was working with an injured child and having a tough time, so he decided against it. Instead, he braced himself for Mickey’s arrival, keeping an injectable sedative on hand, just in case Mickey was upset enough to put himself or anyone else in danger. Lord knows he had seen that side of Mickey before, and it wasn’t pretty. And that was without the added influence of the meds he was now taking.

Mickey jumped out of the car, Mandy chasing behind him, attempting to slow his crazy ass down. “Mickey, please! Wait!” she pleaded, to no avail. Johnny, observing this, opened his car door and called out to Mickey, “Mick! C’mere! I really need to talk to you!” “Nah, Johnny, it’s Ian I gotta see. Gonna let him know what happens when he keeps shit from me,” he growled, lifting up his dressed, air-splinted hand menacingly. “Fuck, Mick! Please calm your ass down before you go in there! He’s working!” Mandy pleaded, continuing to chase him, Johnny, now out of his car, joining the effort. “Mick! At least let me take the two of you out to lunch. We can all talk this out together,” Johnny appealed to his civilized side, hoping it was still functioning somewhere deep down. Mickey paused for a brief moment before continuing his trek to the clinic door. As he stood at the entrance of the clinic, poised to open the door, Montemurro opened it instead.

“Mickey, I understand you want to talk with Ian, and that is fine, but right now he is helping a child. We are planning to have lunch at Sur de la Frontera. I’d love you to join us.” the doctor spoke calmly. “This is between me and Ian!” he blurted out, pushing past the doctor into the clinic. “Ian! Where the fuck are you? You can’t hide from me!” Mickey shouted as he tore through the clinic, opening doors randomly to peer inside the treatment rooms, closets, receptionist’s office, any and every door he saw. Patients in the waiting room observed, whispering amongst themselves at first, many choosing to exit the building as Mickey’s voice rose and his behavior became more out of control.

As Mickey reached the end of the hallway, swearing and raising his fists as he moved toward the last room, where Ian was still busy at work, suturing a young boy’s forehead, Montemurro closed in on him, quickly administering the sedative injection. Mickey immediately became woozy, leaning his body against the wall as Montemurro, with the help of Johnny, got a hold on him, dropping him into a nearby wheelchair, where he slumped over, barely conscious. They carefully wheeled him into an exam room, before attempting to communicate with him.

“Mickey, I need you to help me get you into a comfortable position,” the doctor explained to a heavily sedated Mickey. “Johnny and I are going to help you up onto a gurney so you can rest,” he continued. Mickey, suddenly quite docile, complied with their direction, doing his best to maneuver himself, with a great deal of help, onto the gurney. Once Mickey started to doze off, Dr. Montemurro left to check on Ian’s progress with the young boy’s stitches. As he peered in, he could see that Ian was talking to the boy and his mother, probably giving care instructions. He waited for them to leave the room, then knocked on the door, announcing himself. “What’s up?” Ian said with a smile. Montemurro could tell he was proud of himself for handling the little boy as well as he did. “Looks like you did a nice job on that child’s forehead,” Montemurro praised him, hoping to soften the blow of the news he had to give him. “Thanks!” Ian answered, widening his smile.

“So, where is he now?!” Ian raised his voice, staring wide-eyed at Montemurro, anticipating terrible news. “He’s in Room 1. I had to sedate him, for the protection of our patients and staff, especially you,” the doctor explained. “You what?!” Ian attempted, unsuccessfully, to control his anger. “But he’s on pain medication! I need to see him!” Ian yelled, taking off in a full-on run toward Room 1. “Mickey! Mickey!” Ian screeched, completely losing it. As he opened the door to Room 1, he caught sight of Mickey lying on the gurney, peacefully napping. He stood over him, taking in the soft beauty that came out in Mickey when he slept. ‘As long as I live, I will never get enough of this man,’ he thought to himself, tears welling up in his eyes as he came to the realization that this was but a brief lull in the chaos that would inevitably return, all because of his decision to visit Mexico. He fully believed he was personally responsible for putting Mickey at risk. So many of the paths to where they were now led back to him.

Montemurro, Johnny and Mandy walked up behind him, looking on at Mickey’s motionless form. “You know I would never administer an unsafe medication, Ian,” the doctor said, defending his professionalism after being attacked. “I know, doc. I’m so sorry. It’s just…I didn’t get to tell you yet, but the whole problem is that, because I came down here to Mexico and stayed, because I rescued someone on the beach and was on the news, because Mickey’s company is involved in fundraising for hurricane relief and I’m the model, because of my actions, Mickey’s freedom is at stake! He has to file an appeal and now they are saying he will have to turn himself in, that INTERPOL will be tracking him down; it’s only a matter of time,” Ian paused, breathless and fighting hard to choke back the tears that were pressing and stinging against the back of his eyes. “And now there’s a big distributor from the States, who’s planning to advertise the new boards for the fundraiser real soon. Manuel thought it was great news, and it is, as far as the amount of money it will make us, but it means trouble for Mickey. He just has to file the appeal and turn himself in,” Mandy explained, Ian listening carefully.

“Trouble is…Mickey was so miserable and on so much medication when I got home, I didn’t think it was the time to tell him all this shit. Even Manuel said I should wait. I didn’t think it was a big deal, but then this morning I was starting to feel guilty about keeping it from him, and now that I am hearing about this new business deal, I know he would have needed to know right away,” Ian explained, still trying to calm himself.

“But you said he knows,” Montemurro said, still trying make sense of everything, since the way he was learning the facts of the situation was so disjointed. “Yeah, he overheard Bigley telling Manuel about it this morning and went nuts!” Mandy explained. Dr. Montemurro’s face visibly changed as all of the pieces to the puzzle began to fall into place.

“So, basically, he wants to kill me, and I totally understand why,” Ian said softly, looking down at Mickey’s angelic face with deep regret and sorrow. “Well, the advantage we have now is that the sedative I gave him will wear off gradually, so hopefully we can make him understand the situation a bit better while he is nice and calm. Also, in light on his behavior today, I’d like to put a plaster cast on his hand. That air splint won’t provide enough protection if he’s using that hand improperly. The hard cast will immobilize the hand more effectively, preventing him from reinjuring it,” Dr. Montemurro explained. Ian smiled as his thoughts turned toward the new opportunities he and Mickey would have in the bedroom, once the hand was better protected. Then the reality of Mickey hating him and most likely going back to prison hit him, and he frowned again.
“Ian, let’s wheel him into Room 3 and try to put this cast on while he’s still out of it,” the doctor suggested. “Okay. How long will he be like this?” Ian asked. “Any hope of getting him to lunch with us?” “Everyone reacts differently to sedation. I know it didn’t take him long to come out of the anesthesia after the surgery, so it is possible, although we don’t know what his mood will be, given the circumstances. So, I’d say maybe,” he replied, lifting Mickey’s hand to pre-wrap it while Ian prepared the plaster mixture. Mickey became semi-conscious while Ian and the doctor were casting him, muttering under his breath, only a few words were even close to being intelligible.

“Ian...why...can’t do prison…fuck you...” He was clearly still semi-conscious so Dr. Montemurro dissuaded Ian from trying to address him yet.

Once they finished the casting, Ian and Dr. Montemurro raised the top of the gurney, putting Mickey into a reclined sitting position. His eyes were halfway open and he was still muttering under his breath. “Mickey,” Dr. Montemurro addressed him, “we just finished putting a cast on your hand to protect it better. When you came into the clinic today, you were agitated and I didn’t want you to re-injure it. Please nod if you understand,” Mickey nodded, his eyes moving from the doctor to Ian.

“Mickey, I have wanted to talk to you about my appointment with the lawyer, but when I got home and saw how much pain you were in, I wanted to wait until you felt better. I wanted us to be able to spend time together without you being worried or upset. I missed and love you so much…” Ian’s voice cracked, so he paused, lowering his head and resting it on Mickey’s chest. Dr. Montemurro excused himself to see other patients, Johnny and Mandy following quietly after him.

“Please forgive me, Mick,” he whispered, his tears soaking Mickey’s t-shirt. Mickey brought his left hand up to touch the side of Ian’s face, weaving his fingers into Ian’s hair. “Say you forgive me, please!” Ian pleaded, putting his hand on top of Mickey’s, tracing Mickey’s fingers softly with his own. “Bigley and Cogswell promised me everything will be okay, but we have to file the appeal,” Ian continued, hoping to settle Mickey a bit.

“I forgive you, Ian, but this is fucked up,” Mickey said, his speech still a bit garbled. “You want to have lunch with me, Johnny and Dr. Montemurro?” Ian asked. “Manuel…” Mickey said slowly. “You want Manuel to come to lunch?” Ian asked, for clarification. “Yeah,” Mickey answered. “I can probably have Mandy go and pick him up,” Ian said, lifting his head up to try and locate her. Mickey pulled Ian’s head back to his chest, wrapping both arms up around it, the hard, cold cast resting against Ian’s jaw. “Can’t lose you again,” Mickey whispered, lifting his head to kiss the top of Ian’s. “You won’t! I promise you that!” Ian started to cry harder, just thinking about having to spend more time without Mickey. “We’ll figure this all out,” Ian said, trying to be strong.

“Can you stand up, you think?” Ian asked. “I don’t know, but this hand hurts like a motherfucker!” Mickey replied. “Oh, let me see if you can have more pain medicine yet,” Ian said, leaving the room to consult with Dr. Montemurro. Mickey pulled a pill bottle from his pocket, putting two pain pills on his tongue and getting up to search for a water fountain. Ian met him at the door. “He said you should try to wait a while, until the sedative wears…” Ian stopped talking when he saw the bottle of pills in Mickey’s hand. “Need some water,” Mickey said, pushing past Ian to walk into the hallway. “Mickey! Don’t take those yet! It could be dangerous!” Ian warned sternly. Mickey took a drink from the fountain in the hallway, tilting his head back to swallow the pills. “You’re good with me going back to prison, but you’re worried ‘bout coupla pills? ‘The fuck’s wrong with you?” Mickey spoke in an irritated voice.

Ian decided not to fight this battle, hoping for the best and realizing, with great relief, that they would be very close to the clinic and in the company of a doctor, should anything go awry. “Okay, Mick,” Ian said, lovingly wrapping his arm around Mickey’s waist to help him walk out to the car. He had told Johnny and the doctor that he and Mickey would meet them at the restaurant, and dispatched Mandy to pick up Manuel when he asked Montemurro about the pain meds, so everything was set in
motion. Everyone who gave a shit about Mickey would be together in one place, the private alcove at Sur de la Frontera, helping him decide how to proceed. Ian really wished Cogswell, or at least Bigley, could be there, but he knew, with Johnny there, they were only a phone call away.

He was looking forward to putting this conversation behind them and to putting this whole ordeal to bed. He dreaded spending any time away from Mickey, and was determined to keep it to a minimum, but it still hurt like hell, the thought of seeing Mickey on the other side of a glass wall, of worrying about who’s doing what to him, of wondering if and when he’d get out. Ian opened the car door, helping Mickey inside, then taking his spot behind the wheel, turning to ask Mickey, “Can I just hold you for a minute, Mick? I just need to…” Mickey wrapped his arms around Ian’s neck, the best he could with his new heavy-ass cast, devouring Ian’s mouth with his own. Ian pulled Mickey into him, as close as humanly possible, pressing Mickey’s chest against his own, never breaking the perfection of their kiss.

Mickey abruptly pulled his lips off Ian’s, burying his head in Ian’s chest, and whispered, “Ian, I’m scared.”
Meeting of the Minds

Letting go of Mickey long enough to drive to the restaurant was very difficult for Ian, just as it was for Mickey. The pair could definitely feel each other: pain, pleasure, happiness, sadness, all of it. They were so in tune with each other, sometimes it scared them. Ian couldn’t even imagine how he was going to feel when he really had to let go, not knowing when or if he would ever have him in his arms again.

When they pulled up to Sur de la Frontera, the valet was quick to greet them, opening their car doors and ushering them toward the door. The host showed them to the private alcove, where everyone was already seated at a special, large table, awaiting their arrival. Ian stuck close by Mickey’s side, guiding him since he was still a bit unsteady on his feet. Everyone greeted them with warm smiles as they sat down, Ian pulling Mickey’s chair out for him and helping him to get comfortable.

“Mickey,” Johnny began, “I’m so glad I’m getting this opportunity to talk with ya about your situation. I know things may seem a little bleak right now, but trust me, Bigley’s got your back. Cogswell has it all figured out. You might spend a short time away, but when it’s all over with, you’ll be a free man with no criminal record as an adult, able to travel anywhere in the world. And Bigley plans to have you looking like a local hero with the hurricane relief effort before any of this even goes down,” Johnny paused, trying to read Mickey’s face.

Mickey stared at him silently, his face almost completely expressionless. “Mickey’s on some medication right now, so he might be a little quieter than usual,” Montemurro interjected, more for Mickey’s benefit than anyone else’s, knowing Johnny was already aware. Ian took to tracing tiny circles on Mickey’s inner thigh with his index finger to calm him, just as Mickey had done for him so many times in the past. It seemed to be working; Mickey hadn’t flipped out...yet.

Ian had opted for staying quiet himself, letting everyone else give all of the specifics. It made him feel somehow less responsible for everything that was about to happen to Mickey, despite the fact that it was going to break his heart either way.

Manuel, seeing an opportunity to share what he considered to be great news about the business, spoke up, “Mickey, Bigley is going to make us rich! Surf and Sand, a big surf distributor in the U.S. and Canada, has already agreed to put our ad for the new boards in their online catalog and is expecting to generate a great number of sales!” Manuel smiled brightly at Mickey, hoping to get one in return, but still Mickey’s face didn’t change. It was frozen and devoid of emotion, almost as if he were dead. The waiter delivered a large bowl of Caesar salad, which everyone immediately began passing around the table. Mickey took nothing, continuing to sit and stare off into space.

Mickey had heard everything that was said, but it was all buzzing around inside of his dizzy, clouded head, a collection of words without meaning. All he could think about was going back to prison and never seeing Ian again. He would be right back to square one, after all of the hard work he had done to get himself out of that situation and all of the time he had spent rebuilding his relationship with Ian. He couldn’t believe that, after seven plus months of living in Mexico without a single law enforcement entity giving a shit, that suddenly he was being targeted by INTERPOL. ‘How the hell would they have any idea where I am?’ Mickey thought to himself, attempting to convince himself that there was no real danger, that everyone else was just being paranoid. But he knew better. And deep down in his heart of hearts, he also knew that if Ian hadn’t come to him, he would have gone to Ian, in which case he’d probably have already been back in prison. At the end of the day, there was nothing on earth Mickey wasn’t willing to sacrifice for Ian, including his own freedom. The more he thought about it, the easier it was for him to accept things for what they were, and to trust Cogswell...
and Bigley, since Ian and Manuel obviously were.

Besides, the boost in revenue for the business that these new fundraiser boards were going to bring was going to be helpful to Manuel and Mandy with rebuilding their home, not to mention all of the other Boca residents who would be getting the help they needed to rebuild their homes and their town. Finally, Mickey was ready to speak. He had an important question. “How long do I have...you know...before they come to take me away? Or am I just gonna have to turn myself in, like Bigley said?”

“That’s the million dollar question, Mick. How do we handle this situation?” Johnny began. “I heard Bigley say I was gonna hafta turn myself in,” Mickey said slowly. “Cogswell definitely wants it that way, for you to turn yourself in when he files the appeal. The question is, can we wait long enough for the publicity surrounding the surfboard fundraiser to really kick in, so you would be looked upon in a more favorable light?” Johnny continued. “This is why I texted Bruno earlier to see if he and Cogswell would be available for a conference call. I haven’t heard anything back though. So let’s eat, and hopefully I’ll know more before we leave here today.”

“I’m not hungry,” Mickey said flatly. Ian squeezed his thigh as he looked over at him, his bright green eyes imploring him to eat something. “Mickey, your body needs protein to heal,” Dr. Montemurro said, verbalizing what was on Ian’s mind. “How ‘bout just a BLT or something. Can they make that here?” Ian asked, desperately wanting to make things better for Mickey any way he could. “How ‘bout if you worry about yourself and just eat,” Mickey responded, putting a half smile on his face as he turned toward Ian, grasping the hand that Ian still had resting on his thigh. ‘Damn, how can this fucker be so strong?’ Ian thought to himself, blinking and wiping away tears as inconspicuously as possible.

The group was in the midst of eating their meals when Johnny’s phone lit up. It was Bigley. Johnny answered, then got up from the table, walking over toward the window as he spoke softly into his phone. “Okay,” he said a bit more loudly as he walked back toward the table. “I have Bigley and Cogswell on a conference call here. Gonna put them on speaker at the table. Can someone get the doors over there?” Johnny asked, gesturing toward the double doors at the alcove entryway. Ian got up to shut the doors, hurrying back to his seat as Bigley began to speak. “There have been some developments in the case, so I have Cogswell on the line to share all that can be divulged at this point.” There was a brief pause, before Cogswell cleared his throat, his voice coming through at a much lower volume than Bigley’s, “The grounds for the appeal, based on ineffective representation, will remain the primary rationale, since the deadline for filing one has passed and ineffective representation gets us around it, but there is now even stronger evidence for Mickey’s full exoneration. I’m still planning to depose a few of the inmates that she talked to about getting both Ian and Mickey put away, but now there’s an even bigger break for us. I can’t talk about it in detail yet, but, trust me, it’s our golden ticket.”

Bigley’s booming voice cut in, “The marketing team will have the fundraising ad ready tomorrow, so I’d like to get this Surf and Sand thing off the ground and get the ‘Ojos Azules’ name widely associated with it. Once the money starts rolling in, we get Mickey and Manuel interviewed on-site, where the relief efforts are underway, thanks to their fundraising contributions, looking like the local heroes they are. We will also make both Ian and Mandy available to tell their stories personally, encouraging them, of course, to relate Mickey’s assistance at the clinic during the storm. I’ve had my marketing team strategizing all day, and this is what they’ve come up with so far. I’m sure they will have additional angles for making the fundraiser, as well as Mickey’s public image, even better.”

“I will hold off as long as possible to file the appeal, but it’s going to be a slippery slope, since all of this publicity will surely make the feds aware of Mickey’s whereabouts fairly quickly. I was apprehensive at first about putting Mickey in the public eye, but, after talking to Bigley and his team,
I believe the benefits outweigh the costs and, with the new evidence, the appeal will be a slam dunk. Mickey just has to understand that, at any time, depending on the circumstances that arise, I may have to file the appeal, so he needs to be prepared at any time to turn himself in and, in the meantime, we need to keep him well hidden on the weekends, since I can’t file then and don’t want him to risk getting picked up without an appeal on the books.” Cogswell laid it all out, awaiting a reaction. “I’ll take care of that!” Ian answered with a chuckle, squeezing Mickey’s hand under the table.

“What’s the new evidence?” Mickey asked, a puzzled look on his face. “Well,” Cogswell began, “it hasn’t been properly documented yet, so I don’t want to say. I wouldn’t want anyone to accidentally mention something about it to the wrong person and end up on the hook for anything.” “On the hook? ‘The fuck does that mean?” Mickey asked. “Somebody dead?” he wondered out loud, his ‘inside’ experience giving him a strange comprehension of the unspoken in situations like this one. “I really can’t...Just know that we will win the appeal,” Cogswell said with finality.

“What I need now is for all of the paperwork I sent home with Ian to be signed by you, Mickey. And Johnny, I am e-mailing you paperwork for Mandy and Manuel as we speak. Ian, you have already signed on as my client. These papers need to be signed and returned to me immediately, since establishing the attorney-client relationship makes any and all communication between me and my clients confidential, rendering me legally unable to testify as to Mickey’s whereabouts or fugitive status, or about any aiding and abetting activities any of the rest of you might have engaged in,” Cogswell explained.

“Okay, guys,” Johnny piped up, “I’m on it! We’ll have everything on it’s way by the end of today, fax and snail-mail.” “Perfect! I need to go now. The amount of hoop jumping I have to do before the end of today will have me in the office until at least 8 PM,” Cogswell said, ending the call.

The rest of lunch went by quietly, with the exception of Mickey requesting linguini alfredo about five minutes after the call ended. “How about if I follow you guys back to the factory and print out the paperwork you gotta sign? Mick, you wanna ride back with me?” Johnny suggested as he stood up to leave. “Sure, Johnny,” Manuel answered, Mickey nodding his head as Ian helped him up from his chair, wrapping his arm around his waist.

Ian walked Mickey to Johnny’s car, pulling him in for a quick kiss before helping him into the car. “See, everything’s gonna be fine,” Ian said confidently. “Yeah, Ian, everything’s gonna be fine...I hope,” Mickey responded, looking away. “Hey,” Ian said, grabbing Mickey by the chin to face him, resting his right hand on Mickey’s left, their rings touching. “I love you,” he whispered, pressing his lips softly against Mickey’s again. “And when I get home tonight, I need your full attention. No booze, no pills, no bullshit. Just you and me,” Ian continued. “I’ll be there,” Mickey answered, pulling Ian’s hand to his lips, brushing them lightly across Ian’s ringed finger. “And I love you...more than anything in this whole fuckin’ world.”
Once Johnny had faxed all of the signed paperwork to Cogswell, he headed out to send the hard copies in the regular mail. It was a formality, for the most part, but Cogswell was the type that made sure all the ‘I’s’ were dotted and the ‘T’s’ were crossed, which is an essential trait for an attorney to have. Manuel, Mandy and Mickey were finally left to discuss the morning’s events in the factory, which had been overshadowed by all the insanity that had ensued after Mickey overheard Bigley talking to Manuel. Before he even began to explain to Mickey, he walked into the factory to check on his employees and the machine he had barely finished repairing when Mandy called, warning him that she was coming to get him for lunch. He returned quickly, giving Mickey and Mandy a thumbs up, then relating the morning’s story to Mickey, who was apologetic about the repair guy having installed the part incorrectly. “Shoulda done it myself,” Mickey muttered. “Everything worked out fine, Ojos. I’m just glad you’re okay now. I know there’s a lot of craziness in your future, but, in the end, it will all be worth it!” Manuel said reassuringly, Mandy nodding in agreement.

“Is production on schedule then? With all the new orders we’re gonna get, we probably need to start running a second shift or at least weekend shifts,” Mickey suggested. “I’m with you. I’ve already asked the guys if anyone is interested in overtime. I figured we’d wait to hire extra help until after we see how the OT works out,” Manuel replied. “Anything you need me to do right now? I’m still tired…” Mickey trailed off. “Go ahead and get some sleep before Ian gets home. Something tells me you’ll need it,” Manuel said with a wink that made Mickey blush.

As Mickey headed upstairs, he began thinking about how he could make sure the upstairs rooms would be safe from being searched, if INTERPOL came on a weekend. He needed to discuss this with Manuel, too, but didn’t have the energy at the moment. Plus, his hand was beginning to throb, even though it was early to take more medication. ‘I’ll just take one,’ he thought to himself, remembering his promise to Ian not to be medicated when he got home.

He took the medication and was asleep like a log within ten minutes. He was still sleeping so deeply when Ian returned from work, Ian was able to slip past him to turn the water on in the hot tub. Ian had brought home a nice chicken cacciatore dinner from Sur de la Frontera, which he stowed in the fridge upon seeing that Mickey wasn’t awake. He had also stopped by a local shop to have a special massage lotion made from eucalyptus and spearmint oils to relieve pain and stress. Ian was on a mission to pamper the shit out of Mickey and make him feel well-loved. In fact, he planned to spend every minute of every day he had left with Mickey making him happy, no matter what it took. This was his way of managing his guilt. As much as Mickey said he would have gone to Chicago to see him, he felt responsible for coming to Mexico, staying and drawing attention to himself, which ultimately meant attention for Mickey, attention that was putting Mickey back in prison. The fact that he would get out and be free again didn’t make Ian feel any better. In his mind he was still the one to blame for essentially sending his fiance to prison, and he was struggling with that...hard.

Once Ian had everything ready, a full tub of hot water, the lotion warming over a candle at the bedside and his own work clothes in a heap at the bottom of the bed, he snuck up on his still-snoozing soulmate, who was conveniently already lying on his stomach, dripping warm lotion on his back and beginning to rub it in. Mickey moaned softly in response, after which Ian kneeled over Mickey’s buttocks, affording himself a better angle for the massage. He then moved his hands up to Mickey’s shoulders, working his thumbs into his trapezius muscles as his fingers focused on the tops of his shoulders, just above his clavicles. Mickey sighed with contentment into his pillow, his eyes fluttering open, a sweet, appreciative smile spreading across his beautiful face as he inhaled the invigorating scent of the healing lotion.
Ian continued enthusiastically, working his way down both sides of Mickey’s spine, using his thumbs, knuckles and palms intermittently to rub every last trace of tension from his taut muscles. Mickey lay completely motionless, fully convinced that he had died and gone to heaven. Once Ian had made his way down to Mickey’s lower back, he spent some extra time there, rubbing deep into the muscles with his thumbs and palms, pulling low groans from Mickey’s parted lips. Next, he moved to kneel to the left of Mickey’s body, focusing on every muscle in each of Mickey’s legs, rubbing his inner thighs sensually, then moving downward until he reached his feet, pausing there to rub the soles of each of his feet with his fingertips and thumbs.

Mickey was, of course, rock-hard by the time Ian had reached his lower back and inner thighs, and the foot massage was surprisingly stimulating as well, bringing him closer and closer, prompting him to beg to have his cock touched. Ian ignored the request, proceeding to rub out his biceps, and triceps, then the left lower arm and finally, the hand, which he chose to massage with his mouth, moving his tongue over each finger, and in between them before sucking on each one individually, swirling his tongue slowly around it as he did. Then he zeroed in on the tender center of Mickey’s palm, feathering it with his tongue in just the fashion he had so often done to Mickey’s asshole, before returning for seconds on each finger.

“Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey panted, his face still partially buried in his pillow, giving his voice a muffled quality. “Feel good?” Ian breathed, moving his mouth up to Mickey’s ear, sending chills out over his entire body. “Fuck yeah!” Mickey managed to say, despite the erotic fog he found himself enveloped in. Reality seemed so far from where he was at the moment, like he was suspended in time and space, sitting atop a precipice, awaiting his inevitable descent into the ultimate in self-indulgent gratification, where he would temporarily cease to exist as anything more than a shaking, writhing, begging, moaning pile of flesh, bone and desire, completely under Ian’s command and control. He began grinding himself desperately against the mattress, so hot and bothered at this point that he couldn’t help himself. “Turn over,” Ian hissed into Mickey’s ear, Mickey shuddering as he felt a twinge in his rigid cock, his erection, already maxed out, but feeling as if it somehow just got even harder. Mickey complied, the last bit of his coherence used up for that singular purpose.

Ian encircled the base of Mickey’s cock with his thumb and index finger, squeezing it as he slid his moist mouth over its magnificent tip, then lowering it slowly, sucking fervently all the way down and letting Mickey know how delicious it was with an extended, “Mmmmmmmmm…” that reverberated from his cock out to each and every nerve-ending in his body. Ian manipulated Mickey’s cock into and out of his mouth and throat like a porn star, working his way down until his lips brushed against Mickey’s neatly manicured pubic area with every stroke, pushing a lotion-moist finger into him to tickle his prostate. Mickey’s insides were on fire! Incapable of speech at this point, Mickey moaned loudly and repeatedly, also reminiscent of a porn star, arching his ass up off the bed wildly as he counter-thrusted into Ian’s mouth, unable to contain his passion any longer as he shot his load down Ian’s eagerly waiting throat.

Finally, after a full couple of minutes, Mickey returned to reality enough to gaze over into Ian’s incredibly green eyes, which had been locked on his blissful face, just waiting for him to emerge from his ecstatic coma. Ian smiled widely, Mickey returning it in kind before luring him in for a long, tender kiss. Ian wanted to say something, but what words could he use to express such a feeling? Besides, he knew from the look on Ian’s face that there was nothing he could tell him about how he was feeling that he didn’t already know. That’s what the smiles were all about. Sharing that level of understanding and connectedness could be scary, but it could also be so liberating, the idea of not having to talk. Mickey, for one, loved that aspect of what they had, not that he didn’t love every single blessed thing about their relationship, but this, to him, was fucking gold!

Mickey sat up in the bed, dying to get his mouth on Ian’s exquisite masterpiece of a penis. Every fiber of his being ached to give Ian an experience like the one he had just given him, to max him out,
to have him live and breathe to be satisfied, and then to go far and away beyond his wildest expectations. But Ian wasn’t going to let that happen, not on this day. Instead, Ian directed Mickey over to the hot tub, his arm wrapped tightly around his waist, his right hand grasping Mickey’s left as he helped him in. “Got a surprise for ya,” Ian said, putting Mickey on his knees. “‘Nother one? You’re full of surprises tonight,” Mickey said with a grin. Ian stepped into the tub behind Mickey, gently fondling his asshole as he kissed and sucked at his neck from behind.

“Remember a long time ago, you asked me to do something for you,” Ian began, whispering huskily into Mickey’s ear as he continued lubing up Mickey’s hole with his fingers. “But then we were rudely interrupted,” he finished, beginning to push the first of a string of Ben Wa beads into his hole, his lips and tongue lingering along the side of Mickey’s sweet neck, sucking at it intermittently, leaving a trail of his marks in his wake. Mickey, already relaxed from his massage, among other things, and newly stimulated by the strategically aimed tub jets and Ian’s naughty mouth, began to rut against Ian’s hips, hastening the insertion of each ball into his ass, until he had taken most of them in, panting and groaning, the pressure building up inside of him as he awaited what he knew would be an incredible feeling, although he had never personally experienced it before.

“Ready?” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear softly, as he began to gently tug at the string of beads that dangled from his ass. “Yeah, man,” Mickey replied breathlessly, that first tiny tug, giving him a preview of the intense pleasure that was to come. Ian tongue-fucked Mickey’s ear sensually, raising goosebumps over Mickey’s whole body, as he slowly pulled each bead from his ass. Mickey moaned loudly, the occasional “Fuck!” falling from his red, engorged lips, his shaky legs struggling to hold his body up as Ian haltingly pulled the last of the beads out. “Almost there,” Mickey whispered softly, “Ian, I need you to fuck me...now!” Mickey begged. Ian willingly obliged, his own cock swollen and ready to blow, thanks to the show Mickey had just put on. He wasted no time, giving Mickey all of him, rejoicing in the tight, familiar warmth of Mickey’s hole, their bodies moving in concert, so naturally, so beautifully, like precision parts, custom-built to work together as one. The couple exploded simultaneously, such a gut-splitting orgasm for both that they immediately sunk to the bottom of the tub, resting their spent bodies in the rippling water, the bubbling jets massaging their weary muscles as they kissed one another as though they might never be together again, devouring each other’s lips, noses, necks, throats, cheeks, ravenously.

“Fuck, Gallagher! You’re the most insanely amazing lover in this whole fuckin’ world!” Mickey said, marveling at Ian’s many talents and his sexy, gorgeousness. “You deserve better,” Ian replied. “And that’s why I really need to talk to you...but first, are you hungry?” “Actually, I’m starvin’, Seems I worked up an appetite somehow,” Mickey smirked. “Think you can stand up, tough guy?” Ian teased. “I know I can. How ‘bout you?” Mickey shot back. And so the two managed to get their wobbly asses out of the tub, throwing on some boxers and heading for the kitchen.

“Have a seat, Mick!” Ian commanded, pulling a chair out for him to sit on. “I have a surprise for you,” he finished. “This is getting predictable! A surprise at every fuckin’ corner...not that I’m complaining,” Mickey said with a chuckle, suddenly realizing that his hand hadn’t felt this good since he hurt it. “Hey, seems like that massage helped my hand feel better. ‘That possible?” Mickey asked. “Yes,” Ian answered, “that was the whole point. Well, most of it, anyway.” “Really?” Mickey asked in surprise. “Yeah, it was all to make you feel better, so I’m really fucking happy if you do,” Ian turned and smiled at Mickey, having just put the chicken cacciatore in the microwave. He poured them each a small glass of wine. “This is all you can have today, cuz of your pain meds, but I wanted you to have it. I would like to propose a toast,” Ian said, raising his glass and clinking it against Mickey’s. “To us and a long life together. May nothing ever keep us apart and, if it does, let’s remember we will always be back together again, no matter what…” Ian’s voice trailed off as he sipped the wine, his eyes teary and his voice thick with some crazily cruel mixture of happiness and despair. Mickey looked at him lovingly, reaching to wipe away the tears that were now rolling down his perfectly chiseled face.
“And there’s one more thing, a favor I need to ask, Mick,” Ian blurted out amid the tears that still cascaded down his cheeks, despite Mickey’s continued efforts to remove them. “Ian, if you don’t know by now that I’d do anything for you then…” Ian stopped him, putting his finger against his lips to shush him. “I want you to marry me,” Ian began. “Wha…I am gonna marry you, ‘the fuck? You know that,” Mickey said, a confused look on his face. “I mean now, like soon. Tomorrow or the next day. You know, like right away,” Ian clarified. “Thought you wanted to wait, do it in Chicago or some shit,” Mickey replied, recalling their previous conversation on this subject.

“I know I said that before, but now…uh…like I said, you deserve better. And I wanna be that ‘better.’ Don’t want you finding anyone else, don’t want you to feel like you’re alone, ever, no matter what happens. And if you have to go back to prison, I want you to go there knowing you have a husband who will be waiting for you, no matter how long it takes. I would die waiting for you, Mick, before I would ever be with anyone else, and I want you to know and remember that every day for the rest of your life.”

Ian got up to retrieve and serve dinner. When he came back to the table, Mickey’s brilliant blue eyes were glistening with tears. As soon as Ian put the plates down, Mickey jumped up into Ian’s arms, showering him with kisses and squeezing his body tightly against his own. “You pick the day and the place and I’ll be there! There’s nowhere else in this fuckin’ world that I’d rather be than by your side, for the rest of my life, ‘til death do us part. I meant that shit when I said it before, and I mean it now. Ian, I’m yours--forever.” Mickey let his legs drop to the floor, remaining tightly wrapped in Ian’s arms as they both wept tears of happy sadness, each feeling blessed to have found his soulmate, yet cursed at the same time to have to let go of him yet again.

They enjoyed a quiet dinner together, discussing plans for the wedding into the night, then finally succumbing to sleep, their beautifully matched bodies interlaced into the most perfectly divine sculpture, the beauty of their love emanating from their collective form as they held each other through the night.
Ian was up extra early, thanks to an unfortunate collision of his head with Mickey’s cast, so he decided to make good use of the extra time. He showered and dressed quickly, taking care not to disturb Mickey until his regular wake-up time. He busied himself making a list of ‘to do’ items for the wedding before making coffee, putting some lotion in the tray above the candle and starting a warm tub of water for Mickey. He was very pleased with himself for having found a concoction that had been helpful to Mickey’s condition, and wanted to use it to its maximum benefit. The fewer pain pills Mickey had to take, the better. His goal was for Mickey to be feeling pretty much better by the time his inevitable incarceration came about. He knew Mickey would be suffering in so many other ways there; he didn’t want this added to the list.

Once everything was ready and Mickey’s alarm was set to ring at any moment, Ian began massaging some of the warm, moist lotion into Mickey’s back and shoulders. He stayed away from his lower body, intentionally avoiding a situation that could make them both late for work, although he would have loved nothing more than to shut the world out and spend the day in bed with Mickey.

He knew this would be an extremely busy and important day for Mickey and Manuel. The Surf and Sand ad was being published and orders were sure to be pouring in. Ian was hoping to catch a glimpse of the ad before he left for work, but first, he wanted to get a good long look at the love of his life, and he wanted to be the first thing Mickey saw when he woke up. He massaged Mickey’s upper back, moving the palms of his hands out to massage his upper arms and down to the left lower arm and hand, leaving room for him to lay his own chest against Mickey’s back, putting his head to the right side of Mickey’s head, so he could watch as he opened his eyes. “Good Morning, beautiful!” he whispered as Mickey’s eyes began to blink, focusing on Ian’s handsome face, his lips curving upward into the most innocent, child-like smile Ian had ever seen on Mickey’s face. Looking at him in that moment, it was damn near impossible to believe he was the same Southside hoodrat that struck fear in the hearts of so many. Ian smiled back, basking in the glow of Mickey’s beaming face. His day had been made!

He continued rubbing Mickey’s back and arms out a bit more, before suggesting that Mickey soak in the hot tub, offering to wash his back, and basically anything else he needed help with, since his right hand was out of commission. Mickey agreed readily, begging off to use the bathroom first, then allowing Ian to help him into the tub. Ian sudzed him up really well, washing ‘sensitive’ areas in as non-sexual of a way possible, failing miserably, however, to steer clear of the inevitable hard-on that rose up in the water. “Okay, just you...real quick,” he said, acquiescing to the pleading look in Mickey’s irresistible baby blues and proceeding to jerk Mickey off as he sat in the tub, the jets working their magic on his entire body. He knelt behind Mickey on the platform, reaching around the front of him to stroke his perfectly enticing cock, while nibbling, gnawing and sucking on the right side of his neck, providing some balance for the left side, which was heavily marred from the night before. He paused occasionally to breathe into Mickey’s ear, sometimes adding a sexy moan for effect and, in no time flat, Mickey’s boner was reduced to nothing more than a floating puddle of semen and a wide smile on his face.

“Okay, let’s get you out,” Ian said in a business-like manner, hastening Mickey’s morning routine along. “I have to get going and I still really wanna check out the final version of the ad before I do. I was in the midst of helping Mickey out of the draining tub, when they heard a knock at the door. “Who is it?” Ian called out, instantly panicked. “It’s me,” Mandy answered. “Mick, you gotta see this! The ad was posted at 7 AM Eastern Standard Time and already we have over a thousand boards ordered!” Mandy exclaimed with great excitement in her voice. “Yes, Mickey, we have our work cut out for us! I don’t know how we will ever keep pace with such a large volume of orders!”
Manuel added, his voice sounding both happy and concerned at the same time. “I can get the materials here, but I’m concerned about labor. I think we need to ask the guys to work a double today and start thinking about hiring more employees right away!” the excitement in Manuel’s voice was evident. He never, in his wildest dreams, thought their business could get this big.

“Hey, I want to see this ad!” Ian interjected. “Already sent a link to your phone,” Mandy answered quickly. “Well, okay then,” he responded, drying Mickey off as if he were his child. “I’m good, man. Go check out the ad. I gotta get dressed and get my ass downstairs! Gonna be a crazy day! Thanks for all your help this morning, by the way. Couldn’t a done it without ya,” Mickey said, flashing a sly smile at Ian as he approached the closet, looking for something to wear.

Ian grabbed his phone and headed for the kitchen, pouring two travel mugs of coffee before grabbing one and heading for the door, Mickey’s keys in hand. “Coffee’s on the island,” he called back into the bedroom, then added, “I love ya, Mick!” before walking out the door. Mandy and Manuel were standing just outside the door, waiting excitedly for whomever would walk out first. “Can you believe it?” Manuel’s smile was wider and brighter than Ian had ever seen it, so he tried to avoid bursting his bubble. “Yeah, that’s great, man,” Ian replied, edging past them toward the stairs, thinking, ‘I only wish Mickey didn’t have to go to prison because of it.’ Mandy ran after him.

“Wanna look at the ad together real quick?” she asked. A moment ago, he would have jumped at the chance to see it, especially with Mandy since they were in it together, but all of a sudden a pervasive sadness overtook him, like a wet blanket, suffocating him as he struggled to breathe. “Later,” he responded, striding briskly toward the stairs, looking down to hide his tear-stained face.

Mandy chased after him, but he kept going. “Just look out for Mickey today, huh?” he called back at her, fleeing before anyone could see how busted up he was. He really didn’t want to leave Mickey at all, but leaving him with people who were nothing but happy about the current situation broke his heart. They wouldn’t be focused on him, his feelings or his safety. It wasn’t that Ian thought they didn’t care; it was that HE did, and he wanted to be there with him, every minute or every day, to love him, to protect him and to be his rock.

He tried to keep his mind focused on his day at the clinic and on his and Mickey’s impending marriage, but it kept going back to Mickey’s situation and how powerless they both were to control virtually any aspect of it. The most they could do was to get married and be together, and damn it, he was going to make sure that was what happened.

Once Ian got to the clinic, it was easier to keep his mind off of things, caring for his patients and helping Dr. Montemurro, who was one of the kindest people he had ever met. He could tell by the way the doctor looked at him, that he shared his concern for Mickey, and was also concerned about him, although he didn’t speak a word about it, seeming to have a tacit understanding that bringing it up would do more harm than good. Instead, he threw any extra or odd job Ian’s way to keep him occupied. And so with Dr. Montemurro’s help, Ian survived the workday.

Mickey, Manuel and Mandy spent the morning processing orders, the accounting alone for which was much more complex than what they were used to, both because of the fundraising aspect and because of the sheer number of orders that continued to pour in through Surf and Sand from so many different vendors. Bigley called in the midst of a particularly chaotic part of the morning and, after talking to Manuel for five minutes, suggested they hire someone on as a full-time accountant. He recommended they use Johnny for the time being, but made it clear that Johnny was his employee and could be pulled away at any time to tend to his (Bigley’s) affairs. Mickey and Manuel were comfortable with that, having had a long-standing business relationship with Johnny in the reverse coyote realm, Mickey also being familiar with his book cooking skills.
The subject of Mickey’s appeal came up only briefly, Bigley commenting that once sales reach $100,000, a news story should be done, highlighting Mickey’s role as a major contributor to the relief effort, as well as Ian and Mandy’s backstories, as he had discussed before. He estimated that sales could reach that level by week’s end, at the rate things were going.

Mickey had wanted to mention Ian’s wish that they marry as soon as possible, but didn’t think the timing was right, with all of the business-related stress everyone was under at the moment. He only hoped his situation would remain unchanged long enough that he could make it happen for Ian. Not that it wasn’t important to him, because it was. It was just the idea that Ian asked for it, and he had promised him. He never wanted to break a single promise to Ian because he knew how that felt, and he never wanted Ian to hurt that way again. He knew how badly hurt he was when Ian left him at the border, and he also knew the hell he put Ian through early on in their relationship, trying to deny his own feelings before he came out. He wanted all of that pain and misery to stay behind them, so he had to make this wedding happen. He just didn’t know how to time it, given all that was happening so quickly. He resolved to talk with Mandy, their unofficial wedding planner, at the close of business, whenever that would be on this crazy day!

Mickey had to admit, he did find this volume of business to be exhilarating, especially since it was going to help with the rebuilding of Boca and the lives of so many of its residents. In fact, under different circumstances, he’d probably be on top of the world, just like Manuel and Mandy were. If only this colossal black cloud would leave from over his head. God! If only he could take back that whole roofy incident...nah, he’d still do it all over again, he decided. ‘Bitch fucked with Ian. She had it comin,’ he thought to himself, shaking his head at his own stupidity.

By day’s end, Ojos Azules had just over $20,000 worth of orders from various surf shops, littered across the coastal U.S. and Canada. Manuel had begun contacting former employees, family members and friends, asking if any of them would be willing to pick up a shift or two at the factory or if they knew anyone interested in part- or full-time factory work. He had received a few positive responses, and was planning to bring in a small crew for second shift the next day to work alongside those employees who had volunteered for OT. All in all, the day had been a tremendous success and the mood in the factory office had taken on a festive feel, Manuel opening the magnum of Dom Perignon that Bigley had sent over, serving Mandy, Mickey and himself, and pulling an extra glass down for when Ian arrived from work. Manuel poured a glass for him as soon as he saw him come through the door.

“Ian!” Mickey rushed over to greet him at the door, wrapping his left arm around him, pulling him in for a sloppy, wet kiss. “Mick, you’ve been drinking,” Ian said, a look of worried disappointment on his face. “Just a coupla glasses a’ champagne. Manuel has one for you,” he replied, gesturing toward Manuel, who held the freshly-poured glass in his outstretched hand. “Ian, have a toast with us,” Manuel said, handing him his glass. “We’ve had an outstanding day!” he exclaimed, smiling as he raised his glass. “Here’s to Ojos Azules and to rebuilding Boca del Rio!” Manuel said jubilantly, clinking glasses with the three people who had become his family before downing nearly everything in his glass in one gulp. Ian took a sip from his, setting it down and pulling Mickey aside. “Are you okay? You know you need to keep your wits about you, and that you shouldn’t mix...” Mickey pressed his lips against Ian’s, preventing him from finishing his sentence, then whispered into his mouth, “No pills today. I been feelin’ so much better...” Ian tried to smile, but Mickey’s tongue wouldn’t allow, pushing deep into his mouth, pulling a moan from Ian’s throat as he returned Mickey’s kiss passionately.

“Hey, get a room!” Mandy yelled from across the room. “Already got one,” Mickey retorted, grasping Ian’s hand to whisk him upstairs. “Wait!” Ian said, stopping dead in his tracks. “I don’t know if Mickey mentioned this to you guys, but we wanna get married,” Ian began. “No shit,” Mandy replied. “I think we’ve talked about this once or twice,” she giggled, rolling her eyes at Ian.
“Yeah, well we gotta talk more cuz I wanna do this right away. Mickey isn’t going to prison as anything other than my husband, and I’m gonna make damn sure of that,” Ian spoke seriously. “And I’m gonna need your help,” he added, looking at Mandy, but including Manuel in the general statement.

“We will be glad to help you in any way we can, but the rest of this week’s going to be nuts,” Manuel tried to explain. “Yeah, well I don’t need the feds or whoever dragging him away from me before we do this...PLEASE!” he begged, looking at Manuel this time. “You guys can bring the champagne, but can we please all sit down at the island in our room and figure this out. I don’t think I can sleep until I know this is in the works,” Ian pleaded in desperation. Mickey shot him a look that said, ‘What about the amazing sex we were about to have?’ “Sorry, Mick,” Ian said, responding to Mickey’s unspoken complaint. “This is more important right now.”

The four retired to the Crow’s Nest for the evening, champagne bottles in tow, congregating around the island in Ian and Mickey’s room, just as Ian had requested. As they talked, all agreed that the couple should be married on the beach, behind their beach house in Boca. It was Ian’s idea originally, but as soon as Mickey said he loved it, it was a done deal. Manuel said he had a friend who could perform the ceremony, so that part was taken care of easily.

Under the circumstances, they decided to keep it pretty simple with only their closest friends in attendance. Ian wanted to wear tuxes, but since that brought back such bad memories for Mickey, of his ‘other’ marriage, they decided on casual attire instead, short-sleeved collared shirts and nice shorts, they figured, which would be more fitting for the weather in Mexico anyway. Manuel thought all of this should be discussed with Bigley, at a minimum, and possibly Cogswell, too, before anything was finalized, so Manuel agreed to make the call to Bigley first thing in the morning, or as soon as was possible, depending on what kind of morning they were presented with.

Mandy and Manuel recommitted themselves as Best Person and Best Man for the ceremony, and Ian and Mickey agreed to discuss the issue of their vows privately, opting to enjoy the rest of the evening, the champagne and frozen pizza, which was all anyone had the remaining energy to prepare, in a relaxed fashion, talking and laughing with Manuel and Mandy the way they always did, being their usual selves and doing their best to forget that ugly future event over which they had no control. Ian and Mickey held each other close, not missing any opportunity to touch and kiss one another, but also focused on Manuel and Mandy, placing value on the bond they now had as a family of four and savoring this time they all had together. It was a night to remember, filled with the kind of laughter, love and caring that not many are blessed enough to experience once in life. All four of them were truly doubly blessed.
Manuel and Mandy skipped their ‘morning routine’, heading straight down to the office to check out the number of new orders that had come in overnight, in order to better plan for the day’s shifts and activities. Manuel also wanted to get an early start so he could update Bigley on the morning’s numbers and discuss with him the plan for Mickey and Ian’s upcoming nuptials. They were absolutely flabbergasted to find that they had over $50,000 worth of orders, and that a European distributor had requested permission to publish the ad in their on-line catalog! The e-mail they received regarding the European company had been forwarded from Bigley Enterprises, along with Bigley’s reply, giving them permission to run the ad. “This is wonderful,” Manuel exclaimed, “but there is no way humanly possible for us to manufacture this many boards in a timely fashion, even if we run shifts around-the-clock!”

Just then, the phone rang. It was Bigley. “Business is good!” he began as Manuel answered. “Yes, a little bit too good,” Manuel replied, proceeding to explain his production dilemma. “Not to worry, not to worry,” Bigley stopped him before he could get up too much steam. “These companies do not need to stock all the boards they are ordering. You will simply put them on ‘back-order’ status, and fill the orders as the boards become available. In the meantime, you will have the start-up funds to order the necessary chemicals and to make payroll.” Bigley had a way of putting people at ease in just about any situation. Immediately, Manuel felt better about his production limitations, but still wanted a fairly steady second shift running, or weekend shifts in the alternative.

Manuel cleared his throat, preparing himself to bring up the subject of Mickey and Ian’s wedding. “Bruno, there’s something else I need to talk to you about,” Manuel began. “Sure, Manuel. What’s up?” Bruno asked, the tone of his voice changing to reflect concern. “Well, Ian and Mickey have made plans to marry, sooner than originally planned, and I wanted you to be aware of it, first of all because I am certain they will want you to attend, but also because I want Mickey to be safe. Obviously, they can’t do it on a weekend since he needs to stay hidden away every weekend,” Manuel continued, thinking aloud.

“Well, I’m afraid Mickey’s situation is going to be temporarily changing very soon, regardless of what any of us does. I have full faith in Cogswell though, especially in light of the latest developments,” Bigley said reassuringly, pausing to think the whole scenario through a bit. “Actually, Manuel, I am thinking maybe they should marry this weekend! Right after an interview as you guys are announcing the first of many installments of relief donations you are making. We’ll make sure to have as many residents in attendance as possible for both the wedding and the press event!” Bigley announced with uncharacteristic excitement. “We will also contact as many displaced homeowners as possible between today and tomorrow, notifying them of the help your company will be providing. The fire department has a list. And we’ll make sure to use your names liberally, sharing the ad with as many people as possible. It will be a media frenzy and the whole town will love you all!” Bigley shouted, really working himself up at this point.

“This all sounds wonderful, but won’t it hasten Mickey’s arrest?” Manuel questioned. “At this point, it is inevitable and we need as much positive press as we can get before it happens,” Bigley confided. “I will fly in Saturday morning to prepare for the big event. I will brief all of you as to what you should and shouldn’t say to the press. Don’t worry about any of the food, decorations, officiating or legal filings for the wedding. I will handle everything! I truly believe all of this will come together perfectly and boost sales for the fundraiser as well!” Bigley spoke optimistically.

“Okay, Bruno, but would you please talk over the particulars with Mandy? She has spent a great deal of time planning for the original wedding with Ian, so I’m sure she’s hoping that some of those
plans can remain intact,” Manuel respectfully requested. “I sure will. Is she available now?” Bigley asked. “Mandy!” Manuel called out into the conference room. Mandy came running into the office. “Bruno wants to talk to you about the wedding,” Manuel said with a big smile.

Meanwhile, up in Mickey and Ian’s room, Mickey was the first to wake up, tiptoeing around so Ian could get some much needed sleep. Mickey knew that Ian had been burning the candle at both ends, working hard all day, then coming home to take care of him, which was no small task lately. He wanted to turn the tables on him and spoil him a bit, for a change. He obviously wasn’t going to be able to give him a killer massage with only one good, but non-dominant hand, but he sure could make him some Milkovich-style coffee, run a nice hot tub of water and use what the good lord gave him to make his man happy. He got the coffee and the water going in the tub, then made his way over to the bed, where Ian lay, still sleeping soundly on his side, just the way he was when Mickey slipped out from between his arms.

Mickey rolled Ian onto his back, allowing him to resettle so as not to wake him too abruptly. There were still a good ten minutes before the alarm was set to go off, but Mickey couldn’t wait! Besides, he might need the extra time...He knelt between Ian’s legs, leaning over to lick a stripe from Ian’s balls, to the base of his cock, which he circled with his tongue before continuing up his stiff shaft to the glorious tip, which he sucked into his mouth lightly, waiting for the reaction he knew he was sure to get. Ian hissed as he inhaled sharply, grasping at Mickey’s hair, which was still too short to get a good hold on, then opting for his ears, which he held tightly in his hands as Mickey began to bob up and down, slowly at first, but then with increasing speed, on Ian’s ready and responsive dick. “Mmmmmiccky...So fucking good...” Ian moaned, his drowsy voice dripping with desire.

“MmmHmmm,” Mickey moaned in response, the vibrations shooting from Ian’s raging cock through every last cell of his body as he sucked harder and faster, swirling his tongue furiously around the perimeter of Ian’s phenomenally sweet cock like it was his favorite flavor lollipop and he couldn’t get enough. Ian rocked his hips up and down, meeting Mickey’s lusciously full lips with each thrust, his body begging for satisfaction, his mouth gaping, freeing a trail of ecstatic moans from deep within him as he approached his apex. Mickey slowing his mouth’s motions to stave off the inevitable, if only for just a moment more. He loved having Ian right at this point, where he knew he was incapable of thinking about anything but Mickey’s mouth all over his dick, giving him the ultimate pleasure. Mickey was rock-hard just thinking about it, and listening to the sounds coming out of Ian’s mouth just about sent him to the moon. “Mickey...Mickey...Mickey,” Ian breathed between the short bursts of breath that were now being rapidly pushed from his lips, as he came hard, Mickey swallowing every last drop with a smile of pure contentment, secure in the knowledge that he had just completely rocked Ian’s world, and all before he was even fully awake.

“Tub’s ready!” Mickey called to Ian, who remained in bed, his brain still fuzzy with sleep and that feel-good that only comes after a stellar orgasm. Mickey eased himself into the water, doing his best to wash himself one-handed, Ian joining him after a few minutes and taking over his usual job of bathing Mickey, which they both enjoyed immensely.”Didn’t get to put your lotion on this morning,” Ian frowned. “It’s okay, Ian. I really am feelin’ better,” Mickey grinned, “but if you’re feelin’ guilty, I got somethin’ else you can rub,” Mickey teased, pointing at his partially floating hard-on. “Not much time,” Ian began. “Don’t need much,” Mickey laughed, rolling his eyes. “Okay,” Ian said, grasping Mickey’s stiff dick with his right hand and grazing his balls with the fingers of his left. He lightly massaged his balls, while steadily stroking his gorgeous cock at a moderate pace, turning his head to breathe into Mickey’s ear and suck on his earlobe, then moving his moist mouth down to his neck, then clavicle, then heading north again, licking, biting and sucking as he continued to stroke Mickey faster, grasping his cock more tightly. “Ian...gonna cum,” Mickey muttered amid moans and quick shallow breaths. “Yes, you are,” Ian whispered evilly into Mickey’s ear as he exploded into the water, silently mouthing the word, ‘Fuck’.
The two finished washing up, brushed their teeth, dressed quickly and grabbed travel mugs of the ready and waiting coffee before heading downstairs, Ian’s arm wrapped tightly around Mickey’s middle. When they got downstairs, they could see that Mandy and Manuel had been hard at work for some time. Mandy had even connected the computer to the TV in the conference room, and had the ad projected onto the screen for them to see. “Damn, Gallagher! Lookin’ hot as hell! Don’t know how I feel about half the world ogling my husband-to-be!” Mickey said with a smirk. Ian blushed at the compliment, although he had to admit, the ad was beautiful. Mandy looked stunning, and the agency had done a tremendous job air-brushing some hair onto Ian. And the stories they had written about each of them made them sound like such amazing heroes.

“No wonder we have so many sales already,” Mickey commented. “You don’t even know!” Mandy responded. “We have well over $50,000 in sales and it’s not even 9:00 yet.” Manuel added. “Better not be!” Ian said. “I have to be at work by 9,” he finished. “You serious? We got $50,000 in sales?” Mickey asked in disbelief. “Yeah, it’s serious. And we talked to Bigley. A European distributor is publishing the ad in their on-line catalog today. Oh yeah, and we are having a press event on Saturday on the beach, right after your wedding!” Mandy bragged with a giant smile on her face.

“Yes,” Manuel interjected, “and he’s coming Saturday morning to prepare us. He also said not to worry about a thing for the wedding. I will all be taken care of!” Manuel could hardly contain his excitement, running over to Mandy, lifting her off her feet and spinning around as he kissed her. Ian was feeling pretty festive himself, pulling Mickey by the chin to kiss him softly. “I can’t wait,” Ian whispered between kisses. “You’re gonna be mine forever, and I’m never gonna let you go,” he said, trying his best not to let his emotions get the best of him. “I’m already yours, Ian, but I wanna let the whole fuckin’ world know, and we will, on Saturday,” he added, pulling Ian’s face into his for another lingering kiss, their noses touching softly just before Ian pulled away. “Gotta go! Got work and shit,” he lamented. “See ya tonight,” Mickey called after him. “Don’t make any plans. Your ass is mine.”
Island Excursion

Mickey, Manuel and Mandy scrambled to keep pace with what can only be described as a whirlwind of business activity. Orders continued to pour in, so they were tasked with placing orders for materials and chemicals, but also had the added headache of trying to fill the factory with a second shift of employees, since the weekend shifts were now off the table because of the press event and wedding. Manuel had scheduled so many interviews, they were booked through lunch, Mickey and Manuel each meeting with individual prospects simultaneously, while Mandy tried her best to hold down the rest of the office responsibilities. Johnny was due to stop by to get a handle on the accounting aspect, but hadn’t come yet.

“Where’s Mickey?” Ian called out as he came through the front factory entrance, carrying two large deli bags full of food, much to Mandy’s surprise. “He’s interviewing someone,” she answered, rummaging through the bag as soon as Ian sat it on the conference table. “Well, I need him!” Ian said, sounding a bit too high-strung for Mandy’s liking. “Relax. He should be done in a couple minutes,” Mandy reassured him, rolling her eyes as she turned back toward the computer. She thought about asking Ian if he and Mickey had written their vows yet, but decided against it for the time being, in light of Ian’s current mood. Ian looked at his phone, then over at the closed office door. “Really?” Mandy chided him, “You’ve literally been here two minutes! How ‘bout if you sit here with me and have your sandwich,” she suggested, pulling a second one from the bag and taking a bite of the one she had already sitting in front of her. “Don’t have time. Gotta get back to the clinic!” he said, his stress level seeming to climb by the second. “The fuck’s wrong with you?” Mandy finally asked. “Mickey and I have to get a blood test for our marriage license and the bloodwork has to go out today or we won’t be able to get married on Saturday!” he explained, a tone of sheer panic in his voice.

Just then, the office door opened, a young Mexican man walking out, followed by Mickey, who had a casual half smile on his face and a sexy swagger to match. ‘Damn!’ Ian thought to himself with a big smile, ‘That’s mine!’ Just laying eyes on Mickey put him at ease. For Ian, Mickey was like walking Xanax, without the negative side effects. The calming effect he had on him was nothing short of miraculous and, in this case, totally necessary. “C’mon, Mick, we gotta get our blood tests for the wedding or we won’t be getting married on Saturday,” he said, approaching his love, deli bag in hand. “I got you lunch. Wanna eat in the car with me on the way?” Ian asked. “Guess so,” Mickey replied, fully realizing that this was not really a question, but rather Ian’s way of trying to sound less bossy, while still telling him how it was gonna be. The two headed out the door, Mandy calling a quick, “Thanks for lunch!” out to Ian before the door shut behind them.

Mickey wanted to drive, but Ian insisted that he not, since his right hand was in a cast. This actually worked out well since it put Mickey in the perfect position to trace circles on Ian’s right inner thigh with his left index finger. Ian sighed deeply, allowing the relaxing powers of Mickey’s magic finger to take effect, and of course, willing away the hard-on that was starting already.

When they arrived at the clinic, Ian threw the car in park and jumped out of it as if it were on fire, running around to open Mickey’s door and hurrying him out, too. Luckily, the doctor was in the hallway between patients when they arrived, so he took care of them right away, sending their samples to the lab on an expedited ticket. Ian breathed a huge sigh of relief, knowing that was taken care of. “Let’s go! Gotta get you back to the factory quick so I can come back here to finish my shift,” Ian said hurriedly. “Nah, Ian, it’s okay. I can drive myself and come back for you. Don’t need you blowin’ a gasket over missin’ more work. Really, I’m fine,” Mickey assured him. “Okay, at least let me walk you to the car,” Ian said with a smile, wrapping his arm around Mickey’s waist, as was fast becoming an everyday habit. It felt so good to him, holding Mickey that way anytime and
anywhere he wanted. Everyone they knew in Mexico accepted them as a couple and both Ian and Mickey reveled in that. As much as he had wanted to get back to Chicago, after being there, he realized that Boca was their real home.

Ian pulled Mickey’s face into his, lightly kissing his forehead, then his nose, then his lovely lips, breaking the kiss only to say, “I love you, Mick! We gotta talk vows when I get home,” then resuming the kiss, pulling Mickey’s body into his, his stomach flipping like he was on a rollercoaster, just as it did whenever their bodies brushed against one another, even if it was only for a brief moment. Mickey’s touch was like a burst of electrical current, surging through Ian’s body, bringing him to life. Ian’s thoughts flashed back for a brief second to his time in Chicago after leaving Mickey at the border, about how empty and dead he felt inside. “Mickey, this wedding is everything to me, just knowing I’ll never have to endure a life without you!” Ian gushed, opening Mickey’s car door for him. “Please be careful driving back,” he pleaded. “See ya after work,” Mickey said with a wink. “Love you, too, Gallagher.”

Micky hurried back to the factory, hoping Mandy might have a spare second. Coming up with vows was going to be a challenge, not because he didn’t know what to say, but because he wasn’t the best at putting his feelings into words, at least not in the style appropriate for wedding vows. Then there was the added problem of the busted up right hand. He didn’t even know if his left-handed writing would be legible, if he did come up with something to say. Mandy would definitely be a great help. Hell, she could even type for him.

“Mandy!” he hollered when he didn’t see her in the conference room as he walked in. “She’s upstairs,” Manuel answered as he walked in. “Everything okay out on the floor?” Mickey asked. “Yeah, just getting some of the new guys hooked up with their trainers. Gonna try to run a full second shift today, like we talked about,” Manuel explained. “We started getting orders from that European distributor today, too. We will need to reroute some of the repeat orders from the same distributor to this new one, just to get some boards out to the Europeans,” Manuel said, smiling nervously. “And we’re really behind on our accounting records,” he added. Mickey turned and headed for the office, determined to help his overwrought partner as much as possible. “Hey! I’m here,” a boisterous greeting echoed through the conference room as Johnny walked through the front door. “And not a moment too soon!” Manuel called back to him. “Mickey just went into the office to work on the accounting.”

“Mick!” Johnny bellowed as he opened the office door. “I think I can get a handle on this stuff for ya.” “That’s a big fuckin’ relief!” Mickey responded with a heavy sigh. “Mind if I run upstairs then?” he asked. “I gotta talk to Mandy about somethin’.” “Sure! I got this,” Johnny reassured him. Mickey wasted no time, running up the steps to find Mandy. When he got to her room, her door was partially open. He could see her sitting on the couch, leaning over the coffee table, writing something. He snuck in quietly, getting a closer look; she had two large diagrams of their backyard on the beach in front of her and was configuring the set-ups for the press conference and the wedding. In the margins, she had boutonnieres and other flower arrangements drawn and colored.

“Mandy,” Mickey whispered behind her head, startling her. “Jesus, Mick! You scared the shit out of me!” she yelled, her hands shaking. “Sorry, but I need your help,” he said, smiling at the beautiful work she had done. “You wanna write your vows, don’t you?” she asked, reading his mind like an open book. He nodded quietly, looking down, a little bit embarrassed that he didn’t have this done a long time ago. “C’mere,” Mandy said with a warm smile, patting the couch next to her. Mickey sat down and, in no time, Mickey’s sentiments were beautifully represented in a most apropos format for wedding vows. Mandy truly was a master when it came to this stuff. ‘I’ll probably be helping Ian next,’ she thought to herself, a grin spreading over her face. She couldn’t possibly love all of this wedding planning and preparation more! She could hardly contain her excitement for the event, and for the people who were getting married. They deserved it so much, had earned it after all they had
been through, together and apart.

“Thanks so much, Mands!” Mickey said with great appreciation. “Don’t know what I’d do without ya,” he added, reaching for the door. “You comin’ down?” “Yeah,” Mandy answered, following behind him. “I need to get back on those orders. They’re coming in like crazy!” she exclaimed. “I know,” Mickey responded. “What can I do to help? I have about an hour before I have to go get Ian.” “Actually, if you can order food for us and for the guys who are doubling out today, that would be great!” she spoke with a confident authority that made Mickey smile. He was so proud of his little sister for all of her dedication and work hard, but also for overcoming their shitty past and making something respectable of herself. If there was one thing he hoped this appeal would do for him, it was to give him a clean slate, a chance to be a legitimate businessman. He wanted so badly to be the kind of husband that Ian could brag about, even in his medical circles.

He decided on ordering three large containers, one pasta, one meatballs and one salad. He would set it up, buffet-style in the conference room for the guys to come and get when they took their breaks, hoping they could be staggered so production wouldn’t slow. Once he had everything ordered, he decided to leave a bit early so he could go inside the clinic and see his man in action for a little while before the end of his shift. Ian was such a natural there, like poetry in motion, and Mickey loved to watch.

When Mickey arrived, the clinic was buzzing with sick children. Apparently, there was a stomach virus going around that was causing severe dehydration. Ian had started no fewer than a dozen IVs during his shift, all on children, which was no picnic. Mickey looked on as Ian settled a crying toddler, occupying her with toys while her body was being pumped full of life-preserving fluid. He was completely in awe of the way he interacted with children. Whenever he saw this, it always reminded him of how Ian had been with Yevgeny, back in the day. The time passed quickly, Ian zipping in and out of the exam rooms, looking so clean and doable in his white lab coat. Mickey literally could not wait to get his hands on him.

When his shift ended, Ian stopped briefly to talk with Dr. Montemurro. Mickey couldn’t hear what they were saying, but saw the doctor nod his head and then they both smiled. Mickey thought maybe he had invited him to the wedding. Once Ian caught sight of Mickey, his smile widened and his stride became longer and more brisk. “Hello, gorgeous!” Mickey said, smiling back at him. “Gotta go pick up some food from Sur de la Frontera for the guys at the factory. Need your help carrying it, if you don’t mind,” Mickey grinned. “Then I’m gonna need your help again when we get home,” he said, raising an eyebrow suggestively. “Sure! Anything I can do to help!” Ian chuckled.

They picked up the food and were on their way home when Ian’s phone buzzed. It was a text from Bigley that read: “Flying in tomorrow for some meetings in Boca before the press event. Would like to meet you for lunch.”

“Who’s that?” Mickey asked. “Bigley,” Ian answered. He wants to have lunch tomorrow.” “Good!” Mickey said, “I have some questions for him.” “He didn’t mention you,” Ian responded, shrugging his shoulders. “Well, I’m comin’” Mickey insisted. “We have a lot to discuss, the three of us,” Mickey added. “Okay, I’ll tell him,” Ian replied, unlocking his phone to send his response. “Great! Mickey wants to come. Says we have a lot to discuss.” Ian waited the rest of the way back to the factory for a response, but got none. It was soon forgotten amid the chaos of setting up the buffet for workers who were already milling around in the conference room, Manuel making introductions between some of the new employees and Johnny, who had come out of the office when he heard there was food coming.

Once the food was all set up, Ian and Mickey made their great escape, grabbing some food to go. Ian got the job of carrying everything, since he had two hands, so Mickey ran ahead, opening the door
for him. Ian walked straight in, sat their food on the island and turned around in front of it, giving Mickey his sexiest ‘come hither’ look. Mickey sauntered over to him, pulling his shirttail out of his pants and lifting the shirt over his head, exposing his deliciously tight torso, Ian reaching out to grab him by his belt and pulling him over to him. “You look so…” Ian stopped talking abruptly, palming the back of Mickey’s head as he pulled it forcefully toward his own, burying his tongue in Mickey’s waiting mouth before Mickey even knew what hit him. Mickey returned the favor, the passion of their kiss so powerful that both were breathing hard within seconds, pressing their bodies together, then breaking to tear each other’s pants off, Ian spinning Mickey around in a singular motion, roughly bending his naked frame over the island, cupping his enticingly round ass cheeks in his hands, then giving each one a good smack before spreading them wide open. Ian licked a straight line down the middle of Mickey’s ass, pausing to poke his tongue ever so slightly into Mickey’s sensitive hole before finishing up the back side of his balls. He continued teasing Mickey with his tongue, sending ripples of pleasure through his body that left him craving more. Ian began to alternate between his tongue and his freshly lubed up fingers, massaging and stretching him sensually. “Fuck me, Gallagher!” Mickey begged, grinding himself against the island. “Oh you know I’m gonna,” Ian responded, licking his lips.

Ian took a moment to lube up his substantial shaft before rubbing it up against Mickey’s waiting opening, Mickey all the while rubbing his own stiff cock desperately against the hard surface of the island. “Finally!” Mickey exclaimed as Ian entered him haltingly, always taking care not to hurt Mickey. “Been wanting this for so fuckin’ long,” Mickey hissed between his clenched teeth. Ian continued his process, gradually going further, Mickey grunting and moaning breathlessly with every stroke. “So fucking beautiful!” Ian yelled out as he watched Mickey take all of him into his perfectly exquisite opening that felt like it was made expressly for him. “I love you so much, Mick! You’re fucking incredible!” the heartfelt compliments just kept rolling off Ian’s tongue as he repeatedly rolled his hips against Mickey, thrusting harder and faster until Mickey started screaming his name, exploding onto the island. That was it! Ian came so hard he almost lost his balance and might have fallen, had Mickey not had Ian’s dick so firmly clenched between his butt cheeks.

At long last, Mickey felt like he could put a sentence together, saying, “You’re one hell of a fuck, Gallagher! Missed that shit so much!” “What the hell, Mick?” You talk like we haven’t fucked in years!” Ian laughed. “Well, that’s how it felt. Fuck, I missed you!” Mickey breathed, lifting his upper body from the island to search for some cleaning products. Ian just smiled, thanking his lucky stars, and Mandy and Manuel, for this second chance at a life with Mickey. He had fucked up so bad, leaving him at the border, and sometimes he couldn’t believe his good fortune, that he was actually standing in Mickey’s kitchen in fucking Mexico, just having fucked him silly on his kitchen island. Life was good!
Wet Dreams

Ian and Mickey had crashed hard after a night of wild sex and enough pasta to put anyone into a food coma, but Ian’s sleep was interrupted by a recurring nightmare. In it, INTERPOL landed a helicopter on the beach and hauled Mickey away in the middle of their wedding ceremony, holding Ian back at gunpoint. On three separate occasions, Ian had woken up yelling Mickey’s name, a giant lump in his throat and his face and pillow wet with tears. Each time, Mickey, half-awake from the yelling, mumbled, “I’m right here,” wrapping himself around Ian as best he could, while contending with his cast. After the third time, Ian felt terrible for disturbing Mickey and decided to get up. It was only 5:30 AM, but he figured he could stay busy, hopefully writing his vows and making other wedding preparations.

After about half an hour of his vow-writing attempt sans coffee, he decided to make the trip down to the office to make some so he didn’t disturb Mickey so early. He threw on some clothes, grabbed his phone, which he had been using to record his vow ideas, and headed out the door. The coffee machine was in the office, so he figured he would sit in there, drink some coffee and try to finish up his vows. Like Mickey, he had an idea of the kinds of things he wanted to say, but was having a tough time polishing them up. He sent Mandy a text: “Down in the office. Need help--VOws! Text me when you’re up.” He waited for a response briefly before returning his thoughts to his vows and the wedding. That nightmare really had him shook. He didn’t know how he could possibly endure a painful scenario like that. He had himself prepared for Mickey to turn himself in at some point, but the idea of INTERPOL bursting in on their wedding was a different story, one that had tormented him all night long.

A text came through, jarring him free of his disturbing thoughts. It was from Bigley. “Call me when you get a minute...alone.” Ian sat staring at the message for a good long time. He knew he had to call, but something inside him wouldn’t let him hit ‘send’. He was genuinely afraid, not only of what he might hear, but of how he would handle it. His finger was hovering over the phone screen when he caught Mandy’s form descending the stairs, out of the corner of his eye.

“So, let’s talk vows!” she called out, her bright smile lighting up the office as she walked in. “Well….” Ian was struggling to speak, his nerves twisting his stomach and his tongue into knots. “You’re nervous. I get it. I can help,” she spoke calmly, enveloping him in a warm embrace. Ian clung to her like a cat hung up in the curtains. “Ian?” she began with a suddenly unsettled tone, “You okay?” “Mandy, I just…” he paused, sobbing as he laid his head on her shoulder. “I can’t…” Mandy held him tightly against her, stroking his hair as she comforted him. “Shhhhh...it’s gonna be okay,” she whispered softly.

When Ian finally gained enough composure to speak again, he described his recurring nightmare and showed her the text he had gotten from Bigley. “So, did you call?” she asked. “No. I’ve been trying to get the balls to do it, but I just can’t,” he answered. Mandy grabbed his phone out of his hand and hit ‘send’. “It needs to be done, Ian,” she said, holding the phone up against her left boob, to keep him from trying to hit ‘end’.

“Ian!” Bigley’s raspy voice sounded muffled, due to the positioning of the phone. Mandy pulled it away from her body, putting it on speaker. “Good Morning, Bruno,” Ian said, managing to sound normal, maybe even chipper. “I’m getting on the plane now and would still like to have lunch. With you and Mickey is fine, but I wanted to talk to you first,” Bigley said in his usual booming voice. “Mickey’s appeal is set to be filed, so I am confident he will be able to turn himself in, but he should have an emergency bag of essentials packed, just in case…” Bigley’s voice trailed off uncharacteristically. “I’m suggesting that you pack the bag for him today so he doesn’t have to worry
about it. I realize this puts a lot on you, but we can’t afford for Mickey to go on another bender right now. He seems to be doing better with all of this, but I don’t want anything to set him off right now,” Bigley explained. Ian looked over at Mandy, his eyes filling with tears again. She mouthed the words, “You got this. I’ll help you.”

Bigley droned on, suggesting that all four of them, Mickey, Manuel, Mandy and Ian, record short statements about the fundraising drive that can be used for promotional purposes. Ian agreed absently, his brain still stuck on the idea of Mickey needing an emergency bag. He went on to suggest a dinner, followed by a rehearsal of the wedding ceremony, and all before sundown. Now Ian was scared and overwhelmed, excusing himself to get ready for work.

“Here! Look at what I have and make it sound better,” he said, pressing ‘end’ and throwing his phone to Mandy. “I gotta go get Mickey’s bag packed while he’s still asleep, then get my ass ready for work.” “Okay…” Mandy answered, looking a bit overwhelmed herself, with all of the news she just overheard. “Thanks, Mands! You’re the best!” Ian added, running up the stairs.

Ian slipped into their room quietly, stopping in the kitchen to put some coffee on, then going to the closet in their bedroom to fish out some clothes for Mickey’s bag. He also stowed a few of his own clothes in there because, in his mind, if Mickey had to go anywhere in a hurry, he’d be right along with him. Next, he added some travel-sized items that had been stocked in their room for people who came to use it as a ‘hideout’, and might need them. He packed two new toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, shaving cream and razors, along with a container of body soap he found. He zipped the bag up and set it by the door to the hallway, where he left it, figuring he’d grab it on his way out to work.

Seeing that it was still early for Mickey to get up, he went ahead and got a shower, planning to run a tub for Mickey afterward, since that was easier for him with his cast. He stood under the showerhead with his eyes closed, trying to put his mind back in time, to the night before, when he had Mickey bent over the kitchen island and begging to be fucked. He felt a slight twinge in his dick, but the ache in his heart superseded it, and all he could do was cry. The tears streamed down his face, intermixing with the warm water that fell over his body.

All of a sudden, Ian felt a warm moisture enveloping his hardening cock. His eyes flew open and, there on his knees in front of him was Mickey, his cast covered in a plastic bag, his lips wrapped tightly around his plumping penis. “Mickey…” he moaned, reaching down to weave his fingers into Mickey’s dark, shiny hair, which was beginning to grow in beautifully, a little more each day. “I love you!” Ian cried out with great emotion. Please, just stop,” Ian whispered, pulling at Mickey’s shoulders to get him to stand up. “Well, this is a first!” Mickey said, both surprise and a hint of disappointment in his voice. “I just...I can’t...I need…” Ian couldn’t find the right words.

Mickey stood up, facing him, and planted a firm kiss on his moist, swollen lips. “You been cryin,” Mickey remarked, tasting the salt on Ian’s lips. Ian stayed quiet, lathering himself, then Mickey up with the shower sponge, then wrapping his arms around Mickey’s waist, pulling him in and pressing himself against him. At this moment, it wasn’t about the hard-ons that their bodies each produced immediately upon contact; it was Ian’s need to feel close to Mickey in a bigger way, in a spiritual way that somehow still had its roots in physicality, but at the molecular level. Ian literally could not get close enough to Mickey, and it hurt. He squeezed him more tightly than he ever remembered having done before, tears and sobs uncontrollably pouring from his eyes and lips.

“Ian, we’re forever! We’re gettin’ married! Ain’t nothin’ to cry about,” Mickey breathed into Ian’s mouth as he pulled his head into his own to kiss him again. “I know, I know. I’m good. I just don’t wanna say goodbye…ever!” Ian managed to squeak out, between sobs. “Ian, you were the one with all the faith in these guys from the start. Now I believe they are handlin’ this shit. You gotta believe
it, too or I’m gonna lose it,” Mickey said honestly. “Okay, okay,” Ian responded, reaching for a
towel to dry off with, starting, of course, with Mickey.

“I’m drivin’ ya in today,” Mickey called in to Ian as he poured two travel mugs of coffee and
grabbed two danishes. “Need the car to come back and meet ya for lunch. Bigley’s still comin’,
right?” “Yeah, Mick, he’s coming,” Ian answered, swallowing hard. He couldn’t shake the scared
shitless feeling that was coursing through his body, but he didn’t want to spook Mickey any more
than he already had. “You know Montemurro gave me the afternoon off to get ready for the
wedding, right?” Ian asked, changing the subject. “How would I know that?” Mickey asked, smiling
as Ian walked out to meet him by the door, looking like a fucking movie star. “God, you’re
gorgeous!” Mickey interjected, before adding, “When’d he tell you that?” “I thought you saw us
talking yesterday when you came to pick me up,” Ian replied. “Yeah, I did, but I had no fuckin’ clue
what you were talkin’ about,” Mickey said, shrugging his shoulders.

“Yeah, and Bigley wants all four of us to record little individual statements about the fundraiser. He
also wants us to have a rehearsal for the wedding...on the beach...tonight!” Ian explained, actually
beginning to get a little bit excited about it. “Oh yeah, do we get to rehearse the ‘after the wedding’
part?” Mickey asked, a salacious grin on his face. “Guess we’ll find out!” Ian laughed, nonchalantly
picking up the bag he had packed for Mickey as they walked out the door.

Again, Ian was the one to actually drive the car, again citing Mickey’s injury as a reason for him to
drive. He stowed the bag in the backseat, still keeping quiet about it. Ian was obviously still tense, so
Mickey took to his usual method of relaxing him, drawing circles on his inner thigh all the way to the
clinic, then reminding him before he got out of the car that everything was fine, and that they were
going to be married.

The morning was busy, yet fairly uneventful for both Ian and Mickey, other than the continued
increase in the number of orders ‘Ojos’ had received, now up to nearly $85,000 worth, which was
unbelievable to all concerned, except for Bigley, who said he was pretty much expecting it. On Ian’s
end, the clinic was a bit hectic, but not as crazy as it had been the day before. Dr. Montemurro
praised him for his work with all of the sick children the day before, and also told him he was
looking forward to coming to the rehearsal dinner and rehearsal later that day. Ian was pleasantly
surprised to hear that he would be coming. He guessed Bigley must be pulling out all the stops for
this thing.

When Mickey came to pick him up for lunch, he stopped in to ask the doctor how much longer he
would have to wear the cast, the answer to which was that it would be at least a month. He really
was tired of it already and had hoped that maybe, by some miracle, he would remove it before the
wedding. “There is no chance of that,” Montemurro had responded with a laugh. “Worth a try,”
Mickey said with the bright smile of a man who was on top of the world, regardless.

When Ian and Mickey arrived at Sur de la Frontera, they were surprised to find that Bigley was not
there yet. He had always been there waiting in every situation, up to this point. Whether in Mexico,
New York or Chicago, Bigley was always prompt. Ian and Mickey were seated in the alcove,
looking at each other in silence. Mickey’s tongue randomly darting out to lick his lips, which put an
instant bulge in Ian’s pants. It had been completely unintentional, but anything Mickey did with his
mouth like that always gave Ian an instant boner.

“So, you got your vows written?” Ian asked, trying to draw his attention away from Mickey’s mouth
and his own stiffening cock. “Yeah, you?” Mickey asked with a grin. “Yeah, pretty much,” Ian said,
realizing that he still hadn’t even looked at Mandy’s edits. He had grabbed his phone from her
quickly on his way out that morning and hadn’t even looked at the phone since. He pulled his phone
from his pocket to look and noticed he had gotten a text from Bigley: “Change of plans--my
apologies. You two eat, then meet me at the factory. Gonna get Manuel and Mandy’s fundraiser statements out of the way so we can do yours when you get here.” He read it out loud to Mickey, who shrugged with a half smile.

“So you gonna tell me what’s with that bag ‘a shit in the back seat of the car?’” he asked. “Okay…” Ian began slowly, not sure how he wanted to go about explaining it. “Well, it’s a ‘just in case’ bag,” Ian decided to just be completely honest. “Bigley said we should have one, in case INTERPOL would show up before you have to…to…” Ian stammered, not wanting to say the words. “To turn myself in,” Mickey finished for him. “Yeah,” Ian said with a heavy sigh, partly sad, but also a little bit relieved to have let that cat out of the bag. He absolutely detested the idea of keeping ANYTHING, no matter how small, from Mickey. “That’s a good idea,” Mickey said, trying to make Ian feel better about it. “For sure. I wouldn’t want to be hauled off to prison without the essentials,” he chuckled. “Actually, Mick, I think it’s for you if you have to leave suddenly before INTERPOL gets you,” Ian explained, not even sure whether that was accurate at this point, but telling himself that it was, since it made him, and surely Mickey, feel better.

They ordered and ate lunch, talking about anything and everything that didn’t involve Mickey’s impending incarceration. It was as though, if they didn’t broach the subject, it wouldn’t happen. They briefly discussed sharing their vows with one another, but decided on waiting for the rehearsal. Mickey was pleased that Ian was done for the day, and was anxious to get back to the factory to get their statements done so they could focus on wedding preparations. Mickey’s excitement about the wedding seemed to insulate him from the reality that was to come, which made Ian happy on one hand, but a bit worried on the other. He wondered if the reality of the situation had really hit Mickey yet. It was almost like it did, initially, but then the wedding and all of the craziness surrounding the fundraiser had blotted it from his mind.

Ian tried to be more like Mickey, focusing on the positive, and getting more and more excited about becoming Mickey’s husband, regardless of the circumstances that would likely follow. They traveled back to the factory, happily sharing memories from their past, as well as the first time each had thought of marrying the other. Mickey admitted that he had first thought about it the day Ian had broken up with him in front of Ian’s house when he was sick. When Ian jokingly asked him if they were gonna go get married like a couple of queens, Mickey had thought to himself, ‘yes’, but Ian didn’t share that vision at the time, apparently. Ian, on the other hand, had thought of it even sooner, on the day Mickey married Svetlana. In his mind, after they fucked in the church basement, Mickey was going to call his wedding to Svetlana off and then, he hoped, Mickey would eventually marry him.

So here it was, the wedding they had both wished for so long ago, less than 24 hours away! It was finally going to happen! How could either of them be anything less than thrilled? Mickey took Ian’s hand, squeezing it tightly. “Nothin’ and no one can stop us now!” he shouted, bringing Ian’s hand up to his lips. “Til death do us part!”
The Grandest of Unions

Creating the individual video statements for the fundraiser turned out to be surprisingly easy. Ian and Mandy were able to use the write-ups from the ad as a basis for theirs, and Mickey and Manuel modified their company vision statement to include specific information about their personal experiences, both as victims of the hurricane, and as business owners in the Boca area who want nothing more than to help the town rebuild. Everyone dressed in nice business-casual clothes and, in only a few takes, all four were done, and done well. Bigley and his press rep were more than pleased with the outcome, and were planning to release them to the press, worldwide, before the close of business. This, undoubtedly, was the reason for Mickey’s ‘just in case’ bag. There was no way that, after what was going to amount to a media blitz by the end of Saturday’s press event, law enforcement could possibly remain unaware, both of who Mickey was and of his whereabouts.

Mickey seemed to be aware and resigned to it. Ian, on the other hand, was a bit resentful, wondering why there needed to be so much publicity for these boards when they were already selling faster than they could be made. Mandy was able to break it down for him. “Any publicity was going to put Mickey in danger, but a ton of good publicity will make him look good and possibly get him some support back home that could help with his case.” Mandy firmly believed this; she also wanted Mickey’s name to be cleared so he would be able to come and go from Mexico legally, if he wanted to. Mickey was happy that Mandy had explained the benefits to Ian, and that she even believed there were benefits. To Ian, though, it seemed as if Bigley might have had a talk with Mandy and Manuel before he and Mickey arrived, and that much of what Mandy had to say actually came from Bigley, the product of a good brain-washing. Ian just seemed to be wary of everything.

Once the focus turned from business to the wedding, Ian’s mood lightened as he watched Mickey talking to Mandy, probably about his vows. He was absolutely beaming, like this wedding made everything else that seemed inevitable and spirit-crushing to Ian, irrelevant in Mickey’s eyes. Sometimes Ian was jealous of the way Mickey viewed the world, like anything that didn’t end in disaster was a gift. He didn’t have the kinds of expectations Ian had, and he was happier for it. He lived life as it happened to him, feeling grateful and blessed when it turned out okay. Ian continued to watch Mickey as he smiled, nodded and stole an occasional glance over at him as he was, as Ian had now become certain, practicing his vows.

Bigley’s boisterous voice took Ian’s focus temporarily away from his beautiful husband-to-be, suggesting that everyone head to the beach early for the rehearsal and have dinner afterward since they had the extra time. “And bring your wedding clothes with you, everyone,” Bigley’s photographer, who had done the fundraiser statement recordings called out. “What?” Ian asked, caught completely off-guard. “It’s okay, I got it,” Mickey said, racing up the stairs to grab their clothes, which he and Ian had had laid out for days. “This seems strange,” Ian said to Mandy as she brushed past him to get hers and Manuel’s wedding attire. “It’s no big deal,” she responded, “They just wanna get some pics today, I guess,” she shrugged.

Mickey, Ian and their entourage were soon headed for the beach, not knowing what to expect since they hadn’t seen Boca in nearly three weeks. When they got there, they were amazed at the progress that had been made. Many of the stores had been rebuilt or repaired, and were now open for business. There were also some beach homes that were under construction. The roadways were are clear now and there was light at the end of the tunnel. Envisioning Boca as a viable resort town again made them all smile.

Ian and Mickey pulled up in front of their beach house first, opting to take their wedding clothes inside for the time being. They would need a place to change anyway. As soon as they got out of the
car, Ian asked, “You had the house painted?” “Naw, was just wonderin’ if you did,” Mickey replied, his jaw dropping open as he began to notice other changes. “The windows have been replaced!” he chirped, his big blue eyes aglow as if it were Christmas morning. Ian ran to the front door, laying their clothes over Mickey’s casted hand so he could find the key. As he opened the door, the aroma of burning candles was immediately evident, along with the faint scent of fresh paint. And the place had been completely remodeled! The kitchen was gorgeous, a brand new marble island had been installed to match the new cabinets. All new cooking utensils hung decoratively around the kitchen’s perimeter.

The damp furniture in the living area had been replaced with a new leather sofa, loveseat and recliner. Mickey ran to the bedroom, still carrying their clothes over his arm. The bedroom was brand new, too—a pillow-top king-sized poster bed, draped with gold adornments, accompanied by a matching dresser and chest of drawers. The room was fit for a king—or two, as the case might be! Mickey grinned widely, laying the clothes on the dresser and tackling Ian onto the bed, the two wrestling and rolling around like children.

Their playing was interrupted by a knock on the front door, followed by Bigley’s voice, “Guys, put your wedding clothes on and come on out, please.” “Hey, did you do all this for us?” Ian yelled out, but it was too late. Bigley had already closed the door again.

Ian headed for the bathroom, wanting to shower before wearing his new wedding clothes. He flipped the light on, and it was like a completely different bathroom. A larger all-glass shower had been installed and, right next to it, a hot tub, not as large as the one at the factory, but big enough for Ian and Mickey to be in at the same time. Ian turned the water on in the tub, then jumped in the shower, which was absolutely divine! The shower head was adjustable with five different settings, each feeling better than the one before it, as he tried them all. The water pressure was the best he’d ever felt, instantly washing his tension away. “Ian!” Mickey called in, “Bigley was here again. Wants us to hurry!” “Why?” Ian asked, puzzled. “Fuck if I know! Gonna wash up in this nice-ass hot tub real quick,” Mickey said, Ian hearing the smile on his face, which made him smile, too.

The two finished cleaning up, shaving and handling all of the other necessities before finally getting ready to walk out the door. “Surprise!” everyone yelled as they walked out. “Wow!” Mickey yelled, “You guys all do this for us?” he asked. “You two have been there for every one of us in a big way at some point and, on your wedding day, we wanted you both to know how much we appreciate it!” Johnny spoke up for the group. “Wow, thanks everyone!” Ian said with a heartfelt smile. “But tomorrow is our wedding day,” Mickey said slowly, looking around at all of their faces. “About that,” Bigley began, “Cogswell and I think it would be better to have the wedding tonight, not on the day of the press event,” he explained. “Better for you, Mickey,” he added. Ian’s heart sank as he watched a look of panic briefly flash across Mickey’s face, before he adopted his ballsy, tough-guy facade, saying, “Whatever...let’s do it then. Been waitin’ for this a long fuckin’ time,” he said with a brash tone that contradicted the tender way his eyes locked on Ian’s. He adjusted the collar of his shirt, taking Ian by the hand and walking toward the beach behind their beautifully remodeled home, their Mexico family following behind them.

Once everyone got to the beach, Mandy began arranging people, physically moving them into place, according to her map, which she now had committed to memory. Once everyone was in the right location, Johnny brought out the boutineers and bouquets that Mandy had ordered, and collected the rings from their fingers, distributing them to Manuel and Mandy, before pulling out his officiant’s book. “Johnny, you’re marrying us?” Ian asked. “Yes, I’m an ordained minister,” he answered confidently. “A regular jack of all trades,” Mickey added. “Okay, let’s get this show on the road,” Mickey called out enthusiastically.

Johnny began the ceremony with the usual ‘Dearly Beloved’, but then delved into some specifics
that were pertinent to Mickey and Ian’s life together, citing some examples of their devotion to one another and their undying love. It was immediately evident that Ian and Mickey weren’t the only ones to have Mandy’s help. There was even evidence that Manuel had made some contributions, based on some of the examples Johnny spoke of, regarding Mickey’s love for Ian. Ian’s eyes filled with tears as Johnny recounted Mickey’s reaction to his bridge accident. He squeezed Mickey’s hand tightly as he continued to listen to a retelling of all the pain he had caused Mickey in his absence. He talked about Mickey’s sham of a marriage to Svetlana, how Ian had wanted to be her that day and how today, finally, his time had come. The barroom brawl at the Alibi and Ian’s support the night Mickey came out, as well as Ian’s bipolar disorder and Mickey’s role as caretaker, were also highlighted. By the time Johnny finished, there wasn’t a dry eye in their party, and it was obvious that these two men belonged together...forever.

When it came time for them to say their vows, Mickey jumped right in, wanting to be first, probably so he could relax and pay attention to Ian’s, without worrying about his own. “Ian, you know I’m not the best at this kinda stuff, but today I’m gonna tell you everything you should already know,” Mickey began, clearing his throat, taking a small sheet of paper from his shirt pocket, then continuing, “Ian, I’ve loved you since the day you came to my house with a tire iron, demanding Kash’s gun back.” Mickey paused as everyone erupted in laughter. “It took me a long time to admit it to myself because loving you meant that I’d be the kinda person I thought everyone in my family would hate. So instead of telling you how I felt, I pushed you away and kept it inside. But you wouldn’t let me. You loved me enough not to give up on my closeted ass. You made me realize that I had to be honest with myself, and that I would never be happy until I was, that it was okay for me to love you, and that I shouldn’t let other people, like my dad, tell me how to live. You taught me that I don’t have to be a criminal to make a living, that I’m worth something and can do good things. But most of all, you love me unconditionally. So today, I am promising to be your husband, the kind that will be there through thick and thin, for better or worse, good times, bad, sickness, health, all that shit...til death do us part,” Mickey sighed heavily as he finished, staring into Ian’s teary eyes.

Ian took a deep breath, attempting to compose himself before saying his vows. “Mickey, it’s hard to tell where you end and I begin. We are so interwoven, our souls, our lives and now, our future. You are such an important part of me that I know, standing here today, I can’t live without you. When we were apart, I wasn’t really living, just existing, the shell of a person, dead inside. When I first laid eyes on you in that airport restroom in Mexico City, my heart pounded like it was coming through my chest. I felt an excitement I hadn’t known since the day I left you at the border. You breathed life into me, and this life we share is my everything. You are my friend, my lover, my soulmate, and today I pledge myself to you, to be yours forever, to share anything and everything you want, all of your hopes and dreams, all that comes our way, whether good or bad, everything, Mick…” Ian was so broken up at this point that he had to stop.

After a moment of silence, while Ian collected himself, Mickey fighting the urge to throw his arms around him prematurely, Johnny finished the ceremony, both men putting the respective rings on one another’s fingers, saying “With this ring I thee wed,” and finally, Johnny saying, “With the power vested in me by the City of Boca del Rio, I pronounce you husbands. You may kiss the groom,” after which Ian and Mickey fell into a warm embrace before kissing one another passionately, Mandy sobbing softly in the background. “Fuck, I love you!” Mickey breathed into Ian’s mouth. “I love you, too!” Ian said, wrapping his arm around Mickey’s waist and spinning him around so they both faced their family; yes, that’s what they were--family. The photographer snapped pictures, non-stop, as the two smiled brightly, their eyes gleaming in the late afternoon sun as it reflected off the water behind them.

Ian and Mickey circulated, hugging and thanking everyone for their role in what was the most memorable event of their lives. The photographer took some time to drive everyone insane, getting every conceivable combination of people in at least five pictures per combo. When the photo ops
finally died down, Bigley suggested that they all meet at Sur de la Frontera for drinks, with dinner to be served at 7, which would give everyone time to have a few drinks while the grooms spent a bit of time at their newly remodeled home.

Mickey and Ian raced each other to the door of their beautiful home, arguing over who would carry the other over the threshold, Ian winning out because of Mickey’s hand. Ian carried him inside and all the way to the bed, where he put him down gently. “Tonight,” Ian began, “I want to take my time with you. We’re always in a hurry, usually because we’re so fucking horny, but I really want this to be a special time for us, one that neither of us will ever forget,” Ian said softly as he began to slowly undress Mickey. Mickey closed his eyes, allowing himself to feel Ian’s touch more deeply, since he wouldn’t be able to see what Ian was about to do. The soft candlelight danced over Mickey’s body, giving it the most glorious glow. Ian leaned over him, touching his lips lightly to Mickey’s, before moving them over his entire face, from brow to chin, ear to ear, then returning to his soft, waiting mouth, sucking at it, lightly still, for just a moment, all the while watching Mickey’s reactions. Mickey, keeping his eyes closed, couldn’t keep up with Ian’s lips, missing them each time they came around to his own. This made Ian chuckle. He knew he was teasing Mickey, but it was fun. Besides, Mickey had certainly tortured him in his own ways many times before.

“Awww…” Mickey began to verbalize his frustration. “Shhhh…” Ian whispered, pushing his finger against his lips, again very briefly. Ian began to rub Mickey’s chest, while still playing the mouth game with him, gradually making his way to his nipples. He grasped one between his thumb and index finger, rolling it firmly between them. All at once, Mickey’s eyes flew open as he pulled Ian’s face down to his, using his left hand, smashing his lips into Ian’s hungrily, refusing to take no for an answer. His swollen cock throbbed with want, Ian’s nipple-pinching fingers instantly electrifying his every nerve. Ian responded reflexively, abandoning his ‘take it slow’ strategy for one more fitting for his aggressive mate. He pulled his lips away from Mickey’s, tracing the contours of his neck, collar bones and finally, his nipples with his voracious mouth, sucking and biting maniacally, as Mickey moaned and withered under him. “Fuck!” Mickey yelled, yanking on Ian’s shorts in an effort to expose his devastatingly delicious cock. Mickey wanted it...in his hand, in his mouth, in his ass, any of the above, all of the above. He wanted Ian. Period. And Ian was teasing him with.

Ian proceeded down Mickey’s torso, licking and nibbling at his taut abs, then, at long last, dusting his solid shaft with light kisses as he slowly caressed his ball sack, gradually sliding his hands under his ass, cupping his cheeks as he lowered his mouth onto his cock, pulling at it slowly, grazing it with his teeth, methodically and intentionally driving Mickey crazy. “Gall-a-gher!!” Mickey screamed in ecstasy. Ian sucked harder, moving down further and further onto Mickey’s cock with his mouth, Mickey arching his ass up desperately, then suddenly pushing Ian’s head away. “I don’t wanna cum this way,” Mickey protested. “Wanna cum with your fuckin’ wicked-ass cock in me, okay? I want it...need it, Ian...This might be the last…” “Shhhhh…” Ian grabbed Mickey by the waist, flipping him onto all fours and lubing his asshole up with his fingers, pausing periodically to slide his tongue in and out of his hole, Mickey’s breath hitching in his throat each time he did. He stretched him slowly, preparing him for the onslaught he begged for, rubbing MIckey’s cock intermittently, his own throbbing as if he were touching it.

“Ian, I want it NOW!” Mickey yelled. Ian responded non-verbally, lubing himself up and then slowly sliding himself in at an angle, tapping Mickey’s prostate lightly and shuddering as he drew moan after moan from Mickey’s swollen lips. He tenderly slipped his cock deeper and deeper into Mickey, their bodies rocking against one another slowly, making love as a married couple for the first time. Ian moaned Mickey’s name into his ear as he drove himself all the way in, then pulling out to tap at Mickey’s prostate again, Mickey rearing back onto him, throwing his head back as he erupted all over their fresh, golden-sheeted marital bed, Ian following immediately thereafter, kissing and sucking at Mickey’s earlobe as he shot his load deep into Mickey’s ass. “Goddamn, Gallagher!” Mickey breathed as he rolled over, taking Ian’s mouth into his own, sliding his tongue between his
lips, their tongues co-mingling lovingly. “Mickey, that ass of yours—I mean mine!” Ian laughed, realizing he would be the lucky recipient of this amazing man’s love and sex for the rest of his life. “I love you, my incredibly beautiful lover and HUSBAND!” Ian proclaimed, collapsing on the bed next to Mickey.

The newlyweds lay in a motionless state of bliss for what seemed like forever, then a buzzing phone interrupted. It was Johnny on Mickey’s phone. “This better be important,” Mickey answered gruffly, putting him on speaker. “You coming to eat?” Johnny asked. “It’s almost 7:30.” Mickey and Ian both started to laugh. “On our way!” Mickey answered.
A Celebration of Friends

Ian and Mickey arrived to the sound of uproarious applause and congratulatory shouts from everyone in the entire restaurant. They both blushed red as they passed through the main rooms, thanking everyone for their kind wishes. Once they reached the alcove, they found the family seated and waiting to be served, several empty bottles of wine and drink glasses, as well as partially-eaten salads littering the table. As soon as Ian and Mickey took their seats, all eyes were on them, their faces to flush yet again. Everyone knew what they had just finished doing, especially since they were late. All they could do was smile, have a drink and start eating their salads.

The waiter brought a tray of champagne glasses as soon as he spotted the newlyweds, a second waiter following behind him with a magnum of Don and an ice bucket. Once everyone at the table had their glass of bubbly, Manuel stood to make a toast.

“This is not going to be a typical best man’s speech,” Manuel began, “because there is nothing typical about Mickey, or Ian, for that matter. And there certainly isn’t anything typical about the love they share. Usually, a best man gets to talk about how his best friend met the love of his life and how they got to know one another. In my case, I found out very soon after meeting Mickey that he had already met, and had a significant history with his. One thing was immediately apparent upon meeting Mickey when he first came to Mexico: A piece of him was missing. There was a giant hole in his heart and he was bleeding out slowly. I’m proud to have been Mandy’s co-conspirator, plotting to get Ian into Mexico and back into Mickey’s arms, where he so obviously belongs,” Mickey squeezed Ian’s hand under the table as he listened to his best friend tell the story that changed his life forever.

“And though they’ve had their trials, every couple does, the love and devotion these two consistently show for one another is beyond anything I’ve ever seen in my lifetime. I stand here today toasting the official beginning of a life together that began long ago, when these two were little more than children, doing their best just to survive in an environment where this kind of love seemed unlikely to even bloom, and impossible to cultivate. And yet it grew and has blossomed into this beautiful, flourishing forever love. Congratulations, Mickey and Ian, my dear, dear friends! You deserve all the happiness in the world!

“Here! Here!” Bigley shouted as everyone raised their glasses. No sooner did the glasses hit the table, than Mandy started to bang on hers with her knife, the others joining in immediately thereafter. Mickey turned his head toward Ian, Ian leaning in to capture Mickey’s lips between his own for a slow, sensual kiss, so smoking hot that everyone at the table had to look away.

When Ian and Mickey finally separated and opened their eyes, plates of surf and turf were being served, Mandy explaining that she had ordered both Mickey and Ian’s filets rare, as they both preferred. Everything smelled heavenly, and tasted even better, if that was even possible. The lobster tails were so tasty and tender, the filets, juicy and flavorful, the twice-baked potatoes and fresh green beans, flawlessly prepared as well. No one at the table could have dreamed up a more satisfying meal, not even Bigley, who, no doubt, had tasted his share of fantastic meals over the years.

Once everyone had finished their meals, and before it was cake-cutting time, Mandy stood to make a toast, as Ian’s Best Person:

“Like Manuel, my view of this love affair has been quite unusual, as Best Persons go, but unbelievably touching and rewarding. I am honored to have been Ian’s best friend through it all, the good stuff, hard to believe there was any, where we came from, the horrible shit, stuff no one should have to live through, which I won’t even talk about, and everything in between,” Mandy paused,
taking a sip of water and glancing over at Manuel nervously. He gave her a reassuring smile, nodding his head for her to continue.

“My friendship with Ian was born out of a crush that I had on him. I actually had Mickey and my other brothers chasing him around the Southside to beat him up, all because he didn’t want me. Of course, that’s not what I told them,” Mandy paused to snicker as Mickey just shook his head.

“Anyway,” she continued, “he finally told me that he was gay, and then I became his ‘girlfriend’, as far as the rest of the world knew, which, I know, sounds weird, but it worked for us at the time. Then he got involved with Mickey, but didn’t tell me. I would have never believed it since no one even knew Mickey was gay, not even himself...Over the years, they put each other through unspeakable torment, each suffering more than anyone should ever have to. But nothing and no one, and believe me, my dad did everything short of killing them, could keep them apart. Their love affair survived Mickey’s forced marriage to Svetlana, Ian’s departure for the military and his bipolar disorder, Mickey’s incarcerations and even their separation at the Mexican border. After all that, I don’t think there’s anything in this whole wide world that can keep them apart. Ian, Mickey, you deserve all the happiness in the world, so tonight I toast your forever love, commitment and perseverance. You are best friend and the best brother a girl could ask for, and I love you both more than words can say.”

As everyone raised their glasses, Mandy sat down and started to bawl, her mind turning to the unfortunate situation that they now found themselves in, destined to be separated yet again, with no guarantee as to when or if they would be reunited. She wanted, just like everyone else, to believe everything would be okay, but deep down, she was worried...scared. Manuel pulled her face into his chest, hoping Mickey wouldn’t see how upset she was, but it was too late. His face fell as he looked over at her, completely aware of why she was upset.

Just as he was about to get up and go over to her, Dr. Montemurro started clanking his fork on his glass, prompting everyone else to do the same. This time Ian palmed the back of Mickey’s head, pulling his face forcefully into his own, kissing him hard, their tongues dancing wildly together in each other’s mouths, their lips feeding on one another insatiably. This time around, their tablemates knew better than to stare, taking a quick glance then looking down awkwardly in unison.

This kiss had left both husbands with stiff dicks and they were individually plotting out ways in their minds to excuse themselves before much longer, each dying to be with the other ALONE and for a prolonged period of time.

Thankfully, the waiters had just cleared the dinner plates and were wheeling a beautiful cake out to the table at that very moment. It had three tiers, gold accents like their new bedroom, including two wedding rings, gold and silver balloons and, in the center of the top layer were two grooms, a slightly shorter one with black hair, the taller, with red. They were absolutely precious, miniature replicas of the real thing. Bigley had obviously spared no expense in having these made. Even the eye colors were correct. The two grooms stood, hand in hand, walking over to cut the cake, which they also did together, Ian’s right hand atop Mickey’s left, steadying it as they cut. Each took a piece in his hand to feed the other, both opting against the traditional ‘shove the cake in each other’s mouth’, which usually ended up in noses, hair, etc. Instead, they fed each other slowly, lovingly, sensually. Even their cake eating had an erotic quality to it, each sucking the other’s fingers clean after devouring the cake, then licking the excess icing off each other’s lips. “Damn, Gallagher! Even eating wedding cake with you gets me hard,” Mickey whispered as he tongued Ian’s icing-covered lips. “Who’re you tellin’?” Ian breathed back at Mickey, pulling him in for a sugary sweet kiss.

Mickey and Ian made fast work of serving everyone at the table their cake, hoping to make an even quicker exit. As everyone sat, after finishing their cake, however, Bigley, who had been texting on his phone intermittently throughout the cake cutting, cleared his throat, asking, “Can I please have a
moment?” The entire table instantly fell silent. He continued, “There’s something that needs to happen now. I’ve waited as long as I can, but I’m afraid now is the time you all need to know. Mickey, it is far too dangerous for you to be here for tomorrow’s press event. Cogswell will file your appeal, requesting that it be expedited, first thing Monday morning. If INTERPOL were to apprehend you before the appeal is filed, the court could reject it. That is why you need to be in the States and ready to turn yourself in before the appeal is filed.”

Mickey stared over at his flawlessly beautiful husband, a look of complete and utter devastation in his eyes, as he slowly began to realize what this meant. “So you’re saying Mickey has to leave on Sunday?” Ian asked hopefully. “No, he needs to leave tonight. I have arranged for my jet to fly him into New York and have reserved him a flight out of JFK to O’Hare, first thing Monday morning. The jet will be at the airstrip in half an hour, so we need to get going. I can take you there,” Bigley finished, a profound sadness, unlike anyone had ever seen on him, overtaking his countenance.

“No,” Ian interjected. “I will take him. I want to be the last person he sees. Can I go with him?” Ian begged in desperation. “You can take him to the airstrip, but please don’t go with him. It is important that you are here for the media event tomorrow, and not just for the sake of the event itself. Your being here in Boca will help to keep Mickey, and yourself, safe until Monday. We don’t want to raise any red flags and get Mickey arrested prematurely. That could be disastrous, even costing us the appeal,” Bigley warned sternly. “Once Mickey is in custody in Chicago, Cogswell will be able to determine whether it is safe for you to go there or not, as well as how long the appeal might take.”

The mood at the table had devolved into one of profound disheartenment. What began as such a joyous occasion, forever marred by the reality that had suddenly befallen them all. Mickey rose to his feet, bearing the demeanor of a condemned man, not even shackles and leg irons could have made him look more forlorn. Each dear person at the table took a turn embracing Ian, then Mickey, before heading out of the restaurant in silence. Ian wrapped his arm around Mickey’s waist, pulling him close, as they followed the others, who were now crowded around Mickey’s car. A chorus of ‘We love yous’ bombarded them as they got into the car, Ian nodding his head at them, Mickey raising his left hand to waive as they pulled out of the lot together.

“As Ian parked at the airstrip, Mickey reached over to touch his face, wiping gently at the tears that continued to cascade down Ian’s face. “I love you,” Mickey breathed as he turned Ian’s face toward his own, kissing him gently as his heart shattered into a million pieces inside of him. “Gonna go now,” he added, tearing his lips away from Ian’s and reaching for his bag in the backseat. “I’ll walk you in,” Ian said, forcing his mouth into the configuration of a smile, although it was anything but. He wrapped his arm around Mickey’s waist, the way he did nearly every day lately, this time wondering when he would be able to do it again, and they walked, Mickey ascending the stairs into the jet, Ian following behind with the bag.

The pilot greeted them, congratulating them on their marriage and offering to recline Mickey’s seat,
prior to takeoff so he could rest. Mickey accepted the offer, the pilot disappearing into the back of the plane as Ian and Mickey stood at the door. Ian dropped the bag at his feet, grabbing for Mickey and pulling him into his body. He held him so tightly, Mickey could scarcely breathe, and yet he felt a profound sense of comfort, unparalleled by anything else in his entire life. His breathing slowed as Ian’s grip relaxed into a warm embrace that Mickey prayed would never end. They held each other, completely still, until the pilot returned. “All set!” he confirmed as he stepped back into the cockpit.

“Okay, you just gotta leave now, Ian. I’m not good at this, but you hafta be, for me,” he implored him. Ian leaned into Mickey one last time, holding his beautiful face between his hands as he kissed him in much the same way he had done at the border, all of those emotions flooding back as he did—the love, the tenderness, the desperation, the frustration, the resignation and, this time, powerlessness. Ian ached to save Mickey from all of this, but he couldn’t. ”I love you,” Ian whispered into Mickey’s mouth. “See you soon,” Mickey said, pushing his voice past the growing lump in his throat as he turned away, walking toward his seat.

Ian descended the stairs, holding onto the railing for support as his legs shook uncontrollably. Mickey watched out his window as Ian walked to his car and got in, before pulling his window cover down, throwing his head into his hands, and rubbing his eyes with his palms as he cried like a baby.

Mickey sobbed as he felt the plane’s wheels come off the ground, leaving his beloved, his family, his home, his business all behind, not knowing when or if he would ever return...
Mickey had cried himself to sleep and had begun to dream, beautiful visions of Ian running to him on the beach, his fiery red hair reflecting the sun, scooping him up into his arms and kissing him, squeezing him, loving him, flooding his brain. Then he dreamt of them in their new bedroom, having each other in every way humanly possible. And finally, he had a dream of Ian getting on the plane with him, holding him, touching him, kissing him, whispering in his ear, “Wanna join the Mile High Club?”

Mickey began to stir, slowly recognizing, with a heavy heart, that he had been dreaming. “I said, wanna join the Mile High Club?” Ian’s voice was still in his head. Mickey’s eyes slowly opened and, as he began to focus, Ian’s smiling face was about two inches from his. “Well, do you?” Ian asked, pressing his lips against Mickey’s, which were now forming a giant grin.

“Wait! What the fuck are you….” Mickey began. “Shhhh…” Ian whispered, slipping his tongue between Mickey’s lips, effectively shutting him up and turning him on at the same time. He kissed him intensely, taking in each and every detail of his mouth, his breath, his face, as though he hadn’t seen or felt him in forever, as if Mickey might cease to exist if he stopped, as if their very lives depended on it. “Damn, Gallagher! Take it easy!” Mickey breathed into his mouth a word at a time, as he was able to squeeze each of them out. “No!” Ian answered breathlessly. “Need this…need you…” Their tongues swirled together passionately, their well-rehearsed routine every bit as erotically enticing as their first time, sending sparks through their bodies as they connected on that cosmic plane that was uniquely theirs. Both men were aroused to the point of leaving wet spots on their boxers, each anticipating every move of the other, grinding their bodies together, sweating and panting furiously as their desire piqued. “That pilot the only other one on the plane?” Mickey questioned Ian between kisses. Ian nodded in affirmation.

“Take your fuckin’ clothes off,” Mickey demanded, pulling at Ian’s shorts. Ian complied readily, helping Mickey with his as well. Mickey wasted no time, pushing Ian down across the pair of seats beneath them, instantaneously going down on Ian’s ready and waiting cock, humming and sliding his mouth over it voraciously as he massaged Ian’s balls with his left hand, flooding Ian’s body with carnal excitement. Ian’s fingers played recklessly in Mickey’s shiny black hair as he moaned uncontrollably, throwing his head back against the armrest. Mickey paused, licking Ian from tip to hilt, then tracing the contours of his body all the way to his nipples, then collarbones, neck, then finally, his ear. “Gonna ride you,” Mickey whispered huskily, a shiver running up Ian’s spine as Mickey’s words sunk in.

Ian reached for his shorts, pulling the tube of lube he had carried from the car for precisely this situation, squirting it onto his fingers, then slathering it between Mickey’s ass cheeks, dipping his index finger in and out of Mickey’s puckered hole. Mickey moaned softly as he sucked tiny mouthfuls of Ian’s tender skin into his mouth, Ian adding a second, then a third finger into Mickey’s behind, prepping him quickly. Mickey continued to focus his efforts on Ian’s neck, clavicles and chest, sucking a trail of hickies from one area to the next.

“Ready?” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear as he lubed up his enormous erection, pressing it against Mickey’s beautifully round rearend. “Always,” Mickey answered with a devilish grin, straddling Ian, one knee on each armrest as he slowly lowered himself onto him. Ian guided Mickey by his right hip, his left hand positioning his perfect package beneath him. They connected slowly at first, Mickey’s body moving up and down in a galloping motion as they gained momentum. Ian grasped both of Mickey’s hips tightly, digging his fingers into Mickey’s bouncing bottom as he pulled Mickey more and more forcefully down onto his swollen shaft. Mickey cried out Ian’s name, that familiarly painful
pleasure resonating throughout every fiber of his being. Ian slowed his thrusts, allowing Mickey to take back control of their movements. Mickey slid his amazingly tight asshole torturously slow, up and down Ian’s tremendously engorged cock, Ian moaning, “Mickey” better than a dozen times as his body begged for its ultimate pleasure. “Shhhhh…” Mickey whispered, covering Ian’s mouth with his own as he continued to ride him ever so slowly, rocking his hips to alter the angle at his whim. “Oh fuck yeah!” Mickey repeated until he finished slowly spewing his love potion all over Ian’s chest and stomach, “Here I come!” Ian screamed as Mickey’s taut rectum wrung shot after shot from Ian’s erupting manhood, draining him slowly, one powerful pulse at a time, until Ian lay, half-conscious and completely spent, in a lifeless heap under Mickey.

Mickey laid his head on Ian’s chest, listening as his heartbeat slowed to something near normal, before asking, “So, you gonna tell me what the fuck you’re doin’ here?” “I thought that was obvious,” Ian answered with a smirk, still out of breath. “Yeah, dumbass, I fuckin’ know what we just did. I wanna know why you were here to do it!” Mickey said sternly, a hint of fear in his voice.

“I wasn’t ready for it to end,” Ian answered sadly. “What the fuck you mean, ‘end’? Ain’t nothin’ endin’!” Mickey spoke softly, but with an undercurrent of annoyance. “Our wedding day! It wasn’t meant to end that way. It was meant to end THIS way!” he laughed. “It’s not funny! Bigley warned us about this--not a good idea!” Mickey chided Ian. “Too late now,” Ian said, smiling as he sucked Mickey’s bottom lip into his mouth, biting at it playfully.

“Yeah, well I don’t know what the fuck happens now,” Mickey said, throwing his arms up in resignation. “Guess we’ll just have to find out,” Ian responded, still not seeming to grasp the gravity of the situation.

The rest of the plane ride was fairly quiet, Ian and Mickey huddling together as they lay across the two seats that had, only a short time ago, been their playground. As the plane began its descent to land, Mickey asked, “How we gonna get you past this joker?” “What?” Ian asked, a confounded look on his face. “The pilot. How are you plannin’ to get past him?” Mickey clarified. “Oh, he knows I’m on here,” Ian answered casually. “He fuckin’ does?” Mickey asked incredulously. “Yeah, why?” Ian questioned. “Cuz I wouldn’t a been fuckin’ all out in the open if I knew that!” Mickey yelled. “Relax, I talked to him a good bit when I got back on the plane, actually sat with him as we took off,” Ian said, stroking the side of Mickey’s face lovingly. "Besides, we just got married! Who fucking cares?!” Mickey just smiled, shaking his head at the audacity of his partner--his husband!

Once they landed, Ian grabbed Mickey’s bag, slipping the lube inside. “You bring your pills, bitch?” Mickey asked, looking over at Ian as he shoved the lube into the inside pocket of the bag. “Yup!” Ian replied, pulling his pill bottle from the bag, rattling the pills in Mickey’s ear. “Put ‘em in here this morning. It’s half of my supply. Wanted to be prepared,” Ian explained. “Well, we got some more prepping to do. Like figuring out how the fuck we’re gonna tell Bigley about this,” Mickey complained. “We don’t have to tell him. He probably already knows. I shoulda been back home a long time ago!” Ian laughed. “Yeah, well, who would know if you weren’t? You coulda been plannin’ to stay at the beach house,” Mickey countered. “Nope! I told Dr. Montemurro that, if you left, I wouldn’t be at work, so I’m sure everyone knows,” Ian insisted.

The newlyweds thanked the pilot as they descended the stairs to the tarmac at Bigley Enterprises. A limo was waiting, the driver grabbing their bag quickly and stowing it in the trunk, before opening the rear limo door for the couple. Ian’s phone immediately started blowing up, once he took it off airplane mode. Mickey had received only one message, which had been sent shortly after his departure from the restaurant. It was from Bigley, “Please call me when you get checked in at the Soho. The room is in my name--it’s the penthouse suite.”

Ian had also received a text from Bigley, as well as one from the doctor and one from Mandy. The
one from Bigley had been sent well after the one to Mickey, saying, “Ian--you have put yourself into a very dangerous situation, and have risked Mickey’s safety as well. I understand, and will do my best to keep you both safe, but I really wish you had listened. Please let me know when you two get in.”

Dr. Montemurro’s was shorter: “Ian, I hoped you wouldn’t do this, but wish you the best. FYI: Bigley is pissed!”

Mandy’s was the sweetest: “Ian, I’m scared for you guys! Please be safe and happy! Let me know you’re okay. I love you both!”

The couple checked in and were escorted up to the penthouse suite, where a bottle of Champagne was waiting for them, chilling next to the bed in the room where Ian had stayed before, a fire lit in the bedside fireplace. “For someone who didn’t want me to come here, Bigley sure did set us up!” Ian said with a chuckle. “Yeah,” Mickey murmured, his intense blue eyes burning into Ian’s very soul. “Guess he wants us to enjoy ourselves while we can,” Mickey added, raising an eyebrow. Mickey peeled his clothes off, hopping into the bed, while Ian opened and poured the champagne, setting it on the side table to remove his own clothing and pull the lube from the bag.

“Hope you’re not too tired, Firecrotch!” Mickey teased as he pulled Ian into the bed with him. “You wish…” Ian replied with an evil grin.
Magical M's

The beach area was decorated with multicolored balloons and other adornments, countless press agents collecting behind the barriers, all waiting to meet and interview the owners of Ojos Azules and their heroic models. Bigley, Johnny, Manuel and Mandy were standing by, waiting for the rest of their honored guests, a group of displaced business and homeowners, to arrive, some of whom were being bussed in from shelters further inland. They were all about to be resettled into their newly renovated businesses and beach homes, thanks to the generosity of the many kind purchasers of the surfboards Ojos had so thoughtfully crafted and distributed around the world. Of course, Bigley had front-loaded the financing of these efforts himself, but the fundraiser was getting all of the credit.

Bigley, introducing himself as a regular customer and vacationer of the Boca area, kicked off the celebration, which included ribbon-cutting ceremonies up and down the streets and beachfronts of Boca del Rio, the press trailing along to bear witness. He introduced Mandy as a hero, turned model, and Manuel as a humble business owner, who had been personally affected by the hurricane through his auto accident, as well as the destruction of his home. They each took turns telling their personal stories, the crowd clamouring to meet the crimson-haired hero that helped to save Manuel’s and so many others’ lives.

Bigley returned to the mic, explaining that Ian was unavailable, then projecting his pre-recorded story. Once that was over, the members of the press began to dig. “When will he be back? Where is he on such an important day? What is he doing with his emergency medical skills now?” Bigley avoided sharing any specifics, while at the same time, trying not to appear evasive. Everything seemed to go fairly well in that regard, the event, overall, being a smashing success. The locals absolutely fell in love with Mandy and Manuel, the new power couple of Boca del Rio, and were anxious to meet Ian, which was promised for a later time. Bigley elected to leave Mickey’s name out of the event altogether, given the current circumstances, coupled with the fact that there was a whole slew of people there whom he didn’t know, meaning there could easily have been INTERPOL agents there, or any other law enforcement, for that matter.

As the event drew to a close, an exhausted Mandy took to her phone, texting Ian to share the successful outcome with him, and also to check in and be sure they were okay. When she didn’t get a text back after 20 minutes, she decided to call.

“He’s busy,” Mickey barked into the phone, ending the call abruptly. Mandy assumed she had interrupted something, and turned her attention to Manuel and Bigley, who were singing her praises. She truly had outdone herself, between the wedding planning and the setup for the press event. After the kind of publicity they had received at this event, there was no telling how many new orders they might receive, but it would definitely be substantial, enough to rebuild the rest of Boca, for sure!

“This has been a fantastic day!” Bigley proclaimed jubilantly, throwing his arm around Mandy’s shoulder as Manuel did his best not to glare at him. “And there’s one more ribbon cutting that we need to attend,” he continued, putting his other arm around Manuel. “Come with me,” Bigley said, gesturing toward his limo. Mandy and Manuel got in, Bigley following, and within minutes they were pulling up a completely rebuilt version of their beach house. The damage had been so severe that Bigley and his contractors had decided to start from scratch. “Bruno, this is...it’s...” Mandy was uncharacteristically at a loss for words. “This is absolutely incredible!” Manuel finished. “We can’t thank you enough, and we will pay you back for all of this,” Mandy interjected, once she got her bearings. “No need!” Bigley exclaimed. “My share of the fundraiser profits is more than enough to cover all that we’ve done here! Besides, you are like family to me!”
As Mandy and Manuel toured the inside of their new home, Manuel was overtaken by emotion, unable to conceive of his good fortune. He felt as if his life was nearly perfect, and when Ian and Mickey got back, he planned to talk with them about the future of the company, as well as his future with Mandy. For now, he just prayed that they would both be back home soon, safe and sound.

Mickey had Ian pinned down on the bed, face down, and was using a plastic hanger to literally beat Ian’s ass with. “Fuck the bed or I’ll hit you harder,” he demanded, an evil glint in his eye. Ian humped the bed, as directed, his hard-on raging beneath him. Damn, if this kinky shit didn’t get him hard as fuck! “You really fucked up and you’re gonna learn a lesson,” Mickey growled as he repeatedly brought the hanger down onto Ian’s quivering ass. “And since we can’t go anywhere all fuckin’ weekend, I have all the time in the world to teach you, don’t I?” Mickey asked, though he already knew the answer. “Yesss,” Ian answered, wincing in pain. “Yes, what?” Mickey demanded, swatting Ian’s ass again. “Yes, sir!” Ian added, his dick now so hard it hurt. “Bet you can’t wait to get off, huh?” Mickey teased, putting the hanger down to reach under Ian’s body and stroke his rock-hard cock. “Mickey…” Ian’s voice trailed off as he, feeling Mickey let go of his cock, braced himself for more punishment. “What the fuck do you want?” Mickey snarled into Ian’s ear, just before he resumed his flogging. “I want you to fuck me,” Ian whimpered.

“Oh, is that right?” Mickey hissed sadistically. “Well, then, I wouldn’t wanna disappoint you,” he responded, squirting an ample puddle of lube between Ian’s red, swollen ass cheeks. He slid his fingers up and back over Ian’s asshole, grazing his ballsack lightly, then gingerly poking his index finger into his unbelievably tight opening. “Jerk your cock while I prep you,” Mickey ordered, Ian immediately following instructions, sliding his own hand slowly up and down his ample rod. “Up on your knees, bitch,” Mickey barked, completely in control of Ian’s every move. “Yes, sir!” Ian answered enthusiastically, enjoying the hell out of this whole scenario. As Mickey toyed with his asshole, Ian became so aroused, he was ready to cum, so he sped up the motion of his hand on his own dick. “Nah, Nah, Nah...slow!” Mickey commanded as he continued to open Ian up. “Please fuck me, sir,” Ian begged. “You ain’t ready!” Mickey whispered into Ian’s ear as he pushed a second finger partially into Ian’s ass, against great resistance. “So fuckin’ tight I might rip ya open!” Mickey explained, dropping his dominant character for the moment. “It takes some time,” he breathed, now resuming the role of concerned and loving husband, which, for Ian, was just as much of a turn-on. “I’m good,” Ian insisted, willing to say or do anything at this point to get off. “Wait,” Mickey said softly, spreading Ian’s ass cheeks wide apart and tonguing his hole like it was made of honey. Ian moaned loudly, adding, “Fuck, Mick! It’s so fucking good!” “Mmhm…” Mickey answered as he continued to tongue at Ian mercilessly, inserting a finger or two in between tongue strokes.

After five suspenseful, yet immensely pleasurable minutes, Mickey finally said, “I think you’re good. You think so?” “Fuck yeah, Mick! Let’s go,” Ian said impatiently. Mickey obliged him, easing himself into Ian, bit by bit, amid moans of pleasure, mixed with frustration. Ian’s every action based in complete and utter hedonism. Ian reared back against Mickey, hastening his entry and quickly realizing his mistake. He breathed in sharply, biting down on his lower lip to stave off the yelp that threatened to escape his lips. Ian could handle being submissive. Fuck! He actually loved it! But he was still a relative novice when it came to bottoming, and he frequently underestimated the patience and preparation that were needed for optimum pleasure and minimal pain.

“Gallagher! Let me do it! Trust me!” Mickey said softly, grasping Ian’s left hip with his left hand, while holding his casted hand against Ian’s right hip. He breathed softly into Ian’s ear, relaxing him as he slowly guided him further and further onto his slicked up dick. “Stroke yourself,” Mickey cooed, his voice oozing with authoritative sex appeal. Mickey seamlessly turned the whole experience around, giving Ian such great pleasure that he literally could not stop chanting Mickey’s name. Ian tightened his grip on himself, hastening his pace until he was on the verge, right along with Mickey, whose cock was also threatening an explosion. Ian’s ass cheeks were tender from the
earlier part of their session, so Mickey took care to be gentle, even up to the last, finessing himself in to the hilt without slamming his hips into Ian’s ass for his final stroke, shooting off inside him like a firecracker. “Fuck, Gallagher!” he moaned. That was it for Ian. He blasted all over the headboard, the pillows and his own hand, still murmuring Mickey’s name.

“Fuck, that was good!” Mickey remarked as he held his husband to him, stroking his hair gently. “Still think you really fucked us by getting back on that plane though,” Mickey sighed, changing the subject far too soon for Ian’s liking. “What’s the worst that can happen? We already know you’re turning yourself in,” Ian argued, “I don’t want you to have to do this alone, Mick. I love you!” “I fuckin’ know that, but Bigley said you coming here would be dangerous for YOU! ‘The fuck you think that means? Huh?” Ian could feel Mickey getting pissed, his chest and arms tightening up underneath him. “I’m sorry,” Ian said almost inaudibly, “but what’s done is done, and I’m here, so let’s make the best of it.” Ian finished, trying to force a smile, despite knowing he was in deep shit with his husband.

Mickey rolled over on the bed, away from Ian with his back turned. Ian could sense that Mickey was crying, or close to it. “Mick, I’m sorry! I promise I’ll visit you everyday! It will be alright,” Ian spoke persuasively, trying to stop Mickey from worrying. “You don’t get it! I know where the fuck I’m goin’. Been there before. Know how to fuckin’ survive. You ain’t ready for prison! You shouldn’t fuckin’ be here!” Now the tears streamed down Mickey’s face like giant raindrops on a plate glass window. Ian wrapped himself around Mickey, pulling their bodies as close together as physically possible, weeping as he whispered, “I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry. I’m so fucking sorry.”
The rest of Saturday and all of Sunday went by in a blur, Mickey doing his best to stay positive after his own breakdown and Ian’s subsequent one. Mickey always worried when Ian showed the slightest sign of emotional instability, fearing the worst: that his bipolar disorder would rear its ugly head. It was this worry that added to Mickey’s monumental fear of Ian being incarcerated. Not only did he have that sweet, innocent look that would make every prisoner want him for his bitch, but he also suffered from a mental disorder that could make any prison time he had to do even worse if his medication regimen were to be disrupted; A spike in his stress level could also compromise the effectiveness of his meds, even if they were being properly administered to him. Mickey had realized just how unprepared Ian was for prison when, of all times, the two had been making love the night before. Mickey had done everything humanly possible not to make Ian hurt when he took him, and still Ian was in pain, even a day later. Mickey shuddered to think what it would be like for Ian to be raped, or even to willingly give himself, out of necessity, to another inmate, who would, undoubtedly, not be gentle like he was. The very thought of it made him nauseous.

Mickey had seriously considered asking Bigley to fly Ian back to Mexico, but didn’t want to piss him off more. He had heard, via a text from Manuel, that Bigley had seriously flipped out when he found out that Ian was on the jet. “The guy absolutely adores Ian. He’s so grateful to have his grandson alive,” Manuel had said. So it was no surprise to Mickey that he would be upset with Ian for putting himself at risk. Hell, he felt exactly the same way. Even if Ian did manage to remain free after Mickey’s incarceration, where would he stay? He’d be in Chicago, but without a job or a home. This whole scenario just felt so wrong to Mickey. Ian belonged safe at home on the beach in Mexico, waiting for him there, out of harm’s reach.

He tried talking Ian into at least staying in New York so he could fly back to Mexico with Bigley the next time he went, but Ian refused, reiterating that he didn’t want Mickey to go through this alone, and that there was nowhere else he would allow himself to be, than with him through all of it. Then he made Mickey promise not to speak of it again.

Mickey attempted to calm himself down and stop making Ian feel guilty. He recognized that he was bringing extra stress onto Ian, so he really tried to keep his promise, stay quiet about his concerns and enjoy the time they had left together. They ordered room service, drank bottle after bottle of champagne, and lay in bed for hours, sometimes making mad, passionate love, while other times just holding each other, kissing, hugging, laughing...just being together.

It was nearly 9PM when Ian got a text from Bigley:

“I purchased a second plane ticket from JFK to O’Hare, so you and MIickey will be on the same flight. It takes off at 6:40 tomorrow morning, landing in Chicago at 9:10. A limo will pick you up at 4:30 AM at the Soho, and, once you get to O’Hare, another will take you to Cogswell’s office, where you will be briefed on what will happen next. Cogswell is filing the appeal, first thing in the morning, along with a motion to expedite, based on “good cause,” due to the new evidence being presented, which Cogswell believes will lead to full exoneration. I can’t say where you will stand in all of this, but Cogswell may have an idea…”

Ian shared the information with Mickey, then texted back a brief, “Thank you...Sorry...but I love Mickey!”

Ian and Mickey began packing what little they had, realizing that they had to get up, basically in the middle of the night, and get to the airport. “Better try to get some sleep,” Mickey said in the most somber voice Ian had ever heard come from his lips. “Ever think about what got us into all this shit?”
Ian asked, “Far as I can tell, it was you joining the army, then going AWOL. Then you told Sammi and she called the fuckin’ MPs on you, so I tried to get my revenge,” Mickey recounted his version of the events.

“Yeah, but I would never have joined the Army if you didn’t get married to Svetlana,” Ian countered. “Like I had a choice!” Mickey retorted, getting upset. “Well, I couldn’t stand to see you with someone else,” Ian explained, “when you clearly belonged with me,” Ian confessed, throwing his arms around Mickey’s neck and pulling him in for a slow, smouldering kiss that made Mickey want to throw him on the bed and have his way with him. He resisted the urge, feeling the need to sleep before the next day’s ordeal.

They opted to bathe before bed so they could basically get up in the morning, throw clothes on and go. Ian started the water for the hot tub, which was still the easiest for Mickey to use with his hand in a cast. And since the tub was so large, Ian figured he might as well get in with him. His bottom could use a nice leisurely soaking, after all it had been through the night before, although the hot water did make it sting a bit at first. Both men agreed readily to a non-sexual bath. After all, they had fucked at least seven times since their wedding night, and hadn’t slept much at all. Monday was going to be a harrowing day. Best if they got some rest.

The bath seemed to relax them both a bit, but Mickey was quite restless throughout the night, regardless, which negatively impacted Ian’s night’s sleep as well. Mickey had been plagued with nightmares, all of Ian being Incarcerated and abused, Mickey looking on but not being able to do a thing about it. He woke several times with clenched fists and tears in his eyes, each time Ian reassuring him as he rubbed his back, lulling him back to sleep.

The alarm jarred Ian awake at 4:10. Mickey had been lying there with his eyes open, completely still so as not to disturb Ian’s remaining sleep opportunity. Ian began rubbing Mickey’s back again, presumably to help him wake up. “I’m up,” Mickey grumbled, lifting his heavy body up off the bed. He really had to pee, but had waited, once again, in the name of allowing Ian as much sleep as possible. He ran for the bathroom, wasting no time getting cleaned up, brushing his teeth and dressing himself in one of the extra sets of clothes Ian had packed for him, a powder blue henley and a pair of khakis. “Damn, you look good!” Ian said with a smirk. “Guess you’d think so since you picked the clothes,” Mickey replied. “This shirt makes me look like a pussy!” Mickey added. “I love that shirt on you,” Ian said sweetly. “Yeah, and so will every other piece of shit who sees me walk into prison and wants me for his bitch!” Mickey said with a scowl. “Just give ‘em that look! No one will fuck with you,” Ian laughed. Mickey just shook his head, thinking ‘He has no fuckin’ idea…’.

Ian got up and dressed himself quickly, offering the plain black t-shirt he had packed for himself to Mickey. “No fuckin’ way,” Mickey said, refusing the shirt. “You’re wearin’ that!” “Okay,” Ian said softly, closing the gap between himself and Mickey. “I love you,” he said as he leaned into Mickey’s face to kiss him. “Love you, too! Mickey said, returning the kiss. “Time to roll.”

The limo was already waiting by the time they got the elevator down to the lobby, the driver opening the door quickly and ushering them in. The plane ride was smooth, despite Mickey and Ian being seated apart, since the tickets weren’t purchased at the same time. They sat close in the back of the limo on the way to Cogswell’s office, kissing deeply, passionately, desperately--their love for each other so all-consuming that they couldn’t bear to feel separate for a single second, each silently enduring the pain of knowing separation was imminent.

When they got to Cogswell’s Chicago office, which was a good bit smaller than the Manhattan one Ian had met him in, they were welcomed in high style, opting for coffee and a light breakfast, which was delivered to Cogswell’s office by his assistant. “Hello, gentlemen,” Cogswell began. “Mikhailio,
it is my pleasure to meet you. I’m Blake Cogswell, your attorney. Ian, wonderful to see you again, although being here is not in your best interest.”

Mickey swallowed hard, glaring over at his beautiful husband contemptuously. “I’m going to get right to the points here, and there are several,” he continued. “Mikhail…” “It’s Mickey,” Ian said, interrupting Cogswell. “Mickey,” Cogswell corrected himself, “I have filed your appeal and a Motion to Expedite, based on Good Cause, that being the new evidence that will surely exonerate you, ultimately leaving you with no criminal record as an adult.

The major hurdle here is waiting for the appeal to be heard. The fact that you are a fugitive, having escaped from prison, will preclude you from bail or bond eligibility, which means you will be remanded to Cook County Correctional, once you turn yourself in, where you will await the outcome of your appeal.” Cogswell paused, taking a deep breath, then lighting a cigarette. “I can tell you for sure that this thing is a slam dunk. The evidence is strong.”

“Can you tell us about this new evidence?” Ian interjected impatiently. “Certainly! I have a full briefing on it that was included in the appeal, along with sworn statements from all of the witnesses. Would you like me to read the briefing to you, or do you want to read it yourselves. Ian looked at Mickey, who hadn’t said a word since they arrived at the office. He just shrugged his shoulders. “Go ahead and read it to us,” Ian replied.

Cogswell took one last drag off his cigarette before crushing it out, then cleared his throat,

“Samantha Slott was killed during an unfortunate altercation at Cook County Correctional’s Medical/Psych Unit, where she was being evaluated after another altercation she had been involved in on the Women’s Unit. According to witnesses, including multiple inmates, guards and medical personnel, she attacked another inmate, Teresa Lewis, with a shiv, threatening to harm her unborn child. Ms. Lewis fought back and yelled for help, at which time two female guards, attempting to subdue her, had to use force. One of them, while using an acceptable degree of force for the situation, inflicted a fatal blow to the head. Multiple witnesses reported having heard her admit, as she lay dying, to purposely having Mikhailio Aleksandr Milkovich arrested on attempted murder charges, as well as having military police arrest her half-brother, Ian Gallagher for going AWOL, as vengeance against the Gallagher family for her son’s incarceration, which she claimed was the result of the actions of her youngest half-brother, Carl Gallagher.”

Cogswell paused again, putting the folder down and attempting to gauge Ian’s reaction. Ian and Mickey stared silently at Cogswell, Ian’s eyes imploring him to continue. Cogswell now began to explain further, “Ms. Slott had also shared this information with her cellmate previously, but now that she shared it in front of numerous witnesses as a dying declaration, it is admissible in court, and should be considered as new evidence for overturning Mickey’s conviction on appeal. Additional evidence that we were able to gather against Ms. Slott includes a sworn statement by her father, Francis Gallagher, indicating that she shot him in the arm in an effort to “train the dog”, meaning to make him a better father” Cogswell smirked, “Just between you and me, we don’t really need his statement at this point, which is fortunate since it cost us a week’s worth of open tabs at the Alibi to get him to sign, and he likely would make a terrible witness anyway, if the case were to be retried.”

Ian chuckled at the idea that even a lawyer, who didn’t know Frank from a cake of soap, could tell he was a piece of shit. He looked over at Mickey, whose expression had remained stony since their arrival, but was now just sad. “You okay, Mick?” Ian asked. “Sounds like you’ll get off for sure,” he added. “Yeah, sounds like,” Mickey said softly, his mind clearly somewhere else. “But how long will it take?” Ian asked.

“Well,” Cogswell began, lighting up another smoke. “It’s hard to say, but if my Motion to Expedite
is granted, I would hope it could be within ten days. Ian let out a deep sigh. “Will I be able to visit him?” he asked. “That is the next point I need to cover with you,” Cogswell began, taking a deep drag from his cigarette. “Ian, there is a warrant out for your arrest, on charges of Aiding and Abetting a Known Fugitive and Aiding and Abetting a Convicted Felon. Obviously, I can move to have these charges dismissed, once Mickey’s conviction is overturned, but until then, I’m afraid you are in grave danger of being arrested. This is why Bruno told you NOT to come to the States right now. I do believe, at this point, you are best off to turn yourself in as well, rather than trying to run or hide, possibly causing new charges to be filed against you, charges that I wouldn’t be able to make go away after Mickey is exonerated.”

Cogswell droned on for another ten minutes, explaining the procedure for turning oneself in, promising to have one of his associates visit regularly to update Mickey, and discussing the possibility of Ian being allowed out on bail, awaiting his preliminary hearing. But neither Ian nor Mickey were listening anymore at this point. All Mickey could think about was Ian going to prison, knowing they would likely not be housed together, worrying about his mental and physical health, but realizing he would be powerless over it all. Ian thought only about how he’d rather be in prison with Mickey than anywhere without him, having absolutely no understanding of the penal system. In his mind, he and Mickey would be cellmates.

When Cogswell finally finished talking, Ian turned to Mickey and said, “See, everything’s gonna be fine!” Mickey looked back at him, shaking his head, and said, “What fucking world do you live in?” Mickey looked down, averting Ian’s gaze, as his eyes filled with tears.
Cogswell accompanied Mickey and Ian to the Chicago Metro Police Station, where the Chief of Police was waiting for them. They were both cuffed immediately and were booked on their charges rather efficiently, most likely due to the high profile nature of the situation, Mickey being an escaped felon, and Ian having aided his escape. Of course, Cogswell had advised both Ian and Mickey to say nothing at this point, having explained that Ian would be arraigned, at which point Cogswell would request that bail be set. If bail were to be denied, which he felt was a good possibility, he would file a motion requesting that Ian be held on the Medical Unit, because of his need for daily medication, something Bigley had made clear to Cogswell as soon as he found out he was on the jet with Mickey.

Both Ian and Mickey were transported to Cook County Correctional, Ian, to await his arraignment and Mickey, to await his appeal being heard. En route to CCC, Mickey was extremely quiet, even withdrawn, until he caught sight of the prison, saying only, “Don’t act like my husband around anyone. They’ll take all your stuff, your ring, your clothes—everything. Just do whatever the fuck they say, and don’t even look at me while we’re being processed.” “Okay,” Ian whispered, wiping the tears from his face. As they pulled into the prison lot, Mickey spoke to Ian again, keeping his eyes forward, “Quit fuckin’ cryin’ NOW! Don’t let anyone see even the smallest sign of weakness.” “I love you,” Ian breathed, choking back his tears. “Love you, too,” Mickey said so quietly that Ian wasn’t sure he actually heard him say it. “But we don’t know each other here,” he added.

Ian and Mickey were led into the main building of the prison for processing. They were given their uniforms, then paraded down the center hall toward the showers, amid whistles, catcalls and a myriad of suggestive comments. “Hey baby!” “Hello Ladies!” “Nice ass!” “Cherry Ginger!” There were also rumblings among some of the inmates who recognized Mickey, one prisoner yelling, “Milkovich! How the fuck they find you?” Mickey just kept walking, eyes forward, as if he were oblivious to all of it, watching Ian walk in front of him, his husband, the man he had gone through hell and back to be with, and sadly, the one who loved him too much to let go when he should have, who would now surely live to regret it.

Once they reached the showers, they were strip-searched, including body cavity searches, and made to shower before putting their prison uniforms on, Mickey doing his best to keep his cast dry, the correctional officers barking orders at them every step of the way. “Yeah, Milkovich, yo’ ass ain’t gettin’ outta here this time,” a large, African American guard taunted. “You gon’ to Super Max! You gon’ love it! No female staff gon’ spring ya from there! Gon’ be in the hole fo’ while!” Mickey’s face didn’t change, maintaining a stone-cold, hard-ass scowl, avoiding all eye contact, and not allowing himself to look in Ian’s direction at all.

Ian kept his head down the whole time, trying not to react emotionally to the comments that had just been made to Mickey. “You a pretty lil thang,” he said to Ian. “Fellas gon’ like that red hair. You lucky though. You gon’ stay here a bit,” he added, looking Ian up and down.

Mickey was fuming, but still gave no outward sign of it. Instead, he tried to keep his mind somewhere else, reflecting back on his wedding night, the remodeled beach house, and the weekend he and Ian had just spent together. One good thing was that he was going to the hole. As bad as that sounded, Mickey knew that, in solitary, he didn’t have to worry about getting into any fights. The major downside was that he would have no way of checking up on Ian, unless one of Cogswell’s people were to visit. It was going to tear him up, not knowing where Ian was, whether he was getting his meds, whether other inmates were fucking with him. Cogswell had promised visits from an associate, but he had been lied to by attorneys so many times before, that Cogswell’s word meant
nothing to him. In fact, he would never have gone for any of this if it weren’t for Johnny, whom he trusted to the ends of the earth. They had done plenty of business together, and Johnny had been around, done time, dealt with lawyers and situations like this before. Fuck, he wished he could talk to Johnny right now.

No sooner had Mickey gotten dressed and had all of his personal effects taken from him, than he was being corralled into a prison van to be transported to Division IX, which houses super maximum security prisoners, as well as those who have committed disciplinary infractions while in custody, Mickey having done the latter when he escaped. The ride over was long and quiet, too quiet, forcing Mickey to think—think about all of the horrible things that could be happening to Ian. His time in the hole would be more of the same, no interaction with anyone, no gym privileges, just time alone to sit and think.

Upon his arrival, Mickey was greeted by three white guards, two tall and burly, the third short and stocky, all of whom wanted a piece of him. Escapees were not well-liked in prison. They were a walking reminder of a fuck-up, one that the warden would not soon let any of his employees forget. They led him into the building, each taking the opportunity to rough him up a bit on the way to the hole, one getting in a few kidney punches, another punching him in the face and the last slamming him into the wall, all after they were in the bowels of the building, of course, the place where there were no cameras, no supervisors, and from where no tales were ever carried. “Better watch yourself, Milkovich! No one here gives a shit whether you live or die,” the short, stocky one warned as he uncuffed him and locked him into his dank, mildew-riddled cell.

Mickey sat on his rock-hard mattress, which lay directly on the cement floor of the cell. The walls were covered with peeling paint, cobwebs and a rancid-smelling dampness that made him gag. He held his ring finger in his casted hand, spinning his non-existent ring around his finger, missing Ian so badly he could taste him on his lips—literally worrying himself sick, dry-heaving into the steel bowl he had for a toilet. “Fuck, Ian!” he yelled, breaking down, “Why the fuck didn’t you listen!??”

Ian remained in DIvision V, where he was to be held until his arraignment, which could happen anytime within the first 72 hours of his incarceration. He had brought his medication with him, but was concerned that it was taken and stored with the rest of his personal effects. He wanted to ask someone about it, but remembered that Mickey said not to say a fucking word to anyone. He trusted Mickey and just hoped someone would give him his meds. He had already taken his morning dose, but needed to take it again before bed.

He was assigned a cell with another prisoner, an older white, balding, Italian-looking gentleman, possibly in his 60s, already inhabiting it. “Hello,” the man said to Ian as he walked in, unpacking the toiletries the prison had charged his commissary account. “Hello,” Ian said reluctantly, remembering Mickey’s instructions, but at the same time, getting the sense that this guy wasn’t any kind of threat. “They gonna lock us in here?” Ian asked, surprised that the door to their cell had been left open. “Only at night,” the man replied, adding, “My name’s Joe. What’s yours?” “Ian,” Ian replied, feeling a bit better to have gotten what he felt, at first blush, was a pretty normal cellmate. “Well, Ian, this is overflow housing for minimum to medium security prisoners and temporary placement for those awaiting arraignment, so we have more freedom than most. Gotta be careful though. Not everyone in here’s like you and me. Some of ‘em are lookin’ to get with ya, if ya know what I’m sayin’. And you are a beautiful boy,” he said with a smile that weirded Ian out a bit. “My advice, stay close to the guards, the good ones. I’ll show ya who they are, and pray to God your arraignment happens sooner than later,” Joe finished, laughing nervously. “Okay,” Ian said, sitting on his mattress and pulling his legs into himself, hugging them with his arms.

Before too long, the guards called everyone on the unit to go for lunch. Ian lined up behind Joe, trying to blend in with the rest of the population, which, with his bright red hair and beautiful face,
was completely impossible. All too soon, he was receiving all of the wrong kind of attention, trying his best not to acknowledge anything he heard. He was, however, finding it difficult to ignore the physical invasions of his personal space. There were at least three inmates who grabbed at his ass, and one who had gotten in his face and tried to kiss him, before one of the guards put a stop to that.

Once Ian got to the cafeteria, he immediately began scanning the room for Mickey, inadvertently drawing the attention of many inmates who assumed he was checking them out. A lot of different men tried putting their lunch trays down next to Ian, but Joe stared them all down, surprisingly causing them to back off. Ian smiled at Joe in appreciation, receiving that same creepy smile back in return. Lunch was edible, barely, but it certainly wasn’t going to make Ian forget the gourmet meals he got at Sur de la Frontera.

Ian managed to get through the rest of the day, hiding out in his cell as much as possible, where he could close his eyes and cry without anyone knowing. He already missed Mickey so much, and knowing where he was going made it worse. Mickey was to be housed with the most violent and calculating of offenders, but only after having to spend time in solitary confinement. How stupid he was to think he would be with him in prison! Who knows when he might see him again. Even if Ian was given the option to get out on bail at his arraignment, he wouldn’t be able to visit Mickey. A former inmate is not permitted to visit anyone in prison until he had been out for six months. Ian had read that in the paperwork he was given when he turned in his personal effects. He prayed Cogswell was right, that Mickey would be exonerated, putting all of this behind them.

Ian had opened his eyes, after a good cry, and was staring down at his naked ring finger when he heard a guard’s baton banging on the door to his cell. “Gallagher! Let’s go!” he bellowed, startling Ian. Ian rose warily from his mattress, fearing what might be coming next. He followed the young, white guard down the main hall, the pair stopping near the building entrance, where a second guard handcuffed him and led him to a prison van. He rode some distance before arriving at a Building marked simply, ‘Division X’.

He was led inside and immediately put on an elevator, which he rode to the 3rd floor. As soon as the doors opened, he knew by the smell that he was in the Medical Unit. After all, Ian had certainly spent enough time in the hospital to know that smell, between his injuries, mental health issues, ambulance runs and, most recently, his work at the clinic; he would have known with his eyes closed. He was escorted to a cell in the front hall, where he was uncuffed, then locked in. Ian must have sat in his new cell for at least an hour before anyone addressed him. Finally, a young female inmate, evidently working there, approached his cell. “Did you have dinner?” she asked, her voice so soft he wasn’t sure she was talking to him. “Gallagher, I said, did you have dinner?” she repeated, a bit more loudly. “No,” he muttered, avoiding eye contact, still staring at his ring finger with a perpetual frown on his face. “Well, you can’t take these medications on an empty stomach,” she explained. “Would you like a dinner tray?” “Sure,” he said, finally raising his eyes to meet her smiling face. She was tiny, almost frail, her red hair pulled up into a messy bun on top of her head. She had a kind face and, other than creepy Joe, she was the only person who had shown him any kindness all day. He smiled back at her as she turned to get his tray. He rested back on his bed, noticing, much to his pleasure, that he had a real pillow, not like the rock he had in his last cell.

“Gallagher, your tray...and I have your meds, too,” the young woman said, sliding his tray through the meal slot of his cell. “Thanks,” Ian said. “You must have some powerful friends,” she said softly. “Oh yeah?” Ian began, “Why do you say that?” he finished. “I’ve never seen anyone get in here for meds on their first day,” she explained. “Well, how long have you been here, I mean...working here,” Ian clarified. “That’s a story for another time,” she answered quickly, walking away. “Well, can you at least tell me your name? I’m Ian,” he called out to her. “I know who you are. I’m Reesie,” she answered, just before disappearing around the corner and out of his view.
Ian breathed a sigh of relief at having been moved to a safer, more pleasant place where he was getting his meds and food, without being harassed. He couldn’t stop worrying about Mickey though. Right now, as he was resting, fully medicated, on a comfortable pillow with a full belly, Mickey was toughing it out in a hellhole somewhere, alone—completely cut off from everything and everyone and, worst of all, worrying about HIM! And he knew it was all his fault...
Mickey awoke suddenly to a severe pain in his stomach. He felt as if something was eating away at him from the inside out. He curled up in the fetal position, applying pressure with his cast, hoping the pain would subside enough that he could go back to sleep. Of course, he had no idea how long he had slept already, nor did he have any kind of awareness of time of day. He knew that no food trays had been brought since he had fallen asleep, so he assumed it was nighttime. He drifted in and out of a restless sleep, waking up sweaty one time and freezing the next, but always with Ian as his first thought. This physical pain he was experiencing was dwarfed by the emotional anguish he had been living with, all day, everyday, ever since he found out Ian had opted to come with him. The images in his mind of Ian being raped, forced to give a blow job, getting kicked, punched or otherwise abused by guards, all spun through his head in an endless loop.

Then, as if to prove that things could get worse, he had to run for his cold, steel bowl, expelling the most putrid liquid imaginable, first from one end, then the other. Mickey was beyond sick, and was fast becoming dehydrated. He did his best to get back and forth from his toilet to the bed and over to the sink, his only source of hydration, since he didn’t even have a cup to fill. Breakfast had been pushed through his meal slot, which was at the bottom of his cage, while he was sleeping, and had served no purpose other than the smell making him more nauseous.

By the time lunch came, he sat, sweating and freezing simultaneously on his stainless steel throne, getting up only to vomit, before seating himself again. “Better eat,” the inmate delivering his food said. “Gonna get real sick, otherwise,” he added as he pushed the cart on down the hall to the next cage. “Already there,” Mickey mumbled to himself, too weak to project his voice enough to be heard.

Finally, he was so devoid of hydration in his body, he no longer needed the toilet, and managed to slither back to his mattress, where he passed out from pure exhaustion. “Milkovich!” a tall, slender guard hollered in a harsh tone. Mickey didn’t move. “Milkovich!” the guard yelled louder, banging on the bars of his cage with his baton. Mickey’s head moved ever so slightly for a brief second, then rested motionless once again. “You alive?” the guard asked, his voice a bit less stern. Finally, the guard walked away, returning five minutes later with a second guard. They unlocked the cage, entering together, batons drawn and at the ready. “Milkovich!” the second, shorter guard yelled as he cuffed Mickey, which was challenging, due to his cast. The guard dragged Mickey to his feet by the cuffs, the second guard grabbing hold of him to keep him upright. “This fuck’s in bad shape,” the shorter guard commented, struggling to keep him on his feet. “Yeah, fuck it! I’ll get the wheelchair,” the taller guard responded, leaning his side of Mickey against the wall before leaving the cell to get the chair. “Sure you wanna take him?” the short guard asked. “Have to,” the tall one replied, “His lawyer’s here.”

Within minutes, Mickey, dumped callously into an old, rickety wheelchair, was on his way to visitation. The short guard wheeled him up to a table, locked the wheels on the chair and walked away. “Mikhailio,” a young, blonde associate attorney from Cogswell’s firm addressed him. Mickey’s eyelids seemed to blink ever so slightly, his eyes remaining closed. “Are you okay?” the attorney questioned, Mickey mumbling unintelligibly in response. “I’m Thomas Slade. I’m an attorney from Cogswell’s Chicago Office. Do you understand?” he asked in a concerned voice. Mickey nodded faintly. “Well, Cogswell wants you to know that his Motion to Expedite has been granted and your appeal will be heard next week. Do you understand?” he asked again. Mickey nodded again, barely. “And he wants you to know that Ian’s arraignment will be held tomorrow. We will be asking for bail to be set, but it will likely be denied.
“Wh….” Mickey began to speak, but was too weak to get out a single word. “Do you need something to drink?” Thomas asked. Mickey nodded, trying unsuccessfully to hold his head up. Thomas walked over to the nearby vending area and purchased a bottle of water for Mickey, setting it on the table in front of him. Mickey reached for it with his left hand, but couldn’t open it. Thomas opened the bottle for Mickey and, seeing that Mickey was too weak to function, held the bottle up to his lips so he could drink. “Thanks, man,” Mickey mumbled, adding, “Where’s Ian now?”, trying his best to project his voice, despite being on the verge of passing out.

“Ian is on the Medical Unit, where he is receiving his meds. As I said before, we are going to try to get bail set for him, but if that doesn’t work out, we are hopeful he can remain in Medical, pending the dismissal of his charges, which we believe will happen shortly after your conviction is reversed on appeal. “Thanks, man. So no one’s messin’ with him there?” Mickey asked. “I would doubt it, but I’ll find out for sure tomorrow when I see him at the arraignment. I tried to see him today, but without an appointment, I basically got told to come back later. I’ll keep you updated. You really seem sick. Maybe you should see a doctor,” Thomas suggested. “Nah, not gonna happen when I’m in the hole. Just gonna rest, which will be a fuck of a lot easier, now that I know at least Ian is getting his meds. Can I take this with me?” Mickey asked, pointing to his bottle of water. “I’ll see what I can do,” Thomas replied, getting up from his chair to talk with the guard who had been supervising them.

He came back to the table, nodding his head. “He says that’s fine,” Thomas assured Mickey, handing the bottle to him as a thirty-something white guard with a deep scar over his eye grabbed the handles on the wheelchair to return Mickey to the hole.

As Mickey got nearer and nearer to his cell in the hole, the stench of the place started to get to him again, his stomach churning, his head spinning. “Better drink what you can now, Milkovich. You ain’t takin’ that water in with you,” the guard warned. Mickey knew better than to argue with the guy, so he tried to chug as much of the water as possible before being dumped out of his wheelchair into his cage. He had a very difficult time, between being cuffed, having a cast on his right hand and being so weak from dehydration. Once he hit the floor of his cell, he really started to feel sick again. He struggled to get to the toilet, where he proceeded to lose what he assumed was all of what had just drank, then he crawled over to his mattress, where he curled up into a ball and passed out, his last coherent waking thought being that Ian was getting his meds, the last image in his mind being Ian’s angelic face.

Ian’s day started with a hot breakfast being pushed through his meal slot, along with his morning medication dose. “Mornin’, Ian said with a yawn, as he grabbed his tray. “How are you feelin’ today?” Reesie asked, a genuine, yet sad, half-smile on her face. “Okay, I guess,” Ian replied, really wanting to tell her how worried he was about Mickey, but remembering Mickey saying not to talk to anyone about their business. He got a positive vibe from Reesie. She seemed like a good person. Sure, it was true, he didn’t know a thing about her. For all he knew, she could have been an axe murderer, but he didn’t think so. He decided against saying anything about Mickey, but did ask about two of the people he saw coming into Medical overnight. They had both been vomiting profusely, and were severely dehydrated.

“Did they give those two guys IVs last night?” he asked. “Yep! Put ’em in myself!” Reesie said matter-of-factly. “You did?” Ian asked, shocked to hear that an inmate would be trusted to do such a thing. “Well, I AM a nurse, ya know?” she responded. “No, I didn’t know that!” Ian answered with a big smile. “I’m an EMT!” Ian began excitedly, “And I’m planning to go to nursing school after all this is over,” he finished, blabbing his business like it was nothing. ‘Mickey would be pissed’, he thought to himself, clamming up suddenly. “Really?” Reesie said, turning to administer meds to another inmate. “Yeah,” Ian answered shortly.

Ian sat quietly, watching her administer meds all the way down his hall, before finally deciding to
ask, “Do we get to shower here?” “Yeah, I can get one of the male guards to take you in a bit, if you want,” she answered, looking like she wanted to say something more, yet staying silent.

No sooner had she gone to get someone to open his cell and take him to shower, than a slew of other guards showed up with a big bunch of sick inmates, vomiting and shitting all over themselves. “Reesie!” One of the prison nurses yelled. We gotta get these guys showered and hydrated.” “Okay,” she answered, running toward the men, who were in wheelchairs and on gurneys, all too weak to stand. Ian had just been let out of his cell and was being uncuffed. “Please--Let me help you!” Ian pleaded, looking at Reesie, then at the prison nurse. The prison nurse, whose name was Lucy, shook her head. “He has to be on the books, assigned to work Medical before we can use him,” she said. “At least let me help them in the shower,” Ian volunteered, seeing that the two women were overwhelmed, and that the guards who had brought these men had already disappeared back into the elevator.

Ian had been about to be escorted into the shower by one of the guards anyway, and none of the guards on the unit were too excited about cleaning up puke and shit, so they agreed, wheeling the men into the shower room, Ian walking behind them. They all had to be sat on bathing chairs and hosed down, something Ian had witnessed being done during his stint at the psych ward, so he knew exactly how to handle it.

Once Ian and the sick inmates had all been showered, they were wheeled into the infirmary, where Reesie and Lucy began infusing them with IV fluids, all except one, whose veins were giving them a bit of trouble. “Reesie, trust me! I can do it! I’ve put IVs into tinier veins than that!” Ian bragged. “Oh yeah?” Lucy asked, doubting him. “Yeah,” he answered, “I’ve done a shitload of IVs on kids.” “Okay, McDreamy, let’s see what ya got,” Lucy said with a smirk, handing an IV kit to Ian. Once Ian hit the guy’s vein, which took about thirty seconds, he had won Lucy and Reesie’s respect, and once all of the men were stabilized and resting comfortably, Lucy started the paperwork for requesting that Ian be given Medical as his work assignment.

At this point, Ian felt the need to share the fact that he would be arraigned in the next few days. “I already knew that,” Lucy said. “Your attorney asked to see you today, but you were in the shower and he didn’t have an appointment, so I told him to come back later. He said to let you know that your arraignment would be tomorrow morning, and that he was going to be asking them to set bail.” “He say anything else?” Ian asked. “No, that was it,” she answered.

Ian wanted, more than anything, to ask about Mickey, but remembered Mickey’s words: “We don’t know each other here,” so he bit his tongue and said nothing, returning to his cell, where he could be alone with his thoughts and free to cry for his love, whom he missed like the desert misses the rain, the hole in his heart so big and so painful, he thought he might die. “Mickey…” he whispered to himself as the tears rolled down his cheeks.
Down With the Sickness

Ian had worked for pretty much the rest of the day in the infirmary, which was now at capacity with sick inmates, all from Division IX, which meant there needed to be extra security in Medical since these guys were from Super Max. It also meant there was either a mystery illness spreading through IX or, more likely, they all got fed some rotten food. It certainly wouldn’t be the first time someone working the kitchen didn’t wash their hands properly, didn’t cook food long enough, or left food out too long. Then there was the added possibility that the food was bad when it came in. Cook County Correctional wasn’t known for its quality menu. The bottom line was that nearly everyone in Division IX was sick. Chicago Memorial was even beginning to fill up with inmates at this point, since the infirmary in Medical was out of beds.

When Ian woke the next morning, he noticed right away that his cell door was open. “Reesie!” he yelled, upon seeing her heading for his hall. “Yeah?” she called back to him. “My cell’s open!” he said with great excitement. “Yeah, Lucy got you hooked up. If you don’t get out on bail, you’ll be able to stay in one of the Privates up here, now that you’re working here officially,” Reesie explained.

“Iss that what you do?” Ian asked. “Pretty much,” she replied vaguely. “I was a patient not too long ago…” her voice trailed off. “Were you sick?” he asked. “No, I had an emergency C-Section at Chicago Memorial and they sent me back here to recover. I’m pretty much healed now…” Reesie said, cutting her explanation short. “So, you have a baby?” Ian asked. Reesie stopped what she was doing and paused for a beat before answering, “Yeah, but I can’t see her and I don’t wanna talk about it,” she said in an uncharacteristically cold tone. “Well…” “I said I don’t wanna talk about it, Gallagher!” she said firmly, adding, “You gotta eat, take your meds and get ready. They’ll be here to take you for your arraignment soon.”

Ian ate, took his meds and got himself together, as much as is possible when you have to dress in your prison uniform and walk into court in handcuffs. “Hey Lucy,” Ian called out, avoiding Reesie and her salty attitude. “What is it, Gallagher?” she asked as she changed IV bags. “These guys are all from Division IX, right?” he asked. “Yes,” she answered shortly, thinking he already knew this and wondering why he was asking again. “That’s where violent offenders and escapees are housed, right?” he honed in on his real question, which was whether that was where Mickey was, but without mentioning his name. “Yeah, along with a lot of other dangerous and incorrigible inmates,” she said with a chuckle. “Why? Do you feel unsafe? That’s why all this extra security is up here. Besides, these guys are still really weak, and we have them in leg restraints,” she laughed again. “No, no. I’m good. Just wondering…” Ian mumbled softly, now deep in thought about what this could mean for Mickey.

‘Mickey is probably sick! ’ Ian thought to himself. ‘But maybe no one knows, since he’s in the hole’. He resolved to ask the attorney today at his arraignment whether he knew if Mickey was in the hospital. If he wasn’t, then he would insist that the attorney visit him to be sure he was okay. Now his heart was racing. What if it was too late? What if Mickey died of dehydration before anyone could know or give a shit? He was starting to spiral and was about to ask Lucy or Reesie if they could find something out for him, when a stout, middle-aged African American guard approached him. “Time to go, Gallagher. Gotta cuff ya before we leave,” he said, pulling the cuffs from his belt and reaching for Ian’s hands, which he willingly held out for him. “You really don’t belong in here, do ya?” he said, snapping the cuffs on him. Ian said nothing, walking along side him, his eyes downcast, his mind a million miles away, worried about Mickey’s very survival.
Mickey’s skin was ashen, and he was completely unresponsive when the inmate delivering his morning tray arrived. The inmate, a young white hoodrat, who was probably all of 18 years old, abandoned his cart, looking for a guard to open Mickey’s cell. He was sure he was dead. After about 20 minutes of trying to convince a guard to come to Mickey’s cell, one finally agreed. It was the same one who had returned him to his cell after his meeting with Thomas, the one with the scar over his eye. “Milovich!” he yelled, rattling his baton on Mickey’s cage. No response. He turned to get another guard, as was protocol before opening a cage in the hole, only to find that another guard had already approached the cell.

They opened the cell quickly, rushing in to see if the boy’s suspicions were correct, kicking him along his torso, tapping on his head with their batons, then performing a stern rub, which elicited a weak, barely audible moan. “He’s alive, but in bad shape,” the second guard said, leaving to get the wheelchair. The first guard called for an ambulance and, within minutes, Mickey was in the back of an ambulance, the EMT starting an IV immediately and putting him on a nasal cannula.

Prior to pulling out of the Division IX lot, the EMT was instructed by the Assistant Warden NOT to take him to Chicago Memorial, because of his condition and the fact that he had come from the hole. The last thing CCC needed was another inmate trying to sue them, so they rushed him to Medical, calling ahead, but not getting an answer. Upon arrival, they were greeted by Lucy, who was about to tell the EMT that there were no beds, but then took one look at Mickey and said, “Bring him here,” putting him in the private room she had earmarked for Ian.

Once she got him settled in the bed, hung his IV, and put him back on oxygen, she took his vitals, which were rebounding well, but still not close to normal. She called the prison doctor, who was not scheduled to be in, but was on call, explaining the recent rash of sick inmate admissions from Division IX, and adding the specifics of Mickey’s case, including the fact that he came from the hole. Dr. O’Reilly agreed to come to see Mickey, requesting that Lucy start IV antibiotics on him, as well as all of the other men.

Dr O’Reilly arrived within the hour and went directly into Mickey’s room to examine him. “I don’t like his color,” he said softly. “Let’s do a CBC. I’d like to check his liver and kidney function, plus see what his white count is.” Lucy left the room to get all of the tubes and other supplies needed for the bloodwork. She returned, looking to find a good vein. This was going to be tough since she didn’t want to stick the arm that was in the cast, but the other arm already had an IV in it. She decided to move his IV to his hand, leaving room to draw blood from where that IV had been. This would be a pain in the ass, but would avoid having to irritate the casted arm, which she and the doctor felt would be best.

While in the process of making these changes, Mickey started to come around. “What da fuck’s goin’ on? What are you doin’?” Mickey mumbled in an agitated voice. “You are very ill and severely dehydrated. We are trying to get some blood to…” Mickey cut the doctor off. “No, no, no. I don’t need...I’m fuckin’ fine…” “Better give him a sedative, a small dose. We’ll never get this done otherwise,” O’Reilly advised. Lucy left the room again, returning with a syringe, which she promptly stuck into the existing IV, having been unable to disconnect it because of Mickey’s outburst. Once he was out again, she was able to make the necessary changes and get the blood they wanted. They left him to rest, which he did for about an hour before he started to regain consciousness again, disoriented, and starting to call out intermittently, first Ian’s name, then a long string of expletives.

Reesie, having just finished medicine rounds in the infirmary, walked into the room to see what all the commotion was about. Mickey was still coming and going, in and out of consciousness and had closed his eyes again, falling silent. As she looked down at him, she gasped. His eyes blinked open. “Reesie….” he whispered, a peaceful look washing over his face.
Ian’s arraignment had gone as expected. Thomas requested that bail be set for Ian, but it was denied, based on his ties and recent time spent in Mexico. The District Attorney argued that he would be a flight risk, and the Court agreed. He was remanded to Cook County Correctional, Division X (Medical) to await his trial. Normally, he could have pled his offense down and shortened his prospective sentence, but Cogswell wasn’t interested in that. He felt all he could get the D.A. to drop all of the charges against Ian, once Mickey’s conviction was overturned, which he was confident would happen, based on the sworn statements he had regarding the late Samantha Slott. All of this was made clear to Ian, prior to his return to CCC. He was also told that Mickey had been very ill when Thomas had met with him the day before. In fact, Thomas was so concerned, that he planned to pay Mickey a visit immediately following the arraignment. He assured Ian that he would keep him updated, then called to schedule the appointment to see him while he and Ian were still at the courthouse.

Ian waited nervously, trying his best to make sense of everything by listening to Thomas’ end of the phone conversation. He knew Thomas would share any new information with him after he hung up, but Ian was so worked up about the possibility of Mickey being critically ill, that he couldn’t even wait for the call to end. “He was?” Thomas questioned. “He did...He is?” Trying to eavesdrop on this conversation was only making things worse for him, so he put his mind elsewhere, thinking back to the plane ride with Mickey and their wild weekend at the Soho, all the times that he held Mickey in his arms. God! He longed for that! To bury his nose in the crook of Mickey’s neck and breathe him in again, to feel his taut body against his own, to kiss his full, pink lips...Oh, how he ached to experience every little pleasurable, endearing thing about Mickey, over and over, for the rest of his life.

“Ian,” Thomas’ voice cut into his daydream, “Mickey is in the infirmary. He is quite ill, but he is stable. Since you are being housed in the Medical building, there’s a good chance you will see him there,” he finished. ‘A damn good chance,’ Ian thought to himself, breathing a small sigh of relief, although hearing how sick he was made him nervous. “Okay, can we please go now?” Ian asked Thomas. “There is a prison van waiting for you outside, so you should be back there within 15 to 20 minutes,” Thomas said with a smile. “Thank you, Thomas,” Ian said, offering his cuffed hands for as close to a handshake as he could manage.

Once Ian arrived at Division X, he was led up onto the Medical Unit by two guards, then uncuffed and put into his cell. They locked the door behind him. His first instinct was to tell them he worked there and didn’t need to be locked in his cell, but then he thought about Mickey saying, “Do whatever the fuck they say...” and he kept quiet. He’d been sitting in his cell for about half an hour when Reesie came by. “How’d it go?” she said with a giggle. “Very funny! Obviously, my bail was denied,” he said, knowing she already surmised as much. “Well, I’m just as glad to have you here to help us with all of these sick men we have been getting,” she said, still smiling, brighter than he had seen since meeting her.

“So, are you gonna get me outta this cell, or what? Ian asked, puzzling over why he was locked in there, but not wanting to ask. He was also dying to ask her about Mickey, but he knew Mickey wouldn’t want that. He didn’t even want anyone to know they knew each other. “Sure, I’ll go get one of the guards,” she offered. “Wait,” he said, wanting to talk with her before they had a guard up their asses. “Can I trust you?” he asked. She stood silently pondering his question for a moment. “Of course you can,” she finally answered. “Okay, I want to tell you something, but first, you have to tell me something you would only tell someone you trust,” he said, really putting himself out there to this girl, but not quite understanding why, other than because she had treated him well from the moment
they met.

“Like what?” she asked. He thought for a minute, wondering what he should ask. “Like...what are you in here for?” he finally blurted out. “Same as you,” she replied. “Oh, so you know why I’m in here?” he asked, rolling his eyes. “I know that...and a whole lot more,” she said, suddenly looking away. “Oh really?” Ian said sarcastically, thinking she must be toying with him, although she didn’t seem the type. “Yes, Ian, but I’m really not supposed to talk about it,” she answered. Now his curiosity level was through the roof. “Please...if you know so much about me, it shouldn’t be a problem to share some of it. After all, if you’re talking about me, I should already know what you are about to say,” Ian said, hoping to get her to spill something, either about herself or what she claimed to know about him.

“I am in here because, like you, I helped someone escape from here,” she whispered, her face pressed up against the bars of his cell. Ian chuckled, “How the hell’d you do that? You’re an inmate. If you helped someone escape, I would think you would have gotten out, too.” Now she rolled her eyes, thinking he should be picking up what she was putting down by now.

“Ian, I wasn’t an inmate back then. I worked here as a nurse, but after I got caught, I was charged with Accessory to Escape and Aiding and Abetting a Convicted Felon. Ian stood staring at her incredulously for a full 30 seconds before backpedaling and sitting down on his bed, fearing his legs might come out from under him. “You...you’re...you are the one who helped Mickey escape...and now you’re in prison because of it,” he said slowly as she nodded her head. “Yes, it’s a long story that I’m not supposed to share, on the advice of my attorney, but yes, and before you ask anything else, I know all about you. He told me everything. And I knew who you were before they brought you up here,” she said.

“How did you...when did...did you...” Ian couldn’t even put a coherent sentence together. Here he was, staring at this frail, pale little red-haired woman who had risked her career, her safety, even her life, to help Mickey get out of prison. There was so much he wanted to know. How did they meet? Did she love him? Did he love her? How did she get him out? But instead of asking any of these things, he managed to finally say, “Is he okay? Where is he?”

Reesie stepped away from Ian’s cell, disappearing into the infirmary. Ian was positively woozy and his stomach was churning. He wondered if Mickey was really okay. Where did Reesie go, and why was it right after he had said Mickey’s name? Did he fuck up by asking about him? Was Reesie really who she said she was? Ian had never given Mickey’s actual escape much thought, but now his mind was flooded with questions. ‘Oh God, what just happened here?’ Ian thought, his mind spinning endlessly, his stomach trying unsuccessfully to keep up. He leaned over his toilet and lost his lunch, lying down on the bed afterward, the nerves in his stomach still jumping wildly.

Reesie returned with one of the guards, who opened Ian’s cell for him. Ian wanted to ask Reesie more questions, but kept quiet, as he always did around every guard he came into contact with. “We need your help with an IV,” she said to Ian, putting on a professional tone. “Thank you,” she said, turning toward the guard, who was now walking back toward the infirmary. “Follow me,” she said to Ian, moving in the direction of the private room that had been meant for him, but was now full--with Mickey. Ian rose to his feet, wobbling slightly as he followed her, feeling like the floor was bouncing under him randomly, making him dizzy and off-balance. She pointed at the doorway, busying herself with paperwork just outside.

As soon as Ian hit the threshold of the door, he caught a glimpse of Mickey, who looked to be unconscious, hooked up to an IV and oxygen, cuts and bruises marring his beautiful face. He gasped, fighting to hold back the scream and subsequent tears that were threatening to leave his body. He approached the bed slowly, thinking about Mickey’s statement when they first arrived at
the prison, “We don’t know each other here.” But he’d already blown that out of the water by saying Mickey’s name to Reesie. He hoped he didn’t fuck up, but something had told him, from the moment he met her, that she was not a threat. And if what she had just told him was true, she was anything but.

Ian decided to go with his gut regarding Reesie, but since the infirmary was swimming with guards, he was going to play it cool. As Ian looked down into MIckey’s beaten face, now right in front of him, he struggled not to touch him, wanting so desperately to throw his arms around him, to hold him close, to smell him, kiss him, protect him…

“How long has he been out?” Ian called out to Reesie, who now stood in the doorway. Hearing Ian’s voice, Mickey’s eyes fluttered open. He stared into Ian’s eyes, Ian staring back in silence, watching the corners of Mickey’s eyes moisten, the slight hint of a smile playing at his dry, uncharacteristically pale lips. “Who’s here?” were the words Mickey’s lips formed, although there was no voice behind them. “Reesie, can you come over here?” Ian asked, effectively answering his question without making a direct response. “Sure,” she replied, walking over to stand next to Ian. “Reesie,” Mickey whispered almost inaudibly. “Yes, Mickey, it’s just us, Ian and me,” she assured him. Mickey breathed a sigh of relief, his eyes moving over both of their faces, his smile widening considerably. “How are you feeling?” Reesie asked. “Like shit,” Mickey breathed, although the smile never left his face. “I better switch with Lucy. Once these guards figure out who we all are, we’re fucked if we get caught in a room together like this,” she said nervously, turning on her heel and heading out into the infirmary.

Now that they were alone for a second, Ian took the opportunity to get a few words in. “Mickey, I love you so fucking much,” Ian began, the tears in his eyes brimming over and trickling down his delicately flawless face. “Stop the cryin’!” Mickey said under his breath, adding, “I love you, too. Glad you’re okay, but we gotta be real careful. Shhh!”

“I’m the only one here,” Ian explained. “Reesie tell you?” Mickey breathed. Just then, Lucy walked in. Ian backed away from the bed, pretending to check Mickey’s IV bag, before turning toward Lucy. “Hi,” he said, his face blushing uncontrollably. “Relax, Gallagher. I’m aware,” she said, rolling her eyes. “We have a large guard presence here for the moment, but many of these inmates from Division IX will be returned to their units tonight or tomorrow, so things will go back to normal soon. Until then, you should limit your time in here after this, and stay clear of Reesie. She’s worried about her case, ya know, and she can’t be around him,” she said, looking at Ian, then back down at Mickey. “Lucy!” Mickey called out, using a bigger voice than any of them had heard since his arrival. She approached the bed, grabbing his left wrist to check his pulse, in case any guards might pass by. “Is she gonna get out?” Mickey asked in a low voice. “Looks real good, but she can’t get mixed up in this,” she said, motioning around the room in reference to both MIckey and Ian. “Reesie is too sweet, and it’s gotten her into a big mess. Please...keep your distance,” she said, looking at Ian, then back down at Mickey. “Got it,” Mickey breathed. “Good! Then get some rest. You need it to heal.”
The rest of Ian’s day was a blur of IV bag changes, discharges, interspersed with a few admissions, and finally, some time to get things back in order around the infirmary, the majority of the overflow security finally dispersing, with most of the Division IX inmates gone. Ian’s mind was racing the entire time. He was happy to meet the person who had helped Mickey when no one else, including him, would. He thought back to the last time he had visited Mickey in prison, only because Svetlana had paid him. He should have been talking to lawyers, trying to get him out. After all, he was in prison for standing up for him. Instead, he was preoccupied with his own life, to the point of trying to completely blot Mickey from his memory and his life.

Despite being MIA during this most difficult time in Mickey’s life, Ian still craved knowledge, details, context for what he had just learned. He remembered being surprised to hear from Jesus, when he and Mickey had visited him in Texas about getting a ‘coyote’ to help them across the border, that Mickey had supposedly gotten a ‘prison chick’ to fall for him, but now, after meeting her, it was all so much more real, and he needed to hear the story.

He could tell from Mickey’s behavior in her presence, and also in Lucy’s presence, that he trusted them, so at this point, he figured he would find out what he could from them, then, when he had the chance, get Mickey’s take on the whole series of events. His first opportunity to talk with someone outside the earshot of any guards was with Lucy, while she was showing him how to input discharge summaries, something he was going to be doing a lot of during his stay.

He started the conversation innocently enough. “So, you knew Mickey when he was in here before?” he asked casually. “Yeah, he was a frequent flyer in here, especially after the whole tattoo incident,” she responded. “Oh, you mean it got infected?” Ian asked, remembering the way it looked when he had seen it. “That’s the understatement of the year!” she answered. “What? What does that mean?” Ian asked, surprised to hear her response. “He contracted MRSA in that thing, so he had to be admitted for some time here to be treated for that. Then there was all the abuse he suffered at the hands of various inmates, and guards, actually. That tattoo was pretty much an advertisement that he was homosexual, which is never a good thing in prison, but Mickey, being the type not to take any shit, made it all that much worse for himself. Let’s just say, he was here a lot,” she finished.

Ian’s stomach was twisted so tightly, he felt short of breath. Just the thought of Mickey being abused multiple times like that brought him close to vomiting, right then and there. He swallowed it down, fighting for every breath he pulled in. “You okay? You look a little pale,” she said, picking up on Ian’s sudden illness. “Actually, no. I’m sick, just hearing about this,” he spoke honestly. “We did our best to protect him, keeping him in the infirmary for as long as possible each time he came; we really did.

While he was here, we learned all about ‘Ian Galagher’, the man who meant enough to Mickey for him to tattoo his name into his skin. I doubt you can even conceive of the feelings that man has for you. Reesie and I spent many a night, after our shift was over, crying over his situation, but not knowing what could be done about it. We always kept him until he was well, but every time he went back, it was only a matter of time before he’d be here again, many of his wounds ending up infected, including one particularly bad one on his forehead. He also suffered a broken arm, compound fracture, broken in two places. He had to go to Chicago Memorial to have that surgery, but then came back to us to stay for a while. He was on IV pain meds and was really out of it. That was when we found out about his childhood and made a pact to get him out of here. It was also when...” Lucy, hearing two guards conversing as they approached, clammed up suddenly, focusing her eyes on the computer screen in front of her, pointing, for effect.

‘I have to get into his room,’ Ian thought to himself. He needed to hold him, to console him, to apologize for all he had been through, and all because of him! He wondered how Mickey could keep this from him, but then, after thinking about it, didn’t know how he would have possibly been able to tell him, having to relive all of this unspeakable torture.

The guards took a tour of the entire floor, checking bed charts against their list, making sure everyone was in the right place. As they made their way over to the desk where he and Lucy were working, Ian kept his head down, hoping not to be noticed, but again, his bright red hair betrayed him. “Gallagher! When’s your shift over? It’s late. You need to be in your cell,” one of the guards yelled. “And where is Lewis? She needs to be locked in tonight as well,” he added sternly.

“We’ve had an extremely busy day here,” Lucy began, “so, if you don’t mind, I could use both of them for a while longer. Can Steve just lock them in when they are done?” she asked, looking over at the guard who stood at the entrance of the infirmary everyday from 3 to 11. “Steve, can you handle that for us?” the guard called to him. “Yeah, sure. No problem,” he answered. “Thanks,” the second guard replied, pressing the elevator button.

“Whew!” Lucy said as they disappeared into the elevator. “I was afraid one of you was going to be moved off the unit,” she added. “Please, Lucy! I need to see him!” Ian pleaded, pressing his hands together tightly, tears rolling down his face, ready to drop to his knees and beg, if necessary. “For a minute,” she replied, scanning the entire floor quickly, then motioning to him to follow her.

“Mickey!” Ian sobbed as he ran into his room, bending down over him to embrace him as best he could with all of Mickey’s encumberments. He kissed his forehead, then each of his temples, each cheek, his nose, his chin, then finally, his lips, which he lingered on for some time before Mickey piped up, “Gallagher! Chill! We don’t need trouble!” he whispered, his eyes surveying their surroundings nervously. “Fuck, Mick! I had no idea…” “Shut the fuck up!” Mickey whispered, unintentionally putting a slight amount of voice into it. “Guards been circulatin’,” he explained. “Fuck, I wanna talk to you, Mick! I’m so sorry…for all you went through here,” Ian breathed. “Okay, yeah, but I don’t want them to take you away, so stay the fuck outta here,” Mickey whispered back.

Ian returned to the hallway, where he caught sight of Reesie, changing a dressing on one of the few patients left at this point. He didn’t even know what to say to her. The level of gratitude he felt toward both her and Lucy, but particularly her, for being willing to go to prison in order for Mickey to be free; he was completely in awe of her. He tried to clear his head, which was plagued with images of the incidents and injuries Lucy had described to him, Mickey’s battered face, the way it currently looked, among them. Fuck! He just wanted to get out of there with Mickey and never look back.

But now he wanted to help Reesie, too. How could he not, after all she had done to help Mickey. He looked over at her again, noticing for the first time the contours of her face and the color of her eyes. She had such a familiar look, kind and gentle, but also very familiar. He watched as she circulated among the remaining patients, attending to their medical needs expertly, while showing such a deep level of compassion at the same time. He never thought prison nurses could be so kind. It was comforting to know that, in a place where there was so much hatred, maltreatment and out-and-out abuse, there were still some people who cared for their fellow man, regardless of their crimes or mental infirmities. He felt honored to be working with Reesie and Lucy, and he felt as if he owed them his life.
Breakfast In Bed

Ian woke to the sound of trays being passed and the murmur of voices. He struggled to fully gain consciousness, rubbing the sleep from his eyes and blinking in response to the bright lighting of the hallway. “Good morning, sleepy head!” Lucy said, passing Ian’s breakfast and meds through his meal slot. “’Mornin’, ” Ian replied, his voice still lazy. “Need your help today. Still lotsa records to update, and Reesie’s gone for the morning.” Lucy said, loudly enough for a nearby guard to hear. “Can you please open his cell when he’s done eating? He needs to get ready for his shift,” she continued, turning to face the guard, a tall, twenty-something blonde, who was more concerned with his phone than anything else. “Yeah, sure,” he answered, walking over to unlock the cell, then returning to his post, and to his scrolling and texting.

“Guess I’m sprung early,” Ian said under his breath as he picked up his tray and walked out of his cell. “Lucy,” Ian called down the hall, “Yeah?” she responded. “Think I could get a shower?” he asked. “Sure,” she responded. “You can use a private one, if you want,” she added, motioning toward the private rooms. Ian walked up close to Lucy, turning to see if the guard was watching him. He was still playing on his phone, completely oblivious to his surroundings. “Is he all the security we have today?” Ian asked quietly. “Yeah,” she replied. “We don’t have many patients, and the ones we do have are all minimum security guys, with the exception of Mickey, who is still on IVs. I’ve assured them that he will be bedridden for awhile.”

“How is he today?” Ian asked, a pained look on his face. “Why don’t you go check on him?” she suggested. “I’d love to, but he thinks it’s dangerous for me to be in his room,” he responded. “Not today. You are my only helper until Reesie gets back,” she shot back. “Where is she?” Ian asked. “Had a meeting with her lawyer, then with her caseworker. Busy morning for her,” Lucy explained. “Everything okay?” Ian asked. “Hopefully...I’m sure we’ll hear all about it when she gets back,” she answered. “Go check on your man,” she whispered in Ian’s ear as she brushed past him, heading for the computer. “You can shower in that room, too. I’ll come and lock you in, in a few minutes.”

Ian took one last bite of his breakfast, stowing the tray in the cart before re-entering his cell to grab his shower items, then walking past the still-texting guard on his way to Mickey’s room. As he pushed the door open, he could see that Mickey was sleeping, so he decided to get his shower first. He started the water, then stepped back out into the room, checking one last time on Mickey, who was still asleep. He heard Lucy lock him in. Now he felt at ease and was looking forward to a decent shower, hoping the water would at least be warm. The last shower he had, in processing, had been ice cold.

Ian reached into the shower, checking the temperature, which was wonderfully warm. He stripped his uniform off, anxious to feel the warmth of the water on his skin. As he stepped into the steamy stower, memories of the countless sessions he’d had with Mickey in the shower came rushing back, bringing his cock instantly to full attention. Ian lathered up his entire body, pausing to briefly stroke his swollen shaft, pondering the possibility of jerking himself off. ‘What are the risks?’ he wondered to himself. Lucy, the only one with a key to the door, could walk in and hear him. He doubted she would walk in, after just having locked him in for his shower.

He reached for the soap, working up a good lather in his hands, then grabbing his cock, stroking it rhythmically, his eyes squeezed tightly shut, visions of Mickey’s gloriously full ass cheeks parted and waiting in front of him. As he continued manipulating himself expertly, he began to moan softly. It felt so fucking good! He hadn’t gotten off since Sunday at the Soho. He quickened the pace, the volume of his moans increasing with Mickey’s name interspersed. He imagined himself fucking the hell out of Mickey, just as he had when they were last together, Mickey throwing his head back in
ecstasy as he continued to pound into him. “Oh fuck yeah, Mick! I love you and your sweet ass!” he called out as he exploded all over the shower wall, a giant, satisfied grin spreading across his face. He finished washing up quickly, dried off, dressed and walked out of the bathroom to check on Mickey again.

“Was it good for you?” Mickey asked with a chuckle, startling Ian. “Mickey!” Ian called out excitedly. “How’re ya feeling?” he asked, walking over to the bed. “How am I feeling?” he repeated sarcastically. “How does it look like I’m feeling?” he asked, lifting his sheet, blanket and gown to reveal a raging hard-on. “The fuck you expect, coming in here and gettin’ off five feet away from me? Loud as fuck, too,” Mickey continued. “I’m guessin’ it’s cool out there today, seeing as your ass is locked in my room, jerkin’ yourself in the shower,” he laughed. “Yep,” was Ian’s only reply, before grasping Mickey’s swollen cock in his hand and beginning to fondle it.

He kissed Mickey passionately. “Mmmm…you have breakfast already? You taste like pancakes!” Ian mumbled, licking and biting at Mickey’s deliciously sweet lips, while still gently massaging his dick. “Yeah,” he answered, gesturing over to the food tray on his tray table. “Hmmm…” Ian hummed, eyeing up the tray, then getting up to lift the food cover. Ian grabbed an unopened syrup packet, carrying it over to the bed, then ripping it open with his teeth and dumping it onto Mickey’s still fully-engorged manhood. “Mmmmm…” Ian hummed as he licked up and down Mickey’s sticky sweet schlong, “You really do taste like fucking pancakes!” He encircled the tip of Mickey’s cock with his warm, moist mouth, sucking hard, continuing to hum with pleasure, enjoying his ‘pancake breakfast’ as he took in more and more, Mickey moaning softly. “Fuck, Gallagher!” Mickey breathed, his cock twitching already. “Take it easy!” he whispered, sucking his lower lip into his own mouth, then running his front teeth over it repetitively.

Ian swiped his tongue over Mickey’s slit, the taste of pre-cum mixing tastily with the syrup, before descending his cock again, this time taking it all into his mouth and throat, sending intense vibrations through it as he continued to moan with pleasure. Mickey lifted his ass off the bed, arching up into Ian’s mouth as he let go. “Oh fuck yeah, Ian!” Mickey called out as Ian tightened his lips around the tip of his cock, sucking every last drop of sweetness from it. Ian lay his head on Mickey’s stomach, Mickey stroking Ian’s flushed face with his left hand. “I love you!” they said in unison as soon as they were composed enough to speak, which made them both laugh, again in unison. Even after their time apart, their cosmic connection was still so strong. They both felt it. No conversation necessary.

Ian stood up, going back to the bathroom to brush his teeth, then walking back over to the bed, smiling down on Mickey, who still looked battered and unwell, but his color was the best it had looked since he had come to Medical. Ian guessed that he might just be flushed from their recent activity, and resolved to return later to check it again. In the meantime, it was nice to see some color in his face, and to know that he was probably responsible.

“Lucy needs my help today because Reesie’s not here this morning, but I’ll check on you again soon. Need anything?” Ian asked. “Naw, think you covered it all for now,” Mickey said with a wide smile. Damn! He could light up a room with that smile, even as sick as he was. Ian had wanted to apologize again for all that Mickey had endured before his escape, but the morning had been so nice that he didn’t want to soil it with those ugly memories. He was beginning to better understand why Mickey had always avoided discussing his time in prison, basically wanting to move on with his life and try to forget…

“Where is Reesie?” Mickey asked. “She had two appointments today, one with her attorney, one with a caseworker,” Ian answered. “Probably about her statement for my appeal,” Mickey guessed. “What statement is she giving?” Ian asked, puzzled. “Thought she told ya. She was the one Sammi attacked, right before she died,” Mickey clarified. “Wha…Oh okay, that makes sense. Reesie does have a baby, she told me, but she said she can’t see her. She married?” Ian asked innocently. “Nah,”
Mickey began. “Pretty sure she’s divorced,” he finished.

“So, I’m just gonna ask, is that baby yours?” Ian asked nervously. “‘The fuck knows?’” Mickey responded, shrugging his shoulders. “Look, Ian, me and Reesie weren’t lovers. We were real close when I was in here, but not like that. You fuckin’ know I didn’t have no use for anyone but you. Anything I did in here was just sex, and it was with dudes.” Mickey paused, licking his dry lips.

“There was one night when I was in a lotta pain after my arm surgery. She stayed with me, like she did a lot when I was hurtin’. I was havin’ nightmares and weird-ass dreams. She fell asleep next to me in here. I was on pain meds and havin’ one of those dreams, like I did a lot when I was on ‘em. You were here with me, and we were together. It was so real...I could even smell you,” Mickey recounted. “In the dream, you’re giving me head and it’s fuckin’ fantastic, like today, and like it always is. Next thing I know, I’m callin’ your name as I start to cum. I wake up wrapped around...well I think it’s you, but then as I get more awake, I see it’s really Reesie, who’s half-asleep. I try to stop when I fuckin’ realize, but it’s too late,” Mickey took a deep breath, surveying the look on Ian’s face. Ian just nodded quietly. “We never talked about it after. It was like it never happened.”

“Okay,” Ian sighed deeply. “Is that what you were asking about the other day when you asked if Reesie told me?” “Naw, that part’s between you and her. Got nothin’ to do with me,” Mickey answered. “What the hell does that mean?” Ian asked, obviously annoyed by Mickey’s secrecy after the bombshell he just dropped. “It means, she asked that, if she ever met you, she could be the one to tell you,” he explained. “And after all she did for me, I gotta honor that,” Mickey finished. Ian sighed again, putting his hands on his hips in protest. “Just ask her when you see her. She’ll tell ya,” he added.

“Now c’mere and kiss me before you have to disappear,” he said, raising an eyebrow, a sexy glint in his eye. “Damn it, Mick!” I just found out you fucked a girl while you were in here, that might’ve had your baby, and you can’t even tell me what the fuck she wants to tell me?!” Ian yelled.

Suddenly Mickey, hearing the sound of the door being unlocked, looked, past Ian, at the door, causing Ian to turn, catching sight of Reesie. “Ian, I’m your sister,” she said quietly.
Ian’s world was spinning around him like a whirlwind. He reached for the bed to steady himself, fearing he might fall over, or even pass out. He turned his body to sit on the edge of the bed, looking over at Reesie, his mouth hanging open in utter shock. “What?” he finally mustered up the presence of mind to squeak past his lips. “I said, I’m your sister,” Reesie repeated, tears welling up in her eyes. “I’ve been waiting to meet you, ever since Mickey and I figured it out. As you might imagine, the way Mickey described you, you walk on water,” she said with a slight smile.

“How is that even possible?” he asked. “How old are you?” “I’m 25,” she answered. “You another one of Frank’s?” he asked, “Cuz, I’m not his biological child, ya know?” Ian said with a hint of an attitude, Mickey shooting him a look. “I know that, and, no, I’m not. Clayton is my father...and yours, as I found out, talking to Mickey right before his escape. Apparently, our father had a few affairs,” she said matter-of-factly. “He met my mother in college, then I guess they hooked up again one night a few years later. He used to visit me, when I was young, maybe about once a month, but then he stopped coming,” she said, a small frown overtaking her face. “Never stopped paying child support though. And he paid for me to go to nursing school,” she added. “Have you been in touch with him?” she asked, pausing for Ian’s response.

Ian, still reeling from all of the new information that had been flung at him within such a short period of time, answered curtly, “No.” “I know this must all be a big shock to you, and…” Ian interrupted Reesie, “Look, I know you helped Mickey get outta here before, and that you took care of him through all the hell he endured in here, and I’m so grateful to you for that, but I’m having a hard time understanding your relationship. What was it to you? Did you fall for Mickey, like all the news reports said?”

“I already told you…”Mickey began. “I wanna hear it from her!” Ian snapped, raising his voice over Mickey’s.

“I came to care very deeply for Mickey, and I still do. Mickey, as I’m sure you know, is quite the charmer! Lucy and I both definitely cared and worried more about him than we should’ve, and so we were willing to do crazy things to help him. He went through hell in here, and he was going through it alone. No one came to visit, he had no attorney looking into an appeal for him, and there was no end in sight to the misery he was destined to endure. Somehow, he managed not to give up. As far as we could tell, that was all because of you. He never stopped talking about how much he loved you, and how he couldn’t wait to get out and see you, to be with you again,” she paused, taking a deep breath. Ian’s eyes were becoming moist as he looked down on Mickey’s battered face, his sad eyes looking back up at him.

“I knew your last name was Gallagher, but I thought it was spelled with one ‘L’, like it was in Mickey’s tattoo. Then I saw the picture of you that Mickey had somehow smuggled into prison with him. He always had it with him, hidden inside his uniform. You looked just like our dad did the last time I saw him. I just knew we had to be related, so I asked Mickey about the spelling of your last name. He told me he had misspelled it, that it was spelled with two “L’s. So I asked if your dad’s name was Clayton. Mickey said yes,” she smiled, marvelling at how much Ian looked like Clayton at that very moment.

“From the minute I found out you were my brother, I wanted to find you, not only so I could meet the brother I never knew I had, but because I wanted you to come to see Mickey. He needed you so badly. So, to answer your question directly, my feelings for Mickey weren’t romantic. He made it abundantly clear that he only had eyes for you. Ian, this man lived and breathed solely with the hope
of being in your arms again someday. Nobody would ever replace you. Anyone who got to know Mickey, knew that,” she finished, looking over at the couple, then adding, “All I want is to see you two get outta here and enjoy your lives together. Mickey deserves it, and from what I know about you, so do you.”

Ian reached down, grasping Mickey’s hand and squeezing it. “I’m so sorry I wasn’t here for you. I can’t imagine how terrible it must have been, feeling so alone. I’m glad Lucy and Reesie were here for you when you needed someone, and that they managed to get you out before you ended up dead in this shithole,” he said, glancing over a Reesie, who had tears streaming down her face. “Thank you,” he said, walking over to give Reesie a hug. “And how did your appointments go today?” he asked, hoping to get information about her child in the process. “Very well,” she began, wiping her face. “The attorney says I should be able to get outta here soon, get probation. But it won’t be until after Mickey’s appeal is heard and his conviction is overturned, because then the ‘Aiding and Abetting a Convicted Felon’ charge will be dropped.”

“That also went well. She thinks I will get full custodial of my daughter, once I’m out of here, pending a home visit,” he said, smiling widely for the first time that Ian had ever seen. He noticed how similar it was to his own and smiled back. “So, your daughter...is she Mickey’s?” Ian asked, looking over at Mickey to gauge his reaction. Mickey’s face didn’t change, other than perhaps looking a bit paler than it had after the ‘pancake breakfast’.

“She is biologically his, but I intend to raise my daughter and don’t have any expectations of him,” she said quickly, looking down at her feet. “How do you know for sure?” Ian asked skeptically. “I know because I wasn’t with anyone else. Look, I’m not proud of the situation that resulted in my pregnancy; I put myself at risk, falling asleep in the bed of a heavily-medicated patient, one that, I admit, I cared for deeply. I take full responsibility for what happened. I know Mickey thought he was with you, and we both stopped it, once we got awake and got our bearings,” Reesie said, wiping at her eyes. At that moment, the morning at the Waldorf flashed through Ian’s mind, when Ian had come close to boning Mandy, thinking she was Mickey before he was fully awake. “Things happen for a reason though,” Reesie continued, “and I believe I was meant to have this child. I couldn’t be happier to be the mother of such a beautiful baby girl,” she said, tearing up again, then pulling a picture from her pocket. “I got this today,” she said, holding the picture out for Ian to see. The baby had the most beautiful blue eyes, just like Mickey’s, and a few stray tufts of red hair on top of her perfectly round little head.

“Lemme see,” Mickey called out, reaching his left hand out for the picture. Reesie handed the picture over to Mickey. “I’ll come back for it,” she said, turning toward the door. “I’m gonna go help Lucy. Ian, you should come and work on a few discharge summaries before lunch. Your attorney is coming to see Mickey after lunch. You might want to be there.” And then she was gone.

Okay, Mick, I’m gonna get to work. See ya after lunch?” he asked. “Yeah,” Mickey responded, still staring at the picture. “We good?” he asked Ian nervously. “Yeah, Mick, we’re gonna be just fine,” Ian answered, walking back over to the bed, then leaning down to kiss Mickey tenderly. “I love you, Mick! You’re never gonna deal with shit on your own again. I’ll always be here, no matter what!” Ian promised, his voice shaking with emotion. “Better be!” Mickey smiled, wrapping his left arm around Ian’s neck. “I love you, too!” Mickey said, pulling Ian’s face down to him for another kiss. “So fuckin’ much!”

Ian worked through lunch, grazing on a tray of food that sat next to the computer as he inputted summaries, turning the whole ‘Reesie and her baby’ situation over in his mind. The child was beautiful! He had fallen instantly in love with her and her gorgeous ‘Mickey Eyes’. He loved the idea of helping Reesie raise her, but he didn’t know how Mickey felt about having another child in
his life, after all he’d been through with Yevgeni, and with his life, in general. He resolved to leave that decision for a later date, choosing to focus on getting Mickey, and himself, out of prison and back to their old lives, first and foremost.

“Ian,” Lucy called to him from near the elevator, interrupting his thoughts. “Your attorney is here to see Mickey. You wanna escort him?” she asked. “Sure,” he answered, walking over to meet him. “Hi, Thomas! So glad to see you. Hope you have good news for us,” he said, leading him to Mickey’s room. “I think so,” he responded. Ian knocked on Mickey’s door. “Mick, Thomas is here to meet with you,” Ian called through the door. “Come in,” Mickey responded.

“Hello, Mickey,” Thomas began. “You look better than when I last saw you...but not much,” Thomas said, observing Mickey’s still weak-looking condition. “And as I understand it, your health is not quite up to par for returning to your unit, so you will be here in Medical for at least the rest of this week.” “I will?” Mickey asked enthusiastically. “Yes, and because of your medical condition, I filed a motion today to have your appeal further expedited on medical grounds. I will be collecting additional documentation from here to support that motion, after our meeting.

“Okay,” Mickey said, smiling over at Ian. “We hope to get audience for your appeal this coming Monday, and to have a decision from the Appellate Court by the following day. Mickey, things are looking really good! We have all of our ducks in a row with the witnesses and their signed statements, and Cogswell has spoken personally with the Clerk of Courts, who is a personal friend. I’m pleased to say, you should be a free man before this time next week.” Thomas finished, looking Mickey, then Ian in the eye confidently. “That’s great news!” Ian squawked happily, grasping Mickey’s hand with excitement.

“I’m going to ask the medical personnel to update me daily on your medical condition, but understand that your presence is not required at the appeal, so you can stay here and continue to heal. Hopefully, the conviction will be overturned, rather than the case being remanded to the trial court to be retried. If that happens, we will move for your continued stay in Medical, for health reasons, but let’s not worry about that right now. Just focus on getting better and I will be in touch,” Thomas concluded, shaking both Mickey and Ian’s hands before leaving.

“Woo Hoo!” Ian screamed. “We are so close! I can’t wait to get on a plane back to Mexico with my husband and live happily ever after! Nothing can stop us now!” “Let’s hope not,” Mickey sighed, a reluctant smile creeping around the corners of his mouth. “You are so fucking sexy,” Ian breathed, taking a moment to kiss his husband the way he deserved to be kissed, like he was his entire universe, which couldn’t have been more true.
Ian and Mickey both slept like babies. Their ‘breakfast in bed’, the good news from Thomas, and the resolution of the tension surrounding Reesie and her baby all combined to put them at ease, a feeling that neither had felt in a very long time. Lucy was passing meds and breakfast trays, but had opted to let them both sleep, setting their trays aside for a later time. Reesie was up working on discharge summaries, picking at the breakfast tray that sat next to her.

Finally, once Reesie had finished the last summary, she got up to return her tray to the rack, passing Ian’s cell on her way. Seeing him stirring in his bed, she picked up his tray and meds, delivering them to his meal slot. “Come and get it!” she called into his cell, grinning as he struggled to pull his eyes open, shielding them from the bright light with his hand. Thanks, Reesie,” he yawned. “You sure slept long today,” she remarked, still holding the tray, waiting for him to grab it. “Best night’s sleep I’ve had since I got here,” he said, grabbing the tray as she dangled it through the slot. “Glad to hear that,” she responded. “How’s Mick?” Ian asked. “I don’t know,” she replied. “Why don’t you go and check on him?” she suggested.

“Another laid back day around here?” he asked casually. “Yeah, no new admissions, and another discharge happening today. I think the inmates in IX are all still too weak to beat the shit out of each other,” she kchuckled. “They ever figure out what made everyone so sick?” Ian wondered out loud. “E. Coli,” Reesie answered, wrinkling her cute little nose. “That’s why Mickey’s bloodwork is still off. He needed to get here sooner. His numbers are looking marginally better; the white count is down, but his kidney function is still nowhere close to being normal. Dr. O’Reilly said he’s definitely keeping him here for the weekend,” she explained.

Ian put the lid back onto his uneaten tray of food, suddenly feeling too sick to eat. “Think he’ll make a full recovery?” Ian asked, a look of panic coming over his face. “I’m optimistic,” she responded, noticing Ian’s marked level of concern. “Mickey is a fighter! I have seen him come back from much worse,” she reassured him. “Let’s get you outta there so you can go see him,” she added, motioning for Mr. Cell Phone, who was their only guard again, to open Ian’s cell. As soon as Ian was free, he made a bee-line for Mickey’s room. “Hey,” Reesie called to him. “Take this food with you. You have to take your meds.” “Yeah, yeah,” Ian called back to her, turning to grab his tray from her. “And while you’re at it, here’s Mickey’s,” she said, handing a second tray to Ian. “Thanks, sis,” Ian said with a smile. “You’re welcome,” Reese replied, beaming. “C’mon, I’ll open the door for you,” she offered. “Thanks,” Ian smiled, walking up to the door.

“Just so you know,” Reesie began, “I’m sure that finding out you have another sibling is probably no big deal to you, but I grew up alone and love the idea of having a little brother.” “Yeah, well you’re the only Clayton sibling I know,” he laughed as she opened the door for him.

Ian set both trays down on Mickey’s tray table as quietly as possible, trying not to disturb Mickey, who was still sleeping peacefully, stunningly beautiful in Ian’s eyes, despite the cuts and bruises that were only just beginning to fade, ever so slightly. He stared down at Mickey, the love of his life, and was overcome with emotion. He literally couldn’t wait to have him back in their bed at home, wrapping himself around him tightly, protecting him from all of the evil in the world, for the rest of their lives.

Mickey’s eyes fluttered open, his lips forming a sweet smile immediately, as he caught sight of Ian’s face shining down on him, bright as the sun, his green eyes shimmering. “Ian,” Mickey breathed. “You don’t know how good it is to see you, man,” he finished. “Oh yeah? Why’s that?” Ian asked, raising an eyebrow. “Cuz you’re my fuckin’ husband and I fuckin’ miss the fuck outta you every
minute we’re apart,” Mickey answered, reaching up to grab for Ian, who was just out of his reach. Ian bent down over him, kissing him lightly, then wrapping his arms around him the best he could. “When are they taking this shit off me?” Mickey asked, pointing to his IV. “Probably not for a while,” Ian responded. “Gotta get your numbers back to normal first,” he explained. “What fuckin’ numbers?” Mickey asked in an annoyed tone. “Your kidney function is still a little off, Mick,” Ian explained, trying to minimize it as much as possible. The last thing he wanted was to worry Mickey more. “Reesie says you’re gonna be fine, but you need rest,” Ian added. “Well, she would know,” Mickey replied. “Ain’t never been wrong yet! I’m still here. Her and Lucy always manage to keep me alive,” he said with a smirk.

“Would you like a sponge bath today, sir?” Ian asked with a sly grin. Mickey nodded his head, his smile growing wider by the minute, and that’s not all that was growing. “Have to see about getting locked in first,” Ian said, turning to go and find Lucy. “If you’re hungry, you can eat your breakfast first,” Ian called back to Mickey before disappearing out the door.

Mickey lay in the bed, waiting impatiently, his left hand finding its way to his swelling cock. He rubbed it softly, attempting to get some relief, but only managing to make it worse. God! He wanted Ian so damn bad he could taste it, and he was so tired of lying in bed, using a piss bottle and bed pan. He felt positively gross! The sponge bath sounded good, but what he really wanted was a nice, hot shower. Maybe he could talk Ian into that! He had seen him put IVs in before, so what would be the harm in him taking his out, then replacing it after the shower? Then he thought about his cast and keeping it dry, in addition to the whole IV situation. He sighed in defeat, resigning himself to the sponge bath that, truly, he was very happy about to begin with. It was definitely better than nothing, and just seeing Ian was great! It was just very difficult to see him up and around, wanting him the way he did, and not being able to do all the things they loved to do to each other. Fuck, if it wasn’t like having your favorite food right in front of you, but only getting a tiny nibble of it!

Mickey heard Ian talking to Lucy, the door opening, then closing again and, finally, the door locking from the outside! ‘Yes, my man is here! It’s just me and him,’ Mickey thought to himself, his dick now ridiculously hard. Ian walked in with a basin in hand, taking it with him into the bathroom, where he filled it with hot, soapy water. He grabbed a few washcloths, throwing one into the basin as he carried it out into Mickey’s room, setting it on the side table next to Mickey’s bed. Ian slowly untied Mickey’s gown at his neck, allowing his long fingers to brush softly against Mickey’s tender neck and clavicles as he did. This was driving Mickey absolutely insane already, and Ian knew it. Mickey had a very sensitive neck, particularly in one spot, so Ian often started there if he wanted quick results. Touching his collar bones also did the trick. Ian loved to lick, bite and suck on these areas, but didn’t trust himself not to get carried away and leave marks, which he thought would be dangerous in their current situation. The taste of Mickey was definitely enough to make Ian lose control.

After Ian pulled the gown away from his neck, he moved to the second tie at his waist, making fast work of it, baring Mickey’s body fully. “So fucking beautiful,” Ian breathed, admiring Mickey’s naked frame, literally salivating over it, in spite of its current bruised state. Ian could tell Mickey had been kicked repeatedly about the ribs, but he appeared to be healing nicely. ‘Fuck it,’ Ian thought to himself as he lowered his head to hover over Mickey’s chest, kissing and licking over the tattoo that he now knew had caused him so much pain in so many ways. He continued to move downward, pausing to flick Mickey’s nipples lightly with his tongue, before pulling each into his mouth to suck on them, one at a time, savoring his taste and revelling in the reactions of Mickey and his body. All of the muscles in Mickey’s body tensed up, his nipples fully erect, his mouth gaping open, low moans rising from his throat. “Damn, Mick!” Ian cried out, fully aroused by Mickey’s arousal, moving up to his neck with his mouth, flicking and rolling his tongue over that most sensitive spot on Mickey’s neck, drawing a bead of dew from his shiny slit already. “Fuck!” Mickey whispered as Ian continued to torture him with his tongue. “Wanna cum…” Mickey panted, despite the fact that Ian
had yet to even touch his cock.

“Oh, nooooo!” Ian exclaimed. “Not now! I still have to give you your bath,” he said teasingly, pulling his mouth from Mickey’s neck and turning to lather up the washcloth. He slowly and tenderly began to wash Mickey, starting with his face and neck, then moving down to his torso, then finally to his arms and underarms, the wonderfully warm water raising goosebumps all over Mickey’s body. He blotted Mickey’s face and lips with a small sponge designed for just that purpose, then put the toothbrush sponge into his mouth, swirling it gently against his teeth and tongue, the minty flavor soothing the dryness of his mouth and lips.

Next, he dipped the cloth into the water again, retrieving more perfectly heated water to wash his legs and feet. He began with Mickey’s calves, massaging them gently as he washed them, gradually making his way up each of his legs, concentrating on the inner thighs until Mickey moaned and arched up in an attempt to have his rock-hard cock touched. He then finished up with Mickey’s feet, pressing into them with his thumbs, sending waves of pleasure throughout Mickey’s body.

Ian then dunked a fresh cloth in the basin, retrieving more warm soapy water and proceeding to finally wash Mickey’s swollen cock, Mickey grinding against Ian’s hand in desperation. “Not yet,” Ian chided, “Gonna wash your ass first, he grinned, lifting Mickey’s legs in the air for easy access, then lathering and rinsing him gently, finessing a sudsy finger, then two, into his hole to clean, and further arouse, his gorgeous hubby, as he continued to massage his beautiful penis and balls with his other soapy hand. Ian was very thorough, practically getting off on the sounds that were falling from Mickey’s intoxicatingly full lips as he gently, yet meticulously cleansed all of his irresistible boy parts. Each time Mickey moaned, electrical currents pulsed through Ian’s cock, driving him absolutely wild with desire. Damn, if Mickey couldn’t get Ian to the breaking point without so much as touching him! So fucking sexy!!

“C’mere!” Mickey whispered, tapping the bed to the right of his body. Ian rinsed him, threw the washcloth into the basin, dropped his drawers, then climbed into the bed beside Mickey, rolling him gently onto his left side so they could spoon, his rock hard cock pressed firmly against Mickey’s bare ass. He whispered into Mickey’s ear, “And now that you’re nice and squeaky clean, I’m gonna fuck you!” Mickey shivered with excitement, his cock instantly growing even harder.

Ian reached for the dry skin lotion that he had strategically placed next to the basin on the side table, squirting it into his hands, stroking Mickey’s cock with it, then smoothing the remainder between Mickey’s ass cheeks, dipping two fingers in and out of him, scissoring them to prep him quickly. Squirting more lotion, he lubed up his own cock, preparing to provide the ultimate in pleasure to his poor, bedridden lover. They both needed it, and they both knew it.

Ian threw his right leg over Mickey’s right hip, positioning himself slightly lower on the bed than Mickey, setting himself at the perfect angle, then began to ease himself into Mickey, as he continued to massage Mickey’s package. Mickey was so tight in this position! Ian really had to be patient, which was very difficult, considering how desperately horny they both were. “Damn, Gallagher! You feel so fuckin’ amazing!” Mickey called out, rutting himself up against Ian’s hips, pushing Ian further into him. Mickey sank his teeth into his lower lip as Ian drove up into him harder, bottoming out, then easing himself in and out slowly, rolling his hips rhythmically, breathing into Mickey’s ear, “You---Are---So--- Fucking---Hot,” each word coinciding with a thrust, bringing them both ever closer to climax.

Ian sped up his hand motion on Mickey’s rigid cock, anticipating his own explosion and timing it out with Mickey’s. He craved that simultaneous orgasm that he could consistently attain expertly in so many other positions, but this one was atypical. Being Ian, however, he rose to the challenge with mind-blowing results. He maintained his stroking of Mickey’s cock masterfully, while continuing to
bury his thick cock into Mickey’s tight hole. “Gonna cum!” Mickey screamed, his cock twitching in Ian’s hand. “Oh fuck!” Ian yelled, blowing his wad deep into Mickey’s ass as Micky spurted all over his hand and the bed sheets in front of him.

“Out-fuckin’-standing!” Mickey sighed, rolling onto his back, Ian hopping up to grab his IV tubing before it ended up underneath him. “We really fucked up these sheets,” Ian commented, taking note of all the cum stains on them. “I’ll have to see if I can change your bed later,” he added with a smile. Mickey puckered his lips, Ian instantly bending to kiss him, sucking his lower lip into his mouth sensually. “Mmmmm,” Mickey moaned in appreciation, cherishing this moment he was lucky enough to have with his husband, while in prison of all places.

“I’m gonna get a shower, Mick,” Ian said, reluctantly releasing Mickey’s lower lip from his mouth’s grasp. Mickey pouted momentarily before lifting his head from the pillow, responding, “Whatever…” “C’mon, Mick! I didn’t just get a sponge bath like you did. I NEED a shower,” Ian insisted, taking a quick moment to wash the cum from Mickey’s dick and asshole, then re-tieing his gown around him before heading for the shower. Mickey waved him off with a heavy sigh, throwing his head back into the pillow in resignation.

Once Ian finished showering, he knocked on the inside of the door, hoping to get Lucy’s attention. Their breakfasts were ice cold, and he still hadn’t taken his meds. He figured it must be close to lunchtime and thought he and Mickey could finally eat together. When there was no response, Ian walked over to Mickey’s tray table, lifting the food cover from his breakfast and taking a bite out of a cold, stale bagel he found. He chewed it quickly, choking it down, then reaching for his meds and a small carton of milk, swallowing the pills.

Finally, they could hear footsteps nearing the door, then a light knock on the door. “Come in,” Mickey responded. The sound of a key unlocking the door was followed by Lucy’s voice as she opened the door and walked in. “Mickey, your attorney is here again. He was collecting medical documentation and asked to see you.” “Send him in,” Mickey replied.
Thomas walked into Mickey’s room, extending his hand to shake both Ian and Mickey’s hands. “Mickey, you’re looking better every time I see you,” he commented. “Thanks, man,” Mickey said, “Feelin’ better, too,” he added with a smile, blushing as his eyes met Ian’s. “Good for you,” Thomas replied, looking down at the paperwork he had gotten from Lucy. “Says here the doctor will be keeping you here over the weekend. I have a call in to him, requesting that he extend your stay here, if at all possible, through Tuesday, as I am extremely confident that your conviction will be overturned on Monday. The Court will grant our Motion to Expedite on Medical Grounds as soon as they receive these updated medical records, and we are tentatively on the Court’s docket for Monday.”

“So, how likely would you say Mickey is to be out on Tuesday?” Ian asked. “I feel 99% certain. Barring extreme, unforeseen circumstances, you will be a free man, Mickey!” “And what about my charges?” Ian asked. “I will move to have them dismissed, along with one of Teresa’s, as soon as Mickey’s conviction is overturned, although I don’t have any grounds to request they be expedited in Motions court,” Thomas explained. “So you’re saying Teresa and I might be in here past Tuesday?” Ian asked incredulously. “Well, technically, the judge has up to sixty days to rule on a Motion, but, as I said before, the Clerk of Courts is a personal friend of Mr. Cogswell’s, so it shouldn’t be too long. And frankly, Mr. Bigley has a lot of sway with some of the judges as well, so, since he seems to pull out all the stops where you are concerned, I am quite optimistic for a quick turnaround,” Thomas revealed in a hushed tone.

“Sounds good to me!” Mickey said jubilantly, his entire face lighting up at the thought of walking free with his husband. “Yes, thank you so much for coming to see us today,” Ian added. “You are very welcome,” Thomas responded. “It has been a pleasure working on your case, Mickey. It’s not too often that a criminal defense attorney gets to represent an innocent client! I truly hope you can enjoy your life, not having to look over your shoulder.”

“Oh, I will. Don’t worry,” Mickey said with a nod. “Okay, I’ll be in touch,” Thomas said, shaking their hands again, then turning to walk out the door.

Mandy and Manuel were busy at the factory, working overtime to keep everything going, in light of all of the new orders that continued to flood in. Johnny had become a permanent fixture in the office, managing the accounting end of things since Mickey wasn’t there to help. Many of the distributors had made requests to have the models visit some of the stores that had purchased from them, but Manuel literally couldn’t spare Mandy for long enough to send her. Besides, she refused to go without Ian, whom everyone was clamouring to meet anyway. The new employees were working out well, for the most part; they had stuck with bringing in two shifts a day, and were planning to bring in one shift on both Saturday and Sunday.

Manuel was in the middle of a discussion with Johnny when a phone call came in. It was Bigley. Manuel picked up the phone. “Manuel!” he began with his usual boisterous voice that screamed New York. “Yes, Bruno,” Manuel replied briskly. “I have good news! Are Mandy and Johnny close by?” he asked. “Yes,” Manuel replied, motioning for Mandy and Johnny to gather around the phone as he put it on speaker. “They are right here and can hear you. Go ahead!” Manuel said with great excitement. Bigley cleared his throat. “I got word from Cogswell today that everything is in the works for Mickey’s appeal to be heard on Monday. Sounds like he could be walking out of prison a free man by Tuesday!” “That’s great!” Manuel exclaimed, Mandy clapping her hands in the background. “Good! Because I could sure use his help in the office,” Johnny said, giving a ‘thumbs up’. 
Bigley continued, “I have other news that is also good, but…” “But what?” Johnny asked impatiently. “We have a new account pending with Surfin’ USA, the largest surf shop chain in the U.S. and Canada. They are headquartered in Chicago, but are licensed to do business and have a large number of shops in both the U.S. and Canada. They are requesting that our models fly into Chicago to make a commercial for their shops. Manuel, this account could put Ojos Azules on the map as a major manufacturer, beyond the scope of this fundraiser. All of our accounts can help with that, but in terms of name recognition, these guys are at the top!” And truthfully, if we take this leap, you guys will need to open a second, much larger factory to accommodate the increased volume of orders that will become the norm. This is why Mickey’s status is so important. He needs to be able to travel anywhere in the world—legally! Ian is a hot commodity already, but once they see him in person, he’s gonna be wanted everywhere, a real globetrotter. And I’ve gotten to know Mickey well enough to know he's not gonna go for the idea of him going all these places without him.”

Bigley paused, taking a deep breath. “I need to ask you a favor, Johnny,” Bigley continued, “I’d like to have Mandy and Manuel fly into Chicago for the weekend. I have arranged for them to visit Mickey, who is in the infirmary. Apparently, he got some type of food poisoning in there. Then they can go to meet with the CEO of Surfin’ USA to plan for the commercial. I’ve taken steps to ensure that Ian’s charges will be dropped quickly, following the overturning of Mickey’s conviction, which should happen on Monday. Johnny, can you please keep the factory going while they are gone? I can fly one of my administrative assistants down to help, if needed.”

“This all sounds great, Bruno!” Manuel began. “Of course, I would love nothing more than to see the business grow and to visit Mickey, but I am concerned with what will happen here at the factory if something goes wrong out on the floor, and me and Mickey are both not here.” he finished.

“A valid concern…” Bigley responded, pondering the possibilities. “Would you consider Mandy traveling alone?” he asked. “Absolutely not!” Manuel responded without even taking a breath. “Well, then, is there anyone who works for you who knows enough to be trusted to troubleshoot for you, in your absence? You will only be a phone call away,” Bigley persuaded. “I suppose Jose could handle some of the possible problems,” Manuel said thoughtfully. “Delegating responsibilities is a big part of managing a growing business,” Bigley bellowed. Proceeding to tell the story of when he first had Johnny start to manage a lot of his affairs in Mexico. Johnny nodded his head as he listened to Bruno singing his praises. “I will certainly do all I can to help around here, if you go,” Johnny piped up. It was no accident that Bigley had chosen Johnny as his example of delegating. He was definitely buttering him up for the weekend factory babysitting job, and it worked like a charm.

“Okay,” Manuel said reluctantly, looking over at Mandy to gauge her reaction. Her smile said it all. Like Manuel, she had been missing Mickey, and Ian, really, so the opportunity to see either or both of them sounded fantastic to her. “It’s settled then. I’ll talk to Jose before he leaves today. When will we be leaving?” he asked. “I’ll book you a commercial flight. There is one leaving Mexico City at 9:00 tomorrow morning, arriving at O’Hare at 1:10. I’ll have a limo waiting there for you. That will give you today to organize things a factory, tonight to pack and tomorrow to visit Mickey!” he said authoritatively. “Yay!!” Mandy squealed with excitement, jumping into Manuel’s arms. Manuel smiled widely, kissing Mandy on the top of the head. He, too, was looking forward to the trip. They had been so busy and exhausted lately, their morning routine was no longer a routine, and their smouldering nights of passion a distant memory.

“Oh, and you will be staying in the penthouse suite at the Waldorf again, Mandy,” Bigley added. Mandy wrinkled her nose. Manuel gave her a look that said, ‘What’s wrong?’ Mandy waved him off, indicating she would tell him later.

Everyone said their goodbyes and Manuel headed out to the factory floor to discuss the plan with Jose. “What don’t you like about the Waldorf?” Johnny asked, wondering why anyone on earth
wouldn’t want to stay in one of the finest hotels in the country. “When we were there last, Ian thought someone had come into our room in the middle of the night,” she answered, a look of fear on her face. “Hmmm....” Johnny said, scratching his chin.
Mandy and Manuel were up at the crack of dawn, gathering their carefully-packed travel bags and some coffee to go. Mandy had spent the entire evening before, packing everything they could possibly need for their getaway. And that was positively the way she saw it: a getaway! Poor Manuel had been so overworked lately. She couldn’t wait to pamper him. If it weren’t for the schedule Bigley had made for them, she would have been happy to keep him in bed for the entire trip! He was so hot! Often, she had looked at him in the factory, the way his t-shirt clung to his muscular torso, the way his dimples contradicted his strong jawline in the most perfect of ways, just pining away for a romantic evening in bed, only to have both of them be too exhausted to give anything more than a goodnight kiss. Yes, this trip was going to be special! She could just feel it! Johnny rode them to the airport, making them promise to give Mickey and Ian his best, and to tell them both how sorely they were missed by him and by Dr. Montemurro.

The plane ride was glorious, puffy white clouds cradling their plane like giant, fluffy pillows, the bright sun warming Mandy’s window as she gazed out into the great blue yonder. She gripped Manuel’s hand tightly for the take-off and the landing, kissing him often throughout the flight, much to the distaste of the passenger next to them, who rolled her eyes, but said nothing. At one point, Manuel looked over at her, then back at Mandy, as if to say, ‘Maybe we shouldn’t be kissing like this here’, to which Mandy responded with a loud, “Fuck her!” Still a Milkovich. You can take the girl out of the Southside, but you can’t take the Southside out of the girl.

The limo was waiting for them at O’Hare, poised to whisk them off to Cook County Correctional--how romantic! Mandy had hoped they would be stopping at the Waldorf first, but Bigley had arranged for the driver to drop their bags there after taking them to see Mickey. Manuel was more than a bit concerned about Mickey’s medical condition and was anxious to see him, to be assured that he was okay. Mandy already knew he was--Milkoviches were tough, and were always okay.

When they arrived at Division X, Medical, they were wanded and patted down before being escorted up to the third floor by two scary-looking guards, one of whom was definitely checking Mandy out, having been a bit overzealous on her pat-down, then watching her ass all the way down the hall to Mickey’s room. “Fuck off,” she whispered under her breath, causing Manuel to grin and shake his head. Lucy saw them heading for Mickey’s door and rushed over with her key. She knocked. “Just a minute,” Ian’s voice responded. “Ian’s in there?” Mandy said, smirking at Manuel, who rolled his eyes, smiled, then muttered, “The American prison system.”

“I’m Lucy,” she said, casually introducing herself, much to Mandy and Manuel’s surprise. “I’m Manuel, and this is…” “Mandy!” Lucy interrupted, finishing Manuel’s sentence. How’d you know?” Mandy asked, wondering why this nurse was being so familiar with them. “How could I not?” Lucy replied with a giggle. “There is definitely a family resemblance. Speaking of which, I want you to meet someone. Reesie, come and meet Mandy,” she called out to Reesie, who had just finished clearing lunch trays. “My God do you look like…” “Ian,” Reesie said, before Mandy could finish.

“Oh, sorry,” Mickey finally called out. “You have visitors,” she warned. “Who the fuck’s here?” Mickey yelled. He had not expected anyone since it was Saturday and he had just seen Thomas the day before. “It’s a surprise,” Lucy answered, unlocking the door and smiling at Mandy and Manuel.

The room smelled like sex, but no one said a word. Mickey and Ian’s faces said it all, both blushing and grinning, ear to ear. “Mandy! Ian!” Mandy yelled, running to hug Ian, then heading over to sit
on the bed next to Mickey so she could hug him, too. “Watch where you sit!” Ian chuckled, Mickey blushing even redder. “I’m good,” Mandy responded, opting to remain standing and kiss Mickey on the forehead. Mickey tried to make room for her, moving too quickly and crying out in pain.

“Are you okay?” Manuel asked, taking note of Mickey’s cuts, bruises. And his complexion was so pale, even for him. “Fuckin’ sick a this fuckin’ thing,” Mickey replied, pointing to the IV that was still in his arm. “Doc says you might get it out on Monday,” Ian said, sounding all official. “Are you his nurse?” Mandy asked Ian, raising her eyebrows. “I’ve been helping out up here since I have to stay up here to get my meds,” Ian answered, smiling like the cat who just ate the canary.

“You guys have an hour, so we’ll leave you to visit,” Lucy said, motioning for Reesie to follow her out. The two women left the room and shut the door. “So, who is that girl? She looks like she could be your sister, Ian,” Mandy joked. “She is,” he replied with an awkward smile. “Among other things,” he added, glancing over at Mickey, who offered no reaction, other than to avert his eyes. “It’s a story,” Ian responded. “You really want me to get into it now?” he asked. “No!” Mickey answered gruffly, shooting a ‘Shut the fuck up!’ look at Ian. “Why’s it up to you, Mick? It’s Ian’s sister!” Mandy protested, dying of curiosity. “Mandy, please, trust me on this. It’s a story for another time,” Ian said, giving her a stare that said, ‘Drop it’. Manuel, catching Ian’s vibe, changed the subject.

“So, aren’t you wondering why we’re here in Chicago?” he baited them, hoping to introduce a new topic of discussion. “Uh...to see us?” Ian responded, as if that should be obvious. “Well, actually,” Manuel began, “yes, we came to see you, but also to meet with the CEO of Surfin’ USA, who wants to carry our boards--all of our boards, not just the ones for the fundraiser. And they want Mandy and Ian to make a commercial, here in Chicago!” Manuel could hardly contain his excitement. He looked at Mickey, then at Ian, gauging their reactions. “When?” Ian asked curiously. “I don’t even know when I’ll be getting outta here,” he sighed.

“Bigley says it’ll be real soon,” Mandy assured him. “And he said this account will really get our brand known as a top surfboard manufacturer,” Manuel explained enthusiastically. “Don’t know about you, Ian, but I really wanna get back home as soon as we can,” Mickey said softly. “I do, too, Mick, but I really don’t think we should pass up this opportunity for your business. It sounds really big!” Ian countered. “Besides, if we stay a while, we can visit some people!” Ian continued, thinking about how nice it would be to see all of his family and friends in the Southside. Ian wanted to beg Mickey, right then and there, but he knew the best way to handle this was to wait and talk to him alone, when he could use all of his powers of persuasion.

“Oh,” Manuel interjected, remembering his promise to Johnny. “Johnny told me to tell you how much he and Dr. Montemurro miss both of you.” Mandy shot him a ‘You’re not helping’ look, to which he responded by adding, “But they know we have to do this commercial first. They’re good with it. Johnny is gonna keep the factory going while we’re gone.” “The fuck’s Johnny gonna do if somethin’ goes wrong on the floor?” Mickey asked, getting worked up. “Relax! Jose has agreed to be there for all of the shifts while we’re gone, and to call Manuel with any issues,” Mandy explained, defending their plan.

“Yes, and with you being a free man soon, it’s important to have someone else to help with managing the factory. Bigley says Ian will be traveling the world to model, and we know you will want to go with him as often as possible.” Manuel said encouragingly. “And also, Bigley says, if we land this account, we will need to open a second factory to handle the increased production needs. So we definitely need to train, and possibly hire others to assist with running the factories. We aren’t a small Mexican surf factory anymore! We are about to hit the big time!” Manuel exclaimed.
Mickey sat, deep in thought, remembering what it was like to be stuck in Mexico while Ian was in New York. He knew there would be growing pains associated with the new focus and size of their business, but everything was happening so fast, and without any input from him. It was all so overwhelming. And to make matters worse, he was still not feeling one hundred percent. He put on a good game face, and he felt great while he and Ian were doing things together, but overall, he knew he still had a ways to go. He felt tired, and sometimes dizzy, just weak overall. He clung to Ian’s statement that Reesie had said he would be fine, and just needed rest.

Mandy and Manuel chattered on, Ian interjecting the occasional question as to his involvement, where he would be traveling, etc. Mickey just shook his head, closing his eyes. “I’m tired,” he said, speaking even more softly than before. “You okay, Mick?” Ian asked, rushing over to his side, suddenly quite concerned with his health. He knew Mickey was upset with some of the news he was getting, but it wasn’t like him to get so quiet like this. Usually he’d be bitching up a storm, fighting them on every point. “Want us to go?” he asked, his eyes moist with worry, a lump forming in his throat. “Please,” Mickey answered with a whisper, his eyes heavy as he attempted to reopen them to look at Ian.

“Come on out to the front desk,” Ian said quietly, motioning for Mandy and Manuel to follow him out of the room. “Wait,” Mickey said, his voice barely audible. “I love you, Ian.” “I love you, too, Mick,” Ian replied, circling back to give him a kiss. “I’ll be back after they leave,” he whispered to Mickey. “I feel like shit,” Mickey breathed, closing his eyes. “Probably just gonna go to sleep,” he added, speaking so softly that Ian had to read his lips.

Mandy and Manuel followed Ian out to the front desk. They talked a bit more about Surfin’ USA, the commercial and visiting the Southside, “Think he’s okay?” Mandy asked, just as they were about to leave. “I’m really not sure,” Ian replied. “If you call the main prison number and ask for Medical, they will transfer you here and someone can tell you how he’s doing each day. We’ll have him sign all the necessary forms.” “Okay,” Mandy replied, hugging Ian goodbye. Manuel shook Ian’s hand and then they were gone.

When Ian turned around, Lucy and Reesie were standing ten feet away, discussing a new admission. “Guys, how was Mickey’s most recent blood work?” Ian asked. “Let me see,” Lucy answered, opening the newest e-mail from the lab. “Kidney function is still low. It’s gonna take time.” “How low? He’s very lethargic all of a sudden. Can we call the doctor? Maybe he missed something…”
Pulling Strings

Mandy and Manuel left the hospital feeling conflicted. They were definitely glad to have gotten the opportunity to see Mickey and Ian, but were also very concerned about Mickey’s health. And the fact that he wanted his visitors to leave was so unlike him. Mandy recalled all of the times she had gone to visit him in juvie. Never once did he hang up the phone until he absolutely had to. And wanting Ian to leave? Wayyyyy out of character! Mickey would be happiest if Ian never left his side. Mickey was definitely not himself, and Mandy prayed Ian and those nurses at the prison would get to the bottom of it.

They had left sooner than expected, so they called an Uber and texted Bigley to have him call off the limo pickup. They arrived at the Waldorf and were escorted up to the penthouse, Manuel looking around, completely in awe, once they got inside. “This place is even more posh than the Soho,” Manuel remarked, rushing into one of the bedrooms and flopping onto the bed. “This was Ian’s room,” she told him, following him in. “Not anymore,” Manuel responded with a chuckle. “I like the view from this window,” he added. “I like the view from where I’m standing,” Mandy grinned before taking a flying leap and landing on the bed next to him. Mandy rolled over on top of Manuel, kissing him aggressively, while pressing her body tightly against his. Manuel returned the kiss, embracing her, rolling her under him, then straddling her waist on his knees, pinning her wrists to the bed with his hands. He leaned down over her, lightly biting at her lips, his tongue toying with the center of her top lip seductively. Mandy fought to wrestle out from under him, but to no avail. He had her right where he wanted her, and she knew it, not that she minded at all. She loved to play with Manuel in the bedroom. He was so much fun, and drove her absolutely insane with want at the same time.

Once she gave up fighting him, he let go of her wrists, moving down her body to slowly remove her clothing, reaching inside her blouse to caress her bare breasts. Mandy seldom wore a bra these days. She found it too hot and constricting for the Mexico heat, and now it was a habit, one the Manuel thoroughly enjoyed, his cock swelling just that much more as his hand brushed over her erect nipples and deliciously round breasts. Once he had completely removed the blouse from Mandy’s body, he lowered his mouth to them, licking, sucking and biting as Mandy moaned and begged him to fuck her. “Not yet, baby,” he responded, his voice muffled by his mouth’s activity. He slowly and torturously moved his mouth further south, down to her bellybutton and on down, as he pulled both her skirt and her underwear off all at once. He buried his head between her thighs, flicking at her clit lightly as he finger-fucked her slowly. “I want you to fuck me!” she screamed in agony, Manuel refusing to so much as speed up his motions, instead opting to apply more tongue pressure to her throbbing clit.

“Relax and enjoy,” Manuel said softly as he teased her relentlessly with his tongue. Mandy took a deep breath, but it was no use. She was far too aroused for relaxation. She grinded herself against Manuel’s mouth, sliding herself onto and off of Manuel’s long, thick fingers, desperate for her release, any way she could manage to get it.

Manuel’s cock was pressed painfully against his zipper, but he wouldn’t think of stopping to remove his jeans, not when he had Mandy in such a compromised state. He thoroughly enjoyed watching her squirm, the longer, the better. Everytime she got close to her orgasm, Manuel intentionally slowed down, Mandy sighing heavily in frustration. And he repeated the process, getting her revved up, then letting her idle.

“Fuck you, Manuel!” she finally screamed, pushing his head from her crotch, flipping on top of him, then tearing his pants off. She sat on his massive, stiff member, bouncing up and down on it.
furiously, screaming, “Fuck yeah! Oh Fuck yeah! Harder! Harder!” until she felt the intense waves of pleasure flowing over her, her pussy pulsing uncontrollably as she called out Manuel’s name, which signaled his explosion. He moaned loudly, pushing himself deep into her. Mandy, slowly rejoining reality, kissed Manuel tenderly, then climbed off him, getting up to draw a bath in the jacuzzi tub.

“Well?” he asked. “Fuck, I needed that!” Mandy said with a satisfied grin. “More than you can imagine,” she added. “No imagination necessary,” he responded. “I’ve been feeling the same way. All work and no play is no way for us to live,” he continued, getting up to grab a bottle of wine from the wine cooler. “Bigley is right! We need to train and hire some trusted people. And if, or should I say when, we get this new account, we will need to look for a second factory and the employees to work in it.”

“You’re absolutely right,” Mandy agreed, heading off to fetch two glasses. “Not sure why Mickey seems so against moving forward,” she wondered out loud. “It’s because he doesn’t feel a part of it,” Manuel explained. “He’s been completely removed from the situation, against his will, and things have progressed without him. Mickey is not used to that. Back when we first opened the factory, Mickey and I sat down and made all of the decisions together, and it’s been that way up until Bigley got involved. Don’t get me wrong--Bigley has grown the company more than we ever could have on our own. It’s just that Mickey feels left out. I think he wants to go home because he wants everything to be like it was, but that’s not possible. No wonder he is having a hard time with all of this,” Manuel finished, frowning slightly.

“Babe, I’m sorry I brought it up. Please don’t let this get to you,” Mandy said, wrapping her arms around his neck and standing on her toes to kiss him. “How can I not?” Manuel raised his voice. “Mickey is my best friend in the world! He means more to me than I think you can understand.”

“Mandy instantly thought of Ian, and then she did understand. “I get it,” she said, running over to shut the water off in the tub before it overflowed.

“Maybe we could go to visit him again tomorrow, after our meeting,” Manuel suggested. “Inmates only get one visit per week,” Mandy replied knowledgeably. Being a Milkovich, this was not her first rodeo. “Yes, but Ian hasn’t had a visitor this week,” Manuel said with a wink. “And I’ll bet Bigley can get us in, if it’s for Ian. You know how he is when it comes to him,” he added, handing Mandy a glass of wine. “Why don’t you text him and ask?” Manuel suggested, knowing Mandy was more likely to get a favor from Bigley than he was. Mandy asking for something for Ian was a double whammy, and Manuel knew it. We was confident already that, come tomorrow, he would be visiting Mickey.

Ian was going absolutely berserk, pacing back and forth, refusing to eat or take his meds until Dr. O’Reilly came to see Mickey, who had been asleep all afternoon, with the exception of one time when he woke up disoriented, yelling at Ian as if he were his father, Terry, and pulling at his IV. After that, Lucy injected valium, which is always a standard order for all inmates, should they become agitated, into the port on his IV, effectively putting him out again. Ian had thought all of Mickey’s earlier symptoms were the result of kidney failure, but now he was certain that something else was responsible--and he wasn’t going to rest until he found out what! Lucy already warned Ian that, if he continued to behave erratically, she would have to sedate him, too, but he appealed to Reesie, causing a disagreement between them and staving off any involuntary medication for him at that point.

“Why hasn’t he returned our call?” Ian spouted off, running his fingers through his hair repeatedly as he continued to pace. “Something else is wrong! I can feel it! I’m scared! Reesie, will you try calling again?” he begged, blinking away the tears that were welling up in his eyes. “It’s Saturday, Ian. Give it some time,” she said, taking hold of his hand and squeezing it between hers, “You need to settle
down. You will be much more helpful to Mickey if you do. Take a deep breath and let’s go sit with Mickey, okay?” Reesie’s soft voice had a calming effect on Ian, who allowed himself to be led to Mickey’s room. Mickey was sleeping peacefully, looking beautiful as ever, although he was extremely pale. God, Ian just wanted to scoop him up and take him to Chicago Memorial, or any real hospital. Other than Lucy and Reesie, he knew no one in the entire prison gave a shit about Mickey, and this doctor didn’t seem to either.

As Ian sat with Reesie at Mickey’s bedside, he asked, “So, the latest bloodwork showed normal red and white counts?” Reesie replied, “The latest bloodwork was kidney function only. The one before that was white count and kidney function, but since the white count was back to normal last time, they didn’t repeat it this time,” she explains. “And what about his red count?” Ian asked. “Normal the first time and not repeated,” Reesie answered. “I thought they were running a CBC each time,” Ian said, an undertone of outrage in his voice. “Are you kidding me? The prison’s not gonna pick up the tab for all that, and State insurance won’t pay,” Reesie said matter-of-factly. “So, basically, an inmate’s life is worth less than someone on the outside with the same insurance?” Ian questioned. “That’s right! That’s how the prison sees it! They are not gonna lose money on a prisoner; they make money on them,” she said sadly. “Wow!” Ian said, his voice getting louder with each word. “Just fucking WOW! We have money!! I’ll pay! I want Mickey to get the best care possible! This is his life we are talking about here!”

“Okay, Ian, I understand. And this is why I’m wearing a jumpsuit right now,” she said with a slight snicker, although she was dead serious. “I helped Mickey get out of here to save his life and this is what it got me,” she said, pulling at her prison uniform. We have to give the doctor an hour to respond. After that, if Mickey is showing signs of distress, beyond what we can handle here without a doctor, we can call an ambulance and have him transported to Chicago Memorial,” Reesie explained. “But even there, his ultimate treatment will be limited to what insurance will pay, unless someone signs off saying they will be responsible for the cost of any medical care that is not covered.” “I’ll sign!” Ian yelled in desperation. “You can’t because you’re an inmate. You will not be able to go to the hospital with him. What about Mandy?” she asked. “Yes, I’m sure she would, but someone would need to call her to tell her to go to the hospital. “Let’s give Dr. O’Reilly his hour first,” she suggested. “We can wait here together, in case Mickey wakes up,” she said, squeezing his hand again.

“Ian, I know how much you love him, and so does he. He is not going to leave you. Believe me when I tell you that Mickey lives and breathes for you. We will get him better. Just be here with him.” Ian reached over, taking Mickey’s hand in his own. “Mickey, I love you and I need you to get well,” Ian said in a low voice. “Please don’t leave me, Mickey!” he pleaded dramatically, tears rolling down his cheeks as he lowered his face to Mickey’s hand, pressing his lips against it softly. Mickey stirred, his eyelids lifting ever so slightly. “Ian,” he mumbled, “I’m not going anywhere but home...with you.”

Just then, Lucy ran in with a blood-draw kit. “O’Reilly ordered a CBC, STAT!” she said, prepping Mickey’s arm carefully. “Once I get the blood, a courier will come to get it and deliver it to the lab.” “What?” Reesie asked, completely shocked, but also extremely relieved that these costly heroics were being afforded to a prisoner. “Apparently, someone was in touch with the doc, signed off and faxed a financial responsibility form. And O’Reilly’s on his way here now, so I want to hurry with this blood so we can get the results while he is still here,” she explained, flustered by the whole situation and struggling to find a vein. “Please let me do this,” Ian asked. “It’s one of my specialties,” he reminded them, although they hadn’t forgotten how helpful he was with an inmate’s IV the day after he arrived.

Lucy stepped aside, allowing Ian to draw the necessary blood from his husband, whose eyes were now mostly open and looking up at him lovingly—until he stuck him. “Oww! What was that for!?”
he yelled. “Because I love you, and we need to figure out what’s making you sick! That’s what for!” Ian answered, collecting all of the requisite vials, then removing the needle, applying a bandaid and, finally, bending over to kiss him on the lips.

The courier arrived just moments later, whisking the blood away to be tested STAT! Ian breathed a sigh of relief, sitting down on the bed next to Mickey, looking deep into his tired, yet phenomenally gorgeous blue eyes. “Gotta get you better! There’s so much I want to do with you!” he said, smiling down at Mickey. “I ain’t quittin’ on you, Gallagher. I’m just so tired…” Mickey drifted off, his eyes closing again.

Ian looked over at Reesie, whose face was stained with tears. “Ian, I’m so sorry you are going through this, and that Mickey is,” she said, gripping Ian’s free hand. “This might sound strange, but after I got close with Mickey and heard him talk about you, I knew you were special, and hoped to meet you someday. Now that I have, I hope you will give me a chance to be a part of your life, after we get out. I’m not expecting you to treat me like we’ve known each other our whole lives. I just want the chance to know you.” “Of course,” Ian said with a smile, squeezing her hand. “I wouldn’t have it any other way.” The pair sat at Mickey’s bedside, watching him sleep, awaiting the arrival of the doctor and the results of the bloodwork.

Finally, after about an hour and a half, Dr. O’Reilly walked in with Lucy; he began, “The results are in. Mickey’s red blood cell count is low. My suspicion is that Mickey’s body is destroying red blood cells faster than it makes them. This is a condition called hemolytic anemia, and can sometimes be a complication of E. Coli infection, when it is not treated quickly enough. He has, according to the nursing notes, many symptoms of this, and now has blood work to match. I did want to have a look at Mickey’s back and sides as well…” Ian interrupted, “He has bruising, but it looked like it was healing. Would E. Coli cause bruising?” Ian asked. “No, but batons, fists or feet could,” Dr. O’Reilly said, shaking his head as he rolled Mickey on his side to examine him. “I want to have a CT scan done of his kidneys to be sure one or both is not ruptured. I suspect there may be bruising, but I need to be sure there’s nothing more than that. The trouble is, we don’t have those capabilities here, so he will need to be transported to Chicago Memorial. “Can I go with him?” Ian asked, already knowing the answer. Lucy shook her head. “We will get daily updates sent to us, and can call more often if we want,” she assured him.

“When will he be going?” Ian asked. “I would like to arrange for transport by ambulance immediately. I have been instructed by the guarantor, who signed the financial responsibility papers, to spare no expense for his treatment,” the doctor explained. “And are you at liberty to tell us who has agreed to pay for all of this?” Ian asked. “Bruno Bigley,” Dr. O’Reilly replied, leaving the room to call for the ambulance.

“Mickey,” Ian whispered into his ear. “Bigley is having you sent to Chicago Memorial! You’re gonna be okay!” Mickey’s eyes opened slowly, gazing up absently at Ian. “Did you hear me Mickey? You’re gonna get better and we’ll be together again soon!” Ian said, trying his best not to cry, but feeling that familiar sting behind his eyes.

The paramedics arrived quickly, carefully transferring Mickey and his IV onto their gurney before heading down the hall toward the elevator, Ian trailing behind them. The guard at the entrance to the infirmary stopped Ian, reminding him that he was not permitted to go beyond that point. “Wait!” Ian yelled in the direction of the paramedics. “Can I say goodbye?” He knew Mickey would have been pissed that he asked that in front of a guard, under normal circumstances, but today, he was so sick, he didn’t even realize what was happening, and Ian didn’t give a fuck what anyone knew at this point. He wanted to say goodbye to his husband, and he was damn well gonna do it! The paramedics stopped, backtracking just enough for Ian to walk up to the gurney. “Mickey,” he said, loud enough to bring Mickey back to semi-consciousness. “I love you so much! I’ll be thinking of you every
minute of everyday until we see each other again, so get better so that can happen as soon as possible,” he said softly, bending down to press his lips against Mickey’s, then moving to his nose, temples and forehead. “Ian…” was all Mickey managed to whisper before losing consciousness again.
Mandy and Manuel had stayed up late, discussing everything from Mickey’s illness, to the new factory that Bigley proposed, to the new global market they would be entering, to Mandy’s greatly increased role as a model as a result of the business growth, to marriage. They were talking about the permanency of their business relationship, given Mandy’s having become an integral part of the business, Manuel expressing the invaluable nature of her contributions. He basically said he didn’t know what he would do without her. Then he asked her how she would feel about getting married, which, for some reason, didn’t scare her as much as she would have thought. Maybe it was the recent wedding of her brother and her best friend that gave her a new view on it, or maybe it was Manuel. Most likely, it was a combination of the two. Whatever it was, Mandy had now begun to look at Manuel as ‘husband material’, and as such, she had proceeded to test the merchandise, which took her until the wee hours of the morning.

This would have been fine under different circumstances, but because they had a morning meeting with the CEO of Surfin’ USA, getting a bit more sleep would have been beneficial. Of course, Mandy was still up in plenty of time to get ready and be there by 10, but it infringed on Manuel’s ideas of sleeping in and of having a morning romp, a habit of theirs that he was all too eager to re-establish.

Mandy had come back to wake Manuel up three times, and this time, she was pissed. “Get the fuck up!” she yelled, pulling the covers off his body and yanking him by the arm. The trouble with that was that he yanked back, pulling her onto the bed with him, flipping her over and proceeding to fuck the shit out of her. “Manuel! You asshole!” she yelled, attempting to fight him off, until her body began to betray her, falling victim to Manuel’s irresistible magnetism. Manuel was so smooth, the feel of his dick inside her was like completing a circuit, exhilarating, intoxicating and just so right. Manuel consistently got her off, even when she started out in the foulest of moods. And this was an example of just that! “Oh my fuck!” she moaned as he hollowed her out again and again, giving her that ‘made just for you’ feeling inside of her that drove her over the edge every time.

And the feeling was just as divine on his end, Mandy’s tight little twat indulging his cock magnificently, one glorious stroke at a time. “Mandy….Mandy...you’re an angel!” he cried out as he pounded into her, Mandy countering his every move, intensifying the satisfaction until they toppled over the edge together, sweating, panting and moaning loudly. Then they lay motionless for a brief moment, revelling in the afterglow, until Mandy came to her senses again, that is.

“Fuck! Manuel!” Mandy complained, jumping up out of bed. “Now I have to get another shower! I’m never gonna be ready in time!” “Sure you will, baby!” he responded, getting up to turn the shower on. “And I’m first! Don’t even think about getting in with me! You’ve already caused me enough trouble,” Mandy yelled, running toward the shower, then jumping in before Manuel had the chance.

As the warm water cascaded over her body, she couldn’t help but to think about how good Manuel made her feel, not only when they fucked, but all the time. No man had ever made her feel this confident, beautiful and alive! She finished up quickly, leaving the water on for him, then slipped into one of the complimentary robes and headed out into the bedroom. Manuel was on her phone.

“Okay….Okay….Yes, alright...we will get there as soon as possible,” he finished, before ending the call. “Who was that? Where will we be as soon as possible? Hopefully, it’s Surfin’ USA you’re talkin’ about, cuz we’re about to be late!” she rattled off, rapid-fire, Manuel not getting a single word in until she was done.
“Mandy, Mickey was taken by ambulance to the E.R. at Chicago Memorial last night. He is very ill,” Manuel began. “Who was that?” she asked again. “Bigley,” he responded. “He has rescheduled our meeting for tomorrow, pending Mickey’s condition.” Mandy was actually relieved not to be on a time deadline for the meeting, but now she was worried sick about Mickey. “Oh, and Bigley said we’ll be able to see him at the hospital. He can still get us in to see Ian, too, but that we need to go to the hospital first. He also said it was a good thing you texted last night about visiting Mickey or he wouldn’t have gotten to the hospital and could’ve died. Apparently, Bigley was the one who paid for the doctor to run more tests and to go see Mickey yesterday. He’s sending us a limo. It’ll be here in 20 minutes.” “Well, what are you waiting for? Get in the shower so we can get there!” Mandy yelled, her heart beating as if it were about to come through her chest.

Manuel was showered and ready to go in 15 minutes flat, Mandy hurrying to get herself together as well. They weren’t waiting two minutes when the limo arrived, the pair jumping in, getting underway quickly. “Manuel,” Mandy said, breaking the silence of the ride, “I’m scared. All my life, people have come and gone, and I haven’t relied on anyone, but when I think back to all of the worst times, Mickey was always there. I need to be there for him now. I want to stay here in Chicago until he gets better...and I want you to stay with me. Will you...please?” Mandy sobbed into his chest. “I wouldn’t dream of being anywhere else,” Manuel answered, cradling her in his arms as she cried. “I love you, Manuel,” Mandy said quietly. “I love you, too, baby,” Manuel responded.

Although Mandy and Manuel were a couple in every sense of the word, this was the first time they had put it into those three magic words. Something about the circumstances, the two of them planning the future of the business together, relying on one another for just about everything, and Mickey being sick and separated from Ian, made them appreciate their relationship that much more. The marriage conversation they’d had the night before was just further confirmation that their relationship was progressing to the next level.

Upon arrival at Chicago Memorial, Mandy rushed to the information desk, asking for Mickey’s room number. She was told he was on the Critical Care Unit, which was on the 10th floor. Mickey’s room was 1021. Mandy and Manuel rushed to the elevator, which quickly delivered them to the 10th floor. When they arrived at Room 1021, it was being guarded by a correctional officer from the prison. Before being allowed to enter, they both had to be wanded and patted down, and Mandy’s purse was thoroughly searched as well. Once they were finally allowed into his room, Mickey was fast asleep, his face still exceptionally pale, his body beginning to look at bit frail. Mandy pulled a chair up to his bed, grasping his hand as she sat down. Mickey’s eyes opened a crack, peering out from under his heavy lids to look at Mandy. “Mickey! You’re awake,” she said with great excitement. “I am now,” he responded, sounding stronger than he had the day before at the prison already. “How are you feeling?” Manuel asked, moving closer to the bed, now that Mickey was awake.

Mickey was silent for a moment, pondering how he should answer Manuel’s question. There was a lot to explain, but he didn’t have the energy, so he just said, “Better,” which seemed to put both Manuel and Mandy at ease. “They taking good care of you here?” Mandy asked. “Yeah, they been addin’ a lotta new shit to this thing,” he said, jiggling the IV tube that led into his arm. “The say they might put a port in my chest if I’m gonna be here awhile, but fuck that! I’m s’posta go home in two days!” he said angrily. “Besides, I got enough holes in me already. Just wanna get Ian out and get the fuck back home, ya know?” he said with an edge in his voice.

“Mick, we are all gonna stay in Chicago ‘til you’re better. Don’t worry,” Mandy comforted him. “Why doesn’t anyone understand? I don’t wanna stay in fuckin’ Chicago! As soon as the court says I can, a wanna go home to Mexico. Montemurro can take care of me there. It’s just...I’m not like I was before and...” Mickey paused, having become short of breath. “Ojos, relax, we’ll get back to Mexico, but you gotta get better first.
Mickey’s body was tired, but his mind was racing. Why couldn’t anyone see that he was happy with the life he built in Mexico? He didn’t want to revisit the one he had in Chicago. In his mind, the only good thing from the Southside that stuck with him was Ian, and Mandy, he supposed. Other than that, the place was a shithole, and he wasn’t proud of the stuff he had done there, just to survive.

Mandy excused herself to find a nurse or someone who could share the latest on Mickey’s condition, since she had only gotten bits and pieces from him. Manuel stayed, taking the chair Mandy had been sitting in. “Dude, do we have to change the company so much, so fast?” Mickey asked, seemingly out of the blue. Manuel realized how very much this must have been bothering him, just as he had suspected. “Mickey, you and I have always wanted to make the business as successful as possible. If all of this works out, we’re gonna be rich!” Manuel said, brimming with excitement. “And that’s great,” Mickey responded softly, pausing to take a deep breath, which took great effort.

“Look, I’m not tryna rain on your fuckin’ parade. I just need my life in Mexico back, with you, Ian, Mandy and all of our friends there. You guys wanna do all this Chicago shit and whatever, fine, but leave me out of it. And Ian’s ass is stayin’ with me. Not ever lettin’ him outta my sight after this,” Mickey explained, laying down the law.

Just then, Mandy walked in, a male nurse following behind her. “And that’s another thing,” Mickey continued. “Ian wants to be a nurse. He can’t be traveling all over the place all the time. And I bet he could get Reesie a job with Dr. Montemurro, too…” Mickey’s thoughts seemed to bounce quickly from topic to topic, Manuel having a tough time making all of the connections. Mandy interjected, “This is Shawn. He’s Mickey’s nurse. He has updated information for us.”

“Mickey is currently receiving IV Immunoglobulin, antibiotics and hydration through his IV to treat his hemolytic anemia.. It is likely he will need to remain on this cocktail for the rest of this week. We would like permission to insert a PICC line so he can continue to receive his treatments without us having to manage the IV in his arm for a prolonged period. It would be inserted near his clavicle and will allow the medication to run straight to his heart, where it will then be pumped out to the rest of his body. Getting the IV out of the arm will helpful in making it available for bloodwork and also for allowing it to heal, since that IV has been in for the better part of a week. The trouble is, Mickey has not been willing to have this done, despite our attempts to convince him,” Shawn explained, looking at Mickey, expecting a response.

“Mick, it sounds like this is a good idea. The best way to get your medicine. And you need your medicine so you can get better and get outta here,” Mandy said, appealing to his sense of logic. “Mandy, they can just keep givin’ it in the IV for two more days. Then, when my appeal goes through, I’m gettin’ outta here. Goin’ home, like I said,” he explained, seeming to think he made perfect sense.

“Ojos, you can’t even leave right away. You need a passport to get back into Mexico legally. Besides, you need this treatment now. You can’t just stop and start. Plus, who knows if Dr. Montemurro can even do this for you at the clinic? Just have the PICC line put in...please,” Manuel added, doing his best to make Mickey see reason.

“So will you sign off to have this done then, Mickey?” Shawn asked. “No,” Mickey answered flatly. “I want something I can take out on my own when it’s time for me to leave,” he clarified. “This is nuts!” Mandy exclaimed, walking out of the room, then calling Shawn to come and talk to her in the hall.

Shawn followed Mandy into the hall. “Yes?” he answered. “This is crazy!” Mandy began in a low voice, trying not to be overheard. “He isn’t thinking clearly. Can’t I sign for the thing?” she asked. “We would have to prove that he isn’t competent to manage his own medical affairs right now,
which is a difficult, time-consuming process. And then we would need his next of kin, which is listed on his paperwork as Ian Gallagher.” Shawn explained. “That’s his husband, and I bet if he talked to him, he could get him to sign,” Mandy said confidently. “Well, where is he? Why hasn’t he been here to see him?” Shawn asked. “He’s in prison,” Mandy answered. “But they are both about to get out after Mickey’s appeal tomorrow. “Oh,” Shawn said, nodding his head, although he had heard these types of stories many times before, having dealt with inmates as patients. Everyone always says they are getting out after their appeal. “Well, if there is any way to arrange a conversation between the two of them, it needs to happen. If Mickey leaves here against medical advice and doesn’t continue with this treatment, he could die,” Shawn spoke honestly. “This gentleman who has taken financial responsibility for his care seems to be helpful, maybe I could give him a call.”

“I’ll call him,” Mandy volunteered, taking her phone out. Bigley answered on the first ring, “What’s wrong?” he asked immediately. “Mickey’s not thinkin’ right. He is refusing a PICC line and is planning to leave the hospital before he should, just as soon as he wins his appeal. I can’t talk any sense into him, and neither can Manuel. Ian needs to talk to him! I know he can convince him. If he doesn’t, Mickey could die,” Mandy recounted the story in a panicked voice. “I’ll see what I can do,” Bigley replied, ending the call.
Visiting Hours

“Am I gonna have to come over there and kick your ass?” Ian’s voice poured out of the phone like sweet music to Mickey’s ears. “Bring it on, bitch!” Mickey replied with a grin, feeling a bit more chipper, just hearing Ian’s voice. “That can be arranged, tough guy!” Ian said, popping his head into Mickey’s room, Steve, the 3 to 11 guard from Medical, who Lucy had called in for this detail, leading him in, in handcuffs.

“What’s this shit I’m hearing? You won’t stay here and get better? You’d rather leave early and die? Not gonna happen. I’ve waited too long to be your fucking husband. I wanna be him for more than two fucking weeks!” Ian paused, looking down at Mickey’s pale, drawn, exhausted-looking face. He knew right then, he had this issue handled. Mickey was gonna give in; it was only a matter of time.

“But…” Mickey began. “You’re butt is what I’m gonna get when you’re better, and what I’ll never have if you die. I can’t believe I have to stand here and do this with you. You’ve been in my shoes! You remember how it went when I decided I didn’t need my meds! Leave the medical shit to the professionals—please! Now, I’m gonna find that sexy nurse of yours that I just met, he’s gonna bring your papers in for you to sign...And you’re gonna sign ‘em.”

“Ian, I…” “I don’t wanna hear it! You can either sign and get it over with so we can have a nice visit, or you can fight with me and I can leave here pissed off. Either way, you’re getting the damn PICC line, and you’re staying ‘til you’re better—even if I have to have you found mentally incompetent,” Ian continued, steamrolling over Mickey.

Ian turned to go and find the nurse, Steve following close behind, when Mickey called out to him desperately, “Ian! Wait!” Ian stopped in his tracks, Steve nearly stepping on him. “Would you please just listen?” he spoke quietly, but Ian could still hear the frustration in his voice. Ian walked over and sat down on the edge of Mickey’s bed, looking down at his heartbreakingly distressed face. “I’m listening, Mick,” he said kindly, feeling himself getting lost in Mickey’s mesmerizing blue eyes. He held back the urge to lean his face down to Mickey’s and kiss him, trying his best to focus on what Mickey was about to say. “I don’t wanna be here. I miss our house, our life and everyone in it. I know you and Dr. Montemurro can take care of me. I don’t need to be here,” Mickey said in little more than a whisper, fighting to catch his breath near the end.

“I love you, Mick, and nothing would make me happier than to take you home right now, but trust me, you do need to be here. I’ll be here with you, and we’ll leave as soon as you’re well—I promise. I can’t take the chance of you dying...please,” Ian was reduced to begging at this point, his eyes filling with tears. In this situation, Ian didn’t care who else saw him cry. It was Mickey that needed to see it, to make him realize how serious this was. He lowered his head, resting it on Mickey’s chest, and began to sob. “Okay,” Mickey breathed, folding like a cardboard box as he softly caressed Ian’s tear-soaked face with his left hand, “I’ll do it.”

By this time, Mandy had retrieved Shawn, the hot male nurse, who had pen and paper in hand, making quick work of the signing process. “Thank you,” Ian said, nodding at Shawn, “for taking such good care of Mickey. I know he can be a pain in the ass, but he means the world to me. I really appreciate all of your hard work.” Ian finished, immediately realizing that he owed both Lucy and Reesie the same heartfelt thanks, and then some.

After Shawn left the room, Mandy and Manuel followed suit, hoping Steve might do the same. “We’re going to get some coffee,” Manuel said to him. “Would you like to join us?” “That sounds great!” Steve answered. “And since there are two of us here,” he said, pointing to the door, outside of which another guard was standing, “I don’t think it should be a problem.” In under 30 seconds,
Ian lowered his face to Mickey’s, feeling a bit awkward since his hands were cuffed behind his back, but where there’s a will, there’s a way. And Ian was dying to kiss his husband. Even in his current condition, he was completely and utterly irresistible to Ian. Ian started by touching his lips lightly to Mickey’s, then slowly pulled Mickey’s sexy-as-fuck lower lip into his mouth, nibbling on it until it became gnawing, then pressing his lips more firmly against Mickey’s, slipping his tongue past his parted lips, Mickey panting already, as he pulled Ian’s head down hard, pressing their faces together forcefully as their tongues danced together, familiar, yet wild, hungering for more of one another than was possible, yet still taking this opportunity for all it was worth. Both men were fully aroused, enjoying the torture of their limitations, craving more, but reveling in this togetherness, this spiritual intimacy that knew no bounds.

“Fuck, I missed you,” Mickey breathed, behaving as though he hadn’t seen Ian in months, his arms wrapped tightly around Ian, as best they could be with his cast and IV. “Been thinkin’ about you,” he added between kisses. “When I get you alone…” Mickey reached over to touch Ian’s thigh, Ian jumping up immediately from the bed. “Mick, don’t! I literally can’t handle you touching me like that right now. I swear to God, I might cum in my pants if you do,” Ian grinned sheepishly, his face turning bright red. Somehow, this was embarrassing information to share, even with his husband. Mickey laughed out loud. “Fuck, Gallagher! Didn’t know you missed me THAT bad.” “Yeah, man. It’s bad...If I didn’t know damn well that you need to be here, there’s not a chance I’d leave you here one second past when we are both free. But you’re real sick, Mick, and I need you to have patience and rest up,” Ian said with a serious tone, just before leaning in to kiss him on the forehead. “You’ll never know…” Ian said, pressing his lips against Mickey’s again. “Yeah, I do,” Mickey answered.

“Time to go,” Steve called in from outside the door. “I love you, Mick,” Ian said softly, laying one last impassioned kiss on him, before standing up to leave. “Love you, too, Ian. Don’t worry. I’ll stay ‘til you say I can leave,” Mickey said, his lip quivering ever so slightly as he choked back the tears that he knew were coming.

Let’s go, Gallagher,” Steve said, leading him out the door. Ian turned to look back, their eyes meeting one last time. “Til death do us part,” Ian mouthed to Mickey. “Til death do us part,” Mickey mumbled as Ian disappeared through the door, Manuel and Mandy walking in just afterward.

“What the fuck?” Mandy whispered to Manuel. “Yeah, Mickey does talk in his sleep sometimes when he’s dreaming,” Manuel shared. “Okay...and that’s more than I wanted to hear about it from you!” Mandy said, the idea that her boyfriend and her brother used to fuck finally coming to roost in her mind, much to her chagrin.

“Where’s the baby?” he said again, this time more loudly, waking himself up. “What baby?” Mandy asked, just as Mickey opened his eyes. “My baby,” he replied as his eyes closed again. Manuel and Mandy looked at each other, then shrugged it off, turning their discussion to their upcoming appointment at Surfin’ USA. Bigley had rescheduled them for 9AM Monday morning. Now that they knew how Mickey felt about Ian traveling to model, they were concerned with how much they should commit Ian to, in that regard. They resolved to speak generally and promise to schedule once
they knew Ian’s availability.

Mandy and Manuel stuck around, watching Mickey sleep, listening to him ramble, and sitting close to one another. When Shawn came in to check on Mickey, he reminded them that visiting hours would be over for the evening in ten minutes. Since Mickey had woken up as Shawn hung a new bag of fluids for his IV, Mandy took the opportunity to question Mickey about his sleep-talking, once Shawn left.

“You wanna tell me what baby you were talking about in your sleep?” Mandy asked, looking down at Mickey intently. He stared back at her in total shock, completely unaware that he had said anything at all while he was sleeping, although he knew he was prone to it, particularly when he was medicated. “Not really,” he answered. “Gotta talk to Ian first,” he added. “Why?” Mandy pressed on. “Because Ian’s my fuckin’ husband, and we decide shit together,” he snapped. “So you guys might adopt a baby?” Mandy started guessing. “Fuck, Mandy!” Mickey raised his voice, beginning to get upset. “Leave it alone! It’s fuckin’ complicated, and Ian and I gotta talk,” Mickey finished, his voice getting weak as he fought to catch his breath.

“Okay, I’m sorry, Mick,” Mandy apologized, beginning to feel guilty for pushing the issue when he was so ill. “They’re going to kick us outta here soon,” Manuel interjected, wanting to smooth things over. “We can come back tomorrow after our meeting at Surfin’ USA,” he continued. “Oh, you goin’ to make more decisions without me, huh?” Mickey mumbled indignantly. “Mick, Bigley has all of this lined up for us. He’s done so much. We’re just trying to keep things moving in the direction he set for us. He’s the reason you got outta prison to come here and get better, he’s the one that got Ian out to see you, and he’s responsible for us getting rich. I don’t even think you realize how much Ojos Azules is worth already!” Mandy explained excitedly.

“I know you are feeling like you’re not a part of everything right now,” Manuel went on, “but trust me, everyone values your opinions and contributions. Once you’re better, you’ll see how much you are needed, and how well we are doing for ourselves. Please trust me, Ojos,” Manuel implored him, looking down at him thoughtfully. “it’s all going to work out better than our wildest dreams!” Manuel prophesied enthusiastically. Mickey nodded his head silently, looking back at Manuel with trusting eyes.

“We gotta go, Mick,” Mandy said, kissing him on the forehead. “We’ll see you tomorrow,” Manuel spoke softly, bending to press a kiss into his forehead as well. “I love you guys. Thanks for visitin’ me. Sorry I’m so fuckin’ grumpy,” Mickey whispered. “We love you, too, Mick,” Mandy assured him. “Everything’s gonna be okay.”
Visiting Mickey in the hospital had really taken its toll on Ian. He had maintained a stiff upper lip and had accomplished the goal he had set; Mickey agreed to stay until he was better. But now Ian felt the stress of handling their business and personal affairs on his own. Sure, he planned to visit Mickey to discuss things with him, but, as much as he hated to admit it, sometimes Mickey just wasn’t ‘all there’, and it terrified him. It had always been Ian who was mentally fragile, Mickey having to look out for him. And Ian was a pro when it came to caring for any physical ailments Mickey had encountered, but dealing with him in a less than logical state, other than when he was really pissed, was uncharted territory for Ian. And then there was the added worry of how the appeal would go. One way or the other, they would know the outcome by day’s end, which was also nerve racking.

Ian was still sitting quietly with his thoughts when Reesie approached his cell with his breakfast and meds. “Mornin’,” she said softly as she handed Ian’s tray through his meal slot. “Mornin’,” Ian parroted back, still obviously lost in his own head. “Thinking about Mickey, huh?” Reesie asked, well aware of the answer. “Yeah, I have a lot on my mind, actually,” Ian responded, taking a bite of eggs, then swallowing his meds with some orange juice. “Here ya go,” Ian said, pushing his tray back through the meal slot. “Okay, I’ll put this over by the computer,” Reesie said, grabbing the tray. “Lucy has some nursing notes for you to input.” “I’m good. You can put my tray back on the cart,” Ian said absently. “No, you are going to eat more than a bite of breakfast. The last thing we need is both you and Mickey down and out,” Reesie said sternly.

Ian wanted to tell Reesie off for trying to boss him around, but then he thought about it. He had just done the same thing to Mickey, and it was for his own good. That’s all Reesie was trying to do—to keep him healthy. “Okay, thanks,” he responded. “Can I get a shower?” he asked. “Yes, I’ll have someone open your cell and you can shower in Mickey’s old room. In fact, I’ll check with Lucy to see if she can arrange having you sleep in there tonight, if you want,” Reesie offered, sincere kindness in her voice. “Sure,” Ian replied, thinking about how nice it might be to have some privacy for a night, although it would be lonely, sleeping in Mickey’s bed without him. “I’ll leave you some clean sheets for the bed,” Reesie added, as she walked away to find someone to let Ian out. “Okay, thanks!” he called after her.

Mr. Cell Phone let him out of his cell, then Ian headed for the shower in Mickey’s room. As soon as he walked into the room, Mickey’s familiarly intoxicating scent filled his senses, instantly awakening him, body and soul. Ian had changed the sheets in there once, but Mickey had been on them for his last day there, before being taken to the hospital. Ian lay down on the bed and closed his eyes, hugging Mickey’s pillow to his body and inhaling deeply, wishing with everything in him that Mickey were there, his cock responding in kind.

After about ten minutes of self-inflicted torture, he rose from the bed, setting the pillow back down in its place. He decided he would not change the sheets, electing to cling to all he had left of Mickey, having been stripped since his arrival in prison of every last vestige of him, even his wedding band, which seemed, to him, to be cruel and unusual punishment.

Ian hopped into the shower, the warm, welcoming water magnifying his desire, his brain flooded with visions of Mickey in the throes of passion, his sexy, taut frame writhing under him, his beautiful, black locks woven between his fingers as he pulled at them, his piercing blue eyes rolling back into his head in ecstasy…”Damn, Mick!” Ian exclaimed as he increased the speed of his hand on his own rigid cock. “So fucking tight for me and so beautiful,” he whispered, imagining himself breathing those words into Mickey’s ear. He held his other hand to his face, breathing in Mickey’s scent, which lingered there from his handling of Mickey’s pillow. “Mick... gonna cum,” he moaned,
squirting all over the shower wall, his legs weak, his mind returning slowly to reality as he opened his eyes, Mickey disappearing back into the recesses of his mind. “Fuck!” he yelled to himself, as his eyes began to sting.

Ian finished washing up, working to regain his composure as he towed off, got dressed and walked out of the bathroom. Again, he looked over at the bed, remembering how sick his husband had looked the last time he had been in it. This was going to be a rough day.

“Hey!” Reesie said, knocking on the partially-open door before walking in. “You okay?” she asked, sensing Ian’s mood. “Yeah, just missing the fuck outta Mick,” he admitted. “Hoping it’s going well in Court and that he’s healing. It’s a lot,” he said, getting choked up. Reesie walked over to Ian and wrapped her arms around him. “You don’t have to be tough around me,” she said, embracing him even tighter, once she felt his body begin to shake as he started to cry. “Let it out,” she comforted, rubbing his back gently. And he did, pouring all of his emotions out to her, like he’d known her his whole life, Reesie listening patiently and conveying her understanding, often through non-verbal comfort, which reminded him of Mickey. He always knew when Ian needed a touch or a hug, even when there were no words to be said.

“Thanks, Reesie,” he said, pulling away to look her in the eye. “Thanks for everything that you’ve done for me and for Mickey,” he spoke sincerely. “I don’t know if I would have a husband, if it weren’t for you and Lucy.” “It’s nothing you wouldn’t have done for us, if the roles were reversed, and we both know that. It’s part of being a caring medical professional, and sometimes we get a little too attached. I think that’s normal, at least I hope so. Anyway, we were not going to let Mickey die,” she confided. “I know, and that’s what I appreciate. I just hope you get outta here, and can have your daughter back,” Ian said softly, a look of sadness about his face. “Speaking of which, could I ask a favor?” Ian requested, looking into her eyes again. “Sure,” she responded, a quizzical look on her face. “Could I please see her picture again?” he asked. “Yep!” she replied, pulling the picture from her pocket.

Ian stared at the beautiful baby’s photo, her bright blue eyes looking back at him hypnotically. “Mickey could never deny her,” he said with a smile, his eyes never moving from her picture. “Her eyes are…” “Just like Mickey’s,” Reesie and Ian said in unison. “I could see that the second they handed her to me,” Reesie continued. “And that little round head…” Ian chuckled. “Yep, she definitely looks a lot like him,” Reesie agreed. “But please know that I don’t expect anything from either of you, Ian. I got myself into this, and I can handle it.” “Well, I, for one, would like to visit when I’m in town, if it’s okay with you,” Ian said enthusiastically. “I can’t speak for Mickey…” Ian paused, his last sentence hanging out there uncomfortably, as if he should be adding to it, but couldn’t. “So, what’s her name?” Ian finally asked, breaking the awkward silence. “Mikhaila,” Reesie said in little more than a whisper.

Mandy and Manuel had a busy morning. The meeting at Surfin’ USA had gone extremely well, resulting in a tentatively scheduled modeling shoot in Chicago for Mandy on Wednesday. Like they had agreed the day before, they did not commit Ian, although they said they would check to see if he would be available then. Next they took off to the hospital to check in on Mickey. He had given them a bit of a scare the day before, between refusing the care he needed, until Ian showed up, and just seeming to be a bit ‘out of it’ across the board. Plus, the whole ‘baby’ thing was tormenting the shit out of Mandy. She knew something was up; she could feel it, but Mickey was shutting them out, which she wasn’t used to. Even Manuel agreed that he was keeping something from them, something new. Whatever it was, he was convinced it had happened since he and Ian had left Mexico. They didn’t want to press Mickey while he was sick, but they agreed to attempt to get to the bottom of it as soon as he was well again.

Upon walking into Mickey’s hospital room, they were shocked to see him sitting up in bed. The IV
was removed from his arm. They had inserted the PICC line, probably at some point either the night before or earlier that morning. Mickey waved with his newly-freed left hand as they approached him. “Hey, Mick! You’re looking so much better today!” Mandy said cheerfully. “I feel better,” he replied with excitement. “Doc says if I keep gettin’ this much better each day, I’ll be the fuck outta here in no time!” “That’s so great, Mick!” Mandy said with a bright smile as she walked over to give him a hug. “Your face! The color is so much better. And there’s a light in your eyes again,” Manuel remarked observantly. “Yes, Mick, you definitely look like you came back from the dead,” Mandy agreed. “Too bad Ian can’t see you now,” she lamented. Then she suddenly remembered Ian saying she could get in touch with him through the nurses, by calling the main prison number and asking for Medical.

Mandy did as Ian had suggested, and was connected with Lucy in no time. Within minutes, she had convinced Lucy to use her personal cell phone to FaceTime her so Ian could see how much better Mickey looked. Mandy waited while Lucy went to find Ian, who was still in Mickey’s old room with Reesie. “Say hi, Ian,” Lucy said, handing the phone to Ian. Mandy’s face was glowing with happiness. “What’s up, Mands?” he said, smiling back at her. “Look!” she shouted, handing the phone to Mickey, whose shining face was grinning ear to ear. “Sup, Gallagher?” Mickey called out boisterously. “Mick! You look so good!” Ian exclaimed, his voice oozing with happiness and relief. “Doc says I’ll be outta here in no time if I keep improving like this,” Mickey bragged.

“Bring me the phone when you’re done,” Lucy said, pulling Reesie by the arm as she walked out of the room. “Will do!” Ian responded. “So, I see you got the PICC line put in,” Ian said, mentally putting a tally mark in the ‘win’ column for himself. “Yeah, no big deal,” Mickey said matter-of-factly. “Got one free arm now!” Mickey said, sporting that sexy smile again, spontaneously melting Ian into a puddle on the floor.

“I miss you so much! Been looking at the baby’s picture. She reminds me so much of you…” Ian spoke freely since he was alone in the room. “Yeah, been thinkin’ about that…” Mickey began. “You got a problem with me bein’ in her life? I mean, not like we’re gonna be her guardians or anything, but for visits sometimes?” Mickey asked. “Cuz I was thinkin’ about askin’ Reesie about that,” Ian finished.

“Not at all! In fact, I was hoping you would. She’s about the most beautiful baby I’ve ever seen in my life! Mostly looks like you…” “Gallagher, I think she looks like you! I was noticing that when Reesie gave me her picture,” Mickey insisted. “You really think so?” Ian asked with a grin. “Fuck yeah, man! She’s gorgeous! I fucked up so much with Yevgeny cuz I was young and resented the fuck outta my dad, and Svetlana with her bullshit. I don’t wanna make that mistake again. A kid should know their dad, even if it’s just part-time. And I want a chance to not be an asshole like MY dad, ya know?”

Out of nowhere, Mandy leapt up from her seat, running over to the bed and hugging Mickey hard, tears streaming down her face. “Mick, this is even more wonderful than I imagined. A baby that is yours and is related to Ian! Please promise you will be in her life! Manuel and I will help any way we can!” Mandy squealed exuberantly. “That’s great, Mands,” Ian chimed in, overhearing her enthusiastic offer.

Just then, Shawn, Mickey’s nurse, walked in. “Your attorney just called from downstairs and is on his way up to see you,” Shawn called to Mickey from the doorway. “Good news?” Manuel asked. “Well, bad news isn’t typically delivered in person, in my experience with lawyers, but who knows?” Shawn said with a shrug. “Are you serious?” Ian yelled. “Stay on with me! I gotta hear this!” “What did you think, Ian? That I’d hang up the fuckin’ phone? Jesus!” Mickey said excitedly.

“Hello Mickey,” Thomas said as he walked in. “I was sorry to hear you took a turn for the
worse...although you look better today than when I last saw you,” he continued. “I came to let you know…” “Wait!” Mickey interrupted him, reaching his hand out with the phone in it. “Please let Ian see you, too,” he said.

“This is unprecedented in the Cook County Court of Appeals!” Thomas said proudly. “The judge made his decision within an hour of hearing arguments! I’m guessing it was because there was no credible evidence to support the conviction, and because I stressed how ill you were, but anyway, your conviction has been overturned. The opinion is being written and the decision will be filed with the Court by day’s end. Mickey, you are a free man!”

“Thanks so fuckin’ much, Thomas!” Mickey shouted through the tears of joy and lump in his throat that were growing by the second. “I can’t believe it!” Now both Mickey and Ian were in tears, and absolutely giddy at the same time. “But what about Ian?” Mickey asked. “How soon will he get out?”

“I filed Motions to Dismiss today for his charges and for one of Reesie’s. Cogswell is trying to get those Motions pushed through quickly, since they are basically a formality because of Mickey’s conviction being reversed. But we’ll have to wait and see…” “Mick, don’t worry about me,” Ian said with a smile, “Just get yourself better and it’ll all work out.”

“Ian, I feel like a new man! I’m better! Just can’t wait to fuckin’ be with you!” Mickey said, his voice cracking with emotion. “Me too, Mickey! Me too.”
Mandy was absolutely giddy at the thought of being an aunt, regardless of the terms. She had some experience, having helped to care for Yevgeni, which she enjoyed to a point, but now that she was older and in a serious relationship, the idea appealed to her on a different level. Truth be told, the thought of her and Manuel having a child had crossed her mind more than a few times, particularly since they had their talk at the Waldorf, although she knew now was not the time. She was enjoying the prospect of being a traveling model, part-time, while focusing primarily on the business and Manuel.

She had woken up early, her thoughts racing from topic to topic, the baby, the photo shoot, Mickey, Ian and, of course, when Manuel was ever going to wake up. She knew he was exhausted from the long day they’d had the day before, but she was really looking forward to a leisurely morning in bed together, exploring each other’s bodies slowly, indulging one another in every way imaginable. She was getting terribly aroused, just thinking about it.

Hoping to fall back to sleep until Manuel woke up, Mandy hopped back into the bed, but couldn’t; her brain was too wide awake. She resisted the urge to wake Manuel, although that was proving to be more and more difficult. Finally, at 10:30, her cell phone saved her the trouble, a number she recognized as coming from the prison popping up on the screen. She scrambled to answer, although the ring had already woken Manuel, who began pressing himself against the back of her as she took the call. “Ian!” Mandy squealed, surprised to hear his voice on the other end of the phone. “Yes, of course we will,” she responded. “Sure, we can...Okay! See you then!” she said, barely able to contain her excitement. At this point, Manuel was rhythmically pressing his rock-hard cock into Mandy’s right ass cheek.

“Sure we can, what?” Manuel whispered into Mandy’s ear as he shoved his right hand into the front of her panties that he was surprised to find her wearing, massaging her clit slowly with the palm of his hand as he dipped his middle finger in and out of her wonderfully wet, fantastically tight little box. Mandy moaned softly as she grinded her ass against Manuel’s massive manhood. “Hmmmm...is this what we can do?” he breathed seductively into her ear, raising goosebumps over every inch of her as he continued to slowly tease her with his hand. “Yes,” Mandy panted impatiently, her body wriggling in any direction that provided friction, penetration or both. “Mmmmmm...” Manuel hummed, grasping the outer edges of her panties and yanking them off as he rolled himself on top of her. He entered her, painstakingly slow, maneuvering only the very tip of his ample shaft in and out of her at a snail’s pace.

Mandy arched herself up off the bed, desperately chasing the fulfillment that the plenitude of Manuel’s cock could so magnificently provide. “Patience, my dear,” Manuel hummed as he lightly sucked at the side of Mandy’s neck while perpetuating his torturous teasing of her begging snatch. Mandy pulled Manuel’s face from her neck, staring into his deliriously dashing brown orbs with her own shimmering crystal blue, “Manuel, we have to pick Ian and Reesie up at noon! Get down to it before we run out of time!” Mandy growled, pulling his face down to hers and kissing him hard. “I want you so fuckin’ bad!” she moaned between kisses, wrapping her legs around his waist as he began to delve more deeply into her. Within seconds they were going at it, full tilt, Manuel fucking her savagely, her moans escalating into screams as their pace quickened, the headboard smacking obnoxiously against the wall.

Mandy let out the roar of a lioness as she climaxed, dragging Manuel right along with her, his final thrusts punctuated by her screams and his low growling moans.

“I love you, babe,” Mandy breathed, once she caught her breath. “I love you, too, my angel,”
Manuel responded, kissing her lightly on the forehead, then rolling onto his back. Mandy rested her head on his chest, listening to his heart, still beating fast, and daydreaming about their future together. Her life was already more phenomenal than she ever could have imagined, and it just kept getting better.

After about ten minutes of snuggling, Mandy and Manuel hit the shower together, preparing to pick Ian and Reesie up from the prison. Once in the shower, Manuel began to ask questions. “So Ian and Reesie’s charges were all dropped?” “I guess,” Mandy answered. “Ian just said they were both getting released and asked if we could come to get them. Guess we’ll get an Uber and meet them if we don’t hear anything from Bigley.” “What about Mickey?” Manuel asked. “Figured we’d take them with us to visit him,” she responded, grabbing a soap sponge to wash Manuel’s back. “Mmmmm…” Manuel moaned, enjoying the sensation of the scratchy sponge on his skin. “You like that, baby?” she cooed. “Feels great!” he responded, taking the sponge from her hand and using it on her. “Yes, it does,” she smiled, still utterly bewildered, wondering what she ever did to deserve such a beautiful, kind, sensitive man. “You are my princess, my everything,” he whispered into her ear, before spinning her around to face him for a soulful kiss. It was times like these when the pair recognized how truly blessed they were.

Mandy and Manuel finished washing up and quickly dried off, heading to the bedroom to get dressed. There was a text message on Mandy’s phone. “Limo will arrive at the prison at noon and will be at the Waldorf for you by 12:20 or so to take all of you to Chicago Memorial to see Mickey.” Mandy texted back, “Thank you so much, Bruno…for everything!”

“Manuel, we have some extra time…” Mandy said with a sexy smile, dropping her towel to the floor.

Ian and Reesie had just finished reclaiming their personal effects and were waiting outside the prison for their ride. “You have two rings?” Reesie questioned Ian, as she watched him put a wedding band on each hand. “Nah, they let me take Mickey’s stuff, too, since he will be released from the hospital a free man,” he responded, shaking the paper bag containing Mickey’s clothes. “Pretty sure the prison is the last place he’ll wanna go,” Ian chuckled. “Yeah, right,” Reesie nodded.

She looked beautiful in her own clothes, even though they were nothing more than an old pair of jeans and a blouse. In her prison uniform, she had looked thin, almost too much so, but now she actually looked more like a model, especially after applying the makeup she had with her personal effects and letting her naturally wavy red hair down.

“There it is,” Ian said, pointing at the limo that was heading toward them. “Wow! So we’re riding in style!” Reesie exclaimed. “Yep! Bigley pulls out all the stops!” Ian remarked, thinking about his good fortune in becoming affiliated with such an important, yet generous man. “Hard to believe I’m actually outta there!” Ian added. “You?” Reesie responded with an attitude. “Try being in there for six months or, even worse, a year!” she whined. “Guess you’re right!” Ian began, “I’m really lucky!” “You should have a four-leaf clover tattooed on your ass,” Reesie giggled.

The limo pulled up and Ian opened the back door before the driver even had a chance to get out of the vehicle, allowing Reesie to climb in first. Then he threw Mickey’s bag of clothes in, hopped in himself and shut the door. “Thank you so much for coming to get us!” he said to the driver, who nodded in response, adding, “We are picking up two at the Waldorf, then heading to Chicago Memorial, correct?” “Yes,” Ian said enthusiastically.

“You have Mikhaila’s picture?” Ian asked. “What do you think?” Reesie replied, pulling it from her wallet. Ian just smiled, taking it from her hand. “How soon do you think you’ll be getting her back?” he asked anxiously. “I have a meeting with Family Services tomorrow, so I should know after that,”
she answered quietly, looking over at Ian as he continued to stare at the picture. “Can I show this to Mandy and Manuel?” Ian asked. “Of course!” she agreed with a smile.

As the limo pulled up to the Waldorf, Ian caught sight of Mandy and Manuel. He swung the door open for them, greeting them with a warm “Hello,” followed by an invitation to see something beautiful. “What’s that?” Manuel asked. “This!” Ian replied, handing Mikhaila’s picture to Mandy, Manuel looking on from next to her. “So precious!” Manuel gasped, looking over to catch Mandy’s reaction, which was one of complete and utter shock. “Her eyes look just like…” “Mickey’s,” all four of them said at once. “Reesie,” Mandy commented, “she couldn’t possibly be a more perfect mix of the two of you!” “I can’t wait to hold her again,” Reesie said, beginning to tear up. “I miss her so much!” “Is Cogswell helping with your custody situation?” Ian questioned. “Yes,” Reesie replied. “Then you have nothing to worry about,” Ian said confidently.

The trip to the hospital was a short one, Mickey’s four visitors pouring out of the limo a few short minutes after the last two had gotten in. Ian raced to the hospital entrance, anticipating his opportunity to hold his husband in his arms again. It had been a while, and he missed that sorely, the comforting warmth of Mickey’s body against his, the feeling of contentment that he could not achieve any other way... For Ian, there was literally nothing on earth that compared to holding Mickey tightly against him! He hit the elevator button three times before it arrived, despite the fact that it had lit up after the first. He was so anxious he couldn’t even stand still in the elevator, bouncing and swaying the entire time.

When the elevator opened to the 10th floor, Ian ran out, jogging through the corridors like a man on a mission. Finally, he arrived at Mickey’s room, but the curtain was pulled around his bed. Ian sighed deeply, disappointed with the reality of having to wait to see Mickey.

Finally, after about 15 minutes, Shawn opened the curtain and stepped out into the hall. “Oh, hi,” he said, upon seeing Ian, Mandy and Manuel. “Hi,” Ian answered, his stomach full of butterflies. “He okay?” Ian asked in a worried tone. “Yeah, everything’s great! We have to keep track of his intake and output, so you know what that means,” Shawn said, exchanging a knowing look with Ian. “So, can we go in?” Ian asked. “Sure,” Shawn responded, excusing himself, piss bottle in hand.

“You go first,” Mandy said. “We’ll come in after you say your ‘hellos’. Just let us know.” “Okay, thanks!” Ian smiled back at her as he walked through the door. “Mick!” Ian yelled, overwhelmed with emotion, his eyes brimming over with tears. “Ian!” Mickey replied, holding his arms out. The two hugged each other hard, holding on for a good five minutes, as both men sobbed into each other’s shoulders. “I love you so fuckin’ much! So fuckin’ relieved to see you outta that hellhole,” Mickey whimpered. “Love you too, Mick! Been waitin’ so fucking long for this! You feel fucking incredible!”

“I have something for you,” Ian whispered into Mickey’s ear. “What?” Mickey asked, pulling away to look into Ian’s beautifully shimmering green eyes, then luring him in for a sweet kiss. “This!” Ian said, slipping Mickey’s ring off his right ring finger, then reaching for Mickey’s left hand. Ian pulled Mickey’s hand to his mouth, kissing his ring finger, then pushing the ring onto it lovingly. “Back where it belongs,” Ian said softly, “til death do us part.”
The rest of the visit with Mickey went well, although both Mickey and Ian would have loved to have been alone for the day. They both understood why everyone wanted to be there though, and it felt good to be surrounded by friends and family. There would be plenty of ‘alone time’ available to them, just as soon as Mickey got his ass better and out of the hospital, but they did steal some whenever they could in the meantime.

The group discussed a variety of topics, including plans for a party at Mandy and Manuel’s new place, upon their return to Boca. The subjects that dominated the conversation, however, were the Chicago photo shoot, and subsequent modeling for Surfin’ USA, and little Michaela’s future. At last Mickey was well enough and in the proper company to address these issues. Ian had not been told of Mickey’s objections to his modeling extensively in the States, and Reesie had not been made aware that Mickey and Ian were interested in any type of relationship with Michaela, so there was plenty to discuss.

Mandy, always being one for getting things out in the open and resolving them as soon as possible, brought up the subject of the photo shoot. “So Ian, Manuel and I met with Cal at Surfin’ USA yesterday. We set up a photo shoot for tomorrow, starting at 9. We were hoping you could go, since you’re out now,” she said without even taking a breath. “I…I…” Ian stammered, looking over at Mickey’s face in an attempt to read his reaction. “How long’s it gonna take?” Mickey interrupted. “So far,” Manuel began, “we have only set up the one morning, but there may be more to come in the future,” he finished.

“What do you think, Mick?” Ian asked, deferring to him out of consideration for all that he’d been through, and because, deep down, he knew that, despite the favorable outcome, he had really fucked shit up by getting on that plane with Mickey. “Bout time you left a fuckin’ decision to me,” Mickey said sternly, then cracking that signature smile that melted Ian every time. “Do whatcha gotta do while my ass is still laid up, cuz when they let me outta here, we’re goin’ home,” Mickey said with a sexy grin that told Ian all he needed to know.

“Alright then, guess that’s your answer, guys,” Ian said, looking over a Mandy and Manuel. “Great!” Mandy cheered. “Should be lotsa fun!” she added. “Yeah, well, hopefully no one drugs me this time,” Ian said jokingly, although he was kind of serious. “Don’t let any of those fruity photographers fuck with you,” Mickey warned, “or I’ll have to come and kick some ass when I get outta here.” “Relax, Mick! Everything will be fine,” Mandy assured him.

“Alright,” Mickey growled, moving on to his next concern. “Reesie, they gonna help you get the baby back?” he asked. “Yes, Thomas has filed for full custody for me, just as soon as I go in front of the judge for my remaining charge. He said it will probably be three months probation, and that I should be able to get her after the home visit. I wanna get home soon and clean my place up so I’m ready. I’m a little behind on rent so I have to take care of that, too,” she explained.

“We can help you,” Manuel interjected, Mandy giving him a surprised look. It wasn’t that she objected at all; she was just very shocked to hear him make such an offer. “Thank you, Manuel, but I’ve got this. I have savings. I just couldn’t pay while I was in prison. I paid ahead a few months before I went in, but I owe a few, so I’ll pay them, either today or tomorrow. “Well, if there’s anything you need…” Manuel began. “I’ll be helping. That’s not up to you,” Mickey interrupted. “Kid’s mine and I’m gonna make sure she’s taken care of,” he said firmly. “What is up to you is if you want her to know me or not,” he continued.

“Of course I do,” Reesie said with a smile. “That is, if you want to,” she added, looking down at the
floor, a note of uncertainty in her voice. “Yeah, me and Ian talked, and we definitely wanna...have visits with her when we can. We got a lot goin’ on...and weren’t plannin’ on raisin’ a kid...but we wanna help and be part of her life,” he said haltingly, looking at Ian for affirmation. Ian nodded, adding, “Yeah, I fell in love with Michaela the minute I saw her picture,” he said, throwing Mickey all the support in the world.

“Mik...what?” Mickey said, not sure he believed what he had just heard. “Yeah, Mick, she named her after you! Mikhaila!” Ian announced, beaming with pride and excitement. “Reesie, I...don’t know what to say.” “It’s okay. Don’t say anything. I named her Mikhaila because, the minute I saw her, she reminded me of you so much that I knew I’d think of you every time I looked at her, for the rest of my life. So I figured I might as well give her your name. I always thought your name was so beautiful anyway.

“Fuck! If you were gonna do that, you might as wella given her my last name, too. Mikhaila goes with Milkovich, ya know?” he laughed, but there was a look of sincerity that showed through on his face. “That’s something to think about,” Reesie responded. “Just let me get her back first. Then we can talk about that, if you want.”

Hey, while you’re offering your name up, how about if I take your name?” Ian suggested. “I think there are more than enough Gallaghers in the world already. What do you think, Mick?” “Fuck yeah, man! Ian Milkovich! Has a fucked up ring to it!” he laughed, his eyes crinkling around the edges as he gazed over at Ian. Ian swooped in on him quickly, pressing his lips against Mickey’s, then deepening the kiss, with complete disregard for the others in the room.

“Hey, get a room!” Mandy yelled. “We got one!” Mickey answered, “but I can’t get outta this fuckin’ bed,” MICkey sighed in resignation. “Hey ladies, let’s go get some coffee,” Manuel suggested. “I have to get going to my apartment,” Reesie said, declining the offer. “You sure?” Mandy asked. “If you stay, we could come over and help you after,” she added. “You don’t have to do that,” Reesie said. “We want to,” Manuel piped up. “Maybe...I’ll have coffee and we can talk...” Reesie suggested. And the trio were gone, out the door and down the hall.

Ian dove back into Mickey’s mouth with his own, sliding his tongue in like he owned it, Mickey responding instantly, his tongue mingling with Ian’s, his moans vibrating through Ian’s whole body, awakening every nerve, all of his senses, his entire being drinking in Mickey’s essence fervently, craving more...more...more. “Wanna get you off...” Ian mumbled between kisses. “Been awhile, hasn’t it?” he prodded, Mickey nodding his head in response. “I’m gonna do it,” he whispered into Mickey’s ear, instantly doubling the rigidity of Mickey’s cock. Ian quickly pulled the curtain around the bed shut, then reached under the sheet, under Mickey’s gown, under and around Mickey’s swollen package, stroking it slowly and lightly at first, then adding some lotion from Mickey’s side table and going to town, slicking it up really well, sliding his slippery hand around it and jerking him at a nice moderate pace as he nibbled on his earlobe, then his neck, swiping his tongue over that sensitive spot that, in Ian’s mind, was Mickey’s G Spot.

Mickey was instantly covered with goosebumps, his hips arching up wildly. Ian, still relentlessly attacking that spot on Mickey’s neck, began to pull that sensitive top layer of skin into his mouth, sucking lightly, then harder, mixing it up as he continued to stroke Mickey’s cock just perfectly for him, bringing him closer and closer. Once he knew he had him, Ian moved his mouth to Mickey’s ear, breathing, “Cum for me, Mick...Yeah...Just like that...Just like that...Just like that...” he repeated as Mickey let go, spurting over Ian’s hand onto the inside of his gown, while doing his best to lock his moans of pleasure away, deep within his throat. Ian heard them though, which gave him a painfully hard woody, one that would have to wait for his shower that evening.

“I fucking love the shit outta you, Mick,” Ian whispered into Mickey’s ear as he untied his gown,
using it to wipe all evidence of their session away, peeling it from Mickey’s body, then discarding it in the hamper. He got up from the bed, opened a cabinet in the room, and grabbed a clean gown for Mickey, which he maneuvered onto his body expertly, despite his PICC line and cast. ‘Ian’s fuckin’ amazing...as a lover...as a nurse...as a husband...’ Mickey thought to himself as he watched Ian work his magic.

“Fuck, I needed that!” Mickey shouted as his body and mind recuperated from his trip to the moon. “I know,” Ian said. “I always know what you need, sometimes before you even do,” he added. “So from now on, you gotta trust me. When it comes to you, I know what the fuck I’m talking about, Mick, okay?” Ian paused.

“Yeah, I know, and I fuckin’ love you, too, Ian Milkovich,” he said with a wide-ass grin.
Ian’s alarm woke him from a dead sleep. He was absolutely exhausted, but knew he had to get up to go to the photo shoot. He dragged his ass out of bed, reminding himself that staying up until the wee hours by Mickey’s side was worth it, that dozing off next to him had afforded him enough rest. But the look of his face in the mirror told a different story. He looked pale, and had giant bags under his eyes. He hoped a nice, hot shower might help him to wake up and hopefully, to look more presentable, considering he was supposed to be photographed in a little over an hour.

A part of Ian had wanted to leave sooner, and actually figured he would have been tossed out when visiting hours were over. However, as Ian’s luck would have it, Shawn let his late night visitation slide. Whether it was professional courtesy or because he thought one or both of them were hot, he couldn’t say, but no matter what the reason, Ian was able to stay with Mickey as late as he pleased. Ian had a hard time pulling himself away from Mickey, since this was the longest stretch of time he had spent with him since they had gone to prison. And even when he tried, Mickey pouted, protested or both, before Ian even got close to leaving, so he stayed and held his husband while he slept, until finally, Mickey was sleeping deeply enough for Ian to make a quick exit.

Ian ubered back to the Waldorf and was on his way up to the penthouse when a bellhop started asking him questions--personal stuff, like, how many people were staying with him, how long they were staying, why they were in Chicago--CREEPY! Ian was so exhausted that he answered his first few questions before realizing the guy was invading his privacy. Then he just clammed up, explaining that he was tired and didn’t feel like talking. By the time he finally reached the penthouse, he was a miserable combination of dead-tired and freaked out, which meant it took some time for him to actually fall asleep, thanks to this weirdo.

Ian showered quickly, ignoring his morning wood, too drained to give it any attention. He just wanted to somehow survive the day and go back to bed, but he knew Mickey would be expecting him at the hospital. He couldn’t wait until Mickey got out of there so they could sleep in a regular fucking bed together again, spooning through the night--asleep! Shawn had shared that Mickey’s latest blood work had come back better, but that the doctor had the immunoglobulin ordered through the end of the week. It sounded to Ian like Mickey would be in the hospital until at least Friday, but he still held out some hope that it would be sooner. It was more important, however, that the doctor feel confident that the anemia was fully reversed prior to his discharge.

By the time Ian was dressed and ready to go, Mandy and Manuel were standing by the elevator, waiting. “About time your ass is ready,” Mandy chided. “When the hell did you come in?” she continued. “I don’t know, but it was late,” Ian answered, fighting to keep his eyes open. “Need some Milkovich-style coffee real bad,” he aded. “Run and get it then. I made some this morning,” Mandy replied, gesturing toward the kitchen.

“Thanks, Mands,” Ian said sleepily, shuffling into the kitchen toward the coffee maker. As Ian finished pouring, he heard Mandy yell,”C’mon, Ian. Elevator’s here!” Ian hurriedly put a lid on his cup and hustled to the elevator, finding Mandy, Manuel and the nosey bellhop already inside. Mandy was in the midst of explaining where they were going and what they were doing when Ian interrupted, “Have you heard the weather forecast for today?” To which, Mandy answered,”No, why?” “I just really wanted to know what to expect out there today,” he answered, shooting an odd look Mandy’s way. “Thought we might be getting rain and wanted to make sure I packed my rubbers,” Ian continued, rambling about meaningless fictitious concerns until Mandy finally got the picture and joined in. At last, the elevator ride was over, Ian, Mandy and Manuel spilling out into the lobby and heading for the door. Ian could see a limo parked outside, waiting, and lengthened his
strides, hoping it was theirs and they could make a speedy getaway.

As usual, luck was on Ian’s side and, within seconds, they were on their way to Surfin’ USA. Ian was starting to feel a bit more awake, thanks to Mandy’s Milkovich brew, and decided to call the hospital to check on Mickey. He was actually hoping they had put a phone in Mickey’s room. He had requested one for him, once the news came about him being a free man. Ian dialed the number for the CCU’s nurse’s station, then asked for Mickey’s room. “One moment please,” came through the phone. ‘Yes!’ Ian thought to himself. Now he could call Mickey and talk to him directly!

“Hello,” Mickey said in a groggy voice. “Hey, Mick, sorry if I woke you. Just wondering how you’re doing today,” Ian said apologetically. “Fine...a little tired, but fine,” Mickey responded slowly becoming more and more awake. “That’s good!” Ian said, relieved to know he was okay. “You comin’ to see me today?” Mickey asked with obvious excitement in his voice. “Probably later. We’re on our way to Surfin’ USA right now for the photo shoot,” Ian explained. “Watch yourself there,” Mickey warned. “You remember what happened to you last time…” Everything will be fine, I promise. I gotta go, Mick. I love you,” Ian assured him, signing off quickly.

“All good?” Mandy asked. “Yep,” Ian responded. “So, what was up with you and that bellhop?” Mandy asked. “You know him?” “No, and neither do you. He was asking about your day like he knew you, right?” Ian responded, Manuel nodding in agreement. “Yeah, well, he did the same thing to me when I got back from the hospital. He was in the elevator when I got in.” “That is strange,” Manuel agreed. “What business does a bellhop have riding on the elevator in the middle of the night...alone?”

“I don’t know, but he was creeping me out with his questions,” Ian admitted. “Just don’t give him any personal info, and if he keeps bothering us, I’ll tell Bigley,” Ian said with a half smile. Mandy and Manuel both agreed, and the subject moved on to the impending photo shoot and all of the new business opportunities having Surfin’ USA as a client would afford. “It’s pretty much a done deal, from what I hear from Bigley,” Manuel began, “and Johnny says the factory is running fine, but there’s no way for us to keep up, even with the current volume of orders, with only one factory. He’s been looking into places for a second factory.” “Wow! Who’s gonna run the second factory?” Ian asked. “There’s still plenty for us to figure out, but the point is, things are going fantastically well,” Manuel said jubilantly.

The limo pulled up in front of Surfin’ USA headquarters, a handsome, young blonde gentleman greeting them at the car and leading them inside to Blake’s office. “Good morning, folks! Ian! So great to finally meet you!” he said with excitement, extending his hand to shake Ian’s. “Nice to meet you, too, sir,” Ian responded with a wide smile. “Ian, I’ve seen your picture in the surf catalogs, and it’s great, but seeing you in person, now I think we can do so much better! And I’d like for more of my customers to have the opportunity to see you and Mandy live, meet you, have their pictures taken with you, etc.” Ian looked over at Mandy for help in avoiding this discussion. He wanted to get settled in with Mickey back in Mexico for a while before committing to any significant travel. He knew it was going to be a bit of an issue with Mickey, but if it came about too soon, it could really cause problems.

“Are the photographers ready?” Mandy asked, leaping to Ian’s aid with a subject change. “I love your enthusiasm, Mandy! Always ready to work! Yes, they are, as a matter of fact. Let me show you to the area you will be working in today. It’s a locked space that houses our high-end boards. Customers may shop there by appointment. I am interested in having the two of you pose with some of these boards today. I am hoping to reach a wider market,” he explained, opening the door. Inside, everyone and everything was set and ready to go. “Wow!” Mandy said, taking the swimsuit that was being handed to her. “Everything looks great! I love this suit!” she remarked eyeing up the suit as she walked toward the dressing room.
Ian looked at his board shorts, his mind immediately turning to Mickey and how much he wanted to buy him a pair and teach him how to swim. “Mickey would look sexy as fuck in a pair of these,” he said out loud as he thought it. “Jesus, Ian!” Mandy said, rolling her eyes at Manuel, who just grinned. “See, he agrees with me,” Ian laughed. Mandy glared at him, before turning toward the dressing room.

By the time both Mandy and Ian were dressed and ready, Manuel had taken a call from Reesie on Mandy’s phone. She left word with Manuel that she had just agreed to a plea bargain, reducing her charge to one count of Aiding an Escape, for which she got credit for time served and six months probation. Also, a home visit had been scheduled for later in the day, after which she would, pending a favorable outcome, be given full custody of Mikhaila. She thanked Manuel and asked him to thank Mandy for all of their help with setting her apartment up. She also asked that either Mandy or Ian call her once the photo shoot wrapped.

Both Mandy and Ian were happy and relieved to hear Reesie’s good news. This and Mickey’s improving health were just what Ian needed in order to have a relaxed, positive vibe going into this shoot. Ian lit up the stage with his smile, his eyes gleaming as he imagined giving Mickey a swim lesson, Mickey dressed in the finest of surf gear, then envisioned peeling it off his body in the sand for a seaside sexcapade. He kept Mickey in his mind’s eye for the entire shoot, his face so vibrant and full of joy, the photographers had to ask for a few serious shots. “Ian, you are so unbelievably talented!” one of the photographers complimented. “How have you not become one of America’s top male surf models before now?--and you are about to be, trust me.” Ian just smiled and said, “I haven’t always been this way. I’ve been very blessed in my life recently, had some incredible people help and support me in ways I never dreamed possible. And the love of my life, who I just married, is back in my life for good! Guess dreams really do come true!” Ian smiled again, his entire face lighting up like a Christmas Tree as the cameras clicked away, capturing all of Ian’s zest for life and immortalizing it. Even Mickey would have to admit--Ian was an absolute star!

At the conclusion of the shoot, Blake came running over to hug both Ian and Mandy, congratulating them on a fabulous shoot. The photographers were beyond pleased with what they got, and marketing loved the previews they had received thus far. Ian and Mandy graciously accepted the praise, but were tight-lipped when it came to responding to requests for personal visits to individual stores, both deferring to Manuel and Mickey for a final decision and explaining that Mickey was currently being treated for a serious condition. This seemed to stymie Blake enough so they could say their goodbyes, again referencing Mickey’s illness and their desire to visit him in the CCU.

At last, they were free, the limo whisking them off to Chicago Memorial to visit Mickey. When they arrived, Mandy and Manuel begged off, citing to business phone calls they needed to make. “Right,” Ian said with a smirk, just as happy to go in on his own.

When Ian got up to Mickey’s room, his door was closed. Shawn, seeing that Ian had arrived, made his way over to talk to him. “Lots of news today!” he exclaimed, pulling Mickey’s chart up on his iPad. Doc says the antibiotic is to be dc’d today, that all of his numbers are nearly normal, and that, get ready for this, his immunoglobulin can be administered either as an outpatient or at home with proper medical supervision, which his wealthy benefactor is willing to provide for. So…I can have Mickey ready for discharge within an hour or so, if you’d like…” Shawn paused, smiling at him like he knew damn well Ian would want to take him home.

“And then there’s the other news…” Shawn glancing over toward the closed door as he spoke. “There’s a baby in there. I thought it was your sister’s, but I guess it’s…” “It’s complicated,” Ian said, cutting him off. “Anyway, your sister, the baby and a representative from Children’s Services are in visiting. I shut the door because, technically, we aren’t supposed to have babies up here, but I said that, under the circumstances, a quick visit would be okay.
Ian sighed deeply, attempting to prepare himself for something he had been looking forward to, but had not expected right now, just as he was sure Mickey hadn’t. He wondered how things were going for him, what he was thinking and whether Reesie had decided on whether to give Mikhaila Mickey’s, and soon to be his, last name. Shawn knocked on the door. “Okay for one more visitor to come in?” he called in. “Yeah,” Mickey yelled in response, “long as it’s Ian,” he added. Shawn opened the door and Ian walked in to find Mickey holding Mikhaila, who was fast asleep in his left arm. Her tiny face was shaped exactly like Mickey’s, so beautiful and innocent, Ian started to tear up the moment he laid eyes on her.

“Mick, she’s so beautiful!” Ian whispered as he approached Mickey to give him a light kiss on the lips, careful not to disturb Mikhaila. He looked over at Reesie, who was standing next to her case worker. Ian briefly wondered if his public display of homosexual affection would be held against Mickey or Reesie, but he reminded himself that it was the 21st century, and that people didn’t think that way anymore...at least he hoped not. “I know,” Mickey answered. “Lucky for her, she took after the Gallagher side,” he laughed. “Like hell…” Ian began, before deciding he should shut up and let Mikhaila’s parents be the ones to speak while the caseworker was there.

“Well, Teresa, your home is set up appropriately for an infant and, with your medical expertise, I have no doubt you will provide appropriate care for Mikhaila. And from what I’ve seen of Mr. Milkovich, I have no reason to believe him to be unfit for visitation,” the caseworker concluded. “And this gentleman is?” she asked. “My brother, and Mickey’s husband, Ian Gallagher,” Reesie explained. “Nice to meet you,” Ian said, extending his hand. “Yes, sir, my pleasure. So you will be residing with Mr. Milkovich?” “Yes,” Ian answered, resisting the urge to say they lived in Mexico, since he didn’t know what had been said before his arrival. “Mr. Bigley has provided me with both of your criminal records, which have recently been cleared after some type of mix-up?” she questioned, looking for clarification. “Yes,” they said in unison, looking at each other like they couldn’t believe she was going to take their word for it.

“Alright then, I plan to make an unannounced visit at least once a week. So Teresa, I will need a copy of your work schedule e-mailed or faxed to me, once you start working. Until then, please be available between the hours of 5 and 9 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. If you have a job interview or other essential cause for being out, I will need you to call me as soon as you know of it.”

“Thank you so much!” Reesie said, tearing up as she hugged her. “You’re welcome! I’m happy to see Mikhaila with her parents!” she said, turning to walk out the door.

After she left, Reesie addressed Mickey and Ian together, “I know you guys will be in Mexico, and I don’t expect any kind of regular visitation or support. I just wanted Children’s Services to give the green light on visitation now so we don’t have to deal with it, if and when it comes up. There’s absolutely no pressure…”

Mickey cut her off, “I get it. I don’t feel pressured,” he began, looking down at his gorgeous daughter’s sweet face. “I wanna help and see her when I can,” he said, puckering his lips to kiss the top of her wispy red-hair-covered head. “I already know all Ian can think of right now is holdin’ her, so we’re in, but we do live in Mexico, so visits will be when we’re around.” Mickey explained.

“Wanna talk more to Ian about some specifics and then we can talk again,” Mickey added, just as Mikhaila started to stir and fuss a bit. “Can I hold her?” Ian asked, looking at Reesie, then at Mickey. “Of course,” Reesie answered, Ian wasting no time in taking her from Mickey. “Hi!” he said, staring into her gorgeous baby blue eyes. “I’m your…wait, what the hell am I?” he said with a chuckle. “We’ll figure that out,” Mickey said. “For now, just hold her,” Reesie added, smiling as she noticed the resemblance Mikhaila and Ian clearly bore to one another. “Told ya,” Mickey said to her, reading
her mind. “Yes, you did,” she replied. “I think she’s hungry,” Ian said, noticing that she was looking for a bottle. “Yes, I need to get going home because she will take a nap after she eats and I want her to do that in her new crib!” she sang to her as she took her from Ian’s arms. “We’ll see you...whenever,” Reesie said as she turned and walked out of the room, Mikhaila beginning to fuss in her arms.

“Wow, Mick!” Ian marvelled, “you made that beautiful little girl!” “Yeah, well, it was an accident. Not that I don’t love her, cuz I do, but our life together is first. I want you to know that,” Mickey said sincerely, staring up into Ian’s eyes. “I know that,” Ian responded. “Here’s what I wanna know,” Ian began. “Do you wanna come home to the Waldorf and stay with me there for a few days?”

“Of course I wanna get outta this shitthole! Is that even possible?” he asked, completely shocked at the possibility even being raised. “It’s possible, but I would have to give you your treatments, and we would have to stay close to the hospital, in case anything would go wrong.” Ian added that second part because he knew traveling to Mexico this soon could be dangerous, and also because he needed time to get Mickey a passport and was still hoping to see some family before he went back.

“So, what do ya say?” Ian asked. “The Waldorf good enough for you?” he asked sarcastically. To which Mickey answered, “Ian, anywhere you are is good enough for me.”
Best Laid Plans

Ian texted Mandy and Manuel both about Mickey coming home. He wanted to be sure they would be there to greet him and then make themselves scarce soon after. He also asked them to call the front desk for a fresh robe and towels, as well as a room service menu, if there wasn’t one there already. He wanted everything to be perfect for Mickey. In fact, he was already on-line searching for somewhere that made custom aromatherapy massage lotions. He hoped to have Bigley’s limo driver pick up the concoction that Ian had dreamed up the last time Mickey was hurt, before coming to get them at the hospital. Bigley had insisted when last they spoke that Ian text him as soon as he became aware of Mickey’s discharge so he could arrange for the limo to be waiting for him. As it turned out, Ian would be riding with him, which was even better.

Shawn pulled Ian away from his planning to be sure he knew how to care for Mickey’s PICC port, as well as how to connect and administer his treatments. Ian really hadn’t had any actual experience with this, and had planned to Google it, so he was relieved and grateful to Shawn for the tutorial. He thanked him and made a mental note to do something nice for him before leaving Chicago.

Finally, it was time! Mickey was free, at last! Free of all of his encumberments, both medical and legal, free to begin his married life with Ian without having to look over his shoulder or worry about who he talked to about what, free to just be Mickey Milkovich! Ian and Shawn helped Mickey dress in his own clothes and get into a wheelchair, despite his insistence that he could walk and dress himself. They both tried explaining to him that he was going to be very weak, after having spent over a week in a hospital bed, but it was like talking to a wall, so they let him try to walk, briefly, before pushing his teetering ass into the chair. “It will take some time for you to build up your stamina,” Shawn said to Mickey as he handed him his discharge papers. “The doctor has asked that you remain in the area for the next week or so, and that you return for a follow-up appointment in his office next Monday at 10:00 AM,” Shawn pointed out as he read over Mickey’s shoulder.

“I really wanna…” “Mick,” Ian interrupted, “if you say you’re not gonna stay, then I’m gonna leave you here now! Mexico will be waiting for us when you are well enough to go. Until then, I’ll take care of you here and you will see the doctor when he says.” Ian was firm and insistent, Shawn backing him up with a serious nod. “Okay…fuck!” Mickey muttered under his breath. “Besides, Mick, you gotta get a passport, which takes a few days. That way we can fly non-stop to Mexico, instead of having to go to New York first. And we won’t have to work around Bigley’s schedule,” Ian explained in an effort to make Mickey feel better about having to stay. “Whatever…” was the most Ian could get from Mickey. He really hoped his mood would improve by the time they reached the Waldorf. He had some serious plans for Mickey!

Ian wheeled Mickey out of the hospital to the waiting limo, transferring him directly from the wheelchair to the backseat. Then he slid in beside him, a giant grin overtaking his face. “Mickey!” he shouted, throwing his arms around him and kissing him wildly about the face and neck. “All the bullshit’s behind us! We are both free to go wherever the fuck we want, whenever the fuck we want, and don’t have to worry about jack shit!” Ian exclaimed, squeezing Mickey tightly. “Oh yeah? Then why the fuck am I stuck here for a fuckin’ week when I wanna go the fuck to Boca?” Mickey asked with an attitude. “You know that’s all health-related. We’ll be home as soon as you’re better and cleared to go, Mick. Just please trust me on this and make the best of it here for now. It’ll be fun!” Ian said with a smile. “Yeah…fun…” Mickey muttered under his breath. Ian sighed deeply, rolling his eyes in annoyance.

After about five minutes of silence, Ian’s phone buzzed. He answered. It was the day spa he had contacted about mixing him a custom lotion. It was ready! He discreetly gave the address to the
driver, handing him a wad of money and asking if he could run in and pick something up for him. Of course, this meant he would have to park the limo someplace safe enough to leave the wheel. Ian getting the stuff himself would have been much easier, but the driver wouldn’t think of saying that to a client and, besides, the reason Ian had asked was because he didn’t want to take the chance of Mickey trying to get out of the car.

“Where the fuck’s he goin’?” Mickey asked, after seeing him leave the stopped limo. “Picking something up for me,” Ian answered casually. “Yeah? What?” Mickey questioned. “That’s for me to know and you to find out,” Ian responded with a raised eyebrow. Mickey cracked a smile, then reached for Ian’s face, pulling it to his own. “Sorry I been such an asshole. Just miss home. I love you,” he breathed as he initiated a slow, steamy kiss that quickly escalated into a full-on makeout session. “Damn, Mick! It’s been a while. Gotta stop ‘til we get home or it’ll be a long fucking walk of shame to the elevator with a massive hard-on or, worse yet, a wet spot on my pants.” Ian moaned softly, pressing himself up against Mickey’s hand, in spite of himself. “Hmm?” Mickey hummed, rubbing him some more and reiterating his question. “Since Monday,” Ian breathed, leaning in to suck Mickey’s face off. He was beyond giving a shit what he looked like, walking through the lobby of the Waldorf. He just couldn’t keep himself off his hot-as-fuck husband any longer, not even for a second. “Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey said, the volume of his voice increasing with his excitement.

Thankfully, the limo pulled up to the Waldorf before any premature explosions, Ian grabbing the day spa package from the driver and helping Mickey out of the limo, both men sporting gigantic bulges in their pants. Mickey, complaining of dizziness after his first 50 feet of walking, with Ian’s help, began to lean more heavily on Ian, apologizing all the way. “Sorry, man,” he whispered, embarrassed to need so much assistance. Ian just kissed him on the cheek and kept going until, finally, they got to the elevator, which miraculously opened for them immediately.

Ian helped Mickey into the elevator, wasting no time in pinning him against the wall and going at Mickey’s tender neck like a vampire, grinding against him as he did. Mickey was so heated up, he was starting to sweat, his head deliriously spinning as he fought, both to stay standing and to keep from getting himself off against Ian’s leg. Thankfully, he was saved by the opening of the elevator door.

“Mickey!” Mandy and Manuel shouted in unison as the door opened, before seeing what had been going on behind the closed doors of the elevator. “Oops!” Mandy yelled, snickering at the scene that was revealed as the doors opened. “Just help me get him into bed,” Ian instructed them, a hint of irritation in his voice. “I ran him a bath,” Mandy explained. “Thought he might enjoy that after being stuck in a hospital bed getting sponge baths for so long.” Ian instantly thought of the sponge bath he had given Mickey in the prison infirmary and started to grin. Mickey grinned back at him. “Okay, just help me get him to the tub then. I’ll handle the rest,” he said, winking at Mickey, who looked like he would love to be handled by Ian.

Manuel and Ian helped Mickey over to the jacuzzi, easing him down to a sitting position along its edge. “Thanks!” Ian called out to Manuel as Mandy pulled him out the door. “You’re welcome!” Manuel said with a smile. “Enjoy!” “Oh, I intend to,” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear as soon as the bedroom door closed behind Mandy and Manuel. Mickey felt his dick swelling until it pressed painfully against his zipper. “Fuck!” he called out, doing his best to remove his pants quickly, but struggling because of his position, his cast and his overall condition. “Lay back and I’ll pull them off,” Ian commanded, Mickey complying without issue. Ian couldn’t help noticing that Mickey had lost weight. “I’m gonna have to fatten you up, Mick! Just as soon as we’re done here, we’re gonna order your favorite Italian food and have some wine, too, if you’re up to it,” Ian offered as he finished undressing Mickey. “Sounds great, man,” Mickey replied, dipping his feet into the bath.
“Here, I’ll help you in,” Ian said, putting his arm around Mickey to support him as he lowered himself into the water. “Careful to keep your port dry,” Ian warned, pointing to Mickey’s PICC port. “Yeah, I know. Shawn told me,” Mickey replied, resting his casted arm alongside the tub to keep it dry. “Want me to scrub your back?” Ian asked, once Mickey was comfortable. “Guess that’d be nice, but I was really hopin’ you’d get in here so we can fuck!” Mickey replied in his usual blunt manner. Ian’s eyes lit up and he started tearing his clothes off. In less than 15 seconds, he was in the water next to Mickey, fondling his stiff dick under the water as the bubbles massaged his own swollen member. He leaned into a sensual kiss, lightly pulling at Mickey’s lips with his teeth, one at a time, then slowly sliding his tongue between them, exploring Mickey’s mouth as Mickey did his, both men panting with desire, their cocks desperately hard and throbbing.

Realizing it had been a while for Mickey, in terms of actual fucking, Ian was determined to take his time prepping him, despite his overwhelming urge to flip him and get right to it. Damn, he wanted his ass so badly, he could taste it. He knew Mickey was feeling the same way, but didn’t want to cause any undue soreness that might limit future activity. He wanted it on the regular. Now that he finally had Mickey in his clutches, he planned to make sure to keep him well-fucked. He hadn’t planned for things to happen exactly this way, so, after angling two of the jets in the direction of Mickey’s manhood, he excused himself to get the lube. He decided he would also take the time necessary to get Mickey’s lotion heating over the candle he had purchased along with it.

As he went about his preparations, he heard Mickey call out, “Hey Ian, quit bein’ a fuckin’ tease! C’mere and get on me!” Ian just laughed, thinking, ‘Some things never change! Funny how Mickey has all the patience in the world when he’s the top…but not now!’ Ian knew Mickey took his time with him for the same reasons he was taking his time. They both wanted maximum pleasure for their mate, both so considerate of one another. It was yet another way they showed each other how in love they were.

“Okay, hope your ass is ready!” Ian replied as he stepped back into the tub, squirting a generous gob of lube onto the side of the tub. Ian helped Mickey to a kneeling position, his beautifully round ass cheeks popping up out of the water. He pushed Mickey’s chest down onto the edge of the tub, then pulled his cheeks apart, lathering his asshole with bath gel, then washing it well, inside and out, using his fingers, then after a good rinse, his tongue, beginning with a light feathering around his opening that got Mickey ridiculously hard, then going full bore, penetrating him with his tongue fervently, Mickey literally lifting himself up off his knees for more as he moaned, “So fuckin’ good…” “Easy does it,” Ian breathed quickly, before he resumed giving his husband the ultimate in foreplay pleasure. Mickey was a hot mess, moaning incoherently as his body begged for more. Ian beginning to add soapy fingers into the act, sliding them in and out, while stretching horizontally as well.

Ian was so fucking hard, his dick was aching with anticipation, jealous of his own busy fingers. Mickey slammed himself back onto them forcefully, his ass craving Ian’s glorious cock to fill it, again and again. He grunted as he pushed himself harder and harder against Ian’s hand, finally pleading with Ian, “Gallagher…please…FUCK ME NOW!”

Ian was ready, willing and able to oblige Mickey, warming the lube between his hands before applying a generous portion, first to Mickey’s waiting hole, then to his own engorged, rock-hard rod. He eased into Mickey gradually, Mickey gasping as Ian filled him up so magnificently. Ian moaned softly, enjoying the most intense feeling of connection, both physical and emotional, that he had ever felt in his life, joyously reunited with Mickey again in every possible way. Mickey’s hole hugged Ian’s cock so tight, providing such perfect pleasure, Ian could’ve cum after his initial entry. Instead, he held off, pacing himself so he would last for Mickey, and for himself, savoring the ecstatic waves of carnal satisfaction that reverberated through his entire body with every stroke. “Damn, Mick, your sweet, sweet ass is everything!” he wailed as he picked up speed, railing Mickey hard, Mickey counteracting his every move, intensifying their pleasure exponentially. Ian slowed himself briefly,
scooping up the remaining lube from the tub edge and smoothing over the length of Mickey’s raging hard-on, from the beaded tip to its base, stroking it briskly as he continued to pound into Mickey, pulling moan after moan from his sexy lips. “You’re gonna make me do it, gonna make me cum. So fucking hot, Mick! FUCK!!” Ian panted uncontrollably into Mickey’s ear as he drove into him half a dozen more times, finally exploding inside him., Mickey crying out as his cock erupted, “Fuck yeah, Gallagher! Fuck me...so fuckin’ good!”

Mickey collapsed completely, laying his head down on the tub’s edge. He was dizzy and bleary-eyed, feeling like he might pass out, or even puke. Ian, sensing that he had overdone it, considering he was basically just discharged early from the hospital and went straight to fucking---and not just plain fucking---pure, unadulterated pornstar-grade fucking! No wonder he looked half-dead. Ian spun him around in the tub, propping him up against its side and holding him up with his right arm as he pulled Mickey’s head down onto his shoulder with his left. “You okay, Mick?” Ian asked, still breathing hard himself. Mickey just buried his face into Ian’s shoulder, their romp seeming to have sucked the very life out of him.

“Think I’ll wash you up quickly, then get you outta this hot water,” Ian began. “Sorry, I was greedy and couldn’t wait ‘til you were better,” Ian apologized, feeling guilty now that Mickey seemed to be feeling sick. “Naw, Ian, we both were,” Mickey whispered weakly. “I fuckin’ knew how weak I still am, but I still had to have it...to have you…” Mickey’s voice trailed off as Ian continued to scrub him down as best he could while also doing his best to hold him up.

“Okay,” Ian said, reaching for a towel, then working to ease Mickey’s limp body up out of the tub. “Gonna get you to the bed now,” he finished, continuing to struggle, Mickey offering minimal help. Once he finally had him out, he threw him over his shoulder and carried him to the bed, depositing him onto it in one fluid motion. He pulled the covers back, replacing them over top of Mickey’s frail, maxed-out form, before kissing him lightly on the forehead, repeating, “I’m sorry.” “Don’t be…” Mickey whispered, his mouth forming a slight smile.

“I’m gonna get you some water, Mick,” Ian said, excusing himself. He ran to the kitchen, grabbing a bottle of water from the fridge, then picking up the room service menu. He had considered ordering from an Italian place out in town, but figured they were at the Waldorf and probably had access to the very best right there, in-house. “Hey Mick…” Ian began as he walked into the bedroom, only to find that Mickey had fallen fast asleep, turned on his left side. “Guess we’ll eat later,” Ian mumbled to himself, setting the water and menu on the night table. He gazed down at Mickey’s pale, lifeless, yet strikingly beautiful form, his eyes filling with tears, tears of guilt, of regret, of sorrow---over all Mickey had been through, but also tears of hope, of joy and of unconditional, everlasting love. Ian lay down on the bed, curling his body around Mickey’s, kissing him on the temple as he closed his eyes, then burying his nose in the crook of Mickey’s sweet smelling neck. “Love you, Mick,” he whispered.
Mickey awoke with a start, which was a common occurrence any time he didn’t wake up on his own, or if he had a bad dream. Neither of these seemed to be the case, however. He shifted his body slowly to extricate it from Ian’s, pulling Ian’s arm from around his waist, and sitting up to look around. It was really too dark to see anything, so he willed himself to get up from the bed, his aching muscles struggling to lift his body, his head spinning as he stood up. He stumbled over to the bathroom, flipping the light switch to afford himself some light, hopefully without disturbing Ian, who was still sleeping soundly, despite Mickey’s departure. Mickey scanned the room quickly, seeing nothing but Ian’s sleeping form, his angelic face barely visible in the dim light. Mickey, finally managing to locate a pair of boxers, put them on, with great effort, and ventured out into the living area, stumbling over himself, his dizziness increasing. He stopped, leaning against the wall, feeling for the light switch. As soon as the light went on, he heard a door close---not one of the bedroom doors. The sound came from the opposite direction, where the main door was, to access the elevator.

“Hey!” he called out, but no one answered.

Then, as he listened more carefully, he thought he heard the elevator door open, then close. Mickey wanted so badly to run for the door, upon hearing the first door, but he was self-aware enough to know he was nearly at the point of passing out and needed to hug the wall. His heart was racing! He knew someone had just left the penthouse. It wasn’t Ian, but could have been Mandy or Manuel, so he resolved to check to see if one or both of them were missing. He hugged the wall all the way to Mandy and Manuel’s door, then opened it to peek inside. The light from the main room illuminated their room just enough for him to clearly see that there were two lumps in their bed.

An uneasy, almost nauseous feeling crept over Mickey as his mind began to assess the situation and imagine the possibilities of what had just happened. ‘Who the fuck would wanna come in here in the middle of the night?’ he thought to himself. Then all the possible answers began to flood his brain. Someone from his past who had learned of his release---but it would have to be someone with the means to get access to the penthouse suite of the Waldorf. Possibly his father or one of his Russian mob affiliates, maybe Damon, coming back to get even with him for leaving him stranded in Texas, or maybe even a prison guard, looking to stick it to him for getting off so easy. The possibilities were endless, really, and Mickey was getting sicker by the minute, just thinking about it.

He pulled the door to their room closed quietly, then followed the wall back toward his own room, flipping the lights off as he went. All of a sudden, he ran into something, prompting him to yell out in surprise, “Who the fuck is it?!” at the same time he heard Ian yell, “Mickey?” The two had collided in the dark and, immediately upon realizing it, Ian wrapped his arms around Mickey, reassuring him that everything was okay. “No, it’s fuckin’ not!!” Mickey yelled, pulling away from Ian to try to make eye contact, but it was too dark. “What’s wrong?” Ian asked, putting an arm around Mickey and attempting to guide him back to bed. “Someone was in here!” Mickey said in a panicked voice.

“I see that,” Ian said, continuing to push Mickey toward the bed. “I’m just trying to help, Mickey. I don’t want you to panic.”

“I can’t just go the fuck back to bed after this shit, Ian! We gotta do somethin’ about this.”

Ian insisted. “We’ll talk about it later. Right now, let’s just focus on getting some food into you.”

Ian lifted Mickey off his feet, carrying him over to the bed, pulling the covers back, inserting Mickey
and covering him in them, then sliding in next to him, wrapping Mickey’s body in his, as had become second nature. “Ian, I can’t just lay here when someone was just in here and could still be!” Mickey said angrily, attempting to wrestle himself free of Ian’s grasp to get back up.

“Stay here!” Ian commanded between clenched teeth. I’ll go look again.” “I don’t want you to…” Mickey began, before Ian cut him off. “I said to stay there!” Ian yelled as he headed for the main room, his cell phone flashlight in hand. Mickey was worried about Ian, and he didn’t appreciate Ian bossing him around either. Under normal circumstances, he would never have stood for it, but since he had used every last ounce of his strength for his initial investigation, and could barely stand up, he was pretty much forced to comply with Ian’s wishes.

Ian was back within minutes. “There’s nobody out there!” he yelled. “Look!” he said, scrolling through pictures he had taken of every corner of the room. Mickey breathed a slight sigh of relief, but was still amped up about the idea that someone had been in their space...and he didn’t know who or why. “Ian, what the fuck? I can’t relax, knowing someone can get in here whenever the fuck they want,” Mickey lamented, his restless body twisting and turning under Ian’s arm and leg, which were now loosely draped over him. “I can call the front desk,” Ian offered. “The fuck are they gonna do?” Mickey responded critically. “Okay, I’ll call Bigley first thing in the morning. Until then, how about if I lock the bedroom door?” Ian suggested. “Okay,” Mickey gave in, pulling Ian tight against him for a brief moment before Ian got up to lock the door.

“Hey,” Mickey yelled as Ian’s neared the door. “Could you bring me somethin’ to eat? I’m fuckin’ starved!” “I’ll see what’s in the kitchen,” Ian responded, feeling bummed out that he hadn’t gotten Mickey his gourmet Italian dinner yet. As it turned out, Mandy and Manuel must have ordered in while Ian was at the hospital. There was plenty of leftover baked ziti and about half of a large garden salad in the refrigerator. Ian knew Mickey wasn’t going to sleep anyway, so he decided to try his best to turn the leftovers into a nice, romantic, middle-of-the-night dinner. He preheated the oven, opting not to microwave the ziti so as not to dry it out. He pulled down two wine glasses and opened the wine cooler to select a bottle, opting for a nice white zinfandel, which he knew Mickey would enjoy. He filled the ice bucket and stowed the bottle in the ice, then grabbed two plates and two salad bowls.

At first, Ian planned to serve Mickey in bed, since, in his condition, that would have been easiest. Then he thought about how many meals he had been forced to eat in bed over the last week and opted for Plan B: carrying Mickey out to the table to sit and eat with him. He set the table, placing the large salad bowl in the middle and the ice bucket to the side of the table. Once everything was set, except for the ziti that was still warming in the oven, he lit a candle, turned the kitchen lights down low and went to get Mickey.

Mickey was sitting up in bed nervously when Ian arrived, wondering what was taking Ian so long. When he caught a glimpse of him in the doorway without any food, he was sure something was wrong. “What happened?” he asked, a note of concern evident in his voice. “Nothing happened, Mick,” Ian responded. “Your dinner’s ready,” Ian added with a sweet smile that extended up into his eyes. Mickey could hardly contain his happiness at hearing this news. His stomach had been growling ever since he had woken up, even in the midst of his panic. He was famished! “Thanks, man,” Mickey smiled back at Ian as he stirred, attempting to get up from the bed. Ian ran over and scooped him up into his arms, carrying him into the kitchen.

He sat Mickey in one of the chairs, then opened the bottle of wine, pouring a glass for each of them. Mickey’s face brightened, his blue eyes shimmering in the candlelight, his smile so alluring that Ian could scarcely keep from hoisting him up onto his shoulder and taking him immediately back to bed. Ian restrained himself and sat down across from Mickey, his gorgeous green eyes staring seductively into Mickey’s baby blues, and raised his glass. “I wanna toast to you, Mickey, for being the best
husband anyone could ask for. For sticking with me through all my bullshit, for putting up with me when I do stupid shit, and for still being such a great person after having to take so much shit. And I wanna toast to our freedom and our future!” Ian spoke spiritedly, clinking his glass against Mickey’s, then downing half of his wine in one gulp. “Easy!” Mickey said, sipping modestly from his glass. He knew that, in his weakened condition, it wouldn’t take much to get him wasted, and he worried about Ian drinking too much because of his meds. “I’m fine, Mick! Just celebrating how far we’ve come and how much further I plan for us to go. I love ya, Mick!” Ian said, looking the happiest Mickey had seen him in...ever! He couldn’t help but smile back and take another sip from his glass.

Ian served salads from the large bowl, offering to put Mickey’s dressing on for him. “I can handle that,” Mickey said, pouring his own on with his casted hand. The salad was fresh and tasty, the perfect starter for their dinner. As soon as Mickey finished his salad, Ian stood up to take the ziti out of the oven. It was piping hot, the cheese melted nicely, looking as if it had been prepared fresh for them. Ian pulled the plates from the table, plating up the pasta over the stove, then serving it to Mickey at the table. Mickey’s eyes were as wide as saucers as he watched a gourmet Italian meal being placed before him. He hadn’t eaten this well since their wedding night at Sur de la Frontera. “This is really fuckin’ good!” Mickey said with a genuine smile, the color in his face seeming to return a bit more with every bite. “It is!” Ian agreed, smiling back at Mickey. “I’ve waited for this meal for a long time,” Ian added, becoming a bit teary-eyed. He reached across the table, grasping Mickey’s left hand and rolling his ring lightly with his middle finger. “Mmmm, Gallagher....at least let me finish eating first,” Mickey responded, feeling his dick hardening in response to Ian’s touch. Ian just looked at him, licking his lips slowly. “You know you’re gonna have to quit calling me that,” Ian said with a grin. “What?” Mickey responded. “You think I’m gonna quit callin’ you Gallagher just cuz you want the rest of the world to know you as a Milkovich? I’ll never stop callin’ you Gallagher,” Mickey assured him, squeezing his hand for emphasis.

The two finished their meal together, also killing the majority of the bottle of wine and teasing each other mercilessly until Ian finally grabbed Mickey and threw him over his shoulder, heading back toward the bedroom. “Stay here,” Ian commanded, after dropping Mickey onto the bed. “Gotta go get something.” Ian returned quickly with the candle and a plate of Mickey’s special aromatherapy lotion to warm over it. “Roll over,” Ian growled, Mickey doing his best to comply, with Ian hastening the process. “Don’t need these,” Ian said under his breath as he removed Mickey’s boxer’s, then his own. “Hey! You lock the door?” Mickey called out. “Yep,” Ian affirmed, pouring a bit of warmed lotion onto the small of Mickey’s back, then proceeding to massage deeply. Mickey moaned softly, a tiny grin beginning to spread across his face, as the reality of the sensual rub-down he was beginning to get, hit him.

“Mick, I’ve been dying to do this for so long…” Ian paused, his voice filled with emotion. “This the same stuff you used to heal me before?” Mickey asked. “Cuz it worked!” he added. “Yes, Mick, I had them put all the same ingredients in it as last time,” Ian answered. “So you’ll be all better by tomorrow.” Mickey’s grin widened, soft moans and whimpers continuing to escape from his lips as his body lost all rigidity, relaxing completely under Ian’s capable hands.

“Love you so much, Mick,” Ian breathed as he moved his hands from his lower to middle to upper back, massaging from his spine outward, then finally settling in on his shoulders, dipping his head down to kiss and suck his sweet-tasting neck. “Perfect dessert,” Ian mumbled, Mickey feeling his cock swelling by the second. “You taste so good,” Ian muttered, between kisses and hickeys. “Damn, Gallagher! At this rate, you’re gonna have to quit early,” Mickey whined, humping the bed. “Not a chance,” Ian whispered, moving out to the tops of Mickey’s arms, which he kneaded with his hands, before traveling down his left arm to his left hand, which he applied more lotion to, before massaging between his fingers and in the center of his palm with his thumbs, Mickey gasping with pleasure in response. “Fuck! How do you know this shit?” Mickey mumbled into the pillow, his dick still pressed into the mattress, hard as a rock.
Ian took the opportunity to respond to Mickey’s question as he moved on to his legs, kneading his calves, then knees and thighs, moving inward on the thighs until he was within inches of Mickey’s balls. “I took a class,” Ian chuckled. “Really?” Mickey asked in disbelief. “No,” Ian laughed. “I just know your body, is all,” he bragged, although he had actually done some reading about how to do a sensual massage. It had given him some basics, but he really did tweak Mickey’s massages to suit him specifically, and he did know his body EXTREMELY well, by Mickey’s own admission. And Mickey knew his. He also knew that he WAS going to make Ian cut this massage short so they could fuck. And he would be so sly about it, Ian would never even know it was Mickey’s idea.

As Ian continued rubbing out Mickey’s inner thighs, Mickey began to moan more loudly, eliciting an instantaneous hard-on from Ian. Mickey increased his movements against the bed as he continued to moan, throwing the occasional, “Ian...so fuckin’ good!” into the mix, knowing the effect those words had on Ian, since he typically said them during sex. Before Mickey knew it, Ian was slathering lube between his ass cheeks, prepping him for exactly what he wanted so badly. Mickey grinned in triumph as he felt Ian slip a lubed up finger into him, then two, then three, Mickey backing himself onto them aggressively.

Once he was ready, Mickey rolled over onto his back. “Wanna see you while you fuck me,” he breathed into Ian’s mouth as he pulled Ian’s face down to his own for a kiss. Ian devoured Mickey’s mouth, sucking his lips into his own mouth, then parting them with his tongue, entangling his with Mickey’s, their hearts pounding, their dicks throbbing, their bodies moving against each other desperately. Ian slicked up his cock, lifted and spread Mickey’s legs and gave Mickey exactly what he wanted. Ian looked down into Mickey’s eyes as he entered him slowly, filling him up so exquisitely. Mickey stared back up at Ian, their eyes locking as they moved together passionately, reaching new heights of pleasure with every successive thrust, Ian angling himself to nudge Mickey’s prostrate, Mickey squirming with anticipation.

“Ian, you’re fuckin’ beautiful,” Mickey breathed as he gazed up at Ian’s shining face. “You’re the one...” Ian panted as rolled his hips against Mickey’s bouncing bottom. Then came a chorus of increasingly loud, ecstatic moans, their sweat-soaked bodies colliding, their desire escalating as they neared their climax. “Fuck!” Mickey yelled as he felt himself beginning to spill. “Mick...love you...” Ian called out as he bottomed out one last time, shooting his load inside Mickey as Mickey’s spurted onto his own stomach. Ian rolled over onto the bed, his chest still heaving, his hair soaked with sweat. Mickey lay motionless, his eyes closed, a look of complete and total contentment on his flushed face.

After Ian collected himself, he got up to grab a towel to wipe Mickey down, but decided to fill a bowl with soapy water instead. He was going to give Mickey one last sponge bath. When he returned with the water, Mickey behaved like the perfect patient, allowing Ian to wash him however he wished. His eyes remained closed the entire time, his mind wandering, remembering fucking Ian on the beach, in their beach house, in their room at the factory, all their car sex. He was hard-pressed to think of a place where he and Ian had been together, but not had sex. He realized they had never had sex inside the clinic and resolved at that moment to fix that, upon their return.

As Ian finished up with his sponge bath, Mickey opened his eyes, looking up at Ian adoringly. “Fuck, I love you,” he whispered before closing his eyes again.

Ian got up to dump the bath water, bringing up the topic of the invader as he walked back into the bedroom. “Mick, I promise I’ll call Bigley first thing in the morning, so I hope you won’t let that keep you up tonight,” Ian said with a concerned tone. “You gonna be okay?” he asked as he approached the bed, all at once realizing that Mickey had already fallen asleep. Ian slid into the bed beside him, turning him on his side, enveloping Mickey’s body in his own, and kissing him lightly on the temple before closing his eyes, a feeling of peace and utter joy lulling him to sleep with his
lover, his husband, his everything.
Whatever Mickey Wants...

Manuel and Mandy had Bigley on speaker phone in the kitchen when Ian walked in, reaching for the coffee pot, his eyes puffy with dark circles underneath. His ears perked up when he heard Bigley’s voice; he was anxious to share the intruder story with him, and was hoping he could enlighten Mandy and Manuel at the same time.

Bigley was going on about how well the new ads and commercials for Surfin’ USA were coming. They were expected to be aired and shared by week’s end. He and Manuel were discussing the logistics of planning visits for Mandy and Ian to various Surfin’ USA locations for Meet and Greets. “Ian just walked into the kitchen,” Manuel interjected, hoping to receive some backing from him, in terms of putting any such visits off, at least for a time.

“Hello, Ian!” Bigley barked enthusiastically. “Good Morning, Bruno!” Ian responded, trying to sound awake and alert, despite his obvious exhausted state. “Late night?” Mandy teased quietly in the background, Ian shooting her an exasperated look. “So, what do you think about doing some traveling around the States, while you’re here?” Bruno asked, cutting to the chase. “Well, I know Mickey really wants to go back to Mexico as soon as he is able…” Ian began, Bigley interjecting, “And he should! He and Manuel are both needed there. Johnny has been doing an excellent job, and reports that your new foreman, Jose, has been a Godsend, but there are next steps that need to be taken, regarding the setup and manning of a new factory. Johnny has a line on a building, closer to Boca, that would be perfect, but lacks the industry expertise to get a surfboard factory up and running.”

“I understand,” Ian said as calmly as he could manage. “I just know there’s no way Mickey will accept us being apart after all he just went through,” Ian began to explain. “Is there sufficient profit to allow us to return separately for short periods, basically taking turns, Mandy and I, then Mickey and Ian, handling business in Mexico?” Manuel suggested.

“Johnny tells me there has been a tremendous influx of revenue at Ojos, so it might be possible. However, purchasing the building and machinery for the new factory is going to be quite expensive. I can look for investors, if you want, but that could take some time. People generally want to see a bit more longevity in a company, when it comes to making a large investment,” Bigley explained.

“I’ll talk to Mickey about all of this today, but I need to tell all of you something right now, while we’re all talking,” Ian began. “Mandy, do you remember when we stayed here before and I told you I thought someone must have been in here during the night, while we were sleeping?” he asked. “Yeah,” Mandy answered slowly. “Well, something woke Mickey up last night, and he got up to look around. He didn’t see anyone, but he heard the main door and then the elevator door!” Ian explained, the speed, pitch and volume of his voice increasing as he nervously recounted Mickey’s story.

“That’s impossible!” Bigley interrupted. “That penthouse is leased to my company. Me and my associates are the only people permitted to access it directly.” “I understand, Bruno, but trust me, Mickey is sure of what he heard. I had the toughest time getting him to relax enough to sleep again after it happened. And he needs to rest!” Ian insisted. “I will call and get all of the access cards changed. In fact, I will see about having a deadbolt installed, the five of us being the only ones to receive the code,” Bruno promised earnestly, adding, “Please tell Mickey…”

“Tell me what?” Mickey asked as he walked into the kitchen and heard his name. “Mickey! How are you feeling?” Bigley asked. “Still a little weak, but much better,” he answered, raising his eyebrows and smiling at Ian, who instantly blushed as Mandy and Manuel turned to look at him. “Now, tell me
“First, I’m glad to hear you are getting well. What I wanted them to tell you is that I’m sorry for last night’s intrusion, and that I will be remediing the situation immediately. There will be new swipe cards and hopefully a coded deadbolt will be installed by day’s end,” Bigley promised. “Thanks, Bruno...for everything! No one has ever been as good to me in my life, besides the people in this room, and I owe you my life!” Mickey replied appreciatively.

“You are most welcome, Mickey, and I hope you will consider some of the business-related tasks that I need all of you to complete, so Ojos can continue to grow,” Bigley said in his usual friendly, boisterous tone. “Yeah, Bruno, can the four of us discuss all of that and get back to you?” Ian requested, knowing that Bigley blindsiding Mickey with all of that right now would not end well.

“I think that’s a great idea! That will give me time to get the ball rolling on this lock situation, while you four make a plan,” Bruno said optimistically. “Okay, then. Thanks, Bruno...for all you have done and continue to do for all of us!” Ian said sincerely. Everyone said their goodbyes and Manuel ended the call.

“How about if we discuss this over breakfast?” Manuel suggested. “Yeah, we could go downstairs and eat in the restaurant,” Mandy chimed in. Ian shook his head, citing to Mickey’s medical needs, “Mickey needs to have his immunoglobulin treatment today, so…” “Ian, you can give me the fuckin’ treatment when we get back. I really wanna get outta here for a while,” Mickey complained. Ian really didn’t want to put it off, but after seeing the desperation in Mickey’s eyes, he agreed to wait until after breakfast. Mickey deserved to do whatever he wanted to do, after all he’d been through. Who was Ian to deny him that? “Let’s get you ready,” Ian said, putting an arm around Mickey’s shoulders and guiding him to their bedroom.

“I think I could just have a quick shower?” he asked. Ian sighed heavily, fully expecting to have to steady Mickey throughout the entire shower, while also needing to wrap his cast in a plastic bag before he could even go in. “I guess…” he responded, again giving into Mickey’s whims out of pity, guilt and love. Every time Ian looked at Mickey, he was reminded of all that had happened to him over the course of the last year and a half, not to mention throughout his life. He was so grateful to have Mickey back, to know he had survived hell and come out on the other side to be with him—for the rest of their lives. He would do absolutely anything in his power to keep Mickey smiling. This was why the breakfast conversation was going to be tough. He knew Mickey wouldn’t be happy with all that Bigley was asking them to do.

Ian turned on the shower, helped Mickey off with his boxers, then removed his own. He carefully covered Mickey’s port with one of the waterproof shields Shawn had sent home with them, reminding Mickey that he would be getting his treatment immediately upon their return from breakfast, warning him not to try to derail him with any sexual advances. He knew to expect that from Mickey, and wanted to avoid it at all costs. Getting his treatment done on time was very important to his recovery. In Ian’s mind, they had a lifetime to fuck, but he needed to be sure Mickey was well and going to have a long, healthy life with him.

Ian tried to do everything for Mickey in the shower, but Mickey, asserting his independence, insisted on washing his own hair, leaving most of his body to Ian, which suited them both just fine. Ian knew that Mickey beginning to do for himself was a sign that he was getting better, which was a tremendous relief. He had been quite worried about Mickey’s health for some time. Once Ian was done washing and drying both Mickey and himself, he set about looking for clothes for each of them.

They really didn’t have much with them. He settled on them wearing the same clothes they had worn
into prison, Mickey’s blue shirt complementing his eyes impeccably. The shirt and eyes, combined with Mickey’s bright smile, made him absolutely stunning—and irresistible. After taking a good look at Mickey that moment, Ian hoped and prayed Mickey wouldn’t challenge him on the ‘no sex before treatment’ thing, because there was absolutely no way he’d be able to resist. In fact, it was nearly impossible, even at present, despite his growling stomach and Mandy’s knocking and pestering. Ian quickly threw on his own clothes, pushing his partially-erect cock down into his jeans as he zipped them, his black t-shirt pulled down over his bulge in an effort to keep Mickey from noticing it. “Coming!” he called out in response to Mandy’s incessant bugging.

The quartet stood, waiting for the elevator, when suddenly it opened, revealing the same nosey bellhop that had been questioning Mandy and Ian the day before. “Hello,” he said, looking at Mickey. “Don’t think I’ve met you yet. I’m Dan,” he said, offering his hand to Mickey. Mickey waved him off, looking over at Ian, who shook his head. Mickey nodded his head in response to Dan’s introduction, then stared over at Ian again, undressing him with his eyes, all the way down to the lobby.

The elevator doors opened, the bellhop remaining in the elevator, even after Mandy, Manuel, Ian and Mickey had all exited. “Somethin’s not right with that dude,” Mickey said under his breath as he walked next to Ian with only light support from him. “No shit!” Ian replied, shaking his head again.

The four enjoyed a wonderful breakfast together, making small talk while stuffing their faces with pancakes. Mickey was so hungry, he ate all of his, then started on Ian’s leftovers. Ian had been famished as well, but once he knew the discussion was turning toward business, his appetite vanished. He was dreading Mickey’s response to the idea of them being separated yet again. “So, I guess we need to address some business matters,” Manuel began, looking to Mandy to delve into them individually.

“Bigley wants Ian and I to travel to some of the Surfin’ USA stores for Meet and Greets while we are here in the states,” Mandy began. Immediately, Mickey piped up with his usual response, “We’re leavin’ for Mexico as soon as the doc clears me---you...me...us,” he finished pointing to Ian, then himself, then back to Ian again. “Well, Bigley does need you and Manuel back there as soon as possible,” Ian responded. “Johnny found a building for the second factory and doesn’t know how to get everything set up,” Ian explained.

“No fuckin’ way!!” Mickey yelled, as Ian heard him saying it in his head. He knew exactly what Mickey was going to say, before he even said it. “I don’t wanna be apart from you, Mickey, not even for a second,” Ian said softly, but all of this business stuff is important. We are all about to be rich beyond our wildest dreams. All we have to do is listen to Bigley. He hasn’t screwed us over yet. I trust him. He knows how to grow a successful business,” Ian finished. “So do I,” Mickey snapped back at him. “There wouldn’t be shit for him to grow without me and Manuel,” he added with an attitude. “We all know that, Mick,” Ian said, speaking a bit more loudly this time. “I’m goin’ back and you’re coming with me,” he insisted. “Mandy can go do these Meet and Greets,” he suggested. “I don’t want her going alone!” Manuel objected. “Going with Ian is one thing, but…” Mickey interrupted, “Manuel, you go with Mandy and Ian and I will go home and get the new factory up and running.” “Mick, you can’t leave yet,” Ian reminded him.

“How about if Mandy and I go to Mexico and get the ball rolling with the new factory. Ian, you go to a few stores in the States while Mickey is healing up,” Manuel said calmly. “Then you and Mickey can go home to Mexico and take over for us, so we can go do some Meet and Greets back in the States,” Manuel suggested. “All that traveling back and forth will be expensive,” Mandy reminded them. “I don’t care what it costs! I have money! Ian’s stayin’ with me! Period!” Mickey insisted, raising his voice, his face turning red.
“I think taking turns is a good idea to start out,” Ian commented. “Mick, we can work the rest of our shit out when we get back upstairs,” he said sternly, Mickey glaring at him in response. Just then, a text came in on Ian’s phone from Bigley:

“New key cards are available at the front desk. I also had a coded deadbolt installed. The code is #357. Please don’t share this code with anyone else. You shouldn’t have any further problems.”

“Thanks very much!” Ian texted back, before dropping some money on the table and getting up from his seat. “Let’s go, Mick. You need your treatment now,” Ian said seriously, pulling Mickey up from his seat. Mandy shot Ian a look from across the table, but Ian just turned his head, leading Mickey by the hand into the elevator.

“What the fuck?!” Mickey yelled in Ian’s face as the elevator door closed with them inside. “We need to talk,” Ian growled. “We gonna talk in here? Cuz we didn’t pick up the new fuckin’ key cards!” Mickey yelled. “That’s fine!” Ian yelled back, pressing the ‘emergency stop’ button on the elevator. “So, what do ya wanna talk about?” Mickey asked, looking up angrily at Ian through his beautiful black lashes, the heat between the two men smoldering, rage tempered by lust, the latter overtaking them in spite of themselves.

“I mean, I know we’ve had problems in the past, but I think we need to get it all out on the table. We need to talk about the code, about your treatment, about the key cards. We need to talk about everything.”

“Fuck, Mick!” Ian roared, slamming him against the wall and kissing him hard. “I fuckin’ want you,” Mickey breathed between kisses, “right here, right now.” He reached for Ian’s belt buckle, making quick work of exposing Ian’s fully erect member despite the fact that he was wearing a cast, then unbuttoned his own jeans, dropping them, along with his boxers, below his ass cheeks.

Ian licked his fingers, leaving them as moist as possible before using them to quickly prep Mickey, his nose and mouth buried all the while in Mickey’s neck, inhaling his enticing scent as he licked, bit, kissed and serviced ravenously. “Get my cock nice and wet for you,” Ian whispered into Mickey’s ear, sending a shiver up his spine. Mickey turned and bent down, kneeling in front of Ian and began to slowly suck Ian off, taking more and more of Ian’s massive dick into his mouth and throat with each pass, teasing and tormenting him with his tongue. “Damn, Mick,” Ian moaned as Mickey brought him dangerously close to just letting go in his luscious mouth. “All I wanted was for you to get it wet.” “Well, it’s fuckin’ wet,” he announced as Ian helped him to his feet, spinning him around and shoving him against the wall, his sweet ass pushed out for the taking.

And Ian took him with great force and intention, pulling his hips back hard against his own as he drove himself into Mickey, deeper each time, until he was all in, fucking him vigorously amid a series of grunts, groans and screams, all punctuated by their movements together. “You good?” Ian panted as he continued to hammer it home. “Harder,” Mickey called back to him with a grin. “Harder, huh? I’ll give you harder,” Ian responded, increasing the ferocity of his fucking until Mickey was screaming his name each time he plowed into him. “Gonna cum!” Mickey added to his scream-alogue. “Mmm Hmm,” Ian hummed into Mickey’s ear as he doubled the speed of his last few strokes before exploding right along with Mickey.

“Mick…” Ian began, fighting to catch his breath, “I swear I could fuck you every day for the rest of my fucking life and I’d never get tired of it. You are so fucking amazing! The way you feel…the way you move…the way your ass bounces up and down on my…” “Hey!” Mickey interrupted. “I get it. I’m a good fuck, okay? Just shut the fuck up and let me enjoy this,” Mickey said, his eyes closed, a content, blissful smile stretching across his face.

Just then, Ian’s phone rang. It was Mandy. He answered, and the first words he heard were, “What the fuck, Ian?” “Yeah?” Ian replied, still glowing. “Turn the fucking elevator back on and come get us!” Mandy yelled. “You’re not the only ones who need to use it, ya know?” she chided. “Damn, she sounds pissed,” Mickey laughed as he buttoned, zipped and buckled quickly. “I AM pissed!”
Mandy replied, having heard Mickey’s comment. “Just what kind of treatment are you giving Mickey anyway?” she continued, pelting Ian with sarcastic comments until he finally pressed the button to activate the elevator and ended her call.

As the elevator door opened to receive Mandy and Manuel, Mickey asked, “Did you get the new key cards?” “Yeah---someone’s gotta act responsibly around here,” Mandy said snidely, holding the keys up for all to see. “Oh, and by the way, Bigley called. I’m flying to L.A. tomorrow for a Meet and Greet at the L.A. Surfin’ USA location.” Mandy spoke informatively. “And I have to fly back to Mexico,” Manuel added. “Ian, will you please go with Mandy?” Manuel pleaded. “Yeah, Bigley wants you to go, too,” Mandy said with a slight grin.

“How long are you gonna be there?” Ian asked. “I’ll be flying home to Mexico on Saturday night,” she began. “You could fly back here. Mick, he’d only be gone for two days,” Manuel looked at Ian with the saddest puppy dog eyes, imploring him to go with Mandy. Ian looked over at Mickey, who’s eyes were doing a number of their own on him. Ian wanted to dig a hole for himself to crawl into. There was literally no way out of this situation without seriously pissing someone off.

“Let me think about it,” Ian responded. “Mickey needs to have his treatments, so I’d have to get someone to do that. I’ll call Bigley myself to let him know my decision.” “Ian,” Mickey said softly, “We need to talk.”
Picture Perfect

The new swipe cards and deadbolt code worked, the couples splitting, each going to their respective room to argue. In Mandy and Manuel’s room, Mandy was defending Ian’s right to say no to the L.A. trip, in the name of nursing Mickey back to health after what anyone would categorize as a horrendous set of experiences. Although she agreed it would be nice to have Ian with her, and she knew Bigley wanted him to go, she stressed the fact that she was an independent woman who had done everything on her own for most of her life, prior to meeting Manuel, and that she didn’t ‘need’ Ian, or any other man, for that matter, to go with her.

Manuel cited to the incident that had occurred overnight at the Waldorf, contending that women who are bunking alone are more susceptible to sexual violence in such a scenario. Of course there was plenty of eye-rolling on Mandy’s end, the conversation ending with her simply saying, “Well, it’s up to Ian, not you!” Of course, this left Ian in the same hotseat he had started in, at least from the Mandy/Manuel camp.

Meanwhile, in Ian and Mickey’s room, Mickey was going ballistic. “You said you weren’t leavin’ my side, no matter what, after all this shit! Now, a fuckin’ day later, you’re talkin’ about traveling across the country without me! What the fuck?” “Well, I was thinking Reesie could come and stay with you, handle your treatments. It’s only two days,” Ian offered. “No!” Mickey shouted. “I’m gonna call Johnny right now...See what’s up at the factory,” Mickey said, calming down a bit. “Okay.” Ian said quietly, nodding his head. He was not looking forward to having to make this decision, so if Johnny could help in some way, Ian was all for it.

“Hello,” Johnny’s voice came through, loud and clear, as if he were next door. “So glad you’re there, Johnny. How’s it goin’, man?” Mickey asked. “Jose has been managing the floor like a pro. I think he deserves a raise. Productivity is up, but still can’t come close to matching the demand, with all these new clients,” Johnny explained. “We really need to get this new factory up and running ASAP,” he added. “Yeah, man, I get it,” Mickey responded. “I’d fly back tomorrow if I could, but I gotta see this doctor up here and keep getting these treatments. I been real sick,” Mickey said dejectedly. “I heard, Mick. Wish you didn’t have to go through all this shit, but at least Ian’s there. Guess that all worked out, huh?” Johnny questioned. “Yeah, I guess,” Mickey said, looking over at Ian, who was smirking at the thought of how well he came out looking after all of this, despite how badly he could have really fucked things up.

“Well, since you mentioned Ian, I don’t know if Bigley told ya, but he wants Ian to go with Mandy to L.A. tomorrow for a Meet and Greet at the L.A. Surfin’ USA location. Ian’s been givin’ me my treatments since they let me outta the hospital early, and I wanna find a way to keep him here with me. Don’t wanna end up back in the hospital, ya know?” Mickey explained, smiling over at Ian. “I understand that. Why doesn’t Manuel just come down here, for now, Mandy can go to L.A., and you and Mickey can come back as soon as you’re well?” Johnny suggested. “Yeah, that’d be great if Manuel wasn’t havin’ a fit about her goin’ alone,” Mickey lamented.

“Here’s what I’m thinkin’,” Mickey continued, “Manuel could go with Mandy. He could still be in Mexico by late Saturday night, or Sunday at the latest. It’s gonna take time for the machinery, chemicals and other materials to be delivered to the new factory anyway. So if you can make the deal to buy the place, I’ll order everything we need for the new factory. I can keep in touch with Manuel by phone and text, so we can decide stuff together. I’ll just need the address for the new factory, and you would have to send the payments. Oh, and Jose could hire a cleaning and prep crew to get the new place ready to be set up. I’m guessin’ it’s vacant and probably dirty as fuck,” Mickey described his vision, finally coming up for air.
“Mick, it sounds like a plan that could work, but I know Bigley said Ian is a big part of Surfin’s marketing plan, so if he doesn’t go to L.A. this time, he will definitely be expected to go soon. You should check to see which store he is planning to send them to for the next Meet and Greet, and offer for Ian to go there...soon.” Johnny suggested. “I’d be glad to go,” Ian offered, “but I’m gonna say right now, Mick, that you’re gonna come with me...” “Of course!” Mickey agreed readily. “Even if we have to go before we go back to Mexico,” Ian added, Mickey instantly looking as if he had taken a bite out of a lemon. “Would you agree to that?” Ian asked, giving him his ‘you fucking better’ look. “Okay,” Mickey agreed at a barely audible volume.

“I’m sorry, did you say that would work for you?” Johnny asked Mickey for confirmation. “I fuckin’ guess,” Mickey mumbled, obviously not happy with the concession he had just made, but resigning himself to it, nonetheless. After all, he did say that anywhere with Ian was good for him, and Ian was an important component of the new Ojos marketing plan.

“Good, then!” Johnny said happily. “I’ll pitch this to Bigley and get back to you. Manuel and Mandy will be good with this, right?” he asked. “Think so,” Mickey responded. “Let me see right now,” he added, walking toward their room. “Mandy!” he yelled, banging on their door. He got no response, so he tried the doorknob, but the door was locked. Mickey knocked and yelled again. “Fuck off, Mick!” Mandy finally responded. “Musta interrupted somethin’,” Mickey said with a grin. “I’m sure they’re gonna be good with it. Go ‘head an’ tell Bigley.” “Text me if he has a problem.” “Will do!” Johnny answered. “Thanks, man! Really can’t wait to come home and get everything back to normal again. See ya soon,” Mickey said before ending the call.

“Now, get your ass up on the bed,” Ian commanded, pointing at the bed. “And take off your shirt!” “Sounds like fun,” Mickey said, jumping up onto the bed and giving Ian a sexy ‘Come hither’ look. “’Fraid not,” Ian responded. “Sorry to burst your bubble, but we’re not putting this shit off any longer,” he continued, pulling a bag of immunoglobulin from the hospital pharmacy bag. “Shit!” Mickey said, his body sinking further into the bed as he surrendered himself to the inevitable. He knew this meant hours of lying in bed, which he was dreading. Ian had Mickey all set up in no time, looking for a front-buttoning shirt or small blanket to keep him warm. Ian knew that even room temperature fluids could make someone feel cold. Neither of them had brought a button-up shirt, and Ian certainly wasn’t going to bother Manuel for one, not after Mickey’s recent interruption. He finally settled on pulling the covers up over him as far as possible after crawling into bed next to him to act as Mickey’s own personal human hot water bottle. Ian snuggled up to Mickey as best as he could without getting entangled in his tubing or getting too close to his port. Mickey smiled, pressing himself up against Ian’s body, as close as possible. He loved the feeling of Ian’s body on his. It relaxed him, no matter how uneasy or upset he was about something, it always bothered him a little less when Ian was touching him. To Mickey, proximity to Ian was every bit as important of a part of his healing as any medication he could take. He had seen that so clearly with his hand injury, and the same had been true throughout this illness.

It wasn’t long before the relaxing warmth of Ian’s body, combined with the sedating effects of Mickey’s treatment lulled him to sleep. Ian slowly rose from the bed, covering Mickey’s bare chest and shoulders as best he could, before leaving the room. He really wanted to get both of them a few articles of clothing since they had next to nothing to wear and didn’t know when they would be returning home. He also wanted to get the necessary paperwork for Mickey’s passport.

Ian tried slipping out unnoticed, but was promptly stopped in his tracks. “Where d’you think you’re going?” Mandy said suspiciously. “We have business to discuss,” she added. “Well, we wanted to talk to you earlier, but...where’s Manuel?” Ian asked. “Sleeping,” she replied with a grin. Ian smiled back, then shared the new plan for the four of them, explaining that Bigley still needed to approve it. Mandy gave Ian a half-smile, “You know, I really want him to go with me. It just pisses me off that he thinks I can’t handle going on my own,” she complained. “I’m sure that’s not it...” Ian began
before Mandy interrupted, “Oh, yes it is! Trust me! He likes to think he’s in control.” “We all do!” Ian laughed. “So let him!”

“Let me what?” Manuel asked as he walked out of their bedroom. “Let you go with me to L.A!” Mandy said with great excitement. “I’d love to, but…” Manuel began. “All taken care of,” Ian interjected. Mickey’s gonna order all the machinery and stuff for the new factory. You and Mandy will be there in plenty of time to get the new factory up and running if you both fly straight home from L.A.” Ian explained. “So I’m going with you then?” Manuel asked, the hint of a smile forming on his face as he looked at Mandy. “Yep!” she answered. “Figured it was the easiest way to make everyone happy. Especially you!” she said, running over to kiss Manuel.

“I was gonna go get Mickey’s passport papers and some clothes for us while he’s asleep. Anyone wanna go?” Ian asked. “Sure!” Mandy answered, never passing up an opportunity to clothes shop with Ian. “If you or Mickey don’t hear from Bigley soon, I’d check in and be sure you have a plane ticket for the morning,” Ian yelled back to Manuel as he headed for the door. ‘Will do!’ Manuel answered.

‘Wow!’ Manuel thought to himself. Things really had seemed to work themselves out perfectly for all concerned. And he credited Mandy with all of it. He really was beginning to think it was time to start looking at rings. He’d have to be crazy not to snatch this one up, before someone else did. He smiled contently to himself. Then all of a sudden, he heard the elevator doors. “Did you forget your key card?” Manuel called out, running for the door with one of the cards.

Manuel opened the main door, but no one was there. The elevator doors were closed, with no sign of either Mandy or Ian. Then he looked down, noticing a large manilla envelope at his feet, marked, “Photos - Surfin’ USA.” Someone must have delivered shots from the recent photo shoot, Manuel figured. He grabbed the envelope and opened it. He was actually pretty anxious to see them. As he slid the photos out of the envelope, he was shocked to discover that they were not from the photo shoot! “What the fuck?! What the hell is this?”

“What the fuck are you yellin’ about, Manuel?” Mickey called out from his bed. “Oh, you have to see this, Ojos!” Manuel said in a tone of voice Mickey had never heard before. “Can’t get outta bed with these tubes hooked up to me,” Mickey replied. “Well, I’ll just have to bring it to you then,” Manuel said. “What the fuck, Manuel? You’re scaring the shit outta me!” Mickey said, his voice shaking. Manuel handed Mickey the pile of pictures and waited for his reaction.
Strange Bedfellows

Nothing could have prepared Mickey for what he was now looking at. There were three pictures, accompanied by what amounted to a demand letter. It read as follows:

These beautiful photos of Ojos Azules’ “wholesome” hurricane heroes are for sale to the highest bidder. The Examiner has already offered $5000 per photo. Offers in excess of this amount should be made to this number, within 24 hours, in order to avoid the publication of these photos by the Examiner: (716) 556-4847.

Mickey couldn’t speak. His stomach was churning, all the color drained from his face and he looked to Manuel like he might pass out at any moment. He sat motionless and silent for at least two solid minutes before flying into a sudden, violent, Terry-style rage, ripping the tubing out of his PICC port, grabbing the immunoglobulin bag off the pole and whipping it against the wall, the bag bursting on contact from the sheer force of Mickey’s throw. “I’m gonna fuckin’ KILL somebody!!” he screamed, running and grabbing for anything he could get his hands on, throwing, knocking down and breaking things in his wake. “Ojos!” Manuel yelled, “Calm down! You’re making it worse!” “It couldn’t be any fuckin’ worse! My sister and my husband are fuckin’!! And some asshole has a fuckin’ picture of it, gonna put it in a goddamn newspaper!!” Mickey shouted at the top of his lungs, the veins in his neck popping out.

“I’m just as upset as you are!” Manuel yelled back at Mickey. “I don’t fuckin’ think so!” Mickey screamed, hurling a glass against the wall. “Mandy’s been my sister my whole fuckin’ life, and Ian and I been together on and off for seven fuckin’ years!! I’m fucked for life!!” Manuel wrapped his arms around Mickey before he could get his hands on the large, white vase filled with fresh flowers by the front door, bear-hugging him as he wrestled him to the floor.

In the midst of the chaos, there was a knock at the door. Mickey was still fighting with all he had, to get loose from Manuel’s grip, but was wearing down fast. “Who is it?” Manuel panted, struggling to keep a tight hold on Mickey. “It’s Reesie...and Mikhaila. I’ve been calling Mandy’s phone, but I couldn’t get her,” Reesie answered, “I need to get the rest of your numbers.” “Just a minute,” Manuel responded. “If I let go, do you promise to be calm?” Manuel whispered in Mickey’s ear, out of desperation. “Yeah,” Mickey answered, out of breath, Reesie and Mikhaila’s presence having a sudden, positive impact on his demeanor.

Manuel let go of Mickey, stood up, then helped Mickey up off the floor. “Do you want to answer?” Manuel offered. Mickey nodded, reaching for the door handle and opening the door. “Hi...come in,” Mickey said softly, looking down at his feet, ashamed of the mess he had just made of the place.

Reesie read the note, her head shaking reflexively as she did. Then, when she got a glimpse of the pictures, her immediate response was to ask, “How the hell did someone get in here to take these?” “We don’t fuckin’ know!” Mickey said, raising his voice, which caused Mikhaila to startle.
“Shhhh...I'm sorry,” he whispered sweetly to Mikhaila, kissing her on the forehead.

“Mickey heard someone in here last night, but he didn’t see anything. Bigley got us all new swipe cards and the coded deadbolt that’s on the door now, but I guess it’s too late! There was a creepy bellhop asking a lot of questions in the elevator since we’ve been here this time, but we don’t know if he has anything to do with this,” Manuel explained.

“Well, I can see how this could be a big problem for your business!” Reesie admitted. “Business?! How ‘bout my fuckin’ marriage!?” Mickey screamed, frightening Mikhaila into a full-on cry this time. “Daddy’s sorry,” he whispered into Mikhaila’s ear, trying to calm her. Reesie handed the envelope and photos to Manuel, then took Mikhaila from Mickey, glaring at him as Mikhaila continued to wail. Reesie began to bounce a bit, which seemed to help to settle Mikhaila for the moment.

“I don’t even know when this could have happened,” Manuel said as he looked down at the picture of Mandy and Ian in bed together. Reesie looked closely at the picture. “This definitely wasn’t taken since he got out of prison,” Reesie commented. “How do you know that?” Manuel asked. “Well, for one thing, his ring is on his right hand in this one, and on the left in the one with Mickey,” she answered. “And another big clue is that he practically has a buzz cut in that picture. His hair was longer than that when I first met him, and now it’s a lot longer, as you can see in this picture,” Reesie explained, referring to both pictures.

“So I should feel better that my husband fucked my sister when we were not married, just engaged!?” Mickey spat back at her. Manuel just stared at Mickey, a pained look on his face. And to think he was just considering buying a ring and proposing. This was a shock to him, just as it was to Mickey, but somehow he knew that expressing his feelings right now would set Mickey off all over again, so he just stayed quiet.

The ringing of Reesie’s phone saved anyone from having to respond to Mickey’s last question. It also scared Mikhaila yet again. “Give her to me!” Mickey demanded, reaching for the baby. Reesie handed her off, then grabbed her phone out of her diaper bag. “It’s Mandy,” she said quietly, looking at Manuel, then Mickey, for some type of guidance. “Answer the bitch!” Mickey growled. Manuel shot Mickey an evil look, insulted by Mickey’s choice of words, despite the evidence he had just seen that his girlfriend had been unfaithful. “Hello,” Reesie said nervously. “Yes, I’m here now...yes, I have the baby...but there’s something...Okay, then, I’ll be here. See you soon!” Reesie put her phone away, Mandy having ended the call rather abruptly since she was on her way back to the room.

“What the fuck did she say?” Mickey asked, holding Mikhaila close to him. “They’ll be up in a few minutes. Apparently, Ian insisted on cutting the trip short. She said he couldn’t reach you or Manuel and wanted to check on you, since you were having your treatment,” Reesie answered, looking at Mickey’s port. “Hey! Why aren’t you getting your treatment?” Reesie asked. Mickey looked down at Mikhaila’s cherubic little face, avoiding eye contact with Reesie. “Mickey!” she yelled, Mickey immediately looking up, his eyes locking onto hers. “I took it off,” he admitted. “Mickey, you need that to get well! Where is it? Let’s get it started again,” she said encouragingly. “We can’t,” he said softly, handing the baby back to her as he heard the elevator doors open.

Ian and Mandy walked in, their arms filled with bags from various department stores, Ian carrying a pile of papers under his arm. “Mick, I have some stuff for you to sign. We can get your passport in less than a week! And I got you some shirts that button up the front for your treat...Wait! Why aren’t you in bed? Who took you off your treatment? Did you do that, Reesie?” Ian yelled, firing questions off faster than anyone could answer them. Then he looked around the room, noticing that the place looked like it had been ransacked. “What the hell...”
“That’s what we wanna know, bitch!” Mickey howled, his eyes filling with tears as he held himself back. Every fiber of his being longed to punch Ian in the face, multiple times. Words cannot describe the depth of the hurt Mickey felt at this moment. He grabbed Ian by the shirt and stared into his eyes, “How could you do this to me? After all the shit we been through!” Mickey screamed uncontrollably. “Mick, what the fuck? I went and bought you some clothes, got your passport papers…” Ian responded, his puzzled look slowly shifting to one of terror as he felt the hurt and disdain in Mickey’s eyes.

Manuel held the picture up for both Ian and Mandy to see, their jaws both dropping in utter shock. As Mandy moved in to get a closer look, Manuel averted his eyes. “Ian! This was taken the night you said you could tell someone had been in here, remember? Last time we were here?” Mandy asked. “I told you someone was here!” Ian responded, looking at Mandy, then shifting his eyes over to Mickey. “Do YOU remember what was going on that weekend, Mick? The photographer drugged me, you and me couldn’t communicate, I was a fucking trainwreck and I couldn’t sleep!” Ian said, recalling that miserable weekend. “Meanwhile, you were in Mexico smashing the shit outta your hand!” Ian added. “I remember,” Mickey admitted.

“So, do you remember why you decided to fuck Mandy?” Mickey asked with a nasty edge to his voice. “I didn’t fuck Mandy!!” Ian yelled in Mickey’s face. “If I wanted to fuck Mandy, I woulda done it back in high school! No offense, Mandy, but you know when we were kids you had a crush on me and…” “And you only had eyes for Mickey,” Mandy finished. “And I still do! Mickey, I love you so fucking much it hurts. It hurts that you would even think I would do that to us...It hurts that you stopped your treatment today and are risking your health...It hurts that you are standing there doubting me, doubting my love for you…” Ian broke down, sobbing into his own hands.

“Here’s exactly what happened,” Mandy began, looking at Manuel. “I was lying in bed, going through my pictures, missing you, Manuel, when Ian knocked on my door. He was missing you, Mickey, and told me about how all of his pictures had been deleted for security reasons. He was very sad and made the comment that he couldn’t sleep. My best friend was crying, so I comforted him. I told him to come and lie next to me. He must’ve missed his little spoon, because as soon as he hugged me into him, he fell asleep. I have to admit, it was a comfort to me, having him there since I’m not used to sleeping alone either. But that was it! We cuddled and slept together. There was no sex, not even a single kiss, just best friends being there for each other,” Mandy explained, looking back and forth between Manuel and Mickey. She conveniently omitted the morning wood incident, much to Ian’s relief.

“I believe them!” Reesie said, offering her opinion. “Do you?” she asked, looking at Mickey, then Manuel. “I don’t have a choice! Can’t lose this fucker again,” Mickey said, rushing Ian and laying a passionate kiss on him. “I love you, Mick. I’d never do ANYTHING to put our relationship at risk,” Ian spoke sincerely, his cheeks stained with tears. “Now get your ass back in that bed! We’re gonna finish your treatment!” Mickey turned away, heading for their bedroom, Ian following close behind.

“Of course I believe them!” Manuel exclaimed happily. “But,according to the note, we have 24 hours to come up with over $15,000. Don’t you think we better call Bigley or something?” he asked. “Yes!” Reesie and Mandy said in unison.

“Hey, Mick!” Mandy called into Mickey and Ian’s room. “Yeah?” Mickey answered, sounding a bit aggravated. “Can you guys call Bigley about this note? Something’s gonna have to be done in the next 24 hours or our ad campaign for Ojos and Surfin’ USA could be completely ruined,” Mandy said, stating the obvious. “Got it covered. We were gonna do that as soon as we got everything set in here,” Ian answered, still busy setting up a new IG bag for Mickey.

“Okay, thanks! Manuel and I have to leave early in the morning to fly to L.A., so we just wanted to
be sure you guys would handle it,” Mandy said, reminding them of the timing of the trip. “He said we’ll handle it!” Mickey yelled, obviously agitated, whether it was over the recent developments, or having to have another treatment started, neither Ian nor Mandy knew for sure. In Mickey’s mind, his mood was the result of a conglomeration of things, all of which Mickey would have gladly steered clear of, had it been within his power to do so. The reality was, he was the ying to Ian’s yang. As lucky as Ian was lately, Mickey was just as unlucky—yet another reason Mickey could never let Ian go.


“Bruno!” Ian said as Bigley answered his call. “Ian! How’s everything going? Did Mickey get my text? Your plan will work perfectly. I booked Manuel on the same flight as Mandy to L.A. early tomorrow morning. You and Mickey can stay there until he’s medically cleared, then we’ll see where is best for the two of you to go first,” Bigley said quickly, not allowing time for a response to his two questions.

“That all sounds good, but I have something to tell you,” Ian began. “Sounds serious,” Bigley replied. “It is. Someone has been coming into the penthouse, just like we thought. We know for sure now, because someone slipped a manilla envelope with pictures of us sleeping, under the front door today. There was also a note, demanding over $15,000 to prevent the Examiner from publishing the photos,” Ian finished.

“First of all, I am beyond shocked and dismayed that this could and did happen at the Waldorf, and especially in my leased penthouse! I’m absolutely appalled, and plan to speak with the manager immediately! And concerning the blackmail, that doesn’t make sense to me! Why would they think these photos would be worth so much?” Bigley shouted indignantly.

“The photos are a threat to our image as heroes, I guess, because there are two photos of me, one with Mickey and one with Mandy,” Ian said with a note of embarrassment in his voice. “Hmmm...” Bigley began, having many thoughts about the existence of the two pictures Ian had just described, but opting to keep them to himself. “That does present a problem, but not one that cannot be handled,” he said, obviously with a plan in mind. “I happen to know the Editor in Chief of the Examiner extremely well. I will put a call in to him before I even call the manager at the Waldorf. Let me do this before it gets too late. I’ll get back to you!” Bigley said hurriedly before hanging up.

“Guess that will be handled,” Ian said, grinning at Mickey. “I got somethin’ that needs handled,” Mickey responded with a smirk. “Yeah, well, for what I have in mind, I need you to be mobile, and we’ll definitely need our privacy, so I guess you’ll just have to be patient,” Ian teased, using air quotes around the word ‘patient’. “Ha ha ha, real funny,” Mickey scoffed.

Just then, there was a knock at their door. “Mickey! Ian! We just want to say goodbye,” Reesie called in through the door. “Come on in,” Ian yelled back. Reesie walked in, carrying Mikhaila, who was now awake and alert, having just finished a bottle. “Can I hold her?” Ian asked. “Sure!” Reesie answered, but no yelling, she warned, giving Mickey a look. Ian scooped her up into his arms, staring into her beautiful, blue eyes. “Just like yours, Mick!” he said, becoming emotional. Ian kissed her on the forehead, then carried her over for Mickey to see. Mickey reached his arms out, but Ian just got up on the bed with him, sitting Mikhaila on the bed between the two of them, cradling them both in his arms. “Now there’s a picture that’s worth something!” Reesie said with a smile.
A Matter Of Trust

After Reesie took Mikhaila and left, Ian curled himself around his exhausted hubby and they fell asleep, both completely drained from the mental stress of their argument, which, despite Ian being very hurt, actually amounted to nothing more than a misunderstanding. Mickey, however, was down for the count, his extremely physical outburst, combined with the effects of his treatment, hitting him with a one-two punch.

Mandy and Manuel busied themselves preparing for their morning flight to L.A., Mandy modeling some new clothes she had bought while she was out with Ian. “Very nice,” Manuel remarked as Mandy strutted, spun and posed for him until he’d finally had enough. “Okay, take them off!” he commanded. Mandy gave him a sultry look, slowly lowering her skirt until it fell in a heap at her feet, exposing her bare bottom half. Then she began unbuttoning her blouse, painstakingly freeing one button at a time until her bare breasts were peaking out from each side of the open blouse, her pretty pink nipples standing at attention. She haltingly pushed the open blouse down her arms, inch by inch, until they were free of fabric. She then brought her right hand around the front of her, massaging her clit sensually as she drew her index and middle fingers of her left hand into her mouth, sucking on them fervently before slipping them into her own dripping snatch. “Want you, Manuel…” she moaned desperately, her piercing blue eyes looking up at him through her thick, dark lashes as she continued to finger-fuck herself at a snail’s pace.

Manuel’s cock was rock-hard, pressing firmly against the jeans he was currently extricating his body from as fast as humanly possible. He stepped out of his jeans, ripped off his t-shirt and boxers, and tackled Mandy to the bed, flipping her onto her knees and pounding into her from behind. Mandy gasped in response to the speed and ferocity with which he took her. Her body responded almost automatically as he proceeded to fuck the shit out of her, angling himself for maximum penetration and clitoral contact. Mandy moaned loudly, pushing herself against him, magnifying the intensity of each thrust until she could feel the tingle; this one was coming quickly. “Manuel!” she cried out, “I’m gonna fuckin’ cum!” Manuel continued his onslaught, driving harder and faster, gripping her hips and slamming her onto his throbbing cock until it happened—the monumental explosion they both felt coming, their bodies rocking, twitching and vibrating against each other as Manuel sunk himself into her one last time.

“Fuck, Manuel!” Mandy yelled breathlessly. “Yes, we did!” Manuel laughed, pulling himself out of her, then throwing himself onto the bed. He cupped her gorgeous face in his hands, bringing her in for a slow, sweet kiss. “I love you, Mandy! I’m sorry for doubting you. It’s just...that picture…” Manuel began. “Let’s not talk about it,” Mandy said, interrupting him. “I want to focus on our trip to L.A., and on us!” she said, a positive vibe resonating in her voice. “And I love you, too, Manuel---more than ever,” she said with a smile. “Now let’s finish packing,” she suggested, putting her robe on and throwing Manuel his. “I just did!” Manuel chuckled. “Ha ha ha, very funny,” she snickered, grabbing her new clothes off the floor to put into her travel bag.

They were discussing dinner plans as they packed when they heard a knock at their door. “Coming,” Mandy responded, running to unlock the door. Ian walked in, “Just wanted you guys to know that Bigley texted. He’s in the process of trying to find out who is blackmailing us, and wanted to let us know that, from now on, only one employee at the Waldorf will have access to the penthouse for cleaning purposes. It will be the housekeeping supervisor, and she will have to call one of us for permission to enter, prior to doing any cleaning. I do have her coming to clean up Mickey’s mess here in about ten minutes,” Ian explained.

“Oh, okay, we’re gonna get outta here for a while, get some dinner. Want us to pick anything up
for you and Mick?” Mandy asked. “No, we’ll get something later, but can you let me know when you guys are on your way back? And here,” Ian said, pulling a $50 bill from his pocket. “Have a few drinks on me—take your time and enjoy them,” Ian smiled devilishly as he watched the meaning of his words register on Mandy and Manuel’s faces. “Sure, Ian. We will make a night of it, maybe go dancing, and we’ll call before we come back,” Manuel said, winking at him, then glancing over at Mandy to gauge her reaction. She just smiled back at him, adding, “Gonna go get my dancing shoes!”

Once the housekeeping supervisor had come and gone, Mandy and Manuel were on their way to dinner and dancing, and Ian had checked on Mickey, who was still sleeping soundly, he had time to sit alone and think. The more he went over the events of the day in his mind, the angrier he became at Mickey for all of his shenanigans. He was particularly bothered by the idea that Mickey would assume that he and Mandy had been fucking, but Mickey yanking his treatment tubing out of his port and going on a rampage also had Ian pretty upset. He understood why Mickey had been so enraged, but that didn’t make his actions any more acceptable to Ian.

Ian opened his phone and started a text to Mickey:

“Your behavior today was completely unacceptable and I plan to punish you to the full extent of my abilities. Text me when you are awake and ready to begin.”

Just reading his text back to himself sent a shiver of excitement through Ian’s body. He knew how much he had loved, and yet dreaded at the same time, the note and subsequent punishment he had received from Mickey at the factory after he had left him there one morning when he wasn’t supposed to. Of course, Mickey had sprung a few impromptu punishments on him that he also enjoyed thoroughly, but since this role reversal was going to be new to both of them, Ian thought it only fair, and also very exciting, to give him a heads up.

Ian hit ‘send’ and waited, going through his shopping bags from his excursion with Mandy in search of punishment implements, settling on a new leather belt he had bought for Mickey and one of the ear warmers he had gotten to help them brave the brisk Chicago weather; he thought it would make a great blindfold. Of course, he would have a plastic hanger or two at the ready, just in case the mood struck him. He could still feel the sting of one of those coming across his ass hard, whenever he recalled their recent pre-prison session in New York. Oh was Mickey gonna pay for being such an asshole earlier! Ian was going to make damn sure of it! His dick was getting so hard, just thinking about it, that he decided to take his pants off. He honestly didn’t know how long this would last, despite his strong desire to give it to Mickey good. Ian feared he might become so aroused that he would abandon the mission in favor of just straight fucking. Ian handled all of the items multiple times as he waited, working himself into a frenzy of anticipation.

Finally, Mickey sent a text back:

“Ian, I’m really sorry. Should I be scared? What the fuck are you gonna do to me?”

Ian grinned with satisfaction at the idea that Mickey was squirming already, and he wasn’t even in the room yet. He forced himself to walk, rather than run, to their bedroom, his tools of the trade in hand. “First, let’s get you untangled from this shit!” Ian spoke loudly in a rougher voice than usual, as he disconnected Mickey’s port from the tubing and the now empty IG bag. “What are ya gonna do?” Mickey asked nervously, taking inventory of the items Ian had carried in with him, which were now sitting on the bed, not more than two feet away from him.

“Take everything off and get on the bed, face down!” Ian ordered, ignoring Mickey’s question and focusing instead on wrapping the ear warmer tightly around his eyes. He then took the tubing that Mickey had ripped out of his port earlier, and used it to tie Mickey’s arms together at the elbows,
then fastening the free end of the tubing to the headboard. Once Ian had Mickey secured to the headboard, he stood staring down at his naked, vulnerable form, not touching him or speaking a single word. Mickey was in agony, fearing what would come next, but wanting it at the same time.

Finally, Ian spoke, “Do you know why you are in this position right now?” “Cuz I fucked up today?” Mickey asked, although he already knew the answer. “That’s right,” Ian confirmed. “And do you know what happens to husbands that don’t trust their husbands and go on rampages, risking their own health and really PISSING THEIR HUSBANDS OFF?” Ian yelled, trying to sound scarier than he actually felt. “No,” Mickey mumbled into the pillow. “No, what?” Ian barked. “No, sir?” Mickey guessed. “That will do,” Ian responded, taking a moment to reach up between Mickey’s legs, fondling him until he was hard as hell.

“Ooooo! Is somebody a little bit excited?” Ian whispered, as he slid the ear warmer up to expose Mickey’s right ear. “I am, too,” he breathed. “You really hurt my feelings today,” Ian hissed, his mouth still up to Mickey’s ear. “And I’m so anxious to punish you...getting hard just imagining all the things I have planned,” he continued to growl, in just a little more than a whisper, into Mickey’s ear, still touching his hard-on intermittently, just enough to keep Mickey on edge.

Then Ian backed away again, letting Mickey stew in his own juices for a solid minute before exacting a sudden and decisive blow upon Mickey’s beautifully taut, round ass with the tapered end of the brand-new leather belt. Using the belt at its full length, rather than folding it, he managed to get both cheeks pretty evenly, a bright pink stripe quickly appearing, shortly after Mickey’s muffled scream. “Did that hurt?” Ian laughed, moving his hand underneath Mickey to grab hold of his cock, which was still rigid and now sporting a fresh dew drop. He then proceeded to whip Mickey with the belt, which he had now folded, in order to avoid hitting himself, since he planned to touch Mickey from underneath while he punished him.

He wanted Mickey to feel pain, but also great pleasure, so keeping him aroused was key. “Fuck my hand, bitch!” he commanded as he lowered the belt swiftly over Mickey’s tender derriere repeatedly, his round buns rebounding from each painful stroke with a quiver that made Ian crazy with desire. ‘That ass!’ kept repeating in his mind each time he watched it bounce. “You ever gonna doubt my loyalty and love again, motherfucker?” Ian yelled as he continued to flog Mickey relentlessly. “No...No, sir,” Mickey answered, his voice thick with emotion. Ian could see Mickey’s tears rolling out from under the ear warmer, and it broke his heart.

“Mick, if I’m hurting you too bad, just say,” Ian finally said, breaking his Dom character, out of guilt and concern. “Naw, man. It ain’t that...I’m cool,” Mickey responded. Even with Mickey’s reassurance, Ian was done. He couldn’t bring himself to hurt Mickey any more than he already had, taking inventory of the collection of welts he had managed to amass across Mickey’s entire ass and upper thighs. He continued to massage Mickey’s package, bending the top part of his body down to rest next to Mickey. Ian licked Mickey’s sensitive neck spot lightly, Mickey moaning softly in response as a shy smile crept across his lips. Ian lifted the ear warmer from around Mickey’s head, kissing Mickey’s temple, then the corner of his eye, then whispering into his ear, “I love you, Mickey.” Ian managed to untie him from the bed and release his arms with one hand, while still stroking Mickey’s swollen cock with the other.

“Turn over,” Ian said, making his last demand on Mickey for the day. Mickey complied readily. Ian began a trail of kisses from Mickey’s ear, to his neck, to his sexy clavicle, down to his chest, taking a moment to suck and bite his nipples before progressing down his torso, flicking his tongue in and out of his navel a few times, then taking his stiff shaft into his mouth, moving up and down it vigorously, sucking hard and grazing him lightly with his teeth now and again, doing everything exactly to Mickey’s preference, which Ian knew so well. “Fuck, Gallagher!” Mickey yelled, his body rocking up off the bed in sheer ecstasy, “So fuckin’ good!”
Ian stopped abruptly, staring up from Mickey’s crotch seductively. “Will you do something for me, Mick?” Ian asked, maintaining eye contact, his eyelids heavy with lust. “Anything,” Mickey responded, his eyes subconsciously begging Ian for his release. “I want you to fuck me,” Ian breathed, “want you inside me.” “You got it!” Mickey answered huskily, more than happy to oblige his beautiful lover. He sat up, pulling Ian’s face to his own for a tender, lingering kiss that deepened into a hot, tongue-swirling, lip sucking display of passion, the couple feasting on one another as if they were having their last meal.

Mickey broke the kiss, spinning Ian around and pushing him down onto the bed before reaching for the lube in the nightstand drawer, then stowing it next to him on the bed. Mickey grabbed Ian around the waist with his left arm, pulling him up onto his knees, then spread his ass cheeks open, exposing his tightly puckered pink hole. Mickey flicked his tongue along its perimeter, Ian moaning softly as Mickey gently inserted a lubed up finger while continuing to lick around the edges. Mickey bent his finger slightly, lightly rubbing it against Ian’s swollen prostate gland, which brought louder, more zealous moaning from Ian. Mickey’s cock throbbed with anticipation. He patiently added a second finger, continuing to stroke Ian’s prostate, while also delving more deeply into Ian’s ass, taking his time and enjoying the view.

Ian was such a receptive bottom. He just needed to be touched, to be penetrated the right way, by someone who gave a shit, who wanted nothing more in the world than to please him. Mickey more than fit that description, taking great pains to slowly and methodically set Ian’s very soul on fire!

“Fuck me! Fuck me now, Mick!” Ian begged with everything he had, his cock so fucking gigantic that he was ready to jerk himself off, but held back in spite of himself, craving that wickedly perfect orgasm he knew Mickey was sure to deliver. “Please...Please...Please!” Ian pleaded as Mickey continued his slow, torturous ass play. Finally, Mickey couldn’t take one more word from Ian’s longing lips. He greased up his nearly-bursting cock and began his assent, pushing just the very tip of his penis past Ian’s first sphincter, the tightness driving him absolutely wild from the outset. With each subsequent stroke, he maneuvered himself in just a bit more, carefully adjusting his angle to coincide with Ian’s ecstatic moans, the sound of which threatened to send him over the edge each time. “Mickey...oh my God, fucking unbelievable...so fucking good,” Ian breathed, lost in the throes of passion, Mickey hitting him just right every time. Ian knew Ian was going to cum. He could feel it, and he could feel it washing up over himself at the same time. “Here we go, man,” he whispered into Ian’s ear as he quickened his pace ever so slightly, grabbing Ian’s dick, stroking it sturdily while rolling his hips against Ian’s buttocks, sliding his throbbing cock in and out of Ian expertly until he shot deep into Ian, just as Ian’s load spewed over his hand and onto the bed, amid the sweetest sounding moans ever to grace either man’s ears, falling freely from both sets of satisfied lips.

The couple collapsed onto the bed, completely and utterly spent, waves of pleasure still reverberating through their bodies as they kissed lightly, their love for one another unspoken, yet apparent. “Guess I’m not such a great Dom,” Ian said, out of the blue, after a long, comfortable silence. “If you really wanna know, you were fuckin’ badass!” Mickey said with a grin. “Kinda like your bossy side comin’ out in bed.” “But all those tears...” Ian said softly, a frown etched into his face. “Ian, I ain’t gonna lie. That shit was painful, but I been through much worse, and you know that. It just got to me, what you said,” Mickey explained. “What did I say?” Ian asked. “All that shit about me doubting your love and loyalty. You know, like I didn’t trust you. Ian, if I didn’t trust you, your ass would never have been able to tie me up. I fuckin’ trust you with my life. I love you! It fuckin’ broke me to know you questioned that, and I knew it was my fault,” Mickey said, choking back more tears.

“C’mere,” Ian said quietly, hugging Mickey’s head into his chest. “There will never be anyone but you, Mick. You’re it for me. You’re every fucking thing I ever wanted, and so much more than I ever expected when we first hooked up. You’re my goddamn Superman...and a fucking fantastic,
attentive lover. And I’m gonna spend the rest of our lives being the best fucking husband I can be to you, cuz you fucking deserve it!” Ian spoke sincerely from his heart, his voice cracking with emotion.

The husbands spent the rest of their night in bed, cuddling, kissing, ordering room service...loving each other, just the way each wanted and deserved to be loved.
Mandy and Manuel were up and out early, heading for the airport. Mandy’s excitement about going to L.A. was infectious, Manuel sharing in her enthusiasm, despite his feeling that he should be back in Boca, working to get the new factory up and running. He hoped that Mickey, Johnny and Jose would somehow be able to get the ball rolling without him, so he could pull everything together, once he was back.

Mickey and Ian were also up early, having crashed out for the night by 10 PM, from sheer exhaustion. Even with the short nap Ian had taken, the day had been harrowing, and Mickey was still fatiguing easily in general, as a result of his condition and treatments. The morning found them both energetic, however, and ready to take care of some pretty important business matters. Mickey was on the phone, his first cup of Milkovich brew in hand, making inquiries with machinery manufacturers, gathering information on pricing, timeframes for delivery and installation of all of the necessary equipment for the second factory, crunching numbers and texting with Johnny about the financial status of the company. He set up a noon conference call with Johnny and Jose, with a request in for Bigley also to participate, if at all possible.

Mickey was in his element, and Ian loved to watch. Mickey was a born negotiator, an excellent businessman, and hot as fuck with a pen in his mouth, which was its primary resting place when he wasn’t busy scrawling numbers across a page of his notebook.

As much as Ian enjoyed seeing Mickey doing his thing, he was hoping he would wrap it up for a while so they could get out and back before his conference call. They had other important business to attend to. Ian had started his morning off with a cup of Mickey’s brew, his passport paperwork, and also a legal document that he had faxed to him from Cogswell’s office. He actually had two sent, but only one pertained to him.

Once he had gotten to the point where he had done all he could do in the completion of the forms, he approached Mickey about going out. He knew he needed to be back for his call, and he was planning to give him his treatment after that, or even during, if Mickey would be agreeable. It was the last day the doctor had it ordered for him. Then he would be free of it for the weekend, his Monday appointment most likely involving bloodwork to determine whether the treatments had worked, were working or were no longer working. Ian wanted to believe they were done with this whole ordeal, but Mickey was still tiring very easily, which could just be a side effect of the treatment, but could also mean his red count was still low. No matter what the prognosis, Ian was extremely grateful to have Mickey back. He never wanted to be separated from him again, and he knew Mickey felt the same way. So, not surprisingly, that was precisely what he had decided to lead with, in order to get Mickey to run errands with him.

Ian waited for Mickey to end his conversation with one of the companies he was trying to squeeze for a rush delivery, then sprung it on him. “Mick, we have important papers to file today. I really need you with me,” he said, batting his eyelashes at him subtly. “When do you think you can take a break from all this?” he added, motioning toward his notebook and phone. “One more call?” Mickey said with a bright smile and loving gaze that let Ian know he preferred his company to any business conversation. “Sure,” Ian smiled back at him, happy that Mickey was so agreeable, no convincing needed.

Ian paged through all of the documents, then grabbed his phone to text Reesie, now that he had her number:

“Good Morning! I’m filing my papers to become a Milkovich today, and wondered if you had
decided on what to do about Mikhaila’s name.”

He sent it and waited, both for her response and for Mickey to finish his business so they could go and get back in time for his conference call. Mickey came first. “Ready?” he called out from the bathroom. “Yep!” Ian replied happily, grabbing the papers and wrapping his arm around Mickey’s shoulders. “Gotta be back before noon,” Mickey said in an all-business tone of voice. “Yeah, I know. Still taking you to eat though. You need to get your strength back,” Ian said protectively. “Okay, but let’s get the bullshit taken care of first, just in case we run out of time. We can always bring something back here to eat,” Mickey reasoned as they walked out the door and called the elevator. While they were waiting, Ian got a text from Reesie:

“I would love for Mikhaila to have her father’s name, but I want to be sure that is what he wants. I’d like to talk to him when he’s not off the rails in a jealous rage...lol. Is he available today?”

“I’ll let you handle this,” Ian said to Mickey, handing him his phone, the message open. Mickey read the message, then the one Ian had sent before it. “So, you’re gonna become Ian Milkovich today?” Mickey grinned up at Ian. “Well, it will be official, yes, but I’ve considered myself to be your family for a long time now,” Ian responded, pulling Mickey closer to him.

Mickey was so overcome with emotion at the thought of Ian taking this step, that he had to take a minute to collect himself before he could call Reesie, which was what he had decided to do. Once the elevator arrived, Mickey and Ian stepped in together, Ian’s arm still wrapped tightly around Mickey. “What does she need to do this?” Mickey asked Ian. “Her ID and Mikhaila’s birth certificate should do it,” Ian answered. Mickey hit ‘send’ and waited for Reesie to answer. Once she did, he was very direct, in typical Mickey fashion, “Meet us at the Social Security office in an hour. Bring Mikhaila’s birth certificate and your ID...Yes, I’m fuckin’ sure... And don’t eat anything. We’re takin’ you to lunch.”

Ian and Mickey headed to the nearest Post Office on foot to have Mickey’s passport made. This was a huge accomplishment for Ian. He was absolutely thrilled that Mickey could now go anywhere and everywhere with him, whenever they wanted. He couldn’t help but give Mickey a big kiss, in front of God and everybody, as soon as he saw it. Sure, some people stared, shook their heads and made comments under their breath, but Ian didn’t give a fuck! He and Mickey could now travel to fucking Timbuktu if they wanted, and he felt like celebrating with a kiss from his husband. Mickey might not have had the idea to start making out in the Post Office, but he certainly wasn’t going to deny Ian anything he wanted, especially after all that had happened the day before. In fact, if anything, Mickey felt that it gave him the opportunity to prove to Ian how much he trusted and loved him, and that he wanted the world to know.

The two left, arm in arm, headed for the Social Security office. When they arrived, Reesie was already there with Mikhaila, who was obviously not happy to be there at the moment, and was taking the opportunity to vocalize her displeasure at full volume. Reesie was bouncing her, rocking her, offering her a bottle—anything she could do to shut her up. “Whatsa matter, baby girl?” Mickey asked, reaching for her, cast and all. Mickey pulled her into his chest, consoling her in a soft, loving voice that made Ian and Reesie’s hearts melt. Mikhaila settled down, her eyelids getting heavy, as Mickey held her little head tightly to him, stroking her vibrant, red hair, which was beginning to grow in a bit thicker, the beginnings of tiny ringlets becoming apparent.

Mickey and Ian had already completed all of their paperwork, Ian bringing an official copy of their Marriage Certificate and his ID, so it was just a matter of Reesie doing the same, before everything could be submitted. There would be one hearing, regarding Mikhaila’s name change at a future date, but it would be nothing more than a formality, since both parents had now signed, giving their permission for the change. As for Ian’s name, he was given his new Social Security card on the spot,
and told to use it to update his ID. Ian decided to leave the ID update for another day, since they were pressed for time, and also because, most likely, he would be getting an ID in Mexico, once they became citizens, something Mickey had said, all along, that he wanted to do, if he ended up somehow being able to clear his name. For now, it was more than enough to have, in his possession, a Social Security card that read, ‘Ian Clayton Milkovich’.

This time it was Mickey who initiated a big, public display of affection, after which he said, “Now I’m gonna take the Milkovich Family to lunch. Reesie, what’s the name of that place you always used to talk about?” “RPM Italian,” Reesie answered. “Kinda pricey though,” she warned. “Hey! Today is a very special day,” Mickey said, kissing Mikhaila on the top of her head. “And it’s not like we’re gonna get to see you guys everyday, so let’s just do it!”

They were the first table for lunch, arriving just after the restaurant opened, and were able to order quickly, following some of Reesie’s recommendations from the menu. Ian tried the Lobster Ravioli, which Reesie had also ordered, Mickey sticking to the traditional Cheese Ravioli. They ordered a blush wine, to go with both meals, and chose a family-style Caesar Salad to share.

As they sat, toasting the accomplishments of the morning, sipping wine and eating their salads, Reesie mentioned an upcoming job interview at a nursing home in Southside. Mickey and Ian both expressed their disapproval, especially since it would force her to put Mikhaila in a daycare in that area, which was a scary thought, considering the quality of care available in that area in general. And options would be further limited to what a single mother working in the hood could likely afford. “Well, ya know, hospitals and doctor’s offices aren’t knocking doors down, looking for a prison nurse with a criminal record,” Reesie said, defending her decision to interview there. “Well, fuck it! You ain’t workin’ there! Besides, Mikhaila needs her mother at home with her. The business is doin’ good. Ian, how ’bout if we help Reesie with her expenses ‘til Mikhaila’s ready for school?” Mickey asked, smiling down at Mikhaila, who was now lying, asleep in her carrier, on the seat next to him. “Yeah, I think we could do that!” Ian said enthusiastically, despite Mickey having put him on the spot.

“Probably need to know what your bills come to each month,” Mickey said, thinking out loud. “How ’bout if we figure it out tomorrow? You bring your financial shit and we’ll order in for lunch,” Mickey suggested. “That sounds good, Mickey, but I want you both to know that I don’t expect anything.” Reesie said, looking a bit embarrassed. “Listen Reesie, after what you did for me...for us, there’s nothing we wouldn’t do for you,” Mickey responded, his voice brimming over with emotion. “Or for this little angel,” Ian added, kissing Mikhaila’s forehead and marveling at how quickly he was becoming emotionally attached to her. “Okay, it’s a date then,” Reesie agreed.

Once their meals arrived, the trio enjoyed their food and one another’s company immensely, all three agreeing that they had selected the perfect restaurant! They passed on dessert, since Mickey needed to get back in time for his conference call, but made a pact, promising to have a good dessert the next time they ate there together. They quickly said their goodbyes, reaffirming their plans for the next day before parting ways, Ian and Mickey walking briskly back to the Waldorf to make their time deadline.

As they neared the main entrance to the Waldorf, they passed a familiar-looking homeless man, sitting on the sidewalk, but he wasn’t begging, which Ian thought was strange, bringing it to Mickey’s attention. “Who gives a fuck?” Mickey said, waving Ian off. Mickey was clearly more concerned with getting up into the penthouse in time for his call. Ian dismissed the homeless guy, figuring maybe he knew him from Frank’s shelter, back in the day. He was far more concerned, at the moment, with how quickly Mickey was becoming fatigued, the color in his face draining, a cold sweat forming on his brow.
Ian managed to get Mickey upstairs rather quickly, thanks to some good timing with the elevator. Once they got in, Ian insisted that Mickey make his call from the bed, and that he get Mickey’s IG treatment started right away. “You just look worn out, and I’m worried,” Ian frowned as he looked into Mickey’s exhausted face and eyes, both of which had a grayish hue to them. “I think you overdid it today, Mick! Let’s get you situated here,” Ian said softly, unbuttoning the top three buttons on the new shirt Mickey was wearing. Ian already had the IG bag hanging, tubing and all, so it was quick and easy to get Mickey’s treatment started. Mickey was too tired to object, resting his phone on his stomach in anticipation of his conference call. Once Ian had Mickey’s treatment started, Mickey asked, “Ian, could you please bring my notebook in here? It’s on the desk in the main room. I’ll need it for the conference call.” Mickey was too tired to object, resting his phone on his stomach in anticipation of his conference call. Once Ian had Mickey’s treatment started, Mickey asked, “Ian, could you please bring my notebook in here? It’s on the desk in the main room. I’ll need it for the conference call.” “Of course,” Ian said with a warm smile, rushing off to grab it. “Here ya go, Mick!” Ian called out as he headed back into the bedroom with the notebook. “I’m gonna let you handle this call yourself. I have a few calls I’d like to make,” Ian explained, excusing himself after planting a soft kiss on Mickey’s temple, whispering “I love you, Mick,” as he did.

The conference call began with Johnny confirming the closing date on the new factory, adding that Ojos would be able to rent the building from the owner for the time leading up to the closing, thus enabling them to have the machinery up and running sooner, like Mickey and Manuel had hoped. The subject then turned to the need for a foreman at the new factory. Mickey requested that Johnny and Jose focus on the old factory since Manuel was planning to be back in Mexico by Sunday at the latest, and would be able to focus on the new factory, once he got there. Johnny mentioned that Bigley was supposed to be joining the call with some news, but he wasn’t sure when.

Not even a minute later, Bigley was calling in. “Bruno,” Mickey began, once he had joined the call. “Mickey! How are you and Ian doing?” he asked, never missing an opportunity to ask about his golden boy. “We’re great, Bruno! So glad you could join our call!” Mickey said appreciatively. “Yes, well, thanks to a recent business merger, I’m in a position to help Ojos out with some pretty heavy-hitting investors. Nearly the entire cost of the new factory can be covered by initial investments, but we have to make Ojos Azules a corporation, which needs to be done anyway, now that it has become so much larger. Cogswell will deal with the legalities of it all,” Bigley explained.

“Sounds like a big step that I don’t know anything about, but I trust you, Bruno. Trusting you to know what’s best. You have never let us down so far…” Mickey responded. “It is a big step, but a necessary one. It will also mean set salaries need to be determined for you and Manuel, as well as Ian and Mandy for their modeling. Cogswell will discuss with you and Manuel how many shares you intend to hold onto yourselves, versus how many you will be selling off to investors.”

“Okay, when is all of this happening?” Mickey asked. “I’d like to have you meet with one of Cogswell’s associates on Monday, if possible, but there’s something else I need to share with both you and Ian. And I’d like to do that, just the three of us, after this call, if that’s possible,” Bigley said seriously, in a softer voice than usual. “Should I be worried?” Mickey asked, his stomach dropping as he heard Bigley’s tone and request. “No, I’ll just call you and Ian back after we’re done here,” he assured Mickey.

The remainder of the conference call focused on the logistics of opening and operating the new factory, dividing up the orders between the two factories and, of course, the need for more employees. Jose and Johnny had really developed a solid working relationship in Mickey and Manuel’s absence. It was a relief to Mickey, knowing things were being handled so well on their end. He was still itching to get back, though, and got the feeling from Bigley’s cryptic request to talk with him and Ian together, alone, that it might be a while before he got his ass back to Mexico. The call ended with each party having a list of “next steps” to take, regarding the expansion of the company. Overall, Mickey was very pleased with all that had been accomplished in such a short period of time, and that seemed to be the consensus of all involved parties, although he planned to call Manuel later in the day to review all of the new developments with him.
“Yo, Ian!” Mickey yelled from the bed, unable to get up because of his treatment. Ian ran into their bedroom with a quickness that suggested he thought something might be wrong. “You okay, Mick?” he questioned, a look of worry plaguing his finely-chiseled face. “I’m fine,” Mickey said reassuringly. “Just wanted to let you know we’re gonna get a call from Bigley. Says he wants to talk to both of us...About what, I don’t have a clue,” Mickey finished.

Ian shrugged his shoulders, obviously preoccupied by something he’d been reading on his phone. “What’s up?” Mickey said casually, picking up on Ian’s lack of attention to what he had just said. “Uh...nothing,” Ian replied, abruptly closing his phone. Mickey shot him his ‘That’s bullshit’ look, getting ready to call him out on it. Before Mickey got the chance, Ian’s phone was lighting up with a call from Bigley. “Hello, Bruno,” Ian answered cheerily. “Hello, Ian!” Bruno said with his typical boisterous New York-style charm. “Mickey there with you?” he asked. “Yes,” Ian replied, smiling over at his sexy-as-fuck man, who, even in a state of complete exhaustion, was getting him hard, just looking at him.

“Good!” Bigley continued, “I wanted to let you both know that the individual responsible for the blackmail attempt, a former bellhop at the Waldorf, has been identified, and the Waldorf did press charges for Breaking and Entering. He was taken into custody, but then released on his own recognisance, pending his arraignment, which he didn’t show up for. The police are looking for him now. I just wanted you to know, in case either of you were to see him in your travels. The guy’s a loose canon! Who knows where he might be or what he could be up to?” Bigley explained, sounding, for the first time since Ian and Mickey had met him, like something was beyond his influence or control. It was unnerving. Bigley had basically been their ‘ace in the hole’ ever since he came into their lives. “That asshole from the elevator!” Ian yelled, looking over at Mickey. “So, what about the blackmail?” Ian asked. “Well, if you want to, you can talk to the police about pressing charges, but that might just cause unwanted publicity, if you know what I mean?” Bigley warned.

No! No fuckin’ way I’m pressin’ any charges! He’s out there somewhere! I’ll handle this my way!” Mickey growled, his anger flaring, much to Ian’s chagrin. “Chill out, Mick! I’m sure the police will find him,” Ian spoke calmly, in an attempt to settle Mickey down. The last thing he needed was Mickey ripping his treatment tube out again, especially since he seemed to really need it today, a concern he had intended to address with him before all this new shit hit the fan.

“The police were able to recover what they believe to be all copies of the photos, as well as the phone that they were taken on, so there should be no further blackmail threat,” Bigley assured them. “Okay, thanks for the heads up,” Ian said, anxious to end the call and tend to Mickey, his mood and his medical needs. “You are very welcome,” Bigley responded, adding, “I’ll be in touch,” before ending the call.

“I’m gonna kill that fuckin’ guy!” Mickey roared. “Is your ass sore?” Ian asked Mickey, desperately hoping to derail his rage before he completely lost control. “Fuck yeah, it is, why?” “And why is it sore?” Ian asked, trying not to smile. “Uh...cuz you beat the fuckin' daylights outta me yesterday!” Mickey answered. “What the fuck are you askin’ stupid questions for?” Mickey asked. “Just wondering if you know why I did that. Cuz if not, I’m gonna have to do it again today...and I don’t think you’d like it,” Ian threatened behind a thinly veiled smirk.

“You did it cuz you’re a sadistic fuck!” Mickey said with a grin that melted Ian on the spot. His plan was working. Mickey was starting to calm down a bit. “I did it because your outburst yesterday was dangerous, mostly to your health, but also to our marriage. A lot more dangerous than a sore ass. You could’ve ended up back in the hospital after what you pulled, which, by the way, still isn’t out of the question. I talked to your doctor. He wants you to continue your treatments over the weekend. He’ll check your bloodwork on Monday and, if there is anything out of the ordinary, he plans to put you back in the hospital, so I’d settle the fuck down, if I were you! Just relax, Mick! Let the cops
“Okay,” Mickey said softly, resigning himself to being bedridden for the remainder of the day. “Just get yourself nice and comfortable. I’m gonna heat up your lotion so I can give you a healing massage after your treatment,” Ian spoke tenderly, so in love with Mickey that there was nothing in the world he wouldn’t do for him. He just had to get him well. The responsibility of Mickey’s health weighed heavily upon Ian. He had high hopes that his anemia would reverse itself, but had done some research that concerned him, after seeing the way he had looked upon their return from their morning errands.

After squeezing some lotion out to heat over the candle, Ian lay down on the bed next to Mickey, staring into his beautiful face, each feature, sheer perfection in Ian’s eyes. He moved his head closer to Mickey’s, pressing his lips against his, a single tear rolling down his face as he contemplated life without this damaged, vulnerable, trainwreck of a man, who was also amazingly brilliant, compassionate and hard-working---the one he had fallen for all those years ago and had now pledged his life to. There was no way he would survive without him. ‘Mickey, please get well…’ Ian pleaded, over and over in his head as he kissed, hugged and touched the love of his life, relishing each and every moment as he prayed it would last forever.
Raging Bull

Ian awoke to the scent of spearmint, eucalyptus and Mickey, a heavenly combination that had him questioning whether he was actually awake, or even alive, for that matter. As the fragrance wafted into his nostrils, lulling him back to sleep, he dreamt of Mickey, dressed in the finest blue suit, standing between himself and Reesie, as they all witnessed the baptism of their beautiful daughter. She was absolutely gorgeous in her white Christening gown, contrasting with her bright red locks, her stunning crystal blue Mickey-eyes glistening. After the baptism, the priest handed Mikhaila to Reesie, but when Ian looked over to see her, she was gone---disappeared. Ian’s eyes flew open, his heart pounding, his mind racing. He sat up in the bed, calling out, “Mickey, where is she?”

Mickey woke with a start, his body physically coming up off the bed with a jolt, ready to fight or flee. “What!” Mickey yelled, looking around the room frantically. Ian, coming to the realization that he had been dreaming, replied, “Nothing. Nevermind. Bad dream.” Mickey turned toward Ian, rubbing his back gently with his left hand. “Sure you’re okay?” he whispered into Ian’s ear. “Yeah,” Ian answered, his breathing beginning to return to normal. “What was it about, if I can ask? The dream,” Mickey inquired, flipping around to look Ian in the eye. “It was weird. We were at Mikhaila’s Christening, when all of a sudden, she disappeared,” he explained. “Guess she’s just been on my mind a lot,” he said, smiling weakly. “Mine, too!” Mickey admitted. “Guess I’m gettin’ soft. Been thinkin’ about Yevgeni, too,” he added.

“Well, I was thinking about trying to see some of the family over this weekend, so maybe we could go to visit him,” Ian suggested. “I don’t know…” Mickey began. “Kinda complicated with Svet,” he finished. “Well, I don’t know if I told you, but I was visiting Yev pretty regularly for a while after I got back from the border…” Ian trailed off, not wanting to open that wound again. “I’m sure I could arrange a visit,” Ian said after a moment of silent thought. “I don’t know…maybe,” Mickey replied, his mind clearly recounting their goodbye at the border; Ian could see it in his eyes. Ian leaned in to kiss Mickey, assuring him between kisses, “Mick, I’m not going anywhere. I love you so fucking much.” Ian pulled Mickey’s body into his, continuing to kiss him passionately. The heat of one another’s bodies ignited a fire so hot, they couldn’t control themselves. “Ian…” Mickey moaned as Ian rubbed his own erection against Mickey’s. He stretched his arm out to grab for the lube on the nightstand, grasping it tightly in his hand as he maintained his liplock with Ian.

Mickey lubed Ian’s cock up, then his own asshole, Ian then taking over, prepping Mickey slowly, sensually, Mickey moaning in ecstatic anticipation. Ian pushed Mickey onto his back, pressing into a slow, erotically-charged kiss, pulling Mickey’s full lips, one at a time, into his mouth and sucking on them lightly, his fingers still expertly working at Mickey’s hole as he humped him, Mickey’s legs in the air, their rock-hard dicks stimulating one another, both men breathing hard already.

Ian pushed the backs of Mickey’s thighs downward, so the fronts met his chest, his fine ass exposed, ready and waiting for Ian’s grand entrance. “I’m gonna take my time, Mick,” Ian breathed huskily into Mickey’s ear. “Gonna make love to you, and you’re gonna feel how deeply I love you,” Ian said with a grin, as he slowly entered Mickey, teasing him with the very tip of his cock. “Ian…” Mickey moaned again, so caught up in it, that the rest of the world, outside of the two of them, ceased to exist for him. Ian increased his depth slightly with each painfully slow stroke, poking at Mickey’s prostate, filling him more and more, unintelligible moans streaming from Mickey’s engorged lips as Ian taunted him, still withholding the last inch or two of his massive manhood, despite his overwhelming desire to slam it into him, to the hilt.

This was more than just a fuck for Ian. It was an expression of his monumental love for Mickey, and he was determined to take his time, his own impatient urges be damned. Mickey was absolutely
beside himself, his body silently begging for more, Ian’s lush kisses stoking the fire that blazed
within him. “Fuck, Ian…” Mickey managed to say, amid the many ecstatic moans that now flowed
steadily from his sexy lips. Ian gazed down at Mickey’s tortured face, his electric blue eyes imploring
Ian to finish him. He sunk himself entirely, Mickey sighing heavily at the fullness, the painful
pleasure of Ian’s entire length rippling through him, Ian’s taut stomach massaging Mickey’s stiff shaft
with each stroke, their senses abuzz as they slowly sated each’s desire for the other, moving together,
moaning, writhing, edging ever closer to climax. “Mickey, I fucking love you and your sweet ass!”
flew from Ian’s mouth as Ian pressed deeply into Mickey for the last time, both men cumming with
great force and intensity.

“I love you, too, Ian Milkovich!” Mickey responded, after taking a moment to acknowledge reality
as it crept back into his world. Mickey was literally so far into his and Ian’s collective existence
during intense sessions like this one, that it took time for him to re-engage with the real world. Ian
seemed to know and enjoy this, prolonging them as much as possible. He loved being the only thing
in Mickey’s world, even if it was only temporary.

Mickey lay flat on the bed, his smile never waning, as if it were plastered on his face. “That good,
huh?” Ian chuckled. “Fuck yeah, man! Best fuck on the goddamn planet!” Mickey praised Ian, his
system still on overload after his colossal release. “You’re a fucking rock star, your damn self,” Ian
shot back at Mickey, a wide smile overtaking his breathtakingly handsome face. Ian had that post-
coital glow going on, and Mickey found it irresistible! “C’mere,” Mickey commanded, reaching for
Ian’s face. Ian moved closer, Mickey grabbing him for a soft, tender kiss that screamed, ‘I love you’.

The husbands lay peacefully in each other’s arms until they heard Ian’s alarm go off. “Time to get
up,” Mickey said, shutting the alarm off. “Reesie’s gonna be here soon, and we still have to shower
and order lunch.” “Let’s just order room service after she gets here,” Ian suggested. “It’ll be easier.
And I wanna get you started on your treatment as soon as she gets here with the immunoglobulin, get
it outta the way.” Mickey made his way over to the bathroom, starting the shower as he complained,
under his breath, about being stuck in bed half of his life. Mickey got in the shower, feeling a bit
light-headed. He leaned against the shower wall, taking a deep breath as Ian joined him. “You
okay?” Ian asked, reading Mickey’s body language. “Yeah, just feel a little light-headed. Guess I’m
not up to fuckin’ like that yet,” Mickey said with a slight smile. Ian instantly began washing Mickey
up, starting with his hair and progressing down his body. Mickey grinned as Ian neared his private
area, taking care to clean him thoroughly, front and back. Once he had finished with Mickey, Ian
started on himself, quickly soaping up and rinsing off, anxious to get Mickey out of the shower
before he fell or passed out. Ian didn’t say anything, but Mickey didn’t look well, and all he wanted
to do was to get him into bed and hooked up to his treatment. He helped Mickey out of the shower,
towel-dried his hair and body, then got him into his robe, before doing the same to himself. Ian knew
for sure now that Mickey was not himself because he would never allow himself to appear so
helpless, under normal circumstances.

Ian walked Mickey over to the bed and tucked him in. “Just relax,” he said softly, kissing Mickey’s
forehead lovingly. “I’m gonna order something from room service right now. Maybe you just need
food,” he added. “Anything special you want?” “I’ll have whatever you’re havin’,” Mickey replied
in little more than a whisper. “Text Reesie and see what she wants,” he suggested.

Reesie and Ian ended up deciding on pizza. She knew a place that delivered and was open early, so
she placed the order and headed over with Mickey’s IG, which she had picked up from the
pharmacy the night before. In the meantime, Ian threw on a new pair of sweats and a t-shirt, poured
Mickey some orange juice, and sat next to him on the bed, rubbing his back lightly. “I’m thinkin’ I
might need to talk to Johnny or Bigley about what we can afford for Mikhaila and Reesie each
month,” Mickey suggested. “What d’ya think?” “That would probably be best, but…” A loud,
repetitive knock on the door interrupted Ian’s thought.
“Must be Reesie and the baby. Guess her hands are full. Be right back,” Ian said in an effort to keep Mickey from getting out of bed. “Hurry up! He took the baby!!” Reesie yelled from outside the door. Ian ran to the door and opened it. “I tried calling you! C’mon, we gotta get to an ATM!” Reesie yelled as Ian opened the door. “Wait! Who took the baby? I screeched. “The pizza guy!” Reesie screamed, tears streaming down her pale, terrified face.

”By this time, Mickey was up, dressed and running toward the door. “Where the fuck did he go?” Mickey yelled as he grabbed his coat and ran out the door to call the elevator. “No, Mick! I got this! Get back in bed...please!” The elevator opened and all three parents rushed in. “Okay, so he wants $5,000. He said to drop it in the homeless man’s can on the corner of Walton and State, and he will tell me where to get her!!”

“Okay, so let’s think about this for a minute,” Ian began. “How do we know we’ll get Mikhaila back if we give this guy the money?” “Well, we definitely won’t get her if we don’t!” Reesie yelled. “Bullshit! I’ll handle this!” Mickey roared, running out the elevator door as soon as it opened, then the main door, heading in the direction of State Street. “Damn it!” Ian shouted, taking off after him, Reesie running as fast as she could, trying desperately to keep up.

Ian’s long stride quickly got him to the corner, where he found Mickey dragging the homeless guy into the alley. Ian watched as Mickey jacked him up against the building, a kitchen knife at his throat. “You’re gonna fuckin’ tell me where the baby is RIGHT THE FUCK NOW OR I’LL FUCKIN’ KILL YOU RIGHT FUCKIN’ HERE!!” “Mickey!!” Ian screamed at the top of his lungs. “Ian, please...just take care of Reesie. I got this,” Mickey said, before turning his attention back to the guy whose life he was currently threatening. “Look, how much was he gonna give you?” Mickey asked. “A hundred bucks,” the guy answered timidly. “Well, I fuckin’ hope you value your life more than a hundred bucks,” Mickey responded, “But I’m sure $150 would be better, now wouldn’t it?” “Yeah...Yeah,” the man said nervously. “Yo, Ian! You got any money?” Mickey asked, reaching for his wallet in his pants pocket. “Some,” Ian answered. “And how ‘bout you, Reesie?” “Yes, about $75, I think,” she replied.

“See,” Mickey said, turning back to the man, “we can pay you more, but you gotta tell us, man. Where does he have the baby? That’s my baby, and if anything happens to her, I’m comin’ after you, so if you know what’s good for you, you’ll tell me where he has her RIGHT THE FUCK NOW!” Mickey threatened again, pushing the knife more tightly to the man’s neck. “Okay! Okay!” the man responded, a puddle of piss forming at his feet. “He took her to an abandoned storefront in the Southside—the old Kash N Grab!” Mickey let him go, pushing him to the ground. “Better not be lyin’ or I’ll hunt you down and fuckin’ kill you! ...and don’t even think about tippin’ this asshole off, or you’re both dead!” Mickey spat nastily as he stowed the knife and headed back to the street. “If you’re tellin’ the truth, I’ll be back to pay ya,” he called over his shoulder. “Call an Uber! We’re goin’ to Kash N Grab!” he yelled to Ian and Reesie.

Within a minute, an Uber pulled up to the corner, and all three of them jumped in the backseat, Ian sandwiched between Mickey and Reesie. Mickey was extremely pale and had broken out in a cold sweat. “You okay, Mick?” Ian asked, looking extremely concerned. “I’ll be fine if we get Mikhaila back,” he responded. “Gonna fuckin’ kill this guy!” he bellowed, pounding his casted fist into his left hand. “No, Mick! Remember, this guy is expecting Reesie. He’ll think she paid and will probably just hand the baby over,” Ian reasoned. “Yeah, and I’m still gonna fuckin’ kill ‘em!” Mickey clarified. “Yeah, well, at least let Reesie go in and get Mikhaila before you do,” Ian said, recognizing that this wasn’t a battle he was going to win with Mickey.

The Uber pulled up and Mickey instantly went for his door handle. “No, Mickey! Please stay here!” Reesie pleaded. Mickey reluctantly agreed to wait in the car as Ian negotiated with the Uber driver to wait until they had finished their business there so they could be his next fare, heading back to the
As soon as Ian saw Reesie heading out of the Kash N Grab with Mikhaila in her carrier, he called 911, informing the operator of this guy’s whereabouts. Although he knew him only as ‘Dan’ the psycho bellhop, he provided enough background that the police would surely be able to determine who it was he was talking about. “He have a gun?” Mickey asked as Reesie got into the car with Mikhaila. “No, but he had a knife before. He held it up to Mikhaila’s face and threatened to cut her if I didn’t pay,” Reesie sobbed as she hugged Mikhaila tightly against her body.

“That’s it!” Mickey yelled, leaping out of the car as he watched Dan walk out the back of the Kash N Grab into the alley. Mickey ran down the side street, catching Dan from behind, halfway down the alley. “Listen Dan,” Mickey spoke in a menacing tone of voice as he grabbed him, covering his mouth with his left hand. “You fucked with the wrong girl! And the good news is---you’re gonna live to regret it. Wanna know the bad news?” Mickey asked, spinning him around and pinning him up against a brick building. “N...No,” Dan stammered. “Too fuckin’ bad!” Mickey screamed in his face, just before he punched him in the mouth with his left hand, following up with one from his right, the cast getting stuck in his teeth from the sheer force of the blow. Mickey yanked his cast free, then gut-punched him, once with each hand, knocking him to the ground, then kicking him in the ribs repeatedly until Ian came up behind him, yelling, “Enough! Enough! Let’s get the fuck outta here!” as he grabbed Mickey by the shoulders, turning him in the direction of the car. “The cops are coming for him. We don’t need to be here,” Ian explained as they approached the Uber.

Once Ian had Mickey safely back in the vehicle, he took a good look at him. He looked absolutely exhausted, and unwell. “Mick, we gotta get you back in bed and ready for your treatment. Wait...Where is the IG?” Ian asked, turning toward Reesie, who was still holding Reesie tightly to her. “I put it in the diaper bag,” she answered, trying to reach for it. “Give her to me,” Mickey said softly. Reesie handed Mikhaila over to Mickey, who instantly wrapped his arms securely around her, kissing the top of her head. “Daddy loves you, baby,” he whispered. Reesie pulled the IG bag out, handing it to Ian. “Thanks so much, Reesie!” he said appreciatively. “Mick really needs this,” he said, looking over at Mickey’s pale, sweaty face. “I can see that he is not well,” she whispered as she watched him holding his daughter, clearly a loving father.

“Wait! Stop!” Ian yelled to the driver, out of the blue. “It’s my brother!” he yelled. “Pull up!” he commanded. “Reesie, roll down the window!” Reesie complied, Ian yelling out, “Lip! It’s me---Ian!” Lip turned to look. “Ian! Where the fuck have you been?” Lip asked. “It’s a long story,” Ian replied. “Hey, we’re staying at the Waldorf! Wanna come and hang out?”

“I’m on my way to work, actually,” Lip responded. “But how about tomorrow? I’m off then, and I’d love to know what the fuck you’ve been up to.” “Yeah, sure, but how about a ride to work. At least we can talk a little,” Ian suggested. “Well, I…” “Get in!” Ian interrupted. “You can ride up front.”

“Where to?” the Uber driver asked, having become more than a little frustrated with all the changes. “Patsy’s Pies,” Lip answered. “So what’s goin’ on?” Lip asked, turning around to look at Ian, then catching sight of Mickey. “Hey Mick...Wait...Mickey?! When the fuck did you get out?” Lip asked. “It’s a long story, Lip,” Ian began. "Here are the highlights: Mickey’s conviction was reversed, Sammi is dead, I moved to Mexico with Mickey, we got married, and these two lovely ladies are Reesie, my half-sister by Clayton, and her daughter, Mikhaila, who is also Mickey’s daughter.” Lip looked confused and completely overwhelmed with all of that news hitting him at once. “Okay,” he began slowly, “I have so many questions, I might as well wait until tomorrow. I’m almost at work anyway,” Lip reasoned. “What’s your room number?” he asked. “We’re staying in the penthouse suite,” Ian answered. “Man, do I have a shitload of questions for you tomorrow,” Lip said. “Here it is. I’ll get out here,” he said to the driver, before handing him a tip and jumping out.
“Wow! Can you believe we ran into Lip, Mick?” Ian asked. “Oh, I think he fell asleep,” Reesie said, taking an also-napping Mikhaila from Mickey’s arms. “We gotta get these two some rest,” Ian remarked. “They’ve both been through a lot today,” he added. “Yes, we all have,” Reesie commented, running her fingers softly through Mikhaila’s hair. “I really owe you guys,” Reesie continued. “If it weren’t for you, I might not have gotten Mikhaila back!” she said emotionally, her eyes filling up with tears. “It was all Mickey,” Ian admitted. “He’s an absolute pitbull if anyone fucks with his family,” he added. “If I didn’t know him so well, I would have thought it would have been impossible for him to do what he did, considering how weak he was this morning. I had to help him stand in the shower! He had to have been going on pure adrenalin! I’m wondering if he’ll even be able to walk on his own to the elevator,” Ian finished.

“Are you serious?” Reesie asked incredulously. “Yes, Reesie, very serious...and I wish I wasn’t,” Ian said quietly, a look of anguish overtaking his face. “Please help me!” Ian begged. ”If anything happens to him…” Ian’s voice cracked as he broke down, sobbing uncontrollably as he took Mickey’s limp hand into his own. “He just needs rest---that’s all,” Ian said between sobs, trying his best to convince himself. “He just needs rest.”
“Stop here!” Ian said to the Uber driver, when they reached the corner of Walton and State. Ian jumped out to thank the homeless man who had helped them, stuffing all the money they had into his can, before jumping back into the Uber and attempting to wake Mickey in preparation for their ascent to the penthouse. “Mickey! Mickey!” Ian yelled, panicking when he couldn’t rouse him. “Reesie! What’s wrong with him?” Ian asked, tears beginning to well up in his frantic, green eyes. “Please take us to Chicago Memorial,” Reesie told the driver calmly, handing Mikhaila to Ian so she could check Mickey’s vitals. “His breathing is very rapid and shallow, Ian. And his heart rate is also rapid and thready. I think the anemia is back and may be affecting his kidney function again. This is serious. We need to get there quickly,” Reesie spoke fearfully, her voice wavering as she struggled to remain composed, for Ian’s sake, although she knew Ian understood all too well the severity of the situation, based on the information she had just shared with him.

In a matter of minutes, the Uber pulled up in front of the Emergency Room Entrance of Chicago Memorial, Ian jumping out to request assistance and a gurney. Two orderlies rushed out to the car and scooped Mickey, still unresponsive, up onto a gurney, wheeling him quickly into the hospital and immediately back to one of the treatment rooms.

Two nurses rushed in, administering IV fluids through his port and assessing his level of consciousness. One of them had to perform a sternal rub to get a response. Reesie and Ian gave them as much information as possible, asking that they also pull up the notes from his recent inpatient stay, which they quickly did, noting that he might need immunoglobulin. “Can you please get an order for some?” Reesie asked. “His doctor wants him to have it! I have a bag of it in my diaper bag that we were planning to give him at home, before he took a turn for the worse.

One of the nurses left immediately, in search of a doctor, the other remaining to ask questions. “Was there anything you think that might have caused this sudden decline today?” she began. “Well, he’s been weak for the past few days, not first thing in the morning, but after he’s been up a while,” Ian clarified. “But today, he was unusually active,” Reesie began. “Someone kidnapped our baby, and he went after him,” she explained. “Wow!” the nurse replied. “So he’s been under extreme stress today,” she reasoned.

“How was his energy level prior to the incident?” she asked. “Well, when we first woke up he had energy, wanted to have sex…you know, acting normal,” Ian offered, Reesie smiling awkwardly over at him, realizing that the nurse was probably really confused right about now, with Reesie holding Mickey’s baby and Ian talking about having sex with him. “It—it’s complicated,” Ian added, reading the look on the nurse’s face. “Anyway, by the time we got to the shower, you know—after—he could barely stand on his own,” Ian finished. “And that’s never happened before?” the nurse asked, for clarification. “Well, only one other time since he’s been sick,” Ian answered, Reesie shooting him another look, like, ‘Are you an animal in bed or what?’ Ian shook his head at Reesie, then looked back at the nurse, waiting for her next question. “And when was the last time he ate?” she asked. “Hasn’t eaten since yesterday,” he replied. “We were planning to eat, when everything happened with the baby.”

Just then a phlebotomist came in to draw blood for a CBC and Kidney Function test. “These should tell us a lot,” the nurse said, as she watched the blood being drawn from Mickey’s arm, his eyelids fluttering slightly for the split second it took for her to stick him. Mickey hated that kind of shit, so the fact that he didn’t even flinch, meant he was really down for the count. “Okay, doc says she
wants these results STAT, so we should know something soon. In the meantime, we’re gonna get him hooked up to the heart monitor, get the blood pressure cuff on him and keep an eye on his pulse,” the nurse said, gathering all of the necessary gadgets. “Need help?” Reesie offered. “I’m an R.N.,” she added. “And I’m an EMT,” Ian interjected. “Thanks, but you just relax and be here for him. I’ve got this,” she answered. “Says here the next of kin is Ian Gallagher. I’m assuming that’s you?” she asked. “Yes, I’m his husband, but my last name is officially Milkovich now, if you wanna update that,” Ian said with a smile. “Yes, we’ll get someone to update all of his info, once he is stable,” the nurse said with an official tone.

Ian sat on the edge of the gurney, holding Mickey’s hand, “I love you, Mick! I know you can hear me. I need you to get well. There’s so much I wanna do with you. Our life together has only just started. Please, Mickey! I love you so much…” Ian said softly, his voice trembling.

Reesie approached the other side of the bed, Mikhaila in her arms. “Mickey, thank you so much for saving Mikhaila’s life today! I will never be able to thank you enough! Already, you are so much better of a dad than mine ever was, and I love you for that, Mickey! Please get well. Mikhaila needs you!” Reesie expressed in a heartfelt manner, Ian looking on tenderly. He knew that in some unconventional way, Reesie loved Mickey, but it didn’t bother him. He was coming to accept the idea that his husband was so magnetic, people couldn’t help how they came to feel about him, himself included. As far as he was concerned, half the fucking world could love Mickey! As long as Mickey loved him and only him, that was all that mattered.

The doctor walked in, carrying a bag of Immunoglobulin in her hand. “I’m Dr. Simpson,” she said, offering her hand to both Ian and Reesie, who shook it, introducing themselves, and Mikhaila.

“Looks like Mickey has Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome or HUS. It is a complication of his earlier E. Coli infection that has, unfortunately, caused the beginnings of kidney failure. It appears that the IG treatments were helping at first, but stopped working as well, as time went on. Mickey will need round-the-clock IG treatments and, quite possibly, dialysis, until the kidneys begin to work properly again. I can send him home with the IG treatments, like before, once he is stable, but he will need to go for dialysis, if that becomes necessary. Since I see you both have medical training, you can collect and submit his bloodwork daily, once he gets home…”

“So, we will get him started on the IG right now and have him moved to the CCU ASAP,” she said, before asking, “Any other questions?” “Yes,” Reesie began, “What percentage of patients recover from this?” “It’s better than 50%, but children tend to do better than adults. But from what I just read in his chart, Mickey is a real fighter! He will need plenty of rest, love and support. It looks like he has the love and support, I have a feeling that convincing him to rest will be the biggest challenge,” she said with a smile. Ian and Reesie both nodded in agreement, knowing exactly how Mickey would be, once he started feeling even a tiny bit better. “We may have to tie him to the bed,” Reesie giggled as Dr. Simpson headed out of the room. Ian turned bright red, recalling their session from two days before. “Oh, sorry…” Reesie whispered, realizing maybe she had unintentionally stumbled onto something private, in making her joke. “It’s okay,” Ian replied, still blushing.

“We like what we like,” Mickey mumbled, a faint smile playing at his lips. “Mickey!” Ian yelled, exuding happiness from every pore of his body, his voice startling Mikhaila, who began to cry.
“Lemme see my little girl,” Mickey whispered faintly. Reesie lay Mikhaila between his left arm and his body, supporting her with her own hand. “Can’t see her!” he said a bit more loudly. Ian picked her up and held her in front of Mickey’s face, Mikhaila beginning to babble, “Da Da Da Da Da!” “She knows who her daddy is,” Ian sang to Mickey as he moved her through the air, as if she were dancing. Ian and Reesie were both beaming! And Mickey was as happy as he could be, considering he had just barely regained consciousness.

“Mickey, I love you so much! You need to get well…” Mickey interrupted Ian. “Heard you, Gallagher…love you too…know what I gotta do…gonna do it. Heard you, too, Reesie…Always gonna love and take care a you and Mikhaila,” he breathed, his eyes falling shut again. Ian tossed Mikhaila in the air, flipping her around to face him, then lightly tossing her in front of his face as he sang, “Mikh-ai-la!” with a big smile on his face. She giggled every time he did it, which made him smile even bigger. Mickey and Reesie watched as Mikhaila’s other dad bonded with her in his own special way. Ian knew he and Mickey would miss her, once they went back to Mexico, and he secretly hoped Reesie would eventually move there with Mikhaila, although he would never try to influence her that way. In his mind, his role would be to support that. Of course, Mickey might have other ideas, but now wasn’t the time to ask. He needed to focus on getting well.

A text came in on Mickey’s phone from Manuel:

“Flying out of LAX soon, headed for Mexico! Anxious to get things rolling at the new factory. When will you and Ian be coming?”

Ian saw the message come in, so he quickly handed Mikhaila off to Reesie, who sat her on Mickey’s chest, so he could see her again. He smiled brightly, his eyes lighting up as they took in the beauty of her round, little face and her tiny features that were just like his.

Ian took the opportunity to text Manuel back:

“Manuel, it’s Ian. Mickey’s in the hospital again. He needs to rest and can’t be handling any business right now. He would be very upset if he knew I sent this, so please keep it to yourself. It’s very important that he not be under any stress right now—he’s very sick. Hope your trip went well. Will catch up with you guys after you land.”

Manuel immediately texted back:

“Sick? Is he going to be okay? Sounds serious! Should we come back to Chicago?”

Ian thought for a moment, then responded:

“No, Mickey needs to know business is being handled, and he trusts you. Please take care of it for him. We will be back ASAP.”

Manuel sent one last text:

“Okay. Getting ready for take-off. Take care of our Mickey, PLEASE!!”

Ian responded briefly, shaking his head as he thought again about how many people just fell, through no fault of their own, head over heels for Mickey:

“You know I will…”
Mickey had just gotten settled in the CCU, and Reesie and Mikhaila were about to head home after what had become an extremely long day for all concerned, when Ian got a call from the police. They had called to inform him that they had Daniel Sanchez in custody, and would be needing statements from all witnesses in order to charge him with kidnapping. They said they would be sending a detective to the Waldorf to interview everyone, since they wanted to see if any staff or patrons had seen anything. When Ian told them of Mickey’s condition and that he was in the CCU, they, of course, said they would come to the hospital instead. Reesie agreed to stay and be interviewed there as well, despite the fact that Mikhaila was out of formula and officially down to her last diaper. Ian told her she could go first, then leave. Ian had also offered for her to stay at the Waldorf with him, since he would be alone until Mickey got out of the hospital, but since she didn’t have anything with her for the baby, she declined.

Ian was sitting at Mickey’s bedside, holding his hand, when Shawn, who was, once again, Mickey’s nurse, announced Detective Presby’s arrival. He walked in and introduced himself around the room, before asking, “Who’s first?“ “I am,” Reesie answered. “And you’re the victim’s mother, correct?” he asked. “Yes, sir,” Reesie replied. “Please state your full name, for the record,” Presby began. “Teresa Gallagher-Lewis.” “And your daughter’s name?” he continued. “Mikhaila Aleksandra Milkovich,” she said, smiling down at her beautiful, sleeping child as she took time to spell her name for the detective.

“And, Ms. Lewis, where were you when you first came into contact with the suspect?” he asked. “I was walking into the Waldorf, on my way to visit Mickey and Ian, when this pizza guy walked up behind me. He told the front desk he had an order for Milkovich, so I told him I was going to see them and could take the pizza with me. He went to hand me the pizza, so I set Mikhaila and my diaper bag down, so I could consolidate things to carry the pizza. As soon as he handed me the pizza, he grabbed Mikhaila’s carrier, telling me that I would have to pay the homeless guy on the corner of Walton and State $5,000 if I wanted my kid back alive. And he held a knife to her face!” Reesie recounted tearfully.

“And is that the first time you had ever seen Daniel Sanchez?” “No, actually, now that I think about it, I think I rode the elevator at the Waldorf with him before, but I didn’t recognize him in the pizza delivery uniform. I realized it later, when I went to get my daughter back from him in Southside,” she reasoned. “So, what did you do next?” Presby asked. “I tried to call Ian, but he didn’t answer, so I took the elevator up to get Ian and Mickey. I wanted them to help me get the money for this guy before he hurt my daughter,” Reesie explained. “Why didn’t you just call the police?” Presby asked. “He said he would kill the baby if I got the police involved,” she answered.

“Oh, so you got Ian and Mickey. How did you guys know he had the baby at the old Kash N Grab?” Presby asked, a bit more curiosity apparent in his voice at this point. “Mickey ran ahead and talked to the homeless guy that was begging on the corner of Walden and State. He’s the one I was supposed to pay, but Mickey got him to tell us where he took the baby on the promise that we would bring him the money afterward,” Reesie said matter-of-factly. “So this guy just offered up the information that easily?” he asked. “I guess. You’ll have to ask Mickey. He got there before I did. He ran really fast,” she clarified. “This guy?” Presby asked incredulously, pointing at Mickey, who was lying in a hospital bed, semi-conscious, connected to just about every machine available in the CCU. “Yeah, he did everything humanly possible to get our little girl back, even though he is very ill,” she confirmed, looking over at Mickey’s motionless form with great reverence.

“So Mickey got information that Mikhaila was being held at the Kash N Grab and you went there?”
he asked. “Yes, I went in and said we paid the guy, so he gave Mikhaila to me and I walked out to the Uber,” Reesie recalled. “And then what?” he asked. “Then we got back in the Uber, heading for the Waldorf, but when we noticed how sick Mickey was, we decided to bring him here instead,” Reesie said, concluding her account of the whole ordeal.

“Okay,” Presby sighed, “Ian, I’d like to talk to you next,” he called over to Ian, who was still sitting bedside with Mickey, holding his hand. “Okay, Ian said, getting up from the bed, putting Mickey’s hand down next to his body, where he had been sitting, then kissing Mickey’s forehead lightly before walking over to the detective. “Ian, we’re gonna get going,” Reesie said, picking up her diaper bag, then the baby carrier. “Okay, be safe,” Ian said, hugging her into him. “Text me when you get home, so I know you guys are okay,” he added. “Actually, given the circumstances, I’d like to offer a police escort home, if you’re interested,” Presby offered. “Yes, please,” Ian answered for Reesie, cutting off her objections. “Please, Reesie. We’ve had enough worry for one day. Please just go with the police,” Ian pleaded. “Okay,” she finally agreed.

Presby called for a squad car to pick her up. “He’ll be here in five minutes,” he told Reesie. “Thank you,” she replied, heading for the elevator. “I still want a text when you guys get home,” Ian said again.

“Okay, please state your full name for the record,” Presby began with Ian. “Ian Clayton Milkovich,” he answered. “What is your relationship to the victim?” Presby asked. “Well, it’s...uh...she's my...uh...technically, she's my niece, but she's also my daughter, by marriage,” Ian did his best to explain. Presby didn't miss a beat. “And can you tell me when you first saw Daniel Sanchez?” he questioned. “Yes, I’ve been in the elevator with him multiple times at the Waldorf. He was a bellhop, and he was always asking me a bunch of overly personal questions that had nothing to do with my stay there,” Ian explained. “And did you ever report him?” Presby asked. “I told Mr. Bigley about it, since he’s the one who is leasing the penthouse,” Ian responded. “And earlier today, when did you first see Sanchez?” Presby continued. “After Reesie came out of the Kash and Grab with Mikhaila, I saw him go out the back door there. That’s when I called the police,” Ian recalled. “At any time, did you assault Sanchez?” Presby inquired. “No, sir. I never even got out of the car,” Ian answered. “Well, someone did,” Presby commented. “The guy was in pretty bad shape when our guys picked him up. Said you beat him,” he finished. “I wish I had, believe me, but no, I didn’t,” Ian insisted. “Reesie and the baby got in the car and we left.”

“Okay, then, did you witness anything else that might be helpful to making this charge stick?” Presby asked. “No, sir,” Ian replied. Then I have just a few questions for Mickey, if he’s able to answer,” Presby said with a question in his voice. “I can answer your questions,” Mickey said weakly. “Alright then, state your full name for the record,” he began. “Mikhailo Aleksandr Milkovich,” Mickey breathed. “Oh, so you and Ian are...” “Married,” Mickey interrupted, “and both Milkoviches,” he added. “Okay, and you are the victim's biological father?” Presby asked. “Yep,” Mickey replied, nodding. “Alright, so describe your involvement in today’s events. We will try to keep this brief, since I know you are not well,” Presby said kindly.

“Thank you,” Mickey began, “I ran from the Waldorf to the corner to talk to the homeless man who knew where Mikhaila was being held. I convinced him to tell us where she was, and then we went to get her. Reesie went into the Kash N Grab and came out pretty quick with Mikhaila. Then I saw that Daniel dude slippin’ out the back, so I chased him down and...” “No, you didn’t, Mick. You were too sick to do that,” Ian jumped in, wanting to protect him from having any charges pressed against him. “He--He’s confused, I think,” Ian stammered.

“Well, if someone took my baby daughter, I might very well have gone after the guy, so I understand if you did do something to Sanchez, but, as your husband points out, you are very ill, and it is unlikely that you could have inflicted the damage on this guy, in your condition. That’s why I
thought it was him,” Presby said, looking over at Ian, then down at Mickey.

“He plannin’ to press charges against me?” Mickey asked. “Well, if he does, it would be tough to convict a father whose child was kidnapped, who didn’t inflict any permanent damage, but I can’t really answer as to what he might do. Listen, I’m just gonna note that all three witnesses deny any physical contact with Sanchez. Anyone who would steal a baby and threaten harm deserves whatever they get,” he said. “Of course, that’s off the record,” he added, “Oh, and I didn’t see the teeth marks in that cast, but it sure looks like you could use a new one,” Presby chuckled, winking at Mickey as he turned to walk out of his room.

“Damn! That’s twice the cops have just let me off,” Mickey commented, after Presby left. “Yep, guess you’re luck is changing,” Ian said with a smile. “Now that that’s over, how about if you get some food and then you get some sleep. Gotta get you better so you can get the fuck outta this place. I want you with me,” Ian lamented. “I’m hungry, too, so I’m gonna check with Shawn to see if I can bring something up for both of us from the cafeteria,” Ian said as he walked out of the room to find Shawn.

Ian was gone for a while, so Mickey had dozed off and was fast asleep by the time he returned, carrying take out from RPM Italian. He quietly unpacked the bags of food, trying his best not to disturb Mickey. He looked so peaceful, sleeping so soundly, not a care in the world. ‘God, I love this man!’ Ian thought to himself as he stared over at him, drinking in his overwhelming beauty with his eyes. Just then, as if on cue, Mickey’s eyes fluttered open, his dark lashes batting as he blinked in an attempt to adjust to the bright light in the room.

Ian ran over and shut the lights off, then began serving their meals on the provided carryout trays. He had ordered a double order of angel hair with meatballs and spicy Sicilian sauce, something he knew both he and Mickey would enjoy. He also got each of them a liter bottle of Coke, which he decided to pour into cups, thinking that would make it easier for Mickey to drink.

“Hey, sleepy face,” Ian whispered, bending down to kiss Mickey’s luscious lips. “Mmmmm,” he hummed as he lingered on Mickey’s mouth, longing for more, but realizing Mickey’s limits currently. “Brought you some good Italian from RPMs,” Ian began, still planting kisses on Mickey’s receptive lips, between sentences. “And Bigley called. He seemed a little bummed that we didn’t call him about the kidnapping, but I explained how everything happened so fast, and also that you had gotten really sick,” Ian finished, resorting to a longer kiss, before continuing with the second half of his story.

“So I think he understood, but is still worried about you. He said for us not to worry about the Meet and Greets for now. He wants you well, and so do I,” Ian said. “So that’s what we’re doing, Mick. Nothing—until you’re back to one hundred percent,” Ian kissed him again, this time pulling playfully at Mickey’s lower lip with his teeth. “So I hope you’re ready to be doted on, to have your every whim attended to, and for me to be at your beckon call—at all times,” Ian breathed between kisses, the kind that gave Mickey a raging hard-on—and Ian, too, for that matter. “Damn, Gallagher—stop! Not the time or the place—although I wish the fuck it was,” he said, rubbing his junk momentarily.

“Okay, then—let’s eat!” Ian announced with great excitement, as he finished preparing their plates, and raised Mickey’s head enough for him to eat and drink. The couple enjoyed their meal together, Mickey still weak, but obviously responding to his treatment, as well as to his husband’s love and care, which knew no bounds. “Ian, just wanna say thanks—for everything you’re doin’ here! And for bein’ so good to Mikhaila, and me. When all this went down today, all I could think of was our little family, and how much it all means to me. Don’t know what I’d a done if somethin’ happened to her…” his voice trailed off as he drifted back to sleep. “Goodnight, Mick,” Ian said, kissing him softly, “I love you.”
Ian waited until he felt sure Mickey was sleeping deeply before leaving for the Waldorf. He was absolutely exhausted and couldn’t get any rest in the hospital bed next to Mickey. He asked Shawn to call him with any change, no matter how small, and called an Uber. He was not looking forward to being alone in the penthouse, but as tired as he was, he figured it was his best option.

When he got in, the penthouse felt a little chilly. Even with the bed covers over him, he couldn’t get comfortable. He was so used to having Mickey’s body heat to keep him warm, it was no wonder the bed felt so cold. He got up to look for something to sleep in, settling on one of Mickey’s new long-sleeved Henleys, which he had worn the day before and still bore the absolutely divine scent of Mickey. Ian inhaled deeply as he pulled the shirt over his head, Mickey’s smell filling his soul with a peaceful calm that put him to sleep in minutes.

Ian had slept long, waking up, completely disoriented, to the ringing of his phone. He fumbled frantically for it, fearful that something may have gone wrong with Mickey. The phone number on the screen looked familiar, but he couldn’t remember who it belonged to. This had been a problem ever since Bigley had wiped his phone of all contacts, messages, photos---pretty much everything. He answered, not knowing what to expect. “Ian, what’s up?” Lip’s voice came through the phone, immediately putting him at ease. “A lot, man. So much for us to catch up on, but…” Ian paused, trying to find a tactful way to cancel the plans for the day. “Well, no better time than the present! I’m in the lobby here, but they want you to call down to say it’s okay for me to come up. Guess this is because of the kidnapping?” Lip explained. “Okay, I’ll call,” Ian responded, deciding it would be rude to cancel with Lip already in the lobby.

Ian called the front desk, giving them the go ahead to send Lip upstairs. He threw on a pair of sweats and put some coffee on. After a few minutes, there was a knock at the door, Ian rushing over to let Lip in. “Hey!” Ian called out, throwing his arms around Lip. “Wow! This place is really something!” Lip remarked as he took in his plush surroundings. “How the hell did you end up staying here?” he asked. “That’s part of a very long story,” Ian began. “You got time?” he asked. “All the time in the world,” Lip responded with a smile. “Can I smoke in here?” he asked. “Sure,” Ian answered, walking to the kitchen to get some coffee. “Coffee?” he offered. “Hell, yeah,” Lip said with a smile.

The two brothers spent the better part of two hours getting caught up on each other’s lives, the majority of the time being spent on Ian’s, given the fact that his had changed so dramatically in such a short period of time. Everything from the trip to Mexico, reuniting with Mickey, saving Bigley’s grandson, the hurricane, his emergency medical work at the clinic, Mandy and Manuel, the surfboard business, the modeling, the marriage, prison, the baby, Mickey’s illness, the kidnapping—all of this was new to Lip and required plenty of time to explain. He was a great listener, genuinely interested to know about all of it. How could he not be? This was his brother, and he had one hell of a crazy story to tell.

Once he finished, and had answered all of Lip’s questions, Lip began to talk about his life and the lives of the rest of their family. Lip was working at Patsy’s and taking classes at the Community College, hoping to get to the point where he could return to Chicago Polytechnic. He was also attending AA meetings regularly and hadn’t had a drink since before Ian left Chicago. He looked well, and Ian was happy to hear what he was doing. He moved on to summarize the lives of the rest of the Gallagher clan—Carl was still in military school, Debbie was well on her way to becoming a certified welder, Fiona was getting more into real estate and Liam was going to a fancy school, thanks to some unusually, out-of-character, father-like behavior Frank had exhibited one day. Other than that, Frank was still Frank and couldn’t be counted on to be anything more.
After Lip finished his summary, Ian asked, “What about Svetlana? How’s Yevgeni?” “Svetlana is still running the Alibi, and Yevgeni is fine,” Lip answered. “Think she’d let me visit with him, maybe take him to see Mickey?” Ian asked. “I don’t know about Yev seeing Mickey. Svet kinda talks shit on him for skipping out on them and not sending her a penny to help support Yev,” Lip responded. “Well, that could change, but I’ll leave that up to Mickey. He’s too sick to be concerning himself with anything but getting well at this point,” Ian said with a serious tone. “So, how sick is he?” Lip asked, not one for shying away from the difficult questions. “He has the beginnings of kidney failure because of his condition, which, like I told ya, he has because of having E. Coli poisoning in prison. So it’s pretty fucking serious. I’m hoping to bring him back here and continue his immunoglobulin treatments myself, but he needs to be stable before that can happen,” Ian explained, his eyes beginning to water as the reality of the situation fully hit him. The day before had been so crazy, and he was focused on so many different things, that the severity of Mickey’s condition, although he was aware of it, had not really sunk in.

“Ya know, I really need to get over to see him,” Ian said, thinking out loud. “Want me to go?” Lip asked. “No, I don’t want ya to go, but I’m gonna call the hospital and, if he’s up to it, would you consider going with me to see him?” Ian asked. “Sure,” Lip answered. Ian found the number for the CCU and hit ‘send’. He asked for Shawn, hoping to get some quick answers so he could get over there to see Mickey. They put him on hold and, while he was waiting, there was a knock on the door. “Can you see who that is?” Ian asked Lip. “Well, whoever it is doesn’t need your permission to come up here,” Lip commented, rolling his eyes. “Yeah, probably Reesie. I told her to stop by whenever...” Ian concluded, still waiting for Shawn to pick up.

Lip greeted Reesie at the door with, “Hello, Reesie! Remember Me? I’m Lip, your cousin.” To which she answered, “Nice to see you, Lip! You remember Mikhaila.” “Holy Shit!” Lip responded, after getting a good look at the baby. “That is definitely Mickey’s kid!” Lip laughed. “And you are definitely Ian’s sister,” he added, as he looked at Reesie more closely. “Wow!” he exclaimed, looking at Reesie, then Mikhaila, then over at Ian. “There’s always another Gallagher!” Ian chuckled. “They just come out of the woodwork,” he added.

“So, how did you and Mickey get to...uh...know each other?” Lip smirked, looking over at Ian, who was shaking his head. “Lip, it’s a long story and...” Ian began before Reesie stopped him, “It’s okay, Ian. I was a nurse in the prison infirmary and as Mickey came to spend more and more time in the infirmary with some pretty serious injuries, both Lucy, the other main infirmary nurse, and I became concerned for his long-term welfare, and became quite close with and invested in him as a result. As for how Mikhaila came to be, one day, when Mickey was recovering from surgery there, and was heavily medicated, he was having some pretty wicked nightmares, as he was prone to when on pain meds, I went in to try to calm him, and fell asleep next to him...we were close, but not the way you think. He was dreaming, something about Ian that was anything but nightmarish in nature, from what Mickey said, and well, that was the night Mikhaila was conceived. It was an accident; we were both essentially asleep when it started, but I wouldn’t change it for the world, now that we all have this beautiful child to love,” she finished, looking at her feet and blushing a bit.

“Okay,” Lip said with a grin, looking over at Ian to see his reaction to all of this. Obviously, he knew that Ian knew, but he doubted he’d ever heard her explain it that way before. Ian looked back at Lip, feeling pressure to say something. “Listen, I don’t expect you to understand,” Ian began, “but if there’s one thing I learned from being in prison, it’s that it’s a completely different world in there. Fucked up shit happens and people develop attachments. I only wish I had been there for Mickey when he was going through all this terrible shit. Reesie was there, and helped him get the fuck outta there! Cost her her job and her freedom. Now that’s someone who really gave a shit! Very rare in prison, trust me!” Ian said, walking over to hug Reesie. “Thank you for helping Mickey! I know ya did it cuz you care about him, and you did more for him than anyone in his family ever even did!
You’re amazing!” “Thanks, Ian,” Reesie said, wiping away tears as she spoke. Even after the time it took for Reesie to tell her story, Ian was still on hold, “This is ridiculous!” he yelled, ending his call to the hospital. I’ll call back in a few minutes.” “So, have you given any more thought to coming to stay with us for a while?” Ian asked Reesie. “I’m hoping Mickey will be getting out soon, and could use the help with all of his medical needs. Plus, it would give Mickey some time with Mikhaila before we leave for Mexico,” Ian suggested optimistically, not even entertaining the possibility of Mickey not recovering. “Thought about it. Wanna be sure that’s what Mickey wants first,” she responded.

Before he could say anything more, Ian’s phone rang. It was the hospital. He picked up, putting the phone on speaker, so Reesie could hear. It was Shawn, “Sorry, I couldn’t get to the phone before. Major problems with one of my patients—had me running for a while,” he explained. “I did want to let you know that Mickey is responding extremely well to the synthetic antibodies that the doctor switched him over to. They are pricy, but since Mr. Bigley continues to pay for anything not covered by insurance, he will be able to continue this treatment for as long as is necessary, which hopefully won’t be too much longer. This stuff seems to be working much better than the natural for him, which is common, and can reduce the length of treatment in many cases. His kidney function has rebounded, his red count is up and he’s feeling like a million bucks. Wants to come home NOW!” Shawn paused to take a breath.

“Wow, Shawn! This is great news! So when can I come to get him?” Ian asked, the happiest of smiles adorning his beautiful face. “Well, I’m pretty sure the doctor will want to keep him for one more night, just to be sure he maintains his numbers. I’ll know more later today. You planning to come in? He’s been asking about you all morning. I’m trying to get him a phone again. Put a call in, but haven’t heard back,” Shawn responded.

“Hell yeah, I’m coming in! And thanks for everything, Shawn,” Ian gushed, “I felt comfortable leaving last night because I knew you’d be there. I really appreciate the great care you take of Mickey.” “You’re welcome, Ian! It’s my pleasure! You two are my heroes! I hope one day to have a loving relationship like yours. You guys have something very special,” Shawn commented, catching Ian completely off-guard. “Well, thanks,” Ian said awkwardly. “Tell Mickey I’ll see him soon.” Ian ended the call, asking Lip and Reesie if they had eaten. Both indicated they were hungry, so he suggested they go pick something up and take it to the hospital to eat with Mickey.

They both agreed to go, Ian excusing himself to get a shower so he could look and smell fresh for his man. While he was showering, Reesie and Lip had time to talk, Mikhaila having fallen asleep on the couch next to Reesie. Lip spoke honestly about his drinking problem, his girl problems and growing up a Gallagher, Reesie, about her father, Clayton, growing up the only child of a single mother, and her decision to become a prison nurse. The two slipped into a very natural conversation, as if they had known each other forever, Lip having given up on his original quest to determine just what exactly there was between Reesie and Mickey. Lip could plainly see that she was no threat to Ian and Mickey’s relationship, although it was evident to Lip how much she cared for Mickey.

After hearing Mickey would not be home for another night, Ian opted to jerk off quickly in the shower, after thinking of Mickey all morning and struggling to keep his intermittent hard-on from being detected. As the warm water washed over his body, trickling down onto his private area, he grabbed for the soap, starting with his arms and torso, then working his way down. Until, finally, his huge hard-on was encircled by his slippery fist. He began pulling at it slowly, his eyes squeezed shut as he conjured up one of his favorite fantasies, which wasn’t actually a fantasy at all, but rather a memory of one of the best blow jobs Mickey had given him.

Although there were several that easily came to mind, the one that always got him off quickly when
he was jerking off and needed to cum fast, was the one Mickey gave him in the shower on the day he proposed. Everything about it was so fucking hot! The setting—their first time back inside their beach house after the hurricane, Mickey’s torturous ways—how he teased his whole body with his mouth before making his way to his throbbing cock, making Ian beg, and finally, the fact that right afterward, he agreed to be Mickey’s husband, ‘til death do us part’. The whole scenario just got Ian wildly aroused and, in less than a minute, literally, he was moaning Mickey’s name softly, so as not to be overheard, his dick spewing semen all over the shower wall.

“Damn, that was good!” he thought to himself as he finished up in the shower, shaving, washing his now thick head of hair, and cleaning up the mess he had made of himself and the shower, before getting out, toweling off, and selecting some clothes from his recent shopping spree with Mandy. He chose a new pair of blue Buffalo jeans and a rust-colored flannel that highlighted his beautifully wavy, copper locks. A small part of him liked the idea of being in Chicago for the late fall. It was cold, giving him the opportunity to dress differently, and to grow his hair in without being hot all the time.

Once he was satisfied with the way he looked for his man, he gathered up the troops and called an Uber, plotting out a takeout destination on the way to the hospital. Since it was still before noon and no one, except for maybe Mickey, had had breakfast, they decided on a place called Yolk, Ian ordering steak and eggs for himself and Mickey, desperately determined to get as much protein as possible into Mickey’s system to help him heal and produce red blood cells. He also ordered a cinnamon roll and coffee for Shawn. Realizing that CCU nurses seldom had time for a real lunch break, he figured maybe they could take a minute and have a bite with them. Reesie opted for steel cut oatmeal, while Lip went for a cheese omelette. Ian passed on the hassle of carrying drinks for himself and Mickey, thinking Shawn could hook them up with milk and juice, both of which Mickey should and would be drinking; Ian was going to make sure of it.

Just as they arrived at the hospital and were unloading themselves, Mikhaila and her belongings, and their breakfasts from the car, Ian’s phone rang. It was Mandy. He switched it over to vibrate mode, then answered. “Hey, Mands! What’s up?” he asked cheerily. “He’s doing well. I expect to be bringing him back to the Waldorf tomorrow...Well, no, not right away. He has to stay here for treatments for a while...I don’t know. Is everything okay?...Alright, well, I’m just getting to the hospital for a visit. I’ll call ya after...” Ian ended the call and pushed the elevator button for the 10th floor.

As soon as the elevator door opened, Ian rushed to Mickey’s room, more excited than ever to his husband’s handsome face. Lip and Reesie insisted that he go in alone first, to be sure Mickey was up for other visitors. As soon as Ian walked in, Mickey’s face lit up. “Ian!” he called out, absolutely beaming at the sight of him. “Hey, Mick! I missed you! That bed was cold as hell last night. Had to sleep in one of your shirts to stay warm,” Ian commented. “Oh yeah? That all you had to do, since I wasn’t there?” Mickey laughed, seeming to somehow know about Ian’s morning shower activities. Ian just grinned sheepishly, quickly changing the subject.

So, I didn’t come here alone today. Reesie, Mikhaila and Lip are with me, but they wanted to be sure you were okay with them visiting before they came in. “It’s fine. I feel good today. Although I wouldn’t mind having a few minutes alone with you later,” he said, raising an eyebrow and flashing a sexy smile. “Okay, and I hope you’re hungry,” Ian added. “Yeah, man. Almost time for lunch here. Why? You guys wanna order somethin’?” Mickey asked. “Already did,” Ian said, lifting the takeout bag up into Mickey’s view. “Come on in, guys,” Ian called out into the hallway. Suddenly Mickey’s room was abuzz with bags rattling, Mikhaila’s little voice making random sounds, and discussion of who got what. “I’ll be right back,” Ian spoke out loudly in order to be heard over all the hubbub.
Ian went to the nurse’s station, asking to see Shawn for an update on his husband. The unit clerk promised to send him in as soon as he finished up with another patient. Ian returned to Mickey’s room, Reesie and Lip having opened and begun eating their breakfasts as they talked about Ian and Reesie’s father and her experiences with him, as well as the visit that Lip and Ian had made to his house, after learning of Ian’s true paternity.

Meanwhile, Mickey sat quietly, waiting to eat with Ian. He walked over to Mickey’s tray table, opening their food and cutting the steak on Mickey’s tray first. He remembered how hard it was to cut food up in a hospital bed, and wanted to spare Mickey the public humiliation. “Steak and eggs!” Mickey said with enthusiasm. “Yep, lotsa protein to get you well,” Ian responded, feeding Mickey a bite of his steak. “Mmmmmm,” Mickey hummed, his mouth too full to get any words out. “Glad you like it, Mick,” Ian said, taking a bite of his own steak. Ian stared across the tray table into Mickey’s eyes, as he sat below it on the bed, facing him. What a sight! Mickey was eating! His color looked amazing! And he was smiling, all the way up to his eyes, which crinkled around the edges as he did, in the sexiest of ways.

“Fuck, I love you!” Mickey said to Ian, after swallowing his first bite of steak. Mickey had just said what was about to come out of Ian’s mouth, and Ian was overtaken by emotion. He rolled the tray table to the side, throwing his arms around Mickey and kissing him ravenously, in a way that he usually reserved for times when they were alone, and with good reason! This kiss was basically the prelude to an intense lovemaking session, and anyone who saw, which now included Lip, Reesie, and Shawn, who had just walked in, could sense the sexual tension immediately, making for an uncomfortable situation.

“Fuck, Ian! You’re doin’ it again,” Mickey whispered, half annoyed, but still sporting a slight smile, after breaking the kiss and pressing down on the tent he was making with his gown. “You wanted to see me, Ian?” Shawn asked uncomfortably, averting his eyes to avoid getting a second awkward look at Mickey’s gown-shrouded woody. “Yeah, brought you this,” he said, still blushing in response to what Shawn had walked in on. He handed the coffee and cinnamon roll to Shawn. “Can you stay and eat with us?” he asked, still blushing in response to what Shawn had walked in on. “Sounds good! Thanks!” Shawn responded.

Shawn left the room and returned with a pile of milk and juice cartons, which were accepted with gratitude. The group enjoyed their breakfast-for-lunch together, talking about nursing, emergency medicine and what was going on in the Southside. What a combination! Shawn, of course, was called away, but not before having an opportunity to finish his breakfast and relax for a few minutes, which made Ian happy. Shawn had been absolutely fantastic to both he and Mickey throughout both of Mickey’s hospitalizations, and they both appreciated it.

As the afternoon wore on, Mikhaila became fussy, so Reesie opted to leave, in order to get her home for a nap, Lip opting to share part of the Uber ride with her. They said their goodbyes, Mikhaila getting hugs from both of her dads, and Reesie promising to text when they got in. Once the rest of Mickey’s company had gone, Shawn returned to hang a fresh bag of fluids and to check on Mickey’s vitals. “Everything looks great, Mick!” Shawn said, looking over a Ian reassuringly. “Do you need anything else right now?” he asked Mickey. Mickey shook his head no. Well then, I shouldn’t need to stop in, unless you call me, until dinner time. Your blood work has been done for today already, and your Intake and Output has been charted. This would be a great time for you to rest, Mickey, so I’m just gonna pull your curtain for you. Ian, you might be able to help him with that problem he was having earlier. A good massage can do wonders for stiffness,” he said with a naughty smile, being sure to make eye contact with both of them.

When Shawn left, the curtain was pulled, the lights were out, and the door to the room was closed,
the only light in the room shining in from the partially shaded window. Shawn had practically given Ian an engraved invitation to jerk Mickey off, which sounded great to Mickey; he was getting hard, just thinking about it. But Ian wanted to do more for Mickey. He recalled his fantasy from his own morning jacking off session. Yes, that’s what he was gonna do---give Mickey the mother of all blowjobs. He began by massaging Mickey’s erect rod with his right hand, his left hand lightly tickling his balls. Mickey, already aroused as hell, immediately began arcing his body up off the bed, giving Ian the opportunity to remove his gown and slip his left hand partially under Mickey’s ass. Ian now had the run of Mickey’s gorgeous body, his lips and tongue tracing its contours from neck to hips, slowly and meticulously, taking the opportunity to taste every square inch of him.

Mickey was breathing hard, holding back, as best he could, the moans that were threatening to escape from his throat. Ian pulled his face away from Mickey’s hipbones for just long enough to lick and suck on his long index finger, Mickey watching with his jaw dropped open. Then Ian resumed sucking along Mickey’s pelvic bones as he gradually pushed his index finger into Mickey’s ass. “Ian!” Mickey panted as he attempted to rub himself against Ian’s torso. “Nope,” Ian breathed, pulling his body just out of Mickey’s reach as he pushed his finger further up into Mickey.

At last, Ian took Mickey’s cock into his mouth, haltingly sliding his lips up and down it as he continued to finger his ass slowly. “Damn!” Mickey called out between the moans that were now flowing freely from his lips. Ian swiped over Mickey’s sensitive slit then swallowed up the full length of his shaft, drawing his cheeks in as he tightened his mouth’s grip on Mickey’s swollen manhood, pulling a higher-pitched hum from Mickey’s lips each time his teeth grazed his shaft. “Fuck, Gallagher! Gonna spray paint the back of your throat!” he whispered as he thrusted his hips upward, his cock pushing even further into Ian’s throat. “Mmmm Hmmm,” Ian hummed in acknowledgement, although he was well aware of what was about to happen. He could read Mickey’s body like a book. “Fuck! So fuckin’ intense, Gallagher!” Mickey screamed feverishly, as he shot his load down Ian’s throat, Ian swallowing Mickey’s sweetness with great satisfaction. Nothing made Ian feel better than to provide Mickey the ultimate in pleasure.

Ian stood up, moving quickly to grab a washcloth to lightly clean Mickey’s spent junk. There wasn’t really much of a mess, since Ian had swallowed it all, but he cleaned him up anyway, enjoying the opportunity to fondle Mickey’s body, just because...He had no motive at this point, other than to enjoy touching him. Just the feel of Mickey’s skin under his fingertips was like heaven to Ian. No words could ever describe the closeness, the connection he felt with Mickey, and it extended to each and every part of their bodies. “I love you so fucking much!” Ian breathed, bending down to kiss Mickey. “Move over,” Ian whispered into Mickey’s ear as he replaced his gown. Mickey did his best to slide his body to the right, leaving just enough room for Ian, who slid into bed next to Mickey. He rolled Mickey as far over as he could, without disturbing any of the machinery. He wrapped himself around him tightly, kissing his temple before laying his head down next to Mickey’s. Within minutes, they were both fast asleep, safe from the rest of the world in each other’s arms, absorbed in bliss, wanting for nothing.
Prelude To A Homecoming

Ian had woken up in the wee hours of the morning, carefully extricating himself from his entanglement with Mickey and his menagerie of tubes, wires, etc. Shawn must have just let them sleep through, which surprised Ian, although good rest was probably more important than anything, in terms of Mickey’s recovery.

Ian knew he needed to get back to the Waldorf to prepare for Mickey’s discharge. He wanted to be sure everything was set for him to be receiving his treatments round the clock, which meant finding a way to make everything more portable. He knew better than to think Mickey would lie in bed all day; believing otherwise would only set him up for failure. He also knew that Mickey would be itching to get his hands back into the business right away, so he planned to make that more convenient for him as well. Despite what the E.R. doc had said about Mickey not engaging in any activities, focusing only on getting well, Ian knew Mickey, and was certain that his return to some normalcy in terms of his day-to-day life would spur him on and help him to heal faster.

He intended to call Manuel as soon as possible to get a brief update on Ojos, and set up parameters for what Mickey would be able to do. Since he had fallen asleep, he never did get the chance to call Mandy back, so he planned to hopefully speak with both of them.

On his way out of the CCU, he asked about getting a rolling pole for Mickey’s fluids and treatment. He also asked about getting the necessary items for tracking his Intake and Output, knowing it would be a struggle to get Mickey to allow him to do this at home. He was really hoping Reesie would come to stay for awhile, helping him to lay down the law to Mickey, since he knew himself, and that he had a tendency to give in to Mickey, if he persisted in refusing to do something or arguing its validity. Ian had a tremendous weakness for Mickey and his bullshit, in general, and Mickey knew how to use everything the good Lord gave him, in order to win influence over Ian. If Mickey’s eyes showed the slightest hint of pain or unhappiness, Ian was done—and Mickey knew this.

Mickey woke early, immediately missing Ian, who had snuck out on him again. Despite waking up alone, he was feeling pretty positive, secure in the knowledge that, barring any severe setbacks, he would be headed back to the Waldorf with Ian by day’s end. He was hungry, his energy level was through the roof, and he couldn’t wait to get up out of bed. When the morning trays came, he asked for seconds, Shawn being more than happy to oblige him. Shawn had also scheduled a consult with an orthopedic surgeon to check on the healing progress of his hand. Mickey had told him the cast should be coming off, but his doctor was in Mexico, so Shawn, realizing that Mickey was a while away from being able to go home to Mexico, felt he should be seen in Chicago, and what better time to do it than when he was already in the hospital?

After Mickey had finished both of his breakfasts and had his blood taken, he was whisked away for x-rays of his hand. Once the x-rays were done, Mickey got the opportunity to hang out in a waiting area in a wheelchair, which was definitely a step up from having to be wheeled everywhere on a gurney. He was the life of the party in the waiting area, many of the patients being much older than he was. He had brought his cell phone with him, which had finally been sent up from the ER, and was showing off pictures of his family. Of course, Mikhaila’s pictures got the most attention, everyone who saw her agreeing that she was the spitting image of Mickey, only with red hair like her mom.

Before too long, Mickey was called into the casting room to see the orthopedic surgeon. “Hello, my name is Dr. McIntyre,” the doctor said, shaking Mickey’s hand, before hanging Mickey’s x-ray on the illuminated slab on the wall. He looked at it briefly, then spoke, “Well, Mick, how would you
feel about me removing your cast today?” “That would be great!” Mickey answered, without hesitation. “Everything looks to have healed up perfectly. Whomever performed your surgery did an exceptional job!” “Thanks!” Mickey said with a smile, and within minutes, his cast was gone, his hand and lower arm looking small and chalky underneath. Mickey rinsed his hand and arm in a deep sink, then dried it off. “So can I do anything I want now?” Mickey asked. “Within reason,” Dr. McIntyre answered. “You might want to gradually start to do things, since it has been immobilized for so long, give your muscles, tendons and ligaments a chance to rebound. Tell ya what, just don’t do anything crazy, and if you aren’t sure whether you should do something, you probably shouldn’t.” Mickey laughed, envisioning Ian putting handcuffs on him on his first night home.

Once Mickey got back up to the unit, he refused to get into his bed, buzzing for Shawn, who responded pretty quickly since it was unusual for Mickey to buzz for him. He thought something might be wrong. “What’s up, Mick?” he asked, running into the room. “I wanna get a shower and put my clothes on!” Mickey answered, a note of excitement in his voice. “Um, your doc hasn’t discharged you yet,” Shawn responded. “So what? Then I’ll be ready when he does,” Mickey argued, as he put a dazzling smile on his face. “I don’t know, Mick. I’ll see what I can do,” Shawn replied, feeling hard-pressed to say no to Mickey in general, and especially in light of all that Mickey had been through, but wanting to keep his ass covered at the same time. “Your doc should be making his rounds soon. We can ask him then. In the meantime, if you wanna stay in the wheelchair, that’s okay, as long as you’re on your treatment, which I see that you are,” Shawn finished. “Okay,” Mickey agreed, reaching for his phone. “Will you take a picture of my hand? I wanna send it to Ian,” he asked. “Sure,” Shawn replied, taking the phone from Mickey’s hand and snapping a picture for him.

Within seconds of Mickey sending the picture, Mickey’s phone was buzzing; it was Ian. “Hey, Mick! Your hand looks great! Does this mean you’re ready to come home?” Ian asked hopefully. “Not yet, but I’m expecting to see the doc soon,” he answered, exploding with his newfound optimism. “Okay, well I’m gonna finish up a few things here, then I’ll Uber over and wait for you, if you want,” Ian suggested. “At least wait til I see the doc. I’ll text you when he gets here,” Mickey responded, thinking he definitely wanted to be showered and dressed for Ian in general, and especially in light of all that Mickey had been through, but wanting to keep his ass covered at the same time. “Your doc should be making his rounds soon. We can ask him then. In the meantime, if you wanna stay in the wheelchair, that’s okay, as long as you’re on your treatment, which I see that you are,” Shawn finished. “Okay,” Mickey agreed, reaching for his phone. “Will you take a picture of my hand? I wanna send it to Ian,” he asked. “Sure,” Shawn replied, taking the phone from Mickey’s hand and snapping a picture for him.
nearby, just in case Mickey were to become dizzy or slip. He instructed him to lean against the wall, anticipating that he might still be weak.

Mickey emerged from the shower, unscathed, clean shaven, and smelling like heaven. He got dressed in his street clothes, a cornflower blue henley and True Religion jeans that Ian had bought him. He was absolutely drop-dead gorgeous, the color of the shirt accenting the beauty of Mickey’s tantalizing eyes. “Wow!” Shawn exclaimed, “You look like a new man, Mickey!” “I feel like one, too! Thanks for the soap, man,” Mickey grinned. “No problem!” Shawn said with a smile.

“You know you have to leave here in the wheelchair. I can’t let you walk,” Shawn added. “Yeah, I know. But I wanna walk over to the bed and back first, wanna see how I feel,” Mickey explained. “Okay, I’ll be right here, in case it’s too much,” Shawn answered, giving in to Mickey’s will. Mickey walked about the room briskly, an air of confidence about him that assured Shawn that he was truly recovering and getting stronger.

Mickey was still walking around when Ian walked in. “Damn, Mick! You look so...so good!” Ian said, completely in awe of Mickey’s appearance. “You’re...you’re the picture of health,” Ian continued as he walked toward Mickey, pulling him in for a hug and whispering in his ear, “And hot as fucking hell!” “Right back at ya!” Mickey replied, the two men kissing deeply, not giving a shit who saw.

Shawn cleared his throat, causing the couple to separate and look at him. “Uh...there are a few things I need to go over with you. Then you are free to go,” Shawn said awkwardly. “Ian, here is a list of instructions and a bag of take-home materials for Mickey’s home care. It includes everything you will need to track and administer, including his I&O supplies, blood and urine sampling kits, IG treatments and fluids. IG treatments are to be administered round-the-clock for the next three days. And here is a pole on wheels for you to hang his bags on, so he can move around freely. You will need to call and schedule an appointment to see the doctor in three days, or at least talk to him about whether or not continued IG treatment is needed. If you have any questions, please call me. I’d like to give you my cell phone number so that, even if I’m off, I will be available,” Shawn explained, taking a deep breath after finishing his spiel and putting his number into Miickey’s phone, then heading out the door to answer a page.

“Wait!” Ian called to him. “I have a question!” Shawn stopped and turned back, looking at Ian. “Does he have to go straight home to get on the IG treatment, or can I take this gorgeous guy out for lunch first?” he asked, eyeing Mickey up and down with a smirk. “I guess a quick lunch is okay,” Shawn responded. “I’m sure you two are anxious to get home anyway,” he added, winking at them both. “Yeah,” Ian smiled. “But sometimes I just love sitting across from him, staring into his beautiful eyes while he eats his favorite food. Fuck, he even makes eating look sexy!” Ian commented, making Mickey blush, his shy smile coming out.

“C’mon, let’s go,” Mickey said, grabbing the bag of supplies and sitting down in the wheelchair. Ian stepped behind it, pushing Mickey and the rolling pole out of his room and toward the elevator. Once they were in the elevator, Ian asked Mickey, “So, where do you wanna go?” “To be honest, I think I’d like to grab somethin’ and head back to the Waldorf. I think I need a power nap and then I’ll be ready to grab somethin’ else, Flrecrotch!” Mickey smiled, reaching back to rub Ian. “That okay with you?” he asked, massaging Ian’s crotch lightly with his newly freed hand. “Sounds perfect!” Ian answered, his eyes shining brightly as they went over every inch of Mickey’s body, feeling blessed to have Mickey out of the hospital and coming back to the Waldorf with him, not to mention horny as hell. There hadn’t been a single day since Ian ran into Mickey at the airport, that he didn’t thank his lucky stars for having Mickey back in his life. And Mickey felt that same way about Ian. “Can’t wait to get you home!” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear. Mickey grinned as the goosebumps rose over his entire body, “Mmmm Hmmmm.”.
Once Ian and Mickey were inside the Uber, Ian suggested that maybe they should just go shopping so they could do some cooking at the hotel over the next three days, while Mickey was getting his treatments. Mickey was up for it, but thought they should get a prepared lunch to take home, since they would most likely be famished by the time they finished at the store. Ian did a search and found a Whole Foods only a few blocks from the Waldorf. He asked the driver to drop them there and pick them up in 30 minutes, if he wasn’t busy.

The store was very large, and a bit overwhelming to Ian and Mickey, who had never been to a Whole Foods before. “Wow, big, huh?” Mickey said to Ian, raising his eyebrows at him. “You’re gonna find out how big it is,” Ian said with a chuckle and a flirty grin. “Just hold on to the cart,” Ian said, pushing a cart out in front of Mickey. “We’ll be outta here quick,” he assured him. “Okay, you want me to order some sandwiches for lunch?” Mickey asked, pointing over toward the deli. “Sure. If you wanna do that, I’ll get a second cart and start around the store to get the things I will need to cook with,” Ian reasoned. “Hope ya know, I’m gonna cook, too, so you better get some good stuff,” Mickey responded. “Okay, how about you be in charge of fruit and vegetables, since they are near the deli, and I’ll handle the rest? Text me when you’re done,” Ian suggested. “Sounds good,” Mickey said, turning his cart toward the deli, Ian watching his ass the whole way. ‘Damn!’ he thought to himself, quickly becoming quite distracted from the task at hand by the growing boner in his jeans.

“Fuck!” Ian said under his breath as he turned away, heading for the Meat department to pick up some ground meat for meatballs and some salmon. Protein is the name of the game when it comes to healing someone with anemia, so Ian was on a mission to buy as many high protein foods that Mickey loves, as possible, grabbing eggs and steak to add to his cart. Then he went for the pasta, choosing a few different varieties, all protein enriched, and some ingredients for sauce.

He made a quick sweep of the dairy aisle, picking up some milk, juice and cheese, before heading back to look for Mickey. On his way, he passed the greeting card section and decided to stop. After looking for a few brief seconds, he came across the perfect card for Mickey. It said, “I Am Truly Blessed” on the front. Then inside, there was a picture of two hands coming together to form a heart, with a sunset showing through the middle. Above the picture, it said, “You are my companion, comforter, and friend. I am so blessed to have and to hold you as my husband forever.” He grabbed the card and envelope, borrowing a pen from another customer to quickly sign the card, ‘Yours ‘Till Death Do Us Part, Love Always, Ian’, and write Mickey’s name on the envelope. He then tucked it under the pasta boxes in the cart, picked up a box of chocolate covered pretzels, and rushed over to meet Mickey, who had texted while he was filling out the card. They met up near the front of the fruit aisle, Mickey suggesting that Ian go through the line, while he checked to see if their Uber had waited or whether they needed to call for another one.

Ian quickly agreed and, while he was in line, Mickey shot over to the floral department and bought Ian a dozen red roses and a heart-shaped mylar balloon that read, ‘Through Thick and Thin,” fittingly enough. He then snuck outside to look for the Uber, which turned out to be there, waiting. He got in, sending a text to Ian, saying the Uber would pick him up at the door. While he waited in the car, Mickey borrowed a pen from the driver, filling out the small card for the flowers, writing, “Thanks for loving me thru everything and never giving up on me. I love you til death do us part--- Mickey.” Mickey stowed the flowers and balloon at his feet as he saw Ian coming out of the store with the cart. He opened the door to get out and help him, but the driver insisted on doing it, telling Mickey to just stay in the backseat and rest.
Once all the groceries were packed into the trunk, Ian got into the car next to Mickey, handing him the card he had gotten for him. “Got you somethin’, too,” Mickey said, pulling the flowers and balloon up from the floor and presenting them to Ian. “Awww,” Ian said, taking the flowers from Mickey’s hands and smelling them. “Wow, Mick! Never thought I’d see the day that I would get flowers from you…” Ian began, setting himself up to make a joke. Then he saw the card inside. He opened it and, within seconds, he was holding back the tears. This was how Mickey felt about him, how much he appreciated him. Mickey wasn’t the type of guy to say this kind of shit, but the fact that he took the time to write it on a card for Ian, well, it really touched his heart and he was emotional about it.

“Mickey…” he began, then took him into a warm embrace, stroking the back of Mickey’s neck lightly along his hairline, his fingers playing at the short strands of hair that had grown in since his last haircut. Ian was too wound up to even speak, so he held Mickey to him in silence, making every effort not to break down.

“Okay,” Mickey said, pulling back from Ian to look at the envelope Ian had handed him, along with the box of chocolate covered pretzels. “Gonna open this now,” Mickey said, smiling over at Ian, that genuine smile Mickey got on his face when he felt truly at ease and all was right in his world, as he read the card. Thanks, man,” Mickey said softly, before leaning in to kiss Ian’s lips lightly, lingering on them for an extra beat before hovering over them, so close that Ian could feel their warmth on his own, even though they weren’t even touching. Mickey backed away about another inch or two, still close enough that Ian could feel his breath on his lips.

Mickey touched the side of Ian’s face with his right hand, the feel of Ian’s skin under his newly unencumbered hand feeling like a reunion with a long-lost lover. He ran the backs of his fingers along Ian’s jawline, softly...slowly...tenderly, his sensitive fingers taking in the soft, warm, moist feel of Ian’s skin. Ian was absolutely breathless, his body reacting instantly to Mickey—-his closeness, his touch, his taste. Ian could make a meal of him alone. ‘No need for lunch today,’ he thought to himself as he pushed Mickey backward in his seat, wedging his head in the corner between the doorjamb and the backseat, then kissing him hard. “Driving me crazy!” he hissed into Mickey’s ear, before moving his mouth down over Mickey’s jawline and on down to the side of his neck, attacking Mickey’s sensitive spot with his teeth, then his tongue, swiping and swirling it there until Mickey started to moan. “That’s right. Now you know what you were doing to me, don’t ya, Mick?” he breathed as he continued to drive Mickey absolutely insane, sucking on his neck, then clavicle. “Mick, you look sooooo fucking good,” he breathed as he reached between Mickey’s legs to rub his crotch.

The car stopped and the driver cleared his throat, “Need help getting the groceries in?” he asked. “Uh...no thanks!” Ian answered, sitting up and reaching for the door handle on his side. The driver popped the trunk, Ian and Mickey both hopping out and grabbing their fair share of bags, Ian carefully pulling all of the hospital supplies out as well. A bellhop rushed out, offering his services, which Ian insisted they take him up on, despite Mickey’s objections. “You don’t need to be lugging on all this shit!” Ian yelled, grabbing the bags from Mickey’s hands and allowing the bellhop to pile them all onto his baggage cart.

The elevator arrived quickly, delivering Ian and Mickey to the penthouse in no time. The bellhop left the baggage cart behind, asking Ian and Mickey to leave it outside the door when they were finished with it. Ian thanked him, handing him a nice tip.

Once inside, Ian carried all of the food into the kitchen and began putting it away, calling to Mickey, “Go ahead and get settled into the bed. I’ll be right there with your lunch, and to get you set up with your treatment and fluids.” “Yeah, I was thinkin’, maybe I should nap after——you know, so I don’t have shit hangin’ off me while we’re tryina bang,” Mickey said matter-of-factly. “Aren’t we gonna
have lunch?” Ian asked. I was gonna give you a massage and…” “C’mere,” Mickey said in a low, husky voice, closing the gap between himself and Ian, then pressing himself against him as he began teasing Ian’s mouth with his tongue, eluding Ian each time he attempted to connect for a full-on kiss. Mickey loved to tease Ian, just as Ian did Mickey. It was part of their mating ritual. It wasn’t long before Mickey had Ian backed up against the refrigerator, their bodies grinding together lustfully as they made out passionately, their tongues sliding over one another wildly, yet familiar.

All of a sudden, Ian broke the kiss, bending down to bury his head into Mickey’s stomach, hoisting him up over his shoulder and carrying him into the bedroom. “Damn, Gallagher! A little notice would be nice!” Mickey exclaimed, grinning. “What would be the fun in that?” Ian retorted, throwing Mickey down onto the bed roughly. “Besides, this is my only chance to manhandle you, while you’re not a delicate fuckin’ flower, receiving a treatment,” Ian growled, pulling Mickey’s clothes off him so fast, Mickey didn’t know what was happening to him. “All nice and squeaky clean for me,” Ian mumbled as he spread Mickey’s legs, lifting them up over his head. “Oh and I got something new,” Ian said, smiling down at Mickey’s face before opening a jar of something sweet-smelling. Ian scooped a gob of it out of the jar, spreading it between Mickey’s ass cheeks. Ian had Mickey’s legs parted wide and his body basically bent in half, so his hole was there and ready for the taking. Ian began to lick around Mickey’s asshole, spreading the substance with his tongue as he did, then inserting his tongue into Mickey’s hole and swirling it. “Oh my fuck...Ian, what the fuck is that stuff?” Mickey asked, noticing how unbelievably great its texture felt, combined with Ian’s talented tongue. He felt so sensitive to every movement of Ian’s tongue, even noticing the slight trembles it made as it pressed its way into him. Ian continued, sticking his fingers into the jar, then tracing them over Mickey’s balls before sinking his index finger into Mickey’s ass. His finger slipped right in, like a hot knife through butter, despite how tight Mickey was. Mickey was panting hard, begging for a second finger and silently awaiting the feel of Ian’s huge cock slathered with this stuff as it entered him. He knew better than to try and rush Ian. He was taking his time now, gradually introducing the second finger between tongue insertions, while stroking his balls lightly with his other hand. “Oh fuck!” Mickey cried out, waves of pleasure rolling over his body. By the time Ian had a third finger in, Mickey’s breathing was ragged and he was beyond having the ability of intelligible speech, moaning in desperation, his body begging for Ian to take it completely.

Ian’s cock was so hard, he thought it might explode upon entry, especially as good as Mickey’s asshole was feeling on his fingers and tongue. “Ready?” Ian whispered as he stroked his cock with the sweet-smelling substance that had given Mickey such pleasure, noticing immediately how heavenly it felt, combined even just with his own touch. The thought alone of being inside Mickey with it made him want to to squirt right then and there.

“Gotta take this slow,” Ian said to Mickey, doing his best to distract himself during his initial entry in order to avoid a premature eruption. He slid himself partially in, moaning loudly at the feeling of extreme pleasure that instantly befell him. “Oh Mick, so fucking good,” he breathed as he easily pushed the rest of the way into Mickey, who was moaning and bouncing underneath him. Ian pulled back, redirecting himself at Mickey’s prostate and gliding over it, then stabbing at it, alternating with his mammoth cock over and over, Mickey’s moans increasing in volume and intensity until he began to quiver, his head rolling from side to side as he screamed out Ian’s name six times in rapid succession, throwing Ian over the edge with him, the couple toppling over the finish line together, breathlessly ecstatic and gnawing at each other’s lips.

“Mickey, oh my God!” Ian finally began, looking over at his sweat-bedazzled lover, whose gorgeous blue eyes were absolutely glowing. “You’re so fucking fine,” Ian finished. “Fuck! Lemme see that stuff,” Mickey said, pointing over at the jar of magic that had made his perfect lover even more perfect, if that was even possible. Ian handed him the jar. “Coconut Oil?” Mickey read with a puzzled look on his face. “This shit is natural?” he asked. “All natural,” Ian replied with a smile. “Great for cooking, too. And a whole bunch of other stuff.” “Oh yeah, well I like it for fuckin’!”
Mickey called out happily, as Ian got up to turn on the shower. “Make this quick, Mick. You gotta get on your treatment ASAP. In fact, I’ll come in and wash you up real quick,” Ian said with a wink. Mickey smiled and they got into the shower together, Ian doing as he said, washing both of them, head to toe.

Once they were dried off, he wrapped Mickey’s robe around him, then put his own on, and walked him over to the bed. He made sure to dry well all around the port before grabbing the supplies and getting Mickey’s treatment and fluids started.

After accomplishing that feat, he ran to the kitchen, fixing a lunch tray for the two of them and carrying it into the bedroom. “Lunch in bed for my warrior,” Ian said happily. “Warrior?” Mickey questioned. “Yeah, Mick! You’ve been fighting so hard your whole life, most recently FOR your life. You’re a warrior. I would want you on my side in any fight, and I want you by my side for the rest of my life. I love you,” Ian finished, holding half of a turkey sandwich up to Mickey’s mouth for him to take a bite. Mickey didn’t usually take well to being fed, but in the few times Ian had done it recently, he kind of enjoyed it, especially when he was feeling too weak to feed himself. Ian had his six and he knew it—through thick and thin. “I love you, too, Ian,” Mickey responded, once he had swallowed his first bite of food. “Through thick and thin,” he sighed, looking deeply into Ian’s captivating eyes. “Thick and thin.”
The Art of Massage

Once Ian and Mickey had finished their lunch, they were both feeling pretty worn out. Ian had been up, basically since the middle of the night, and, not only did Mickey wake up earlier than usual, but he had also had an extremely active morning for someone who had just gotten out of the CCU. There was nothing either of them wanted more than to spoon and nap.

Ian, however, refused to go to sleep until he gave Mickey his full body massage with his aromatherapy lotion. He was convinced that it had true healing powers, and wanted Mickey to have every advantage possible in his fight to overcome his illness. Being that Mickey was taking his treatment, however, he didn’t want him to lie on his chest, so he decided to give a frontal massage. Under normal circumstances, he would only opt for this position for massage if the goal was to ultimately have sex, but in this case, he was doing it out of necessity, and really didn’t want anything out of it, other than for Mickey to get better. In fact, he wanted to avoid going for a second round, at least until Mickey got some rest. The last thing he wanted was for Mickey to end up in the hospital. He didn’t even know if he was mentally strong enough to handle it again, the whole experience having been so emotionally draining. He needed Mickey well ASAP, and he needed him to stay that way!

“Mick, I know you wanna sleep, and I do too, but I really wanna give you this massage. All you have to do is lay there. I’ll do the rest,” Ian smiled lovingly at Mickey, a hint of concern showing on his angelic face. “Alright,” Mickey said, closing his eyes. “Top or bottom?” Ian asked, causing Mickey’s eyes to fly open abruptly. “Ain’t that a question for later?” Mickey asked, yawning. Ian laughed, “I meant, do you want me to start at the top or bottom of your body?” Mickey looked at Ian, shrugging his shoulders as best he could from a supine position. “Up to you,” he finally said, responding to Ian’s questioning look. “Okay then. That’s fine,” Ian said, sounding disappointed that Mickey hadn’t chosen. “Okay, bottom,” Mickey responded with a smirk. Ian smiled, sitting near the foot of the bed after setting the candle and warm lotion within his reach.

Ian took Mickey’s right foot into his hands, spreading the lotion over the entire foot—top and bottom, tracing between each of Mickey’s toes with his fingers, stopping briefly in each crevice to massage the foot just above it with his thumb. He then focused his efforts on the sole of his foot, pressing first into the ball of the foot firmly with both thumbs, moving them to cover the entire area, before advancing down the middle of his sole and on down to his heel, which he massaged with all four of his fingers. Mickey moaned softly, a contented smile spreading over his face. Ian repeated this same technique on his left foot, with the same results.

Ian slid his hands up over Mickey’s knees, one at a time, rubbing the calves out, using his thumbs and fingers alternately, moving both hands up and down Mickey’s lower leg expertly, as Mickey continued to endorse Ian’s talents as a masseur with his moans of pleasure and perpetual smile.

Ian then reached for some more lotion, spreading it over Mickey’s shins and calves, one at a time, rubbing the calves out, using his thumbs and fingers alternately, moving both hands up and down Mickey’s lower leg expertly, as Mickey continued to endorse Ian’s talents as a masseur with his moans of pleasure and perpetual smile.

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Ian slid his hands up over Mickey’s knees, one at a time, making his way to his thighs, which he massaged deeply, front and back, with his thumbs, relieving any lingering tightness in his hamstrings that may have resulted from his position during their morning romp. “Damn, Gallagher! You’re like a fuckin’ professional,” Mickey mumbled between satisfied moans and sighs. Ian grinned, looking down at his robe, just below his waist, where his fully erect cock was creating a serious protrusion. “Yeah, well, I think anyone would be this good, with the right motivation,” Ian laughed. “And what’s that?” Mickey asked. “Well, you’re laying there moaning like a fucking porn star, so of course I’m horny as fuck, and I’m getting as much mileage as possible outta this damn massage. I fucking love to touch you, Miick! You’re so fucking beautiful and sexy…” Ian trailed off as he
moved up from Mickey’s thighs to his lower abdomen, skipping over Mickey’s swelling cock, in
despite of himself. He rubbed his fingers in a circular motion, moving over Mickey’s entire abdomen,
believing that such a massage would stimulate organ function, and making a mental note to have
Mickey sit up at the end, so he could rub over his kidneys from the back.

By the time Ian had made his way up to Mickey’s chest, he was straddling his hips as he applied
pressure to each of Mickey’s pecs with his thumbs, rubbing in a deep, circular pattern, then working
his way out to his shoulders, which he massaged with the heels of his hands, pressing them outward
down his arms and hands, handling Mickey’s right hand gently, but not avoiding it since he wanted it
to heal, too.

Ian was proud of himself for having finished the massage without giving in to his tremendous desire
to pleasure Mickey. He knew Mickey wanted sleep and didn’t want to force anything. He did,
however, want to give him the choice. He moved down near the bottom of the bed, resting his head
on Mickey’s stomach, then looked up at him. “Now or later?” he breathed with a mischievous glint
in his eye. Ian was poised to take Mickey into his mouth and make him forget what planet he was on.
He just needed the go ahead. “Much as I’d love to, Ian, I’m so tired of being tied down to this shit,”
he began, motioning to his port and treatment bag, “I just wanna be free, so can we do somethin’
after the fuckin’ bag is empty? Can you please just unhook me for a while later? Please!” Mickey
said, a note of frustration in his voice. “Not really supposed to,” Ian began.

“But today was so fuckin’ nice!” Mickey interjected. “Well, I suppose it wouldn’t hurt, just for a little
bit,” Ian reasoned, caving to Mickey’s will once again. “But you gotta get a good nap,” he added.
“And we have something to discuss,” Ian finished. “What’s that?” Mickey asked, suddenly looking
uneasy. “No, Mick, it’s nothing to be worried about,” Ian said, reading the look on Mickey’s face.
“Well, ya should just fuckin’ tell me now, cuz I won’t sleep ‘til ya do,” Mickey sighed, clearly
aggravated by the timing Ian chose for bringing up whatever this was.

“It’s just a question...a favor I have to ask,” Ian began, crawling up next to Mickey and covering
them both in the bed, then turning Mickey carefully onto his side to hold him. “Yeah, I’d like to do
somethin’ for you, for a change. You been takin’ care of my ass, non-stop, for weeks!” Mickey said,
turning around to look at Ian. “Well then, this involves the business,” Ian began. “Then I’m definitely
in! Been wantin’ to know how everything’s been goin’,” Mickey said with excitement, turning his
whole body to face Ian. “Yeah, well, it’s not probably anything that you’re thinking about right now,
although Manuel is supposed to call with some stuff for you to do, once you are settled in here and
are feeling well. It’s actually something Mandy asked ME to do, so she won’t have to come back
here so soon after leaving,” Ian explained.

“What the fuck does that mean?” Mickey asked, looking both puzzled and slightly annoyed.
“Apparently, Surfin’ USA wants one of us to make a commercial here in Chicago, and Bigley called
her about it because he knew you were sick,” Ian clarified. “Look, I know you don’t wanna be apart,
and that’s okay. I was kinda hoping you would come with me. I could set you up with your portable
treatment, or I could schedule it for after your treatments are done,” Ian offered.

“Well, there’s no fuckin’ way I’m goin’ to a studio with tubes stickin’ outta me, so you better
schedule it for later, or you could go yourself, if it’s just for one day. I’ll just call Manuel and focus
on some work here while you’re gone,” Mickey suggested. “I’ll find out the timeframe then, and we
can plan from there,” Ian said, smiling brightly at Mickey as he pulled his face in for a quick kiss
before rolling him to his other side and enveloping him in a tight curl. “Now, let’s get some sleep,”
Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear. Mickey smiled as he closed his eyes, pushing himself up against
Ian’s body, his own body relaxing at Ian’s touch. In minutes, both were sleeping peacefully.
GET IT OFF!

Mickey awoke to the smell of salmon cooking and the sound of Ian talking on speaker phone to Mandy and Manuel. He got up to use the bathroom, rolling his fluids and IG treatment with him, pausing on his way, near the door, so he could hear both ends of the phone conversation. Manuel was giving a detailed account of what had and had not been delivered to the new factory. ‘What the fuck does any of that mean to Ian?’ Mickey thought to himself, believing in his heart of hearts that he should be the one having this conversation. He hurried to the bathroom to pee, but the wheels of his rolling pole caught on the bathroom rug, causing the pole to topple over, nearly dislodging the treatment tubing from Mickey’s port. “Fuck!” he yelled, the mishap also having put him off-balance, nearly flying head-first into the glass shower door. Luckily, he was able to catch himself by bracing himself on the chrome edges of the shower.

“What happened?!” a panicked Ian yelled as he ran into the bathroom to investigate. “Nothin’. I’m fine. Just got the wheels on this thing caught on the rug.” Mickey explained as he attempted to pick the pole up from the floor. “I got it. Just use the toilet. That IS why you’re in here, right?” Ian asked. Mickey nodded quietly. Ian picked up the pole, rehanging Mickey’s fluids and IG bag, then picked the rug up from the floor and carried it out of the bathroom.

Ian started a tub of water, then came back into the bathroom, grabbing hold of the rolling pole, which Mickey had already a grip on, pulling it with him as he navigated his way out. “I got it!” Mickey protested. “Gonna have to manage this shit on my own if you’re goin’ to shoot a commercial,” he added. “Yeah, well I might not be going until after your treatments are done. I’m supposed to hear back from Bigley. But Reesie is considering coming to stay with us for a few days anyway. We still never got to look at her finances, and the baby is getting shots nearby tomorrow, so she’ll at least be stopping by. ‘I don’t need a fuckin’ babysitter,’” Mickey mumbled in frustration as he struggled to pull his pole out into the main room.

“Hey! I thought you might wanna get a bath with me,” Ian called out into the main room after Mickey. “Not now,” Mickey snapped as he headed for the kitchen. Mickey put some coffee on, then sat at the island to wait for it to brew. Ian followed him into the kitchen. “Hey!” Ian said, walking toward Mickey. “No one said you need a babysitter, I…” “Ian, please...Just leave me alone right now,” Mickey responded, trying his best to remain calm. “But Mick…” Ian tried again to reason with him, but he wouldn’t hear it. “Ian, I said, LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE!” Mickey yelled. Mickey reached for his cell phone, which he had put in the pocket of his robe when he got up to use the bathroom, but it wasn’t there. “FUCK!!” Mickey exploded, feeling completely and utterly useless and incompetent—dependent on Ian or whoever would happen to be there to tend to him. All of a sudden, he understood why Ian took off for the beach the day he ended up saving Bigley’s grandson—He hated that feeling of helplessness, or dependence on someone else. Thing was, Mickey felt he had handled it pretty well for a long time. Today had just brought him to his breaking point.

Mickey got up from his stool, dragging his pole with him back into the bedroom to look for his phone. He figured it must have fallen out of his robe in the bathroom when he went flying toward the shower. As he headed toward the bathroom, Ian called out to him, “Looking for this?” holding up Mickey’s phone. “Yeah!” Mickey huffed, completely unable to calm himself, yet realizing he was being an asshole. Ian started to walk toward Mickey, holding the phone out to him. “I don’t even need it now!” Mickey yelled. “I’m too pissed off to call anyone! And please take this fuckin’ shit off me, right the fuck now!!” he continued, tugging at the tubing that connected his port and the bags on his pole.
“Okay, chill. Don’t pull on it! Your treatment isn’t…” Ian began. “GET IT OFF!” Mickey screamed. “Fine!” Ian said, close to reaching his boiling point himself. He grabbed the tubing, tracing it to Mickey’s port, avoiding eye contact throughout the entire process, disconnecting it, after shutting down the flow of both the IG and the fluids. “There! It’s off!, asshole!” Ian yelled in Mickey’s face. Mickey stared back at him, his eyes filled with an odd combination of rage, hurt and lust.

“Fuck you, Gallagher!” Mickey yelled, shoving Ian down onto the bed and quickly straddling him, his robe flying open at the legs as it slipped from his shoulders. He leaned his body down over Ian’s, kissing him hard, as he tore Ian’s robe open, rubbing his rock-hard cock against Ian’s. The passion with which Mickey literally attacked Ian had him going completely nuts, pulling at the back of Mickey’s hair, smashing Mickey’s lips into his own, literally devouring his entire face as he breathed, “Want you so fuckin’ bad, Mick.” Ian flipped Mickey over forcefully, still sucking wildly at his lips and tongue. Once he had Mickey pinned down on the bed, he lowered the focus of his mouth to Mickey’s tender neck, zeroing in on his most sensitive spot, wreaking havoc on Mickey’s reserve, his body reacting instantly, sultry moans falling from his lips, “Damn, Gallagher!” the only coherent thought to emerge from them.

Ian made his way down Mickey’s body, sucking at his clavicles, nibbling on his nipples, licking a stripe down the middle of his stomach, then encircling his swollen dick, lightly kissing his ball sac before licking him like a lollipop, from hilt to tip, Mickey’s whole body lit up with anticipation, his hands grasping and pulling recklessly at Ian’s fiery locks.

Ian reached for the coconut oil, his new go-to lubricant, smoothing it onto Mickey’s manhood, then spreading the excess across his asshole. Ian slid his mouth down over Mickey’s sweet-tasting cock, while dipping his index finger into Mickey’s hole. He tapped his prostate firmly as hebobbed up and down on his dick, slowly at first, then with increasing speed and ferocity as he pushed two fingers further into Mickey, who was moaning breathlessly, his body begging for Ian. “Mmmm...you taste so good, Mick!” Ian hummed, reluctantly pulling his mouth off Mickey. He quickly lubed himself as he looked down at Mickey’s beautifully shiny face, a look of complete desperation and pleading in his eyes. “Yeah, I’m gonna fuck you now, Mick...and I’m gonna watch your face while I’m getting you off!” Ian grinned salaciously down at Mickey, whose body writhed impatiently under him.

Finally, Ian began pushing into Mickey’s asshole, watching Mickey as he pulled his lower lip into his mouth and bit down, shutting his eyes tightly. Ian’s first several strokes were aimed directly at Mickey’s prostate, knocking it at a slow, steady pace, then pushing in further until Mickey was taking all nine, his lip still firmly tucked under his top teeth. “So fucking sexy, Mick,” Ian breathed into his ear as he continued fucking Mickey just right, his every move bringing Mickey closer, Mickey countering him, the two immersed in their natural rhythm, like precision parts built to work in concert, pleasing each other immensely, their climax creeping up on them confidently, pushing, pushing…until Ian could feel that Mickey was about to blow.

"Open your eyes, Mick! Wanna see you cum!” Ian whispered into Mickey’s ear, pulling his head up from the bed to look down on his ecstatic lover, and grabbing Mickey’s cock, stroking it rhythmically. Mickey opened his eyes, staring up into Ian’s as his body succumbed to the ultimate pleasure, which Ian was delivering so adeptly. Ian watched closely, putting his own pleasure out of his mind for a moment to focus solely on Mickey’s beautiful face. Ian watched as his eyes seemed to brighten, his mouth dropped open, a series of moans escaping from it as his head began its characteristic side to side roll, his eyes instinctively closing again, in spite of himself, his cum spurting over Ian’s hand and onto his own chest. “So fucking gorgeous!” Ian yelled as his own orgasm overtook him, “Fuck, Mick! You are soooooo hot!” Ian leaned down and kissed Mickey, his tongue invading Mickey’s mouth, finding Mickey’s tongue, sliding against it passionately, feverishly. “I love you so fucking much, Mick!” Ian breathed into Mickey’s mouth. “I love you, too, Gallagher,” Mickey whispered, smiling up at him.
Ian rolled over next to Mickey. His breathing gradually returning to normal. He lightly caressed Mickey’s newly healed hand as he held it. “I have a bath ready for us,” Ian said, breaking their blissful silence. Mickey smiled, moving to get up from the bed. “Yeah, and then I know I have to finish my treatment,” Mickey said softly. “Yeah,” Ian replied, happy that Mickey had acknowledged that fact, and that he wasn’t going to have to fight Mickey on it.

Mickey walked over to the tub and got in, smiling ear to ear, proud to have made it there on his own, and without any attachments to his body. Ian followed him, watching Mickey’s fine ass as he walked. “We should check our phones. Manuel and Mandy said Bigley would be calling to talk about the commercial shoot,” Ian suggested. “And I wanna talk to Manuel,” Mickey added. “Yeah, I did end that call unexpectedly today when you fell. Didn’t really finish the conversation. Most of it would be better for you to hear anyway. Lotsa factory shit I don’t know anything about,” Ian admitted.

The couple resolved to make their phone calls, once they were out of the tub and Mickey was back on his treatment. “I have some salmon cooked, too. Gotta make something to go with it. Want pasta?” he asked. “Sure!” Mickey agreed happily, his stomach growling just thinking about it. The couple took a semi-leisurely soak in the tub, washing each other’s bodies and enjoying one another’s company. As soon as they got out, Ian dried Mickey off thoroughly, paying extra special attention to the area around his port, then wrapped his robe around him and worked quickly to get Mickey restarted with his treatment, while Mickey checked both phones for missed calls. All the calls were on Ian’s phone. “Hey, why is everyone callin’ you?” Mickey asked. “Probably cuz I told them to leave you the fuck alone so you could get better,” Ian said with a smile. “Oh really…” Mickey said, giving Ian a pissed off look. “Yeah, Mick! I don’t know if you get it, but this shit can KILL you! Almost did! This is fucking serious shit! You need your treatments, you need rest, you need to eat well, and you DON’T NEED stress,” Ian said as calmly as he could, considering the way this shit made him feel.

“I get it. Sorry.” Mickey responded. “So, you got a call from Manuel, one from Bigley and one from Reesie,” he reported, reading them off Ian’s phone. “How about if I call Bigley, you can call Manuel, and we can call Reesie together, after we know what’s up with the shoot?” Ian suggested. “I wanna hear Bigley’s call so I know your options,” Mickey insisted. “Then I’ll call Manuel after I know what’s up with your schedule.”

“Oh, Mandy tells me, Ian, that you are willing to shoot the commercial for Surfin’ USA,” Bigley began, changing the subject to business matters. “Yes, of course,” Ian confirmed. “Alright then, that’s wonderful! Is there any chance you would be available tomorrow morning?” Bigley asked hopefully. Ian looked over at Mickey, who was nodding his head. “Sure,” Ian answered, his eyes still lingering on Mickey’s face. “What time?” he asked. “I’ll send the limo to get you at 8:30 so you can be there by 9,” Bigley answered. “And how long will I be?” Ian questioned. “I’d say, if all goes well, you should be outta there by lunchtime,” Bigley estimated. “Sounds perfect!” Ian responded. “Don’t wanna be away from Mickey for too long,” he added, smiling over at Mickey, who glared back at him. The last thing Mickey wanted was for anyone to know that he depended on anybody, even Ian. It was a Milkovich pride thing. Ian mouthed the word, ‘sorry’, and blew Mickey a silent kiss, which seemed to make everything golden again.
Bigley thanked Ian for his willingness to do this on such short notice, and was about to end the call when Mickey piped up, “Bruno, I found out I have a daughter and I wanna support her. How can I figure out how much I can afford, with this new corporation thing we’re doin’? Sorry I didn’t ask sooner, but I been feelin’ like shit,” Mickey explained. “I completely understand, Mickey. Johnny would probably have a more exact figure for you, but I’d say you would be safe in earmarking $1000 to $1500 a month for child support, maybe more, and definitely more, once this Surfin’ USA thing really takes off,” Bigley answered. “Okay, thanks a lot!” Mickey said gratefully, before ending the call.

Mickey seemed to be very happy with the results of their phone call with Bigley, which meant Ian could feel free to show his happiness, which had been bubbling up inside him ever since he heard Mickey ask about supporting his daughter. Ian had grown more than a little bit attached to Mikhaila, and felt good knowing that she and Reesie would be taken care of. He was sure Reesie would want to be back to work as soon as Mikhaila had nursery school or some other quality program to attend. He could tell that she loved her profession as much as he did. He could see it on her every time he was around her doing her job.

“Gonna call Manuel now,” Mickey said, obviously anxious to get up to speed concerning the new factory, the new account and just business in general. “Okay, I’m gonna start the pasta then,” Ian replied, putting on his robe and heading for the kitchen.

Within 20 minutes, Mickey had been briefed on all business matters, learning that the factory was in the process of being set up, nearly all of the necessary machinery having been delivered already, with the last of it on its way. Jose was still doing a tremendous job, both running the original factory and hiring new employees who were training there, the plan being for them to move to the new factory, once it opened. Manuel sounded happy and confident, which made Mickey feel more at ease about having to be in Chicago this long.

Mickey offered to help anyway he could, requesting that Manuel e-mail him a list of anything he could accomplish remotely, through the use of a computer. He then shared the plans Ian had made for shooting the commercial, which Manuel relayed to Mandy, much to her relief. She really didn’t want to have to travel back to Chicago only days after returning to Mexico, and she certainly didn’t want to leave Manuel behind.

“Dinner’s ready!” Ian called, signaling Mickey to end his call and wheel his pole out to the kitchen to eat. But by the time Mickey started maneuvering the pole and himself toward the door, Ian was already on his way in with a tray full of food. Mickey sat back down on the bed, while Ian set the tray on the nightstand, then helped Mickey get situated, strategically placing pillows behind him so he could sit up comfortably to eat. “This smells real good,” Mickey complimented, his eyes lighting up at the sight of the food. “Hope you like it,” Ian said softly. “It’s good for you,” he added.

The two enjoyed dinner, staring into each other’s eyes as they ate, feeling so comfortable and at ease, Mickey almost felt like he could sleep again, by the time they finished. “I’m really tired,” Mickey said to Ian. “Then you go to sleep,” Ian replied. “I’ll be in in a bit. Gonna call Reesie and just ask her if she wants to stay over tonight. That way you guys can talk about her finances tomorrow morning while I’m gone,” Ian suggested.

Okay man, but could you lay with me for a few minutes? I know it sounds cheesy, but it helps me fall asleep faster,” Mickey requested. “Not at all, Mick! It helps me sleep, too,” Ian answered, wrapping Mickey’s body in his own, then pulling him in as close as possible, nuzzling his nose in Mickey’s neck. “I love you, Mick,” Ian breathed as he inhaled Mickey’s heavenly scent, a soft smile creeping across Mickey’s drowsy face as he drifted off.
Mickey woke from a dead sleep to the sound of Mikhaila exercising her lungs. He assumed it was morning at first, but then, as he became more awake, he could feel the warmth of Ian’s body at his back, realizing that, if it was morning, it was damn early. Otherwise, Ian would have been up getting ready for his commercial. He repositioned his head on his pillow, attempting to bury it more deeply in order to shut out some of the sound. He briefly considered going to get her, but then the reality of dragging his rolling pole with him convinced him otherwise.

Mikhaila’s wailing persisted, and it wasn’t long before Ian stirred in response. “I got it,” Mickey mumbled, making a move to get up, and readjusting the covers around Ian’s body to keep him warm. He knew that getting up, under the circumstances, was ill-advised, but he wanted Ian to be rested for his morning so it would go smoothly and he could return home ASAP. He managed to get his hand on the pole, despite the darkness of the room, dragging it to the bathroom, where he peed and grabbed his robe before heading out of the bedroom.

Mikhaila’s cries were coming from the other bedroom, so Mickey made his way in, finding that she was in her Pack “N Play, with no sign of Reesie. She had obviously been in the bed, but was no longer there. Mickey did his best to bend down to pick Mikhaila up, careful not to dislodge the tubing from his port. Tucking Mikhaila under his left arm and pulling his pole behind them with his right, Mickey approached the doorway into the main room, then heard Reesie’s voice coming from her bathroom, “Ian!” “No, it’s Mickey,” Mickey answered. “Mickey, how…” “I got her. You okay?” he asked. “Really sick!” Reesie answered. “Think I got some bad sushi on my way here last night. Her bottles are in the fridge and the diaper bag is next to the bed,” Reesie instructed Mickey before resuming her heaving.

Mickey headed for the kitchen, reasoning that Mikhaila would be easier to change if she had her bottle. He ran some hot water into a glass and put the bottle inside, all with his right hand, Mikhaila still screaming under his left arm. While the bottle was warming, Mickey sat on one of the stools, lifting Mikhaila up and resting her head against his chest. This seemed to quiet her a bit, although she was still whiney, obviously wanting her bottle. After a few minutes, Mickey cradled her in his arms, popping the bottle into her mouth. And suddenly---silence!

Once Mikhaila had finished her bottle, Mickey began their trek back to the bedroom, still carrying Mikhaila awkwardly as he dragged his pole with them. Once he got back to the bedroom, he laid Mikhaila on the bed and carefully reached down into the diaper bag to get a diaper and wipes, then changed her like a pro. Doing all these things for her reminded him of Yevgeni, and he suddenly felt a pang of sadness in his heart at not having been a part of his life for so long. He laid down on Reesie’s bed, hugging Mikhaila into him, and in no time, they were both sleeping.

Ian woke up in an empty bed, his alarm rattling his brain. The moment he was awake enough to process his reality, he panicked. “Mickey!” he yelled, jumping out of bed to look for his missing mate. He first ran to the bathroom, halfway expecting to find Mickey sprawled out on the floor, his pole on its side. When he realized Mickey wasn’t there, Ian really started to lose it. “Mickey!” he yelled again, louder this time as he ran into the main room, and then into the kitchen. With still no sign of him, Ian approached the door to Reesie’s room, which was open. Since the bathroom light was left on, there was just enough light for him to see two motionless bodies in her bed and, upon closer examination, Mikhaila’s tiny, sleeping form in between them. He also noticed that there was a trash can positioned next to the bed on Reesie’s side.
Ian breathed a sigh of relief at finding Mickey, safe, sound and sleeping. He did wonder how and why Mickey had ended up in there, but was sure he would find out soon enough. He left the room, headed back to his bedroom to shower and get dressed, since the limo would be coming for him in a half hour. While he was in the shower, he heard Mickey calling out, “Ian!” “In here,” Ian yelled from the shower. “Damn, wanted a shower with you,” Mickey complained, wheeling his pole into the bathroom. “C’mon, help me get this thing off,” Mickey pleaded. “Mick, I don’t have time for anything. The limo’s coming for me soon,” Ian explained. “Besides, you need to finish that treatment,” he added. “It’s about done,” Mickey replied, “and I need it off anyway.” “What the fuck are you talkin’ about? We’ve been over this. You are doing 24/7 treatments through tomorrow night,” Ian said, raising his voice slightly with agitation.

“But I hafta take Mikhaila to the doctor’s,” Mickey protested. “You can’t. Why would you need to do that?” Ian countered. “Cuz Reesie’s been real sick and I don’t want her to hafta go,” Mickey explained. “What’s wrong with her?” Ian asked, genuine concern coming through in his voice. “Been pukin’ all night long,” Mickey answered, Ian, all at once, sorry he had asked. “Okay, so we reschedule her appointment. No big deal,” Ian spoke in a serious tone. “No, I’m gonna take her. If you won’t help me, I’ll get Reesie to do it,” Mickey threatened.

“I’ll tell ya what, Mick. I’ll set you up so you can take your treatment with you,” Ian suggested as he stepped out of the shower and began to towel off. “...’The fuck am I s’posed to carry a baby, diaper bag and push a pole around? And what about while I’m in the car?” Mickey protested, his Milkovich temper flaring. “The appointment is at the Medical Arts Building. They have wheelchairs. Get ready. We can go there together before my appointment and I’ll get you all set,” Ian said confidently. “No, sorry. Too much of a fuckin’ hassle. Take the treatment off or Reesie will, or I’ll do it my fuckin’ self!” Mickey said angrily.

“Mickey, I don’t have time for this shit! You have to leave your treatment on and have it changed when it’s empty! Maybe I should cancel my commercial if this appointment is so damned important to you! Then I can take her!” Ian was fuming mad at this point, and was seriously about to call Bigley to say there was an emergency, and that he wouldn’t be able to make it, when Reesie walked into the room. “I’m better now. I can take her,” she interjected, having heard their arguing from her room. “Naw, I’m takin’ her,” Mickey insisted stubbornly. “Then you can come with me,” Reesie responded. “But I’m gonna change your treatment bag, and you’re bringing it with you. And that’s that!” Reesie said sternly. “Okay,” Mickey replied quietly.

“Holy Shit, Reesie!” Ian exclaimed. “Can’t believe he just caved for you after I’ve been fighting with him since he got in here this morning,” Ian said, shaking his head in disbelief. Reesie just smiled weakly, her complexion even paler than usual. “Mick, I’ll run you a bath, so you can keep your port dry,” Ian offered. “And if you guys are ready soon, I can have the limo driver take you to the appointment on our way to Surfin’ USA. That way I can help you get him set up, Reesie.”

Mickey grimaced at the thought of Ian having to help him at all. As much as he loved Ian, he really needed to feel his independence again. This prolonged period of Ian playing nursemaid was fucking with Mickey’s head, making him feel like less of a man, less of a husband. He gritted his teeth as Ian helped him in and out of the tub and dried him off, carefully attending to the area around his port, then replacing his nearly empty IG bag with a new one.

Reesie had cleaned herself and the baby up, and somehow still managed to prepare travel mugs of coffee for everyone, despite feeling weak and dizzy from dehydration. She grabbed two bottles of water, along with two bottles for Mikhaila, and shoved them into the diaper bag, before strapping Mikhaila into her carrier and calling the elevator. “Guys! The elevator is here!” Reesie called in through the main door. “On our way!” Mickey responded, steadying his IG treatment and fluid bags on his left shoulder with his right hand, as Ian had instructed, while Ian grabbed their prepared coffee.
from the kitchen island.

The elevator ride down was quiet, the sound of Mikhaila sucking on her bottle the only audible noise. Once they arrived in the lobby, they hustled out the front door, the limo driver waiting with the door open. Everyone got settled quickly, and they were off to the hospital, Mickey beginning to complain almost immediately, “I really gotta go in a fuckin’ wheelchair? I can just hold the bags like I did on the way down,” he reasoned, having rested them on the carpeted shelf behind his head in the limo. “Mickey, if you’re going to be any help to me, you will need both of your hands free,” Reesie explained. Mickey nodded his head silently, avoiding eye contact.

The limo pulled up to the Medical Arts Building and Ian jumped out immediately, running to retrieve a wheelchair, carefully selecting one with an IV pole on it. He wheeled it quickly out to the limo, Mickey handing him his IG and fluids bags as he got himself seated. Ian then grabbed Mikhaila in her carrier, placing her on Mickey’s lap, then handing Mickey his coffee mug, before wheeling them in, Reesie trailing behind. “See you soon!” Ian said, smiling at Mickey and giving him a quick kiss. Mickey nodded, his eyes focused on Mikhaila’s tiny face, her crystal blue eyes staring up at him innocently. Reesie hooked the diaper bag onto one of the wheelchair handles and began pushing Mickey and Mikhaila in the direction of the doctor’s office.

Ian headed back to the limo, checking the time on his phone. Miraculously, it looked like he still had a pretty good shot at being on time—and he was, racing into the building with two minutes to spare. The production crew had everything set up. He was to be filmed in front of a green screen, enabling them to superimpose his image onto a beach setting as he maneuvered about the stage with his surfboard. The aestheticians were thrilled with the length and color of his hair, working to perfect his look for the cameras through the use of makeup and complementary rust-colored board shorts. His lines were all pre-written, focusing mainly on the destruction of the hurricane and the impact it had on the community, as well as the “greenness” of the fundraiser surfboards. He was asked, however, if there was anything he would like to add, pertaining to his experiences during the hurricane. He spoke specifically about Manuel’s injury and its life-threatening nature, carefully avoiding the use of Dr. Montemurro’s name. He also touched briefly on the man Mickey had rescued from his car outside the clinic. Ian performed flawlessly, the cameras loving him up, as usual, and in no time, the commercial was complete.

Ian texted Mickey to see how things had gone at the doctor’s office. Mickey responded, indicating that they had just stopped for lunch at a deli near the hospital, since Reesie was starving after the miserable night she had put in. “Jason’s Deli---Come eat with us,” was Mickey’s last text. “Okay (winky-face emoji),” was Ian’s reply.

When Ian arrived, he found his little family sitting in a booth, Mikhaila in her carrier next to Mickey, whose bags were propped atop that back of the booth, behind his head. Reesie was sitting across from Mickey and moved over to make room for Ian. The trio discussed their mornings, Ian sharing that he had managed to highlight both Mickey and Manuel in the commercial, emphasizing that Mickey was as much of a hero as he was during the hurricane, which made Reesie smile, knowing she was responsible for his freedom that had allowed him to help someone else. Of course, she was also quite proud of her baby brother and all of his lifesaving efforts.

Mikhaila had survived her shots fairly well, save for a few screams and some brief tears. Reesie held her while she got them, and Mickey had actually been the one to comfort her afterward, bouncing her on his knee as he held her close to him. She seemed to be bonding very naturally with both of her biological parents, and had also taken a liking to her second dad, who could always make her smile.

They were nearly done eating when Mickey brought up the subject of Yevgeni, who had been on his mind since the wee hours of the morning. Ian shared with Mickey that he had asked Lip about
visiting Yev, but that Lip felt Svetlana was resentful of the lack of support she had received since Mickey’s escape. “I couldn’t help her then, but now, maybe I can. That’s why I gotta know, Reesie, how much is your rent?” Mickey asked in his typically direct manner. “It’s $950, but I have to pay for electric. And then there’s my car and food, etc. That’s why I gotta work. I would never expect you to pay my way like that, Mickey,” Reesie explained. “Well, Bigley said I can spare $1000-$1500 per month right now, and that it will be more as the business grows, so…” Mickey’s voice trailed off as he thought about how he could manage to take care of both of his children. “Mick, I work, too! We pool our resources. You have my earnings at your disposal, too. We’ll be okay,” Mickey asked in his typically direct manner. “It’s $950, but I have to pay for electric. And then there’s my car and food, etc. That’s why I gotta work. I would never expect you to pay my way like that, Mickey,” Reesie explained. “Well, Bigley said I can spare $1000-$1500 per month right now, and that it will be more as the business grows, so…” Mickey’s voice trailed off as he thought about how he could manage to take care of both of his children. “Mick, I work, too! We pool our resources. You have my earnings at your disposal, too. We’ll be okay,” Ian assured Mickey, rubbing his foot up Mickey’s leg under the table. Mickey smiled and nodded, Ian’s secret flirtation putting him into a better mood instantly. “How about if we try to schedule a time to see Yevgeni before we go back to Mexico? Like maybe tomorrow?” Ian suggested, still toying with Mickey under the table. Mickey smiled widely, becoming more aroused by the second and trying desperately not to tip his hand to Reesie, who seemed completely oblivious, despite the fact that she was sitting right next to Ian. “Sneaky fucker!” Mickey thought to himself as he replied, “Sure!” in answer to Ian’s question.

“Well, I hope you get to see him,” Reesie interjected. “But I still wanna work, at least part-time—stay current in my field and make some money to help out.” “We’ll work it all out!” Ian said optimistically, his face absolutely glowing as he gazed over at Mikhala lovingly. Ian had completely fallen for the baby, as if she were his, and in his mind, she was.

Ian picked up the tab and they all packed up to head back to the Waldorf. “Ian, I’m gonna try to get in touch with Svetlana tonight. Gonna call the Alibi,” Mickey said with conviction. “Okay, Mick. I’d love to see Yev! If we go to Southside, I’d like to see some more of my family, too.” Ian responded, Mickey rolling his eyes. He was hoping to avoid Southside altogether, perhaps arranging to meet Svetlana elsewhere in the city, or even having her bring Yev to the Waldorf. And he definitely didn’t really want to get too wrapped up with all the Gallaghers. They tended to attract trouble, and one thing Mickey wanted, more than anything, was to avoid trouble, which, up until recently, seemed to also follow him. “Alright,” Mickey said reluctantly, swallowing hard.
The phone call to the Alibi yielded the desired result, but didn’t go anything close to smoothly. Kev was working. Apparently, in the time since Ian had left for Mexico, Svetlana had struck a deal with Kev and V to co-own and manage the bar again. It took three phone calls from Mickey, followed by one from Ian, before they were able to get in touch with Svetlana, who wasn’t even there at the time. The first time Mickey called, Kevin told him not to call there, that it wasn’t safe, that the police had come there asking about him. Mickey had tried to explain that he had been exonerated, but Kevin hung up abruptly, raving about the phone being bugged by the Feds. And he did the same thing all three times that Mickey tried talking to him. Under most circumstances, Mickey would’ve been pissed, but knowing Kevin the way he did, understanding that his loyalty was matched only by his stupidity, he actually felt honored to have Kevin for a friend, misguided as he might be.

Mickey finally had Ian call. He was able to convince Kevin that Mickey was no longer a fugitive and just wanted to see his son. Kevin agreed to call Svetlana to give her Mickey’s number, and she called him. After a giving Mickey a good tongue lashing, Svetlana did actually listen as Mickey described his circumstances, and his willingness to make up for lost time. Of course, Svetlana was skeptical, but Mickey arranging to send a limo for her and Yevgeni seemed to buy him some credibility in her eyes.

On another front, the morning had been so crazy that no one got the chance to take Mickey’s blood, which had Ian bugged. He tried not to say too much to Mickey though; he didn’t want to spoil his positive mood. Mickey was very happy that he was able to arrange for Yevgeni to come for a visit, and was busy conjuring up a plan for making him lunch. He thought back to what he recalled eating when he was 3 or 4, and all he could remember was Mac n Cheese. He decided to try a homemade recipe, even though he had never done it before. He wanted to do it himself, so he didn’t even mention it to Ian or Reesie, fearing they would take over, leaving him to feel helpless again.

Mickey was checking the fridge for ingredients when Ian approached him. “Hungry already?” He asked. “Naw, just checkin’ to see what we have for tomorrow,’’ Mickey replied, turning from the fridge to look at Ian. “Yeah? Got something special in mind?” he asked, raising an eyebrow. “Yeah,” Mickey smiled, “Mac n Cheese!” “Sounds really good, man! Hope you’re gonna make enough for me,” Ian grinned, rubbing his stomach. “Yep! Gonna make more than enough for everyone, but think I’m gonna need some more cheese,” Mickey concluded, closing the fridge. “Gotta go to the store,” he added. “I can go for you,” Ian volunteered, already thinking of a way to give Mickey his way in return for the blood that he wanted from him.

“Naw, I really wanna see my options for myself,” Mickey countered, staring at Ian defiantly. “Okay, can we make a deal then?” Ian asked. “Does it involve you gettin’ this shit the fuck off me so I can go to the store like a normal human being?” Mickey asked with an attitude. “Yes,” Ian answered resolutely, “But only if you let me get your blood work done so we can drop it off at the lab while we’re out.” Ian answered, grabbing the lab kit from the island, then pulling Mickey by the hand into the main room. “Okay,” Mickey agreed, looking down at the floor as Ian led him to the couch to sit down.

Mickey plopped himself onto the couch, Ian sitting down next to him with the kit in his lap. Mickey’s eyes were still downcast, Mickey obviously avoiding eye contact all of a sudden, for some reason. Ian wasn’t fucking around. He wanted to know what was up right away. “Hey,” he said softly, tilting Mickey’s chin upward with his hand so he could look into his eyes. “What’s going on right now, Mick? Thought you were happy to get the bags off and go out.” “I am,” Mickey answered, pushing his sleeve up so Ian could draw his blood. “Okay, then what’s the problem?” Ian
asked. “No problem,” Mickey mumbled, looking away. “It’s just...I feel good, and don’t want my tests comin’ back bad,” Mickey finally admitted.

“Mick, if you’re feeling good, they probably won’t. Avoiding the test won’t change anything. It’s gonna be what it’s gonna be, but I have every reason to think you are well, based on your energy level, your color and your mental clarity. I can’t guarantee anything, but I really think you’re gonna be okay, and just so ya know,” Ian whispered seductively, pausing to plant a short, but passionate kiss on Mickey’s irresistibly full lips before continuing, “I can’t fucking wait to get your ass back to our place in Mexico!” Mickey grinned broadly, leaning in to kiss Ian again, a feeling of peace and joy welling up inside him as he envisioned himself carrying Ian over the threshold, promising himself at that moment that he would be healed and well enough to do it.

“Okay, Mick,” Ian said, breaking the kiss and distracting Mickey from his daydream, “Let’s get this blood taken.” Ian quickly found a vein, filling the necessary tubes with blood, then packaging them up to be delivered to the lab. “Perfect timing!” Ian exclaimed, looking up at Mickey’s IG Bag, which was empty. “Let’s get this off and we can be on our way! Sooner we go, sooner we can get back,” he said with a wink and a raised eyebrow. Within five minutes, Mickey was extricated from his tubal prison and the couple were on their way to the lab in an Uber.

After dropping the blood samples off and confirming that the results would be available by morning, Ian and Mickey headed for Whole Foods, discussing ideas for Yevgeni’s visit on the way. “Seems a fuckin’ shame not to use that nice ass pool at the hotel. I mean, I know I can’t go. Don’t swim anyway, but…” Mickey began. “Mick! I love the idea of taking Yevgeni to the pool! And you could go, too! Just stay in the shallow end with Yevgeni! And how about if I invite Debs and Franny? We can pick up some floaties and some swim trunks while we’re out!” Ian cut Mickey off enthusiastically. Mickey wasn’t all that revved up about going in the water himself, and he worried that inviting Debbie might bring more Gallaghers, which didn’t appeal much to him either, but Ian’s excitement about the whole thing was absolutely infectious. The way his face lit up, Mickey couldn’t help but go along with it. “What do ya think, Mick?” Ian asked, batting his beautiful, long eyelashes pleadingly, pressing Mickey for an answer. “Alright, I guess,” Mickey answered reluctantly, pulling Ian’s face to his own and slipping his tongue between Ian’s parted lips, as he ran his fingers through Ian’s soft, sexy, orange-red curls, pulling at the ends roughly as he ravished Ian’s mouth with his hungry lips and tongue. Ian moaned softly, reaching into Mickey’s lap and massaging his package sensually. “Um...unfortunately, Whole Foods is right down the block,” Mickey breathed, clearing his throat as he attempted to compose himself.

Within seconds, they were pulling up to Whole Foods, both fighting to lose their hard-ons before walking in. “So, where are we gonna get the swim stuff?” Mickey asked, looking around the store as they walked in. “Doesn’t look like they have that stuff here,” he added. “Yeah, I see that,” Ian responded, frowning slightly. Guess we’ll have to find a department store next,” Ian answered. “Maybe we shoulda done that first,” Mickey commented. “Well, we can be quick!” Ian said brightly. “Wanna get your ass home to bed ASAP anyway,” he breathed into Mickey’s ear.

The dashing couple made a quick pass through the dairy aisle, picking up some cheeses and milk, before grabbing some elbow macaroni on the way out. Mickey sent a quick text to Reesie to see if she needed anything, but she said she was well-stocked on both formula and diapers. They stopped at Macy’s on their way back, searching out swim trunks, which were in limited supply, given the season, but they did manage to find what they needed. The floaties, on the other hand, were nowhere to be found, but Ian pointed out that hotel pools often have some floatation devices.

Once they finally arrived back at the Waldorf, Mickey breathed a sigh of relief. “Tired?” Ian asked, looking over at Mickey as the elevator doors closed, the elevator whisking them up to the penthouse. “A little,” Mickey admitted, a touch of insecurity evident in his voice. Ian knew what he was
thinking—that he was getting sick again. “Mick, it’s normal to be tired when you first start to become more active after a serious illness like this. Please stop worrying! I’m not worried, so you shouldn’t be either. I can tell that my husband is on the mend. I can feel it!” Ian exclaimed jubilantly. “You got somethin’ I’d like to feel,” Mickey growled, his eyes narrowing into a scorching glare, his lips curved into a sultry pout. Ian was immediately and irresistibly drawn to Mickey, slamming him against the elevator wall as he jammed his tongue into Mickey’s mouth passionately, pressing his own body firmly against Mickey’s, grinding on him desperately as they made out, his fingers avidly weaving themselves into his shiny, black hair. “Want you, Mick…so fucking bad,” Ian breathed urgently, Mickey’s neck luring his lips with its sweet, intoxicating scent and powerfully seductive contours. Ian buried his face in it, swiping his tongue over the spot, the one he knew was going to put Mickey over the edge—and he didn’t care. Mickey knew how fucking sexy and irresistible he was to Ian, and he had used that to its fullest right then, so Ian felt justified in reaching into his bag of tricks, too.

The elevator door opened and the heaving, panting, sweaty conglomeration that had, only moments ago, been two respectable, composed men, tumbled haphazardly toward the door, pushing through it forcefully, then landing in the middle of the floor in a moaning, writhing heap, completely oblivious to the surroundings. Reesie, who left the kitchen in response to the sudden racket, quickly turned away from the scene, heading back into the kitchen. Ian, suddenly aware of Reesie’s presence, rolled off Mickey and scooped him up into his arms, carrying him swiftly into their bedroom, giggling with embarrassment. “Wanted to fuck ya on the floor, Mick, but this will have to do,” Ian said in a low, raspy tone, tossing Mickey onto the bed and proceeding to tear his clothing off, then his own. “Shit!” Ian yelled, suddenly remembering the bags he had dumped at the entryway in the heat of the moment. “I’ll be right back, Mick! Here! Get started! Got a surprise for ya,” he smiled, lobbing the coconut oil onto the bed.

Ian threw his robe on, scurrying out into the main room to retrieve the bags, then carrying them to the kitchen. As he began unpacking the groceries, Reesie said, “Go! I got this,” grabbing the groceries from his hands. Ian picked up the Macy’s bag and ran back to their room, finding Mickey lying on the bed, touching himself in the most delicious way as he applied the coconut oil. ‘Goddam! He’s a sexy fucker!’ Ian thought to himself as he dumped the Macy’s bag out onto the floor, retrieving the satin pillowcase he had smuggled into their pile at Macy’s, unbeknownst to Mickey, and switching it for one of the regular pillowcases quickly.

Ian tossed the pillow onto the bed, crawled up the bottom of the bed, positioning his head between Mickey’s well-turned legs and beginning to lightly tease MIcky’s asshole with his tongue. “Musta been readin’ my mind, Gallagher,” Mickey breathed huskily, that signature sexy smile spreading across his flawless face. Ian continued to pleasure his mate, swirling softly around Mickey’s opening, slowly adding slight tongue penetration. Mickey moaned loudly, nearly shaking Ian’s resolve to continue. He wanted more than anything to plunge into Mickey like a red-hot poker and satisfy them both, which he knew could be accomplished in a matter of minutes. Instead, he stayed the course, torturing Mickey, and himself, into oblivion as he slowly and painstakingly added his fingers into his repertoire. Mickey’s moans began to take on a begging quality, which, as much as Ian wanted to give in, strengthened his will to hold off in anticipation of the monumental explosion that would certainly result in the end.

“Mick...so Mmmmm...” Ian hummed as he continued, unconsciously rubbing himself against the bed. Finally, Ian, himself, was at his breaking point, branding Mickey with two large hickeys, one on each of Mickey’s sensitive upper inner thighs, as he continued to finger-fuck him, Mickey’s response to this being literally off the charts. “Gonna make me cum!” Mickey yelled frantically. “Oh no, not yet,” Ian countered breathlessly as he finished his handiwork and flipped Mickey over onto the satin pillow, which pushed his ass up into the air at the most aesthetically beautiful and mechanically opportune angle for Ian’s easy access, also providing Mickey with amazingly pleasurable friction,
courtesy of Ian’s new purchase. Ian lubed himself up quickly, making a smooth, satisfying entry that drew a slight gasp, followed by a deep, heavy moan from Mickey’s lips that seemed to emanate from deep within his soul. Ian pressed down on Mickey’s outer thighs, which were spread into a frog-like position, optimizing the angle and depth further and providing great leverage. Mickey grinded himself wantonly against the pillow, the satin sending scintillating currents of electricity through his entire body as Ian drove into him savagely, grunting and groaning animalistically with each increasingly brutal stroke. Mickey’s entire being was on fire, from head to toe, inside and out. “Fuck, Gallagher!” he screamed, “You fuckin’ own me!” Ian lifted his left hand from Mickey’s thigh, replacing it over Mickey’s left hand, weaving his fingers into Mickey’s as he continued to drive into him relentlessly. Each could feel that the other was close and reveled in the height of pleasure he had bestowed upon the other. Both men climaxed together, Ian growling ferociously as he shot deep into his husband’s ass, while Mickey panted and moaned, his swollen lips managing to form Ian’s name once, his release spilling exquisitely across the soft satin canvas.

After a minute or so of blissful exhaustion, Ian regained the strength and clarity to perceive his environment. “Something smells good!” he whispered as his eyes took in the elegance of Mickey’s fine features. “And you look…” Ian, completely captivated by Mickey’s beauty, couldn’t even finish his sentence. “So do you!” Mickey responded, running his tattooed fingers through Ian’s gorgeous, fiery mane.

After a few more minutes, Mickey pulled Ian by the hand, leading him to the shower, where they kissed lightly, holding and washing one another tenderly, then drying off. They each helped the other with his robe, Ian leaving Mickey’s epen. “You know what we gotta do now, Mick,” Ian said solemnly, as if he hated it as much as Mickey did. “Yeah, I know,” Mickey replied, sitting on the bed to make it easier for Ian to reattach him to his treatment. Ian made quick work of it, the couple then joining Reesie and Mikhaila for a family dinner in the kitchen. Reesie had made a fine pasta dish, one that neither of them had ever tasted, using Ricotta Cheese and a red sauce. The three discussed the next day’s plans over dinner with excitement, anticipating a good time for all and appreciating all that they already had.
Loose Ends

Ian and Mickey both slept like logs, securely entangled in each other---finally---Mickey, in particular, having had an extremely action-packed day, starting in the wee hours with a screaming baby, and ending with explosively orgasmic sex, followed by a satisfyingly filling pasta dinner. And there had been plenty of activity in between for him as well, none of which he was used to, after having been so ill. He definitely needed the rest, as did Ian, who had also had a quite a busy, hectic day.

They were both woken suddenly by the sound of Ian’s ringing phone. It was Bigley, who had called to say that Surfin’ USA had completed the edits on the commercial, and that it was being released to network TV. Bigley went on to explain that Ian was not being paid through Ojos Azules, but rather, directly by Surfin’ USA. As a result, he needed to fill out and fax a W-4 form, which Bigley wanted Ian to understand, would technically make him their employee. The other route would have been for him to work as an independent contractor, which would pay more up front, but less in the long run. Bigley seemed to prefer the first arrangement, so Ian agreed, figuring it would make very little difference to him in the long run. Bigley arranged for Ian to pick the form up at the front desk in the lobby of the Waldorf, fill it out, then have the concierge fax it back. They would be paying him by the job, and were now more interested in booking Meet and Greets at various store locations.

Ian had put Bigley on speaker at Mickey’s insistence. The more Bigley talked about Ian traveling the country as a spokesmodel, the angrier Mickey’s face became. Ian had seen it in his eyes at the first mention of the words, ‘Meet and Greet’, and it was all downhill from there. In Mickey’s mind, Ian making the commercial was his ticket out of the States, pending the resolution of his health problems. The last thing he wanted to hear was that they’d be staying longer. Mckey cringed as Bigley went on, singing Ian’s praises and suggesting that he consider making spokesmodeling a career, outside of Surfin’ USA and Ojos.

Then came the last part of the conversation---they both, along with Reesie, could possibly have to return to Chicago for the trial of Dan Sanchez, if a plea agreement couldn’t be reached. Bigley cleared his throat before beginning to tell the story, “At present, the police are looking into allegations made by him that he was coerced into assisting with the blackmailing by a man he had met by chance, while he was out drinking in the Southside one night. Apparently, he liked to drink close to home, so the Alibi Room was one of only a few shitty choices. It was there that he met a guy who started buying him drinks and struck up a conversation. The guy, probably in his 50’s and definitely an alcoholic, said someone else was getting his tab for him, so they drank a lot. Sanchez got so drunk, he said, that he shared a little ‘hobby’ he had. Said he liked to go into the penthouse at the Waldorf and take pictures... pictures of the people who stayed there, which he told police were all friends of mine. Apparently, he has some kind of sick obsession with me,” Bigley hesitated, that idea seeming to rattle him.

Bigley sighed deeply, then continued, “When that didn’t pan out, Sanchez claims he was threatened with bodily harm by another man, who allegedly had some type of connection with the first. Dan couldn’t provide any last names, but was able to drop one first name---Frank, and to provide a description of both men, the first matching your father to a tee, which makes sense since Cogswell’s office had arranged to have his tab at the Alibi paid for a while, as part of his ‘incentive’ to sign his statement for Mickey’s appeal. The second man Sanchez described as a large, bald, heavily tattooed Latino man with a moustache and a goatee.” Bigly paused, waiting for Ian’s reaction. Ian and Mickey just looked at each other. No words necessary. After an awkward moment of silence, Bigley went on to say that it was quite possible Dan might be fabricating the whole scenario, in order to minimize his culpability.
When Ian finally began to respond, likely to provide a very accurate guess as to who the second individual might be, Mickey put his finger to his lips, silencing him immediately. After that, Ian did his best to end the conversation quickly, agreeing to come back for the trial and to schedule some Meet and Greets sometime soon, much to Mickey’s displeasure.

Ian thanked Bigley for all of his hospitality and for the opportunity to work for Surfin’ USA, then ended the call. “What the fuck’s with you shushing me?” Ian yelled. “What the fuck’s with you agreeing to go to these fuckin’ Meet and Greets soon?” Clearly they both had some explaining to do, but they were interrupted by another call, this one to Mickey’s phone, which was ringing from the bathroom. Mickey hoisted himself from the bed, grabbing his pole and wheeling it into the bathroom to retrieve his phone. It was the hospital. Mickey picked up, Shawn’s voice greeting him. “Hey Mickey! How are you feeling?” he asked. “Okay,” Mickey said shortly, while peeing. “You sure? You sound...well, you sound pissed!” Shawn said. “Don’t worry ‘bout it. What’s up?” Mickey responded, his words still clipped.

“Well, I shouldn’t actually be calling you, but your lab results were mistakenly reported to my unit, and I promised Ian I’d give you a heads up if I ever knew something so...” Shawn paused, awaiting a response from Mickey. “Here’s Ian,” Mickey said, handing the phone over to Ian, who was approaching the bathroom to use the toilet himself. Ian pressed the speaker button and said hello. “Hi, Ian. I really wanted to talk to Mickey about this, but...” “He can hear you,” Ian said, glaring at Mickey as he switched places with him so he could piss. “Well, it’s really good news, actually, but you can’t let the doc know that I told ya,” Shawn began. “Mickey’s test results were all within normal limits!” Shawn exclaimed. “Thanks, Shawn! Thank you so much!” Ian responded, unable to contain his excitement, despite being very upset with Mickey at the moment.

Ian ended the call, turning and throwing his arms around Mickey’s neck to give him a celebratory kiss. Mickey returned the kiss, enveloping Ian in a warm embrace. “I love you so much, Mick!” Ian said softly. “Love you, too, but I’m still pissed,” Mickey breathed between kisses. “Me, too,” Ian whispered. Then they both laughed at themselves, realizing that, no matter what kind of trouble life threw their way, their love could surmount it.

“Well, so I’ll change your bag and we can go to the kitchen for some coffee and breakfast, then we’ll talk, okay?” Ian suggested. “Yep,” Mickey answered. “Can we change it in the kitchen? I wanna put the coffee on,” Mickey asked. “Sure,” Ian agreed, spinning Mickey around and pushing his pole behind him. Mickey started making the coffee while Ian was busy disconnecting Mickey’s old bag and replacing it with a new one.

“I need some of that!” Reesie yawned, inhaling the pungent aroma of the Milkovich brew as she walked into the kitchen with Mikhaila on her hip. “Guess what?” Ian chirped, having just hung Mickey’s new bag. “I don’t know. What?” Reesie replied. “Mick’s bloodwork came back normal!” Ian shouted triumphantly. “Wow! That’s great!” Reesie said, walking over to give Mickey a hug, Mikhaila’s tiny body wedged between them. “What a relief!” she added, resisting the urge to cover his face with kisses. She had been extremely concerned about Mickey’s health ever since he had come to the infirmary, and now, finally, she could put her mind to rest, safe in the knowledge that Mikhaila’s father would be okay. As much as she hated to admit it, the idea of Mickey, and Ian, being part of Mikhaila’s life had become very important to her, after seeing the way they interacted with her, and how much they obviously loved her. “Let me see her,” Ian smiled, reaching for the baby. Reesie handed her off, Ian instantly bouncing and tossing her, which brought giggles and smiles galore.

Mickey smiled, his eyes crinkling around their edges, as Ian continued to entertain Mikhaila with his crazy antics, adding funny faces and loud kisses on her little cheeks to his routine. Reesie was smiling too, rolling her eyes at how silly Mikhaila made Ian behave. She hadn’t seen that side of him
in prison at all, and it was refreshing. Ian had spent so much time in there, worried sick about Mickey. “What a blessing to have everyone here together and well!” Reesie said, her eyes welling up with tears. “Yeah, that is what’s important, huh? Being together,” Ian said, shooting Mickey a look. “No matter where it is,” he added, Mickey scowling at him in response.

“Well, I’d be happy to make some breakfast,” Reesie offered, pouring coffee for everyone. “You just cooked for everyone last night, and Mickey’s cooking lunch. I’ll make breakfast,” Ian asserted. “If you insist,” Reesie replied. Mickey opened the fridge, grabbing Mikhaila’s bottle, sitting down on his stool, then reaching his arms out for her. “Come see daddy!” Mickey smiled as Ian passed her to him. He kissed the top of her head, then arranged her so she was sitting on his left knee, her head laid back in the crook of his left arm so she could drink her bottle while he drank his coffee with his right hand. This was something he hadn’t done since Yevgeni was small, but it was like riding a bike, or fucking Ian just right; it all came back to him naturally, and it felt good.

“I’ll hurry up and get a shower if you’re gonna feed her. That okay?” Reesie asked. “Sure,” Mickey answered, waving Reesie off so he could talk to his man.

“Okay, so what is your plan for dealing with my dad and Damon?” Ian asked, cutting to the chase as he cracked eight eggs into a bowl. “Whoa, whoa, whoa! First, you’re gonna tell me what the fuck you mean by ‘soon’, for these Meet and Greets you fuckin’ committed yourself to,” Mickey countered, raising his voice. “Shhhh! You’re gonna scare the baby,” Ian said quietly. “And as for the Meet and Greets, I’ll work it out. I’ll find out if they’ll fly me back from Mexico after a bit,” Ian reasoned.

“Once I get your ass back to Mexico with me, I wanna keep you there. None of this leavin’ the country every fuckin’ weekend!” Mickey bristled. “Yeah, well, I’d say I could do one before we go home, but I know what you’d say,” Ian argued back. “Oh yeah, what would I say?” Mickey asked, annoyed with the idea that Ian probably did know exactly what he would say, which made him feel as if he needed to say something different, which was exactly what Ian was going for—and Mickey knew it. “That you just wanna go back to Mexico ASAP,” Ian quipped. “Well, I do, but if you can do it in one day, I guess I could handle it,” Mickey said, giving in for the sake of avoiding an argument at this turn, in hopes of Ian being reasonable about the other subject they had to discuss.

“Okay then,” Ian began, with a satisfied smile, “I’ll call Bigley back after breakfast to make the arrangements. So...about my dad and Damon. Why not let Bigley know about Damon? And why not let Frank get what he deserves for his involvement, and for just being a shitty human being, in general?” Ian asked, while preparing and adding some vegetables to the eggs. “Cuz I’m not a pussy that lets the cops handle my business. You shouldn’ta called them in the first place,” Mickey argued. “Well, I wanted Mikhaila and Reesie to be safe, so I figured the guy needed to be off the streets,” Ian concluded.

“Yeah, well I ain’t involvin’ the fuckin’ cops, especially where Damon is concerned. “He was cool enough not to tell anyone where we...well, where I was goin’, even after we ditched him, so…” Mickey stopped talking suddenly, obviously deep in thought. Ian could see the wheels turning in his head.

“Bet he met Frank cuz he was lookin’ for you,” Mickey finally said, his mind spinning as he dreamed up several different, yet plausible scenarios. “Easiest thing to do is play dumb and get it outta Frank,” Mickey reasoned, thinking out loud as he sipped his coffee. “Thought you wanted to avoid the Southside,” Ian said, looking at Mickey as he plated up the eggs. “I fuckin’ do, but this shit’s gotta get settled,” Mickey growled, his grip on his cup visibly tightening.

“So, what’s your plan?” Ian asked, recognizing that there was no point in fighting Mickey at this
‘Better to end-run him by getting Bigley to take care of things without Mickey knowing,’ Ian thought to himself, then dismissing the option, since it would require him to be less than truthful with Mickey.

“Well, first of all,” Mickey began, setting Mikhaila’s bottle down on the island, so he could burp her, ‘I’m gonna talk to Svetlana about it. Bet if these two were discussin’ shit, either she or Kev or V heard somethin’. But you also gotta talk to your family, which you fuckin’ wanna do anyway, so it’s a win-win. See if Debs knows anything when she comes over today---and talk to fuckin’ Carl!’ Mickey commanded. “Wish I could, Mick, but he’s away at military school...probably be home for Thanksgiving. Doubt he knows anything,” Ian said, scratching him off the list as a possible lead. “We’re gonna be home then, too! Wanna do Thanksgiving at the beach house for sure! Got a lot to be thankful for!” Mickey beamed, gazing down at his adorable daughter’s little face as he popped the bottle back into her mouth.

Ian arranged the plates of food on the island, feeling pretty damn thankful himself. Mickey had come such a long way in a short time. Not only had he regained his health, but he had also begun dealing with problems more rationally, instead of with his fists. Some of that was still there---it was part of him---but Ian noticed a difference inside their relationship, and he was fuckin’ grateful for being able to talk things out peacefully. He was concerned, however, with how Mickey intended to handle Frank and Damon, once he had the story straight.

Reesie joined them in the kitchen, where they all enjoyed the fine breakfast Ian had prepared. Once they finished up, Reesie offered to do the dishes, breaking the news that she and Mikhaila were going to head home soon. Mickey pulled the baby into him, holding her close. He really hated to see her go. “Don’t you wanna stick around to meet Yevgeni?” Ian asked.

“I wouldn’t want to take any of his time with his dad. He’s already lost enough,” she answered. “Reesie, you’re fuckin’ family,” Mickey interjected. “Please stay,” Mickey pleaded, his gorgeous, blue ‘Mikhaila eyes’ imploring her. “I guess we could stay for a little bit,” she shrugged, caving to Mickey. “We don’t have swimsuits though,” she said softly. “Then go get some,” Mickey said matter-of-factly. “Need money?” he asked. “No, it’s just…” Mickey cut her off. “Just fuckin’ go. I got her!” Mickey pulled Mikhaila in close to his body, a feeling of warmth and comfort transferring from her tiny body to his. “I love you, Mikhaila,” he whispered as he touched his lips to the top of her head lightly.

“Let me have her,” Ian said, offering to take the baby off Mickey’s hands so he could cook. “Get over here,” Mickey answered, standing up and holding his right arm out. Ian encircled Mickey and Mikhaila in his arms, holding them both tightly to him. “Love you guys,” Ian breathed. They stood that way for a while, silent and motionless, before Ian finally took Mikhaila from Mickey. “You gotta start to get lunch together. Let me take her. Gonna sit her in her carrier for a while so I can call Bigley, and maybe Fiona,” Ian said.

“Fuck Fiona!” Mickey said, recalling Ian’s story about his conversation with her before they met at the docks after his escape. “She’s so wrapped up in her own shit anyway. She’d be the last one I’d fuckin’ call.” “Well, who else is there? We already know Lip doesn’t know anything or he woulda told us,” Ian called back to Mickey as he headed to Reesie’s room to get Mikhaila’s carrier. “I’d call Kev and V before I’d call that fuckin’ bitch!” Mickey said bitterly. “And don’t say SHIT to Bigley about Damon!” he added. “Fine,” Ian responded, just wanting to put the whole mess behind them, once and for all.

Mickey called up the Mac N Cheese recipe on his phone and got to work, trying his best to focus his mind on his upcoming visit with his son, rather than dwelling on all the other bullshit he currently had to deal with. He had just finished preparing the dish for the oven, when his phone rang. It was
his doctor’s office, calling to give him his test results and to schedule an appointment to remove his PICC line. He scheduled it for early the next morning, figuring it would be best to get it out of the way early, especially since he couldn’t fucking wait to be done with that shit. He considered consulting with Ian, but didn’t feel like wheeling his pole in there, only to find him on the phone with Bigley or something.

As it turned out, it was Ian who came to Mickey, wanting to be sure he was okay with the plans he was making. He walked into the kitchen with Bigley on speaker. “Hi Mick!” Bigley bellowed. “Heard you’re doing well. So glad to hear that, especially because I have some news I hope you’ll be pleased with.” “Okay, what’s the news?” Mickey asked apprehensively. “Well,” Bigley began, “I tentatively scheduled Ian for a Meet and Greet in Corpus Christi on Friday, and I’d like to fly you guys in there Thursday night so Ian can do the Meet and Greet, then you guys could fly out of there on the red eye and be home by Saturday morning,” Bigley finished with a confident sigh.

Mickey smiled so hard he thought his face might crack. He couldn’t believe he heard right. Now the biggest problem was, and he couldn’t believe he was thinking this, whether he could address this Damon business that quickly. Suddenly, his smile wasn’t so big, his stomach dropping and his throat beginning to tighten. He couldn’t leave this loose end. He needed closure, to know that his past life was really behind him.

“Well?” Ian asked, peering into Mickey’s eyes, trying to make sense of the look he was seeing on Mickey’s face. “Let’s plan on it,” Mickey mumbled reluctantly, hardly the reaction Ian and Bigley had expected. “I have a doctor’s appointment tomorrow, so things could change…” Mickey trailed off, seeming to be in his own world. “Oh, and Mickey,” Bigley piped up again, “Is the limo still needed in the Southside at noon today?” “Yeah, thanks,” Mickey responded absently. “At the Alibi Room, right?” he confirmed. “Yeah, I really appreciate it,” Mickey answered in a monotone voice.

“Alright, I’ll text you the details, once I have them, Ian. In the meantime, enjoy your visit today!” Bigley said with enthusiasm, “And don’t forget to fax that W-4,” he added. “Will do, thanks!” Ian said, ending the call.

“What the fuck, Mickey!?” Ian said, pulling Mickey into him close and staring into his eyes. “Let’s just get ready for this visit. I need to focus on this first,” Mickey said seriously, pecking Ian on the cheek. “Don’t worry,” he added, brushing Ian’s lips softly with his own, before turning to check on the delicious lunch that was now in the oven, its mouthwatering aroma permeating the entire penthouse. “Okay,” Ian responded, running to grab Mikhaila, who had begun to cry. Mickey followed Ian in to get Mikhaila, hugging them both securely into his body. “We got this,” Ian assured Mickey. “All of it.”
“Yevgeni, this is your father, Mickey,” Svetlana began as she entered the penthouse with her son in her arms. He had grown a lot since Mickey had seen him last, and his hair had gotten darker, but his eyes were the same crystal blue, just like Mickey’s. In fact, he was pretty much the spitting image of Mickey. “Do you remember me, bud?” Mickey asked hopefully. Yevgeni shook his head, looking over at Ian. “Well, it’s been awhile,” Mickey smiled awkwardly. “Now this one he remember—- Crazy Carrot Boy,” Svetlana said, rolling her eyes. Mickey tried to mask his hurt, but it was written all over his face. “…The fuck’s he remember you and not me?” he fumed under his breath.

“Ian!” Debs called out, as she walked in, carrying Franny on her hip. Ian approached them, throwing his arms around them both, saying, “You look great, Debs!” “So do you!” Debbie responded, breaking free of his embrace to introduce herself to Reesie, who was standing between the door and the kitchen, holding Mikhaila. “Hi, I’m Debbie. You must be Reesie,” she smiled, looking at Mikhaila, who looked like she could easily have been Franny’s baby sister. “Nice to meet you, Debbie! And this is Mikhaila!” Reesie said with a warm smile.

Suddenly everyone’s attention was drawn to Yevgeni, nearly four now, who was whining and doing his best to wriggle out of Svetlana’s arms. All at once, she put him down and he ran straight for Ian, wrapping his little arms around Ian’s long, thin legs. “Hey buddy! How are ya?” Ian asked, scooping Yevgeni up for a hug. “Okay,” Yevgeni answered in a shy, little voice. “Your dad’s been really looking forward to seeing you, ya know?” Ian spoke softly. Yevgeni nodded. “Go swimming?” Yevgeni asked, looking up at Ian, his big, beautiful, innocent, blue eyes nearly breaking him. “Yes, we are gonna go swimming!” Ian said, choking back tears. This whole experience was very emotional for him. The last time he had visited Yevgeni, he was in the throes of depression and had left abruptly, something he still had a lot of guilt about, since he knew how attached Yevgeni had become to him.

“Do you know how to swim?” he asked, trying to smile as he blinked away his tears. Yevgeni shook his head. “Well, neither does your Daddy, but we’re gonna work on it today,” Ian said with enthusiasm, ignoring the pissed off look on his husband’s face. “Are you hungry?” Ian asked, putting him down and tousling his hair. Yevgeni nodded. “Do you like Mac N Cheese?” “Yeah!” Yevgeni shouted with excitement. “Can you smell it?” Ian questioned, a big goofy grin forming on his face. Yevgeni inhaled deeply, then nodded his head, smiling. “Your dad made that special for you!” Ian said, emphasizing the word, ‘you’. Yevgeni looked over at Mickey and smiled. Mickey, whom Ian had freed of the bondage of his treatment for this visit, moved closer to Yevgeni. “Wanna see it? I’m gonna get everyone’s plates ready!” Mickey said with a nervous smile. Yevgeni nodded, grabbing Ian by the hand and dragging him with him.

“Come on in and sit down!” Reesie said to Debbie and Svetlana, motioning toward the couch in the main room. “I’m Reesie, by the way,” Reesie said, offering her hand to Svetlana. “Svetlana,” Svetlana said, shaking Reesie’s hand. “This other child of Mickey?” she asked, eyeing Mikhaila up. “He is not good father, you know,” Svetlana began. “He does not pay and he does not care,” she continued. “He tells me he is changed—-We will see,” she finished skeptically, taking in her surroundings.

“Actually, I think you will see that he has changed a lot!” Reesie countered. “He has been great with Mikhaila, and has been looking forward to seeing Yevgeni! You’ll see,” Reesie said, smiling down at her gorgeous baby girl. “So how does dick-loving fuckboy get you pregnant?” Svetlana asked bluntly. Reesie’s jaw dropped open. She couldn’t believe the audacity of this woman, whom she had just met, asking her this personal of a question.
“Come and get it!” Mickey yelled from the kitchen, Debbie jumping up from the couch with a quickness, happy for a reprieve from the crazy conversation that had begun between Mickey’s two babymamas. Everyone congregated in the kitchen around the island, steaming hot plates of Mac N Cheese served up for all. Mickey had raised one of the stools so Yevgeni could sit like a big boy, and he was happily spinning himself around on it until everyone sat down. Mickey had given him a place between himself and Ian, since he had requested to sit with ‘Een’, which was what Yevgeni called him.

While the three of them had been in the kitchen alone, Ian had questioned Yevgeni about whether he remembered certain things they had done when he came to visit, like playing ‘Red Light, Green Light’ and making chalk drawings on the sidewalk. Now Mickey understood why Yevgeni remembered Ian, but not him. The moment he heard Yevgeni’s little voice say, “Yeah, Een. Fun!” he stopped what he had been doing and rushed over to hug Ian. “I love you so fuckin’ much. You even took care of my son…” he said quietly, his voice cracking as a single tear rolled down his cheek.

“He was my last connection to you…” Ian whispered into Mickey’s ear before kissing him lightly on the temple.

Once everyone was seated with food and drinks in front of them, Mickey spoke up, “Just want everyone here to know how happy we are that you’re here. Me and Ian been busy tryna make a lotta good changes, so...Hope ya like the Mac N Cheese. Let’s eat.” Mickey smiled as everyone dug in. He received compliments on the meal across the board, but the most important one came in the form of a smile and two words from Yevgeni, “Good, Daddy!” “Glad you like it, bud!” Mickey said, beaming.

The conversations stayed light throughout lunch, mostly catching up on Gallagher family stuff, including Debbie's pending divorce, Ian and Micky also explaining to Debs just how she and Reesie were related. Ian and Mickey provided the short version of their prison experience and how Mickey’s appeal had been overturned as well, knowing that some of that story was probably out, after Lip’s visit.

The large pan of Mac and Cheese was nearly empty by the end of lunch, most people having seconds. Mickey was very pleased with how things were going so far, but was a bit apprehensive about the swimming, even though he was the one to suggest it. “Een! I wanna swim!” Yevgeni shouted, jumping down from his stool. “Okay, let’s go swimming!” Ian shouted back. “Svet, do you have a suit for him?” Ian asked. “No, sorry, no suit,” she answered. Yevgeni frowned. “That’s okay,” Mickey interjected, “Cuz, Ian and I got one for you!” “Yay!” Yevgeni cheered, jumping up and down. “Let’s go get our suits on, okay?” Ian said in a sing-song voice. “Daddy have one?” Yevgeni asked. “Yes, we got one for him, too!” Ian hummed happily. “Let’s go!” Yevgeni roared, following Ian and Mickey into their bedroom.

“If you guys need to change, I have a bathroom in my room, too,” Reesie offered. Debs took her up on it, but Svetlana declined, saying, “No swim for me.” While Debs was in the bathroom changing herself and Franny into swimsuits, Reesie was busy doing the same with Mikhaila in the bedroom. She had found the cutest little suit for Mikhaila, blue with tiny red flowers that set off her eyes and hair, respectively. The suit she bought for herself was a plain one-piece, but fit her well, the top being of the push-up variety, thus giving her the illusion of having more curves than she actually had, which made her happy.

When everyone was dressed and ready to go, they all headed out to the elevator, Mickey lifting Yevgeni up so he could push the button, which Yevgeni seemed to really enjoy. Once they reached the pool area, Ian noticed right away that there were life vests for young children and babies. “Yevgeni! Gotta get suited up!” he called out, holding up a vest in his size. “Yeah!” Yevgeni yelled, running over to Ian. “Walk, buddy,” Mickey warned. “This tile is slippery.” Ian grabbed two baby-
sized life vests, too, walking over to hand them to Debs and Reesie. “I don’t know,” Reesie began, “she’s so little…” “Oh, she’ll be fine! She’ll have a lot more fun with it on, and so will you,” Ian smiled.

Svetlana and Mickey each took a seat in a chair along the edge of the pool. “No swimming for you?” Svetlana asked Mickey. “Maybe…I don’t know,” he replied, watching Ian as he took Yevgeni down the stairs and into the water, Yevgeni squealing with excitement. “Look, I want you to know, I plan to help out with the kid, and I wanna see him…more than just today,” Mickey began. “Really…” Svetlana said snidely. “Yeah, I fuckin’ mean it. You still live above the Alibi?” Mickey asked. “For now, but looking for something better…for Yevgeni,” she answered. “Well, I’ll send the money to the Alibi until I hear you moved, alright?” Mickey offered. “Sure,” Svetlana sighed, “I believe when I see.” “Okay, that’s fine. And you will see. Hey, speakin’ of seein’, you seen Frank Gallagher at the Alibi recently?” Mickey asked curiously. “Yes, I see him every day. Sometimes I kick him out since he have no money to pay,” she explained. “Yeah, well, you seen him talkin’ business with anyone?” Mickey continued, pursuing his line of questioning.

“Business. What business? I see him talking to pervert with pictures and he buys him drinks. Says they make money if he take pictures at hotel, but pervert seems worried when he comes back, like something goes wrong. Then pervert stops coming, until one day he comes asking for Frank. Seems afraid of something, like someone want to kill him,” Svetlana recalled matter-of-factly.

“All at once, Mickey’s eye was caught by a sudden movement in the pool area, followed by a loud shriek. Ian had tossed Yevgeni high into the air, then caught him, and Yevgeni loved it. As Mickey continued to look on, it seemed as if both baby girls and their mothers were thoroughly enjoying themselves as well. All of the Frank and Damon drama faded into the background, if only for a moment, as Mickey watched Ian showing Yevgeni how to kick his feet and move his arms through the water. God! How he wished he knew how to swim, that he could be the one teaching his son. He thought about it. If he couldn’t teach Yevgeni, he would learn right along with him. “Time for Daddy’s swim lesson!” he yelled across the pool to Ian and Yevgeni as he walked toward them. “Yay, Daddy!” Yevgeni squealed with delight as Mickey reluctantly lowered himself into the shallow end of the pool. Mickey followed Ian’s instructions, doing all of the things Yevgeni was doing, only without a life vest. Granted, he was in the shallow end, but he did pretty well, promising to continue working on it, much to Yevgeni and Ian’s satisfaction.

Yevgeni spent the rest of his time in the pool ‘swimming’ from Ian to Mickey, then from Mickey to Ian, with his life vest on, giggling happily as he bonded with his dad. Mickey was absolutely glowing! Debbie and Reesie seemed to be forging a fast friendship, and Franny was absolutely enthralled with Mikhaila. Svetlana, for all her hard-ass ways, couldn’t help but smile as she watched her son with Ian and Mickey. As much as she hated to admit it, she could see a change in Mickey, and one in Ian as well. Even Svetlana could see that they brought out the best in each other.
As the visit ended, the goodbye between Yevgeni and Ian and Mickey was bittersweet. Yevgeni giving them each a bear hug and a giant kiss on the cheek. “Love you, buddy!” Mickey said, kissing his son on the top of the head. “I love you, too, Yevgeni,” Ian chimed in. “Come swimming again tomorrow?” Yevgeni asked, looking up into Mickey’s, then Ian’s eyes hopefully. “We’ll see, buddy,” Mickey answered, giving him another squeeze before handing him to Svetlana, then looking at Ian, who looked like he was ready to cry. “Okay,” Yevgeni said with a smile, disappearing into the limo with Svetlana.

Mickey and Ian watched as the limo headed down the road, Mickey comforting Ian as he wept. Mickey was sad, too, but the concern over why Damon had been looking for Ian loomed large in his mind, now that Yevgeni was no longer there as a distraction. “Hey!” Reesie called out to them, Mikhaila and their belongings in tow. “Got an Uber coming, but wanted to ask you, Ian, did Debbie tell you about the scary guy that came to your house looking for you last week?” “No! What are you talking about?” Ian asked. “Apparently, this guy was looking for you, but he ended up talking to Frank, and then he left,” Reesie explained.

“Did she say anything else about this guy?” Mickey demanded. “Just that he said he needed Ian’s help,” she answered. “My help? With what?” Ian wondered out loud. “She didn’t seem to know much else. Maybe you should ask Frank,” Reesie suggested. “Yeah, okay, we’ll ask him,” Mickey said with a scowl on his face. “Reesie, ‘didn’t know you were leaving now. You could have ridden home in the limo with the others,” Ian reasoned. “Nah, that’s okay. I don’t think Svetlana likes me or Mikhaila too much, so I’d rather get my own ride,” she responded. “Svetlana doesn’t like anyone,” Mickey began, “except maybe Yevgeni,” he finished with a chuckle, trying to lighten the mood after they had basically just interrogated Reesie. “There’s our car. See you later!” Reesie shouted, waving as she walked toward her Uber. “Wait! Let me help you,” Mickey offered, grabbing Mikhaila’s carrier from Reesie’s hand. “Thanks for staying! Love you, Mikhaila!” Mickey said softly as he loaded Mikhaila into the car, kissing her on the top of her head.

Ian hugged Mickey into him as they walked back into the lobby, calling the elevator. Once inside, Mickey said, “We gotta talk to fuckin’ Frank! Somethin’s not addin’ up here, and I gotta get to the bottom of it!” “Okay, but can we do it tomorrow?” Ian asked. “Today was such a perfect day, and I wanted to end it by spending some time together, then finishing your last treatment and making sure you get some rest before your appointment tomorrow.

“Oh yeah? What kinda time?” Mickey whispered into Ian’s ear. “I don’t care. We can do whatever you want,” Ian smiled. A fiendish grin came over Mickey’s face as he looked his gorgeous husband up and down, imagining all the possibilities. “Oh, I’m sure I’ll think of somethin’!” Mickey growled, pulling Ian in for a sexy tease of a kiss, his teeth lightly grazing Ian’s lower lip. “Mmmmmmm…” Ian hummed, his mouth less than an inch from Mickey’s as the elevator door opened. “Alone at last!” Mickey breathed into Ian’s mouth, “Just you and me.”
“Hey, wanna rinse all this chlorine off me real quick,” Mickey called out to Ian from the bathroom.
“Hmm...I think I’ll join you,” Ian purred seductively, stripping his clothes off and throwing them in
a heap on the floor. Ian could hear the shower water running already, so he decided to wait a minute
for Mickey to get in before him, giving him a chance to start washing his hair.

Once Mickey had stepped in, Ian meandered up to the bathroom door, listening for the click of the
shampoo top popping open. Shortly after that, he could hear the change in the water spatter pattern,
indicating that Mickey was rinsing his hair. He pulled the shower door open quietly, moving in next
to Mickey, who was standing under the shower head, his eyes tightly closed, the water trickling
down over his face. Ian grabbed hold of him suddenly, hoisting him up into his arms, his hands
supporting his glorious ass as Mickey instinctively wrapped his legs around Ian’s waist. “Damn,
Gallagher!” Mickey yelled, Ian having startled him with his sudden advance. Ian swallowed
Mickey’s mouth up with his own, abbreviating the last syllable of his name as Mickey uttered it. He
pressed Mickey’s back firmly against the shower wall as his tongue delved deeply into his husband’s
enticingly inviting mouth, Mickey’s own adept tongue returning the favor with voracity.

Ian gripped Mickey’s ass cheeks tightly as he pressed his body against Mickey’s, rubbing his
massive erection against Mickey’s pelvis zealously. Ian let go of Mickey’s right ass cheek long
enough to grab the bottle of bath gel, squeezing out a generous amount onto Mickey’s shoulder and
allowing it to drip down his back before massaging it into Mickey’s lower back, creating a nice lather
and causing Mickey to moan softly. He coated his fingers with suds and began to toy with Mickey’s
anus, all the while kissing him passionately. “Fuck!” Mickey mumbled between kisses, tightening his
legs around Ian’s waist. “Put your feet against the wall!” Ian growled, repositioning Mickey so that
his legs were bent at the knee, his feet just outside Ian’s shoulders. Mickey complied willingly,
supporting his own weight with his legs, allowing Ian to lean his back against the opposing wall and
play with Mickey some more. “Oh, fuck!” Mickey cried out in pleasure as Ian slowly slid his fingers
in and out of Mickey’s asshole teasingly. Ian was taking his time, his own cock just as swollen as
Mickey’s, savoring this time alone with his smokin’ hot hubby, watching as Mickey licked his lips,
then bit down on the lower one like he always did when he was really enjoying himself this way. Ian
smiled as he soaped up his own member, then Mickey’s, still taking his time so as not to end their
grand anticipation prematurely.

Ian gently began his assent, gripping Mickey’s ankles with his hands for leverage as he pressed
further up into him, Mickey breathing harshly through his nose, his lower lip pinned halfway inside
his own mouth, his top teeth denting it severely. As Ian continued, Mickey’s breathing became more
ragged, his soft moans punctuating Ian’s movements. “Oh, Mick,” Ian breathed sensually, his body
and soul completely overtaken, his lips quivering, his eyes fluttering in sheer ecstasy as he moved
aptly in and out of Mickey’s tight hole with increasing speed and force. “Ian...so fuckin’ good!
Fuck!!” Mickey screamed as Ian moved his right hand from Mickey’s ankle to his throbbing cock.
As their excitement intensified, Mickey reached for Ian’s hair, pulling at his damp, crimson ringlets
wildly as Ian fucked and manipulated him until he couldn’t see straight, his dizzy head spinning.
Within seconds, Mickey erupted atop Ian’s fist as it encircled him, pumping furiously at the same
tempo as his vigorous thrusts. “Ian! Fuck!” Mickey yelled as Ian blasted into him for the last time,
calling Mickey’s name hoarsely as he unloaded, suddenly feeling Mickey’s weight on his left hand
as Mickey loosened the grip of his feet on the shower wall. Ian eased Mickey down into a standing
position, the couple leaning against one another’s wobbly frames for support.

As the two men continued their gradual descent from their euphoric encounter, their eyes locked on
each other, prompting silly, satisfied smiles from both. No words necessary. What they had together

Compromising Positions
was indescribable through the use of mere words. It was so much bigger than what they or anyone could ever explain or describe, a feeling of complete communion, oneness, combined with the hottest sex anyone could ever imagine or dream of. Even the words ‘I love you’, seemed too small and insignificant to represent what each felt for the other, but they used them nonetheless, sharing them at the exact same moment, as they stood, holding each other under the warm, comforting drizzle of the shower. They finished up their shower, lathering each other up lovingly, Ian washing his own hair before toweling himself and Mickey dry, as had become his routine, ever since Mickey got his PICC line. This would very likely be Mickey’s last shower before finally having it removed, and Ian couldn’t be happier. But for now, Ian needed to carefully dry around the area and reattach Mickey for his last treatment.

“Last one,” Ian said to Mickey softly as he helped him on with his robe, then worked at attaching a new IG bag and tubing. The doctor’s office had told Mickey he could discontinue the fluids when they had called to set his appointment, so that was one less thing for Ian to be concerned with.

“Mick, do you mind if I go into the exam room with you tomorrow morning?” Ian asked. “…’The fuck would I mind? There’s nowhere you can’t go with me, Ian,” Mickey answered.

Ian’s face softened, Mickey having knocked him out of the all-business frame of mind that he routinely adopted when dealing with Mickey’s medical issues, mostly to protect himself from becoming emotional, since there had been so many ups and downs throughout his illness. He couldn’t help but think about the reality of what Mickey had just said to him, in personal terms. Of course, Ian knew that, as his husband, he was Mickey’s caregiver, his support system, his lover and his friend, but the idea that there was nowhere Mickey would feel the need to go without Ian—-that was a huge leap!

Ian recalled how angry Mickey had been when he realized that he was going to end up in prison with him and, before that, long ago, when he had told Ian things would go a lot more smoothly if he didn’t attend Yevgeni’s Christening. Then there was the time when Ian crashed Mickey’s wedding to Svetlana. Mickey was quite obviously uncomfortable with his being there, although it didn’t stop him from fucking the shit out of him in the coat closet. But now, at this point in their relationship, they were inseparable, as far as Mickey was concerned, and Ian loved hearing that. It was like music to his ears.

“I just want to be sure how the doc thinks we should proceed, as far as future treatments go, since we will likely be back in Mexico soon,” Ian explained. Ian went on to say that Mickey could possibly require future treatments, and that he wanted to be sure they would have access to the same product he had been given for this second round of treatments. He shared his concerns about Mickey’s future health, becoming emotional in spite of himself, until it got to the point that he had to stop talking about it. He just sat across from Mickey, staring into his magical, blue eyes in silence, then finally blurt out, amid a bout of tears, “Fuck, I love you!” as he leaned into Mickey, gripping the base of his neck with his right hand and kissing him tenderly, his left arm clinging to Mickey’s body like a vine. “Love you, too, Ian. I’m good. Don’t worry,” Mickey breathed as they continued to kiss softly.

Once Mickey and his loving lips had calmed Ian, he broached the subject of contacting Kevin again, as well as the possibility of having to find Frank, which they both knew could prove to be a difficult task. Mickey explained that leaving the States, with Damon possibly still out there looking for them for some unknown reason, could come back to bite them, especially if Damon were to be caught and decide to talk about the details of his escape, possibly causing video footage of the convenience store robbery or the car theft to be viewed. Both Mickey and Ian could easily end up back in prison, especially since Ojos Azules was now completely above-board, making it a piece of cake for law enforcement to find them. “I gotta find Damon’s ass somehow, but I don’t have a fuckin’ clue where to start,” Mickey lamented. I’m gonna call Kev now. You wanna talk?” Mickey asked. “Yeah, I’ll at least get him on the phone so he doesn’t hang up on you again,” Ian laughed.
Ian called, but it was V that answered. “Hey, V!” Ian said warmly. “It’s Ian! How are you?” “I’m good, Ian! Saw you on TV! Lookin’ good, babe!” she answered, complimenting him on his recent work. “Thanks, V!” Ian responded adding, “Mickey has some questions, but maybe you could answer some of them?” Ian suggested, looking over at Mickey for his approval, Mickey nodding in affirmation. “I can try,” she replied. “Okay, great! Here’s Mickey,” Ian said. “V, I don’t know if you heard, but some asshole tried to kidnap my daughter a few days ago,” Mickey began. “Mickey, I didn’t even know you HAD a daughter. Is she okay?” V inquired, the sincerity of a concerned parent evident in her voice. “Yeah, she’s fine, but the guy who took her says it was fuckin’ Frank that bribed and threatened him to do it,” Mickey explained. “Yeah, we pretty much know he was the mastermind behind all this shit, but what we don’t know is how Damon, the guy who escaped with Mickey, got involved,” Ian interjected.

“Wait...what does he look like?” V asked. Mickey gave a detailed description, all the way down to his tattoos, adding that they had found out from Debbie that he had been at her house, looking for Ian, and had also talked to Frank. “Yeah, I’ve definitely seen him around here. Mostly out back in the alley, talking to Frank a few times. Seemed like he and Frank didn’t get along so well, like Frank had something on him. Probably threatened to call the cops on him since he was an escaped convict, now that you told me he escaped with Mickey,” V reasoned. “What would Frank have to gain by calling the cops on him?” Ian wondered out loud. “Frank used that shit to get Damon to do what he wanted, Ian!” Mickey said, raising his voice in frustration. “I fuckin’ knew it! He didn’t risk his freedom coming to the Southside to fuck with you or me. He musta had another reason. Frank just threatened him, so he had no choice but to threaten that Dan pervert or go to prison. Now that the cops got Dan, Frank’s gonna want Damon to do somethin’ else to get money from us!” “So what are we gonna do?” Ian asked.

“V, when’s the last time you saw Damon?” Mickey questioned. “I haven’t worked for a few days, so I guess it was last time I worked. Kev was here the last two nights. You should ask him,” V suggested. “What’s his number?” Mickey barked. “Please,” Ian added politely. “I’ll text it to ya,” V replied. “Okay, thanks,” Mickey said graciously, ending the call.

As soon as Kev’s number came through, Mickey hit ‘send’, Kev picking up rather quickly. “Yo,” Kevin answered boisterously. “Hey, Kev, it’s Mickey,” he said in a familiar tone of voice. “Sup, Mickey?” Kevin asked, being his usual dim-witted self. “No, the other one—tall, dark and not so good-lookin’,” Mickey chuckled. “Oh okay, I know who you mean now. He was in the alley last night arguin’ with Frank. Somethin’ about takin’ a kid if Ian didn’t pay. Had me pretty weirded out. I told Svetlana about it. Figured it might have somethin’ to do with Yev,” Kevin guessed. “So what did the guy say?” Mickey asked. “Well, I didn’t hear much. Was only out there a short time, throwin’ out empties. But Frank said somethin’ about the Feds that seemed to ruffle his feathers pretty good. Think he threatened to turn him in,” Kevin concluded. “Okay, thanks. If you or V see him, tell him to hang in the usual spot ‘til I get there,” Mickey instructed. “What’s the usual spot?” Kevin asked. “Don’t worry ‘bout it. Best if you don’t know—keep your mouth shut. Anyone asks you anything, you don’t know nothin’.” “Okey Dokey!” Kevin responded, ending the call.

“Okay, I gotta take care a somethin’,” Mickey said to Ian. “Stay here! I’ll be back. Oh shit! You gotta take this fuckin’ thing off me!” “No, I don’t. And I’m comin’ with you!” Ian insisted. “Like hell you are! Too dangerous!” Mickey yelled. “Oh yeah? What happened to ‘There’s nowhere you can’t go with me, Ian’?” Ian asked, throwing Mickey’s own words right back at him. “This is different! I can’t put you at risk over my stupid shit!” Mickey screamed. “I’m sorry. I don’t mean to yell at you, but really, Ian, this is like last time! This time, please listen!” Mickey pleaded with him.

“Sorry, but if you’re at risk, then so am I. I don’t wanna live without you. So if you’re goin’ down,
I’m gonna go right with you!” Ian threatened. “No, you’re fuckin’ not!” Mickey’s voice was so loud, it hurt Ian’s ears, but he got up close in his face anyway. “If you leave me here, I won’t be here when you get back,” Ian hissed, his eyes burning into Mickey’s, challenging him. “Oh yeah, where the fuck you goin’?” Mickey asked cockily. “Out lookin’ for your stubborn ass!” Ian shouted. “So, you should just take me with you. At least you’ll know where I am. And more importantly, I’ll know where you are,” Ian said more calmly, seeing that something had clicked in Mickey’s head. He understood. “I get it. No more leavin’ each other behind. Alright, Sundance, let’s ride. Call a fuckin’ Uber!” Mickey sighed in resignation. Ian smiled at the love of his life as he reached for his phone, never having loved him more than he did at that very moment.
It was completely dark by the time the Uber dropped Mickey and Ian off near the docks, where Mickey thought Damon might be hiding out. There was an old house boat, called ‘The Moonlighter’, that was known by the Milkoviches to be out of commission. Mickey and Damon had spent a night or two in it, before they upgraded to the van. It was cold inside, but the risk of getting caught in it was very low, provided any comings or goings took place either very late or very early. Mickey had no idea how much or little the police or the Feds might actually be looking for Damon after so much time, but knowing Damon, and also having the misfortune of knowing Frank, Mickey knew how easily Frank could spook Damon and blackmail him into doing his bidding.

As Mickey approached the houseboat, he asked Ian to hang back and act as a lookout while he gained entry. He used a particular knock to announce himself, which was essential in order to avoid being shot, a side effect of his former lifestyle that Mickey was unfortunately quite prone to. “Damon,” he whispered as he walked in, noticing immediately that there were food wrappers and empty beer cans strewn about the place. Of course, it was possible that some of the Southside’s growing homeless population had discovered it and made it their home, but the quantity of the same brand of beer cans told Mickey this was not the case. Someone who, at least at one point, had some funds, had been staying on that boat.

“Damon,” Mickey called out, this time in slightly more than a whisper, prompting a response. “Mickey?” Damon answered, each recognizing his old cellie’s voice immediately. “Yeah, it’s me…” The fuck’s goin’ on?” Mickey asked. “Man, gotta get to Mexico, like yesterday. Was up here trying to find your dude. Saw him all over billboards and TV. Figured he might be able to help me get in touch with you, if you were there. I have citizenship there, but can’t cross the border cuz I’m a fugitive.”

By this time, Ian was in an absolute panic! Mickey had disappeared into the boat, and he hadn’t heard anything from him. Mickey had told Ian to wait there, to be his lookout, but the longer he waited, the more he worried. ‘He could be lying in there hurt or dead,’ he thought to himself as he approached the boat, doing the exact opposite of what Mickey had asked him to do. Ian listened at the door for a minute. When he didn’t hear anything, he opened the door and walked in, Damon instinctively pulling his glock out and pointing it in the direction of the door, after hearing it open. Mickey, who was unarmed, positioned himself behind Damon. Both men listened silently to the sound of the approaching footsteps. Mickey doubted it was the cops, since they usually busted in, announcing themselves, but it could easily be a federal agent, conducting a search.

Damon cocked his gun. “It’s Ian!” Ian declared nervously, having heard the clicks of the gun. “It’s cool,” Mickey said to Damon, putting his hands on Damon’s arms from behind, helping him to lower his weapon. Ian breathed a sigh of relief. “...The fuck are you doin’ in here!? Thought I told you to stay on lookout!” Mickey chided Ian. “Well, I didn’t know what the fuck was going on! You could have been in danger!” Ian argued. “And what could you’ve done about it, besides get your own ass hurt or killed?” Mickey countered, shaking his head in disappointment.

“Anyway, now that you’re in here,” Mickey continued, “Damon needs to get to Mexico. He has dual citizenship but, being a fugitive, he can’t get across the border...and I don’t think my way would work for him.” Ian couldn’t help but laugh out loud as the image of Damon in a dress and heels flashed through his mind. “He got into some trouble in Texas after we left him, so he couldn’t stay down there. He came back to Chicago hopin’ to meet up with some friends who could help, but that didn’t pan out. He saw your ads and figured he’d look you up, Maybe you could put him in touch with me,” Mickey explained to Ian quickly.
“Yeah, okay. So why the fuck would you get involved in the kidnapping of Mickey’s daughter?” Ian questioned Damon angrily. “Didn’t wanna be. Your asshole father threatened to turn me in to the Feds—still doin’ it, man. Especially now that the Dan dude’s in jail. I gotta get the fuck outta here...quick!” Damon said, looking worried.

While Damon and Ian were talking, a text came in on Mickey’s phone, from Kev:

“V called. Said the police just came and picked Frank up from the Alibi for questioning. Svetlana called the cops when she saw him lurking around. Said he was trying to get Yevegni to go with him. V said he wasn’t, but with all the stories Dan’s been telling, I guess they had enough to take him in. Just thought you would wanna know.”

Mickey read the text to Ian and Damon. “So, what you think?” Damon asked Mickey. “I think it gives you time to get the fuck outta Chicago. And, think about it, if Frank turns you in, how the fuck does that help him? He won’t get any money. I could only see him doin’ that if it was his only way outta jail. But who the fuck knows what Frank will do? I gotta get in touch with Manuel and Johnny,” Mickey concluded.

“Who the fuck are they?” Damon asked. Some people in Mexico that know how to do what you need done,” Mickey explained. “Darn it, Mickey! Don’t put them at risk. They are finally outta all that shit, like you are. No more trouble!” Ian shouted. “Shhh!” Mickey whispered. “We don’t need to be attractin’ any unwanted attention.” “Ian, if you really think Bigley and his people are squeaky clean, think a-fuckin’-gain. All the strings he can and has pulled for us, how quickly he gets shit done---The guy’s connected! I’d ask him directly, but he’s already done so much for us. Trust me, Manuel and Johnny can and will handle this,” Mickey assured Ian. “Just to be safe though, we need burner phones, at least two.” Ian rolled his eyes, realizing he couldn’t reason with Mickey on this, but dreading his involvement at the same time.

“Damon, I’ll take care a gettin’ the phones. You gotta lay low here ‘til you hear from me. I’ll drop a phone for you. It’ll be on the deck in a plastic bag within a couple hours,” Mickey instructed. Damon nodded silently as Mickey steered Ian out the door of the houseboat.

“Fuck, if we weren’t pressed for time, I’d say let’s stay and fuck for old time’s sake, but we are, so...raincheck?” Mickey asked with a silly smirk. “Yep!” Ian smiled, the conversation taking him back to the night he tried, very unsuccessfully, to tell Mickey he had moved on, had a boyfriend, etc., only to end up fucking him right there at the docks, the moonlight reflecting magnificently off Mickey’s ‘full moon’ as he did it.

Ian felt a twinge in his cock as he relived the feeling of it all in his memory, his body and soul aching to experience it again. “Fuck it!” Mickey muttered, sensing and sharing in Ian’s desire. He turned Ian toward him, pulling him by the waist, flush against his own body, planting an impassioned kiss on Ian’s beautiful lips. As the kiss deepened, Mickey reached down to unbuckle, unbutton and unzip Ian’s jeans, all of which he accomplished in mere seconds. “Don’t have any lube,” Ian breathed into Mickey’s mouth as Mickey began to stroke his rock-hard cock. “Got it!” Mickey responded, pulling a small tube from his back pocket and handing it to Ian before turning his back and dropping his own jeans below his bountiful buttocks. “What the fuck, Mick?” Ian reacted in surprise, holding the tube of lube in front Mickey’s face for a brief second, before opening it. “I knew where we were headed,” Mickey grinned, looking over his shoulder at his sexy-as-fuck man, who had begun lubing his fine ass up instantly, Ian’s painfully stiff cock just begging to get inside him.

All at once, everything came flooding back to Ian like a tsunami—the desperate sense of urgency, that split second of fear and self-loathing at the realization of his complete lack of self-control, followed by the most exquisite waves of pleasure, relief, satisfaction, and contentment, like none
other than Mickey could provide. And for Mickey, it was the same, but with the added benefit of a confidence boost, knowing that, after all their time apart, he was still irresistible to Ian, who, whether he liked it or not, was still Mickey’s man, one hundred percent, to command, to be at his sexual beckon call.

This experience was so exhilarating for both to relive, that, in a matter of minutes, they both climaxed, Mickey’s limp, spent body bent over a random boat, Ian’s slumped over on top of him, their left hands still intertwined, Ian’s on top of Mickey’s, just like old times. “That was intense!” Ian breathed, his eyes still aglow with lust. “Yeah, and quick!” Mickey chuckled, completely starry-eyed and fucked-out. “Let’s go,” Mickey prodded, pulling his pants up as he stood, suddenly realizing that they needed to call an Uber, or someone with a car, to get them where they needed to be, wherever that was.

Mickey wasn’t sure what to do first. He needed to get drop phones, but didn’t really want to be on camera buying them himself. He decided they would Uber to the Alibi and, if all else failed, at least he would get to see his son once more before he left the city and, ultimately, the country. “Call a fucking Uber to the Alibi,” Mickey told Ian, after a long few minutes of silent thought. “I could call Fiona. She has a car,” Ian suggested. “Would you fuck off with this Fiona shit?! If you wanna ride with her, that’s fine, but I can’t stand the bitch!” Mickey seethed. “You used to get along with her okay,” Ian reminded him. “Yeah. That was before she said I’d set a fuckin’ match to your life! And did I?” he asked, a hint of hurt in his voice. “No,” Ian admitted. “Good fuckin’ thing you didn’t keep listenin’ to her. I woulda never seen ya again!” Mickey whined, “True. I would’ve missed out on all that fantastic fucking,” Ian laughed. “That all I am to you? A good fuck?” Mickey asked incredulously. “Yeah, man. That’s all,” Ian smirked, unable to hold a straight face. “Hi-Larious,” Mickey responded. “Just call the goddamn Uber, for fuck’s sake!”

The Uber arrived shortly thereafter, dropping them at the Alibi in record time. When they walked in, the place was dead, and V was on the phone. From her end of the conversation, it sounded like she was talking to Svetlana, who, it seemed, was very upset and worried about Yevgeni. “…the fuck’s goin’ on?” Mickey asked, after eavesdropping for a few minutes. V put her finger up, as she attempted to calm Svetlana so she could get off the phone. Finally, after what seemed like forever, V hung up, giving Mickey and Ian the details regarding Frank’s arrest, Svetlana’s concern over a threat that was supposedly made to take Yevgeni, and, of course, the fact that Kev had been living in fear for the past week that all of their phones were bugged because of all the weird shit that had been going down. As it turned out, this worked to Mickey’s advantage since crazy, paranoid Kev had purchased a bunch of drop phones, four of which Mickey paid to take off V’s hands as soon as he heard she had them.

“So, you think Svetlana would mind if we took Yevgeni to the hotel to spend the night?” Mickey began, out of the blue, Ian’s jaw dropping in complete surprise at his husband’s split second decision. “Security there is really tight now, since everything happened with Mikhaila. No way anyone would be able to get to Yevgeni there, especially with me and Ian with him. Besides, Ian and I are leaving tomorrow night, and Yevgeni wanted to swim again tomorrow,” Mickey finished, Ian still staring at him in disbelief. “You have an appointment in the morning,” Ian reminded him. “Yeah, I fuckin’ know I have an appointment, but it won’t take long,” Mickey reasoned. “And I wanna swim with my son...and my husband,” he added, smiling at Ian warmly, hoping to disarm him, putting an end to his protests.

“And I got somethin’ I gotta ask one of you to do for me,” Mickey continued, directing his words at V. “I hate to ask, but I really shouldn’t do it myself. Need somebody to drop one a’ these phones on the deck of an old houseboat down at the docks—"it’s called the Moonlighter,” he instructed. “And then just forget you did it, okay?” “Uh, sure,” V answered. “And here’s something for your trouble,” Ian added, handing her forty bucks. “Ian, you don’t have to…” V began. “V, it’s no big deal. I’m
getting paid for my commercial soon, which will be pretty decent. We’re good! Just appreciate your friendship,” Ian said kindly. V smiled at him sweetly as he put the money into her hands.

“Hey, can you do that now?” Mickey asked, “If I watch the bar...or how ‘bout if I have Svet bring Yev down and we can hang out here ‘til you get back?” “Alright, but this seems shady. You sure it’s safe?” V asked. “Yeah, safe for anyone but me and Ian. Trust me,” he answered. “And can you call an Uber to somewhere near there? I’ll pay for it.” “Okay,” V agreed, reaching for her phone and purse.

Mickey called Svetlana, letting her know where he was, and giving her the option of coming down to the bar with Yevgeni or him coming up to get him. She was still pretty shook up about the threat she perceived to have been made on Yevgeni, so she decided to come down with him.

“Een!” Yevgeni squealed, running over to hug his legs. Instead, Ian scooped him up, spun him around and handed him over to Mickey, who gave him a tight squeeze. “I love you, Yevgeni,” Mickey said softly as he held him. “Love you, too, daddy! Go swimming?” he asked with great excitement as he stared up at his father, their crystal blue eyes a perfect match. Mickey looked over at Svetlana. “Okay if me and Ian take him back to the hotel for the night and take him swimmin’ before we leave?” Mickey asked, putting Yevgeni down just in time for him to run to his mother, yelling, “Peeezzzz!” Svetlana glared at Mickey, clearly not wanting to let Yevgeni out of her sight. “You can come, if you want,” Mickey offered.

“I promise there’s nothing to worry about. The cops have my dad,” Ian chimed in, attempting to ease Svetlana’s mind. “This I know. V tells me. What about big, scary Mexican Kevin talks about?” “There’s nothing to worry about there,” Ian assured her. “He escape from prison. How you trust this person?” Svetlana asked. “Mickey escaped from prison, and I trust HIM!” Ian pointed out. “Besides, Mickey trusts him. And that’s good enough for me.”

“Look, the guy just wants to stay outta prison. Frank was threatening him. Now Frank’s in jail. All he’s tryna do is get the fuck outta the country. He’s not gonna touch our son. Don’t fuckin’ worry,” Mickey said in a low voice, while Ian distracted Yevgeni. “Now, can I take my son swimmin' or not?” Mickey appealed to her sympathy for Yevgeni. They both knew how badly he wanted to swim again, and also that Ian and Mickey would be leaving the country soon. “Alright,” Svetlana sighed in resignation. “But if anything happen to my Yevgeni, I kill you!” she hissed at Mickey.

After about an hour of Mickey and Ian overseeing a dead bar and playing ‘Red Light, Green Light’ with Yevgeni, V returned, making the comment, “Mission accomplished,” which put Mickey at ease. Now all he had to do was get in contact with Manuel and Johnny to set things up, which he figured he’d do, once they got Yevgeni settled in for the night. Mickey hoped everything would go smoothly in that regard. He did realize that both Manuel and Johnny had been so busy running Ojos Azules, that they hadn’t had their hands in the reverse coyote business in a long while. He also knew getting Damon where he needed to be, in order to get to Mexico, could prove to be tough, particularly because he had no vehicle, and Mickey thought it would be too risky for any of them to steal one.

It was fairly late when the Milkovich Family arrived back at the Waldorf. Yevgeni had fallen asleep in the car, so Ian insisted on carrying him in. He reminded Mickey that he still hadn’t finished his last treatment and needed to get that started again before bed. Mickey was too preoccupied with making phone calls to think about much else. He wanted to get everything set up for Damon---and soon---so he could relax, secure in the knowledge that Damon would be out of Frank’s reach.

He was hoping the police would charge Frank with Conspiracy to Kidnap, but didn’t know how far they would take it, based on Dan and Svetlana’s statements. Frank was slippery, and Mickey knew it. No matter what kind of shit he managed to get himself into, he always seemed to escape
unscathed, while others, even his own family, took the fall. Mickey considered Frank to be the scum of the earth and, if there was anyone he wouldn’t mind seeing incarcerated, it was him. He knew Ian didn’t give much of a shit about his dad either, which made it all that much easier to hope he would stay put.

Ian deposited Yevgeni directly into the bed, kissing him lightly on the forehead. “Damn, Mick! This kid looks more and more like you everyday!” he commented, walking toward Mickey with his pole and treatment bag. “Oh shit!” Mickey responded, heading in the opposite direction with his phone in his hand. “Don’t do this,” Ian whined, chasing after Mickey. “I gotta make this call,” Mickey barked. “Yeah, well, you can do it with your treatment on! C’mon, Mick! I took it off twice today when you asked me to! You wanna be in the fucking hospital again?” Ian blurted out, not realizing the impact of his words until after he said them. Mickey’s face fell, and he stopped dead in his tracks, staring, angrily fearful, at Ian. “I’m sorry, Mick. I shouldn’t have said that. It’s just that I want you to finish this treatment. I think you are all healed, but I don’t want us to do, or not do, anything to change that.”

Mickey nodded in understanding, sitting down on the couch, Ian plopping down next to him immediately and beginning the process of attaching Mickey’s last treatment. Mickey opened a flip phone and, taking Manuel’s number from his own phone, dialed him up. “Hello,” Manuel’s reluctant voice came through the speaker of the drop phone. Mickey knew he didn’t like answering unfamiliar phone numbers, but thank goodness he did this time. “It’s me,” Mickey said softly. “Ojos, where’s YOUR phone?” he asked. “It’s fine. I need a favor. Need you and Johnny to get Damon to Mexico,” Mickey said shortly. “Can he get to the crossing?” Manuel asked. “That’s gonna be tough,’” Mickey answered. “Let me talk to Johnny and I’ll get back to you,” Manuel promised. “Might have to call Bigley,” he added. “Whatever you gotta do. This needs to happen ASAP,” Mickey asserted, emphasizing its importance. “I’ll be in touch. On a new number,” Manuel said in little more than a whisper, before ending the call.

“Mick, are we gonna be okay?” Ian asked, a look of fear and concern overtaking his face, as the reality of the reasons for Mickey’s secrecy hit him. “Yeah, you gotta trust me this time,” Mickey replied. “You know I do,” Ian said solemnly. “Just want our life together, with all this other shit in the past,” he added. “Me, too, Ian. Me, too,” Mickey breathed, reaching for his hand and touching their rings together as he kissed him softly.
Ian and Mickey had tried, unsuccessfully, to sleep apart, with Yevgeni lying in the middle of the bed, the idea being that he couldn’t possibly fall out that way. The trouble was that the husbands were so used to spooning their way to sleep, it was nearly impossible for them to accomplish it any other way. After over an hour of tossing and turning, they finally decided to move Yevgeni to one side so Ian could wrap himself around Mickey. After that, they fell sound asleep in minutes, waking the next morning to Yevgeni poking Ian in the back. “Een! Een! Go swimming?” he shouted, evidently well-rested and thinking that 7 AM was the perfect time to hit the pool. “No, buddy. We have to take Daddy to the doctor’s first,” Ian yawned sleepily, as Mickey began to stir inside his embrace. “Daddy sick?” Yevgeni asked. “No, he was, but he’s better now,” Ian explained honestly, Mickey smiling to himself as he heard their conversation.

Mickey hopped out of the other side of the bed, shutting off the alarm on his phone and thinking about hitting the bathroom first, until he remembered his pole and bag. He really hoped Yevgeni could be distracted by something so Ian could help him remove it before Yevgeni noticed it. He thought it might scare him.

Ian must have been thinking along the same lines because he offered to run a bath in the hot tub for Yevgeni. “It’s not swimming, but it’s still fun,” Ian told Yevgeni as he walked over to run the water. As soon as there was enough water for Yevgeni to sit in, Ian helped him in, telling him to sit still while he went to get some soap and a washcloth. Then he dashed over, disconnected Mickey’s treatment, and ran into the bathroom to pull the shampoo, soap and a washcloth from the shower. Mickey threw a shirt on and joined Ian at the tub with Yevgeni. “G’morning, little man,” Mickey smiled, first at Yevgeni, then at Ian, who was washing Yevgeni’s hair. “It even feels like yours,” Ian remarked as he rinsed Yevgeni’s hair.

If anyone ever doubted Yevgeni’s paternity, there was no doubting it now. In fact, it was pretty crazy how much both of Mickey’s kids looked like him. “You must have some strong genes,” Ian said with a giggle. Ian loved seeing Mickey in the kids. And he enjoyed having them around—a family—-their family. It was something Ian was used to, having spent his whole life immersed in a large, albeit dysfunctional one. It was nice to have a little bit of harmless chaos around sometimes. Of course, Ian did enjoy his alone time with Mickey, too, but that goes without saying. If he lived to be 100, he could never get enough of him. This was why the upcoming events involving Damon had him worried. He and Mickey both finally had clean records, and here they were, risking it all to help an escaped felon—a fugitive!

Ian tried to put all of his concerns out of his mind, turning on the jets in the tub, which Yevgeni absolutely loved, then focusing on getting Yevgeni out of the tub and dressed. Mickey had taken the opportunity to jump in the shower, offering to make breakfast when he got out.

When Mickey got out of the shower, he heard his drop phone ringing, so he rushed over to grab it, slipping on the wet tile and narrowly escaping serious injury. Fortunately, he ended up catching himself against the door jamb, his head bouncing off the door without incident. “What happened?” Ian yelled, rushing into the bathroom as Mickey was just getting his bearings and trying to head out to get the phone. They collided, Mickey’s head crashing into Ian’s mouth, splitting his lip open. “Fuck, Mick!” Ian screamed, an off-the-cuff reaction to sudden pain. “I gotta get that fuckin’ phone!” Mickey said with an agitated tone, scurrying past Ian, who was standing there holding his hand up to his mouth to catch the blood that was spewing from his bottom lip.

Yevgeni stood, wide-eyed, as Ian walked out into the bedroom, grabbing a towel to apply pressure to
his lip. “Daddy hurt you, Een?” Yevgeni said in a tiny, frightened voice, his eyes filling up with tears. “It’s okay, buddy. It was an accident,” Ian answered calmly, trying his best to hide the blood that was rapidly staining the towel. “C’Mon, let’s get some breakfast,” Ian continued, ushering Yevgeni out of the room.

Mickey had somehow managed to catch the phone call, which was, as he expected, from Manuel. As it turned out, he and Johnny did have to involve Bigley, who was sending a limo to pick Damon up to drive to New York. Then he would be flown into Mexico on Bigley’s jet. Mickey was amazed at the amount of risk Bigley was willing to take, in order to accomplish this, but Bigley always seemed to find a way around everything. “There is one condition for all this,” Manuel added, after sharing the plan. “Whatever it is, I’m okay with it,” Mickey responded, realizing his desperate situation. “Well, it also involves Ian,” Manuel clarified. “Alright, so you need to talk to him?” Mickey asked. “Unless you are comfortable answering for him,” Manuel responded. “Uh...hold on,” Mickey hesitated, walking with the phone into the kitchen, where Ian was cooking one-handed, his left hand holding ice wrapped in a towel onto his still-bleeding mouth.

“Hey, Manuel needs to talk to you,” Mickey muttered, taking over the cooking duties and handing the phone to Ian. “Hello,” Ian’s voice came through faintly, muffled by the towel that was covering his mouth. “Ian, Bigley is handling today’s travel business for our friend and has a condition that involves you,” Manuel explained. “And what’s that?” Ian asked, his annoyance obvious in his tone. “He wants you to agree to traveling to the States once or twice a month to work for Surfin’ USA, the timing and frequency of which would be at their discretion. If you’re okay with it, I’d like to go now. I can give you more details later on my phone,” Manuel spoke hurriedly.

“What did Mickey say?” Ian sighed, obviously not wanting to deal with any of this while his face was a bloody mess. “He said, whatever Bigley wants, he’s okay with it,” Manuel paraphrased Mickey’s words. “Oh, he is?” Ian said, becoming more agitated by the second. “Manuel, can you please give us a few minutes? I need to talk to Mickey,” Ian said flatly. “Well, I...Yes, I’ll call you back on my regular phone in five minutes. We don’t have much time!” Manuel answered with urgency, ending the call. Ian was livid, whipping around on his heels to confront Mickey.

Mickey was just serving up the eggs for everyone, Yevgeni looking on in silence, when suddenly, Yevgeni noticed the growing bump on Mickey’s forehead that was now also beginning to bruise. “Een hurt Daddy?” he asked in that same small, scared voice he had used to ask Ian the same question about Mickey. “No, buddy. I hit my head on the door in the bathroom. I slipped. Then Ian came to see what happened, and we ran into each other,” he paused, putting all of the plates out onto the island, then scooping Yevgeni up into his arms. “It’s okay. Ian would never hurt Daddy, and Daddy would never hurt Ian. We love each other...and we love you,” Mickey said softly, hugging his son into his body.

At that moment, all the venom that had built up inside Ian, for Mickey having basically committed him to a job, indefinitely and on the company’s terms, in exchange for Bigley’s help with Damon, just washed away. He realized that, whatever he had to do for Mickey, for his family, was more important than anything else in his world. Ian joined them in the embrace. “Family Hug,” Ian said, smiling under the ice-filled towel. “Love you guys,” he added, choked up with emotion.

“That thing gonna quit bleedin’, or you gonna need stitches?” Mickey asked, genuinely concerned. “I don’t know, but we’re going to the right place to find out,” he answered, pulling the towel away to put a bite of eggs into his mouth as the group disbanded and sat at the island to eat. Ian texted Manuel, “Let’s do it!” He then scheduled an Uber for Mickey’s appointment, and finished breakfast before running to the bathroom to look at his lip. The bleeding had slowed to a trickle, but he kept the ice on it until the Uber arrived.
As they were getting into the car, the drop phone rang. Mickey picked it up, mumbling a barely audible ‘hello’. “Listen, he needs to come up from the boat at exactly 9:00. The car will be waiting…” Manuel said in a low voice, before ending the call. “Fuck! I forgot something,” Mickey breathed, running back into the Waldorf. Ian sat in the car with Yevgeni, making apologies to the driver for the hold-up.

Mickey was gone about ten minutes, then got into the car and they were on their way. Yevgeni seemed to have calmed down, secure in the knowledge that Ian and Mickey hadn’t been brawling. He rested his head on Mickey’s arm for most of the ride, Mickey stroking his hair lightly, remembering what Ian had said, then touching his own hair. It really did feel just like his!

The trip to the doctor’s office, including the removal of Mickey's PICC line, went off without incident, Ian asking questions about Mickey’s future health. He drew more blood, just to be sure, but said he felt Mickey was out of the woods, that, based on the blood work up to that point, everything was functioning normally again, and that there was no reason to think that would change. Of course, he said it should be monitored, suggesting that Mickey have follow-up blood work done once a month for six months, then once every three months for a year, but, barring any unfavorable results over that period of time, he could essentially consider himself cured, as if he had never been sick. Ian was so relieved that he couldn’t contain himself. He jumped up and gave Mickey a huge hug, right in front of the doctor, and Yevgeni, who joined them, yelling, “Family Hug!”

As the family headed for the elevator, Ian arranged for an Uber, then asked Mickey, “So, is everything set?” “Yeah, all taken care of,” he answered, leaning over to kiss Ian. Yevgeni looked up at them, smiling. “Daddy loves Een! I love Een, too!” Yevgeni said, burying his face in Ian’s coat as he hugged him.

The ride back to the Waldorf was laced with silliness and fun, the three Milkoviches playing “I Spy” and taking turns tickling each other. Ian’s lip had finally stopped bleeding and Mickey’s port site was well-covered, so they were both full-on attacking each other, when it came to the tickling. Yevgeni laughed so hard, he was complaining that he had to pee for the last ten minutes of the trip. As the Uber pulled up to the hotel, the trio jumped out, Ian finding a bathroom in the main lobby for Yevgeni to use.

Mickey headed up to the penthouse to get everyone’s suits together. When Ian and Yevgeni arrived, Mickey, already dressed in his swim trunks, called out, “Who’s ready to go swimming?!?” “Meeeee!” Yevgeni squealed, reaching for his trunks, which Mickey was holding out for him. Ian got dressed quickly, while Mickey helped Yevgeni and, in minutes, they were in the elevator, heading for the pool. As the elevator opened to the pool, Ian asked, “Do you remember everything I taught you yesterday in the pool?” “Yeah!” Yevgeni and Mickey answered simultaneously. “Good!” Ian exclaimed, retrieving a life vest and buckling Yevgeni into it. “Get in and show me!” Ian called out with excitement. Mickey hoisted Yevgeni up into his arms and walked down the stairs into the shallow end, Ian jumping in after them, making a big splash. “Today you’re gonna jump in, Yevgeni! And you, too, Daddy!” Ian yelled. “Daddy?!?” Mickey smiled, raising an eyebrow seductively at Ian. Ian winked at Mickey, instantly wanting to rip his suit off his sexy ass and take care of business, but resisting the urge, obviously, in the name of family time. Still, it was criminal, the ease with which Mickey could get Ian aroused. Ian had marveled at that from day one. The reverse also held true, and both were already fantasizing about their next romp. Ian forced himself to focus on teaching Yevgeni to put his face in the water, while Mickey focused on using his arms and legs to keep himself afloat.

While everyone was busy in the pool, one of the drop phones rang...and rang...and rang, the family too caught up in their swim lessons to notice...
Okay! Wait...What?

Mickey swallowed hard as he looked at the screen on the second drop phone, which he had used to contact Damon about the limo. He had missed several calls from Damon’s drop phone, but it had been over an hour since the calls had been made. Mickey tucked all of the phones away into his towel, trying not to worry Ian, who was having a blast with Yevgeni, carrying him to the elevator on his shoulders. He knew that, all too soon, they would be taking Yevgeni back to the Southside, to Svetlana and a life living over a bar, spent doing God knows what, to pass his time while his mother worked. He knew Svetlana loved Yevgeni to the ends of the earth. It was just that he wanted his son to grow up in a better environment than he had. He decided, right then and there, to do whatever it would take to give both of his children the life they deserved, and to make sure he stayed out of trouble, to set a good example. He just needed to get through this situation with Damon and put his old life behind him—for good!

Mickey offered Yevgeni another opportunity to use the hot tub, which he jumped at. He asked Ian to get the tub ready for him, indicating that he needed to use the bathroom. He carried his rolled-up towel in with him, opening it to access the phones after closing and locking the bathroom door behind him. There were no new calls on the second drop phone, but there was one missed call on the one he had used to contact Manuel. Then he noticed a text that had come in on his regular cell phone. It was from Manuel, and simply read, “No worries.” Mickey breathed a huge sigh of relief, knowing that, whatever the problem had been, Manuel, or someone, had handled it. His natural inclination was to wonder what had transpired, but he tried his best to put that out of his mind, choosing to focus his energies on his son and husband, both of whom, he was sure, had worked up an appetite at the pool.

He showered off quickly, then dressed in his True Religion jeans and his blue Henley. He knew how much Ian loved those particular articles of clothing on him, and wanted to look his best for him, and for their upcoming trip to Texas. He shaved and even put some styling gel in his hair, something he had experimented with only recently, since his hair had grown out so much. He looked into the mirror, liking what he saw, which was something relatively new for him. He attributed it mostly to Ian. If he looked good enough for someone as hot, smart and wickedly awesome in bed as Ian to marry him, then he must look pretty damn good! Another factor in his self-esteem boost was likely the realization that both of his children, whom everyone said looked just like him, were absolutely gorgeous. Mickey flashed a quick smile at the mirror, practicing for the way he wanted to look for his man, then turned for the door.

Mickey opened the door to find Ian standing in front of him. “I wanna get a quick shower, too. Bigley texted. Our flight’s earlier than I expected. 3:00. Can you keep an eye on Yevgeni? I put the jets on for him,” Ian spoke softly, brushing past Mickey, who flashed his sexy smile as he nodded in response to his question. “Lookin’ real good, Mick,” Ian called out over his shoulder, before closing the door behind him.

Mickey smiled to himself, wishing he could peel his clothes off and jump into the shower with Ian. Instead, he headed over to the hot tub, where Yevgeni was pretending a bottle of bath gel was a motorboat. “Almost ready to get out, little man?” Mickey asked with a smile. “No!” Yevgeni answered, continuing to play with his makeshift boat. “Okay, you can play a little longer, but when Ian gets outta the shower, you gotta get out. We’re gonna have lunch and then take ya home to see Mom,” he explained.

When Mickey heard Ian get out of the shower, he pulled Yevgeni out of the tub and started to dry him off. As he was helping him get dressed, he got a call from Kevin. He picked up and put him on
“Mickey!” Kevin said in the most alarmed voice Mickey had ever heard come out of his mouth.
“Tootsie!” At this point, Mickey scrambled for the phone, hitting the speaker off and putting it to his ear. Yevgeni’s eyes got as big as saucers as he looked up at Mickey questioningly. Mickey hugged Yevgeni into him as he continued to listen to Kevin.

“I guess they decided to hold Frank, and he used his only phone call to threaten Svetlana with calling ICE on her. Ever since she moved outta our place, Frank’s been flappin’ his gums about her citizenship and how illegal immigrants are taking jobs and opportunities away from Americans...blah, blah, blah. Then some cops were nosin’ around the Alibi, lookin’ for someone who broke into that new purse store or whatever, down the block. Svetlana freaked out and ran out the back door. Well, I guess they thought she was who they were looking for. Pretty soon the street was filled with cop cars, all lookin’ for Svet. Jesus! When they finally got her, they took her in. Wouldn’t listen to anything she said!” he stopped to take a deep breath before continuing. “Fuck! I woulda called sooner, but I figured they’d let her go, I don’t know what to do!”

“Relax,” Mickey began, walking out into the kitchen as he motioned for Ian to take over with Yevgeni, who only needed socks and shoes, at this point. “I’m gonna call her a lawyer and look into taking Yevgeni to Texas with me and Ian. We’re only gonna be there for about a day, total. I’ll let ya know what I find out.” Mickey finished, ending the call and fishing through his phone to find the number for Cogswell’s office. He was able to get in touch with Thomas, who took down Svetlana’s information, including the police station she had been taken to, and agreed to make the necessary calls to facilitate her release. Mickey promised to pay any fees associated with his representation of her, but Thomas explained that he, and the entire firm, were on retainer for Bigley Enterprises and its subsidiaries, so Mickey was covered. Mickey, too overwhelmed to focus on that at the moment, filed away a mental note to look into just what that meant for Ojos, at a later date.

Mickey put some water on for pasta, poured milk for everyone, and was about to put some fresh coffee on, when Ian walked in, carrying Yevgeni on his hip. “Why is he talking about the cops taking his mother?” Ian asked with a note of disgust in his voice. “Sorry, I had Kevin on speaker at first. Crazy story, but should be okay. I have Thomas on it,” Mickey said matter-of-factly, clearly trying not to upset Yevgeni further. He picked up his phone and proceeded to text the details to Ian, including his idea to take Yevgeni to Texas with them. Ian put Yevgeni down and reached for his phone as he heard the text come in. “Wanna help me make the pasta, buddy?” Mickey asked Yevgeni, scooping him up and depositing him on the counter. “Yeah, help daddy cook!” Yevgeni shouted with joy.

Ian disappeared back into the bedroom, calling Bigley to try to arrange for Yevgeni to fly with them to Texas. In his mind, this also meant they would need to fly back to Chicago with him, before heading for Mexico, an extra detour he was certain Mickey would have objected to, had Ian been the one to suggest it, but now that it was necessary in order for Mickey to care for Yevgeni, he figured it must be okay with him. He decided, nonetheless, to send Mickey a text, confirming that he understood they would have to return to Chicago.

He also hoped Yevgeni wouldn’t be upset about going with them. He didn’t think he would, but who knows how he might react after hearing the cops had his mom? He was so young. It was hard for Ian to predict how much he understood or how he would feel about any of this. When Bigley picked up, he agreed to look into a ticket for Yevgeni, but seemed distracted from the topic of discussion. Ian wasn’t sure he had heard that he and Mickey would need to return to Chicago before flying to Mexico, which would involve flight changes. Ian was about to ask if he was alright, when Bigley said, “I’m sorry, could you please say that again. The passenger for my jet hasn’t arrived...I’m...hold on...”
Ian walked back into the kitchen, making eye contact with Mickey, signaling to him non-verbally that something was amiss. Just then, there was a knock at the door. “Who’s that?” Mickey asked. “Oh, I forgot to tell you. Reesie texted about coming over with Mikhaila to say goodbye,” Ian answered, breathing a sigh of relief at the thought that she could busy Yevgeni so he and Mickey could have a conversation. Mickey smiled, dumping the pasta into the strainer, grabbing Yevgeni and heading for the door “I got it,” Ian said, waving Mickey off. “Just get lunch ready.” “Yeah, lucky for Reesie, we made enough pasta to feed an army, right, little man?” Mickey grinned at his son, who nodded his head with a smile, just like Mickey’s.

As Ian reached for the door, his phone rang again. He motioned for Reesie to come in, then ushered her and the baby into the kitchen. “Your baby sister’s here,” Mickey announced. “How about if you help Aunt Reesie with her so she can set the table and get lunch served?” he suggested, looking over at Reesie pleadingly. “Yeah, c’mon Yevgeni! I have some toys here that you can play with!” she smiled, handing him some plastic keys and a mini jack-in-the-box. “Thanks!” Mickey said appreciatively, walking briskly out into the main room, where he found Ian on the phone with Bigley.

Ian pressed the speaker button, so Mickey could hear him. “He actually just arrived now. Apparently, there was an issue with him meeting his ride on time, which made him late for the flight…” Bigley continued, describing what had happened with Damon earlier, without sharing much detail. Mickey’s eyes widened, but Ian gestured to him, indicating that everything was okay, in that regard. “I can definitely get Yevgeni on the plane, but I need his full name and address. Now, what else were you trying to ask before? I apologize. I was distracted. “That’s fine. And Mickey’s here now, too,” Ian responded. “Hello, Mickey,” Bigley said, acknowledging him. “Hello,” Mickey answered quietly, still feeling ill at ease about the recent turn of events. “I wanted to be sure you understood, and that it was okay if Mickey and I flew back to Chicago with Yevgeni to get him back home, before we return to Mexico,” he explained, looking over at Mickey to gauge his reaction.

Mickey sighed deeply, gazing over at Ian like they might never get back to their house in Mexico to resume their life together. Then he thought about all that had transpired since they had left there. He was a free man, no longer a fugitive having to hide out in Mexico. He was the father of two beautiful children, both of whom he was becoming more attached to by the day. He had a clean bill of health, after nearly dying from complications of an infection. His company was continuing to grow by leaps and bounds. He was learning to swim, for Christ’s sake! In the overall scheme of things, postponing his return to Mexico in order to ensure the safety of his son seemed a rather small sacrifice.

Ian could see the change in Mickey’s face and he smiled, loving him just that much more at that moment. “I’m sure I can arrange something,” Bigley responded, adding, “You guys are gonna be traveling in and out of Chicago a lot in the coming months, so I’ll make an arrangement with the airline.” Mickey looked at Ian quizzically, after hearing Bigley’s last statement. Ian looked back at him as if to say, “Duh, you just agreed to this!”

Bigley concluded the conversation with the promise to text pertinent flight info as soon as he had it, adding that they would have adequate accommodations in Corpus Christi for Yevgeni. Ian and Mickey both thanked him profusely for all that he had done for them, Bigley reminding them of their role in making Ojos Azules so successful.

Finally, after ending the call, the husbands had a minute to talk, face to face. “So, what the fuck’s up with Svetlana?” Ian asked frantically. “Cops hunted her down and arrested her cuz she ran outta the bar when they came to look for someone who robbed that purse store. She thought they were comin’ for her cuz your fuckin’ dad called from jail and said he was callin’ ICE on her ass! Kev said the Southside was swarmin’ with cops. Haven’t heard anything more yet,” Mickey answered. “Hey, I bet that’s why Damon was late for the limo! Probably thought the cops were after HIM!” Ian
reasoned. “Damon missed his ride?” Mickey asked, suddenly panicked. “No, he was just late,” Ian explained calmly, diffusing Mickey quickly.

“We gotta let Svet know we’re taking Yevgeni. If we don’t hear back from Thomas soon, I’ll call him and ask him to tell her. Sucks she had to get so freaked out,” Mickey lamented. “Your dad’s a fuckin’ dick! I’d love to kill that motherfucker!” Mickey said, raising his voice in anger. “Shhhh…” Ian whispered, approaching him and giving him a slow, smouldering kiss. Mickey’s cock sprang to attention instantly, his anger washing away as Ian lured him in. Ian’s cock had been hard, on and off, since his shower, just checking his man out in his hot outfit, with his gorgeous hair, and a sexy hint of temper. “You look so fucking sexy, Mick. It’s been nearly impossible for me to look at you and get shit done today. I want your ass so fucking bad,” he breathed into Mickey’s mouth.

“So, what did Bigley mean, we will be traveling to Chicago often?” Mickey asked, reluctantly pulling back from Ian, before they got too out of hand. “For Surfin’ USA, once or twice a month, like you told Bigley we would, or at least I would,” Ian said, half frowning. “This is the first I hear of that!” Mickey objected. “Well, you told Manuel it was okay, as long as I was okay with it,” Ian responded, raising his voice. “No! I didn’t know what he was gonna ask ya to do, so I said he should ask you!” Mickey countered.

Just then, Yevgeni ran into the room. “Lunch ready. Gonna get cold, Een and Daddy! I help!” he announced. Both men smiled, admiring what had to be the cutest little boy EVER, then followed him into the kitchen to sit at the island. Mickey took Mikhaila out of the carrier, propping her on his lap as he sat down, then kissing her softly on top of her head. At least, he thought to himself, if he and Ian came back to Chicago often, they’d see the kids.

Mickey decided not to make an issue of Ian’s latest commitment at that point, realizing how much Ian had willingly accepted in order to be with him: He was a fugitive, a criminal; he had a business partner who he had been involved with; and he had two children, not to mention his ridiculous temper! Things could certainly be a lot worse, he realized, as he sat around the island, eating pasta and holding his baby girl as he stared lustfully at his sexy-as-fuck husband.

Mickey and Ian cleaned up the dishes quickly, Yevgeni bugging Ian to play “Red Light, Green Light” with him. “You go play,” Mickey suggested, “I’ll get everyone packed up.” “We’re gonna get going,” Reesie said softly, moving to put Mikhaila into her carrier. “Wait! Wait! Wait!” Ian said, running over to hug them both goodbye. “And please go into the bedroom and let Mickey say goodbye, too,” Ian requested. Reesie walked into the bedroom, Mikhaila on her hip. “We’re gonna head out,” she began, watching Mickey as he packed all of Ian’s, Yevgeni’s and his own clothing into the suitcases. Mickey turned toward them, holding his arms out. “C’mer! I’m gonna miss you two! I love you,” he whispered as he hugged them both into his body. “Never gonna forget everything you did for me,” Mickey added, giving Reesie a light kiss.

“Gonna make sure you guys always have what you need. And we’ll be around for visits.” Mickey turned away because his eyes were filling up, and he didn’t want Reesie to see, but she knew him well enough to know what was happening. Plus, she had the same thing going on herself. “C’mon! I’m gonna miss you too!” Reesie whispered as he hugged them both into his body. “Never gonna forget everything you did for me,” she said, giving Mickey a light kiss.

Once everything was cleaned up and packed up, Ian and Mickey sat down with Yevgeni to explain that they were going to be traveling to Texas together. Ian began by saying that he was going to be visiting some nice people who wanted to meet him. Mickey nodded his approval as Ian continued, telling Yevgeni that he would be home to see Mommy in a day or two. Then, a text came through on Ian’s phone. It outlined the revised itineraries and included their boarding passes, along with the
address and photos of their hotel, aptly named, “Village By the Beach.” The photos were gorgeous, showcasing water as blue as it was in Boca. Ian flashed one of the photos at Mickey, who grinned. “Yevgeni! Wanna go to the beach?” Mickey asked with great excitement in his voice. “Yeah!” Yevgeni squealed, “What’s beach?” Ian and Mickey both laughed, realizing that it didn’t matter where they went. As long as they were together, they would be happy.
Ian, Mickey and Yevgeni were greeted personally at the airport in Corpus Christi by the District Manager of Surfin’ USA for the Eastern Texas District, Dale WInters. Once he was introduced to Mickey as the co-founder of Ojos Azules, who had assisted in emergency medical treatment for hurricane victims, he was completely taken with the idea of having Mickey and his son take part in the Meet and Greet. He pitched the idea in the car ride to the hotel. Ian instantly loved the idea, hyping it up to Yevgeni, who would get charged up about anything Ian said with an enthusiastic voice. Mickey, however, remained silent on the topic, signaling to Ian that he wasn’t all that hot on the idea. Not that Ian was worried; he knew just how to persuade Mickey to do anything he wanted, so he began, straight away, dreaming up the details of his plans for Mickey, once Yevgeni was in bed for the night.

Actually, Ian, himself, couldn’t wait to get Mickey alone, all need for convincing aside. The way he looked and smelled had been making him crazy all day long. They cruised through the remainder of their trip to the hotel, Dale, at one point, asking if they had been in a fight, and requesting that they come to the store a half-hour early in the morning for wardrobe, and so their makeup artist could do some prep work on them for the pictures that would be taken with the customers. Ian began secretly revving Mickey up, sending him texts describing how hard his sexy ass was making him, describing the way he was going to eat it, how badly he wanted to suck his delicious cock, etc., Mickey smiling subtly in response, as he struggled to control the hard-on that was growing in his jeans.

As soon as they got checked in and settled in, Mickey suggested ordering a pizza. He figured staying in would ensure an early night for all concerned, which he thought was a good idea, since they had to get up early, and because he fully intended to spend some time rocking his husband’s world. Besides, they really didn’t have much in the way of light-weight clothing, and it was hot out, compared with Chicago. Ian, seeing his own logic in staying in for the evening, yelled, “Pizza! My favorite!” instantly winning Yevgeni over on the idea.

Of course, Mickey wanted to watch a movie and have some beer with the pizza, so Ian, wanting to keep Mickey as content as possible, found the Ninja Turtles On Demand so Yevgeni could watch, too. Ian took the opportunity to continue his sexting, excusing himself to use the bathroom, then taking and sending a gorgeous dick pic from in there, while continuing to send more graphic descriptions of his plans for the night ahead.

Mickey could hardly contain himself, sending detailed requests to be rimmed and railed relentlessly until he exploded everywhere. Somehow, the couple were able to engage in their digital foreplay while still entertaining their son. Yev truly was enjoying the movie, his favorite Turtle being Mikey, but he was so tuckered out from his long, exciting day, he fell asleep before it was even over, which made putting him to bed in his own room very easy. Ian and Mickey had put his suitcase in there when they arrived, explaining to him that he had his own room, so him waking up there wouldn’t be a surprise.

Once Yevgeni was tucked safely into his bed for the night, Mickey, having received a voicemail from his dirty lover, listened to Ian’s message, which consisted of a lot of moaning and heavy breathing, once again stoking the fire in his loins.

Then he noticed he had one voicemail from Thomas. He must have missed that call when his phone was in airplane mode. In the message, Thomas said Svetlana had a bail hearing scheduled for the next morning. The police claimed to have an eyewitness who saw Svetlana with stolen merchandise, following the burglary. He said he would keep Mickey updated, and that he was able to get word to
Svetlana that Yevgeni was still in Mickey’s care and was going to Texas with him for a day.

Mickey shared the news with Ian, who, like Mickey was troubled that Svetlana was being held, especially since he knew his father was responsible, but was relieved that at least she had representation, and was made aware that Yevgeni was safe with them. He hoped that this wouldn’t weigh so heavily on Mickey’s mind that he wouldn’t want to participate in the Meet and Greet. At this point, he really just wanted to get started on Mickey, especially since he had been fantasizing about going wild on him all fucking day! Every time he saw him looking so damn hot, all he wanted to do was throw him against the wall, face first, rip his fine-ass jeans down over his hips and fuck the shit out of him until he screamed his name, which was exactly what he whispered into Mickey’s ear, as soon as there was a lull in the conversation about Svetlana.

Of course, Ian was planning for things to play out differently than that. He was going to make Mickey beg, and when he did, he would make a deal with him. He could have exactly what he wanted, but only if he agreed to do the Meet and Greet. From Mickey’s point of view, Ian was already driving him absolutely insane, Mickey noticing a damp spot on his boxer briefs as he shook his jeans down off his hips. Mickey was definitely juiced up. He tackled Ian onto the bed, straddling him as he stripped his pants off him, kissing him hard before pulling Ian’s shirt off over his head, then his own, all the while gyrating on Ian’s stiff cock. Ian was so caught off guard and turned on by Mickey’s surprise attack that he had essentially lost sight of his plan, fully acquiescing to Mickey’s every whim, and loving every blessed second of it.

Once Mickey had every stitch of clothing off Ian and himself, he began kissing, tonguing and biting his way down Ian’s body, moving from his mouth to his ear, sucking and biting sensuously at Ian’s earlobe, then licking down the side of Ian’s neck, before moving around front, just to the right of his Adam’s Apple, making tiny circles with his tongue and sucking lightly, careful to avoid leaving any marks that could detract from the next morning’s photo op. Ian moaned softly, his cock throbbing under Mickey’s adept ass cheeks, as they massaged him into a frenzy. “Fuck!” Ian yelled, completely at Mickey’s mercy.

Mickey pulled his ass away from Ian’s cock, sliding his straddle further down to Ian’s shins, to allow his mouth access to Ian’s taut, muscular chest and abs, which he teased lovingly with his tongue, teeth and lips, taking a moment to nibble at each of his tender nipples as he caressed the sides of Ian’s torso with his finger tips, the combination sending shivers up the back of Ian’s neck as he squirmed uncontrollably under Mickey’s command.

Mickey inched further down so he was kneeling at Ian’s feet, parting Ian’s legs with his hands, then sliding them under Ian’s ass, gripping his buttocks tightly as he lowered his mouth to Ian’s pelvic area, focusing his mouth’s attention first on the curve of his right hip bone, pulling its thin, sensitive skin into his mouth roughly and sucking hard, then letting go and blowing softly on his freshly-made handiwork, before sealing it with a soft kiss. He repeated the process on his left hip bone, Ian’s cock lifting up off his body, begging desperately for Mickey’s affection.

As Mickey licked and sucked his way over to Ian’s beautifully massive member, Ian yelled out, “Bring that ass up here!” Mickey maneuvered his body around, doing a complete 180, straddling Ian’s torso, his ass just inches from Ian’s face, then lowered his sexy mouth onto Ian’s waiting wood. Mickey started at the tip, licking at it lightly like a lollipop as Ian pulled Mickey’s ass cheeks open, tracing circles around his anus with his tongue, then slowly moving his tongue in and out of his hole. Mickey encircled the tip of Ian’s dick with his warm, moist mouth, sucking on it hard as Ian continued to tease him from behind. Each man attempted to concentrate intently on giving his lover pleasure, falling victim to his own intense desire for gratification, Mickey begging to be fucked, Ian thrusting his cock greedily up into Mickey’s mouth, both filling the room with the sounds of unabashed craving and ecstasy.
“So you wanna be fucked, huh?” Ian hissed, after substituting two of his fingers for his tongue in Mickey’s asshole. “Ye…yeah,” Mickey answered, choking back a moan. “Then take my dick outta your mouth so I can put it in your ass!” he commanded, grasping Mickey by the hips and flinging him off the bed. As Mickey picked himself up off the floor and stood up, Ian pushed his head and chest down onto the bed, lubing Mickey’s ass and his own cock up with coconut oil and pushing only the tip of his dick into him. Mickey reared back, trying to get more of Ian, but Ian just backed away, giving Ian’s hand access to Mickey’s cock, which he grasped and stroked slowly, matching the pace at which he teased Mickey’s asshole with increasingly more of him, until he finally bottomed out, Mickey moaning and trying with everything he had to speed things up. Ian wasn’t having any of it though. He held Mickey still against the bed, using the weight of his upper body and a tight grasp on Mickey’s left hand with his own.

Ian continued to control the pace and depth of their fucking, keeping it torturously slow until Mickey began pleading with him once again. “C’mon, Ian! Fuck me, Goddamnit!” Mickey yelled. “I am,” Ian replied quietly, slowing his strokes even more. “What the fuck, Ian! Please?” Mickey implored him. And then Ian heard it; it was there—the degree of desperation in Mickey’s voice that told him he could get him to agree to anything, in exchange for what he wanted so fucking bad, he could taste it. “Okay, Mick. I know just how you want it. You ready?” Ian teased. “You fuckin’ know I am, you prick!” Mickey whined at Ian between impassioned moans. “Doesn’t fuckin’ matter!” Ian commented, slowing his fuck and his jerk down to nearly a complete stop. “Oh, it matters…” Mickey replied raggedly, reaching around to grab Ian’s ass with his right hand to hasten his thrusts. “Ohhhh Noooo!.” Ian snickered, “Who is in control? You or me?” Mickey answered breathlessly, literally dying to get off at this point.

“So, you’re saying you are completely fine with you and Yev having your pictures taken tomorrow at Surfin’?” Ian whispered seductively into Mickey’s ear, licking the inside of it as he kept Mickey’s ass on simmer, his own cock threatening to boil over with excitement as he watched Mickey squirm this way, wanting him so badly. It was the ultimate turn-on for Ian, and he was ready to explode. “Fuck yeah, Ian, whatever! Just please…” As soon as Ian heard those words, he began pounding into Mickey’s ass, hard and fast, stroking his cock furiously, a string of nasty words and phrases spewing from Mickey’s foul mouth as he climaxed all over Ian’s fist and onto the side of the mattress. As soon as Ian felt Mickey start to cum, he could feel himself hitting his peak, railing Mickey wildly as he shot his load into Mickey’s ass with a colossal moan of pure rapture. “Jesus Christ, Mick! So---Fucking---Good! I fucking love you and that ridiculously tight ass!” After that, Ian collapsed completely on top of Mickey, breathing harshly as he stroked the hair on Mickey’s temple, pushing a few long, stray strands behind his ear.

“Wow, Gallagher! So fuckin’ intense! Love the fuck outta you, man,” Mickey breathed, a feeling of complete and utter bliss permeating his entire body and soul. ‘Damn! I’m a lucky motherfucker!” Mickey thought to himself.

After a long period of motionless silence, the couple took to the shower, washing each other tenderly and discussing the plan for the morning. Surfin’ USA was sending a car at 8:00 sharp, so they needed to be up by 7:00, especially since they needed to have Yevgeni fed and ready as well. They retired for the night, immediately following their shower, falling asleep in their usual spooning position, Ian’s body wrapped tightly around Mickey’s, holding him so close, they could each feel the other’s heartbeat, and Mickey could feel Ian’s breath at his neck as Ian took in Mickey’s heavenly scent, the effect of which on both was immediate, peacefully sound sleep. Never in their lives had
either of them felt so at ease and so perfectly content as they were with each other, the degree to which this sated them both never ceasing to amaze them.
“Hurry, Daddy! Een says the sun is coming!” Yevgeni said as he jumped on Mickey’s sleeping form. “C’mon, Daddy!” his little voice pleaded as he gripped Mickey’s hand, pulling with all his might. Mickey shook the sleep from his head, rubbing his eyes as his feet hit the floor, willing himself to stand up and walk. Yevgeni led him out onto the balcony, then ran and jumped up into Ian’s arms. Mickey stood in the doorway, taking in the sheer beauty of the scene, the beach at sunrise, the sun’s brilliant orange reflecting off the shimmering water, its splendor matched only by the sight of his entrancingly radiant husband, hugging his adorable son tightly against him as he pointed at the sand and seagulls, full of questions, all of which Ian patiently answered with a loving smile that illuminated Mickey’s world every bit as much as the sun. “Wow!” Mickey breathed, completely in awe of his surroundings, as he enveloped his little family in a warm embrace, kissing Yevgeni lightly on the cheek before capturing Ian’s lips in an amorous liplock. “Daddy loves Een!” Yevgeni squealed, “Me too! Me too!” he added, kissing Ian’s cheek, then Mickey’s. The family stood silently, wrapped in one another’s arms, enjoying the view for a moment before Ian piped up, “Gotta get ready for our big day!”

Mickey rolled his eyes as the reality of what he had agreed to sunk in, then smiled at the memory of what he had gotten in exchange for it. He did his best to ignore the twinge he felt in his dick and the flurry of excitement in his stomach, as if he had just descended a hill on a rollercoaster. It was difficult though. Ian aroused the fuck out of him, plain and simple. Just the thought of something physical happening between the two of them lit Mickey’s insides up like a California wildfire, burning hotter than the hubs of hell and feverishly out of control. ‘Fuck! gonna be one of those days,’ Mickey thought to himself as he ogled his handsome hubby, contemplating jerking himself off in the shower.

Ian, for his part, seemed much more focused on the current task at hand, bathing Yevgeni, then feeding him some breakfast, which he had gone down to the lobby to grab while Mickey and Yevgeni were still sleeping. “Watch Mikey!” Yevgeni called out, grinning ear to ear as he handed the remote control to Ian, who got him set up to watch the Turtles again while he ate. “I’m gonna get a shower, Yevgeni. Let me know what Mikey does while I’m gone,” Ian smiled, disappearing into the bathroom before stripping his pants and underwear off.

Ian was surprised to find that Mickey was already in the shower, so he turned, yanking his pants back up over his hips to return to the TV area. “Get your ass in here!” Mickey growled. “Can’t leave Yevgeni out there alone for long,” Ian responded. “One of us will have to shower off quickly,” he added. “How ‘bout I wash you and you wash me?” Mickey suggested, as he began soaping Ian up from head to toe, lingering as he gently sudsed up Ian’s package, instantly getting the desired result. Ian quickly returned the favor, leaning in to give Mickey a steamy kiss, while squirting soap down his back. He scrubbed Mickey down, honing in on his manhood, once he got there. After they had both slicked each other up pretty good, they took to manipulating one another skillfully, each masterfully bringing his mate to a most pleasurable ending in record time, the two taking a moment afterward to kiss and giggle in sincere appreciation of their gratifying accomplishment. “You are so fuckin’ hot!” Mickey panted heavily. “Can’t never get enough,” he added with a smirk. “I feel the same fucking way, Mick,” Ian responded, taking Mickey’s lips into his mouth ravenously, sucking and biting his bottom lip, then delving into his mouth with his tongue like they were about to go at it again, Mickey instantly up into it right with him. “Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey breathed, his cock stiffening again already. “Gotta stop, Mick! We gotta,” Ian whispered, warning himself every bit as much as Mickey. Mickey reached over to the shower knobs, adding some cold to the mix, hoping to cool their jets. They finished washing up fast, shivering in the cold water, quickly drying off and opting to shave at the sink, after checking on Yev, who was still sitting exactly as Ian had left him,
completely engrossed in the Ninja Turtles.

“Brought some coffee up from the lobby. Probably needs to be warmed up,” Ian called over his shoulder as he headed for the microwave with two disposable cups of coffee. “Thanks, man,” Mickey responded, looking up from the Turtles to acknowledge Ian’s thoughtfulness. “Also got you a bagel with cream cheese, unless you want leftover pizza…” Ian added, taking a bite out of his own bagel. “Thank you,” Mickey said, getting up from the couch, where he had been sitting next to Yevgeni, to hug and kiss Ian as he took his bagel from his hand and retrieved his coffee from the microwave. “Our ride will be here soon,” Ian said, checking the time on his phone.

“Done eatin', little man?” Mickey asked Yevgeni. Yev nodded his head, still watching the Turtles intently. Mickey cleaned up his breakfast, while quickly finishing his own, then returned to get Yevgeni motivated to leave. Ian watched as Mickey broke it to Yevgeni that he had to turn the Turtles off. “Yev, we gotta go. Gonna hafta watch the Turtles later. We’re all goin’ to meet up with some people and get our pictures taken. Ian says it will be fun,” he said with as much enthusiasm as he could muster. “Okay, Daddy,” Yevgeni answered, getting up from the couch and taking his father’s hand. Ian’s heart melted as he watched Mickey and his Mini Me walking toward the door together, hand in hand. To Ian, fatherhood made Mickey just that much sexier. There was just something about Mickey showing love and care for his children that Ian found to be incredibly hot! “Damn, Mick! You’re killing me!” Ian said with a smile. “What!?” Mickey asked, completely in the dark as to what Ian was referring to. He assumed it was the jeans, since he had the same ones on that he had worn the day before. “You two are just so cute!” Ian said, falling madly in love with his husband all over again.

The ride to Surfin’ USA was spent talking with Yevgeni about just being himself and having a good time. Ian knew he was taking two novices into a completely foreign situation, but he was hoping for the best, ready to accept any outcome because they were his life, and this was just work.

As soon as they walked in, they were intercepted by wardrobe and makeup artists, who made quick work of doctoring up Ian’s lip, which had begun to heal fairly well and required only light coverage, as did Mickey’s forehead, the bruise on which had lightened considerably, and dressing all three in boardshorts and matching Surfin’ USA tanktops, rust for Ian and ocean blue for Mickey and Yevgeni. They ended up substituting in a sleeveless T-shirt for Mickey, in order to cover the bandage from his port removal, but the color still matched Yevgeni’s tank. Dale had the photographer take a few preliminary shots of the trio with various green screen backgrounds behind them. Since there were still a few minutes before the store doors officially opened, Dale took the opportunity to have the pictures that had just been taken projected onto a large screen. As it turned out, Ian wasn’t the only Milkovich the camera loved. Both Mickey and his son looked absolutely stunning, their crystal blue eyes catching the light like prisms, Ian having to adjust himself in his shorts multiple times, after looking at Mickey.

Dale left one picture of the three of them with an ocean and beach background up all morning, as people came and went, many of them hugging both Ian and Mickey, thanking them for their acts of heroism and commenting on how adorable Yevgeni was, Yevgeni flashing his bright ‘Mickey’ smile each time. Dale looked on from a distance, clearly seeing Mickey and his son as diamonds in the ruff, who needed to be shaped to reach their full potential. People absolutely loved them! Women were going crazy buying their husbands and sons matching outfits, just like theirs, after seeing them. As the Meet and Greet came to an end, Yevgeni seemed to be a little bit bummed out. He had truly enjoyed all of the attention and wasn’t ready for it to be over. Fortunately, he was quickly distracted by Dale’s invitation to lunch at Chuckie Cheese. He didn’t actually know what it was, but Ian did, so, once he started to talk about it, Yevgeni couldn’t wait to go. Of course, Mickey had no idea what a Chuckie Cheese was either, never having left the Southside as a kid, but he was definitely up for
free lunch at a place where Yevgeni and Ian could have a good time, because he knew if they had fun, he would, too.

And they all had a blast! Mickey loved all the hoop and shooting games, since he had a knack for shooting both baskets and guns. At one point, Mickey had made eight baskets in a matter of about 20 seconds, Yevgeni squealing each time he got one in. Ian was like a big kid, jumping in the ball pit and the Bouncy House. He was too big to crawl through the Sky Tunnels, so, after a lot of begging by Yevgeni, Mickey agreed to go in, after which Ian tackled him in the ball pit, wrestling him down and burying him, which Yevgeni thought was the funniest thing ever! Dale had to hunt them down when the food arrived---pizza again, which was fine with Mickey and Yevgeni, but Ian insisted on everyone also having the salad bar, to stay healthy. The fear of Mickey getting sick again was always in the back of Ian’s mind.

Everyone sat down and dug right in. They had really worked up an appetite, playing so hard. While the Milkoviches were all busy stuffing their faces, Dale took the opportunity to talk business.“How would you like to meet people, like you did today, all the time, and have your picture taken, Yevgeni?” he asked. “Yeah!” Yev cheered with a big smile. “And could you bring your handsome Daddy with you?” he added. “Yeah! And Een?” Yevgeni asked. “Of course Ian will be there!” Dale assured him, smiling across the table at Ian, who nodded in affirmation. “And what do you think, Mickey?” Dale inquired. “I ain’t no model. That’s Ian’s thing. Can’t see myself sayin’ a buncha stuff in a commercial or anything. Ian’s good at that,” Mickey explained, glancing over at Ian with a look of reverence. “Let us worry about that. All you have to do is show up---and bring this little guy with you!” Dale encouraged Mickey. “Gotta talk to his mother,” Mickey replied shortly, Ian shooting him a look. “How soon can you let me know?” Dale pressed. “I’d like to get this approved by Corporate as soon as possible! I think this could really boost sales, particularly in our area, due to people’s personal experiences with hurricanes. They really love heros like you, especially ones with adorable, personable kids, like Yevgeni here. “Can’t answer that until I make some calls today. Sorry,” Mickey answered, looking down at his phone for the first time in hours, noticing a missed call and voicemail from Thomas. Ian, reading Mickey’s phone over his shoulder, asked, “Can we call you in an hour or so? There’s a lot going on in Chicago right now. That’s why Mickey can’t answer you,” “Sure!” Dale replied, adding a tip and signing off on the bill, “I’ll look forward to hearing from you,” he added as everyone stood to leave and head for the car.

On the way back to the hotel, Mickey fought the urge to listen to Thomas’ voicemail, opting, instead, to listen as Dale pitched idea after idea involving the three in public relations ventures for Surfin’ USA, marketing the hurricane relief surfboards, as well as other Ojos boards and Surfin’ USA gear. Mickey shook his head, dreading so much travel, rather than focusing on the business back home in Mexico that he and Manuel had built from nothing. Then he looked at Ian and Yevgeni’s faces, lit up like Christmas Trees. He sighed heavily, promising himself it would work out. It had to. He couldn’t fucking live without Ian and their son---and he was theirs, Ian’s just as much as his own, if not more. The love between the two of them was so genuine and powerful, like the love he had for Ian from the start.

As they pulled up to the hotel, Ian and Mickey gathered all of their bags of clothing, everyone having been gifted their clothes from the Meet and Greet, as well as some other Surfin’ USA shirts and flip-flops. “Thanks for everything, Dale!” Ian said as they got out of the car. “We’ll give you a call as soon as we know something,” he added. “Thank YOU!” Dale replied. “Oh! And your room is booked through tomorrow morning, in case you want to stay and enjoy the beach!” he yelled out the window as the family headed toward the hotel.

As soon as they got into the elevator, Mickey went to play Thomas’ message back. Ian and Yevgeni, both oblivious to what he was doing, were discussing going to the beach. Naturally, Yevgeni was excited and started yelling, “Daddy! Go to the beach?” “Yevgeni! Be quiet!” Mickey yelled.
Yevgeni, never having heard Mickey raise his voice that way, began to cry, burying his face into Ian’s thigh. Ian picked him up and comforted him, as Mickey continued listening to the message. When he was done, he made eye contact with Ian, communicating non-verbally that something was wrong. “Looks like we’ll be spending another night here,” Mickey said with false excitement in his voice, so as not to further frighten Yevgeni. “Got lots to figure out.”
“You guys go ahead,” Mickey said, scrolling through his phone. “No, Mick,” Ian objected, I’m not leaving all this on you. I’m gonna be here. Whatever has you so upset is my problem as much as it’s yours.” Mickey sighed heavily, looking completely exasperated, as he continued to scroll. “Whatcha lookin’ for?” Ian asked. “I got this, Ian!” Mickey said, raising his voice. “Please take Yevgeni to the beach! I don’t want him gettin’ upset again, cuz I’m gonna yell...and I don’t want it to be at you! And get some fuckin’ sunscreen for both your white asses!”

Ian walked into the bathroom and grabbed the three biggest towels he could find, then opened the closet and took the extra blanket. “Okay, but I’m doing this against my better judgment. I really think we should figure this out together,” Ian tried one more time to appeal to Mickey’s sense of partnership in the marriage. He knew Mickey believed in that, so he was a bit surprised at his insistence that he handle whatever this was, solo. “Ian, please!” Mickey said adamantly, “I need you to take Yevgeni and go!”

Ian reluctantly lifted Yevgeni up onto his hip, then gathered the blanket and two towels into his other hand awkwardly. “Jesus Christ, Ian! C’mere Yevgeni! I’ll carry him down for you!” Mickey snapped. Yevgeni started to cry, still spooked by Mickey’s sudden mood change. “I got him. Here, if you could carry the towels and blanket…” Ian negotiated, Yevgeni resting his head on Ian’s shoulder.

The family loaded into the elevator, Mickey avoiding eye contact, staring down at his phone, which sat atop the pile of towels and blanket that he carried. As the elevator door opened, the phone started to ring, and Mickey shifted the pile so he could answer. “Yeah...I need you to do me a favor…” Mickey began, setting the towels and blanket down on a table in the lobby, then waving Ian off toward the hotel convenience store, mouthing the word, ‘sunscreen.’ “I need you to go upstairs and find Yevgeni’s fuckin’ birth certificate...the fuck should I know?! Just fuckin’ look...please!”

When Mickey saw Ian coming back from the convenience store with sunscreen and a plastic shovel and bucket, he picked up the towels and blanket, pressed the speaker button on the phone as he sat it atop the pile again, and headed for the beach access door, Ian, and Yevgeni, now on foot, trailing behind him. Ian picked a spot on the beach and took the blanket from Mickey, spreading it out for them to sit on. Mickey turned toward the hotel, phone in hand, but stopped when he heard Ian’s voice. “Mickey, please! Don’t shut me out! I love you!” Mickey’s eyes began to sting. He was absolutely at his breaking point. “Ian, we gotta talk, but not in front of Yev,” he finally said, staring down at the phone. “C’mere, I’ll put the sunscreen on you, while you put it on him,” he suggested, motioning for Ian to come closer.

Mickey began to massage the lotion onto Ian’s back, the sensation of Ian’s skin on his fingertips sending electricity through his body. The love and desire he had for this man was so compelling, he was temporarily distracted from the many urgent tasks he had been working towards completing, totally mesmerized and inextricably bound to Ian’s very essence, breathing him in… “Hello?” Kevin’s voice came over speaker phone. “Yeah,” Mickey responded, wiping his hands on a towel and reaching for the phone to put it to his ear for privacy. “Yeah, great! Thanks!” Mickey replied after hearing that Kevin had Yev’s birth certificate in hand. “I may need you to take it somewhere for me. I’ll get right back to you. Please keep your phone with you and answer. Please!” Mickey pleaded in desperation, before ending the call.

“Okay, sit down,” Ian insisted, turning to face Mickey and guiding him down onto the blanket. “You’re gonna tell me what’s going on, and it’s gonna be now!” Ian demanded, peering into
Mickey’s baby blue eyes. Mickey stared back at Ian through the tears that were welling up in his eyes, drawing Ian in closer until their noses and lips touched. They kissed softly, the sexual tension between them building until they heard Yevgeni, “Een, go swimming?” as he pulled at Ian’s hand. “Okay, buddy, but how about if you play in the sand for a while with your new shovel and bucket? I gotta talk to Daddy,” Ian answered, kissing him on the top of his head, then showing him how to scoop sand into the bucket.

Mickey spoke in a hushed tone, explaining everything that had transpired that morning as best he could. “Ian, your dad is in the hospital,” Mickey began. “Got his ass handed to him by some of the Russian Mob at CCC. Guess he’s pretty bad off, so if ya wanna go see him…” “Fuck no! After all the trouble he started for us!” Ian responded, raising his voice “Shhhhh…” Mickey whispered, glancing over at Yevgeni, who had looked up from his sand bucket, startled by Ian’s outburst. “And you don’t know the half of it, as far as the shit he’s caused us,” Mickey continued in barely more than a whisper. Ian could tell by the look on Mickey’s face that there was more bad news to come—extremely bad.

“So now I don’t know what the fuck to do! But I know what I’m not doin’. I ain’t goin’ back to live in that shithole Southside to take care a Yevgeni. So I gotta know. You okay with tellin’ Bigley we wanna go to Mexico from here and take Yevgeni with us til we know the fuck’s goin’ on? I know it ain’t what we planned, but…” Mickey trailed off, his emotions getting the best of him.

“Mick, you know how I feel about Yevgeni. There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for him—or you, but we can’t just up and take him to Mexico,” Ian responded. “I fuckin’ know that! I already had Kevin search Svetlana’s apartment for his birth certificate—he found it! Ain’t that what you need to get a passport?” Mickey asked. “Not sure what all we need,” Ian answered. “Yeah, that’s why I want ya to call Bigley. Cuz I really wanna go fuckin’ home,” Mickey lamented, looking over at their son, wondering how the fuck he was going to explain everything to him. “Okay, Mick, I’ll call, but then will you please come in the ocean with us, just for a little bit?” Ian asked pleadingly, his gorgeous green eyes and beautiful lashes melting him instantly. “Alright, but call Bigley now, okay?” Mickey said, caving to Ian’s insistence and charm.

Ian found Bigley’s number in his phone and called. Bigley answered quickly, as usual, his big, brash voice echoing through the speaker, “Ian! So glad you called. Heard from Dale Winters apparently your husband and son were hot commodities at the Meet and Greet this morning! So are you calling to tell me to set everything up? Gonna be a lot of money to be made, hooking in even more with Surfin’ USA. Ojos will need another factory before you know it!”

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“I’m lookin’ into Svetlana’s marriage to V as bein’ a fraud, cuz of mail she got at her apartment above the Alibi. And guess where the fuck they got the idea she was stayin’ there?” Mickey paused, waiting for Ian’s answer. “My fucking dad,” he said flatly. “Yep! So now V could get arrested, fined, or both! And Svetlana could be deported! Plus, they denied her bail cuz of this!” Mickey was really getting wound up at this point.

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“ Actually, Bruno, I was calling because, once again, we need your help. Of course we are happy to do whatever you need for Surfin’, but right now we have a problem,” Ian responded. Mickey glaring over at him as he committed all three of them to whatever he needed for Surfin’. Mickey had intended for them to have a talk about that before they called Dale, but now, it seemed, Bigley had gotten the commitment from Ian, in exchange for the help he was about to ask for. In Mickey’s mind, Bigley was going to help get Yevgeni to Mexico with them. Then it would be his responsibility to help Svetlana. He couldn’t expect Bigley to pay Thomas and Cogswell’s firm for the kind of legal help she now needed. He needed to get back to Mexico, to get the money he had squirreled away for himself and Ian. He needed it to help Svetlana, and he needed it to support Reesie and Mikhaila.
Ian went on, explaining the details of Svetlana’s situation in as general of terms as possible, focusing on Yevgeni and their need to get him into Mexico with them. Bigley suggested that Yevgeni’s birth certificate be overnighted to them at the hotel in Corpus Christi, then taken, along with Yevgeni, to an expedited service there. He seemed to think Mickey might need notarized permission from Svetlana to take Yev out of the country, in order to get the passport, but wasn’t sure if they applied since she wasn’t a U.S. citizen. He resolved to have Cogswell’s office check into it and said he’d let them know if there was anything more they needed to do. He ended the call, saying that, since Ian and Mickey had so much going on, he would communicate their willingness to do more Meet and Greets together to Dale himself.

Mickey rolled his eyes as the call ended, dialing Kevin up on his phone to tell him to overnight the birth certificate to the hotel for them, giving him the address. He also mentioned that he might need Svetlana’s signature, although he was pretty sure Thomas would take care of that, and that he intended to help V, if she got into any legal trouble, since she had helped him with Damon. He sent Thomas a text, informing him of their plans to take Yevgeni to Mexico, requesting that he let Svetlana know that he would be safe with them, and that he intended to continue to help her. He also wanted to put him on notice that they might need her signature for the passport.

And then, finally, Mickey put the phone down and took off toward the ocean. “Race ya to the water!” he yelled, egging Ian and Yevgeni on to run after him. Ian scooped Yev up and quickly closed the gap between them and Mickey, the three meeting up in the water, splashing around and having a great time! Of course, they didn’t venture too deep. As they stood in the water, Ian asked, “How would both of you like to learn to swim in the ocean one day?” “Yeah!” Yevgeni squealed, giving what had become his automatic answer to anything Ian asked with a smile on his face. Mickey nodded in agreement, adding, “You know we have the ocean in our backyard at home, right?” Yevgeni looked confused, obviously thinking ‘home’ was the Waldorf.

“Daddy’s talking about our real home---in Mexico! Would you like to see it?” Ian asked, Yevgeni, of course, answering, “Yeah!” “Well, how about if we go tomorrow or the next day?” Mickey interjected. “Yeah!” Yevgeni yelled out, Mickey smiling at the fact that he had received the same response Ian always got. “Ian, I fuckin’ love you so much!” Mickey mused, looking into Ian’s gleaming green eyes, his own blue eyes shimmering like the ocean. “I love you too, Mick! For better or for worse, til death do us part!”
Something Old, Something New

 Somehow they had done it! Jumped through all the hoops and made it to the other side. The Milkovich Family landed at the Mexico City International Airport and were greeted by an overjoyed Mandy and Manuel, Mandy opening her arms and yelling, “Yevgeni! I’m your Aunt Mandy! Remember me?” “It’s okay,” Ian whispered to him, “Go see her! She’s Daddy’s sister, like Aunt Reesie is mine.” Mickey walked Yevgeni over to Mandy, hugging them both together. “Can you say ‘Mandy’?” Mickey asked Yevgeni softly. “Mandy!” he said with excitement. “And this is Manuel!” Mandy said, introducing them. Manuel smiled brightly and said, “Hello, Yevgeni! You look just like your father!” Mickey beamed with pride as his son grinned and greeted Manuel. Mickey hugged Manuel next, “Missed ya, man!” he said with a sincere smile, “Can’t wait to get back to work!”

“Yes! I think you will be very pleased to see all the progress we have made! We just started production at the new factory near Boca. We can stop there on the way to your place, if you want,” Manuel offered, picking up one of Mickey’s travel bags to carry it for him, since Mickey had Yevgeni on his hip and another travel bag hanging off his shoulder.

The group headed out of the airport to the car, Mandy and Ian steady gabbing the whole way, catching up on all that had happened since they had seen one another. Mandy was shocked to hear all that had transpired with Svetlana, and had a million questions as to what the plan was for Yevgeni. As they were putting the bags in the trunk, Ian asked that she not discuss anything around Yevgeni, since he and Mickey had not yet said anything to him about what was going on with Svetlana. Both of them were hoping her situation would be resolved favorably without the need for him to know that anything had been wrong. Explaining the actual circumstances would be impossible, given his age.

The car ride was spent discussing the many business developments involving Ojos, both at the factories and with advertising and appearances. Mandy and Manuel also mentioned their move from their room at the factory into their new beach home. Mickey used that conversation as a springboard into his announcement that he intended to carry his husband across the threshold when they got to their home, which they had yet to spend overnight in since its post-hurricane renovation. Mandy agreed to watch Yevgeny, while he carried him in. Not quite what Mickey had in mind when he first planned to do this, but, then again, not much was going according to plan these days.

Manuel again broached the subject of stopping to see the new factory, so Mickey reluctantly agreed, not sure how Ian and Yev would feel about it. He ended up saying he didn’t want to stay long, but would love to see the new place..

Mickey must have tipped the guys off that they were coming because, as soon as they walked in, all of the machines stopped, everyone staring at Mickey. Then came the applause. Many of the guys who had worked for Mickey and Manuel at the original factory were there, and apparently, Manuel had told them about Mickey’s illness, so they were all thankful to see their boss back home and well. “Thanks, guys, for all the hard work and dedication,” Mickey said, keeping it short and sweet, as was his way. He was always there for the guys if there was a problem, but wasn’t much for small talk, so this was a bit awkward for him, but he handled it, the men responding with smiles, ‘you’re welcome’ and ‘welcome home’.

The new factory was beautiful, all of the machinery, state-of-the-art, the floor, clean enough to eat from, and the employees, competent and hard-working. “You guys did a great fuckin’ job! Wish I coulda been here to help!” Mickey complimented Mandy and Manuel. “Johnny, too! Where’s he?” “He’s at Sur de al Frontera. We’re supposed to have dinner there later,” Manuel answered. “Lots of new financials to review! Think there’s really good news about Surfin’ USA!” Mandy added,
smiling. “You’re the one who got all the machinery ordered. We couldn’t have done it without you,” Manuel said, acknowledging Mickey’s efforts from Chicago.

“Okay,” Mickey responded, blushing at the compliment, “Well, I’d like to get home and unpacked before that. Get a shower…” he continued, changing the subject. “Okay, let’s go then,” Manuel suggested as Mickey waved at his employees on the way out. As planned, Manuel took his time, pulling the travel bags from the trunk, while Mandy sat with Yevgeni in the car so Mickey could carry Ian over the threshold of their home. Mickey scooped Ian up into his sturdy arms, kissing him lightly, then carrying him into their newly-remodeled living room. As he bent to lay Ian out on the couch, Mickey’s phone rang. He dropped Ian softly onto the couch, then reached into his pocket to retrieve his phone.

It was Thomas, who, after a quick hello, then began to spout off a steady stream of news, most of it neither good nor bad, just more waiting. Mickey clicked the speaker on his phone so Ian could hear, so when Mandy walked in with Yevgeni, she quickly shuffled him to the bathroom, where she had him change into his swim trunks, offering him the opportunity to go to the beach with her and Manuel. Yevgeni quickly accepted, Mickey nodding his approval and mouthing the words, ‘thank you’, as they walked toward the back door.

Svetlana was going to be held for an additional 48 hours, despite the witness against her basically falling apart because Frank was hospitalized in critical condition, and couldn’t compensate him. ICE had requested the Chicago PD hold her, pending further investigation into the validity of her Green Card, based on the address discrepancy. He did mention that Svetlana was grateful for his services and for Mickey and Ian’s care of Yevgeni, asking only that he be returned to her, once she got out. Evidently, she didn’t take her situation as seriously as Thomas did, because he seemed to feel there was still a possibility that she could be deported. A lot would depend, he explained, on what Kevin and Veronica said on her behalf or against her, as well as the accounts of others they would likely interview, many of whom Thomas supposed might be regular patrons of the Alibi Room.

Mickey didn’t know what to think of all of this, since he hadn’t been around the Southside for over a year and a half. Ian, on the other hand, knew about Svetlana taking the bar over, and that, even though Kev and V had agreed to a continued partnership with her, it was only because they couldn’t legally exclude her. Who knew what they might say if they thought they could eliminate her from the equation? Ian wanted to talk to Mickey about that, but didn’t want to interrupt Thomas, so he lay quietly on the couch, just listening. Mickey had questions, but none that could be answered at present, so he thanked Thomas, asking him to please keep him informed, then ending the call.

Ian started to sit up on the couch, addressing Mickey, “Hey Mick, I wanna talk to you about Kev and V, and what they might say…” “Stop!” Mickey interrupted, putting his index and middle finger tips over Ian’s mouth. “Look, we’re in Mexico...in our fancy new house---alone. I just carried your ass over the fuckin’ threshold. You really think I wanna talk about this shit right now?” Mickey asked, not expecting an answer. And he didn’t get one, at least not a verbal one. Ian lunged at Mickey, tackling him to the floor, atop the shiny new ceramic tile, forcefully overtaking Mickey’s mouth with his own, tearing violently at Mickey’s shorts, desperate for him, and not wanting to waste a single moment. Mickey returned Ian’s kiss fervently, pulling Ian’s shirt off over his head between kisses and yanking his shorts aptly down over his narrow hips, grazing Ian’s cock with his hand lightly as he did. The two rolled around on the floor, making out passionately, panting as they extricated themselves from any and all remaining clothing.

Ian pulled himself off Mickey, kneeling as he fumbled through his travel bag in search of some type of lubricant, settling on the coconut oil, which he dipped his fingers into before lightly fondling Mickey’s asshole as he resumed their makeout session, brushing against Mickey’s lips with his own, this time more slowly, tenderly, matching the tempo of his caress, yearning to fill Mickey up, to
provide for his every unspoken, implicit want and need.

Mickey moaned softly as Ian slowly finger-fucked him, nibbling at his lips longingly as he stroked his beautifully stiff cock. Ian could have exploded instantly as he rose to his knees, just watching Mickey moan and writhe on the floor, completely consumed by desire. Ian leaned back onto his feet, so he was kneeling, low to the floor. He lifted Mickey’s legs, resting the backs of his thighs atop the fronts of his own, Mickey’s lower back and sweet ass arched up off the floor, then slowly worked himself into Mickey, who instinctively bent his legs, digging his heels into the floor. After the first two strokes, Mickey was like putty in Ian’s hands, bouncing wildly on Ian’s cock to counter his thrusts, bracing his head and shoulders against the cool tile. Ian leaned back onto his left hand, avidly watching his own cock sinking up into Mickey’s ass with increasing speed and urgency, Mickey’s head beginning to roll from side to side in ecstasy as he grunted, “Fuck me! Oh fuck, yeah, Ian, Fuck me!”

Ian stuck all four fingers of his right hand into the coconut oil, then grasped Mickey’s swollen cock tightly, sliding his hand up and down it vigorously, all the while continuing to aggressively pound up into Mickey’s sweet ass, Mickey’s groans becoming screams as he continued to increase the pace and intensity of his thrusts. As Ian felt Mickey’s rock-hard member begin to twitch in his hand, he drove deep into him one final time, screaming, “Damn! Mick!” as he shot his giant wad, Mickey following suit, uttering a series of sensual moans as he spurted all over his own taut stomach, the couple collapsing into a spent pile of flesh and bone.

“Where’d that come from?” Mickey finally spoke in a low voice with a small chuckle, as he managed to lift himself off the floor. “What?” Ian responded, feigning innocence. “C’mon, you didn’t just make that shit up!” Mickey argued, pressuring Ian for an answer. “Alright...I’ve been planning to fuck you that way for a long fucking time!” Ian began. “And so why didn’t you?” Mickey asked, grinning, “Cuz I fuckin’ loved it!” he added, blushing a bit at his confession. “Been waiting to get back home,” Ian sighed with contentment at hearing Mickey’s admission as to how much he enjoyed it, not that Ian couldn’t tell.

“So, who the fuck you do that with?” Mickey asked, not letting go of this for anything. “Just you!” Ian smiled, pulling Mickey into him for a warm embrace and light kiss on the temple. “Really!? So one night you just dream this shit up and then save it for our first day back in Mexico?” Mickey asked incredulously, glaring over at Ian in disbelief.

“Okay, okay! I saw it online!” Ian finally admitted. “When!?” Mickey yelled, wondering when the fuck his husband had had the time to surf the web for porn and new sex positions. “One of the nights when I was at the Waldorf and you were at the hospital,” Ian confessed, blushing bright red and turning his face away from Mickey. “Jesus, Ian! And I bet you jerked off to it, too, huh?” Mickey asked, enjoying his line of questioning and the reaction it was getting. “Maybe,” Ian responded, still avoiding eye contact. “Well, might just have to punish you for your behavior later,” Mickey warned with an evil leer, the mere thought of which was getting them both hard again.

The two slowly motivated themselves to shower and get ready for dinner, also planning to retrieve Yevgeni from the beach for a bath. But by the time they were showered up, Mandy and Manuel were knocking at the door, an exhausted Yevgeni in tow. “Hey! Hope you remembered to put sunscreen on him!” Mickey barked with concern. “Of course,” Mandy smiled in response. “And did he go in the water?” Ian asked. “Yeah!” Yevgeni answered enthusiastically. “Let’s get you a bath then, little man,” Mickey said, turning the water on in the hot tub. “Got a hot tub here, just like in Chicago,” Mickey told him, much to his pleasure.

The Milkoviches were a strikingly handsome bunch as they walked into Sur De La Frontera; they were ushered into the private alcove, where Ian and Mickey had, less than a month ago, celebrated
their union with many of the same kind people who graced them with their presence on this day--Johnny, Doc, Manuel, Mandy and now, Jose, their new factory foreman. Bigley, who was noticeably absent, was, according to Johnny, planning to call in for the meeting, following dinner.

As the host pulled Ian and Mickey’s chairs out for them to sit, the waiter arrived with a magnum of Dom Perignon, opening it and pouring for everyone. Once all champagne glasses were full, Johnny proposed a toast, “To Ojos Azules, the next big thing!” “Here! Here!” everyone shouted, holding their champagne glasses high in the air, Yevgeni holding a small plastic version, filled with sparkling white grape juice. Then Manuel made a second toast, “To Mickey and Ian’s long-awaited safe return to us!” after which everyone cheered, “‘Salud!’

The table enjoyed family style salad and pasta primavera, all the while catching up on business and family news, Johnny mentioning the benefits of their growing business relationship with Surfin’ USA, as well as the possibility of becoming a publicly traded company, and Ian sharing the recent addition of Mickey and Yevgeni to the Meet and Greet schedule. “Yes, I understand the young mothers were quite taken with you and your son, Mickey!” Manuel commented, Ian smiling over at Mickey. “Yeah, and with Ian, as always,” Mickey added, raising an eyebrow at Ian.

As the waitstaff cleared the dinner dishes, bringing chocolate mousse for all, Johnny accepted a FaceTime call from Bigley. “Hello All!” Bigley spoke in his usual lively manner, “So glad to have Ian, Mickey and little Yevgeni safely back in Mexico!” he began. “Glad to be here!” Ian said, beaming, Mickey nodding in agreement. “I’m so glad everyone could get together today. I have some news I think you will all be happy to hear!” “We’re all ears, Bruno!” Johnny responded, looking around the table with excitement.

“I think the time is right for Ojos to go public! It will benefit our current investors, as well as the company as a whole. Surfin’ USA was interested in Ojos becoming their subsidiary, but I knew that wasn’t something Mickey and Manuel were willing to consider, based on previous conversations with them, so I suggested that if we became publicly traded, they could purchase shares and invest as they deemed best for them. So I’m asking...Does everyone agree to this? If so, I’d like to get the ball rolling, sooner than later. This would mean a tremendous influx of capital into the company and would likely enable virtually all employees to get sizeable raises and profit sharing opportunities. It could also make possible the building of a satellite office in the U.S.” Bigley paused, awaiting a response.

“I’m all for anything that will grow the company,” Manuel answered, “How about you, Mickey?” “Sure,” Mickey answered shortly. “Mickey, you and Manuel will maintain a controlling interest in the company, and will continue to have managerial jurisdiction over both factories,” Bigley explained. “So, how possible will it be for me to build an addition onto my house?” Mickey asked, out of the blue. “Mickey, what you and Ian do with your money is your business. Just know that between this new stock deal and your work with Surfin’ USA, you will have plenty to work with,” Bigley responded, Ian looking at Mickey quizzically.

As the conversation drew to a close, Mickey seemed to relax and accept the idea a bit more, Johnny explaining after Bigley hung up that management salaries could be easily doubled, plus they would receive payouts in the form of dividends. “Basically, what I’m trying to say,” Johnny clarified, “is that we are all going to be much more wealthy than any of us ever imagined. Mickey, you can probably build a new house, if you want to.” Mickey looked over at Yevgeni lovingly, imagining the kind of room he would love to build for him.

The evening ended with hugs from everyone, as well as the promise to always cherish their friendships, and to never forget where they came from. Dr. Montemurro was silent on the subject of Ian returning to work at the clinic, figuring Ian would need a day or two to decompress, after being
away for so long, but Ian did tell him how much he missed the clinic and was eager to work again.

Ian had so many irons in the fire at the moment, he wondered if he would ever get the chance to go to nursing school, like he had planned. He knew he still wanted to go, but, to him, being a dad was more important, and, if Yevgeni was going to be around them a lot, he needed to devote as much time and energy to raising him as possible. He knew Mickey would be a good dad, but not without his help. The love he felt for his ‘mini Mickey’ was so great, that he doubted he could adjust to life without him, if it ever turned out that way, so he vowed to himself to make sure he and Mickey stayed active in his life, no matter how the circumstances might change.

Yevgeni fell asleep on the drive home, Mickey tracing tiny circles on Ian’s thigh with his index finger for old times’ sake as he drove them back to their house in silence. It had been a long day and he was looking forward to slipping into their new bed, burying himself under the covers and in the comforting arms of his husband, the one he loved to the ends of the earth, embracing their future, come what may, secure in their ‘forever’, for better or for worse, til death do they part.
Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was Christmas Eve morning, just over two years since Ian and Mickey had returned to Mexico, following their incarceration and Mickey’s hospitalization. All of the finishing touches had just been done to the interior of Mickey and Ian’s beach house, after the second floor addition. The upstairs now had three large bedrooms, all with vaulted ceilings and their own bathrooms. The downstairs bedroom had been converted into a family room, the old living room being used to enlarge the kitchen to include a more substantial island for preparing food, as well as for sitting on stools at mealtime. Ian had left for the airport to pick up his family, all of whom he and Mickey had flown out for the holiday. Mickey was busy doing some last minute decorating with Yevgeni, who had come to stay with his father after his mother’s prolonged battle with ICE and subsequent deportation. Mickey and Ian were looking into the possibility of her immigrating to Mexico during their process of becoming Mexican citizens, but hadn’t made any definite plans, due to their concern over her mob connections and their desire to steer clear of anything illegal. Yevgeni had started first grade at a nearby American School, where he was learning primarily in English, but was also being taught Spanish, which his Uncle Manuel was happy to reinforce at home.

Mandy and Manuel had married soon after Manuel and Mickey’s return from the States, following their merger with Surfin’ USA, which made them co-owners of a Fortune 500 Company. Ojos Azules was now the leading surfboard manufacturer in the western world, and was rapidly expanding into the eastern hemisphere, with Japan one of its new major markets. They were now expecting their first child, so Mandy was planning to retire from modeling, but continue to help with the day-to-day running of Ojos, which Manuel and Mickey both insisted on doing as well, despite the fact that the company was now big and successful enough for them to essentially allow others to run it, while they collected dividends.

Ian, Mickey and Yevgeni still attended the occasional Meet and Greet, just to stay visible to their customers, but had scaled back their visits to the States after Reesie was granted her Mexican visa and, ultimately, citizenship, based on Mexico’s dire need for Registered Nurses. She and Ian both worked part-time at Dr. Montemurro’s clinic, Ian fulfilling his Clinical hours for nursing school, while working at his academic coursework online on his off days, since Yevgeni had begun school, and also sharing in the care of Mikhaila on Reesie’s work days, along with Mandy.

Upon Ian’s return with all of his siblings and their families, even Fiona, who Mickey reluctantly agreed to giving another chance since she was back with Jimmy-Steve, their new larger house seemed suddenly much smaller, the family crowding together in the family room in much the same way as they had at their house in Southside, everyone with a story. Lip was nearly three years sober, and had married Sierra, who came with him, along with her son. Debbie brought Franny, who was talking up a blue streak. Carl was on leave from his Marine duty station in Okinawa, Japan, and brought his Japanese girlfriend, Kia. Of course, Frank, who was on the mend after the extensive rehab he required, following his beating by the Russian mob, was not invited, but the family brought news that he was a free man, sober and trying to live a better life.

Reesie, Mikhaila, Mandy and Manuel arrived shortly after the Gallagher’s, and Lip couldn’t take his eyes off Mandy, who was early in her pregnancy and absolutely glowing. Fiona, who was meeting Reesie and Mikhaila for the first time, was stunned at the resemblance Mikhaila had to both Mickey and Ian, swearing she looked like she could be their child. “She is,” Mickey responded, kissing her on the top of the head, then giving Reesie a giant hug. Yevgeni followed his dad over, hugging
Reesie and Mikhaila, then making his rounds, hugging all of his aunts and uncles, then finally, Ian, whom he now addressed as ‘Daddy Ian’.

Mickey opened three bottles of wine, one white, one red and one blush, to go with the ¼ keg of beer that was already iced and tapped. No sooner did everyone have a drink, than Johnny showed up with enough finger foods to feed an army, which was a good thing, considering how many people were there. He also brought a large tray of chicken parmesan and a vat of pasta with various sauce choices on the side, all of which Ian popped into the oven to keep warm until all the finger foods went.

Once Doc showed up, they were really ready to start celebrating. He was such a great friend and mentor to Ian, and had, as the clinic continued to grow, serving more and more patients, taken Reesie on as a part-time charge nurse, acknowledging her experience and capabilities, regardless of her record, something no clinic in the States would have done. He understood better than anyone that legal trouble did not affect a healthcare professional’s dedication or expertise. In fact, sometimes it was the degree of compassion one possessed that got them into trouble in the first place.

At one point during the evening, there was a knock at the door. “Wonder who that is?” Ian pondered out loud, not expecting anyone else for the evening. Ojos had their Christmas party the day before, so they weren’t expecting any employees. Ian went to the door, opening it to find Damon, accompanied by a small, frail woman, looking to be in her forties, with shiny jet black hair and breathtaking crystal blue eyes. “Damon! What are you doing here?” Ian asked, completely shocked to see him after all this time, especially since it was agreed that, in exchange for Mickey’s help, he would never contact them. What he didn’t know was that Bigley had been using him for some of his ‘less than legal’ business in Mexico, not wanting to involve Mickey and Manuel anymore, now that Mickey had a clean record and they had children in their lives.

“I can’t stay. Just had to bring her,” he replied, referring to the woman at his side. By this time, Mickey had heard enough of the commotion at the door to come to investigate. “Mickey!!!” the woman wailed, literally bawling her eyes out as she approached Mickey, throwing her arms around him and squeezing him tight. “M--Mom??!” he responded, pulling away to look at this woman, who couldn’t possibly be his mother...and yet she was! “Damon, c’mon in and get some food and a drink,” Ian said, motioning for Damon to come inside.

“Mandy!!!” Mickey screamed, his eyes brimming over with tears as he hugged his mother, whom he hadn’t laid eyes on since he was a young kid. He remembered watching them lower her casket into the ground. ‘How could this be?’ Mickey wondered. And why had she waited all this time to find him? And how did she find him? But these were all questions for later. Right now, he just wanted to hug her, the woman who had continually put herself in harm’s way to protect him from his father, often enduring terrible beatings herself in his stead, had worked, doing whatever it took, to feed the family during Terry’s periods of incarceration, frequently doing without food herself, and had always made Mickey feel loved, telling him he was a good boy and that she appreciated his help with the younger kids. God! He loved her!

“Mommy!” Mandy yelled, running over to join the hug, Ian and the rest of the Gallaghers looking on in disbelief. After a very long and warm embrace, Mickey and Mandy stepped back, looking again at their mother, who had aged a bit, but looked healthier and happier than they had ever seen her, and beautiful as ever. “Got some people for ya ta meet,” Mickey finally said, looking over at Ian and Yevgeni, Yev hugging Ian’s hips, then at Reesie and Mikhaila. “You’re a grandma!” Mandy said with a bright smile. “Yours?” she asked Mandy. “Not yet,” she responded, rubbing her stomach. “Mickey! You’re married!” his mother said, with a look of surprise, directed at Reesie. “I always thought…”

“Yeah, mom, you’re right. I’m gay. This is my husband, Ian!” Mickey said proudly, wrapping his
arm around Ian’s waist. “Hello, Ian!” she said, rushing over to give him a warm hug. “And this,” Mickey said, pulling Yevgeni up into his arms, “is our son, Yevgeni!” “Yevgeni, hello!” she said, pronouncing his name with the appropriate eastern European accent. “She sounds like Mommy!” Yevgeni said with a grin.

“And this is Reesie and Mikhaila! Reesie is Ian’s sister and Mikhaila’s mother. Ian and I are her fathers.” he explained. “She’s biologically his,” Ian clarified. “Technically, I’m her uncle,” he laughed. “Well, it’s very nice to meet you, Reese and Mikhaila! You named your daughter after me?” Mickey’s mother asked, her eyes welling up with even more tears. “Actually, Reesie named her, after me,” Mickey answered. “Well, she’s beautiful and I’m honored to share a name with her!”

“This is my husband, Manuel!” Mandy interjected proudly. “Well, aren’t you gorgeous, Manuel! Very nice to meet you!” her mother responded. “It’s very nice to meet you, too,” Manuel said respectfully. “Manuel and Mickey are business partners, and I work there, too. It’s a surfboard manufacturing company,” Mandy explained. “This, I know,” their mother said, smiling. “This is how I was able to find you all!” she added. “I saw a billboard with your pictures on it!” she said with excitement, “I contacted Surfin’ USA, who put me in contact with the kind gentleman who paid for me to travel here---Mr. Bigley!”

Mickey and Ian looked at each other and smiled. There was a brief lull in the conversation, so Ian took the opportunity to introduce his family, as well as Johnny and Dr. Montemurro. Of course, she had already met Damon and heard about Mickey’s incarceration, his escape and his subsequent exoneration.

As the evening progressed, everyone enjoyed fine food and drink in great company, continuing to fill each other in on all the latest in one another’s lives. Mandy revealed her pregnancy, prompting Sierra to share the news that she, too, was expecting. Debbie had gotten her master welder certification, Lip had returned to college, finishing his degree and working as an engineer for a robotics firm. Fiona and Jimmy-Steve were planning a big wedding, and were considering having a destination wedding, possibly holding it on the beach in Ian and Mickey’s backyard.

Finally, as people began to disperse, finding their lodging for the night, some of them retiring to Mandy and Manuel’s place, Mickey got the chance to talk with his mother about where she had been all this time, and why she hadn’t come back to see any of them. She explained that her oncologist, who had become very concerned with her health as she battled cancer while trying to protect her children and suffering chronic, severe abuse from her husband, had gotten her a spot in a clinical trial for a new cancer treatment. He told her the only way she would be strong enough to survive the trial was to leave Chicago to heal first. She refused, at first, citing to her children needing her, but after Terry beat her within an inch of her life, the doctor helped her fake her death and get out of Chicago for the trial.

As it turned out, she had to participate over a number of years at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City. The doctor tried to find out about her family and keep her apprised of their whereabouts, but Terry made that nearly impossible, keeping the kids under his thumb whenever he was around. The doctor warned her against making any direct contact, for fear that doing so might endanger her life. She did have one teacher that kept in touch with her regarding her children, but as they all ended up quitting school, that avenue dried up, so she just tried to move on, although she claimed that not a single day went by that she didn’t weep over the loss of her children from her life.

She said she vowed to reconnect with them, once they were free of their father. The trouble was, once she got word that he was in prison again, she went back to the house, only to find that all of the children were gone, and she didn’t have the first clue as to where to find any of them. She described the day she saw them on the billboard as “miraculous”, the best day of her life, because she knew at
that moment that she would find them, no matter what it took.

Ian, moved to tears by her story, couldn’t help but to embrace her as he wept, thanking her for coming to find Mickey. He knew how much this meant to him, and couldn’t have dreamed up a better Christmas gift. “I understand you lost your mother, Ian,” she remarked, having read his bio on the Surfin’ USA website. “Yeah, I did,” Ian replied sadly. “Well, I hope all of you will give me the chance to be your mother. Ian, I know I can’t replace yours, but I want you to know that I see how happy you make my son, and I want to be here for you, any way I can.”

After a good long talk, everyone was exhausted and ready for sleep. After all, the whole gang would be there, first thing in the morning, ready to open presents. Ian and Mickey got Mickey’s mom and Yevgeni settled, then headed off to their own bedroom. They got undressed and fell straight into bed, saying little more than ‘I love you’, before Mickey drifted off into a peaceful sleep, safe in Ian’s loving arms, Ian holding him extra tight, feeling absolutely heartbroken as he thought about all that Mickey and his entire family had dealt with, living in constant fear of Terry all those years. How he wished he could take their pain away, make it so none of those horrible things had ever happened, kiss and love away all the scars that marred Mickey’s psyche, that had made him so angry and so insecure about himself his whole life.

At least, he thought as he pressed his lips lightly against Mickey’s silky neck, he had his mother back in his life, a wildly successful business, two beautiful children and a family who loved him to the moon and back. He pulled Mickey even closer, inhaling his scent deeply, feeling his heartbeat against his own chest, listening to the slow, rhythmic sound of Mickey’s breathing as he whispered, his words thick with emotion, “Merry Christmas, Mick! I love you ‘til death do us part.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! I hope you all have enjoyed Mickey and Ian's journey as much as I have! Gallavich Forever!

I am open to prompts or ideas for what to write next. Planning to revise this one a bit as I read it from start to finish for the first time. Thanks again!❤
Shameless Plug

Hello Wonderful Readers,

I just want to be sure everyone knows I have begun publishing chapters in my sequel to South of the Border, The Milkoviches. I also wrote a short story, by request, that is set in post-South of the Border Mexico, Ian Gets A Surprise (or two). I'd love it if you all would read and provide feedback!

And thanks for all of you who have read South of the Border! I thoroughly enjoyed giving Ian and Mickey the life together they deserve!!

Gallavich Forever!

End Notes

I just started the sequel to this story, "The Milkoviches." Please let me know what you think!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!