no consolation (nothing stays the same)

by statusquo_ergo

Summary

This was supposed to be a present. This was supposed to be a game.

This was supposed to be fun.
This story begins sometime in the middle of the episode “Hitting Home” (s05e07), after Mike and Soloff start working together but before Soloff decides to recommend Mike for junior partnership.

The very second the scene was finished, after the final touch but before the paint had time to dry, someone dragged a dirty rag back and forth across it, smearing the colors into one another, giving objects the illusion of motion even as they’re being woven into the background, strung up and immobilized. That’s the best way, the only way Harvey can think of to describe it, and it’s not even a very good explanation.

There’s no precise moment of unsticking, no instant that he comes back to himself and lunges into action the way that books and movies like to imply; not entirely aware of things, not entirely capable of moving with agency, he pulls his cell phone from his pocket and dials, 9-1-1 SEND, panting words like “car” and “blood” and “hurry” in complete sentences that he doesn’t understand as they come out of his mouth, doesn’t remember after he’s ended the call. Gravel scrapes his knees through his Tom Ford trousers as he lunges to the ground and he reaches out but doesn’t touch, just in case, just to be safe.

“Oh god,” says the other man, who’s right to be afraid, “oh—god, god, sir, I’m so sorry, but I, I just called my friend, he has his helicopter—”

“This some kind of habit of yours, you motherfucker?” Harvey hollers as he scrambles to his feet, thrusting his finger into the hapless man’s face. “You sick fuck, you got your buddy on standby to fly people to the hospital after you run them over? You son of a bitch?”

The other man shakes his head deliriously and Harvey shouldn’t be yelling, shouldn’t be swearing at this awful person who made an unforgiveable mistake but who has a friend with a helicopter and directions to the nearest hospital, who’s moving much faster than Harvey can and just trying to do the right thing.

The whirlybird sinks down at the side of the road and the other man’s friend leaps out, dragging behind him a plastic orange stretcher that looks like a flimsy piece of shit, nothing but an overlarge lunch tray strung up with old-fashioned seatbelts, but it’s all we’ve got, it’s all there is, it’ll have to do; the man’s friend presses his fingers underneath Mike’s chin and puts his ear to Mike’s mouth as though he knows what he’s doing and Harvey shouldn’t be yelling at him but he can’t help it, he can’t, he won’t, and then he’s back in his silver Lexus, following the other man’s navy blue Honda Civic on the way to the hospital and the speed limit is too slow too slow too slow but he turns into the hospital parking lot and leaves skid marks, sprinting through the front doors and crashing into the reception desk where the edges dig into his palms to keep him from strangling somebody.

“Michael Ross,” he blurs out, “the man who was flown in on the helicopter, Mike Ross, I need to see him.”
“He’s in surgery,” the woman at the reception desk says to her computer, typing typing typing. “Are you his family?”

“Yes,” he says, and she finally looks up at him with sympathy in her eyes, maybe, or something, it doesn’t matter.

“You’re welcome to wait there,” she says, pointing behind him to three rows of sparsely-padded chairs, “and we’ll alert you as soon as there’s any news.”

“My name is Harvey Specter,” he says desperately, and she nods, looking back down at her computer.

“Yes sir,” she says, and she won’t remember, she doesn’t care.

Harvey clasps his hands behind his head and spins on his heel, closing his eyes tight; when he opens them again, everything is grainy, the lights overly bright and a little blue, a layer of static on top of his vision transforming objects into shapes and colors, people into oozing masses lurching across the floor.

One of them squirms awkwardly toward him, and Harvey blinks until it comes into focus. The other man.

In some fucked-up kind of way, Harvey thinks he feels bad for not being more grateful to this stranger.

“What?” he snaps.

There are more important things to think about right now.

The man holds out his hand—a business card, ROY WENTWORTH New York City Office of the Comptroller Audit Engineer, and Harvey shoves it into his pocket, it’ll probably be useful later, who knows, whatever, the man’s mouth opens and Harvey glares at his face as a shrill buzz pierces Harvey’s ears without words, noise, pointless noise, just shut up, please, god, shut up and tell me he’s going to be okay.

Roy Wentworth fumbles around the waiting area for a little while, hemming and hawing and making indistinct efforts to offer some kind of help before he apologizes, again, and gives Harvey his business card, again, and leaves, the bastard.

In a sparsely-padded chair, one of several arranged in three rows of nine, surrounded by the acrid smell of too much antiseptic over the coppery stench of blood, too much synthetic gardenia perfume trying to cover the pervasive reek of old age, Harvey sits.

The lights are fluorescent, one rectangle bare where the cover has been removed, or fallen, and underneath it all, Harvey sits.

This was supposed to be a present. A lighthearted little aside, accosting that conman Gideon Blake with an airtight case to get an easy win under their belts in the midst of all the shit going on with Soloff and Hardman. This was supposed to be a game.

This was supposed to be fun.

If Harvey hadn’t tried to lighten the mood, hadn’t dragged Mike all the way out on a day trip to the Hamptons to nail this penny-ante sonofabitch, none of this would have happened. If Roy Wentworth hadn’t been on vacation at his fucking summer house, hadn’t been driving his fucking car down that
fucking road right at that fucking moment…

If, then.

Blame isn’t going to do Mike a whole lot of good at the moment.

Besides, he’s got the rest of his life to bear the burden, to simmer with the knowledge that this is all his fault, to hold tight to these regrets, rewinding the last five-ten-fifteen-twenty hours to pinpoint the moment that this went wrong, that he should have done that differently.

All of it, all of it.

“Michael Ross?”

The last thing Harvey remembers is telling Mike that he’ll enjoy what’s coming up next.

“Family of Michael Ross?”

Five hours, ten, fifteen, twenty, how long has he been sitting here?

“Michael Ross.”

“Yes,” Harvey says, rising to his feet as some woman in dark blue scrubs with hair falling out of her ponytail walks towards him, holding a medical file close to her chest.

No one looks that exhausted when they’re delivering good news.

But this is Mike.

“Mister Ross?” she presumes.

“Harvey Specter,” Harvey says, except that it doesn’t come out quite right so he clears his throat and tries again: “Harvey Specter. I’m his boss.”

The doctor looks down at the file uncertainly, and Harvey waves his hand in her face.

“Friend, I’m his friend. I’m—I’m his close friend.”

“Okay,” the doctor says, trying to placate this poor guy who’s obviously going through some shit but seriously she’s done dealing with grieving friends and family members when all she really wants to do with her life is practice medicine and save lives. “Mister Ross sustained a traumatic brain injury as a result of the car accident—”

“He was hit by a car,” Harvey snaps, “that wasn’t a ‘car accident,’ that was a pedestrian collision.”

“Right,” the doctor says, trying to placate this poor guy who’s obviously going through some shit but seriously she’s done dealing with grieving friends and family members when all she really wants to do with her life is practice medicine and save lives. “Mister Ross sustained a traumatic brain injury, and…”

And Harvey doesn’t care how many big words she knows, or where she got her medical degree, or where she did her residency, or whatever else she plans on telling him, having gone temporarily deaf as she relays some vague specifics of whatever miracle the surgeons performed because they did, didn’t they, and Mike is going to be fine, isn’t he, because he has to be, he does, he is.

“So Mister Ross will have to remain in surgery for now; does he have any next of kin?”
“How long?”

The doctor frowns. “How long…?”

“You said he has to remain in surgery, how long?”

She looks down at the file in her hands and shakes her head. “As long as it takes,” she says, and he’ll wait forever if he has to, he’ll sleep in these chairs and he’ll eat from the vending machine outside and he’ll live and die here if that’s what he has to do, but she looks up at him impassively and he knows that’s not going to be an option.

“Does he have any next of kin?”

She means “family,” she means “parents,” she means “brothers,” “sisters,” “wife,” she means “who should I ask to make medical decisions on his behalf,” she means “who signs the DNR.” Harvey wants to say “Me,” wants to say “I can do it, I know him best,” because he does, he does, but he knows better and this is the wrong time to be selfish, the wrong time to be petty and cruel.

“He has a fiancée,” he says, and the next words out of the doctor’s mouth will be “We’ll need to get in touch with her,” or some variant thereof, and this is the end of Harvey Specter, Mike Ross’s Legal Representative, Responsible Party, this is the beginning of Harvey Specter, Michael Ross’s Good Friend, Not a Family Member; now he’s just an interloper, just a guy with a phone number they need, so he nods as the doctor talks and he puts his hand in his pocket, wraps it around his cell phone and waits for her to shut up so he can make that call, so he can play his part, serve his purpose and get out of the way.

“This is Rachel Zane.”

Harvey sniffs sharply.

“Rachel.”

“Harvey,” she says warmly. “Where have you been all day? Is Mike with you?”

He counts the seconds it takes him to figure out how to answer, three, four, five, six, and she stops waiting before he comes up with the right words.

“Harvey, what’s wrong?”

He sniffs again; she kindly doesn’t interrupt as he sighs, mustering the courage to answer truthfully.

“There’s been an accident.”

“Harvey.”

“He’s alive,” he assures her, because he has to be, because there’s no other way for this to end. “But they need to talk to you about making some medical decisions on Mike’s behalf.”

“What—”

“I don’t know,” he cuts her off, “they wouldn’t tell me. They just asked me to get in touch with you.”

They might have told him, they might have tried, but it doesn’t matter, he doesn’t care. Doesn’t want to hear any words that aren’t “He’s going to be fine,” or maybe even “Everything’s alright, you can see him now.”
“Where are you?”

Harvey looks up above the door, as though the words might be posted there, but it’s just a big neon EXIT sign so he looks instead over his shoulder to the reception desk, where an Emergency Procedures poster is stamped with the hospital logo, the same as the one in the parking lot where he left the skid marks and almost parked inside the lines but probably not exactly.

“Stony Brook University Hospital,” he says, “in Long Island. Don’t—ask me why, just, don’t.”

She wasn’t going to.

“I’m on my way, I’ll be there as soon as I can.”

He hangs up, or she does, neither of them even thinking to say goodbye or anything like that, because what would be the point, who would that be helping.

In a sparsely-padded chair, one of several in three rows of nine, Harvey sits.

Chapter End Notes

The Hamptons are about three and a half hours’ drive from New York City in average-heavy traffic. In conjunction with the Suffolk County Police Department, Stony Brook University Hospital operates a helipad adjacent to its Emergency Department.

A “close friend,” defined by the Family Health Care Decisions Act (FHCDA) of New York State (2010) as “any person, eighteen years of age or older, who is a close friend of the patient…who has maintained such regular contact with the patient as to be familiar with the patient’s activities, health, and religious or moral beliefs,” has the sixth priority to make medical decisions on behalf of an incapacitated person. This is why Harvey specifically identifies himself as Mike’s “close friend.”

A “domestic partner,” defined by the FHCDA as, among other things, “a person who, with respect to another person…is dependent or mutually interdependent on the other person for support…including but not limited to…signs of intent to marry” (i.e., Rachel), has the second priority to make medical decisions on behalf of an incapacitated person.

DNR: Do Not Resuscitate, also known as an AND (Allow Natural Death), a legal order to respect the wishes of a patient not to be resuscitated in the event that their heart stops or they stop breathing.

Please feel free to say hi on tumblr, and if you want to, check out the mood board for this fic.
The front doors open and shut and open and shut, visitors with teddy bears for their loved ones and children with broken arms and drunks with vomit down their fronts, and sooner or later, Harvey stops looking up because it’s all just white noise, none of them are really important. Rachel will come when she comes, and it’ll be to see Mike, not Harvey, unless she wants to gut him, which would only be fair.

Ambulance sirens blare outside, fading away as they drive off to the next emergency and piercing his eardrums as they approach; a gurney crashes through the doors, doctors running alongside and shouting numbers and abbreviations at each other, fumbling with needles and bandages and ripping off some poor guy’s bloodstained shirt as nurses look after them attentively and bystanders leap back in horror.

Harvey folds his hands in front of his face and sits, and waits.

“Family of Jennifer Brady?”

A middle-aged couple stands together, the woman wringing her hands as the man places his arm around her shoulders, which does nothing to warm her gaunt face. Harvey glares at them as he sits, and waits.

Five hours, ten, fifteen, twenty.

The front doors open and shut.

“I’m here to see Mike Ross.”

The keys on the keyboard clatter as the woman at reception types types types.

“Michael Ross?” she intones. Rachel shifts her feet, her stiletto heels clicking against the tile.

“Michael Ross,” she repeats, “where is he, is he alright?”

“Mister Ross is in surgery,” the woman at the reception desk says. Rachel sighs out through her nose, like an angry bull from an old episode of Looney Toons.

“I’m his fiancée,” she insists, “I need to see him.”

“Mister Ross is in surgery right now,” the woman at reception says, “you’ll be notified as soon as any new information is available.”

Harvey looks over at the tense line of Rachel’s back, the visible arc of her shoulder blades through her lace polyester blouse as she presses the heels of her hands into the edge of the reception desk.

“If something’s wrong with my husband and you don’t tell me what it is, I will make it my life’s purpose to make your life a living hell.”

The woman at reception stops typing.

“I thought he was your fiancé,” she says dryly.
Rachel grips the edge of the reception desk as tight as she can, the tips of her fingers turning white. Harvey wonders if she’s about to start screaming.

“Ma’am, you’re more than welcome to wait over there, and we’ll notify you as soon as any new information becomes available.”

Her stiletto heels click, click, click across the floor as she stalks to the waiting area with her shoulders thrown back and her head held high, clutching her overcoat to her chest. Harvey wonders when she took it off, whether she was wearing it when she came in and why she bothered.

“Harvey!”

He turns his head and raises his eyebrows; she reaches out to wrap her hands around his.

“Harvey. What happened?”

Please stop touching me.

“Mike was hit by a car,” he says. She gasps, tilting back and covering her mouth with both hands, so that takes care of that.

“Oh my god…”

He nods, and her eyes begin to shine under the bare fluorescents.

“What did they tell you?”

He shakes his head.

“Traumatic brain injury,” he says. “He’s in surgery. They’ll tell me when they know something.”

“But you’re the best closer in the city,” she reminds him. “Can’t you make them tell me, isn’t there some—loophole, some obscure precedent you can use?”

Harvey looks down at her coldly. As if he would be sitting here waiting if that was even a remote possibility.

Her lips part weakly as tears bead on her lashes.

“They’ll tell us,” he says. “The doctor came out a few hours ago, they should have an update soon.”

He has no idea what he’s saying.

She nods and sniffs.

“Did you see it?” she asks. “Did you see what happened?”

Did you hear the thump as his body hit the fender, the screech as the brakes slammed on, the thud as the car door shut? Did you see him fall to the pavement, did you see the driver pull out his cell phone, did you see the world come crashing down?

While you were safely across the street, ringing Gideon Blake’s doorbell, did you see it?

“No,” he says. “It all happened so fast.”

That’s a line that people give, isn’t it? That’s a thing that people say, that’s something she’ll believe.
She covers her mouth again.

“Oh my god…”

Yes, that’s a thing that people say.

“Family of Michael Ross?”

Rachel leaps to her feet.

“I’m his fiancée,” she says, a broken fucking record, and Harvey stands too but he doesn’t really have the words to go along with it.

A man walks toward them, a tall man in dark blue scrubs and a long white coat with a latex glove sticking out of his pocket and a medical chart clutched to his chest.

“Ma’am,” he says, stopping in front of Rachel and looking over her head at Harvey as he tries to figure out who he’s supposed to talk to. “Sir, my name is Doctor Grant, I’m the lead surgeon on Mister Ross’s case.”

“How is he?” Rachel demands, and the doctor flips open the medical chart as though he can’t remember.

“There was a small complication that required us to perform an additional surgery,” he warns her, as though she’s been here the whole time, as though she might’ve spoken to that other doctor earlier, as though there’s any way she might know what’s been going on back there in the operating room.

“Is he okay?” she asks, and the doctor keeps reading from the chart as though he’s used to keeping these sorts of conversations on track while other people are becoming insane.

“He’s suffered a broken clavicle, a hairline fracture to his jaw, and a fracture in his sinuses,” he explains, “as well as the traumatic brain injury; the additional surgery resulted in the temporary removal of a small part of his skull to relieve the pressure on his brain.”

Rachel covers her mouth again, with only one hand this time, and Harvey sticks his hands in his pockets to keep from punching the wall.

“Ma’am, you say you’re his fiancée?”

She nods dumbly, and he holds out the medical file and a pen.

“At this point, we’d like your permission to put Mister Ross into a medically induced coma to allow him to continue his recovery.”

Every gut instinct tells Harvey to scold Rachel for signing the release form without reading it, but he can’t say he wouldn’t have done the same, if they’d asked.

Doctor Grant takes the medical file back and puts the pen into his pocket with the latex glove.

“Thank you.” He smiles at her, a comforting sort of smile from a guy who’s been doing this a long time. “Someone will be out shortly to answer any questions you might have.”

She nods, and he walks back down the hall, and Harvey sits.

Continue his recovery.
Mike is going to be okay.

Rachel stumbles to the seat beside Harvey’s and covers her mouth again, her shoulders quavering as tears tumble down her cheeks.

Medically induced coma.

Mike might never be okay again.

Harvey stares at the wall and tries to remember why it would be a bad idea to hurl himself against it headfirst.

A little girl, maybe six years old, sits beside Harvey and opens a slender chapter book with large-print text and a picture of a giraffe on the cover. If this was a television show, a medical drama like *ER* or *Grey’s Anatomy*, she would abruptly put the book down and say something innocent and well-meaning as only a child can, at exactly the right moment to give him hope and the strength to carry on believing that Mike is going to be okay, that everything is going to be alright.

If this was a television show, a medical drama like *ER* or *Grey’s Anatomy*, Harvey wouldn’t desperately want to shove her out of her chair and scream at her parents for letting her near him, for daring to be innocent and well-meaning while Mike’s doctors have permission from his fiancée to put him in a medically induced coma so he can continue his recovery and maybe come out of it okay but maybe nothing will ever be okay again.

“My brother has a spinal fracture,” the little girl says proudly, holding up her large-print chapter book with the giraffe on the cover that has nothing to do with anything.

If this was a television show, Harvey would try to smile, even though it was hard, and humor her, even though he wasn’t feeling it, and everything would mean something, even if it took awhile to figure out what, or how.

This is real life, and Harvey ignores the little girl, and he gets up and walks over to the reception desk, standing so that the edge of it presses into his right palm as he reaches out with his left hand for a brightly-colored pamphlet on cancer treatment options.

“You’re a mean old man!” the little girl says loudly.

“Mary Kathryn!” a woman says, grabbing the little girl’s wrist and pulling her away toward the wall, where a man stands looking at his watch with a dissatisfied expression, and none of them say anything of any importance.

“Family of Bishop Dean?”

The man with the dissatisfied expression raises his hand and says “Right here,” and the doctor waves them on into the bowels of the hospital where their son with the spinal fracture is going to be fine and they can see him now and they’ll probably even be home in time for dinner.

This is real life, and nothing means anything.

“Harvey?” Rachel chokes, and he drops the cancer pamphlet on the counter and goes back to his seat beside her.

“Mike’s gonna be okay,” she says, wiping her fingers under her eyes. “Isn’t he?”

He should say yes. He should say he knows everything will be okay in the end. He should lie to
make her feel better.

“Family of Michael Ross?”

“Yes,” Rachel exclaims as she leaps to her feet, and Harvey wonders if he would’ve gone through with it if he had a little more time, but it’s probably for the best he didn’t have to find out.

The doctor who first spoke to Harvey walks over to them, the one who said “car accident” instead of “pedestrian collision,” and Harvey stands with his hands braced on the armrests of his chair to keep from falling over.

“Miss Ross?” she asks, and Rachel nods fervently.

“Miss Zane,” Harvey cuts in. “I’m Harvey Specter.”

“Of course,” the doctor says warmly, which confuses Harvey for reasons he doesn’t quite understand. “Miss Zane, Mister Specter, I’m Doctor Zhang, and I’d like to speak to you both for a moment, to answer any questions you may have about Mister Ross’s situation.”

“Situation,” as though anything about this is normal, as though the answer can be found in a routine memorandum, the kind Harvey might send around the office after signing a new client. As though this is the sort of thing that can be won.

“Thank you,” Rachel breathes, following Doctor Zhang down the hall into the bowels of the hospital where they can’t see Mike yet because he’s in a medically induced coma and they’re probably still getting him situated in a tiny room somewhere that’s illuminated with fluorescent lights and glowing machines that beep rhythmically as they monitor his vital signs.

In a small office crammed with patient files and legal forms and medical textbooks and one worn peach-colored stress ball, Doctor Zhang sits behind her desk, gesturing to the two padded swivel chairs opposite her. They’re nice chairs, much nicer than the ones in the reception area. These are the chairs that people sit in to hear announcements that start with “I’m very sorry, but.”

Harvey folds his hands in his lap and forgives himself for tilting to one side.

“As Doctor Grant told you,” Doctor Zhang begins, “Mister Ross—”

“Mike,” Rachel interrupts. Doctor Zhang smiles and nods.

“As Doctor Grant told you,” she says, “Mike suffered a broken clavicle, which we reset to the best of our ability, and several fractures around his facial area, which unfortunately there isn’t much we can do to fix right now but will likely heal on their own, so, that’s nothing to worry about.”

Nothing to worry about, as though Harvey is worried about Mike in pieces and parcels instead of the whole damn thing.

“I’m sorry, but I’m not worried about his broken clavicle,” Rachel retorts, “I’m worried about his traumatic brain injury. What, what does that even mean?”

Doctor Zhang smiles patiently, and Harvey wonders how much her next bonus hinges on maintaining good relationships with the friends-and-family set.

“We define a traumatic brain injury as any brain dysfunction caused by a violent blow to the head,” she explains. “It’s impossible to say right now exactly how Mike’s injury will affect him later on, since every brain is different and so every TBI is different, but we’ll do everything we can to give
him the best care available and hopefully aid in his recovery.”

“And what do I do now?” Rachel demands, leaning in and pressing her hands down on Doctor Zhang’s desk.

Doctor Zhang smiles.

“We can permit one of you to remain in Mike’s bedroom overnight during the course of his recovery, but I recommend arranging accommodations elsewhere if you want to stay in the area for more than a couple of days.”

“Well, well, of course we do,” Rachel sputters. “What do you mean, ‘if,’ of course I’ll be staying here while he’s recovering, of course I’ll stay in his room.”

Doctor Zhang smiles.

“The Hilton Garden Inn is only about a mile from here,” she says, writing the address on a sheet of notepaper and ripping it off the pad to pass along to Rachel. “Can I assume you have a car?”

“Yes,” Harvey says before Rachel replies with something thoughtless and abrupt.

“Alright,” Doctor Zhang says. “That’s good. For now, you can both stay in the waiting area until we finish setting Mister Ross up in his room, but I’m afraid visiting hours end at eight thirty, so Mister Specter, that’s when you’ll have to leave for the day, and you can come back tomorrow at ten, if you’d like.”

“If you’d like,” as though this isn’t the last place on the planet Harvey wants to be right now, or ever.

“I’d prefer to stay in his room overnight as well,” Harvey says.

“Harvey,” Rachel murmurs, somewhere on the tightrope between indignation and wonder, and Harvey really doesn’t care what she thinks.

Doctor Zhang winces. “I’m sorry, sir, but it’s our policy to permit only one overnight visitor in extreme cases such as Mister Ross’s.”

“So you’re saying that there’s a precedent for a less extreme case,” Harvey challenges, so here’s the best closer in the city, Rachel, what do you think about that. “There’s a circumstance where we’d both be permitted to stay?”

“I’m saying that Mister Ross’s case is so extreme,” Doctor Zhang elaborates, “that we’re permitting any overnight guests at all. I’m sorry, but we need to be prepared to quickly handle any possibly emergency situation, and the more unnecessary people there are in the room, the harder it will be for us to do that.”

It’s in Mike’s best interest, in other words.

All for Mike. Anything for Mike.

Rachel abruptly bursts into tears.

“Thank you,” Harvey says indifferently, snatching up the address of the Hilton Garden Inn and pushing himself up out of his seat. “I’ll be back shortly.”

Doctor Zhang nods, looking uncomfortably at Rachel. Harvey is supposed to put his hand on her back, he’s supposed to comfort her in this, her hour of need, he’s supposed to escort her out to the
waiting area and sit with her as they look out for Doctor Grant to tell them that Mike is all set up in his room in his coma and they can see him now if they’d like.

This is real life, where nothing is what it’s supposed to be.

“Miss Zane,” Doctor Zhang says hesitantly. Rachel puts her hand over her mouth again, standing and only swaying a little bit as she follows Harvey back out to the waiting area where she immediately collapses into one of the sparsely-padded chairs, banging her elbow on the armrest even though she doesn’t seem to notice.

Harvey clears his throat, then clears it again and puts his hands in his pockets.

“I’m going to rent a room,” he says.

Rachel nods.

That’s enough of that for now.

The front doors open and shut, and he walks into the parking lot where there are actually lots of skid marks, and his car isn’t the only one that’s almost parked inside the lines but not exactly. The directions to the Hilton Garden Inn are stuffed into his jacket pocket, but the building is close enough that he can see it down the road; the drive only takes five minutes.

It’s a nice building. Open décor, light nature-type colors. Greens and browns and so on, nothing like the pretentious old-money Chilton back in the city. Back where this all started.

Wouldn’t it be a hell of a thing if this was where it ended?

Harvey rings the bell on the desk so hard that it doesn’t make a sound.

“Excuse me,” he says instead, and the receptionist crouched behind the desk straightens up with an activities folder in his hand and a smile on his face, his head tilted slightly and his eyes creased up at the corners.

“How many I help you, sir?”

How do you think?

“I need to rent a room,” Harvey says, slapping his wallet down on the countertop.

“Alright, sir,” the receptionist says as he begins typing on the computer hidden behind the desk, “and how many nights will you be staying with us?”

As long as it takes.

“I don’t know,” Harvey bites out. He wonders if they get a lot of that, a lot of people staying until the operation is over, until the recovery is done, until we’ve put all of this behind us.

“I’m afraid I need to enter an end date into the reservation in order to give you a room, sir,” the receptionist says with a smile on his face and a slight tilt to his head, and he’s just doing his job but Harvey wants to leap over the counter and strangle him with his bare hands.

“A month,” he spits, because he won’t be kicked out before Mike is well again, he won’t, and he’ll absorb the charges for early cancellation when Mike gets better before that, when everything turns out alright and no one has to worry anymore.
The receptionist types types types on his damn computer until he looks up with a plastic smile on his plastic face and he’d better have a room for Harvey or there’s going to be hell to pay, absolute hell.

“For that length of time, sir,” he says, “all we have available is a double on the third floor. Will that meet with your needs?”

“Fine,” Harvey says, ripping his American Express Platinum from its sleeve and shoving it in the poor receptionist’s face, “fine, here, charge it.”

“Very good, sir,” the receptionist says, typing typing typing, handing Harvey a paper envelope with two keys in it and explaining checkout times as though Harvey might remember, asking if he has any luggage, reminding him that he’ll find a complete list of their amenities offered in his room, sir, and Harvey grabs his wallet and walks off in the middle of a sentence.

Mike would hate that.

“Thank you,” he calls back over his shoulder.

Good effort, Harvey.

Chapter End Notes

Mike undergoes multiple operations to treat his various injuries; the additional surgery resulting from the complication is a decompressive craniectomy.

The Hilton Garden Inn Stony Brook is a hotel a five-minute drive from Stony Brook University Hospital.

“Fiancée” is the spelling for an engaged woman while “fiancé” is the spelling for an engaged man.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Harvey pulls into the hospital parking lot without leaving a single skid mark, he’s reasonably sure, and maybe even manages to land inside the lines, though he doesn’t much care either way. When he opens the door, it almost bangs into the next car over, but it doesn’t quite reach, which is probably for the best.

A middle-aged couple Harvey somehow vaguely recognizes leaves the building as he nears; the moment the automatic doors slide shut behind them, the man begins to weep, his companion patting his back robotically as she clenches her fist around the pendant at her neck. It’s probably a cross, Harvey would be willing to put some money down on that.

He pushes past them indifferently.

A few people wait, scattered around the reception area in clearly-defined clusters; one man sits alone with a book open in his lap and a mildly amused expression on his face, and Harvey hates him completely and irrationally. Stalking to the front desk, he places his hands on the countertop and tries to ignore the sinking feeling in his gut.

“I’m here to see Michael Ross,” he announces. The receptionist looks up at him a little sadly, and it takes everything Harvey has in him to keep from collapsing to the ground right where he stands.

If something’s happened to Mike and he wasn’t here, if they sent him off to that fucking hotel and put Mike in a coma and none of it mattered in the end, if he wasn’t here and they had to—and—

“Sir,” she says, “it’s eight twenty-five.”

Harvey stares at her.

Mike is fine.

Mike is fine, Harvey’s just too late to see him today.

Mike is in a coma.

Mike is healing. Everything will be fine.

Harvey grits his teeth. “Well,” he grits out, “can you tell me which room he’s in? Unless you’d like me to bother you again when I come back tomorrow,” he adds when she looks at her watch.

She glances down at her computer screen. “Mister Ross is in room two-four-two,” she confides. “The elevators are around this corner here, down the hall.”

There’s a big blue arrow-shaped placard on the wall that says “ELEVATOR,” but Harvey appreciates the gesture all the same.

“Thank you,” he acknowledges, turning on his heel and striding back out the front doors.

Did it without even thinking twice this time around. Mike would be so proud.

Sliding into the driver’s seat of his silver Lexus, Harvey sticks the key into the ignition and thinks
that maybe he should call Jessica, just to let her know what’s going on.

Stepping out into the parking lot of the Hilton Garden Inn, Harvey takes his cell phone out of his pocket and thumbs the Contacts button. Walking across the pavement to the front doors, he turns his cell phone off and holds it in his fist.

Harvey’s room is three-oh-six; an old woman boards the elevator with him in the lobby, pressing the button for the fourth floor, and it occurs to Harvey that it’s probably for the best that Mike’s grandmother isn’t around to see her grandson like this. It’s nice she doesn’t have to worry.

He nods to the old woman as he disembarks, but she doesn’t seem to notice.

The electronic keycard doesn’t give Harvey any trouble, and the room is pretty nice; a little stuffy the way new hotel rooms sometimes are, but pretty nice, all in all. Two queen size beds, it looks like, plus the usual bathroom, television, key counter. Mirror. It’s a nice room; Harvey will take the bed closest to the door, leaving the other for Rachel, whenever they switch places. Whenever that is. Whenever she’s ready.

If he has to grab her by the arm and throw her out of the hospital himself, he will.

Sinking down at the foot of the bed closest to the door, Harvey sighs.

Mike would never forgive him. He would deserve it, too, as much as he deserves everything else that’s coming his way.

Well, that’s the way it goes.

Harvey glances across the room at the other bed.

Empty.

Mike heads out the door.

No.

No. No, no, Mike is fine. Mike is going to be fine. The doctors know what they’re doing, the doctors are taking care of him, and he’ll be fine. He will because he has to be, he will because he’s Mike, because he’s better than this, better than some stupid car, some stupid Honda, a goddamn navy blue Honda Civic, Mike is so much better than a Honda Civic that Harvey could laugh, would laugh at the absurdity of it all, the foolishness, the ridiculousness of this insane situation, this crazy circumstance they’ve found themselves in, the silly little day trip Harvey arranged for the two of them, the neat little adventure they were going to go on, the beach they might’ve stopped at on the way home because Harvey doesn’t think Mike’s ever seen the ocean proper, and that would’ve been nice, wouldn’t it, it would’ve been fun, and when Mike gets better they can go and see, they can go and Harvey can show him the ocean proper, so Mike can see the way the water stretches out to the horizon for miles and miles and miles beyond the farthest point in the distance because he deserves to see it, that and a thousand other things, and now—and now—and—and—

Harvey grasps at the covers, scrambling after the wall, lurching to the key counter, to the bathroom where there’s a sink with running water and a glass in a paper tray, water, water, I need a glass of water, but he downs it too fast and now he’s choking, coughing, heaving, gasping, you could be having a heart attack, oh god, oh god, not now, it’s not a heart attack, please not now, not now that Mike—that Mike—

The bathmat doesn’t provide much of a cushion as Harvey falls to his knees, fumbling the glass to
his lips and dripping nearly as much onto his shirt and the floor as he manages to pour into his mouth, and thank god Mike isn’t here for this, isn’t here to crouch beside him with his hand hovering over Harvey’s shoulder, wanting to touch but not sure he should, trying to help without knowing how, oh, god, Mike, Mike, Mike, this can’t be the end, please, please, say it isn’t so, somebody tell me everything’s going to be okay in the end, please, someone, anyone, someone, someone just—

Just. Somebody. Anybody, please.

Reaching up to the counter, Harvey shoves the glass in his hand up onto the ledge, hears it bang into the raised edge of the porcelain sink. Fine. Fine, that’s fine.

He’ll just stay here for now, just for a moment, here on the bathmat, leaning against the cabinets where the spare toilet paper is kept, staring at the shower with its white plastic curtain that probably doesn’t do much to keep water from spilling out across the floor that’s probably filthy with garbage spewed up from the flushing toilet, taking heaving breaths as he tries to keep from hyperventilating again.

Take a look at the great Harvey Specter, would you?

Harvey bangs his head against the cabinet at his back.

Take a good look.

It’s almost funny, in a way. In a terrible, stupid sort of way. The great Harvey Specter, brought to his knees, dropped on his ass by his own carelessness, his own stupidity, his own arrogance. His own single-minded, bullheaded desire to show off in the middle of a massive shitstorm, to dig up an easy win and grab it because he can, because he needs to remind everyone that he’s not a complete fuckup. And not just everyone, but Mike, the kid who upended his entire life’s plan, who barged into Harvey’s world with his brashness and his arrogance and his brilliance and his kindness and carefree and effortless ability to make people love him, who somehow taught Harvey how to be a better person, a better lawyer and a better human being just by being there, by being himself.

Harvey knocks his head against the cabinet again.

Mike would never stand for this.

You can sit on the floor watching your shadow get longer, Mike would challenge him, or you can get up off your ass and start being Harvey goddamn Specter, the best closer this city’s ever seen.

You better fucking believe it.

With one last gasping breath, Harvey heaves himself up onto his feet, stumbling back to the bedroom to sit at the desk and fish around for some hotel stationary and a pen. His briefcase is in the car, and he’ll need a computer to get any copies of the forms that’ll hold up in a real courtroom, but this will do for now; he’s written up thousands of lawsuits, he knows this playbook, he understands this world. Roy Wentworth is lucky he’s a state employee or he’d be on the way to the poorhouse for sure, but Harvey has no intention of pulling any punches just because he’s frying a bigger fish; that motherfucking comptroller’s office is going to have to empty their discretionary fund to cover the damages Harvey plans to shove in their faces.

MICHAEL JAMES ROSS, he writes in bold text. Plaintiff. Michael James Ross, Plaintiff, by Harvey R. Specter and Pearson Specter Litt, LLC, his attorneys, sues the defendant…

When he bothers to look around, finally, it’s nearly three in the morning, but he’s pulled all-nighters for less important things in the past, and anyway, this is just a rough draft, an exorbitant, furious
fantasy. Besides, now that he’s translated this clusterfuck, this disaster into a language he can understand, now that he’s proved himself even barely useful, maybe he can persuade his body that it deserves a little rest.

At four thirty, he stops pretending this is going to work, trudging down to the twenty-four hour fitness suite in his undershirt and boxer shorts to fire up the treadmill.

Visiting hours start at ten.

Harvey forgoes the recommended warmup period and cranks the treadmill straight up to eleven, his sock-clad feet nearly slipping out from under him as the conveyer belt starts to turn. He’ll burn himself out well before he has to go to the hospital, but that’s fine; he deserves it, and the cramp already stitching in his side at suddenly pushing himself so hard after effectively fasting for the better part of eighteen hours.

About twenty minutes in, his shins start to twinge. Shifting his weight to the balls of his feet, he cranks the speed up to twelve.

Sunrise casts a glare on the television screen in front of him that transforms it into a low-grade mirror, and Harvey grabs onto the treadmill’s handrails as he twists to look behind him for the slack-faced, sallow-eyed man he sees reflected there.

No.

None other than the great Harvey Specter.

Harvey stabs the treadmill’s big red STOP button and jogs along with the slowing pace until it’s finished turning off.

Pathetic. This is pathetic. He’s pathetic. He’s pathetic, and Mike deserves better. Mike deserves him at his best, at the top of his game, fighting the good fight all the way down so that when Mike is better, when Mike wakes up and everything is okay again, he’ll be able to take the punches and the kicks, he’ll be able to stand for Mike’s assault for as long as he wants to launch it, as long as he needs.

Panting, picking at his tee-shirt where it sticks to his chest, Harvey drags himself back to the elevators, his socks bunching up under his feet and slipping off his heels as he shuffles along the carpeted floor; a passing maid offers him a pitying glance and he nods at her, trying not to trip. Back on the third floor, back at his room, he fumbles his way inside and shucks off his reeking clothes, tossing them on the floor and reaching into the closet for a starchy cotton robe that he tries to tie with one hand as he digs around in the pocket of his jacket for his cell phone.

Twelve missed calls, six unanswered text messages. Three of the calls are from Jessica, two from Louis, one from Gretchen, and the rest, plus all the texts, from Donna; Harvey wonders what Rachel told them before she left. How much they know; how much they’ve assumed.

Harvey thumbs the Contacts button.

“Harvey…what the hell do you want at—five forty-five in the morning? On Saturday?”

Is it? Harvey pulls the phone from his ear and glances down at the screen. Well, how about that. Saturday, five forty-five.

“I need clothes.”
Donna doesn’t respond immediately, and Harvey grits his teeth.

“Did you hear me, I said I need—”

“I heard you,” she interrupts. “But I’m not your maid, Harvey, I’m not gonna pack you a suitcase and drive all the way out to the Hamptons just because you want to impress some long-weekend fling.”

Harvey glares incredulously out the window. The very idea that he would ever call her for something so frivolous, so careless, when Mike is—is—

No. Stop. This isn’t fair.

Harvey takes a breath.

“There’s been an accident.”

Donna gasps, and Harvey clenches his free hand into fist as tight as he possibly can to keep from ending the call right then and there.

“Oh my god, Harvey, what— Does this have anything to do with why Rachel left early yesterday?”

Please don’t make me say it.

Harvey sinks down on the edge of the bed closest to the door and presses his palm to his forehead.

“I need clothes.”

“Yeah,” she murmurs, and he hears shifting fabric as she pushes her comforter away and puts her feet down on the floor. “Where are you?”

Harvey massages his hairline.


“I’ll be there soon,” she promises, as though she’s talking him down from a ledge. He doesn’t think he’s ever hated her and loved her more than he does right at that moment.

“Thanks,” he says.

She doesn’t respond; Harvey isn’t sure she heard him before she hung up.

Well. He tried.

Chapter End Notes

“This thing’s over, Zane goes, and Mike heads out the door with him.”
—Harvey, “No Refills” (s05e03)

“Harvey, what’s going on with you?”
“Nothing’s wrong. I need a glass of water.”
“What the hell is going on? Okay, I’m dialing 911.”
“No, you’re not.”
“Yes, I am. You could be having a heart attack.”
“It’s not a heart attack.”
“You don’t know that.”
“It’s a panic attack.”
—Mike and Harvey, “No Refills” (s05e03)

“You can keep hiding out in Jessica’s shadow, or you get out of it and start being Harvey goddamn Specter.”
—Mike, “Skin in the Game” (s07e01)

Since Roy Wentworth works for the government of New York, Mike stands to benefit the most by suing New York State rather than suing Wentworth directly.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The phone in this room needs a new ringtone; it’s not quite the office phone, not quite the phone in Harvey’s bedroom. Sounds a little like his intercom.

He should probably answer.

“Is this Mister Specter?”

“Yes.”

“Good morning, sir,” a young woman says cheerfully. Harvey looks at the clock on the bedside table; it’s three after nine. Fair enough.

“Morning,” Harvey replies.

“Sir, there’s a Miss—Donna Paulsen here to see you,” the woman reports. “Shall I send her to your room or would you prefer to meet her here in the lobby?”

She must not have hit much traffic.

Harvey clears his throat. “Does she have a suitcase with her?”

“Yes, sir.”

Alright, well. That’s a start.

“Send her up,” he says. “Uh—thank you.”

Getting better.

The receiver clatters as Harvey drops it back in its cradle, and the room is still. The hotel stationary roughly scrawled with the first draft of Harvey’s—the first draft of Mike’s lawsuit is sprawled across the desk; Harvey’s slacks, filthy and maybe a little ripped at the knees, hang over the back of an armchair beside his button-front. His undershirt and boxers are tossed on the floor somewhere near the bathroom, maybe inside it.

Harvey needs to have a talk with the cleaning service department at this place.

He would, too, except that it’s his own damn fault.

A knock sounds at the door, three sharp raps, and Harvey nearly calls “Come in!” before he remembers that Donna doesn’t have the key.

“Harvey,” she says as soon as he’s opened the door, her eyes soft and her lips slightly parted. “God, Harvey, you’ve been gone one day, what the hell happened?”

Nice to know that he looks as bad as he feels, as bad as his reflection seemed at the gym a few hours ago. As he backs away to let her in, she places the suitcase on the floor to slide her hands up over his shoulders and pull him in for a hug; when she’s through, she places her hands against his chest and looks into his eyes nervously.
“Thanks for coming,” he says. She tries to hug him again, so he walks back to the bed closest to the door and sits on the edge, holding his robe closed.

“Harvey.” Picking the suitcase back up, she sets it down between the bed and the wall and crouches before him with her hands on his knees. “Harvey, what happened?”

Please stop touching me.

Harvey clenches his fists in the comforter and concentrates on the furrowed spot between Donna’s eyebrows.

“Mike was hit by a car.”

She opens her mouth as if to respond, but of course there’s not much to say to that. It’s okay; Harvey understands. He’s getting pretty tired of this story, too.

“He’s at Stony Brook University Hospital,” he says, “five minutes down the road. Visiting hours are from ten to eight thirty.”

Reaching up towards his face, she draws back abruptly and nods, instead standing to retrieve the suitcase and pop it open. There are five dress shirts inside, neatly pressed and folded, along with two tee-shirts, one with the Harvard logo and one without; two pairs of slacks, one pair of jeans, the usual assortment of underwear and socks. Harvey looks down at them a bit stupidly, unable to recall why such luxury is so important.

Because Mike deserves him at his best, of course.

Donna sets out black pants and a navy blue shirt, and Harvey bypasses them to reach for the next shirt in the stack, white with purple pinstripes, and a pair of socks.

“Thank you.”

“Of course,” she says immediately, stroking her hand down his shoulder. “We can get something for breakfast and then go straight there.”

Breakfast?

Harvey’s stomach clenches; the idea of putting anything into it makes him want to throw up.

“You can go back to the city,” he says stiffly. “Whatever plans you had for the weekend.”

“Harvey.” Donna stands and sets her hands on her hips. “My plans can wait, I’m staying here with you.”

In retrospect, it’s the obvious move.

“I’ll change,” Harvey says, picking up the white shirt with purple pinstripes, “and we can go.”

Donna nods, thinning her lips and sighing out through her nose, and retreats to the bathroom as Harvey sheds his starchy cotton robe for a clean pair of underwear. There are three ties in the laptop compartment of the suitcase; Harvey grabs the grey one and shoves it in his pants pocket.

“I passed by a Starbucks on my way down here,” Donna says then, brushing her hair away from her face as she emerges back into the bedroom. “It’s right next to the hospital, we can get some pastries to go.”
Harvey nods.

“I’m not hungry.”

“You have to eat something,” Donna presses, already opening the front door. “How about I stop at Starbucks and get you a muffin and I’ll meet you at the hospital?”

He’s not a child.

“Fine.”

She smiles and holds the door open for him, trying to keep pace as they walk toward the elevator; down in the lobby, the receptionist smiles at the two of them like she thinks they’re a cute couple. Out in the parking lot, Donna pets his arm tenderly and walks off, looking back over her shoulder as she goes, and Harvey unlocks his silver Lexus remotely, driving to the hospital at exactly fifty-five miles per hour in accordance with that one Speed Limit sign he thinks he saw somewhere awhile back.

Five minutes later, pulling into the parking lot and stopping his car right between the lines, Harvey tries not to hold his arms too stiffly at his sides as he walks through the automatic double doors, straight to the sparsely padded seats arranged in three rows of nine where he sits, and waits.

There’s a generic plastic clock on the wall beside the reception desk.

At nine thirty-three, Harvey takes the grey tie out of his pocket and loops it around his neck.

At nine forty-five, Donna sits beside him and holds out a giant banana nut muffin.

Fifteen minutes.

“You know it’s not your fault,” she murmurs, laying her hand tenderly on his shoulder and looking at him with such intensity that she seems to think she can will him into believing her. “Whatever happened, it’s not your fault. It wasn’t you, and it wasn’t Mike. It was the other driver.”

You don’t know that. You didn’t hear the thump of his body against the fender, the screech of the brakes slamming on, the thud of the car door shutting while I was across the street, while I was ringing the doorbell, while I was trying to be a bigshot. You weren’t there, you don’t know. Don’t talk about things you don’t understand.

“I know,” he says, which is what she’s hoping for.

She smiles kindly, rubbing his back, and he looks up at the clock.

Twelve minutes.

“Where’s Rachel?” Donna asks softly. “Did you tell her where to find you?”

What kind of a stupid fucking question is that, of course I did. What kind of monster do you think I am?

Don’t answer that.

“I did.” Harvey looks down the hall and presses his hands against his knees. “She got here yesterday afternoon, she spent the night in Mike’s room. The doctors said he can have one overnight visitor at a time.”
“Okay.” Donna keeps rubbing his back. “Okay.”

Harvey arches his back to make his shoulder blades jut out, and Donna slides her arm around his waist.

Please stop touching me.

“Everything’s gonna be okay,” she whispers, pulling him a little closer. “He’s gonna be okay.”

Harvey sighs.

Nine minutes.

“What did the doctors say?” she asks. Harvey wonders if she really wants to know, if she’ll really listen if he tells her. Maybe she’s just trying to distract him.

“Broken clavicle, fractured jaw,” he says. “Traumatic brain injury. He’s in a medically induced coma, they had to get Rachel’s signed permission.”

It isn’t very distracting.

Donna nods slowly. “When’s he going to be out of it?”

As though Mike will just wake up one day and everything will be fine, as though he can make himself better by sheer force of will. As though this is all anything more than a game of fucking chance.

Harvey closes his eyes and bites the inside of his mouth. “They don’t know,” he says, because he can’t admit that he didn’t think to ask, that it seemed so irrelevant at the time, that he didn’t want to hear how long he’ll be living here, how long this place will consume him, mind and body and heart and soul.

Donna rubs his back again, looking at the floor.

The automatic doors open, and a woman walks in with two small boys at her sides and a teenager trailing behind. She glares back over her shoulder, and the teenager rolls her eyes, taking earphones out of her ears and shoving them into her pocket as she screws her face up disdainfully.

Three minutes.

“Did you call Jessica?” Donna asks.

Harvey shakes his head. “Didn’t have time.”

Like hell you didn’t.

“I’ll call her later,” Donna offers. Jessica won’t get the complete story that way, and she won’t be able to ask any questions, but Harvey isn’t quite sure how the call would turn out if it came from him, and it’s nice of her to offer.

“Thank you.”

Thirty seconds.

The banana nut muffin falls out of Harvey’s lap, into the seam between the seats.
“Harvey?” Donna says nervously, reaching for his hand.

“Have visiting hours started?” he asks the receptionist, a man he doesn’t recognize who has to look down at his watch to check.

“Yes sir,” he says, looking up and shaking his wrist for some stupid reason. “Who are you here to visit today?”

“Michael Ross,” he says, walking up to the desk and laying his hands flat across the top. The receptionist types quickly and looks back up with the friendly smile of a man who’s just begun his shift and has every reason to hope that today will be a good day.

“Room two forty-two,” he says, as though Harvey might have forgotten. “Elevator’s right around the corner.”

Yes, obviously.

Harvey storms off, jabbing the call button and crossing his arms as the elevator begins its journey down from the third floor to meet him. That woman and her kids stand behind him, talking in hushed tones; the teenager begins to hum, and Harvey paces the floor to shut them out.

Ding!

Harvey presses the button for the second floor; the woman boards behind him and presses it again, and he hates her suddenly and without reason. When the doors open, she herds her children off to the right, following an arrow that reads “Geriatric Care Unit,” and Harvey stalks off to the left, following the directory towards “200 – 250.”

Two forty-two.

Rachel looks up with a jolt as he throws the door open, her red-rimmed eyes glittering in the harsh fluorescents and her hands pressed together in something like a prayer position in front of her chest.

“Harvey,” she says, standing and crossing her arms tight across her stomach.

“How is he?” Harvey demands, trying not to look, trying not to be distracted. Rachel shrugs weakly.

“No change,” she murmurs. “Harvey…they won’t even let me touch him.”

Harvey shakes his head. Of course they won’t, what kind of resort hotel does she think this is?

“Did you get any sleep?” he asks, stepping closer, toward the padded wooden side chair she must have spent the night in.

“No,” she says thickly, sniffling and rubbing her nose with the back of her hand. “I tried to sit on his bed, next to him, you know, in case it might make him feel better to have me nearby, but the doctors said I had to get up.”

Of course they did, what kind of melodramatic romance film does she think this is?

Harvey makes a pitying noise and nods in some weak imitation of sympathy. “Donna’s here,” he says. “In the waiting area, downstairs, if you want to talk to her.”

Of course she’ll say no, of course she’ll refuse to leave Mike’s side, but it would be rude not to tell her.
Rachel sniffles again. “She is?”

Harvey nods again. “I called her this morning, I told her what had happened.”

Rubbing her eyes, Rachel shrugs her shoulders helplessly. “Okay,” she says. “Okay, thank you, um… Are you going to stay here? In case the doctors come back?”

Harvey stares at her.

Rachel peers up at him. “Harvey?”

“Yes,” he says abruptly, “yes, I’m going to stay here.”

Is she really going to go? Is that actually allowed?

Offering a watery smile, she shuffles past him, out the door, and Harvey stares at the padded wooden side chair where she must have slept.

The door clicks shut, and he’s alone.

No. Not alone.

Harvey stands in front of the chair and puts his hands on the plastic guardrails.

This is a hospital bed. This is a body in a coma.

That blue plastic tube protruding from a white T-shaped device in his mouth is probably to help him breathe, maybe to help him eat. Those electrodes pasted to his head attach to some machine on a wheeled tray that displays numbers Harvey doesn’t understand; the colored wires leading away from the left side of his chest, attached to the skin by taped-down plugs, are doing god knows what, and more electrodes are pasted to the right side of his chest, hooked up to a machine displaying that heart rate line that everybody knows, beep, beep, beep. Needles pump fluids into his veins, piercing the back of his right hand, stuck in his left wrist and held in place with padded cuffs, terrycloth wrist warmers.

This is a body on life support.

Harvey falls into the chair.

This is Mike.

His head is shaved, which shouldn’t be any sort of surprise, even though it is; a long wound that will certainly scar reaches back over the left side of his skull and a rectangular-shaped one on the right seems to sag, as though the bone beneath the skin has been removed. His eyes, his bright, inquisitive, piercing blue eyes, are calmly closed, as though he’s merely sleeping, his face slack and peaceful, as though this is all according to plan, as though everything will be fine in a little while, if Harvey can just wait, if he can just relax a little bit.

In the back of his mind, Harvey adds another hundred million dollars to the lawsuit against the comptroller’s office.

Five hundred million. Fifteen.

The number will never be high enough.

“Mike,” he whispers, just making sure he still knows how to make the word come out right.
Nothing changes.

The ephemeral “they” recommend that friends and family members talk to people in comas, he’s heard. They claim it helps in the recovery, they claim it makes the process move faster and helps the brain rebuild more strongly. They claim that the first memories to return are the ones from the stories they were told, that somehow the brain is capable of absorbing all of it, even while it’s broken, while it’s trying its very best to recover.

Harvey can’t think of a single thing to say.

Mike’s chest rises and falls, the way that people’s do. He’s alive, he’s alive, he’s alive.

Harvey would close his eyes, but he’s afraid of what might happen when he opened them again.

Chapter End Notes

Nicolls Road (the road Harvey takes from the the hotel to the hospital) has a speed limit of 55 miles per hour, and there really is a Starbucks right next to Stony Brook University Hospital.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It’s nearly noon.

It’s been almost thirty hours since Harvey last slept; about twenty-five since he last ate.

What happened to keeping at the top of his game, huh? What happened to being presentable, what happened to being his best self for Mike?

He’s being selfish, is what it is. Sitting here at Mike’s bedside, watching him breathe, reassuring himself that Mike is alive, believing that everything will be okay because they’ve done everything they can do, all of them. The doctors rushed him into the OR, the surgeons operated immediately and efficiently, Rachel drove down from the city, Donna brought fresh clothes and the comfort of her presence.

Harvey drafted a lawsuit.

Abruptly, he understands Rachel’s impulse to touch, why the doctors needed to warn her away, how the guardrails do more than just keep Mike from falling to the floor. If he could just reach out and hold Mike’s hand, or pat him on the shoulder, or put his hand on his forehead, or anything at all, maybe—maybe he could begin to apologize, maybe it would be worth something, maybe he could even just begin to understand what Mike needs from him, what would be the best thing for him to do after such a horrible, horrible mistake. Maybe he could be helpful, even just a little bit.

Harvey clears his throat.

“Mike,” he says softly, as though his voice might wake him, as though he might interrupt Mike’s progress.

Nothing changes.

“Mike,” he says again, stronger this time, loud enough for him to hear, in case it really does make a difference. “Mike, I think I read once, somewhere, that people in comas, that the things they hear while they’re—out, they can help bring back memories from before the accident, that it’s a good idea to tell them about things they already know. Things they’ll recognize, things they might understand.”

You were eleven years old when you parents died, Harvey thinks. You were brought up by your grandmother, who was a wonderful woman named Edith, and I know she was wonderful even though I only met her a couple of times because I know the wonderful man she raised, and she died three years ago.

No, he can’t say any of that.

You’re a fantastic lawyer, Harvey thinks. You’re one of the most thoughtful and resourceful men I’ve ever met, and you’ll fight for what you believe in until it’s impossible to do anything more, and then you’ll try one more thing just in case and half the time that’ll be the thing that does it.

No, he can’t say any of that, either.

Harvey drops his head down onto his clasped hands and tries not to laugh.
“This is such a fucking mess,” he says, mostly to himself.

Still, it’s easier to keep going once he’s started.

“Jessica put you on a case with Soloff, remember him?” he asks wryly, hoping the answer is “no,” wishing they had the power to dismiss people from their lives merely by refusing to acknowledge their existence. “You were working so hard, Mike, you were doing so good, and everything at the firm has been so goddamn stressful the last few weeks that I thought, hey, you know what, here’s this little case, this arrogant asshole is peddling fake flu vaccines and covering his tracks for shit, let’s, you know, let’s you and me go confront him, tell him he can keep his name out of the papers, his case out of the courtroom if he settles with us right here right now, what could go wrong?”

If there are more famous last words out there, Harvey doesn’t want to hear them.

He clears his throat again, looking up at the machine monitoring Mike’s heart rate.

“We took a day trip, you and I did,” he says, “out here to the Hamptons, to Stony Brook. It’s on Long Island, we had to take my car on the ferry because Blake, that’s the guy’s name, he’s got his shitty little laboratory out here, and I mean it is some shitty kind of lab, basically a Bunsen burner and a lot of test tubes full of sugar water.”

Beep, beep, beep.

“We, uh. We drove to his house, we were going to surprise him, he’d never see it coming.”

Listen carefully, now. This is the important part.

“So,” Harvey carries on loudly, looking up at the blue plastic tube pumping air into Mike’s lungs. “I stopped the car on the side of the road, you know, he lives in kind of a suburb, I guess you’d call it, and I got out of the car and I walked across the road, to his front door, and you got out of the car, and you started to cross the road to meet me, and then…”

And then.

And then.

Harvey takes a deep breath in though his nose and looks up at the ceiling.

“And this guy,” he says, “this guy, Roy Wentworth, he’s driving along in his Honda, and he comes out of nowhere and he just—hits you, and—and he stops, and he gets out of his car and he calls his buddy, this friend of his who’s a goddamn helicopter pilot, if you can believe it, so his friend the helicopter pilot flies out to meet us, in his helicopter, and he takes you to this hospital, this one here, and the doctors rush you to the emergency room, and they start operating on your head, on your brain, and…and I’m just sitting here, I’m just sitting out there in the waiting room, I’m just sitting there waiting, and not knowing anything, and not—doing anything, and god, Mike, I…”

You what?

You what, Harvey?

Shaking his head until his neck begins to ache, Harvey forces himself to look down, to look at the bed, over the guardrails, past all the wires and needles and plugs and bandages and wounds and scars, past all of that to Mike, brilliant, fierce, clever Mike lying with his head propped up against a dense-looking pillow in a thin white pillowcase, his eyes calmly closed, his face slack and peaceful, his chest rising and falling with his slumbering breaths, in, out, in, out, in, out.
You what, Harvey?

Yeah. Exactly.

A gentle knocking sounds at the door, and Harvey doesn’t manage to respond before a woman in powder-blue scrubs enters, smiling awkwardly.

“Mister Ross?” she guesses. Harvey wonders how long they have to be here before people stop making that mistake.

“Harvey Specter,” he says, standing and putting his hands in his pockets. “I was told I would be permitted to stay in this room until eight thirty tonight.”

“Oh, yeah, of course,” the woman agrees, “you absolutely are, I’m just here to reposition Mister Ross and record his vitals.”

Harvey narrows his eyes. “Reposition him?”

The woman nods as she picks up the medical file hanging off the end of Mike’s bed. “To prevent skin irritation, mainly to reduce the likelihood of his developing bedsores,” she explains. “Totally routine, you’re more than welcome to stay if you’d like.”

Bedsores? Isn’t that an old-person problem, isn’t that something they train nursing home staff to treat?

“How often are you in here doing this?” Harvey asks, hearing the words come out like an accusation and not particularly caring to soften them for her. The woman nods as though she expected it, as though she might’ve even expected worse.

“Every two to four hours,” she says. “There’s not much to it, would you like to watch?”

Clenching his teeth, Harvey crosses his arms over his chest. He has to, doesn’t he? Especially if it makes him uncomfortable, especially then.

“Sure,” he says, far too dismissively. “Yes. Yes, I would.”

Oh, yeah, nice save.

The woman steps around to the side of Mike’s bed, pressing a button near his head that reduces the bed’s incline; when it’s nearly flat, she starts drawing back the sheets, and Harvey can’t quite see everything she’s doing, pulling his shoulder this way and pushing his hips that, rearranging pillows and blankets, but whatever it is, it only seems to take a moment and he’s left wondering if she really did anything of any consequence at all.

“Thank you,” he says anyway, trying to give her the benefit of the doubt. She nods, checking the beeping machines and making notes on the medical chart and doing her best to ignore Harvey as she works, and he sits in the padded wooden side chair, doing his best to stay out of her way.

“Have a good day,” she says vaguely as she hangs the chart back at the foot of Mike’s bed, seeming a different person now that she can check this room off on her rounds, now that her job is done for the moment.

“Yeah,” Harvey replies, equally distracted as the door closes behind her and he’s alone again.

No.
Mike might be lying in bed with needles stuck in his chest, scars on his head and pillows between his knees, being pushed and pulled around by nurses as his life is reduced to numbers that can be summarized by words like “promising” and “worrisome,” but he’s here, he’s breathing, he’s alive. He’ll be okay. He will.

He will.

Harvey scrubs his hand over his face.

Won’t he?

Of course he will. He has to be.

Harvey takes a deep breath.

“I drafted a lawsuit for you,” he says, trying to smile so the words come out brightly. “Charged the comptroller’s office, the cost of your medical bills plus a ten million dollar settlement. I know, I know,” he waves his hand against the inevitable challenge, “what am I thinking, ten million dollars, but come on, Mike, that’s nothing, that’s pathetic, that’s— This is your life we’re talking about, ten million dollars is, it’s, it’s, I mean how am I supposed to measure something like that, how am I supposed to put a price tag on you, you know, you’re, you’re you, you’re Mike!”

Harvey shakes his head; there’s only one side to this argument, it’s not even one worth having with himself, much less anyone else. “There’s no number that goes along with that,” he rambles, “you’re just—you’re you, there’s no—I, I can’t tell someone how much it’ll cost them to hurt you, how much they have to fork over to get away with, with, with doing this! With nearly killing you, Mike, god, do you have any idea what could’ve happened? What almost happened, Mike, you almost died, and you—you, you might—”

Bep, bep, bep.

He looks up abruptly at the strange noise, rising to his feet without quite meaning to; the line of Mike’s heart monitor has changed, the pulses closer together, the beeping faster, shorter, higher. Suddenly Doctor Grant appears, pushing through the door, pulling on his latex gloves and heading straight for the malfunctioning machine, and that’s what’s happening, isn’t it, it has to be, Mike can’t be— Mike can’t be—

“Mister Specter,” Doctor Grant says firmly, tapping a button underneath the screen, “did you see Michael move or hear him make any noise at all immediately prior to this change?”

Harvey shakes his head as his hands begin to tremble. “No, no, I was just talking to him, I was telling him about what’s going on, I was telling him that I, I wrote a suit, I…”

Doctor Grant waves him off, leaning over Mike’s chest and pressing his fingers to his throat, right under his jaw where the pulse point ought to be. “Alright,” he says more sedately, standing up straight and looking at his watch. “Did you raise your voice, by any chance, did you become particularly emotional when you were talking about those things?”

“I…” Harvey runs his hand through his hair, scraping his nails against his skin. “I guess I was, I didn’t… I didn’t mean to, I— Did I…”

Looking back at the heart monitor, Doctor Grant shakes his head, and Harvey sinks back into his seat.

“I’m sure the noise was surprising, but it wasn’t a major event, everything is fine,” Doctor Grant
assures him. “It’s not wholly uncommon for familiar sounds and familiar voices to arouse patients in a comatose state, and a particularly…energetic voice might have caused a more dramatic response, so just try to keep your voice fairly level for now, maybe don’t talk about things that will make you angry.”

“For now?” Harvey repeats. “Now” means there’s a “later” to look forward to, a time in the future when the rules can change, when the game might be different.

“At this early stage in the recovery process,” Doctor Grant elaborates. “Once he’s in a more stable condition, reactions like that won’t be quite as alarming.”

“How long will that be?” Harvey demands, pushing himself up to standing.

Doctor Grant looks down at the medical file and purses his lips. “It’s difficult to say at this point, but for now, my best estimate is…about two weeks.”

Harvey tries not to stare. “He’ll be stable in two weeks?”

“Oh no,” Doctor Grant says, as though the notion is absurd. “No, I’m talking about when the swelling in his brain might have reduced enough that we would be able to take him out of the coma, to begin his active recovery. He’ll be more susceptible to external stimuli once he’s awake, changes in his heart rate won’t seem so, out of the blue, you might say.”

Harvey sits.

“Oh.”

Doctor Grant makes a note on the medical chart and hangs it at the foot of Mike’s bed.

“Alright,” he says, “so let’s try to keep things calm in here for now, and I’m sure I will be seeing you later on, Mister Specter.”


A stilted moment passes before Doctor Grant takes off his latex gloves, tossing them in the trash on his way out the door.

He’ll be stable later. He isn’t right now, but he will be, later. Probably. Maybe.

Another moment passes before the door opens again.

“Harvey.”

Rachel.

Harvey stands.

“What happened out there?” he asks as Rachel looks up at him with dried tear tracks on her face.

“I was talking to Donna,” she says, her voice surprisingly steady considering the state she was in a few hours ago. “What happened, what was the doctor doing? Is everything okay?”

Of course not.

“Everything’s fine,” he assures her, stepping sideways away from the chair, from the bed. “Doctor Grant was checking on Mike’s vitals, everything’s fine. Nothing to worry about.”
Rachel breathes a sigh of relief, the corners of her mouth curling up in a little smile. “Okay,” she says. “I’m sorry, I just... I guess I shouldn’t be surprised to see doctors checking on their patients in a hospital.”

Harvey tries to smile back, hoping it comes out right. “It’s not the most unusual thing in the world.”

She laughs, and Harvey reminds himself that it’s not appropriate to bear her any ill will for finding a single moment of levity.

“I’m glad you were here,” she says. “When he came in, I’m glad it wasn’t just Mike all alone.”

Harvey nods, hoping he doesn’t look too nauseated.

“Everything’s fine,” he repeats. “The doctor said he thinks Mike might be ready to come out of the coma in about two weeks.”

Rachel looks delighted, and Harvey wants to be happy for her, really he does.

“That’s amazing,” she says, brushing her fingers under her eyes. “That’s so amazing, I— Can you stay here for a minute? Just another minute, I want to call my parents.”

Can you stay here a minute before you go? Can you hold my place in line and then can you leave? Harvey doesn’t bother smiling this time around.

“Of course,” he says, as though he’d be doing her a favor. “Take as long as you need.”

She walks out with a smile on her face, and Harvey wonders when they decided it was fair to barter with Mike’s time, when they made the mutual decision that someone should be with him always but it wouldn’t be the both of them together. When they decided it would be easier to think of him as an object that needs minding rather than the man they’re both so desperate to see take his own life back.

Harvey wonders what makes him think he deserves more of that time than she does.

He sits in the padded wooden side chair, resting his chin in his hands as he watches Mike’s chest rise and fall and tries to think of something, anything else to say, anything that might help even a little bit, anything that doesn’t make bile rise in his throat, anything that doesn’t make him want to run down the hall smashing windows and upending crash carts. Then Rachel comes back and gives him a pitying look, sweetly grateful and just a touch condescending, and Harvey leaves without waiting to be asked.

Out in the waiting area, sitting with Donna’s arm around his back, Harvey remembers that he’s just an interloper, a hanger-on without the good sense to get the hell out of there before he can do any more damage.

It’s getting late.

He’ll stop somewhere for a bite to eat before he starts in on revising that lawsuit.
The main purpose of a medically induced coma is to reduce swelling on the brain.

There is clinical evidence suggesting that hearing familiar voices affects coma patients’ consciousness, including potentially raising their heart rate.
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rolling onto his back, Harvey tosses his arm over his forehead and stares up at the ceiling. He must’ve gotten a few hours’ rest, given that it’s nearly seven thirty, but how he made it through the night, he isn’t sure; he’s only been awake for a few minutes and guilt at having wasted his time sleeping, time he could’ve been working on Mike’s case, fretting over Mike’s prognosis, is already gnawing at his insides, fighting against the half order of grilled chicken fettuccini he choked down for dinner last night.

Mike might be awake in two weeks.

Harvey shoves his hands under his pillow and rolls onto his side.

Might be.

Will be.

Across the room, three drafts of the lawsuit against the state are spread across almost the entire surface despite being no more than ten pages apiece, none of them typed. None of them official, none admissible in court. Mike would be ashamed.

Harvey arches his back and stretches his arms out in front of him.

Might as well get going.

It isn’t until Harvey’s buttoning his slacks—grey, but not the grey ones he was wearing a few days ago, those are ruined, those need to be incinerated and the ashes scattered to the seven seas—that it occurs to him that he hasn’t showered since Friday morning. It’s not a shocking revelation; he’s heard how those sorts of routine things, those little self-care rituals fall by the wayside in situations like this.

A little while later, freshly cleaned and properly dressed, Harvey makes his way down to the hotel restaurant for breakfast. Mike would want him to take care of himself.

Half a grapefruit and two mini-muffins, that’ll do for now.

Eight fifty-four. Harvey drives to the hospital in four minutes and thirty-five seconds exactly.

Striding purposefully in through the front doors, he imagines he shouldn’t be so surprised to find Donna dozing in the waiting area; come to think of it, he doesn’t know where else she intends to spend her nights, or whether she’s brought any spare clothing and such of her own. For now, it’s probably better for Rachel to have her nearby, and so long as Rachel is staying with Mike, it’s in everyone’s best interest for her to have a support network on hand. It’s alright, everything is alright.

“Morning, Donna,” he says sharply, taking some small pleasure in the spasming of her shoulder as she wakes.

“Harvey,” she marvels, as though she’s forgotten where she is, forgotten everything that’s happened. Rubbing her eyes with her fingertips, she stands with a swish of the ruffled hem of her ostentatious little dress, and Harvey sticks his hands in his pockets as he rocks back on his heels.
“Any news?” he asks. She shakes her head sympathetically, and he nods, having expected nothing less. They would’ve called him.

They would.

Wouldn’t they?

“Excuse me,” Harvey says, walking up to the reception desk and laying his hands flat across the top.

“Mister Specter, good morning,” the receptionist says, looking up with a small smile. It’s the woman who was here on Friday, the one who got that sad look in her eyes when she told him he’d finished up at the hotel too late and would have to wait until Saturday to see Mike again. The woman who wasn’t going to remember him, except look at how that turned out.

Harvey smiles back.

“Hello,” he replies, hoping she understands that he’s doing his best, but pretending that there’s anything good about today is a step too far.

“What can I do for you?” she asks like she really means it. He clears his throat.

“I want to make sure that in the event that Michael Ross has any sort of emergency overnight,” he advises, “or anytime something happens to him when I’m not here, someone will know to call me immediately.”

Not that anything is going to happen.

But if it does.

“My number should be in his file,” he elaborates, “the emergency contact number I gave when he came in. My cell phone. Nine-one-seven area code.”

“Mm-hm,” she murmurs, typing away on that computer of hers. “I see we have the number right here, I’ll put a note next to your name.”

Not that anything is going to happen.

But just in case.

“Thank you,” he says. She nods, and he pats the counter absently as he walks away.

Donna smiles, maybe for lack of anything better to do.

“Rachel’s in with him now,” she says. “She’s been in there all night.”

Yeah, well, she’d better be.

“Alright,” he says.

Donna hums agreeably. “Did you have any breakfast?” she ventures. He nods, looking over his shoulder at the clock on the wall beside the reception desk. Six after nine.

“Uh-huh,” he mumbles. Fifty-four minutes to go.

One…two…three…
Precisely five hundred and fifty-eight seconds later, Rachel walks around the corner of the hallway that leads to the elevators, smothering a yawn in her sleeve and tousling her hair with her free hand.

Nine seventeen.

What the fuck is she doing out here?

“Rachel?” Donna says as she and Harvey hurry toward her. “What’s wrong, is everything okay?”

“Hng?” Rachel yawns again, her shoulders hunching over. “Yeah, no, everything’s fine. Nothing… nothing happened, I just… I needed some air. Needed to get something to eat.”

She needed some air?

She needed to take a break, and now Mike is all alone.

Harvey puts on his most diplomatic expression, feeling for the neutral alignment of his spine, his shoulders, his hips. “How was your night?” he asks coolly, ignoring her weary eyes and pretending not to notice her exasperation with his admittedly stupid question.

“Long,” she says. “The doctors came in like… twenty times, they kicked me out twice for ‘procedural reasons,’ I think I slept for about three hours.”

Does she expect him to pity her or something?

“You must be tired,” he notes. It’s clumsy, sure, it’s obvious and brash, but he’s worn out, he’s stressed, and so is she, and maybe she’ll fall for it.

“Of course I am,” she says snidely. To her credit, only a moment passes before she shakes her head, raking her hands back through her hair again. “Sorry,” she mutters, “I just… I don’t know what to think, it’s like I’ve been here for a thousand years.”

Yeah, well, he knows the feeling.

But maybe…

“Maybe I should take the night shift tonight,” he proposes.

She waves him off immediately. “No, no,” she dismisses, “no, I’ll be fine, I want to be there.”

Fuck.

Harvey smiles.

“Well, let’s see how the rest of the day goes, and then we can decide this afternoon.”

Ducking her head down and shrugging, Rachel walks past him toward the exit, probably on her way to Starbucks for a coffee, or a croissant, or something, whatever. Harvey smiles blandly until she’s out of sight; the moment she’s gone, he returns to the waiting area to fix his eyes on the clock and wait for the next forty minutes to crawl on by.

Donna nears him cautiously, and he wonders when it’s appropriate to start hissing and bearing his fangs.

“You aren’t going to trick her into it.”
She’s always been too damn good at reading him.

Harvey shrugs. “I have just as much right to be there as she does.”

Donna sighs.

“Harvey, she’s stayed with him for two days, and two nights, and she’s barely left his side the entire time. I’m not saying you would’ve done any different,” she adds before he cuts her off, “but if you think you’re going to be able to barter for a turn, or pull a fast one on her somehow, just…be prepared.”

He’s the best damn closer in the city, and he’ll play to his strengths whether or not it’s going to be easy.

He nods. “Fine.”

It’s a battle cry as much as it is an acknowledgment of the warning, but she’ll know what he means.

At nine forty-two, Rachel walks back in through the automatic doors nursing a large hot coffee that she clutches with both hands as she walks past them, past reception straight to the elevators as if in some kind of daze. No sense in talking to her now, but that’s alright. The best closer in the city knows how to play ball. He can wait.

Harvey counts the seconds in groups of one hundred and twenty.

By ten thirty, he’s waited long enough.

A group of three doctors attempting to share a single medical file with apparently little success bustle onto the elevator behind him; when the door opens on the second floor, they startle and fumble to press the button for the fifth, and Harvey forgets them completely the moment they’re out of his sight.

Rachel seems unsurprised when he opens the door without knocking.

“Hi,” she whispers, as though Mike is only sleeping.

“How’s he doing?” Harvey asks without preamble.

Shrugging, she picks demurely at her fingernails. “The same.” She stops picking her nails to smile softly at Mike. “I was telling him about what our wedding’s going to be like, the flowers and the food and the cake and everything. I even told him about my dress.”

“Mm-hm.”

He wonders for a moment if she still thinks those things are important. Why she would, how she can.

“Harvey,” she says then, looking back down at her hands, “I know Doctor Zhang said that you were allowed to stay with him overnight if you wanted, that we could take turns, but I don’t think I want to leave.”

At least she’s being upfront about it.

“I understand,” Harvey says, “and I hope you can understand that that’s not going to work for me.”

She smiles tersely; for whatever reason, she’s sure she has the upper hand. It’s fine. She’ll learn.
“Harvey, I’m trying to appeal to your sense of civility,” she implores, which is a decent thing of her to do, but this situation is well beyond civility, well beyond decency. He matches her smile and tilts his head a little to the right.

“And I’m sure that you and I agree we only want what’s best for Mike,” he replies, “and I don’t see how keeping him all to yourself is in his best interest.”

“Don’t you?” she snaps, her calm veneer falling for a second before she shoves it back into place with another brittle smile. “I’m doing my best to look out for him.”

“And I’m sure that you and I agree we only want what’s best for Mike,” he replies evenly, “though actually, you don’t; as his legal counsel, I have the right to visit my client as frequently as I deem it necessary to keep me informed of any change in his condition, which includes the right to visit him or stay in his room overnight.”

That’s total bullshit, Harvey’s well aware; until he can speak for himself, the hospital staff has the final say over who can and can’t see Mike, and since Harvey and Rachel both have obvious personal connections to him, verified in writing and everything, no one is going to risk a lawsuit by kicking either of them out. Still, Harvey bets—he hopes—that Rachel’s never needed to refine her expertise in the HIPAA Privacy Rule, that maybe his willful, self-assured deception will wear down her idealistic ignorance before they start screaming at each other.

Mike lies still, blissfully unaware, and Harvey clenches his teeth.

What was that she said about a sense of civility?

“I’m not trying to kick you out indefinitely, Rachel, I’m just asking for a night.”

“And I’m just telling you that’s not going to happen.”

Fine. Harvey isn’t in the mood for games, anyway.

“Let’s get the doctor in here for a second opinion,” he challenges, which is only a gamble in that Grant or Zhang or whoever might uselessly confirm that Harvey is allowed to stay, but they have to work the actual schedule out amongst themselves. As it turns out, it doesn’t matter either way, since Rachel immediately shakes her head and fixes him with an icy glare.

“I don’t want to get the doctors involved,” she snipes. “Do you have any idea what that phone call did to me, Harvey, I was so worried I still don’t know how I made it here in one piece without driving off the damn road!”

His eyes dart to the heart monitor, where Mike’s vital signs are unchanged. Rachel doesn’t seem to notice.

“This is the man I love,” she reminds him, “the man I plan to spend the rest of my life with, and if I want to stay by his side until he wakes up, then that is exactly what I’m going to do, and there’s nothing you or anyone else is going to do to stop me!”
“I’m not trying to stop you, I’m trying to give you a break!”

“Give me a break,’ what kind of break can you give me when you’re the whole reason he’s here in the first place?”

There’s a retort on the tip of his tongue; there are a few of them, actually, equally cutting and variably long.

He can’t force a single one past his lips.

Bep…bep…bep…

Someone had to point it out sooner or later, but why did it have to be now? And why did it have to be her? Isn’t it Mike’s right to make the accusation, Mike’s right to hurl that acid in his face for all the world to see instead of letting it slosh around in Harvey’s conscience forever?

The door opens quietly, and Doctor Grant walks in behind them.

Bep…bep…bep…

“Everything alright in here?”

Rachel smiles.

“Harvey and I were just discussing which of us would be staying with Mike tonight,” she says. Doctor Grant nods.

“Harvey?” he suggests as Rachel’s face falls.

“No,” she fumbles, “it… Me, I’m staying.”

Doctor Grant looks between them, at Rachel’s red eyes and Harvey’s greyish skin, and curls his lip thoughtfully.

“Miss Zane, I think it would serve you well to get a good night’s sleep in a proper bed,” he decides after a moment’s consideration. “Mister Specter I believe secured a hotel room nearby, is that correct?”

“I did,” Harvey agrees. “In fact, the room’s a double, one bed for me and one for Miss Zane.”

Furrowing her brow, Rachel turns to Mike, as though he’s in any position to offer her support.

“But what if he wakes up and I’m not here?” she laments.

Harvey stares at her.

What if—what?

Raising his eyebrows, Doctor Grant takes a step forward, clapping his hands behind his back. “Miss Zane,” he says slowly, “there is…no chance of Mike waking up before we stop administering the propofol.”

Rachel looks at him incredulously. “But you hear stories all the time about people coming out of comas—”

“Are you serious?” Harvey interrupts the moment he finds his voice. “Do you have any idea what
the fuck is going on here? Have you listened to a single thing anyone’s said to you?”

“Of course I have!” she cries. “My husband was hit by a car, and he has a traumatic brain injury, and now he’s in a coma until he gets better, and I just have to sit here and wait!”

Doctor Grant winces as Harvey barks a disbelieving laugh.

“He’s not your husband,” he says crassly, “and he’s in a coma because he’s on drugs, they’re doing it on purpose.” She opens her mouth to argue, but he advances on her instead; “He’s not going to wake up because you’re sitting in bed next to him,” he ticks off, “or holding his hand, or kissing his forehead, or whatever other goddamn Disney princess bullshit you think you can pull to magically fix this! You can’t wake him up, I can’t wake him up, even the doctors can’t be sure he’ll ever wake up again, and even if he does, he’s not going to be ‘better’ for a long fucking time!”

Bep, bep, bep!

“Both of you need to leave, right now,” Doctor Grant interjects, putting his hand on Harvey’s shoulder and waving Rachel on toward the door. “Right now, get out.”

“But I—”

“Get out,” Grant repeats, actively pushing them now, “and I think the best thing for Mike tonight is to be alone to get some rest, no more visitation for today.”

He shuts the door as soon as they’ve stepped into the hall, and Rachel doesn’t waste a second before turning on her heel to slap Harvey across the face.


There’s more coming, more and viler words she wants to spit at him, a longer tirade that he might excuse with a clearer head but at the moment he feels only that it’s in fact his right to deliver to her, but doctors and visiting family members walk past them with suspicious glances, making judgments and assumptions without knowing anything at all about what’s going on, and she clenches her trembling fists and storms off toward the elevators as he stands there with a pulsing ache in his forehead and a sharp sting on his cheek.

And now what?

The other room key is hers, it’s supposed to be hers; they’re supposed to trade nights like civilized people, switching on and off in the hopes of getting a little bit of rest even though they know it won’t do much good. They’re supposed to deal with the situation maturely, they’re supposed to work together for Mike’s benefit, to help Mike, everything for Mike. They’re supposed to understand each other, to support each other in this dire hour of need, not…vie for position, not act like panicky, petulant children.

So now what?

“Hey, are you lost?”

Harvey startles, looking over at the man stopped beside him with a knowing look in his eye and a stuffed bear in his hand, and shakes his head.

“No, I’m not,” he says, “I just…needed a minute.”

The man smiles understandingly and walks off down the hall, and Harvey shoves his hands in his
pockets as he looks down at the floor.

Just a minute.

Now what.

Chapter End Notes

According to the HIPAA Privacy Rule, since Mike is unconscious and therefore unable to give consent, his medical providers have the authority to regulate his visitation and who may receive his personal information however they see fit. Stony Brook University Hospital in particular maintains the policy that patients have the authority to define anyone “biologically, legally, or emotionally related to the patient” as their family.

Because his induced coma needs to last longer than 72 hours, Mike is being sedated with a propofol (Diprivan) drip.
The walls are bare but for a trite sunset-colored poster with the word “Inspire” printed on the black border in white Times New Roman, and the plastic directional sign pointing off toward the different wards across the floor. Harvey spends about a minute looking around for a clock, which is far longer than necessary to realize there’s nothing there.

Room two forty-two.

Another minute passes before the door opens and closes behind him; Doctor Grant walks briskly past, shoving latex gloves into his pocket and glowering darkly. Harvey dares himself to look through the narrow window in the door; the only clear lights are those on the various life support machines and monitor screens, the rest of the room dim and indistinct with all the hulking medical stuff cluttering it up. In the middle of everything, Mike lies still, peaceful, undisturbed.

So that’s that.

Harvey turns away.

Now what?

He can’t stay here forever. Obviously. Can he go back to the hotel, can he go back to his room to revise the lawsuit again? And then again, again, again, until he goes mad with it, until he forgets what he’s doing it for in the first place? No, it’s probably still early for that, too early to hole himself up in his room until tomorrow; there aren’t any clocks in this hallway, so he can’t be sure.

One of these days, he ought to start wearing a watch.

Deliberately placing one foot in front of the other, Harvey walks toward the elevator, watching the tile floor pass by underneath him and counting his steps. Thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three; turning the corner, he blindly reaches out to press the call button, noticing too late that he’s stabbed the one for “Up” rather than “Down.” Surely that won’t make a difference.

*Ding.*

The doors close, and the elevator begins to rise.

It doesn’t make a difference.

A couple of doctors in maroon scrubs with dark smudges under their eyes get on at the sixth floor, leaning against each other for support. Harvey presses the button for the first floor, even though it’s already lit, but they don’t seem to notice.

It doesn’t make a difference.

Down in the waiting area, Rachel sits huddled in a sparsely-padded chair, curled up in Donna’s embrace and pressing tissues to her nose as she sobs without shame. Harvey pauses by the reception desk, and the woman there stops typing for a moment as she glances over at him apprehensively.

Not to worry. Harvey’s finished causing a scene for today.
Over Rachel’s trembling shoulders, Donna looks at him, her eyes sort of blank in a way he’s seen a couple of times in the past, a way that means everyone is filled with too much emotion, the situation is filled with too much tension for her to see the obvious right answer and start ordering people around to sort it all out. He can’t hold it against her; he feels about the same.

Rachel raises her head to take a gasping breath and her eyes catch on Harvey, lingering off to the side like a voyeur. He doesn’t think she particularly wants to talk to him, to clear the air or anything, but to be fair, he doesn’t exactly want to talk to her at the moment, either, and when she shoves herself out of her seat to flee out the door, he doesn’t feel any particular urge to go after her.

Mike wouldn’t want them to be fighting.

Sorry, Mike. We’re doing the best we can.

When Rachel’s gone, Donna stands with her arms held stiffly at her sides.

“Harvey.”

He looks around at the clock beside the reception desk. Eleven thirty-one; yeah, that feels about right.

“Harvey, she’s just scared.”

Maybe he should go for a drive, or a walk; something to clear his head.

“You’ve seen how much she and Mike have been through to get to where they are, and she’s just doing everything she can to keep believing that it’s not all going to fall apart.”

“I know that,” he says shortly.

Donna looks away at the wall.

“I just think,” she elaborates, her jaw clenched tight, “that you could give her a break. Given that I’m sure you understand how difficult this is for her to go through.”

How difficult this is.

This situation. This normal, routine event.

This thing they’re going through.

“You know what, Donna,” he bites out, “I’m not really interested right now in hearing about what a tough time Rachel is having.”

She frowns irritably, and he shakes his head.

“I don’t know if you forgot, but we’re all having a tough time with this. Okay?”

“God, Harvey, don’t you think I know that?” she begs, dropping her tightly-controlled guise in an instant and turning to him with tears beading on her lashes. “Mike means a lot to all of us, okay, we’re all struggling here, but Rachel thought she and Mike were going to have the rest of their lives to have all sorts of amazing experiences together, and now this might be the last experience they ever have!”

“Mike being on his deathbed isn’t some—trump card Rachel gets to wave around to get her out of being a responsible adult!” he roars, flinging his hands out wide, feeling himself becoming unhinged
and unable to do a single thing to stop it. “This is, without a doubt, the worst thing I’ve ever done, alright, and whether he gets better or not, I’m going to have to carry that around for the rest of my life. So maybe you can just drop it with the whole hierarchy of suffering, do you think you can do that?”

His breathing comes in uneven heaves, his chest tight and his whole body tired and aching as though he’s struggling to the finish line of some sort of marathon.

Donna takes a step closer.

“This isn’t your fault,” she reminds him sternly. “You didn’t do anything.”

Put that headline in your paper.

Harvey shakes his head and drops his hands.

“Exactly.”

“No, Harvey—”

She reaches out for him, maybe to touch, to hug, to hold, but he pushes past her, his face twisting into a grim mask as nausea roils in his stomach and he walks out the door, past the ambulances idling by the curb, past the parking lot with all the skid marks, with his shiny silver Lexus, past the big road sign directing traffic to Stony Brook University Hospital, right this way, single file please and keep your voices down, there are people here who are trying to rest.

Harvey turns right onto the highway, sticking his hands into his pockets and walking along the shoulder as cars whiz by down the road. How goddamn fucking ironic would it be if some careless driver clipped him right out here in front of the surgery wing? What twisted sort of justice would that be?

It only takes a couple of sidesteps to move his path into the grass.

Up above, idling there as though nothing’s gone wrong at all, the sky has never looked quite so bright, quite so blue; sunlight beats down on his shoulders, warming his neck underneath his starchy shirt collar, and it’s a good thing he isn’t wearing a suit jacket or he’d run the risk of heat stroke. Maybe. Well, no, probably not; it’s warm, but it’s not that bad.

The hospital has air conditioning or something, some controlled heating and cooling; not in the waiting area, where the automatic doors open and close every minute, sometimes twice a minute, but on the upper floors. On the second floor. Room two forty-two.

Harvey takes his hands out of his pockets and unbuttons his cuffs, rolling them up to his elbows like some kind of slacker.

That was a terrible thing he said to Donna, he knows. She was only trying to help, only trying to make his life easier. Only trying to do her best as his employee, as his friend. It’s not like she was completely wrong, either; Mike means a lot to all of them, and they’re all suffering in his absence, they’re all feeling the loss, the stress, the hurt and the sorrow and the threat of the unknown. Suffering in different ways, ways he still doesn’t much care to rank, but suffering nonetheless.

It’s a little bit funny, the whole situation. Not really, but just a little bit. This is one of those things that’s supposed to bring people together, this sort of shared loss, this shared pain; this is the sort of thing that makes friends of enemies, allies of rivals, forging bonds between people where there might not have been much in common before. They should all be coming together in mutual understanding
over their shared love for Mike, they should all be supporting each other, standing stronger together than the mere sum of their parts.

Rachel is absolutely the last person Harvey wants to talk to just now.

Their motley little crew has never been one for convention.

Chuckling under his breath, feeling a little delirious, Harvey digs the toe of his shoe into the dirt, the top layer loose and crumbling from picking up tons of highway debris. A road sign across the intersection directs him toward Stony Brook Hamlet, Business District, two miles to the left, north, south, east, west, whichever direction it is; he hasn’t the faintest idea why anyone would want to go there, what’s supposed to be so great about it. Maybe nothing; probably nothing. There’s only one thing out here that really matters, anyway, and it’s not the fucking Business District.

Harvey pulls his phone out of his pocket and thumbs the Contacts button.

One ring. Two.

“Harvey.”

He smiles, rubbing his hand across his forehead.

“Why didn’t you call?”

Jessica sighs.

“I figured you could call me when you were ready.”

It isn’t funny.

Harvey laughs anyway.

The sound that comes out is harsh and grating, burning the back of his throat and making heat rise on his cheekbones, his eyes squinting not so much against the light as against whatever’s rising up inside him, this foreign sensation. No, he knows what it is; he knows, it isn’t hard, and he isn’t the least bit surprised when he starts to cry, when his back begins to heave and he covers his mouth as though he’s about to throw up, as though there’s any way to keep all this inside himself once it’s started pouring out. Jessica is patient with him, bless her, staying on the line, offering comfort in her presence but waiting for him to find himself again, waiting for him to decide he’s ready.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

He laughs again, choked and short, as his tears slow, soften, stop.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

“I…really fucked up.”

Jessica hums softly.

“Harvey. Talk to me.”

Harvey sniffles, wiping his nose with the back of his free hand. “What did Donna tell you?”

“She told me that Mike was hit by a car,” Jessica recites. “She said he’s been put into a coma, but the doctors don’t know when they’ll be able to take him out of it, and there isn’t much more they can do
for him right now than what they’re doing.” She sighs, and Harvey envisions her pursing her lips, the way she does. “I’m sorry, Harvey.”

“Two weeks,” he replies.

“What?”

“They’ll be able to take him out of it in two weeks,” he clarifies. “His doctor said.” He coughs, his voice still thick and muddled. “Yesterday, he said about two weeks.”

Jessica doesn’t say anything she’s supposed to, anything like “I’m so glad” or “What a relief” or any of that. Harvey misses her fiercely.

“Two weeks?” she inquires.

He takes a few steps forward and back, his eyes fixed on the grass.

“Maybe.”

He doesn’t need to explain what he means.

“Louis will cover your cases for the time being,” she says. It doesn’t matter, of course; he knows it, she knows it. Louis can have his whole damn job, if he wants it.

It’s nice of her not to blindside him.

“How long?” he asks.

She sighs.

“As long as it takes.”

Thank god for Jessica Pearson.

Chapter End Notes

According to Gabriel Macht, Harvey doesn’t wear watches because his suits look better without. (Of course, he also asserts that “getting Mike out of prison far supersedes Harvey’s ‘dress to impress’ motto,” so…)
The air is heavy in a way usually associated with the late summer months, when everything is muggy and damp and most people prefer to spend their time fucking around in swimming pools or the ocean than with their nose to the grindstone in the heart of a major city. Harvey is reasonably certain that, at the moment, the weight on his shoulders has more to do with his state of mind, more to do with the tear tracks on his reddened face and the excess of saliva still in his mouth than something like the weather.

In a vain effort to calm his riled nerves, to settle his churning stomach, he takes a deep breath that ends up drawing more exhaust into his lungs than he’d prefer to consume in an entire week. Maybe it’s about time to go back to the hotel; the walk won’t be long, and he tries not to think too hard about anything in particular, which isn’t as difficult as it probably should be.

At the turnoff to the hotel, Harvey takes a left. The walk isn’t long; he passes the big cement and plastic monument sign in just a minute.

*Stony Brook University Hospital.*

Past the parking lot, past his shiny silver Lexus, Harvey walks through the automatic doors into the hospital waiting area. In a sparsely padded seat, one of several arranged in three rows of nine, Donna sits with her legs pressed together, knees to ankles; her back is straight and her eyes alert, waiting, waiting for who knows what. Something, anything. A sign, a hint. Whatever.

Rachel is nowhere to be seen. Harvey doesn’t know where she might have gone, which is fine. Maybe it’s for the best.

Donna looks at him over her shoulder; Harvey smiles wanly and steps closer.

“Harvey,” she says curtly.

“Donna,” he replies.

She continues to watch him impassively; he shrugs.

“I shouldn’t’ve said that to you,” he admits. “Not in that way. But I can’t say it’s not how I was feeling. How I still feel.”

She arches her eyebrows; he shakes his head.

“Look, I’m sorry,” he says. “I am. But I need you to stop trying to tell me this isn’t my fault, okay, or that I’ve gotta be there for Rachel because she’s afraid her life is going to be upended, because it, it — This just isn’t the time.”

Pinching her lips together, Donna tugs on her pristine skirt as if to straighten it.

“None of us are going to get through this on our own.” Donna says. Harvey opens his mouth, and she raises her hand to stop him. “But if you’re not ready to talk about it yet, then I will try to respect your decision.”

Well that’s some kind of condescending bullshit.

Harvey nods.
“Thank you.”

He’ll take it.

Harvey sticks his hands in his pockets, fingering the edges of the hotel keycards he’s hoarded for the room they were supposed to share. They had a plan for all this, really they did; maybe it isn’t too late to carry on, maybe they can still pretend that they can handle this.

“Do you know where Rachel is?” he asks, sidling up to stand right beside her chair.

Donna shakes her head.

“I have some ideas, but she didn’t tell me where she was going when she left.”

When she ran off, you mean. When she ran away from me.

Yes, then.

Harvey takes one of the keycards out of his pocket and holds it up. “Whenever you find her,” he says, “the next time you see her, give her this, room three-oh-six at the Hilton Garden Inn. Down the road.”

Donna takes it, clasping it in her fist and lowering her hands to her lap. “I remember.”

“And while I’m spending the night here,” he says, “you can stay in the room too, you can sleep in my bed. The uh, the one closer to the door is mine, Rachel’s is the one near the window.”

She looks at him evenly.

“The doctor said no more visitation until tomorrow.”

He narrows his eyes. As though he would have forgotten. As though he could have.

“I remember.” Clutching the other key still in his pocket, he gestures indifferently to the waiting area. “I’ll stay out here tonight.”

“You won’t get much sleep.”

As though that matters.

“I know.” He glances pointedly toward the doors. “It’s fine. But, you know, Rachel probably shouldn’t be wandering around on her own right now.”

Hint, hint.

She gets it. She might not like it, but she can read between the lines.

“You’re sure you’ll be alright here by yourself?”

Better than the alternative.

He offers a solemn smile. “I’ll be fine. Just make sure you find Rachel, make sure she’s okay.”

Mike would be worried, and we have to do right by Mike.

Donna stands slowly, as though her muscles are sore, as though she hasn’t gotten up from her chair since this morning, or maybe even yesterday. As though she doesn’t want to go, as though she
doesn’t know how to split her attentions, how to take care of everyone who needs taking care of.

Harvey tries to smile a little softer.

“Don’t worry,” Donna says, straightening her sleeves. “I’ll find her. Everything’ll be alright.”

You’re a goddamn liar.

“Thank you.”

She nods, sparing him one last uncertain frown before she glides past him, her heels clicking across the linoleum on her way out.

Then Donna’s gone, and Harvey sits in the seat at the end of the row closest to the hallway, farthest from the doors. The woman at the reception desk is the one he recognizes; he ought to learn her name, maybe, try to get on her good side, but the idea makes his head pound even harder than it’s been doing constantly for the past three days. He doesn’t need to start learning people’s names; they aren’t going to be here that long.

Two weeks.

Harvey crosses his arms over his stomach and tries to figure out what to do next, but it makes his chest feel tight, and he would prefer not to start crying again. Especially in the middle of a hospital waiting room, which is far too much of a cliché to be permissible for a man of his standing.

“Family of Valerie Grom?”

Harvey looks around; there’s an old man sitting in the corner, apparently half asleep, and a woman who’s had too much plastic surgery for him to guess her age with any accuracy pacing a line back and forth against the wall.

“Valerie Grom,” the doctor announces again, sticking a medical file under her arm and putting her free hand on her hip.

Harvey nearly volunteers himself, nearly asks what’s wrong with this Valerie girl, nearly asks what kind of person might be rushed to the hospital only to have her family walk off in the middle of her surgery, to abandon her before it’s time to go.

“Family of Valerie Grom,” the doctor repeats, already on her way back down the hall.

The old man startles awake, but instead of answering the doctor, he picks up a copy of The Economist and starts flipping the pages.

Harvey back settles into his seat and looks up at the clock on the wall beside the receptionist’s desk.

Four twenty-three; just where has the time gone?

He should’ve brought a copy of the suit for proofing; he’s gotta make sure it’s airtight before he tries to submit it in court, much less to Jessica.

“Family of Tarek Buchanan?”

The woman rushes forward, waving her arms and crying “Yes, yes, I’m right here,” and when the doctor sighs out through his nose and lays his hand on the woman’s back to guide her down the hall, Harvey turns away, refusing to cry over nothing. The old man glances up from his magazine, making an effort to catch Harvey’s gaze for some kind of commiseration, some weak solidarity, but Harvey
shuts his eyes and raises his fist in front of his mouth and that’s the end of that.

“Family of Michael Renault?”

Harvey decides to stop listening to the announcements from then on.

He isn’t sure whether it was the exhaustion or the boredom that made him fall asleep, but at nearly four in the morning, he wakes abruptly for no reason whatsoever, and then later on, a bit closer to five, he wakes again when an ambulance comes roaring up to the entrance and a gurney shoves through the doors, clattering on down the hall toward the operating room.

Nothing of any real importance happens for awhile after that.

People start filtering in around nine, preparing for visitation even though it’ll be awhile yet before they’re allowed in.

At a few minutes to ten, Rachel materializes seemingly out of nowhere, pausing beside the seat behind him as she clears her throat and sits rather primly, considering this is a hospital waiting area. It’s a little funny that he didn’t hear her approach; the doors open and close so often, he must have stopped noticing.

The world seems to have gone sort of numb.

“Harvey,” she says.

“Rachel,” he replies. She laughs a bit, the way a person might when faced with something that’s only funny because it’s harmlessly ironic.

“Harvey, I’ve been thinking,” she begins carefully. “I think we need to…discuss our situation. Diplomatically.”

Diplomatically. Sure. This is just another day at the office, isn’t it, this is just another business negotiation.

“I see.”

She clears her throat again.

“I want to stay with Mike two days and two nights,” she proposes, “and then you can take the next day and night, and we can switch off like that.”

Just another day at the office.

“Let me make sure I understand this,” he intones. “You’ve monopolized nearly every minute of Mike’s time since you arrived here, going so far as to kick me out of his room when we had already decided it was my turn to stay with him, and now you want twice to take twice as much time as you’re offering me.”

“As I’ve said before,” she grits out, “I’m his fiancée, and I’d like to be treated as such.”

Predictable, predictable.

“Which is why you were the first person I called,” he reminds her. “But I’m sure that as a reasonable human being, you realize I can’t possibly agree to those terms.”

“Reasonable,” that might be a stretch.
“Well,” she sniffs, “I don’t hear you making much of a counteroffer.”

“One day and night apiece,” he says reflexively, “we switch off at ten o’clock in the morning, every twenty-four hours.”

She laughs again, and he’s hard pressed to find anything funny about any of this. Of course, he’s used to opposing counsel using inappropriate tactics to get their way.

“We can switch off on a daily basis,” she snaps, “but I want to stay until one after I spend the night. You can come relieve me at one and I’ll see you the next morning at ten.”

It’s not much of an offer, and he wouldn’t really consider it if he wasn’t desperate.

Well, anyway.

“Fine,” he says. She wants to think she’s in control, he’ll let her; better this that another fight, another banishment from Mike’s room.

“I’ll take today,” she declares, standing with her arms folded across her chest and her gaze diverted well away from him. “I’ll see you tomorrow. Afternoon.”

She doesn’t wait around for his response, but then, he isn’t sure he planned on giving one.

The room is empty but for him and the other visitors beginning to traipse down the hall, and everything is a little bit too flat.

Of course, this is a hospital, and a hospital is supposed to be clean; he prefers it that way, he really does. It’s what’s best for Mike, after all. Best for all of them, really, if they’re going to be staying here. If he’s going to be here twenty-one hours every other day.

“Clean” isn’t exactly the word for it, is the thing.

More like “blank.” “Empty.”

Maybe “dead.”

That’s a silly word to use, though, because Mike will be fine. They’ll wait out the two weeks, and he’ll be fine, won’t he, yes, probably, and they can move on to the next stage of his recovery, whatever that is, and everything will be fine. They just have to take things one day at a time.

One day.
Harvey isn’t sure what he’s expecting to happen.

The waiting area fills with visiting friends and family members, aspiring patients with broken arms and stomach pains, nervous relatives fidgeting in their seats as they wait to hear status updates on their loved ones. The woman at the reception desk treats them all with practiced patience and zero tolerance for bullshit, far calmer than Harvey would be in her shoes. A young woman sits alone in the corner, listening to music on her cell and doing her very best to look totally disaffected except that every time a doctor comes out to give an announcement, to call for a new family, her eyes dart up and she surreptitiously lowers her phone’s volume.

Once in awhile, the receptionist looks up at him. One time, she even smiles.

Harvey smiles back, but afterwards thinks he might’ve imagined it.

The automatic doors open and close, and people come and go. No one is rushed in on a gurney, which is probably for the best.

When someone touches his arm, Harvey doesn’t even startle; when he sees that it’s Donna, it occurs to him that he’s stopped checking the clock.

“Hey,” Donna murmurs. Harvey isn’t sure whether it’s out of respect for the other visitors or she’s afraid he’ll lash out if she speaks too loudly; he doesn’t think he would, but he understands.

“Hi.”

Donna pats his hand. After a minute, she puts an unopened Poland Spring bottle on the armrests between them without comment. Another minute later, she takes her hand back, snapping open the purse in her lap and taking out a container of Advil Liqui-Gels, which she shakes back and forth.

“Want one?”

Come to think of it, he does have a bit of a headache.

“No. Thank you.”

Donna nods, popping the lid off the bottle and dry swallowing two of the pills.

In the corner, the young woman listening to music suddenly and without prompting sobs loudly before covering her mouth and huddling down in her seat. Harvey glances over his shoulder at the sound and turns away, pretending not to have noticed.

Donna clears her throat.

“Are you just gonna sit here until tomorrow afternoon?” she asks tonelessly, her unblinking eyes fixed on the reception desk. Harvey clears his throat.

“I don’t think so,” he says. “But isn’t it a little early for bed?”

She closes her eyes, lowering her head with a sad little smile.
“Those are your only options?”

He picks up the water bottle and rolls it between his hands so the cheap plastic makes that annoying crinkling sound.

“I could go for another walk.”

She hums. “I think that’s a good idea.”

Nodding, he stands, idling for a moment before he goes to the reception desk.

“Excuse me,” he trails off in his most saccharine tone. The woman looks up and quirks her lips in an understanding sort of grimace.

“Bianca,” she fills in in such a way that it means the same as “We’ll be seeing a lot of each other.”

“Bianca,” he repeats as though he’s committing it to memory. “Just making sure someone will know to call me if there’s any change in Michael Ross’s condition. Room two forty-two. My name is Harvey Specter, I believe you have my cell phone number on file.”

“Don’t worry, Mister Specter,” she assures him, turning back to her computer. “It’s taken care of.”

He raps his knuckles against the counter. “Thank you.”

Donna looks after him as he passes her, heading straight out the door and stopping to observe an idling ambulance that seems to be having some sort of engine trouble. There’s something that’s never really occurred to him before; what if instead of safely in the parking lot, an ambulance broke down on the way to the hospital? What if the helicopter carrying Mike had crashed? What if it hadn’t been there at all, what if he’d had to wait for the official hospital helicopter to arrive? What if there had been no helicopter, no helipad, what if Harvey had had to drive him?

Harvey walks on past the parking lot wondering why the thought doesn’t fill him with panic and dread.

Empty.

That’s the word.

There’s nothing in there right now. No fear, no nausea, no hatred, no vigor, no anticipation. He exists, and that’s all there is to it.

Depression? For the time being.

Somehow he imagined it would take a little longer to get here.

At the highway, he turns left, walking in the grass alongside the road, ambling down a path to god knows where, it doesn’t matter. After awhile, he just barely avoids walking into the back of a traffic sign pointing drivers toward “Admissions,” and a few other buildings, “Athletic Department” and so on; hunching his shoulders, dropping them heavily, he keeps walking a little faster.

Daylight begins to fade as he reaches a massive four-way intersection, and he turns around, walking all the way back to the hospital, all the way to the turnoff to the Hilton. Up in his room, he sheds his clothes down to his underwear and slides into bed without bothering to check the time.

He falls asleep staring at the ceiling, and he wakes up just the same, lying there until he can’t put off going to the bathroom any longer. Breakfast service started at six; that’s as good a place as any to
waste a couple hours.

Nursing a mug of black coffee and a complimentary glass of water wastes nearly forty minutes before the waiter informs him as delicately as possible that he’ll have to leave if he doesn’t order some actual food; a fruit salad gets him all the way to ten o’clock, at which point the restaurant closes to prepare for lunch at eleven thirty. He can stretch the walk to the hospital out to twenty minutes if he drags his heels.

Ten thirty. There’s Donna in the waiting area, Bianca at reception. That young woman in the corner with her earphones and her cell phone.

Harvey sits in the corner seat, closest to the hallway.

Donna gives him a moment, but not much longer before she sits beside him.

“How did you sleep?” she asks gently. Harvey nods.

“Fine.”

She thins her lips and sighs; he figures there are probably dark circles under his eyes, which are probably a little red. She’s making a good decision in choosing not to believe him.

“Tell me you had something to eat before you came here.”

“I did.”

She narrows her eyes, and he doesn’t much care if she believes him this time around or not. After a minute, she gets up and walks away, out the doors; a few minutes more, and she places a bag with the Starbucks logo on it in his lap. He knows without looking that it’s a giant banana nut muffin. This is going to become a thing with them.

It’s fine.

“You haven’t changed your shirt,” she says. He looks down at his front; white with grey sharkskin stripes.

“Yes I have.”

She tilts her head, narrowing her eyes as though she’s trying to remember.

“Oh,” she concedes. “I guess you have.”

Yeah.

The waiting room gets busier around eleven; the woman with her two small sons and disaffected teenage daughter carries with her a large box of miniature Three Musketeers bars and the daughter has an expression on her face like she’s had a severe talking to about her disrespectful behavior the other day.

Harvey wonders how many more times he’ll see them around.

It’s one fifteen when Rachel shows up. She missed the cutoff, she should be penalized.

And what’s he supposed to do about it?

“Hi, Harvey,” she says, folding her arms across her chest as though to keep out a winter chill.
Meanwhile, it’s July.

“Rachel,” he greets, standing with his arms at his sides. She nods.

“I’ll see you tomorrow morning,” she says, looking him straight in the eye.

“Have a good night,” he replies. She nods again, and Donna stands to put her hand on Rachel’s shoulder.

After a lingering moment, Harvey ducks his head down and makes for the elevators. A woman who looks enough like Jessica to make him look twice steps up beside him, pressing the call button before he gets the chance, but she’s wearing dark green scrubs and doesn’t pay him any mind. If it had really been her, if Jessica had really come, he doesn’t know what he would have done; yelled at her, maybe. Said something thoughtless. She doesn’t need to be out here, abandoning her firm for Mike, who is going to be fine. Probably.

Of course he is.

Let’s hope.

A man pushing a teenager in a wheelchair boards with them, pressing the button for the third floor. Harvey doesn’t appreciate the additional delay; maybe next time, he’ll take the stars.

Ding. Down the tile floor hallway, and stop: Room two forty-two.

It hasn’t been a moment since he was last here.

The machines hum and glow, the fluorescents shining bright and cold, and Mike lies still with the sheets pulled up to his ribs, wires and tubes poking out of him every which way, that plastic T-shaped thing covering his mouth. The padded wooden side chair is pushed up close to the bed and tilted at an angle, as though Rachel only moved it as much as she needed to stand up and step away. As though she spent the night pressed up against the guardrails, watching his chest rise and fall.

Harvey sits.

Beep…beep…beep…

He puts his hand on the guardrail. It’s warm. Still just a little damp, like Rachel put her hand there, had left it there for a long time and her palm was sweating. Harvey rubs his thumb on the underside, right at the corner, and wonders what he can say that hasn’t already been said.

Not much, probably.

Maybe it’ll be good for Mike to hear things more than once. Assuming he’s hearing anything at all, anyway; is there such thing as being too deep into a coma to hear voices? His heart rate, though, the fight that got them kicked out.

He hears them. He knows.

Harvey should stop making excuses.

“I called Jessica yesterday,” he says, which is something Rachel definitely wouldn’t have brought up. “I wanted to tell her what’s going on. Keep her updated, you know; you’re important to her, she cares about you.”

In case you were wondering.
“She says everything at the firm’s going okay,” he says, even though she said nothing of the sort. “Louis is doing pretty well, handling all his cases. He’s picking up the slack. Him and Jessica. They miss us, but they’re handling it, so, you don’t need to worry about that.”

You don’t need to worry about anything other than getting well.

“I uh.”

Harvey clears his throat. There’s no point in lying about these things.

“I miss you. I miss you being uh, being here to…talk to, to work with. To…watch movies, whatever you’d want to do at the hotel. We could go swimming, I guess, I’m sure they have a pool. I know they do, there’s a sign for it in the gym. Down the stairs. I didn’t, I didn’t check it out, but I was on the treadmill the other night, and I saw…”

Do you like swimming, Mike?

“Like the Chilton, remember, and the pool at the Metropolitan Health and Racquet Club. Remember that, I didn’t— I don’t think I noticed that sign, actually, I don’t remember seeing it, but you told me, you said that was how they knew they were cops— Well, the gun, I guess the gun was a pretty big clue, but you said the pool…”

Do you remember that, Mike?

Harvey runs his hand up and down the guardrail.

Do you remember that?

“Mike, I’m so sorry.”

Beep…beep…beep…

“I just wanted to give you a little time off. I wanted to boost your confidence a little, I wanted to get your mind off work for awhile. I wanted—I wanted to spend some time with you, just…slam-dunking, get that easy win, maybe save a couple lives while we’re at it. You like that kind of stuff. That do-gooder stuff, saving the world taking down one jackass at a time.”

We’re so good at it, you and me.

Harvey looks down at the floor.

“We were having fun, though, weren’t we? Driving out here, to the Hamptons, you asked me why we were going out to ‘rich people country.’ you said the whole point of concierge doctors was that they come to you, not the other way around, and I, I called you a smartass, remember that? I told you to shut your mouth, I said you’d see when we got there; I said it’s a surprise, but I said I know you, and I’m pretty sure you’ll like it, remember?”

Remember when?

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

“Mike, I am…”
Sorry.
So sorry.

Never going to forgive myself.

Harvey sniffs.

“So, do you regret it? Knowing what you know now, knowing where we’ve ended up, do you wish you’d never…never offered to make that drug run for Trevor, do you wish you’d never gone to the Chilton that day? Do you wish I’d never offered you a job, do you wish you’d never come to PSL?”

He laughs, as little as he’s able.

“Do you wish you’d never met me?”

I bet you do.

“Mike, I’m not a good person. I try, I try my best, but you know what, Mike, even with—even now, I don’t want to go back to not knowing you. I don’t want to go back to my life before, I don’t—I don’t miss it. The guy I was before I met you, he just wanted to keep playing the game until he could collect all the pieces he needed to get to the top, to win big because it was the easiest way to look like he was better than all of the rest of them, everybody else who ever told him he couldn’t. But then you—you know what you did, Mike. You do. You made me care about stuff I never thought I’d care about, you made me care about people I never thought I would, and I know you know you did, but I don’t think I ever told you, so I’m telling you now, okay? So you know for sure, because I wouldn’t lie to you, right?”

Stop asking questions.

It’s a surprise.

You’ll like it.

I promise.

Harvey rubs the heel of his palm against his eye and wipes away the tears.

“You know what, when I caught my mom cheating on my dad—when I was sixteen, remember, I’m sure I’ve told you about it, but uh, I don’t…I don’t think I told you that she offered to get me a puppy? As a peace offering, I think, or—something like that.” He chuckles at the memory, which wasn’t funny at the time and isn’t funny now, but all his automatic responses seem to have gotten mixed up along the way and he doesn’t have it in him to put them back in line.

“I didn’t want one, I’d never said I wanted one, but god, she was so desperate to shut me up about it, about everything I’d seen, so you know what I did? I did something stupid, I said yes, I said get me a puppy. I said I want a Siberian Husky, with black rings around the eyes, and I’m gonna take care of it all by myself, I’m gonna get a part time job at the gym in town, at the reception desk, I’ll work there after school and on weekends and I’m gonna take care of this dog, feed it and walk it and take it to the vet and everything, and, god, Mike, I don’t think I’ve ever seen her more terrified than she was at that moment.”

Mike would laugh. Mike would laugh at his mother for panicking, for stupidly offering to buy Harvey’s silence with something so clichéd, something so obvious and reflexive; he would laugh at Harvey for taking her up on it, for demanding a Siberian Husky when he’s clearly much more suited
to a Pomeranian or a Maltese Terrier. He would ignore the reminder of his mother’s infidelity, all the
damage it did to Harvey; he would ignore the fact that sixteen-year old Harvey thought he could give
up baseball and schoolwork and free time with his friends and everything else that mattered to him if
it meant showing up his mother, even though she didn’t mean it, even though she wouldn’t let it
happen.

Mike would laugh, and the whole thing would be funny.

Harvey clears his throat.

“And she said no, she said, what are you talking about, of course not; she didn’t apologize or
anything, she just took it all back, she pretended she hadn’t said anything at all, she asked me…not to
tell my dad, because it would ruin him, she said I’d break up our family if I did, and she didn’t want
to have a hand in that. She asked me to be a grown-up, to do the right thing because I knew it was
right, not because I was getting anything out of it, and you know what, Mike, you… I think that, that
might’ve been the moment I stopped giving a shit.”

Mike would go quiet then, maybe for awhile, maybe only for a moment before he said that Harvey’s
different now; he’s better, he’s stronger than he was then and he’s stronger than his mother was, than
she’s ever been. And Harvey would smile a little, and he would nod, and he wouldn’t say that it’s
because of Mike, but he’d know. Mike would know.

Everybody knows.

Chapter End Notes

Mike’s comment about concierge doctors is a reference to Royal Pains, a show about a
concierge doctor in the Hamptons which ran on USA from 2009 – 2016.
Chapter 10

The machines keeping Mike on life support and monitoring his vital signs, dull spots of color under the cold fluorescents, beep rhythmically, humming a steady, indifferent backdrop to the morbid scene. Watching blearily, his attention beginning to wander, Harvey wonders if he’s like Rachel, if he’s secretly waiting for Mike to open his eyes, to defy all medical logic and the laws of probability and wake up on his own to chastise them for being so concerned that he could be defeated by something so unimaginative as a car accident.

He shakes his head.

Don’t bother.

What time is it? Pushing his sleeve out of the way to check his watch, Harvey remembers that he doesn’t own one; surging to his feet, he frantically pats his pockets for his cell phone before he remembers that he left it at the hotel, on account of not being allowed to use it in Mike’s room.

Rachel will come by at ten, and then he’ll know.

Harvey sits in the padded wooden side chair and rests his chin in his hand.

“I’m sorry, Mike,” he says. “I’m sorry I’m not better at this. It’s my fault you’re in here, and I’m just taking up your time sitting around talking about myself, about why I’ve never owned so much as a goldfish. What am I doing, I’m treating you like you’re my…my therapist or something.”

A distant memory drifts to the surface, and he smiles sardonically.

“My brother had a goldfish, you know,” he recalls. “Two of ‘em, actually, when we were kids. They died pretty quick, but then when he went to college, he got a big old tank, about ten feet long, set it up in his room with an industrial filtration system or something and maybe ten fish, all different kinds.” He shakes his head as the smile falls away. “I never saw them in person, but he sent me pictures, and then every once in awhile, he’d tell me one of them had died, and then he’d tell me what he’d replaced it with. I don’t think he got too attached.”

This is stupid.

Harvey slaps his hands down on his knees.

“I’m sorry,” he repeats. “I’ll do better next time. I’ll… I’ll be ready. I’ll prepare.”

Beep…beep…beep…

Next time.

Harvey wonders if Mike is the kind of guy who would get attached to his goldfish. Maybe not; he’s emotional, he’s empathetic, but…they’re goldfish. Five bucks apiece at PetSmart.

Maybe Harvey should get him a dog.

Lost in his meandering thoughts, conjuring spontaneous images of Mike romping through a field with an enthusiastic pack of hounds, Harvey barely notices when the door opens; doctors and nurses
have been in and out at all hours, checking on Mike’s vitals and moving him around on his bed. Doctor Zhang came in, once. Harvey asked how she was doing.

Fine, she said. Thank you for asking.

“Harvey.”

He looks up blankly.

“Rachel.”

Ten o’clock. Good to know.

She clasps her hands in front of her waist and smiles.

Sure, if that’s how you want to play this.

Harvey stands, his left hip bone audibly cracking, and offers a shallow smile in return. She ducks her head, acknowledging him without quite managing the full nod, and he goes.

The moment the door shuts behind him, Harvey drops his head against the wall, pressing his hands over his face and sighing into his palms. What a goddamn disaster; all he wanted was a chance to be with Mike, to watch over him for a little while, to tell him how sorry he is without freaking the fuck out and making his heart rate spike so that the doctors would have to rush in to make sure everything is okay.

And he went on about his brother’s goddamn goldfish.

Taking a deep breath that reeks of antiseptic and makes his sinuses burn a little, Harvey bangs his head against the wall again and then goes down the hall, around the corner to the elevators. He’ll go back to the hotel, that’s what he’ll do, and he’ll go back to his room, where he’ll sit at the desk against the wall with some hotel stationary paper and one of those pens he found in the top drawer, and he’ll make a plan. He’ll write down what he’s going to say, all the things he wants Mike to know; it’ll be just like what he does with closing arguments, he’ll write out his speech and he’ll rehearse it until he knows it backwards and forwards, until he can deliver it like it’s the most persuasive thing the judge has ever heard and there’s no way he’ll lose this one, absolutely no way.

In the waiting area, Donna stands, holding her arms over her chest and watching the hall as though she’s waiting for him to appear. Harvey can’t think of a single thing she could have planned to say to him that he wants to hear, so he nods his acknowledgment and keeps walking, out the automatic doors to the parking lot, sliding into the front seat of the silver Lexus. An ambulance arriving makes him wait to pull out onto the highway, and he would feel guilty for being so annoyed except that its sirens aren’t even on, so how urgent can the patient’s case be, really?

Harvey begins planning the speech he’s going to write while he waits.

All told, it takes ten minutes to return to the hotel; it’s disgraceful, it really is.

Past the receptionist’s desk, up the elevators to the third floor, down the hall to three-oh-six, Harvey sits at the desk against the wall with a piece of paper and a pen that he grabbed out of the top drawer and begins to write.

*Mike. Words can never express the depths of my regret, how sorry I am for what’s happened, and for my role in it. All I can do now is do my best to support you in every way I can, possible, be it by writing a deposition to take down Roy Wentworth, or by staying by your side every moment I’m*
able, or by stepping back to give the doctors room to do their work. I will do all of it, I promise you that.

Tension throbs at the base of Harvey’s skull and his vision goes out of focus for a second, subtle reminders that he hasn’t eaten since breakfast yesterday, hasn’t slept since the night before last. How he made it back to the hotel in one piece is a marvel; he really should be more careful. Mike would want him to take better care of himself.

Plus, he doesn’t think he could stand the irony.

He shakes his head and puts pen back to paper.

As I mentioned to you on [Saturday] Sunday, it’s my understanding that people who are in comas benefit from hearing stories with which they’re already somewhat familiar to help the brain restore itself, as it uses this external input to rebuild broken synapses as the basis for recalling although I don’t know how the process works and honestly I can’t remember where I heard that in the first place but nevertheless, I’ll tell you some stories from the firm, because I was there for those, too, so I know what happened I can give a firsthand account, which I imagine is more helpful than a second-or thirdhand one.

He has his firsthand knowledge, sure, but does he really know how Mike experienced any of it? Does he really? Would he just be implanting his memories into Mike’s brain? Should he only tell Mike things that Mike told him, should he only relay stories of conversations they’ve had over the years, tales he can tell from as close to Mike’s perspective as anyone else is able?

_The very first time you and I met, Mike, was_ 

No.

_The first case you assisted me on, I_ 

No.

_Have I ever told you exactly why_ 

No.

Harvey’s eyes dart to the top of the page, skimming frenetically over the words he’s written, and this is wrong, this is all wrong, he should be embarrassed, he should be ashamed for thinking he should, thinking he could treat Mike like a case, like an item on his itinerary he could map out, script, dictate, direct. Skimming over the words again, he presses the pen down and scribbles over all of it, distorting the lines and blackening the page, probably grating track marks into the wooden desk until he grips the pen too tight and it flies out of his hand, skittering across the surface to the floor as he snatches up the paper, crumpling it into a ball and throwing it at the wastebasket, overshooting by a mile.

Shoving his chair back across the carpet, Harvey stands, stumbling to the bed and sitting with his head in his hands, his breathing labored.

He may be a great litigator, but this is no deposition. This is no fiery debate.

This is Mike, who deserves him at his best, but who also deserves him at his most honest, his most sincere. A performance piece is never going to be good enough; Mike would see right through it, and that won’t do any good. Harvey might as well make a tape recording of himself reciting the verdicts of all his cases from the District Attorney’s office in alphabetical order and play it on a continuous
Falling back against the bedsheets, Harvey drops his hands out to his sides and sighs.

It’s been a long time since he really had to learn anything new, and this is one hell of a learning curve.

We’re trying our best, Mike. We’re doing the best we can.

I’m doing my best to be better for you.

Toing off his shoes, Harvey tries to quash the guilt rising from his gut at the idea of bettering himself as a person at Mike’s expense. All in all, that immediate and voracious self-defeating attitude is probably a sign that it’s about time to get some sleep; Rachel had a point that spending the night with Mike is a pretty restless affair.

He hopes she’s doing Mike some good. Hopes she has nice stories to tell him, hopes he likes the fantasies she’s spinning of their future together.

She’s good for him. She is.

Harvey squirms out of his pants and shrugs off his shirt, dropping them on the floor as he kicks his way underneath the blankets. This place is high-end enough that it must have its own dry cleaning service; he’ll take care of it tomorrow, put it in a bag outside the door or something. However things are done here.

Yawning, he turns over onto his side and closes his eyes, which only makes them burn for some reason.

Mike would want him to sleep.

Okay. Okay.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

He squeezes his eyes shut tight and the burning stops, replaced by grit and persistent aching, and he tries to relax all his muscles at once.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

Light seeps into the room underneath the heavy curtains; he hasn’t slept in so long.

Breathe in. Breathe out.

All for Mike. Anything for Mike.

In the morning, we’ll have another chance. In the morning, we’ll get to try again.

In the morning, Harvey wakes with a start, flailing to sit up, to find a clock, how late is it, how late is he, what’s going on, what’s happening—

Nine fifteen.

Harvey falls into the pillows and knocks into the headboard on his way down.

He’s been asleep for such a long time, and now it’s only forty-five minutes until the start of visiting
hours. Two hundred and twenty-five minutes until he gets his next turn.

Two hundred and twenty-five minutes to decide what to say.

The desk taunts him, mocks him, innocently inquires about his motivations, his intentions, his complete and utter uselessness at coming up with something, anything to tell Mike, anything to make him feel better, heal faster. Anything that might help. Harvey stops himself short of chastising the thing, responding in kind with some accusation of malicious intent, and maybe he should get a little more sleep, or maybe he’s slept too long already. Maybe he should get out of here, maybe he should get some air.

Maybe he should go back to the hospital.

What else is there?

Shoving back the bedsheets, Harvey hauls himself out of bed and reaches for his suitcase to grab a new shirt; with his arm outstretched, he catches the scent of dried sweat, grime and filth, and decides to take a shower first. Plus there’s the dry cleaning to take care of, so he’ll have to figure that out.

Okay. Okay.

Deep breath.

He’ll wear the pale blue shirt today. Black slacks. Everything is fine.

The drive to the hospital only takes four minutes and fifty-six seconds, approximately. The ambulances sit in the parking lot, waiting idly for disaster to strike; he parks inside the lines, and everything is fine.

Donna seems surprised to see him at this hour. Ten thirty, yeah, it’s a little strange, but it’s not as though he has anywhere else to be.

“Rachel hasn’t left his side,” she greets him. They’re well beyond the point of empty platitudes, and it’s about time they started admitting it.

“Good,” he says. She nods and looks at the floor.

It’s not your time yet, is another way of putting that. You’re not welcome here.

He’s being taken care of, is probably how she meant it. Please don’t worry too much.

You know I can’t do that.

Harvey looks around the waiting area and doesn’t see anyone familiar; he isn’t sure whether that’s a good thing or a bad one. Maybe both. Depends on the context.

He sits.

“Did she tell you anything?”

Donna sits beside him, smoothing down her skirt.

“There’s not much to tell,” she warns. “His vitals have all been stable, nothing seems to have changed.”

“How do you know?”
She tilts her head at his snappish question, and he shakes his head.

“I mean did she talk to Grant? Did she talk to Zhang? Did anyone explain anything?”

She sighs wearily, trying to hide her impatience and only doing a decent job of it for once as opposed to her usual superb.

They’re all having a hard time.

“No one has said anything,” she says, “so as far as we know, everything is going well. Everything’s fine.”

As good as can be. Take it and run.

“I’m going to wait upstairs,” he says. “I’ll see you later.”

“You’ve still got more than two hours,” she objects. He stands and nods.

“I’ll see you later.”

She reaches out plaintively as he starts to walk away.

“Harvey, wait.”

Pausing midstride, he turns his head to the left, enough to indicate that he’s paying attention but not so much that she’ll think he wants to chat.

She bites her lip and draws her hand back.

“I’m going to Starbucks,” she says. “Do you want me to get you a muffin?”

Are they really so desperate for an anchor?

He smiles.

“Thanks.”

There’s no shame in it.

Chapter End Notes

Goldfish at PetSmart range from $0.14 (comet goldfish) to $31.99 (fancy goldfish).
Hidden away behind a scarcely-marked door, Harvey finds a staircase leading down to the basement, or whatever’s on the subterranean level, and up to the second floor, maybe higher, probably higher, who cares, it doesn’t matter. He probably doesn’t belong here in this vacant shaft, he might not even be allowed, but Harvey dashes up the steps and emerges next to a room he doesn’t recognize but that has the word “Restricted” printed above the frame.

The number 266 is printed on a little placard beside the door across from him, and Harvey takes a left. A few paces down, he passes the elevator bank.

200 – 250.

Harvey stops outside room two forty-two and pauses for a moment before crossing his arms over his chest and leaning against the wall. Two hours, Donna said? Fine. That’s nothing, nothing at all.

Doctors and nurses scuttle back and forth across the floor, talking to each other and reading off of charts and pages tucked into folders; visitors arrive with gifts, or nothing, some of them crying, most of them not.

Harvey closes his eyes and massages his temples. Time moves backwards.

He and Mike stop across the road from Gideon Blake’s house and Harvey cuts the ignition.

He and Mike get in the silver Lexus parked in the garage at Pearson Specter Litt; “Where are we going?” Mike asks. “You’ll see,” Harvey replies with a smirk.

Harvey thinks this is a good idea.

Mike storms into his office with a file clutched under his arm and a flush on his cheeks as he rants and raves about the awful things Soloff is doing, the awful things Soloff is trying to make him do, the ridiculous effort he’s having to put into this whole goddamn charade just to keep them on the straight and narrow, to prevent something he likens to a catastrophic meltdown even though he has to know that’s an exaggeration.

Harvey wonders if he and Mike could take a little trip somewhere, just for a couple of hours, maybe a day, to take their minds off all the shit going on at the firm. All the shit with Soloff, with all their casework, all the treading they’re doing to keep their heads above water.

Harvey thought it was a good idea.

“Mister Specter.”

Harvey opens his eyes and drops his hands.

“Doctor Grant.”

Grant looks through the narrow window in Mike’s door and smiles. “I’m pleased to see that you and Miss Zane have sorted out your differences.”

Harvey frowns. “Oh—no, we’re not here together. When she’s finished, we’ll switch, I—I’ll go in alone.”

Grant’s smile falters as he turns back to Harvey. “I see,” he murmurs. “Well, whatever is best for the
two of you.”

Harvey nods distractedly. Grant has a file clutched to his chest and a pen in his hand and it isn’t, probably, it couldn’t be, but maybe it is, and just in case, just to be safe…

“How’s he doing?”

Grant narrows his eyes a little.

“Hm?”

“Mike,” Harvey says, fidgeting with his hands, clenching and unclenching them in and out of fists. “What’s he look like, how—how are his numbers, how’s his case? How is he?”

Grant’s eyebrows arch, as though he’s taken aback at such a question. “Stable,” he says cautiously. “He seems to be doing well so far, he is responding well to the treatments. Everything is moving along according to schedule.”

Harvey’s eyes dart to the window, as though such a quick glance might tell him anything he doesn’t already know, or anything at all. “And what’s that?” he asks. “What’s the schedule, when’s he going to wake up?”

Grant thins his lips, and Harvey knows that expression well enough; whatever the answer is, he doesn’t want to give it. Harvey isn’t going to like it.

Spit it out, Doc. I can take it.

“Assuming he continues to progress at this rate, we intend to take him off the propofol five days from now,” Grant says.

Harvey’s lips part in wonderment, and he makes an effort to close them so as not to look foolish. That’s not the whole of it; come on now, give it to me straight. No use delaying the inevitable.

“But you should know that I cannot guarantee when he will regain consciousness.”

There we go.

Harvey clears his throat, his eyes dating away again.

“Have you told Miss Zane?”

Doctor Grant looks back through the window, his expression sinking a little as he catches sight of Rachel slouched at Mike’s bedside.

“It hasn’t come up.”

Of course it hasn’t.

Harvey nods firmly.

“I’ll tell her,” he says. “Thank you.”

Grant smiles, turning and striding off down the hall to go about his business.

Harvey sighs and leans back, knocking his head against the wall.
Five more days.

And then…
We intend to take him off the propofol five days from now.

Five days.

Five days.

Five days.

Harvey stands at the window, looking in, staring, tick, tick, tick, X number of minutes until his turn, then twenty-one hours until Rachel comes back, and then it’ll only be four days, three, two, one, countdown, pull the trigger, warning shot, here we go.

We intend to take him off the propofol.

In five days, the world will resume turning, and everything is going to be that much closer to normal.

Rachel looks up and for a moment, Harvey fears she’s going to look in his direction, going to startle at the sight of him looming with this incredible news, but no, she only has eyes for Mike; he watches her lips move as she speaks softly, relaying some story, some idea, some unanswered question, and he wants to sneak in, to lean over and whisper to them, to tell her what he knows. He does. He will. She deserves to know just as much as he does, even though she didn’t think to ask.

All for Mike.

Turning around, away from the window, Harvey leans against the wall, sticking his hands in his pockets and crossing his feet as he waits, and waits. This is a place out of time, a place where the countdown clock moves in concentric circles, grains of sand falling sideways and all they can do is wait, and wait, and wait.

Tick, tick, tick.

Eventually, at some point, the door opens and Rachel comes out with bags under her eyes and a tremor in her hands. Harvey smiles thinly, and she nods at him, walking toward the elevators as if in a daze.

“Rachel.”

She doesn’t turn to him when she stops, instead pressing her hands to her eyes and rubbing them harshly, and he puts his hand on the doorknob at his back.

“I talked to Doctor Grant this morning,” he says, and now she turns plaintively, desperately, needing to hear good news but not quite believing that he has any.

“He said Mike’s doing well,” he abridges. “They’ll take him off the propofol on Tuesday.”

Rachel gasps, raising her hands to cover her mouth as her eyes begin to tear; Harvey isn’t sure whether she’s about to collapse where she stands, but then she lowers her hands to clasp them in
front of her heart, smiling widely, gratefully, liberated from her worries and her fears. He turns the
doorknob, opening the door a crack and sliding his heel back into the wood to stopper it open.

“Oh my god,” she babbles, “oh my god… He said five days? He— Five days? They’re sure?”

“That’s what he told me.”

She sobs and laughs at the same time, and he thinks about forcing himself to smile, but she probably
wouldn’t even notice.

“He’s going to be alright,” she says as tears fill her eyes, beading on her lashes. “We’re going to be
okay, everything’s going to be alright.”

“He’s going to survive,” Harvey corrects. She nods giddily, and he knows she didn’t hear him.

“I have to tell my parents, I have to— Did you tell Donna? I have to tell Donna, I…” Still smiling,
biting her lip, she takes a step backwards. “Are you going to stay here? I’ll be right back but I—I
don’t want to leave him alone.”

“Of course I’m going to stay here,” Harvey says slowly, moving his heel from the door and closing it
with a gentle click. “But I’m not sure why you’ll be coming right back, seeing as how today’s my
day.”

“Harvey,” she condescends, “he’s waking up in five days, I’m not going to leave him.”

Does she understand nothing?

“You need your rest,” Harvey asserts. “We talked about this, we agreed on this, neither of us is any
good to Mike if we’re exhausting ourselves just sitting by his bedside for a hundred hours straight.”

“But—”

“Rachel,” he interrupts, and he doesn’t want to play the parent to her spoiled child, but she isn’t
giving him much choice. “They’re not taking him off the drugs for five more days. Go downstairs
and tell Donna, and call your parents, and then go back to the hotel and get some rest. Get something
to eat, watch some TV, try to relax.”

It’s some kind of hypocritical advice, to be sure, but he’s running out of options. Running out of
empathy, running out of interest.

Her hand twitches uncertainly around her chest before she lays it over her sternum, pressing down as
though she’s feeling pain there, and Harvey turns the doorknob again, listening for the latch to click
but keeping it closed all the same.

“Five days,” she repeats. Harvey nods.

If she doesn’t understand the implications, if she can’t see what’s coming next, it’s not his job to
coddle her.

“Okay,” she breathes. “Okay, I can… Five days.” Standing up straight, she sets her shoulders back
and tips her chin up. “I’m going to tell Donna, and then I’m going to call my parents. I’ll be at the
hotel if you need to reach me.”

He won’t. She knows it; he knows it.

“Okay. Sleep well,” he says, and she nods.
There she goes.

Harvey opens the door at his back and slips into room two forty-two. The padded wooden side chair is sunk down a little, an impression of Rachel’s seat; Harvey nudges it back a bit and sits in her place, resting his elbows on his knees and smiling wearily at Mike.

“Hey, rookie,” he says, just for fun, trying not to regret it right away. “I got some good news for you; I talked to your doctor—his name is Doctor Grant, I don’t know if anyone ever mentioned that? Good man, he’s a good man, he does good work. So I talked to Doctor Grant, and he said that he’s gonna take you off the propofol on Tuesday. That’s, five days from now,” he adds, for a frame of reference. “He says he doesn’t know how long it’ll take you to wake up after that, but you’re a fighter, Mike, I bet you’ll be up right away. Couple days, max.”

Everything’s going to be alright.

Harvey’s shoulders roll forward, his head dropping down, and he makes a sound sort of like laughter, maybe, or disbelief.

“You’ll be back to normal in no time,” he says to the floor, “you’ll be telling Rachel to get back to concentrating on her studies, you’ll be telling me to get back to work, you’ll be… You’ll be telling all of us what to do; you’ll probably try to sue Wentworth yourself, take the case right out from under me. ‘Ten million dollars, Harvey,’” he parodies, picking his head up and pitching his voice high, “‘what were you thinking, trying to get that much out of a car accident brought against the city? You really think they’re gonna throw that kind of money at a problem this small? They’ll look into my finances and put me in jail for fraud! Did my parents get ten millions dollars? No, they didn’t even…”

Didn’t even.

Harvey sinks his teeth into his lip and lowers his eyes.

This isn’t funny anymore. This isn’t a game.

Was it ever? Was it really?

Was it?

He shakes his head.

“God, Mike, you’re never gonna forgive me and I won’t even hold it against you, you know that? I mean,” he scoffs, “that’s if you wake up. This is great news that they’re taking you off the drugs, of course, but it’s not a guarantee, is it? And even if you do, you’ll never be the same guy you were before, you won’t act the same, you won’t—like the same things, you won’t feel the same, you won’t think the same, you…”

Shoving his hand up into his hair, digging his nails into his scalp, Harvey laughs hollowly into the crook of his elbow. “Mike, I can take it if you hate me for the rest of your life, I, I understand, but you can’t do that to Rachel. Mike, you can’t lose that, you can’t lose what you have with her, I can’t… I wouldn’t be able to stand it, to see you all miserable and alone when there are so many people around you who love you so much, and she doesn’t know what she’s in for, I know she doesn’t, but you gotta cut her some slack, okay?”

Pressing his hands down into his lap, he leans forward, as though Mike will hear him better if he gets close.
“She wants to be there for you,” he implores, “and she wants you to get better, and she just wants everything to turn out okay. And I know you love her, so if you could just…let her help you, I think—I know it’ll all work out, if you let it.”

I know it.

Beep…

Beep…

Beep…

In the end, we’ll be alright.

We will.

Harvey sags down in his seat until his shoulders are nearly raised up to his ears. It’s hideously uncomfortable.

“Did I ever tell you about my first capital venture?” he asks flippantly, struggling to sit up straight only because speaking at such a slouched posture makes his chest hurt. “One summer, when I was ten, my brother and I set up a lemonade stand in front of our house; we charged twenty-five cents for a Dixie cup of Country Time, even though you could get yourself a whole half gallon at the supermarket for a dollar seventy. Two dollars with tax.”

Smiling wryly, Harvey wonders what it is about Mike that makes him want to divulge all his secrets, to make stories and jokes out of his past rather than keep it hidden away or play it for sympathy. Mike doesn’t have an answer, but that’s fine. It was a rhetorical question.

“I guess some people felt sorry for us or something, because we made some sales, but not too sorry, because we only sold about ten cups the whole month of June.”

See, Mike? I was a failure once.

“And then, you know, the temperature starts climbing a little, it’s up in the nineties, we’re selling maybe a cup a day. And then July ninth, I’ll never forget it, July ninth, it’s a Thursday, so people still have to be out doing chores, going to work, kids are out playing, but it’s about a hundred degrees, and everyone’s so fucking hot and tired that they just…completely forget that we’ve got this shit deal going, that we’re charging out the ass for something we didn’t even make ourselves, and we sell ninety-six cups in a day, if you can believe it. Twenty-four dollars even, we were so proud of ourselves, I don’t think we even realized how much we’d played them all for suckers. We just thought we’d been out there long enough, everyone was finally coming around.”

We all turn out okay.

He chuckles under his breath, shaking his head and wringing his hands a little. “I don’t know why I’m telling you this,” he admits. “I don’t know, we were, we were defying logic with boundless fortitude! You can accomplish anything if you try! If you stick with it long enough, you’ll eventually catch a break!”

And we all lived happily ever after.

Harvey presses his hand to his face, roughly massaging his forehead with the tips of his fingers.

“I’m sorry I’m not better at this.”
Not that he’s had a lot of opportunity to practice.

Not that he wants any.

“I think we can make it five more days, though, don’t you?” He tries to smile, finding mild success and deeming it good enough. “I’ll bring a book next time, read to you a little. Maybe some Dostoevsky, maybe Tolstoy. Or the Bar bri, what do you think? I bet Rachel hasn’t been talking much about law to you, would you like something like that?”

Mike’s chest rises and falls. Up, and down; up, and down.

Harvey sighs.

“I’m not like you, kid,” he admits, “I don’t have the whole thing memorized, even though I’ve sure read it enough times that I should. I’ll bring it with me on Saturday, alright, but in the mean time… I think I know something you might enjoy.”

He clears his throat and sits up a little straighter.

“Back in two thousand and one,” he narrates, “there was a big scandal at this energy company called Enron, that they’d been committing massive fraud, embezzlement, the whole nine. And because of that the government, in two thousand two, decided that corporate disclosures needed to be fairer to their investors, you know, more accurate, more reliable, so these two congressmen, Senator Paul Sarbanes and Representative Michael Oxley, drafted this thing called the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.”

Let’s take it back to the start.

Sitting on his hands, Harvey smiles down at his lap, gently shaking his head.

“You were such a cocky little shit,” he murmurs. “Barging into my interview room like that, telling me you’d be better than all those other kids just because of what, because you wanted it more? You had something to prove? Like they didn’t, like they weren’t all desperate for a shot. But you… You asshole, you turned my life completely upside down.”

A derisive laugh falls from his lips, a harsh scratching sound that burns the roof of his mouth.

“Shit, I was supposed to be talking to you about the law, wasn’t I? But you know I thought about it, when we first got here, when we first started...this, I thought about telling you about the day we met, about a bunch of other shit, and I decided not to.” He sighs, tipping his head back to look up at the ceiling. “I don’t really remember why; I think it had something to do with being objective, but...you know. Sorry I couldn’t keep that up, I guess.”

I’m trying to do right by you, Mike.

“You’re a good person.”


Harvey tries to think of something witty, something droll. Something Mike would appreciate, something that would earn them scandalized looks from other people who don’t understand the way they are.

Maybe now’s not the time.

Instead, slouching farther and farther down in his seat with each passing minute, Harvey marvels
over the difference between sitting at his desk in his office, working silently at his computer as Mike sits on the sofa with his feet propped up on the coffee table and case files stacked in his lap, and sitting here in the padded wooden side chair, watching silently as Mike lies in a hospital bed with his hands resting motionless at his sides and a beeping heart monitor looming over his head. Circumstances couldn’t be more different, and the events really aren’t alike at all, but it’s the best he’s got, it’s all there is, it’s something to hold onto to get him through the next five days.

_Five days._

It doesn’t seem possible.

As if anything has since this whole shit show started.

_Beep…beep…_

_Click._

Harvey looks over at the door as Rachel sidles in, closing it carefully behind her.

“Hey.”

He stands and cracks his knuckles. Did he doze off? The time seems to have flown.

Four days.

“Hi.”

Stepping forward, she squares her shoulders and looks him in the eye, and he cracks his thumb in his fist to round out the set.

“Harvey,” she says. “I know that I’m going to be in with Mike on Tuesday, but since that’s the day he’ll be taken off his medication, I’m going to come in at nine, before visiting hours begin, and I’m going to come straight here, to Mike’s room, so I can be with him all day long.”

Harvey narrows his eyes. This is just more of her fantasy, more of her gross misinterpretation of what’s going on and what’s to come; she’s expecting one of those stupid movie moments, Mike’s heart rate suddenly returning to normal as his fingers twitch and his eyes flutter open, turning to her with a sleepy smile and a soft “Hey” as she’s overcome with emotion, throwing herself at him and wrapping him up in a desperate hug. Or maybe she plans to be controlled, she plans to have poise, smiling back and returning her own gentle “Hi, Mike,” locking her eyes with his until they both laugh delightedly because Mike is awake and the road ahead is long, but we can all start getting back to normal, everything is going to be okay.

“I want to be here,” Harvey lays out. “I don’t mind you coming in before ten, but I want to be in the room when they stop the propofol.”

Rachel smiles softly.

“Of course,” she soothes.

Harvey bites down on the tip of his tongue and clears his throat.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” he says as pleasantly as he can manage. She nods as he walks past her toward the door.

“Harvey,” she says as he puts his hand on the knob. He glances out her out of the corner of his eye.
“Yeah?”

She takes a breath, and he watches her fingers flex.

“I just wanted to tell you that…I forgive you.”

His hand aches suddenly as it seizes around the doorknob, the pain ricocheting up his arm as his elbow begins to prickle and burn, his chest tight and it’s a good thing he’s in a hospital just in case this is a heart attack or something.

No.

Thinning his lips, he lowers his eyes to the ground and nods. She smiles, relief or commiseration or whatever, and he pulls the door open, slipping out into the hall.

We never asked for any of this.

Chapter End Notes

I’m approximating the price of half a gallon of lemonade in 1981 (when Harvey was ten) based on the price of half a gallon of Ocean Spray juice at that time.

The maximum temperature in Boston in the summer of 1981 was 99°, on Thursday, July 9th.

“Pick a topic.”

“Stock option backdating.”

“Although backdating options is legal, violations arise related to disclosures under IRC, Section 409A.”

“You forgot about Sarbanes-Oxley.”

“The statute of limitations renders Sarbanes-Oxley moot post-2007.”

“Well, not if you can find actions to cover up the violation, as established in the Sixth Circuit, May 2008.”

—Harvey and Mike, “Pilot”
Harvey stands with his back to the door, his lips parted as he tries to focus on his breathing, to calm his racing heart. In, and out; in, and out.

*I forgive you.*

Unbelievable.

Does she think he needs her mercy? That he’s been waiting for it? Does she think he *wants* it, does she think it *means* anything? Does she think she has any right to be angry with him, after he called *her*, after he was the one to bring her into the loop, the one to make sure the hospital staff even knew she existed? The one to point them in her direction and say, “Here’s the closest you’re gonna get to a next of kin, here’s the person you should be talking to, here’s the woman you should be keeping on your speed dial”?

Here’s the woman who won’t even think to ask the doctors how Mike is doing! Here’s the woman who needs to be spoon-fed every little bit of information, who needs to be coddled and given her own goddamn way no matter what, who can’t be bothered to think about anything that’s happening that doesn’t involve her. This woman, *this* is who thinks Harvey needs her forgiveness.

Un-fucking-believable.

Storming to the elevators, slipping into the carriage behind another couple of visitors who eye him cautiously and make sure to keep close to the doors, he clenches his teeth and waits impatiently to arrive at the first floor so he can storm out, so he can leave this fucking place, who even fucking knows, he just needs to go, right the fuck now.

“Harvey?”

Donna stands, clutching a greasy Starbucks bag in her left hand as she reaches out with her right, laying it on his arm as he passes, and he must have fury in his eyes because she flinches when he turns to her, her nails scraping his shirtsleeve, but she’s in this for the long haul, too, and she doesn’t let go.


He doesn’t even know how to put it into words how stupid, how wrong this is, *all* of it, but this, this is Donna. Donna, who’s been with him through the highs and lows, who knows him, how he operates, how his mind works. Donna, who will hear everything he isn’t saying. Everything he can’t say, everything he doesn’t know how.

He shakes his head.

“It’s not Mike,” he says, “Donna, I told her they’re going to take him off the propofol on Tuesday and she said she *forgives* me.”

Withdrawing her hand, she bites down on the corner of her lip.

“Oh.”
Harvey narrows his eyes. Doesn’t she understand?

“Donna,” he reiterates, “she—Rachel—she said she forgives me.”

Reaching back, she sets the bag on the chair behind her and folds her arms over her stomach.

“Harvey,” she hedges carefully, “I’m sure that was hard for you to hear, but…you don’t know what it’s been like for her the last couple of days. You don’t know what she’s been going through. I… I’m sure it took a lot for her to tell you that, I think it meant a lot to her that you know how she feels.”

Harvey stares at her.

He doesn’t know what it’s been like?

He’s spent every second, every moment permitted to him in exactly the same place she has, doing exactly the same thing, feeling exactly as hopeless.

Exactly as hopeless and a thousand times more guilty.

He knows.

Ignoring her plaintive expression, her soft eyes and her frowning lips, Harvey pushes past Donna toward the doors, uncertain of where to go but knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that he can’t stay here.

“Harvey—!”

Not this time.

The doors open as he approaches and he walks directly to the parking lot, unlocking the silver Lexus and opening the door, immediately slamming it shut again as he realizes the thought of being contained, of being confined in such a small space makes him sick, makes him feel like he’s going to choke, to die. He needs to walk, he needs to run, he needs to burn off this furious energy, to go and go and go until he can’t feel anymore, until he’s so exhausted he can’t remember how to do anything but squeeze his eyes shut and gasp for air.

A sheen of sweat prickles on his forehead, his shoulders, trickling down his back as he sprints toward the hotel, his shins throbbing, his feet aching, dashing along the grass, across the road to the hotel, stumbling to a stop and at least having the sense to tuck his shirt back into his slacks before he heads inside, fidgeting with his hems as he goes. Bypassing the reception desk entirely, he rides the elevator up to the third floor, tugging at his collar and unbuttoning the top buttons of his shirt as he walks to room three-oh-six.

The fitness suite is on the first floor. Open twenty-four hours.

Harvey shucks off his shirt, fumbling in the suitcase Donna brought for the unmarked tee he thinks he saw in there and kicking off his slacks, letting them fall where they will. He’ll be fine in his boxers and socks; everyone says they’ll work out on vacation, bringing a set of gym clothes, a pair of running shoes, but the center will be empty. Ninety percent certain.

One hundred percent accurate.

Harvey steps on the treadmill closest to the wall and sets the speed to twelve.

Donna is doing her best to keep the peace, doing her best to keep everybody sane, doing her best to
be everybody's support. It's too much to ask of her, too much she's asking of herself, and Harvey can't expect her to keep it up forever. He can't expect her to keep it up for long; more than for Harvey, she needs to be there for Rachel, who doesn't know how to handle herself without Mike, without all the plans she's made for the future still spread out before her.

Crank it up to fifteen.

Harvey pounds down on the conveyer belt, feeling the pressure all the way up through his joints as his knees ache, his thighs spasm, he's a better runner than this, he is, he is, but that's not what this is about.

He presses the speed button higher, but it only trills at him, *maxed out*, and he smacks the dashboard, *faster, faster, faster*, this isn't enough yet, it isn't nearly enough, not nearly enough, *work harder, do better*.

Run, and run, and run.

The light outside begins to change, and his breathing begins to hitch.

Run, and run, and run.

*I can't, I can't*.

Trying not to trip, he gropes for the STOP button, running, jogging, walking along with the slowing revolutions, letting them carry him back to the ground and only stumbling a little as he steps down.

What time is it now, around six? The hotel restaurant is open for dinner, or he could get room service. On the other hand, he should probably wait, on account of the fact that he feels like he's about to vomit.

Bracing his hands on his thighs, Harvey pants heavily, closing his eyes as sweat drips down his face.

However hard it is to distract himself, to wile away the hours, however much it makes him hurt, makes him suffer, it's nothing compared to what Mike is going through. But Mike is going to survive, he's going to be alright. Harvey just has to wait.

Tomorrow, he'll visit Mike, and he'll read to him from the Barbri. And everything will be fine.

For now, he drags himself down the hall to the nearest elevator, accidentally pressing the buttons for the third and fourth floors together and leaning into the corner of the carriage as it brings him up. Back in his room, he orders a chicken Caesar salad, which should taste fine no matter when he gets around to it, and steps into the shower, dumping his clothes on the floor and hoping he remembers this time to check on that whole dry cleaning situation.

He either tips the attendant who delivers his dinner fifty dollars, or he doesn't tip him at all, but by the time he crawls into bed, he can't remember which.

Harvey's hardly woken up again before he flails his way out from under the covers to reach into his suitcase for the dark jeans and black shirt Donna brought, dressing efficiently and shoving his wallet into his pocket on his way to the elevator. Stony Brook University is right behind the hotel, and according to their website, the nearest campus library opens at ten on Saturdays; the school's in summer session right now and security is bound to be lax. If push comes to shove, he's got his bar card in his wallet to wave around and threaten some kind of bullshit legal action.

He stops at the hotel restaurant for a cup of coffee and flashes partway back to Harvard. Running on
caffeine and fumes and all that. All the more so when no one bats an eye as he strides into the library, heading straight for the unambitiously small Legal section, which is less of a section than a shelf tucked away next to International Relations. There are two copies of The Conviser Mini Review New York, both from 2012 for some indiscernible reason; Harvey grabs one and tucks it under his arm, walking out without paying the front desk a second glance. The librarian is tied up with something on her computer anyway; she’s probably on work study, the poor kid, working her ass off to keep her grades up.

Anyway, he’ll bring it back tomorrow.

Back at the hospital, Donna smiles at him but doesn’t seem inclined to strike up a conversation, which is understandable; it’s just as well. There’ll be plenty of time after this is all over and done with to patch things up between them.

Rachel leaves Mike’s room at ten after one, and Harvey isn’t even surprised. She smiles beatifically; he nods and closes the door behind him.

“Hey, Mike,” he says, sitting down and setting the Barbri manual in his lap. “Remember I told you we’d go over some law review the next time I came by? Well I stopped by the library at the University this morning, I thought I could read to you a little, maybe it’ll cheer you up.”

He pastes on a wide grin and opens the front cover.

“Actual express authority,” he reads. “Specific powers, expressly conferred by a principal to an agent to act on the principal’s behalf. Can be oral, but must be written to enter into a contract. Also known as ‘express authority.’”

Beep…beep…beep…

“Land conveyance,” he reads. “The purchase and sale of real estate; satisfied when grantor physically or manually transfers the deed to the grantee. It is permissible to use mail, an agent, or a messenger.”

Beep…

Beep…

Beep…

His smiles slips as he drops the book on the floor.

Wasn’t this supposed to make it all better?

“God dammit, Mike, I’m sorry.”

What the fuck was he expecting to happen?

“I’m just trying to do what everyone says will help you, I’m trying to talk to you about things you know, things you love, things that—things that you’re passionate about, god, Mike, you’re the most passionate guy I know, you know that? You care about things so, much, you put your all into everything you do and I admire you for it, I really…”

Laughing, smiling, a touch lightheaded, Harvey clasps his hands and looks up at the ceiling, because he should look at Mike while he’s talking to him, but just at the moment, there’s no telling what would happen if he did.
“You make me better, Mike. You make me a better lawyer, a better person, a better—a better
friend… And I’ve been trying not to say any of this to you because I guess I-I-I thought it would stress you out, or something, it wouldn’t help you to hear all of this, and you won’t remember it anyway, but, fuck, Mike, I…”

He shakes his head at the insanity of it all, closing his eyes as if it’ll shut out everything that’s happening, all the madness, all the unfairness, all the stupid, stupid fighting.

“Look, none of this is your responsibility, and I don’t want you to think I’m asking you to do anything, or be anything you aren’t, but I want you to know…you—you’re important. To everyone here, but, you’re important to me. And I wouldn’t say this to just anyone, but you know what, Mike? I’m a goddamn mess without you.”

So how about that.

Harvey drops his head into his hands and sighs.

This is one hell of a fix we’ve gotten ourselves into, isn’t it.

“Hey, Mike?”

Beep…

“I know I’m supposed to be talking to you, so you can recover faster.”

Beep…

“But do you think I could just sit here with you for awhile?”

Beep…

Harvey smiles softly.

“Alright.”

The night passes quietly, and morning comes all too soon. Rachel knocks on the door at ten o’clock sharp, walking in without waiting for his response and folding her arms across her chest as though to block out the cold, hunching her shoulders and looking away. Harvey wonders how she’s been spending her hours spent out of the hospital, out of this room; maybe she and Donna have been holing up in the hotel, licking each other’s wounds and insisting that everything will work out in the end.

Picking the Barbri handbook up off the floor, Harvey walks past her without so much as a glance, heading down the stairs and out the front doors in such a daze that he isn’t completely sure whether he passed Donna in the waiting area or she wasn’t even there.

Two more days.

Harvey drives back to the hotel and heads straight for the library, ambling around it until he finds a book drop by the back entrance.

No harm, no foul.

On another day, in a different sort of mood, he would take the time to wander the campus, inspecting the facilities, immersing himself in that pervasive aura of academia. It’s a nice campus; good architecture, green lawns. Blue sky, not that the university has any control over that sort of thing.
It takes nearly ten minutes for Harvey to make his way back to the hotel, but only five for him to head upstairs to his room and crawl into bed. Two minutes after that, he gets up again, gathering his dirty clothes and shoving them into a heavy cotton laundry bag in the closet.

The front desk picks up after the first ring.

“Hello, Mister Specter,” says a chipper young woman, maybe the same one who called to inform him of Donna’s arrival so many days ago. “How may I assist you today?”

He picks at the bag’s drawstring. “I have some laundry here that needs to be dry cleaned, who can I speak to about getting that taken care of?”

“Don’t worry, Mister Specter,” the woman assures him, “I’ll send somebody up to take care of it right away. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“Okay,” he murmurs. “No, uh, that’s it. Thank you.”

“Of course.”

Three minutes for the attendant to ring the doorbell for his dry cleaning. Thirty seconds for Harvey to get back into bed.

Two hours to fall asleep, and he still has the gall to be surprised when he wakes up before sunrise.

One more day.

Harvey presses his hands down over his eyes and grits his teeth against a wide yawn.

He’ll eat a proper breakfast today, sitting down and ordering a full course and everything. Orange juice, coffee, and enough food to justify both. Mike would want him to take care of himself.

No time like the present.

It’s five forty; the hotel’s restaurant doesn’t open for breakfast until six. Rubbing his eyes again, Harvey sits up and shuffles his feet down to the floor. His dry cleaning can’t be back yet; he’ll have to wear the navy shirt to the hospital today.

Navy blue. That goddamn Honda Civic.

He shakes his head quickly and pushes himself to stand. It’s just a shirt, just a color, and he’s bigger than some stupid superstition. He’s better than that.

Mike is better than that.

Harvey takes a minute to shower before he gets dressed, pulling on the black slacks because they’re close, and the grey ones are in the wash. Downstairs at the restaurant, the maître d greets him with a bright smile ill suited to the hour, and Harvey wonders if employees here are ever allowed to be tired.

He makes it to the hospital by quarter after eight to find Donna dozing in the waiting area with her head resting in her hand; at the reception desk, Bianca waves him over.

“Mister Specter, Doctor Zhang was looking for you,” she confides. “Mister Ross is going to be taken off his medication tomorrow at eleven thirty, so if there’s anyone you need to contact before that, you might want to do it now.”

Oh, right. Other people.
Harvey clears his throat. “Thank you.”

She smiles. “I’m glad to hear about Mike.”

Drumming his hands on the countertop, Harvey tries to smile back. It was a nice thing for her to say. He appreciates it.

“Thanks, Bianca.”

She nods; it’s enough. It’s good.

Sticking his hand in his pocket, Harvey closes his fingers around his cell and walks out the automatic doors, stopping on the pavement immediately outside.

Barely a single ring.

“Harvey.”

“They’re taking him off the propofol tomorrow.”

Jessica pauses; Harvey hears her nails tap nervously against her desk.

“What does that mean?”

_They’re taking him off life support._

They sound awfully similar, don’t they?

Not today.

Harvey coughs into his fist, struggling to banish the thought of Mike on his deathbed as he forces the words out as quickly as he can. “He’s gonna wake up. In a few days, probably, but once he’s off the meds, it’s anybody’s guess how long it’ll take.”

The staticky sound of a muffled snicker gives Harvey a pretty clear vision of her relieved smile.

“Harvey,” she says softly. “You and I both know that Mike would never give anything less than his all to anything he tried. Even if he doesn’t know he’s doing it.”

Got that right.

Harvey rubs the heel of his palm into his eye.

“I’ll let you know how it goes.”

Jessica sighs.

“You’re doing good, Harvey.”

Grinning despite himself, Harvey shakes his head, pacing slowly down the sidewalk.

“I’ll talk to you later.”

“Bye, Harvey.”

Harvey thumbs the End Call button and slips the phone back into his pocket.
Thank god for Jessica Pearson.

Taking one last look up at the clear blue sky, feeling the warmth of the sun begin to sneak in under his collar, Harvey takes a deep breath of exhaust and antiseptic and a faint trace of gardenia. Sighing out through his nose, he turns on his heel, walking back through the automatic doors to the waiting area where Donna continues to doze. It’s only about eight forty-five, according to the plastic clock on the wall beside the reception desk, but it’s not like he has anywhere else to go.

In a sparsely-padded chair, one of several in three rows of nine, Harvey sits.

Chapter End Notes

The Conviser Mini Review is the name of the Barbri textbook.

Stony Brook University doesn’t have a law school, but it does offer a Legal Studies program in its School of Professional Development, so I choose to believe there is at least one copy of the Barbri textbook somewhere in the library. There is a Courtesy Borrowing program for people not affiliated with the University, but I sincerely doubt Harvey would take the time to do the paperwork, considering the circumstances.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Harvey closes his eyes, he hears the insectile hum of the one bare fluorescent overhead; when he opens them, he sees that it’s been repaired sometime in the last eleven days, patched up since he first arrived, and the room feels a little bit less like a prison.

Donna pats his hand gently.

Harvey clenches his fist.

“Morning,” he mutters.

She smiles, sliding her hand back into her lap.

“Morning, Harvey.”

He sighs.

“Sorry about yesterday.”

Nodding at the floor, she knits her hands together and crosses her ankles.

“Thank you.”

He stares vacantly at the wall, resting his elbows on his chair’s armrests and dropping his shoulders when he turns his attention to the clock.

Three and a half hours to go.

He’ll tell Mike about Stony Brook University, about sneaking the book out of the library; he’ll tell Mike about the librarian on work study, about how he took advantage of her distraction. He’ll try to make it funny, even though Mike would never approve; he’ll make it sound like he made sure the girl won’t get in trouble, he’ll make it sound like he has any idea what he’s talking about, like Mike has no reason to worry.

Because planning ahead worked out so well last time.

Hunching his shoulders, he drops his chin to his chest.

No need to worry; the words will come. Everything is going to be fine.

“I know this is hard for you.”

Harvey tries not to laugh. She means well.

“Yeah.”

Well, what else is he supposed to say? Anyway, she seems pretty satisfied with the response. He doesn’t need to explain himself to her.

Everything’s fine.
“Family of Audra Goddard?”

A redheaded girl with watery eyes and a lip ring that doesn’t suit her face stands abruptly; looking around, Harvey wonders how he didn’t notice her when he came in until he sees that the waiting room is occupied by maybe ten other men, women, and children, and he didn’t notice any of them, either.

Other people.

“I’m going upstairs,” he says, and Donna’s learned better than to question him, to question his motives, so she lets him go with a gentle smile and a shallow nod, and he gives Audra Goddard’s nurse a wide berth as he drags his heels to the elevators around the corner and wishes he didn’t already know this route well enough to navigate it in the dark.

Harvey plants himself in front of room two forty-two, glaring at anyone who pauses to give him a second glance.

That woman with the two young sons walks by, and Harvey wouldn’t recognize her except for the box of Three Musketeers bars and the disaffected teenager with her headphones and her obvious disdain. One of the boys says something that makes the woman shake her head gravely, and Harvey wonders if he’ll be seeing them again.

At some point, the door opens; Rachel comes out, wiping her eyes and offering a shaky smile.

Harvey bites his tongue and smiles back.

“I guess I’ll see you tomorrow morning,” Rachel says.

“Guess so.”

She lingers awkwardly, and Harvey doesn’t mean to be cruel, but she’s had her time, logged her hours, and he closes the door with an audible “click,” just to make sure she understands.

Mike looks just as he did when Harvey left him.

One more day.

Harvey sits in the padded wooden side chair. After a moment, he sticks his hands underneath his legs, which makes him feel grounded for some reason, and rocks side to side, which makes him feel infantile, so he puts his hands back on his knees and sits still.

“Hey, Mike.”

Beep, beep, beep.

Harvey smiles. “So I guess Rachel told you that you’re being taken off the propofol tomorrow. Taken off the drugs, you know. I’m not sure she remembers the name, but it’s called propofol, the medication that’s keeping you under. That’s healing your brain. Helping you heal your brain. That’s… Propofol, that’s what it is.”

Five micrograms per kilogram per minute IV as a continuous infusion for at least five minutes.

He looked it up.

Harvey sighs.
“I don’t know what to expect,” he admits. “Tomorrow, when they take you off the drugs, I don’t… I mean I know what Grant and Zhang said, I know what I read online, but I can’t believe there’s nothing else I could’ve done. Somewhere else I could’ve looked, something… Something else I could’ve done. Someone I could’ve talked to, or…or something.”

And what would that have been, exactly? Who or what or where?

“But, you know, everything I saw said that every recovery is different, that, uh, that no one can predict what’s gonna happen; some people come out of it in a couple hours, some people take a couple days, sometimes it’s…it’s a few months…”

(Sometimes it’s a few years; sometimes it’s never.)

But this is Mike.

“So I wanted to tell you that it doesn’t matter how long it takes you to wake up, it doesn’t—I don’t care how long I have to stay here, how long I have to live in that hotel, I will be here for you as long as it takes, I’ll be here when you wake up and I’ll do anything in my power, I’ll do whatever I can to help you, whatever—whatever you need, I’ll do it, or I’ll, I’ll get it for you. No matter what, if you need it, if you want it, if it’ll help, it’s yours.”

So just wake up, alright? Please?

“I’m sure Rachel will stay here too, we’ll be here for you as long as you need us, because I’m not gonna lie to you, Mike, recovering from this, after you wake up, getting back to normal isn’t gonna be easy, it’s not gonna happen overnight, or in a few days, it’s… It’s a process, alright? It takes a long time and a lot of work, and it’s gonna be hard, and you might want to give up sometimes, but I need you to promise me you won’t give up, okay Mike, I need…”

I need to know for sure.

Raising his clasped hands in front of his mouth, Harvey lets his vision soften, the glowing numbers on all of Mike’s monitors going out of focus as his eyes begin to water.

Everybody knows that there are no guarantees in life.

He sighs.

“All I’m saying is that you recover however you need to, alright? You do what you have to, no one’s… No one is going to get mad at you or anything. We’re all here for you. However long it takes.”

You sure you can make it all the way to the end?

Harvey shakes his head vigorously.

I can. I will.

“It’s kind of funny,” he says wistfully, “when I think about what you were like when you first started working for me, absolutely no shame, just barging into my office whenever you had something to talk to me about, whenever you had some work you wanted to show me; you didn’t think twice about telling me I was wrong, or I was being mean, I wasn’t giving our client a fair deal; sometimes I wasn’t giving our opposition a fair deal, you just… You did not back down, no matter what, until you got what you wanted.”
“And now I’m worried about what, worried about you? I’m worried about you not working hard enough, I’m worried about you giving up.”

Stupid, stupid, stupid. Jessica was absolutely right, Mike has never been one to give up without a fight. Tooth and nail, he’ll go down swinging and then pick himself right back up, shove them all out of the way to dive back in for round two.

Harvey smiles.

“You know, last year, when you went to work for Sidwell, I was so…angry, about everything. I was angry at Jessica, for not making you stay; I was angry at Louis, because it was easy; I was angry at Donna, for not…fixing everything. I was angry at you for leaving; I was angry at myself for letting you go.”

He sighs, long and slow, like a harsh wind blowing off the river and up a steep hill.

“I was angry at myself for not knowing how to let you go.”

That’s it, isn’t it? That’ll always be it.

“But that’s what people do, though, right?” he asks, partly of Mike, partly himself. “They grow up, they find themselves, figure out who they are and what they want, and they leave. And I know I’m the one who’s wrong, I’m the one who just wants everything to stay the same, all the time, for everyone I love, everyone I rely on to stay near me, no matter what. And I was stupid, I thought— I thought you were different, I thought, you wouldn’t leave me, you would never leave me; I found you in the gutter, I picked you up and taught you how to stand on your own two feet, we’ve spent five years committing fraud together, you can’t leave. It wouldn’t… It wouldn’t be fair.”

So why did you do it, then?

For a second, Harvey’s eyes dart down to Mike, whose voice he hears clear as a bell in his ear even as he lies where he’s lain for the past eleven days, beep, beep, beep, at the mercy of his IV drip and his breathing tubes and god knows what all those other wires are for.

“I don’t know why I hired you in the first place,” he admits. “Maybe it really was just that I saw myself in you, I saw that you were better than me; I saw a brilliant kid, a genius with the potential to do amazing things who needed to be given a shot, who needed to be pulled out of the shit life he’d gotten himself stuck in and pointed in the right direction, even though he didn’t really deserve it, even though he hadn’t done anything but fall into the right person’s path at the right moment.”

Is that a reason?

Is it a good one?

After all this time, does it even matter anymore?

Harvey shakes his head, pressing his hands to his forehead.

“We went through so much together, so fast, I just… I never thought about what would happen when it ended. Because that would mean we’d been caught, right? Caught by someone who wouldn’t keep the secret, who’d take it and show it to a judge instead of throwing themselves into the ring with us, and that was never going to happen because it can’t, it…it’s not allowed to, because then I’d lose you, and I—”
He drops his hands to stare at Mike plaintively. “What would I have left after that? If I lost you, Mike, what would I have? I tried to go back to the way things were, when you went to Sidwell, I tried to build my life back up without you in it, I tried, but I couldn’t, Mike, I, I just…”

_Bep…bep…bep…_

Glaring nervously at the heart monitor, Harvey clenches his fists in his lap and tries to calm his racing pulse, his heart pounding against his ribs. They’re so close, Mike is _so_ close; he can’t fuck it up now, he absolutely can’t. Not now, not again.

He takes a deep breath. In through the nose, out through the mouth.

“But that was a long time ago,” he says slowly, “and I’m not trying to make you feel guilty. I promise you I’m not. But I am trying to say that I get it now.” He shakes his head and looks at Mike’s hand, lying still at his side. “You understand? There’s always a place for you with me, wherever I am, but if you want to…do your own thing, after you wake up, if you figure out who you are and it’s…someone else, someone who doesn’t want anything to do with me, then I won’t—I won’t stop you. If you want to go. Just as long as you do wake up, because the world is a better place with you in it, Mike, and I…”

I can’t be the one to take that away?

That’s what you were going to say, isn’t it?

Harvey rubs the heel of his palm against his eye.

“I think you deserve a chance to prove it.”

_Beep…beep…beep…_

“So, they’re stopping the propofol tomorrow at eleven thirty,” he says thickly to a spot near where the wall meets the floor, “and then it’ll be awhile before you wake up.”

He clears his throat, coughing into his fist.

“I just… I want you to be prepared for that.”

But don’t worry.

Everything’s going to work out in the end.

Sniffling, rubbing his nose with the back of his hand, Harvey settles into his seat and tries to calm himself, staring off into space without thinking about anything in particular. After awhile, he finds that he can breathe without it getting stuck in his throat, he can blink without making his eyes water.

He clears his throat again.

“I’ve been seeing a therapist,” he tells the guardrails. “Her name is Paula Agard, and she says I have abandonment issues. She says I’ve been having panic attacks because I’m afraid of people leaving me; I’ve been having panic attacks, by the way, I don’t know if you remember that, but, I have.”

I’m Harvey Specter, by the way, I don’t know if you remember that.

Harvey shakes his head.

“She says they’re about Donna leaving me,” he explains. “Jessica thinks they’re about you; well,
maybe she thinks they’re about both, but she said I was losing my shit because I was afraid you were
going to leave with Robert Zane after this whole thing with Soloff was over and done with.” He
chuckles under his breath, forcing the sound out for appearance’s sake even though there’s no one
around to impress.

“You know what I think might’ve been nice?”

Mike would have a sarcastic quip at the ready for that one, “flying cars” or “a good night’s sleep for
once in my life” or some bullshit like that. Harvey bites his thumbnail and tries not to think about it.

“If someone, Doctor Agard or Jessica or Donna, or, anyone, had just…reminded me that sometimes
when people leave, they come back.” He bites down on his lower lip, sinking his teeth into the skin.

“Donna did,” he declares after a moment, “after she went to work for Louis. And…you did. Back
then.”

Sometimes lightning strikes twice, in other words.

“I just…”

You what?

Harvey lowers his gaze to his hands clasped tight in his lap.

“I need you to wake up.”

Please don’t think I’m being selfish.

Of course I am, but please don’t say it out loud.

He sighs. Just wait; tomorrow will come soon enough.

And then…

Chapter End Notes

Mike’s propofol dosage is cited in the prescriber’s digital reference.

“I told you, your sleepless nights aren’t going to stop until you accept the fact that your
secretary isn’t coming back.”
—Paula Agard, “Denial” (s05e01)

“You need to get yourself under control right now.”
“What the hell are you talking about?”
“I’m talking about you have a problem, and it doesn’t have anything to do with me. And
you just expose it by bringing up some paranoid bullshit about Mike Ross going with
Robert Zane. Because this all started when Donna left you, and now you’re afraid that
Mike’s going to do the same thing. So you better get your abandonment issues under
control, because Jack Soloff is gonna keep coming, and now you’re gonna have to put
him down.”
—Jessica and Harvey, “No Refills” (s05e03)
The average trip from Mike’s room to the bathroom and back takes exactly five minutes and thirteen seconds. More often than not, Harvey goes out of his way to time his to coincide with a doctor or nurse coming around to check on Mike, moving him around or taking his vitals or whatever it is they’re doing; they operate seamlessly, a well-oiled machine, and for a moment, it’s as though Harvey doesn’t have a thing to worry about.

As such, Harvey isn’t surprised to see a nurse he recognizes but whose name he doesn’t know exit Mike’s room as he returns, except that she holds the door for him with a tight smile that he meets with a furrowed frown. She would let him know if something was wrong with Mike, wouldn’t she? Of course she would. She knows him. They all do, by now.

Stepping past her, over the threshold into the room, it doesn’t take much to understand what she meant.

Rachel sits in the padded wooden side chair, the one Harvey vacated a mere five minutes and thirteen seconds ago, with her hands folded in front of her face, leaning forward as though she’ll be able to hear the very moment Mike wakes up.

Harvey sighs; Rachel doesn’t seem to notice.

He closes the door with a shuffle and a click, and she looks up sluggishly.

“Rachel,” he says cordially. She hums a low note.

“I think I saw some folding chairs down the hall somewhere,” she replies. He clenches his fist around the doorknob.

“I think I’ll stand.”

She shrugs.

Stiffening his shoulders, Harvey walks over to the opposite side of the bed; Mike lies indifferently still between them, and Rachel presses her fingertips to her mouth.

“I’m not an idiot,” she murmurs after a minute.

Harvey grunts apathetically, but she doesn’t seem to mind.

“I know it’s going to take awhile for him to get back to normal.”

Back to normal. Is that what she thinks is going to happen?

Well, she would, wouldn’t she. She’s revised all her plans, re-mapped her future to account for all of this, and everything hinges on it.

“Have you talked to the doctors?“ he asks, though he suspects he knows the answer.

She shrugs. “I talked to Doctor Grant about it one time,” she says. “I asked him how Mike was doing; he said he was fine.”
Harvey nods. That must’ve been back at the beginning, before any of them knew much of anything.

“It’s good you’re prepared for this,” he commends her, even though she isn’t really. Or maybe he’s just overprepared; maybe things won’t be as bad as he expects, as bad as he fears.

They might, though.

“I think I still don’t believe it’s really happening,” she admits. “I’m sitting here, in this hospital, looking at him, and… I don’t know, I guess part of me feels like this can’t be real. It’s all a bad dream.”

It isn’t, though.

Harvey nods.

“It’ll be over soon.”

She smiles gently. Harvey can’t decide whether the silence settled over them is heavy or comfortable; maybe it depends which way he’s looking.

Beep…

Beep…

Beep…

“Do you have a watch?” he asks after awhile.

Without taking her eyes off of Mike, she holds up her left wrist and shakes it a little.

“It was my mom’s.”

Right, like he really cares about that.

“What time is it?” he prompts.

She takes a fraction of a second to glance down. “Ten twenty,” she says. “You said they’re coming at eleven thirty?’”

“That’s what they told me.”

She hums agreeably, and he shifts his weight forward and back.

The droning of the machinery fades to white noise, and a few minutes later, Harvey hears Rachel’s watch ticking.

It doesn’t seem to bother her.

“Harvey?”

“Mm?”

Tucking her lips into her mouth, Rachel drops her cheek into her hand as she sighs out through her nose.

“What?” Harvey goads after a moment of silence. Rachel sighs again.
“Mike’s going to be okay, isn’t he?”
Yes.
Yes.
Yes, he is.
He is, because he has to be.

Harvey grits his teeth and lowers his chin to his chest.

“He’s doing well,” he says. That’s what Doctor Grant said, isn’t it, so it has to be true, right, because he has no reason to lie, nothing to gain. He knows what he’s talking about.

Smiling softly, Rachel picks her head up and twists her hair through her fingers, laying her free arm across her lap and skating her nails over her skirt, unable to sit still.

“Yeah.”

Harvey sticks his hands in his pockets.

“He’ll wake up soon.”

Rachel untangles her hand from her hair, resting her elbow on her knee and leaning her chin in her hand again.

“I know.”

Then why did you ask?

Harvey smirks at the wall. What a stupid question.

We all need a reminder every now and again.

Beep…

Beep…

Beep…

Harvey doesn’t try very hard to focus on anything in particular; the sound of Rachel’s watch overpowers the whirring machines and he counts the ticks until it becomes unbearably boring, at which point he thinks he might start to doze on his feet.

The door opens without warning, and Doctor Zhang enters with a metal tray balanced on her arm.

“Doctor,” Rachel gasps, standing abruptly. Harvey blinks a few times and folds his arms over his chest.

“Good morning,” Doctor Zhang says as she walks to Mike’s bedside, setting the tray down on top of a small wire basket attached to the heart monitor stand. The overhead lights glint off a metal basin that blocks Harvey’s view of the rest of her equipment, but that’s fine; he doesn’t really want to know.

“Are you ready?” Doctor Zhang asks rhetorically as she picks something up off the tray that looks, at
a distance, like a plastic clothespin, and reaches for Mike’s IV tube. Rachel nods, clasping her hands in front of her chest, though Doctor Zhang seems not to notice either gesture as she pats Mike’s wrist with a wet cotton ball and pulls back the tape holding the needle in place.

Harvey watches her hang the tube on the IV stand as Rachel covers her mouth and turns away. Not a moment later, it seems, Mike’s wrist is padded and bandaged, the IV stand pushed aside; Doctor Zhang reaches to inspect the discarded tube as Rachel bites her lip and steps forward, and Harvey is ideologically glad he’s here but wonders what exactly he was expecting to be worth in the whole process.

“Wait,” Rachel blurts out as Doctor Zhang retrieves her tray and makes to leave.

“Everything went fine,” Doctor Zhang says bemusedly, pausing at the door. “Now we just have to wait for him to flush all the propofol out of his system.”

“What?” Rachel frowns as though she’s trying to figure out who to blame. “But he… I thought he was going to wake up today, what’s going on?”

Doctor Zhang smiles kindly, more than a little patronizing, and Harvey knows instantly that she’s had to explain this a million times before to a million grieving well-wishers.

“We stopped administration of the medication today,” she corrects. “Mister Ross is no longer being sedated, but the effects of the medication will last for some time after the removal of the IV. Now,” she carries on, opening the door and setting one foot out into the hall, “I’m sorry, Miss Zane, but I have other patients to take care of.”

“But…”

The door clicks shut, and Harvey almost feels bad for her before he remembers that it’s her own damn fault she didn’t know.

She looks at him urgently.

“What am I supposed to do?”

Maybe try to accept the fact that nothing ever works out the way you want it to and we all just have to learn to live with it.

Harvey closes his eyes and clenches his jaw. Mike would hate that.

“We just have to wait,” he repeats. “When Mike wakes up, we’ll be there for him, but for now…we have to be patient.”

Rachel drops bonelessly into her seat, staring at the bed, the heart monitor, the abandoned IV station. Mike lies still, his bandaged wrist the only sign that anything might be different than it was a moment ago, and Harvey sighs.

“I’m gonna tell Donna that he’s off the meds,” he says. “You ought to get some sleep tonight, you can take the hotel room.”

Rachel nods dazedly; Harvey closes the door behind him and sighs.

He was prepared for this. He was. He read all about it, he knew what was coming.

The waiting is something else entirely.
As he approaches, Donna looks up with an expression that looks like a middle ground between empathy and understanding, and Harvey wonders if she thinks Mike’s somehow died on the operating table, if something’s gone inexplicably wrong when everything was supposed to be going as well as it possibly could, all things considered. Tossing his head, he straightens his spine and walks over to her with his shoulders set and his hands in his pockets.

“They stopped giving Mike the sedatives,” he says.

“Oh,” Donna replies. Whatever she prepared herself for, it wasn’t that. “When’s he going to wake up, shouldn’t you be back up there with him?”

If this was a television show, a medical drama like *ER* or *Grey’s Anatomy*, the answer would be “Soon,” the answer would be “Tomorrow”; the answer would be “I’m going back right now but I wanted to let you know.”

This is real life, and everything is a shot in the dark.

Harvey scowls and grinds his teeth.

“He’ll wake up when he wakes up,” he says. “Maybe a couple days, maybe a week. Rachel’s still up there with him, but I told her to take the hotel tonight.”

Donna purses her lips. “Is she going to?”

“I don’t know.”

“Oh.”

Yeah.

Donna looks down at her lap and reaches under her seat.

“I got you a muffin?”

Harvey smiles.

“Thanks.”

She smiles back as he takes the greasy Starbucks bag, crinkling the paper in his fist. He clears his throat.

“I’m gonna go take a walk.”

She nods slowly, grasping probably about half the picture. It’s fine; that’s enough for now.

“Okay.”

Past the waiting area, past the clusters of friends and family and their pins-and-needles tension, he walks out the door, out to the parking lot, out to the silver Lexus; fastening his seatbelt, starting the motor, he putters down the highway at about fifteen miles per hour below the speed limit.

All told, it takes ten minutes to return to the hotel; Harvey doesn’t have anywhere in particular he needs to be.

Back in room three-oh-six, he sits on the bed closest to the door, leaning against the headboard and looking out the window on the other side of the room.
Next to the window is the desk.

Michael James Ross, Plaintiff, by Harvey R. Specter and Pearson Specter Litt, LLC, his attorneys, sues the defendant.

Harvey knocks his head back against the wall.

Rachel won’t be coming back to the room tonight. Staying with Mike isn’t going to do her a whole lot of good, but she’s spent the better part of twelve days building this up in her head and there’s no way she’s going to give up on the idea that he’ll wake up exactly the same person he was when she saw him last, ready to get right back to the life he left behind.

Harvey knocks his head against the wall again.

Are there any drugs to make the process faster, to flush the propofol out in hours instead of days? Will electroshock jolt Mike’s heart into pumping out the medication, will a transfusion make everything all better? Is there a miracle cure the medical community has secretly been working on, some revolutionary new therapy being tested in the laboratory of a reputable hospital somewhere just outside Seattle?

Harvey’s vision blurs around the edges and the base of his skull begins to throb.

Thinking outside the box isn’t going to save him this time around.

Save him, as though Harvey is the one in any sort of danger. Curling his legs up to his chest, Harvey drops his body down on the mattress and thinks about maybe taking off his shoes.

The waiting is the worst of it.

Groping around for the television remote, Harvey turns on some news channel, NBC or CNN or whatever, his eyes glazing over as brightly colored graphics inform him that a new story is breaking roughly every ten minutes, coinciding suspiciously neatly with the show’s act breaks in some convenient cosmic accident.

When he manages to focus his attention again, it’s on a couple of moderately attractive people speaking to him from behind a news desk in front of a wall of windows, alternating between lighthearted banter and ominous announcements of torrid Hollywood scandals or heated political forums or some other bullshit he’s blissfully unaware of.

The other bed is still made up, the sheets pulled tight and the pillows puffed. The clock reads six fifty-one, and that must have been the worst night’s sleep Harvey’s had in years.

Well, maybe not years.

Harvey opens the door with every intention of going down to the fitness center to fire up the treadmill and walk until he can’t feel his legs, except that hanging on the handle is a large bag that he thinks might have been there when he got back yesterday, though at the time, he didn’t pay it any mind. Thinking logically, it’s probably been there longer than that; he asked for his dry cleaning to be picked up on Sunday, right, and what’s today, Wednesday? Yeah, something like that.

He picks at the drawstring of the bag. It’s totally innocuous, it doesn’t mean anything. It’s just dry cleaning.

Six fifty-one; the hotel restaurant is open. Mike would want him to take care of himself.
Plus, he’s got these clean clothes, so.

Stepping into the shower gives him the same sort of mixed relief feeling of bathing while he has the flu; it’ll help, and he does feel better as the water beats down on his head, but the sickness still lingers under the surface, and the relief will only last a couple of hours at most.

His white shirt with the purple pinstripes is stiff at the collar, like it was starched after the cleaning. Harvey should’ve remembered to ask for that, but it’s nice that they took the initiative.

After breakfast, he thinks about walking to the hospital, but the path alongside the highway isn’t well defined, and his clothes are freshly cleaned and pressed, so.

The drive takes six minutes; Donna greets him with a small smile and doesn’t bother to stand. No change, then.

“He’s doing fine,” she says when he walks over to stand beside her. “The doctors said his vital signs are all improving, they think he’ll wake up soon.”

“Soon,” what does that even mean? Nothing real, nothing concrete.

Harvey nods.

“You talk to Rachel?”

Donna smiles again. “She’s doing fine, too.”

That’s nice.

Harvey clears his throat; at the reception desk, Bianca looks up and smiles at him, and he smiles back.

“I’m gonna go for a walk.”

Pressing her hands down on the armrests of her chair, Donna seems to think better of standing before she gets particularly far, nevertheless setting her shoulders back and keeping her muscles tensed for the slightest provocation.

“Are you sure?”

Obviously.

“I’m sure.”

She wants to ask if he’s okay, he knows she does. It’s a usual question for these kinds of situations.

“I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“You’re not coming back?” she asks, and she does stand as he begins to walk away and waves at her over his shoulder.

“Let them have some time to themselves,” he advises.

Let Rachel hold onto her delusions. Let her wrap herself in hope, let her think she’s making a difference.

He gets back in the silver Lexus and begins to drive, and drive, and drive; when the daylight starts to
change, he tries to find his way back, winding up on the wrong side of the university campus and pulling into the parking lot in front of a Dunkin’ Donuts to sit for a minute where no one will ask him how he’s holding up.

A minute turns into an hour, an hour and a half, maybe two; by the time Harvey makes it back to the hotel, night has long since fallen, street lamps guiding his way.

Back in room three-oh-six, he sits on the bed closest to the door and crosses his legs, picking up the greasy Starbucks bag with the giant banana nut muffin Donna bought him because what else are they supposed to do for now but bide their time, keep themselves in maintenance mode until the next step?

Harvey dreams of a time and place where he doesn’t know much of anything except that everything is moving very, very fast.

The next morning, he makes it to the hospital by nine thirty and tries not to feel guilty about it.

Donna greets him with a smile; for a panicked second, he worries that Mike woke up when he wasn’t here, immediately hating himself for wanting Mike to stay under longer and abruptly rationalizing that if Mike was awake, there’s no way in the world her reaction would be so subdued.

So what’s she got to smile about, then?

“Good night?” he asks briskly, which makes her laugh a little.

“You mind if I spend tonight at the hotel?” she replies. “These chairs aren’t doing my back any favors.”

He shrugs. “If you want.”

Folding her hands in her lap, she nods affirmatively and fixes her gaze on the reception desk, watching him out of the corner of his eye less covertly than she thinks as he stares at the clock on the wall. At exactly ten o’clock, he sweeps off to the elevators, diverting at the last moment to that discreet staircase he stumbled onto the other day and taking the steps two at a time.

Rachel startles when he opens the door, the dark circles under her eyes confirming that she’s barely slept, if at all, since he saw her last.

“You didn’t take my advice,” he greets her as he walks around to the opposite side of the bed.

She looks up at him snidely. “You didn’t take mine.”

Advice? Harvey narrows his eyes; is she talking about the folding chairs? Wow, way to scrape the bottom of the barrel.

“No,” he agrees, “I didn’t.”

She doesn’t care.

Neither does he.

Harvey settles his weight in his heels, his vision going in and out of focus on Mike’s medical equipment, Mike’s body, Mike’s face as he waits for something, anything to happen. Any second now.

Don’t push it.
Rachel’s watch ticks in the quietude, blending into the mechanical beeps and tones; every now and again, one of them leaves to use the bathroom and walk up and down the hall, anything to keep from becoming too stiff, too cold. Every once in awhile, Rachel sighs.

Doctors come and go.

“Donna’s sleeping at the hotel tonight,” Harvey says at some point, when they’ve been there so long that he figures it must be dark out, or at least dusk, or maybe twilight. Resting her chin in her palms, Rachel looks up at him suspiciously.

“I’m not leaving,” she says. He shakes his head.

“Just letting you know.”

“Hm.”

Beep…

Beep…

Beep…

Time crawls on, and Harvey becomes somehow simultaneously more eager and more frightened to leave Mike alone for any length of time. Hasn’t this gone on long enough? Is it going to go on forever? Isn’t Mike ever going to wake up?

Every second Harvey spends out of the room is another missed opportunity to be there when it happens.

Beep…

Beep…

Beep…

What the fuck was that?

On the edge of delirium, Harvey rattles himself awake, stepping forward to grip the guardrails as his eyes dart back and forth across the screens around Mike’s head, even though he doesn’t understand a thing they’re telling him. A moment later, Rachel returns from her latest whatever-the-fuck, who gives a damn, and as soon as her confusion clears, she rushes to the other side of Mike’s bed, reaching down to cradle his face for a second before anyone points out that she’s not allowed.

“Mike,” she murmurs, and Harvey knows he’s right, knows that even now, even after everything, she still expects her movie magic moment, just as surely as he knows she isn’t going to get it.

It doesn’t matter.

The readings on one of the machines against the wall beside Rachel begin to change, and Rachel bites her lip.

Doctor Grant arrives with a pair of latex gloves sticking out of his pocket and a pen in his hand.

“How is everything going?” he asks as he picks up Mike’s medical chart and steps past Rachel to inspect the screens behind her, scrawling notes without looking down at the page too closely.
“He’s waking up,” Rachel insists with her hands pressed to her chest. Doctor Grant nods.

“These are good numbers,” he says vaguely, turning to the heart monitor behind Harvey. “I expect he will be fully conscious sometime tomorrow.”

Rachel makes some high-pitched gasping noise that hurts Harvey’s ears. No, it’s fine; she’s entitled. Mike would be happy to know she’s so excited, after all this time, which is the important part.

All for Mike.

“Try to get some rest,” Doctor Grant advises as he hangs Mike’s chart back at the foot of his bed.

“Thanks,” Harvey says as he leaves, and Doctor Grant nods with a sympathetic sort of smile that tells him he knows that they won’t be resting properly until Mike’s opened his eyes. He’s seen it all before.

It suddenly occurs to Harvey that he doesn’t know Doctor Grant’s first name.

Funny the sorts of things that slip through the cracks.

Rachel hurries back to Mike’s bedside, clutching the guardrails so tight that her knuckles pale; Mike’s head twitches to the left, toward Harvey, but no matter how wide Rachel’s smile gets, how many times Harvey secretly holds his breath…nothing else happens.

They were stupid to expect anything more.

For her part, Rachel lasts a good long time at the bedside before she has to sit down; Harvey redistributes his weight from time to time, leaning against the wall when he can’t take it anymore and bracing his hands on his knees for an occasional reprieve. They trade off bathroom breaks, forgoing the hallway strolls entirely, and stay out of the nurses’ ways when they come around to check on Mike’s status and shuffle him around on the bed.

The night passes in a blur of fluctuating tones as Mike slides in and out of consciousness, none of his occasional spasms and sleepy little movements especially meaningful. Rachel’s watch ticks audibly when the silence becomes otherwise overbearing, and Harvey reminds himself every now and again that this is exactly what he expected, exactly what he prepared himself for, which doesn’t make it any easier but keeps him from feeling like a useless sack of shit, so that’s not bad.

Funnily enough, it’s when he can’t take being on his feet anymore that it finally happens.

Rachel heads off to the bathroom, scurrying out the door as quickly as she can, and Harvey steps around to the other side of the bed the moment the door clicks shut, sitting in the padded wooden side chair Rachel’s monopolized for the better part of the last four days. He wonders if Mike would be waking up faster if either of them was still speaking to him, but apparently whatever messages Rachel was dictating were about as personal as Harvey’s, because neither of them has spoken to him, or to each other, since Harvey arrived.

Not that he’s going to start now, having nothing special in mind to say that he hasn’t already, but it’s something to think about.

He’s spent two weeks forcing himself to stop dwelling on the what-ifs, and he isn’t about to start again now.

Bep, bep, bep.
“Mike?”

No, it’s okay; this time is different.

Mike’s eyes are bleary and unfocused, but they’re open, finally, finally, and Harvey knows he must look like an idiot but he can’t stop smiling, folding his hands in his lap and holding them together so tight that it starts to hurt.

“Hey,” he murmurs as he leans forward a little. Mike blinks, and Harvey nods.

“You’re doing great, kid.”

Mike blinks again, heavily; then once more, except this time his eyes stay closed, his breathing slower, steady, sleeping.

Harvey sighs. Today is a good day.

A minute later, the door opens and Rachel comes back into the room, sliding along the floor to keep her heels from clicking.

“How’s he doing?” she whispers, as she does every time she has to step out.

Harvey doesn’t know what makes him do it. He doesn’t know what keeps the words off his tongue, what makes him think the lie will save her, soothe her, free her; there’s the easy answer, that she’d hate to know she missed Mike waking up properly for the first time, but that’s only half the story, at best.

“No change,” he says, as he does every time she comes back.

He’s one selfish sonofabitch.

Careful; it’s a secret.

Somewhat mindlessly, Rachel walks over to the padded wooden side chair, pausing beside it as she tries to wrap her head around the fact that it isn’t empty. Before she does something drastic, storms over to the other side of the bed in a huff or shoves him to his feet or breaks down in tears or whatever, Harvey takes pity on her and stands. Why not? It’s easier this way.

They settle into their separate corners, trading bathroom breaks and staying out of the way of the occasional nurses, and Mike continues to twitch and jolt as they wait with baited breath for him to finally, finally open his eyes.

Tick…

Tick…

Tick…

This time, today, it’s Doctor Zhang who stops by for a visit, for the check-in. Rachel leaps to her feet at once, smoothing her skirt nervously as though anyone is paying attention.

“How’s he doing?” she asks, as though Doctor Zhang might already know something they don’t.

“He’s doing well,” Doctor Zhang replies, managing to sound for some reason simultaneously impressed and exasperated. “It looks like he’s probably regained consciousness several times already, that’s a good sign.”
“But he hasn’t opened his eyes,” Rachel bemoans. “Should I be worried, isn’t that bad?”

Harvey winces as Doctor Zhang shakes her head.

“Not necessarily,” she reassures her. “His energy levels are still very low, and as far as Mister Ross is concerned, his primary focus is getting better, not…whether or not you know he’s awake.”

Rachel falls back into her seat, lacing her hands behind her neck and hunching over as she drops her elbows down to her knees.

“Oh,” Doctor Zhang says abruptly, “well; hello, Mike, it’s nice to have you back with us.”

Mike’s eyes, dramatically clearer than the last time Harvey saw them, dart to the doctor hovering over him with a penlight she seems to have summoned out of thin air, then to Harvey, who smiles at him in what he hopes is a comforting fashion, and finally to Rachel, who’s bolted out of her chair and covered her widely smiling mouth with both hands.

“Oh my god,” Rachel mumbles giddily.

Mike’s gaze continues to skip around the room, trying to soak in everything he sees until he grows too weary to keep up the search, settling on a spot right along his natural eyeline as his blinking slows. Doctor Zhang glances at the heart monitor, then at one of the other machines behind Mike’s head, and moves to the end of the bed to make a note on his chart.

“Good,” she says, “this is very good. Keep it up, Mister Ross, and you’ll be out of here in no time.”

“Out of here?” Rachel mimics. “Where…where are you sending him, what’s going on?”

Doctor Zhang looks uneasily at Harvey, who shakes his head subtly, before she turns back to Rachel.

“You’re from the city, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” Rachel affirms, “but, I would come out here every day, I’d, I’d rent a room at the hotel, I’d stay in a dorm at the university, I…”

“I would assume,” Doctor Zhang interrupts, “that it would be more convenient for all of us if Mike was to be transferred to a hospital a little closer to home.”

Rachel bites her lip, utterly unprepared for such an option to arise. Doctor Zhang slowly turns her attention back to Mike’s chart as Harvey clears his throat.

“Who should I speak to about arranging that?” he asks authoritatively, probably coming off a little more short-tempered than he intends.

Doctor Zhang replaces Mike’s chart at the foot of his bed. “One of our social workers will provide you with a list of facilities to choose from.”

Harvey nods slowly. “And…who can give me that number?”

Doctor Zhang smiles at him. “You can speak with the receptionist downstairs.”

Harvey smiles back, equally brittle, equally forced. “Thank you.”

Doctor Zhang leaves, her step brisk, and Harvey ponders trying to get some rest before he accosts Bianca.
In the meantime, Mike seems to have gone back to sleep; Rachel reaches for his head as though to thread her fingers through his hair, remembering at the last moment that that’s probably not a great idea, on account of all the stitches and the wires. Plus the fact that two weeks after the surgery, there’s not much hair covering the visible, unbandaged parts of his head but for a coarse layer of fuzz.

Harvey looks down at the floor.

“I’ll be right back,” he says, louder than he intends. Rachel recoils but doesn’t speak, and sorry, Bianca, but he doesn’t want to draw this out any longer than he has to.

Bianca sits idly at the reception desk when he arrives, and he wonders if she’s been waiting for him. It’s a stupid thing to think, obviously untrue, but…still.

He smiles and rests his hands flat on the counter.

“Doctor Zhang tells me you’ll be able to help me speak to the social workers about getting Mike moved to a hospital a little closer to home,” he says. She nods, reaching to the back of her desk and producing a directory and a pen.

“Jenette Monroe,” she says, circling one of the entries. “She’s the supervisor of her department, she — You know what,” Bianca takes the paper back and picks up her phone, “hang on a second.”

Harvey draws back a step as Bianca lowers her voice for the duration of her conversation, nodding to herself and making a note on the page.

“Alright,” she says after a moment, hanging up the phone and offering the directory again, “her office is down the hall here, number seventy-five, she’s expecting you.”

Well that was fast.

Harvey takes the paper with a halting grin. “Thank you,” he tries, which makes her smile.

“Good luck.”

It isn’t hard to find room seventy-five; the directional signs on the wall are about as clear as can be, and seeing as how there aren’t any emergency cases bursting through the doors, no three-car pileups along the freeway and whatnot, the doctors roaming up and down all have a certain calm about them that Harvey appreciates. Jenette Monroe’s door is open a crack when Harvey approaches, and he pushes it the rest of the way without knocking.

An older woman sits huddled at a desk overflowing with papers and file folders crammed around an old Dell monitor, flyers and printouts advertising maybe two dozen different hospitals tacked up on the wall around her and two red lights illuminated on her telephone dock.

“Miss Monroe,” he presumes. She looks up with a start, smiling when he arches his eyebrows skeptically.

“Jenette, please,” she replies. “Mister Specter? Miss de Ferro tells me you’re here about Mister Ross.”

Bianca de Ferro.

Harvey wonders if he’ll remember that.

He wonders if he should feel bad that he won’t.
“I was told to speak to you about moving him to a hospital in Manhattan,” he says. “Something closer to home.”

“Manhattan,” she mumbles to herself, squinting at her computer screen and stabbing each key purposefully as she types. “I see, well, at the moment, I think the best options for Mister Ross’s recovery are Bellevue Hospital, Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Center, New York Presbyterian, or… Rusk Rehabilitation at NYU Langone.”

Wait, what?

“I—” Harvey stutters, utterly unprepared to have to make this decision on his own. “Uh… Which one is the best?”

Jenette looks at him sympathetically, and Harvey feels like an idiot.

“They’re all very fine institutions,” she soothes, “but unless you have a strong preference, the deciding factor is really where the first bed opens up. I can put you on the waiting list for all four, would you like that?”

“Yeah,” he fumbles, “yes, please, I, uh— So how will I know— How will I find out when a bed… opens up?”

Opening a drawer underneath her desk, Jenette pulls out a business card and hands it to him. “I’ll be in touch,” she says, “but if an emergency arises, here’s my number.”

“Thank you,” he says distantly, taking his wallet out of his pocket and sliding the card into the cash pocket.

She turns back to her computer, and he walks out the door, closing it behind him.

So that went well.

Walking carefully back to the elevators, it occurs to Harvey that this is precisely what he’s wanted all along, exactly what he was trying to do on his own with so little success: Make a difference. Be useful, somehow, in any little way, anything at all.

Today is a good day.

He ambles down the hall toward room two forty-two with his shoulders relaxed and a satisfied quirk in his lips.

“Harvey!”

Rachel barrels toward him, her eyes wide and her cheeks flushed, skidding along the tile floor. Reaching out, he catches her before she can crash into him and holds her at arm’s length, narrowing his eyes as her lip quivers.

And today was such a good day.

“What happened?”

Trembling in his grip, she wrings her hands and shakes her head. “Mike woke up,” she blubbers, “and he moved his hand, and I was so excited I-I-I turned away for a second, just for a second, and he—he grabbed the tube and he pulled it out and I didn’t know what to do, I didn’t—”

“Okay,” he cuts her off, “okay, when did this happen?”
“Just now,” she says, looking back over her shoulder toward the door, “just a second ago—”

“Hey!” he shouts, setting Rachel aside and storming past her to accost an unsuspecting young man in mint green scrubs. “I need a doctor in here!”

The man glances down at the folder in his hand and rolls his shoulders back before he follows Harvey into room two forty-two, where Mike leans against his pillows with the tube previously inserted into his nose clutched in his hand.

“Okay,” the guy says, “we can just put that back in, it’s not a big deal.”

Harvey takes one look at the defiant glare Mike is struggling to maintain and shakes his head.

“No,” he resolves. “No, leave it out, he doesn’t like it.”

The guy frowns. “Uh, with all due respect, sir, it’s not exactly—”

“What does it do?” Harvey interrupts. “Is it medication?”

The guy scowls at him, but Harvey is well beyond the point of caring. “It’s a feeding tube.”

“Is it necessary?”

“Not…technically, but—”

“Leave it.”

The guy frowns again, but Harvey isn’t the city’s best closer for nothing; greater men have cowered before him over less important matters than this. The guy picks up Mike’s chart and makes an annotation in one of the boxes, turning back to Harvey wearily. “Who’s his primary? His main doctor?”

“Grant,” Harvey says. “Doctor Grant.”

“Yeah, I think I know where he is.” The guy puts Mike’s chart back and rolls his shoulders again. “Stay here, I’ll send him up.”

“Thank you.”

Nodding indifferently, the guy walks out past Rachel, who’s frozen in the doorway with her hands pressed to her mouth.

Harvey steps toward her slowly.

“It’s...gonna be okay,” he says, glancing back at Mike, who’s watching them with his eyes half-lidded. “Rachel, he’s fine.”

Mumbling into her hands, Rachel blinks back tears and sags against the doorway, looking at Mike as she continues to shake. Harvey reaches out to take her shoulder and pull her forward into the room, toward the chair, lowering her into it.

“Doctor Grant is coming by,” he reminds her. “Just tell him what happened. Everything’s going to be fine.”

“How did I miss it,” she says thickly. “I was right there, and I didn’t…”
Harvey would try to reassure her, but he’d like an answer to that question, himself.

A knock sounds on the door, and Doctor Grant comes in without waiting to be welcomed.

“I hear Mike has pulled out his feeding tube,” he greets them lightly. Rachel looks up in alarm, but Harvey only nods.

“I hear that’s not going to be a problem,” he retorts. Doctor Grant smiles.

“I would prefer to replace it, but no, it’s not necessary,” he says. “I also hear you have been talking to our social work department about moving Mister Ross to a hospital closer to his residence?”

Harvey nods. “Anything you can do to expedite the process?”

“I’m afraid not, but Miss Monroe is very good at what she does.”

Harvey smiles thinly. What a nice sentiment.

Rachel makes a choked sound, and Harvey looks at Mike again; he seems to be struggling to stay awake.

“I’m going back to the hotel,” he decides. “Rachel, why don’t you talk to the good doctor here, ask him any questions you have, and I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Turning her attention to Doctor Grant, Rachel nods, taking great pains to stand up from her chair and make an effort to compose herself. Nodding to the doctor, Harvey steps out into the hall, letting the door fall closed behind him and sagging against the wall.

One step at a time.

A fresh-faced young woman and a guy smiling way too brightly for someone who has any reason to visit a hospital trot by him on their way from the elevators, and Harvey forces himself to start walking before they try to talk to him.

Down at the reception area, he waves to Bianca, hoping she understands that he’s trying to thank her, even though he doesn’t quite have the energy. She says something as he passes, but she’s looking down or he’s walking too fast and he doesn’t quite catch it.

He drives back to the hotel at a steady fifty-five miles per hour, no cruise control necessary, and gets out of the car as soon as the engine stops. The receptionist is that guy with the plastic smile who first checked Harvey in, so long ago now, and Harvey waves to him too, uncertain whether it’s more or less than he should have done and deciding right away not to give it too much thought.

It shouldn’t surprise him, opening the door to room three-oh-six, to find Donna seated on the far bed with the television remote in her hand, and it doesn’t, exactly; it’s more like a disappointment. Not that he knows where she should be instead, but wherever it is, it’s not here.

Whatever. This is supposed to be a sanctuary for all of them, not just him.

“Harvey,” she says, muting whatever sitcom or procedural or whatever it is she’s watching. “How’s Mike?”

“Good,” Harvey summarizes as he sits on the other bed. “Doctor Grant took him off the feeding tube.”

Sort of. Close enough.
Donna nods hesitantly. “And…how’s Rachel?”

He shrugs. “She’s having a rough time, but she’ll get through it.”

Probably.

“Hey, listen,” he says as he unties his shoes, “I haven’t slept since Wednesday night and I’ve been standing since yesterday, so you can keep watching TV, but, keep it down, okay?”

“I don’t have to watch this,” she says, raising the remote, but he shakes his head and pulls back his bedcovers.

“No, I don’t care, just…not too loud.”

Nodding, she unmutes the show and dials the volume down to six, practically a whisper, as Harvey takes the pillow he isn’t already lying on and shoves it over his ear.

Closing his eyes, he tries to concentrate on his breathing; the hum of the television does a mediocre job standing in for the arrhythmic clamor of a Manhattan night, and it doesn’t take too long for Harvey to doze off.

The room is dark when he wakes up again. The clock reads seven forty-seven; Donna must have drawn the curtains before she went to sleep.

Funny the sorts of things that don’t seem important at times like this.

Like undressing before bed, apparently. Harvey’s shirt stretches tight across his shoulders as he rolls over onto his stomach and rubs his eye, fidgeting around until he feels that, yep, he’s still wearing his slacks, too.

Whatever. It’s not like Donna hasn’t seen him in more embarrassing situations that this.

“Morning, Harvey,” she murmurs as he sits up and starts unbuttoning his shirt.

“What time is checkout?” he asks tersely.

“Twelve,” she yawns, pushing herself up to sitting as well. “Why?”

Really?

“Because I want to check out today,” he says, standing and shoving his pants down as he stumbles to the bathroom. “Jenette put Mike on the wait list for a bunch of hospitals in Manhattan and I want to be ready to go as soon as one of them comes through.”

“Jenette?” Donna calls.

“The social worker at the hospital,” he calls back, closing the door and dropping his boxers on the floor.

Standing under the shower spray, which has pretty decent pressure, for a hotel, he hears the door open and Donna take two steps across the tile before she leaves again; when he pulls the curtain back, his black slacks and pale blue shirt are laid neatly on the toilet lid, which is a pretty nice gesture, even if it feels a little mothering.

“I’m going downstairs,” he says when he returns to the main room, sitting on the bed to put his shoes on. “You might want to get your stuff together and get out of here.”
Donna looks around cynically at Harvey’s clothes strewn about the floor and crammed into the laundry bag beside the nightstand.

“You want me to take care of your stuff too?”

“Thanks,” he mutters, grabbing his wallet and his cell as he goes.

“You got it.”

Well that was a little snide, considering the circumstances.

Whatever. Harvey rides the elevator down to the lobby and heads straight for the front desk.

“Excuse me,” he says tartly. A smiling young woman turns to him, laying her hands one on top of the other on the desk in front of her.

“How may I help you?” she asks. Harvey recognizes her voice at once; he wonders if the hotel has more than two front desk employees.

“I want to check out,” he says, producing his driver’s license for identification. “Harvey Specter, room three-oh-six.”

“Of course, Mister Specter,” she assures him, already typing away on her little computer. “I see here that your reservation isn’t scheduled to end for another thirteen days, is there something wrong with the room?”

“No,” he says, “I just… I don’t need it any more, can I check out now?”

Her smile becomes a little flat, but she’s a trooper, god dammit, and she’s going to keep up her customer service façade if it kills her.

“Of course,” she hedges, “but I’m afraid we will have to charge you for the remaining time.”

“Fine,” Harvey says without even bothering to do the mental math, “that’s fine, just, check me out, please.”

Palpably relieved, she turns back to the computer, typing as fast as she can before he decides instead to demand some kind of special treatment on account of his obvious wealth. A receipt appears on the counter before him as though by magic, and she points to the dotted line as she offers him a pen; he signs without bothering to read it, ignoring the chastising voice in the back of his head, and slides his license back into his wallet.

“Will there be anything else, Mister Specter?”

“No,” he fumbles, reaching into his pocket as his cell begins to vibrate. “Uh.”

“Alright,” she says, bidding him some pro-forma salutation that he doesn’t catch as he raises his phone to his ear and turns away from the desk.

“This is Harvey Specter,” he greets the unfamiliar number.

“Mister Specter, it’s Jenette Monroe from Stony Brook University, I’m calling about Mister Ross?”

Harvey’s pulse immediately doubles, or triples, his heart pounding in his chest; he’s only been gone a night, and Mike was doing so well, but past success is no guarantee of future performance and if something happened, if something happened and he wasn’t there—
“Jenette,” he says, “yes, what, what about Mike, what about him?”

“I received a call this morning from my colleague at Mount Sinai,” she says, “that they have a free bed for Mister Ross, if he’s interested; the facility is in Manhattan, on Madison Avenue between ninety-eighth street and—“

“Yes,” Harvey blurts out, making a break for the front door, “yes, he’s interested, he— He’ll take it, I’m on my way right now, to the hospital, what, what do I have to do?”

“Okay, great,” Jenette murmurs, sounding like she’s talking more to herself than to him. “I’ll let them know you’re taking the spot… Mister Specter, will you be settling the transport fee?”

“The what?” he demands as he throws his car door open and slides into the front seat.

“The transportation fee,” she elaborates, “the cost of moving Mister Ross to another facility. Does he have insurance?”

“Yes,” he says in a rush, turning on his speaker phone and tossing the phone into the passenger seat as he guns the engine. “Yes, of course he does, we have to pay to move him?”

“Yes sir,” she says, “and as soon as I get a copy of Mister Ross’s insurance card, he can begin the relocation process.”

So much for these people doing everything in their power to make his life easier. Harvey smacks the steering wheel; going through insurance will take forever, who knows how long it’ll be before they clear a cost like this?

“Is there any way to do it faster?” he asks. “Get around the paperwork?”

“Well…” she wavers. “If you’re willing to pay out of pocket, I can give you the number for a private ambulette service.”

“That,” he snaps, “yes, I want that, give it to me.”

She pauses, and he knows he’s being rude, knows he’s being ungrateful, but this has gone on too long, god dammit, and he won’t have it all thrown to the wind by some stupid technicality.

“Stop by my office when you get here,” she says, “and I’ll put you in touch with the company.”

He sighs sharply. “Thank you.”

“I’ll see you soon, Mister Specter.”

The line clicks as she hangs up just as he lands in the parking lot, pulling the emergency break and dropping back into his seat for a breather.

They’re going back to the city.

They’re going back home.

Mike is going to be okay.

Mike is a fighter, and he’s not going to let this get him down, and he’s going to be okay.

Yes. Yes. Yes.
Everything is going to be alright in the end.

Taking another deep breath, he unlocks the door and puts his feet down on the hot concrete. It takes another minute to steady himself enough to stand, but that’s okay. He’ll cut himself a little slack.

He keeps his cell phone in his hand as he walks.

“Mister Specter,” Jenette says as he raps on her office door, pushing it open in the same motion. She holds out a Post-It note as he approaches. “The company I was talking about is called Medlink, tell them your friend is at Stony Brook Hospital and they’ll know where to go.”

“I can pay them directly?” he asks, already beginning to dial his cell.

“You’ll sort that out with them.”

“And Mount Sinai knows all about him? About Mike?” he presses. “I don’t need to bring them any—records, or anything?”

“I’ll ensure that they receive all of the necessary information.”

“Okay.”

He puts his phone to his ear, and Jenette looks pointedly at the office door; Harvey nods, mouthing a distracted “Thanks,” and moves into the hall.

The receptionist at the ambulette service is kindly and sympathetic, asking if he’ll need to make future arrangements or set up a regular transportation schedule, assuring him that it won’t be any trouble to move the patient from Long Island to Manhattan, yes of course our vehicles are all equipped to handle patients on ventilation or with any other monitoring systems you need to accommodate, we’ll be there in about an hour.

Fantastic.

Hanging up, he looks down at the dark screen.

Now what?

Well, he probably ought to tell Rachel what’s going on. Harvey walks back down the hall to the elevators, pressing the call button and waiting a full minute before he decides to take the stairs instead.

The first thing Harvey notices is that in addition to the feeding tube, Mike’s breathing tube has been removed, rendering his face completely free of wires, which is wonderful except that it makes the ones on his head look about ten times as foreign, twenty times as dangerous.

Rachel sits at Mike’s bedside, smiling tenderly.

“Rachel,” Harvey announces himself.

She closes her eyes and sighs.

“Hi Harvey.”

“Mike’s moving back to the city today.”

That gets her attention. Jerking upright in her seat, she turns to him with her eyes wide, pressing her
hands down in her lap.

“Who told you that?”

“The social worker,” he says. “Everyone thinks it’s a better idea than leaving him here.”

“You want to move him?” she demands. “He’s recovering from a coma!”

Harvey frowns. Was she even here yesterday?

“I thought he was on the road to recovery,” he points out, making her flinch. “Look, the hospital needs the bed, and they all think it’s a better idea for him to be closer to home. Closer to somewhere we can look out for him without having to worry about getting ourselves all the way out here, or about getting time off of work.”

“Mike is more important to me than my job,” she counters immediately. Harvey shakes his head; god, she’s so young.

“I know you feel that way now,” he warns, “but think about what Mike would want. Would he want you to throw your whole life away just to sit at his bedside, day in and day out, while he’s trying to sleep, and there’s nothing you can do to help?”

“There is nothing,” she fumes, standing with a flourish, “more important to me right now than Mike getting better.”

“Look, Rachel,” he snaps, “I know you want to put Mike first, and you want to do what’s best for him, but I’m telling you, he’d want you to be taking care of yourself, and part of that means getting back to your own life and giving him time on his own!”

“You can’t tell me what to do!”

“This has nothing to do with you, this is about what’s best for Mike!”

It isn’t Doctor Grant bursting through the door to interrupt them this time, nor the rapid staccato of Mike’s spiking heart monitor, but a quiet, cough-like sound that jerks their attention around to the bed, draws their eyes to Mike’s pursed lips and sour glare; he doesn’t say a word, which isn’t really surprising, considering what he’s been through, but his intention couldn’t be clearer:

*Shut your fucking mouths.*

Harvey takes a step back, away from the bed, and Rachel raises her hands the way she does when she’s about to start crying. Mike turns his head toward the wall and scowls.

“I’m—I’m going downstairs to wait for the ambulette,” Harvey says, pulling the door open. Shaking her head, biting her quivering lip, Rachel sinks back into the padded wooden side chair and turns her attention to Mike, who’s doing his damndest to ignore them both.

Harvey takes the stairs two at a time and resists the impulse to kick the door in.

In the waiting area, Donna sits with a suitcase at her feet. His suitcase, the one she brought with her from the city. He sits beside her, leaning back in his chair and setting his hands on his thighs.

“Thanks.”

She nods. “Any news from Jenette?”
Harvey smirks. “Ambulette transport will be here in an hour to take Mike to Mount Sinai. It’s in the nineties somewhere, on Madison.”

“Good.”

“Mm.”

Their’s is another relationship that’ll need patching when all this is said and done, but Harvey doesn’t quite have the energy to be concerned about that for the time being.

Visitors come and go; people storm the gates and demand attention for all sorts of complaints from persistent migraines to vomiting blood, and Harvey tunes out every single one. Eventually, a couple of people wearing navy scrubs with the letters “ACC” printed in large letters on the breast pocket arrive, heading straight for the reception desk; Bianca gives them Mike’s room number and points behind them to Harvey, who stands, brushing imaginary dust from his pants and straightening his cuffs.

“Mister Specter?” one of them inquires, approaching as her partner heads for the elevators. “My name is Karen, I’m from ACC Medlink.”

“Yes,” he says, shaking her hand. “Hi. What do you need me to do?”

“You don’t have to worry about a thing,” she says gently. “We’ll get Mister Ross into the ambulette and transport him to Mount Sinai in Manhattan, you’re more than welcome to ride with us or follow behind if you’ve got your own car.”

Fuck, the Lexus. Harvey’s gonna owe the car club an arm and a leg when he brings it back.

“I’ll follow,” he says, “but I’m pretty sure his fiancée would prefer to ride along.”

Karen nods. “We’ll speak to her about that.”

“Yeah.”

Donna stands with one hand on Harvey’s suitcase, offering the other for a shake. “Karen, was it? I’m Donna, I’ll be riding in the ambulette with Miss Zane.”

Karen takes her hand curiously. “Miss Zane?”

“Mister Ross’s fiancée, she’s up in his room with him right now,” Harvey fills in. “Thank you, Karen, I uh, I think I’ll wait in my car.”

“Nice to meet you, Mister Specter,” she says as he picks up his suitcase and walks away. She’s probably used to people being emotional about shit when she meets them, it’s fine.

The sun is bright, and the sky is clear, and everything is dark and sort of grainy.

Harvey walks past a van with the ACC Medlink logo plastered across the side to the silver fucking Lexus and pops the trunk, dumping his suitcase inside and slamming the lid.

So. Here we are.

Time has moved out of its stagnation, finally, but the world is still off its axis, just enough to make sure everyone knows that something is wrong, even if they don’t know what.

Well, other people probably won’t notice, but there’s nothing Harvey can do about that. He and
Mike have always existed on a level a little bit above.

The ride back to the city will be a little over an hour, probably. Harvey leans against the car and watches the traffic rush by on the highway; people, all those other people, are going on about their days, living their regular lives. Driving past the hospital as they may well do every day without a care in the world.

People, doctors and patients and visitors, move in and out of the building without giving Harvey a second glance, without paying him any mind; without warning, an ambulance pulls out of the lot with its sirens blaring as it speeds down the road.

Eventually, Karen and her coworker come out the doors with a nurse Harvey doesn’t know, wheeling a stretcher and dragging an IV behind them.

Have a nice ride, Mike.

Harvey opens the Lexus’s driver-side door and slides into the front seat.

I’ll be right there when you wake up again.

Everything is going to be just fine.

Chapter End Notes

An outline of the process of moving a patient from a surgical hospital to an inpatient rehabilitation facility can be found at UHF Next Step in Care: Planning for Inpatient Rehab Services. The tip about hiring a private ambulette company rather than waiting for the hospital to clear an ambulance is culled from a variety of patient support message boards.

Mike pulls out his nasogastric tube (basically a feeding tube inserted through his nose).

Harvey uses ACC Medlink to move Mike back to the city; this isn’t a tacit endorsement of the company, they’re just the first organization that came up when I Googled private medical transportation companies that serve clientele from Long Island to Manhattan.

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