### The Milkoviches

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**The Milkoviches**

by gallavichfanfic

**Summary**

Sequel to South of the Border--Seven years after Ian and Mickey were reunited in Mexico, the continued story of their lives together as they juggle family issues, parenthood, business and its travel requirements, Ian's medical career and the many problems they continue to face. Is their love strong enough to survive all of life's stressors? Can their marriage stay strong, even in the darkest of times? Is it possible to give up on someone you can't live without?

These questions, and many more will be answered
This is the sequel to South of the Border, as well as Ian Gets A Surprise (or two). Enjoy!

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Mickey was out on the factory floor, handling a problem that was way below his pay grade, but that was just the way he was; he absolutely refused to take a hands-off approach to his business, regardless of how filthy rich he became. Manuel, who subscribed to the same philosophy, had been entertaining some visitors from ‘Surfear Arriba’, a Costa Rican Surfing Distributor, headquartered in Tamarindo Beach. After wrapping up his meeting, Manuel called Mickey away from the problem he was addressing in the factory, citing the need to discuss some pressing business. Mickey put Jose on the issue and immediately headed for the conference room, where Manuel was waiting for him.

“What’s up?” Mickey asked, curious to find out what was important enough to pull him away in the middle of a mechanical failure on the floor. “I need to know if Ian can be in Tamarindo Beach tomorrow,” Manuel asked hopefully. “Why? Ya know he’s in Los Angeles now, and is lookin’ forward to flyin’ home. The kids are missin’ him, and so am I,” Mickey frowned, all but saying no.

“Well,” Manuel paused, sighing deeply, as had become his habit any time he had to delve into an unpleasant subject with Mickey, “DreamSea Surf Camp is hosting the Playa Grande Surf Competition at Tamarindo Beach this year, and Surfear Arriba needs us to send a model there to represent Ojos Azules and Surfin’ USA. There will be a high profile fashion show immediately before the start of the competition. It will be televised in every country that has surfers in attendance, which would include all of our major overseas markets,” Manuel explained, looking over at Mickey with puppy dog eyes that pleaded non-verbally for Ian’s attendance.

“Alright, but I’m goin’, too,” Mickey insisted, “This is the longest we been apart since he left...uh...since before he came to live in Mexico, and it feels like fuckin’ forever!” Manuel nodded his silent agreement and sent a text to one of the reps from Surfear Arriba, confirming Ian’s availability and requesting they set up lodging accommodations. He then began texting Bigley about flights for Ian from L.A., and for Mickey from Mexico City. “Hey! Wait! You might wanna ask Ian first! And don’t tell him I’m comin’! I want it to be a surprise!” Mickey added, just in time for Manuel to stop in his tracks and text Ian before Bigley.

Within seconds of Manuel’s text to Ian, Mickey received one from Ian. Manuel chuckled when he heard Mickey’s phone buzz. “Yeah, I coulda predicted that, but I know he woulda been real pissed if we just sent him without askin’,” Mickey said as he opened Ian’s text.

“WTF? Am I ever gonna see home again? Manuel says you guys want me to go to Costa Rica! Don’t mind going, but wish you and the kids were, too! (sad face emoji)”

“Awww, shit!” Mickey said aloud as he read. “He fuckin’ wants me and the kids to go! Don’t think I can swing that! Mom would hafta go, and with her lab results bein’ off, I doubt Doc would go for that,” Mickey reasoned. “I agree,” Manuel offered, “especially now that Doc has taken a ‘personal’ interest in your mother. He won’t want her out of his sight!” Manuel grinned, raising an eyebrow.

Shortly after Mickey’s mother became Dr. Montemurro’s patient, they started to spend time together outside of her visits to the clinic, having dinner, entertaining the children, and just hanging out. Both had assured Mickey and Ian that they were just friends, but lately it seemed like much more than that. ‘Kayla’, as Doc called her, had begun spending nights at his place and would blush terribly at the mention of his name or her overnight whereabouts. Needless to say, asking her to leave the country when there was a chance that she was having a relapse would not sit well with Doc, under any circumstances, but now, NO WAY was it going to happen.

“I’m not lettin’ this ruin my surprise,” Mickey sighed as he began texting his reply:
“It’s only two more days. Got some issues to deal with here at the factory. Besides there’s no way mom can come to help with the kids. Her latest labs came back iffy. Just hang in. And pls call me before bed 2nite. (Heart emoji, Praying hands emoji, Eggplant emoji)"

Ian responded right away: “What do you mean “iffy”? Wanna know details. Tell doc to call me when he leaves the clinic. Wanna come home and take care of mom! (Crying emoji)”

“She’s in good hands. This show is real important or I’d never ask ya to go. Two days, Ian. (Heart emoji) I’ll have Doc call ya. Don’t forget bedtime call (winky face emoji)”

“OK (sad face emoji)”

“He’s killin’ me,” Mickey said to Manuel, “but I really wanna surprise ‘im. And we could use some time away together. Been a while…” Mickey trailed off as Manuel sent and received texts with the Surfear Arriba guys, Bigley, and Ian, firming up the travel and lodging accommodations for both Ian and Mickey. “Is there anything special you want in your room?” Manuel asked. “King-sized bed and a hot tub, if possible—and Ian, of course,” Mickey said with a smile, his mind wandering back to their last encounter, which happened to begin in their hot tub and end in their own king-sized poster bed. Mickey adjusted himself, trying to put Ian, and all the sex he couldn’t wait to have with him, out of his mind for the time being, heading back out to the factory floor for the update on Jose’s progress.

Mickey was in the middle of being briefed on the production hold-up, which had been effectively resolved through the combined efforts of Mickey and Jose, when he got a text from Bigley, saying he would be flying into Tamarindo on the red-eye and needed to be on his way to the airport ASAP. Mickey texted his limo service and said his goodbyes at the factory before getting into his car to drive home. On his way, he called his mother, who was at his house with the kids, explaining that he was going to be traveling on business and asking if she could stay at the house with the kids for a few days. Kayla was pretty much accustomed to this arrangement. She kept an overnight bag in her car at all times, citing the frequency with which she stayed at their house, but Mickey and Ian both knew she also spent many nights with Doc, and they liked to tease her about it, just to watch her blush.

When Mickey walked in, both Yev and Mikhaila ran at him, Mikhaila yelling, “Daddy!” and Yev chiming in with an enthusiastic, “Daddy! Are you coming to my game tonight?” Mickey hugged them both, scooping Mikhaila up into his arms. She was still in her school clothes, having started kindergarten at Yevgeny’s school, where he was a fourth grader. “Sorry, little man. Can’t make this one,” Mickey paused, noticing a look of disappointment settle on Yev’s face. “I’m sorry, bud. Gotta meet Daddy Ian,” he explained, looking back and forth between Yev and Mikhaila. “We got some business in Costa Rica, but we’ll both be home soon,” Mickey promised.

“I’ll be watching,” Kayla interjected with a sweet smile. “I missed lots of your Daddy’s games, so I really wanna see yours!” she added, rumpling his hair and handing him his freshly-washed uniform. “Better get dressed!” Mickey suggested. “I gotta get ready, too. Race ya upstairs!” Mickey grinned, setting Mikhaila down, giving his son a head start, then quickly catching up to him, but still letting him win by a hair.

Mickey hastily packed some basics, figuring he could pick up anything additional he needed, once he got there. He stopped in the doorway of Yev’s room, watching him finish dressing, then reach for his book-bag, pulling out a piece of paper. When he saw Mickey, he quickly stuffed the paper back into his bag. “What was that?” Mickey asked, thinking perhaps his son had done poorly on an assignment or test. That certainly wouldn’t be a first in the Milkovich Family. “Nothing,” Yev responded, grabbing his baseball glove off his dresser. “Yev,” Mickey began again. “It’s just a thing we’re doing at school. But I’m not. It’s okay, Dad,” Yev spoke softly, a note of sadness in his voice. “Let me see,” Mickey prodded, holding his hand out.
“Mickey!” Kayla yelled up the stairs, “The car is here for you!” she finished. “Coming!” he yelled back, throwing his travel bag over his shoulder, then putting an arm around Yev’s shoulder. “We’re gonna talk about whatever is on that paper when Ian and I get home,” he said to Yev with a wink and a smile. “Whatever it is, we’ll figure it out, okay?” Mickey said, running down the steps.

“Thanks, ma! Sorry I’m in such a rush. You okay? How you been feelin’?” Mickey asked as he put his shoes on, a look of concern on his face. “I feel fine,” she answered, smiling brightly as she reached her arms out to hug her son, but to Mickey, she looked paler than normal, and her eyes lacked their usual luster, like she was overly tired or something.

At this point, Mickey was beginning to feel very selfish, and was considering calling his trip off, when there was a knock at the door. Mickey figured maybe it was an overzealous driver, but when he opened the door, it was Doc. “Michael!” Kayla beamed as she uttered his name. “Hello, Kayla,” he responded with a twinkle in his eye, walking over to give her a big hug.

“Everything okay?” Mickey asked, eyeing Doc up in an attempt to read his expression. “Yes, Mickey! Your mother is in good hands, as usual. Relax and have a good trip! Ready?” he asked, looking over at Yev, who was standing at the bottom of the stairs, bat and glove in hand. “Yes,” Yev answered with a half-smile. “What’s wrong?” Doc asked, “Did grandma forget to tell you we’re going for ice cream after the game?” Yev’s smile got bigger as he headed for the door, Mickey hugging both Yev and Mikhaila one last time on his way out. “Oh, Doc! Almost forgot! Ian wants you to call him, but when you do, and this goes for you, too, mom, don’t tell him I’m comin’. Gonna surprise him,” Mickey grinned, running out the door.
Mickey was mid-flight before he realized that he would be unavailable for the call he had made Ian promise to make to him at bedtime. Knowing how Ian typically reacted to not being able to reach him, he immediately began to worry. Would he check with his mother? Mandy and Manuel? Would he call Doc? If he chose to contact any of them, they would be put into the awkward position of either having to lie to preserve his surprise arrival, or tell Ian about it, which would mean going against Mickey’s wishes. The worst thing was that, at the time he would be landing, everyone would likely be sleeping, so he wouldn’t be apt to get any answers right away.

Mickey’s plans of sleeping through the ten hour flight now completely dashed, he opted to have a few drinks, hoping to at least calm his nerves, which, at the moment, felt like they were about to pop out of his skin. After his fifth drink, he finally passed out, the combination of alcohol and mental fatigue ultimately getting the best of him.

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Ian paced the floor of the empty hotel lobby like a caged animal as he waited for the airport shuttle, calling Mickey’s phone every 30 seconds, each call going directly to voicemail. ‘What the fuck!!?’ Ian yelled into the phone, tears streaming down his face. Mickey was expecting his call; why wasn’t he answering? “Where the fuck are you, Mick!!?” he screamed, his mind racing, conjuring up scenario after scenario to explain why Mickey wasn’t taking his calls, none of them good.

Sure, there were plenty of logical explanations that weren’t catastrophic, but Ian dismissed each and every one of them, certain Mickey was either sick, hurt, dead or somehow occupied with something dangerous, deceptive or otherwise unsavory. His brain was flooded with horrific images of Mickey bleeding, screaming, cheating, knocked out and sprawled across the floor---anything and everything that could’ve conceivably gone wrong entering his mind.

Once the list of possibilities grew to include problems involving the family, he started blowing their phones up. Mandy, Manuel, Kayla, Doc, Johnny----they all started getting calls and texts. He definitely needed to get in touch before boarding his flight, or he was certain he would go completely insane, if he wasn’t there already.

Unfortunately, or fortunately for Mickey, being that it was 1AM CST, Ian didn’t get any immediate answers or replies. By the time Ian landed in Tamarindo at noon, Mickey had been there for five hours and had sent him a text saying he was fine and had just fallen asleep. He sent the same message to the entire family, covering the bases so none of them would contradict his story. As soon as he had resolved that problem, he breathed a sigh of relief, then set about trying to plan how, when and where he would disclose his presence in Tamarindo.

While on his flight, Ian, like Mickey, had opted for a few drinks to settle his nerves. This was in addition to the drinks he’d had at the airport with some other surf models who ended up also being on his flight with him. By the time the flight attendants realized how wasted Ian was and tried to cut him off, he was drunk enough to start arguing with them, garnering support from some of the other models who had imbibed a bit too much themselves, effectively starting a little riot on the plane. He had also managed to commit himself to a group lunch and cocktails before checking into their rooms.

There were a total of five models on the flight, including Ian, three male, two female, ranging in age from 18 to 32, Ian being the second oldest of the bunch. Of course, the girls were on the young end of the spectrum, one named Jasmine, who was 21, having taken a particular shine to Ian. One of the males, Justin, 25, also seemed to be eyeing Ian up and flirting a bit, although their attention and interest was completely lost on Ian, who could barely express a coherent thought before finally
passing out for the remainder of the flight.

Once their flight landed, Jasmine and Justin, who were seated on either side of Ian, both attempted to rouse him from his alcohol-induced slumber, Ian finally coming around, glancing down at his phone and smiling, secure in the knowledge that Mickey was safe. The group of models assisted a tipsy Ian down the aisle, out of the plane and through the airport to his limo.

The combination of alcohol and his bipolar meds serving to do a real number on Ian, he was fortunate to have their help, and he was at least aware enough to recognize that. The group decided collectively to get showered and ready for the fashion show before lunch, hoping Ian would sober up a bit before they had to take him to a restaurant or, at the very least, before he had to walk the runway.

Ian opened his texts, scrolling until he found the one with his accommodations on it. With some help from Justin, he discovered that he was staying in a boutique villa at the Calla Luna, right on Tamarindo Beach. The others were all staying at one of two different hotels further inland, and further from the surf competition. Jasmine suggested that they all get ready at Ian’s villa, then find a restaurant near the competition, so they wouldn’t have to rush through their lunch, even though most of them were probably going to be opting for a liquid lunch, either in the form of a smoothie or a cocktail, in order to avoid being bloated for the show.

The group aided Ian in navigating the check-in process, as well as physically helping him get into his room. He was quite unsteady on his feet and intermittently disoriented, almost as if he had been drugged. Justin and the other, older male model, Brach, helped him over to the bed. The group then began arranging an order for taking turns showering or bathing as the shower or hot tub became available.

“Hey,” Jasmine, who had gotten access to the shower first, called out, “Looks like someone else already had this room!” “What?” Brach responded, walking toward the bathroom. “See, there’s a travel bag in here and all sorts of other stuff,” she explained, pointing out the various toiletries that littered the sink area.

Meanwhile, Justin was sitting on the side of the bed, doing his best to flirt with a heavily-sedated Ian, whose eyes blinked open slowly, only in response to conversation directed at him.

“Surprise!” Mickey yelled, walking into the room with two salads and fruit smoothies from Sprout Tamarindo, a nearby eatery. Mickey scanned the room, catching an eyeful of the scantily-clad models that were traipsing in and out of the bathroom, then honing in on his husband, lying on the bed, a handsome, young male model at his side.

“Ian! What the fuck??” Mickey bellowed. “Hey,” Justin said casually, extending his hand to shake Mickey’s, “What’s up? I’m Justin, and you are?”

“Gonna kick your fuckin’ ass! Get the fuck off MY bed, and away from my goddamn husband!!” Mickey growled, lunging at Justin and throwing him across the room, his head bouncing off the wall opposite the bed. “Husband?” Justin replied, dazed and smiling awkwardly as he picked himself up off the floor. “Yeah, genius! Can’t you see the fuckin’ ring on his fing…” Mickey stopped mid-word as he realized Ian wasn’t wearing his ring.

“Everybody better get the fuck outta now before I fuck up all your days!” Mickey howled, his anger masking the hurt he felt in his heart. The next 30 seconds were a blur of towels, clothing, hair and bodies flying in every direction, every last person doing his or her best to get the fuck out of dodge in one piece as Mickey closed in on them.
Mickey slammed the door after the last person fled, turning to look at Ian, who was now struggling to sit up in the bed. “Ian, what the fuck?! Who were all those fuckin’ people? Where’s your wedding ring?” Mickey said more quietly, his every word weighed down with despair and drowning in tears.

“It’s not what you think,” Ian slurred. “And what do I think?” Mickey asked incredulously, looking into Ian’s bloodshot green eyes. Ian stared back blankly at him, his eyes blinking slowly.
Mickey took a long, deep breath, trying to calm himself before he spoke again. “Just tell me why you weren’t wearin’ your ring and who the fuck that dude was on the bed with you?! Please! I’m trying real hard not to flip out cuz I see you’re fuckin’ wasted, but you’re tryin’ my fuckin’ patience, Ian!” Mickey pleaded, the volume of his voice increasing with each word until he was yelling again.

“You didn’t answer me!” Ian sobbed, reaching for Mickey and pulling him toward him. He sloppily groped for the surf necklace he was still wearing from the LA photo shoot, holding it by its leather band and shoving it indelicately into Mickey’s face. “Nice, Ian! What the fuck?” Mickey responded with an angry eye roll, exerting great effort to remain calm with his inebriated husband. “Open it,” Ian stammered drunkenly.

Mickey pulled the locket closer, focusing his eyes on it to open it, Ian’s face now only a few inches from his own. Mickey tried to avoid looking at Ian, but caught sight of his fluttering eyelashes, wet with tears, and he was done. Fuck! The places his mind went, the things he wanted to do to this beautiful man at that moment, in spite of himself, as he continued to struggle with this stupid locket---and for what?

Finally, Mickey managed to get the locket open, exposing a single, shiny gold band, resting safely inside, sparkling as the light hit it. He pulled the ring from the locket, shoved it unceremoniously onto Ian’s waiting left ring finger, and pushed Ian roughly down onto the bed, kissing him hard as tears poured out onto both of their faces, salting their passionate liplock. He stopped, only momentarily, to pull Ian’s muscle shirt off over his head, then resumed with even greater conviction and voracity.

“Don’t move!” Mickey commanded between the desperate, wet kisses he was planting, every couple of inches, down Ian’s taut torso as he grasped Ian’s shorts in his hands and yanked them down over his hips, exposing Ian’s enticingly erect phallus.

After making his way feverishly down Ian’s body, Mickey encircled the tip of his dick with his mouth, sucking at it fervently, Ian moaning softly as his member grew even larger and stiffer, despite the degree of his intoxication. “Damn, Mick!” Ian muttered. “Shhhhh,” Mickey paused to quiet his lover, before pulling more of him into his hungry mouth, squeezing his slick shaft between his lips. Mickey slid his mouth up and down swiftly, twisting a hand adeptly around the base of Ian’s cock, while gently massaging his balls with the other.

Ian arched up off the bed, pushing himself further into Mickey’s magical mouth. “I said don’t move!” Mickey snarled, pausing to pull off. “Awww!” Ian whined in disappointment. Mickey continued to stroke Ian’s cock much more slowly than he had been sucking it, coaxing a shuttering sigh from between Ian’s gorgeous lips. “So, who the fuck was the dude sittin’ on the bed?” Mickey demanded as he teased Ian with his hands and the occasional swipe of Ian’s dewy slit with his talented tongue.

Ian paused briefly, distracted by Mickey’s fondling, then answered, “A surf model,” his mind dulled significantly by the combination of alcohol, meds, and now, raging desire. “What the fuck was he doin’ on the bed with ya?” Mickey continued his line of questioning, as he persisted in languidly pumping Ian’s penis with his hand. “All those people helped me…” Ian began, struggling to speak coherently as Mickey continued to manipulate him expertly, reintroducing his mouth more with each successive stroke.

“Helped you?!” Mickey asked, raising his voice, but still not missing a beat with his leisurely torture of Ian’s begging manhood. “Yeah, Mick,” Ian breathed in lust-laden annoyance. “I was so fuckin’ drunk, I could barely walk. An’ ya know why?” he slurred. “Cuz you didn’t fuckin’ answer me!!”
he chided Mickey, pulling hard at a tuft of his shiny, black hair for emphasis. “Owww!” Mickey yelled, grazing Ian’s dick lightly with his teeth, Ian lifting his ass entirely off the bed in response.

“Got lots more questions, but for now, gonna finish ya, feed ya and put your drunk ass to bed. You gotta sober up for the show,” Mickey informed, sliding his mouth over Ian’s cock between each word. “Want your sweet ass cock in my mouth,” Ian breathed softly. “Bring it!!” he hissed, a sexy grin spreading across his face. Mickey didn’t waste any time, quickly dropping his pants, acquiescing to Ian’s will. Both men turned onto their sides, each facing and devouring the other’s rock-hard penis ravenously, both moaning heavily, the vocal vibrations reverberating through them, taking their arousal to new heights.

Mickey licked his index and middle fingers, then reached between Ian’s legs, rubbing them over Ian’s hole, gradually pushing one, then both fingers inside. Ian groaned with pleasure, relaxing his body to allow Mickey complete access. “Mmmmickey...” Ian hummed, as he sped his mouth’s motion on Mickey’s glorious cock, all the while enjoying Mickey’s oral and tactile maneuvers immensely. “Really close,” he added deliriously.

“Mmmm hmmm,” Mickey hummed, tightening his lips and right hand around Ian’s massive, throbbing erection and massaging Ian’s prostate with his fingers. Mickey chuckled as he felt the beginning of Ian’s release come on. Ian moaned with delirious pleasure onto Mickey’s cock, luring Mickey to his own colossal climax. The two men achieved their gut-splitting orgasms simultaneously, the villa filling with ecstatic grunts and groans, each man drinking the other in greedily.

Mickey flipped himself around, Ian enveloping him in his arms and burying his nose in his neck, inhaling Mickey’s alluring scent deeply as he drifted off. Mickey allowed Ian to hold him close until he heard him breathing rhythmically, his grip on his body loosening slightly. He then removed himself from Ian’s embrace, moving to refrigerate the lunch he knew Ian needed to eat before the show.

Ian woke to the aroma of a fresh pot of Milkovich brew and the sound of a blender. Still feeling a bit sluggish, he wiped the sleep from his eyes, as he sat up, taking in the endearing sight of his husband preparing an intimate lunch for the two of them to share. Oh, how he wanted to grab him and drag him back to bed for a leisurely afternoon of fondling and fucking. Over the years of their marriage, Mickey had only become more breathtakingly beautiful, at least in Ian’s eyes.

As his mind began to clear, he recognized the events of the past twelve hours or so for what they actually were—a horrible misunderstanding! Clearly, Mickey had come to Tamarindo to surprise him, so they could share some much-needed couple time. How could he possibly be upset with him about missing his calls while, he was sure, Mickey’s phone was in ‘airplane mode’?

As he approached the counter at which Mickey was now sitting, he heard him listening to his irate messages from the night before. Damn, he sounded absolutely distraught—only because he was! He truly had feared the worst when Mickey didn’t answer him, but now, looking at his handsome husband, all of his anger evaporated, replaced with utter joy and appreciation for what he had arranged for them.

“Hey, Mick!” Ian smiled brightly, pulling a stool up close to him and giving him a big, loud smooch on the cheek. “I’m sorry,” Ian and Mickey said simultaneously, both laughing at themselves afterward. “I should’ve just told you I was comin’,” Mickey began. “But you wanted to surprise me, which was really nice,” Ian interjected. “I shouldn’t have had so much to drink,” Ian continued. “But you were worried sick and needed to calm yourself down before the trip,” Mickey responded,
explaining Ian’s actions. “And I shouldn’t have had all of those models here,” Ian finished. “But they
kept you outta trouble and helped you get here when you were drunk,” Mickey said, repeating Ian’s
earlier explanation.

Clearly, both men now understood the other’s point of view and could move past it all, for the most
part. That is, until Ian piped up, “That dude WAS flirting with me though.” “Yeah, I saw,” Mickey
concurred. “Cuz he thought you were SINGLE!” Mickey added, curling his pouty lips around his
straw to sip his smoothie. “So yeah, I do wanna know how and why your ring got inside that
locket,” Mickey said, trying to sound matter-of-fact as he held Ian’s straw to his lips, imploring him
to drink.

“Some of these photographers and their bosses want my ring off so I fit the sexy single surfer dude
stereotype. Even the PR guys at the stores sometimes have me take it off for Meet and Greets,” Ian
explained with a slight frown. “So yesterday, when I saw the necklaces, I asked to wear one. Figured
I’d rather have my ring in there, close to my heart,” Ian explained, pushing the locket into his chest to
make his point, “than in my pocket, where I’m always afraid of losing it.”

“Never made ME do that shit!” Mickey replied, a tiny hint of suspicion in his voice. “No shit, MIck!
“Cuz you were posing with Yev, like a married family man—totally different image,” Ian explained,
rolling his eyes at Mickey’s lack of understanding of this end of his own business.

Mickey’s temper flared, “That’s bullshit! You’re a married family man, too!” “I know that, and you
know that,” Ian began, “but that’s not what these people want me to project,” he concluded, taking a
bite of his salad, then feeding the next one to Mickey. “Why do you think they still introduce me as
Ian Gallagher?” Ian asked.

“What!?” Mickey yelled, his face turning redder by the second. “C’mon, Mick, you know my profile
has always had me as Ian Gallagher,” Ian replied. “Yeah, but I didn’t fuckin’ know they introed you
that way! Why don’t you fuckin’ say somethin’?!” Mickey questioned Ian, completely shocked and
disappointed to learn that his husband was content to be called by his birth name, told to stow his
ring for photos, and basically to behave as if he were single at every PR event he attends.

“Mick, it’s just business,” Ian defended, swallowing another mouthful of salad. “I’d like to give you
the business!” he purred into Mickey’s ear seductively. Ian licked the inside of Mickey’s ear
lasciviously, sending shivers up the back of Mickey's neck, next sucking and biting on his earlobe,
then tracing the contours of his tender neck with his tongue, rolling it over Mickey’s sensitive spot
repeatedly until Mickey squirmed in his seat. Finally luring Mickey in for a tempting kiss, his eyes
burning into Mickey’s, Ian breathed salaciously, pulling at Mickey’s lower lip with his teeth before
each word, “When we get back, I’m...gonna...fuck...the...shit...outta...you.”

Mickey’s loins were on fire! He had all but forgotten his upset over Ian’s ‘single model’ situation,
focusing instead on willing away his raging hard-on, since they had to leave in less than half an hour.
“This is false...” Mickey squeaked from his tight throat, his dick so hard he thought he could
pound nails with it. “Definitely, my hotter than hell hubby!” Ian retorted, looking over his shoulder at
his ‘everything’, completely in awe of his good fortune at having found his soulmate. “I’ll start the
shower,” Ian chuckled, turning it on straight cold, rubbing his own swollen cock briefly, a futile
attempt at relief.

“You’re first,” Mickey suggested, “Not gettin’ in ‘til you’re done, surfer boy,” Mickey grinned,
swatting Ian’s ass on his way back to the kitchen. “Hmmm…” Ian smirked, “When I get IN,
YOU’RE gonna get done, and you’re gonna know you’ve been DONE!”

Mickey smiled to himself, thinking, despite all the bullshit surrounding this trip, being with Ian was
worth it, like always...
Ian and Mickey arrived at the oceanside site for the Surfear Ariba Fashion Show, a throng of admirers, separated from the models by makeshift metal barriers, clamouring for a pre-show glimpse of the hottest new surf looks. In all of his years in the business, Mickey had never seen anything like this before. They made their way, amid catcalls, hoots and hollers, to the makeup and dressing area, where a small group of models had already congregated, buzzing about the incident that had occurred earlier that day at the Calla Luna, highlights including the ginger model from Surfin’ USA’s psycho husband and Justin’s concussion. Once Jasmine caught sight of Ian and Mickey, the entire bunch fell silent, averting their eyes awkwardly.

“Hey, Guys!” Ian chirped brightly, “Thanks for your help earlier today. Sorry I was so wasted,” Ian paused, laughing nervously. “No problem,” Brach replied reassuringly, his eyes darting about the group of models. There was a long, awkward silence, finally broken by Mickey. “Look, I’m sorry I got shitty with you guys earlier. It was all a misunderstanding... We cool?” Mickey asked, trying to smooth things over for Ian’s sake, as well as the sake of his business.

Mickey knew some of the models had to be aware that he co-owned Ojos Azules and Surfin’ USA, and it was only a matter of time before they all would. Once again, Brach nodded in affirmation, extending his hand to formally introduce himself. Mickey, again going the extra mile in his attempt to make peace, shook Brach’s hand, introducing himself. Mickey turned to the others, hand extended, but got the cold shoulder from all of them. Apparently, they weren’t going to be so forgiving of Mickey’s violent outburst, and it didn’t take long for Ian and Mickey to discover why.

One of the make-up artists arrived, calling out, “Ian Gallagher?” as she approached the group, Mickey wincing at the use of the last name, ‘Gallagher’, rather than ‘Milkovich’, which was the way he was accustomed to Ian being addressed back home, whether it be one of Yev’s teachers, a patient or any friend or associate from Boca. “Right here,” Ian responded, promptly being whisked away to the dressing area.

“I’m Dawn,” the artist introduced herself nervously. “Ian,” Ian responded, flashing a friendly smile that put her immediately at ease. “So do you normally wear any body bronzer?” she asked shyly, taking note of his pale complexion. “No, but I have never been to such a high profile show, so do whatever you think…” Ian stopped mid-sentence upon catching sight of Justin and the huge, rapidly-discoloring egg on his forehead, which the artist next to them was busy trying her ass off, albeit very unsuccessfully, to minimize, using a ton of makeup.

“Holy shit!” Ian exclaimed before he could stop himself. Justin glared over at him, seemingly over his little ‘crush’, thanks to Mickey’s hot temper. “Yeah, I’m sorry,” his artist began, throwing her makeup brush into a pile of cosmetics. “There’s nothing more I can do!” she concluded, throwing her hands up in frustrated resignation. Bryce!” she yelled, turning to look for the fashion coordinator.

“Geez, I’m sorry, man,” Ian said, genuinely feeling terrible about the whole thing. Justin just averted his eyes, pulling his phone from his pocket and scrolling through his messages. “What’s up?” an older, well-tanned, well-built, flamboyantly dressed, dark-haired man called over, running in Justin’s direction. “Oh no! No! No! No! I can’t send him out there looking like this! All you gotta do is show up, look good and smile! Why the fuck can’t you people handle these simple tasks?!” he whined, waving his hands wildly in agitation.

Ian looked over, trying not to laugh, although he knew it shouldn’t be funny. “You!” the man yelled, pointing to Ian. “You will go on first! And please get some color on his pale ass!” he added, addressing Dawn authoritatively. “Yes, Bryce, right away,” Dawn replied, starting to apply bronzer
to Ian’s face and body, straight away. At that moment, Mickey sauntered in, snickering at the sight of Ian being so extensively ‘bronzed’. “And YOU will take HIS place!” Bryce ordered, pointing first at Mickey, then at Ian. Mickey, moving his hand up to his mouth, attempting to cover the smirk that was forming, responded, “I’m sorry, what did you just say to me?”

“He needs you to take Justin’s place, Mick,” Ian interjected. “You know the one you…” “Yeah, I know who he is,” Mickey snapped. By this time, Brach was headed in with his artist and caught wind of the situation. “I’ll go second…give him time to get dressed and made up,” he offered, surveying Mickey’s pallor. “Man, I appreciate you doing this,” he said, acknowledging Mickey. “It’s the least he can do,” Ian quipped, giving Mickey a look that said, ‘Yes, you will do this’.

Mickey was fuming mad, but was also trying to save face, for the sake of the company, and, as much as he wanted to punch him at the moment, for Ian. “Here. Put these on,” Bryce barked, tossing a pair of multi-colored board shorts and an ocean blue tank his way. “I ain’t no fuckin’ runway model, ya know?” Mickey piped up as he watched Ian’s freshly-bronzed form practicing his turns. “You’ll be fine, Mick!” Ian said reassuringly.

“And take off those hideous rings!” Bryce shouted over his shoulder as he exited the dressing area. Now Mickey was pissed, but sitting at an artist’s station being bronzed, he resolved to keep his cool as best he could. Both he and Ian had already done enough to tarnish the company name, and he didn’t want to fuck things up any worse. Not only was HIS reputation on the line, but also those of people he genuinely cared about, like Manuel, Bigley and even Ian. He calmed himself with what was fast becoming his go-to mantra, ‘Ian is worth it’, glancing over at his bronze beauty every few minutes, to stoke his motivation.

Once everyone was dressed and dolled up, they formed a line in the order they were scheduled to walk, waiting to be prompted by none other than the bossy, overbearing and highly annoying Bryce. Mickey sighed deeply, rolling his eyes as Brach coached him through a quick rehearsal of the basics, pouting, smiling, walking and turning, although, as Ian pointed out, Mickey had an excellent pout naturally. Brach gave Mickey a few quick, easy-to-remember tips, after which Mickey thanked him, retreating to the nearest wall, where he hugged himself nervously, clearly uncomfortable in his own skin, at this point. Even Ian, who had been enjoying how ill at ease Mickey was, had begun to pity him and took to attempting to calm him, whispering “I love you! You got this!” into his ear before he, himself, sashayed through the curtain and down the runway like he owned the place, flocks of photographers snapping pictures of him as he smiled and posed like a pro.

Mickey watched, completely awestruck by the ease with which Ian floated down the runway, seemingly without a care in the world—so natural, so graceful, so beautiful. “Damn, Gallagher!” he whispered, adjusting himself in his board shorts as he watched Brach head out onto the runway, strutting his stuff like the polished veteran that he was, definitely a tough act to follow.

Mickey’s stomach churned and his head spun, the reality of his ass stumbling down the runway in a minute or less finally hitting him. “Just take a deep breath and relax all your muscles,” Ian breathed softly into his ear as he massaged his tense shoulders. “Walk slowly and say the word ‘poor’ once, just before you walk, holding your face in that position. Then at the end, mouth the word ‘hey’. It will make the perfect smile. And most important, think of me and how fuckin’ good I’m gonna bang you tonight, no matter what the fuck you do out there,” Ian laughed, swiping slowly down the side of Mickey’s neck with his tongue, then tapping him lightly on the ass to send him on his way.

Mickey glanced back at Ian, his loving smile somehow giving Mickey the confidence he needed to walk through that curtain. ‘Poor,’ he said silently just before sauntering down the runway, just like Brach had shown him, his mind suddenly recalling Ian’s last words, his dick reacting before he could prevent it. ‘Shit!’ he said to himself, trying to think of a way to hide it—but it was no use. He
finished his walk, sporting a half chub, a barely audible, ‘hey’ escaping past his lips, forming a sexy smile as the cameras flashed, illuminating his naturally flushed, bronze-plastered face beautifully.

Somehow Mickey managed to survive his ordeal unscathed, returning to the dressing area with a half smile on his face, much to Ian’s surprise. “You fuckin’ liked it!” Ian teased, poking at Mickey’s ribs. “Hey, how ‘bout if we meet up with these guys later. I wanna make things right,” Mickey suggested. “Oh, I don’t know if…” “I’d love to go out for a few drinks later,” Brach interrupted Ian, accepting Mickey’s invitation. Ian smiled at Mickey, heading over to ask Justin, Jasmine and Elle. “Whoa, whoa, whoa! I’m comin’ with ya,” Mickey called out, refusing to let Ian out of his sight.

“Hey, you guys wanna meet for drinks after the competition?” Ian asked the group, who were now gathered immediately outside the dressing area, speaking in hushed tones as he approached, Mickey catching up from behind. “Sure,” Jasmine replied, grinning over at Mickey, Elle nodding in agreement. Apparently Mickey’s runway performance had earned him some points with the ladies. “I’ll pass,” Justin scoffed, “Still recovering from last time we hung out,” he finished, rubbing the lump on his forehead, but still managing to smile as he made eye contact with Ian.

“Sorry about that,” Ian responded. “Let us make it up to you. We’ll take you all to dinner!” Ian offered, putting his arm around Mickey. “He means well,” Ian added, “He’s just very protective of me,” he explained further, smirking at Mickey, then pulling him in for a quick kiss. Justin reluctantly agreed to coming to dinner, Mickey suggesting the Black Stallion Cafe & Surf Saloon, which he had heard from the staff at Sprout Tamarindo was one of the best restaurants in the area.

“Hey, the competition is about to begin!” Elle squealed with excitement. “Let’s go!” Jasmine yelled, grabbing Ian by the hand. “You guys go,” Ian began, “Mickey and I have some business to attend to,” he added, raising a seductive eyebrow at Mickey. “Yeah, we’ll meet you at the Black Stallion around 6,” Mickey asserted confidently, wrapping an arm around Ian’s neck as he walked him back toward the villa.

“Mmmmm…” Ian hummed into Mickey’s ear as they walked, “Just wait…” he breathed, swirling his tongue over the sweet spot on Mickey’s neck relentlessly, Mickey shuddering with excitement in spite of himself. “You may have plans for me, but we got a score to settle first…” Mickey hissed, grabbing Ian roughly by the hair and yanking him backward. “Wh-What?” Ian gasped, taken completely by surprise.

“If you think,” Mickey panted, stopping Ian dead in his tracks and spinning him around to face him, rubbing himself wantonly against his thigh, “I’m gonna let you make plans for me,” he paused, grinding Ian’s earlobe lightly between his teeth, “and put me on display like that,” he continued, branding Ian with hickeys between phrases, “without consulting me,” he snorted, sucking even harder at the tender skin covering Ian’s clavicle, “and take your ring off and leave it in a fuckin’ box hangin’ around your neck,” he snarled, biting Ian’s lower lip before pulling it into his mouth, “you have a lot to learn!” he concluded, kissing him hard, then adding, “And I’m gonna teach ya!”
Mickey pushed the door to the villa open, dragging Ian by the arm to the edge of the bed, tackling him onto it, and pinning both of his hands over his head, all in one brisk, fluid motion that made Ian’s head spin. “You gonna fight me on this?” Mickey growled into Ian’s ear as he pulled at the waistband of Ian’s shorts. “No, master,” Ian replied, immediately submitting to Mickey’s will, his dick swelling with excitement. Mickey may have been pissed and ready to punish Ian, but the only feeling rising up inside of Ian was an intense craving. He loved it when Mickey took charge and manhandled him---the rougher, the better---his zest for it most likely emanating from their early ‘fight and fuck’ days, as well as what he affectionately referred to as the ‘pancake turner incident’.

Of course, this didn’t mean he wouldn’t put up a fight or attempt to minimize his punishment, once they got into it, even if it was just for Mickey’s sake. “Roll over!” Mickey commanded, releasing Ian’s hands and pulling his shirt off over his head. Ian obeyed, his entire body tingling with anticipation. Once Mickey had stripped Ian of every stitch of his clothing, he excused himself. “I’ll be back in a while. Meantime, think about how you wanna be punished. I want a fuckin’ answer when I get back...or I’ll decide FOR you!” Mickey growled, taking a brief moment to reach beneath Ian’s hips and run his hand over his swollen cock. “And keep those eyes closed!” he added.

As Ian lay there, pondering prospective punishments, he could hear Mickey rustling through the drawers in the kitchen, then unzipping compartments in his travel bag. Apparently, he was preparing to decide Ian’s punishment for himself, which was a good thing because Ian, in his current state of extreme arousal, couldn’t concentrate sufficiently to come up with his own plan, his mind constantly reverting back to the physical feeling of Mickey’s tight ass clenched around his cock, sending ripples of pleasure throughout his body. The longer he waited, the worse it became, escalating to a recurring, obsessive thought that completely dominated his consciousness to the point that he lost track of all time.

“Well?” Mickey questioned, startling Ian back into reality. “Your choice, master,” Ian responded, relinquishing all control over his immediate situation to his husband. Mickey laughed heartily, adding, “I was hoping you would say that. Know why?” “No, why, master?” Ian asked, entirely out of courtesy. He really wished Mickey would get on with it; he was so ridiculously hot for him by this time. “Because I’m in charge anyway, and I got plans for your ass!” Mickey roared, dumping a random collection of items onto the bed and setting some sort of container on the nightstand.

Mickey then sat on the bed beside Ian and began spilling a warm lotion or cream of some type onto Ian’s back, then smoothing it over his lower back and buttocks, massaging it in firmly as Ian moaned with pleasure, quickly identifying the scent of coconut oil. This was hardly what he was expecting, but fuck! did he love it! Mickey added more oil and his left hand into the equation, rubbing between Ian’s ass cheeks with one hand, while reaching under him with the other, gently caressing his package. “Mick,” Ian mumbled into the pillow. “Didn’t give ya permission to talk,” Mickey breathed huskily into Ian’s ear, sending shivers down Ian’s spine, before licking and biting at the nape of his neck playfully. Ian struggled to remain quiet, his body and soul afire with passion and desire as Mickey continued to overload his senses with pleasure. “You feel good?” he asked, his voice soft, yet raspy.

“Oh fuck yeah, Mick!” Ian breathed. “That’s twice!” Mickey snapped. “What?” “You know what!” Mickey growled, lowering his hand across Ian’s oil-lubed ass with a solid smack. Ian winced, sucking air between his clenched teeth as Mickey smacked his ass a second time, this stroke more forceful, sending painful swells throughout his body that co-mingled with the waves of pleasure emanating from Mickey’s frontal massage in the most erotically delicious way. A sound, something
between a moan and a whimper, escaped Ian’s lips, despite his marked efforts to remain quiet, but no words of apology or explanation followed, much to Mickey’s disappointment.

“Still not gonna fix your mistake?” Mickey hissed, slathering more coconut oil onto Ian’s bottom and massaging it in delicately. “Let’s try this again,” Mickey barked. “Feel good?” “Yes, master,” Ian replied promptly, finally realizing his error and looking to get back into Mickey’s good graces ASAP, seeing as his cock was literally begging to be buried, balls deep, in Mickey’s fine ass.

“Better,” Mickey snarled, “And now I want my fuckin’ apology!” Ian remained silent for the moment, considering his options as he lay feeling his own pulse thumping in both his dick and his ass. “No response?!” Mickey yelled, picking a flip flop from among the menagerie he had amassed on the bed beside Ian. “Yes sir...I mean, no sir...uh,” Ian stammered, sensing a more severe swat was about to be delivered, but certainly not expecting the sting that came off the sole of the flip flop that Mickey was now wielding, its plastic sole rebounding repeatedly off Ian’s sensitive cheeks with increasingly louder ‘thwaps’, leaving raised, red welts in its wake, the fresh coat of oil intensifying the sting. “Sorry, master,” Ian wailed remorsefully. Finally, Mickey relented, putting his punishment on pause and softly caressing Ian’s blazing buttocks while continuing to fondle his rock-hard cock.

"I’m sorry, master, for everything,” Ian finally added, hoping to get by with the generic apology so he could move on to fucking the hell out of Mickey, which he fully intended to do. “Naw...I want a list,” Mickey replied, swatting Ian’s ass again with the flip flop, then immediately licking lightly over the resulting welt with his tongue. Ian didn’t know whether to moan, laugh or cry, the varied and opposite sensations bombarding his nervous system faster than his brain could process them all. He wanted to make his apology, but he literally couldn’t think. “Help me, master,” he finally blurted out in desperation. Mickey was ready to whip him some more, this time with a spatula he had found in the kitchen, but then he saw the look on Ian’s face and took pity.

“Alright,” Mickey began, rubbing more coconut oil onto Ian’s ass and over his cock. “What are you gonna do with your wedding ring next time you gotta take it off?” Mickey asked, rubbing Ian’s asshole with his index finger. “Put it back on ASAP,” Ian moaned in response, muttering, “Want you, Mick,” under his breath. “Good,” Mickey responded, poking his finger slowly into Ian’s hole, all the while rubbing his junk rhythmically, wondering to himself which of them had a harder, more dew-covered cock at this point. “And next time you get an idea to make plans or commitments for me, whatcha gonna do first?” Mickey questioned, sliding his finger gently in and out of Ian as he watched him squirm and writhe on the bed, adorably soft, low moans emerging from Ian’s lips, despite his attempts to swallow them.”I’ll ask you first,” Ian promised in little more than a tortured whisper.

“Feel good?” Mickey asked Ian again as he slid his middle finger into him, alongside the other, delving more deeply as he stretched him, while quickening the pace of his manipulation of Ian’s bountiful cock. “Yessss, master,” Ian sighed, relaxing himself in anticipation of Mickey’s entry. “Good. Gonna fuck ya now,” Mickey murmured as he pulled Ian up onto all fours, still stroking his cock enticingly. “Yes, PLEASE!” Ian begged, granting Mickey the permission that his announcement was meant to elicit.

“Mickey pressed himself against Ian’s tight opening, gradually inserting the tip, then a small portion of his beautiful cock, Ian gasping, then moaning as Mickey fucked him slowly, lovingly, whispering, “So fuckin’ good, Ian,” into his ear. Ian countered Mickey’s movements, quickening the pace and impact of each pass, Ian’s legs trembling, his lips quivering, as Mickey’s cock brushed over his prostate. “Damn, Mick!’ he cried out, his head buzzing euphorically as Mickey nudged him closer to nirvana with each titillating stroke. “MICKEY!” Ian screamed as he exploded all over Mickey’s fist, the headboard, the pillow, fucking everywhere! “Yeah, that’s it!” Mickey yelled, Ian’s climax pushing Mickey over the edge, Mickey driving into Ian one last time as he unloaded.
“FUCK!” Ian roared, completely overwhelmed by the intensity of their incredible session. Ian collapsed onto the bed, Mickey lying on top of him, his head resting on Ian’s glistening back, both men falling asleep out of sheer exhaustion.

Mickey woke up with a stiff dick and a wet asshole, Ian’s hands first lifting him up onto his knees, then pulling his cheeks apart as he licked fervently around Mickey’s puckered hole. “Mmmmm,” Mickey moaned as he felt Ian’s tongue slip inside him. An exhilarating electrical current pulsed through Ian’s body as the sweet sounds of Mickey’s pleasure permeated his eardrums, his lover’s excitement stoking his own from the inside out.

As Ian continued to tease Mickey with his tongue, he introduced a finger, and then a second, both dripping with warmed coconut oil, licking the excess off his balls and taint, Mickey backing himself onto Ian’s finger to deepen the penetration. “Fuck me!” Mickey mewled, throwing his head back as he reared further onto Ian’s slick fingers. Ian removed his fingers, reached around Mickey with his other oil-lubed hand to grasp Mickey’s swollen shaft, sliding it slowly over the tip and swiping his sensitive slit with his thumb.

“You—-are---so---perfect,” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear, as he sucked lightly on his earlobe, pumping his fist up and down Mickey’s rigid rod. “And now I’m gonna make sure you remember this day FOR -FUCKING- EVER!” he hissed, slamming harder and deeper into Mickey, angling himself to pound Mickey’s prostate mercilessly, fucking him into submission as he jerked his cock harder and faster. Mickey screeched and moaned, “Fuck! Cummin’! Cummin’ so fuckin’ hard, Ian! Fuck...Fuck...Fuck...Ian!” spilling his salty seed over all the places Ian’s had landed earlier. “I fuckin’ love the shit outta you, Mick!” Ian hollered, pounding into him until he erupted deep inside his beguilingly tight, round rump, delirious grunts and groans of sweet satisfaction spewing forth from his gaping mouth.

The two were well on their way to their second nap of the day, when Ian’s cell phone buzzed, then buzzed again, prompting him to look at it.

The first message was from Brach,

“Where are u guys? U missed the whole competition! We’re at the Black Stallion waiting 4 u! Justin’s half kicked in the ass already!”

The second was from Doc,

“Now that the show’s over, I want to talk to you about Kayla. Just you, for now. Let me know when you have time to talk.”
Ian carefully tucked the blanket and sheet in around Mickey’s body, swaddling him in a cocoon of sorts as he slept, hoping it would serve as a temporary substitute for his own body, which he habitually wrapped around Mickey at bedtime. Once he had his lover nestled securely in the bed clothes, he snuck off to make the call he had been dreading all evening.

He had maintained a pretty good game face when he received the text, choosing to focus on the one from Brach, and the urgency of getting to dinner, conveniently neglecting to mention Doc’s. He had managed to get through the evening with the other models, maintaining a jovial mood, allowing Mickey to take center stage as the hot, young business mogul that he was, which was highly impressive to the models, even Justin, who had gotten somewhere close to the point of forgiveness, after being primed with enough alcohol.

Ian loved seeing Mickey this way: confident, engaging…sexy as fuck…He was hardly willing to bring their wonderful evening to a screeching halt by bringing up his mother’s health, which he knew was the topic Doc wanted to discuss with him. So he put off making the call, opting to wait for a more opportune time.

This was it. He could sit in the living area, out of Mickey’s earshot, and hopefully catch Doc before he retired for the evening. Ian held his phone to his ear nervously, awaiting Doc’s answer. “Ian! So glad you were able to call...Are you alone?” Doc asked, his voice barely more than a whisper. “Yes,” Ian replied, “Are you?” “Actually,” Doc began, the sound of rustling papers obscuring his voice, “I am now,” he answered. “Kayla is in bed, so I walked out into the hallway,” he explained further.

“So, what’s up? How are the kids?” Ian asked, not feeling quite ready to delve into the topic he knew Doc wanted to discuss. “Mikhaila is with Reesie, and Yev is okay, I guess. He really misses you guys,” Doc answered. “Okay, we’ll make sure to call him before we leave tomorrow,” Ian promised, smiling to himself as he conjured up the sweet images of their gorgeous children in his mind. ‘For a gay man, Mickey sure knew how to make some beautiful babies.’ Ian thought to himself, both children looking remarkably like Mickey in their own special way.

“Ian, Kayla’s leukemia is back,” Doc blurted out, the words stabbing Ian in the gut like a knife. Mickey’s mother was a fucking saint. If anyone deserved happiness and good health, it was her. She’d been through so much in her life, but had never become jaded or resentful. She was kind to everyone and would sacrifice herself for the people she loved, no matter how dire the consequences for herself. How could this be happening?

“So far, I have minimized it to her and the rest of the family. I wanted to wait until we are all back together before discussing options, prognosis, etc., but I wanted to give you a heads up, so you can start to think about how best to broach this subject with Mickey. You and I know he is going to take this very hard,” Ian sighed heavily, choking back the tears that he felt stinging the backs of ihs eyes. “Okay…thanks,” he finally responded, barely able to push the words past the lump in his throat.

“As I’m sure you’re aware, a relapse after this much time is serious and will require immediate treatment, if we can find a donor,” Doc continued. “Donor?” Ian asked in a barely audible whisper. “Yes, I really think a stem-cell transplant is our only option here, but it’s tough to find a match. Do you know anything about her siblings?” Doc asked hopefully. “Mickey mentioned her having sisters, but I have no idea where they are. Don’t think she’s seen them since she came to the States,” Ian offered. “Yes, she told me a bit about those circumstances,” Doc responded with great sadness in his voice.
‘What circumstances?’ Ian wondered, afraid to actually ask, based on the emotion in Doc’s voice. There was a brief silence, Doc most likely considering whether he should share that part of Kayla’s personal history with Ian, since he assumed from Ian’s lack of response that he must not know anything about it. “Okay, well, I’ll ask her about them,” he continued. “What about Mickey and Mandy?” Ian asked. “They are possible candidates, but a sibling is preferred because they share more of the same DNA,” Doc explained, although Ian was already aware that siblings were the best option. He just doubted she would be able to find hers, since she was from the Ukraine.

“Okay, thanks for letting me know. Maybe I’ll talk to Mickey about it on the plane,” Ian thought out loud. “See you soon, and thanks to you and Kayla for taking care of Yev while we are away,” he added before ending the call.

Ian sat in silence, feeling powerless to protect his family from the stress and pain they would all be forced to endure. He struggled with how he would break it to Mickey and, if and when it became necessary, the kids. After about an hour of mulling it over, Ian finally succumbed to his exhaustion, retreating to the bedroom, where Mickey lay peacefully sleeping, just the way he had left him, completely oblivious to the news that now weighed so heavily on Ian. ‘Fuck!’ Ian said to himself, dreading the moment when he would have to share this information and watch the hurt overtake his husband’s beautiful blue eyes.

He crawled into bed next to Mickey, pulling him close, listening to his slow, even breathing and inhaling his heavenly scent. “Love you, Mick,” he whispered, pressing his lips softly against the nape of Mickey’s neck, the comfort of his husband’s essence lulling him to sleep.

Mickey woke from a restful night’s sleep, the best he’d had since before Ian had left for LA. He absolutely hated sleeping apart from Ian and stayed in bed for the better part of an hour after he woke, reveling in the homey feeling of Ian’s body against his own, his arms wrapped lovingly around him, his top leg draped over his hip.

Mickey’s phone alarm, pinging obnoxiously and disrupting his tranquil morning, served as a rude reminder that he and Ian needed to pack up and be on their way to the airport in half an hour. He had set the alarm as a backup, certain that he would be up and ready well in advance. Ian had felt just too comfortable to Mickey, so Mickey had stayed in bed, losing all track of time. Now they had to hurry. “Ian, wake up, man,” Mickey said quietly, rubbing Ian’s thigh as he scooted out from under it. “We gotta go!” Ian pulled the blanket up over his head, mumbling to himself. “Ian, we have less than 30 minutes!” Mickey prodded, turning to look at Ian’s phone as it buzzed.

Message from Brach:

“Where are you? Waiting for you. Thought you’d be here by now. Gonna be late.”

“Ian, what the fuck?” Mickey raised his voice. “Hmm?” Ian responded, forcing his eyes open to look at Mickey. ‘Brach texted. ...the fuck’s he waitin’ on you and sayin’ he’s gonna be late?’ Mickey asked. “Oh! I said we’d pick them up on the way to the airport,” Ian replied, yawning and rubbing his eyes. “We don’t have fuckin’ time! Ian, our ride will be here in...twenty minutes!” Mickey warned, after looking at the time on his phone. Mickey did NOT want to miss that flight! He was anxious to get back home with his husband and resume some kind of normal existence. He truly had enjoyed their time alone, but they had chances for that at home, too. And somehow that just felt even better to Mickey---to be in THEIR house TOGETHER. God! He wanted that more than anything in the world!

Ian dragged his exhausted ass out of bed. In addition to being up late after his phone call to Doc, Ian had been a bit restless through the night, waking multiple times with Kayla’s illness on his mind...
Would she get better? How was he going to tell Mickey? How would Mickey react? What if she were to get really sick, really fast? What would the family do without her?---All of these questions bombarded his brain, jarring him awake and keeping sleep at bay.

Ever since Kayla showed up unexpectedly on their doorstep on that Christmas Eve years ago, she had almost instantly become an integral part of the family and its daily routine, everyone absolutely adoring her. She was a fantastic mom to Mickey and Mandy, as well as Ian and Manuel, and a doting grandmother to all of her grandchildren, always giving freely of herself without any expectations in return. The entire family loved her deeply and would be hard pressed to go on without her.

Ian joined Mickey in the shower, still bleary-eyed, with dark circles underneath. “Look like shit, man,” Mickey commented. “Yeah, didn’t sleep well,” Ian responded, lathering himself up quickly, then turning Mickey around to wash his back. Once he finished, Mickey spun around to return the favor, wishing they had the time to do more. “Ima go pack all our shit. Hurry up!” Mickey said, giving Ian a quick peck on the lips, followed by a smile and a look that said, ‘I love you’. “Love you, too, Mick,” Ian said in return, reading his lover’s face. How Ian dreaded seeing the pained expression on Mickey’s gorgeous face after telling him the news. The closer they got to getting on their flight, the more Ian started to second guess his decision to tell him then. In short, he just didn’t know how, and didn’t want to do it at all.

When Ian got out of the shower, he overheard Mickey sending a car to take Brach and the others to the airport. Ian grabbed the disposable cup of coffee Mickey had prepared for him, picked up one of the travel bags Mickey had sitting by the door and headed outside to wait for their car, Mickey following closely behind, his phone still up to his ear. “Okay, thank you,” Mickey said, ending the call, just as their ride arrived, the driver jumping out to grab their bags.

Mickey jumped into the car first, grabbing the coffee from Ian’s hand and pulling his head down into his lap as soon as he sat down. “Ian, ya look real tired,” he commented, stroking his hair softly. “Try to get a little rest, man,” he added. Ian closed his eyes, but all he could do was think about the impending doom surrounding the conversation he knew he had to have with his husband. He squeezed his eyes shut tightly in an attempt to trap the tears that threatened to fall, but it was no use; they drained from under his eyelids, moistening a small area on Mickey’s left thigh. “Ian!” Mickey began as soon as he felt it, “What’s wrong?” he asked, a note of panic in his voice. “Just tired,” Ian lied, wiping the tears from the exposed side of his face.

“C’mon, Ian!” Mickey said angrily. “Don’t do this! I know you’re upset, just fuckin’ tell me why...please!” Mickey pleaded, his mind immediately recalling Ian’s bouts of depression before his bipolar was under control. “You upset or sad?” Mickey asked, after getting no response from Ian. “It’s not what you think,” Ian finally said, Mickey immediately breathing a sigh of relief. Ian knew what he was thinking and didn’t want him to worry unnecessarily about that, especially in light of what he was going to be sharing with him in the near future.

“Talk to me, Ian. What’s goin’ on?” Mickey prodded, running his fingers through Ian’s hair and wiping the fresh tears from his cheek. Ian sat up, turning to look at Mickey. He had decided to tell him now, while they had privacy, especially since he was demanding answers and they had a twenty minute ride to the airport ahead of them.

“Okay, Mick,” Ian sighed deeply, blinking more teardrops down his face as he attempted to compose himself. Mickey wiped at them, his crystal blue eyes imploring Ian to explain. “Talked to Doc last night while you were asleep,” Ian began, reaching for Mickey’s hand and grasping it tightly in his own. Mickey’s heart sank. He knew what Ian was going to say, but waited to hear it from him. Ian could tell by the distraught look on Mickey’s face that he already knew, but he continued anyway,
realizing that, on some level, Mickey needed to hear the words in order to make it real. “Mom’s leukemia is back,” Ian said in a low voice, pulling Mickey’s head into his chest to absorb the tears that were now flowing from Mickey’s beautifully sad eyes, and to protect himself from the sight of Mickey’s fallen face and quivering lip. “But Doc says there are treatment options…” Ian began, his voice thick with emotion. He considered going into the whole stem cell donor thing, but decided against it, not wanting to overwhelm him while both of their emotions were so raw. Instead, he held Mickey close, whispering, “We’ll get through this. I love you.”

The couple remained in a silent, snug embrace for the balance of the trip to the airport, the warmth and love emanating from one another’s bodies providing tender, unspoken comfort. Upon arrival at the airport, they were met with the appreciative ‘thank yous’ of Brach and the others, who, Ian learned, had, in addition to their limo ride to the airport, been provided with breakfast. Mickey, doing his best to contain his emotions, responded graciously, apologizing again for the initial misunderstanding at the Calla Luna.

The models served as a much-needed diversion for both Mickey and Ian, gossiping about the events of the competition, as well as some sordid personal details of their later evening encounters. “TMI...TMI!” Ian shouted at one point, laughing heartily at Elle’s story about a surfer she had hooked up with after the competition. The overall mood was light, lifting the Milkoviches, at least temporarily, out of the dumps.

By the time they all boarded the plane to Mexico city, Ian and Mickey had both had some laughs and were enjoying the morning, as much as could be expected. The conversations aboard the plane continued to be pleasant, but more centered on business as the discussion of the models possibly doing some shows for Ojos Azules and Surfin’ USA came up. They all seemed to be somewhat interested, except for Brach, who was talking about retirement. He said he felt he was getting a bit ‘long in the tooth’ and was ready to move into the next phase of his life. “Whatcha thinkin’ about doin’?” Mickey asked, genuinely interested.

“I’m really not sure. I went to school for business, but dropped out when I couldn’t manage my tuition on top of my living expenses. I was an exotic dancer for a while, until I was fortunate enough to land a surf modeling gig, and here I am,” Brach explained. “So you have any managerial experience?” Mickey asked. “Well, I did help run one of the clubs I danced at, but that’s about it. I mostly just kept an eye out for undercovers, did bar inventory and made the employee schedules. My boss owned three other clubs and was hardly ever at ours,” Brach said, matter-of-factly.

Ian had started listening after he heard Brach say that he had been a dancer, remembering his days at The Fairy Tale and thanking his lucky stars that he was done with that. He had mad respect for someone with experience running a place like that, since there were constant call-offs, no shows and police surveillance, not to mention illegal drug sales and use. Ian joined the conversation and was impressed with what he heard, nodding his head as he glanced over at Mickey, whose wheels, Ian could see, were turning already. Ian was sure Mickey was about to offer Brach a job, but instead, he made the generic comment, “Lotsa opportunities for a guy with your life experience.”

Halfway through the long flight, Ian and the other models dozed off, Mickey leaning his head on Ian’s shoulder and closing his eyes in an unsuccessful attempt to join the others in their slumber. Instead, his mind raced, imagining all of the horrible possible scenarios concerning his mother’s illness and its impact on the family. As the plane began its descent, Ian awoke, turning to plant a kiss on the top of Mickey’s head, his heart aching for him. Mickey sat up and turned toward Ian, kissing him softly. “Almost home,” he said with a half smile. Ian smiled back, kissing Mickey on the bridge of his nose, then leaning his head back onto his seat for the landing.

Upon exiting the plane, the group said their goodbyes, all of the others having connecting flights to
catch. They all promised to stay in touch, Brach, in particular, taking great care to be sure he had all of Mickey’s contact information correctly stored in his phone.

Mickey and Ian raced for the airport exit, their driver having texted that he was there and waiting. They found their limo, hopping in quickly, dragging their bags in with them to save time. As they settled in for the fairly long commute from the airport to their house, Ian pulled Mickey to him, cradling his head in his lap. “Want you to sleep now, Mick,” Ian breathed. “Think you can?” he asked. “Doubt it,” Mickey replied, “Got a lot on my mind.”

“Mind if I distract you a little then?” Ian purred into Mickey’s ear as he pulled Mickey up to sit on his lap, massaging Mickey’s package over his shorts. “Mmmm...no,” Mickey mumbled in response, his cock hardening instantaneously.

Ian pushed Mickey off onto the seat next to him, then slid himself off the edge, so he was kneeling on the ample floor. He then laid Mickey out flat on the roomy seat, pulling his shorts down below his knees with one hand, while massaging Mickey with the other. Once he had himself in position, he lowered his head to Mickey’s pelvic area, licking and sucking at his hip bones until Mickey began to squirm, then moving slowly toward Mickey’s swollen cock, taking it into his mouth. Ian teased the tip of Micky’s rock-hard penis with his tongue, swiping it over his slit repetitively, Mickey already lifting his ass off the seat in an attempt to get more stimulation. Ian smiled as he took more of Mickey into his mouth, savoring the taste and pressure against his tongue as he licked and sucked at him. “Mick…you taste…so fuckin’ good!” Ian said amid his titillating oral manipulation. Mickey moaned with pleasure as Ian hastened his pace, as well as the depth to which he took him into his moist, sexy mouth, while massaging his balls tenderly with his other hand.

“Oh fuck, Ian!” Mickey exclaimed, breathing hard. “Mmmmm…” Ian responded, sending delicious vibrations up Mickey’s shaft and throughout his whole body. Mickey bucked up wildly into Ian’s mouth, desperately countering Ian’s every stroke, moaning loudly each time his cock hit the back of Ian’s throat. “Ian, it’s so FUCKIN’ GOOD!!” he yelled, Ian’s cock-filled lips tightening more, his teeth grazing Mickey ever so slightly, in just the way Ian knew would make his man crazy. “FUCK!!!!” Mickey screamed, his body drenched with sweat, his fingers tangled in Ian’s fiery red hair as he yanked at it forcefully. Ian moaned, reveling in the reaction he was pulling from his beautiful mate, his own massive member threatening to explode with excitement as he grinded himself against Mickey’s hip.

“Cummin’,” Mickey moaned as he erupted, Ian swallowing his sweet stuff with a satisfied smile. Mickey took Ian’s rock-hard cock into his hand, finishing him handily within seconds, Ian singing Mickey’s praises, “Mmmmmick! So...fucking...good!”

Mickey cleaned Ian up quickly, pulled up his shorts, then settled into the seat beside him, pressing his body tightly against Mickey’s. Sometimes Ian just couldn’t get close enough to Mickey---and this was one of those times.

The remainder of the trip was quiet, the couple huddled up together and lightly dozing. Finally, they arrived, Mickey waking first, “Ian, we’re fuckin’ home!” he whispered joyously, rubbing Ian’s face with his own, so as to rouse him gently. Ian grinned, his eyes still half shut, groping for his bag, then taking Mickey by the hand as the driver helped them out with their bags. “Yes, Mick, we’re home!”
“Daddy!” Yevgeni shouted, running at Mickey and Ian and hugging both of them. Ian remembered instantly his forgotten promise to Doc that they would call Yev. “Hey, Yev!” Ian said with great excitement. “I missed you sooooo much!” “Me, too!” Mickey added, rumpling Yev’s hair with his hand. “Yeah, but Daddy Ian’s been gone longer!” Yev said, squeezing Ian in a tight bear hug. Mickey backed off, allowing Yev the attention he craved from his other dad. Ian began asking him about school and baseball, listening intently to everything Yev shared.

Mickey walked over and sat on the couch next to Kayla, who had a sleeping Mikhaila on her lap. “Hey Ma,” Mickey began, kissing her on the cheek, “How ya doin’?” he asked quietly. “Oh, pretty good...A little tired,” she responded, shifting Mikhaila’s weight in her lap. “Here, I’ll take her and get her dressed for bed,” Mickey offered with a smile. “She wanted to wait up to see you guys,” Kayla whispered. “Come on, Mik,” Mickey said, lifting his daughter from her mother’s lap and carrying her up the stairs, planting a sweet kiss atop her vibrant, red locks.

“Where’s Doc?” Ian asked, when there was a lull in his conversation with Yev. “Oh, he’s at home,” Kayla answered. “Said he had some research to do on some treatments for one of his patients,” she added. Ian nodded, certain that he was researching treatment options for her. “Missed ya!” Ian smiled, bending down to kiss Kayla on the cheek. “Missed you, too, sweetheart! Did you and Mickey have a good time?” she asked. “Yes, we did! Thanks so much for staying with Yev! When did Mikhaila get here?” Ian responded. “Oh...a few hours ago, I guess. Reesie wanted to bring her before she got too tired, so she wouldn’t fall asleep in the car,” she explained.

Doc had scheduled Reesie to work the next day, just in case Ian and Mickey’s flight were to be delayed, meaning he would not be at work to talk to Doc. He considered texting him about meeting for lunch, but decided on waiting to consult with Mickey. After all, Mickey had gone to great pains on their trip to express his displeasure with Ian for making plans without his input, and Ian had the marks on his ass to prove it.

“Got any homework?” Ian asked Yev, just as Mickey was coming down the stairs, after putting Mikhaila to bed. “No,” Yev answered Ian, avoiding eye contact with Mickey. “Oh yeah, Yev, how ‘bout if you show me and Ian that paper you stuffed into your book-bag before I left on Friday?” Mickey called out as he neared the bottom of the stairs. Yev’s face fell as he walked slowly over toward the door to pick up his book-bag, where he always left it on school nights.

“Bring it over here,” Mickey commanded, pulling Ian down onto the couch next to him. Yev retrieved a crumpled paper from his bag and reluctantly handed it to Ian, Mickey looking on from beside him. “Mother’s Day Brunch!” the top of the paper read in bold, flowery letters, followed by a date, time and location, along with some pictures, obviously drawn by students. At the bottom of the page was a sign-up form.

“I’m not going,” Yev said, staring down at his feet. Ian looked at Mickey, Mickey back at Ian, neither of them knowing what to say or do. Ian finally spoke up in a hushed tone, pointing over at Kayla, who was half asleep in the recliner. “Sure you are! Just take Grandma! I’m sure she would love to go!” Yev smiled weakly, replying, “Okay...I’m tired,” and heading for the stairs. “Want me to tuck you in, buddy?” Mickey asked. “You and Daddy Ian,” Yev said, the couple heading up the stairs after him, arm in arm. “You spending the night, Mom?” Ian called down to Kayla. There was no response, so they assumed she had fallen asleep.

Mickey and Ian tucked Yev in, each telling him how much they had missed him and how happy they were to be back home with him and his sister. They steered clear of the Mother’s Day topic, having
agreed non-verbally to discuss it first. Once they left Yev’s room, Ian pulled Mickey toward their room so they could talk. “We gotta get Svetlana into Mexico!” Ian said, not wasting any time getting to his point. “I don’t know how we can, Ian,” Mickey responded. “I’ll call Thomas in the morning...see what he says,” he added. “Promise?” Ian asked, melting Mickey with the emotion in his misty, green eyes. “Yeah, Ian, I promise,” Mickey answered, kissing his lips softly, then pulling Ian’s head downward to press his own lips against Ian’s forehead tenderly.

Their conversation was interrupted by a loud thud, followed by several softer ones. ”What the fuck?!” Mickey exclaimed, Ian running for the stairs before Mickey could finish his sentence. “Mom!” Ian yelled, racing down the stairs. “Mick! Call 911!” Ian raced to Kayla’s side, quickly assessing her, without moving her at all. She was unconscious and had definitely hit her head as she fell down the stairs. The possibility of a spinal cord injury made moving her dangerous, so Ian was forced to wait for an ambulance with a backboard and cervical collar. He took her vital signs, determining that her pulse was strong and her breathing, regular. He could hear Mickey on the phone, losing it on the operator, “I don’t fuckin’ know! She’s at the bottom of the fuckin’ steps! My husband’s with her. Hurry the fuck up!” Ian decided it would be best if he called Doc, rather than asking Mickey to do it, under the circumstances. He hit send and put his phone on speaker, continuing to monitor Kayla and attempt to rouse her as he waited for Doc to answer.

Mickey came flying down the stairs, yelling, “They’re sendin’ an ambulance! Ian, she gonna be okay?” “I don’t…” Ian stopped talking when he heard Doc answer, “Ian! You guys get in safely, I guess?” “Doc, Mom fell down the stairs. An ambulance is on its way,” Ian interrupted. “Be right over!” Doc responded in a panicked tone. “Wait! The ambulance just got here!” Ian said, watching as Mickey opened the door to let the paramedics in. “Meet us at the hospital!” Ian added before ending the call and offering his help getting Kayla onto the board and the gurney, indicating that he was a nurse and had been an EMT.

Mickey stood back, watching it all play out, as if he were in the middle of a sad movie, feeling completely helpless and alone. As soon as Ian finished helping the paramedics load Kayla into the ambulance, he ran back into their house, grabbing Mickey by the hand. “Let’s go, Mick! I’ll drive,” Ian said assertively, lacing his fingers between Mickey’s and pulling their hands up to his lips to press a kiss just above Mickey’s knuckles.

The couple hurried into the car, speeding off after the ambulance, until Ian suddenly realized and pointed out that they had left the kids at the house. “Fuck!” Mickey screamed in frustration as Ian turned the car around, heading back to the house. “Call Mandy!” Mickey demanded. “Okay, but she’s not gonna wanna stay with the kids either, ya know,” Ian reasoned. “Nevermind. I’ll call Manuel’s phone. He’ll do it for me,” Mickey decided. “Mick, I’ll stay with the kids, if you wanna go,” Ian offered. “No fuckin’ way! You’re comin’ with me! Need you…” Mickey said softly, barely able to push his voice past the growing lump in his throat. “I can also try Reesie,” Ian suggested, pulling up to the house.

Manuel answered after three rings, sounding distraught himself, “What’s up, Ojos? Kinda in a mess here! Little Manny’s been sick all evening and just vomited all over the floor. Mandy’s sick, too, so I gotta do the clean up.” “Oh sorry, man. Mom’s on her way to the hospital though. Fell down the steps,” he explained briefly. “I’ll keep ya posted,” he added, ending the call.

By this time, Ian had Reesie on the phone and was filling her in as she was packing a bag to come to the house. “She’s coming, Mick,” Ian said reassuringly. Mickey instantly breathing a sigh of relief as they headed back into the house to wait. As soon as they stepped inside, Ian pulled Mickey’s body into his own, stroking the side of his face with his hand. “I’m here, Mick. Sorry I can’t do more, but I’m fucking here and I love you,” he breathed into Mickey’s soft, black hair as he held him. “Love you, too, man,” Mickey whispered, kissing Ian lightly, his arms wrapped tightly around Ian’s waist.
The front door opened behind them, Reesie striding in, uttering one word only, “Go!” after which, Ian took Mickey by the hand once again, leading him out to the car. “Thanks, Sis!” he called back over his shoulder before she closed the door.

Ian drove even faster than the first time they had left the house, holding Mickey’s hand the whole way, rubbing his thumb over Mickey’s softly, comforting him without words. When they arrived, Kayla was already in an exam room, Doc by her side. He had briefed the physician on duty, Dr. Rodriguez, concerning her recent lab results, the doctor immediately ordering new blood work. They had also performed a CT scan and were awaiting results. Doc seemed to think that there was a good chance that her fall was induced by her losing consciousness, rather than the other way around, since she had seemed to be fatigued recently, which was a side effect of the AML relapse. He also mentioned shortness of breath, suggesting that she may have been having trouble breathing on the stairs and ended up passing out and falling.

As he shared these thoughts with Ian and Mickey, Mickey stood at Kayla’s bedside, looking down at her mother’s tired, ashen face, her fine features and beauty still prominent, despite her unwell appearance. Tears welled up in his eyes at the thought that, after having her back in his life after so many years without her, he could lose her again. Ian walked over and wrapped his arm around Mickey, kissing him on the temple.

Everyone looked up when Dr. Rodriguez walked in, reporting that the CT scan had come back normal. Ian breathed a sigh of relief, then asked, “What about the blood work?” “Still waiting for those results,” the doctor reported.

Kayla’s eyes blinked in response to all of the commotion. “Mom!” Mickey said, looking down into her eyes, which were a beautiful shade of blue, despite her exhaustion. “Mickey,” she breathed, struggling to keep her eyes open, “I love you, honey.” “Love you, too, Mom,” Mickey responded, taking her by the hand. “Do you remember what happened?” he asked. “I was really tired, so I headed upstairs for bed,” she began, pausing to catch her breath, “Then, just like now...it got hard for me to breathe. That’s the last thing I remember,” she finished. “Do you know where you are?” Mickey asked. “Looks like I’m in the hospital,” she replied softly, her eyes scanning the room around her.

Meanwhile, Doc was having a conversation with Dr. Rodriguez, outside the curtain. “Sounds like she’s awake, so perhaps we should discuss her situation as a group,” Dr. Rodriguez suggested, agreeing that Doc, as an Oncologist, would know best how to proceed with treating Kayla’s leukemia and that, pending the lab results for her latest blood work, his professional opinion would be that the fall was precipitated by complications caused by her relapse.

Both doctors knew that receiving results on a second set of blood samples, taken only days later, was only a formality; she was definitely suffering from leukemia and needed to begin a treatment protocol ASAP. “She doesn’t really know there is a problem yet, so…” Doc trailed off, his eyes filling up with tears. Just then, the unit clerk walked over from the nurse’s station. “The STAT lab results you requested are in, Doctor,” she informed. “Let’s take a look,” Dr. Rodriguez suggested, walking into Kayla’s room to pull them up on the computer inside.

As he and Doc scanned the results, Dr. Rodriguez addressed Kayla, “Mikhaila, may I speak freely in front of your family here?” “Yes, of course,” she replied, squeezing Mickey’s hand. “I am looking at your lab results here, and they confirm Dr. Montemurro’s suspicion that your leukemia has recurred and you are in need of treatment as soon as possible. Dr. Montemurro has shared with me that he has done extensive research in order to determine what your best treatment option will be. I will be turning your care over to him at this time, since your visit here in the ER is the result of complications of your relapse. Do you understand?” he asked.
Kayla nodded, Mickey bending down over her to kiss her on the forehead, then clearing the way for Doc to stand bedside to talk with her. “Good to see you awake, Kayla,” Doc smiled, reaching down to take her hand. “I’ve been doing a good bit of research on different treatment options. Treating a relapse is different than treating ACL the first time around,” he explained, his voice kind and gentle. “The best treatment this time, I believe, would be a stem-cell transplant, but we would need to find a donor match.”

“I’ll do it!” Mickey interrupted, volunteering himself. “We can definitely get you tested, Mickey, and Mandy, too, but usually the best option is to test a person’s siblings. You said you have two sisters, right?” Doc asked optimistically. “Yes, but…” Kayla paused, blinking back tears. “Do you want to talk about this in the morning?” Doc asked thoughtfully. “No, it’s okay. Mickey, there are things about my past that you don’t know,” Kayla spoke softly as she looked over at her son, who was now standing next to Ian, near the curtain. “Look, I can step out if you gotta talk to Doc alone. It’s cool,” Mickey said sincerely. “No, I think it’s time that you know. You’re an adult now, and I’ve always felt like you thought I abandoned you, ever since you found out I was alive all those years while you thought I was dead,” she sighed, her breathing becoming labored. “Ma, I never thought that. Please…” Mickey begged for her understanding.

“Michael,” Kayla began, addressing Doc, “you already know that I was smuggled into the States by the Milkoviches when I was 15, but what you don’t know is that my father sold all three of us, after our mother died. He didn’t want the financial burden, so he sold us into sexual slavery,” Kayla paused to catch her breath, Mickey gasping and burying his head in Ian’s chest. “I landed in the States, but I’m afraid my sisters weren’t so lucky. I have no idea where they went, but they weren’t with me,” Kayla explained.

“So, how did you end up with Dad?” Mickey finally got up the courage to ask. “When we first got off the boat in Chicago, the Milkoviches, your Dad and his brothers, were there to transport us to other locations, where we would be ‘bought’ for the entertainment purposes of men with a lot of money. I didn’t speak any English and couldn’t understand a word they said, but I ended up with your Dad at his house, where he first had sex with me, and, soon after that, we were married. “So you wanted to marry him?” Mickey asked. “I had no choice, Mickey! I was a 15-year-old Ukrainian girl in a foreign country with no way of getting back home. Terry wanted me, so I had to go with him,” she answered. Ian shook his head, grasping Mickey’s hand in his own. “I’m afraid my sisters may have wound up prostitutes in Russia, since I heard that’s what happened to a lot of girls, but I really have no idea,” Kayla added, tearing up again as she thought of her two older sisters, whom she hadn’t seen in decades.

“Why didn’t you ever ask Dad to help you find them?” Mickey asked. “Mickey, we didn’t have that kind of relationship,” she answered. “What does that mean?” he asked. “It means, I did what he wanted. I didn’t ask questions or request favors. Mickey, you know what he was like. If I so much as looked at him wrong, he beat me. And there were other things…” Kayla stopped mid-sentence. “I just won’t be able to find my sisters, okay?” she said with finality, pursing her lips tightly as she fought to keep her composure.

“Oh, Ma,” Mickey comforted, relenting on his line of questioning. “So we’ll just get all of us here tested then,” he continued, trying to smile at her, despite the fact he felt like he was going to vomit. He couldn’t stand the thought of his father forcing himself on his mother, of his mother spending her whole young life miserable, catering to the whims of a mean-spirited, violent man and being forced to bear his children. “Mickey, it’s okay. If I hadn’t been brought to the States, I would never have had my beautiful children, and now, my grandchildren,” Kayla said with a bright smile.

“Okay, Dr. Rodriguez has arranged for you to be admitted overnight. We will sort through all of this in the morning,” Doc said calmly, in an effort to settle everyone’s emotions. “Why don’t we all try
and get some rest? We can meet here again tomorrow. I will have Reesie cover the morning at the clinic, so we can hopefully get a treatment plan put into place,” Doc smiled pleasantly at Kayla as she nodded her head, her eyes falling shut in sheer exhaustion.

“C’mon, Mick, let’s go home and get some sleep. We can come back, first thing in the morning,” Ian suggested, walking over to the bed to kiss Kayla goodnight, Mickey following suit, then shaking Doc’s hand to thank him for being such an amazing doctor and friend.

As Ian drove his husband home, he tried to distract him from thoughts of his mother by reminding him to call Thomas in the morning. Mickey, of course, agreed to that, but brought the subject around to his parents’ marriage circumstances. “I just can’t get that out of my head,” Mickey began. “What?” Ian asked, fast becoming too exhausted to follow the conversation. “My Dad forcing himself on my Mom,” Mickey clarified. “Well, he did it to Mandy,” Ian began, “Why would he be any different toward your mom?” Ian asked rhetorically. “I just had it in my head that my mom loved my dad at some point, I guess. Kinda hard to think that she musta hated him, and that I came outta that,” Mickey lamented.

“Mick, Mom loves you as much as I do! I can see it in the way she looks at you, how she talks to you...She really does. It’s like how my Mom loved me, except your Mom isn’t nuts!” Ian laughed as he thought about Monica, the good, the bad and the ugly. There would always be a special place in his heart for her, despite all her faults.

“Well, I sure as hell do love her!” Mickey said with great feeling. “I just fuckin’ pray I’m a match, so I can help her. I fuckin’ owe her that, after all she went through for us kids. Fuck!” Mickey wiped at his tears as they cascaded down his face.

“Me, too, Mick,” Ian said softly, pulling up to the house. “Let’s go get some rest. Tomorrow’s gonna be a long day.”
Wait For It...

Ian woke to the smell of pancakes and Milkovich brew, and the sounds of morning conversation. Ian’s body felt heavy, his head cloudy, but he didn’t want to miss seeing the kids before school, so he forced himself out of bed, threw on his robe and headed down the steps, catching sight of the family, seated around the island, eating and having morning conversation.

“Morning!” he called out in a chipper voice as he reached the landing at the bottom of the stairs. “Daddy Ian!” both kids yelled in unison, getting up from their breakfast to run and hug him. Mikhaila jumped up into his arms, wrapping her arms around his neck and giving him a big kiss on the cheek. Ian smiled. “Missed you, Mikhaila!” he said, squeezing her tight, adding, “How’s our little man this morning?” tousling Yev’s hair.

Ian slowly made his way over to the island, weighed down by his two children, both clamouring for his attention. “Hey, what am I? Chopped liver?” Mickey bellowed from the far side of the island. “Love you, Daddy,” Mikhaila’s little voice called out to him in response. “Me, too!” Yev added, “And your pancakes!” he grinned, hovering over his plate for one last bite before he had to leave for school.

Reesie was already standing at the door, holding two bookbags and her keys. “Okay, guys, you gotta go,” Ian said, setting Mikhaila down on her feet. Mickey brushed past, stopping to kiss Mikhaila on the top of her head and squeeze Yev’s shoulders, before going to grab his phone from the coffee table.

“Bye!” the kids and Reesie all called out as they left. “Hey!” Mickey called to Ian, who was in the kitchen, grabbing some leftovers. “You gotta call Doc and see what we gotta do to get checked for being Ma’s donor. ‘I’m on it,” Ian said, picking up his phone.

Mickey sat down on the couch and called Manuel. “Ojos!” Manuel exclaimed, answering on the first ring. “Hey, yeah sorry I didn’t call last night. Thought you might be asleep by the time we knew anything. It’s for sure. The leukemia is back, so we gotta get everyone tested to see if anyone is a match. She needs a stem-cell transplant,” Mickey explained, pausing momentarily to take a breath. “Where do we need to go to be tested?” Manuel asked. “Ian’s gonna find out. I’ll have him text you guys. How’s the Fam?” Mickey asked. “Still sick,” Manuel groaned, sounding exhausted himself. “You tell Mandy?” Mickey asked. “Yes. She did not take it well,” Manuel replied. “Well, tell her, best thing she can do is get better so she can get the test,” Mickey said softly, listening, as he spoke, to Ian’s end of his conversation with Doc.

“Oh...Manuel...Doc just told Ian, we can give our samples at the clinic,” Mickey exclaimed, as if he had just won the lottery. “They just take a cheek swab. Mandy well enough to go?” Mickey asked with great urgency. “I doubt she can drive herself, but I could drive her, except Manny’s really sick, too, so I don’t want to take him anywhere,” Manuel explained. “How ‘bout if we pick her up?” Mickey asked. “You can give your sample later. It’s really me and Mandy that will most likely match anyhow.”

“Yeah, I guess I can just stay here with Manny. I already told Jose not to expect either of us early. He’s going to have to travel between the two factories. We really should talk soon about hiring another foreman or manager,” Manuel suggested. “Yeah, I have a guy in mind,” Mickey responded, making a mental note to text Brach about a possible interview. “I’ll text Mandy when we’re on our way,” Mickey finished, ending the call, just as Ian had ended his.

“You need a shower? Cuz I just wanna go do this ASAP!” Mickey said to Ian, a stressed look
dominating his face. “Yeah, let me just get a quick one,” Ian replied. “Okay, I will, too, but no funny stuff,” Mickey warned. He was far too worried about his mother to think about sex, but if anyone could change that, it was Ian, and he didn’t want to take any chances.

Mickey ran upstairs, Ian following closely after. As he turned the water on, he remembered his promise to Ian. “Remind me to call Thomas,” Mickey said, glancing over his shoulder at Ian. “I was planning on it,” Ian grinned. “Why don’t we call on our way to get Mandy?” Ian suggested. “Sounds good,” Mickey answered, stripping down and stepping into the shower, Ian dropping his robe to join him.

Ian smirked as he hopped in behind Mickey, leaning in to kiss him. “I mean it,” Mickey said, returning Ian’s kiss briefly, then pulling away. “I’ll come back home with you after, okay?” he added, noticing Ian’s growing cock, but trying to pretend he didn’t. “I’m gonna hold you to that,” Ian responded, turning his back in an attempt to get himself under control. Mickey in the shower was just more than he could handle sometimes, especially when Mickey had that fucking pout on his face. Ian just wanted to spin him around, bend him over and go to town.

Ian kept his back to Mickey until he heard him get out, then turned around, just in time to watch his gloriously round buttocks tense up as he reached for his towel. ‘Damn!’ Ian thought to himself, never tiring of checking out his husband’s goods. He fondled himself for a brief second, then reached for the cold water handle, adjusting the temperature until he shivered, then finishing up quickly.

By the time Ian got out of the shower, wrapped in his towel, but still shaking from the cold water, Mickey was almost fully dressed, pulling a tight, ocean blue t-shirt he had bought him for his last birthday over his head, then smiling innocently at Ian as he caught his eye. “Fuck!” Ian exclaimed as he dropped his towel, pulling a pair of boxer briefs up over his, once again, swelling package.

“What’s wrong?” Mickey asked, feigning ignorance. “Oh, you know damn well what’s wrong!” Ian chided him. “Why the HELL would you wear that fucking shirt, today of all days?” Ian asked, adjusting himself to fit inside the shorts he was struggling to pull up over his now rock-hard cock. “I’m sorry,” Mickey answered, looking down shyly. Damn, did he have this shit down! “Let’s fucking go!” Ian barked, pulling a muscle shirt over his head and walking into a pair of flip flops.

As the couple get into the car, Ian reminded Mickey, “Call Thomas!” Ian had opted to drive, leaving Mickey completely free to focus on the call. Mickey knew this was an important call, but was having a hard time focusing on anything but his mother, thinking how badly he wanted to wake up and find out that all of this was nothing more than a terrible dream. Mickey found Thomas’ number and hit ‘send’. “Miccy!” Thomas’ voice came through the speaker of Mickey’s phone after two rings. “Hi Thomas!” Mickey responded, smiling genuinely at Ian as he caught his eye. “I have a question for you…” Mickey began. “Is this about Svetlana?” Thomas asked, seeming to read Mickey’s mind.

“Yeah...I need to get her into Mexico,” Mickey said, cutting to the chase. “This is about Yev, isn’t it? Is he sick?” Thomas asked. “Naw, nothin’ like that,” Mickey answered, “He just misses his mom...and my mom’s sick,” he added, his voice quivering and his eyes beginning to sting at the mention of his mother. “I see…” Thomas responded, picking up on Mickey’s emotional state and not wanting to ask for particulars on Kayla’s health. “I will look into the status of the charges that were filed against her here, and we will go from there. I’ll be in touch, Mickey. Best of luck with everything!” Thomas said earnestly. “Thanks, Thomas! You’re the best!” Mickey replied before ending the call.
When Ian pulled up to Mandy and Manuel’s place, Mandy was ready and waiting by the door, walking to the car soon after their arrival. “Look like shit!” Mickey commented as she got in the backseat, clearly not feeling well. “Thanks for coming, Mands,” Ian said appreciatively. “Yep,” Mandy replied, leaning her head against the window. The remainder of the car ride was quiet, all three individually mulling over the circumstances silently.

Once they arrived at the clinic, the procedure was quick and painless. Reesie had everything ready, and they were done in minutes. “Doc said to only take samples from Mickey and Mandy, since they were related to Kayla,” she related, “Besides,” Reesie continued, turning to Ian, “your medication makes you prone to leukocytosis, which can cause complications for the recipient.” “No! I wanna be tested!” Ian insisted. “Ian, it’s not safe for Kayla to receive stem-cells from you, even if you are a match, which I doubt you would be!” Reesie stated, trying to simplify it, although she knew Ian understood.

“Ian!” Mickey interjected, “Don’t worry ’bout it. I’m sure either me or Mandy are gonna match.” “Yeah,” Mandy added, still looking green around the gills, but trying, nonetheless, to ease Ian’s mind. “And Manuel is gonna get tested, too. He’s gonna come in after I get back home,” she added. “We’re going to send the samples out today and should have an answer by the end of tomorrow. Doc is good friends with the tech that runs the lab,” Reesie said reassuringly. “Thanks, Reesie, for everything,” Mandy said softly, throwing his arms around her. “Mick! Let’s go! I gotta get home. Feeling really sick,” Mandy groaned, holding her hand over her mouth.

The trio rushed out the clinic door, Mandy doubling over to puke as soon as she got outside. “Oh man!” Mickey yelled, averting his gaze to avoid getting sick himself. “You okay?” Ian asked, walking over to check on her. “Yeah, just need to get home,” she said hoarsely. “Let’s get you into the car,” Ian said with great compassion as he eased her into the backseat.

“Mick, call Manuel so he can come out to the car to help Mandy, okay?,” Ian suggested. Mickey called and Manuel was waiting when they pulled up. “Ojos,” Manuel addressed Mickey as he helped Mandy out of the car, “think you could stop by the factory and check on things? It doesn’t look like I’m going to get there today, and Jose got held up at the other location.” “Sure,” Mickey responded, receiving an angry glare from Ian.

“Mick, I thought…” Ian began, Mickey cutting him off, “Jesus Christ, Ian! I was plannin’ to go see Ma at the hospital anyway!” Mickey snapped. “We’ll get home eventually, and then you can have whatever you want,” Mickey said half sarcastically, but Ian knew he was good for it, which only made things worse. Now all he could think about was what he was gonna have Mickey do with him, since he was just given free reign to choose whatever sexual favor his little heart, or, in this case, his big cock, desired.

Ian drove to the factory in silence, still pissed that he wasn’t able to have a sample taken, but also so horny that he didn’t want to start a conversation, since even the sound of Mickey’s voice would be risky, at this point. As soon as he stopped the car, Mickey opened his door to get out. “I’ll stay here,” Ian said, rubbing his cock surrupticiously as Mickey slammed the door behind him.

Once Mickey was inside the factory, Ian pulled around back, parking so his car was facing away from the factory, then slid his shorts down, exposing his massive, hard-as-fuck penis. He opened the glove compartment, grabbing the lube and squeezing it onto his hand, then grasping his dick, stroking it hard and fast as he envisioned Mickey’s head between his legs, his mouth bobbing up and down on it…"

His mind wandered, thinking, ‘Now I can get through the rest of the morning without constantly fighting with myself, and without getting short with Mickey. He doesn’t deserve it, after all. He’s just
being a good businessman and son—a good person’.

Ian jerked himself harder, trying desperately to return to his fantasy world. He was just so fucking turned on by his husband. Even after all their time together, he was still magical, and Ian couldn’t get enough of him. Try as he might, his hand just didn’t measure up...he needed Mickey---BAD!!

Ian pulled his shorts up quickly as Mickey sidled up to the car. Ian looked away, trying to be casual, but failing miserably. “Okay,” Mickey said with a smirk, “So ya decided to park around back,” he continued, surveying Ian’s body language, along with the look and smell of the inside of the car. “And ya decided to recline your seat.” Mickey was laughing now as he pulled the tube of lube from underneath Ian’s right ass cheek. “Hmmm...” he said, turning to face Ian, then licking a stripe up the side of his neck. “Hope ya saved somethin’ for later,” he breathed into Ian’s ear, “Cuz I’m ready,” he purred, grabbing Ian’s right hand and pressing it against his plump package. Now it was as if Ian hadn't gotten off in weeks, his dick responding to Mickey instantaneously.

“I talked to Doc,” Mickey began. “He said Mom will be getting out soon, so there’s no point in us going to the hospital. He’s bringing her to stay with us, so if we’re gonna have any time alone, we better get our asses home,” he finished.

Ian threw the car into drive and sped down the road...
A Taste of Mickey

All the way home, Mickey had wanted to ask Ian questions about his mother’s prognosis, to get a better idea of what being a donor would be like, to know what would happen if a match couldn’t be found. He decided, however, to wait and talk more with Doc when he wasn’t with Mom, or to possibly have a conversation with Reesie when Ian wasn’t around. He definitely needed to avoid the topic with Ian for now because he was clearly so pissed about not being able to be tested. Mickey hoped he or Mandy would be a match, thus putting the whole issue to bed, before Ian could blow it up into something bigger.

Ian’s mind was firmly fixed on Mickey and his insatiable desire for him. He traced his right index finger down between Mickey’s legs, sliding up from between his knees, along his inner thighs, until he reached the left leg opening of Mickey’s shorts. Ian slid his hand up the leg hole, gently massaging Mickey’s package, which responded readily under Ian’s teasing touch. Ian smiled as he intensified his stimulation, lightly grazing Mickey’s balls with his fingernails.

Mickey shifted in his seat, moaning softly, sending a flood of electrical impulses through Ian’s body, his dick now pressing painfully against his zipper. “Fuck, Mick! Wanna pull over and do ya right here!” Ian shouted zealously, sucking impatiently on his own lower lip and rolling his tongue over it repetitively. Mickey pulled Ian’s hand from his shorts, grasping it with his right hand, pulling it to his lips, sucking Ian’s long, thin index and middle fingers into his mouth, then running his tongue over them, between them, around them, ever so slowly, before thrusting them more deeply into his hot, wet mouth, the delicious sensation traveling straight down to Ian’s smoldering crotch. Ian’s eyes rolled up into his head in sheer ecstasy. “Fuck, Mick!!” Ian screamed, “Too fucking much!”

Mickey grinned. He was thoroughly enjoying himself, as the huge bulge between his legs demonstrated. He loved to tease Ian, but he fully intended to cater to Ian’s every whim, as promised, just as soon as they got home. By the time Ian pulled up in front of their house, an accomplishment that he considered to be superhuman, under the circumstances, he had a large wet spot forming on the front of his shorts, just to the right of his zipper. “Hmmm…” Mickey hummed, flashing an evil half-smile, his eyes looking askance at his lover as he rubbed a finger fleetingly over the darkened patch of material, then opened his car door to get out.

As Mickey headed for the front door, Ian caught up with him, scooping him up and throwing him over his shoulder. “Damn, Gallagher! Take it easy!” Mickey yelled as he flailed his arms, attempting to get a hold of something to steady himself, finally grasping tightly onto the back of Ian’s shirt as Ian continued, running briskly.

Ian flung the door open, stepping inside, slammed it shut with his foot, then ran straight up the stairs, Mickey still in tow. Ian kicked their bedroom door open, throwing Mickey down on the bed. “Fuck!” Mickey screamed, making his best attempt to focus on Ian’s face, his head spinning from the head rush he had gotten, hanging upside down over Ian’s shoulder. “Yes, we will!” Ian chortled with great excitement as he tore at Mickey’s clothes rapaciously, then his own.

‘Mickey,” Ian began, as he ravenously kissed, licked and sucked at his sweet neck, “Mickey…I…just….” Ian stopped talking, unwilling to remove his mouth from Mickey for long enough to finish a sentence, intensifying his insatiable feasting, sucking and biting until Mickey, his system on overload, cried out, “Gallagher!!” “Sorry…I…just…can’t get enough of you!” he finally blurted out, after a long struggle to string more than two words together between bites of his beloved.

Mickey could feel the blood rushing to the surface of his skin, strongly suspecting that Ian’s teeth had
broken through it in at least two places, his suspicion confirmed when he felt a slight sting as Ian breathed against his neck, licking and sucking at his wounds, panting, “I’m sorry…So fucking good though!”

“It’s cool, Gallagher…Like it rough…You know that,” Mickey grinned, flipping him over, then pulling Ian’s mouth to his for a frenzied kiss, Mickey sucking urgently at Ian’s lips as he ran his tongue over Ian’s front teeth, both men finding the metallic taste of Mickey’s blood to be strangely intoxicating. “Intense as FUCK!” Mickey breathed into Ian’s mouth as he humped Ian desperately, their swollen cocks stimulating one another to near climax.

“You said I can have whatever I want, right?” Ian whispered lustfully into Mickey’s ear, nibbling at it between words. ‘Uh huh,” Mickey confirmed in little more than a mumble, his mind lost somewhere in a sexually-induced delirium. Mickey was literally drunk on Ian, his senses completely filled with him, his body, his smell, his taste, his movements and his unrelenting energy, surging through him as if he were Ian’s personal lightning rod.

Ian reached for the jar of coconut oil in their nightstand with his right hand as Mickey continued to rub his ass cheeks over Ian’s throbbing member, begging him without words to take him in the manner of his choosing. Ian dipped his fingers into the jar, shoving one at a time into Mickey, until he was taking three, moaning uncontrollably as he countered Ian’s finger thrusts, his ass bouncing wildly.

All at once, Ian shoved Mickey to the side, stood up, then lifted Mickey up off the bed, Mickey wrapping his arms and legs around Ian’s body as he carried him to the bathroom, resting Mickey’s ass on the sink counter, then pulling his legs up until Mickey braced himself with his feet against Ian’s shoulders. Ian pushed Mickey backward until the back of his head hit the mirror, then slicked both of their cocks up with the remaining oil on his hand. Ian eased himself into Mickey gradually, picking up speed with each successive stroke, Mickey gripping the edge of the counter with his hands to steady himself. “Harder, Gallagher!” Mickey roared. Ian plowed into him savagely, pushing his chest firmly against his legs, bending them back until Mickey was forced to hook his knees over Ian’s shoulders, which nearly doubled the degree of penetration, while simultaneously nailing the fuck out of Mickey’s prostate. “Oh fuck yeah!” Ian howled as he bottomed out, over and over, his hand reaching for Mickey’s nearly-bursting cock as Mickey’s head slammed off the mirror violently. “Yeah, Gallagher!! Just like that...Just like that...Just like that!” Mickey, his hair dripping with sweat, spat through clenched teeth as he exploded everywhere, Ian driving his own massive cock to a mind-numbing orgasm deep in Mickey’s ass, all of their pent-up tension washing away effortlessly.

“Yes, I’ll do it!” Ian growled, mid-cum. “Just did,” Mickey panted breathlessly. “Did you fucking ever!” Ian exclaimed, allowing himself to stop twitching before pulling himself out gingerly, then releasing Mickey’s legs to fall to a more relaxed position.

“Mickey? Ian? We’re here!” Kayla called out, the front door shutting immediately afterward. “Oh Fuck!” Ian said, helping Mickey down from the counter, then running to grab clothes for them both. Mickey’s legs were shaking, his hamstrings on fire, not to mention the way his head and ass both felt presently, after taking such a pounding. He hobbled over to Ian, capturing his lips in a tender kiss. “So damn good, Gallagher,” he whispered, licking his lips as he reached for his shorts. “Gonna have to help me on the fuckin’ steps,” he laughed, looking at Ian as if he walked on water. Ian laughed, too, although he knew from experience that Mickey was serious, so, once they were both dressed, Ian held Mickey at the waist, walking alongside him as they descended the stairs.

“Mom!” Mickey called out happily, wanting to run and give her a big hug, but being physically unable to do so. Instead, the couple made their way slowly down the stairs, Doc and Kayla
exchanging knowing glances. They had certainly taken the opportunity to enjoy themselves when they had time alone, so they fully understood and were happy to see Mickey and Ian doing the same.

“She has to take it easy,” Doc started right in with his discharge instructions, using his ‘doctor’ voice. Mickey and Ian nodded as he continued. “She needs to eat well, rest often and NO STAIRS!” he finished, raising his voice near the end. “When we gonna get the results on the samples?” Mickey asked, wishing he didn’t have to do it in front of Ian, but wanting to know too badly to stop himself. Reesie had already said she thought it would be the next day, but Mickey wanted to know for sure, and also, precisely when.

“My friend at the lab will push them through quickly. We should know tomorrow morning, first thing,” he answered. “Manuel get his done in time?” Mickey questioned. “Yes. Johnny, Jose, Reesie and I, as well,” Doc answered. Ian frowned, feeling positively left out of the entire process. “Ian,” Kayla said softly, noticing his disappointment, “I understand why you can’t be my donor. Please don’t feel bad.” Kayla’s words had the opposite effect, stinging Ian’s pride, as if they somehow suggested that he was less of a person for being bipolar. He already felt that way often, so it didn’t take much to bring it on. Mickey, sensing this, changed the subject.

“So what’s considered eatin’ well?” he inquired, looking to Doc for a response. “Well, I told her I would make her a shrimp stir-fry tonight. Does that sound good to everyone?” he asked with a warm smile that extended up to his eyes as he gazed at Kayla adoringly. “Sure!” Mickey replied enthusiastically. He loved seeing Doc and his mom together. They were so obviously in love. He’d never seen his mother this happy before. He only hoped her health would improve so he could see her marry the man that so clearly meant the world to her. Mickey felt so blessed to have Ian. He wanted everyone in his family to know that kind of happiness. He’d already watched Mandy go from an insecure little girl with low self-esteem to a beautiful, confident woman, thanks to Manuel’s love and encouragement. Now it seemed as though his mother had met the man of her dreams. It was finally her turn! He hated thinking that her illness might steal that opportunity from her.

“Great!” Doc said spiritedly, “I’ll head to the store then to pick up some fresh shrimp and vegetables!” “Reesie should be here with the kids any minute. Said she’d pick them up after work since she thought we’d be at the hospital,” Mickey said. “Mind if I invite her to stay?” he added. “That sounds like a great idea!” Kayla answered, smiling.

“Oh shit!” Mickey said, raising his voice as he realized that his phone was upstairs and he might have missed a call or text from Thomas. “What’s wrong?” Ian asked. “Nothin’. Just realized I left my phone upstairs,” he replied, walking slowly toward the stairs. “Sit down. I’ll get it,” Ian offered with a slight smirk. Mickey flipped him off, then sat down carefully on the couch next to his mother. “I’m not a china doll, Mickey! I won’t break,” she said, thinking his gentle demeanor was in response to her condition, rather than his own, as was actually the case. “I know, Ma,” he responded, shifting his weight uncomfortably.

“You got a text,” Ian announced, running down the stairs. “From Thomas,” he added, handing the phone to Mickey.

“Charges against Svetlana in Chicago---dropped. I have a call in to a colleague that handles immigration exclusively. Hopefully he will have some insight, or can at least put me in touch with someone who does. Also have a call in to a lawyer in Mexico City that Bigley knows through a ‘business arrangement’. I’ll be in touch.”

Mickey read the text aloud, his mother’s eyebrows arching up as she listened. “Sounds like he’s on it, Mick,” Ian said confidently as he put a large pot of water on to boil. “Yeah,” Mickey said with half a smile, avoiding eye contact with his mother.
“Mikhailo!” Kayla said for the first time in the better part of 20 years. Mickey and Ian’s heads spun her way so fast, they might have suffered whiplash. “What is going on?!” she demanded, fear and concern bubbling over in her voice. Mickey and Ian had discussed the Svetlana situation with Kayla many times before, each time Kayla indicating that she believed them to be very fortunate not to have to deal with her. She had heard all of the stories of how Svet had bullied Mickey, holding his sexual preference over his head, threatening to tell his father about his relationship with Ian, if he didn’t do just as she asked, about the way she treated Ian when he was battling his mental illness, and about how, once Mickey became successful, she had tried, prior to her deportation, to use Yevgeni as her meal ticket. In her mind, Svetlana was nothing but trouble.

“Yev misses her, Ma,” Mickey said flatly, “And I know what that’s like,” he added, his eyes welling up with tears as he looked lovingly at his own mother. Kayla rested her head on her son’s shoulder, too weak to reach around him for an actual hug. “I love you, Mickey,” she said softly, “and I understand what you’re doing. Just be careful. I want you to talk to Thomas about your rights as parents,” she said, looking back and forth between Mickey and Ian. “A mother has a lot of legal power, when it comes to her children, and you two have worked too hard to…” “Grandma!” Mikhaila yelled, hopping up onto the couch next to Kayla, cutting her off, mid-sentence. “Hi, honey!” Kayla responded with a bright smile.

“How was your day, Yev?” Mickey asked. “Good!” he replied, pulling a math test from his bookbag and handing it to Mickey. “Wow! A+!” Mickey exclaimed, waving the test in Ian’s direction, Ian running over, grabbing it from Mickey’s hand and hanging it on the fridge. “That’s great, Yev!” Ian smiled warmly.


Ian, catching sight of this pitiful display, attempted to distract everyone, “Ice cream for dessert?” “Yeah!” Mikhaila cheered, Reesie shooting Ian a look. Ian shrugged his shoulders and dumped the rice into the pot.

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“How everybody’s hungry!” Doc shouted enthusiastically as he walked in with two big bags full of groceries. “I got pre-cut vegetables to make it easy,” he informed Ian as he sat the bags on the island and reached for the large wok that hung on the kitchen wall.

Within minutes, a heavenly aroma filled the entire house, Mickey somehow managing to navigate the stairs with Yevgeni in his arms. Ian wanted to tell Yev he was too big for his dad to be carrying him, but the look on his face was so forlorn that he held his tongue. “I love you, buddy,” Mickey whispered as he put Yevgeni down next to Ian in the kitchen. “Love you, too, Dad,” he replied, giving first Mickey, then Ian, a big hug. “Everything okay?” Ian asked, looking over Yev’s head at Mickey. “Yeah,” Mickey smiled, reaching into the cupboard for plates and glasses. “Yev, wanna help me set the table? You can get the silverware,” Mickey suggested. Yev nodded, opening the silverware drawer.

In no time, the table was set and the food was served, the whole family enjoying a feast fit for royalty---together! In all his life, Mickey never dreamed life could be this good! Now, if only he could guarantee his mother’s health...
Ian had slept later than he had wanted, and still needed to get Yevgeni to school before heading to the clinic. The family had made somewhat of a late night of it, even Reesie and Mikhaila staying until 9, so everyone was tired. Getting a makeshift bedroom set up in the downstairs for Kayla had taken some time as well, and had kept Ian, Mickey and Yev wide awake, up until the time they actually went to bed.

Ian hurried into Yev’s room, doing his best to be sure Yev wouldn’t drift back off after his first wake-up, as he often did; there was no time. Once he had Yev sitting up in bed and had gotten a quick shower, he ran down the stairs to throw on some coffee and quickly make some oatmeal to go.

As Ian was checking Yev’s book-bag to be sure he had all of his materials for school inside, Mickey trudged down the stairs, rubbing his eyes, which were still heavy with sleep, with the palms of his hands. “Yev says he’s sick and can’t make it to school today,” Mickey mumbled. “What? I just woke him up! He didn’t say a word to me,” Ian responded. “Well,” Mickey began, his eyes beginning to open a bit, “it doesn’t take an Einstein to figure out what’s goin’ on here.” “What?” Ian asked, completely clueless as to what Mickey was talking about.

“They must be makin’ shit for that fuckin’ Mother’s Day thing, Ian!” Mickey said in an irritated voice, wondering why he had to spell it out for him. “Ohhh, right,” Ian sighed, putting lids on the oatmeal containers and pouring Mickey a mug of coffee.

“Thanks, man,” Mickey said, sipping from his mug. “We can’t just let him stay home all week, ya know?” Ian warned. “Yeah, I get it. Just let me talk to him. I’ll ride him in on my way to the factory,” Mickey promised. “You’re leaving Mom here alone!?” Ian asked incredulously. “I guess. Gotta go to work today. Mandy is still sick, so Manuel is comin’ in this afternoon. Figure I’ll do the morning, then come home to check on her. She’s just sleepin’ now anyway, right?” he asked.

“I can’t believe...Ya know what? I’ll just have Reesie come and sit with her, after she takes Mikhaila to school,” Ian huffed, clearly not happy with Mickey’s decision to go to work. “No need. I’m fine,” Kayla interjected, having heard the couple arguing from her ‘bed’ in the family room. “Michael is bringing me lunch on his break,” she added with a smile, blushing slightly. Ian and Mickey just looked at each other, then went about their business without another word about Kayla, which made her giggle. She was such a little girl sometimes that it was hard for Ian to believe she was old enough to be Mickey’s mother.

“I gotta go,” Ian announced abruptly, grabbing an oatmeal and his travel mug. “Love you guys,” he called over his shoulder as he headed for the door, turning suddenly on his heel to double back. “Mick, I’m sorry. Didn’t mean to get short with you,” he said, staring down into Mickey’s sleepy, blue eyes, then pressing his lips against his forehead. “Love you so much,” he breathed as he turned to walk away. “You, too, Gallagher,” Mickey called after him, a calm, peaceful smile overtaking his face as he watched his husband walk out the door.

“Kayla’s heart leapt for joy as she witnessed this simple show of respect and kindness toward her son. Kayla loved Ian and knew what a fantastic person he was, but in all her years back in her son’s life, never had she been so struck by a gesture than she was right now. It was obvious that Ian disagreed with Mickey on his decision, and yet, he refused to leave the house without putting Mickey’s mind at ease and reassuring him of his love for him.

“You’ve got one sweetheart of a husband there, Mickey!” Kayla commented. “Better be good to him,” she added thoughtfully. “Ma, I am! You just don’t even know,” he responded, his stiff legs
and aching ass serving as a reminder of just how good. “We take care of each other,” he said softly, Kayla smiling warmly in response.

Mickey excused himself, heading for a much-needed soak in the jacuzzi before tackling the task of getting Yevgeni to go to school. He knew he’d be late, but he was determined to get him there. Ian was right; they couldn’t just let him stay home all week. Besides, he knew his mother and Doc had lunch plans that didn’t include Yev.

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Ian arrived at the clinic early for his shift, having saved the time he would have needed to drop Yev at school. He fired up the clinic’s computer system, checking the morning e-mail, as he often did when he was the first one in. He was surprised to find one from the lab, titled, ‘HLA Results, MM #10459’. Ian sat in front of the screen, frozen. He knew he should probably wait for Doc to open it, but he was literally dying to know if anyone was a match. He imagined how absolutely fantastic it would feel to be the bearer of such wonderful news. He smiled to himself as he thought about it, debating for a good five minutes before clicking to open the e-mail. Each sample was coded with its own series of numbers, followed by the words, ‘NO MATCH’.

Ian’s heart sank. ‘How could this be?’ he lamented to himself. Then he had an idea. He clicked on the ‘reply’ button and began drafting an e-mail:

“To Whom It May Concern: Thank you for providing us with these results so quickly. There was one sample, however, that we didn’t send yesterday. I would like, if possible, to bring it by the lab during my lunch and hope you might be able to quickly test it. Thank you in advance for your assistance, Ian C. Milkovich, RN.”

Consuela, the receptionist, arrived before Doc, Ian instructing her to share the results with Doc, but to please come to find HIM if another e-mail came from the lab. “Doc has a lot on his mind these days, so I’m trying to take some of the pressure off,” he reasoned to her, Consuela nodding in understanding.

By the time Doc arrived, there was a waiting room full of patients, Ian having begun to see them before his arrival. “Room 3 insists on seeing a doctor,” Ian announced to Doc as he approached the exam rooms. “Won’t even let me touch him,” he added, rolling his eyes. As Doc entered Room 3, Consuela approached Ian. The lab e-mailed. They said to bring the sample by at your earliest convenience. “Thanks,” Ian responded, making a beeline to the front office to delete the correspondence. On his way back to the exam rooms, he stopped in the supply closet, grabbing a cheek swab kit and tossing it into his lab coat pocket.

The remainder of the morning was a blur, Doc speaking briefly about the results they had received and resolving to have a friend e-mail the National Registry in the States, since his legal problems precluded him from doing so himself. He also broached the subject of looking for other family members. Ian politely acknowledged these possibilities, his mind fixated on the unused cheek swab kit and the results it could prospectively yield. Ian knew it was a longshot, but a gnawing feeling in his gut wouldn’t allow him to leave this stone unturned.

When there was a lull in the flow of patients through the clinic door, Ian asked Doc if he could take an early lunch, citing to some factory business he needed to tend to for Mickey and Manuel. “That will work out well,” Doc smiled. “I was planning to take Kayla lunch, so I’ll leave as soon as you return.”

Ian scurried to his car, turning on the ignition and locking himself in. He pulled the kit from his pocket, quickly and carefully swabbing his own cheek, then storing the sample properly before
speeding off toward the lab.

Ian made it there in record time, pulling up in front and leaving his car running as he dashed in, pleading with the tech on duty to please perform the test STAT, and text his cell phone with the results. Ian slid $50 through the the plexiglass slot as insurance, the tech readily agreeing as he wiped the money up with his hand.

Ian stopped off for a quick bite, eating in the car on his way back to the clinic. He figured he would relieve Doc early for lunch so he could have a bit of extra time with Kayla before returning to work.

Upon arriving back at the clinic, Ian noticed Mickey’s car in the adjacent lot. He drove past, but the car was empty, so he parked and went in. As soon as he walked through the front door of the clinic, he could see Mickey pacing, his right hand pressed against his forehead, as Doc spoke to him. Ian surmised that Mickey was taking the news of the lab results hard, so he rushed over to comfort him.

“Hey, Mick,” Ian called out, trying to force a smile. “Get Yev to school?” he asked. “Yeah,” Mickey replied, rubbing his eyes with his palms. Ian put his arm around Mickey and led him into an empty exam room, where he pulled him in for a tender hug, fighting back his own tears as he felt Mickey’s body shake with sorrow. “Doc’s gonna find someone,” Ian reassured him, trying to convince himself as much as Mickey, tightening his embrace, then stroking the back of Mickey’s neck lightly. “I wanna believe that,” Mickey whimpered, his beautiful eyes full of despair. “I gotta find Iggy,” he added. “Don’t know where the fuck he is, but I’m gonna find him. Probably gonna have to go back to Chicago and visit my fuckin’ dad,” he said matter-of-factly.

“What?!” Ian exclaimed, mortified that Mickey would even consider such a thing. “The fuck else am I s’posed to find Iggy?” Mickey snapped. “Maybe your cousins?” Ian suggested. “Naw, they all left Illinois when they got off probation—probably went somewhere that it’s okay to be a fuckin’ Milkovich,” he reasoned. Wouldn’t know where to even start lookin’,” Mickey said, shaking his head.

“Doc’s gonna look for a match through the U.S. National Registry. Let him do that first,” Ian pleaded, getting nauseous just thinking about Mickey having any contact with Terry again, the memory of him beating the shit out of both of them on more than one occasion ever-present in his mind.

“Okay,” Mickey agreed reluctantly, burying his face in Ian’s chest as Ian held him. “Hey, I have half a sandwich left over, if you’re hungry,” Ian offered, attempting to change the subject. “Thanks, man, but I can’t eat anything. Gotta get goin’ to cover for Manuel anyway. He’s still home with Mandy and Manny,” he answered, brushing his lips lightly over Ian’s, before disappearing into the hallway.

Doc took off for the house for lunch with Kayla, leaving Ian to man the clinic on his own. The afternoon was slow, affording Ian the opportunity to research possible avenues of treatment for Kayla, other than a stem-cell transplant. Doc was 100% correct in his decision. Under her circumstances, none of the other treatment options were likely to be successful. He also took some time to read about Lithium and the incidence of leukocytosis in those who use it regularly. Reesie was right; donating stem-cells to Kayla while taking lithium would not be advisable. Its presence in donor stem-cells could cause her body to reject them, which would bring on a whole host of other medical complications.

Ian scoured the Web, searching for any new studies or treatment protocols that might be helpful in treating Kayla, although he was quite sure Doc had already done so. Ian just couldn’t let go, couldn’t trust Kayla’s life to anyone else alone. He HAD to do everything humanly possible to help her, for her own sake, for the sake of the whole family, and especially for his beloved husband, whose heart was literally breaking, right before his very eyes. ‘I won’t let that happen!’ Ian told himself, tearing
up at the image of Mickey, his head in his hands, that he could not, for the life of him, expel from his mind.

Ian was about to close up shop for the day, Doc never having returned from lunch and the clinic having been completely devoid of patients for over an hour, when his cell phone buzzed.

It was a text from the lab that read, simply: MM#10459 - Sample # 15326 = MATCH

Ian nearly fell over after reading the text. Never in his life had he been so happy and so scared at the same time, other than possibly the day he had gone to Mickey’s house to retrieve Kash’s gun.

He deleted the message, cleaned up, closed up and headed for Yevgeni’s school.
Promises, Promises

Ian and Yev walked into a quiet house, which was almost never the case. ‘Shhhh!’ Ian whispered to Yev, ‘Grandma must be asleep.’ Yev nodded his head, tiptoeing around the island to open the fridge, looking so much like Mickey, Ian had to tell him. ‘Yev, you look just like your dad!’ ‘I look like you,’ he responded, ‘except for the red hair,’ he countered proudly. ‘Yeah, you’re right,’ Ian smiled, opting not to argue with a child over something so trivial, especially when he knew he was right. Yev poured himself some milk, grabbed some graham crackers and sat at the island, pulling his homework from his book-bag.

Yev started on his assignments straight away, not mentioning a word about the Mother’s Day brunch or the fact that he had gone into school late with Mickey. Ian, wishing to avoid a confrontation or any negativity, busied himself on his laptop, searching for contact information for the stem-cell registries in the top five countries of the world, in terms of stem-cell research. He also searched for a registry in the Ukraine, but there wasn’t one.

‘Do I look like mom?’ Yev asked, out of the blue. ‘You have her picture. What do you think?’ Ian asked, looking up from his research. ‘Yeah, but sometimes people look different than they do in their picture, like Grandma,’ Yev explained, pointing to an old picture of Kayla. ‘Yev, don’t you remember…’ Ian stopped himself, not wanting to expose the very real possibility that Yev DIDN’T remember what Svet looked like. After all, he was not even four yet, the last time he had seen her. ‘Yeah, you might look a little like her…and a little like your dad, but mostly like me,’ Ian grinned, throwing his arms around his son and hugging him tight. ‘I love you, Yev!’ Ian whispered in a continued attempt not to disturb Kayla’s slumber.

The sound of Kayla’s giddy laughter permeated the house as the front door banged open, Doc carrying her inside. ‘Oh!’ Kayla called out in surprise at the sight of Ian and Yev in the kitchen. ‘Didn’t realize anyone was home!’ she snickered, Doc blushing slightly as he sat her down on the couch. ‘Missed you at the clinic this afternoon,’ Ian teased. ‘Had some important business to attend to,’ Doc began. ‘Oh?’ Ian responded, raising an eyebrow. ‘What kind of ‘business’?’ Ian asked playfully, enjoying Kayla’s expressions as the banter ensued.

‘You’ll see…’ Doc replied, sitting down next to Kayla. ‘When?’ Yev asked innocently, looking up from his homework. ‘When your other Daddy gets home,’ Kayla chirped happily. ‘And we’d like it if you could invite Mandy, Manuel and Manny over, too,’ she added. ‘I don’t know...Mandy and Manny have been pretty sick for the past few days,’ Ian explained, reaching for his phone to text Mandy:

‘Are you guys available to come over for dinner? Mom requests your presence.’

‘Where is Mickey, by the way? Haven’t seen him all day,’ Kayla asked. ‘I haven’t seen him since he stopped by the clinic today,’ Doc answered and Ian confirmed, an ache forming in the pit of his stomach at the thought of no one having seen or heard from Mickey since lunchtime. Ian sent a second text, this one to Mickey:

‘Where are you? Mom and Doc have news and they want everyone here.’

No sooner did Ian hit ‘send’, than the front door flew open, ‘Hey, Mom! Doc! You have news?’ Mickey shouted with excitement, rushing over to hug Kayla. ‘We’re waiting to hear from Mandy and Manuel. We were hoping they could be here, too,’ Kayla explained as she hugged Mickey, holding him close for an extra second and kissing the top of his head, as if he were five years old.
Just then, Ian received a text from Mandy, cleared his throat and read it aloud:

“Not quite ready for dinner, I’m afraid. Maybe tomorrow?”

“I don’t wanna wait ‘till tomorrow. I wanna know now!” Yev exclaimed. “Me, too!” Mickey added, looking at his mother expectantly. “How about if we FaceTime them? Ian suggested. “And we can FaceTime Reesie and Mikhaila on someone else’s phone. I’m sure you wanna share your news with them, too, right?”

“I suppose that would work,” Doc agreed, a love-struck look on his face as he glanced over at Kayla to see her nodding in agreement. “Let’s do it,” Mickey piped up, the entire family now gathering around the couple on the couch.

Once they had FaceTime set up with everyone, which ended up including Johnny as well, after all was said and done, Doc began to speak, “First, I want to thank all of you for making me feel like a part of your wonderful family. I feel truly blessed to have enjoyed so many great years with all of you. I really do cherish every moment,” he paused, gazing lovingly at Kayla, “because one thing I have learned in my years as a physician is that life is fleeting; it’s too short not to do the things that are important to you, to express your feelings to those you care about, to live your life to its fullest. This is why today I wanted to have everyone here to witness what I know will be the best time of my life. I have asked Kayla for her hand in marriage.” The family broke into spontaneous applause, interrupted suddenly by Kayla’s voice. “Don’t you all want to know what my answer was?”

Mickey laughed, “I think we know the answer. You’re wearin’ the ring, Ma. Happy for you guys,” Mickey said sincerely, squeezing Ian’s knee as he sat next to him, then spinning his own wedding band on his finger. “Yes, you deserve all of the happiness in the world,” Manuel chimed in over the speaker of Ian’s phone. Mandy’s face was covered with tears of joy, her voice quivering as she congratulated them.

“Let me get a good look at this rock,” Ian smiled, walking behind the couch to look over her shoulder, Kayla lifting her hand so he could get a better view. It was absolutely gorgeous, a marquise-shaped diamond of at least a carat, with a rose gold band, Mikhaila’s favorite!

“So when’s the wedding?” Johnny, his voice brimming over with excitement, asked over Mickey’s phone, “I can get any kind of food you want, and have some special wines in the cellar that I’ve been looking for a reason to open. What better use for them than to celebrate this glorious union!”

Doc and Kayla looked at each other. “This is a question we cannot yet answer,” Doc began. “There is a matter in Chicago that needs Kayla’s attention,” he added, the family exchanging puzzled looks. “You find a donor there?” Mickey asked anxiously. “No, honey,” Kayla said, looking down at her ring, but with a note of sadness in her face.

“What then?” he asked, “Cuz I’m goin’ there to find Iggy!” he blurted out. “What?!” Ian called out in shocked surprise. He knew this would involve seeing Terry, and thought he had convinced Mickey to wait until after Doc contacted the National Registry in the States before pursuing that avenue. “Can’t wait around. Iggy could be a match. Flying out tomorrow,” Mickey announced to everyone, Ian glaring at him, his face turning bright red.

“Well,” Doc said uncomfortably, trying to put an end to what had become an uncomfortable situation, “I’m sure you all have important things to do this evening and…” Ian pulled Mickey up from the couch as Doc continued to talk, dragging him into the bathroom. Kayla watched them go, shaking her head as Doc ended the FaceTime calls and guided Yev back over to the island to finish his homework, asking him what new math skills he was learning.
The sound of Ian and Mickey’s raised voices escaped the bathroom, despite Doc’s efforts to drown them out. “Michael,” Kayla called out, Doc looking up from Yev’s math. “There’s something I need to tell you. Well, Mickey, really,” she said softly, looking down at the floor. “What is it?” Doc asked, attempting to mask his level of concern in front of Yev.

“I don’t want Mickey to go looking for Iggy,” she blurted out, just as Mickey and Ian came striding out of the bathroom, both men still visibly upset. “I don’t either!” Ian yelled. “Yev, let’s take your homework up to your room,” Doc said, helping him pack his book-bag.

“I contacted stem-cell registries in five countries and am going to set up a cheek-swab drive at the nursing school,” Ian reiterated in front of Kayla, as well as Doc, who was on the stairs with Yev. “And I have a call in with Bigley,” he added. “I have business with Surfin’ USA there anyway,” Mickey retorted, the two rehashing their argument for the sake of their captive audience. “Bullshit!!” Ian screamed.

“Boys! Boys!” Kayla shouted over them, her eyes filling up with tears. “Please don’t fight!” she begged. “Mickey, there’s something you need to know before you make that trip,” Kayla began, looking at her son fondly. “You are my first-born,” she said assertively, Mickey looking at her like she was delusional. “What the f…” Mickey caught himself before he finished the ‘F word’ in front of Yev. “Iggy is not my biological child,” she finished. “So you adopted him before me?” he asked, trying, but failing to remember a time when Iggy wasn’t part of the family. “No, he is your father’s son, but not mine. I loved him and raised him as my own. No one besides Terry, and all of you, knows this,” Mickey stood in front of Kayla, completely dumbfounded, a profound sadness overtaking him as the realization hit him that a prospective match had now been taken off the table. “Where’s his mother?” Mickey asked as soon as his brain began to function again. Kayla looked down at her feet, shaking her head. “I don’t want to talk about it,” she finally responded.

“How important is that ‘business’ in Chicago now?” Ian taunted, seemingly unfazed by the emotional impact of Kayla’s revelation. “Ian!” Kayla chided him, probably for the first time EVER. It just flew out of her mouth in response to what she considered to be incredible insensitivity on Ian’s part, before she could think better of it. She had never seen him behave this way. It seemed she was learning a lot about Mickey and Ian’s marriage, both good and bad, in the short time she had been staying there, 24/7.

“I’m sorry, Mom!” Ian said remorsefully. “It’s not ME you should apologize to,” she responded sadly. “Sorry, Mick,” Ian mumbled like a little kid, who had been forced to make an apology. “I think we’re all hungry,” Doc interjected, coming back down the stairs after having just gotten Yev settled with his homework in his bedroom. “How about if we order in?” he suggested. “Maybe pizza and some salad?” he continued after no one objected. “Okay,” Mickey replied absently, his thumbs flying over his phone screen as he sent text after text.

“Who ya texting, Mick?” Ian asked, a sarcastic, mean-spirited edge still present in his voice. “I’m postponing my trip, Ian! You happy now?” he snapped back, raising both eyebrows in agitation. “Yes, I am!” Ian answered, his facial expression softening as he approached Mickey, throwing his arms around him and planting kisses all over his face.

Mickey’s body stiffened, impervious to Ian’s attempts at reconciliation until, at long last, his anger gradually subsided, draining, bit by bit, from his body as Ian continued to fuss over him lovingly. “’C’mon, Mick! I’m sorry! I love you!” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear as he enveloped him in a warm embrace, Mickey finally acquiescing and returning Ian’s affection. “Now THAT’S more like it,” Kayla said with a bright smile that lit up the room.

The family enjoyed a quiet pizza dinner, avoiding any sensitive topics in the name of preserving the
peace. Kayla, despite her illness and all of the earlier dishord, was glowing, absolutely enthralled with her new fiance and his irresistible charms.

The house was dark and silent, the evening ending remarkably well, considering all that had transpired. Ian lay completely still, Mickey’s body endearingly huddled against his own, his slow, steady breathing accompanied by the occasional snuffle, both of which, under normal circumstance, lulled Ian to sleep in no time.

This night was different though. Try as he might, he couldn’t stop himself from obsessing on the message he had gotten from the lab. Despite his preliminary research confirming Reesie’s contention that he was not a viable donor candidate, he couldn’t help but think that, if there were no other matches to be found, his stem-cells would be better than none at all. He also knew from his research that he would not be accepted as a donor, even if Kayla decided she wanted him to be. The guidelines for donor acceptance were quite clear; anyone taking Lithium on a routine basis was to be preliminarily disqualified as a candidate. Had he gone to a registry to be tested, he would have been turned away, based on the pre-qualification questionnaire.

Ian couldn’t sleep. He needed to move. He slowly maneuvered his body away from Mickey’s, careful to avoid waking him, grabbed his robe and headed down the stairs before it dawned on him that Kayla was asleep in the family room. As he made an about-face on the stairs, he heard Kayla call out, “Who’s there?” “It’s me, Ian,” he responded, Didn’t mean to disturb you.” “You didn’t disturb me, honey,” she said, comforting him. “Come on down. We can talk a bit. I’m assuming you’re having trouble sleeping,” she guessed. “Yeah,” he said, turning to finish his descent into the family room. “Come. Sit,” Kayla coaxed, tapping the cushion next to her as she sat up.

“So tell me what’s going on,” Kayla said in a soft, soothing voice. “I can’t...not yet,” Ian stammered, holding his head in his hands. “Oh, come on, sweetie, you can tell me anything,” she prodded gently. Ian sat silently, not knowing quite what to say. He certainly couldn’t divulge his secret at this point. In fact, he hoped he would never have to tell anyone, that another donor would be found and he could forget that he had ever had himself tested.

“Okay, well it’s kind of a question,” he finally began. “Ask me anything,” she said encouragingly. “Well, I’m wondering...I know you gave up a lot in life for the people you love...Do you ever wish you had done anything differently?” Ian asked. “Never. Not once. My children mean the world to me, and I wouldn’t change a thing,” she smiled. “Why are you asking me this, honey?” she questioned, putting her hand on top of his. “Are you and Mickey having problems that I don’t know about?”

“It’s not that. It’s just...” Ian paused, trying to find the right words. “You mean so much to Mickey...to all of us, and you’ve sacrificed so much for all of your kids and grandkids. I just really wanna see you enjoy your life. Want you to marry Doc and have a long, happy life together,” he explained, “See your grandkids grow up, too.” “Of course!” Kayla replied, “So do I!” “I mean, you’ve done the right thing by everybody your whole life. It’s time someone did right by you,” Ian said, his voice cracking as he held back a sob.

“What is all of this about, Ian?” Kayla asked, a puzzled look on her face. “You need sleep. Goin’ back to bed,” Ian said, excusing himself, then kissing her on the forehead. “I’m gonna make sure you get a donor, if it kills me!”
Mickey was up before his alarm, showered and ready to wake Yev for school when Ian called out for him. "'Sup?" Mickey responded, turning back from the bedroom door. "C'mere!" Ian smiled seductively, peering over at Mickey from under sleep-heavy eyelids. Mickey knew the drill. He would take one small step forward, Ian would lure him in with his irresistible charms, and he’d be late for work, Yev would be late for school, and complete and total chaos would ensue---beautifully amazing, tremendously gratifying chaos, but still...hardly the way they needed to be starting their day.

"Coming," Mickey answered, trotting over obediently in spite of himself. Damn! If Ian wasn’t just overwhelmingly sexy, to the point that Mickey was completely under his spell with the snap of his fingers. As soon as Mickey was within Ian’s reach, he grabbed at him roughly, yanking him into bed with him and proceeding to attack his sensitive neck, licking, sucking and biting at it until Mickey grabbed Ian’s face between his hands, pulling it up to his lips and kissing him wildly, engulfing his mouth in his own, their tongues swirling, sucking intensely on one another’s lips, each drinking in the intoxicating essence of the other. Ian humped Mickey relentlessly, their passion growing exponentially as Ian fought to remove Mickey’s clothing, the lone, annoying barrier to their carnal bliss.

"Ian...” Mickey began, with great desire and anticipation in his voice as he fondled his mate fervently. “Mmmm,” Ian responded, once again assaulting Mickey’s delicious neck with his lips and teeth, while grinding himself against Mickey’s now naked, beautifully buff frame. “Want you so fuckin’ bad...Hafta get Yev up real soon though...Gotta be quick. How you want this?” Mickey asked breathlessly. Ian hated to be rushed, but had known this would be the case before he summoned a fully-clothed Mickey, disrupting his busy morning schedule for impromptu sex.

He just honestly couldn’t help himself. Mickey always looked so hot when he was dressed to go to work. Not that he wasn’t hot all the time, but there was just something about knowing Mickey had somewhere important to be, then making him stay with him instead, that really turned Ian on. Plus, they had argued the night before, which made Ian want to fuck the living hell out of Mickey even more, for some strange reason.

Ian reached for the coconut oil, slicking up his fingers, rubbing them between Mickey’s ass cheeks, then quickly beginning to prep him, his nose and mouth still busily buried beneath Mickey’s jawline. Mickey pressed his ass against Ian’s fingers, while teasing Ian’s cock with his hand, reaching, himself, for the oil and lubing it up as he did. “Ready, man,” Mickey breathed after a few minutes of Ian’s skillful fingering, reaching for his own rigid cock and coating it with coconut oil as he caressed it lightly.

Ian rolled Mickey onto his side, pressing his taut, well-toned torso firmly against Mickey’s back, slowly sinking into him, his top leg resting on Mickey’s, their left hands interlocked, Ian’s over Mickey’s, holding it firmly to the mattress, their wedding bands touching. Ian thrusts his hips against Mickey’s perfectly round buttocks, slowly but with great force, until Mickey took all of him, both men grunting and moaning with each movement. “Mick, you’re fucking everything,” Ian whispered into Mickey’s ear, Mickey smiling in response as he reared back onto Ian, clenching Ian’s beautiful cock between his ass cheeks tightly, knowing from experience how to induce a quick cum from his lover. “Fuck, Mick!” Ian bellowed, “Gonna fucking explode!” Mickey hastened the stroking of his own desperately aroused cock, combining with Ian’s fantastic fucking to put him over the edge, right along with his gorgeous husband. “Ian! Fuck!” Mickey exclaimed in ecstasy, jamming his ass against Ian’s hips as they both came hard, Ian moaning unintelligibly.
Mickey pulled their interlaced hands to his face, pressing his supple lips softly against the top of Ian’s, then flipping onto his back, Ian kissing him tenderly, until Mickey abruptly announced, “I gotta go!” hopping up from the bed to re-shower before work. “You get Yev up for me?” he asked. “On my way,” Ian replied, putting his robe on and heading down the hallway to Yev’s room.

By the time Mickey was out of the shower and dressed, Yev was also nearly ready and Ian was downstairs pouring coffee into two travel mugs. “I’m gonna go to the nursing school today—try to set up a cheek-swab sample drive for Mom, so I can drop Yev off at school for ya,” Ian offered quietly, as Mickey came down the stairs, looking fine as ever. “Course, I shouldn’t let you leave the house looking like that,” Ian added, ogling Mickey up and down.

“You sure?” Mickey asked, reaching for the coffee Ian had prepared for him. “Yeah,” Ian replied with a smile, swooping in on Mickey to kiss him goodbye. “Thanks, Ian. Gonna be replayin’ this morning in my head all fuckin’ day,” he smiled, returning the kiss, then adjusting himself as he walked out the door.

Ian quickly got himself and Yev together, managing, miraculously, to get Yev to school, just in the nick of time. After Yev got out of the car, Ian took a minute to look for Shawn’s number in his phone. He had the number for the CCU Nurses’ Station and also a cell number, which he hoped hadn’t changed in the time since they had been in contact. Ian hadn’t talked to Shawn since Mickey had flown him in for Ian’s 25th birthday party, so it certainly had been a while.

Ian took a deep breath as he hit ‘send’, hoping for the best. After two rings, Shawn answered, “Ian! Everything okay?” “Well…” Ian was suddenly speechless, a pervasive fear overtaking him. “Ian? Let me call you back in two minutes. I have to finish up with a patient, okay?” he asked, more than a little bit unnerved by Ian’s silence in response to his question. “Yeah,” Ian replied in scarcely more than a whisper.

Ian continued his drive to the nursing school, waiting for Shawn’s call. He was nearly there when his phone rang. He answered without looking to see who it was. “Thanks for calling back, man,” he began. “What?” Mickey’s voice came through the speaker, startling Ian. “Oh, sorry, I thought you were the Director from the nursing school,” he explained, covering his ass quickly. Why he didn’t just say he had called Shawn, he wasn’t sure, once he thought about it.

It was probably because Ian knew he was planning to share a secret with Shawn, and it made him feel guilty. He wasn’t good at keeping things from Mickey, but, in this case, he didn’t think there was any other way. Mickey would go absolutely ballistic if he knew Ian was even considering stopping his meds to help Kayla, and Ian knew it.

“So,” Mickey paused, thinking to himself that Ian seemed to be on a strangely familiar basis with the Director, based on the way he answered the phone, but then quickly dismissing the notion to continue with the call. “I wondered how long you were gonna be this mornin’,” he asked. “Don’t want Mom alone for too long,” he added. “Shouldn’t be too long. I’m here at the nursing school. Gonna go so I can get back to Mom,” Ian said, switching over to take Shawn’s call that was now coming in.

“Hey, man. Thanks for calling back,” Ian said graciously. “Sure,” Shawn responded. “Now you wanna tell me what the hell’s going on?” Ian explained the details surrounding Kayla’s relapse, including Doc’s choice of treatment protocol, adding that he had left word with Bigley to do what he could to get her genetic profile into as many databases as possible to increase the chances of finding a donor.

“Sounds like you’re doing all the right stuff,” Shawn concluded. “It’s just really hard to find a match,” he added. “I did my Clinical on an Oncology floor…” “I know,” Ian cut him off, “That’s
why I’m calling you. Do you...do you think...let’s say someone is a match, but they have have medical issues that make them a less than perfect potential donor,” Ian began to explain.

“That wouldn’t happen,” Shawn interrupted. “Yeah, well, let’s just say it did,” Ian continued. “No, there’s a screening questionnaire that precludes anyone who isn’t medically viable from being tested. It’s standard protocol everywhere, as far as I know,” Shawn explained, beginning to lose patience with Ian’s continued pursuit of a scenario he knew, logically, could never occur. “The registries don’t wanna waste resources on subpar candidates. So many patients die waiting for donors, the registry needs to know that, if a prospective donor matches, they can actually donate,” Shawn paused, waiting for Ian to acknowledge his point.

“Well, let’s say someone has a history of being on a medication that would prevent them from being a donor, but they aren’t on it when they are tested?” Ian asked desperately. “The questionnaire asks for a medication history...Are you...What are you asking me, Ian?” Shawn replied nervously, slowly putting together what he thought was really on Ian’s mind.

Ian didn’t respond right away. His brain was scrambling to finesse a way to keep this hypothetical, but Ian realized that Shawn was no dummy, and had probably figured out, at least in part, what he was thinking.

“Ian, if you’re considering stopping your meds so you can be tested, I can tell you that’s far too big of a risk. The odds of you being a match is so small to begin with…” Shawn trailed off. Ian could hear someone talking to him in the background. He waited, Shawn finally rejoining their conversation.

“Ian, just trust me. It’s not worth risking your own health---your life, really. The likelihood of her finding an unrelated matching donor is less than 20%, so the odds of you being that match are extraordinarily low. You guys gotta find some more family to test,” Shawn concluded.

“But,” Ian began. “Ian, you are NOT gonna be a match! Please listen to me!” Shawn begged, beginning to think Ian had already made the wrong decision and hoping desperately to talk sense into him. “Shawn, I AM A MATCH!” Ian screamed into the phone, his heart pounding as he realized the gravity of what he had just divulged. “Please! Don’t say anything to Mickey! I gotta do this!” he pleaded, Shawn’s end of the conversation suddenly going deadly silent.

“So Doc knows?” Shawn asked. “Hell no!” Ian answered. “How is that even possible?” Shawn asked, then adding, “Nevermind. I don’t wanna know. Listen---don’t stop taking your meds. Look for other possible donors. What other family does she have?” “Sisters that were sold into sex slavery in the Ukraine when they were young. That’s all I know. Listen, I gotta go. I’m at the nursing school. Gonna set up a cheek-swab testing drive here, if I can,” Ian said, trying to extricate himself from the call, now that he knew Shawn would not support his idea.

“So you’re not gonna quit taking them, right!” Shawn questioned. “Nope. You’re right. Too big of a risk. Just don’t say anything, PLEASE! Just pretend we never had this conversation, okay, Shawn?” Ian asked, trying to smooth things over and get out of what had become a very awkward conversation. “Okay, Ian. I have your word you won’t stop your meds, right?” Shawn asked. “You have my word. Thanks, man. Have a good day,” Ian said, concluding the call as he opened his car
“So now you’re NOT going to Surfin’?” Manuel asked Mickey incredulously as he walked into the factory office. “Nope. Not now. Too much goin’ on with Ma,” he defended. “Okay...forgive me. It just seemed strange after you spent yesterday moving heaven and earth to get to Chicago, that now you are not going,” Manuel explained. “Is there something I should know?” Manuel asked. “Naw, man. Just wanna be here for Mom. And I was thinkin’ we should see how many of our employees we can get to do the cheek swab,” Mickey suggested. “Good idea, Ojos! I’ll send out an e-mail, if you want,” Manuel offered.

“Yeah, man. Great! And tell ‘em all about Mom, ya know how sweet she is, and how she needs this or she’ll...” Mickey stopped mid-sentence, not wanting to say the words. He knew this was a life or death situation, but somehow, saying it would make it too real. “Okay, okay, don’t worry. I got it, Ojos,” Manuel assured Mickey, squeezing his shoulders comfortingly.

Mickey looked down at his phone as it vibrated in his hand. It was a text from Thomas:

“Spoke with Svetlana. Filing Petition to Emigrate with the Russian Consulate. Seems like having a child in Mexico might help her chances. Looking into things on the Mexican end through a friend. I’ll be in touch.”

Mickey began a response immediately:

“If she can get here, what’s the timeframe? What do you think her chances are?”

Mickey stared at his phone, awaiting answers to his questions. Finally, a return text came:

“No sure. I’ll get back to you on that. By the way, I have someone working on your Mom’s divorce. Trying to avoid her having to come here, but if he contests it, she may have to appear in court, and it could delay things significantly.”

So that was the ‘business’ Doc was referring to Mom having in Chicago! “Fuckin’ Terry!” Mickey muttered. They just couldn’t seem to expel that scumbag from their lives. Every time he thought they were at the point of never having to so much as think about him again, some circumstance presented itself that threatened to bring him back into their lives in some form or fashion. “Fuck!” Mickey yelled, pulling Manuel’s attention away from the e-mail he was composing. “What is it?” Manuel asked. “Nothin’,” Mickey mumbled, heading for the factory floor to check in with Jose.

“Still wanna get that Brach I told you about in here for an interview,” he called over his shoulder. “Set it up,” Manuel replied. “Yeah, I will,” Mickey responded, turning to face Manuel. “I just wanna get Mom’s shit under control first.”

Manuel sighed, realizing, or at least acknowledging, more so than Mickey, that Kayla’s illness wasn’t going to go away overnight. In fact, he wondered if Mickey understood how unlikely it was for Kayla to find an unrelated donor. Doc had explained it to all of them, but Manuel doubted it sunk in with Mickey.

Mickey texted back a half-hearted, “Thanks,” to Thomas, just before walking out onto the factory floor. It seemed that the only thing certain in his life these days was all of the uncertainty. That and, thankfully, his beautiful marriage with Ian. Right now, Ian was his sanctuary and his rock, the anchor that was holding him steady through the storm. How he appreciated and adored him! He resolved not to keep anything from him ever again, to let him know of his plans in advance, from now on. After
all, he had been pretty severe with Ian for making plans and commitments without his knowledge when they were in Costa Rica, so it was only right to hold himself to the same standard.

Finding everything in good order out on the floor, Mickey took the opportunity to leave for a bit, offering to pick up lunch for the guys in appreciation of all their hard work, and to butter them up for Manuel’s e-mail, if he were completely honest.

He texted Kayla, asking if she wanted him to pick up lunch for her and Ian. She texted back:

“Haven’t seen Ian all morning, but I’d love a chicken salad, if you’re going to be in the area. You’re such a good son, Mickey! Love you!”

“What the fuck?!” Mickey yelled as he got into his car. He tried calling Ian, but there was no answer.
“Reesie!” Ian called out to Reesie, as she walked down the hall toward the exam rooms. She held one finger up, just before ducking into one of the rooms. As he stood at the end of the hallway, waiting, Doc walked up behind him. “Here to work?” he asked with a laugh. “We could use the help,” he added in a more serious tone, gesturing toward the full waiting room. “Guess I could help out for a bit,” Ian replied. “Mick doesn’t want Mom to be alone for too long,” he added. “I just spoke with her,” Doc responded reassuringly. “She’s fine! In fact, if you can stay for a couple of hours, I can visit with her and take her meds to her.”

Ian stood silent for a moment, contemplating his options. He had wanted to follow-up with some registries he had attempted to contact before, and also do some more research before the kids and Mickey got home for the day. He guessed he could accomplish some of that at the clinic, if it got slower as the afternoon progressed, but it was definitely not a sure thing. He did, however, need to arrange staffing and supplies for the cheek swab drive at the nursing school, which was the original reason he came, so he decided to stay. “Sure,” he finally answered, his mind reverting back to his dilemma concerning his status as a match and his meds. He fought to push it out of his mind as Doc thanked him and began briefing him on the patients currently being seen or awaiting treatment.

Ian had treated three patients before getting the opportunity to talk with Reesie, who had been busy seeing patients herself. He explained that he had been granted permission to hold a stem-cell sample drive at the nursing school, but that they wanted it to be on a Tuesday, since that was the day a large hall, suitable for such an undertaking, was available. Ian had tentatively agreed to the next Tuesday on the calendar, in the interest of time, but he was scheduled to work that day. Reesie agreed to work for him, on the condition that Ian take Mikhaila to school on his way, which meant having her spend the night with him and Mickey that Monday. He tentatively agreed to it, pending a conversation with Mickey, which, he was sure, would go just fine. There was nothing Mickey wouldn’t do to save his mother’s life; of that, Ian was certain.

Once the patient flow died down, Ian took the opportunity to check his email, planning to call Mickey immediately afterward to discuss the plans for Mikhaila. He had contacted a company that handled stem-cell donation in the Ukraine, since they had no National Registry. In the email, they explained that they tested people on an individual basis for a fee, and that anyone who had been within 30 miles of the Chernobyl explosion of 1986 was automatically excluded from being a donor.

Chernobyl?! Ian had heard of that before, but didn’t know what it was. He Googled it, finding that it was an accident involving a nuclear reactor in the Ukraine, back when it was part of the Soviet Union, and that many survivors had gone on, years later, to develop a whole host of illnesses, including AML, the type of leukemia that Mom had. He had to find out if she lived near Chernobyl, because if she did, finding her sisters, which Ian had asked Bigley if he could try to do, would be pointless. Further, it would narrow the field of possible donors from the Ukraine quite a bit. ‘Maybe it’s not worth pursuing the Ukrainian avenue,’ he thought to himself.

He pulled his phone from his pocket to call Mickey. He needed to ask him about Kayla, and also about Chernobyl, although he was pretty sure he would have to speak with Mom directly. He noticed he had a missed call from Mickey, so now he really hoped he could get him on the phone.

“You’re fuckin’ lucky,” Mickey said as he picked up. “Oh, I know that,” Ian responded, “but why are you reminding me now?” he asked. “Was plannin’ to have lunch with you and Ma, and ya weren’t there,” Mickey explained. “When I brought Mom her lunch, Doc showed up. Said ya were workin’ for him at the clinic.” “Yeah, okay, so?” Ian asked. “So, ya said ya’d be back home soon,
when I talked to you this mornin’. Then, when I try callin’, ya don’t answer...or call me back,” Mickey explained, remaining calmer than even Ian expected, once he heard Mickey’s side of the experience. “So...good thing Doc told me what was up---seein’ as you didn’t,” he added. Ian could hear Mickey’s pout over the phone, which instantly made him wanna reach through it and grab him.

“Oh Mick, I’m so sorry. You at work now?” Ian asked, suddenly yearning for him. Maybe it was the secret he was keeping, weighing on him, maybe it was his renewed realization that life is fleeting, or maybe it was just something in the sound of Mickey’s voice; whatever the case, Ian had an overwhelming, unrelenting desire to see his husband, right then---not for sex, but just to assure him that he loved him deeply, and that he meant everything to him. “Yeah, was gonna leave soon to pick Yev up at school,” he answered. “Don’t leave yet,” Ian demanded desperately. “Why not?” Mickey asked suspiciously. “Cuz I wanna go with you,” Ian answered, feeling his eyes fill with tears. ‘What the fuck?’ he thought to himself, then realizing he hadn’t even asked Mickey either of the questions he had planned to ask, the reasons for his call in the first place.

“Hey, can we keep Mik next Monday night? I scheduled the sample drive at the nursing school for Wednesday, and Reesie’s gonna work my shift so I can man the drive. “Fuck, I’m here to tell ya, you can DEFINITELY man the drive!” Mickey said with a chuckle. “Funny,” Ian said, a small giggle escaping past his lips. “So that’s a ‘yes’?” Ian confirmed. “Course!” Mickey answered, still smiling at his own joke. “And the other thing...I think we’ll have to ask mom,” Ian finished. “Ask her what?” Mickey questioned, sounding concerned. “I’m heading to the factory. We’ll talk more then,” Ian said softly. “Be there in five,” he finished, ending the call.

Mickey wrapped up his conversation with Manuel about any upcoming need for travel, requesting that Manuel handle business-related trips, and asking him to consider hiring some of the models Ian and he had met in Costa Rica for some of the modeling gigs. He also mentioned Brach again, Manuel becoming a bit frustrated, “I’ve told you many times now, Ojos, to schedule this interview. I am ready to meet him. We need someone ASAP!” “Okay, fine,” Mickey answered, heading out the door, scrolling through his phone for Brach’s number, then beginning a text, which he was still busy drafting when Ian arrived, honking his horn to get his attention. Mickey jumped, startled by Ian’s loudly-announced approach.

“Hey, handsome! Need a ride?” Ian asked playfully as he rolled down his window to greet his beautiful man. Mickey jumped in, Ian immediately throwing his arms around him and pulling him in for a warm embrace. “God, I fuckin’ love you!” Mickey breathed into Ian’s ear. “Not as much as I love you,” Ian replied, Mickey drawing him in with his sexy pout. Ian brushed Mickey’s lips lightly with his own, the kiss quickly deepening, an expression of their intense love for one another. “We gotta go,” Mickey finally said, pulling back as Ian pressed his lips to Mickey’s tenderly, one last time.

“Fuck, Mick! I can’t even describe my feelings right now. I just don’t wanna ever let go,” he explained, freeing Mickey from his embrace, his right hand lingering on Mickey’s left thigh as he maneuvered his car out of the lot. “You don’t have to,” Mickey said softly, grasping Ian’s right hand with his left. “I know all I need to know, and you got me forever, so...But what did ya wanna ask about Mom?”

“You ever hear about Chernobyl?” Ian asked, interlacing his fingers with Mickey’s as he drove. “Ain’t that in Russia or somethin’?” Mickey asked, cluing Ian in that he definitely wouldn’t know if his mother’s hometown was near it, seeing as it was in the Ukraine, not in what was currently considered to be Russia. “No, it’s in the Ukraine,” Ian answered. “Ah, so you wanna know if Mom was near it? Why?” Mickey asked curiously.

“People who were near it...the ones that didn’t die...a lot of them got real sick,” Ian began. “And
some of them got leukemia, like Mom,” he continued. “So, what’s the difference if she was there or not? She still got leukemia, right?” he asked, wondering where this was headed. “Well, I didn’t wanna say until it was for sure, but Bigley was gonna try to find Mom’s sisters, but if they lived by this nuclear site when the accident happened, they won’t be able to donate stem-cells. So I don’t want him wasting time and resources, if that’s the case,” Ian answered, Mickey’s face changing abruptly, causing Ian’s stomach to drop.

“Ian! I appreciate ya contactin’ Bigley, but I wanna know everything you’re doin’, even if it’s not a sure thing. I feel better knowin’,” he sighed, looking down at their hands, still intertwined. “Besides, we made a deal—no more secrets,” Mickey added, squeezing Ian’s hand, then yanking him in for a kiss, as Ian parked in the school parking lot. “Easy!” Ian called out breathlessly, after another beautifully intense kiss with his husband. “There are kids around,” he whispered, adjusting his cock in his pants, just before Yev got to the car, opening the back door and climbing in.

“Yev! How was your day?” Ian asked enthusiastically. “Terrible!” he answered honestly. “Why, buddy?” Mickey inquired. “All we did all day was get ready for the Mother’s Day brunch, which I’m not even going to!” he shouted indignantly. “And we didn’t even have math class,” he added angrily, perturbed over missing his favorite subject.

Mickey wanted to tell him he was working on getting Svet into Mexico, but he couldn’t, not until he knew it was a sure thing. A light bulb went off in his head as this thought registered, realizing why Ian had kept the Bigley stuff to himself, up until this point. But he was an adult, capable of handling disappointment, he told himself.

“That’s okay,” Ian responded to Yev. “We can do some math at home!” “It’s not the same!” Yev complained, burying his head into the back of Ian’s seat. “If Doc’s still there, he can make some more of those cool problems you guys like to do,” Ian continued, trying anything to cheer him. “Yeah, Doc was there when I left, and it didn’t look like he was leavin’ anytime soon,” Mickey reasoned. “Well, he definitely didn’t come back to the clinic,” Ian added.

Yev smiled weakly, still visibly upset about the day’s events at school. “And what about asking Grandma to the brunch?” Ian suggested for the second time. Yev shrugged his shoulders. “You never know how long your Grandma will be healthy enough to go…” Mickey began. Ian glared at Mickey, prompting him to end his sentence prematurely.

The trio arrived at the house, Mickey realizing that he was going to have to ride to work early in the morning with Ian and Yev, since he had left his car at the factory. He had also just remembered that he hadn’t finished his text to Brach, so he sat in the car until he had completed and sent the text, asking him about his schedule and when he might be able to fly in for an interview.

By the time Mickey walked into the house, his mother was already busy describing Chernobyl and how many of the older people in her neighborhood had become sick, some, including her own mother, even dying from their radiation exposure. She further hypothesized that she and her sisters had been sold, at least in part, because their farm had been contaminated and they had lost all of their livestock, rendering their father essentially unable to support them, or even himself.

Ian chimed in with the research he had come across, regarding leukemia, as well as the number of people who were not permitted to be donors, due to their exposure. “And you gave me a look for talking about Ma in front of Yev,” Mickey muttered under his breath, shaking his head at Ian. “Sorry, Mick,” Ian said sincerely, looking down at his feet with shame. “I just had to know…” he added.

“Gonna go work out,” Mickey announced, grabbing a change of clothes and heading for their back porch, a portion of which they had enclosed, creating a mini-gym. Ian knew Mickey was upset, so he
let him go, figuring he needed to blow off some steam, which would give him an opportunity to talk more with Mom, if he could get Doc to do some math with Yev. Doc had gone to pick up some fresh vegetables, in his never-ending quest to pump Kayla full of antioxidants, so Ian was in sort of a holding pattern, regarding the conversation, not wanting to continue to talk in front of Yev.

Of course Yev was aware that there was some type of health issue with his grandmother. There definitely had to be a reason she was suddenly staying with them every single night, and not babysitting like she always had in the past, but he didn’t know any details as far as diagnosis or severity of the illness. Neither Ian, nor Mickey wanted to worry Yev at this point. Kayla had also requested that the kids not be told anything yet.

Yev sat at the island, looking like he’d just lost his best friend, so Kayla took the opportunity to sit with him, asking about his day and giving him some grandma love. By the end of their conversation, Yev had invited her to the Mother’s Day Brunch, Ian looking on adoringly as Kayla worked her magic.

When Doc walked in with his vegetables, he had three other visitors trailing behind him: Manuel, Mandy and Manny had made a surprise visit to share some wonderful news. “Where’s Mickey?” Mandy called out, as they trudged into the house. “He’s getting a workout in before dinner,” Ian answered casually, opting not to mention the tension there was between them at the moment. “Well, I’m going to get his ass!” she replied, rushing through the kitchen toward the back patio. “Mick!” she yelled. “What?!” he answered, sounding a bit irritated. “Come in! We have an announcement to make!” Mandy beamed. Mickey’s first thought, as he hopped off the treadmill, was that someone had come up with a possible match for his mother. He followed Mandy back into the family room anxiously, glancing over at Ian with a smile, which Ian attributed to post-workout endorphins. He smiled back, taking the opportunity to approach him for a quick kiss. Ian simply couldn’t get enough of Mickey today, regardless of Mickey’s mood.

“Okay, I’m here!” Mickey said enthusiastically. “Well,” Mandy began, “it seems that my recent illness was not limited to the bug Manny had,” she paused, Mickey wondering how being sick was good news. “Why don’t you tell them, Manny?” she said to her son. “I’m getting a brother or sister!” Manny said with a big smile. The room was suddenly ablaze with joy and excitement, each family member taking a turn to kiss and hug the mother-to-be, Ian especially thrilled for his best friend, who had confided in him that she wanted to have a second child soon.

“Please stay for dinner,” Doc implored them. “There is plenty of food for everyone!” “Sure!” Manuel answered with a bright smile. “Hey, I’m gonna text Reesie to see if she and Mikhaila can make it!” Mandy added.

Reesie accepted the invitation and the entire family enjoyed an evening of celebration, an opportunity for all to think about something other than Kayla’s health, to rejoice in the promise of a new family member. Manuel did briefly mention the tremendous response he was getting from employees, who were wiling to be cheek-swabbed, Ian suggesting the they have their swabs taken at the nursing school on Tuesday. Mickey and Manuel agreed to allow employees to leave for an extra hour during their shift, in order to have it done.

After dinner, Doc requested the use of Ian’s laptop to check the clinic email. He said he had put out some feelers to some clinics in western Mexico and wanted to check for responses, since they were in a different time zone. There was an email from his friend at the lab they were using for the cheek swab tests. He opened it immediately.

“Michael, I can certainly arrange to have extra staff to accommodate the influx of samples you will be sending me from this upcoming drive that your nurse informed me of today. I just have one
question. Why are you going to all of this additional expense when you already have a matching prospective donor? Is there a problem with that person’s availability or willingness? The likelihood of finding another match is, as you know, quite small, so I’m wondering why you aren’t pursuing this avenue more vigorously.”

Doc stared at the screen like he had obviously lost his mind. ‘What match?!” he thought to himself. He had clearly seen that none of the people who had been tested, himself included, had been a match for Kayla. He stood up, feeling lightheaded, and slowly made his way over toward Ian and Reesie, who were building Legos with Mikhaila. “Which one of you two knows anything about this?” he whispered, turning the computer screen to face them.
Ian, Mickey and Yev were on their way, each to their own respective destination for the day. Yev had gotten up remarkably well for Ian, so Mickey had been able to sleep until the last possible minute, his alarm waking him just twenty minutes before they had to leave. He hauled his ass begrudgingly out of bed, taking note of the aroma of fresh coffee, just before turning the shower on. He had to admit, the night before had turned out extremely well, considering all of the upheaval that had taken place during the day. Not only did they have a fantastic dinner in celebration of Mandy and Manuel’s newest addition to their family, but Ian had been especially generous in bed, giving Mickey a titillating full body massage, followed by some intensely pleasurable rimming, accompanied by the mother of all blowjobs, and mind-blowing, earth-shattering sex, to top it all off. In fact, Mickey was convinced that his body wouldn’t be capable of producing any more cum for at least a week.

Mickey sat in the passenger seat on this ride to work, smiling as he relived the delicious feeling of Ian’s gorgeous mouth on his swollen cock, bobbing up and down tirelessly until Mickey exploded, shooting his stuff straight down Ian’s throat, all while Ian, his fingers perfectly penetrating Mickey’s hole, nudged his prostate gently, sending waves of pleasure throughout his body, even before he came. Fuck! If Ian wasn’t the best lover on the planet, Mickey didn’t know who was! He glanced over at Ian, rubbing his thigh in appreciation, not only of his sexual prowess, but also his kindness and consideration, his dedication to their children and his relentless work in looking for a donor for his mother.

Ian looked back at him briefly, before hopping out of the car to walk Yev to the door of the school, as he had promised he would, in order to make sure they would still accept his completed Mother’s Day form, since the event was only a day away. He returned, giving Mickey a thumb’s up, coupled with a bright, sexy smile and the confident swagger he had developed through his years of modeling. Damn! Mickey certainly was counting his blessings this fine morning, wondering what on earth he had ever done to deserve such an exquisite and selfless creature.

While he waited, Mickey noticed he had received a text from Brach, late the night before, indicating that he was very interested in interviewing and had an open schedule for a while, due to a stubborn ankle sprain that had rendered him temporarily unable to model. Mickey texted back, promising to get him the next flight out of LAX, and telling him to pack enough clothes to stay a while, regardless of the interview’s outcome.

“All set,” Ian said as he got back into the car, confirming that the brunch situation had been handled. “That’s great!” Mickey replied. “I know Mom’ll enjoy going.” “One of us will have to take her though. Doc says she can’t drive,” Ian commented, Mickey nodding in agreement.

Before Mickey knew it, Ian had pulled up in front of the factory. Mickey honestly didn’t want to leave Ian yet. He had so enjoyed the last twelve hours with him. He knew, however, that he had plenty of business to handle, and that Ian had his regular clinic work, plus extra responsibilities for the upcoming sample drive, so he compelled himself, against every fiber of his being, to get out of the car quickly, hoping to stay busy until day’s end, when he would see his amazing husband again.

Ian reached over, pulling Mickey into him for a soft, tender, but also insanely hot and arousing kiss, Mickey’s insides afire with passion as he forced himself from the car, his body feeling positively electrified, as he made his way to the door of the factory.

Mickey greeted Manuel, congratulating him once again on the pregnancy, before jumping right into the business of the day. “Gotta get Brach the next flight outta LAX,” Mickey muttered as he checked
Ian had been attempting to conceal his nervousness all morning, in the desperate hope that he could keep Mickey from thinking anything was wrong. He had spent most of the night, after a most gratifying session with Mickey, lying awake and motionless, in order to prevent Mickey from waking up and noticing that he wasn’t asleep. His heart was racing, and all he could think of was the conversation he was going to have with Doc, once he got to the clinic.

Miraculously, he had convinced Doc and Reesie, after admitting he was the responsible party, to table the discussion about his potential donor status, promising to come in early to discuss how to proceed, which, he was deathly afraid, would mean telling Mickey about it----something he hoped never to have to do. He planned to persuade them to keep his secret, once he got to the clinic, if he even made it that far.

At the moment, he was focused on trying to appear relaxed—normal, as he drove Yev and Mickey to school and work, respectively. He knew he was sweating, and was trying to be conscious of his tendency to clench his teeth when he was uptight, hoping to pass for his usual self, but feeling that at any moment, Mickey might ask him what was wrong.

Fortunately for Ian, Mickey seemed to be in his own world, his eyes closed, a dreamy smile on his face as he rubbed Ian’s leg, at one point opening his eyes to look over at Ian. ‘This is it,’ Ian thought to himself, swallowing hard as he made brief eye contact in return, trying, once again, to maintain some measure of normalcy to his behavior, despite the fact that his heart felt like it was about to come through his chest.

“Saved by the school!” Ian said under his breath as he and Yev got out of the car, heading into the school to sign Yev and Kayla up for the Mother’s Day Brunch. Yev was worried because his paperwork was late, but Ian was able to finesse the secretary into accepting it. As he walked out of the building, he tried to appear nonchalant, giving Mickey a thumbs up and doing his best to form something that resembled a real smile, although he was much too skittish for that. He hoped he faked it well enough to fool Mickey. The last thing he needed was a bunch of questions from Mickey before he had the chance to talk with Doc and Reesie.
As he got back into the car, he told Mickey everything was, “All set,” after which they had a brief discussion about Kayla needing a ride to the brunch. Ian was coming in the home stretch with Mickey, with only minutes until he would be dropping him off at the factory. He decided to remain quiet for the balance of the trip, driving right up to the factory door, then kissing Mickey like he meant it—because he did! He loved Mickey more than anything, and only wanted him happy. In fact, he had really outdone himself the night before, doing everything humanly possible to please Mickey, fearing that it might be his last opportunity to feel that closeness, to have such control over Mickey’s pleasure and happiness, and all because of something he had stupidly chosen to do behind Mickey’s back. He almost started to cry, just thinking about it. This is why he hoped never to have to tell him what he’d done. Mickey might never forgive him, given the circumstances, especially for the secrecy part.

Fortunately for Ian, it seemed that Mickey was in a bit of a hurry, and preoccupied with something, probably business, exiting the car abruptly after their kiss, without so much as a word. Ian breathed a brief sigh of relief at having jumped the first hurdle, Mickey not suspecting anything, as far as he could tell. Now he would have some real convincing to do. He wasn’t sure how he would handle it. He had mulled over several different scenarios in his head, but in the end, he had decided to just wing it. After all, the best laid plans often do not come to fruition, due to unforeseen obstacles, as he well knew from many of his life experiences.

Ian courageously walked into the clinic, Doc and Reesie both waiting for him in the back of the office. “Good Morning, Ian,” Doc said kindly, although his greeting lacked his usual laid-back feel. Reesie nodded hello, her countenance markedly more serious than usual as well. “Good Morning,” Ian said bashfully, avoiding eye contact with both as he racked his brain, desperately searching for the right words. “I...I...know you’re both upset with me, but I really just couldn’t live with the thought of not at least being tested. I kept thinking, ‘What if I am a match and we never know. What if we don’t find another match?’”

“Well, now that’s exactly the predicament we are all in,” Doc said, looking and sounding completely exasperated, and also as though he hadn’t slept a wink. “What if we DON’T find another match? Then we are in the position of having to either watch Kayla die or violate a code of ethics, not to mention wreak havoc on our family relationships, by endangering your health in order to save her,” Doc said, explaining in detail, what was already blatantly obvious to all three of them.

“But...but, Isn’t there a part of you that believes potential temporary damage to one is worth saving the life of another?” Ian began, his demeanor changing, his confidence growing, as he shifted into philosophical mode, a skill he attributed, surprisingly enough, to his exposure to Frank and his ability to justify crazy behavior, or to rally for a cause, whether he believed what he was saying or not. Frank always had a knack for using evidence or ideas to suit his argument, no matter how wrong he might be. In Ian’s case, at this moment, however, he believed passionately in what he was saying. In fact, as he heard his own words, it reminded him of his reasoning behind his decision to test himself in the first place.

“What price can be put on a person’s life? Especially a wonderful, selfless person like Mom, who sacrificed her entire young life for her children, taking abuse, going hungry, protecting them, even when it was to her own detriment, only to be dealt the death card, once she finally begins to enjoy her life. Who will stand up for her, put her first, for a change?—I will,” Ian finished, his eyes brimming over with tears as the reality of the situation hit him.

“Ian, I will have to do some extensive research before I can even consider doing something like this,” Doc responded, after a long moment of silent thought. “And I understand that. I am still hopeful that we will find another suitable donor,” Ian added. “So am I,” Doc replied, “but do you realize how unlikely that possibility is? You have put me in the position to have to seriously consider this!” Doc
said, raising his voice emotionally. “Can’t we just wait until after the drive to see if we find a
match?” Ian pleaded with Doc.

“Of course. We can always wait. But at what cost to Kayla?!” Doc was quickly becoming quite
irate, which was completely out of character for him. His personal investment and his precarious
position were painfully evident and overwhelmingly sad. “I want to apologize, but I can’t say I’m
sorry if I’m the only person who can save her,” Ian responded.

“Ian, medically speaking, there needs to be some substantial time---and I need to research your
medication to find out how much---between when you would quit taking your meds and when you
would be a viable candidate,” Doc explained, his voice thick with emotion.

“I understand...and I’m willing to stop tomorrow---taking my meds,” Ian pledged. “I want to research
first, we need to have a discussion with Mick…” “Nooooooo!” Ian interrupted, immediately
beginning to sob, Doc staring at him in shocked surprise. “So, am I to assume that Mickey is
completely unaware of this?” Doc asked. “Of course, he is!” Ian snapped. “Oh, I thought maybe the
two of you discussed this, weighing the pros and cons, and decided together that this was the right
thing to do,” Doc barked, his frustration level hitting a new high.

“Please!” Ian begged. “I’ll do whatever you want! Just please don’t tell Mickey!” “Ian,” Reesie
began, breaking her long silence, “you know Mickey will find out eventually, and that the longer
you wait, the worse it’s gonna be.”

“PLEASE, Doc, can you do your research and figure out how long I have to be off the meds before
we tell him?” Ian was literally groveling at this point, tears streaming down his face. “I will do the
research, but once I have all of the facts, we all need to sit together to discuss this,” Doc answered.
“So can we go ahead with the sample drive then, at least? Before I tell him...just in case?” Ian asked.

“Let me see what my research turns up,” Doc responded. “In the meantime, start thinking about how
you’re going to tell Mickey, because barring a miracle, you’re going to have to.”
Ian was on his way home from work when he got Manuel’s group text, inviting everyone to dinner at Sur de la Frontera. Manuel was a master at crafting group texts that made people feel as if they’d be missing out on something spectacular if they didn’t participate in whatever he happened to have planned. This text was no exception.

“Please join Mickey and I in welcoming the prospective new co-manager of Ojos Azules factories 1 and 2! Brach Robertson will be joining us for dinner at Sur de la Frontera at 6:00 sharp! Johnny will be serving Shrimp Tortellini in Garlic Parmesan Sauce, along with one of his best Italian Chablis, and Sparkling Grape Juice for the kids (and Mandy)! (celebration emoji)”

Ian sighed heavily as he sat motionless at the stop sign a block from Yev’s school, after reading Manuel’s text. The last thing he felt like doing tonight was having to put on a show of ‘normalcy’ for a crowd of people, especially when those among the crowd included Reesie and Doc, both of whom he expected to be looking at him expectantly all night, attempting to will him with their eyes to share his secret with Mickey, and all while Mickey and Mom looked on, oblivious to the whole situation. This invitation was like a non-refundable, one-way ticket to hell, in Ian’s mind; he knew there was no way possible for him to get out of it. “I’ll be there with bells on!” he texted back to Manuel and the rest of the group.

Yev walked out of the school, carrying a special necklace he had made for his grandma to wear to the brunch, explaining to Ian, in great detail, how he had made it. Then he pulled a second necklace from his book-bag. “I made this for Mom,” Yev said softly. “Think we could send it to her?” he asked, Mickey’s smile lighting up his little face. “Sure!” Ian replied without hesitation. Little did Yev know, he could get ANYTHING he wanted from Ian with that smile. The two talked cheerfully for the entire short ride home, Ian sharing the dinner plans with him, much to Yev’s delight. There had been a baseball game scheduled for that evening, but it had been postponed, so Yev was happy to have something else to do.

“Okay, I want you to get your homework started right away, since we will have to leave in an hour and a half or so,” Ian said to Yev as they got out of the car, headed for the house. “Can I give Grandma her necklace first?” he asked. “Of course you can,” Ian smiled, marveling at what a good kid Yev was. “I’m glad she’s coming to school tomorrow,” Yev added. “Make sure you tell HER that!” Ian said. “I will. Love you, Daddy Ian!” he said, hugging Ian’s waist as Mickey opened the door for them.

“Missed ya, man,” Mickey said to Ian as he walked in, greeting him with a warm embrace and a light kiss. It felt so good to Ian to be in Mickey’s arms, to have him open the door and tell him he missed him, to feel his fabulously full, moist lips on his own. He wouldn’t think of giving any of this up for all the money in the world, and yet, he had somehow managed to jeopardize it all by being stupid. Why hadn’t he just talked it over with Mickey first, or at least told him right after he did it? His mind kept returning to the same explanation---because he never dreamed he’d be a match; he only needed to know definitively that he wasn’t a match, which he never would have been able to determine, had he not tested himself. But now that he WAS a match, everything got ugly---complicated and ugly. He willed himself to stop thinking about it since he could feel the backs of his eyes stinging, and certainly didn’t want Mickey to see that.

“Grandma! I made you something to wear to the brunch tomorrow!” Yev shouted enthusiastically. He laid the necklace out on the coffee table in front of Kayla for her to see. She reached for it, struggling to fasten it around her neck. “It’s beautiful, Yevgeni!” she beamed, as Mickey walked
behind her to help her put it on. The brightly colored blue and purple beads shimmered, accentuating the shine in Kayla’s eyes as she thanked Yev for making her such a perfect necklace, and her son for his assistance in getting it on. Ian, already on the verge of tears before Yev even presented the necklace, now broke down, his chest heaving as he continually wiped tears from his face. Fortunately, Yev and Kayla were focused on one another, and didn’t notice how upset he had become, seemingly over a handmade gift. Mickey, on the other hand, had been watching his husband closely, wondering how something like this could have brought him to his knees.

“...The fuck’s goin’ on?” Mickey asked, circling around to walk up behind Ian, then wrapping his arms around his waist. “Just hoping for the best for Mom,” Ian whispered through tear-laden lips. It felt really good for Ian to make an honest statement to his husband, and to receive his comfort. Mickey certainly understood where Ian was coming from and spun him around so he could hold him, face to face. “Gotta believe everything’s gonna be okay,” he breathed into Ian’s chest as Ian kissed his forehead tenderly. “I know,” Ian responded, “We’ll get through this...together. And after the sample drive, if that doesn’t get us a donor, I wanna explore some other options. Can we do that?” Ian asked. “Of course we can!” Mickey said, smiling up at him. “I love you, Ian. There’s no one in the world I’d rather go through hell with than you,” Mickey said quietly, before kissing Ian’s lips sensually.

By the time their little exchange ended, Yevgeni was curled up on the couch next to Kayla, doing his homework in his lap. “Let’s sit at the island so we can do a neat job,” Ian suggested, motioning for Yev to join him at the island. “I’m okay here, right, Grandma?” Yev answered. “That’s up to your Dads,” Kayla replied, keeping herself out of the middle. “Daddy?” Yev said, appealing to Mickey for support. Mickey looked over at Ian, who nodded. “Okay, better be able to read it!” Mickey said with a loving smile. “And you gotta get done,” he added. “We gotta leave for dinner soon! ...Fact I’m gettin’ in the shower now. Ma, you need anything?” “I’m fine, Mickey. Go get ready! I’ll stay here with Yevgeni,” she offered, motioning for Ian to join him.

Mickey headed for the stairs, Ian following close behind him. Once they were in their bedroom, Mickey turned the shower on, then turned to Ian, “Go ‘head! Get in and wash up! I’ll be there in a minute.” Ian got undressed and stepped into the shower, allowing the warm water to wash away his tears, and attempting to let go of some of his tension. He showered fairly quickly, and was ready to step out when Mickey got in. “...I’m gonna go,” Ian mumbled, reaching for his towel. “Naw...I want ya to stay,” Mickey responded, pulling him back under the water with him. “Not trying to make us late today,” Ian said with a slight grin. “We won’t be late. Just you, okay?” Mickey purred into Ian’s ear, before dropping to his knees. “Mickey, I...” “Shhhhh!” Mickey cut him off, massaging his balls, then taking his swelling cock into his mouth. “Been thinkin’ ‘bout this all day,” Mickey managed to get out, amid the small, circular licks he was showering upon the sensitive underside of the head of Ian’s dick.

Ian closed his eyes, leaning against the shower wall to support his wobbly legs as Mickey continued to showcase his exemplary oral skills, pulling more and more of Ian’s rock-hard shaft into his mouth, his cheeks hollowing magnificently as he sucked more intensely. “Fuck, Mick! So fucking good!” Ian grunted, gripping a fistful of his shiny, black hair as he braced himself more firmly against the wall.

Mickey quickly lathered his index and middle fingers with body gel, then began to gently fondle Ian’s opening, as he continued to suck him off expertly, gradually inserting his digits. Ian gasped sharply at the introduction, then began to moan, the volume and frequency of his utterances increasing as he neared his orgasm. “OH MY FU--MICK!” Ian screamed as as he detonated inside Mickey’s mouth, nearly losing his balance, his climax, so incredibly powerful.

Mickey had clearly enjoyed pleasuring his man immensely, and took pride in how quickly he could
accomplish it, when necessary, his own member now throbbing with envy. Mickey stood up, washing up Ian’s entire private area, then tapping him on the ass, as if to send him on his way to get dressed. “No way I’m leaving you in this condition after what you just did for me,” Ian asserted, lathering his hands and taking hold of Mickey’s enticing manhood. “It’s okay. We gotta get ready,” Mickey breathed. “Not until you get off!” Ian insisted, slowly beginning to stroke Mickey’s erection. Mickey closed his eyes, resigning himself to Ian’s will as he leaned his head and upper body against the shower wall, Ian delivering a searing, passion-filled kiss, while manipulating Mickey’s cock exquisitely.

Mickey erupted in a matter of minutes, moaning Ian’s name rhythmically as he did. “Okay, now we really gotta get ready,” Mickey smiled, after regaining his bearings. The couple finished washing up, then quickly dressed, Mickey in a sexy-ass pair of dark blue Dockers and a cornflower blue button-down shirt, and Ian in a pair of brown Calvin Klein Khakis, with a tan Henley, each admiring the other’s tremendously good looks before heading down the stairs to rally the troops.

Kayla and Yev were both ready to go and looking fine, Yev’s hair still damp from the shower, just like Mickey’s, but styled nonetheless. Kayla had obviously taken some time, primping them both to perfection. “All set?” Ian called out to the group? “Yep!” Yev smiled in response, the family making their way out to the car anxiously.

Ian hopped in the driver’s seat, feeling remarkably relaxed, despite his current predicament, thanks to his husband’s felatiotic talents. As he drove to dinner, Ian couldn’t help but think that he needed to share his secret with Mickey—and soon. He just didn’t know how to go about it without causing a major argument—or worse.

The valet greeted Ian, opening the car doors for the entire family, Johnny meeting them all at the door and whisking them off to the private alcove, where Manuel and Mandy were already seated and waiting at a large, round table, Manny sitting at a smaller square table, set up with activities for children.

Mickey and Ian smiled at each other as they sat down next to one another, Kayla taking the seat on the opposite side of Mickey. Johnny escorted Jose and Brach in next. Jose had kindly offered to pick Brach up at the airport, rather than having him take a car, which gave them a chance to talk before their arrival. As they entered the alcove, it seemed to Mickey that they had hit it off well so far, Jose giving Mickey a ‘thumbs up’ on the sly, verifying his suspicion.

Doc arrived immediately after them, looking tired, but happy to see Kayla, making his way to the table and immediately grasping Kayla’s hand to kiss it, before taking the available seat next to her. He was followed by Reesie and Mikhaila, both of whom were dressed to the nines, Mikhaila in a beautiful, lacy, blue dress that set off her gorgeous Mickey eyes, and Reesie in a more understated, turquoise dress that accentuated her tiny waist nicely, as well as enhancing her bustline.

As the new arrivals took their seats at the table, Manuel began introducing Brach to everyone, describing each person at the table in the most flattering of terms, especially his stunning wife, who was absolutely glowing in her purple, off the shoulder gown, accentuating her flawless, despite being pregnant, figure. Before Manuel could even get to Reesie, Brach was blatantly eying her up. Reesie, as was typical of her, had no clue that this was going on, but had, herself, taken a subtle notice of Brach’s model-perfect looks, his wavy, sandy blonde hair, contrasting with his deeply-bronzed skin and punctuated by his piercing, ice blue eyes. Reesie’s obliviousness to Brach’s interest came across to him as her being aloof, or not all that impressed, which couldn’t have been further from the truth. When Manuel introduced her, Brach immediately stood up at the table, reaching across to take her hand as he re-introduced himself awkwardly.
Mickey grinned over at Ian, never having seen someone as good-looking and experienced as Brach get flustered. Ian smirked back, rolling his eyes. Reesie nodded, smiling shyly, as Brach held her hand for just about a second too long.

The evening was off to a great start, the group enjoying drinks, appetizers and salad as they awaited the main course. Manuel spoke casually with Brach about the business, not being one for asking a whole bunch of canned questions. He let the conversation flow naturally, Mickey listening intently to the exchange. Reesie and Doc were both too caught up in their own experiences to give Ian any kind of a hard time, neither casting so much as a dirty look in Ian's direction.

Mickey was beyond thankful to Ian for what he had insisted on doing for him in the shower, because he was now able to focus almost completely on Brach and the rest of the dinner guests, rather than lusting after Ian incessantly all night, although he did feel a twinge between his legs, now and then, when he looked over at his to-die-for mate.

As the group neared the end of the evening, Doc ordering another magnum of Chablis for all to enjoy, it was unanimous: Brach was in! This had formally been decided when, shortly after Reesie had excused herself to the restroom, Brach did the same. As it turned out---not surprisingly---Brach and Reesie ended up stopping outside the restrooms to have a private conversation, giving the decision-makers at the table plenty of time to discuss and agree that Brach was a perfect fit for the co-manager position. In fact, both Mickey and Manuel were hopeful that he could be persuaded to stay and begin work immediately.

Mickey, having been relatively quiet all evening, spoke up to make the offer. “Don’t wanna put ya on the spot, Brach, but we all agree you’d make a great manager, and hope you’ll consider stayin’ here and gettin’ started right away. We’ll pay for anything you need right now, and send for your important stuff in LA. Like I already told ya, you can stay in one of the factory suites ‘til you’re ready to get a place of your own. So...think about it…” Mickey finished, turning to pour more wine for everyone.

The group continued enjoying themselves: drinking, talking, smiling, and just reveling in the joyful togetherness they were all blessed to be a part of. Suddenly, Brach stood up, holding his glass in the air.

“I’d like to make a toast. To Mickey and Ian, and their beautiful family, for believing in me, and for making this one of the best nights I’ve had in a long time. To Mickey and Manuel, for flying me here, treating me like royalty, and giving me this awesome opportunity to become part of such a bomb company. And to Jose for scooping me up at the airport and treating like a brother, from the minute he met me. I’m honored to have been offered,” Brach paused, sneaking a peak at Reesie before continuing, “and stoked to accept the co-manager position at Ojos Azules!” Brach finished with great excitement, the rest of the table responding, “Here! Here!” before drinking from their wine glasses.

Mickey smiled widely, first at Manuel, then briefly at Reesie, before standing up to shake Brach’s hand. “Thanks, man,” he said to Brach sincerely. “We really need ya.”
Ian woke up, his face soaked with tears, his body and the sheets surrounding it, drenched in sweat. He pried himself loose from Mickey’s back slowly, doing his best not to disturb him. He had one foot on the floor and was swinging his other leg around when he heard Mickey’s voice. “Hey!” he said softly, reaching for Ian’s arm, before Ian could maneuver himself out of reach. “You okay?” he asked. “Fine,” Ian muttered, making a second attempt to get up off the bed. “Cuz ya didn’t seem okay before ya woke up,” Mickey began, tightening his grip on Ian’s wrist. “You were apologizin’ to me in your sleep,” he added, craning his neck to get a look at Ian’s face, the rising sun shedding just barely enough light for Mickey to see his averted eyes and tear-stained cheeks. Ian shrugged his shoulders silently, looking away as he tried, for a third time, to rise from the bed. “And ya were cryin’ and beggin’ me to forgive ya,” Mickey finished, pulling Ian down into a lying position, then straddling him as he stared down into his watery eyes. “Ian, there somethin I should know ‘bout?” Mickey implored him, Ian still avoiding eye contact as he silently contemplated his response, before Mickey added, “There someone else?!” Mickey’s face was beet red, his eyes welling up with tears as he grasped Ian’s shoulders tightly.

“You gotta be fucking kidding me!!” Ian yelled, fighting with all of his strength to throw Mickey off of him, then storming off to the bathroom. “There’s no one but you, ASSHOLE! If you only knew…” Ian hollered, his voice cut off with the slamming of the bathroom door.

Mickey leapt out of bed, running to the bathroom door, which Ian had locked, preventing Mickey from following him. “Ian! Let me the FUCK IN, BEFORE I KICK THE MOTHERFUCKIN’ DOOR DOWN!” Mickey screamed at the top of his lungs, his neck veins bulging, as he tried the door repeatedly, banging on it loudly with his fists.

Now huddled behind the door, sobbing into his knees, as he hugged them protectively into his own body, Ian didn’t know what to say or do. Mickey was far too enraged to have a conversation with, at this point, but Ian didn’t know how to calm him. Ian continued to hide, ignoring Mickey’s incessant pounding and screaming, Ian’s sobs escalating to the point that his body was now involuntarily gasping for air, his diaphragm spasming uncontrollably, when suddenly he heard a second voice outside the door. It was Kayla.

“Mikhailo!! What the HELL is going on? You know you have Yevgeni scared to death?!!” she chided Mickey, demanding an answer. “Don’t worry ‘bout it, Ma!” he yelled, his voice lowering slightly in volume as he stopped battering his fists against the door. “Oh, I’m quite worried!” she said in a softer, yet still admonishing tone. “You...you don’t understand…” Mickey began, his mother and her fearsome, five-foot-nothing, 100-pound frame somehow managing to put him on the defensive.

“I understand one thing,” Kayla began, more calmly this time. “That is your husband in there and, no matter what he may have said or done to upset you, he deserves to be able to walk out of that bathroom without fear of physical harm…” Mickey cut her off, “I’m not gonna fuckin’ hurt him. He won’t fuckin’ talk to me!”

“Mikhailo!! What did you do?!!” Kayla demanded, once again becoming angry with her son. “Ian, honey, I want you to come out here,” she spoke softly through the door, Ian standing up, then pulling the door open gingerly, peeking out, then looking down at his feet as he walked warily out into the bedroom. What had started out as fear, had turned to anger, and now back to fear again. He didn’t know what he was going to say to Mickey, or what to expect from him, and that made two of them. Mickey just stared at him, also at a loss for words, now that his mother was standing three feet away.
“Now,” Kayla said, looking back and forth between the two of them, “can I trust you two to have a civilized conversation, while I go and coax Yevgeni out from his bathroom? Poor kid is afraid!” Mickey and Ian each nodded in affirmation, making brief eye contact before Kayla turned and walked out the door. “And we have a brunch to attend!” she called back over her shoulder, instantly making them both feel like pieces of shit, as they realized it was almost Mother’s Day AND she wasn’t supposed to be using the stairs.

As Kayla walked out the bedroom door, pulling it shut behind her, Mickey said, “If I only knew what?” staring wide-eyed at Ian. “Mick,” Ian began, his voice wavering, “I really didn’t wanna talk about this until after the sample drive at the nursing school,” he continued, still trembling as he spoke, “and this is definitely not the time,” he concluded, backing away from Mickey as he watched his temper flare again. “What the fuck, Ian?! I NEED to know NOW!!”

Ian looked around the room, as if he were searching for a secret exit, designed for emergencies, such as this one. “Listen...It’s complicated...uh...can we have lunch today with Doc?” Ian stammered. “Ian! ...the fuck does Doc have to do with this?!” Mickey yelled. “Keep your voice down!” Ian whispered, glancing toward the door. “Losin’ my patience here, Gallagher!” Mickey growled through gritted teeth. Ian sighed deeply, his lower lip quivering as he pled with Mickey, “Please! Just trust me!” “...The fuck should I trust you? Ya won’t tell me shit!” Mickey raised his voice, pacing back and forth to keep from putting Ian through a wall.

Ian took another deep breath, then began speaking in little more than a whisper, “Is there anything you wouldn’t do to save Mom’s life?” Mickey rolled his eyes angrily. “...The fuck you askin’ stupid questions for?!” he barked. “So I’ll take that as a ‘no’,” Ian concluded, his voice and breathing becoming more regular. Mickey nodded in agreement, still wondering where the fuck Ian was going with all this.

“Okay, so there’s a possibility I wanna explore,” Ian said softly, “but we need to talk it over with Doc, and I’m not sure he has all the info he needs. Plus, I don’t wanna discuss it around Mom,” Ian added, watching Mickey’s anger recede as it slowly sunk in that Ian’s nightmare apology had nothing to do with another man, and everything to do with helping his mother. He didn’t know exactly what was up, but at least he knew it didn’t involve cheating. Mickey had secretly worried about Ian’s fidelity, ever since his manic days when he was pretty free with his body, despite their relationship. And now, his love for Ian was so deep, he didn’t know if he could go on, if Ian were ever to be unfaithful.

“So what you were cryin’ and apologizin’ about has somethin’ to do with Mom?” Mickey asked, still baffled as to what the connection could be between the two. “Yes,” Ian replied shortly. “Let me get in touch with Doc to see about having lunch, okay?” he asked, looking to Mickey for approval, and a way out of this mess of a conversation. Mickey nodded in agreement. “Better fuckin’ be today, or you’re tellin’ me yourself!” Mickey threatened, Ian approaching him for a kiss. “Okay,” Ian breathed into Mickey’s mouth as he sucked on his beautifully swollen lips, relishing heir salty taste and engorged texture, “Love you so fucking much, Mick.”

Ian breathed a gargantuan sigh of relief, having dodged a bullet, at least for now. He began texting Doc as Mickey headed for the shower, but then decided to call instead. Doc answered on the first ring, in a state of panic, “Ian! What is it? Is she...” “Doc, Mom’s fine. Well, actually we...I put her through some shit this morning, but, listen, I don’t have much time...” Ian struggled to quickly bring Doc up to speed. “What do you mean ‘put her through shit’?” Doc asked angrily.

“I mean Mickey and I were arguing, but it’s okay, except we have to explain about me being a match, so I was hoping you finished researching my meds...” Doc interrupted Ian, “No, I’ve only just begun the research. There are many variables to consider, and there is very limited data, since
patients taking Lithium are routinely eliminated as possible donors before they are tested. This is going to take some time,” Doc explained. “And ‘we’ don’t have to explain anything to Mickey. That’s your responsibility! He needs to know that you did this on your own, and certainly not with my blessing,” Doc asserted, taking a tough stance.

“Okay, I’ll tell him I tested myself, but can you at least be there to explain what you know?” Ian pleaded with Doc, not wanting to be alone with Mickey when he told him. “This really isn’t fair, Ian. You’re putting me in a terrible position, not only with Mickey, but also with Kayla!” Doc complained. “But I’ll be there, because the bottom line is, you could be Kayla’s only chance at survival and, the more I thought it over, the more I realized how difficult it would be for me, and the entire family, to sit back and watch her….” as Doc paused, Ian could hear him falling apart on the other end of the phone.

“So sorry, Doc!” Ian whispered into the phone. “This,” Doc sobbed, “is not your fault.” Ian realized that he was not responsible for Kayla’s illness, but could be the key to her recovery, despite the possible negative consequences for himself. He just couldn’t predict how Mickey would react to the news, or what course of action he would want him to take. Suddenly, Ian felt nauseous, retching as he ran for the toilet, just as Mickey was coming out of the shower. “Morning sickness?” Mickey grinned as he walked past Ian, making his way to the closet.


Mickey and Yev were both ready to go at around the same time, Kayla having successfully calmed Yev and gotten him his breakfast. “Wanna ride to school with me?” Mickey asked Yev as he grabbed his keys off the island. Yev looked at Mickey skeptically. “It’s okay, buddy. I’m done yellin’. Ian just scared me, is all,” Mickey said honestly. “Why were you scared?” Yev asked, a look of confusion and uncertainty on his face. “We had a nightmare,” Mickey answered, Ian corroborating Mickey’s story with a nod. “C’mom, let’s go, little man,” Mickey called out reassuringly as he wrapped his arm around Yev’s shoulders. “See ya at Frontera, ‘round noon?” Mickey confirmed on his way out the door. “I’ll text you,” Ian replied, immediately wishing he had kissed Mickey goodbye before he left.

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It was a busy morning at the factory, Brach having reported for his first day of training, and nearly half the line at the main factory having called off sick with the flu. Needless to say, things were not running smoothly, which made for a rough training day for Brach and a high-stress day for Mickey and Manuel. Jose, as soon as he found out about the call-offs, sent two workers from the other location to work for Brach. Mickey and Manuel decided, since they were still short workers, to have Brach work the line for his first morning, so he could learn about all of the machinery, first hand.

Brach jumped in with both feet, or at least the best he could, his sprained ankle causing him to have a slight limp. When Mickey asked him about it, he said it was no big deal, but once Manuel saw him struggling, he insisted that he go see Doc at the clinic to make sure nothing was broken. Brach requested that he finish the morning, at least, before heading to the clinic, offering to go there on his lunch hour. “Brach, you can have lunch AND go to the clinic. Take an extra hour, PLEASE!” Mickey urged, texting a few of his ‘extra’ workers to see if they were available.

Brach seemed to take to factory work quite readily, becoming skilled at the operation of the various machines and getting friendly with many of the workers. “You do know you’re their boss, right?” Mickey asked. “Yeah, and so do they, but we’re still cool,” Brach explained. Mickey smiled. He
understood what Brach meant. He and Manuel handled the guys in much the same way. They were like a family. This is why everyone knew Brach would be a nice addition to Ojos.

By 11:30, Mickey hadn’t yet heard from Ian, but decided to head out anyway, offering to drop Brach at the clinic on his way. Brach accepted, passing Doc, who was headed to his car, on his way in. Mickey looked down at his phone, noticing that he had, in fact, received a message from Ian, as well as one from Thomas.

“Wanna ride with me?” Mickey asked, rolling down his window. “Sure,” Doc answered as he read a text on his phone. He got into the passenger seat, immediately gushing about what a good time Kayla was having with Yev at the school. “She’s been sending pictures all morning! Those two are like two peas in a pod, both smiling and enjoying their time together!” Doc announced happily. “I’m glad,” Mickey responded. “Hope this lunch goes good. Have to admit, I’m nervous. Don’t really understand what this is all about,” he explained, Doc immediately beginning to squirm uncomfortably in his seat. He had considered declining Mickey’s invitation to ride with him for this very reason, but had decided against it, not wanting to appear rude.

Now he was on the spot. “Everything will become much more clear, once you hear from Ian at lunch,” Doc responded awkwardly. “But I still have research to do, if this avenue is to be pursued,” Doc continued, choosing his words carefully. Mickey nodded, a puzzled look etched into his face, as he pulled up to the valet, the pair getting out and walking into the restaurant.

“Hey, I dropped Brach off to have his ankle x-rayed,” Mickey began, changing the subject. “So can he get that looked at with you not bein’ there?” Mickey asked, realizing that sending Brach at lunchtime might not have been the smartest decision. “Reesie can take the x-ray, but I definitely need to have a look at it. I’ll text Reesie and tell her to order some lunch from the deli for them. He can wait for me there...with her,” Doc smirked, the mutual attraction between the two not being lost on him. “Good idea,” Mickey chuckled as they walked into the alcove, Ian already sitting at the table, bouncing his left leg anxiously.

“Hi,” Ian said nervously, standing up to shake Doc’s hand, then leaning into Mickey for a light kiss. “Okay, so what do ya gotta tell me?” Mickey asked impatiently as he sat down beside Ian. Ian looked over at Doc, then back at Mickey, taking a deep breath before blurtig out, “I’m a match for Mom.”
Unconditional Love

Mickey stared at Ian, utterly dumbfounded. Ian looked away, trying his damnedest not to burst into tears, on the spot, at Mickey’s lack of response. There was an awkward silence at the table, the waiter finally breaking it to take a drink order for Doc and Mickey. Doc ordered a Pepsi, Mickey, a shot of Jack Daniels and a Corona, after which Mickey resumed eyeing Ian up vacantly.

Finally, Mickey took a deep breath, counted to ten in his head, then spoke, “So tell me more. How’s this gonna work?—Doc?” he asked, shifting his gaze to Doc. “Well, that’s the problem,” Doc began, clearing his throat nervously. “Right now, I don’t have enough information to know how long Ian will have to be off his meds…”

“Wha...What did you just say?” Mickey asked slowly, feeling his blood pressure increasing by the nanosecond. “Mick,” Ian interjected, “I can’t donate to Mom until my white blood cell count is normal, which will happen after I stop taking my…” Mickey cut him off, mid-sentence, “No! No fuckin’ way!!” he said, raising his voice, despite his marked efforts to remain calm in front of Doc and the restaurant staff.

“See, Mick, this is why I didn’t want to discuss this yet. We don’t have enough information. Plus, we could still get another match through the sample drive on Tuesday,” Ian explained, trying to diffuse Mickey.

“No...no!!! This is too fuckin’ risky! Last time he was off his meds, he ended up in Lake fuckin’ Michigan! Doc, why would you go ‘head and test Ian, when you know he needs his meds?? Now I gotta choose between my husband and my Mom’s life! What the fuck?!” Mickey shouted, no longer giving a shit how he appeared or who heard him.

“He didn’t,” Ian admitted, taking Mickey’s hand in his own, Mickey resisting at first, then reluctantly allowing it. “Please, Mick! Please understand!” Ian begged, his eyes overflowing with tears. “I tested myself because I...I couldn’t stand the thought that...that I might be able to save Mom’s life...but we would never know, since I wasn’t being tested,” Ian explained haltingly, amid a collection of sniffs and whimpers. “It’s my fault! And I should’ve told you…” “NO!, We shoulda talked BEFORE you did it! Same problem as Costa Rica, only WAY FUCKIN’ WORSE!!” Mickey yelled, squeezing Ian’s hand uncomfortably. “FUCK!!! Don’t know what the fuck to do...to think...wanna kick your fuckin’ secretive ass...but also wanna know if somehow this can work...” Mickey rambled, tremendously conflicted.

There was a lull in Mickey’s tirade, the waiter finally feeling comfortable enough to approach the table with their drinks. Mickey gulped his shot down the second after it hit the table, gesturing to the waiter to bring the bottle, then chasing it with his beer, glaring over at Ian as he did.

Doc sipped his soda, then cleared his throat, before beginning to speak. “Mickey, I need you to know that I am also very upset with Ian’s actions, but hopeful at the same time. I definitely didn’t plan for him to be tested at all, and surely believe he did it too soon. One benefit of his decision to go against medical protocol, however, is that I have more time to research. The problem, as I told Ian, is that, since patients who take lithium are precluded from being tested, via a pre-qual questionnaire, there isn’t any readily available data on donors who had been taking it. So I need to find out how long he needs to be off the lithium.”

“...there any other medication he could use instead?” Mickey asked, pouring and gulping down his second and third shots, back to back, chasing them, once again, with his remaining beer, then holding up a finger to order another. “There could be, but I can’t answer that yet. I also need to know...
what other meds Ian tried before Lithium---anything that didn’t work,” Doc clarified. “I...I got an old list somewhere,” Mickey piped up, looking down at his phone. “How...how is that even possible?” Ian asked, surveying Mickey’s face in disbelief. “Got it saved in my phone. I’ve had this phone forever...had it brought to me when I busted out,” he explained, suddenly feeling the calming effects of the alcohol. He found the list easily, texting it to Doc.

This was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Ian had been holding back tears from the moment he confessed what he had done. And now, he was so touched by the fact that Mickey had managed to keep that list, for all those years, through all he had endured, that he broke down, resting his head on the table as he sobbed. Mickey took his hand from Ian’s, rubbing his back softly to comfort him.

“Can I have a minute with my husband?” Mickey asked, a slight slur to his words. “Sure,” Doc said politely. “In fact, I may just order my lunch to go, so I can see Brach before too much longer. I can’t tell you much more until I do some more extensive research anyway. I’m just glad you’re not upset with Ian,” Doc said, sounding relieved.

“Oh, I’m fuckin’ furious!” Mickey corrected him. “Now’s just not the time…” Mickey’s voice trailed off as he rested his head on top of Ian’s. “Enjoy your lunch! I’m going to grab mine and head back to the clinic,” Doc said, excusing himself. “Thanks, Doc,” Ian mumbled into the table. “You’re welcome,” Doc replied, smiling faintly, before addressing Mickey. “Mickey--not that it’s any of my business, but I think it might be best if you ate something and maybe slowed down on the whiskey,” he suggested. “Don’t want to have an accident or be caught driving drunk.” Mickey nodded, capping the bottle of JD, then resuming his position with Ian.

“Ian,” he breathed into Ian’s ear, “look at me,” he finished, lifting his head up. Ian turned toward Mickey, his eyes, nose and lips markedly inflamed from crying so hard. “I’m so fuckin’ mad right now...I can hardly see straight...Don’t matter how pissed I am though, it don’t make me love you any fuckin’ less, so what the fuck can I do?” Mickey asked, a look of forlorn desperation in his mesmerizing, crystal blue eyes. Ian smashed his face against Mickey’s passionately, kissing him hard. Mickey returned Ian’s kiss, hugging his body into his own and holding on for dear life. “Just can’t lose you, Ian. And you bein’ off your meds is fuckin’ dangerous! There’s gotta be another way…” Mickey said softly as he continued holding Ian tightly against him.

Ian literally couldn’t stop himself from crying, feeling so hopeless about the whole prospect of being a donor, particularly after hearing Doc’s uncertainty. Mickey consoled him, promising to be by his side through thick and thin, as he had always said, and done, throughout their relationship.

Mickey let go of Ian, then called the waiter to the table, asking him to take the bottle of JD away and ordering lunch for both of them: Hot pastrami sandwiches with Pasta Fagioli Soup. As the couple waited for their food, Ian finally began to calm down, thanks to Mickey’s soothing assurances. Mickey opened his phone up again, at long last, getting the opportunity to read his message from Thomas, bypassing some pictures from his mother that he fully intended to check out afterward.

Mickey read Thomas’ message to Ian:

“Svetlana has been granted a visa and will be officially eligible to leave Russia by the end of next week. She will need a plane ticket, which I can arrange through Bigley. I just need to know how soon you want her in Mexico. I’m sure you need some time to make living arrangements, etc.”

“Oh shit!” Ian exclaimed. “With all the craziness today, I forgot to send Svet’s necklace from Yevgeni to her!” “It’s alright,” Mickey responded. “He can give it to her when she comes, but I gotta tell ya, as much as I know Yev wants to see her, I’m not lookin’ forward to tellin’ Mom she’s comin’!” Mickey lamented. “You’re so scared of Mom!” Ian laughed. “So are you, asshole! Didn’t see you hesitatin’ when she told ya to get your ass outta the bathroom this mornin’!” Mickey pointed
“Yeah, you’re right! Pretty scary! I’ll be there for you when you tell her,” Ian assured Mickey.
“Fuck! Least you could do is help me tell ‘er, tough guy!” Mickey said sarcastically. “Yeah, and wait ’til Reesie finds out,” Mickey added. “Why?” Ian asked. “She knows Svet’s the reason I got in half the fights I did in prison---fuckin’ Russians!” Mickey muttered. “Yeah, well maybe if you weren’t in there trying to kick everyone’s ass…” Ian began, their banter interrupted by their lunch.


Ian nodded as he looked down at his food, but it wasn’t what he was hungry for. He wanted Mickey, and he wanted him BAD! All the arguing and early morning manhandling had him hot for Mickey to begin with, but now that there was the threat of ‘punishment’, he couldn’t stop thinking about it, and about everything HE wanted to do to Mickey...torture him, tease him and treat him like gold---all fucking day long...squirt whipped cream all over him and lick it off slowly.

He wanted to fuck him, slow, fast, soft, hard—every possible way—until he begged and screamed. He wanted to watch Mickey’s intensely beautiful face while he came, to control exactly when and how it happened, to make him ask for permission. He wanted the rest of the day to prove to Mickey that everything he had done, he did for him, that he loved him more than words could say—and he wanted to do it without words, to SHOW Micky what he meant to him, to make him FEEL it at the most primal level.

“Fuck!” Ian mumbled under his breath. “What?” Mickey asked as he continued to eat, oblivious to Ian’s sordid plans for him. “Nothing,” Ian replied, adjusting himself on the sly, under the table, Mickey immediately noticing and smirking at him.

Ian knew, unfortunately, however, that Mickey would be returning to work for the afternoon, and that he had to pick Mom up from the school soon. She would be tired and need her rest, so he’d have to take her home before heading back for Yev and Mikhaila shortly afterward, unless Mickey could pick them up. Either way, they were in for a weekend with kids and a sick mother.

He thought, for a fleeting moment, about taking Mickey out to his car to bang, but that wasn’t going to cut it. Ian wanted a long, uninterrupted session with his man, so he could take his time, so they could enjoy each other fully. He stared into Mickey’s eyes as they both ate lunch, no words necessary. Mickey was now getting Ian’s message, loud and clear. “I’ll figure somethin’ out...soon,” Mickey said softly, responding to Ian’s unspoken request. Ian nodded, reaching between Mickey’s legs to fondle him for a brief moment. “Ian, I gotta stop and get Brach, then I gotta go back to work, but I won’t forget, okay?” he assured him, his cock now every bit as hard as Ian’s.

As they finished their meal, Mickey checked his phone. Still no text from Brach. He texted him:

“Did you see Doc? What did he say? Did you have a chance to eat?”

Mickey checked out his mother’s pictures, sharing them with Ian as he awaited a response from Brach. Yev and Kayla looked so tremendously happy in every picture. If Mickey didn’t know his mother had leukemia, he’d never be able to tell. She looked so healthy and vivacious. The kids brought something alive in her. He could see it every time she was with them. In fact, he was starting to think they were doing her a disservice by not having her babysit because of her illness, which gave him an idea.
Mickey’s thoughts were interrupted by a return text from Brach:

“Yes, no broken bones. Out to lunch. I have a ride back. See you soon. Thanks!”

Mickey smiled, sharing the text with Ian, who shook his head knowingly. “This is going to be very interesting,” Ian commented, sending heart and winky face emojis to his sister, just to give her a hard time. Mickey nodded and snickered, before allowing his thoughts to return to the weekend arrangement he was now hoping to make.

Everyone was planning to have Mother’s Day Brunch at Sur de la Frontera on Sunday morning. That had been set up for weeks. Mickey thought it might be nice to have Doc and Kayla spend the night on Saturday, since Mikhaila would be sleeping at Reesie’s that night. If Kayla couldn’t handle the stairs, Doc would be happy to carry her, he was sure. If they were willing to stay, Mickey could take Ian out for dinner, and they could get a room somewhere private, maybe even a small beach villa for the night, where they could do their thing, without interruption and without fear of being overheard. It hadn’t been that long since their Costa Rica trip, but so much had happened since then; it just seemed ‘necessary’. Besides, Mickey could tell, by the look in his husband’s eyes, just what he needed—and he was going to make it happen.
Mother Love

Mickey had returned to the factory in a jovial mood, the alcohol he had consumed keeping him in good spirits, despite the heaviness his new knowledge brought with it. Manuel, smelling the odor of alcohol about Mickey’s person, asked him if lunch had gone okay. Mickey shrugged, not entirely sure how to answer, and preferring not to share any details until after the results of the sample drive were in. He, like Doc, Ian and Reesie, was hoping against all hope that another match would render their current prospective plan unnecessary, thereby allowing the whole thing to remain a secret.

“I was only asking because you smell like you had a liquid lunch,” Manuel clarified. “Had a few…” Mickey responded, heading out to the factory floor to check on Brach. “Mickey! I can’t thank you enough for this opportunity!” Brach said with a wide smile. “You have a good lunch?” Mickey asked, raising his eyebrows as he smirked. “I’m not gonna lie. Ian’s sister is amazing!” Brach replied with a sheepish grin. “All those hot models you been workin’ with all these years, and it’s a skinny, little ginger nurse that does it for ya?” Mickey chuckled. Brach felt like responding sarcastically, but held his tongue, opting instead to just nod his head as he smiled. After all, he had no idea what the circumstances were that led to Mickey and Reesie having a child together, but something had to have been there, at some point, unless she was artificially inseminated, which he supposed was a possibility. His mind was reeling, sorting through all of the possibilities, when Mickey commented, “She’s the best! Literally saved my fuckin’ life—more than once!”

Brach left that statement hang in the air, choosing not to ask Mickey a bunch of personal questions, but rather to smile, once again, and keep working. “Glad you're happy here, Brach! Great havin’ ya!” Mickey called over his shoulder, before walking the line cheerfully, checking in with various workers.

Once he was done socializing with his employees, Mickey, still feeling pretty good, moved to the corner of the factory, taking his phone out to look, once again, at the pictures his mother had sent, then beginning a response:

“Looks like you guys had fun! Wondering if you and Doc can stay with Yevgeni Saturday night. I’d like to take Ian out. We need some time to talk.”

He thought about broaching the subject of having a discussion with her as well, but decided against bringing up the Svetlana subject until after Mother’s Day, so as not to ruin it for her. He knew how upset she was going to be about Svet coming to live in Mexico. Still, he thought he and Ian should come up with a timeframe, since Thomas had asked.

Mickey texted Ian:

“Leave some time for me tonight. We need to address the Svetlana timeline.”

To which Ian responded:

“Leave some time for US! I have quite a few things to undress with you.”

Then came a second ‘correction’ text from Ian:

“address*---Damn autocorrect! Lol!”

Mickey texted back:

“Gonna have to wait til Saturday…and you won’t be Lol then! (Devil emoji)”
An electric current zipped through Ian’s body as he read Mickey’s last message. He was literally DYING to be alone with his husband. How could Mickey say he had to wait until Saturday? He tried to put it out of his mind, adjusting himself covertly as he left the family room, where he had been sitting with Kayla ever since he had picked her up at the school, heading to the kitchen to check out dinner options that would suit the kids.

His conversation with Kayla had remained light, both avoiding the subject of what had occurred that morning, and Ian opting not to discuss anything health-related. Seeing as there wasn’t much in the fridge to make for dinner, Ian returned to the family room as Kayla addressed him. “So you and Mickey have a hot date tomorrow night?” she asked, reaching for her phone as a text came through.

“We do?!” Ian asked with great excitement. “You mean you didn’t know about it? I guess I screwed up. Didn’t know it was a secret,” Kayla responded, shaking her head at herself for making an assumption. Ian cringed at her use of the word, ‘secret’. “No secrets!” he said nervously. “Tell me about this date!” he insisted. “Well, I guess maybe Mickey was waiting for me to check with Doc before he told you,” Kayla hypothesized. “Doc just confirmed he is available to spend the night here with me and Yevgeni tomorrow night. I’ll text Mickey to let him know. Then I’ll bet you will hear from him! I don’t want to spoil his surprise any more than I already have!” she giggled.

Now Ian couldn’t think about anything other than Mickey---hugging him, kissing him, making love to him, taking in his heavenly scent. Fuck! Mickey was just so...Mickey!!!!

Mickey Mickey Mickey Mickey Mickey Mickey Mickey Mickey---Ian was completely obsessed with the thought of him, daydreaming the afternoon away, nearly forgetting to pick up the kids.

“Ian,” Kayla finally said, breaking his solid two-hour streak of sitting silently, pining away for his husband. “Don’t you need to leave to get the kids?”

“Leaving now,” he said absently, his head still in a cloud of Mickeyness. As Ian drove to the school, he continued to fantasize about his gorgeous, compassionate husband. Now that he knew Mickey had plans for him for Saturday, he knew they were over the hump, in terms of putting his lie by omission behind them, and he was so looking forward to having alone time with Mickey before they were forced to make any heavy, impactful decisions about him being a donor.

As Ian sat, waiting for the children, still deep in thought, his phone buzzed. It was a text from Mickey, that read simply:

“Pack a bag. Tomorrow night your ass is mine. (laughing face)”

Ian sprouted an instant hard-on and was unconsciously rubbing himself when he caught sight of the kids, headed for the car.

“Hey guys!” he exclaimed with a big smile as they piled into the back seat. “Hi Daddy Ian! I missed you!” Mikhaila yelled, Yev following suit with a hearty, “Me, too!” “Did you guys have a good day?” Ian asked, turning to be sure Mikhaila had buckled herself in properly, before heading home. “Yes!” they replied in unison, Yev adding, “Brunch with Grandma was the BEST!”

“I’m glad you had fun! What should we have for dinner?” he asked, looking for suggestions, since there wasn’t much at the house. “Pizza!” Yev called out, before Mikhaila could say anything. “That okay with you, Mik?” Ian asked. “Okay!” she answered brightly. “Here, Yev, call Daddy and see when he wants to eat,” Ian instructed, hitting ‘send’, then reaching backward to hand him the phone. As Yev leaned forward to grab the phone, he noticed Svetlana’s necklace, still lying in the tray under the dash. “Oh no! Now Mommy won’t get her gift in time!” Yev screamed, immediately beginning to cry. Mikhaila tried to reach for her brother to give him a hug, but the straps of her car seat and the seat belt had her so tightly ensnared, that she couldn’t reach him.
“Yev, I’m so sorry!” Ian responded, feeling the tears welling up in his own eyes. “Now Mommy will NEVER come to see me!” Yev wailed, pummeling Ian’s seat with his fists. “Calm down, Yev!” Ian demanded, raising his voice. Yev continued to pound on the seat, seemingly ignoring Ian.

Ian pulled the car over, jumped out the driver’s side door and climbed into the back seat on Mikhaila’s side, consoling her for a moment, before reaching for Yev, grabbing his arms and holding them still. “Yev, calm down. I’m sorry,” Ian repeated, more calmly this time, taking both of his wrists into one hand and rubbing his back with the other. Yev stopped screaming, but was still breathing heavy, and had worked up quite a sweat.

Now that he was quiet, Ian took Yev into his arms and hugged him. It was then that Ian heard Mickey’s voice coming from his phone. “Ian! What the fuck?!” Mickey yelled, Ian immediately taking him off speaker and holding the phone to his ear. “I had to pull over,” Ian began to explain. “Yev was very upset that I hadn’t sent his mother her gift. I know what we talked about today, but I didn’t wanna…” “Stop talkin’.” Mickey cut Ian off, sighing deeply, before adding, “We’ll tell him and Mom tonight---together. Still need to let Thomas know when to send her, too. Just get your ass home!”

“Okay,” Ian smiled, letting go of Yev and buckling him back in. “Dad and I have something to tell you when we get home,” he announced, Yev still whimpering softly as he worked to catch his breath after his outburst.

When Ian pulled up to the house, Mikhaila immediately began struggling with her encumberments, freeing herself quickly and running for the door. “Daddy! Daddy!” she squealed with delight as Mickey opened the door, Mikhaila jumping into his arms. Ian and Yev followed after, Ian lugging both book-bags as Yev trudged along beside him, dragging his feet, his eyes downcast. “C’mon, Yev,” Mickey called out to him, “wanna talk to ya.” Yev picked up the pace infinitesimally, kicking at the sidewalk on his way in.

Ian closed the door behind him as he walked in, last. He wasn’t sure how Mickey planned for all of this to go down, and he secretly wished he could just bypass it all, throw his husband over his shoulder and carry him to bed, sequestering him for the night. Unfortunately, Mickey got started right away, setting Mikhaila down on her feet, then informing his mother that they had news to share with her and Yev. “Sit on the couch with Grandma, Yev. Mik, need you to go play in your room til I call ya,” he instructed with an authoritative tone of voice. Both children complied readily, Yev still sporting the Milkovich scowl.

“Ma, give me and Ian a minute,” Mickey requested, taking Ian by the hand and leading him into the first floor bathroom. Had Ian not been so rattled by this most recent turn of events, he surely would’ve attacked Mickey the minute he shut the bathroom door, their pent-up sexual energy fighting desperately for an outlet, drastically increasing in intensity with their close proximity to one another.

“Damn, Gallagher,” Mickey blurted out breathlessly, reaching for Ian in a momentary lapse of restraint, then immediately turning away as he attempted to refocus himself on the task at hand. “Fuck!” Ian whispered to himself as he felt his body instinctively react to its brief contact with Mickey’s. “I need a cold fucking shower,” he remarked, before changing the subject.

“So, how do you wanna do this?” Ian asked, avoiding eye contact in an attempt to cool his jets. “First of all, Yev needs to be told about his violent outburst,” Mickey asserted. Ian responded with laughter, followed by a snide question, “Yeah, what are YOU gonna tell him about it?” “That he can’t be pullin’ that shit. Only makes things worse,” Mickey explained. “So...just curious---where do you think he got the idea to bang his fists like that?” Ian asked, raising an eyebrow. Mickey breathed
harshly through his nose. He knew Ian had him on this one.

“Okay, so I’ll tell Yev it’s somethin’ we both gotta work on,” Mickey said softly, looking up at Ian with his beautifully soft, blue eyes, through his thick, dark eyelashes. God! How each wanted the other in this moment, both resisting their urges as they struggled to proceed with their discussion.

“How about what you’re gonna say to Mom?” Ian asked, physically turning away from Mickey again to maintain his composure. “I’m just gonna let you explain about the necklace, then I’ll break the news we got from Thomas and we’ll set a date. When you think that should be?” Mickey asked.

“Why put it off, Mick?” Let’s just do it and get it over with. Mom will accept it when she sees how happy Yev gets,” Ian reasoned. “Okay, man,” Mickey responded, putting his arm around Ian’s waist so they could walk out, side by side.

“Okay, guys,” Ian began. “First, Yev, can you tell Grandma why you were so upset in the car?”

“Yeah, and tell her what you did to Ian’s seat in the car, too,” Mickey added, Ian shooting him a look. Mickey felt he needed to take responsibility, but Ian thought Mickey had put him on the spot.

Yev curled up next to Kayla, speaking in little more than a whisper, “Daddy Ian forgot to send Mommy her necklace and now she’ll never come to see me!” Yev began to tear up as he continued, “So I yelled at Daddy Ian and punched his seat,” he admitted. “That all?” Mickey asked. “A lot. I punched his seat a lot,” Yev added. “Yevgeni!” Kayla reacted, raising her voice a bit, Yev turning to look at her with surprise. “Why would you do such a thing?” Yev shrugged his shoulders, looking over at Mickey. “I was mad,” he finally said flatly.

“Both you and your Daddy need to work on handling your anger better,” Kayla continued, as if she had heard Mickey and Ian’s bathroom conversation. “And I’m sure your Mommy would come and see you if she could, whether you send her a necklace or not. Your Mommy loves you. All mommies love their babies, but sometimes they can’t see them...even when they really want to,” Kayla explained, Mickey sitting down next to her, then hugging her hard as she began to weep softly.

“Love you, Mom,” Mickey breathed as he held her.

“Yev, your Daddy and Grandma spent a lot of years apart, but they both wanted to see each other the whole time. And they never stopped loving each other. That’s the same way it is for you and your Mom. Mick, you wanna share the news?” Ian asked, feeling the time was right. “Sure,” he said, smiling over at his son. “Your mother misses you and wants to see you real bad. We’re hopin’ she’ll be here in a week or so. We were gonna wait to tell ya ‘til we knew a date for sure, but…” Yev jumped up from the couch, running to Mickey for a hug, then to Ian, then sitting back down to hug Kayla, whose face was completely frozen in shock.

“Grandma! I can’t wait to see her! Just like when you saw Daddy again, right?” he asked, his adorable little face lit up like a Christmas tree with the same smile she remembered on her own son’s face when he was Yev’s age. “That’s right, honey!” she sniffled as she hugged Mickey and Yev into her, one on each side. “Just like when I saw your handsome Daddy again.”
The family had just finished up their Svetlana conversation when Mickey got a text from Manuel, asking if he and Ian would mind keeping Manny for the night. “Hey Ian!” Mickey called up the stairs. Ian had gone to get Mikhaila, who had been busy entertaining herself in her room. “Yeah?” Ian answered as he headed for the stairs, giving Mikhaila a piggyback ride down to the family room. “Mind if Manny spends the night?” “Yeah! Yeah! Manny!” Mikhaila cheered. “There’s your answer,” Ian replied, Mickey texting back a thumbs up.

“So, what are Manuel and Mandy up to tonight?” Ian asked. “Dinner and dancin’,” Mickey answered. “Speakin’ of which, Yev says we gotta order the pizza.” “Got it,” Ian said, preparing to make the call. “And guess who they’re goin’ out with?” Mickey asked, Ian holding a finger up as he ordered the pizza.

“It’ll be here in 30 minutes...Who?” Ian asked. “Just guess,” Mickey grinned. “Mom and Doc?” Ian figured, since he had seen Kayla packing a bag. “Nope, she’s just goin’ to his place for the night,” Mickey answered. “Jose and his flavor of the week?” Ian shrugged. “Nope!” Mickey responded. “I don’t know! Just tell me!” Ian whined impatiently. “Brach and…” Mickey paused, waiting for Ian to fill in the blank. “Reesie?” Ian guessed, pretty much figuring she was the only single female Brach had met in Mexico so far. “Uh huh,” Mickey confirmed. “She needs it!” Ian laughed. “Yeah? She the only one?” Mickey asked, raising a seductive brow. “You already know the answer to that fucking question,” Ian muttered, grabbing for Mickey’s ass as he brushed past him in the kitchen, Mickey scooting it just out of reach playfully at the last millisecond. “Fucking tease!” Ian mumbled. “Mmmm Hmm,” Mickey responded, already plotting his course for driving Ian absolutely nuts on their getaway.

‘Gonna learn not to lie to me…’ Mickey thought to himself as he conjured up the many methods he could employ to extract a fitting apology, complete with plenty of begging. That would have to wait for Saturday night, but Mickey had already begun the process with his enticing looks, frequent all-too-brief bodily contact, and occasional near misses, like this one.

When Manuel and Mandy showed up with Manny, they had Brach and Reesie with them, since Mandy’s favorite dance club was on the beach, just a few blocks from Mickey and Ian’s house. As the foursome stepped in with Manny, Mickey and Ian couldn’t help but notice an electricity between Brach and Reesie, not unlike what they had noticed between Mandy and Manuel when they had first met.

They exchanged knowing glances, as they often did when they had the same thought at the same time, then proceeded to greet them all, wishing them a good time and grabbing Manny’s things to get him settled into one of the kids’ rooms. Manny said his goodbyes, Mikhaila already taking him by the hand to go play. Yevgeni was building them a pillow fort in his room, so Ian headed up the stairs with Manny’s bag as Mickey saw the adults off.

Doc was the next to show up, stopping in briefly while Kayla put some finishing touches on her make-up. Of course, Doc thought she was absolutely ravishing without it, but she wanted to look her best, feeling as though the leukemia made her appear washed out. “Where’s Ian?” Doc asked in a low voice, as he sat on the couch with Mickey, awaiting his bride-to-be. “Upstairs with the kids,” Mickey answered, a note of curiosity in his voice. “I wanted to tell him about something,” Doc said, responding to the questioning look that was now fixed on Mickey’s face. “Yeah, well ya can tell me,” Mickey responded with an edge.
“Doc!” Ian called out as he descended the steps and joined them in the family room. “Ian, I was just saying that I have a bit of news to share. Of course, this is preliminary, but I may have found two other medications you could try using instead of lithium—temporarily, of course,” he began.

Mickey sighed heavily, not wanting to create a scene with his mother in the next room, but he was more than a little bit aggravated with what he felt was Doc’s assumption that this decision was between him and Ian. Mickey had thought, in his mind, that he and Ian should have a discussion if, after the drive at the nursing school, Ian was still the only match. He knew Doc was going to research Ian’s meds, but somehow Doc’s way of barging in and wanting to share possibilities with Ian tonight felt presumptive, like Doc’s and Ian’s opinions were all that mattered, like Mickey was going to be excluded, once again, from the decision-making process.

As Doc and Ian talked, throwing around drug names, half-lives and treatment protocols, Mickey realized Doc had really only addressed this conversation more toward Ian, due to its medical nature. Doc knew that Ian understood these things, while Mickey did not. Still, Mickey listened, trying to make sense of it all, and hoping to somehow reaffirm the idea that all of this was pending the result of Tuesday, and that he expected to have a discussion with Ian before anything changed with his meds.

Finally there was a lull, and Mickey took the opportunity to speak up, “Just wanna make sure ya both know this ain’t happenin’ unless no one else matches, and then I gotta know Ian ain’t gonna get fuckin’ sick again.”

“There are no guarantees...with any of this,” Doc conceded. “All we can do is hope for the best. “Fuck!” Mickey yelled, getting up from the couch abruptly to face them both. “So I could end up losin’ Mom AND Ian?!”

“What’s going on?” Kayla asked as she walked into the room. “I think it’s best if we wait and discuss this in a few days,” Doc suggested. Kayla glared at him, this being the first time Ian or Mickey had ever seen anything other than pure bliss between the two of them. “I don’t think so,” Kayla began. “Somebody better start explaining what I just heard Mickey say.”


“Do you two mind if I discuss this with Kayla myself? I think it might be best...for her,” Doc proposed. Ian stood up angrily, following Mickey, who was now on his way to the workout room.

“Let’s just go,” Doc pleaded with Kayla, who was already halfway to the workout room herself. “I’ll tell you everything,” he promised. “I can’t leave them here like this!” Kayla wailed, as if she were somehow responsible, tears streaming down her cheeks. “Kayla! They’ve survived together for years on their own. They will be okay!” Doc called out in desperation, his words falling on deaf ears as she disappeared through the back door.

Mickey had changed clothes in seconds flat, and begun running on the treadmill, ignoring Ian’s attempts at arguing further. He knew he was about to blow, so he bit his tongue, allowing Ian’s sharp words to bounce off him for the moment. He knew his mother would be walking in, any second, and wasn’t about to recreate the scene from earlier that morning.

“Ian!” Kayla yelled, raising her voice over his, causing him to take a break from his chastising of Mickey. “I’m not sure what’s going on, but I can tell you, it’s not Mickey’s fault. When people get sick, it’s no one’s fault. But when you love someone who’s sick, there’s nothing you wouldn’t do to fix it, and when you can’t, you get frustrated...angry,” she spoke softly and with great sadness.
“When my mother was sick, I thought if I was good, if I cooked and cleaned and helped take care of her, that she would get better. When she didn’t, I got mad. I blamed my dad, my sisters, the government...myself...” Mickey stepped off the treadmill, rushing over to hug Kayla, then pulling Ian into the embrace with them. And then he sobbed, Ian holding him close, burying his nose into Mickey’s shiny, wet hair and kissing him on the crown of his sweaty head. Somehow, Mickey still smelled like heaven, his scent and proximity stirring Ian up, from the inside out. The way he loved and wanted Mickey was so deep, so pure, so profound, he, too, was overcome with emotion, weeping softly as he clutched Mickey and Kayla tightly to his body.

“We’re okay, Ma. Thanks,” Mickey whispered, still holding onto them both himself. “Think we should let Doc fill ya in. Go an’ try to have a good night,” he added, allowing her to untangle herself from them. “Sorry, Mom,” Ian murmured remorsefully. “No need to apologize. Be good to each other. I love you both,” Kayla said reassuringly as she turned on her heel to leave.

“Oh, I’m gonna do this once. Then you’re gonna wait til tomorrow. You gotta learn,” Mickey said firmly, pulling Ian’s face to his and kissing him tenderly, at first, then gradually more forcefully, intently, as if he were making love to Ian, using only his mouth. Ian moaned softly, pressing himself longingly against Mickey’s taut, sexy body, their rock-hard cocks easily palpable to one another.

Mickey pushed Ian away abruptly. “Okay, that’s it,” Mickey said in a serious tone, laying down the law in spite of himself, bound and determined to carry out his punishment plan for Saturday. Mickey hopped back onto the treadmill without a single word, opting to work out his aggression that way. Ian disappeared back into the house, reappearing within minutes in his workout gear and hopping onto the elliptical beside Mickey. They finished their workout in silence, Mickey excusing himself for a shower.

When Mickey came out into the living room, he saw Doc and Kayla, still there with the kids, who were eating the pizza that must have arrived while they were working out. “Ma, you shoulda gotten me! Go enjoy your night...Please! I got this!” he insisted, shooing them out the door. “How’s the pizza, guys?” he asked with a sincere smile as he closed the door behind them, amid a chorus of ‘Bye, Grandma!’ “Good!” all three kids chimed in happily. “Wanna watch a movie?” he asked.

“Manny, when Yev was about your age, he used to like the Ninja Turtles. Remember, Yev?” Mickey asked. Yev nodded with a smile. “Let’s watch the Turtles!” Mikhaila shrieked with excitement. “So you’ve seen them, too, Mik?” Mickey asked. “Yeah!” Mikhaila answered, rolling her eyes as if to say, ‘Who hasn’t?’

Once he got the kids set up with the movie, he headed up to his bedroom, deciding to poke around until Ian got there so he could use the shower while Ian waited.

Ian, seeing that the kids were being entertained and had already eaten, grabbed a slice of pizza and headed upstairs for a shower, figuring Mickey should be finishing up. As soon as Mickey heard Ian on the stairs, he jumped in the shower, locking the door behind him. He washed up quickly, rinsing his hair, then lathering his right hand up in preparation for some much-needed self-pleasuring. He began to stroke his cock slowly, leaning his head and upper back against the shower wall. As he aroused himself to full capacity, he quickened his pace, ever so slightly, moaning softly, then getting gradually louder. He heard Ian try the door, so he knew he was right there, easily within earshot.

He continued to manipulate himself with practiced expertise, soaping up his index finger, then sliding down the wall to sit on the shower floor, gradually working his finger into his own hole, calling Ian’s name softly as he finger-fucked himself, imagining Ian sliding into him from behind while the water cascaded over him. Now Ian was pulling loudly at the door, calling out, “Mick, let me in! I’m here! I’ll do it!”
Ian could hear Mickey’s excitement escalating from outside the door, rubbing himself instinctively as he listened, completely enraptured, his earlier supplications intentionally disregarded. Ian could almost feel Mickey’s explosion as he listened to its beautiful sound, coming from the opposite side of the door, stroking his own cock until he was about to shoot his load onto the very door that separated them, moaning with enough volume to be easily heard over the trickle of the shower.

Upon hearing this, Mickey quickly shut off the shower and toweled off, busting out into their bedroom, nearly knocking Ian over with the door. “Stop!” he yelled at Ian, who was already off balance and had clearly been forced to abandon his stiff cock in favor of using both of his hands to steady himself. Ian’s manhood twitched and throbbed painfully, his balls sore and tight as fuck. “When I say, wait til tomorrow, I fuckin’ mean, wait til tomorrow!” Mickey warned Ian with a devilish glint in his eyes.

“Mick, why are you doing this to me?” Ian asked, resisting the urge to touch himself as he watched his exquisite, stark-naked husband search leisurely for something to wear. ‘Because, Ian, you really fuckin’ need to learn not to decide shit on your own that affects both of us, and not to fuckin’ lie and keep secrets. That’s why! And I fuckin’ know how to get your goddamn attention---and this is it!” Mickey growled, seductively shimmying on some boxers with a half-smirk, then turning toward the bedroom door.

“I’m goin’ to check on the kids and have some pizza. Don’t fuckin’ test me,” he cautioned as he peered back in Ian’s direction, his hypnotic, blue eyes burning into him. “And you’re gonna regret touchin’ yourself, too!” he added punitively.

Ian stood motionless, anticipating what he knew would be a marathon session with Mickey on Saturday, while simultaneously wondering how he was ever going to make it until then, or endure whatever Mickey had in store. “No one to blame but yourself,” he mumbled as he opted for a quick, cold shower, then put on his robe, heading downstairs to be a dad with the hottest, most loveable, kind, sensitive, beautiful man on earth, who, he was pretty sure, was going to torture the hell out of him in less than 24 hours.
Ian somehow survived the night, Mickey finally relenting to allow spooning, which he only very reluctantly acquiesced to, once he finally admitted they both needed it in order to sleep well. Ian did disturb Mickey’s sleep a number of times, during what must have been some extraordinarily erotic dreams. On three separate occasions, Mickey was awakened by Ian moaning his name softly, as he rubbed his captive cock against Mickey’s boxer-clad butt. Mickey had insisted they both wear undergarments to bed, once it was decided they would spoon, in order to avoid any ‘accidental penetration’.

Needless to say, both men’s sleep pattern had been less than optimal, Mickey chalking it up to one of the ‘necessary evils’ of teaching his sneaky, inconsiderate, naughty husband a lesson he wouldn’t soon forget.

Despite their rough overnight, they were still hosts to three children, all of whom were awake, hungry, and clamouring for them outside their door, which Ian had locked, unbeknownst to Mickey. “You can let ‘em in, since you locked the damn door,” Mickey mumbled, still half asleep. Ian pulled himself away from the soothing comfort of Mickey’s warmth, Ian’s only respite from Mickey’s brutal ban on bodily contact, begrudgingly, throwing on a pair of shorts and opening the door.

“You can let ‘em in, since you locked the damn door,” Mickey mumbled, still half asleep. Ian pulled himself away from the soothing comfort of Mickey’s warmth, Ian’s only respite from Mickey’s brutal ban on bodily contact, begrudgingly, throwing on a pair of shorts and opening the door.

“C’mon, guys! Let’s get some breakfast!” he called out, putting on the most cheerful voice he could muster. Mickey grinned to himself in amazement. Maybe he was being too hard on his poor, sweet hubby…

Nah! Ian had fucked up, for sure, and Mickey didn’t want him ever to do anything like that again! Whenever he started to think about lightening up on Ian, he remembered the feeling in the pit of his stomach when Ian dropped the bombshell—he had taken their life together into his own hands, with complete and total disregard for Mickey’s feelings—and it hurt like hell!

Not to mention the fact that this whole thing scared the shit out of Mickey. In the old days, Mickey would likely have opted for complete avoidance—to quit seeing and talking to Ian altogether—and, if Ian would have chased him down, as he typically did, they would have ended up coming to blows, so Mickey’s new approach, in his mind, seemed like a big improvement.

Mickey, after spending a good twenty minutes lounging, deep in thought, finally rolled out of bed, heading straight for the shower, opting for a steamy, hot one, during which he quickly took care of himself again, imagining Ian’s beautiful, pink lips sliding over him so perfectly, pulling them away occasionally to allow his teeth to graze him intermittently, just the way Mickey loved it. Mickey had convinced himself this was necessary, in order for him to have the strength to resist the many tempting advances he anticipated Ian making on him throughout the day.

Once he had finished his wash and wax, he dried off and began searching his closet for the ideal clothes for the morning, opting for something casual, yet enticing—after six years of marriage, he knew damn well how to get Ian going. He decided on a pair of ass-hugging athletic shorts and an arctic blue muscle shirt that accentuated both his arm definition and his gorgeous, crystal blue eyes. He dressed and groomed himself meticulously, checking himself in the mirror on his way out of the bedroom, before descending the stairs nonchalantly, Ian eyeing him up as soon as he came into his view from the island, where he was sitting with the kids, eating pancakes.

“Look good,” Ian complimented Mickey as he approached the island, serving himself from the stack of pancakes in the middle. “So do these!” Mickey responded, licking his lips as he covered his pancakes with syrup, maintaining eye contact with Ian throughout the whole process.
Ian sighed heavily as Mickey took his first bite, Ian’s mouth hanging open as he stared hungrily at Mickey’s syrupy lips. “Yes, they do,” Ian responded, catching himself just before he drooled on the table. Of course, the kids all thought he was referring to Mickey’s fluffy pancakes, but Mickey and Ian both knew exactly what Ian was talking about.

“Gonna be a long day,” Ian muttered, under his breath. “What’s that, Mumbles?” Mickey teased, loving the way he had Ian squirming already. Ian stood up, clearing his plate, then flipping Mickey off as soon as he was out of the kids’ line of vision. Mickey just shook his head, his phone buzzing before he could comment. It was a text from Manuel, which Mickey forwarded to Ian’s phone after reading:

“Thanks for keeping Manny! We had a great time! Made somewhat of an early night of it since Brach’s ankle was sore. Said he needed to get back to the factory to rest it, but Reesie insisted we drop him off at her place so she could give him an ice pack---LOL! We’d love to come and take the kids for an afternoon at the beach, if that’s okay.”

Ian smiled over at Mickey as he finished reading it, then read the last part out loud to the kids. “What do you think, kids? Is that okay?” Ian asked, sporting a wide smile. “YAY!” all three kids squealed with delight. “Let’s go get our suits on!” Yev shouted, taking off up the stairs, Manny and Mikhaila following close behind.

“Looks like we might get an earlier start than I had planned,” Mickey growled, raising his eyebrows as he brushed past Ian with his now empty plate and coffee mug, his ass bumping Ian’s package lightly as he squeezed between him and the sink. Ian inhaled deeply, catching a tantalizing whiff of Mickey’s divine scent. He wanted to grab Mickey so badly, he could taste it! Somehow, however, he managed, through sheer force of will, to refrain, despite every cell in his body desperately thirsting for him, Mickey’s essence drawing Ian in, like a moth to a flame.

“Gonna go pack some things…” Mickey trailed off as he made his way to the stairs, the kids running past him on their way back down. Ian took a pile of clean beach towels from the dryer, folding them and setting three out for the kids, leaving two on the island for Mickey and himself. He literally had no idea where they were going or what they were doing, but he figured the beach would likely be involved at some point, since Mickey had become so enamoured with the ocean, ever since Ian had taught Yev and him to swim. Ian loved seeing Mickey in the water; it made him feel as though somehow they had stuck it to Terry, who had never considered it important that his children learn to swim, choosing instead to teach them to be violent criminals, who lived in constant fear of him.

Mickey had grown so much over the course of their relationship, and yet, he was still Mickey. Not a day went by that Ian didn’t realize and appreciate what they had together, and it was breaking his heart to know that Mickey felt disrespected and taken for granted at present. Ian knew things needed to be set straight, and was willing to do whatever it would take to make that happen. He clutched the towels into his chest, closing his eyes and imagining that Mickey had allowed him to hold him, for just a brief moment.

“Gallagher!” Mickey yelled, jolting Ian back to reality. “Those the towels for the kids?” he asked impatiently, pointing to the ones Ian was holding. “No, these are for us,” Ian responded, putting them down and picking up the pile from the island. “These are for them,” he added, handing them off to Mandy and Manuel as they walked in.

“Thanks, man,” Mickey whispered to Manuel. “Now we can get an early start.” Manuel smiled, lifting Manny up onto his shoulders. Yev and Mikhaila were all smiles, greeting their Aunt and Uncle with hugs and kisses. “Ma and Doc are s’posed to stay here tonight, so can you just let ‘em know when you’re ready to leave?” Mickey asked. “And Reesie is coming to get Mikhaila sometime
later today, too,” he added.

“We got it covered, Mick,” Mandy assured him. “Go and have a good time. You guys deserve it,” Manuel chimed in. “You’re gonna get what you deserve,” Mickey hissed under his breath, so that only Ian heard him. Ian was so hot for Mickey by this time, that even Mickey directing those words at Ian gave him a monstrous chub. Ian grabbed the towels, carrying them in front of his raging hard-on. “You ready?” Mickey chucked, having taken immediate notice of his prior comment’s effect on his ridiculously hot husband.

“Yes,” Ian answered, following Mickey toward the car, the towels still obscuring his erection from the world. “Bye guys!” Ian called out as he hurried into the car, Mickey turning back to hug the kids goodbye. Typically, Ian would have been sure to do the same, but under the circumstances, he chose to avoid it.

“Fuck, Mick! You can’t be getting me so damn aroused in front of the kids,” Ian whined as he settled into the passenger seat, his soldier still defiantly standing at attention. “That’s nothin’” Mickey smirked. “Ian, you got no idea…”

Mickey skimmed Ian’s thigh with a single finger, seemingly by accident, as he reached for his phone, although his finger felt, to Ian, to have lingered, to have moved more slowly and deliberately than if it were truly unintentional. Ian shivered with excitement at the electrical impulse Mickey’s touch sent through him.

Mickey started the GPS in his phone, setting the course to a pre-entered location. Ian tried to read the address without Mickey noticing, but Mickey quickly yanked the phone out of Ian’s view, muting it as he stowed it between his left thigh and the driver’s seat.

“Wow, so it’s gonna be like that,” Ian commented, scanning Mickey’s face in an attempt to read his thoughts. “Yep,” Mickey sighed. “Big secrets—All day,” Mickey said with a voice that almost sounded sad, to Ian. ‘Fuck! He doesn’t even wanna do this to me…’ Ian thought to himself.

In truth, everything Mickey had planned could be quite the pleasurable experience for them both; it was the reasoning behind it that tore at Mickey—the fact that IAN LIED TO HIM—kept him in the dark about something so important in both of their lives.

Mickey drove in silence for what seemed to be the better part of an hour, before pulling up to a cluster of small villas, scattered over a private segment of the beach. Mickey stepped out of the car, popping the trunk to get their bag, then approached the largest and most secluded of the villas. Palm trees and other tropical brush obscured its entrance, which Ian could see, upon closer examination, was adorned with sunshine cactus and other wildflowers.

Ian followed closely behind Mickey, absolutely in awe of the natural splendor of his magical surroundings. As Mickey set their travel bag down in front of the door, pulling a set of keys from his pocket, Ian was so overwhelmed with affection for Mickey and all of his thoughtfulness, that he reached out for him, pulling his body to his own forcefully and laying an impassioned kiss on him, before Mickey even knew what hit him.

Mickey briefly succumbed to Ian’s white-hot intensity, his body acting instinctively as he pushed his frenzied lover roughly over the threshold. “Fuck, Mick! Want you so fucking bad!” Ian breathed into Mickey’s molten mouth. He began tearing at Mickey’s clothes maniacally, his hunger for him beyond his ability to control. “No!” Mickey yelled suddenly and with great conviction, shoving Ian away from him, Ian landing squarely on a large, round bed, cloistered in sheer, sand- and sea-colored draperies, below a mirrored ceiling, from which he suddenly found his own lust-laden eyes staring back at him.
“You gotta use the bathroom?” Mickey asked, after allowing Ian a moment to compose himself. “Not really. Why?” Ian asked, more than a little put out with the whole situation, at present. “You sure?” Mickey reiterated, “Cuz you ain’t gonna be up and around for a while, once I get started.”

A tiny fire lit inside Ian, quickly growing into a blazing inferno, engulfing his very soul, as he contemplated the reality of his situation. He might have to endure quite a lot of pain and unsatiated desire, but in the end, he would leave this little slice of heaven a deliriously happy man, satisfied beyond his wildest fantasies—this he could feel in his bones, his heart of hearts, deep within his soul--through the spiritual connection his felt so deeply with Mickey. More to the point, at the moment, he could feel it in his inordinately throbbing cock.

“I’m good,” he replied, smiling up at Mickey, a pervasive feeling of peace coming over him as he prepared mentally for the harrowing, yet immensely rewarding journey he was surely about to undertake. “Ready to do ANYTHING for you, MIck!” Ian breathed, his eyes ablaze with adoration and unabashed yearning.

Mickey turned away, setting their travel bag up onto the bed and unzipping it, then removing four coiled-up, adjustable bungee cords, each with carabiners at both ends. Next, he pulled out four single, locking, metal shackles, two larger than the other two. Last, he extracted a jar of coconut oil, opening the lid and setting it on the nightstand, next to the bed.

Ian could see where this was going already, but as Mickey stood up on the bed, fastening each bungee cord to a hook at one of the corners of the mirror above them, everything became crystal clear. Ian’s heart was racing with excitement already.

“Take all your fuckin’ clothes off!” Mickey barked, Ian suddenly feeling the need to pee, his body’s response to the electrical charge Mickey’s words sent through it. Ian stripped himself naked, then ran for the bathroom. “Hurry up!” Mickey bellowed. Ian did his business, then trotted briskly back to the bed, Mickey pushing him back onto it forcefully.

Ian shuddered in anticipation, anxiously awaiting Mickey’s next command. “Spread ‘em!” Mickey demanded, fitting the fetters tightly around each of Ian’s limbs as Ian maneuvered himself into a spread-eagle position on the bed. “Now don’t move a fuckin’ muscle,” Mickey ordered, as he stretched each bungee cord down from the ceiling, affixing it to its corresponding shackle, effectively rendering Ian, Mickey’s captive. Mickey adjusted the tension on each cord, until Ian’s arms and legs were held taut, in the air, approximately six inches above the plane of the bed.

“Now, what d’ya think I oughta do with ya?” Mickey asked rhetorically, scratching his chin as he puzzled over Ian’s stunningly beautiful, naked form. Ian squirmed slightly, his washboard abs rippling with his every move, shrugging his shoulders as best he could, just in case Mickey had anticipated some type of response.

Mickey moved away from the bed, placing himself well within Ian’s field of vision, as he slowly undressed himself, doing a 180, both to provide a breathtaking view of his meticulously-sculpted back, narrow, muscled waist and taut, round ass, and to hide his raging hard-on from Ian, as he stepped seductively out of his shorts.

Mickey turned back toward the bed, exposing the fully-erect, strikingly gorgeous member that Ian knew, loved and, at the moment, craved more desperately than his next breath. “You like it?” Mickey asked, fondling his own insanely stiff dick, as if doing so could possibly make it any harder. “Yes!” Ian exclaimed, licking his lips expectantly. “Mmmmm…..” Mickey responded, climbing onto the bed and standing over Ian’s face as he continued to stroke himself slowly.
“Bring it down here!” Ian coaxed, running his tongue over his lips slowly and deliberately. Mickey crouched down, his ass hovering just inches above Ian’s face, dipping his left hand into the coconut oil, while keeping a steady rhythm with his right hand on his cock. Ian stuck his tongue out further than he would ever have believed to be possible, but still, Mickey’s ass and balls were just beyond his reach. Mickey began to play with his hole, taunting Ian with soft, ragged moans in response to his own touch.

“Mick!” Ian yelled in desperation, “Please! I need it! I’m so sorry!!!” Mickey flipped down onto his knees, pulling his body straight up, so that now only Mickey’s hole was at Ian’s eye level, although Ian could see every move Mickey made in the mirror above them. Ian watched helplessly as Mickey finger-banged himself relentlessly, while jerking himself more vigorously, Ian’s torturously-taut manhood raised up off his abdomen, connected to it, just below his navel, by a thin string of pre-cum.

Mickey was fucking close---and Ian knew it. “Please!!! Please!!! Stop!!!” Ian begged. “I wanna do it for you---PLEASE!!”

Mickey laughed, slowing his self-manipulation to stave off his own explosion. “Okay...now what?” Mickey asked, all but stopping. “Bring me that ass!” Ian beseeched him. “Oh, you’d like that, wouldn’t ya?” “YES!” Ian screamed impatiently. “But it’s nowhere close to time for that,” Mickey snarled, moving himself down Ian’s body and rubbing his cock and balls over Ian’s painfully-engorged penis.

“Oh my...fuck...Mick!!,” Ian moaned loudly, reveling in this sudden provision of pleasure Mickey was so kindly bestowing upon him. But then Mickey stopped, resuming his self-pleasuring, Ian, once again, his captive audience. Mickey’s eyes rolled up into his head as he enjoyed the fruits of his own expertise, as if he were completely oblivious to Ian’s presence.

“Mickey!! Goddamnit!! What do I have to do? I want things back to normal!” Ian wailed, tears pouring out his eyes and trailing down the sides of his face. “How you like feelin’ excluded?!” Mickey panted, as he massaged himself licentiously, putting it across, big as life, that he was delighting in his self-directed activities immensely---without Ian. “Like I got it on my own,” he continued, amid breathy gasps and groans. “Mickey!” Ian sobbed.

“Don’t need you!” Mickey fired back, his eyes filling with tears, and yet he continued to manipulate himself for effect. “Gonna do it myself, even though you’re there...an’ wanna help me...” Mickey closed his eyes, attempting to refocus himself so he could cum all over Ian, like he had planned, but he was so emotional, he just couldn’t. “Like your opinion don’t count for shit!!” Mickey broke down, storming off to the bathroom, leaving Ian screaming for him, still completely immobilized in Mickey’s makeshift torture chamber.

Ian had been crying so hard, his throat was dry, his chest, heaving, by the time Mickey returned, completely composed and prepared to continue teaching Ian his lesson. He started on the inside of Ian’s right ankle, licking his way up to his inner thigh, where he lingered, making tiny circles with his tongue, then sucking the tender flesh inside each circle into his mouth slowly, one at a time, rolling his tongue over each resultant mark.

He continued this process, repeating it on his left leg, until both of his inner thighs were heavily bruised and his cock was, yet again, painfully plump. “Mickey...need you...” Ian moaned in complete surrender. “Do you now?” Mickey questioned, taking the tip of Ian’s waiting cock into his moist mouth. “How much?” he growled, sucking in more and more of him with each pass, tormenting him with his tongue as he slid it over his sensitive slit. “So much...so much...” Ian whined hoarsely, licking his dry, swollen lips and swallowing hard.
Mickey brought his mouth down repeatedly over Ian’s stiff shaft, coating his fingers with coconut oil again, this time, using them to tease Ian’s opening, rubbing it softly, slowly sinking one, then two fingers into it. Ian moaned steadily, “Mick...Mick...Mick,” his rock-hard cock ready to erupt at any moment. Mickey stopped, removing his mouth from Ian’s twitching tool and peering up at Ian from between his legs.

“You need me?!” Mickey howled. “YES!! PLEASE!!” Ian begged. “Then fuckin’ show me!!” Mickey screeched, releasing Ian from his bondage, one appendage at a time, until he was completely unencumbered, staring reverently at Mickey’s beauty, feeling his body’s newfound freedom, in shocked amazement.

Ian flipped over, pulling his sweat-soaked frame up onto all fours, then pouncing on Mickey. Ian slathered up his enormously-erect cock and slid it so slowly and exquisitely into Mickey’s tight asshole, that Mickey couldn’t help but scream, “Fuck me! Damnit! Gallagher, FUCK ME HARD!!”

Ian obliged Mickey immediately, reaching around to grasp Mickey’s solidly stiff shaft, pumping it recklessly as he slammed into him again and again, nudging at his prostate like a pro, as he fucked Mickey into oblivion. “So fuckin’ good, Gallagher!” Mickey bellowed as he clenched down on Ian, both men shrieking like wild animals as they erupted, so intensely gratified that they both collapsed, falling asleep almost immediately.

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Ian woke up, Mickey’s magnificently beautiful face in his. “Fuck, I love you, Mick,” he whispered, pressing his lips to Mickey’s forehead. “Never keep anything from you again!” he promised, rolling Mickey over and pulling his back up against his chest, then burying his nose into the nape of Mickey’s neck, inhaling deeply. “Ever...” he breathed.
After dozing most of the afternoon away, Mickey and Ian were finally both awake at the same time. Mickey had awoken first this time, freeing himself from Ian’s embrace so he could turn to watch him sleep. The bright sun was shining in through the back door, casting its warm glow onto Ian’s angelic face. Mickey was admiring his sleeping beauty lovingly, when his drowsy, green eyes fluttered open. “Hi,” Ian breathed, a serene smile slowly spreading across his face.

“How?” Mickey whispered. “Starving!” Ian yawned in reply. “Get your swimsuit!” Mickey chirped enthusiastically. Ian stretched leisurely, reaching for Mickey’s face, caressing the side of his cheek as he leaned in on his elbow to kiss him gently. Mickey closed his eyes, basking in the attentions of his gorgeous mate.

The two opened their eyes at the same precise moment, Mickey taking Ian by the hand to drag his sexy ass out of bed. “Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey exclaimed, admiring Ian’s impressive physique as he sauntered over to the bathroom. “Right back atcha!” Ian responded, raising a brow as his eyes lingered on Mickey’s fine-ass frame lustfully. “You sure you wanna go out?” Ian questioned, staring longingly at Mickey. “Yeah,” Mickey answered without hesitation. “Got somethin’ for us to take to the beach,” he added, pulling a picnic basket and a jug of Sangria from the fridge.

After using the bathroom and showering off, quickly, at Mickey’s insistence, despite Ian’s attempt to have some steamy shower sex, Mickey gathered up the food and drink, Ian following with the towels. They headed out the door, Mickey leading Ian to a large shade umbrella on the secluded, private beach with two lounge chairs and a small table underneath. “Mick! This is fucking perfect!” Ian exclaimed as he watched Mickey unpack a small ceramic container of sushi, a stack of tiny, bite-sized turkey and swiss sandwiches, and a large bowl of fresh fruit from the picnic basket.

“All my favorites!” Ian gushed as he popped a sandwich into his mouth. “Mick...I...I don’t know what to say…” Ian stammered, at a loss for words. “Don’t say nothin’! Just eat!” Mickey grinned, stuffing a piece of California Roll into his mouth.

The two leaned back in their chairs, gorging themselves until they could eat no more, Ian finally breaking the silence of their feast, “Just so surprised you did all this for me...after what I did,” his eyes downcast in shame. “Ian! ‘Course I did! I fuckin’ love you!” Mickey blurted out with heartfelt sincerity. “What you did—didn’t change that. It just fuckin’ hurt and pissed me off...cuz I thought we shared everything...and cuz I actually give a shit!” he paused, cramming a piece of cantaloupe between Ian’s parted lips, Ian sucking avidly on the sweet mix of the fruit, Mickey’s index finger and thumb.

“You have any idea how fuckin’ hard the last 24 hours been for me?!” Mickey asked. “Not as hard as it’s been for me,” Ian enunciated as best he could with his mouth full. “That’s bullshit!” Mickey countered, his dick twitching beneath his swimsuit in response to Ian’s oral activities.

“Trust me, I know you fuckin’ did it cuz you love Ma, so I wanted to let it go, but...the fuckin’ secrecy...I just couldn’t. Pure fuckin’ torture—all of it,” Mickey spoke seriously, his voice cracking, his eyebrows furrowing in a show of great pain.

Ian wedged a strawberry between his teeth, feeding it slowly to his husband, Mickey sucking and biting at it seductively until their mouths met, Ian pulling Mickey’s sticky sweet lower lip in past his own ravenously.

Ian ended the kiss suddenly, staring into Mickey’s adoring eyes. “I did it because I fucking love you,
and I know what Mom means to you,” Ian breathed, pressing his own forehead against Mickey’s, and brushing his lips lightly over Mickey’s nose.

Mickey smiled, the tears in his eyes not detracting from the beauty of the moment. Ian was everything, and he loved the shit out of him. “Race ya to the water!” he called out, giving himself a headstart, Ian quickly overtaking him and throwing him up over his shoulder, nonetheless.

Ian slowed his pace, wading into the water leisurely, pulling Mickey down from his shoulder and cradling him in his arms. “C’mon, let’s swim,” Mickey grinned, wriggling himself out of Ian’s grasp. The couple swam together until the sun began to set, Ian taking notice of it and suggesting they watch it from the beach. Mickey agreed and they made their way back, spreading their towels on the sand and sitting, just beyond the the shoreline, taking in the sun’s opulent burst of vibrant color, its powerful presence slowly waning, leaving the beautifully painted sky in its wake.

“Mick,” Ian whispered, “Wanna take you, right here, right now,” grabbing a fistful of Mickey’s hair from the back of his head and pulling him in for a searing kiss. “Damn, Gallagher! You fuckin’ got me...anytime...anyplace…” Mickey panted, reaching under his towel for the jar of coconut oil he had stowed there.

Mickey returned Ian’s kiss passionately, lying back, allowing Ian to press his entire body against his own, as their lips and tongues intermingled magically, each man wanting nothing more than to satisfy the other in every conceivable way. The setting sun cast the impression of their shadowy forms impeccably upon the golden sand as they moved in concert, two bodies joined at the soul, feeling the thrill of the moment with their love of a lifetime, inextricably bound, their magnetic attraction, ever-present---inexhaustible.

The pair took their time, body to body, face to face, making love like only true soulmates can, anticipating and reveling in every move, every breath, sigh, moan, shudder---delivering everything to perfection and cherishing every blessed second. As they climaxed together, Ian atop Mickey, the world could have ended and neither would have had a clue.

“We share everything,” Mickey breathed heavily as he stared up into the breathtaking beauty of Ian’s face. “Everything, Mick,” Ian whispered, sealing his promise with a tender kiss.

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Sleep came quickly for the exhausted lovebirds, after a long evening of swimming and sex, the two waking to the morning sun, entangled in their usual sleep position, but somehow closer and more connected than the night before. Perhaps it was the absence of underwear, although Mickey didn’t think so. He knew it was more than underwear that had separated them. And now it was gone. No more secrets, lies, or nightmare revelations---just Ian and Mickey. Everything in good order, back in its proper place---including Ian’s stiff dick against Mickey’s bare, right asscheek.

Mickey rubbed the sleep from his eyes, then checked the time on his phone, realizing two things: 1) They had really slept in, and 2) The rest of the family was waiting for them. It was Mother’s Day, and they were due at Sur de la Frontera in two hours. Mickey had planned for them to get home early so they could be sure Yev was up and ready to go. Now that would be left to Kayla, on Mother’s Day.

Mickey knew he screwed up by not setting an alarm, but he also realized his mother would never complain. It was more a matter of his own guilt, and of what the rest of the family would think of him being so self-indulgent on Mother’s Day. He hadn’t even planned for them to sleep through the night. In fact, he had been hoping to use his makeshift contraption again before they left, under more pleasant circumstances, but there was, unfortunately, no time for that now.
“Fuck, Ian!” Mickey exclaimed, rolling out from under Ian’s top arm and leg, Ian giving him a sleep-dazed look. “We’re late! We gotta go!” Mickey said, quickly jumping out of bed. “Wanted some more...uh...time here, but...” Mickey trailed off as he turned the corner into the bathroom, starting the shower. “Yeah...” Ian said drowsily, pulling his head off the pillow reluctantly.


Ian wasn’t sure how to react. The place was absolutely heavenly, to be certain, but they already had a house on the beach, and he worried about how expensive Kayla’s medical treatment could become, not knowing if Mickey had even considered that, but not wanting to delve into that topic at the moment. “Definitely something to consider...” Ian replied, hoping to table the discussion, to pick it up once they knew more details concerning Kayla, including his possible role in her treatment.

“It’s a good deal. Can’t fuck around,” Mickey shot back, again trying to read Ian’s face. Ian stepped out of the shower, hooked a towel from the rack, and dried off in silence, preparing to walk out of the bathroom. “Hey!” Mickey called to Ian, stopping him dead in his tracks. “Whatcha thinkin’? Don’t get quiet on me...Makes me nervous,” Mickey admitted. “Just don’t wanna make any big decisions til we know more about what’s up with Mom,” Ian answered honestly, choosing not to hold anything back, in honor of his newly-made promise to Mickey.

Mickey shut the water off, stepping out to dry himself off next to Ian. “Thanks, man,” Mickey said softly, with genuine gratitude in his voice. “For what?” Ian asked, perplexed. “I should be thanking you for this amazing trip...and for...” Mickey cut him off, “Thanks for tellin’ me the truth just now. That’s all I fuckin’ expect.” Mickey kissed Ian hard, Ian taken aback, considering the time crunch they were in. “And you KNOW I want more...” Mickey breathed, turning away to get dressed, having packed clothes to wear to brunch for each of them, just in case.

The ride to Frontera was uneventful, aside from Mickey, sensing Ian’s uneasiness about talking with Kayla and Doc, tracing his trademark circles onto Ian’s left thigh to calm him. Ian leaned his head back on the headrest, closing his eyes, breathing a sigh of relief, and thanking his lucky stars for Mickey and the all-consuming love they shared.

The entire family was seated in the alcove when Ian and Mickey arrived, Mickey carrying a tiny gift-wrapped box that he’d kept hidden in his glove-box for the better part of a month, Ian holding a small gift bag in each of his hands. “Sorry we’re late, guys,” Ian smiled apologetically. “Yeah, sorry...” Mickey chimed in, adding, “Happy Mother’s Day, Ma...Mandy...Reesie!”

Ian dropped one bag in front of Mandy, handing the other to Reesie, who was standing near the kids’ table. Mickey flashed the box at Kayla, but sat down, setting it in front of him, since she was on the other side of the table and out of reach. The restaurant staff was in the process of setting up an elaborate buffet, so Mickey knew his mother would be leaving her seat in the near future, when he planned to give her a hug, a kiss, and her gift.

And Mickey did just that! As soon as Kayla had her plate filled, Ian took it from her hands and Mickey swooped in with her gift and more affection than anyone had ever seen Mickey bestow on anyone, besides Ian. He took her in his arms and squeezed her until she couldn’t breathe. “Mickey!” she called out in surprise. “I love you, Ma!” he said, his voice filled with emotion as he released her and handed her the box. “Can I open it after I eat?” she asked softly, looking at Mickey with tear-
soaked eyes. Sometimes it was still difficult for both of them, and Mandy as well, to believe they were actually together again. “Whatever you want, Mom,” Ian interjected, carrying her plate to the table for her.

The family enjoyed a fabulous breakfast, the buffet not lacking in a single variety of breakfast food. The conversation was light, focusing on the kids, school and the new baby Mandy and Manuel were happily expecting, the due date being very close to Kayla’s birthday. There was no mention of leukemia, the sample drive, or Ian’s status as a match, although Ian and Mickey knew it was on Doc’s mind, and surely Kayla’s as well, since they were quite certain she had held Doc to his promise to tell her everything.

As the last of the plates were cleared, Manuel suggested that the mothers open all of their presents, the first of which were envelopes with pictures Mikhaila and Manny had drawn, followed by Ian and Mickey’s gift bags for Mandy and Reesie, each of which contained massage oils from Ian, and big-ticket spa gift certificates from Mickey. Next, Mandy opened a small nearly-flat package from Manuel, which held a beautiful, 1 ½ carat diamond pendant that Manuel immediately fastened around her dainty neck. “Manuel, it’s so perfect for her,” Kayla commented with a wide smile. “She’s perfect!” Manuel announced, staring in complete awe of her flawless beauty.

“Okay, Ma! You’re turn!” Mickey insisted, pushing her gift closer to her from across the table. “It’s from all of us!” Mandy added, barely able to contain her excitement. Kayla carefully unwrapped the box, the entire family looking on suspensefully. Inside was a diamond-studded Mercedes key ring. “Oh, I…” Kayla began, only to quickly become too choked up to speak. She stood up, making her way around the table, hugging each and every family member, finishing with Mickey, who, again, squeezed her just a little too tightly, taking the wind out of her.

“Wanna take it for a spin?” Mickey practically begged her. “Of course,” she replied, finally finding her voice again. “And I want you to come with me, Mikhailo,” she added quietly. “I need to talk to you.”
“Okay for her to drive tonight, Doc?” Mickey asked, before leading Kayla out of the restaurant. “As long as you’re with her,” Doc replied with a nod. Mickey smiled, his brilliant blue eyes twinkling as he put his arm around his mother and headed for the door.

The whole family gathered around the outside of the door at Frontera to watch Kayla take off in her new car. Brach had driven the silver Mercedes S-Class Sedan to the restaurant, as planned, and was waiting, with the driver’s side door open, to help Kayla into the car. No one expected for Mickey to have been going with her, but Brach backed off as soon as he saw him walking out with her, allowing Mickey to do the honors instead, which gave Brach the opportunity to talk with Reesie.

After helping Kayla into the driver’s seat, he walked around the car, hopping in the passenger seat, where he took his time explaining all of the car’s features, and showing her how to control them. The car looked and smelled extraordinary, and Kayla looked absolutely radiant sitting inside it. “You’re beautiful, Ma!” Mickey complimented as he watched her put on her seatbelt and shift the car into drive, smiling and waving to the rest of the family.

Mickey felt honored and humbled to have been selected, out of everyone at the brunch, to be her first riding partner in her new car. “You like it?” he asked with the grin of an 8-year-old on his face. “I love it, Mickey! And I know this was all your doing,” she asserted. “Naw, everyone pitched in,” he corrected her. “Yes, but this was your idea, and you picked the car, along with everything that would go in it,” she said confidently. “How’d you know?” Mickey asked. “It’s written all over your face, Mickey!” she smiled adoringly at her son. “Ya got me,” Mickey admitted sheepishly.

“And ya know what?” she continued. “I can always tell when something’s bothering you. THAT I can also see on your face.” Mickey stayed quiet, looking out the passenger-side window, all the side streets whizzing by more quickly as Kayla hit the gas. She was really driving fast now, Mickey actually in shock that she was approaching 60 mph in what was a primarily residential area, the posted speed limit being 25. “Ma, slow down!!” Mickey finally yelled in a panic, a car suddenly pulling out in front of her a split-second later.

Kayla paused for a second, then hit the brakes—hard, Mickey’s eyes nearly popping out of his head. “What was the first thing that came to your mind when you thought I might hit that car?” Kayla asked. Mickey shrugged his shoulders. “Now...the truth...the first thing, before all others,” she rephrased. “I...I don’t know...” Mickey mumbled, not liking his mother’s line of questioning one bit. “C’mon, Mickey. Something went through your head when you thought I might not stop in time,” she pushed him.

“Okay…” he began, searching for the correct words, the right way to put it. “Mikhailo, just tell me the truth! I already know the answer. I just want YOU to hear yourself say it!” Kayla insisted stubbornly. “Alright! Alright...That if I died, Ian and I would never see each other again,” Mickey finally blurted out, both saddened and ashamed of what he had just said.

“Good, good!” Kayla praised him for his candor. “See, Mickey! This is why Ian cannot be my donor!” “What?!” Mickey questioned, surprised to hear this, coming from her at this moment. “Michael told me everything, Mickey! And I’m not willing to risk Ian’s health for mine. I just can’t!”

“But, Ma…” Mickey protested, Kayla cutting him off. “‘No, Mikhailo! Ian is your world! I will not put him at risk. We will find another donor, or Michael will find an alternate treatment. I have already spoken to him about this,’” she said firmly. “Mom, I need you to promise me something,” Mickey pleaded. “Mickey...I...” Kayla tried to interject, but Mickey kept talking.
“Promise if we don’t find another donor, we’ll talk about this again. Mom, please...Ian won’t have it any other way…” Mickey begged, his voice becoming low and thick. Kayla drove back toward Frontera in silence, her mind, along with Mickey’s, spinning. Once they were within a city block of the restaurant, Kayla took Mickey’s hand, whispering, “I want what’s best for you, Mickey.” “The family. It’s always what’s mattered to you, Ma. And we all need you,” Mickey sniffed, wiping tears from his eyes before they could fall.

As mother and son pulled up to the crowd of family members that anxiously awaited Kayla’s return, Ian ran over to the car. “Well?!” he asked with excitement. Mickey opened his car door, exiting quickly. “Get in,” he commanded, pushing Ian toward the car. “Ma, talk to Ian. Meet ya at home…and do the speed limit,” Mickey ordered, closing the door after Ian sat down, then walking over to the family.


Mickey led the caravan back to their place, expecting to find Ian and Kayla already there. He was surprised and a bit concerned when the new S-Class was nowhere to be seen. Mickey welcomed everyone, getting them settled in the house. Johnny brought some wine for everyone to sample, so Mickey got the glasses out, then sat down at the island, texting Ian:

“Where are you?! Everyone’s at the house. Waiting for you…”

Mickey stared at his phone expectantly, to no avail. He sighed deeply, trying to participate in the gathering he had instigated, his mind stuck on Kayla and Ian’s absence, and lack of communication. He worried that Kayla might have been speeding again and had an accident, or that something had somehow gone wrong.

Mickey was into his third glass of wine when he finally decided to call Ian. He had told himself it would be rude to call and possibly interrupt their conversation, but at this point, he no longer gave a shit, the wine lowering his inhibitions and increasing his emotional response.

The phone rang three and a half times, then went to voicemail. Mickey tried to conceive of a way Ian might not hear his phone, like if it was set to vibrate and they were playing music, but at this point, everyone having been at their house for the better part of an hour, this seemed highly unlikely. He tried Kayla’s phone next, Mandy approaching him as it rang. “Where the fuck are Mom and Ian?” she asked, becoming more concerned as she read the worry on Mickey’s face. “...s’what I’m tryna find out!” he answered, still hoping to hear Kayla’s voice pick up on the other end of the phone. “C’mon, Ma! Pick up the fuckin’ phone!” he yelled, his stomach churning as this call, too, went to voicemail.

“Mickey! Where are they?” Doc inquired, a serious look etched into his face.

Kayla pulled away from Frontera, Ian now in the passenger seat. “So, I’m guessing Doc told ya I’m a match for your stem cell transplant,” Ian finally began, breaking the ice after an awkward moment of silence.

“Yes, honey,” Kayla responded slowly, as if she were half asleep. “Mom, are you okay?” Ian asked, looking over at her. “You look really tired. Pull over and let me drive,” Ian insisted. Kayla pulled
over into the lot of a cantina, Ian stepping out of the car and circling around to help Kayla out of her seat. She seemed to be getting weaker by the second, and leaned heavily on Ian as he walked her around the back of the car. Ian very quickly realized she needed more help, hoisting her up into his arms to carry her, then pausing momentarily to check her level of consciousness.

Ian heard one, then two car doors close, redirecting his attention to Kayla’s car, which was now speeding away from them. “Fuck!!” Ian screamed, startling Kayla, who now lay half-conscious in his arms. Ian trudged toward the entrance of the cantina, finding it to be open, with only a few customers, all of whom were extremely drunk. He approached the bar, propping Kayla up on a bar stool and leaning her head against his chest.

“Hey!” he yelled desperately, in the direction of the bartender, who was at the far end of the bar, washing glasses. “Call the cops!! Someone stole our fucking car!!” Ian screeched. “Who just left here?!” he demanded. The bartender meandered over to Ian. “What you say?” he asked. “Can I...can I use your phone, please?!” Ian was pleading at this point, not knowing how well this guy even understood English. “El Telefono!!” he screamed.

The bartender pointed to a pay phone near the restroom, which was a good 50 feet from where Ian was standing, supporting Kayla. “Fuck!! Call 9-1-1?!?” he screamed, wishing his hands were free so he could punch this fucking guy! Finally, he seemed to understand, picking up the phone behind the bar. Ian spun the bar stool around, resting Kayla’s head and arms up on the bar so he could reach for the phone that the asshole behind the bar was now holding out in his general direction, still well beyond his grasp.

“Motherfucker!” Ian yelled in frustration, running at him and grabbing the phone from his hand. “Hel-Hello? I want to report a stolen car and I...and I need an ambulance!” Ian was frantic at this point, throwing the phone at the bartender and rushing back to Kayla’s side, catching her just before she slipped off the stool. “Can you give them the fucking address, shit for brains?!” Ian bellowed, his temper blazing out of control.

Ian scooped Kayla up off the bar stool, lying her out as flat as possible on an empty, round table nearby, in anticipation of the ambulance. He monitored her vital signs as best he could without his phone or any cooperation from anyone there, although the few drunks who were there began to gather in curiosity, once they saw that Kayla was both beautiful and unconscious. “Get the fuck away from her!” Ian roared at one skinny, old derelict who had begun to rub himself against her dangling left leg.

Ian paced back and forth in front of the table for what seemed like forever, unwilling to leave Kayla’s side to make a second phone call, for fear the vultures would swoop in and take advantage of her. He decided to ask if any of them had a phone he could use. “Cell phone?” he asked in as polite of a voice that he could manage. “Telefono!” he translated, holding his hand out as if he had a phone in it.

One younger man, maybe 25, staggered up to Ian, handing him an old flip phone. “Thank you! Thank you! Gracias!” Ian said kindly, tears pouring from his eyes at this unexpected show of compassion. He immediately called 911 again, explaining that he had called before, and adding a request for them to send a car out to his house since, try as he might, he couldn’t remember Mickey’s cell phone number.

The dispatcher told him there was already an ambulance and police on their way to the Luna Azul, which is where he guessed they must be, although he didn’t recall seeing a sign. He also said they could not use emergency resources to inform, and encouraged Ian to call a neighbor to go over. Obviously, if he knew a neighbor’s number, then he would surely remember Mickey’s. ‘How stupid
are these people?’ Ian wondered to himself as he slowly realized how worried the family must be by now, and that he had no way of contacting them.

At long last, the police showed up, followed by an ambulance, both sets of professionals collecting the pertinent details from Ian, who began assisting the EMTs immediately upon their arrival. Kayla was loaded up into the ambulance in a matter of minutes and on her way to Boca General, Ian riding in the back with her, holding her hand. “I love you, Mom!” he whispered. “And I’m gonna help you get well.”
Choices

Mickey and Doc each received phone calls within seconds of one another, both from the same familiar area code and prefix. “Hospital’s callin’!” Mickey slurred, having polished off an entire bottle of Johnnys homemade Chianti. “On my phone, too!” Doc yelled. Both men answered their phones, the rest of the guests silently looking on in fear and anticipation. The kids were, thankfully, all up in Yev’s room playing, blissfully oblivious to the unnerving mystery that was unfolding. However, Yev had chosen this inopportune moment to descend the stairs for some water.

The onlookers watched as Doc and Mickey’s faces changed from fear to utter panic, Mickey yelling, “Let me talk to Ian! I wanna talk to Ian!!” while Doc said, “I’ll be right there!” and headed for the door. “Let’s go, Mickey!” he added, looking over at Mickey. “Uh...could you guys stay here with the kids?” Mickey addressed the entire room. “Wha---What’s goin’ on with Mom!?” Mandy asked, then took one look at Mickey’s face and yelled, “I’m coming!”

“Mandy!” Manuel called out, just as she was walking out the door behind Mickey. “Just stay here with Manny...please!” she yelled over her shoulder, pulling the door closed behind her. Manuel glanced over at Reesie, wondering if she knew anything he didn’t, but he could see by the look on her face that she was just as bewildered as he was. Brach had put his arm around her, and was attempting to calm her. She was visibly upset, but hadn’t said a word since they had all heard that neither Ian nor Kayla had answered their phones.

“Where did Daddy and Aunt Mandy go?” Yev asked as he joined what was left of the gathering, having seen both Mickey and Mandy leave in a hurry. “Come here, Yev,” Reesie said softly, moving to the couch and tapping the cushion next to her. Yev walked over and sat down reluctantly, sensing that something was definitely amiss.

“Yev,” Reesie began, not knowing quite how to respond to him, since she didn’t know what was going on herself. “All we know right now is that the hospital called, and Grandma and Daddy Ian are there. I’m sure one of us will get a phone call soon…” Yev looked at her, his innocent blue eyes filling with tears. Reesie hugged him, looking up at Manuel, whose phone had just begun to go off. He answered on the first ring, everyone in the room listening in on his end of the conversation. “Ojos! What the hell is going on?” he asked impatiently.

“...And so what will they do?” Manuel followed his first question with another. There was a long silence as Manuel listened to what must have been a detailed explanation. “Wait! What? ...Okay...Please keep in touch with me. I will share this with everyone here...Ojos, hang in there!” he responded, ending the call.

“Yev, the doctors at the hospital are taking good care of Grandma. You can go back and play with Mik and Mandy,” Manuel explained kindly. “What about Daddy Ian?” Yev asked. “Both of your Dads are fine and will be home to see you as soon as they can,” Manuel answered. “Will Grandma be okay?” Yev wondered out loud. “The doctors will do everything they can to make her better,” he answered, reaching for his nephew to hug him. “Now go play while you can. School tomorrow!” Manuel suggested, rubbing Yev’s back briefly, then steering him toward the stairs.

As soon as Yev disappeared into his bedroom at the top of the stairs, Reesie asked, “Okay, so what the hell is going on?” Manuel sighed heavily, then began his synopsis of Mickey’s lengthy explanation.

“Kayla seemed really tired so Ian had her pull over so he could drive. She was actually only half-conscious, so Ian had to carry her to the passenger side of the car. He stopped behind it to see if she
had passed out, and that’s when someone got in the car and drove away with it! Their phones were inside, so Ian carried Kayla into a cantina where he called 9-1-1. Kayla’s really sick, from what Mickey was told. He’s scared,” Manuel said in a hushed tone of voice, so as not to alarm any of the children, if they happened to leave Yev’s bedroom.

Reesie swallowed hard. She knew Ian would now insist on being her donor, and that he’d be fighting Mickey about not taking his meds. Mickey was in one hell of a predicament, and with no one unbiased to help him make sense of it all. As a medical professional, Reesie really believed Mickey and Ian needed to talk to an objective third party before making a decision, but she doubted that would happen. And to make matters worse, there was no one in the house, besides her, who even knew of the situation.

Brach tried, unsuccessfully to comfort her, saying, “I’m sure Doc will get her the best care possible.” Of course, he didn’t have the slightest clue as to what Doc was dealing with at the moment. Reesie wanted to be the voice of reason for the family, but she honestly didn’t even know what she should or would say that could even come close to resolving their dilemma. All she did know was that, no matter what was ultimately decided, there would be second-guessing, criticism and, quite possibly, regret. There was nothing easy about constructing a treatment plan that included Ian as a stem-cell donor, but this was, more than likely, what would end up being done, since Kayla’s condition seemed to be declining so quickly.

Reesie did want to wait to talk with Doc or another medical professional before jumping to too many conclusions, but that was difficult, given the current circumstances. She sat with Brach, Manuel and Johnny until the sun went down, with no word from anyone. “You guys might as well go home. I’ll call or text as soon as I hear anything,” Reesie promised. Johnny said his goodbyes, offering Manuel to help at the factory any way he could. Brach also promised to come in early and stay late for as long as the company needed him. Manuel thanked them both, seeing them out to Johnny’s car.

“Would you like me to stay here with the kids so you can go to the hospital?” Manuel asked Reesie, once they were alone. Reesie looked at him, not sure how to respond. “I can see that there is something in your head that you will not discuss with me. Maybe it is because I won’t understand, since it is of a medical nature, or perhaps something you are not able to share for other reasons. Either way, I will be happy to remain here, if you would like to go,” Manuel offered sweetly.

“That is so nice of you, but let me just make some dinner for the kids, and we’ll see if we hear anything. Are you hungry?” Reesie asked Manuel. “Sure, and I would be happy to help you cook dinner. I need something to take my mind off all of this,” he replied, topping off his wine glass and offering to do the same for Reesie. “I’m good. Rather not drink, in case I end up going to the hospital,” she explained politely.

The two worked together to create a simple Mexican dish, made of what few scraps Ian and Mickey currently had in their kitchen. Everyone had been eating out and ordering in so much lately, there wasn’t much to work with---but they managed.

“Let me just call Doc while you dish that up. I’d rather call before the kids come down to eat,” Reesie reasoned. “Go ahead and call. I’ll go up and entertain them a bit to make sure no one comes down early. Text me when you’re done,” Manuel suggested. “Great! Thanks!” Reesie said with a smile. Now she could talk freely, as long as Doc answered her call.

As she looked for Doc in her contacts, a call came in from Mickey. “Reesie!” he began in a serious voice. “Gonna be makin’ some serious decisions here. Kinda wanna know what you’re thinkin’,” he finished. “Mickey, is Doc nearby?” she asked. “Yeah, why?” he responded. “Can I please talk to him?” she requested. The next thing she heard was Doc’s voice, “Reesie ...everything is happening
so fast. I haven’t taken the time to…” Reesie interrupted him, “This is NOT your fault! Just tell me what’s happening!”

Doc cleared his throat nervously, then began to explain, “Leukemia can cause blood vessels to leak, as I’m sure you are aware. Often this produces bruising of the body and red spots on the eyes, but sometimes, when it happens in the brain, there is a buildup of pressure ---essentially a brain bleed that needs to be drained, much like the one Manuel had when he was injured in the hurricane,” he paused, sounding to Reesie as if he needed the break to compose himself.

“The problem with performing the surgery is that, as long as the leukemia persists, this can recur. Reesie, Kayla needs the transplant ASAP!” he said gravely, knowing that Reesie understood the circumstances surrounding Ian’s need to have a normal white blood cell count before he could donate, which would require him to stop taking his lithium.

“So, you’re going to chance the leukocytosis?” she asked him. “No, that would not be wise, but we definitely can’t wait four to six weeks for Ian to ween off, then another two weeks to month for his levels to go down. Of course, we are still hoping for a match on Tuesday, but…” Doc stopped talking again, this time listening to someone at the hospital.

“Okay, I’m back,” Doc said, his voice sounding tired and stressed. “What does Mickey say?” Reesie asked. “Here, I’ll let him tell you himself. This IS his phone. Besides, Ian’s labs just came back, and I need to see them.”

“Hello,” Mickey said after finally getting his phone back. “Reesie?” “Can you hear me?” she responded. “Yeah, so Doc told ya, right?” he asked. “Yes, he told me that your mom is very sick, and needs a transplant as soon as possible,” she summarized. “Yeah, well, do ya think Ian will be okay just stoppin’ the meds now, if he takes the other ones Doc researched about? Cuz I’m pretty sure he thinks he’s gonna do that!” Mickey explained, sounding more frightened than Reesie had ever heard him sound, in all the time she had known him, even when he was in prison and near death himself.

Reesie knew, in her heart of hearts, what she thought her most truthful answer was, but she also understood the effect those words would have on Mickey, and on the entire situation. She sat silently, deep in thought…”Reesie? You still there?” Mickey’s panicked voice pushing her to respond, despite her uncertainty about how she should answer. “I’m here. Just thinking about my answer to this question, Mick,” she began earnestly.

“I don’t wanna scare you, but I also don’t wanna mislead you. The best I can tell you is that I don’t know. First, I don’t even know how elevated Ian’s white blood cell count is. I also don’t know how long he has to be off the lithium, or how high his levels are in his blood now. This is all stuff Doc is in the process of finding out. Bottom line though, Mick, is that Ian will never forgive himself if he doesn’t do this and your Mom dies...and honestly, I don’t think you would either.” Reesie breathed a huge sigh of relief at having answered Mickey as honestly as she could.

Mickey breathed nervously into his phone. “Course I want Mom to get better, but I don’t wanna see Ian that way again! You don’t know...Can’t imagine...He’s not...It's like he’s not himself...and like he would...he would leave me cuz he’s feelin’ weird, or cuz he doesn’t wanna fuckin’ take the meds anymore, or some shit.”

Mickey took a slow, trembling breath, then continued, “...And that’s just the mania. The depression’s even fuckin’ worse. He won’t get outta fuckin’ bed for days----won’t fuckin’ talk to me…” Mickey’s voice cracked, “I gotta go,” he whispered, and then he was gone.

Reesie put her phone down and started to cry, knowing that was exactly what Mickey was doing at
that moment. Hearing Mickey hurt made her hurt. After all these years, she still had such a close bond with him. And then there was the relationship she had built with Ian. She certainly didn’t want to see the Ian that Mickey had just described, nor did she want to see Mickey having to deal with that again.

“Come down with the kids and have dinner,” Reesie texted to Manuel, drying her eyes.

Mickey made his way back to Kayla’s E.R. room. He stopped short of walking in, ending his call with Reesie suddenly when he overheard a conversation taking place between Ian and Doc.

“So then if I stop today, I could have a normal count within two weeks to a month?” Ian asked Doc, seeking confirmation that he had accurately interpreted the results of his lab work. “Yes, that is correct, Ian, but stopping the lithium abruptly is not advised. I can’t, in good conscience, tell you that you should do this,” Doc explained.

“But you also can’t tell me Mom will live if I don’t, right?” Ian asked. “That is also correct,” Doc answered, Mickey’s eyes filling with tears as he eavesdropped from the other side of the curtain.
By around 2 AM, Kayla’s level of consciousness and confusion had gotten to the point that Doc was demanding emergency surgery. She had been fading in and out since her arrival, but now her brief periods of wakefulness were characterized by disorientation, delirium, even rage. Doc was beyond distraught, and Mickey was literally coming apart at the seams. If ever Mickey had believed that he could actually prevent Ian from stopping his meds and being Kayla’s donor, that moment had certainly passed, Ian now Mickey’s rock, holding him as he wept at the sight of his mother in this condition.

Manuel had come to retrieve Mandy just before midnight, early pregnancy sapping her energy to the point that Ian had texted Manuel to make the suggestion. Reesie stayed the night with the kids at Mickey and Ian’s house, and was planning to drop Manny off to Mandy on her way to the school with Yev and Mikhaila, before heading into the clinic to work solo, since Doc and Ian would be staying at the hospital indefinitely at this point.

The trouble with having the emergency surgery was that the brain surgeon on call was already performing one on a victim of a motor vehicle accident. Doc had convinced the Chief of Staff to allow him to scrub in and oversee her sedation so the surgeon could walk right in, as soon as he finished with his other surgery. The lab also took the opportunity to draw additional blood for the purpose of determining whether Ian was what is referred to as a complete match (8/8 HLA) or partial match (⅞ HLA), which would be both more likely, given his non-relative status, and less desirable in terms of possible host-versus-graft disease.

Once Kayla and Doc had both gone to the O.R., which finally happened at approximately 5 AM, Ian and Mickey, upon Ian’s insistence, had gone to the cafeteria. Neither of them had eaten a thing since brunch, and Ian knew Mickey needed to hydrate himself after consuming a fair amount of alcohol. He had noticed the wine on his breath when he arrived at the hospital, along with his characteristic slur. Normally, a bottle of wine wouldn’t have affected Mickey to such a degree, but given the fact that he had killed the bottle in a little over half hour, without food, and had been highly upset, it had hit him harder than usual.

Ian ordered them both pancakes and delivered them, along with two large coffees and two bottles of water, to the table where he had sat his weary husband, promising to bring him anything he wanted and refusing to take no for an answer. Ian sat down across from Mickey and what he saw made him want to cry. Mickey looked beyond exhausted, but worse than that, he looked beaten, as if he had given up all hope that life would ever be good again. His face was pale and haggard, his eyes lackluster and heavily hooded by his drooping eyelids. And yet, he was still the most beautiful human being Ian had ever laid eyes on.

“I love you, Mick,” Ian said softly, Mickey’s forlorn state evident in the melancholy of Ian’s voice. “Yeah, you know how I fuckin’ feel. Just don’t want any of this comin’ between us,” Mickey said, staring blankly at the food in front of him. “It won’t,” Ian said confidently, “I promise.” “But that’s just it...You can’t promise me anything, cuz once you’re off the meds, you won’t think the same...won’t feel the same...won’t be the same. You might decide you don’t want me...” Mickey mumbled into his coffee.

“That would never happen! I want you so bad, Mick. All the time, every minute of every day. You fucking know it, too! You use it to your advantage all the time!” Ian paused, Mickey nodding to admit Ian was right, as he clutched his coffee in his hands. “Fuck! I’m always making you late for work, attacking you in the shower, in the car, basically whenever and wherever I can. And if I do get
Mickey sat silently for a minute, then started back in with his doubts, “Yeah, but what if…” “Stop!! No ‘what ifs’! It’s you and me, in it together, through thick and thin, for better or worse, ‘til death do us part. Isn’t that what you always tell me? I know you’ve made that promise to me more than once,” Ian interrupted with a smirk, throwing Mickey’s own words back at him.

“And I know you fuckin’ meant it—So do I! Mick, if I get real sick, put me away ‘til I’m better! I’ll sign the papers now! What do I have to do to make you believe it’s gonna be okay?” Ian asked, sliding into the booth next to him and pulling him close. “Just love me, Mick. That’s all I need. We’ll be okay. I gotta do this for Mom. You know that,” Ian nuzzled Mickey’s neck with his nose, inhaling sharply, breathing Mickey in like he was the last bit of oxygen left on earth.

Manuel and Brach both arrived at the factory early, Jose covering Factory #2 on his own. Johnny showed up about an hour later, Reesie having texted him to say that Manuel had had a late night and might need some additional assistance, since there was no way Mickey would be in. “Johnny, you are a one in a million friend!” Manuel said with great emotion as Johnny proceeded to take on all of Mickey’s office business, like it was his own. This gave Manuel the chance to acclimate Brach to some of their advertising, as well as discuss possible travel and modeling needs for the near future, given the family situation. Mandy had briefed Manuel on her mother’s need for surgery, as well as the donor situation involving Ian, since Mickey, Ian and Doc had basically shared that with her through their conversations at the hospital.

Manuel had also promised Mickey to look into the situation with the stolen car, starting with the police and contacting the insurance company, if necessary. Things at the factory were running pretty smoothly by noon, Johnny and Brach doing their best to give Manuel a break, so he decided to take off for home to check on Mandy and call the police on his way.

Being an important business owner in the area, Manuel was immediately put through to the Chief of Police, who shared with him some good and not so good news. The good news was that they knew who had stolen the car, and had recovered Kayla’s purse and Ian’s phone. The bad news was that the car was damaged severely in an accident, the alleged car thief was hospitalized, and, therefore, not available to be questioned and/or arrested.

The car had been towed to the nearest auto body shop and declared a total loss on sight, so Manuel’s next task was to call the insurance company, which he did, giving the address he had gotten from the Chief as to where they could send an adjuster. With Kayla’s uncertain condition, Manuel didn’t know whether Mickey would want to replace the car or just hold on to whatever the insurance company paid out, but he wasn’t about to answer that question, so he gave Mickey’s cell phone number as the contact number, effectively taking himself out of the loop.

As soon as Manuel arrived at home, Mandy insisted on going to the hospital, demanding that Manuel stay at home with Manny. After all, what the hell was she going to do with a 4-year-old in a C.C.U., which was definitely where Kayla had to be, if the surgery was over. Mandy hadn’t heard anything, which was really starting to make her nervous. She had even called to ask about her mother, but all they could say was that she was having emergency surgery, which she had found out about via a text from Ian, before she even went in. She just needed to be there. Period. And Manuel understood. He called Johnny to check in, and, once Johnny assured him they were fine, he sent Mandy on her way.

Mandy arrived at the hospital and was directed to a room in the C.C.U., where Kayla had just been placed, post-op. As she approached the room, she could see Doc sitting bedside, to her mother’s right, holding her hand, and Ian and Mickey both standing to the left of the bed, looking down at her,
Mickey’s face somber and ashen. As she entered the room, she noted that Kayla was unconscious, which she had expected, but could also see that both Ian and Doc were visibly upset.

“How is she?” Mandy asked reluctantly, not entirely sure she wanted to hear the answer. “We are waiting for her to regain consciousness. We’ll know more then,” Doc answered in little more than a whisper, his eyes wet with tears. “And when will that be?” she asked. “That’s something we really can’t predict. Brain bleeds and surgery are serious business, as I’m sure you remember from when I had to perform emergency surgery on Manuel at the clinic. All we can do right now is wait… and let her know we are here and want her back,” Doc was trying his damnedest to control his emotions, but his love and concern for Kayla could not be masked, despite his attempts at maintaining a professional demeanor.

“Hi Mom. It’s Mandy,” she spoke softly, bending down to kiss Kayla’s forehead. “Mickey’s been here all night with Ian, and he looks terrible. I’m gonna send him home for some rest after he talks to you,” she said boldly, looking over at her big brother, who literally looked like death warmed over.

“So, Ian’s quitting his meds now anyway?” Mandy questioned, a bewildered look still frozen on her face. “Yeah, Mands. It’ll take two weeks to a month for my white blood count to be normal. And if I
donate when it’s not normal, my stem cells might cause a...a type of rejection, I guess is how I can explain it. You know what I mean? So that’s why I gotta stop the lithium now. So my stem cells can be ready for Mom ASAP, in case there’s no one else,” Ian explained.

“Well, are these new meds gonna work!?” she asked, staring wide-eyed at Doc, getting so worked up that her voice rose a register higher, taking on a ‘nails on the chalkboard’ type of tone. “I’ll be fine, Mands. Doc hooked me up with a psychiatrist here at the hospital, who’s gonna monitor me, and Mick’s gonna be with me…” “A lot!” Mickey interrupted Ian. “C’mon, let’s go get your meds, Ian,” Mickey commanded, suddenly conjuring up what had to be the last ounce of energy he had left in his exhausted body to grab Ian by the hand and drag him out of the room. ‘I’ll be back. Gotta get Ian to bed. He has to work the sample drive tomorrow at the nursin’ school,” Mickey explained on their way out.

“No, Mickey! Don’t you dare come back until you get some rest yourself,” Mandy insisted. “We are okay here. I am well-rested and can stay as long as I’m needed,” she called out to Mickey, just before he disappeared down the hall. “Doc, I think you should get some rest, too,” she added. “Why don’t you go home for a few hours? Ma and I will be fine!” Mandy smiled as she pulled Doc up from the bed. “Please go!” she implored him. “Mom would want you to get some rest! You’re no good to her if you’re worn down. Go!”

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It wasn’t long after Mickey and Ian walked out the door of the hospital pharmacy that they realized neither of them had driven there, so they had no car. Mickey texted Doc, whom Mandy had just convinced to head home for some much-needed rest, so he was able to swing around to the outer entrance to the pharmacy and pick them up.

“Thanks so much, Doc! We really appreciate it!” Ian said, Mickey chiming in, “Yeah, you’re the best! And thanks for treatin’ my Mom so good! She’s lucky to have ya!” “Actually,” Doc responded, “I’m lucky to have HER! We all are! And we’re lucky she’s even alive right now! You’re thanking me with words. If you really want to show your appreciation, go home and get some sleep! You need it! Both of you, MICKEY! Don’t go back to the hospital until you’re well-rested. You need to be strong for your Mom, just like I do. And Ian needs you, too,” Doc was getting choked up, just thinking about Kayla and how helpless she was, how much she did need him.

“I’m going to go home and sleep, too, so I can be my best for Kayla. You don’t know how much she means to me!” he sobbed, the lack of sleep and his deep feelings for Kayla hitting him with a 1-2 punch. “I do. I do,” Mickey assured him, looking over at his stunningly gorgeous, sweet, kind husband. “And I’ll sleep, too. Me and Ian are gonna go right to bed,” he promised.

Doc pulled up to the house, Mickey and Ian both dragging their exhausted asses out of the car as quickly as they could, with no energy. As they walked into their house, the lingering smell of Mexican food filled their nostrils, reminding them that, once again, they hadn’t eaten in a very long time. “Manuel’s been cookin’,” Mickey said with a smile. “Go get in bed. I’ll bring you some leftovers to take your meds with.”

“I’ll help you,” Ian insisted, Mickey shooting him a look, but choosing not to fight him on it. Mickey reheated the food, while Ian got each of them a tall glass of water. “Still wanna eat it in bed?” Ian asked. “Yep!” Mickey answered, heading for the stairs. “And as soon as we wake up, I want my fuckin’ dessert,” he called over his shoulder at Ian with a sexy smirk. “Mmmm Hmmm…” Ian licked his lips slowly, “Not if I get mine first!”
Mickey woke to text messages galore, his adrenaline immediately pumping him up. He had one message from Doc, one from Manuel, two from Mandy, the second of which had just come in, three from Reesie, and a single message from an unknown number. He struggled with himself as to which he should read first, finally deciding on Mandy’s, since he was certain she was with their mother.

First text from Mandy (4:06 PM): “She’s gonna wake up soon. I just know it. She is so beautiful and looks just like you when she’s asleep.”

Second text from Mandy (6:30 PM): “Still no change. I hope you’re sleeping. Wanted to let you know, they said I can sleep here, but I’ll need to leave in the morning so Manuel can go to work.”

First text from Reesie (1:48 PM): “Finally taking a minute to eat. Clinic’s been busy all day. How’s Kayla?”

Second text from Reesie (3:30 PM): “Leaving clinic. Long day. If I don’t hear from you, I’ll pick Yev up and take him home with me.”

Third text from Reesie (5:04 PM): “Homework done. Gonna go ahead and take Yev to his game. We’ll be stopping for him to get his uniform. He’ll need a ride home around 7. Please let me know if you can get him or not.”

Message from Doc (6:23 PM): “I’m up. Can’t sleep, thinking about her. Going in to relieve Mandy and spend the night with her. Please stay at home and rest. I’ll need you at the hospital tomorrow so I can be at the clinic. Reesie had a rough time today alone and has to work for Ian tomorrow, since he’s working the drive at the nursing school. And please let him sleep. That new medicine is going to take some getting used to. He might be more tired than usual, among other things.”

Message from Unknown Number (4:25 PM): “Claim #348790 - Auto Replacement allowance: $74, 579. Please forward any and all police reports and/or legal documents to GuillermoEstrada1@aleroauto.com”

“What the fuck?! What police reports?!” Mickey mumbled to himself as he unwrapped Ian’s long, thin appendages from around him begrudgingly. He was completely overwhelmed, his heart beating like it was coming through his chest. This was hardly the way he had imagined his wakeup.

As worried as he was about his mother, he had hoped for some alone time with Ian, even if it was brief. He couldn’t shake the unsettling feeling that something was about to go horribly wrong because of Ian’s medication change, and he wanted to soak up every possible remaining second of the Ian he loved so completely, so deeply, and who loved him back the same way.

Apparently, he had fewer of these seconds left, based on the texts he had received. He rolled out of bed quickly, throwing on the nearest combination of clothes he could find, and heading for the car to
pick Yev up. He knew he should also take Mikhaila, since Reesie had had such a tiresome, stress-filled day, but he worried that having two kids in the house might wake Ian, although, if he wanted to sleep at all overnight, Mickey thought maybe he should get up before too much longer.

He resolved to offer to pick Mikhaila up, dialing Reesie up as he got into the car to get Yev from his game. “Hi!” Reesie answered on the first ring. “Hey, I’m on my way to get Yev. Wondered if ya want me to pick Mikhaila up for the night,” Mickey asked, his voice still rough and hoarse, like it often was when he first woke up. “You sound really tired,” she responded. “So do you!” he laughed. “I think we’re okay here, Mick. Mikhaila’s gonna be going to bed in an hour or so, and I won’t be far behind. Brach brought us dinner a little bit ago, so I didn’t have to cook, which was nice,” she shared, Mickey hearing the smile on her face from over the phone.

“No...nice,” he chuckled, thinking they were the most unlikely couple he’d ever seen in his life, but loving it, nonetheless. “Brach’s a good guy!” he added. “...s’why I brought him here.” Mickey paused, but Reesie stayed uncharacteristically quiet. “Okay then. Thanks for takin’ care of Yev. Need me to grab Mikhaila for school tomorrow?” Mickey continued. “Nah, we should be okay. Thanks, though,” she answered, politely declining his offer.

“You should have Ian take Yev on his way to the nursing school. It’s practically nextdoor,” she added, clearly reading his state of overwhelm and trying to keep things simple for him. “We’ll see,” he answered. “Talk to ya later,” he finished, ending the call, just in time to pull up in the baseball field parking lot.

“We won!” Yev yelled as he ran to the car. “Alright, little man!! You score any runs? Mickey asked enthusiastically. Yeah! Two!” he bragged. “And you make any outs?” Mickey continued his questioning. “I caught one pop fly,” Yev answered. “You play shortstop again?” Mickey asked. “Yep!” Yev smiled. It was his favorite position, and he was good at it. Mickey smiled back at his son, grateful to have such a super kid; two, actually.

When Mickey thought about it, he really didn’t know what he ever did to deserve the wonderful family he had. Ian always told him he only felt that way because his dad made him feel like he wasn’t worthy of anything good. Mickey figured he had done the same thing to Mandy and his Mom. It was a miracle they all had managed to find happiness, and with the most amazing people in the world, to boot.

Mickey appreciated all of the blessings in his life, and didn’t take anyone or anything for granted, but damn, if the idea of losing Ian didn’t absolutely kill him, just thinking about it.

He really did want to explore the option of having Ian sign something now that would help the family get him the help he would need, should his mental health fail him, while he was off the lithium, but he didn’t know how to go about it, without upsetting Ian, even though he had been the one to suggest it. He also didn’t know what kinds of papers there were that could be signed, or where to get them. Maybe he could ask Doc, which reminded him that he still needed to return his text.

“Okay, Champ! Get your shower and I’ll find somethin’ for us to eat,” Mickey said, tousling Yev’s hair on their way into the house. He looked around the main floor of the house, but there was no sign that Ian had been up while he was gone. He opened the fridge, but it was almost completely empty, save for a can of Reddi-Whip, Orange Juice and some aging vegetables, the freezer stocking some freezer-burned chicken patties and a bag of ice. “Shit!” Mickey muttered under his breath, looking up the deli down the road on his phone and placing a call, “Yeah...Oh you...Okay...wanna order three steak and cheese subs...yeah...and a bottle of Pepsi. Thanks...I’ll be there.” They were about to close, but agreed to make the sandwiches if he would pick them up, since their delivery driver was gone for
the evening.

Mickey waited five minutes, then left ot pick up the sandwiches, calling Doc on his way. The phone rang three and a half times, then went to voicemail. He pulled up to the deli, then quickly sent Doc a text:

“Tried to call you. What’s up? Any change? Sure you don’t want me to come in? Wanna talk to you about something.”

Mickey grabbed the food order and hurried back to the house, having left Yev in the shower without telling him he would be gone, figuring Ian was there, but still not wanting to be out long. “Yev!” he called out, “Food’s here!” He began unpacking the subs, quickly realizing that Yev wasn’t coming down to eat. He didn’t really want to yell louder and disturb Ian, so he decided to climb the stairs and get him.

When Mickey reached the top of the stairs, he could see that Yev’s bedroom door was open. He went in and checked the bathroom. No Yev. ‘Maybe he’s with Ian,’ he thought to himself, ambling toward his own bedroom. As he walked in, he found Yev, lying next to Ian as he slept. “Yev,” Mickey whispered. “Food’s downstairs. C’mon.”

“Daddy Ian won’t wake up!” Yev complained, jostling Ian around in the bed as he shook him. “Yev, go down and get the subs outta the bag. I’ll be down,” Mickey ordered. “What’s wrong with him?” Yev asked. “Just tired, Yev. I’ll get him up. Just go,” Mickey said calmly, although he was struggling to breathe, as if the wind had just been knocked out of him.

As soon as Yev left the room, Mickey pounced on top of Ian, straddling him, a knee on each side of his pelvis, pressing down on Ian’s shoulders with his hands as he shook him. “Ian! Wake up!” he managed to squeak out, despite the tightening of his own chest. When this failed to bring a response from Ian, Mickey ran to the bathroom, opened the closet and retrieved the first aid kit, quickly removing a pack of smelling salts.

Mickey cracked the smelling salts open and waved them under Ian’s nose, bringing him around promptly. Ian’s eyes opened, but he kept blinking. “Ian...you okay?” Mickey asked, still pretty shook up, but trying his best not to show it. “Yeahhhhh...” Ian said slowly, slurring as if he’d had way too much to drink. “Guess that medicine really got me…” he mumbled, sounding more like his ‘father’, Frank, on a bender, than himself.

“Well...uh...I picked up some steak and cheese subs. Maybe if you eat, you’ll…” “How about if I eat you?” Ian hissed with an evil smirk. “Ian, Yev’s downstairs, waitin’ to have dinner with us. I really don’t think…” Ian lunged at Mickey, pulling him down onto the bed and attacking his neck with his lips and tongue, doing a real number on Mickey’s most sensitive spot, driving Mickey crazy in spite of himself, his mouth threatening to leave marks.

“Damn, Gallagher! Meds got you a fuckin’ mess already!” Mickey said seriously, trying desperately to extricate himself from Ian’s grasp, despite his own bulging package. Clearly, Mickey wanted Ian physically, as much as Ian wanted him, but he felt a responsibility toward Yev that, at the moment, he couldn’t and wouldn’t want to shake.

Ian teased Mickey relentlessly, pinning him to the bed, restraining him as he humped, licked and sucked on him until he feared he might just give in. “Ian! I gotta go to Yev now!” Mickey insisted with his last remnant of self-control. “I’ll...I’ll bring ya your sub up in a while. Maybe...Maybe you can sleep a little more and I’ll...”

“You’ll what?” Ian leered at Mickey like he was a gingerbread man he was about to snap up like a
hungry alligator. “I’ll be all yours, once Yev’s in bed,” Mickey promised, feeling genuinely conflicted about Ian’s current behavior. He was sure it was temporary, a reaction to the introduction of a new medication. It was also exciting, in terms of the level of sexual arousal he clearly had at the moment. But it was definitely a bit scary, too—especially the difficulty Mickey had waking him in the first place. Certainly, Ian couldn’t take this stuff and go to work, nor could he man the Sample Drive tomorrow. Not this way!

“Okay, but if you’re lyin’, I’ll get you anyway! Believe that!” Ian snarled, letting Mickey up off the bed, then rubbing his own stiff dick, pouting as if it were unbearably painful. Mickey bent over the bed, kissing Ian lightly to seal their deal, “Ian, I promise,” he breathed.

Chapter End Notes

Got another chapter to upload within the hour! Please check back!
“Yev!” Mickey yelled as he ran down the stairs, “Daddy Ian’s fine. Gonna take him his sub after we’re done eatin’.” “You mean he’s not coming down to eat with us?” Yev asked, holding a plate he had made for him, complete with potato chips, which he had split evenly among all three plates he had prepared. “Still half asleep,” Mickey shrugged, hoping that would be the end of Yev’s questions.

“But I heard him!” Yev countered. “He sounded awake to me! Please tell him to come down!” he begged. “Really, Yev, he can’t. I’ll have him say g’night to you b’fore bed. Now, eat up! It’s gettin’ late!” Mickey growled, actually more aggravated with Ian, than with Yev, but Yev bearing the brunt of it, just the same.

Yev’s eyes filled with tears and he put his sandwich down. “Not hungry,” he whined, getting up from his seat and walking toward the workout room. “Where ya goin’?” Mickey called out to him. “I’m sorry, Yev! Please come eat with me,” Mickey pleaded. “I’M NOT HUNGRY!” Yev yelled. Mickey could hear him getting on the treadmill and figured he’d leave well enough alone. He knew working out helped HIM calm down when he was upset. Maybe it would do the same for Yev.

Mickey started to eat his sub by himself, still reeling from all this day had unleashed on him. He scrolled through his messages from the day as he ate, rereading Doc’s, then texted him back a second time:

“Haven’t heard from you, so I guess there’s no change with Mom. Is this normal?? I’ll be in first thing tomorrow after I take Yev to school. Wanted to come tonight, but I can’t. Need to talk to you about Ian’s meds, but didn’t wanna disturb you while you’re with Mom. I’m worried. Please call when you can. Thanks for being there for Mom.”

Mickey had just taken a bite of his sub when he heard someone on the stairs. He turned around to see Ian making his way down, leaning heavily on the bannister. “Mick, I’m starting to feel a little better,” Ian smiled weakly. “Seemed like you were feelin’ damn good before!” Mickey responded, puzzled by Ian’s statement.

“No, when you woke me up, I felt out of it...really dizzy,” Ian explained. “Didn’t stop ya from gettin’ on me,” Mickey quipped. “Yeah, that’s the thing. All I could think about was fuckin’ the hell outta you,” Ian grinned. “That part felt good, but I was definitely out of it. I really don’t think I should take this stuff again, at least ‘til after the Sample Drive tomorrow,” Ian spoke seriously. “I don’t either,” Mickey admitted, then continued, “But you gotta start back on ‘em tomorrow night, Ian.”

“Daddy Ian! I knew I heard your voice!” Yev beamed as he ran into the kitchen from the workout room, his body coated with a fresh layer of sweat. “I made a plate for you. Are you hungry?” he asked. “I sure am! Thanks, Yev!” Ian said, smiling over at his son. “Did you get enough sleep? Daddy said you were too tired to get up.”
“Yes, I’m feeling much better now. Let’s eat. Then you gotta get a shower and get to bed,” Ian said, squeezing his shoulders affectionately. “Guess I do have to shower again. I was mad, so I worked out,” Yev explained to Ian. “Just like your Dad!” Ian complimented, Yev grinned over at Mickey, Mickey returning it in kind.

“Can we have a family hug?” Yev asked, wrapping a sweaty arm around Ian and reaching for Mickey, who quickly walked across the kitchen to join them. “I’m so glad you’re up,” Yev said, clutching Ian a little tighter. “Me, too, Yev! Now let’s eat and get you to bed!” Ian exclaimed, turning to raise an eyebrow at Mickey.

The family sat, eating their dinner, discussing Yev’s day, what he was learning in math class and sharing his baseball victory with Ian, when Mickey got a call from Doc. He answered and walked out to the living room.

“Doc! How is she?” he asked in a low voice. “Mickey, there’s really nothing new to share. She is breathing on her own, which is a really good sign, but she hasn’t regained consciousness. I have every hope that she will, but I don’t know when. I just keep telling her I love and need her. I know she can hear me, and I believe she’ll come back to me,” Doc explained optimistically.

He sounded positive, and yet desperate, at the same time. Hearing Doc this way was very difficult, but Mickey had to admit, it beat seeing his mother the way she was, at present. That, to him, was beyond heartbreaking. To see her, lying utterly helpless, so damaged by something completely out of her control----out of anyone’s control.

“I’m sure she will, Doc!” Mickey assured him, sharing in his hopefulness, if only to help him get through the day. “Now, what questions did you have about Ian’s medication?” Doc asked, changing the subject. “Well, you said it would make him tired, among other things. What other things?” Mickey asked, sounding a bit unnerved.

“Mickey, there are a whole host of side effects, most of which will go away over time, as he adjusts to the medication. Some of the most common are dry mouth, drowsiness, blurred vision and increased sex drive. Patients may also have impaired cognitive functioning…”

“So you’re sayin’ he won’t be thinkin’ clear, but will want lots of sex? That sounds as bad as the mania. Least when he’s manic, he’s not hard to wake up! I couldn’t fuckin’ wake him up today. Had to use smellin’ salts!” Mickey explained, starting to get worked up.

Mickey jumped in surprise as he felt hands on his shoulders. “So...so we were thinkin’,” Mickey continued, “that maybe Ian shouldn’t take it in the mornin’, since he’s gotta do the Drive at the nursin’ school...that he could start back tomorrow night,” Mickey proposed, Ian sitting down next to him, grabbing the phone and putting Doc on speaker.

“That’s fine, but he’s gotta start back on them then. And I would highly recommend, given what you just told me about his behaviors, that he not come into work at the clinic until he adjusts to them, and that you, or someone, stay with him as much as possible, just until his body gets acclimated to the drug.”

“How long will that take?” Mickey asked nervously. “It’s hard to say, especially since he’s coming off the lithium so abruptly, but if I had to guess, I’d say two to four weeks. I would hope he’d be stable by this time next month.” Mickey breathed a heavy sigh as Ian grabbed Mickey by the head, turning it toward him and shaking his own head from side to side. Mickey nodded in response, but Ian just shook his head again, more vigorously this time.

Mickey wanted to discuss the possibility of Ian signing paperwork for mental health treatment, just in
case, but with Ian right next to him, he didn’t feel comfortable broaching the subject—-at least not today. Mickey elected, instead, to end the conversation for the time being.

“Okay, Doc, I gotta go. We got an early day tomorrow. Hope you can sleep some there. I’ll be in as early as I possibly can, to see my Mom. Thanks again for bein’ so good to her, and to all of us,” Mickey spoke respectfully. “You guys are my family. I’d do anything for you. Have a good night. I’ll see you in the morning, Mickey! Take good care of Ian,” Doc said softly, just before ending the call.

Mickey put his phone down and looked up into Ian’s supplicating, green eyes. “I can’t do this again, Mick,” he began. “Wha….What the fuck you talkin’ about?” Mickey asked, staring back at him, fearing the answer he knew was coming. “Can’t do this new med shit. Not feeling like myself. Not being able to do anything for myself. Needing you as my fucking nurse! Can’t do it!” Ian clarified, Mickey having been 100% correct in his assumption.

“Ian, Doc says it’s important that you take these, and that the bad side effects will probably go away,” Mickey countered in desperation. “Yeah, Mick, I heard what he said. They might go away in a month! I can’t sit around, doing nothing for a month, having you as my nursemaid, while I’m unable to work, to be trusted, to see straight, to think clearly. Easy for you and Doc to say I gotta take them. It’s not you guys that have to live with this shit! It’s me!” Ian lamented.

Mickey was fuming mad. He glared at Ian, realizing this was only the tip of the iceberg, and that he had to find a way to manage this. “You gonna make me take ‘em?” Ian asked defiantly. Mickey pondered his answer silently, not wanting to prompt a crazy fight, after what he’d already been through with Yev, who was now calm, happy, fed and in the process of getting showered. Mickey took a deep, cleansing breath and counted silently to ten, his eyes drinking in the flawless beauty that sat in front of him, in all of his obstinate glory.

“Ian, let’s save this conversation for tomorrow. I think we got some more pressing matters to handle right now,” he purred, pulling Ian’s face to his own and kissing him sensually. “Oh fuck yeah,” Ian breathed, wasting no time in reaching right down into Mickey’s sweats to grab his rapidly swelling cock. “I fucking want you BAD,” Ian breathed into Mickey’s mouth, amid their frenzied make-out session. Mickey loosened Ian’s robe, just enough to slide his hand inside and massage his magnificent member, then suddenly it hit him that Yev was still up. “Fuck, Ian! We gotta stop. Gotta get Yev to bed first,” Mickey reasoned.

“Okay, I’ll tuck him in and meet you in bed,” Ian grinned, rising from the couch and heading for the stairs. Mickey adjusted himself, then grabbed the lone container of whipped cream that had been sitting, unopened, in their refrigerator for weeks, before heading up to his bedroom.

Once in the room, he started a hot bath, stowing the Reddi-Whip in the nightstand drawer, next to the coconut oil, then traipsing down the hall to join Ian in saying goodnight to Yev. As he stood by the door, he heard Yev ask about Grandma, Ian handling it like a pro, “Doc is there with her, making sure she is getting what she needs. He’ll let us know when you can visit. I love you. Now, get some sleep.”

“G’nite, Yev,” Mickey added, approaching his bed to plant a soft kiss on his forehead. “I love you.” “Love you, too,” Yev responded sleepily as he shut his eyes.

Mickey grasped Ian’s hand, leading him back into their bedroom. “Meet ya in the tub,” Mickey said, rubbing Ian’s back as he made a beeline for the bathroom. Mickey peed, then stripped himself naked, throwing his robe on as he headed for the jacuzzi, where Ian was already sitting, a sexy smile spread across his face. Mickey dropped his robe, Ian’s eyes immediately moving over every inch of his enticingly exquisite form longingly. “Get that ass in here!” Ian growled.
Mickey quickly obliged him, stepping into the water slowly, giving himself a chance to acclimate to the steaming hot water. Ian watched intently, each second feeling like a lifetime, until his hot-as-fuck husband was finally seated in the water next to him. Ian turned on the jets, angling one so it grazed Mickey’s crotch rhythmically, as he washed his partner lovingly, then leaned over to bite and suck at the most sensitive and erogenous spot on Mickey’s neck. Mickey instantly responding with soft moans and a quickly stiffening cock. Ian fondled him under the water, Mickey returning the favor, Ian’s gigantic, fully-erect phallus seeming to get even harder by the second.

Mickey was putty in Ian’s hands, panting and moaning in desperation as Ian continued his double-barreled assault on him. “Fuckin’ need you, Gallagher,” he panted. Then he remembered the Reddi-Whip and his original plan for their session. Ian was in the process of flipping him over, positioning him for what promised to be some bomb-ass tubfucking, when Mickey interrupted, “No...want you layin’ on the bed,” he demanded.

Ian sighed in frustrated disappointment. Mickey calling this audible meant it would be longer before he could sink himself into that fine ass of his, which was, at this moment, what he lived for. “Okay,” he whined in resignation, lifting himself out of the tub, drying off, then running for the bed, where he promptly lay down on his back, just as Mickey had demanded.

Mickey was there, looking down at him lustfully, in a matter of seconds. And he wasted no time, bending Ian in half as he caressed his balls, his hand lightly trailing over Ian’s manhood to get there, while he reached into the nightstand drawer for the coconut oil and Reddi-Whip. “Gonna have my dessert now,” he beamed, staring up at Ian from between his thighs.

Ian shivered with excitement as Mickey opened the coconut oil and began to apply a generous dollop of it, first to Ian’s dick, then, as it softened, smoothing it over his scrotum and massaging it in around his taut, pink hole, which peeked out perfectly from between Ian’s ass cheeks as Mickey widened the gap between his legs.

“Mmmm…” Mickey hummed as he licked in a circular motion around the perimeter of Ian’s hole, Ian squirming as intense waves of pleasure rolled over him, despite his marked efforts to remain still. Mickey continued licking, now in a light feathering pattern that had Ian moaning uncontrollably, Mickey pushing his tongue inside him intermittently as he stroked Ian’s beautiful cock with his right hand. “Oh God...Mick!” Ian’s voice called out, crescendoing as his arousal piqued.

Mickey reached for the Reddi-Whip, squirting it liberally from the tip of Ian’s magical cock down to his sweet, well-oiled hole, which Mickey had begun to dip into with the index finger of his left hand. Ian inhaled sharply, letting his breath out in short, staccato gasps as Mickey’s mouth began its descent, licking and sucking his delicious, creamy coconut cock from tip to hilt, all while he continued to finger Ian’s asshole expertly, tapping and rubbing at his prostate, Ian wincing and moaning ecstatically. “You. Taste. Fuckin’. Fantastic.” Mickey sang, one word at a time, amid his other oral manipulations. “Fuck, Mick! Gonna cum!” Ian squealed.

Mickey immediately slowed the momentum in all areas. “You want it like this?” Mickey asked. “Yes! Yes! Yes!” Ian begged hysterically. Mickey obliged, immediately resuming his prior pace, now engulfing the entirety of Ian’s massive manhood with his mouth and thrusting his finger into Ian with more force, curving it to tag his prostate squarely every time. “Oh fuck yeah!” Ian screamed, over and over and over again, as his body writhed wildly under Mickey’s doting dominion, his climaxing cock spewing it’s liquid passion as Mickey finished him, grinding his own rock-hard member against the bed recklessly, the sound, feel and taste of Ian’s delicious release provoking him.

Mickey rolled down the bed, allowing Ian to relax his shaking legs. “Get over here!” Ian demanded, tapping the bed next to him. Mickey moved up beside Ian, gazing lovingly into his placid, spent face,

“I’ll be ready soon,” Ian replied, opening his eyes to admire Mickey’s. “Meantime, I’m not gonna let that whipped cream go to waste,” he chuckled, sliding down the bed and positioning himself between Mickey’s legs.

Ian drew a triangle, the first line connecting Mickey’s pretty, pink nipples, the other two beginning there and extending down to his throbbing erection. He started with Mickey’s right nipple, sucking the whipped cream off, then flicking it with his tongue, then sucking and biting at it, carefully holding his own body up and away from Mickey’s whipped cream-plastered frame. Ian’s mouth made its way from the right nipple to the left, painstakingly licking and sucking every last drop of whipped cream from Mickey’s chest, then repeating his torture technique on the left nipple. Mickey drew in a deep breath, holding it in with anticipation until Ian progressed from licking to biting, Mickey hissing as the pain-punctuated pleasure from each bite registered in his brain.

Ian moved down one side of Mickey’s torso, then the other, lapping up the sweet path he had created, until he reached Mickey’s sugar-coated schlong, swiping his tongue up and down his shaft until he had lapped up every last morsel of sweetness, then taking the entire length of him into his mouth, sucking ardently.

Mickey kicked his feet impatiently as Ian removed his mouth momentarily to dip his fingers into the coconut oil. “Patience is a virtue, Mick,” Ian chided him, opting now to only tease him with his tongue, then beginning to slowly finger his opening. Mickey exhaled heavily through his nose in annoyance. “Ian, I just…” “Shhh…” Ian interrupted, once again taking his mouth completely away from Mickey’s cock. “You gonna beg for it?” Ian sneered. He’d been waiting for this. He hadn’t forgotten, as much as he knew he deserved it, what Mickey had put him through at the beach villa—and it was time for payback.

“Ian, I want you so fuckin’ bad,” Mickey snorted. “I know you do,” Ian sang to him, stretching him slowly as he lightly skimmed his right hand over his raging hard-on. “Okay, okay! Please, Ian!!” Mickey pleaded as he lifted his ass up off the bed, attempting to get more substantial contact with Ian’s hand. Ian kept the stimulation steady, at the ‘barely-there’ level, Mickey bucking his hips and legs in protest. “C’mon, Ian!” Mickey mewled, his very existence, at this moment, seemingly dependent on Ian’s touch. “What do you want?” Ian taunted him.

“I want your fuckin’ cock jammed up my ass...PLEASE!” Mickey yelled, clearly pissed off, but still horny as hell. “Well...why didn’t you say so?” Ian teased, finally flipping Mickey over, pulling him up onto all fours and positioning himself behind his exasperated lover. Ian nudged Mickey’s ass cheeks with his hips, stroking his cock lightly, still fucking with him. “Ian!!” Mickey wailed.

“Relax,” Ian murmured into Mickey’s ear, the timber of his voice, sending chills up Mickey’s spine. Ian began his excruciatingly slow entry, Mickey bucking and rocking back against Ian to hasten his ascent into him. Ian backed away, denying Mickey any control, Mickey finally resigning himself, settling in to allow Ian his way.

Ian nestled his nose into the nape of Mickey’s neck, his ambrosial essence lighting Ian’s insides on fire, like a match to gunpowder. He gradually nudged himself into Mickey, wanting, just as Mickey did, to bang like there was no tomorrow, but denying himself, for the sake of making his mate squirm. He bit his lip, attempting to stave off the moans he knew were coming, as he continued to inch his way in, his own body betraying him as he sank more and more quickly and deeply into Mickey with each stroke, as had become second nature to him over the years. And it felt so fucking
good! “Damn, Mick!” he muttered, before he could catch himself.

Mickey grinned to himself in satisfaction, pulling his lower lip under his front teeth intuitively. He knew damn well where Ian was, and what was coming next. Sure enough, within seconds, Ian gripped Mickey’s hips tightly. “Fuck it!” he muttered under his breath, driving into Mickey hard and pulling him back against him at the same time. Mickey gasped, drawing his breath in sharply through his nose, biting down even harder into his lip as Ian fucked the hell out of him, humming his name into his ear. Ian formed a fist snugly around Mickey’s cock, jerking it as they banged like fucking porn stars, both men screaming each other’s names as they came, Mickey exploding everywhere, Ian, shooting his wad deep into Mickey’s magnificent ass.

Mickey rolled over onto his back, pulling Ian down on top of him and kissing him passionately. “Ian, we gotta make sure we don’t fuckin’ lose this, cuz what we have...It’s everything to me,” Mickey whispered as Ian stared down into his eyes. “Nothing can touch us, Mick,” Ian smiled. “Nothing.”

Chapter End Notes

Make sure you didn't miss a chapter. I published the one before this less than an hour ago. Thanks for reading! Comments welcome!
Ian Rides

Mickey woke up to the sound of a text coming in on his phone. It was still dark outside, so he knew it wasn’t morning yet and assumed it was something important. He picked up his phone, finding that it was 4:30 AM and the text was from Doc, only two words: “She’s AWAKE!!!” Mickey smiled, trying to contain his excitement so he wouldn’t wake Ian, but as he attempted to slide out from under Ian’s arm and leg, where he had been safely tucked away all night, Ian stirred, mumbling his name. “Hey...getting up to use the bathroom. Mom’s awake!” he decided to share.

“She is?!” Ian responded, instantly sitting up and reaching for Mickey. “Yeah! Hey, can you take Yev to school on the way to the Drive? I wasn’t gonna ask, but since you’re not takin’ the meds this morning...This way I can go see Ma now,” Mickey reasoned. Ian pouted, pulling Mickey into him and back down onto the bed, wrapping himself around him like a clinging vine. “I can’t do this with you right now. I gotta piss, then I really wanna get goin’ to see Mom,” Mickey said as calmly as he could. Ian released him with a reluctant peck on the lips, smacking his ass lightly as he stood to go to the bathroom.

Mickey was like an addictive drug to Ian right now. He wanted him all the time, and once he got him, he needed more of him with every passing hour. Maybe it was the medication itself, maybe his insecurity over the whole change of medication situation, or maybe, he just really loved and desired his husband, and wanted to show it in his time of need. Whatever the cause, Ian was relentless---insatiable---and Mickey, under so much stress, had barely accomplished the basic things he NEEDED to do the day before, so he was trying to address necessities first, and to get an early start. Of course, he wanted to satisfy Ian, but he wanted to enjoy it, free of the concerns and obligations that plagued his mind at the moment.

He peed, then hopped in the shower to clean up quickly before heading for the hospital. He hurriedly lathered himself up, washing his hair and body, then put his head directly under the shower head to rinse himself, closing his eyes to keep the shampoo out. When he opened them, he found he was not alone. Ian had snuck in, and began rubbing his massive hard-on against Mickey’s hip. “C’mon, Mick, please?” he begged, tiny water droplets adorning his beautifully long lashes as he batted them irresistibly at Mickey. “Okay, man,” Mickey responded, feeling his body react reflexively to Ian’s advances, “but you’re takin’ it. Gonna be sittin’ all fuckin’ day...I’ll be ready for tonight,” Mickey promised, winking at Ian with a sexy smile.

Fine,“ Ian agreed, handing Mickey the body wash. Mickey, becoming more aroused by the second, kissed Ian softly, licking and sucking at the center of Ian’s top lip sensually as he applied body wash liberally to both Ian’s monstrous cock and his tight little asshole. He caressed Ian’s manhood slowly, matching the pace with which he massaged his hole, taking his time, gradually delving into him with his left index finger as Ian moaned softly into Mickey’s mouth.

Mickey’s own cock sprang to full attention immediately, the sights and sounds of his gorgeous lover exciting him beyond measure. “Damn, Ian! So fuckin’ sexy.” Mickey breathed as he continued to nip at Ian’s lips teasingly. He gingerly added his middle finger to prep Ian, as he continued to stroke him haltingly, Ian pulling Mickey’s face into his own, thrusting his tongue past Mickey’s parted lips desperately, the couple kissing tempestuously, igniting a flame inside them both that burned white hot.

“You want it in here?” Mickey panted, once he could feel Ian was ready. “How about if I ride you in bed?” Ian suggested, eyeing Mickey up seductively. “Wanna watch you cum,” he grinned. Regardless of role, there was nothing Ian loved more than to watch Mickey’s face during his orgasm,
from beginning to end. It literally sent him over the edge every time.

“Sure,” Mickey smiled, resigning himself to the time necessary to enjoy Ian fully, which he absolutely intended to do. He dried them both off briskly, leading Ian to the bed, where he lubed him up with coconut oil quickly before lying down, just as Ian had requested. “Come an’ get it,” Mickey growled, coating his own rigid cock with coconut oil as he watched his breathtakingly handsome husband climb atop him, straddling him at his waist, knees pressed into the bed, feet tucked under Mickey’s thighs.

Ian spread his own ass cheeks wide, reaching behind him, guiding Mickey’s sweet cock into his taut ass slowly. Mickey grasped him at the waist, encouraging his every movement, splaying his fingers so he could feel the gyration of Ian’s hips as he rode him like a jockey with the video on slo-mo, “So fuckin’ tight...the way you move Gallagher…” Mickey growled, his fingers digging into Ian’s buttocks as he held on for dear life, praying Ian wouldn’t change a blessed thing, he felt so fucking amazing.

Mickey took Ian’s firm cock, the tip sticky with the dew of his desire, and began to maneuver his hands over it adeptly, Ian responding with a deep growl. Ian persisted, his gallop becoming more frenzied as the intensity of his pleasure increased, Mickey’s magical touch co-mingling with the brush of Mickey’s manhood against his prostate driving him to fuck, harder, faster, with greater intensity until he and his ecstatic mate could take no more.

Ian could feel Mickey literally coming apart beneath him, his deep, husky moans electrifying Ian’s entire body. He watched, his own gratification coming to fruition as Mickey drove up into him, countering Ian’s every move, Mickey’s head rolling from side to side, his lusciously full lips parted, allowing the sweet sounds of his satisfaction to piermate the room. “Open your eyes!” Ian commanded breathlessly, Mickey acquiescing just in time for Ian to watch as his pupils doubled in size, Mickey’s lashes fluttering as he willed his eyes, against their instinct, to stay open for Ian.

“So fucking beautiful, Mick! FUCK!” Ian yelled, utterly overcome with the magnitude of this extraordinary experience, Mickey titillating all five of his senses simultaneously. He was on Mickey Overload and there was no better feeling in all the world, if the world even existed outside of them, at this moment.

Ian could feel Mickey’s warmth explode up into him, amid all of the myriad sexy sights, sounds, smells and feelings that Mickey so magically bestowed upon him as he responded, his own massive, rock-hard cock erupting over the top of Mickey’s right fist, both men panting and moaning as their bodies stilled, their eyes gazing intently at one another, each overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of his lover and the entire encounter.

Ian rolled over onto the bed, next to Mickey, taking a moment to catch his breath. “See...bet you’re glad you decided to stay with me,” Ian grinned. “Fuck, yeah!” Mickey replied breathlessly. “Ian, I fuckin’ love you so much...You don’t even know...” Mickey murmured. “Yes.. I do,” Ian assured him. “And I love you even more,” Ian added. “Not fuckin’ possible!” Mickey argued. “...And tonight I’m gonna show you,” Ian promised.

“You really wanna show me?” Mickey asked, heading back to the shower for a quick rinse. “Of course!” Ian replied, rising from the bed more tentatively than usual, the aftershocks of their tryst promising to serve him as a reminder of Mickey for a good while. “Then meet me at the hospital after the Sample Drive. We gotta get some important shit set up,” Mickey said matter-of-factly as he stepped into the shower.

“Is this about Mom?” Ian asked with a look of concern on his face, as he followed Mickey into the
shower. “Naw,” Mickey replied, lathering Ian’s body up and tracing the outlines of Ian’s pecs with his finger. The expression on Ian’s face changed from worried to puzzled. “It’s about us. Somethin’ you talked about before,” Mickey added in response to Ian’s non-verbal question.

All at once, Ian knew what Mickey was referring to, the realization plainly reflected on his face. “Ian...if you love me and what we got, you’ll come and talk to me about this,” Mickey said seriously, having read Ian’s face yet again. Mickey’s brilliant blue eyes implored Ian, a lump forming in Ian’s throat at the very thought of arguing with Mickey, after the spectacular demonstration of passionate love he had just experienced.

Ian was contemplating how to tactfully speak in opposition of the idea, when a single tear dropped from Mickey’s left eye, quickly disappearing into the puddle of water on the shower floor. But Ian had seen it fall, and it was enough to make him agree to pretty much anything Mickey wanted. He loved him that much...

“I do. And I love YOU, Mick!” Ian kissed Mickey tenderly, giving him a quick scrub down, then grabbing towels for each of them. Mickey toweled off quickly, got himself ready to go and headed for the stairs, Ian calling out to him, “Wait!” Mickey stopped on a dime at the top of the stairs, turning to respond to Ian, who ran up and kissed him again, then asked, “Who’s picking Yev up after school?”

“Depends,” Mickey answered. “Just let me know when you’re done at the nursin’ school and we’ll figure it out...But I want your ass at the hospital.” Ian couldn’t help but think his ass could use a hospital right about then, but he just nodded his head in agreement, creeping back toward his bedroom to try and catch a few more Z’s before getting Yev up for school.

Mickey drove speedily to the hospital, which reminded him that he still needed to make some calls pertaining to his mother’s car. He couldn’t deal with one more thing at this point, however, feeling the need to focus on the family, Kayla and Ian’s health in particular. As he pulled into the lot, he noticed both Doc and Mandy’s cars. He parked hastily and strode into the hospital, reaching Kayla’s room within minutes of his arrival.

“Mickey,” Kayla murmured weakly, her weary face lighting up at the sight of her son. “Ma!” Mickey called out, rushing over to give her as close to a hug as was possible, in her current condition and position. “So glad you’re awake!” he rejoiced, kissing Kayla’s forehead, then each of her cheeks, smiling widely down at her, his mirror image smiling back up at him.

“Hi Doc! Mandy!” Mickey greeted him, still grinning from ear to ear. He wrapped his arms around his exhausted sister. “Need some sleep,” he commented, before turning to shake Doc’s hand. “How are ya, Doc?” Mickey asked, noticing the worry that was etched into his face. “I’m okay. Just want to get your Mom better so I can marry her!” he said, the characteristic twinkle in his eyes returning as he mentioned their impending nuptials.

Before Mickey could turn away, Doc spoke to him again, “Mickey, I need to talk to you. It’s about Ian,” he began, then added, “Privately,” motioning for Mickey to follow him into the hall. “I’ll be right back, sweetheart. Do you need anything?” Doc called back to Kayla. “No, I’m fine. You two go ahead and have your talk. I’m gonna talk to Mandy for a bit,” she answered softly.

“What is it, Doc?” Mickey spoke with great concern. “It’s okay, Mickey. I just wanted to tell you that I spoke with Ian’s new psychiatrist, Dr. Gonzalez, who was actually the prescribing doctor for his new meds. I described the incident that occurred yesterday,” he paused, his face brightening a bit as he continued. “He told me he was trying Ian at a slightly higher dose to start, in an attempt to counteract the abrupt discontinuation of the lithium. He thinks this is probably why he had the symptoms he did, and he recommends that Ian cut the dose in half for the first week, then increase it
by a quarter for a few days, then another quarter,” Doc explained.

“And then he’ll be normal?” Mickey asked, his eyes full of hope and optimism. “I didn’t say that,” Doc clarified. “No one can predict with any certainty what might happen, but the likelihood of him transitioning more smoothly is higher. “Okay…” Mickey said, his face falling slightly in reaction to such a guarded short-term prognosis.

“So, bottom line, Doc, can he still come to work? Cuz he was real upset when he heard he wouldn’t be able to do anything, possibly for a month. He was talkin’ some shit about not wantin’ to take the meds at all!” Mickey related uncomfortably.

“We can try him at work, as long as he isn’t working alone. As for not taking the meds, that’s not an option. Make sure you tell him, if he can’t be declared mentally stable by a psychiatric professional, he will not be eligible as a donor,” Doc delineated. “Uh...could you explain all this to him? Please? Somehow I think it’ll go over better from you,” Mickey suggested. “I will be happy to talk with him about this. I was planning to talk to him in the first place, actually, but I saw you first,” Doc responded.

“Hey, while you’re at it...Think ya could talk him into signin’ voluntary papers, for in case he needs to be hospitalized, like if shit starts to go real crazy...like before…” Mickey stammered, his eyes filling with tears at the mere thought of Ian getting sick again. “That’s a sticky situation, legally,” Doc started to explain. “What d’ya mean?” Mickey asked.

“Well, we can have him sign, but basically he can sign again to revoke the papers anytime. The only way to enforce them is to have him declared mentally incompetent, which we could actually do with or without the papers. What would be beneficial would be to have him sign a medical power of attorney, giving you the right and responsibility of making medical decisions on his behalf, should he be declared mentally incompetent. This would put you, rather than the State, in charge of his welfare,” Doc expounded.

“But...Ian said he’d sign somethin’ sayin’ we could put him away for mandatory treatment, if he got too crazy,” Mickey countered, desperately wanting to put that safeguard into place. “Then we’ll have something drawn up to that effect to go along with the power of attorney, if that will make you feel better, Mickey,” Doc concluded.

“Should I call Thomas or someone at Cogswell’s office?” Mickey asked. “I’ll take care of it, Mickey. You focus on keeping him on the meds!” Doc beseeched him. “If we don’t get an alternative donor today or in the near future, and he doesn’t take them, your mother...will not survive,” Doc whispered, watching Mickey’s eyes well up again, his own throat tightening uncomfortably as he choked back his emotional response.

“Thanks, Doc. I’ll do my best,” Mickey promised, swallowing hard. Doc turned back toward the entryway to Kayla’s room, gazing in wonderment at her natural beauty, strength, and grace in the face of such misfortune, a lifelong trait of hers that she had most definitely passed on to her incredibly resilient children.

“Why don’t you go home and get some real sleep, in your own bed, Doc. Me and Mandy got this for a while,” Mickey assured him. “No...not leaving the hospital, but I will go to the on-call doctors’ sleeping quarters, as long as you promise to get me if anything goes wrong. I’ll be calling to get Ian’s paperwork started first, then I’ll be on the 3rd floor. Just ask for me at the nurses’ station and they’ll wake me...and don’t let me sleep past 2 PM. Do you promise me, Mickey?” Doc pleaded. “Yeah, we gotcha, Doc. Get some fuckin’ rest, or you won’t do Ma any good,” Mickey reassured him with a smile.
Mickey walked over and sat down on the left side of Kayla’s bed, Mandy already occupying the right side. “My babies!” Kayla said, her voice low and hoarse. “I love you both so much! How are my grandbabies?” “They’re fine. We just gotta get YOU better,” Mickey answered. “Ian and Manuel?” she added to her inquiry. “Also fine,” Mickey announced. “Taking care of the kids so we can be here!” Mandy elaborated.

Mickey and Mandy spent the morning, reminiscing with their mother about happier times, over the recent years, as well as some of the bright spots during their childhood. “We always knew it was gonna be a good day when it was just you and us at the house, Ma,” Mandy remembered. “Yeah, I alway slept better when I knew Dad was in fuckin’ prison...just like now,” Mickey laughed, Mandy and Kayla joining in, although all three knew how true that statement was.

Mickey and Mandy anticipated Kayla’s every need, all morning, spoiling her with soda, magazines and love. After one particularly long period of silence, Kayla deep in thought, she expressed, “I only wish I could have been here to see each of you get married.” Kayla frowned, admiring the inner and outer beauty of her children as they sat, doting on her.

“We would love for you to have been there,” Mandy replied softly. “It’s okay, Mom. We’re gonna be at yours—all of us!” Mickey smiled sweetly, grasping Kayla’s hand. “And if ya really feel like ya missed somethin’, I’ll marry Ian again...just for you, Ma,” Mickey laughed. “…fact, I’d marry Ian again each day for the rest of my life,” he added, pulling his phone from his pocket and texting Ian:

“Hope everything’s going ok. Love you so fucking much, Ian! Let me know when you’re done,”

Surprisingly, he got a quick response:

“Going great! The place is mobbed. And Doc had the lab send 3 helpers, so we’re in great shape. In fact, I’m gonna be able to leave as soon as it dies down, since the lab techs are gonna pack up all the samples, and some nursing students, who helped me set up, volunteered to tear-down. Told them about Mom and they’re all praying for us! I’ll text you when I’m on my way! (heart emoji)”

Then a second message came. Also from Ian:

“I love you more!!”
Ian arrived at the hospital by 2:00, hoping to talk with Mickey, make a quick visit, then go to pick up the kids from school. He had insisted, when he talked to Reesie, upon picking Mikhaila up and giving her a break, since she had been working so much by herself. He boarded an empty elevator, destined for the CCU on Floor 6, but the elevator stopped on Floor 3, where he was joined by Doc, who appeared as if he had just woken up,

“Doc!” Ian said with a smile, “You look exhausted!” “I am,” Doc replied sleepily. “Just got a few hours of sleep, but wanted to get back to see Kayla, and to talk to you, actually,” he added. “Mind stopping in the cafeteria for a quick cup of coffee before we go up?” Doc asked kindly. “Sure,” Ian replied, thinking he could use a cup himself, after the day he’d put in at the nursing school.

The two rerouted the elevator for the basement, Ian describing the scene at the school, stressing the large number of people who had shown up to try and help. Ian had been positively overwhelmed by the outpouring of kindness and support from his former school.

The elevator finally stopped with a thud, the doors opening to allow Ian and Doc’s exit. The coffee smelled fresh and delicious, as did the food, reminding them both how long it had been since they had eaten. “Maybe we should grab a quick coffee, then offer to bring food up for the others,” Ian suggested. Doc nodding his head in agreement.

“So...is this about Mom or me?” Ian asked, cutting to the chase. “Both,” Doc replied with a serious look on his face. “Ian, I know there is a chance we will find another donor, but right now I’m operating under the assumption that it will be you who will donate, which means you have to be psychologically healthy enough to do so. I spoke with Dr. Gonzalez today about your medication. He had started you at the high end of what is considered to be an appropriate beginning dose, primarily because of how abruptly you stopped taking the lithium. He was trying to guard against any relapses associated with that,” Doc explained, Ian listening intently.

“Ian, in light of some of the side effects you’ve been having, he suggested that you cut your dose in half for the first week, then increase it by a quarter twice the following week. He thinks it might make the transition smoother for you, although you may feel more of the effects of the lithium withdrawal,” Doc expounded.

“Such as?” Ian asked with a bit of an edge in his voice. “Well, you may have headaches, not sleep as well, and have some sexual side-effects,” Doc answered. “Sexual?” Ian questioned, his interest piqued. “Yes. Lithium has the known side effect of dampening the sex drive,” Doc responded. Ian smirked, “Maybe when I first started to take it…” Ian began.

“Yes, I’m sure it may have been so subtle at your age, that you didn’t notice, and you may not notice a change now either. I just wanted you to be aware of it, in case you do, so you or Mickey don’t immediately believe it, along with the sleep trouble, is a sign of mania. Now, with that said, if you start to have other symptoms of mania, such as talking fast, having excessive energy or delusions of grandeur, feeling euphoric or overly irritable, or having disconnected, racing thoughts, then you need to let Dr. Gonzalez know immediately. At that point, your mental health would come first, since you cannot donate if your bipolar disorder is not under control, and he could take the proper measures to get you stabilized,” Doc spoke slowly and deliberately, understanding that, even for someone with a medical background like Ian, this was a lot to digest.

“Okay, so that’s good! Does that mean I can come back to work?” Ian asked hopefully. “Well, I wouldn’t want you to run the clinic alone, just in case you have some type of reaction to the meds,
but yes, you can definitely start back tomorrow, as long as you’re feeling up to it, on two conditions,” Doc replied.

“And what are those?” Ian asked, beginning to bristle. “First of all, you have to continue to take these new meds, unless Dr. Gonzalez says otherwise. If you don’t, you are putting yourself and Kayla at risk. Don’t you agree?” Doc asked. Ian nodded in silent ascent, adding, “And?”

Doc took a deep breath, then began, “I would want you to sign off on a Medical Power of Attorney. This would protect you by having a loved one, I am assuming Mickey, rather than the State, make decisions for you, in the event that you become mentally unstable,” Doc paused, watching for Ian’s reaction.

Ian sat silent for a moment. “Did Mickey tell you to talk to me!?” Ian asked, getting defensive. Doc wasn’t sure how to answer. Sure, Mickey had brought up the subject, but Doc had a vested interest in protecting, not only Ian, as his patient and employee, but also Ian, as the prospective donor for his fiance, whose life hung in the balance.

“Ian, I want to do everything possible to protect your health and well-being. You’re a great nurse and you are like a son to me. You are also in the position of possibly being the only person we have at our disposal that can save Kayla’s life, so I can’t afford to have my best employee, adopted son, and fiance’s stem-cell donor have an episode and remain untreated, possibly taking off and endangering himself or someone else. You know, if you were to become manic, you could have a psychotic break, as you have in the past. I’m sure I don’t have to remind you about your road trip with Yevgeni, or about your unfortunate experience in Lake Michigan.”

Ian’s entire body tensed up as he held back his anger at Doc having reminded him of these horrifying experiences. “These are the kinds of events that can be avoided, if you see your doctor regularly, report any changes in behavior, and agree to having someone oversee your care, if you’re not able to do it yourself for a time,” Doc explained, a sincere look of caring in his eyes.

Ian’s body relaxed as he internalized Doc’s concern and the genuine reasons for his request. “Doc, I trust you, but I don’t wanna be locked away forever,” Ian intimated. “Don’t worry about that. Your family loves you, and so do I. Everyone would be working hard to assist in your speedy recovery, and anxiously awaiting your return,” Doc assured him, Ian nodding, despite still looking a bit uneasy.

“I don’t think you understand how important you are to the entire family. And as far as Mickey is concerned, that boy would be lost without you! You are everything to him. It’s written all over his face, every time he sees or talks about you. In fact, I highly recommend you put his mind at ease about this as soon as possible. I’m worried about him. Between your situation and his mother’s illness, he is one catastrophe away from a meltdown,” Doc remarked, hoping like hell that he was getting through to Ian.

Ian paused, envisioning the worried expression he had seen on his face after Mickey had woken him up with the smelling salts the day before. “Okay, I’ll do it. And I’ll talk to Mickey when we get upstairs. I’d be lost without him, too,” Ian confided in Doc, becoming emotional as he thought of Mickey being so stressed out.

“I’ll call the room and see what everybody wants,” Doc volunteered. “Can you refill our coffees?” he asked. “Sure,” Ian responded, “and thanks Doc, for being a better Dad than either of mine ever were.” Doc smiled, responding as Mickey answered his phone, “Mickey... Ian and I are in the cafeteria and wondered what everyone would like to eat.” “Hold on,” Mickey replied, turning to ask Mandy what she wanted.
Mickey returned to the phone, “Two grilled cheese with fries---three, if Ma’s allowed to have one,” he laughed. “I don’t see why not!” Doc answered. “Okay! We’ll see you guys in a bit,” Doc finished, ending the call. Ian had filled the coffees and returned for the lunch order, deciding himself to join in the grilled cheese party, convincing Doc to do the same, and in a matter of ten minutes they were lugging five to-go containers, filled with grilled cheeses, to the elevator, along with their coffees and a bag filled with bottled waters.

Mickey, smiling brightly as soon as he laid eyes on Ian, had met them at the elevator entrance on the 6th floor, anticipating they would have their hands full. “Thanks, Mick,” Ian said softly, thinking how thoughtful his husband was, and how much he couldn’t wait to kiss him, and tell him how much he loved him. He held back though, hoping to have time to eat with everyone, before leaving to pick up the kids from school.

The family crowded around Kayla’s bed, Ian kissing her cheek once he had unloaded all of the food and drinks from his hands, Doc doing the same, but on her lips. They all enjoyed their sandwiches together, Kayla expressing her heartfelt gratitude for all of the visitation and the solid food. She had been so hungry all day.

“Shit! I forgot to call Thomas back!” Mickey exclaimed. “Better hurry before he’s done for the day,” he added. “Oh yeah? What does he want?” Ian asked, wondering if he was preparing the Medical Power of Attorney. “He made arrangements for Svet’s travel into Mexico City and wants to talk logistics,” Mickey explained. Kayla grimaced, dreading the idea of Svetlana coming to Mexico, especially now that she was so sick.

“Oh,” Ian responded, “well, I was going to talk to you about something, but go ahead and call him. I gotta get going to pick up the kids anyway.” “W-Wait!” Mickey called out in desperation as Ian stood up. “You okay? Everything alright?” Mickey asked, his face filled with panic. “C’mere,” Ian whispered, turning, grabbing Mickey by the hand and yanking him out into the hallway.

“Everything is fine, Mickey,” Ian said with a warm smile. “I’ll sign the papers, I’m gonna take the half dose of medicine, and...I love you...like fucking crazy,” Ian said calmly, leaning in to kiss Mickey gently on the lips, lingering to take in his irresistible scent. He couldn’t help it. Mickey just smelled like home to him, and he couldn’t get enough.

Mickey took a step back, gazing at his wonderful, loving, fine-ass husband, his vibrant, red hair and beautiful porcelain face giving off a mesmerizing glow. It felt to Mickey like he hadn’t seen Ian in days, the attraction he felt to him in this moment so strong, his body involuntarily lunged back at him, Mickey kissing Ian passionately, the lovers pressing their bodies together lustfully.

“Uh…” Ian cleared his throat and adjusted himself, “I gotta go get the kids. Gonna go say bye to Mom first.” “I’ll walk you in,” Mickey said, taking Ian by the hand and stroking the back of it softly with his thumb. “Mom, I’m so glad I got to have lunch with you. You look so much better,” Ian smiled at Kayla, leaning over her bed to kiss her on the cheek once again. Then he kissed Mickey goodbye again, enveloping him in his arms, and releasing him reluctantly afterward.

“Why don’t you go with him, Mickey? He obviously wants you to,” Kayla said observantly. “I’ll be fine here. In fact, I’m gonna kick everyone outta here so we can all rest,” she insisted, motioning for Mandy and Doc to vacate the premises as well. “Don’t want you to be alone, Ma,” Mickey protested. “Mickey, I’m fine. I’ll rest better knowing you’re all at home with your families, where you belong,” Kayla countered. Doc frowned, staring sadly at her.

“As for you, Michael, you’ve been here for me all this time, and I love you to the ends of the earth, but you need rest, too. Real rest in your own bed. There are people here to care for me. I’ll be fine,” she assured them all, adding, “Now, please go! All of you!”
Kayla’s family lined up to kiss her goodbye, Doc hanging back to give her a proper farewell kiss, privately. “Hurry!” Ian said to Mickey, grasping his hand again. “We’re gonna be late for the kids!” The couple hurried out of the hospital, rushing to Ian’s car. “Can I drop you here tomorrow on my way to work?” Ian asked Mickey, hoping they could ride together. “Sure,” Mickey answered, not wanting to be separated either. “I do have to call Thomas though,” Mickey reminded Ian. “Go ‘head,” Ian responded. Mickey scrolled for Thomas’ number, then hit ‘send’. “Put him on speaker,” Ian commanded, Mickey obliging him.

“Thomas! Sorry I didn’t call sooner. My mother is in the hospital, so things been crazy,” Mickey explained. “That’s okay, Mickey. Just wanted to confirm that you’ll have a ride for Svetlana from the airport in Mexico City on Friday. Her plane lands at 5:00 PM,” Thomas informed. “I’ll send a car,” Mickey replied.

“Mickey, I know it’s none of my business, but have to tell you, she seems a bit ungrateful, for a woman in her position. I just hope this all works out for you,” Thomas shared, a note of concern in his voice. “What d’ya mean, ‘ungrateful’?” Mickey asked, Ian giving him an exasperated look. “Well, let’s just say, she seems to think you should have done more to help her to remain in the States. I tried explaining to her that we did all we could, but she’s very resentful about being deported to Russia,” Thomas said with a disgusted sigh.

“Did she seem like she wanted to see Yev?” Mickey asked. “See him!?” Thomas asked incredulously. “Come on, Mick! You know what she’s like. She wants him back! To live with her, and for you to pay for their accommodations, like you had promised when they lived in Chicago,” Thomas reported. “She’s angry about time she lost with him, and envious of the lifestyle you have enjoyed during the intervening years, compared with hers,” Thomas paused, responding to a question from someone in his office.

“If you and Ian intend on maintaining primary custody of Yev, I highly suggest you dot all of your ‘I’s’ and cross your “T’s”, because if she decides to fight you, which she very well might, you, as a dual male-led household, need to be above reproach. A mother wields quite a bit of legal clout, especially down there in Mexico. I don’t want to scare you, but I’d be very careful, Mick,” Thomas finished.

Mickey swallowed hard, avoiding eye contact with Ian. “Any news on Mom’s divorce?” Mickey asked, awkwardly changing the subject. “As of yesterday, Terry still hadn’t made any move toward signing the papers. I am planning to visit the prison on Friday, once he’s out of Solitary, to talk with him. I should know more after that,” Thomas responded. “Hey, I have to go. I have another call coming in,” Thomas said, abruptly ending the call.

“Shit, Ian! Guess we fucked ourselves by arrangin’ to bring Svetlana here,” Mickey whined. “Let’s just wait and see what happens. Things change. Remember, at one point, we all lived together and got along fine, sharing responsibilities and…” “Fuck that!” Mickey interrupted Ian. “She ain’t livin’ with us! And she ain’t gettin’ Yev!” Mickey yelled.

‘If you only knew the shit she talked on you when you were in the psych ward. How she packed your shit up. How I had to tell her you were more important and that she could get the fuck out’, Mickey thought to himself, choosing not to share with Ian at this point in time.

Mickey took a deep breath, muttering under his breath, “Mom was right.” He reached over into Ian’s lap, tracing his inner thigh with his index finger seductively, then grasping Ian’s right hand with his left, “No one and nothin’s gonna fuck with us, Ian....I don’t care what it takes!”
Mickey and Ian enjoyed a nice evening with the kids, starting with a much-needed trip to the grocery store. Yev and Mikhaila each got to choose some part of the evening meal that they liked and would be willing to help prepare. Yev chose pasta, something he always enjoyed making with Mickey, and Mikhaila picked chicken, which she and Ian would marinate before baking. Ian insisted on getting ingredients for salad, although both kids turned their noses up at that.

The preparation went smoothly, the family working well together, and Mickey felt truly blessed to have his children and husband all at the same table, peacefully enjoying a meal. Ian took his new, lower medication dose as he ate and, hours later, he still seemed to be himself---no slurring or lapses in judgment. He did, however, seem very horny, which seemed to be par for the course lately.

Mickey did his best to stave him off, having been awake since 4:30 AM and really just wanting to go to bed as soon as possible. Once the kids had finished dinner and their homework, he shuffled them off to shower and get themselves ready for bed, while Ian cleaned up the dinner dishes. When Mickey walked into the kitchen for a bottle of water, Ian pushed him up against the refrigerator roughly, reminding him of his promise to be ready for him tonight, while rubbing Mickey’s package, as he kissed and licked circles over the sensitive spot on Mickey’s neck, which Ian had recently begun affectionately referring to as ‘Mickey’s G-Spot’.

Mickey moaned softly, pressing his stiffening dick against Ian’s right upper thigh. Tired or not, Mickey was putty in Ian’s hands whenever Ian decided he wanted him. The converse was very much true as well. Ian began unbuckling Mickey’s pants, quickly accessing the goods, before either of them could gather the presence of mind to realize they needed to wait. They were both so overtaken with passion, they could easily have sprawled out on the island and banged, right then and there, had Mickey not heard Yev’s voice, as his bedroom door closed behind him.

“Dad?” he called out, “I can’t find my Cubs shirt! I wanna wear it tomorrow!” Mickey quickly grabbed at his waist, buttoning, zipping and buckling in a frenzy. Ian backed away from him, adjusting himself and turning away from the stairs, in case Yev decided to come down. “Hey! Yev! Gonna check the laundry room. Think it might be in there...I’ll let ya know,” Mickey called up to Yev in response, as he scurried into the laundry room. “Got it!” Mickey yelled, after finding it in the dryer. “I’ll bring it up to ya!” he added as he heard Ian walk up behind him.

“Mmmm…” Ian purred into Mickey’s ear, “Just wanna bend you over the dryer and…” Ian attacked Mickey’s neck from behind, inhaling him deeply as he shoved him down, pressing Mickey’s chest against the top of the dryer and humping him hard. “Shhh!” Mickey whispered, recognizing how loudly his body was banging against the metal front of the dryer. “Keep your fuckin’ pants on! Ya talked me into it, okay?! I gotcha when we go upstairs for the night,” Mickey promised, slowly extricating himself from Ian’s grip.

“And when’s that?” Ian asked impatiently. “I’m ready whenever you are,” Mickey responded. “Just gotta get the kids to bed. Promised Mik I’d read to her next time she spent the night. Maybe you could get Yev settled. Here’s his shirt,” Mickey said, reaching for Yev’s Cubs shirt, which had ended up on the floor, thanks to Ian’s antics, and handing it to Ian. “...And I don’t think we should mention Svet. What do you think?” Mickey asked, looking up at Ian through his thick, dark lashes, his brilliant blue eyes burning Ian up, from the inside out.

Ian was hard-pressed to respond, Mickey’s eyes such a compelling distraction, in all their glory. “Uh…” Ian stammered, struggling to collect himself. Mickey was so fucking hot! All he could think of was mounting him, face to face, and staring down into those big, blue eyes as he made love to
him, pleasuring him as only he could. The last thing he wanted to think about right now was Svetlana! Ian shrugged his shoulders, his mind focused on the contours of Mickey’s mouth as he spoke, “C’mon, Ian! At least gimme an opinion!”

“My opinion is that if I don’t fuck you soon, I’m gonna lose my shit!” Ian responded, pulling Mickey’s voluptuous lips into his mouth provocatively. “Stop!” Mickey yelled, more pleading than objecting.

“Nah, I won’t say a thing,” Ian finally mumbled into Mickey’s mouth, before releasing him to go to their daughter. “Make it a SHORT story!” Ian smirked, pecking Mickey on his irresistible lips one last time, before heading out of the laundry room, Cubs shirt in hand.

Ian delivered Yev’s shirt to him, hanging around as he brushed his teeth and finished organizing his clothes for the next day. Ian really was proud of their son, how responsible he was, and how well he seemed to have adjusted to life with them, over the years. He wondered, as he watched Yev pack up his book-bag, how introducing Svetlana into the mix might affect him, but quickly pushed the thought out of his mind, giving Yev a hug and kiss goodnight before heading down the hall to peek in on Mik and Mickey.

Ian could hear Mickey reading, “The Little Engine That Could,” which he’d read to her a thousand times before. Every time Ian heard Mickey read it, he thought how much that engine reminded him of Mickey, and how grateful he was that Mickey never gave up on him, or anything, really. Mickey was the type of guy that rolled with the punches and never quit, no matter what. Ian absolutely LOVED that about him.

Ian listened outside Mikhaila’s door as Mickey finished reading, closing the book and saying goodnight to Mikhaila, then walked in to join them. “Just came in to help you tuck our little girl in,” Ian smiled, bending down to kiss Mikhaila’s forehead. Mickey grinned as he took in the sight of Mikhaila wrapping her little arms around Ian’s neck as he kissed her, then turned to walk out, finally destined for his own bed and what he hoped could be a good night’s sleep. He knew, of course, that Ian had expectations. That was fine. Mickey was most worried about Ian possibly having trouble sleeping, as Doc had warned them might happen.

Mickey was already lying in bed when Ian sauntered into the room, quickly stripping down to his bare ass before joining him. “So how ya feelin’?” Mickey asked, hoping to hear that Ian felt like his usual self, just for his own peace of mind. “You tell me,” Ian growled, taking Mickey’s hand and putting it on his cock, which instantly became hard as a rock. Mickey attempted to make a clarification, “Yeah...okay...well, I wanna talk to you.” Ian stared into Mickey’s eyes lustily, slipping his hand between Mickey’s legs and sliding it slowly from between his knees, up his thighs, to his stiffening cock, whispering, “I don’t feel like talking,” as he fondled it teasingly. Mickey closed his eyes, reveling in the feeling of Ian’s tantalizing touch. Damn if Ian couldn’t derail Mickey from even the most noble of causes, with nothing more than a look, a word or a touch.

Ian continued to shower his gorgeous cock with attention, now lowering his mouth to suck feverishly at it, as he began to massage Mickey’s hole. “Fuck it!” Mickey mumbled, stretching to open the nightstand drawer, grabbing the coconut oil and handing it off to Ian, then grasping Ian by the hips, pulling his body closer, engulfing Ian’s delicious cock with his sexy mouth. Ian moaned loudly, the vibrations of his voice reverberating through Mickey’s entire body, sending waves of pleasure up Mickey’s shaft. Mickey moaned in response, sucking fiercely at the tip of Ian’s sweet cock, swiping his tongue over it mercilessly until Ian began thrusting up into Mickey’s mouth.

Once Ian had stretched Mickey sufficiently, he pulled his mouth from Mickey’s manhood abruptly, Mickey sighing in disappointment. “I wanna see you,” Ian breathed, pulling his own cock away from
Mickey’s talented tongue so he could lube it up.

He flipped himself around, straddling Mickey as he stared down into his mystical blue eyes, hopelessly caught up in his spell in an instant. “So fucking beautiful, Mick. Gonna fuck you now,” he whispered, his lips quivering with excitement.

He spread Mickey’s legs, positioning himself between them, Mickey holding them in the air as Ian penetrated him slowly, adding his substantial length with care, so as not to hurt Mickey who, he was sure must still be tender from the pounding he had taken the day before. Ian was particularly sensitive to this phenomenon this time, since he, himself, was sore as hell from their early morning romp. “Feel good?” he asked Mickey, Mickey moaning in response as Ian slid completely into him, Mickey tucking his lip firmly under his front teeth.

Ian grasped Mickey’s ankles, spreading his legs wide as he thrusted deeply into him with increasing speed, Mickey counteracting Ian’s thrusts forcefully, clenching down tightly, intending to make quick work of Ian, skillfully driving him painfully close to climax in seconds flat. “Mick...look at me...Mick...” Ian panted. Mickey opened his shimmering, crystal blue eyes, gazing admiringly up into Ian’s finely-chiseled, flawlessly gorgeous face as he moved so adeptly in and out of him, knocking at his prostate so exquisitely that he was ready to explode himself. “So fuckin’ good, Ian...fuckin’ love you...so much,” Mickey breathed as he let go, his body shaking violently under Ian’s, spewing his seed onto his own stomach, his eyes still fixed on Ian’s, his movements nudging Ian over the edge with him. “Mickey, I love you and your sweet ass!” Ian yelled ecstatically, as his massive, throbbing cock bursted inside Mickey’s tight, little ass.

Mickey got up out of bed, Ian joining him in taking a quick post-coital clean-up shower. Both men dried off briskly, getting back into bed. “Now I’m goin’ the fuck to sleep, Ian,” Mickey said, kissing Ian lightly on the temple, before rolling over and edging himself up against Ian’s body. “Okay,” Ian sighed, feeling far too wide awake to fall asleep just yet, but not wanting to worry Mickey.

Ian lay completely still in bed, his eyes popping open every few minutes in protest. Once he felt fairly certain that Mickey was asleep, he slipped out from around him, carefully replacing his body with two pillows. Mickey stirred momentarily, muttering Ian’s name, before nudging back against the pillows, a look of discomfort on his face. Ian stood watching Mickey for the better part of five minutes, wanting to be sure that he was going to remain asleep. He certainly didn’t want to be the cause of a poor night’s sleep for Mickey, after all he’d been through recently.

Finally, once Mickey appeared to be tranquil again, Ian made his move, exiting the bedroom and descending into the kitchen. He sat at the island for over an hour, reading medication blogs about his new meds, lithium withdrawal and bipolar disorder, in general, until he couldn’t keep his eyes open. His first inclination was to sleep in the bed they had set up for Kayla, since he truly did not want to climb the stairs in his current state of exhaustion. He decided against that, however, thinking Mickey might be freaked out if he woke in the morning to find him missing, electing instead to drag his weary ass up the stairs to rejoin his husband.

Ian moved the puffy imposters he’d replaced himself with, slipping his body around Mickey’s once more, breathing him in, Mickey’s heavenly scent and the peaceful, even rhythm of his breathing lulling him to sleep.
Ian’s phone alarm’s obnoxious chime jarred both men awake rudely, Mickey kicking at Ian, muttering, “Turn it off,” under his breath. Ian reacted sluggishly, fumbling for the phone. Once he managed to shut it off, he turned back toward Mickey, reminding him of their morning plan, “Hey, remember, we have one car this morning, so you gotta go with me to drop the kids, then I can take you to the hospital on my way to work.”

“Fuck,” Mickey mumbled, rubbing his eyes, clearly still exhausted. “Everything okay last night?” he asked as his mind slowly became less fuzzy. “Fine. Why?” Ian responded. “Just wanna be sure you’re sleepin’ alright,” Mickey explained. “I know you were up during the night.”

“Yeah? How do you know that?” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear, rubbing himself against his left buttock playfully. “Uh...well...for one thing, THAT was missin’!” Mickey chuckled, referring to Ian’s perpetual wood. “...And guess I can feel the difference between my husband’s warm, muscular body and a fuckin’ pillow!”. Mickey paused, waiting for Ian to respond.

“So...you okay?” Mickey questioned Ian a second time, after an awkward silence. “Yeah...I said yeah,” Ian responded, trying not to let Mickey’s unnecessary concern get to him. “Promise?” Mickey pressed on. “YES!” Ian hissed, losing his patience, “I’m fucking fine! Don’t worry!” Ian cringed at the harshness of his own words, recognizing that he had reacted the way he did, in part, to convince HIMSELF that he was alright, given some of the disturbing knowledge he had gleaned from his late-night reading session the night before.

Mickey rolled away from Ian silently, sitting up in bed, then slowly rising to a standing position and trudging toward the bathroom. Mickey peed, then turned on the shower, setting the temperature on the cool side, stepping in and immediately soaking his face, hoping to both wake up and cool off. He was more than a little bit pissed about the way Ian had just spoken to him, but didn’t want to engage him any further. He preferred just to let it go, but at the moment the incident had him too riled up to do that.

As the cool water pelted his face and body rhythmically, Mickey began to relax, his mind turning to his mother, wondering how she was this morning, and whether he would need to stay at the hospital again all day. He definitely wanted to be there for his Mom, but being away from the factory was killing him, especially since Brach had just started. He really wanted to see how he was doing, and to talk with Manuel, since they had essentially been two ships passing in the night, ever since Mom had gotten sick. Manuel truly was, other than Ian, his best friend, and he missed him.

“Hey,” Ian called out as he stepped into the shower with Mickey. “I’m sorry,” he said in a low, repentant voice, leaning in and brushing his lips over Mickey’s. “I really am fine, though. Did a lot of reading last night that freaked me out a little, but I’m gonna do everything right this time. Listen to Doc and try my best. And yes...I promise!” Ian smiled warmly at Mickey, as he watched him breathe a big sigh of relief. Ian reached for him, pulling his body into his own, as if he were a sixth appendage. Mickey collapsed into Ian’s arms, Ian holding him firmly as he whispered, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” into Mickey’s ear. He knew how stressed out Mickey was, and he hated that he was adding to that.

The couple remained in their comfortable embrace until they heard a little voice, coming from their room. “Dad? Daddy Ian?! Yev called in to them. “Yeah, buddy...In the shower. You okay?” Mickey responded, exiting the shower and toweling off quickly. “Can I go see Grandma before school? Please?” he pleaded. “I’m all ready!” Yevgeni announced. “Hold on! I’m comin’ out!” Mickey responded, wrapping his towel around his waist and reaching for the bathroom door. He
took a deep breath, then looked at his son, who was all dressed and ready for school, with his book-bag on his back. “Yev...I don’t know if we have time this morning. We still have to get breakfast, and your sister’s here. Gotta get her ready...” Mickey said, feeling genuinely crappy for having to tell his son, ‘no’, under the circumstances. “But...” “Yev!” Mickey cut him off, “I said I don’t think this morning’s gonna work. I also have to get Ian to work on time, so I can’t visit at the hospital ’til later.”

By this time, Ian had finished up in the shower and walked out, smiling at the sight of Yev in his Cubs shirt, all ready to go. “Mornin’, Yev! That’s great you’re all set for school” Ian complimented him, giving him a fist bump. “Gonna go get Mikhaila up, and then we can have some breakfast!” Ian added, throwing on his robe. “She IS ready!” Yev said, grinning back at Ian. “She is, huh?” Ian responded, genuinely surprised and impressed. “Yeah, she’s in the kitchen, eating cereal,” Yev continued to explain. “I already ate mine. I was gonna make coffee for you and Dad, but I wasn’t sure how much to use,” he shrugged, looking exactly like Mickey at that moment. Ian threw his arms around Yev, “I’m so proud of you!” he praised Yev again.

“I wanted to go see Grandma, but Daddy said we don’t have time today,” Yev explained. “Well, maybe now we do?” Ian asked, glancing over at Mickey, who was feeling really badly for not allowing Yev to finish his sentence earlier. “Yeah, maybe for a few minutes, but we gotta go when I say it’s time,” Mickey warned. This was definitely going to complicate his morning, more than it already was, but Yev truly had outdone himself this morning, and he deserved to see his Grandma. “Let us get dressed and we’ll get goin’,” Mickey said, ushering Yev out the door.

The husbands dressed quickly, trying to maximize the amount of time Yev would have to be with Kayla. They both knew how happy she was going to be to see two of her grandkids. They were ready in no time, gathering the kids up and heading for the hospital. They still needed their morning coffee, but resolved to get it, once they arrived at the hospital.

As luck would have it, the Resident was making his morning rounds, when the Milkovich Clan arrived in Mikhaila’s room, providing an opportunity for them to be briefed on Mikhaila’s condition and the plans for her release. Ian caught him on his way into Kayla’s room, stopping him to talk, while Mickey took the kids on in to see her. “You brought my babies! Mickey, thank you so much!” Kayla beamed, her eyes instantly sparkling like he hadn’t seen since Mother’s Day. She stretched her arms out, both children running to her and clamouring to be the object of her attention. She gave each one a turn, squeezing them into her as best she could. Mickey waited as his mother questioned them both about school and life, in general, reveling in every detail they shared. “Love you, Ma,” Mickey said softly, kissing her on the forehead after both kids had been sufficiently doted on. “Love you all so much!” she called out joyfully.

“Ian!” she exclaimed as she looked up to see him walking in from the hallway. “Mornin’, Mom!” Ian sang back at her. “They’re trying to throw ya outta here,” he added. “Really?” her eyes brightened. “Yeah, but ya can’t be alone,” he continued, “And you need regular blood work,” he finished.

Ian looked over at Mickey to try and gauge his reaction, but Mickey was completely absorbed in his phone, appearing not to have even heard what Ian had just said. Ian closed the distance between himself and Mickey, peering over his shoulder at his phone. “Whatcha lookin’ at?” he asked curiously, genuinely baffled as to what could be more important than news about his mother. Ian rested his chin on Mickey’s shoulder, reading the text from an Unknown Number silently:

“Claim #348790 - Since I haven’t heard back from you, I will be cutting a check in the amount of $74,579, which will be sent to you by Certified Mail by the close of business today. Please get back to me immediately, should you wish to make a change to this plan.”
“I heard ya, Ian,” Mickey responded. Just thinkin’,” he sighed. “Oh yeah, whatcha thinkin’?” Ian breathed huskily into Mickey’s ear. “I’ll talk to ya ‘bout it later,” Mickey answered, his voice matter-of-fact, but his expression, as he turned to face Ian, was very serious. “You okay?” Ian asked, resisting the urge to pull Mickey into his chest and just hold him. “Yeah, I’m good,” Mickey replied reassuringly.

“C’mon, Yev...Mik...Say goodbye to Grandma. Time for school,” Mickey called over to the kids, who were playing, “I Spy” with Kayla. “Awwww!” Kayla whined. “Ma, you’re worse than the kids!” Mickey teased her. “I’ll see you both soon!” she smiled at them. “Guess I’ll be coming home before too long!” “Yay!” Yev and Mikhaila screamed in unison. “Shhh!” Mickey whispered, “You’re in a hospital!” “Owww,” Kayla rolled her eyes, waving him off, “they’re fine!”

“Bye, Grandma,” Yev said, hugging her again. “Bye,” Mikhaila followed Yev, jumping up beside Kayla to give her a kiss on the forehead, as she had seen Mickey do. “Ma, I’ll see you later,” Mickey said, putting a hand on each kid’s shoulder and guiding them both out of the room, Ian trailing behind them. “Bye, Mom,” Ian called over his shoulder as he disappeared into the hallway.

“Ride with me to drop the kids off at school,” Mickey implored Ian. Ian looked at the time on his phone, then looked over at Mickey questioningly. “I’ll bring you back for your car after. Wanna talk to ya. It’s important,” Mickey clarified. Ian pulled his phone out to text Doc and explain the situation. He knew Doc was probably already at the clinic, and would most likely be happy that someone had stopped to visit Kayla this morning. He figured it would be fairly easy for him to buy some time. Once the kids were out of the car and headed for the front entrance to the school, Yev holding Mikhaila’s hand the whole way, Mickey turned to Ian. “I think we should keep the insurance money for Ma’s car and use some of it to get her medical care for when we’re at work. What d’ya think?” Mickey asked, a look of desperation in his eyes. “I can do it!” Ian argued. “Yeah, but you gotta work. I saw how important that is to ya when Doc was sayin’ he didn’t want ya to work,” Mickey reasoned, although, truth be told, he wanted to have an avenue for obtaining care for Ian as well, if it were to become necessary.

“Yeah...well, I don’t want some total stranger coming into our home to care for her!” Ian protested. “I think you know enough nurses down here,” Mickey countered. “Okay, I’ll look into it, but until I find a suitable candidate, I will do it!” Ian insisted. He scrolled through his contacts, looking for Shawn’s number. In his mind, there wasn’t a better, more caring nurse in the world. He hoped he might be able to convince him to take some vacation time and come down. After all, it would amount to a part-time job. He could spend his off-time at the beach, and could stay, free of charge, which would minimize what he would need to be paid.

Once he found Shawn’s number, he texted him, updating him on the whole situation and requesting his help. “Whatcha doin’?” Mickey asked, seeing that Ian was writing a novel to someone, via text. “Just trying to do what you asked,” Ian replied, rubbing Mickey’s inner thigh firmly with his thumb, applying just the right amount of pressure to completely distract Mickey from his current train of thought.

Mickey leaned into Ian, kissing him softly, then slipping his tongue between his luscious lips, sliding it over Ian’s longingly, Ian returning the favor to perfection. They kissed like newlyweds, blatantly fondling one another in the middle of the school parking lot until someone behind them honked obnoxiously, jarring them both back to reality. “Damn, Gallagher! So hot I’m ready to get naked in our kids’ school lot!” Mickey murmured, giving Ian a smouldering, ‘I fuckin’ want you’ look.

“Sorry I got carried away, man,” Mickey apologized, putting the car in ‘Drive’ and heading back to the hospital to get Ian’s car. “You?!” Ian laughed. “Feel my fucking cock!” Ian exclaimed, referring
to his hard-as-fuck tree-trunk of a penis. “Already did. Gonna leave it at that. Afraid I won’t be able
to help myself, if we get started again,” Mickey confessed, trying like hell to regain his composure.
In light of the news about Kayla being released from the hospital soon, he had decided to head to the
factory after dropping Ian at his car, and he surely didn’t want to walk in there with wood, or a wet
spot on his pants, for that matter.

“Meet me for lunch?” Mickey asked as he pulled up to Ian’s car. “Where? Frontera?” Ian asked.
Mickey shrugged his shoulders, raising an eyebrow seductively. “Pick me up at the clinic. We’ll
decide from there,” Ian suggested, Mickey agreeing readily with a nod, then pulling Ian in for a
quick peck on the lips. “Love you, man,” Mickey called to Ian as he stepped out of the car. “I love
you more,” Ian responded with a wide grin, then repeated it again in his own head, ‘Love you more.’

Doc greeted Ian with an appreciative smile as he walked in, the waiting room already filled with
patients. “Sorry I’m late,” Ian said apologetically. “No, no. Thank you for visiting Kayla! It was
definitely the best use of your time this morning. And taking the kids...pure genius! I’m sure that was
a hassle for you and Mick, but she was so happy! She texted me, describing the entire visit and how
thrilled she was to see the kids! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” Doc spoke with enthusiasm
and gratitude.

“You’re welcome! When things die down here, I wanna talk to ya about Kayla’s care. I don’t know
if they called you, but they’re planning to discharge her soon,” Ian explained. Doc looked surprised,
but disappeared into one of the exam rooms before making any sort of reply. As Ian headed for one
of the exam rooms, himself, to see his first patient, two texts came in on his phone, right in a row.
The first was from Shawn:

“Hey, of course I want to help. Need to talk to you first though. This is a lot to digest. I work until 3
today. Can I call you after work?”

Ian replied: “Sure!”

The second text was from Mickey: “When should I come to get ya?”

Ian replied: “I’ll let ya know.”

He also noticed that he had missed a second reply text from Doc:

“Sometime today, before you leave the clinic, I want to get some blood from you. Need to test for
your lithium levels and get a Complete Blood Count. Hoping your numbers are getting closer to
where they need to be.”

Ian sighed deeply, realizing that, amid all of the changes to the morning plan, he had forgotten to take
his meds. He set a reminder on his phone and went about his day, greeting his first patient with kind
eyes and a warm smile.
Mickey drove up to the factory, seeing that Manuel was already there. Mickey decided to park around back and use the back door, so he could walk straight onto the factory floor. He hadn’t talked to Manuel or Brach for over 24 hours, and now he just wanted to be a ‘fly on the wall’ for a bit. Of course, he was certain that all was well; he’d have heard by now, if it wasn’t. He just loved to watch people without them knowing he was there sometimes. For instance, watching Ian sleep was likely one of the top ten experiences in life, from his perspective. Factory spying wasn’t going to top that, but it was still exciting, to Mickey, to see something he had helped to build, working so well.

He opened the door slowly and quietly, hoping not to attract the attention of any of his employees that manned the machinery near the door. As he slipped in, he could see everyone, hard at work, taking care to do their very best, as always. It was then he decided to get lunch for everyone, to say thank you for helping to keep things afloat in his absence, and for their participation in the Sample Drive. Both factories had nearly 100% participation, the only exceptions being those who had a medical reason not to qualify.

Mickey looked around at all of his dedicated employees for a bit more, then began walking the line, greeting everyone and thanking them personally. He thought he might see Brach, but there was no sign of him on the floor. He made his way to the door leading into the conference room, once again slipping through quietly, in hopes of catching a glimpse of Manuel and Brach in the office. He managed to sneak up to the office door, undetected, then hid to the left of the office, outside the line of sight from the office door.

Mickey could hear Manuel talking to Bigley, then Bigley discussing an upcoming Surfin’ USA photo shoot with Brach. From what Mickey could glean, it seemed as though Brach would be meeting with Cal, the CEO of Surfin’ USA, in Chicago, and Justin, Elle and Jasmine would join him there for the photo shoot. “Guess your modelin’ days ain’t over yet,” Mickey laughed, as he walked in and shook Brach’s hand. “How’s the ankle?” he asked. “Good!” Brach grinned. “Reesie’s been giving me stim treatments that have helped a lot!” “I bet!” Mickey smirked.

“Where the hell did you come from?!” Manuel asked, surprised to see Mickey there at all, and finding it strange that he didn’t use the front door. “Decided to use the back door. Check out the floor,” Mickey explained. “The guys are workin’ hard, as usual. Wanna bring them lunch today. Think it’s too late to get Johnny to cater a nice lunch?” he asked. “Probably not,” Manuel answered, thinking to himself that Mickey seemed to be in a much better mood than he’d seen him since Kayla had gotten sick again.

“How’s Mom?” Manuel asked. “Mandy is going to see her today after I get home to watch Manny,” he added. “Just came from the hospital. They’re plannin’ to let her out today,” Mickey reported. “Is she going home or to your house again?” Manuel asked. “Our place. Gotta get her some care for when she gets there. Ian’s handlin’ that,” Mickey answered. “I see. So I am guessing Ian is doing well?” Manuel asked. “Yep! Seems okay…” Mickey replied optimistically. “Well, you know Mandy and I will help with any expenses for Kayla’s home care. It’s the least we can do, with you guys taking on the full-time responsibility of her care,” Manuel offered with sincerity. “Thanks, man. That means a lot. Might just wanna have you guys come and stay with her sometime, but guess Doc might be doin’ that,” Mickey shrugged, thinking about how much he’d love to have another night away with Ian.

He just couldn’t help thinking that one day he was going to wake up, and the Ian he loved would be gone again. It haunted him, day and night. He figured that was why he wanted to be with him every
possible minute, like lunch, for example. He hoped to have Johnny deliver the food for the employees, make an appearance at their luncheon, then take off to pick Ian up, in order to maximize their time together.

Mickey pulled his phone out to text Johnny about the catering order, then noticed he had gotten a text from Ian:

“Have to drop some blood work at the lab at lunchtime, and I also need to stop at home. In all the confusion, I forgot to take my morning dose. DON’T WORRY! I’m gonna go get it. You want me to just pick something up from the deli, after I’m done running around?”

Micky took a deep breath, trying to calm himself. Ian’s text had instantly tied his stomach in knots, his heart beating a mile a minute. It was almost as if Ian’s assurance that everything would be fine made Mickey worry even more. He was just about in a full-blown panic. “Ojos!” Manuel’s voice cut into Mickey’s thoughts. “What’s wrong!?” he asked, reading the sudden nosedive in his mood. “I-I’m good,” Mickey lied. “Brach, would you excuse us for a moment?” Manuel asked politely. “Sure! I can use the conference room to finish this up,” he said, stepping away from the computer and striding out of the office.

“What the fuck, Manuel?! You probably just made Brach feel uncomfortable, like we don’t trust him,” Mickey complained. “It has nothing to do with trust, and everything to do with a family situation that I consider to be private,” Manuel said, defending his actions. “Mickey, you are my business partner, my brother-in-law, and my best friend. I know you well, and can tell when you are having a problem, which you ARE! Now, whatever it is, you should know by now that you can talk to me about it, but if you are not so inclined, then please know this: Brach and I are fine here today. You are free to go and handle whatever it is that has you so clearly distraught.”

“I really wanna be here today, but…” Mickey began, stopping mid-sentence as another text came through on his phone, from Ian: “Heading out to run my errands around 11. Let me know when you can meet up.”

Mickey texted back right away: “I’ll pick you up and we can go together (smiley face emoji).”

To which Ian responded: “Okay (smiling devil emoji)!”

“Thanks, man,” Mickey said, finally getting back to Manuel. “Think I’ll take off from here around 10:45. Gotta pick Ian up and take care of some business. I’ll order the food and have it delivered for the guys. If I don’t get back before they’re done eating, please tell them they are the best, and I really fuckin’ appreciate their hard work and dedication.”

“You got it, Ojos! And don’t worry about coming back here today, if you have other stuff to take care of. We really do have everything under control. Brach is absolutely excellent at his job. You really nailed it, choosing this guy. Now, when he leaves for Chicago, then I will need some help around here!” Manuel smiled. “Yeah, guess I have a good business sense when it comes to finding people I can trust,” Mickey sighed with a grin. Manuel had absolutely been the ultimate in good choices. Even before Ian lucked them into a business relationship with Bigley, Mickey and Manuel had built a successful business up from nothing, and Mickey knew he had Manuel to thank for a lot of it.

Mickey set up lunch for the employees through Johnny, then took some time to review the company’s financials, which he found to be doing exceedingly well, particularly in some of their new foreign markets. He was quite relieved to know that Brach was working out so well and would be able to do some of the traveling that Mickey and Ian would not be able to do, given Kayla’s medical problems, not to mention what Mickey feared might turn into a relapse for Ian, although he
fought against admitting that concern as part of the equation. It was like a secret truth that he refused to acknowledge, as if denying its existence as a possibility would mean it wouldn’t or couldn’t happen.

Mickey took a look at the advertising budget, making a note to discuss a possible increase, as well as a redirection of some funds to bolster their presence in some of the more sluggish markets. Mickey was very much in favor of expanding both companies’ sales into as many foreign markets as possible, and didn’t want to lose any of the newer, fledgling markets they had begun to establish. He sent out some feelers to some new distributors in the East, then resumed his calculations for a new budget proposal.

Before Mickey knew it, his phone reminder was going off. He finished up what he was working on, said his goodbyes, then headed to the clinic to pick Ian up. He couldn’t wait to see him, and, now that he knew Ian needed his meds, he didn’t want to waste any time getting him home to get them.

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Ian and Doc had a busy morning, seeing close to 30 patients and still finding the time to get Ian’s blood drawn for the tests Doc wanted. Ian had agreed to bring lunch back for Doc, in exchange for his being able to leave early and have enough time to stop by the lab, run home for his meds, and have a decent lunch with Mickey. Doc considered any time Ian was able to put in, under the circumstances, to be a blessing, so he was being intentionally lenient with him, in hopes of keeping him healthy and on-track with his meds.

Ian had contacted the lab to inform them of the tests Doc wanted done on his blood, as well as his plan to drop his samples off between 11 and 12. The tech who answered, which was the same one he had bribed to complete the testing of his cheek-swab, recognized who he was and shared the fact that, after testing approximately 50% of the samples from the Drive the day before, they had yet to find a suitable match for Kayla. He added that, with the extra staff they had working, he expected they would have the remaining samples tested by day’s end. “Please text me with any news,” Ian requested, adding, “See ya soon,” before ending the call and going to the clinic entrance to wait for Mickey.

While he waited, he received a text from Shawn: “Been thinking about your situation all morning. I have a lunch break at 11. Can we talk then?”

Ian didn’t know how to respond. He was going to be pretty busy during Shawn’s lunch, but if he really wanted to talk, he didn’t want to blow him off. He thought for a minute, then responded: “I will be running some errands with Mickey at that time. How long is your lunch? Can I call you?”

Mickey pulled up, just as Ian sent the message, a sexy smile on his face. “Sup, man?” Mickey said casually, as Ian opened the door to get into the car. “Wanna get this taken care of first,” Ian replied, holding up a large, padded envelope, containing several vials of blood. “Okay,” Mickey replied, pointing the car in the direction of the lab.

While they were en route, Shawn responded to Ian’s last text: “Yeah, you can call, but don’t call any later than 11:45.”

Ian responded: “OK”

“Who’s that?” Mickey asked, his curiosity getting the best of him. “Shawn. Says he wants to help with Mom, but wants to talk to me first. Said I can call him between 11 and 11:45,” Ian explained. “Okay, then let’s do that right after we hit the lab,” Mickey suggested. Now Ian was in a predicament. He had been honest about Shawn wanting to talk during his lunchtime with Mickey,
but now he worried that Mickey would want to hear the whole conversation, and might find out that he had told Shawn about his donor status before telling him, which he knew might be a problem. He didn’t want to keep anything from Mickey, ever again, but this was in the past, and he could feel it in his bones—it was going to start something, and it wasn’t going to be anything good.

“I really want to get my meds ASAP, Mickey, which means I gotta eat something. Let’s do what we planned first, and if there’s time, we’ll call Shawn. If not, I can just talk to him after work,” Ian proposed. “Alright...but let’s watch the time. I really wanna know if he’s willin’ to come, cuz if not, you gotta get someone else. She’s gonna be home, probably tonight,” Mickey explained. “I also gotta arrange for the other room at the factory to be prepped for Svet. Forgot to tell Manuel this mornin’,” Mickey added.

As Mickey pulled up in front of the lab, and was parking the car, he looked over at Mickey, who was beautiful, as always, but had a stressed-out look that had become all too common. His face looked tired, marred by tiny expression lines that never typically showed, and his eyes were a lackluster gray, drooping uncharacteristically at the corners. Ian decided, right then and there, that he would not add to his stress, and that he would do everything in his power to relieve it.

He hopped out of the car, carrying his blood samples with him, and disappeared into the lab in a matter of seconds. As soon as he got inside, he tried to call Shawn. The phone had rung three times before Shawn finally answered, “Ian, can you give me a couple minutes?” he said, clearly not at liberty to actually take Ian’s call just yet. “Yeah, I’ll call again later. Just please... Mickey will probably be with me when I call, so don’t say you knew about the testing before him. He’ll freak!” Ian explained. “Okay, I’ll talk to ya later then,” Shawn responded, ending the call abruptly.

Ian dropped his samples, along with a written prescription for the tests to be run, and ran back out to Mickey’s car, hoping Shawn was on board with what he had asked. After five minutes of silence, following Ian’s return to the car, Mickey said, “You’re quiet. What’s goin’ on?” “I’m fine. Why?” he replied. “You’re never this quiet, unless you got somethin’ on your mind,” Mickey responded, reaching over to touch Ian’s left thigh, his right index finger beginning to trace tiny circles onto it, with a calculated result in mind. Ian relaxed his head back onto the headrest, sighing deeply as Mickey’s finger worked its magic. “Mmmm...” Ian hummed, “Love you...” A peaceful smile spread over Ian’s face as all of his problems melted away, under the calming abilities of Mickey’s powerful finger.

“So...”Mickey purred softly, having manipulated Ian into a nearly trance-like state, “You wanna tell me what’s keepin’ ya so quiet, or am I gonna have to pull out the big guns?” “Mmmm...just need some alone time with you, Mick...and your big gun. That’s all,” Ian breathed, reaching his own hand over to rub Mickey’s right inner thigh, his right index finger beginning to trace tiny circles onto it, with a calculated result in mind. Ian relaxed his head back onto the headrest, sighing deeply as Mickey’s finger worked its magic. “Mmmm...” Ian hummed, “Love you...” A peaceful smile spread over Ian’s face as all of his problems melted away, under the calming abilities of Mickey’s powerful finger.

“Awww...does it hurt?” Ian asked, unbuttoning and unzipping Mickey’s pants to give his ever-expanding cock room to breathe. “Ian...” Mickey moaned, fighting to keep his eyes from rolling up into his head as he drove, Ian resting his head in Mickey’s lap as he maneuvered Mickey’s stiff cock out the fly of his boxer-briefs and began sucking at the tip. “Pull over,” Ian commanded as he licked and sucked at Mickey’s delicious dick.

“But, I wanna...wanna get you home to take your meds,” Mickey insisted breathlessly. “Okay, have it your way...but I’m...not...stopping,” Ian panted between the sucking kisses he was showering on Mickey’s sweet cock. Mickey hit the gas and did his best to keep his wits about him, Ian driving him completely insane with desire the whole way. “Fuck, Gallagher!” he yelled through clenched teeth. “Wanna save it for ya!” he screamed in desperation, fighting with everything in him not to cum in his
husband’s wildly talented and equally beautiful mouth. He made the mistake of looking down at the party going on in his lap, while at a stoplight, and nearly exploded at the sight of Ian’s fiery, red-locked head bobbing up and down on him like a jackhammer. Luckily, the light turned green and an irate driver behind them honked at just the right moment.

After a few more minutes of precarious driving, Mickey pulled up in front of their house. “We made it! Finally!” Mickey yelled, his chest heaving, his body trembling as he held back his release by a tiny thread. “Let’s go!” he commanded, pulling Ian’s head roughly out of his lap by his vibrant, sexy-ass, ginger hair.

The two men ran for the door, stripping their clothes off before it was even closed behind them. Mickey pushed Ian down forcefully into the recliner, then opened the tube of lube that he had taken from the car’s glove compartment. He quickly prepped himself as Ian looked on, his cock wickedly hard---so much that Mickey couldn’t wait to feel it inside him. “Fuck! Want you so fuckin’ bad!” Mickey breathed as he continued to stretch himself to accommodate Ian’s massive manhood. “Gonna sit on ya,” Mickey announced, Ian’s monsterous cock now just as painfully erect as Mickey’s.

Once Mickey was finished, he crouched down, suspending himself just above Ian’s lap, rubbing himself lightly over Ian’s package as he took Ian’s lips by force, stoking the already raging inferno inside of Ian until he burned so hot for Mickey, he thought he might spontaneously combust. Ian returned Mickey’s kiss ravenously, their tongues colliding passionately, Ian sucking desperately at Mickey’s lower lip as he pulled away.

“Awww!” Ian sighed in utter frustration. Mickey stood up, leading Ian to believe there was a sudden change in plan, but then Mickey did at half turn, hovering, once more, over Ian’s lap. This time, however, he was facing away from Ian, so Ian couldn’t kiss his lips, forcing him to address the nape of his neck, which Ian fucking adored just as much. The scent of it alone brought him near climax, as he buried his nose in it, licking tiny circles with his tongue between gentle nips and the occasional hickey that he imposed upon Mickey’s beautifully vulnerable, porcelain skin.

Mickey shuddered, throwing his head back against Ian’s, begging non-verbally for mercy. “Want ya to fuck me NOW!” Mickey pleaded, as he positioned himself for Ian’s entry, Ian reclining the chair in response. “Fuck yeah!” Ian whispered hoarsely in Mickey’s ear as the two began to make love, Ian gradually inserting himself into Mickey’s waiting hole from behind, reaching around Mickey’s hips from the outside and grasping his inner thighs, from the bottom up, with his hands as he pulled them apart, gripping Mickey’s now straddling thighs firmly from the underside as he fucked him, lifting him on and off of his cock, slowly at first, then with increasing speed to match Mickey’s counter-movements and vocalizations of pleasure, which ranged from moans to screams, to enraptured growls. “Mick...So fucking hot...” Ian panted, his own ecstatic verbalizations co-mingling with Mickey’s passionate cries.

Ian released Mickey’s right leg, leaving him to hold it up on his own, grabbing for Mickey’s swollen shaft, which he knew was mere seconds away from an earth-shattering explosion. He could hear it in the pitch and tone of his moans and screams, and he could feel it in the way his ass tightened and quivered around him. He knew he didn’t NEED to touch his cock, but he longed for it, nonetheless, wanting so badly to feel Mickey’s explosion at the same moment he knew Mickey would feel his.

Ian sat upright in the chair, perfecting the angle for Mickey’s pleasure, granting him access to Mickey’s gorgeously plump cock, as well as his neck and ear, and also giving him the leverage he needed to continue to fuck Mickey, while holding only one of his legs. “Gotcha now, Mick,” Ian breathed as he trailed his tongue from the back of his neck over to his ear, breathing harshly into it as his orgasm became imminent. He stroked Mickey vigorously, matching pace with his thrusts into Mickey’s ass, which Mickey was Countering forcefully in complete desperation, wanting nothing in
the world, more than what he and his husband would enjoy together momentarily.

“Oh fuck yeah, Ian!” Mickey squealed with impassioned delight, as he detonated, squeezing Ian’s cock so firmly between his cheeks that Ian erupted inside him immediately, panting, “Mickey...Mickey...Mickey...Mickey,” softly into his ear, sending chills throughout his already tingling body.

“Fuck! That was good!” Mickey exclaimed after a moment of blissful silence, as he pulled himself off Ian’s shrinking shaft, resting his gorgeous, round ass on Ian’s bare thighs. “Better than good!” Ian panted. “I’m completely spent,” Ian chuckled, lifting Mickey off his lap, then dragging his ass up from the chair to get his meds.

“Hey! Gotta eat somethin’ first,” Mickey reminded him. “I ate on the way here!” Ian smirked. “Not funny, Ian! Seriously…” Mickey nagged. “Gonna eat an apple for now,” Ian began, downing his meds with some water and grabbing an apple off the counter. “I wanna go get whatever you want for lunch!” he smiled adoringly at Mickey. “I kinda need a shower...and gotta clean up this mess,” Mickey responded, pointing to the fruits of their labor, which were simultaneously dripping down the recliner and out of his ass. Ian roared with laughter, approaching the chair with a damp paper towel in one hand and an apple in the other.

“See...no big deal! Now go get in the shower! I’ll do a little better job on this, then I’ll be up to join ya,” Ian promised, his smile absolutely infectious! “Yeah, okay, Romeo,” Mickey answered, recognizing that he was being charmed.

Ian scrubbed both cum stains until they were completely gone, then headed upstairs to join Mickey, stopping in his tracks as his phone began to ring. It was Shawn. He retraced his steps, returning to the kitchen to accept the call.
“Ian,” Shawn began. “Hey, Shawn, sorry I didn’t call back. I got...well, Mickey picked me up for lunch and…” Ian stammered. “It’s okay, I get it. Shit comes up,” he giggled. “Anyway, I just wanted to know whether you are doing this the right way. How is it that you are able to donate? Etc.” Shawn explained. “Yeah, I’m on a new medication. Stopped taking the lithium and…” Shawn interrupted Ian, “You stopped taking the lithium already?” he asked. “Yeah, well, things have changed a bit. Kayla had a brain hemorrhage and...well, I’m pretty much the backup plan if the Sample Drive we just had doesn’t turn up another donor,” Ian explained.

“Wow! So a lot has changed since we talked, huh?” Shawn asked in surprise. “Yeah, and I’m just trying to make sure I’m a viable donor. Gotta keep my shit straight. Doc says I could have a relapse, but he hopes this new medicine will work ‘til I donate. Then I can go back on the lithium,” Ian said matter-of-factly.

“So, how long until you donate?” Shawn asked. “Well, that depends on the results of the tests we sent my blood out for today. My white blood count has to be within normal limits, which, Doc said, could take two weeks to one month. But he doesn’t have a baseline for me. That’s why we tested today. We’re hoping it will be sooner than later, since Kayla is on borrowed time, but if I show any signs of mania or depression, then I won’t be able to donate. I know that’s what you were worried about when we talked. That’s why, like I said, I’m trying to do everything right, especially since I know Mickey’s so stressed out. I don’t wanna worry him any more than he…” Ian looked up to see Mickey turning the corner from the stairs and stopped, mid-sentence.

“Hey, Shawn, Mickey’s here and I gotta get ready for a quick lunch before I head back to the clinic. So...can you visit and…” “Shawn,” Mickey interrupted, grabbing Ian’s phone and hitting the speaker button, “We can pay you, and can give ya a free place to stay...on the beach...free food...whatever you want. Just please come and help us. Ian didn’t wanna trust Ma to anyone else.”

Ian’s first reaction was to flip out on Mickey for commandeering his phone like he did, but then, as Mickey continued, offering Shawn everything under the sun, he realized just how desperate he was, and felt nothing but pity and compassion for his poor hubby. He also couldn’t help but wonder how much of his previous comment Mickey overheard.

“Mickey, you know I’d do anything for you guys, but I gotta arrange for the time off first,” Shawn responded. “How long will that take?” Mickey asked nervously. “I’ll talk to my supervisor after lunch and I’ll let you know...” he replied. Mickey and Ian could hear someone talking to Shawn, then he returned to end the phone call, “Mickey, Ian, I gotta go. I’ll call or text you as soon as I can.”

“Ian, I heard you talking to Shawn and I…” “Mickey, I would’ve told you, but I didn’t wanna upset you anymore than you already were,” Ian confessed tearfully. “Please forgive me,” he begged. “Forgive you for what, Ian?”” Mickey asked, a puzzled look on his face. Now Ian realized that Mickey had not overheard what he thought he had, and he thought for a split second about telling him something other than the truth, in order to avoid unnecessary conflict and stress on Mickey, but then he realized the best thing to do would be to be completely honest and get everything out in the open, once and for all.

“I-I…” Ian struggled to find the right words, Mickey, in the meantime, receiving a distracting text from Thomas: “Your father is out of solitary and says he will contest the divorce. Call me and I’ll explain the details.”

“What is it?” Ian asked, realizing that he no longer had Mickey’s attention, and that his confession
was officially taking a back seat to whatever was in the text Mickey had just received. “Gotta call Thomas,” Mickey answered, clearly focused on whatever news he was about to receive.

“Thomas! Got your text!” Mickey began, Ian reaching for the phone to hit the speaker button. “Mickey, thanks for calling back,” Thomas answered. “So, he said he ain’t gonna sign the papers?” Mickey asked incredulously.

“Actually,” Thomas began, taking a deep breath, then beginning his abridged, yet still lengthy explanation, “he said more than that, but that’s basically all you need to know at this point. We have already filed, which sets the clock ticking. A hearing date will be set, at which time Terry would have to delineate his reasons for contesting the divorce. Not having grounds is no longer actionable in Illinois, so, being that your mother is not seeking any of the marital assets, which amount to the house on South Trumbull Avenue and its contents, and there are no minor children involved, the divorce should be granted pretty quickly after the first hearing, which is typically scheduled between 90 and 180 days after the filing.”

“So there’s gotta be a hearing?” Mickey asked. “Yes, and I’m aware that your mother is ill. If she is still too sick to attend the hearing on its scheduled date, we could ask for a postponement, until such time that she is well enough,” Thomas replied reassuringly. “Thomas, I don’t think you get it. My Mom is real sick, and she wants to marry Doc. If she doesn’t get this divorce soon, and she ends up…” Mickey got so choked up, he couldn’t finish his sentence.

Ian jumped in to finish Mickey’s thought for him, “What Mickey means is that we gotta get her this divorce quick, because we want her to be happy, which means marrying Doc, for what could be the short time she has left.” Ian knew his words cut Mickey deeply, but he also knew Mickey needed Thomas to realize the gravity of the situation so he could do everything in his power to make this thing happen.

“Thomas! I’m comin’ up there! Gonna talk to my fuckin’ piece a shit Dad. Make him understand what will happen if he doesn’t do this,” Mickey threatened. “Mickey, I wouldn’t advise you to do anyth…” Thomas began, Mickey cutting him off. “I’ll handle it!” Mickey yelled, hitting the ‘End’ button before Thomas could say anything more, then grabbing Ian’s glass from the island and whipping it against the wall, shattering it into countless, tiny shards. “He’s gonna be sorry he ever fucked with Ma!” he yelled, clenching his fits angrily.

“Mick! Don’t do this!” Ian begged him. “I won’t sleep, knowing you’re putting your freedom at risk. We’ll find another way!” “Ian, stay outta this! It doesn’t concern you!” Mickey blasted Ian, clearly not thinking the least bit rationally at this point. “Goddamnit, Mick! You better fucking believe this concerns me! I’m your fucking husband!” Ian screamed, tears beginning to trickle down his cheeks as he tried his best to get through to Mickey.

“Don’t fuckin’ worry ‘bout it!” Mickey shouted back at Ian. “If you’re showering, hurry the fuck up! I gotta get back to the factory. Need to switch some travel plans around.” “Please, Mickey!!!” Ian pleaded, falling at his feet and completely coming apart at the seams.

In his heart of hearts, Ian didn’t know what worried him more, the possibility of Mickey getting himself into some type of legal trouble in Chicago, or the reality of dealing with everything being in flux in his own life, without having Mickey with him through it all. Ian acknowledged how stressed out Mickey was, and had vowed to be strong for him, but the reality was, Ian depended just as much, if not more, on Mickey for his own stability and sanity. The thought of Mickey leaving right now, to Ian, was like being thrown out into the middle of shark-infested waters with no boat, no raft, no vest...nothing.

As luck would have it, Mickey received another text, this time from Mandy, saying simply: “Mom
looks so good! Glad she will be coming home to stay with you guys. I’ll sleep better, knowing she’s in good hands.”

Mickey sighed deeply, realizing how much everyone was counting on both him and Ian. As Mickey’s temper flare-up began to subside, and he was able to focus on his immediate surroundings again, the sight of Ian groveling on the floor suddenly hit him. “Ian, C’mon, man. Get up! Not leavin’ yet,” he promised, scooping Ian up off the floor and helping him up the stairs. “Get your fuckin’ shower and we’ll get some lunch. We still got time together,” Mickey promised, attempting to calm Ian without having to agree not to go to Chicago, since he fully intended to do so, with or without Ian’s assent.

Ian stayed quiet, going through the motions of showering, dressing and following Mickey out to the car, but appearing to be completely disengaged from the world around him. “Ian, I’m sorry, man, but I refuse to let Ma die unhappy. She’s gonna marry Doc, no matter what I gotta do!” Mickey explained as they headed to an unknown destination for an undetermined kind of lunch. “Whatcha wanna eat?” Mickey asked. Ian shrugged his shoulders, still appearing to be in shock or some other type of zoned-out state. “Ian!” Mickey raised his voice again, “I said I was sorry…” In the absence of a response from Ian, Mickey finally decided on hitting their favorite deli and just picking something up for the two of them and Doc. “Look, if ya don’t tell me whatcha want, I’m just gonna order what I think ya want,” Mickey tried again to get an answer from Ian, before calling the deli and ordering three turkey and swiss subs. “There, well, hope that’s whatcha wanted,” Mickey hissed in Ian’s direction, becoming somewhat perturbed at his refusal to speak.

When he pulled up in front of the deli, he tried one last time, “Ian, you wanna go in and get the subs?” Still, Ian gave no reply. Mickey looked over to see that Ian was staring straight ahead, his eyes filled with tears, which were overflowing and had stained his pale, lightly freckled cheeks. Fuck! He was beautiful! Mickey turned Ian’s gorgeous, china-doll face toward his own, pulling him in and kissing him tenderly. “Ian, I love you! Everything’s gonna be okay. I promise. Now go get our fuckin’ lunch,” he encouraged him with a slight smile and another light peck on his salty lips.

Ian blinked, his long, curly lashes sending two more tears down his face, before he turned to exit the car. “Fuck!” Mickey screamed in frustration, once Ian was out of earshot. He knew Ian needed him, but he also yearned for his mother to be happy for the rest of her life, however long or tragically short it ended up to be. He just couldn’t let Terry take that from her, especially after all that he had already done in her life to hurt her and make her miserable. It just wasn’t fair, and Mickey wasn’t going to let Terry get away with it—no matter what!

When Ian got back to the car with the subs, Mickey surprised him by parking. Mickey walked around the passenger side of the car, opening the door for Ian. “Here! Gimme your feet,” he said, removing Ian’s shoes and socks, then his own, the whole lot of which he stowed in the back of the car. “C’mon!” Mickey smiled, taking Ian by the hand and pulling him out of the car. “I know how much you love the beach, so I figure we’ll eat there today!” he continued, pausing to roll the bottoms of his pants up, then walking Ian out into the sand.

They walked for a good ten minutes, taking in the glorious sights, sounds and smells of the beach before they came to a wooden picnic table, where Ian dropped their bag of food. Mickey sat down, pulling Ian down next to him. “Look,” Mickey said, unwrapping Ian’s sandwich for him, then his own. “We got a lot to deal with, and we’ll do it together. I shouldn’t’ve said my trip to Chicago didn’t concern ya, but there’s no fuckin’ way I’m lettin’ my Dad’s bullshit keep my Mom from the happiness she deserves. So don’t try to stop me from takin’ care of this for her, okay?” Ian looked at him like he wanted to say something, but stayed quiet.

“Okay?” Mickey asked again, turning Ian’s face toward him by his chin and looking him in the eye.
Ian averted his gaze and shrugged his shoulders, tears once again drizzling down his face. “Ian, I promise I won’t get into any trouble!” Mickey insisted, kissing his tears away as fast as he could make them.

“Now...about what I overheard between you and Shawn,” Mickey began. “I-I…” Ian struggled again for the words he needed in order to explain. “Ian, let me finish first,” Mickey interjected. “I heard you say you didn’t wanna stress me out any more than I already am. Ian, is there somethin’ wrong? Somethin’ you’re not tellin’ me? You feelin’ okay? I’d rather know, than not know. I mean...at least then I’ll know what I gotta worry about,” Mickey paused, awaiting Ian’s response.

Ian just shook his head ‘no’. “What!? You’re not gonna tell me?” Mickey asked, starting to get a tad pissed. “No, Mick, nothing’s wrong. In fact, I was actually telling Shawn I was trying to do everything right, so I wouldn’t worry you,” Ian explained. “Really?” Mickey asked, breathing a small, tentative sigh of relief. “Yeah, but there’s one thing I wanna tell ya,” Ian continued, his tear-filled eyes shimmering in the sun.

Ian inhaled deeply, taking Mickey’s hands between his own, “After I decided, without telling anyone, to have my cheek swab tested to be Mom’s donor, and I found out I was a match, I wanted to know if I could actually donate for her, before I told anyone.” “Okay…,” Mickey acknowledged, anxiously awaiting the second part of Ian’s story. “Well, I knew Shawn had done his Clinical on an Oncology floor, so I called him about it,” Ian explained.

“Okay, that makes sense...So did he help you?” Mickey asked. “Well, he was pissed at me for putting myself and everyone in this position, but yeah, he answered my questions,” Ian replied. “So…” Mickey tried starting Ian’s next sentence for him, in hopes that he might get to the point. He was finally starting to calm down and was feeling pretty hungry. “So, I’m sorry I told Shawn before you,” Ian finally finished, looking up at Mickey through his tear-sodden lashes, awaiting his reaction.

“Ian, I think you’re confused about why I was pissed about this in the first place,” Mickey began to explain. “You an’ me shoulda made the decision for you to get tested, as a couple, since you would be puttin’ your mental health at risk to be Mom’s donor. You askin’ someone you trust, who knows about this shit, after you found out you matched, is fine with me. I shoulda known before that, cuz I shoulda been in on the decision. But you tellin’ Shawn—-I get it. No big deal. It was smart, really. And I’m sure if any shit went down, he woulda told me what you did, if you didn’t. I trust Shawn...and I trust you,” Mickey said, kissing Ian lovingly.

“I’m so glad you understand, Mick! I love you! I hope you also understand why this trip to Chicago you think you’re going on should also be a decision made by us, as a couple, cuz if you go without my blessing, I’m gonna be real pissed,” Ian said seriously, Mickey wondering how Ian had turned the tables on him so quickly. “Okay, let’s fuckin’ talk…” Mickey smiled, taking a bite of his sub.
Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Ian returned to the clinic with Doc’s lunch, having mixed emotions about his discussion with Mickey about Chicago. While he had gotten Mickey to agree to table the final decision until after the results of all of the lab work were in, including his own, and also until Shawn got back to them with a possible date of arrival, he still felt uneasy about the whole thing. And the idea that Mickey could be out of town by the time Svetlana arrived really wasn’t sitting well with Ian either. At the very least, however, Ian got Mickey to agree to the possibility of someone going with him. He had discussed perhaps making it part of a business trip that Brach had planned to go on alone.

Doc seemed to be in a pleasant mood, talking incessantly about his plans for Kayla, once she was released from the hospital. “I will see to it that she gets rest, but I am also going to ensure that she gets out and enjoys life!” he vowed enthusiastically to Ian, between patients. Clearly, he had accepted the idea that Kayla might not recover from her illness, and was planning accordingly. He didn’t want to waste a single moment of their time together. “That’s great, Doc! I agree! Everyone should get the most out of the time they have, and should be with the people they care most about!” Ian responded with a bright smile, thinking non-stop about Mickey and how he intended to spend forever with him, or however long they had. This was, once again, why he didn’t want Mickey going to Chicago, and especially not without him. “Not without me, you don’t,” Ian said to himself, as he conjured up an idea to keep his ass in Mickey’s presence as much as possible.

“Hey, Doc!” Ian called out during a lull period at the clinic. “What’s up, Ian?” Doc responded kindly. “When did you say I should be increasing my dose? I mean, assuming I’m still gonna be Mom’s donor,” Ian asked, then clarified. “By the end of the week,” he answered. “And I won’t be able to donate for at least another week after that, right?” Ian requested confirmation. “I’m guessing two weeks to a month, but we really won’t know until your bloodwork comes back,” Doc explained, although he felt certain that Ian already understood all of these things. “Well, have you checked with the lab...for the results?” Ian questioned.

“I was planning to wait to hear from them, since they will likely have an answer as to whether we have another possible donor, by the end of the day,” Doc replied, again wondering how it could be that Ian wasn’t thinking the same way he was. Something was up—and Doc knew it. “Ian, what’s with all of these clarifying questions that you already know the answers to? Better just tell me what’s going on,” Doc said, looking at Ian suspiciously.

“I was planning to wait to hear from them, since they will likely have an answer as to whether we have another possible donor, by the end of the day,” Doc replied, again wondering how it could be that Ian wasn’t thinking the same way he was. Something was up—and Doc knew it. “Ian, what’s with all of these clarifying questions that you already know the answers to? Better just tell me what’s going on,” Doc said, looking at Ian suspiciously.

“Okay,” Ian sighed heavily, although it was all for show. He definitely wanted Doc to ask, so he could tell him about Mickey’s plan to go to Chicago to handle Terry. “But I don’t want Mom to worry,” he added, sincerely wanting to spare her any emotional turmoil whatsoever, but feeling that Doc and/or Mom could make a difference in Mickey’s decision.

“Well...Thomas told Mickey today that Terry won’t sign the divorce papers. I probably shouldn’t be the one telling you this, but Mickey plans to take matters into his own hands and go to Chicago to ‘convince’ Terry to sign,” Ian explained, using air quotes around the word ‘convince’. “Oh no! How on earth does he believe he can do that?” Doc asked.

“That’s what scares me, knowing Mickey,” Ian shared. “I’ve been trying to talk him out of it. In fact, we’ve been fighting about it, I...” “Wait a minute!” Doc interrupted. “You two have been arguing over something that concerns me and Kayla? That’s ridiculous! Your relationship is under enough stress because of us! You need to stay relaxed. And how can you do that when...I’ll handle this, Ian!” Doc resolved, sounding angrier than Ian had ever heard him before.

“But wait, Doc! Mickey’s just gonna be more pissed if you go to him about this...” Ian began. “I
said, I’ll handle it. You have nothing to worry about. It will be as if we never discussed this...and Kayla doesn’t need to know a thing...ever,” Doc said mysteriously.

Ian wondered what Doc meant by what he said. How could he address this problem without letting Mickey know they had spoken? He wanted to ask, but a part of him didn’t want to know, and he could sense that Doc didn’t want to share details with him.

Ian and Doc worked quietly for the rest of the day, talking only about patients and lab work that needed to be sent out. Once the clinic emptied out, Doc suggested that Ian leave early to drop off the labs from the afternoon patients. Ian jumped at the chance to get out early, hoping to grab Yev and surprise Mickey with one of his favorite pasta dishes. That was always a winning combination, since Yev loved to make pasta and Mickey loved to eat it!

Ian really wanted Mickey to relax. He even thought about stopping to pick up some of the massage lotion he had used to de-stress and heal Mickey before, once, when he had injured his hand, and again, when he was fighting the post-prison e-Coli anemia that almost killed him. He knew it helped Mickey and he loved to use it on him. It gave Ian an excuse to tenderly rub every square inch of Mickey’s exquisite body, and to take his time doing it. Ian was getting hard, just thinking about it.

Ian finished preparing all of the exam rooms for the next day, grabbed the blood samples for the lab and said his goodbyes, heading out nearly a full hour early. He stopped at the aromatherapy shoppe to pick up Mickey’s lotion, then headed for the lab. As soon as he walked in, he was greeted by his favorite lab tech, Alejandro. “Did you get the email?” he asked. “No, why? Is there a match?” Ian asked hopefully. “No, I’m sorry,” he answered. “I had a feeling,” Ian said, dropping his head. “The e-mail also included the results of your CBC and lithium levels. Are you interested in those?” he asked.

“Yes, very!” Ian answered so quickly that Alejandro had barely gotten the words out. Ian was bouncing on the balls of his feet, anxiously awaiting the results, which Alejandro had just sent to ‘print’, so Ian would have a copy to look at, as he highlighted the most important results. Once it had printed, Alejandro placed it on the counter in front of Ian, pointing out that his lithium levels were nearly zero and that his white blood count was elevated---20,000. “Okay, so I realize you have no baseline for my white count, but do you have a guess as to how long it will be before it’s within normal range?” Ian asked.

“I have no way of knowing that, since, like you say, I don’t know what your number was before you stopped the lithium, to get a gauge on how quickly it has changed so far. However, I would say, based on the fact that you are nearly lithium-free, it should happen sometime in the next two weeks, unless there’s another reason for your white count to be up. I’d keep checking it every two to three days,” Alejandro advised. Ian smiled, thanking him for the info and throwing him a twenty for his trouble.

‘Two weeks,’ Ian thought to himself, ‘I can make that.” He smiled as he got into the car. ‘But I need Mickey,’ his nagging inner voice added. “That’s right. Not letting him leave me,” Ian mumbled, actually talking to himself AND answering at this point.

Mickey had returned from lunch in an unsettled mood. He had wanted to make the changes to include himself in the upcoming trip to Chicago, but had promised Ian he would wait for the lab results, both his, and all of the remaining cheek swabs from the Drive. He was also in a holding pattern until Shawn got back to Ian about his availability. Mickey had absolutely no control over any of these things, which made waiting all the more unnerving. And to top it all off, he had nearly forgotten about getting the second factory suite set up for Svet, which would require some heavy-
duty cleaning and stocking. He wanted it to be comfortable, since he knew his son would likely be staying there for visits with his mother until she got a place of her own.

Mickey busied himself with the phone calls necessary to get Svet’s room in order, but couldn’t help overhearing the details of the trip to Chicago, which Manuel and Brach were discussing. Brach would be flying out just after midnight on Friday, and was tentatively scheduled for a Tuesday morning return flight. ‘Doable,’ Mickey thought to himself. Brach was to gather the other models at the airport, meet with Cal while they were in wardrobe, then go there himself, just before the photo shoot. Mickey thought about what a tremendous amount of responsibility the company putting on Brach so early on, basically giving him double duty. Surely, if he were to go to Chicago with Brach, the trip would go much more smoothly; Brach could focus on modeling, 100%, leaving the business to Mickey.

Mickey was just about to mention the possibility of his going to Chicago, when he received a text from Kayla:

“They’re springing me! I can wait for Doc to finish up at the clinic and come to get me. He wants me to visit with him at his place for a bit, but I’ll need to sleep at yours, since I’ll need someone with me for a while, and Ian said he’d be home all day tomorrow.”

Mickey responded: “That’s fine, Mom! Glad you’re coming home.”

Kayla texted back: “Me too! Looking forward to some family time this weekend. Hope to have some fun with you, Ian and the kids...or do we have to give Yevgeni up to his mother right away?”

“I don’t know, Mom. We’ll have to see what Svet thinks when she gets here,” Mickey replied, realizing very quickly how complicated his leaving for the weekend could make things for Kayla and Ian. But, in the long run, nothing could outweigh the importance of Mickey getting those papers signed so Kayla and Doc could be married ASAP. There were some people Mickey knew from his past life that could definitely help with that, but he needed to be in Chicago to find them. They weren’t the type of people that kept consistent phone numbers and addresses. He was going to need a day or so to comb the area, but he felt confident he could get it done, once he got there.

Mickey decided to keep quiet about the possibility of him going, at least until he got some of the information Ian had wanted him to wait for. Once Mickey had a cleaning crew and a shopper lined up for Svet’s room, he took another look at financials. This time, focusing on Surfin’ USA. One of the ideas he had recently was to open a Boca location, right on the beach. Not that Surfin’ wasn’t already wildly successful, but Mickey just knew a Boca location would thrive, not to mention building up the Mexican market, which was extremely limited. This was yet another reason for Mickey to make this trip. He really wanted to pitch this idea to Cal himself. He had wanted to run it past Bigley as well, but with the craziness that had ensued in his life recently, he hadn’t had the chance. Surfin’s financials were as strong as ever, and could easily support the addition of a new location, especially one that Mickey felt certain would be extremely profitable from the moment it opened its doors.

Mickey was distracted again by his phone, this time receiving a text from Ian: “No match. Lithium percentage down to nearly zero. White blood count still elevated--retest in 2 to 3 days. The earliest Shawn can come is Monday. Leaving for Yevgeni soon. See you after work (winky face emoji).”

Mickey was about to respond, letting Ian know about Kayla coming to stay at their place that night, when he got another text from Ian:

“Come home prepared for a relaxing night (heart emoji).” Mickey shook his head disheartenedly, feeling anything but relaxed.
Doc finished up the last of his paperwork, closing and locking the clinic for the night, when his phone rang. “Johnny!” he said, clearly pleased. “Thanks for getting back to me so quickly. I know you’re pretty much removed from this kind of stuff these days, but...there’s a situation. I really don’t want to involve Bigley, so I’m hoping you can help,” Doc began.

“Michael, your wish is my command,” Johnny responded.
Precious Time

Mickey walked into the house and was instantly overwhelmed by the amount of time and energy Ian had obviously put into everything he saw, heard and smelled. The island was set for three, wine service for two, cinnamon-scented candles adorning the center. A bottle of Johnny’s homemade chianti was chilling, tableside, the aroma of Mickey’s favorite pasta sauce permeating the entire first floor. And in the background---Frank Sinatra. Ian and Yev stood in the entryway, their smiles lighting up the room.

“Daddy!” Yev cheered, approaching Mickey with his arms stretched wide. “Family hug!” he added, pulling a fresh-shaven, impeccably groomed, divinely-fragranced Ian into their embrace. Mickey squeezed them both into him tightly, pressing his work-weary face into Ian’s strong, comforting chest and inhaling deeply, allowing his senses to fully absorb the sweet essence of his incredibly hot husband. “Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey exclaimed, under his breath, removing himself from his family’s arms to adjust himself as subtly as possible. “All this over a trip to Chicago?” he asked, cutting to the chase, far too soon for Ian’s liking.

“Thought we’d talk about that AFTER DINNER!” Ian replied, gritting his teeth into a false smile and managing to keep his voice lower than he wanted it to be, for their son’s benefit. “C’mon, Daddy! Let’s eat!” Yev beamed, taking Mickey by the hand and leading him to his place at the island. Mickey smiled and sat down. “We made your favorite!” Yev announced as he portioned out the angel hair, covering each pile with a generous helping of hot sicilian red sauce. “And I made salad,” Ian offered, gesturing toward a large bowl of greens and vegetables that he had tossed in an citrus vinaigrette dressing.

“Everything smells great!” Mickey said, a genuine smile forming on his face, despite Ian’s obvious displeasure with his previous comment. He focused his gaze on Yev, but couldn’t help but glance over at Ian, who truly had outdone himself and certainly deserved some acknowledgement, regardless of his motives. Ian’s eyes were downcast, his expression, sad. “Daddy Ian! Look! Daddy and me are happy! Why aren’t you?” Yev asked innocently. “Just hasn’t had any of Johnny’s chianti yet, is all,” Mickey answered for him, getting up from his place to pour for both of them.

As Mickey moved toward Ian to pour his glass, he stopped directly behind him, planting a kiss onto the crown of his head, whispering, “Sorry,” into his ear as he poured over his shoulder, then lifting Ian’s face, by the chin, pecking him on the lips, and mouthing the words, “I love you.”

As easily upset as Ian had become, it was with even less effort that he forgave Mickey, all at once smitten with him again, his shy smile, his soft, full lips, his hypnotic blue eyes, but most of all, his ‘Mickeyness’, that magical, indescribable, irresistible ‘thing’ he did to Ian, everytime he was within 50 yards of him. After all, what was the point in being mad and spoiling the entire, perfectly-planned evening over a comment, the sentiment of which, Ian was now certain, would ultimately be immaterial, since he fully intended on persuading Mickey not to leave him to go to Chicago? It mattered not that Mickey knew his goal in advance; that would not stop Ian from achieving it.

The couple toasted to Kayla’s homecoming, to Yev’s culinary skills and to their good fortune at having enjoyed so many happy years as a family. Ian had proposed the last part of the toast, remembering his conversation with Doc earlier that day, when he had realized that no amount of time together is guaranteed, and wanted every possible moment he could squeeze out of life with Mickey.

The dinner itself was absolutely to-die-for, and the company was stellar as well. The trio enjoyed sharing details of their days, as well as reminiscing about some of the best times they’d had together. It had been a while since the three had congregated in such a leisurely setting and felt this at ease.
Mickey shared that Grandma would be coming home later to spend the night, which made Yev even happier than he already was.

Ian, knowing his man well, kept the chianti flowing, sneaking in an under-the-table thumbnail sweep of Mickey’s inner thigh whenever he could, staring at him longingly as he did, his sultry, green eyes already melting away Mickey’s resolve to stand firm on his decision to make the trip over the upcoming weekend.

By the time everyone had finished eating, Mickey couldn’t take his eyes off Ian. His white henley lay open, exposing a sexy tuft of his ginger chest hair, the light cotton material hugging his muscled torso exquisitely. Ian smirked at the obvious, non-verbal attention he was receiving, as Mickey continued undressing him with his eyes.

“Homework done?” Mickey asked hopefully. “Yep,” Ian breathed, staring back at Mickey lustfully. “Okay, let’s get showered and ready for sleep, little man,” Mickey said, giving Yev’s shoulder a light squeeze. “Yeah, we’ll clean up here and tuck you in,” Ian added, tousling Yev’s hair affectionately.

The couple made quick work of the kitchen clean up, Ian inflicting the occasional accidental bump upon certain choice parts of Mickey’s body as they bustled about. Of course, Mickey knew exactly what Ian was doing, and could barely contain his excitement, although he did his best to play it cool.

As they were finishing up, Mickey’s phone buzzed, vibrating loudly against the marble island. Mickey turned, leaning over the island to read the message, Ian approaching him from behind and grinding himself against Mickey’s perfectly-positioned, enticingly round derriere shamelessly.

“It’s Mom,” Mickey spoke softly. “Says she wants to spend the night with Doc and wonders if I can pick her up in the morning before work,” Mickey paraphrased. “I’ll get her,” Ian hummed as he pressed his lips against Mickey’s neck, while still rubbing himself seductively against his ass. Mickey texted back, asking how she was feeling, and letting her know Ian would be there to get her in the morning. “Guessin’ you’re gonna take Yev to school then?” Mickey asked. “Depends…” Ian breathed huskily into Mickey’s ear, raising every single hair on the back of his neck, Mickey shivering in response. “Fuck!” Mickey called out, recognizing his own transparency. Ian was getting to him, big time, and they both knew it. His burgeoning hard-on was pinned painfully against the side of the island, the metal zipper of his jeans adding insult to injury.

Mickey spun around, capturing Ian’s mouth in a heated, desperate kiss, Ian returning it ravenously, as if he were starved for his affection. “Mick…” Ian moaned, barely able to contain himself as they kissed, teased and fondled each other. “Want you, Ian…” Mickey breathed into Ian’s mouth. “Mmmm Hmmm!” Ian responded, sucking at Mickey’s neck, running his tongue over his ‘G-Spot’ repeatedly, instantly achieving the intended result.

Mickey was ready to explode, so aflame with desire that he feared too much stimulation of any kind, even over his jeans, might bring him to climax. “Ian…we gotta…” Mickey panted. Ian smiled, nodding his head in understanding. “I know,” Ian whispered, backing away and turning for the stairs, making the necessary adjustment on his way.

Ian headed straight for Yev’s room, pausing outside the door to collect himself further, before knocking. “Come in,” Yev said quietly, sounding as if he were in bed already. Ian pushed the door open to find that he was, but he was reading a book that Ian had never seen before. “Whatcha reading?” Ian asked. “It’s called ‘The Fall of Freddie the Leaf,” he answered. “Oh,” Ian replied, thinking the title was a bit unusual. It was a thin book, more the size Mikhaila would typically bring home. “Did you get that at the school library?” Ian asked curiously. “Got it from Ms. Juarez,” Yev began. “When Grandma came for brunch, she told her I should read it. She actually said I should read it with Dad and you, but the words are easy, so I just started by myself. Oh, and she said you
would want to read it to Mikhaila, too, and that you would know when she was ready!”

“Mind if I take a look?” Ian asked. Yev nodded as he handed the book over to Ian. By this time, a freshly-showered, heavenly-scented, blue, velour-robed Mickey was walking in to join them. “Dad! My teacher gave me this book today! Grandma wanted me to read with you guys!” Yev said with excitement in his voice. “Okay if we read this together?” Ian asked, shooting Mickey a strange look. Mickey nodded slowly, as he tried to get a read on Ian’s expression. It certainly was different from the one that he’d seen in the kitchen when they were together last.


Ian walked briskly toward their bedroom, his intentions, for the moment, 180 degrees out from what he had planned, but undeniably significant, and remarkably apropos to his original goal, nonetheless. He needed to share the premise of this book with Mickey so they could discuss what it would mean to Yev, once they read it. Not only that, but Kayla’s motivation and timing for suggesting it was also something Ian wanted to address.

Ian sat cross-legged on the bed, his head bowed as he read the blurb on the back of the book to himself, pausing to look up as Mickey entered the room, the sweet scent of warmed lotion filling the air in vain. “Okay, what the fuck, Ian?!” Mickey said in his usual ‘I’m irritated, so make it quick’ tone of voice. Mickey had known there was something weird between Ian and Yev, but now that he realized it could prospectively affect the rest of his night, as evidenced by his husband’s position on the bed, as well as the fact that he was still fully-clothed, he begrudgingly gave this ‘issue’ his full attention.

Ian looked back down at the book cover, reading from the back, “As Freddie experiences the changing seasons along with his companion leaves, he learns about the delicate balance between life and death,” then lifted his head to meet Mickey’s eyes with his own, which were now filling with tears. “What?!” Mickey asked, raising his voice slightly as he approached Ian, wrapping his arms around his head and pulling it into his chest to comfort him.

Ian took a deep breath to calm himself, then began, “Mom suggested that Yev, and eventually Mikhaila, read this book with us. As you probably figured out from what I just read to you, it’s a…” “It’s a book to help kids handle losin’ an older family member. I get it,” Mickey interrupted, saving Ian the agony of explaining it in detail, the way Mickey knew he would have.

“So, I think the timing’s a little ‘off’, don’t you?” Ian asked. “And,” he continued before Mickey had a chance to respond, “it’s kinda scary that Mom thinks now is the time.” Mickey sat, quietly mulling over what Ian had just said for nearly a full minute, before he finally responded, “She just wants us all to be prepared.”

“And we should be,” Ian continued, swallowing hard, then seizing his golden opportunity. “We gotta stick with her through all this shit! Mick, I’m doing everything I can to help her! I’m off my regular meds, taking new ones, getting my blood drawn regularly so I can donate as soon as possible...and I feel like it’s not enough!” Ian choked back his tears as he rambled on, “I’m gonna sit with her, and monitor her, and do all I can to keep her comfortable and happy, and to keep the kids happy, and to help Yev adjust to Svetlana being here...but I CAN’T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!!!”
Ian began to sob uncontrollably, Mickey pulling him up against him, gently stroking the back of his neck with his fingers. “Please don’t leave me now, Mick!” Ian whimpered as Mickey held him. “I fuckin’ won’t! I promise!”

“Really? And you won’t change your mind? Or make any plans behind my back?” Ian was begging, more so than asking, at this point. “I ain’t changin’ nothin’, Ian,” Mickey assured him, kissing him softly, and slowly beginning to unbuckle his pants.

Ian breathed a gigantic sigh of relief, tallying a point in the ‘win’ column for himself, and for his beloved family, then helped Mickey along with the removal of his pants. “Ian, even before all this shit with the book, I was havin’ serious doubts about leavin’ your sexy ass, even for a day...So fuckin’ hot,” Mickey breathed as he stood to drop his robe, then finished stripping Ian naked, just dying to satisfy him. “How you want it tonight?” Mickey panted, as he languidly licked a stripe down Ian’s neck, grazing his Adam’s Apple, then tracing the center line of his torso, all the way down to the tip of his ample, fully-erect, beautifully-formed cock.

“Your choice,” Ian breathed. “Was gonna give you a little massage first. Got your special lotion today,” he explained. “Sounds fuckin’ great, but you sure you wanna wait that long?” Mickey asked, tempting the tip of Ian’s dick with his tongue. “Oh, I can wait...and so will you...” Ian growled, rolling Mickey over onto his stomach and reaching for the spearmint-eucalyptus lotion he’d had specially made for him. “...And you’re gonna relax...” Mickey let out a deep sigh, surrendering himself, body and soul, to the love of his life, come what may...
Worth the Wait

Ian drizzled some warmed lotion onto Mickey’s taut back, then began to slowly massage it into his muscles, using the palms of his hands. Mickey moaned softly as Ian’s hands traveled adeptly over his back, from top to bottom, exerting the optimum amount of pressure as they moved in a circular motion.

Ian focused next on the small of Mickey’s back, rubbing deeply with his thumbs, just above his waistline on both sides. “Have I ever told ya how much I love doing this?” Ian asked as he worked his way back up Mickey’s back, settling in on his shoulders. “Mmm-mmm,” Mickey responded in a barely audible mumble. “Yeah, there’s just something about having complete control over your pleasure that I really enjoy,” Ian chuckled. Mickey moaned in agreement, sending shivers of excitement up Ian’s spine. “So perfect…” Ian added, massaging outward from his shoulders over his sculpted upper arms, Mickey’s muscles relaxing more and more under Ian’s capable touch.

Mickey was his usual quiet self, enjoying Ian’s attention without comment, other than the occasional contented sigh or blissful moan, both of which got Ian harder with each successive utterance. “Mick...so fucking sexy,” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear as he leaned down, resting his chest on Mickey’s back and stretching his arms out over Mickey’s to massage his hands.

Massages were serious business to Ian, and he was not one to disappoint. Mickey was quite spoiled in this regard. Over the years, he’d NEVER had a massage that was anything short of fabulous. And this one was no exception. Once he finished with Mickey’s upper body, he slid down to straddle Mickey’s calves, applying more lotion, this time to his beautifully round buttocks, kneading them firmly with his fingers, then rubbing them from the center, outward, around the curves of his hips.

This was getting Mickey extremely aroused, and Ian knew it, but chose to ignore the slight rise of Mickey’s bottom, in favor of continuing on down the posterior of his gorgeous frame, shimmying himself still further south on the bed, until he had the entire length of Mickey’s shapely legs laid out in front of him. For this part of Mickey’s body, he took a bottom-to-top approach, beginning with a deep thumb massage of the soles of each of his feet, taking his time to apply that precise, perfect degree of pressure on every square centimeter of each with his lotion-slathered hands, before weaving the excess between his toes with his fingers. Mickey moaned loudly, genuinely loving to have his feet rubbed. And the way Ian did it was absolutely to-die-for.

Ian progressed slowly up Mickey’s legs, encircling his calves and shins, one at a time, with both hands, squeezing and twisting them from ankle to knee, again using his thumbs to exact just the right amount of compression to release muscle tension and bring a pleasurable relief. As Ian made his way up to Mickey’s thighs, he again focused on one at a time, now incorporating his fingers into the compression of the larger muscles---hamstrings and quads---before honing in on his inner thighs. Ian saved the best for last, anticipating the response he was sure to get, knowing where it would lead, and reveling in the deliciously impatient hisses, sighs and moans that fell, non-stop, from Mickey’s voluptuous lips as his fingers traveled ever closer to, yet artfully avoided contact with Mickey’s primed and painfully plump package.

Mickey began to wriggle his hips, effectively producing some pleasurable friction between himself and the bed beneath him, probably more out of reflex than intention, his body desperately craving relief from Ian’s torturous temptation. Ian had this planned all day, initially believing it to be the method by which he would coerce Mickey into staying with him in Boca, rather than going to Chicago, but now that was no longer necessary, and yet Ian continued to delay their session mercilessly. An erotic charge zipped through Ian’s entire body as he continued to deny Mickey his
ultimate pleasure, watching him struggle beneath him. He couldn’t help but laugh as he traced the border of Mickey’s package with his fingers relentlessly, from underneath, then flipped him over onto his back to proceed from above.

Mickey’s blazing blue eyes burned into Ian’s, his pent-up passion electrifying the air around them. Ian proceeded to knead Mickey’s inner thighs sensually, Mickey’s rock-hard, pre-cum laden cock lifting up off his stomach, begging for Ian’s touch. “What?” Ian finally asked, toying with him, as he cupped Mickey’s right buttock in his right hand and began to squeeze, while continuing to tease him from above with his left. Mickey’s mouth silently formed the word, “Please,” Ian grinning in satisfaction. “Please, what?” he teased. “I’ll do anything…” Mickey breathed. “What do you want, Mick?” Ian was lightly grazing Mickey’s balls with his left hand, at this point, and Mickey was arching his hips up in an attempt to get any contact he possibly could for his throbbing cock.

“Oh...I think I know how to make it better, but you gotta tell me if you like it,” Ian whispered as he gazed down into Mickey’s pleading eyes. Mickey nodded his head vigorously, Ian taking the cue and bowing his head to take the tip of Mickey’s sweet cock into his mouth, tightening his pretty pink lips seductively around it and sucking slowly, intermittently, then stopping. He rested his head on Mickey’s stomach, staring up at him through his sexy, curled-up lashes, awaiting his response. “Yeah!” Mickey gasped. “Yeah, what?” Ian responded, grazing his sack lightly with that skillful thumbnail of his. “Yeah! I fuckin’ love it!” Mickey raised his voice in frustration. “You sure?” Ian smiled, before turning his head back in the direction of Mickey’s manhood. “Fuck yeah, Ian!” Mickey answered, hooking the coconut oil off the nightstand and resting it to the left of his hips.

“Mmmm...someone in a hurry?” Ian hummed over Mickey’s swollen shaft as he gradually began to take more of him into his mouth. “Want you…” Mickey murmured, as Ian pulled his legs up off the bed, spreading them wide. “Hold these,” he commanded between licks up the midline of Mickey’s ball sack. Mickey obeyed, grasping the backs of his legs, just below his knees and lifting them up and away, just as Ian wanted. Ian pulled Mickey’s robust, round cheeks apart as he licked backward from Mickey’ sack to his hole, slowly tracing its perimeter with his tongue as he took Mickey’s rigid cock in hand, gliding his hand firmly over it with increasing speed.

Mickey’s eyes rolled up into his head as he tensed his stomach muscles in response to the sudden increase in stimulation. “Oh fuck!” Mickey called out as Ian continued to stroke him, his tongue now darting more quickly around and inside Mickey’s sweet asshole, which he had prepped nicely for just such an occasion. Mickey did his best to remain still, although he squirmed in spite of himself, his breath quickening, exhaling with short, shallow gasps. “Mmmm,” Ian hummed, the tenor of his voice vibrating through Mickey’s cock, as he moved his mouth to it, sucking it hard, while finger-banging Mickey’a ass. “So fuckin’ intense, Gallagher!” Mickey mumbled, Ian suddenly overwhelming his pleasure receptors as he grasped the base of his cock with his other hand, counteracting his oral manipulations expertly.

Ian added some coconut oil to the experience, giving every touch a smooth, silky glide, Mickey moaning uncontrollably as Ian’s talented fingers, tongue and mouth exacted the ultimate in sexual gratification relentlessly upon Mickey’s rocking, writhing, begging form. “Gallagher...I’m gonna…” Mickey began, before Ian interrupted, stopping everything abruptly. “So I guess you like it?” he began, “But I haven’t heard you say it. Heard a lot of other stuff,” he chuckled.

“Yeah, I fuckin’ love it!! Want you...real bad,” Mickey panted, imploring Ian to finish him. “That’s all I needed to hear! My dick is so fucking hard for you, Mick!” Ian admitted. Mickey smiled up at him shyly, from between his own shaking legs, his ocean blue eyes shimmering, enticing Ian, spurring him on to take him decisively.

Ian pulled Mickey to the bottom of the bed, then stood at the end, covering his massive cock with a
generous coating of coconut oil. “Here, put these under your ass,” he told Mickey, as he handed him two fluffy pillows, “and keep your legs up by your ears,” he added. The pillows put Mickey at the perfect height and angle for Ian to fuck him, standing up, yet also able to watch his face, which was fast becoming part of their ritual. He loved to see Mickey’s cum face. It was so fucking beautiful and satisfying, to know he was making Mickey feel that way...to witness it, in all its glory. Fuck! He loved this man!

He eased himself into Mickey’s waiting hole, little by little, all the while lightly stroking Mickey’s rock solid rail. Mickey moaned and panted continuously, “Oh fuck! Ian!” the refrain he repeated amid all else. Ian pulled Mickey’s left leg up, holding it straight with his left hand, flush against his own body, effectively keeping Mickey right where he wanted him, as he began to fuck him harder and faster, much to Mickey’s well-vocalized enjoyment. “So nice and tight...Mick...so hot...Mick...fucking need you…” Ian slammed his hips against Mickey’s beautiful, bouncing bottom, Mickey taking all of him, as Ian jerked him capably with his right hand.

Mickey looked up at Ian lustily, Ian’s brow furrowed with intense concentration as he strove to do Mickey just right, which he was, his facial expression only adding to Mickey’s excitement. “That’s it, Gallagher! So fuckin’ good, man...so fuckin’ good!” Ian mooned admiringly over his mate, basking in his exotic beauty, his dark lashes contrasting with his striking blue eyes as they fought to remain unveiled, specifically because Mickey knew Ian wanted to see him at that defining moment, when he’d reached his limit, when Ian had succeeded in bombarding him with more pleasure than his body could absorb.

Ian continued to watch intently as Mickey’s glorious body moved so naturally against his own, like poetry in motion, as they made wickedly all-consuming love to each other. “Gonna cum...fuck!” Mickey screamed, Ian shivering at the sound of those words spewing from Mickey’s lips. Ian’s eyes traced the expression on Mickey’s face, the curl of his lips, the blue of Mickey’s eyes as it intensified, giving way to his enlarging pupils, as he exploded over Ian’s fist and all over himself. He clenched his ass tightly around Ian’s pulsating member, Ian driving into him even harder as he shot his load, moaning, “Mick, fuck...fuck...fuck!”

Ian let go of Mickey’s leg, allowing it to fall freely and drape over the edge of the bed, Mickey allowing the other to do the same. “Wow!” was all Mickey could manage to say, his head still buzzing, his ears whistling, as they did sometimes after an insanely rewarding session with his husband, usually one that involved his head being positioned below heart level, as was the case this evening. Ian loved to watch Mickey’s face flush that way. He took it as a sign that he was doing his job, attending to his husband as he deserved.

The couple lay still, wrapped in each other’s arms for a time, Ian finally stirring to draw a bath with epsom salts for Mickey. “Not going to Chicago, right?” Ian asked for confirmation, on his way back over to the bed. “Not any fuckin’ time soon,” Mickey answered. “Hope that’s not what this was about, cuz I already told ya I wasn’t goin’. I’ll find another way…” Ian hugged Mickey into him again, silently breathing Mickey in, feeling his heartbeat, pulsing through his back against his own chest. “Hope I don’t need a reason to do my partner right, cuz I plan to do it all the time...just cuz I fucking love you!” Ian whispered, pressing his lips against Mickey’s neck.

Mickey grinned, easing himself up off the bed and heading for the tub, which had his name written all over it. “Need help?” he added, as he watched Ian trudge slowly over to the tub. “I’m never
too tired for you, Mick,” Ian replied with a soft smile, touching his lips to Mickey's forehead as he sat down in the tub next to him.
Ian’s alarm woke Mickey from a terrible nightmare, his body shivering, coated in a cold, clammy sweat. Mickey had these now and again, but chose to ignore them as best he could, and not to share them with Ian, in part since they sometimes revolved around their break-ups, far too often their heart-wrenching border goodbye, but also because, even those that did not involve Ian, the ones from his childhood, were horrible to relive in the first place, without having to explain them to Ian or anyone else. Besides, Ian and he both had enough to worry about these days, without giving his stupid-ass dreams any air-time.

Ian remained dead to the world, seemingly oblivious to Mickey’s issues and the annoying sound he now had his phone alarm set to. Mickey, still shaken, shut off Ian’s alarm and dragged himself out of bed, even though the plan was for Ian to take Yev to school and pick Kayla up at Doc’s, so Mickey could sleep in. Mickey just didn’t feel right leaving all of that legwork for Ian, especially after all Ian had done for him the night before, both in and outside of the bedroom. He was an absolute rock star in every spousal category, all while being sleep-deprived, a condition Mickey was well aware of, despite Ian’s marked efforts to minimize it in his eyes, especially in light of the lengthy late-night planning session they’d had.

Mickey stood still for a moment, taking in the incredible beauty of his husband and soulmate. He looked so peaceful, his vibrant red hair and eyelashes contrasting starkly with his alabaster skin and the white pillow that cradled his head. After all these years, Mickey still wondered, on nearly a daily basis, how this was his life. How did he manage to marry such a beautiful, amazing, sexy man? How did he ever get him in the first place? Where did angels like him come from? Certainly not Southside Chicago. Mickey felt like Ian must have been dropped from heaven, and somehow landed in the wrong place.

Of course, Ian always told Mickey how gorgeous he was, what a fantastic lover, how much he loved him—all of the things people tell their mates to make them feel secure—but staring down at Ian right now, his flawlessly radiant face illuminated, literally glowing, in the morning light, Mickey felt unworthy. Surely, this was the result of his hideous past life experiences, some of which were all too fresh in his mind at the moment; the consistent, forcefully-administered beatings and berating exacted upon him by his father, prison guards, inmates, even society at large, all collectively convincing him that he was nothing more than a delinquent, hood-rat, piece-of-shit faggot—someone likely to spend most of his miserable existence in prison, never amounting to anything more than a two-bit criminal.

But no matter the cause, Mickey had somehow managed to escape the personalized hell that was his life before, and now had a family, a successful business, and an angel in his bed every night. And not just any angel, but the one he loved more than life itself, who loved him back with everything he had, and who made him the happiest man alive! Even when he and Ian fought, or when Ian had him so pissed off he could spit nails, he never lost sight of what Ian was to him. It was overwhelming sometimes, and this morning was one of those times.

Mickey reached down to caress Ian’s heaven-sent face lightly, not wishing to disturb him, but unable to resist touching him, just the same. Ian, his hands instinctively reaching out in front of him on the bed, murmured, “Mickey….” Mickey, not wanting Ian to become fully awake, crawled back into bed, Ian instantly wrapping his arms around him, draping his top leg over him and burying his nose into Mickey’s neck.

Mickey’s body relaxed, Ian’s slow, rhythmic breath at his neck pulling him back into a deep sleep. The measure of comfort Mickey felt, safely tucked in Ian’s arms, could never be quantified with
Mickey’s alarm sounded, waking both men readily, the realization that he was late instantaneously hitting Ian like a ton of bricks. “Shit!” he whined, jumping out of the bed in a hurry and racing for the shower. “Mick! Can you please get Yev up?” he called over his shoulder as he ran. “Got him,” Mickey responded, springing into action to help. He felt largely responsible for their current predicament, since he had shut off Ian’s obnoxious alarm, intending to get up, but instead, slipping back into Ian’s arms, snuggling up with him and falling back to sleep.

Fortunately, Yev was already up and in the bathroom when Mickey got there. “Mornin’, buddy,” Mickey called into him. “We’re runnin’ late today, so hurry up,” he added. “Gonna go get a quick breakfast together,” he announced on his way out the door. Mickey flew down the stairs, grabbed three bagels and tossed them into the toaster, then made a pot of coffee---extra strong, even by his standards---knowing how badly he and Ian both needed it. Their extensive discussion the night before, into the wee hours, was all necessary, but draining, nonetheless, especially after such a busy evening. As Mickey finished preparing breakfast, his mind wandered back over all the ground they had covered. Miraculously, they had come to consensus on every major topic, varying only slightly in their opinions on certain minor details.

Mickey loved when both he and Ian were reasonable about things, which was common when they spoke just after mind-blowing sex, since they both tended to be starry-eyed, feeling head-over-heels in love, and not wanting anything to disturb their marital bliss. This was precisely why Mickey had chosen their post-coital tub-soak as the time and location for their talk.

They had decided to wait until after school on Friday to share with Yev the news of his mother coming, just in case anything changed, and also to minimize any anxiety that might build up in him as he anticipated her arrival. They both admitted to being a bit uneasy about it themselves, Ian thanking Mickey again for his decision not to leave for Chicago in the midst of all that was happening. Truth be told, it felt really fucking good to Mickey to have Ian feel that he needed him so desperately. He still wanted to get his mother’s divorce handled, but now just wasn’t the time. His place was at home with his gorgeous husband and family, a fact of which Ian had made him painfully aware.

They had also decided to put off the reading of “The Fall of Freddie the Leaf”, at least until they had an opportunity to discuss it with Kayla, which they hoped to do as soon as possible. Ian had offered to talk to her during the day, while they were alone, but Mickey insisted on being there, proposing a possible lunch date, pending the way the day looked at the factory. Of course, Ian’s idea of a real lunch date with Mickey didn’t involve anyone other than the two of them, but for Mom, and for Mickey, he was willing to make the sacrifice.

Finally, they discussed Ian’s donor status and his med situation. Ian shared some of the new concerns he had developed as a result of the late-night reading he had done, earlier in the week, including the possibilities of relapse: mania, depression, or both. He knew there was a really good chance that, if he were to relapse, he wouldn’t recognize the signs, or, if he or someone else did, he could, quite possibly, deny them, which might force others, most likely Mickey, into the awkward position of getting him mental health treatment against his will.

While he was certain he wouldn’t ever want this to happen, he felt they needed to be prepared for it, so he asked that Mickey make plans for him to sign all of the necessary paperwork as soon as possible, just in case. Mickey cried as he listened to Ian, talking about himself as if he were someone else---not the Ian he knew and loved---that very real possibility being Mickey’s greatest fear.
Ian had attempted to soothe him by saying, “I love you, Mick, and I trust you to do the right thing,” which only made Mickey cry harder. Ian didn’t like to see Mickey cry, EVER, but to feel powerless over the cause was beyond torture. The reality was, they were both irrevocably vulnerable to any and all chaos Ian’s reactions to the changes in his medication regimen might bring their way. The best they could do was to plan for it, so that is exactly what they did.

Mickey’s replay of his conversation with Ian was interrupted abruptly as the bagels popped up in the toaster, causing him to jump. He quickly prepared all three bagels, packaging them, along with two travel mugs filled with coffee and one with milk, for the road, then ran back upstairs to get dressed. “Everything’s ready and on the counter,” he said as he stopped on the stairs to peck Ian softly on the lips. “Thanks,” Ian said with a warm, appreciative smile, his eyes twinkling as he made eye contact with Mickey for a brief moment. “Yep,” Mickey responded as he strided into his room, quickly throwing on yesterday’s jeans and a fresh shirt, then brushing his teeth and heading back down the stairs, Yev just ahead of him.

“I can take him, if you want,” Mickey offered as he rounded the bottom of the stairs into the kitchen. “Yev’s lip pushed out slightly, most likely because he already had his mind set on riding in with Ian. Yev loved Mickey very much, but he and Ian had a special bond, which Ian believed was due, in part, to the significant role he had in Yev’s early life. And, in his heart of hearts, Ian knew he was the adult who had been there for him most consistently throughout his entire life, now that he hadn’t seen Svetlana in such a long time.

“I got it,” Ian answered, “Just get into work so we can see you for lunch!” Ian winked at Mickey as he and Yev grabbed their breakfast, Yev thanking Mickey with a big hug and “I love you, Daddy!” Ian brushed past him from behind on the way out of the kitchen, bowing his head and pressing his mouth against Mickey’s ear. “I love you, too, Daddy,” Ian added in a low, deep, sexy growl that made Mickey’s hair tingle at its roots. “Gallagher!” Mickey hissed through his teeth as he reached down to adjust his package inside his now uncomfortably snug jeans.

Mickey watched as his hot-as-fuck husband and adorable son disappeared out the front door, then quickly cleaned up the kitchen, heading out shortly thereafter, hoping for a smooth morning so he could come home for lunch, as they had tentatively planned. He did want to talk to Doc about the Power of Attorney and other paperwork Ian was now pushing to sign ASAP, but he knew how busy Doc was, between Kayla and the clinic, and didn’t want to be a pest.

Ian and Yev had a nice ride to school together, Yev going into great detail about a new assignment he had in Math class that involved finding temperatures in different parts of the world, then calculating the differences during all of the seasons. He wanted to know the name of the city where his mother lived, so he could look it up, but Ian had to tell him that he didn’t know. “You could just do Chicago,” he said, to which Yev replied, “Already did.” Ian fought with everything he had to stay quiet on the subject of Svetlana’s arrival in Boca, like he and Mickey had agreed to, but it was damn hard, given the direction their conversation had taken. Clearly, Yev wanted to feel some type of connection to his mother, however small it might be. He only hoped Yev would be happy when Svet being around became a reality.

The day went from one challenging situation to next for Ian. Once he had taken Yev to school, having to walk him in and write a note since he was late, he headed straight to Doc’s and was surprised to find Doc there waiting for him. He had a detailed set of instructions for Kayla’s care, part of which was to send him regular, hourly text updates. He seemed very ill-at-ease about leaving her in Ian’s care, or anyone’s, really. ‘He obviously loves her the way I love Mickey,’ Ian had thought as he perused the list, which had clearly been revised many times and included such
directives as “Be sure she is not left alone while awake.” Ian chuckled at that one, but understood his concern. He knew all too well that a Milkovich on the mend could often overestimate their abilities and would also rather struggle to get something on their own, than to ask for it.

Once Ian had sufficiently calmed Doc’s fears, convincing him that he could and would provide Kayla with the care she required, they left for his and Mickey’s house. The ride was uncomfortably quiet, Ian having to avoid the topic that he would have most naturally discussed with her, had Mickey not insisted that he be there. “Glad you’re coming to stay with us,” Ian finally said, awkwardly breaking the silence between them. “Me, too,” she smiled. “How are my babies?” she asked. “Yev is very excited to see you today! Mikhaila may be coming for the weekend. We have to see what plans Reesie has, and also what happens with Yev and Svetlana,” Ian explained. “Can’t wait to see both of the kids! I’d love to see Manny, too! It was so nice having them visit at the hospital. I love them so much!” she said, tearing up. “They love you, too! We all do!” Ian responded. “And how are my other babies?” she asked, looking over at Ian. “We are all fine, Mom. We just can’t wait until you’re better and we can put this all behind us,” Ian said confidently, speaking for the entire Milkovich-Martinez Clan without giving it a second thought.

Ian took great care in getting Kayla settled in at the house, bringing her every conceivable creature comfort and tending to her every need, before she even knew she had it. Once she was all set, lying comfortably in her first-floor bed, Ian sat down next to her, smiling brightly as he said, “I love you, Mom! Everything’s going according to plan, and soon I’ll be able to give you my stem cells. You are gonna get well, and we’re all gonna dance at your wedding!”

Kayla put her arms around Ian, squeezing him into her body. “You are so sweet! I couldn’t have dreamed up a better mate for my son! I love you, Ian! You’re the best thing that ever happened to him—you and the kids!” she beamed, feeling, very much like Mickey, that she and her children had been blessed beyond her wildest dreams. “No matter what happens, Ian, I’ve had a wonderful life!” she added, stroking his face softly. “And I know you’ll take good care of my babies.”

Before Ian could respond, a text from Mickey popped up on his phone: “Things are good here. Manuel, Brach and I have a conference call with Cal and Bigley at 1, so I’ll be coming for lunch early—like 11. Let me know what you and Mom want, and I’ll pick it up. See ya soon (kissy face emoji).”

“Mom, Mickey wants to know what we want for lunch. On Doc’s instructions it says…” Ian began, Kayla interrupting him, “I really want pizza. So sick of the hospital food. Please? Grant a dying woman her wish…” Kayla had blurted out what was on her mind before she even realized it, then quickly tried to recover, “I didn’t mean…” “Mom! You’re not gonna die!” Ian yelled, his eyes welling up, in spite of himself. “I’ll tell Mickey you want pizza,” he added, after taking a moment to collect himself, then reached for his phone to send Mickey a text:

“Need you here...ASAP!! Bring pizza.”
Mickey struggled to find a pizza shop that opened early enough to accommodate the pizza order Ian had put in with him. Sensing that something was ‘off’ when he received Ian’s text, he had called immediately, picking up, from the tone of Ian’s voice, that he was having a significant issue of some sort, although he seemed to be trying his best to play it off, as if everything were fine. Mickey couldn’t tell whether the problem lay with Ian himself, or possibly with his mother. Regardless, his panic button had been pushed, his brain flooded with a whole host of worst-case scenarios.

He tried texting Ian a specific question, but the response he got was simply, “JUST GET HERE!” Out of desperation, Mickey called Johnny, asking if his morning prep cooks could possibly whip up a pizza for him to take home with him, to which Johnny, detecting the uneasiness in Mickey’s voice, answered, “Of course,” even volunteering to deliver it personally, an offer Mickey, under the circumstances, was grateful to get, and happily accepted.

Mickey excused himself for his extremely early lunch, alluding to the idea that there was an emergency of some sort, involving Mom. “Go!” Manuel responded, without hesitation. “And please keep us informed,” he added, clapping Mickey on the shoulder as he turned for the door to the parking lot.

Mickey sped home, his mind racing, his heart pounding and his hands shaking. He was an absolute wreck, and had no business driving at all, in his current condition, let alone at the rate he was traveling. It wasn’t long before his erratic, speedy driving caught the attention of local law enforcement, resulting in him being pulled over. Mickey was so angry at the idea of being stopped, when he felt he needed to get home ASAP, that he got an attitude as soon as the officer approached the car. “Sir, you do…” was all the cop got out, before Mickey cut him off, “Listen, hurry up and write the ticket or whatever! I gotta get home! My family’s in fuckin’ danger!”

“What kind of danger?” the cop asked, concerned that they might be in need of his assistance. “That’s what I was goin’ to find out!!” Mickey screeched in frustration, trying his best to control his temper. “I can escort you, if there’s an emergency,” the cop offered, with an intrusive, authoritative tone. “No, we’ll be fine, just…” “Wait in your car, sir,” the cop barked, cutting him off, before he could finish.

Mickey sat in his car for the better part of 15 minutes, and was fuming mad by the time the officer returned to his window, yellow slip in hand. “Take your time on our roads. Keep Boca safe,” he said in a condescendingly official tone, as he finally handed Mickey his ticket.

“Fuckin’ asshole!!” Mickey yelled, as he put up his window, edging his car back out onto the road, the squad car following him closely, slowing his forward progress down to a virtual crawl. “What the fuck?!” Mickey muttered under his breath, as his ‘tail’ followed him nearly the entire way to his house, his total travel time, including the stop, now exceeding an hour.

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Johnny pulled up to the Milkovich house unannounced. Ian, assuming it was Mickey, wondered why he would be knocking, but went to answer the door anyway. “Johnny?!” Ian said with surprise, as he opened the door to find Johnny holding a large pizza and a bottle of Chianti. “Come on in!” Ian smiled, speaking in a hushed tone.

“Mom’s asleep,” he explained, reaching for the pizza and wine bottle, both of which he sat on the island. “Thanks for the delivery!” Ian said, a bit puzzled. “So, how are things at Frontera?” Ian
asked, making small talk, uncertain as to what, if anything, Johnny knew about the current situation with Mom. After all, he hadn’t even told Mickey much.

“Really good! Busy! Could use a second manager to focus on the bar and customer service. My kitchen manager is talented, but can’t do it all,” he began, quickly realizing, as evidenced by Ian’s vacant smile and nod, that he was providing far more detail than Ian really gave a shit about. Talking to Ian was definitely not the same as talking to Mickey or Manuel.

Normally, Ian would likely have become more engaged in the conversation, but, at present, his mind was fixated on Mom, and the conversation he and Mickey needed to have with her. In fact, he was hoping Johnny would say his goodbyes and be on his way, but didn’t want to be rude by rushing him off.

Johnny, obviously planning to wait around for Mickey’s arrival, for some reason, abruptly changed the subject, taking a seat on the couch. “So, have you heard anything from Thomas yet, regarding the, uh, the divorce?” “No, why?” Ian asked. “You will,” Johnny replied mysteriously.

Ian swallowed hard, wondering what Johnny and, indirectly, he and Doc, were responsible for that would render Kayla free of her marriage to Terry so quickly and easily. Sure, Ian hated Terry, and had wished the S.O.B. dead a million times before, but the fact that he had complained to Doc about Mickey’s plan to go to Chicago and, as a result, Doc went to Johnny, who apparently had something done about it, all without anyone mentioning anything to Mickey ---it now felt like a secret, and Ian knew all too well how Mickey would feel about it.

The two sat quietly for a few minutes, before Ian, whose curiosity was getting the best of him, finally asked Johnny, “What are we gonna hear?”

“Let’s just say, Doc and Kayla need to look over some of the menu options I have come up with for their wedding,” he said with a steely glint in his eye. “Oh, Doc talked to you?” Ian asked, hoping to absolve himself, if only in his own mind, of any culpability that would be traceable by Mickey. Johnny smiled, but said nothing. Ian returned the smile uncomfortably, still wondering what Johnny had done, but the more he thought about it, the more he began to believe it might be best that he didn’t know.

They sat in silence, once again, for what seemed, to Ian, like forever, before Johnny, at last, said, “Well, I gotta get back to Frontera to prep for lunch. Tell Mickey I’ll be in touch, and enjoy the pizza!” before he headed for the door. Ian breathed a strange sigh of relief after Johnny left, getting up from the couch to check on Kayla, who he found to be still asleep, before texting Mickey:

“Pizza’s here. Where are you?”

To which, he got no response.

Mickey pulled up outside the house, sitting for a moment to collect himself after what could only be described as an irritating, seemingly never-ending ride home. After some deep breaths and counting to ten, he opened his car door, noticing, as he stepped out, that the cop who he thought had finally found something better to do than follow him, was parking behind him and getting out of his car.

“Just checking up, sir,” he began, stopping Mickey before he could get to his front door. “I wanted to be sure your family was safe,” he continued. Mickey took another deep breath, then replied, “Look, I got it! ...s’why I’m here, okay?” The cop nodded, but continued to walk with him toward the door to his house.
“Listen, the last thing my family needs to see is some cop walkin’ up to the door with me, so…” Mickey stopped talking, mid-sentence, as Ian opened the door. “Is everything okay, sir?” the cop asked, now addressing Ian. “Yeah, our mother’s just sick,” Ian answered calmly, as Mickey stood between the two, doing his best not to flip shit on this guy. “Does she need an ambulance?” the cop asked. “No!” Mickey roared, adding, “She needs me!” Mickey walked straight toward Ian, pushing him backward so he could step inside, then shut the door unceremoniously in the cop’s face.

“Ma!” he yelled, before Ian could tell him she was in bed. “She’s sleeping, Mickey!” Ian chided him, after-the-fact. “…the fuck’s goin’ on?!” Mickey asked, lowering his voice, although he was still quite agitated. “Mickey?” Kayla’s voice wafted into the family room softly from her makeshift first-floor bedroom. “Wait!” Ian called out to Mickey, who was already headed back to see her. Mickey turned around, a look of worry replacing the anger he had initially displayed.

“First, what the fuck’s up with a cop coming to our door?” Ian questioned Mickey impatiently. “Asshole gave me a speeding ticket, then decided to follow me all the way the fuck home!” Mickey complained, some of the irritation returning to his face, Ian, on the other hand, appearing to be immediately relieved by Mickey’s explanation. “Okay, well, Mom is talking like she thinks she’s gonna die, so…” Ian’s voice trailed off, as he struggled with how to finish his sentence.

“C’mon, let’s go talk to her,” Mickey said, more calmly, taking Ian by the hand. “Wait! Help me bring the pizza in!” Ian said, pulling away from Mickey and toward the kitchen. “Naw, she can get up and eat at the island with us. It’ll be good for her to get outta bed. I got ‘er. Go ‘head and get lunch ready,” he called to Ian, who quickly set about doing just that.

Within minutes, Mickey emerged with Kayla in his arms, setting her on the couch, rather than in the kitchen, as he had planned. “Gonna have to bring the stuff in here,” he told Ian. “Says she’s not ready to sit on a stool yet,” he added. “Okay,” Ian responded, gathering as much as he could and dropping it onto the coffee table, then returning for a second trip, after which, he ran upstairs to retrieve Yev’s book.

Once everyone was sitting down and had their lunches, Mickey, much to Ian’s surprise, started the conversation, as only Mickey could. “Ma, you’re not dyin’! We need you, so stop actin’ like you ain’t gonna be here!” “Mickey, you don’t know, I could…” Kayla began, Mickey cutting her off, “Not gonna happen! Why you think Ian stopped his meds? Huh? Cuz his cells are gonna get you better, that’s why!”

Mickey was pretty much on a tirade, but Ian let him go because he was making a lot of sense. Ian also knew that, if Mom was going to listen to anyone, it would be Mickey. She knew Ian and Doc were the experts, but somehow, hearing things from Mickey made them the gospel, to her.

“You hear me?” he added, looking into her eyes with a seriousness that Ian remembered from the day he had taken off in Mickey’s car with Yevgeni. Mickey was worried about Ian, and had told him he was going to take him to a hospital to get help. Looking back on that day, Ian knew he should have just gone, but his mind wasn’t working right at the time. Recalling that incident only made Ian more set on the idea of signing the legal papers that would give Mickey permission to make medical treatment decisions for him. The last thing Ian wanted was to make any of this harder on Mickey than it already was.

Kayla nodded her head, her eyes welling up with tears, which made Mickey’s do the same, almost immediately. Ian walked behind them on the couch, throwing his arms around both of them and squeezing them tightly. “I love you guys so much!” he breathed, as he kissed each of them on the forehead.

The trio finished their lunch together, discussing everything, A to Z, good, bad and ugly, Kayla
agreeing to wait with the reading of the book, at least until after she received her transplant, and to sitting Yevgeni down, with all three of them, to explain her condition and the transplant, in whatever way Doc thought would be best.

Mickey looked at his phone to check the time, since he was sure he needed to get back to the factory soon for the conference call with Bigley. It was then that he noticed a lengthy text from Thomas, which he began to read, bringing their group discussion to an abrupt halt.

“Whatcha reading?” Ian finally asked. “Text,” Mickey replied absently, still blatantly preoccupied with its content. “From?” Ian questioned. “Thomas,” Mickey responded, pausing for another 30 seconds, which felt like an eternity to Ian, then looking up at Kayla, “Ma, he says you can get married now.” Mickey shot Ian a quick look, then said, “I gotta get goin’,” turning toward the door.

“Hey! Goodbye kiss?” Ian hollered indignantly, hoping to get a better read on Mickey by bringing him in close. “Ian, I gotta go!” Mickey said, raising his voice slightly as he turned back to give Ian a quick peck on the lips, before heading back out the door. “Oh no you don’t!” Kayla yelled, “You get back here and give that beautiful husband of yours a proper kiss! Life’s too short!”

Mickey changed direction again, lunging at Ian and planting a hot, sensuous kiss on him that left them both wanting more. “That’s more like it!” Kayla giggled, Ian nodding his head as he concentrated on willing his half-chub away. “Love you, Mick!” Ian said softly, secure in the belief that, whatever Thomas had told Mickey, his name had not been mentioned.

Mickey got into the car and immediately texted Thomas: “So where is he now?”
When the Levee Breaks

Mickey was more than a little off his game during the conference call, which was already in progress by the time he walked in, ten minutes late. He was also extremely pissed off, since the reason he was late was because that same asshole cop managed to find him again, following him all the way to the factory, which meant Mickey had to drive the speed limit, something no one, other than new tourists, did in Boca. Not only that, but now the dickhead knew Mickey’s place of business and could hover, keeping an eye on Mickey at all times. Not that he had anything to hide, thankfully, but Mickey just didn’t appreciate that kind of attention from anyone, especially the police. His attitude toward law enforcement was deeply ingrained in him, the combined result of his past experiences and his upbringing, in general.

Mickey made his apologies, and did his best to hone in on what was being discussed, but his mind kept wandering. He hadn’t received a response from Thomas, regarding Terry’s whereabouts, following Thomas’ previous message, which was quite lengthy and described Terry’s involvement in an incident at the prison. The description was fairly detailed, considering the fact that it was coming in the form of a text, but it was oddly worded, as if Thomas were sharing the ‘official’ story.

Basically put, what Mickey was reading just didn’t add up, and he felt the need to talk to Thomas, rather than text, especially since Thomas had not responded to his initial question. He had tried, briefly, to contact him by phone, but Thomas didn’t answer, and Mickey, once he discovered that he was again being followed, didn’t want to use his phone to try again.

“So let’s hear about this new proposal of yours, Mickey!” Bigley said, his brash, raspy voice booming out of the speaker, jarring Mickey back to reality. “Yeah, uh, well ya all know I’ve been wantin’ to put a Surfin’ store in Boca...I ran some financials, and they looked real good, so I checked into some properties, and found one right on the beach, real fuckin’ close to our house!” he said with as much enthusiasm as he could muster.

Manuel and Brach each chimed in, throwing their support behind Mickey and his idea. Even Bigley, a long-time frequenter of the beach at Boca, spoke in glowing terms of the opportunities this could afford the company. And before Mickey could move on to his demographic research on the customer base in Boca, Cal had greenlighted the proposal, from a logistical perspective, the group settling on a grand opening date sometime before Thanksgiving, pending the successful purchase or rental of the storefront Mickey had investigated.

Mickey was pleasantly surprised by how easily his proposal had been accepted. At least SOMETHING had gone smoothly during his crazy day. As the call wrapped up, everyone congratulating Mickey on his new enterprise, Bigley made mention of coming to see the building in question, sometime in the near future. Mickey thought it was odd, given the fact that Bigley routinely traveled to the Boca area during the winter months, in order to escape the frigid New York weather. “Really? What’s bringin’ ya to Boca this time of year?” Mickey asked curiously. “Well, Doc and Kayla’s wedding of course!” Bigley responded. “Thought you’d have it all planned by now!” he added. Mickey was stunned. ‘How did Bigley catch wind of this so quickly?’ he thought to himself, the wheels in his head spinning wildly as he struggled to maintain his composure in front of Manuel and Brach.

“Yeah, well, I guess we got some work to do,” Mickey responded, opting not to question Bigley on it in his present company. Each of the others made their closing remarks, mainly small talk, and then the call was over. Mickey excused himself to the crow’s nest, claiming that he needed to check out Svet’s accommodations to be sure everything was in order for her arrival the next evening.
Once he got upstairs and had closed the door behind him, Mickey started to pace, pulling at his hair and cursing under his breath. It was all too strange. His father gets into an altercation while on kitchen duty, resulting in severe burns and the loss of two fingers. Then somehow, Thomas just happens to stop in to see him, presumably while visiting another client, and he just signs the papers? No way!!

It wasn’t that Mickey objected to anything that had ‘happened’ to Terry. As far as he was concerned, karma is a bitch! Any remaining vestige of Mickey’s affection for Terry had been completely obliterated, once he heard that Terry had never treated his mother well, and that she had been forced into the relationship entirely, basically being raped and beaten, even when she was gravely ill. Mickey got sick to his stomach every time he thought about it.

He certainly was relieved that his mother and Doc could now be married, and all without Mickey having to travel to Chicago, which, he had believed, up until getting this news, would have, unfortunately, been necessary in order to accomplish that goal. He knew damn well this shit didn’t just ‘happen’, and felt fairly certain that, considering Bigley’s comments during the conference call, he must have been involved somehow, which begged the question: How did he even know of any of this? This was definitely not something Thomas would have shared with him, as a matter of course. “And why did he give a shit enough to get involved in something like what Thomas had described?

Mickey knew Bigley would do ANYTHING for a select few people in the world, and that he was one of them, but only because he was Ian’s husband. Ian was his golden boy, who, because of his heroic, lifesaving care of his grandson, held Bigley forever in his debt.

Mickey didn’t want to think it, yelling, “No!” back at himself for even letting his mind go there. And yet, that’s exactly what he kept returning to. ‘In whose best interest was it for this to be taken care of so quickly? Obviously Kayla and Doc would benefit most, but with her health taking such a sudden turn for the worse, Mickey felt certain that they had other, more immediate issues to address, and clearly could not have been involved.

There was only one other person, besides Mickey, himself, that wanted this issue handled, and without Mickey’s involvement. Mickey had fond memories of the lengths Ian had gone to, in order to keep him from going to Chicago to get this done. And, clearly, Ian was one person Bigley had consistently bent over backwards for.

“Damn it!” Mickey yelled. Bigley’s likely involvement wasn’t even what bothered him. Hell, he might have had to resort to requesting his assistance himself, if none of his other options ended up panning out; he acknowledged that. Mickey just detested the thought of Ian going behind his back, especially after the whole cheek-swab deception. Ian had promised, quite tearfully, never to keep anything from Mickey again. And yet, Mickey had been seeing little signs of deceit---lies by omission, such as his difficulty sleeping and middle of the night research session---things he had, up until now, dismissed as being ‘no big deal,’ or his ‘imagination’. There had definitely been Indicators that Ian was withholding bits of information from him, here and there---but this one was big!

Mickey had seen this pattern of behavior before, Ian minimizing things or omitting them entirely from conversation, as if they didn’t exist or never happened. He’d also seen the over-the-top attention to every detail, the overblown pampering he had showered upon Mickey again recently, and the mad, impassioned (and constant) sex. It was really tough to distinguish between what was Ian’s normal loving, caring, passionate self, merely reacting to a stress-filled situation, and what could be the beginnings of a manic episode.

‘This ain’t that!’ Mickey muttered, attempting to convince himself that everything was normal, or at least okay. ‘Maybe Ian was just so afraid of him leaving for Chicago that he couldn’t help himself.
That would be forgivable, right?’ Mickey’s tortured mind fought itself for over an hour, going round and round, deciding one minute to just let it go, the next, to confront him. A text interrupted his self-inflicted torment.

“Chicago Memorial” was Thomas’ return text, in answer to his earlier question. Now Mickey’s brain was on overload, his stomach churning, as he considered the reality of the situation. No way was Terry going to be moved from the CCC Medical Unit to Chicago Memorial, unless he was on death’s door, and even then, it was unlikely to happen. Bigley was behind this. Mickey was certain of it, based on his own experiences.

Mickey made a quick walk-through of Svet’s soon-to-be living quarters, then headed back downstairs, making a brief appearance on the factory floor, before heading out the back door. Once he got to his car, he made a phone call to Johnny, letting him know he’d be stopping by shortly, and needed to talk. He then sent Doc a text, “Need those papers for Ian ASAP!”

“How the hell is an inmate from CCC having reconstructive surgery anyway?” a tiny, blonde scrub nurse asked the anesthesiologist, who had, as he administered the anesthetic, just relayed to her the violent threats their patient had, only moments before, been spewing from his foul, terribly burned and disfigured mouth.

“Private pay,” he answered, “Some big wig from New York’s footing the bill. The guy must know something. I’ve never seen this kind of attention given to a prisoner before.”

“What the fuck happened to him?” the plastic surgeon asked as he walked in on his O.R. case, sight unseen, on what had been, up until half an hour before, his day off. “Not sure of the details, but one of the correctional officers said something about oil from a fryer. “And what’s going on with this?” he asked, pointing to the bloody bandage covering the inmate’s left hand. “Two fingers...on ice,” a male voice called out from the entrance to the room, handing a cooler to the circulating nurse. “All paperwork from CCC is at the CCU nurse’s station.”

“Okay then,” the surgeon began. “We better work quickly.”

Ian’s afternoon had been fairly uneventful. Kayla had been sleeping a lot, so he busied himself with laundry and cleaning, sniffing Mickey’s clothes before throwing them into the washer, the very scent of him giving Ian butterflies in his stomach. After all of their years together, Mickey still made him absolutely crazy. To Ian, Mickey was the hottest man ever to walk the earth, not to mention what a fantastic lover he was. When it came to Mickey, Ian was, and forever would be, insatiable!

Ian shivered at the mere thought of pushing himself into Mickey, feeling his delicious tightness as Mickey moved on and off him, rutting his sweet ass forcefully against Ian’s hips. It was almost as though his body was reliving it, each time he remembered one of their sessions, his flesh tingling as goosebumps formed all over his body. Every fiber of his being craved Mickey---the sight of his beautiful face, the sexy purr of his voice in his ear, the ambrosial scent of his neck as his nose pressed into it, the feel of his soft, supple skin, his muscles, his bones, grinding against his own, full of passion and want, the lavish thickness of his lips, the delicious taste of him, from head to toe---’Fuck!! How the HELL am I gonna make it through this afternoon?’ Ian thought to himself wistfully.

It was just one of those days. Mickey was so much on Ian’s mind that he thought briefly about taking a hot shower and relieving himself, but then decided against it, since Mom might need him, and he
wanted to be available to her at all times.

Ian distracted himself with a search of the kitchen, looking for dinner ideas. He finally settled on Turkey Devonshire, which he began preparing, then noticed he had missed a call from Shawn’s cell. There was a voicemail, which Ian listened to immediately, fearing that he might be cancelling his plans to come and help with Kayla.

Shawn spoke in a hushed tone, signaling to Ian that he was about to share some privileged, or at least private information. “Ian,” he began in little more than a whisper, “Your father-in-law is here, having his face rebuilt and his fingers reattached. I’m looking at his paperwork. Someone definitely wanted to fuck him up pretty bad. Got a stack of papers here, too, all signed by him. Some of them have Kayla’s signature on them. Weird! You know anything? Call or text when you can. Hope all’s well,” after which the message ended abruptly.

All of Ian’s blood rushed to his head, like water crashing through a broken dam, instantly making him dizzy, downright woozy. He reached out for the island to try and catch himself...
Connecting the Dots

Mickey sped up to the curbside of Sur de la Frontera, finally able to let his hair down and hit the gas pedal, having managed to travel undetected by his new ‘follower’. He slammed on the brakes, his vintage black Mercedes stopping on a dime, then hopped out, leaving the door open for the valet. He walked straight in, past the host, seating himself at the bar. “I’ll have a shot of Jack and a Corona. And tell Johnny I’m here,” he said to the bartender, who was also the server for the front room, and was quite busy, considering it was well past lunchtime, but not even close to dinner.

Mickey downed his first shot immediately, ordering a second shortly thereafter, polishing off his first beer following his second shot, before Johnny finally approached him, “Mickey! How ya doin’? I’ve got a few menu options I’ve been working on, if you’d like to see them, based them on what your mother and Doc both like to eat here,” he said with a smile. “W-Wait! I need to know some shit, before I’m ready to look at anything,” Mickey said, a note of bewildered agitation in his voice.

“Yeah? What d’ya need to know?” Johnny asked, his smile shrinking away in response to Mickey’s saltiness. “How is it that my Ma is able to get married now? Thomas sent me a text, givin’ me a story about my dad gettin’ into it with some guys in the kitchen at County, and that Thomas was there that day, on another case, and got him to sign the papers. And now he’s at Chicago Memorial? What the fuck? Too many coincidences, Johnny. I need to know how this really went down, and what’s gettin’ done to protect my Mom,” Mickey snorted, clearly becoming more annoyed as he described what he believed to be a secretly-planned, carefully-orchestrated operation, that was now being passed off as something that just ‘happened’.

“Mickey…” Johnny began, pausing to gather his thoughts, then continuing, “I assumed you knew all about this by now. When Doc came to me, he said…’ ‘Wait…Doc? He’s the one who set this thing in motion?’ Mickey asked. He could hardly believe what he had just heard. Doc didn’t seem the type to sign off on violence of any kind and, furthermore, he had been so busy with Kayla and the clinic, Mickey had trouble believing this would have been anywhere near the top of his list.

“Yeah, he didn’t want you concerning yourself with it. You’re dealing with enough, having your mom at your place, Ian having to change his meds around, and you guys got Yev’s mother comin’, too,” Johnny replied, listing off a handful of the many stressors in Mickey’s life, currently. “Ian tell you all this?” Mickey asked. “No, Doc did. Mickey—and this stays between you and me—Doc’s real worried now that Ian’s Kayla’s only donor option. Too much goin’ on for him…what, with all the things I just mentioned. If he loses it, Kayla doesn’t get her transplant. Mick, we couldn’t have you taking off for Chicago to handle this right now,” Johnny tried to explain.

“So, does Ian know all this?” Mickey asked. “I don’t know what he knows. Like I say, I thought you both knew, up until you got here askin’ questions. And at this point, I’d like not to talk further on the subject,” Johnny answered, looking over his shoulder at the bartender.

“Yeah, well, this ain’t over,” Mickey piped up, in spite of Johnny’s request that he drop it. “I wanna know details, and I wanna know how this ain’t a risk to Ma and Doc. My fuckin’ dad has to know who…” Johnny glared a him, prompting him to stop mid-sentence.

Mickey stood up abruptly, nearly knocking his bar stool over. “See ya, Johnny,” he said in a short, clipped voice, throwing a wad of cash on the bar in front of him and guzzling the last of his beer. Mickey strided out the front door in a huff. “I need my fuckin’ car!” he barked nastily at the valet, who scurried away promptly.

While Mickey was waiting for his car, his phone vibrated against his hip, where he had it clipped to
his belt. He grabbed for it hastily, thinking it was a phone call, but it was only a text, from Doc:

“I can bring Ian’s papers by after the clinic closes. I am planning to come to visit your mother.”

Mickey quickly texted back, “I need to talk to you. Just you.”

The valet pulled Mickey’s car up, Mickey handing him a tip with an attitude, then taking off, once again going well over the speed limit. He was frustrated, having, once more, gotten only part of the story. At least he knew for sure now that Johnny was involved, which meant Bigley had definitely been the one to pull strings to get the asshole to Chicago Memorial, something he would only have done if someone asked him to. He still wasn’t sure how all this fit together, but he was damn sure he was going to find out.

His phone buzzed again, and Mickey looked down to read the next text from Doc. “Slowing down here. Stop by, and we’ll talk. Reesie is here, and can handle patients.”

Mickey waited until he got to a stop sign, then texted, “Already on way,” to which Doc replied, “See you soon.”

By the time Mickey arrived at the clinic, Reesie was ping-ponging between the two remaining patients, and stopped in the hallway to talk to Mickey. “Hey, how’s it going?” she asked. The two hadn’t really communicated beyond basic childcare discussions since the Mother’s Day brunch. “Kinda nuts, actually,” he answered honestly. “Really? Anything I can do to help?” she asked kindly. “You been doin’ enough. Sorry Ian and I haven’t been quite as involved with Mik lately. Mom’s really been keepin’ us busy,” he explained.

“Hey, Mikhaila and I were thinking of coming to Yev’s game tonight, so, if you want, I could pick him up from school and take him, if that would help,” she offered. “Sounds good,” Mickey answered, thinking some time alone to talk to Ian and have him sign papers would be beneficial, especially since he knew that his meeting with Doc would be likely open up a fresh can of worms. “Thing is,” Mickey continued, “His shirt, bat and glove are at my house.” “We’ll figure something out. Just let me get him after school and I’ll be in touch,” Reesie insisted. “Okay,” Mickey reluctantly agreed, knowing he and Ian should spend some time with Yev before Svetlana arrived, but also feeling the need to sort things out, in light of this news about his father.

“Mickey!” Doc called out from down the hall, “Let’s talk in my office.” “I’ll pick Yev up from school and text ya about his stuff,” Reesie called after Mickey as he walked toward Doc’s office. “Thanks!” Mickey replied, before walking in and sitting down with Doc.

“Here are papers for Ian to sign. You can take them with you, since you’re here. The Power of Attorney is on top. The other one is an Admission paper from the Veracruz State Mental Health Hospital in Mexico City. This is more or less for your benefit, since, as I told you before, if he goes in voluntarily, he can sign this now or then, but he can also revoke it. The best way to go, if a situation arises, is definitely for you to invoke the Power of Attorney, after an initial commitment by the State,” Doc explained, pausing to take a breath.

“So basically, I gotta get someone at the hospital to agree he needs involuntary treatment, before I can make him go and stay?” Mickey asked, hoping he understood what, to him, was very confusing. “Yes,” Doc answered, “and it can be tough, if he decides to fight you on it.” “Well, hopefully he doesn’t,” Mickey sighed, looking dejected.

“Okay, Mickey, I gotta ask, is this sudden rush for the papers because you or Ian thinks he is on the verge of a relapse? Because if that’s the case, I need to know,” Doc said assertively. Mickey spun his wedding band on his finger nervously. “I don’t know what the fuck to think. He’s definitely doin’
some stuff that he did before... like when I think he started to be manic for the first time, when we were kids,” Mickey began to explain hesitantly.

“Such as?” Doc asked, a worry line pressed into his forehead, just above the bridge of his nose. “Like, not sleepin’ well...and tryin’ a keep that from me. An’ wantin’ sex, even more than usual, like I said before. And, well, I don’t know, but I think...” Mickey stopped talking suddenly, searching for the right way to bring up the whole incident involving his father and the divorce.

He had planned to go into the clinic, guns blazing, to give Doc hell for his involvement in something he thought could very well endanger his mother, but now, after a nice conversation with Reesie and the supportive, helpful way Doc had approached the legal paperwork, and everything else, really, he felt remarkably calm, disarmed by the love and compassion that had been shown him.

“Can ya just please tell me somethin’?” Mickey interrupted himself, after a brief pause, his pulse suddenly beginning to pound through his body like rapids through a narrow inlet. “What is it, Mickey?” Doc asked, looking even more concerned than before, if that were even possible.

“Look...I...I pretty much know... you and Johnny...and I’m damn sure Bigley’s involved...all have somethin’ to do with the story I got from Thomas today...about my dad,” Mickey stammered, rising from his seat to pace, as he twisted his ring, now in more of a back and forth motion on his finger. “Was...was...did...did...Ian ask Bigley to do all this shit? And I’m not askin’ cuz I’m upset that someone got to my dad. Fucker deserves it! I’m just tryn’...tryin’ to understand...I know that Bigley would...” Mickey stopped talking, stopped pacing, and just stared at Doc, his eyes pleading for an answer, for his help in understanding what it was he was trying, with so much difficulty, to explain.

“Mickey, if you’re looking for someone to blame, it’s me,” Doc said quietly. All Ian is guilty of is answering me truthfully when I questioned him about his reasoning for asking me a bunch of medical questions that I was sure he knew the answer to. It came out through our conversation, that he wanted nothing more than to be Kayla’s donor...to save her life. But he’s scared Mickey...to death, of the same thing you are. He wants to stay mentally healthy, but all the stress...what, with the new meds, which are set for an increase tomorrow, by the way, Svetlana coming, Kayla staying with you, and you planning to leave for Chicago in the middle of it all...it was just too much...” Doc stopped, getting up from his seat to hug Mickey, who, at this point, looked as if he might break down.

“Mickey,” Doc continued, as he embraced him, as if he were his own son, “I love your mother, and your whole family. I’m not gonna stop until I’ve done everything I can to make her well. You and Ian have already made a tremendous sacrifice for us. I wasn’t going to stand by and watch your relationship suffer unnecessarily, because of me.” Doc pulled away suddenly, turning his back to Mickey, his body shaking as he let go of the pressure and pain that had been building up in him for weeks. “We gotta take care of them, Mickey,” he said softly, as he fought to regain his composure.

“Johnny talk to you about this? I mean, give you any details?” Mickey proceeded with his questioning, dismissing his concern about Ian’s prospective involvement, and refocusing on his desire to know everything that happened, why it was handled the way it was, and what the end result of it all was going to be, especially pertaining to the ultimate safety of his mother.

“No, and I’m not sure he has all the details yet. This all just happened, and it seems like it was complicated. Sorry I don’t know more, Mick. But what I do know, is that it was all done for the family,” Doc said, emphasizing the word, ‘family’, as he turned to face Mickey, once again, looking him in the eye as he continued,

“And whatever happens, I’m marrying your mother, and we want you and Ian to be there, happy, healthy, and TOGETHER! I love you both. You’re like the sons I never had. You mean the world to
me, and to your mom. There’s not a day that goes by when she doesn’t tell me how wonderful her life is, and how much it has meant to her to be with her children and grandchildren. And you, Mickey...you and Ian are extra special to her. I can’t even put into words the joy that you being happy with Ian brings her.”

“Thanks, Doc,” Mickey said in a low voice. “Gonna go home and see ‘em.” “Okay,” Doc responded, “if your mom’s up to it, I’d like to take her out for dinner. I know she probably won’t want to go, but I gotta try. I just want her to enjoy each day as much as she can. Maybe I can bribe her with going to Yev’s game. She already mentioned wanting to see him play again.”

“Good luck, Doc! I’ll see ya at the house. Gonna try to put this shit outta my mind until we get all the info,” Mickey called back to him from the doorway, as he moved swiftly, suddenly desperate to get home to Ian and his mother. He made a mad dash for the clinic door, jogging to his car, and taking off as soon as he got in.

Mickey was making good time, on his way home, when he caught sight of his new stalker, that same cop who had now followed him twice before, who had turned out from a side street and begun to tail him AGAIN. Mickey slowed down, trying to remain calm. He knew that an interaction with this joker today would not be at all positive, and, the way he had been feeling, on and off, could easily turn ugly and land him in jail.

Finally, after a drive that was nearly double his normal commute, Mickey arrived at home, the cop having turned off a block beforehand, thankfully, allowing Mickey to avoid what would surely have been an unpleasant confrontation. He raced in the front door, calling out, “Hey, I'm home!” No one answered. He headed back toward his mother’s bed, finding her sleeping comfortably.

He kissed her forehead lightly, then ran up the stairs to find his husband. “Ian!” he called out, opening their bedroom door. No answer. He checked the bathroom. No Ian. He ran to both other bedrooms. No Ian.

Mickey ran back down the stairs, yelling, “Ian!” As he rounded the bottom, tearing through the kitchen, he stopped short as he came upon Ian, lying behind the island, unconscious, dinner ingredients strewn about the floor around him. “Ian!” Mickey screamed in desperation, kneeling down over him, tapping his left cheek lightly with his shaking hand, Ian’s right cheek stained with blood that had dripped from an open wound on his forehead. As Mickey continued to jostle Ian around in a panicked effort to rouse him, Ian’s eyes finally blinked open slowly. “Sorry, Mick…” he mumbled.

Mickey carried Ian over to the couch, depositing him in a seated position, then taking his phone out to call Doc. “You on your way here?” Mickey began the conversation. “Hurry! Need your help with Ian. He fell or somethin’. Need ya to check him out,” Mickey pleaded as he turned toward Ian to get a second look at the cut on his head. “Yeah, he hit it on something...Yeah, a little bit, but not bad. Yeah...okay...I will. Thanks!” Mickey said, ending the call and getting up to put some ice in a towel, like Doc had suggested.

“Here. Can ya hold this on your head? Doc’ll be here soon,” Mickey said, putting the towel-wrapped ice on Ian’s wound, Ian moving his own hand up to hold it. Mickey nuzzled his nose against Ian’s temple, “I love you,” he breathed into his ear. Ian closed his eyes to hide his tears, but one managed to escape, rolling down from under his eyelid, over his blood-stained cheek.

Mickey ran to the kitchen, moistening a paper towel with warm water, then wiping at the blood, and now tears, on Ian’s face. The sound of the front door opening got both men’s attention, Doc rushing in toward Ian, then leaning down to look into his eyes. He pulled his pen light out of his lab-coat pocket, quickly checking his pupils. “Equal and reactive,” he muttered, reaching for the bloody, ice-filled towel. He removed it momentarily, investigating the cut that lay beneath. Might want to put some stitches in that,” he proposed, Ian immediately shaking his head ‘no’. “We can just run to the clinic, and I’ll do it real quick,” Doc proposed, appealing to Mickey with a look that said, “Help me out here!”

“Ian, let’s just do this. Doc knows what’s best,” Mickey spoke gently, surprising Doc, who’d never seen him that soft in all the years he’d known him. He couldn’t help but smile, as Ian nodded his assent, and began, with Mickey’s help, to stand up. “What about Mom?” Ian asked in a panic. “I’m gonna bring her with us,” Doc announced, surprising both Ian and Mickey with his statement. “Put him in the car and we’ll be right out.”

“Okay…” Mickey answered, shrugging his shoulders in disbelief. He wrapped his arm firmly around Ian’s waist and walked him carefully toward the front door. Doc opened the door for them, then headed for Kayla’s bed. Her eyes fluttered open as he approached her. “Michael!” she beamed, her face brightening. “Kayla, I want to help you get dressed. We need to take Ian to the clinic for some stitches,” he said calmly. “Oh my God! Is he okay?” she asked, raising her voice in panic. “He will be, but I don’t want to leave you alone, and he seems spooked, like he needs Mickey there with him,” Doc explained. “What happened?” she asked, slowly shifting her body to dangle her feet over the edge of the bed. “I don’t really know, but I want to get going,” he responded, reaching for a pair of sweatpants that were folded on the side-table, next to her. He helped her put them on, supporting her back with one hand, steadying her as they worked together to get the pants on, Doc scooping up a pair of flip-flops and tucking them into his lab coat. He then hoisted her up into his arms briskly, Kayla letting out a squeal and grinning like a schoolgirl. “You are everything to me!” Doc said, smiling down at her thin, pale, yet strikingly beautiful face. Her bright blue eyes connected with his, drawing him in. “I love you, Michael,” she said softly, as he kissed her tenderly.

Doc moved swiftly toward the door, which he had left open, then out to the car, Mickey having
opened the back, passenger-side door for them. “Ian,” Kayla began, her voice strained with worry, “Are you alright, honey?” “He’s gonna be fine, Ma,” Mickey answered, tracing tiny circles onto Ian’s thigh with his index finger, as he pulled away from the house. Ian sighed deeply, relaxing into his seat, Mickey calming him, as only he could.

Fortunately, Mickey’s new ‘friend’ had seen fit to allow him to drive unfollowed this time, so they arrived at the clinic fairly quickly. Doc wasted no time in unlocking the clinic door, then running back to the car to lift Kayla out and carry her in, sitting her down in a soft chair in Exam Room 1. He scrubbed his hands, then waited for Mickey to help Ian in, before turning his back to Kayla, in order to collect the needed supplies from the cabinets.

“Elevate his head,” Doc commanded, as Mickey helped Ian onto the exam table. Mickey raised the end of the table, staring down into Ian’s beautifully sad green eyes. “Mickey, I…” Ian began, Mickey pressing his finger up to Ian’s lips. “Shhhh,” he murmured, reaching for Ian’s hand and gripping it tightly, as Doc approached him with a syringe, needle and thread.

“How about if I take you home for a nice bath, then we can go get your hair done! We can grab some sandwiches after…to take to the game. Please, Kay? I really think you need to get out a bit,” Doc was begging now, and she couldn’t resist him. “Okay…okay, but I’m missing a lot of hair,” she grinned at him, as if she were sixteen. Even Mickey couldn’t help but crack a smile at the sight of his mother behaving this way. “We have a ball hat that matches Yev’s,” Mickey suggested, trying to help Doc out. “We’ll figure something out,” Doc promised.

Doc made fairly quick work of suturing Ian’s cut, while also taking care to do a quality job, so his scarring would be as minimal as possible. “Thanks, Doc,” Ian smiled up at him, as soon as he had finished. “You’re most welcome, Ian,” Doc responded, as Mickey moved in for a sweet kiss that was just steamy enough to make his mother blush and giggle happily.

“Ian had an equal part in making the kiss what it was, capitalizing on the opportunity to bond with Mickey, to feel his love one last time before having to share the details of what he considered to be his responsibility for all that had happened, concerning Terry. He truly feared and dreaded Mickey’s reaction, so he figured at least he’d have this moment to remember.

Mickey helped Ian down from the exam table, ushering him out to the car, Doc and Kayla following shortly thereafter. Doc took a few minutes to clean up and lock up, after situating Kayla in the backseat of the car. “Ian, are you going to tell us what happened now?” Kayla asked, definitely letting her concern and curiosity get the best of her.

“I don’t know,” Ian started off, getting Mickey’s attention right away. “One minute I’m fixing
dinner, the next, I’m on the kitchen floor looking up at Mickey,” he finished. Mickey glanced over at Ian’s face, knowing, just from the little bit that Ian had tried to communicate with him already, that there was more to it than that. Doc hopped into the car, and that was the end of the conversation, Doc setting the stage for his and Kayla’s evening together as he described all they were going to do, starting with a bath back at the house.

“Reesie’s gonna take Yev to his game, but he needs his stuff. Think ya could get it to him before the game starts?” Mickey asked. “Sure,” Doc answered without hesitation. “How about if you bring what you need, and you can get a bath at my place, after we drop Yev’s things at Reesie’s?” Doc suggested to Kayla with a devilish grin. “That’s fine,” she replied. “Just need some decent clothes to wear.” “Ma, you can wear one of our team shirts,” Mickey interjected. “Yeah! They’re both clean. Just washed them,” Ian added.

As Mickey pulled up to the house, Doc jumped out of the car, circling around to the other side to grab Kayla, who he carried to the door, Mickey leaving Ian in the car and racing up to open the door for them. When he got back to the car for Ian, he said, “Look at me,” Ian obeying readily. “I know you got somethin’ on your mind...somethin’ you gotta tell me, but you don’t wanna...Ian, I fuckin’ know you...” Mickey paused, his eyes scanning Ian’s face, taking in every captivating detail, including the bandage that now adorned his forehead.

Mickey frowned, then continued, weighing his words carefully, “You’re gonna tell me, as soon as Mom and Doc leave, whatever has you so fuckin’ bugged---and I have an idea what it is---but I need ya to know that, no matter what you tell me, I ain’t gonna be pissed, at least not at you. This shit ain’t your fault, okay? It’s not! I never shoulda even considered leavin’ you to go to Chicago right now.”

Mickey helped Ian out of the car and pulled him by the waist into his own body, so they were side by side, as he guided Ian into the house. “You hear me?” Mickey asked, raising his voice to get a response. Ian nodded his head, a forlorn look still imprinted on his face. Gonna run you a bath, and you’re gonna relax,” Mickey commanded forcefully, as he walked behind Ian on the stairs, holding him at the waist.

Mickey helped Ian onto the bed, then started a bath, before heading to Yev’s room to get his baseball gear. He doubled back to check on Ian, who was still lying on the bed, then grabbed the shirt and hat he had offered his mother to wear. His arms overflowing with baseball stuff, Mickey descended the stairs. “Can I put this in your car for you guys?” he asked. “Yes, thank you, Mickey. And we’re going to head out. I know you and Ian need to talk. This will give you the chance,” Doc responded with a wink, “Ready, Kayla?” he called back to her. “Yes,” she answered, stepping out into the kitchen on her own, carrying a small travel bag, which Doc immediately removed from her hand, gripping it with one hand, her waist with the other.

“Thanks, Doc...for everything,” Mickey said sincerely. “Have fun, Mom!” he added, closing the door behind them, then running up the stairs to shut off the tub water, before it got too full. Ian was still lying on the bed, his eyes closed, the bandage, once again, getting Mickey in the gut, like someone had just punched him. He absolutely hated seeing Ian hurt or in pain. He walked over, sitting on the bed next to Ian. “You too tired to talk?” he asked, his voice barely more than a whisper. “No,” Ian replied. “I’m never too tired for you, Mick.”

Mickey could feel a lump forming in his throat. He’d heard those words come out of Ian’s mouth a hundred times before, but, tonight, they took on a new meaning. Clearly, there was nothing Ian wouldn’t endure for him, and that hurt like a motherfucker. Not because he was so incredibly loyal, but because Mickey had, up until today, not fully understood all that Ian was going through for Kayla. He had been insensitive, and he needed to let Ian know that he got it now---that he appreciated and loved him all the more for it, if that was possible.
“You wanna go sit in the tub? I’ll help you,” Mickey offered, removing Ian’s shoes, socks and pants. “Sure,” Ian answered, a sexy smile spreading across his face, as Mickey’s hand grazed his cock while he was undressing him. Mickey sat him up, carefully pulling at the neck of his shirt, stretching it so it would fit over Ian’s head without touching his bandage. Once he had all of Ian’s clothes off, he removed his own, becoming hard-pressed to move him to the tub, wanting instead to pleasure Ian in the manner of his choosing, right then and there.

Mickey resisted the urge, helping Ian up, then walking him over to the tub, holding onto him as he lowered himself in. “Dizzy?” he asked. “Nah,” Ian mumbled, reaching for Mickey as he stepped into the tub. “Wait!” Ian called out suddenly. “Get my phone! It’s important!” he continued, having remembered the message he had received from Shawn. Seeing as Mickey said he wasn’t going to be mad at him, and that none of what happened was his fault, he figured he might as well play the message back for Mickey. Then they could call Shawn back together.

Mickey stepped back out of the tub. “Where is it?” he asked. “I don’t know,” Ian responded with a perplexed look, “Check the kitchen.” In less than a minute, Mickey came charging up the stairs, taking two at a time. “Got it! And you got five missed calls...from Shawn. And a text,” Mickey yelled.

“What does the text say?” Ian asked, as Mickey’s sexy-as-fuck, naked ass sauntered over to the tub, phone in hand. “Says, ‘Fuck, Ian! Call me back! It’s important!’”
Ian’s face was filled with terror. “M-Mick, I wanted the phone cuz...cuz I wanted you to hear the earlier message I got from him, which is the last thing I remember doing, before I woke up with you staring down at me on the kitchen floor,” Ian explained nervously. “What? So you sayin’ you passed out cuz of what he said?” Mickey asked in disbelief. “I...I don’t know,” Ian answered, his brain still fuzzy on the details.

“Alright, let’s hear it!” Mickey said, his voice rising in volume, startling Ian a bit. Ian played back the message, the details beginning to come back to him, as he listened. “Okay, so Shawn must know more now. Call him back,” Mickey barked. Ian hit ‘Send’, waiting nervously for Shawn to pick up. Who knows what news they were about to get?

“Ian! He’s here! And man is he fucked up! They had to do grafts on the lower half of his face and neck---and his nose and lips were literally burned off!” Shawn began, Ian, his hand shaking, struggling to keep the phone from dropping into the tub. Mickey looked down, staying deathly quiet, while Ian’s gaze shifted over to him, gauging his reaction.

“Ian...Are you there?” Shawn asked. “Yeah...uh...any details on how this happened?” Ian questioned. “Nope. No incident report included. Weird! Does Mickey know?” Shawn questioned tentatively. “Yeah, Mickey knows,” Mickey piped up. “Hey Mickey! How are you?” Shawn politely addressed Mickey, hoping he hadn’t offended him in his description of Terry. “I’m good. Just tryin’ a make sense of all this shit, is all,” Mickey responded calmly, putting both Shawn and Ian at ease.

Shawn went on to fill Mickey and Ian in on what little he had discovered since the voicemail he had left for Ian earlier. Terry was going to require two weeks for the grafts to heal, before he would be able to have his nose and lips rebuilt, which was also going to be a process. Terry was easily looking at the better part of a year in total, including multiple surgeries that would need to be spread out over time, in order to allow for proper healing in between. Shawn assumed that he would be sent back to the Medical Unit at CCC, once he was stable enough to be transported, and kept there to heal, until he was ready for his next surgery, but he was only guessing, never having seen a case like this come through before.

Terry’s surgery was performed by one of the best plastic surgeons in Chicago, which baffled Shawn, since most prisoners had State insurance. In fact, the last time he’d seen a private pay situation like Terry’s turned out to be, was when Mickey was there for his E Coli complications. And, as was the case with Mickey’s treatment, the guarantor listed for billing was none other than Bruno Bigley of Bigley Enterprises.

“Why the fuck would Bigley pay to fix my fuckin’ Dad up?” Mickey asked incredulously. “That’s what I was wondering,” Shawn began, “Has anyone on your end said anything to...”

“Hey, Shawn, we gotta go. Talk to ya later,” Mickey cut Shawn off, mid-sentence, then abruptly ended the call. “We’re done talkin’ to him on your phone, Ian. Gonna use a drop phone from now on. Somethin’ ain’t right, and I don’t wanna talk to anyone else ‘til I hear from Johnny,” Mickey said in a solemn tone. “Okay...” Ian responded tensely.

Mickey sighed deeply, obviously terribly troubled by what he had just learned. Between Shawn’s initial message and the conversation they’d just had, he was worried about the safety of his family, and had serious questions as to the decisions and motives of people who had been his closest friends and business associates for nearly eight years.
Ian, while relieved that Mickey wasn’t blaming him for any of this, was still, in his own mind, blaming himself. Had he not had that conversation with Doc about not wanting Mickey to leave for Chicago, none of this would have happened, or so he thought. He wanted to tell Mickey he was sorry, that he was to blame for everything, and let the chips fall where they may, but he knew Mickey was already questioning the loyalty of many people close to him, and he didn’t want to add himself to that list—for Mickey’s sake.

“Mick?” Ian cooed into Mickey’s ear. “Hmm?” Mickey responded absently, his mind still clearly a million miles away from the jacuzzi bath he currently shared with his husband. Ian gripped Mickey’s chin between his thumb and index finger, turning Mickey’s face toward his own, “There’s nothing you can do right now, and I...” Ian paused, reading Mickey’s mind as he locked eyes with him. “Oh, there’s somethin’ I can do,” Mickey growled, Ian’s regretful, frightened eyes and quivering lower lip luring him in, a fire igniting inside Mickey, burning hotter by the second.

Mickey captured Ian’s lips between his own, drawing them into his mouth, feasting on them voraciously. Ian pulled Mickey’s face in tighter to his own, slipping his tongue into Mickey’s eager mouth, tasting him, inhaling him, savoring each and every sensation, movement, reaction, as the two ravenously partook of one another, each swallowing the passion-filled moans of his mate, exploring his body, both of them experts in the art of titillating and torturing the other.

“Whoa!” Mickey exclaimed, “Your head, man.” The last thing Mickey wanted to do was open up Ian’s wound, doing some crazy shit, but Ian was all over it, moving to sit on top of Mickey, then grinding himself on him as they continued to literally devour each other’s faces. Mickey was sure their heads were going to collide and things would end badly. “Gallagher!” he yelled, pulling his face away to look at Ian, “Lemme get ya to the bed.”

Ian stared back at Mickey, his eyes so filled with lustful desire that Mickey nearly relented, but instead, he stood up in the tub, Ian’s arms and legs wrapped snugly around him, and carried Ian’s soaking wet, trembling body over to the bed, lying him down gently, then running for a towel to dry them both off.

“Mickey,” Ian breathed, sitting up to reach for Mickey’s waist. “Here,” Mickey responded, stacking all of their bed pillows behind Ian’s head and back, so he could sit in a semi-reclined position, as he knew from Doc, was better than having Ian lay flat. He then straddled Ian, kissing him softly, licking and sucking at his lips sensually as he brushed his package lightly over Ian’s. Mickey could feel Ian pressing his hips and swollen cock impatiently up against his ass cheeks, as he moved over him. “Don’t fuckin’ move,” Mickey commanded, “Just close your eyes and fuckin’ relax.”

Mickey watched as Ian obliged him, stopping his body, mid-thrust, his eyelids closing, his beautifully curled lashes adorning the skin beneath them exquisitely. “Damn, you’re gorgeous, Gallagher!” Mickey breathed as he gradually increased the friction between them, all the while enticing Ian with his gifted tongue and supple lips. Ian moaned softly, fighting to resist his craving for even more substantial contact with Mickey, who was taking his sweet time, despite both of their cocks being painfully erect.

Finally, in a moment of weakness, Mickey reached for the coconut oil, pulling himself away from Ian so he could prep himself. Damn! He wanted Ian so fucking bad, he could taste it. He didn’t want Ian to overexert himself, yet he knew how badly Ian wanted it, so he resolved to do it all for him, trying his best to minimize the need for Ian to move.

Mickey slid down the bed, fingering his own asshole, while simultaneously taking Ian, bit by bit into his hungry mouth, sucking him off fervently, Ian moaning and thrusting his hips upward in desperation. “Stay still!!” Mickey muttered, his voice muffled by the giant cock that was in his
mouth. Ian reacted, quieting his body, and allowing Mickey complete control over his pleasure. Mickey tongued Ian’s slit relentlessly, while ringing the head of Ian’s penis with his lush lips, sucking hard.

“Fuck!!” Ian screamed. Mickey knew he had Ian where he wanted him, and he enjoyed pushing his limits, just as Ian did his. “Want you, Mick,” Ian begged, Mickey responding by removing his fingers from his own asshole and beginning to massage Ian’s, a barely audible chuckle rumbling from deep within Mickey’s throat.

“Don’t move,” Mickey reminded Ian, as he lifted his head, pulling his mouth off Ian’s swollen cock. He separated Ian’s legs, then pulled his ass cheeks open, licking Ian from sack to hole, then swirling his tongue around and over it, as he grasped Ian’s mammoth manhood with both hands, massaging it slowly, teasingly, with a light touch that had Ian groaning in ecstatic misery. “Mick...Fuck!” he panted, the recurring image of himself flipping Mickey over and slamming into him, playing on continuous loop in his tortured, one-track mind.

Once Ian could no longer remain still, Mickey moved himself back up the bed, straddling him once again, his ass hovering, just inches above Ian’s rock-hard cock. He lowered himself onto Ian, parting his cheeks to begin the process of finessing Ian’s substantial shaft into his tight opening. Bit by bit, he took more, moving so painstakingly slow that Ian cried out in frustration, “Mickey! Damn it!”

Mickey smiled down at his man, watching as Ian’s last remaining shred of composure drained from his pleading face. Mickey continued to slowly work himself further down Ian’s pole, finally bottoming out and rocking slowly against Ian’s hips. Mickey’s pulse was vibrating through him, his entire body electrified, the sensation of Ian inside him lighting up his every nerve ending like a fucking Christmas Tree.

“Ian,” Mickey moaned as he continued to ride him just right. “So...fucking...good...” Ian whispered between his parted lips as he countered Mickey’s every move, thrusting upward at Mickey’s easy pace, their bodies colliding in the most deliciously exhilarating way.

The moans and groans that emanated from both men rivaled any from their past sessions, in both number and intensity, the sweet sounds of their arousal stoking the mad desire each felt for the other. “Slow down,” Mickey growled whenever Ian tried to hasten their pace.

“Don’t,” Mickey warned, each time Ian grasped his hips in desperation. “Wanna do this forever...watch you...feel you wantin’ me...so fuckin’ sexy...Ian...Ian.” Mickey babbled as he rode Ian so slowly, deliberately, squeezed him so tight, staving off his release, Ian imploring him silently with his smouldering green eyes to fuck him, harder, faster—-but it was no use. Ian reached for the coconut oil, dipping his long fingers into it, then wrapping them snugly around Mickey’s already-sticky, enormously inflamed cock, stroking it at the same languid rate that Mickey was fucking him. Mickey stared down into Ian’s eyes lustfully, Ian returning the favor, both pairs of eyes non-verbally communicating what they both understood, and needn’t ever say aloud. “I love you, body and soul, more than anything...and this is the most incredible feeling in the fucking world!”

The couple looked into each other’s eyes—-each other’s souls—-as their lovemaking gradually reached its climax, chills and goosebumps engulfing their shivering bodies, their slow, shuddering orgasms overtaking them with an unparalleled intensity, washing every last remnant of stress, worry and despair away, and replacing it with pure joy, tingling satisfaction, and all-consuming love.

Mickey’s exhausted frame collapsed atop Ian’s, Ian kissing the top of Mickey’s head as it rested, motionless, on his chest. “Mick, I have no words. Fuck!!” Ian said breathlessly, completely
overwhelmed, emotionally, and tapped out, physically, by their divine experience. Mickey grinned. He knew he’d truly outdone himself, and that Ian was beyond satisfied.

The pair remained in that position, dozing off, then waking to kiss and hold each other, before dozing off again, neither mentioning any of the stressors that had recently taken their lives hostage. The evening was just too perfect to tarnish with even the smallest bit of negativity.

Mickey grabbed for his phone, checking the time, as he heard the door open downstairs. “Daddy Ian! Daddy! We won!! Where are you? I scored a run today!” Yev’s voice carried through the house. “Be right down,” Mickey answered, smiling over at Ian as he rolled to his side. He rose from the bed, throwing his robe on, then moving toward the door. “I got this. Stay here and rest. I’ll bring ya some dinner in a few…” he said softly, noticing that he had missed a call from Johnny.

As soon as Mickey disappeared out the door, Ian sat up, muttering, “Like fuck, you’re leaving me up here without ya, Mick!” reaching for his own robe as he forced himself up off the bed. Ian trundled down the hall, toward the stairs.
The Devil's in the Details

“Grandma doesn’t feel good! Doc tried calling Daddy Ian. He took her home with him. He left a message,” Yev immediately began to explain. “Okay, you hungry?” Mickey asked, opening the fridge in search of something he could quickly put together for dinner. “No, me and Mik had Mac ‘n Cheese!” he answered with a grin that matched Mickey’s to a tee. “Homework?” Mickey questioned. “Done!” Yev replied, still beaming. “Okay, then, why don’t ya get your shower, while I make a phone call and some dinner for Ian, then we can hang out for a while,” Mickey suggested, smiling back at his son.

“I wanna hang out!” Ian interjected from the stairs. “Daddy Ian! What’s wrong with your head?!” Yev asked, a concerned look overtaking his small, elf-like face. “He cut it open...and he’s s’posed ta be in bed,” Mickey growled through gritted teeth as he raced for the stairs to support Ian’s descent. “Ya know, you kick ass as a husband and dad, but you suck as a fuckin’ patient,” Mickey muttered under his breath as he guided Ian down to the first floor, walking him to the island, where he sat down next to Yev.


Yev took off, running for the stairs, Mickey taking the opportunity to fill Ian in on the situation with Kayla, as well as his plan to return Johnny’s call. Ian made a move to retrieve his phone from upstairs, Mickey stopping him dead in his tracks. “Sit! I got it,” he said sternly. “Please...take it easy! Fuck!” he added, calling back to Ian from the stairs.

Mickey returned with Ian’s phone, shaking his head. In addition to the voicemail from Doc, there was a text from Shawn, “CALL ME ASAP!” “Fuck!!” Mickey yelled, doing an about-face to look for a new drop phone, which he knew he had hidden away somewhere in their closet. When Mickey didn’t re-appear in what Ian considered to be a reasonable amount of time, he rose to his feet, heading upstairs, calling out, “Mick! You okay?”

“Comin’,” Mickey responded, tucking both phones into his robe pocket. He rushed down the stairs, catching up to Ian and grabbing him at the waist. “What part of ‘sit’ don’t you fuckin’ understand?” Mickey guided Ian over to the couch, where they sat down, side by side. “Okay,” Mickey began, “we have a bunch a calls ta make. Shawn sent ya a text,” he continued, fumbling for Ian’s phone in his robe pocket, and Yev says there’s a message from Doc. “And on my phone,” Mickey paused as he retrieved his own phone from the same pocket, “there’s a missed call from Johnny. So who you wanna call first?” he asked, leaving it up to Ian. “I say we call Doc together...find out what’s up with Mom, then you call Johnny and I call Shawn,” Ian suggested, pulling Doc’s number up on his phone. “Don’t ya think we should hear the message first?” Mickey asked. “Okay,” Ian agreed, going into his voicemails and playing Doc’s:

“Ian, Kayla is really worn out, and between you and me, she doesn’t look good. We’re gonna drop Yev off at the house. Reesie says all his homework is done, and he has eaten dinner. And Ian, if it’s not too much, I’d like to ask that you work tomorrow, with Reesie. I’ve already asked her. I need to be here with Kayla, in case she needs to go to the hospital. Let me know...and you need to have your bloodwork done again as well. Maybe you could hold off on increasing your medication dose for a day, if you’re worried about side-effects.”

Damn! That was a long fuckin’ message! And he didn’t say what’s wrong with Ma,” Mickey
complained. “What’s wrong is her leukemia is getting worse. I gotta be ready for this transplant! And I’m not!” Ian whined, sounding utterly defeated. “Listen to me,” Mickey said softly, turning Ian’s face toward him and kissing him lightly, “You’re doin’ all you can, and I fuckin’ love the shit outta you for it. Period.”

“I’m gonna text Doc and tell him I can work tomorrow,” Ian said, his thumbs moving quickly and briefly over his phone. “Done!” he announced, looking up at Mickey, the thought crossing Mickey’s mind that he would go absolutely insane if Ian were sick the way Kayla was. Ian’s bipolar disorder was a motherfucker to deal with, but at least, Mickey thought, barring the possibility of some lethally crazy-ass behavior, it wasn’t going to kill him. He took a deep breath, looking back at Ian, his eyes full of love, the sight of Ian’s beautiful face bringing him tremendous comfort. “Now let’s make our other calls, so we can relax with Yev awhile,” Mickey told Ian, in his usual direct, no-bullshit way. “Sounds like a plan,” Ian responded, pecking Mickey on the lips, before Mickey got up, moving to the island so they could make their calls simultaneously, leaving the drop phone for Ian to use.

“So…how did this work out?” Johnny asked, his voice vibrant loudly into Mickey’s ear, as he held the phone up to the side of his face, rather than using the speaker, while also getting out the eggs and bagels to make Ian something to eat. “I have some more information for you.” “Figured. Ian got a call from Shawn at Chicago Memorial. Hey…can ya call me on another line?” Mickey asked, letting his paranoia run wild. “Sure,” Johnny replied, thinking that wasn’t a bad idea. Mickey hurriedly scrambled the eggs, threw the bagel in the toaster and took a plate out for Ian’s dinner.

Within minutes, Mickey’s phone was ringing. “Okay,” Johnny began, “So, I’m gonna give ya the basics, and can answer any questions you have. Should keep it short though. We can talk at Frontera tomorrow, if you have time for lunch.” “Alright…” Mickey responded, his heart pounding with frenzied anticipation.

“The plan was for Terry to be injured, just enough that he would need to go to Chicago Memorial for treatment---something fairly minor, but beyond the Medical Unit’s treatment capabilities. Patients, or their relatives, if they are unable, have to sign for treatment. Terry was gonna sign for that, and also sign the divorce papers, without realizing it. That part worked out. Trouble is, Terry fought these guys like a motherfucker, fucked ‘em up, got more of the kitchen staff, which is all Italians, our Chicago guys, including my nephew, in an uproar in a matter of seconds. And it’s all during lunch, with a cafeteria full of prisoners. So...some of the inmates in line at the time of the incident were Russians---apparently Terry’s ‘connected’--- so they got involved. COs let it go ‘til it got real crazy, like they didn’t see a thing. My nephew, Marco’s ass is on the line with the Russians...serious threats if Terry doesn’t get proper care...I had to get Bigley involved...the damage was extensive. Still no guarantee what happens in that place, as you know, but my people will go to bat for Marco, long as they know we kept up our end with the Russians,” Johnny paused, taking a deep breath.

“So...he signed Ma’s papers?” Mickey asked hopefully. “Yeah,” Johnny answered. “And my asshole father...he’s not gettin’ out or nothin’?” “That’s a question for Thomas. Don’t know what or how long he’s in for. Normally, I’d expect additional charges filed against him, especially if…” Johnny trailed off. “If what?” Mickey demanded. “Well, he fucked one of the guys up pretty bad, and was making some pretty serious threats…” Johnny shared reluctantly, “Mickey, he thinks Doc put the hit on him.”

“But he doesn’t even fuckin’ know him!” Mickey yelled. “Right. We don’t think he even has his name, so I think we’re good,” Johnny said optimistically. “You THINK we’re good?” Mickey hissed. “Look, Mickey, this didn’t go according to plan. I assure you my people are doing the best damage control possible. Your dad always so tight with the Russians?” Johnny asked.

she’s in tight. Found that out when they fucked Ian’s dad up in there. And her and my dad were fuckin’ close, so…Our family also used to run guns for the Russians, back in the day…” Mickey recalled.

“Mickey! Mickey!” Ian whisper-shouted at him, as he flailed his arms, trying to get his attention from across the room. Mickey looked over at Ian, just in time to see him pointing at the stairs. Yev was about halfway down. “Johnny…thanks…gotta go,” Mickey said curtly, ending the call. Ian had apparently finished talking to Shawn. He looked uneasy, pale even. “You okay?” Micky asked. Ian shrugged his shoulders, then addressed Yev, who was nearing the bottom of the stairs.

“Hey buddy!” Ian said with a smile. Yev ran over, plopping himself on the couch next to Ian and throwing his arms around him, squeezing him tight. “Wanna see my math project?” he asked with excitement, watching Ian’s face for his response. “Sure!” Ian replied enthusiastically. I’m sure Dad wants to see it, too,” he added, summoning Mickey with his eyes.

Mickey walked over, handing Ian his plate, then sitting on the other side of Yev, who was now rummaging through his book-bag in search of his project. He glanced over at Ian, who returned the look, each appearing to the other to be ill-at-ease. Yev unfolded a large world map, showing temperature ranges in various regions, including one in Russia. “I just picked Moscow for Mom’s city, since it’s the capital,” Yev grinned. “Think we can go there and find her for our next trip?” he asked. Mickey and Ian looked at each other, both thinking the same thing and nodding to one another in agreement.

Mickey raised his eyebrows, non-verbally pleading with Ian to break the news. Ian looked back at Mickey, opening his eyes so wide they bulged, indicating he felt it was Mickey’s place, but then gave in after Mickey started fidgeting and coughing. Mickey just didn’t have it in him to say a kind word about Svet, after the news he’d just gotten from Johnny, despite knowing that, to Yev, his mother coming would be the best news he could possibly get.

“Yev,” Ian began, “We have something to tell you,” Yev looked up at Ian fearfully. He had been worried about his grandmother since she had gotten so sick at his game, so he assumed it was about her, and probably not good. “It’s good news, Yev,” Mickey added, only half-believing that himself. Yev’s face brightened as he turned toward Mickey. “What is it, Dad?” he asked curiously.

“Your mother is comin’ to Mexico, Yev,” Mickey said with as much enthusiasm as he could muster. “She is!?” Yev beamed, his sparkling blue eyes as big as saucers. “When?” he asked excitedly.

“Tomorrow!” Ian said exuberantly. “How’s she getting here?” he questioned. “Daddy is flying her in,” Ian explained. “Tomorrow!!!” Yev squealed, leaping to his feet, then jumping up and down like a pogo stick. “I love you, Daddy! Thank you!” Yev cheered, hugging Mickey hard as he stood up to grab Ian’s phone, which was sitting on the coffee table, ringing. “Here,” Mickey said, handing the phone to Ian and shooting him a look for giving him all the ‘credit’ for Svet’s impending arrival.

“C’mon, Yev! Let’s get some ice cream, Mickey said cheerfully, luring his son into the kitchen so Ian could speak freely with Shawn, whose call Ian had just picked up. “Ian!” Shawn began with a note of desperation in his voice. “Yeah, sorry I had to go before,” Shawn responded. “This shit is getting crazier by the minute!” Shawn spoke in little more than a whisper. “You on now?” Ian asked. “Yeah, I ducked into the supply closet to call back. This place is nuts. A revolving door for mobsters…Italian…Russian…some creepy dude who seems to be of eastern European descent. And, of course, our newest patient, who is under close 24-hour surveillance.” Shawn shared, rapid-fire and in a hushed tone.

“Who’s that? Ian asked, just as Mickey walked over, his face bright red. “What the fuck, Ian!?” he muttered angrily under his breath, as he grabbed the phone and hit ‘end’, then handed him the drop
phone, raising his eyebrows and scowling at him, attempting to convey his aggravation with Ian for making such a stupid mistake. Ian got the message, although he sprouted a half-chub in response to the look on Mickey’s face, since it reminded him of the last time Mickey had been his ‘master’ for the night.

‘So fucking hot!’ Ian thought to himself, despite his marked efforts, given the current situation, to put it out of his mind. “Remind me to ask you for something later,” he said to Mickey with a smirk, as he began putting Shawn’s cell number into the drop phone. Mickey nodded, walking back into the kitchen to join Yev, who had just sat down to his ice cream.

The phone rang three times before Shawn, not recognizing the number, reluctantly picked up. “Sorry,” Ian began. “Mick’s getting paranoid over all of this,” he explained. “I don’t blame him. There’s some really weird shit going on here,” Shawn replied. “So...who’s the new patient?” Ian asked, his curiosity getting the better of him.

“Marco Sacramone,” Shawn replied. “Is he…” Ian began, Shawn cutting him off. “He hasn’t regained consciousness, but his next-of-kin is listed as John Sacramone.” “Oh fuck!” Ian exclaimed, Mickey glaring at him from the island, as Yev looked over at Ian, obviously having heard him. “So, what’s wrong with him?” Ian asked, trying to get as much info as possible, quickly, so he could join his family for ice cream and possibly enjoy a moment of peace, amid all of the chaos that was sure to descend upon them within the next 24 to 36 hours.

“‘What isn’t wrong with him’ would be easier to answer,” Shawn laughed nervously, “He has internal bleeding, including some of his vital organs--shanked multiple times, his eye socket is shattered---will have to be completely rebuilt, if he recovers, and his face looks like it was in a blender.”

“Holy Fuck!!!” Ian yelled, once again drawing his family’s attention. This time Mickey strided over to the couch, sitting down next to Ian. “Okay, what the fuck?” Mickey hissed between gritted teeth. Ian put his finger up, still listening to the litany of injuries Marco had sustained. “Did anyone call Johnny?” Ian asked. “Tried,” Shawn sighed. “The number we have has been disconnected.”

“Hmm...question: If Marco’s in such bad shape, why is he under 24-hour surveillance?” Ian asked. “Well, actually, his room is being guarded because there have been threats on his life. In fact, there have been a few people, who weren’t on his visitation list, that tried to get into his room for a ‘visit’. Shockingly, they all had Russian accents,” Shawn said, his words dripping with sarcasm.

“The prison actually just sent an additional guard, who’s now posted just outside the doors leading into the CCU. Ian, I’m tellin’ ya, this place is nuts. I’m fully expecting retaliation against Terry and the Russians for this butcher job! Frankly, I’m more than ready to pack it in for a while and hang out with you guys, south of the border,” Shawn chuckled, although he was quite serious.

“I gotta go. Johnny needs to know all this. Keep me updated?” Ian asked. “Sure,” Shawn promised. “...And call me at this number,” Ian added as Mickey stared him down. Ian ended the call, turning to Mickey, “We gotta call Johnny! This shit is bad!!!” Ian said frantically. “You can tell him. I’m gonna go tuck Yev into bed and talk to him some. Right now, he’s waiting for our attention, Ian. It’s our last night with him, before Svet comes,” Mickey reminded Ian. “I know. I’ll be as quick as I can,” Ian responded.

“And use the fuckin’ drop phone!” Mickey growled, kissing Ian on the crown of his head as he walked back into the kitchen, where Yev was still sitting, an empty bowl in front of him and a spoon hanging out of his mouth. “C’mon, little man. Ian’s got some important calls to make. If he’s done in time, I’ll send him up,” Mickey assured him. “Go brush your teeth. I’ll be right there.” Mickey turned toward the couch, listening as Ian related the horrifying story Shawn had told him, regarding
Johnny’s nephew, Marco. Even Mickey was taken aback by the extent and severity of his injuries.

“Damn,” Mickey mumbled, shaking his head. “Tell Johnny I’ll talk to him soon,” Mickey whispered to Ian, after he finished the horrid description of Marco’s condition. Ian nodded in response, awaiting Johnny’s reaction, which, so far, had been complete silence, as if he were in shock.

Mickey spun around abruptly, heading up the stairs to Yev’s room. “Dad, it’s not that late yet,” Yev protested as he walked out of his bathroom. “Yeah, I know. But you and me can talk. How ‘bout that?” Mickey suggested. “Okay, you mean like, about Mom?” Yev asked, grinning, ear to ear. “Sure,” Mickey answered. “Well, what should I wear when I first see her?” he asked. “That won’t matter,” Mickey said softly. “Your Ma just wants to see you, like mine wanted to see me,” he continued, his eyes getting a little misty as he thought about his mother lying over at Doc’s, feeling sick, dying of leukemia, and he hadn’t even called yet to check on her. “What’s wrong, Daddy?” Yev asked, instantly picking up on Mickey’s upset. “I’m fine, Yev,” Mickey smiled. “Let’s talk about your Mom.”
Yev had been up with bells on, dressed and ready for school, an hour ahead of schedule. Ian, getting up early to work at the clinic, was surprised to find that Yev had made bagels for everyone and was trying his hand at brewing a pot of coffee as Ian walked into the kitchen. “Good Morning, Daddy Ian!” Yev said with a bright smile, “How’s your head feeling?”

“Oh, I’m fine,” Ian replied convincingly, although, with the night’s sleep he’d had, he was feeling beyond exhausted and more than a little bit ‘off’. Both he and Mickey had been restless, the news they had received the night before definitely weighing heavily on their minds. Mickey, Ian was fairly certain, was having nightmares, either about prison or about some other situation during which he had been put in serious physical peril. Ian tried to hold onto him as he tensed up, swung his arms, kicked his legs, and spat out long strings of angry, frustrated obscenities, peppered with the occasional, “No!”

Despite Ian’s efforts to keep Mickey in his arms, he fought Ian so hard, in his sleep, that Ian finally opted to try and wake him up. Each time he did, Mickey would settle down after a few minutes, Ian dabbing the sweat from his face and body, and reassuring him, “It’s okay, Mick! You’re here with me,” in a low, soothing voice. Eventually, Ian was able to hold him and lull him back to sleep, only to have the same thing happen all over again.

Ian helped Yev with the coffee, then suggested they take breakfast in bed to Mickey, hoping to wake him nicely and start his day off as positively as possible. Ian carried the coffee and Yev brought everyone’s bagels on a serving tray. As Yev pushed the bedroom door open, he and Ian could hear Mickey yelling, “No! Dad! Get the fuck off a’ him!!” Ian rushed over, rubbing his back lightly, whispering, “Mick...brought ya breakfast.” Mickey woke with a start, calling out, “Fuck you!” and swinging his fists in the air. “Yev, set the bagels on the dresser and give me a minute with Dad,” Ian said, turning to see the fear in their son’s eyes. “Yev, it’s okay. I’ll come get you in a minute,” Ian assured him.

“Mick,” Ian turned back toward him, pulling him into his chest. “I’m sorry.” he breathed into Mickey’s ear. “For what?” Mickey asked, having calmed down a bit, thanks to Ian’s comforting embrace. “I know what your last nightmare was about. And I’m sorry for not fighting him harder or doing something more to help you. I let that fucker beat the shit outta you, and then he…”

“Stop! If anything had been diff’rent, we wouldn’t have Yev, so…” Mickey interrupted Ian, then pulled him in for a kiss. Ian returned his kiss passionately, deeply, wanting desperately to take Mickey’s pain away. Just the thought of Mickey reliving the most terrible days of his life made Ian nauseous. “I love you, Mick,” he said softly, stroking the side of his face as he pulled away. “Gotta go soon. Yev made breakfast. Eat with us?” Ian asked Mickey. “Sure,” Mickey answered, Ian handing the breakfast tray to Mickey, then turning to get Yev.

The three enjoyed a quick breakfast in bed, Mickey assuring Yev that he was fine, that he must have been having a bad dream, and that he was sorry if he scared him. Mickey concerned himself with having a look at Ian’s head wound, before running him a bath to allow him to keep that part of his head dry. Once they had finished their breakfast, Yev excused himself, saying he needed something from his room. Mickey took the opportunity to help Ian into the tub, although Ian insisted he was fine. As they both washed up quickly together, Mickey asked, “You gonna increase your dose today?”

“Haven’t really thought about it much. Today’s supposed to be the day, but since I’m working, it might be better if I wait, or I could increase it this afternoon, once I’m back at home. I was
wondering what the plan is for when Svetlana gets here,” Ian responded. “She’ll be gettin’ in late, but I’m sure Yev’s gonna wanna see her right away. Figured maybe we could just meet her at the factory, show her to her room, then see how things are goin’,” Mickey answered.

“Yeah, I guess trying to plan too much in advance might not work out,” Ian concluded, “Gonna check my white blood count again today,” he added, a nervous half-smile creeping across his face. “Ian, when you’re ready, you’re ready. You got no control over this, so don’t get all weird about it, okay?” Mickey said, his voice rising a bit in volume. Ian could tell this was an uncomfortable subject for Mickey, and, after the night he had put in, he really just wanted Mickey to relax. “I’m not, Mick. Everything’s fine,” Ian responded, widening his smile for Mickey’s benefit.

Ian checked the time on his phone, then hurriedly got out of the tub, Mickey rising to steady him, despite his objections. He towelled off briefly, then grabbed a clean set of clothes from the laundry basket, dressing quickly, then throwing on his lab coat. Mickey was close behind, following suit with the speedy dress routine, not wanting to miss seeing his family off and checking to be sure Ian was feeling alright to drive.

Yev was a ball of energy, grabbing his book-bag and topping off both of his Dads’ travel mugs with hot coffee. He had even taken special care to dress up a bit and to style his hair, which was reminiscent of Mickey’s, whenever he took the time to really work with it. “Thanks! Looking sharp, Yev!” Ian complimented him, as he grabbed his fresh mug of coffee and they headed for the door. Mickey opened the door for them, standing in the way until he was satisfied that Ian was good to drive.

“Hey!” Mickey said, looking Ian straight in the face, “You good? I can take you guys, ya know,” he offered. “Yeah, I’m good!” Ian spoke confidently. “I gotta have my own car today. Have to take my samples to the lab. Otherwise, you know I’d love to ride in with you,” Ian smiled seductively, raising an eyebrow.

Mickey rolled his eyes, his husband’s insatiable sex drive never ceasing to amaze him. Not that he couldn’t keep up, but he recognized that Ian was very often the initiator, leading Mickey to believe that he must be fantasizing about fucking, 24/7, a thought that made Mickey adjust himself after seeing them off and kissing Ian goodbye.

Mickey was definitely looking forward to a day when things were calm again, and he could focus 100% of his energy, mental and physical, on making love to Ian. Their session the day before had been phenomenal, but there was still that nagging ‘what if’ feeling that he couldn’t shake, even during the most intense throes of passion. He needed that to be lifted, to forget that anything existed, beyond them and their love. To Mickey, what they had was everything, and had only grown stronger and more extraordinary as their years together progressed.

Mickey scooped up his coffee and headed for his car, proceeding to work on the early side, but figuring he should, in order to make one last run through Svetlana’s room, since he had been pretty distracted the last time. “Fuck!” he exclaimed as he noticed, in his rear-view mirror, that he had a ‘tail’ once again, the officer, this time, attempting to be more subtle, hanging back a few extra car lengths and integrating himself with other traffic in an attempt to remain unseen.

Mickey tried his best to keep his cool, driving the speed limit and sipping his coffee. He kept a mental image of Ian’s face, as it looked right before he left that morning, bright and full of love, bandage and all, at the forefront of his mind. He smiled to himself, vowing not to let this asshole ruin his morning.

Once he arrived at the factory, Mickey threw himself into his work, not wanting to dwell on his ‘escort’ there, his helplessness, regarding his mother’s illness, or any of the craziness that had ensued
at the prison, and then the hospital. He greeted Manuel and Brach, then immediately set about surveying Svetlana’s room, spending the remainder of the morning, holed up in the office, finalizing the deal on the building for the new Surfin’ location in Boca.

As he was negotiating, a text came in from Johnny: “Chicken Bolognese - 12:00?” “I’ll be there.” Mickey texted back, once he had finished up the building deal. He emerged from the office, striding into the conference room with his signature, cocky ‘Mickey swagger’, announcing, ‘The building for the new Surfin’ will be ours in 15 days, to remodel to our specs. We’ll be allowed in, rent-free, for 15 days, and will close on the property in 30. Got him down $20,000.”

“Mickey! That’s incredible! The guy was already selling below market value. How did you do it?” Manuel asked. “The dude owns several other businesses in the area, so I told him how much additional foot traffic our store would bring to the block, and he couldn’t resist,” Mickey grinned, a confident glint in his eye. “Wow! Mick, I’m impressed!” Brach chimed in.

“Mickey’s one hell of a negotiator!” Manuel responded. “You’ll see...That was one of the traits that drew me to him as a partner, when we first met. I could see it, right away.” Manuel added. Mickey smiled graciously, having appreciated the compliment. He had often wondered why Manuel was prepared to go into business with a relative stranger so quickly, and often thought Manuel may have been so attracted to him sexually, that he used the business as a way to get close to him. It was nice to know that he was selected for his business skills, and not just for his ‘ojos azules’.

Mickey left the factory feeling on top of the world, as if nothing could possibly bring him down—until he got to Frontera. As he walked in, he wondered if he should go to the alcove, as was typical when he went for lunch, or whether he should stop at the bar first. He had no idea if there was a space reserved for him, since the place was so jam-packed. He decided on the bar, as his first stop. He sidled up, giving the bartender a quick head nod, before glancing down the bar, catching sight of Johnny, his head down, face flat against the bar, holding a nearly empty bottle of Sambuca in one hand, and a rocks glass in the other.

“Fuck! Johnny!” Mickey yelled as he approached him, doing his best to sit him back up in his seat. “Mi...ckey,” Johnny slurred, “They’re gonna fu...ckin’ kill him.” “...The fuck you talkin’ about?” Mickey asked. “The fu...ckin’ Russians!” Johnny spat angrily. “You hear somethin’ more?” Mickey asked. “Yeah...hospital called...guy named Shawn...says he...knows you an’...you an’ Ian.” Johnny paused, pouring himself another drink.

“So, what’d he say?” Mickey pressed him, wondering if he’d get the whole story before Johnny passed out. “They changed guards...and they got in,” he mumbled. “Who got in?” Mickey yelled, getting extremely frustrated. “The fu...ckin’ Russians!” Johnny bellowed. “Marco was awake...Had surgery yesterday...and he was talkin’, the guy said. “Guess they were...uh...trying to force him to name who ordered the hit...on your dad.”

“How you know that?” Mickey wondered out loud. “Guess it’s the last thing he said before he lost consciousness from the pain. Shawn said, from the damage he saw, they must’ve used a fist or blunt object to push on his incision, trying to make him talk.” “So...he say anything?” Mickey asked. “What d’you think?” Johnny growled. “Why...why d’you think they fucked him up so bad? He ain’t gonna talk...ever,” Johnny hissed, “This ain’t gonna...play out well for the Russians either...or for Terry...Just wait ‘til Bigley finds out!” And with that last sentence, Johnny’s head hit the bar---hard---and he was out cold. Mickey tried, without success, to wake him up, but it was no use. He needed to sleep it off a bit.

Mickey got up, tracked the bartender down and asked him to tend to Johnny, so he could see about meeting Ian for some lunch. Then he texted Ian, “Wya?”
Ian: “Dropping my samples at the lab. Then I was gonna call you on my way back to the clinic. Shawn called me again.”

Mickey: “On your phone?”

Ian: “Yeah, but I made him call back on the Clinic phone. (Winky face emoji)”

Mickey: WTF?? Reesie get her lunch yet?

Ian: Yeah.

Mickey: Meet me at Frontera ASAP.

Ian: OK

Ian showed up in less than ten minutes, looking so fine that Mickey had to rethink tearing him a new asshole for being stupid about the phone calls. When Ian sat across from Mickey, in the booth that had been cleared for them, and made eye contact, Mickey couldn’t help but smile.

Ian had that effect on him; no matter how bleak things looked, one second of Ian’s eyes on his always made any situation seem better, if only the slightest bit. “So fuckin’ glad to see you,” Mickey said softly, leaning in to kiss Ian. “Really?” Ian asked, blushing a bit, which just made Mickey swoon. “Okay, okay…” Mickey said under his breath, trying to keep his focus on all of the craziness that had recently crept into their lives, for at least long enough to share his concerns with Ian.

Mickey began, “This shit with my dad ain’t good. Johnny’s nephew is in bad fuckin’ shape, and Johnny’s a mess over it. Shawn called…” “Mick, I know. How do you think Shawn got Johnny’s number?” Ian interrupted. Of course, Mickey didn’t know the hospital didn’t have a current number for Johnny, since Mickey and Ian had never fully shared all they learned the day before with one another. Now they needed to do that, and to start thinking about the safety of their friends and family, if things continued to escalate as they had been so far.

Mickey ordered three plates of the Chicken Bolognese, as Johnny suggested, planning to try and have Johnny join them, if he came to and could sit up. He felt absolutely awful for Johnny and all that he and his family were going through because of his parents.

Of course, he understood that Doc, and even Ian, had a hand in all of this, but, at the end of the day, it had all started over his mother needing a divorce so she could marry the man of her dreams before she died, and his piece-of-shit father putting a block to her, as usual. Micky liked to think that if he had handled things, it would have turned out more favorably, but, deep down, he knew better. These types of scenarios always got messy, and people always got fucked up.

Much of what Ian and Mickey discussed was common knowledge between the two of them, but one important bit of information that Mickey did learn from Ian was that Shawn was doing everything in his power to get Marco moved to Mt. Sinai Hospital without anyone knowing.

Mickey was glad to hear that something more was being done to protect him, for Johnny’s sake, and also because the guy kept his mouth shut, which was worth a lot to Mlckey, not only because it kept his surrogate family out of the line of fire, but also because he knew Marco was Southside, and was taking whatever he knew to his grave. Mickey only hoped that wouldn’t be happening soon. Marco was young, and still had the hope of getting out and doing something with his life, provided he didn’t get charged with anything relating to this incident with Terry, which, by the sounds of things, was pretty likely to be swept under the rug at CCC.

After all of the business talk, Mickey reminding Ian not to use his personal phone AGAIN, the topic
of conversation turned toward Svetlana’s arrival. Mickey seemed to think she would have some knowledge of the incident, and wondered what her take would be on it. He hoped it wouldn’t complicate matters between them; he hoped they could be civil, and work together to raise Yev, as it seemed they were going to do, before she got arrested and, eventually, deported all those years ago.

Mickey had his doubts, many of which stemmed from his mother’s reluctance to believe Svetlana would be anything but trouble. Ian agreed that Svetlana hadn’t always been the nicest to either of them, but pointed out the she always loved Yev, and would want the best for him. And how could anyone not see how good he and Mickey were for Yev?

As Ian and Mickey were eating their lunch, finally getting the opportunity to enjoy each other’s company, after having tried unsuccessfully to get Johnny to join them, they both received a text from Doc: “Taking Kayla to the hospital. Meet me there. Reesie will handle the clinic.”
Fleeing and Eluding

Ian and Mickey arrived in the Emergency Room to find that Kayla was in the process of being moved up to the CCU, already having been put on oxygen and had an IV run. Her thin face was ashen, her lips having a bluish tint. On Ian’s closer examination, he noticed that her nail beds were also bluish. Ian stayed quiet, holding Mickey back from her to allow the medical team to prepare her for her move.

Doc was outside the room, steady talking on his cell phone. As Kayla was wheeled out of the room, Ian and Mickey followed, stopping to wait for Doc. “As soon as possible...Let me know...Thanks!” Doc said, before ending his call. “Hey Doc! Got here as fast as we could,” Mickey began, Doc surprising him by throwing his arms around him for a tight embrace. Doc was definitely beyond upset. Mickey hugged him back, feeling Doc’s level of concern and starting to tear up, himself.

Ian walked away, stepping up to the nurse’s station. “Hey, my mother was just transferred to the CCU. I just got here. Can you give me some information on her condition?” he asked, having put his lab coat on before entering the hospital, and looking every bit the part of a nurse, who needed to get the ‘low down’ on his mother quickly. “I’ll have the doctor speak with you,” the unit clerk responded, getting up to get her attention.

“Hello, I’m Dr. Aguiar,” she introduced herself. “I’m Ian Milkovich. My mother…” Ian began, the doctor beginning her explanation as soon as she heard his last name. “Mr. Milkovich, your mother has an antibiotic-resistant lung infection and alveolar hemorrhage. She has been put on some stronger IV antibiotics, and will need to remain here in hopes that they can clear the infection. Aggressive treatment for the hemorrhage involves medications that could compromise the effectiveness of the antibiotics, so we are in a precarious situation. I understand she has a prospective stem cell donor. I put in for a consult with her hematologist. Mr. Milkovich, she needs that transplant as soon as possible.”

“Let’s go!” Mickey said impatiently, pulling Ian by the arm toward the elevators. “Thank you,” Ian said quietly, trying his best to swallow past the growing lump in his throat. The trio got into the elevator, Ian attempting to break the awkward silence, once the elevator started to move. “Mickey, I...” Ian began, not able to finish his sentence. He reached for Mickey, pulling his body into his own and holding him there until the doors opened. Kayla’s room was the first one, nearest to the elevator. Doc hung back, calling to Ian, “Ian, I need to talk to you...Did you get your blood samples to the lab?” “Yes, just dropped them off on my lunch,” he answered, somehow finding his voice to speak with Doc.

“How have you been feeling lately?” Doc asked. “Be completely honest,” he added, before Ian could respond. “I’m fine, Doc. I mean, I’ve been a little stressed out and didn’t sleep the best last night, but I think the whole family is in that predicament,” he answered.

“Okay, well, as I’m sure you are aware, after speaking with Dr. Aguiar, Kayla needs that transplant yesterday. I’m praying that your white blood cell count is low enough that we can proceed in the near future. If you’re not experiencing any symptoms of relapse, I’d like you to check with Dr. Gonzalez about whether you need to increase your medication dosage at this point. Ian, we need you healthy, so whatever is going to accomplish that goal is the path I’d like you to take,” Doc explained.

“I understand,” Ian nodded. “Great! Here’s his personal cell phone number. If he doesn’t answer, please leave him a message. Tell him it’s urgent that you speak with him about your medication. He’ll call you back,” Doc assured him.
Ian and Doc joined Mickey at Kayla’s bedside. She was awake, but barely able to speak. “She looks so tired,” Ian whispered to Doc. Doc pulled Ian backward a few feet, before responding. “She is, Ian. She’s fighting so hard, but she doesn’t have much left. I have already made some calls. Thomas is overnighting her Divorce Decree. We’ll be applying for our marriage license tomorrow, through the Chaplain here at the hospital, but I’d like Johnny to marry us. I’m going to see about having the wedding here.”

“In the hospital?!” Ian’s insensitive reply shot out of his mouth, before he could think better of it. “Yes,” Doc answered solemnly. Ian, feeling uncomfortable after his comment, walked up behind Mickey, who was sitting on Kayla’s bed, holding her hand. “I love you, Mick,” Ian breathed, kissing the crown of his head as he rubbed his shoulders. “Love you, too,” Mickey mumbled, his eyes fixed on his mother’s pallid face.

Ian stepped out of the room to try and call Dr. Gonzalez, leaving a message for him to contact him ASAP, as Doc had requested. Ian had also received a text from Shawn, which read, simply: “Other!” Ian assumed this meant Shawn had left some sort of message on the drop phone, which he had not brought with him. Ian panicked. Shawn must have had some pretty significant news to have been this persistent in trying to reach him. He didn’t want to bother Mickey with this, given the current situation, but he also didn’t want to ignore Shawn’s attempt to communicate potentially vital information.

He thought, briefly, about discussing the matter with Doc, but ultimately, he decided it was best to find a way out of the hospital, without having to delve into another potentially stressful subject with either of them. He walked back over to Mom’s bed, bending down to kiss her on the forehead. “Love you, Mom,” he said softly, putting his hand over Mickey’s, which was on top of hers.

Ian could feel electricity pulse through his body when he touched Mickey’s hand, and he was sure the three of them connecting that way had done something to heal her. He smiled, turning away from them silently, then calling over his shoulder, “I’ll be back.”

Ian ran six flights down in the emergency stairwell, then jogged to Mickey’s car, which they had taken in their hasty departure from Frontera. Using his own set of keys, he started it, put the gas pedal to the floor, and sped down the road toward home, dialing Mandy up to ask if she was planning to go to the hospital. “Mandy,” he began, “Ian, I got the text from Doc. Are you at the hospital?” she asked.


“License and registration, please,” Mandy could hear the cop asking Ian, over the phone. “Fuck!” she muttered, under her breath. “I’m sorry, officer, it’s just...” “Milkovich...thought I recognized this car. Just pulled another one of you guys over in it, less than a week ago,” the cop said, adding, “Do you all drive with complete disregard for the safety of our citizens?” “No,” Ian replied. “Oh, so it’s just you? And Mikhailo, was it?” the cop quipped with a cocky sneer. “Officer, I’m very sorry. It’s just that our mother is in the hospital...very ill...and I’m trying to get back to her as soon as possible,” Ian explained. “Hospital’s that way,” the cop replied, pointing in the direction Ian had come from.

I’m trying to...oh, nevermind! I gotta go!” Ian yelled, putting the car into drive and punching it. “Fuckin’ prick!” he screamed. “Ian!” Mandy’s worried voice came through the phone, “Did you just do what I think you just did?” Mandy asked, already knowing the answer. “So what if I did? Cop was being an asshole, and I gotta get back to Mom and Mickey, before they realize I’m gone!” Ian
explained breathlessly.

Mandy could hear the car cycling through its gears quickly, so she knew Ian was driving dangerously fast. “Slow down, Ian! You’re gonna kill yourself of someone else!” she screamed frantically. Then she heard the siren in the background. Shit! Ian! Please stop!!” Mandy pleaded. “Fuck this guy!!” Ian hollered in a full-on rage. “Please, Ian!!” she screamed again, but it was no use. Ian wasn’t stopping.

Mandy hung up, calling Mickey, who was looking at a checklist of depression and mania symptoms that Dr. Gonzalez had just delivered, in an attempt to determine whether Ian could hold off on increasing the dosage of his new medication, pending the upcoming transplant.

“Hey Mands, what’s up? You comin’ to see Ma?” Mickey asked. “Later, but Mick…” she began, obviously upset to the point of tears, “Ian is...he's...the police are chasing him...and he’s not stopping!” she wailed. “What the fu…” Mickey caught himself beginning to yell and curse, two things his mother hated to hear him do. The last thing he wanted was to wake her up this way. He stood up, moving away from her bed, still holding the clip-board with the checklist on it.

“Mandy, where!?” Mickey yelled, “I didn’t even know he left the fuckin’ hospital!” “I–I don’t know! He didn’t say!” she blubbered. “Okay, I’m gonna go try to f...Fuck!” Mickey yelled, as the reality of the situation dawned on him. “He has my fuckin’ car!! We rode here together! Fuck!! Can you ask Manuel to look for him...please?!” Mickey begged, sheer desperation in his voice. “O...Okay,” Mandy replied, ending the call abruptly.

“What’s wrong?” Doc asked, looking a combination of ‘worried sick’ and ‘completely exhausted’. “Ian...he…” Before Mickey could answer Doc, Dr. Gonzalez had come back to retrieve the checklist that Mickey had yet to complete, the news of Ian’s shenanigans forcing him to put it on hold. “Finished?” he asked kindly. “Not quite,” Mickey answered, pulling a pen from behind his ear and looking down at the list. He had already completed the ‘depression’ checklist, citing only ‘restlessness’ as something he saw in Ian.

As he went over the list of mania symptoms, his eyes filled with tears. He checked off the following: Intense happiness or joy, overly excitable; Impulsive; Instances of “high-risk” behaviors; Highly energetic; Increased Activity Levels; Agitated, irritable, or “touchy”; and Trouble sleeping---more than half of the indicators that someone with bipolar disorder may be having a manic episode. And he couldn’t say for sure that Ian wasn’t feeling more of them, having symptoms that Mickey hadn’t noticed yet.

“Okay, can you tell me what kind of impulsive behaviors you are seeing?” Dr. Gonzalez asked. “Well, for one thing,” Mickey paused looking over at Doc, wondering how he would handle the information he was about to share. “He’s out right now, fleeing and eluding the police!” Mickey said with great terror in his voice. “Oh God!” Doc responded, immediately beginning to cry, himself. “We gotta find him!” “Mandy’s askin’ Manuel to go out and look. I was gonna go, but he has my fuckin’ car!” Mickey yelled, his face beet red by this time. “Hey, Dr. G,” Mickey began, “You think all this could be cuz a stress? I mean with Ma bein’ sick and Yev’s mother coming into town and, well, other stuff I can’t get into. Can’t stress cause someone to do this type a shit?”

“Well, Mickey, stress has been known to bring on mania in bipolar patients, so I think we need to operate under the assumption that what we are dealing with currently is a manic episode. If we’re wrong, at least we will have made sure he’s safe. “So what are you suggestin’?” Mickey asked. “I think we should call the cops and…” Mickey cut the doctor off, before he could finish, “NO FUCKIN’ COPS!” “Mickey,” Doc said, pulling him aside for a private conversation, “In this situation, if we don’t call the cops, they will handle him as a criminal, rather than someone who is
mentally ill. They may hurt, or even kill him. Please...we need to inform them of what’s been going on, so the right people can make sure he stays safe.” Doc was very convincing, somehow maintaining his composure amid all the chaos that surrounded him. “Alright,” Mickey agreed, “but you’re callin’,” he said, looking at Doc through tear-filled eyes.

“If you’d like, I’d be happy to call, as his doctor,” Dr. G offered. Mickey and Doc both nodded their heads silently, before bowing them in something close to complete resignation. As they stood, waiting for Dr. G to make the call, Doc’s phone buzzed. There was a new email from the lab, titled, “Ian Milkovich, WBC results”. Doc opened the email, reading it silently, then looking up to address Mickey and Dr. G, “Ian’s WBC is now within normal limits. He’s physically ready to donate stem-cells,” Doc said flatly. “That’s great news, right?” Mickey asked. “It would be, if he wasn’t currently presenting as a person having an acute psychotic break, incident to a manic episode,” Dr. G explained.

“Oh, shit! Here we go again. Damn it, Ian, where the fuck are you?!”
Hey everyone! Just wanted to let you know I am working on the new chapter and will finish ASAP. "Red Line" is filming and I am an extra, so I've been busy!! Noel is so incredibly talented! I hope you all will watch the pilot on CBS!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Ojos! I’m here with Ian! The police are also here, asking me a lot of questions. I told them they should talk to you,” Manuel began, preparing to hand his phone off to the police. “No, fuck that!” Mickey yelled, “Just tell me what the fuck’s goin’ on!! Please!!”

“They’re loading him up into the ambulance. His forehead is bleeding, but he doesn’t appear to be badly hurt. He was well enough to take off on foot, but once they captured him, they couldn’t seem to calm him down. It was like he had the strength of fifty men! I watched as three policemen and two paramedics struggled to get him to the ground. I tried talking to him, but he was completely irate, babbling about some phone and how he needed to get it NOW! I thought that was strange, since they showed him that he had his phone on him.” Manuel spat, rapid-fire, in a low, serious tone.

“...He okay now?” Mickey questioned, his voice wavering slightly. “Mickey, he’s out cold. They had to shoot him up three times with a sedative to get him under control. I’ll follow the ambulance to the hospital. Are you still there?” Manuel inquired. “Yeah, still here outside Ma’s room,” Mickey answered, pacing back and forth, absolutely distraught.

“Oh, wait...they...they want to tow your car,” Manuel added. “...It driveable?” Mickey croaked from his tight, dry throat. “Seems it would be. It’s still running. There looks to be only minor front-end damage and, unfortunately, rear-end damage to the parked car he hit,” Manuel explained.

Mickey sighed heavily, “See if you can move it and park it somewhere, please?” “Of course, Ojos. Anything you need,” Manuel responded, feeling completely helpless to provide Mickey with any REAL assistance, where Ian was concerned. Who knew what charges he might face, or what his fate might be today, after all that just happened, and all Manuel could do was move Mickey’s car and follow the ambulance.

“Hey...Manuel...are you there?” Mickey said, listening carefully for a reply. “Yes, I’m in your car right now,” Manuel answered. “Okay...don’t follow the ambulance. I’m here and can handle shit when he gets here. I need you to pick Yev up from school. I’ll come to get him as soon as I can,” Mickey promised him. “No rush. He can stay, if you need him to,” Manuel offered.

“That would be great, except Svetlana’s flying in tonight, and he’s dyin’ to see her,” Mickey reminded him. “Oh, that’s right,” Manuel replied, “Well, we are flexible. Whatever you need, Ojos.” “Thanks, man,” Mickey said graciously, then ended the call.

“Doc,” Mickey called into Kayla’s room, “I gotta get down to the ER. Ian’s on his way here in an ambulance.” Kayla’s eyes popped open. “What happened to Ian?” she asked, clearly alarmed at hearing he was in an ambulance. “Just a fender bender, Ma. He’ll be fine. Just need to check him out cuz of his head wound,” Mickey assured her, attempting to quiet her nerves so she could rest.
As Mickey rode the elevator down to the main floor, the gravity of his family’s plight hit him hard. He fought to keep himself together, but he could feel the sting of tears forming behind his eyes, and the lump in his throat felt like it was as big as a softball. He knew his mother’s situation was dire to begin with, and now that Ian’s mental health was in question, there was an additional obstacle to her getting the treatment they were all so desperate for her to have. And as if he didn’t have enough problems, he still had to figure out how he was going to handle Yev’s meeting with Svetlana, after this most recent turn of events, and to get an update on the whole Terry and Marco situation.

The elevator door opened and Mickey raced toward the ER. Upon his arrival, he could see Dr. Gonzalez standing near the ambulance drop-off entrance. He breathed a huge sigh of relief, knowing now that he would not have to go this alone. He knew Doc had likely called in a personal favor, so he pulled his phone out, texting Doc:

“Dr. G is here. Thanks for finding us a great psychiatrist, and for asking him to be here with us tonight. Hope Mom is okay. Sorry I couldn’t stay.”

Doc responded rather quickly: “Your mother is asleep. Would you like me to come to the ER? I’d be happy to try and help in any way I can.”

Mickey texted back: “Sure. Thanks!”

Doc immediately headed for the ER, and was striding over toward the entrance as the ambulance pulled up, the back doors flying open, and the paramedics quickly unloading an unconscious Ian. Mickey took one look at his beautifully angelic face and was overcome with emotion. It didn’t seem fair that such a wonderful, kind, loving and beautiful person should have to suffer like this. He felt the same way about his mother, and wondered how life could be so cruel to them, when others, including himself, deserved it so much more.

Doc held Mickey back as they wheeled Ian in, Mickey absolutely beside himself at the thought of not being with him for every miserable second of what he would have to endure. “Doc, I’m goin’ in, and I’m stayin’,” Mickey expressed tearfully. “None of this would’ve happened if he wasn’t tryin’ ta help Mom.”

“Mickey, he knows you love him. Once we get him settled, your place is to be at home with Yevgeni,” Doc advised, wondering immediately if he had overstepped his bounds. “I know you’re right, Doc, but I can’t leave him,” Mickey responded. Dr. G had followed the paramedics back to the treatment area, leaving Mickey and Doc in the waiting area.

Mickey swaggered up to the registration window, “They just brought my husband here in an ambulance and I wanna see him,” he barked forcefully, Doc standing directly behind Mickey, just in case he started to go nuts on someone. “Your name, sir?” the nurse asked. “Mickey Milkovich. And my husband is Ian…” he answered, then adding, “Milkovich. His last name’s Milkovich, too.” “Okay, sir. Just let me check with the team to be sure he’s stable…” “He is! I saw him come in. Please! I need to see him!” Mickey was losing it. Doc pulled him aside, whispering, “Calm down! Ian is in good hands. You will see him soon.”

“In the meantime,” the nurse began, “could you please fill out this form? Looks like we’ve never treated Ian here before,” she surmised after typing his name into her computer. “Sure,” Mickey replied, grabbing the clipboard from her roughly. “Fuck! Another form,” he muttered, the process of completing the paperwork, ironically, seeming to calm him, perhaps because it occupied him for a brief period of time, short-circuiting his preoccupation with having to be with Ian immediately.

After a few minutes that seemed, to Mickey, like hours, the nurse called him, “Mr. Milkovich, you can come back now.” Mickey leapt to his feet, jogging for the double doors leading to the treatment
area, Doc traipsing behind him, utterly exhausted from the last 24 hours he had put in with Kayla.

They were ushered into a treatment room, where Mickey could already see that Dr. G was standing. As they got closer, Mickey could also see that Ian was still asleep, looking to be at peace and gorgeous as hell, just as he always did when Mickey watched him sleep at home. It appeared he had a new bandage on his head wound, but that it might still be bleeding. “His head gonna be okay?” he asked Dr. G.

“If you’re asking about the sutures, some of them had come loose. The resident just finished putting some new ones in. If you’re talking about his mental health, I think we need to discuss some options here, while we wait,” Dr. G answered kindly.

“I’d like to make a suggestion, if you don’t mind,” Doc interjected. “Certainly,” Dr. G responded. “Since Ian’s white blood count is low enough for him to donate now,” Doc began, “why not harvest the stem cells from him as soon as possible? Kayla’s hematologist can determine whether he can transplant them immediately or if Ian’s donation will need to be frozen.”

“This sounds like a good plan, assuming Ian is of sound mind and able to sign off on all of the necessary documents to have the procedure performed. My concern is, however, in light of his recent behaviors and your completion of the bipolar symptoms checklist, that Ian would benefit from inpatient treatment for his disorder. If he returns home in this condition, he could put himself and/or others in danger. I’m not willing to take that chance,” Dr. G explained.

“So you’re sayin’ you’re gonna put him away involuntarily?” Mickey asked, beginning to bristle. “Actually, I was hoping you would sign off on a commitment for him, 72 hours to start, and then we can go from there. “Look at him. He seems fine!” Mickey objected, letting his emotions get the best of him.

“Mickey, with all due respect, Ian is currently on enough sedative medication to put a rhino down. You surely cannot judge his mental condition on his current status,” Doc added in support of Dr. G.

“Doctor, these are the police and EMS reports from the scene of Mr. Milkovich’s accident,” the nurse from Registration said as she handed the documents off to Dr. G. As he began reading to himself, Dr. G shook his head, “This is clearly more evidence to support the need for hospitalization.” He then began to read aloud from the police report:

“Mr. Milkovich sped away during a traffic stop, which had been made due to his erratic driving in excess of 60 mph in a 30 mph zone. He ignored continued attempts to get him to pull over, increasing his speed to 70 mph, while disregarding stop signs and lights, as well as the safety of other drivers and pedestrians. I pursued him until he struck a parked car, after which he jumped from his vehicle, taking flight on foot.

Once he was apprehended, which required the efforts of three police officers and two EMTs, he continued to fight medical care, using profanity and insulting language as he spoke incoherently at a rapid rate and high volume.”

“The EMT’s report goes on to describe that he required three sedative injections to…”

“I know! I know!” Mickey interrupted Dr. G. angrily, the reality of Ian’s need to be hospitalized no longer deniable in his mind. “Alright, so I can sign for him to be hospitalized then, right?” he asked. “Yes, there is a procedure for involuntary commitment that you, as his spouse can initiate,” Dr. G explained. “I can also do this, as his doctor, and based on the police report and your completed checklist.”
“So, basically he’s going, no matter what?” Mickey asked. “Yes,” Dr. G answered. “And this is why he will not be able to sign for the stem cell donor surgery—because he will be committed, based on an assumption of mental instability, which means he cannot be held legally accountable for anything he would sign.”

“Wait!” Doc interrupted. “Mickey has Medical Power of Attorney set up for situations like this. Can he sign for him?” “Legally, he can sign for anything he believes to be in Ian’s best medical interest,” Dr. G began. “I’m not sure if this fits the…” Doc interrupted, “The whole purpose behind the change in Ian’s medication regimen was for him to be able to make this donation! If getting that done and putting him back on his regular meds isn’t what’s best for him, then I don’t know what is!”

“Valid point, Michael. Let’s talk with her hematologist and her oncologist, and see what we can do!” Dr. G said enthusiastically, heading for the nurse’s station. “Meantime, what if he wakes up?”

Mickey asked Doc. “Actually, I would prefer him to be awake. This way, if he is at all lucid, we can explain everything to him. This biggest problem is going to be the fact that this hospital doesn’t have a psychiatric unit, and once Ian is committed, that’s where he would typically have to go...Let’s see what happens with the surgery situation first,” Doc finished.

Mickey watched as his beautiful husband slept peacefully, completely unaware of what lie in store for him, for what seemed like forever, completely forgetting about his mother, Yev, Johnny, Svetlana--everyone and everything, his focus 110% on Ian. “I love you,” he whispered into Ian’s ear, Ian’s eyelashes fluttering ever so slightly in response.

Dr. G walked back into the room. “I think we can do this!” he said encouragingly. “Hey, seems like he’s gonna wake up,” Mickey shared, “I saw his eyelashes move.” “It may still be a while. They gave him a hefty dose of sedatives,” Doc responded, “I have the paperwork for you to sign, Mickey, and once you do, we need to schedule the surgery for as soon as possible, since Ian needs to be transferred to Veracruz State Mental Health Hospital to receive the proper care for his current mental condition.”

“So how soon we talkin’?” Mickey questioned. “I’m hoping for tomorrow,” Dr. G replied. “And you’re gonna tell him he’s goin’ to the nut house after?” Mickey asked, his eyes welling up with tears. “Let’s take one thing at a time, Mickey,” Doc interjected, gesturing toward the clipboard Dr. G had just handed to him. Mickey reluctantly signed off on permission for the donor surgery, and for Ian’s involuntary commitment, immediately following the surgery.

Suddenly Mickey’s eye was caught by movement from Ian’s direction. He turned to see that Ian was struggling against his restraints and mumbling. Mickey walked back over to the bed, leaning down toward Ian’s mouth to listen to him.

“Fuck you...need that phone...you don’t understand...Fuck…” was all Mickey could make out amid a whole host of other unintelligible syllables. “Ian, I’m here and I love you. What are you…” Mickey stopped, mid-sentence, realizing all at once what Ian was talking about. “I’ll get it,” he breathed into Ian’s ear. “I’ll get it. Don’t worry.”

Almost instantly, Ian was still and silent. “Doc,” Mickey said softly, “I need to talk to ya---in private.”

Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone! Just wanted to let you know I am working on the new chapter and will
finish ASAP. "Red Line" is filming and I am an extra, so I've been busy!! Noel is so incredibly talented! I hope you all will watch the pilot on CBS!!
“Ian’s not manic!” Mickey blurted out, as soon as Doc met him outside the treatment room. “Mickey, I…” Doc began, but was instantly interrupted by Mickey. “He was only goin’ nuts cuz he needed to get a drop phone from the house. He musta gotten a message on his regular phone that made him do all that. I need that phone, Doc! It musta been somethin’ important…Shawn’s been keepin’ us updated on all the crazy shit at Chicago Memorial with my dad and Marco,” Mickey explained. “Marco?! Last I heard everything was settled!” Doc said, beginning to panic.

“No! No fuckin’ way! I’m gonna get those papers back and rip ‘em up!” Mickey threatened. “Oh, don’t do that, Mickey,” Doc warned. Dr. G can commit Ian himself, based on the documentation from the police. Let’s just get the surgery done, then we’ll see how Ian’s doing. Maybe, if what you say is true, Dr. G will see that Ian is fine, and the plans can be changed. Right now, we need to keep things as they are, and get your mom the transplant she needs. I know Ian would want that, too,” Doc pleaded, trying to talk some sense into Mickey.

“Mickey...Mickey...Where’s Mickey!?” Ian was yelling from his treatment room in a panic. Doc had gone back to the CCU to check on Kayla, but Dr. G was still there, attempting to reassure Ian that Mickey had just stepped out, and would be back, when he walked in, “I’m right here, Ian,” Mickey smiled, “and Reesie’s goin’ to get it,” he whispered, as he bent down to kiss Ian’s forehead.

“Uh...let’s get it ourselves,” Ian protested. “You gotta stay here. You feelin’ okay?” Mickey asked in an upbeat voice, trying to keep things positive. “I’m fine. Why would I need to stay here?” Ian asked, a look of confusion on his face. “Well, for one thing, you gotta have your donor surgery. You’re bloodwork came back and you’re ready!” Mickey said, once again with extra enthusiasm.
“Oh, yeah, well...we don’t have to do that anymore,” Ian responded, smiling widely. “What...what are you talkin’ about?” Mickey asked, feeling as if he’d just been punched in the gut. “We healed her, remember?” Ian asked, with a twinkle in his eye. “Wait...wha...when? Mickey asked, hoping Ian would come up with some logical reason for what he had just said.

“You know, when we were in her room!” he answered, as if Mickey should know exactly what he was talking about. “I...I don’t know what you mean!” Mickey squawked, his throat tightening more with each passing second. “Ma’s real sick. You know that! We been waitin’ for ya to be ready for a long time...and finally you are!” Mickey tried using logic.

“She’s not sick anymore!” Ian beamed, his eyes having a far off look that frightened Mickey. “...That sedative is still fuckin’ with his head!” Mickey rationalized. “Ian, just trust me. Ya gotta go have this surgery! Ma could die, if ya don’t. Cuz you gotta get back on your regular meds ASAP,” Mickey insisted.

“No, I don’t. She’s fine, and so am I!” Ian said, raising his voice. “Ian, that’s not true! You trust me?” Mickey pleaded, looking desperately into Ian’s eyes for something familiar, but finding a stranger instead. Mickey pulled out his phone, sending Doc a text: “Please come down here ASAP! We need you!”

Within seconds, Mickey’s phone was ringing; he stepped outside the room. “What’s wrong?” Doc asked, as soon as Mickey answered. “Ian...Ian...” was all Mickey could choke out before he completely broke down, sobbing into the phone. “I’m on my way,” Doc spoke compassionately, “Hold on, Mickey.”

“Mickey,” Dr. G began, joining Mickey in the hallway, once he ended his call to Doc, “Ian has definitely lost touch with reality. I feel certain he his having an acute manic episode, based on his current presentation. I’m not sure this hospital is equipped to handle his needs overnight. He may need to be transported to Veracruz State tonight, for his own safety.” “No!” Mickey replied emotionally, “I want those papers back! I’m not sendin’ him to a psych ward! I’ll just take him home for the night, and bring him back in the mornin’ for the surgery.”

“Mickey, you can’t handle him like this! He’s not himself. I know you can see that!” Dr. G said, appealing to Mickey’s rational side, which was out the window at this point. “Alright, what’s going on?” Doc asked as he raced down the hall in a state of near panic. Mickey looked at Doc, tears streaming down his face, but couldn’t get a single word out. “Ian thinks he no longer needs to have the surgery because he and Mickey healed Kayla,” Dr. G explained, “And he doesn’t think he needs his old meds back either.”

Before Doc could respond, Reesie came running down the hall toward Mickey with the drop phone, “Mickey! My God! Who is this from!?” she yelled, completely alarmed by what she had read. “Reesie, not now!” Mickey growled, clearly at his breaking point. “Doc! I ain’t sendin’ him to a psych ward! I’ll just take him home for the night, and bring him back in the mornin’ for the surgery!”

“I thought that was the plan,” Doc said, looking over at Dr. G. “Ian appears to be having a psychotic break, as I had suspected, based on his behavior leading up to and following his accident today. He seems to believe Kayla has been healed, and that he no longer needs to have the donor surgery. I am concerned that he may not be able to be contained in an ordinary hospital room, under these circumstances,” Dr. G spoke solemnly, addressing Doc’s unspoken question.

Reesie’s eyes widened, a look of extreme worry etched into her face. “Let me try and talk to him,” Doc suggested. “Please...” Mickey said in a barely audible whisper. Doc went into the room alone, Dr. G excusing himself to check on the status of another patient.
“Mickey,” Reesie begged, “I think you need to look at this phone NOW!” Mickey swallowed hard, knowing whatever was on that phone must be very serious, for Reesie to be reacting this way. He opened it, finding a series of texts from Shawn:

1st: “Think I got it done. I’ll confirm safe arrival.”  
2nd: “Another Russian admission - meat grinder special”  
3rd: “We have your boy. Give us our man, and you’ll get him back”

“Fuck!” Mickey screamed, pulling at the hair on the top of his head as he mulled the entire scenario over in his mind. The last text was obviously from someone other than Shawn, someone affiliated with his dad and/or the Russians, but what ‘boy’ were they referring to? Marco? Shawn? Another one of the Italians? His mind was racing.

“I gotta call Johnny...and probably Bigley, at this point,” Mickey muttered to Reesie, who was even more aghast after seeing Mickey’s reaction. Mickey was pacing like a caged animal, unable to think clearly enough to even make a move. “Mickey,” Reesie said, trying her best to sound calm and reassuring, “Look at me,” she commanded, stopping him in his tracks, then cupping his face in her hands to force eye contact, “What do you need to do first? Can I help?”

“I’m gonna call Johnny. See if he’s sobered up. He was passed out drunk at Frontera today when I left. He was real upset about all the shit that went down with his nephew, Marco,” Mickey explained, somehow mustering the courage to deal with even more shit, amid the growing pile he found himself at the center of.

“Can you call Bigley...see if he’s aware of all this shit?” Mickey asked. “Sure, but I don’t have his...” “Here,” Mickey interrupted Reesie, forwarding Bigley’s contact information to her. “Just tell him about the texts. Hopefully he can fill in the fuckin’ blanks!” Mickey added, tossing Reesie the drop phone. “Got it!” she said, disappearing down the hall, so they could both speak without interference from the other’s phone call.

Before Mickey could make his call, Doc stepped out of Ian’s room. “I think I got through to him. He has agreed to stay and have the surgery, but he still isn’t himself...at all. Mickey, I think you should try to accept the idea that Ian needs mental health treatment. Putting him back onto the lithium will not instantly make him better, and he will go through, as I said before, a period of adjustment, not unlike the one he experienced when he first started taking this medication.”

“So we let him fuckin’ adjust,” Mickey argued. “He has told me stories of what you and he went through when he first started taking his bipolar meds. He was not willing to stay on them when they made him ‘not feel’, as he put it. He may very well try to avoid taking them again. This is why I say getting his meds regulated in a controlled setting will likely be the best for all concerned. You have kids to consider now, too. And your mother, when she gets out of the hospital,” Doc spoke frankly, Mickey shaking his head in disbelief.

“Why aren’t you on our side? Is Ian nothin’ more than a fuckin’ donor to you?” Mickey lashed out at Doc. “Fuck! Johnny’s nephew’s life is in danger cuz of all this bullshit with my dad, and now I don’t even know if Shawn’s safe...Jesus...can ya cut me some fuckin’ slack here? Just...I need Ian at fuckin’ home after this surgery. I’ll take care of him. I did it before, and I can fuckin’ do it again, damnit!” Mickey was ranting, blazing a trail, back and forth, covering the full length of the hallway outside the treatment rooms.

“Mickey,” Doc stood in front of him, “If there’s any way we can safely make that happen, I promise I’ll find it. But you have to trust me. If Ian is too sick to come home, you have to let him get the help he needs,” Doc said in a low, patient tone. “I promise,” he repeated, pulling Mickey into his arms, “You know I love you both like you are my own sons.”
“Can you fuckin’ call Johnny then? See what he knows?” Mickey requested, pulling back and eyeing the opening in the curtain for Ian’s treatment room, “I gotta see Ian.” Mickey pushed through the curtain, looking at his husband, who was again sleeping peacefully. “I ordered him a bit more sedative. The nurse added it to his IV, just a few moments ago, so he should sleep for a while,” Dr. G began. “Why?” Mickey barked with an attitude. “He was getting agitated, and I know you want him here, up until the surgery. I really think we will need to keep him calm, using medication, in order to accomplish that,” Dr. G clarified.

Mickey approached Ian’s bed, sitting next to him, then lowering himself to lay his head on Ian’s chest. He sighed deeply, tears rolling down the side of his face, landing on Ian’s hospital gown. “Fuck, Ian! I need you!” Mickey breathed, “You gotta be okay. Ya just have to.”

The Unraveling

Mickey stood up from the bed, kissing Ian’s lips lightly before turning to stare at Doc and Reesie. “Well, I could use some fuckin’ good news right now,” Mickey responded. “Okay” Reesie began, “We each have some of that. First, Ian is scheduled for his donor surgery tomorrow!” “And your mom will be able to receive the transplant right away!” Doc finished.

Mickey was so happy and overwrought with emotion, he started to cry, wiping his tears away with embarrassment. “And...the bad news?” he asked reluctantly, wondering what it could be, and hoping it wasn’t as bad as he feared. “Well, first of all,” Doc began, “Bigley didn’t answer, which I told Reesie might be because he didn’t recognize her number. You or I should try calling.” “Okay...so that might not be a big deal,” Mickey said, breathing a sigh of relief. “But there’s more,” Reesie said softly, looking down at the floor. “What?! What is it?!” Mickey asked, his stomach beginning to churn uncontrollably.

“I talked to Johnny,” Doc responded, “Apparently, he got word that Marco was to be transferred by ambulance to Mt. Sinai Hospital...but he never arrived.” “Oh fuck! How...how long ago was he transferred?” Mickey stammered, feeling nauseous. “According to what Chicago Memorial told Johnny, it was around 2:30,” Doc replied. “And what time is it now?” Mickey asked.

“Uh...it’s 7:30,” Reesie answered, “And I gotta get home. I left Mikhaila with Brach, and she still needs a bath before bed. “Go!” Doc told her. “Yeah, thanks for everything, Reesie!” Mickey said gratefully, hugging her into him before she left. “Gonna go say goodbye to Ian before I head out,” she said, walking over to Ian’s bed and bending down to kiss his cheek. “I love you, bro! You got this! I know you hear me. We’re gonna get through this, just like we always do,” she whispered into his ear. “Please keep me updated,” Reesie called over her shoulder, as she headed for the hallway. “Will do!” Doc replied.

“There’s an open bed, next to Kayla,” Dr. G announced as he strode into the room. “Due to the unusual circumstances, I was able to have Ian admitted to the CCU, and he will be housed with Kayla overnight. Of course, it did help that Veracruz State is at full capacity, and the next closest mental health facility is nearly four hours away---hardly an ideal scenario, given Ian’s upcoming, time-sensitive surgery. The CCU is the only unit, other than the ER, where we are legally permitted to use restraints, which I am planning to do, in order to guarantee Ian’s safety, as well as those around him,” Dr. G clarified.

“That’s excellent! How soon will they be moving him?” Doc asked. “It should be any time now. Just waiting on his labs, but they can be sent to me up there, just as easily,” Dr. G answered. “Oh? What labs did you run?” Doc asked. “The resident ran all of the routine blood-work for an individual presenting with an altered state of consciousness, so that includes a CBC, Glucose Test, Blood Alcohol Content and Drug Screen,” Dr. G responded.

“You gonna stay with Ma overnight?” Mickey asked Doc. “I wouldn’t be anywhere else,” he replied, feeling guilty for thinking he should leave to prepare Yev for Svet’s arrival. “So, before you start to feel guilty,” Doc started off, seeming to have read Mickey’s mind, “As I said before, your place is with your son, to help him through what has got to be an anxious time for him. It’s bad enough that Ian can’t be there. You need to be,” Doc asserted his opinion, feeling strongly enough about it, and about Mickey and his family, not to care if Mickey thought he was intruding.

“But...” Mickey stared over at Ian, feeling as if the earth were falling away from under his feet, a mile a minute. “Mickey...I’ll watch over him. If he wakes up, I’ll tell him what he already knows—that you love him. I’ll also let him know that you are taking care of Yev. Trust me, that will give him
more peace of mind than you may realize. He loves you and that kid to the ends of the earth. Talks about you guys at work all the time, like the two of you walk on water!” Doc chuckled as he recalled a recent story Ian had told about a fancy dinner he had prepared with Yev, for Mickey.

“What? What’s so funny?” Mickey asked, demanding to know what Doc could possibly be laughing about, at a time like this. When Doc told the story, Mickey started to tear up as he remembered how wonderful that whole night had been. Sheer perfection, down to the last bite, the last kiss, the last touch! Damn, if Ian wasn’t a fucking angel, Mickey didn’t know what he was!

“Okay, Doc, gonna leave him in your hands and get Yev. Please don’t let them move him outta this hospital! I don’t care what you gotta do! Just fuckin’ keep him here, okay?” Mickey implored him.

“You have my word,” Doc replied, “Whatever it takes.” As Mickey turned on his heel to leave, Ian’s phone and the drop phone buzzed simultaneously. “What the fuck!?” Mickey exclaimed, looking at both phones, each having received the same message from Shawn’s phone: “What was done will be avenged. We know who and where you are. Only a matter of time.”

An icy chill ran down Mickey’s spine, the color draining from his face as he stared at both phones in terrified disbelief. “What is it, Mickey? You look like you need to sit down for a minute,” Doc insisted, pushing him into a seated position at the foot of the bed. Mickey sat motionless, dazed, as if in a trance. Doc looked over his shoulder, reading the message. “Who sent that!?” Doc demanded frantically.

“They think they’re gonna fuck with Ian,” Mickey whispered, as if to prevent Ian from hearing him, a deadly calm suddenly washing over him, as he absorbed all of his anger and pain, hiding it away, controlling it, reserving it for just the right time. “Over my dead fuckin’ body,” he muttered under his breath in a low, menacing tone, clenching his fists so tightly that his knuckles turned white. “Mickey, just stick to the plan. Go get Yev, and we’ll get through this surgery, and…” Doc reasoned, Mickey cutting him off. “I ain’t leavin’ him. Not for a single fuckin’ second!” Mickey insisted, counting to ten to maintain his cool, if only for Ian’s benefit.

“Mickey, this is all my fault,” Doc said softly, focusing on the wall clock because he couldn’t bear to look at Mickey’s face. “Doc, just fuckin’ don’t! We all wanted Ma to be free of that piece of shit so you two could get married. And it’s gonna happen now. I just gotta protect my fuckin’ husband…cuz…right now…he’s fuckin’ defenseless!” Mickey’s voice cracked, his eyes firmly fixed on Ian’s tranquil countenance, which somehow, in conjunction with Ian’s obliviousness to it all, brought Mickey some small measure of comfort.

Mickey stood, stepping away from Ian’s bed to call Manuel, “Hey, need ya to keep Yev, take him to meet Svet...whatever he wants,” Mickey said in a low, serious voice, as soon as Manuel answered. “Wait! What’s going on, Ojos?” Manuel questioned. “I’ll fill ya in later. Just gotta stay here. I have other communication, if you do…” Mickey entreated him.

About five minutes later, Mickey got a call on his drop phone from an unknown number. He picked up the call and listened, “Ojos!” Manuel said quietly. “Yeah,” Mickey grunted, stepping further from Ian’s bed, but never taking his eyes off him.

“Listen, they have Shawn’s goddamn phone! Who knows what the fuck they did to him?! And they’re makin’ threats against Ian on his drop phone and his main one! I ain’t leavin’ this fuckin’ hospital without him, so…” Mickey paused as a nurse and orderly walked in, preparing Ian to be moved up to the CCU.

“Why Ian? What kind of threats?” Manuel asked. “Look, there’s too much...I...I gotta go. Try gettin’ a holda Johnny or Bigley, from this number. See what the fuck they know,” Mickey entreated him
anxiously, ending the call abruptly to follow Ian’s gurney into the elevator. “I’m still here, Ian. Not goin’ anywhere ‘til you do,” Mickey assured his unconscious mate in earnest.

Doc stepped into the elevator behind them all, aggrieved at the colossal clusterfuck he believed himself to have caused, and praying that no one else would have to suffer as a result of his bull-headedness, although, in his heart of hearts, he knew better. “Mickey, I’m so sorry!” Doc lamented. “Just keep your fuckin’ promise,” Mickey mumbled, taking Ian’s limp hand into his own and lovingly brushing over it with his thumb, a look of utter despair carved into his brow, and seeping downward over his eyes and mouth.

Just as the elevator door opened, Ian’s phone buzzed. It was a call from an unknown, unfamiliar number. Mickey ignored it, choosing not to get into a potentially volatile conversation in the presence of hospital staff, and also preferring not to take any calls on Ian’s phone, under the circumstances. Once Ian was settled in his new bed, and Mickey had peeked over at his mother, he decided to call the mystery number back, on his drop phone. “Hello!” Bigley’s brash, raspy voice boomed through the drop phone’s tiny speaker. “Bruno!” Mickey said with great relief. “Reesie tried to get ya earlier…” Mickey began to explain. “No...no...Mickey...just listen,” Bigley said in the most serious voice Mickey had ever heard, coming from him. “We just landed. I’m arranging for transport to the clinic, and need to know if Ian, Doc or Reesie can be there to at least open the doors. Shawn will stay with him,” Bigley paused, awaiting a response. “Sorry Bruno, but I don’t know what you’re talkin’ about. I’m in the hospital right now with Ian and my mother…” Mickey started again, trying to get a word in.

“Shawn left a voicemail at the clinic,” Bigley interjected again, “after trying to communicate with Ian using the burner without success. Figured someone got the message and would respond, but after we landed, Shawn looked for his phone and it’s missing, so we had no way of knowing whether Ian, Doc or Reesie were aware we’d be coming.”

“Bruno, listen, I don’t know who you’re plannin’ to bring to the clinic, but if Shawn called the clinic from his phone, then the Russians know where the clinic is by now,” Mickey tried to explain. “Mickey, I don’t understand, how would…”

Mickey cut Bigley off, “Cuz they have Shawn’s fuckin’ phone! Been makin’ threats. Sendin’ ‘em from Shawn’s phone to Ian’s cell and his drop phone. They’re comin’ after Ian!” Mickey hissed, getting more steamed up by the second. “Then we gotta find somewhere safe for him, and will need to set up medical facilities there. He and Shawn can care for Marco together. How about one of the factory rooms?” Bigley suggested, out of desperation.

“Marco?” Mickey questioned incredulously. “Yes! Shawn arranged for him to be transferred to Mt. Sinai, but then I got word that the Russians planned to intercept him, so I arranged with Shawn to cut his shift short and accompany Marco to Mexico, since he was coming to stay with you anyway,” Bigley clarified, pausing momentarily to silence Shawn, who had been trying to tell him something as he was talking.

Bigley continued, “Some of my guys helped to quickly replace Marco with a dummy in the ambulance, while the EMT was being briefed by the unit clerk at the nurse’s station. He told the driver he was setting up Marco’s IVs.”

“Yeah, and I must have dropped my phone in the back of the ambulance!” Shawn interrupted, completely shaken by the implications of what he had done, as they slowly began to dawn on him.

“Yeah, well, I can tell ya one thing, they were fuckin’ pissed when they found out!. And now they got Ian’s phone numbers---both of ’em---and they fuckin’ know where he works, so…” Mickey trailed off, thinking better of ripping Bigley a new asshole at the last second and deciding, instead, to
punch something. Luckily, there was an extra pillow available to cushion the impact, and save his hand from a repeat injury.

Bigley was rattled, and speechless, a combination Mickey had never before witnessed with him. "Hold...hold on...here’s Doc," Mickey muttered, utterly unnerved by the whole conversation and the information it had yielded, a feeling that he and Bigley currently shared. He passed the phone to Doc, who had been looking on from Kayla’s side, throughout the entire conversation, up to and including the pillow punch.

“Michael,” Bigley’s voice came through the phone, lacking its usual, confident power. “Bruno, before you say anything, you should know that both Kayla and Ian are in the CCU. Mickey and I are with them right now. The donor surgery for Ian, and the transplant for Kayla are both scheduled to be done here at Boca General tomorrow. Additionally,” Doc paused, looking over at Mickey, then attempting to put the next bit of information as delicately as possible, “Ian is having some mental health issues presently, incident to his medication change, that his psychiatrist and I are quite concerned about.

“The safety of everyone involved is top priority, and I need to find a safe medical facility for Marco, first and foremost,” Bigley stated flatly.

“What about Ian?!” Mickey yelled. “He’s at fuckin’ risk, too! Are you sayin’ this hospital ain’t safe? Cuz if it’s not, I’m takin’ him and we’re gettin’ the fuck outta here. I got somewhere I can take him, where no one will fuckin’ find us!” Mickey wailed, having gone completely off the rails at this point.

“Mickey,” Doc said, his mouth hanging open in total incredulity, “What about your mother?!”

“FUCK!!!!!” Mickey screamed, so loudly that one of the nurse’s rushed in. “Sir, you’re going to have to be quiet, or I’ll have to ask you to leave.” “Like HELL you fuckin’ will!” Mickey thundered, collapsing onto the bed next to Ian and entwining his body with Ian’s as he sobbed into his chest, “Ian! Wake the fuck up! Ian! Please! Help me!”
Doc and Bigley continued to discuss options, including the wine cellar at Frontera, the new building for Surfin’, and Bigley’s beach house. In the end, however, they decided that one of the fortified rooms in the crow’s nest of the factory would be best, for the time being, although, if the factory needed to be vacated by its workers, due to a serious threat, getting supplies in and out could prove to be quite difficult, if Marco and Shawn were to remain there.

Bigley felt the possibility of an attack on the factory was remote, since Manuel was listed as owner for that property, given the fact that Mickey was a fugitive when they had purchased it initially. The second factory, on the other hand, had Mickey’s name associated with it, naturally putting it at greater risk, along with their home on the beach, which Mickey and Ian had put into their names, following their return to Mexico after Mickey’s exoneration.

The safety of the fortified factory rooms, as Doc knew from experience, surpassed that of any other option as well. The walls were fireproof, soundproof and could withstand explosives, even, but the continued need for medical supplies and food would require them to be well-stocked in advance. Doc knew this was possible, but was concerned about unforeseen circumstances that might necessitate more or different supplies than they could possibly anticipate. He hoped this wouldn’t be the case.

The next problem was that Brach was currently occupying one of the rooms, and Svetlana was slated to take the other, within a matter of hours. Even if Brach were to be relocated, having Svetlana next door to the operation, thinking she could come and go freely, and nosing around, would definitely be less than ideal.

Mickey was silent throughout the entire discussion, pressing himself as tightly to Ian’s tethered body as possible, and stroking his face with his fingers intermittently, while calling his name, hoping that, by some miracle, Ian’s eyes would open and he would be his old self again.

“So, what does Mickey think?” Bigley asked, after he and Doc had hashed out a majority of the plans., “I’d have to ask him. He’s...he’s...well, he’s lying here, clinging to Ian for dear life,” Doc all but whispered into the phone, pausing to snap a quick picture of Mickey, securely wrapped around Ian, then sending it immediately to Bigley. “Oh, for Christ’s sake! He looks like he’s scared to death!” Bigley acknowledged, before adding, “No more pics!”

“You really need to see the texts that came through on Ian’s phone. This is serious! Marco is far from the only one at risk here. I think,”, Doc responded, walking over to tap Mickey on the shoulder, then holding the phone so he could hear both ends of the conversation, “and I’m sure Mickey agrees, that Ian AND Kayla are in danger. At any moment, one of the Russians could arrive and easily track them down in a public hospital,” Doc finished, Mickey adding, “Yeah! I don’t think we can do this here tomorrow! Too fuckin’ risky! We gotta get ‘em the fuck outta here!” Mickey piped up, leaning up onto his elbow, his attention still focused on Ian.

“Who’s performing the surgery?” Bigley asked. “Dr. Garcia, the hematologist on staff here,” Doc responded. “Get me his number! He’s gonna do it tonight! And I’ll be sending some of Boca’s finest to ensure that there is no outside interference.” “Bruno, It’s Friday night! This guy could be six drinks deep by now,” Mickey warned. “I fuckin’ would be, if I had some,” he continued, his eyes still completely transfixed by Ian’s profound beauty and unwitting vulnerability.

“Doc! See if you can get hold of him! If he can’t do it, we’ll find someone who will! Hell, you can do it, if you can’t find anyone else!” Bigley ranted, overcome with emotion himself, after seeing
Ian’s lifeless form and the obviously terrified state Mickey was in, then adding what was always the case, when it came to Bigley and the people he cared for, “Money is no object!”

“Okay, I’ll be in touch!” Doc promised, stepping away from Mickey and Ian to check on Kayla, who was awake and doing her best to smile at the sight of him. He smiled back, bending to kiss her, then added, “In the meantime, someone needs to tell Brach to vacate the first room in the crow’s nest, and I’d prefer if Yev’s mother stayed elsewhere as well.” Kayla nodded her approval, after hearing those words. “We’re going to need the space anyway...for my family!” he beamed, squeezing Kayla’s hand with his own.

“Yes, I understand she has ties to the Russian mob. She’s the last person we need there! Did Mickey use the car company?” Bigley asked. “Yes,” Mickey called out from Ian’s bed. “Good! I’ll call and have them take her to a hotel in Mexico City for the night,” Bigley resolved. “And someone needs to gather the necessary materials to set up the crow’s nest,” Doc rattled off, working himself up into a tizzy as he started a list.

“Wait!” Mickey interjected, Doc handing the phone off to him, “My son’s expectin’ to see his mother tonight. Been lookin’ forward to it since the minute he found out she was comin’.” “I understand,” Bigley croaked, “but under the circumstances, he’s gonna have to wait. Where is he now?” “He’s with Mandy and Manuel,” Mickey answered.

“And that’s the best place for him. You or someone needs to explain to him that her plane is coming in late, and that he can see her in the morning. Of course, that will be pending the outcome of tonight. This really isn’t the time for her to be coming. And I know that’s not what you wanna hear, Mickey,” Bigley sighed in frustration, feeling Mickey’s pain in having to disappoint his little boy.

Doc’s call to Kayla’s hematologist had already gone through from his cell phone before Bigley could tell him to use the drop phone; he had gotten so caught up in his conversation with Mickey, regarding Svetlana and Yev, that he didn’t realize Doc had made the call. “Done! And he’s going to bill normally. He was actually happy to get this taken care of tonight!” Doc announced happily, adding, “And he’s contacting the on-call anesthesiologist, so everything is covered.”

“That’s great, Michael! This is the time that we need to get all our ducks in a row,” Bigley praised Doc. “Yes, I know. I made a preliminary list of needed items for Marco’s care, but Shawn may need to add to it, based on what he knows about Marco’s condition,” Doc explained. “And I can have all supplies delivered first-thing tomorrow morning from the same supply company we use for the clinic.”

“I need to arrange for Marco and Shawn’s transport to the factory. Will someone be there to let them in?” Bigley asked. “Brach should be there,” Mickey responded, “but I’ll make sure he is. How soon’ll they be there?” “The unmarked box truck I sent for just arrived, so they should be there within the hour. Shawn just started to move the supplies from the jet; then we’ll need to secure Marco. “Okay, I’ll call Brach now. Svet’s room is well-stocked with food, so we’re set there,” Mickey said, his mood having brightened slightly at the realization that there was at least a plan for keeping Ian and his mother safe.

“I need to use this phone,” Mickey continued, “Can Doc send ya a list of supplies on email?” “No, I’m not willing to take that chance. Michael, call me when Mickey’s done,” Bigley instructed, his voice becoming lower and even more raspy than usual. “Yeah, okay, he will. Thanks!” Mickey spoke rapidly, ending the call, scrolling through his own phone to find Brach’s number, then dialing it from the drop phone.

Brach picked up just before the call went to voicemail, sounding like he had been interrupted. “Hello?!” Brach answered breathlessly. “Am I gettin’ ya at a bad time?” Mickey asked, feeling
fairly confident that he had, but not really giving a shit, under the circumstances. “Well, uh…” Brach stuttered, lifting himself up from Reesie’s bed, Reesie sighing with exasperation. “Sorry, Brach...but this is real fuckin’ important,” Mickey began. “I take it you’re not in your room at the factory,” Mickey continued, stating the obvious. “Uh...no…” Brach answered, already beginning to dress, in anticipation of Mickey’ instructions. “I need ya to get there and pack some shit. You’re gonna have to find somewhere else to stay for now. Somehow I don’t think that’s gonna be a problem,” Mickey snickered.

“Okay…” Brach replied, completely baffled by Mickey’s request. “I do need ya to stay there ’til they get there,” Mickey added cryptically. “Until who gets there?” Brach questioned. “Shawn and Marco,” Mickey answered. Reesie knows Shawn. Just get there, please? And call me once they get there. Use one of the drop phones in the office desk drawer,” Mickey barked, ending the call suddenly, then making one to Manuel’s drop phone. “Ojos!” Manuel whispered, picking up on the first ring, “What’s goin’ on?” he asked in a concerned tone.

“Look...uh...are you...are you away from the family?” Mickey asked. “I am now,” Manuel responded, stepping into his kitchen. “Okay, good. The shit’s hit the fan in a big fuckin’ way. Ian and Ma are havin’ their surgery tonight, and Marco and Shawn are comin’ to the factory. Settin’ up a hospital room in the room I prepped for Svet. Brach’s room’s also gonna have to be used, so I told him he’s gotta get out,” Mickey spewed hurriedly, sticking to the bare bones info for the sake of expediency.

“But what about…” Manuel started, Mickey anticipating the question and responding before Manuel could finish his thought, “Svetlana’s gonna stay at a hotel in Mexico City for the night. Bigley’s arrangin’ that. So I gotta tell Yev, and you’re gonna have to keep him until further notice. It’s not fuckin’ safe for him to be around me or Ian right now. I’m sorry to…”

“Manuel cut him off, “Don’t give it a second thought. Mandy and I are here for you guys, always, Ojos, and we’ll keep Yev safe...Can you tell me what you are going to say to Yev, so I can be consistent?”

“I’m gonna say Svet’s plane is late. As for why he has to stay with you, I’m open to fuckin’ suggestions...Fuck! I hate doin’ this to him!” Mickey hissed, exhaling forcefully through his nose. “I think you should tell him about the surgery, and that you may not see him for a while because you have to be with Ian. We can update him as time goes on, but you have to keep us in the loop...and I have to share this with Mandy,” Manuel offered honestly.

“Perfect! And fuck yeah, tell Mandy! I just didn’t want the kids hearin’ what I’m about to say,” Mickey said, introducing the sensitive subject of the amount of danger they were actually in. “Manuel,” Mickey’s voice was barely audible through the phone at this point, “the Russians think Ian ordered the hit on my fuckin’ dad. I can’t get into the details, but they know who he is, where he lives AND where he works. We’re gonna be in hidin’ for awhile. I have no fuckin’ idea when I’ll be able to get Yev, and who the fuck knows what Svetlana might try to pull? I know this is a huge fuckin’ burden, but you’re the only ones I trust to keep our son outta harm’s way.”

“I got you, Ojos. We love you guys, and will do whatever it takes. Know that, and don’t hesitate to ask us for anything you need,” Manuel reassured Mickey. “Thanks, man,” Mickey said, breathing a sigh of relief. “Can I talk to Yev now?” he asked, dreading this conversation, yet still wanting---needing---to hear his son’s voice. "Daddy's on the phone, Yev,” Manuel called to him, Yev full-on running to the kitchen.

“Hi Daddy!” Yev’s little voice chirped. “Hey, little man! How ya doin’?” Mickey asked, feeling his stomach tightening as he prepared to break Yev’s heart. “Where are you? I miss you! Is Daddy Ian
“Okay?” he asked, shattering Mickey’s heart into a million pieces. “Yev,” Mickey began, his voice betraying him as it shook uncontrollably, “I’m at the hospital with Grandma and Daddy Ian. They’re havin’ their surgery tonight to make Grandma better, but they’re both gonna need time to heal afterward, so it might be awhile before…”

“It’s okay, Daddy. As long as they’re getting well,” Yev addressed him with an understanding that was beyond his years. Then came the knife-twister, “Besides, Mommy’s gonna be here! She can take care of me! I can’t wait to see her tonight!” Yev shouted with excitement.

“Yev...her...her plane’s gettin’ in late tonight, so you’re gonna have to stay with Aunt Mandy and Uncle Manuel for now. Then we’ll figure things out for tomorrow,” Mickey concluded, trying to keep things as vague as possible. “But Daddy...I...I wanna see Mommy,” Yev whimpered. “C’mere, Yev,” Mickey could hear Mandy calling to him.

“Ojos? You still there?” Manuel asked, picking the phone up from the counter, where Yev had thrown it down, before running into Mandy’s arms, sobbing. “Yeah, I’m here,” Mickey sniffed, hearing and feeling his son’s disappointment. “Mandy’s got him. Don’t worry about us over here. Focus on all this other stuff. That’s what you need to do right now,” Manuel reasoned. “I know,” Mickey acknowledged, “Thanks again, man.”

“All set,” Mickey called over to Doc, tossing the phone to him as he approached from Kayla’s side of the room. Doc caught the phone, addressing Mickey before calling Bigley with the supply list. “They’re prepping the OR, and two policemen have arrived to stand guard,” Doc informed Mickey. Mickey stared fearfully at Doc, as he came to realize that Ian and Kayla’s surgery was imminent.

Mickey turned back toward Ian, tracing every exquisite contour of his finely-chiseled face with his eyes, as if to memorize it, in case he never saw him again, then leaning down to kiss his forehead, his eyelids, his nose, each of his cheeks, his chin, then finally, his lips, where he lingered, breathing Ian’s essence in deeply. Doc’s voice cut suddenly into Mickey’s private moment with his husband, startling him, “You should know that Ian’s bloodwork came back normal and completely clean, not a single trace of drugs or alcohol...not even his meds.”
Cat and Mouse

Mickey’s head was spinning. He was scarcely aware of Doc pulling him from the bed so Ian could be prepped for transfer to the OR. His eyes were still fixed on Ian as he was being helped out of the way, but everything was blurry, Ian’s face and his surroundings barely discernible from one another. It wasn’t until Ian was being wheeled away, that Mickey’s presence of mind returned, his mouth forming the word, “Wait!” as he struggled to push the corresponding sound from his dry, constricted throat.

Mickey watched helplessly as Ian’s gurney disappeared down the hall and into the elevator, bound for the OR, followed by his mother’s, which was parked in the hallway, awaiting the next car. “Doc,” Mickey was finally able to squeeze hoarsely past his lips, exerting considerable effort to do so, “I wanna go in!” he insisted. “Mickey, I’m not even going in,” Doc explained. “The medical team is already scrubbed and ready to perform the surgeries. Us going in would only hold things up. We can stay in the waiting area, just outside,” Doc continued in a soft, soothing voice that somehow seemed to get through to Mickey, calming him a bit.

“Allright,” Mickey answered, joining Doc and his mother in the elevator. “I love you, Ma! Can’t wait to put all this behind us,” he said with a smile that reminded Kayla of when he was a small child. He had always tried to cheer her up when things were bad at the house, and the brightness of her son’s smile, even in the face of the most horrific of situations, had always given her inspiration to persevere, to take Terry on, the best she knew how, and to protect her beautiful children at all costs.

“Can I at least see him before they start?” Mickey pleaded as the elevator opened, revealing Ian’s gurney, sitting stationary, outside the OR. “Hurry up!” Doc whispered, motioning for him to go straight over. Mickey darted across the hall, stopping just short of the head end of Ian’s gurney. As he gazed affectionately down at his lover, he couldn’t fathom a world wherein Ian would have intentionally not taken his medication. ‘No way....No fuckin’ way’, Mickey repeated to himself, as he felt the rage and hurt that he’d buried, welling up inside him.

Still, he wasn’t angry with Ian, but with himself, for not seeing the signs more clearly, for not getting to the bottom of the reason behind Ian’s recent fall, for subjecting him to the stress of dealing with his mother’s illness, and with Svetlana---for not being a better husband, and for failing to protect him.

God only knows what he would have to deal with after this surgery! A manic, out-of-control Ian that would put the safety of all concerned at risk? An overly-medicated zombie, scarcely able to understand the reality of the current situation? A depressed, possibly suicidal Ian, incapable of caring about himself or anyone else? No one could say with any certainty which Ian would surface. One thing Mickey was sure of—he’d lost the Ian he knew and loved, and he didn’t know how, when, or if he would get him back!

Mickey kissed Ian’s motionless lips tenderly, his unrequited affection stirring him to tears. “Ian...love you,” he whispered into Ian’s ear, as he wept quietly. “Sir,” the orderly interrupted in a low voice that startled Mickey, nonetheless, “they’re ready for him.” Mickey turned away, choosing not to watch the final leg of Ian’s journey, and not to be seen by medical staff in his current emotional state.

As he walked away from the OR entrance, he could see two uniformed police officers, one stationed outside the elevators, the other in front of the door to the stairwell. “Yeah, this is the nut-job I chased down a few hours ago,” Mickey heard one say to the other, rolling his eyes. Upon closer examination, he recognized the one by the stairs as the asshole who had pulled him over, and had been tailing him fairly consistently ever since. “Hey! McBride!” Mickey yelled, reading off the cop’s name-tag, seeming to miraculously have found his voice, once he had targeted a deserving recipient
for his pent-up fury.

“Whoa! Mickey! Let’s just...take a breather here,” Doc said nervously, reaching out to hold Mickey back by his flexed upper arms, which had instantaneously tensed up to support his raised fists. “...The fuck you doin’ here?” Mickey growled. “Watching over you and your psycho husband---like I have been for the past week or so,” McBride sneered. “Yeah?” Mickey countered angrily, shaking Doc’s grip and advancing further in McBride’s direction. “Who the fuck asked ya to do that?” Mickey barked, then taking a deep breath, clearly trying to contain his rage, for the sake of his mother, who was looking on in horror, as she awaited her entry into the OR.

“I have orders from my chief,” he answered. “Yeah...your orders include talkin’ shit on my husband?” Mickey remarked snidely. “You don’t know what we went through, trying to catch him,” McBride replied, attempting to defend his previous, unsavory comment. “You don’t fuckin’ know Ian, and you got no idea what the fuck he’s goin’ through right now!” Mickey snapped back protectively.

“What Mickey means to say,” Doc began, having been sent over by Kayla to diffuse the situation, “is that he appreciates your protection, but he doesn’t like the way you spoke about his spouse, who is bravely donating stem cells for my fiance today, despite his altered mental state, which was brought on by a medication change that became necessary, in order for him to make the lifesaving donation. He deserves your respect, and I’m quite certain Mr. Bigley will agree that you have not given him that, once I tell him what you said here today.”

“Uh...I’m sorry if I spoke out of turn. It’s been a long night for all of us. Mr. Milkovich, I hope you will accept my sincerest apologies...I was out of line,” McBride addressed Mickey, backpedaling after the mention of Bigley’s name. “Yeah, just don’t let anyone fuck with my family, and we’re cool,” Mickey responded, his face still sporting the signature Milkovich scowl.

Within minutes, Kayla was wheeled through the OR doors, leaving Mickey and Doc to sit and wait. As they sat silently in the waiting area, they heard the drop phone buzz. Mickey picked it up, holding it to his ear. “Who?” Bigley’s voice asked, in little more than a whisper. “Me,” Mickey replied, also speaking in a low voice. “They’re in!” Bigley shared, Mickey motioning for Doc to sit next to him so he could hear all that Bigley had to say. “And Doc needs to close the clinic---indefinitely. I’ve got men headed there to remove the sign right now.”

“What about Svet?” Mickey asked. “Hogar Elegante in Mexico City. Got her slated to stay for a while. We’ll get Yev there to see her tomorrow, one way or another,” Bigley assured Mickey. “As for you two, and our patients, I have arranged for transport to the factory. Call me when everyone is ready. Doc, see how much you can bring with you, in the way of medical supplies. Brach is in the process of packing up his things, so we will have both rooms available. I’ll know better by tomorrow how guarded we need to be, in that regard.

“Bruno...I...we...owe you our lives,’ Doc piped up. “Yeah, man. You gave me and Ian the chance at a better life than I thought was possible. I ain’t gonna forget that...ever. Thanks, man,” Mickey added. “You’re most welcome! You all are like family to me. Just do me one favor...” Bigley croaked. “Anything!” Mickey promised. “When I tell ya to do something or to stay somewhere, do it! Your safety depends on it.” Bigley warned ominously.

“I’m gonna need more IV antibiotics,” Shawn muttered under his breath, adding to the list he had scrawled on a partially-used Ojos Azules notepad. He wasn’t used to going so ‘old school’, but without his phone, he had no choice. “Here,” Brach called out, tossing a drop phone at Shawn as he walked into the room Shawn and Marco now occupied in the crow’s nest. “Kitchen’s fully stocked.
You should have everything you need,” he added, Shawn immediately putting his hand up to stop Brach from walking away.

“Hey, thanks, but I really need all this stuff,” he said, tearing the list off the top of the tablet and handing it to Brach. “I can’t get any of this,” Brach responded. “Let’s call Bigley,” Shawn suggested. “You got his number?” Brach asked, then realizing they needed to use drop phones only, and that Shawn very likely didn’t have Bigley’s number memorized anyway. Bigley had opted not to give Shawn a phone, once he realized his was missing. He felt it was an unnecessary risk, and that he could get one at the factory, once he and Marco had arrived safely.

“Nevermind,” Brach continued, “I’ll call Mickey. He’ll know what to do.” Brach dialed Mickey’s drop phone from his own, Mickey picking up on the half-ring. “Yo,” he answered in a gruff voice. “Shawn’s got a list of medical stuff he needs…” Brach began. “Doc!” Mickey yelled, Doc’s voice coming through the speaker within seconds, “Yes, Brach?” “I’m just gonna let you talk to Shawn,” Brach reasoned.

Shawn and Doc talked for the better part of a half hour, discussing Marco’s condition, needed supplies, Ian and Kayla’s prognoses, and how best to handle the upcoming weeks, which they might very well spend trying to treat three severely injured/ill patients, while in hiding. The call ended with Doc assuring Shawn that supplies would be delivered to the back dock at the factory, sometime the next day. Once the call ended, Brach shared numbers for all drop phones with Shawn, including the one he had just taken ownership of that day, advising him to call Mickey first with any concerns. Shawn didn’t anticipate any, since he knew Doc, Mickey, Ian and Kayla would all likely be arriving within the next few hours. His biggest issues to handle would be continuing to care for Marco, while also attempting to set up space for the other two patients, as Doc had requested.

He set to work, attempting to make space for all three patients to be housed in the larger of of the two rooms temporarily, with the hopes that either: 1) they’d be out of hiding soon, or 2) Ian would join the ranks of the caregivers, leaving only two patients to handle over the long haul.

Shawn knew sleeping quarters would be tight, but figured he and Doc would take shifts, affording them both the opportunity for some decent sleep in the other room. He was in the midst of checking Marco’s vitals when he stirred, moaning incoherently, at first, then mumbling, between deep, pained gasps, “Uncle Johnny…I didn’t tell ‘em nothin’…but they said he’d find me…” Marco began to struggle against his restraints, fighting to free himself.

Shawn tried talking to him, hoping to calm him without the use of sedatives, which he had in only limited supply, and anticipated possibly needing to use early on in Ian’s treatment, something he was very uneasy about, in general. “It’s okay. You’re safe,” Shawn spoke softly, resting his hand on top of Marco’s, as he continued. “Who is it you are worried will find you?” he asked, looking down into Marco’s tortured, chestnut-brown eyes, the only visible part of his face, bandages completely covering it, a small cone-shaped piece of plastic holding them away from the eye with the shattered socket. “Milkovich...” he whispered, almost inaudibly.

“Milkovich is in the hospital. Fucked up as badly as you, if not worse,” Shawn responded, “Trust me. I saw him.” “Not that one…” Marco breathed, the lids of his eyes closing, as best they could, as he slipped back into unconsciousness.

“Who?” Johnny asked as he answered his drop phone. “Me,” Bigley answered. “Close up and be at the beach house in an hour. Pack a bag,” Bigley commanded. “Got it!” Johnny acknowledged, swirling his hand over his head, signaling to his bartender that they needed to clear out and close up. “All good?” Johnny questioned. “Got him,” Bigley replied, ending the call. Johnny breathed a sigh
of relief, heading for the wine cellar.
Kayla and Ian were still only semi-conscious as they were being loaded into the box truck in the underground parking lot, reserved for medical staff only. Doc moved quickly to secure both gurneys, Mickey loading the truck with all of the supplies Doc was able to procure, having scavenged items from as many of the hospital floors as he could. Both Ian and Kayla were still on IVs, Kayla’s pumping her full of anti-rejection drugs and antibiotics, Ian’s, with lithium and valium.

Dr. G had made the decision, since Ian was on an IV anyway, to administer low dose lithium intravenously, in order to increase his blood level gradually and more predictably than if administered orally, especially given the recent revelation that Ian had not been taking his other meds consistently. Ian would require some recovery time after his surgery, so Doc and Dr. G came up with a treatment plan that they hoped would bring Ian around to a more stable state, as smoothly as possible, particularly in light of the unusual and highly stressful circumstances that he and his family currently found themselves in. In fact, Doc was quite concerned with Mickey’s mental health lately, given the monumental stress level at which he had been existing for the past two weeks, and hoped Ian’s transition could be a smooth one, for Mickey’s sake as well.

Both Mickey and Doc insisted on riding in the back of the truck with Kayla and Ian, Doc to render any medical care, and Mickey to be the first to speak to Ian, if and when he woke up. Ian had made a few unintelligible sounds already, his eyes seeming to be fighting to open, their lids, being quite heavy, winning out for the moment.

After a few pretty significant bumps in the road, Ian mumbled something that sounded close to “Mickey.” “Ian!” Mickey shouted, immediately moving his ear as close to Ian’s mouth as possible, “I’m right here.” He grasped Ian’s still-encumbered hand in his own, awaiting the next words from his man. Ian squeezing Mickey’s hand tightly in return. “My hip...it hurts really bad,” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear. “Ian!” Mickey yelled again, this time with a huge smile on his face. “You’re smiling cuz I’m in pain?” Ian questioned. “No, I’m fuckin’ smilin’ cuz I missed ya, and you just said somethin’ that made sense!” Mickey laughed. “Ian,” Doc began, shifting over toward his gurney so he could hear him better, “the pain you’re feeling is normal after donating bone marrow.” “Bone marrow?” Ian said with a puzzled look on his slowly awakening face. “Yes, your stem cells were successfully transplanted. Kayla is also recovering from her surgery,” Doc shared. “Mom? Where is she?” Ian mumbled softly. “She’s behind me, on the other side of the truck we’re in right now,” Doc explained, gesturing over toward Kayla, who was asleep.

Ian tried to lift his head up to see her, but he couldn’t. “I’m tired,” he breathed, his eyes falling shut, despite his efforts to keep them open. Mickey lowered his face to Ian’s, kissing him tenderly, this time feeling a faint response from Ian, his lips seeming to pucker ever so slightly. “Love you, Ian,” he beamed, telling himself that Ian was fine, and that everything would be normal again soon, his heart on the verge of exploding with joy at the sound of Ian’s voice and the sight of his at least partially-cognizant face.

The remainder of the ride was spent in silence, Mickey closing his eyes, a faint smile still gracing his face, as a feeling of peace and ease overtook him, the rumble of the truck’s engine, Ian’s restful, even breathing, and the rhythmic rise and fall of Ian’s chest beneath his head, lulling him to sleep.

Mickey’s slumber was abruptly cut short by the sudden braking of the truck that he, soon after, remembered they were all riding in. “What the fuck!?” Mickey muttered, as he lifted his head from Ian’s chest to look around. “I think we’re here,” Doc commented, noticing that Mickey had just woken up. “We need to do this quickly,” he added, Mickey noticing that Doc was now holding his
mother’s hand in his own, her eyes open and now scanning her surroundings. “Ma!” Mickey said softly, but with excitement, “You’re awake!” “Yes, honey, and I’m glad to know you didn’t punch that police officer,” she grinned, “because he’s going to be keeping us safe.” “What?” Mickey asked, confused by her random comment. “I saw him...while I was asleep...but it was real. He will be there when we need him,” she said reassuringly.

Now Mickey was questioning his mother’s sanity, on top of Ian’s. She wasn’t the type to think that kind of shit, any more than Ian was. He stood up, walking over to get a better look at her. “I’m fine, Mickey,” she responded, “Stay with Ian!” Mickey walked back over to Ian’s gurney. “I’m not goin’ anywhere,” he whispered, staring down at Ian’s placid, angelic face.

All at once, the back of the box truck swung open, the driver pulling the ramp out so the gurneys could be easily off-loaded. Mickey grabbed as many of the supplies as he could carry, quickly moving them from the path needed in order to wheel Ian and Kayla out, and depositing them on the loading dock behind the factory.

Mickey looked up to find Shawn standing on the dock with the back door propped open. “Hey, Mickey!” Shawn began with a nervous laugh, “I’ll take the supplies up if you can help Doc get them in here.” “Okay,” Mickey replied readily, anxious to get back to Ian. As he turned, he could see that Doc and the driver were already wheeling Kayla up the ramp to the door, so he held it open, then jumped hurriedly off the side of the loading dock, running up the ramp and back into the truck. He then unfastened Ian’s gurney and descended the ramp with it.

Somehow he managed to get Ian into the factory without any help, securing the door behind them. He then waited for someone to come and help him on the stairs to the crow’s nest. After what seemed like forever, but was, in fact, only about ten minutes, Shawn showed up, grabbing an end of the gurney and assisting Mickey in getting it up to the makeshift treatment room. The driver had gone as soon as Shawn came out to help Doc with Kayla, so Shawn was winded before he even started to move Ian. “Damn, he’s heavy, for such a thin guy!” Shawn remarked. Mickey felt like saying all of his weight was in his dick, but he decided against it, choosing to steer clear of humor until Ian was safely at the top of the stairs.

As Mickey entered the room, nothing could have prepared him for the sight of Marco, so mangled, seemingly clinging to life by a thread, and all because of Mickey’s asshole father. He instantly thought of Johnny, wondering how much he knew about his nephew’s condition and how he might be handling it. He looked away, refocusing himself on Ian as he worked to secure his gurney in the front corner of the living area, near the couch, where Mickey figured he’d sleep for the night. He inclined the head end of Ian’s gurney, stacking two pillows behind his head to prop him up a bit more. Ian grimaced, shifting his weight to ease the additional discomfort that this small movement had caused. “Sorry, man,” Mickey said regretfully.

“It’s okay,” Ian replied, doing his best to smile at Mickey, despite his pain. His mind was foggy, but the bits and pieces of his day that he could recall, coupled with the exhausted expression on Mickey’s face, led him to believe that he’d put him through a lot, and should attempt to be pleasant. Mickey grinned back at Ian, his entire body relaxing as the idea of Ian being safe and on his way back to good health sunk in.

Doc talked with Kayla briefly, finding her to be pleasant, and grateful for all that had been done for her. He then turned his attention to Marco, who was awake and obviously still in great pain. Over the course of his travels, beginning with the flight from Chicago to Mexico, and ending with his transport to the factory and trip up the stairs to the crow’s nest, Marco had gone through nearly all of the IV pain medication that Shawn had been able to bring with them, under the circumstances. Shawn had been forced to slow the drip substantially, in order to preserve what little was left, which
resulted in ineffective pain control for Marco.

“Marco,” Doc began, speaking softly, so as not to startle him, “I have some more pain medication for you. You’ve got to heal a bit, then we’ll see about getting that eye fixed,” he finished optimistically. He didn’t expect a response, but did hear Marco mumbling something about Uncle Johnny. “Your uncle will be here to see you soon,” Doc reassured him, Marco immediately quieting down and falling asleep soon thereafter, as the effects of the pain medication hit him.

Mickey’s drop phone buzzed, a new, unrecognized number coming up on it. “Mickey,” Bruno’s voice came across, much quieter than usual. “Yeah,” Mickey answered, keeping it short. “Got confirmation that they’re sending someone down, so you gotta stay put. No movement, in or out! You got it?” Bigley said in a commanding tone of voice. “Got it! What about Yev?” Mickey asked. “I talked to Mandy and Manuel. They will take him to see Svetlana. They will explain that Ian is ill, and you have decided as a family not to share too much with Yev, so he doesn’t worry. Mandy agreed to stick around for the visit, to see how it goes. Mickey, if Yev is comfortable, how do you feel about him spending some time with Svetlana? He would probably be safer there with her, for the time being,” Bigley explained honestly.

“Bruno,” Mickey could hear Johnny call out in the background. “Hold on, Mickey...Johnny, come in. I was just telling Mickey that there needs to be no movement in or out of the factory until further notice. This means you won’t see Marco for a bit, but Doc and Shawn are both there with him...” Bigley explained, putting Mickey on speaker phone. “Yeah, and they’re takin’ real good care of everyone,” Mickey interjected, once he realized Johnny could hear him.

“No...his son,” Marco clarified, his breathing becoming quite labored at this point. “Mickey’s there with you,” Johnny said, trying to comfort Marco, “You don’t have to worry about him.”

“Nah...not me,” Mickey stammered. “I think he’s talkin’ about my brother, Iggy.”
Mandy, sitting in the passenger seat of Manuel’s car, chewed nervously on her bottom lip, wishing she could avoid the interaction she was being forced to have with Svetlana. There was certainly no love lost between the two of them, and, given the current situation concerning the family, she certainly didn’t relish being the one that had to selectively communicate information to Svetlana, information that she could conceivably use against Mickey and Ian, should she decide to seek custody of Yev. She tried her best, nonetheless, to remain positive, for Yev, who was excited beyond belief to see his mother, although he had asked about his dads many times, Mandy also having the tough job of trying to assure him they were fine, despite not knowing what was actually happening.

Manuel, for his part, stayed quiet, more worried about everything than he let on to Mandy, choosing to play the role of the strong, silent husband. Manuel frequently clammed up when he was nervous about something, so Mandy was pretty well aware, based on previous experience, that Manuel was really bugged, which helped to fuel her anxiety as well.

“Manny, I’m going to see my Mom!” Yev said exuberantly, his voice carrying loudly into the front seat of the car, Mandy cringing at the sound of his words. “Yay!” Manny replied, echoing Yev’s enthusiasm. “Almost there,” Manuel piped up, having nearly reached the restaurant where they had agreed to meet Svetlana. Frontera was closed, so they selected another Italian place, since Yev wanted his mom to have pasta. “Oh no!” Yev exclaimed, suddenly distressed.

“What’s wrong, Yev?” Mandy asked with great concern. “I forgot Mommy’s necklace!” he wailed, now sobbing uncontrollably. “Can we go get it? It’s in my room,” he pleaded. “Yev, you can give it to her later,” Manuel interjected, “We’re going to be late if we turn back now.” In reality, Mandy and Manuel had been given strict orders not to go anywhere near Mickey and Ian’s place, just in case anyone was watching it. “But Uncle Manuel! I’ve been waiting a long time to give it to her. I want her to know I was thinking of her on Mother’s Day!” Yev protested angrily, tears streaming down his cheeks.

“She’ll know,” Mandy said softly, squeezing Manuel’s knee lightly to keep him from overreacting, as she feared he might. He’d been under a lot of stress lately, with Mickey making little more than cameo appearances at the factory, and now the threats against the family that had resulted in he and Mandy being Yev’s primary caregivers until further notice. Yev quieted down, seeing that Manuel had put his turn signal on and was pulling into the parking lot of La Luna sul Mare, Yevgeni immediately noticing a brown-haired woman exiting a limousine. “There she is!” he shouted. “That’s her?” Manny asked, seeming to be nearly as excited as Yev. “Yeah, that’s her,” Mandy responded, sounding more like she was identifying a suspect in a lineup than confirming the identity of Yevgeni’s mother.

The quartet exited the car, once Manuel had parked. Yev and Manny ran for the door as soon as their feet hit the ground. Yev boldly opened the door of the restaurant, holding it for Manny, then also for Mandy and Manuel, who had broken into a slight jog in order to catch up to the kids. Manuel addressed the host, informing him of his reservation, although he assumed Svetlana was likely already seated, thereby already having made him aware. As the host approached their table, the entire family could see that it was empty. Mandy, fearing the worst, excused herself to check out the women’s room, claiming to need to use it.

As Mandy opened the restroom door, she could hear Svetlana speaking in Russian, so she stopped short, not wanting to reveal herself just yet, in hopes that she might be able to glean, from Svetlana’s end of the conversation, just who she might be talking to. Mandy didn’t know much Russian, but
had picked up a few words throughout the time they had cohabitated in Terry’s house, during Svet’s marriage to Mickey. Mandy listened for a while, but it was no use; Svetlana was speaking far too quickly, and in an irritated tone.

Mandy cleared her throat as she rounded the corner, her eyes narrowing as they met Svetlana’s. She didn’t care much for Svetlana, in general, and certainly didn’t trust her, when it came to her nephew, her brother and her best-friend, who also happened to be her brother-in-law. “Hello, Mandy,” Svetlana said, ending her call abruptly and trying her best to smile, despite the glare Mandy was giving her. “Are you coming to see your son, or what?” Mandy sneered. “Of course I come to see my Yevgeni! Why else would I be here?” Svetlana replied indignantly, following Mandy as she headed out of the restroom and toward the table.

Yevgeni’s eyes got as big as saucers as he looked up from his menu to see his aunt and his mother approaching the table. “Yevgeni!” Svetlana exclaimed as she walked briskly over to his seat, putting her arms around him. “I miss you so much!” she added, squeezing him into her, as he stood to return her hug. “I have something to show you, and I have a Mother's Day gift, too, but it’s at Daddy and Daddy Ian’s house,” he explained as he pulled his folded map from his pocket.

Svetlana sat down in the chair next to his, Yev following suit as he unfolded his temperature ranges map, which included Moscow, Russia. He slid it over in front of Svetlana so she could see it. “It looks like you are good at math,” Svetlana remarked, flipping Yev’s map over to look at his calculations. “Yes, and Daddy Ian likes to help me! It’s fun!” he grinned. “That is good,” Svetlana smiled back at him, noticing how much he had started to look like Mickey, and yet was still the cutest little boy in the world, in her eyes.

“This is my cousin, Manny, and my Aunt Mandy and Uncle Manuel,” Yev introduced them. “And this is my mom!” he added, his eyes shining with pride. “Do you remember me, Yevgeni?” Svet asked, saying his name properly, in Russian, in a way that made her voice seem familiar, although his grandmother pronounced it the same way. “I do remember...a little bit,” he answered. “And I think Daddy Ian used to visit, before Daddy and Daddy Ian came to get me...I think…” Yev struggled to put all of his fragmented memories together to form a cohesive story, but he had been so young, he just couldn’t seem to make sense of it all. “Well...I remember you…” Svetlana said, “and I miss you,” she said again, continuing, “Now is time for you and me to be together.”

Yev beamed, loving the attention he was getting from his mother, but still, in the back of his mind, wondering if his dads were okay. He recognized that his aunt and uncle seemed to be leaving details out of their explanation, regarding Ian’s condition, basically focusing their discussion on the transplant, despite his knowing, as of his ride home from school with Manuel, that something was wrong with Ian. He wondered if it had anything to do with the cut Ian had on his head, and worried quite a bit about that.

After a brief lull in the conversation, followed by the ordering of drinks and appetizers, Yevgeni asked, “Is Daddy Ian’s head okay?” Svetlana’s ears perked up, instantly remembering Ian’s issues with his mental illness, and hoping to get as much information as possible on his current condition. The last thing she wanted was for Yevgeni to be raised in an environment with that kind of instability. She knew from experience, that Ian could be dangerous when he was manic. “Yes, is orange boy’s head okay?” she asked, staring over at Mandy, who scowled at her, before answering. “He’s fine, Yev. Just donated some stem cells for grandma,” she said, reiterating what Yev already knew, “And his head wound is healing just fine,” she finished, clarifying the reason for Yev’s question.

answered, “Is he your favorite?” she questioned, Mandy shooting daggers at her with her eyes. “I love both of my dads,” Yev answered, “And I miss them very much! At least I don’t have to miss you anymore!”

“That is right! You come to stay with me now,” she smirked, glancing over at Mandy to catch her reaction. Mandy’s face was turning bright red, as she fought to control her anger over what Svetlana had just said, only minutes after seeing her son for the first time in over seven years. “Where is your house?” Yev asked Svet innocently. “We have to find her one,” Manuel interjected, smiling across the table at Svetlana, who seemed to be checking him out, in spite of the fact that Mandy was literally sitting RIGHT THERE!

While the waiter approached the table, making dinner recommendations, Manuel excused himself, asking Mandy to order him the Penne with Vodka Sauce, before walking off, exiting the restaurant as he used his drop phone to contact Mickey. “Who?” Manuel heard Mickey whisper into the phone. “Me,” Manuel replied, proceeding to ask about Kayla and Ian, then telling Mickey about Svetlana’s comment and Yev’s reaction. “So you think he wants to spend the night with her?” Mickey asked. “I don’t think he knows yet, Ojos, but I need to know what to say, if the subject comes up again and he decides he wants to go,” Manuel explained.

“You’re there...she seem okay to you?” Mickey questioned, “Or you think she’s down here to cause trouble?” “Too early to tell,” Manuel confessed. “I trust your judgment, man,” Mickey responded. “You gotta decide, based on what you see. If we were fuckin’ home, it would be an easy answer. No fuckin’ way! But since we’re stuck here, I’m gonna leave it to you to decide,” Mickey said again. “Okay, Ojos, I’ll let you know,” Manuel said in closing. “Talk to ya soon,” Mickey finished, ending the call quickly so he could attend to Ian.

Ian appeared to be recovering fairly well from his surgery, and his mind, from all outward signs, seemed to be functioning pretty normally, although the valium, combined with the lithium, made him feel perpetually tired, so he napped quite often, Mickey never taking his eyes off of him, no matter what else was going on.

Marco had been making a lot of gasping and gurgling sounds, along with the occasional moan, all of which was disrupting Ian’s sleep. It didn’t seem to bother Kayla, who was also sleeping, on and off, but who had spent the majority of the night, and following morning, discussing wedding plans happily with Doc. He had been the one to bring up the subject, hoping to keep her engaged in positive thought, in order to distract her from the current situation, which had not yet been fully explained to her, given her fragile condition leading up to, and following the surgery.

Now that she appeared to be on the mend, the plan for the wedding reverted back to its original form, which included a reception at Sur de la Frontera, although, as Doc knew, it was not currently open for business. He hoped everything would resolve itself quickly, so he would not have to share any of those details with her. It would be as if nothing had ever happened, that there were no threats on their lives and livelihood, that no one had been severely hurt, and that only good things, like the signed divorce papers, came out of the whole ordeal. Doc knew this was wishful thinking, and nearly impossible, but he couldn’t help but hold out hope. Otherwise, he’d drive himself crazy thinking about all of the misery that was surely headed their way.

After a restless night, plagued by Marco’s frequent outbursts and random noises, Mickey convinced Doc to allow him to move Ian into the other room, promising to monitor him, and to let either Doc or Shawn know if there were any problems. Doc had climbed onto Kayla’s gurney, lying next to her as she rested, although he was having trouble sleeping through Marco’s disruptions, so eventually, he
opted to relieve Shawn for the remainder of the night, allowing Shawn to go sleep in the bed for a few hours.

Meanwhile, in the second room, Ian had insisted on getting into their bed, forcing Mickey to make the necessary adjustments to Ian’s IV set up, which he was able to do without too much trouble, with Ian’s guidance. Mickey also had to help Ian with his pee bottle, since Ian didn’t have a portable IV, and thus, could not have used the bathroom, even if he was ready to walk on his own—-which he wasn’t. Ian was embarrassed that Mickey had to do this for him. “You’re not my fucking nurse!” he yelled, at one point, having become annoyed with all of the catering Mickey was having to do to him. “No, I’m your fuckin’ husband! Just do me a favor---shut the fuck up, and let me do what I gotta do. You focus on gettin’ well,” Mickey barked back at him, adding, “Now get some fuckin’ sleep. I’m gonna do the same.”

Ian’s IV and wound sites kept him from spooning with Mickey in the usual way, but Mickey crawled into the bed next to Ian, nonetheless, pressing his back and buttocks against Ian’s good side. Each loved the feel of the other’s body---its warmth, contours and firmness. Although their current position was not what they were used to, it sure beat sleeping separately, something they both hated, not only because neither of them slept well that way, but also because it just felt ‘wrong’. Once they got comfortable, they were sleeping peacefully within minutes.

Their placid slumber was short-lived, however, Mickey starting to breathe heavily, thrashing about, kicking at Ian as he yelled, “No! No! No!” waking both himself and Ian with a start. “It’s okay, Mick, I’m here,” Ian reassured Mickey in his usual comforting tone, carefully turning himself onto his good hip and wrapping his free arm up around Mickey, as best he could, keeping is IV-infused arm to the side, so as not to dislodge the IV from it. Mickey turned his body toward Ian’s, pressing up so close to him that it seemed, to Ian, as if Mickey would have climbed inside of him, if he could.

Mickey drifted off shortly thereafter, finally allowing Ian some rest, until his next dream, of course, which was completely different from the last, the only commonality being that Mickey was again talking in his sleep. This time it was Ian’s name that Mickey called out repeatedly, grinding himself against Ian relentlessly, until he finally woke up. “Mickey!” Ian whispered, attempting to rouse him without scaring him. Mickey’s eyes flew open, staring into Ian’s lustfully. “You’ll never guess what I was dreamin’ about,” Mickey breathed heavily, as he continued pressing himself against Ian wantonly. “Bet I can,” Ian responded sleepily, rubbing his free hand over Mickey’s erection with a grin. “I bet I can.”
Mickey moaned softly, rocking his hips forward in order to increase the delicious friction Ian had created between his hand and Mickey's swollen member. “Fuck, I want you,” Mickey mused in spite of himself. The last thing he had planned to do was to pressure Ian for any kind of sexual favors. Ian obviously needed to rest and heal, not be performing any sexual acts, which, invariably, would cause movement for which Ian was not yet ready.

“Got ya covered,” Ian hummed into Mickey’s ear, as he proceeded to spit on his hand and jerk Mickey’s cock. “Think you can get me some lube or something?” Ian asked. “It’s okay, Ian...really,” Mickey breathed, pulling himself away, “Don’t want ya hurtin’ yourself. I can wait.” Mickey’s assurance did little to dissuade Ian. He had made his mind up to please his man, and no one or nothing was going to stop him. “Go get something,” Ian demanded, “Or I will!”

Mickey lifted himself up carefully off the bed, his eyes still heavy with sleep, his rigid cock putting a stretch to the boxer-briefs he had left on to sleep in, thinking that if he had to go and retrieve either Doc or Shawn quickly, he’d rather at least be partially clothed. He knew he had removed all lube and coconut oil from the nightstand, in anticipation of Svetlana’s arrival, so he headed for the kitchen, where he knew he could find cooking oil. He truly felt guilty for having Ian do this for him, even if it was Ian’s idea, but he had to admit, the sensation of Ian touching him that way sent shivers up his spine. Damn, if Ian didn’t still have such a hold over him, their attraction was so deep, so powerful, so primal---he was powerless against it.

As Mickey trundled back into the bedroom, he could see that Ian was manipulating himself, trying, less than successfully, to get himself hard. “Probably the lithium,” Mickey remarked off-handedly, “Gonna take some time to get used to it again.” Ian sighed in frustration, pulling his hand from his own underwear as Mickey was shimmying his down over his sweet, round bottom. It was then that Ian felt that familiar twinge between his legs, his cock swelling at the glorious sight of Mickey’s gorgeously full derriere. “Get that ass over here...now!” Ian growled, slathering his free hand with the cooking oil Mickey had just deposited on the nightstand, then stroking his own cock, bringing it up to full size in seconds flat. “Comin’,” Mickey responded, immediately straddling Ian.

“Here,” Ian muttered, handing the cooking oil to Mickey, who instantly began to finger his own asshole, knowing full well exactly what Ian expected. “Can’t wait to feel the inside of that ass sliding onto my cock,” Ian hissed, continuing to fuck his own hand as he eagerly watched Mickey do the same. “Take it easy, man,” Mickey cautioned Ian, “I’ll do this. You just stay still. Don’t want ya causin’ yourself any pain.”

Once Mickey felt he was ready, he took Ian’s cock from his hand, fondling it with his own as he positioned it beneath him, then slowly lowered himself onto it, his incredibly taut ass taking it in, bit by bit, both men sighing deeply as they were simultaneously overtaken by their all-consuming desire, the pleasure and excitement that they were experiencing already banishing all other thoughts, situations, surroundings and people from their minds. “Just you and me, man,” Mickey panted as he glided smoothly and gently onto and off of Ian’s magnificent manhood, taking it in a bit deeper with each successive stroke. “So fucking good, Mick,” Ian breathed, his eyes rolling up into his head as he struggled to remain still, the once nagging ache in his hip from the donation seeming to all but disappear, replaced with the exquisite waves of pleasure that emanated from his cock, dispersing throughout his entire body as Mickey fucked him masterfully, taking great care not to put any of his weight on Ian’s hips.

“I fuckin’ love you so much,” Mickey whispered amid the insanely intense lovemaking session he
was orchestrating so beautifully, absorbing Ian’s essence, fusing their souls, uniting their spirits. Finally, Ian could no longer refrain. He began lifting his ass off the bed, countering Mickey’s every move, driving himself further and harder into Mickey, then adjusting the angle to tap his prostate.

Mickey began to moan loudly, calling Ian’s name, just as he had while he was dreaming, finishing his increasingly noisy vocalization by repeating the words, “Just like that... Just like that...” until finally Ian, anticipating Mickey’s orgasm and wanting to intensify it as much as possible, took Mickey’s rock-hard penis into his still-lubricated hand, pumping it vigorously as Mickey continued to dance on his enormous, erect cock. “Gonna cum!” Mickey called out. “Look at me,” Ian commanded, gazing up a Mickey’s stunning, sweat-coated face.

Mickey stared ecstatically down at Ian, their eyes locking onto one another. Mickey’s brow furrowed, but he managed to keep his eyes open for the duration, taking in Ian’s phenomenal beauty as the pleasure of his climax washed over his body like a tidal wave. As Mickey came, his ass instinctively clenched Ian’s throbbing masterpiece even more tightly, sending him over the edge, right along with Mickey, his monumental explosion accompanied by curse words, compliments and Mickey’s name, all spewing erratically from Ian’s lips as he lost complete control of himself, grasping Mickey’s hip and squeezing his asscheek as he guided him, quickening their pace. “Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey screeched, still looking down, mesmerized, at the most adorably handsome creature in the world, who happened to be fucking the hell out of him at the moment---and he belonged to him, and him alone.

An utterly spent Mickey collapsed atop an equally exhausted Ian, both fighting to catch their breath, Mickey dizzy with satisfaction, the room seeming to spin with the energy he and Ian had just released into the world around them. Ian flinched at the addition of the extra weight on him, the pain in his hip suddenly returning, having also become much sharper. “Fuck!” he whined, obviously hurting.

“What’s wrong?” Mickey asked, lifting his head to look at his husband. “Nothing. I’m fine,” Ian answered, pulling Mickey’s head back down to his chest, running his fingers through Mickey’s hair and caressing the side of his face. “You were fucking fantastic!” Ian mused, savoring the afterglow of their session, despite his resultant discomfort. “Me?” Mickey responded, raising his head again and turning his face up toward Ian’s, “You got me first, And right after fuckin’ surgery. Fuckin’ unbelievable!”

Ian smiled at Mickey, thinking there was no one in the world who could ever a more perfect partner, lover or, as much as he hated to admit it, caretaker. He loathed the idea of having to be cared for that way, but, as time went on, he came to realize that sometimes that was part of being a spouse. Mickey had accepted it when he was sick, and so should he. “Help me,” Ian said softly. “What d’ya need?” Mickey asked. “Wanna be on my side, with you in my arms, like always,” Ian requested. Mickey set about carefully adjusting both of their positions, then the location of the IV bag, until Ian got his wish, breathing a contented “Love you, Mick,” after which they both fell asleep, Mickey nestled comfortably in Ian’s loving embrace.

“We’re getting that bastard, Terry Milkovich back today,” Lucy commented to Meg, the other staff nurse on duty on the Medical Unit at Cook County Correctional. “For how long?” Meg inquired, rolling her eyes in disgust. “A couple weeks---until he’s ready for his next surgery, if that even happens, after everything that has gone down,” Lucy replied, Meg nodded in agreement, recalling Marco’s condition, following the retaliation against the Italians that was exacted upon him by the Russians for the hit on Terry. “Yeah, I would doubt it,” Meg frowned, the image of Marco’s mangled face still lingering in her mind, her stomach churning at the thought. “Gonna have to set him up in one of the privates until he’s a bit more stable, from the looks of his hospital chart,” Lucy
added, shaking her head, “Says here that he’ll be arriving within the hour.”

“I know that everyone in here has committed a crime, so they’re all ‘bad guys’ up to a point,” Meg began, “but when I see a guy like Terry Milkovich and his Russian cronies, and what they’re capable of, it’s hard to even care for these people,” she groaned, once again referencing the beating and shanking Marco had taken, and his resultant injuries.

“Hey, listen, when it comes to Terry Milkovich, no one is more disgusted than me. If you would’ve been here when we had his son in here, to hear the things he said in his sleep, you’d be physically sick!” Lucy lamented, grimacing at her recollection of Mickey’s plaintive cries for mercy at the hands of his father. “Poor kid was abused his whole life...but he ended up happy, as far as I know...was in here a while back...his husband was here with him while he was sick. Sweetest thing you’d ever wanna see, those two,” Lucy smiled, “Never saw two people more in love.”

“Really?” Meg asked, marveling at the idea that someone so maltreated was capable of maintaining a long-term, loving relationship. “Yes,” Lucy grinned, thinking back to the times she had locked them in Mickey’s private room for some ‘alone time.’ “Guess I’ll go get his room ready,” Meg sighed, heading from the nurse’s station toward the private rooms.

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“This is EMS 1, calling for backup! We’ve been in an accident and need alternate transport for our patient!”

“What is your location, EMS1?”

“Corner of South California and West 30th!”

“Dispatching EMS 2. Have the police arrived yet?”

“Just now. Yes.”

“Officer! Did you see the car that hit us?” the ambulance driver asked. “No, I came around front here to check on you first. What about my EMT and our patient?” the driver questioned. “Didn’t know you had anyone in back. You have damage to the left rear of the ambulance, but the right door was wide open. There’s no one back there. I assumed the door was ajar from the impact of the other vehicle,” the police officer explained.

“Where the hell is my patient? He’s a prisoner from CCC!” the driver yelled, becoming more alarmed by the minute. “I didn’t see anything. I’ll radio the station...let them know,” the officer responded, turning to head back to his squad car. “Aren’t you gonna interview any witnesses?” the driver asked. “Uh...no one pulled over, so I’m assuming there were no witnesses,” he replied. “There was a car heading the opposite direction, just before I felt the impact,” the driver explained. “Do you recall the color, make and model of the vehicle?” the cop questioned. “Late model Buick Riviera—brown,” the driver answered, looking puzzled and a bit scared.

“I’ll call it in. Strange the driver of the vehicle wouldn’t have stopped,” the cop thought out loud. “Yeah. Very strange,” the ambulance driver muttered, rolling his eyes. As the police officer meandered back to his car, the driver called out to him, “You do realize there is a dangerous inmate on the loose right now, don’t you?” He watched in disbelief as the cop continued his languid approach to his vehicle. “EMS2, this is EMS1,” he radioed, “Disregard backup. EMT and patient are currently at-large. Chicago PD are handling it from here.” “Copy that, EMS1.”

Within minutes, the surrounding streets were being patrolled by multiple squad cars, while the first-responding officer took an official statement from the driver, who was then transported back to
Chicago Memorial to await pick-up by another ambulance.

Meanwhile, a brown Buick Riviera made its way through the Southside, stopping at the end of Trumbull Street.
“Mickey!” Mandy said with an edge in her voice, mixed with relief at having finally reached her brother. “What’s up, Mandy?” Mickey asked sleepily, rubbing his eyes, then carefully extricating himself from his sleeping husband’s grasp. “Yevgeni has been very upset all morning! I’ve been trying to call you,” Mandy continued, Mickey walking into the kitchen to avoid disturbing Ian.

“Sorry, I was asleep with Ian. What’s Yev upset about? Did he stay with Svetlana?” Mickey questioned, suddenly wanting to be made aware of all that he had missed. “He doesn’t want to stay with Svetlana until she is living nearer to all of us, and he is begging to see Ian. He said he had a dream last night that he was sick, and can’t stop worrying about him,” Mandy explained. “Fuck!” Mickey muttered to himself, recognizing the reality of the situation, which was that it wasn’t safe for Yev to see Ian, and he didn’t know when it would be.

“How ‘bout if I call him when Ian wakes up, and we can all talk?” Mickey suggested. “Okay, but he’s gonna have a lot of questions, ones you probably can’t answer,” Mandy warned. “And how’s Ma?” she added. “She’s in the other room. I’ll go check on her and we’ll call ya when Ian’s up,” Mickey promised, ending the call as he saw Ian stirring in the bed.

“Mickey,” Ian mumbled, reaching across the now empty portion of the bed beside him, in search of his mate. “Right here,” Mickey called over to him, speeding up his approach to the bed. “You alright?” he asked, as he sat next to Ian, leaning down to kiss his forehead. “Yeah,” Ian answered, flinching as he shifted his weight.

“I’m gonna go check on Ma. I’m thinin’ I should ask Doc if you can get up. All this layin’ around’s gotta be driving ya nuts,” Mickey reasoned. “Yeah...a little...but this medicine is making me so tired. I can’t stay awake, and I feel really out of it,” Ian commented. “Speakin’ of medicine,” Mickey began, “I gotta ask ya somethin’, and I want ya to tell me the fuckin’ truth, okay?” Mickey finished, giving Ian a deadly serious look. “Of course I will,” Ian answered, flinching as he shifted his weight.

Mickey stared intently down at Ian, not wanting to miss a single facial expression that might convey dishonesty on Ian’s part. Mickey had not forgotten about the hospital blood work; he had merely put it out of his mind, awaiting a more opportune time to bring it up---and now was that time. “When did ya stop takin’ the new meds Dr. G prescribed for you?” he asked, his eyes darting over the entire surface area of Ian’s pristine face.

“Well, I didn’t take any today...” Ian replied right away, then taking a moment to ponder his actions over the past 24 hours, which were very fuzzy. “And I guess, now that I think of it, I didn’t take it yesterday, since we got called to the hospital at lunchtime. I was planning to take it after work, since I didn’t wanna be weird there on the new dose,” he continued. “But the day before I did...I think...at least I meant to take it. Mickey, I swear...if I didn’t take it on Thursday, it was an oversight—nothing more. I wouldn’t do that...to us,” he defended emotionally, beginning to break down, his eyes filling up with tears.

“Okay, man. I believe you. That’s all I needed to hear,” Mickey said in a low voice, bending to touch his lips to Ian’s tenderly. “Oh God!” Ian suddenly exclaimed, panicking, “I caused all this! I fucked us all up! The cops...the car...and...the phone! Fuck! What’s happening? Why are we here?! Where’s Yev?” Ian questioned as his drug-induced fog appeared to be lifting, Ian suddenly recognizing where he was, recalling some precipitating events, but not having any real understanding of the current situation.

“Relax, man. It’s gonna be fine. We’re together, at least,” Mickey replied, the gravity of their
situation, all at once, hitting him like a bullet, right between the eyes. “Why are we here?!” Ian repeated, now demanding an answer that Mickey didn’t want to get into just yet. Mickey sat, his mouth hanging open, at a total loss as to how he should respond. “Mickey!!” Ian yelled impatiently, “Tell me! Tell me NOW!”

“Look, Ian, you didn’t CAUSE anything! But there is some pretty fucked up shit happening right now. We’re here because, right now, it’s the safest place for us. Yev is with Mandy and Manuel. And I wanted to talk to you about that, Mickey started to explain.

“What do you mean ‘safe’? Mickey, you’re keeping something from me! Don’t do this!” Ian pleaded frantically, his face becoming flushed, tears now drizzling down his face. “Ian,” Mickey touched his hand in attempt to console him, also taking time to wipe the tears from his face. “I don’t want you worrying…” “Too late!” Ian cut him off, “Just please tell me what Shawn left on the phone. Are we here because I left that phone at home?” Ian asked, his eyes imploring Mickey to answer.

“Ian, we’re here because Shawn left his phone in the back of a fuckin’ ambulance, the Russians got it, and because of him calling you on your drop phone, your regular phone, and at the clinic, they now know all of those numbers…and they think…they think…” Mickey paused, taking a deep breath, then swallowing hard.

“They think WHAT?” Ian demanded. “Ian, they think you ordered the hit on my dad,” Mickey finally spat it out, avoiding eye contact with Ian afterward. Ian stayed silent, looking up at Mickey, awaiting the return of Mickey’s eyes’ attention on his face, as they typically were when they had a serious talk. After a long 20 seconds of silence, Ian reached up, pulling Mickey’s face closer to him, staring up into his bright blue eyes, “Mickey,” he whispered, “Is someone coming to kill me?”

Mickey’s eyes were suddenly flooded with tears, “Not if I can help it,” he growled. He wanted to ask Ian if he had seen Marco—if he even knew that Marco had been in the room with him. But Mickey knew Ian didn’t know a thing about any of that, and he wanted to keep it that way for as long as possible. No such luck.

“What was so important that Shawn tried contacting me like that, even after I asked him not to?” Ian questioned, his mind seeming to Mickey to be quite clear and firing on all eight, at this point. Mickey sighed, “He wanted to tell us he was coming to Mexico early, with Marco.” “Okay, how the fuck did Shawn get here so early? And why? And Marco? He can’t even get a passport. He’s a felon!” Ian rambled on incessantly, not even giving Mickey a chance to address one question before asking another.

“Bigley brought them,” Mickey sighed, resigning himself to the fact that this bit of information was really going to set Ian off. “Bigley?! He’s here? Oh fuck! The shit has really hit the fan, huh, Mickey?!” Ian screamed, as if he were stark raving mad. “Just let me out! Let them take me! Then everyone will be safe!” he babbled on, Mickey wiping at his eyes with the palms of his hands continuously, a steady stream of tears flowing from them as he listened to Ian lose it completely. “Tell me! Tell me what happened to Marco! Tell me now! Why is he here?!?” Ian attempted to get up from the bed abruptly, losing his balance and falling backward onto it as quickly as he had gotten up.

“Ian, it’s cool. We’re all gonna be fine,” Mickey stated calmly, smoothly----so much so that he nearly convinced himself of his own bullshit, “We just gotta stay here for a while.” “How long?!” Ian asked, Mickey’s tranquil response having calmed him ever so slightly. “I don’t know, but one thing is, we gotta call Yev. He’s been upset...thinks you’re real sick. We told him you weren’t, but he had some crazy-ass dream and he’s been pesterin’ Mandy all morning to talk to ya,” Mickey told Ian, before excusing himself to see his mother. “But first, I gotta check in on Ma. Mandy wants to know how she’s doin’, and so do I,” Mickey said, getting up from the bed to head for the other room.
“Take me with you,” Ian begged, “Carry my bag. I can walk,” he insisted. “Just wait there. Gonna have Shawn help me,” Mickey asserted, walking out of the room before Ian could make an argument against it.

Ian exhaled heavily, frustrated by his lack of mobility, and angry with himself over the predicament he felt he had put his whole family in, by being careless in his communication with Shawn, branding Mickey as ‘paranoid’ for being cautious when, as it turns out, he was exactly right to be that way. Another thing that tore at Ian from the inside out was the knowledge that he had talked with Doc about not wanting Mickey to go to Chicago, and the next thing he knew, all this crazy shit started.

Ian’s self-blaming session was interrupted by the sound of Mickey’s voice, as he returned to their room, “He’s right here, and he’s just fine, Yev. He just needs to rest. Here. You can talk to him.”

“Daddy Ian?” Yev’s little voice came faintly through the small speaker in the drop phone Mickey was holding. “Hi Yev!” Ian responded, his face lighting up at the sound of his son calling to him. “How are you feeling?” Yev asked, full of concern. “I’m okay, Yev. Feeling pretty good actually. It’s just that I can’t be around too many people right now until my immune system gets stronger. Same as Grandma,” Ian lied, glancing over at Mickey for his approval.

Mickey, stunned by Ian’s quick thinking, nodded and smiled. “And Daddy’s stuck here with me so he doesn’t bring any new germs in with him. We miss you very much!” Ian added, the tone of his voice still dripping with positivity. Mickey, completely in awe of Ian’s handling of the whole situation, jumped in to keep things short, which he felt was best, for the time being, “Yev, Daddy Ian is very tired and needs his sleep. Can he go, now that you know he’s alright?”

“Yeah. Bye Daddy Ian! I love you...so much!” Yev replied, the sadness in his voice absolutely killing both Ian and Mickey. “I love you, too, Yev,” Ian answered softly. “Me, too!” Mickey chimed in. “And I love you, too, Daddy!” Yev said, pausing for a moment before continuing, “Daddy, when are you getting Mommy a place by our house? She wants me to stay with her, but I want to be in Boca, close to school and our house.”

“We’ll see, Yev. I’ll do it as soon as I can. Ian and Grandma having this surgery now is a really good thing, and they’re both doin’ great! Make sure you tell Aunt Mandy that. But it means we all gotta sacrifice a little bit for a while, okay?” Mickey reassured him. “Okay, Daddy. I miss you both so much,” Yev whimpered, trying his best to hold off a full-on breakdown. He didn’t want to upset his dads. “We miss you, too, Yev,” Ian said, returning his affection sincerely. “We’ll see ya as soon as we can,” Mickey closed, “Gotta go for now, Yev. Bye.”

Mickey ended the call, marching straight over to Ian’s side and reaching for his IV bag. Just then, Shawn walked in, making his way over to the bed. “Ian, I want you to put an arm around each of us, and we’ll walk slowly. Kayla is anxious to see you. But be warned, Marco is very difficult to look at. I know you’ve seen a lot as a nurse, but it’s different when it’s someone you know who is in such bad shape. I just wanna warn you of that,” Shawn explained compassionately. “Gotcha,” Ian answered with a smile, reaching one arm around Mickey, the other around Shawn, just as Shawn had instructed.

The trio made their way slowly into the room where Kayla and Marco both lay, half asleep. “Ma!” Ian called out, startling Kayla slightly. She recovered quickly at the sight of Ian on his feet, Mickey by his side supporting him. “My boys!” she smiled, tearing up with joy. “Ian...I can’t thank you enough for all you’ve done for me,” she gushed, reaching her arms out as she waited for the hugs she soon got from both of them. “Love you, Ma,” they took turns saying, both of them over the moon about Kayla’s progress.

The room got quiet for a minute, then the gurgling sound that had plagued them overnight
resurfaced, bringing Ian’s attention to Marco’s battered and broken face, as well as his many bandage-covered bodily wounds. “Oh Marco,” Ian whispered softly, his voice seeming to have failed him, all at once, feeling his stomach churn as he tried his best to stave off a gag, “I’m so sorry.” “Ian, we’re gonna fix him up, good as new, as soon as he heals a bit,” Doc spoke confidently, Ian breathing a slight sigh of relief, although, in his heart of hearts, he doubted Marco’s face would ever look or function properly again.

“Dad! You can’t just walk around without a nose or mouth. People are gonna notice...and you’re gonna end up right back in jail! You’re gonna hafta wear the face-mask...I know it fuckin’ hurts, but it’s your only chance to stay outta prison!”

Terry muttered unintelligibly to himself, stretching the mask over his face, then growling like a wounded animal. Once he had the mask on, he could feel it sticking painfully to his wounds. “Gonna kill that faggot-ass son of hers and that ginger aids-monkey that fucks him up the ass!” he hollered in a rage-induced frenzy, as he packed all the guns he could get his hands on, before exiting the house and heading for the car. “Dad?” Iggy began timidly. “What the fuck do you want, Iggy?” Terry barked. “How the fuck we gettin’ into Mexico?”
“Daddy says he’s getting you a house as soon as he can!” Yev chirped happily at his mother. “And when will that be?” Svetlana questioned, sighing in annoyance into her phone. “I don’t know, Mommy. Daddy Ian has to heal before Daddy can leave,” he explained. Mandy’s ears perked up as she heard Yev’s end of a conversation she had, up until that moment, been unaware that he was even having. “Manuel!” she hissed between her teeth, wacking him on the shoulder. “Huh?” he responded, looking up from his laptop. “He’s talking to Svetlana...about Ian!” she mouthed silently, her eyes looking as if they might pop out of her head at any moment.

“Yev!” Manuel called to him loudly, scaring him a bit since Manuel didn’t often raise his voice to him. “Yes, Uncle Manuel?” he answered timidly. “I need to talk to you. It’s important. You can call your mom back a little later,” Manuel finished, lowering his voice a tad, in response to Mandy’s glare. Yev said his goodbyes to his mother, promising to call her back.

Yev walked over to the couch, where Manuel was sitting, and stood in front of him, waiting to hear what was so important that he had been made to end his conversation with his mother prematurely. Now that Manuel had Yev’s attention, he really didn’t know what to say. Yev remained quietly attentive, although, the longer the silence persisted, the more he began to look at Manuel a certain way. The expression on Yev’s face was quite familiar, although Manuel had never before seen it on his face. Finally, it dawned on Manuel, the words flying out of his mouth faster than he could think better of it. “Don’t look at me like that!” he chided Yev. The pout on Yev’s face included an air of judgment, like, ‘Why are you wasting my time?’ Manuel had seen this look a million times before, usually in the midst of a major disagreement between him and either Mandy or Mickey.

“Like what?” Yev asked innocently, the look beginning to dissipate slightly as he spoke. “Like...like...like a Milkovich!” Manuel stammered. Mandy was chuckling by now, which helped to diffuse the situation a bit. “But, I am a Milkov…” Yev began, Manuel cutting him off, “I know you are!” he interrupted with a hint of exasperation. Mandy peered at Manuel out of the corner of her eye, wondering how the hell he was going to fix this.

“Okay, listen Yev, can you keep a secret?” Manuel asked, softening his tone. “Sure!” Yev responded, his voice now filled with excitement and anticipation. “Good! Okay...well...it’s pretty important that you not talk to your mom about your dads too much right now...or about her house,” Manuel began, spinning his bullshit tale as convincingly as he could. “Why?” Yev asked, his curiosity getting the best of him. “Because your dads are going to surprise her!” Manuel blurted out, Mandy shooting him an odd look that he couldn’t quite interpret definitively.

“What kind of surprise?” Yev asked, “You mean like a house? She already knows that!” he quipped. “Yes, but...” Manuel paused, looking to Mandy for help. “Yev, just trust me. Don’t let your mom know anything involving your dads, or you’ll ruin the surprise,” Mandy interjected, trying her best to keep things vague and simple. “Trust me,” she repeated for effect. “Okay, Aunt Mandy, but I don’t understand...” “Ehh, ehh, ehh...just...shhhhh, Mandy interrupted, holding her finger to her lips. “Okay,” Yev said softly, “Can I at least go to the house to get Mom’s necklace?” “No!!” Mandy and Manuel replied forcefully, in unison.

“I’m afraid opening the restaurant this afternoon may be too risky,” Bigley reasoned. “Fine! But I gotta get over to that factory today to see Marco!” Johnny responded stubbornly. “We’ve been over this, Johnny. No one should get anywhere near the factory until Monday morning, when first shift is going in. We can’t take the chance of putting up any red flags, in case someone is watching the
place. It would put all of them in great danger over there,” Bigley explained, referring to Doc, Shawn, Mickey and the three patients. “I understand,” Johnny acquiesced, “I’ll go dressed like a factory worker on Monday morning, like you suggested.”

“Hmm…” Bigley mumbled to himself as he scrolled through the notifications on his regular phone. “What?” Johnny asked nervously, having been on edge since the moment he found out about Marco and the impending Russian invasion of Mexico. “Notification from the Chicago Tribune.’ Cook County Prisoner At Large After Ambulance Accident’,” Bigley read from his phone, tapping to open the article.

“Guess who?” Bigley asked, after reading silently for about ten seconds. “Are you fuckin’ kiddin’ me?!” Johnny exploded. “Crazy son of a bitch is probably halfway to Mexico by now! And the thing is—he has no face! Still needed to have his nose and mouth rebuilt!” Bigley announced, shaking his head. “What an idiot! Not gonna be hard to spot him, huh?” Johnny chuckled with a cocky smirk, although his blood pressure was through the roof at the very thought of Terry Milkovich being on the loose. Johnny felt Bigley could keep pretty good tabs on the Russians. He had more moles within their organization than Johnny had wine varieties, but Terry Milkovich was a different story altogether. There was no way to keep tabs on him because he wasn’t sharing his plans with anyone, wasn’t actually part of an organization. He did things on his own, and in total secret. And, historically speaking, anyone who had the goods on him didn’t live long enough to tell about it. Simply put, he was a loose canon and a scary dude.

“So, you think we should tell Mickey?” Johnny asked. “What do you think?” Bigley asked Johnny, who was one of his few confidants, someone he could let his hair down around and be his true self—no airs, no overconfident chest puffing—just Bruno, the man. Over the decades of their association, Bigley had come to value and trust Johnny’s instincts and opinions on many things. “Fuck No!” he’s got enough shit to worry about already,” Johnny responded, “We can handle this.” “Yeah,” Bigley sighed, tossing a new drop phone at Johnny, “Get Damon on the phone.”

“Doc, I need to talk to you,” Ian called over to Doc, interrupting the latest of his wedding planning sessions with Kayla. “Give me just a moment, Ian,” Doc said with a smile, as he leaned down to kiss his fiance, whispering, “Get some rest. We’ll talk more later.”

“Ian, I think you should get back in bed…get some rest, right Doc?” Mickey piped up, before Ian had a chance to talk with him. “No, Mickey! That’s what I wanted to talk to Doc about. I’m feeling okay. I don’t need to be in bed! What I do need is to get off this hefty valium dose you got me on, Doc!” Ian called out in protest. “Ian, Mickey’s right, you do need to rest. I’m surprised you’re not hurting, after being up and around so much, this early on,” Doc countered, walking toward Ian, who was sitting in the recliner, near Marco’s bed. Shawn had just left the room to use the bathroom.

“C’mon, Doc, I could help with their medical care,” Ian suggested pointing to Marco, then Kayla. Don’t you think Shawn needs a break?” he continued. “I think you need to let yourself heal before you start flitting around this place, overdoing it,” Doc suggested. “Well, I at least need not to be bedridden. I’m ready to take the lithium orally and, like I said, I don’t need the valium; it just makes me dizzy and sleepy,” Ian asserted, “so can we get rid of the fucking IV...please?!”

Even Mickey had to admit, being stuck with an IV was a major pain in the ass. “Doc, if you take the IV out, I’ll make sure he takes his meds,” Mickey promised, Ian immediately smiling appreciatively at his mate, giving him a look that said, ‘You’ll be rewarded later.’ “Well, I guess we could try it, but I’d like you to continue with a lower dose of the valium, just for another day or two, just to be sure...” Doc’s voice trailed off as he refocused his attention on Marco, who was fighting his
restraints in his sleep. Doc had opted to keep him restrained in order to keep him in a supine position to avoid further facial damage.

“Let’s give him 30 mg of valium, IV push,” Doc called out, Ian immediately jumping to assist him in Shawn’s absence. It was as if Doc had forgotten, momentarily, that Ian was still a patient, allowing him to work, much to Ian’s pleasure. He had, while sitting in the recliner, devised a makeshift IV hook, strapping it to his shoulder with a blood pressure cuff. Doc chuckled at the sight, adding, “And when you’re done, we’ll get rid of that IV.” It was truly amazing how adept Ian was at manipulating both Doc and Mickey to get his way—almost criminal!

Once Marco was stabilized and sleeping comfortably, Doc asked Shawn, who had finally returned from the bathroom, to remove Ian’s IV, while Mickey watched, hoping this was the right decision and that Ian was going to be his old self from that point forward. He was breathing deeply in an attempt to relax himself, when his drop phone rang. The call was coming from Manuel’s drop phone. He picked up, remaining silent until he heard, “Ojos!”

“Yeah,” Mickey responded, a bit on edge at having received an unexpected call. “Have you been following the news from your hometown?” Manuel asked. “Naw...kinda been focused on shit around here,” Mickey answered, “Why? What’s up?” “Your father escaped this morning!” Manuel shared nervously, awaiting Mickey’s response. By this time, Ian’s IV was out, and he was walking over toward Mickey to listen. “Fuck!!” Mickey yelled, before he could think better of it, given Ian’s still fragile mental state.

“What?” Ian questioned, sidling up next to Mickey, resting his chin on Mickey’s shoulder and pressing his ear up to the phone. Manuel continued, “He was being transported from Chicago Memorial to Cook County Correctional when a car smashed into the back of the ambulance. When the police arrived, there was no one in the back of the ambulance!” “Ho-Ly Fuck!” Mickey muttered under his breath.

“Oh, and there’s a video! Says it’s a WLS exclusive! Hold on!” Manuel exclaimed as he opened the video on his laptop. “Oh my God! Ojos! You’ve gotta see this! It’s an interview with the EMT that was riding with him! He’s all beat up, and he’s talking about what happened!” “Fuck! I’m gonna get the laptop from the other room!” Ian yelled, “I wanna see who it is!” “I got it! Just chill the fuck out! Don’t need ya fallin’ on your ass now,” Mickey commanded. Ian sat down in the chair, Mickey walking briskly toward the door, mumbled, “Manuel, I gotta go, man. Gonna check this out!”

“Wait!” Manuel shouted into the phone, but it was too late. Mickey had already ended the call, setting the phone on a decorative shelf beside the door before exiting. Within minutes, he returned with the laptop, the video cued up for all to see. Doc, Ian and Shawn all gathered around the laptop, opting to leave Kayla, who had drifted off to sleep, out of the loop on this whole developing situation.

The headline at the top of the video read, “Injured EMT Speaks Out About Prison Break.” As soon as Mickey pressed ‘Play’, Ian reacted emotionally, “Oh my God! Ojos! You’ve gotta see this! It’s an interview with the EMT that was riding with him! He’s all beat up, and he’s talking about what happened!” “Shhh…” Mickey whispered, pulling Ian in to comfort him as he struggled to hear what Troy was saying.

“From the minute I got into the ambulance with him, I knew something was up. He was cursing under his breath and seemed to be working to loosen his restraints. I tried talking to him, to keep him calm, but he was obviously quite agitated. Then, all of a sudden, I felt the jolting impact of another vehicle crashing into the ambulance. Then, within...I don’t know...a minute or less, the back door of the ambulance flung open and...I don’t remember anything else until I woke up in the backseat of a car. Musta been drugged on something.”
“And did you know the driver of the car?”

“No, but my patient was in the passenger seat. He was talking...told the driver he wanted to take me with him so he had a doctor for the trip.”

“And did he say where they were going?”

“Yeah, something about Mexico, to settle the score…That’s all I know because he was a scary guy, and I just wanted to get away from him. I opened the back passenger-side car door and jumped out!”

“So, is that why your face is so battered?”

“Well, some of it, but I must have been fighting them before the drug took effect, too, because I could feel that my right eye was swollen and that my lip was bleeding, even before I jumped. Another driver stopped to pick me up and rode me to the hospital.”

“Where were you after you jumped out?”

“Like I told the police, I don’t know an exact intersection, but I know I was somewhere in the Southside.”

“Thank you for your time, Troy. We all hope you heal quickly and that we find the monsters who did this to you! Anyone with information leading to the capture of Terry Milkovich and his accomplices should contact the Chicago Police at 1-800-261-4500, extension 25.”

Terry’s mugshot flashed onto the screen, sending an icy shiver down Mickey’s back. “I think I’m gonna be sick!” Ian gagged, running for the bathroom.
Clusterfuck

Ever since Damon was able to get back into Mexico himself, thanks to Mickey, Johnny and Bigley, he had made it a priority to learn everything there was to know about the reverse coyote business, even putting some tentative feelers out among trusted former cellies and inmates, back in the U.S., two of whom he knew from Cook County Correctional. One of them, Julio Ramirez, had sent people his way already, and had become an underground favorite in the Chicago area. Once he heard from Johnny, regarding Terry’s escape, Damon set about, at Bigley’s behest, trying to market his services to Terry, through Julio.

Bigley had chosen to take this route only because he really didn’t have many other options, other than to utilize the police, which, other than the Boca force, he had consistently avoided entanglements with, in order to protect friends and clients, like Doc and Johnny, whose freedom depended upon keeping a low profile and avoiding contact with law enforcement.

“Mr. Bigley!” Damon’s voice blurted out as soon as Bruno picked up. “Da-Damon! I’ve told you before, you need to wait to hear that it’s me before you blurt out my name! One day you’re gonna cost us BIG! And that’s not gonna bode well for you.”

“I have good news...and bad news,” Damon began, trying his best to divert Bigley’s attention from his recent faux pas. “Which one would you like to hear first?” “Damon, this this no time for games. Please, just get to the point.” Bigley snorted, less than amused by Damon’s informal manner. “Someone contacted Julio...on behalf of Terry Milkovich!” Damon announced enthusiastically. “And Julio has agreed to keep you informed, correct?” Bigley asked, for confirmation. “Yes...In fact, he has already provided some info,” Damon said, then pausing awkwardly.

“Which was?!” Bigley growled, becoming annoyed. He’d never had this trouble with Damon before, but, then again, this was the first time he’d asked him to track anyone for his own purposes. His past dealings had involved strictly garden-variety reverse coyote operations and deliveries, such as the one involving Kayla.

“Julio says Terry is on his way to Mexico with his son,” Damon replied. “Yeah, I already know that...and so does all of Chicago...and probably the rest of the world, by now!” Bigley shouted. “Listen, I need your guy to help that dumb ass get here without getting caught. And I need you to find out exactly how, where and when he’s getting in,” Bigley barked impatiently. The stress of this situation, being that it involved so many people that he cared for personally, was really beginning to take its toll on Bigley, and Damon was a convenient, unwitting scapegoat. “And once you find out, I need you to get it done---quickly.”

“Morning!” Ian hummed, his mouth stuffed with Mickey’s morning wood as he sucked him into the land of the living. “Mornin’,” Mickey yawned, a satisfied smile creeping across his face as he gradually woke up enough to realize what was being done to him. He reached down, entwining his fingers in Ian’s brilliant, red locks as he watched him bob up and down on his stiff cock. “Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey panted as Ian expertly manipulated him, his lips ringing his tip tightly, his tongue rolling wildly over his slit simultaneously, his oil-coated fist sliding up and down his shaft. “You...taste...so...good!” Ian spoke haltingly, amid all his divine sucking and licking.

“Mmmm...” was the only response Mickey could squeeze from his throat, he was so caught up in the throes of passion, his hips bucking up recklessly into Ian’s face. “See, I...could ...never do...this...if...I was...still on an IV,” Ian continued to communicate when his mouth was empty, between bobs, as he gradually increased the depth to which he took Mickey into his mouth, until he
was sliding it over its entire length.

Ian licked his index and middle fingers, then slowly introduced one, then both into Mickey’s asshole, all the while continuing to suck him off as if his dick were a fucking popsicle. “Fuck!” Mickey moaned in ecstasy. “Oh, no you don’t,” Ian paused, feeling Mickey might explode before he wanted him to. “I want you to really enjoy this when it happens,” he said as he allowed his fingernails to faintly graze Mickey’s balls, while still pumping his fingers slowly into and out of Mickey’s ass.

“I will! I will!” Mickey insisted, his voice taking on a begging tone. “Oh yeah...I know,” Ian replied, chuckling before taking Mickey’s rock-hard cock into his mouth again, moving over it much more slowly this time. Mickey groaned in resignation, settling in as best he could, although he was so aroused that Ian’s lazy pace became more torturous by the second. Before long, Ian had him moaning steadily, his vocal volume and intensity continually increasing, his grip on the tufts of Ian’s hair tightening as he pulled at them feverishly, trying every tactic imaginable to get Ian to hasten his process and allow him the release he craved so desperately.

“Not gonna work,” Ian said in a sing-song voice, its vibrations resonating within Mickey’s throbbing manhood, teasing him just that much more. “Don’t you like it this way?” Ian questioned, stopping once again, this time staring up at Mickey with his gorgeous green eyes and a sexy smile. “Yeah...’course I do!” Mickey answered as patiently as possible, realizing that complaining would only slow everything down more.

This was the stuff Ian thrived on—having his hubby eating from the palm of his hand, completely at his mercy, knowing full well that he could decide exactly when and how Mickey was going to cum. “Think you’re ready?” he asked Mickey, resuming and quickening his movements only slightly. “Ian...whatever you think,” Mickey responded breathlessly, verbally ceding control to Ian, although Ian knew damn well he had it the whole time.

“You wanna cum in my mouth, or with me?” Ian questioned, catching Mickey by surprise. “What?” Mickey asked, his head heavily clouded by extreme want. “You heard me! I can finish you this way, or you can cum when I fuck you. Either way, I’m gonna fuck the hell outta you within the next five minutes,” Ian clarified, smirking at Mickey as he looked up at him through his bright, curly eyelashes.

“Hey, whatever floats your boat,” Mickey responded, feigning nonchalance, despite the raging hard-on he had, which was beginning to ache from being so stiff for so long. “Alright then, up on your knees,” Ian commanded, Mickey flipping himself over immediately. Ian greased his own cock up with the oil, then crawled up behind Mickey on the bed and began to gently press into him.

“I’m ready!!” Mickey announced, stating the obvious. “Yeah, yeah, but I wanna take my time,” Ian laughed as Mickey began to rut his ass up against Ian’s hips, deepening the penetration until he was taking the full nine and moaning loudly once more, loving every blessed inch of it. “Fuck, Ian! The way you move!” Mickey exclaimed, intense pleasure overloading his system. “Mmm Hmm…” Ian responded, Mickey’s impassioned words inspiring him to continue, full-tilt, despite the growing pain in his hip.

“So fucking beautiful,” Ian breathed as he watched Mickey’s exquisitely-contoured buttocks bounce as they collided with his hips. Just seeing that was enough to push Ian over the edge. He slowed his pace once more, putting the breaks on his own climax. “Gallagher!” Mickey whined in protest. “Sorry, I just don’t want this to ever end,” Ian purred into Mickey’s ear, raising the hair on Mickey’s neck and giving him goosebumps over his entire body.

Mickey made a valiant attempt at flipping Ian over so he could control the speed of their fucking, but Ian wasn’t having it; he held Mickey firmly in place, proceeding to fuck him at the same tantalizingly
slow pace, rocking up and back, altering his angle expertly and driving Mickey absolutely out of his mind. Mickey bucked wildly, telegraphing to Ian how close he was, calling Ian’s name over and over and over again.

Ian grasped Mickey’s nearly exploding cock in his hand, pumping it at the same increasing tempo that they were banging at, and within seconds, Mickey was literally screaming in ecstasy, spewing all over Ian’s fist and the bed beneath him, and squeezing Ian’s cock so tightly that his eruption followed within minutes, equally explosive and punctuated by Ian’s cries, which consisted of two words, juxtaposed randomly, “Fuck...Mickey...Mickey...Fuck! Fuck!”

The pair lay quietly content, nearly passing out from exhaustion, until Mickey, finally breaking the silence, asked, “So what the fuck was that all about?” He was truly shocked that Ian would feel up to such an intense session, first thing in the morning, given all he’d been through recently---the surgery, the medication change, the stress, all of it. “Two reasons for it,” Ian began with a relaxed grin, “First, to show my appreciation for your vote of confidence in removing my IV. Second, I wanted you to start your day off right—wanted to catch you before you were awake enough to let all the bullshit ruin it for you.”

“Yeah, well...you’re welcome...and fuck yeah! Mission accomplished! I didn’t think about a fuckin’ thing...until now,” Mickey responded, his facial expression changing as he ended his sentence. Suddenly, all of the crazy shit they had learned the day before came flooding back to him. “Fuck!” he yelled, popping up from the bed to find his phone. “Where ya going?” Ian asked, his lower lip jutting out into a pitiful pout. “Just gettin’ my phone,” Mickey called back to him as he neared the kitchen. “Okay,” Ian answered, suddenly catching sight of his phone on the nightstand. This was the first he’d seen it in a while. He knew he had received a message from the Russians on it, but figured that, as long as he didn’t make any calls or send any texts, he should be able to use it to surf the net and catch up on the latest headlines.

Ian reached for the phone, a searing pain shooting from his hip up into his lower back. “Owww!” he cried out in pain, at the same time looking down at his phone, which now rested on the bed beside him. There was a new text message from Shawn’s phone: “Be at the clinic today at noon, or you’ll never see your son again. Tell no one.” Ian’s heart began to pound, all the blood rushing to his head, his eyes stinging as they filled with tears. He ran for the bathroom, just as Mickey walked back into the room with his phone. “Ian?” he called after him as he ran into the bathroom and shut the door. “I don’t feel good!” Ian replied in a muffled voice from the other side of the door. “What the fuck?!” he bellowed skeptically.

Ian texted back, “Please don’t hurt him! I’ll be there,” read it back to himself, then hit ‘send’.  

“Got a line on a way into Mexico,” Terry grunted, “And they’ll have that carrot-topped cocksucker waitin’ for us when we get there. Then all we gotta do is dangle the carrot and your pansy-assed brother will come runnin’. Really, he ain’t even your fuckin’ brother...Remember that when we gotta do it.”

“Dad...the fuck you talkin’ about?” Iggy asked. “Iggy, you know damn well what we’re goin’ to do!” Terry screamed at the top of his lungs, flailing his arms and shaking his fists, Iggy flinching reflexively. “No...I mean about Mickey not bein’ my real brother,” Iggy clarified, edging himself as far away from Terry as he could to avoid getting smacked or punched.

“That whore mother of his!” Terry hissed contemptuously. “Hey! That’s my mother, too!” Iggy protested cautiously. “No...she’s not!” Terry countered. “Yes, she is!” Iggy insisted. “No, your real mother’s fuckin’ dead,” Terry remarked matter-of-factly, “and so is my piece-of-shit brother!”
“Your brother? Uncle Ray?” Iggy asked, feeling as if his whole world was crashing in on him. “No, my punk-ass little brother, Alex,” Terry clarified. “Never knew I had an Uncle Alex,” Iggy said, a puzzled look coming over his already pale, flustered face. “Yeah, that’s cuz he was a fuckin’ backstabber...and you know what Milkoviches do to people who ain’t loyal…” Terry reminded him. “Yeah, we eliminate ‘em,” Iggy snarled in support of his father, genuinely afraid not to be, in light of the current topic of conversation. “So, what’d he do?” Iggy asked, swallowing hard as he realized his father had probably murdered two of his family members already.

“Right after I married that bitch you think is your fuckin’ mother...and she’s not...I got busted runnin’ guns...went away for a little over a year. I finally get out, come home, and she’s in the fuckin’ hospital squeezin’ out her pillow-bitin’, pole-smokin’ bitch of a kid! Alex is at the house...sits me down to explain. Those were the last fuckin’ words he ever said…” Terry howled, pulling at the woolen mask that had now begun to stick painfully to his facial wounds. “Fuckin’ raised that motherfucker like my own...and this is the fuckin’ thanks I get! He’s gonna find out what happens to turncoats...first-hand…”
Mickey settled Ian back into the bed, kissing him on the forehead, then went into the other room to get Ian’s medication, and to check on the other patients. “Mickey!” Kayla said with a bright smile, as he walked in. “Mornin’, Ma! You feelin’ better?” he responded. “Yes, Mickey, and we were just talking about the wedding!” she answered, her voice filled with excitement. “Ma, ya know we can’t have a wedding ‘til all this shit blows over…and hopefully it will,” he countered, genuinely feeling guilty for being such a wet blanket, but needing to be the voice of reason, nonetheless.

“Gonna make some breakfast, or...uh...brunch. Wno’s hungry? Ian’s gotta eat so he can take his meds,” Mickey announced. “Whatcha making?” Shawn asked, looking like he hadn’t had a good meal in forever. “Well, since I’m cookin’, and we all know Ian’s the better cook, can everyone handle scrambled eggs?” Mickey asked, looking around the room for approval.

“That’s fine, honey!” Kayla answered with a warm smile, the rest nodding in agreement. “How ‘bout him?” Mickey asked, motioning over at Marco, who still looked, to Mickey, to be in terrible shape. “He’s going to have to stay on IV nutrients for now,” Doc replied with a slight frown.

“Okay,” Mickey shrugged, heading back to his room to make breakfast. He had purposely avoided the news, realizing there was nothing he could do about his father coming, except to hope that he wouldn’t make it, or that someone would intercept him before he could get to anyone in the family.

By now, however, he was itching to know if there was any news. Perhaps they had been caught. Never before had Mickey wished for law enforcement to be successful in apprehending a family member, but in this case, it would definitely make everything a lot easier for him and his loved ones in Mexico.

Mickey was determined to cook first, then take some time to check out the latest news, but then he realized he could just have Ian do it for him. Surfing the web was definitely something Ian could handle. Besides, after Ian’s early morning performance, Mickey felt that he was getting better already. “Ian,” he called from the kitchen, “You feelin’ well enough to check the Chicago news headlines?”

“Sure, but I think we left the laptop in the other room,” Ian answered. “Okay, I’ll go get it in a minute,” Mickey sighed, trying to hurry the eggs, at this point. “I got it,” Ian insisted, “I need to move around a little anyway. I’m feeling better.”

Within seconds, Ian showed up in the kitchen, fully-clothed and ready to retrieve the laptop. “That was quick!” Mickey commented. “Told you I feel better! And just want you to know how much I love you,” he whispered into Mickey’s ear, wrapping his arms around Mickey tightly and breathing him in from behind. “So much,” he added a bit more loudly, his voice full of emotion. “I love you, too, man,” Mickey replied, beginning to dish up the eggs. “C’mere,” Ian purred, spinning Mickey around and kissing him hard, causing the egg-covered spatula to fly out of Mickey’s hand. “...the fuck, Ian?!” Mickey yelled, giving him a look. “I just love you...so much...” Ian reiterated very seriously.

Mickey bent down to grab the spatula and clean up the mess. By the time he stood back up, Ian had left. He finished preparing all of the brunch plates, then grabbed the coffee carafe, which was filled with his signature Milkovich brew. Now all he needed was some help carrying it all next door. But since Ian hadn’t returned, he decided to head over with as much as he could carry, then ask for help bringing the rest. He figured Ian must be on the laptop in the other room.
Mickey filled his hands, two plates each, and headed over. He kicked at the door, Shawn, who was anxiously awaiting his brunch, promptly swinging it open and taking two of the plates off Mickey’s hands. “Thanks, man,” Mickey said, acknowledging Shawn’s helpfulness. Mickey took the two remaining plates, serving one to Doc, the other to Kayla. “Where’s Ian?” he asked, looking around the room. “Assumed he’d be coming over with you,” Doc answered. “No, he came over to get the laptop about five minutes ago,” Mickey explained.

No, honey, we haven’t seen him yet today. Maybe he’s in the bathroom over in your room,” Kayla suggested. “I don’t think so, but I’ll go check…” Mickey responded, his chest beginning to tighten with worry.

Mickey jogged back to their room, calling for Ian and checking the bathroom. No sign of him. ‘What if he went downstairs for something and fell?’ Mickey thought to himself, half sick with worry, turning and racing down the hall, running down the stairs, and calling for him again.

Now Mickey was panicked. He ran into the conference room, his eyes darting around the room desperately, then into the office, and finally, out onto the factory floor. No Ian. His hands shook violently as he reached for his drop phone, dialing Ian’s, then realizing that Ian most likely wouldn’t have either of his phones on him.

He ran back upstairs, frantically calling Ian’s name, Shawn stepping into the hallway in surprise. “Dude, you didn’t find him yet?” “No!” Mickey yelled, running back toward their room to look for him there yet again. “Check the bathroom in there,” he called out to Shawn on his way into their room.

Mickey and Shawn met in the hallway, each confirming to the other that Ian was not in either of the rooms. “Maybe he left,” Shawn suggested, following Mickey into his room. As Mickey glanced around the room one last time, he noticed that Ian’s iPhone was missing from the side table. He picked up Ian’s drop phone, which had been sitting right next to his other one, and flipped it open. There was a new text message from Shawn’s phone. His heart dropped into his stomach as he read it: “Be at the clinic today at noon, or you’ll never see your son again. Tell no one.”

“FUCK!!!” Mickey screamed at the top of his lungs, falling to his knees and beginning to pound on the floor, like a baby having a temper tantrum, or someone having a nervous breakdown. “Mickey,” Shawn said timidly, not knowing what to expect from him next. “What does it say?” Mickey looked up at Shawn, holding the phone out to him in his trembling hand, his eyes overflowing with tears, his lower lip quivering as his mouth hung open in complete shock.

“Oh, Mickey, I’m so sorry,” Shawn said comfortingly, helping him up from the floor and hugging him. “I gotta go get him! Gotta go get him! Right the fuck now! Gotta get him,” Mickey wailed, weeping uncontrollably, pulling himself out of Shawn’s grasp, then pacing back and forth, swearing, sobbing and ranting, like a madman.

Shawn ran for the door, calling out loudly, “Doc! Valium! Quick!” Doc had a syringe full of valium prepared for Ian’s morning dose of meds, since he wanted to be sure Ian got it for at least the next few days, just to be certain he was going to remain stable and calm. Assuming that was not the case, Doc came running into the room, looking for Ian.

“Where is he?” Doc asked, a puzzled look on his face. Shawn pointed over at Mickey, who, by this time, looked and sounded nothing short of insane, still pacing, muttering tearfully, and throwing punches in the air.

Doc handed the syringe to Shawn, then approached Mickey from behind, wrapping his arms around him. “Now,” he said calmly as he struggled to keep Mickey still, without much success. Fortunately,
Shawn was able to inject him quickly, the valium making it easier for Doc to hold him soon after, although he was still rambling about having to go get Ian. “More?” Shawn asked. Doc nodded his head, as he led Mickey over to the bed, lying him back onto it as Mickey became more woozy.

Shawn returned with the additional dose and administered it, Mickey finally succumbing to a drug-induced nap. “Okay, now what the hell is going on?!” Doc asked, still winded from having to subdue Mickey. Shawn handed the drop-phone to Doc, the message still open on the screen.

“Oh my God!” Doc yelled. “We have to go get him!” “Doc! Don’t make me sedate you, too!” Shawn yelled. “Anyone who leaves here is at risk and could put the rest of us in danger! You need to call Bigley before we do anything! Go ahead! I’ll stay here with him while you call,” Shawn said more calmly as his breathing evened out, his eyes glancing over Mickey’s motionless form. “Think he’ll be out for a while?” Shawn asked. “Probably,” Doc replied, “He has no tolerance. Never uses this type of medication.”

Shawn stood, watching over Mickey, marveling at how beautiful and peaceful he was as he slept, and wondering what the fuck they were gonna do when he woke up. He sat down on the bed next to him, awaiting Doc’s return.

“Finally, after what seemed like forever, Doc came back to Mickey’s room. “Still out?” he asked. “Yeah,” Shawn replied, touching Mickey’s face lightly and getting no response. “What did he say?” Shawn asked impatiently. “He said no one should leave here under any circumstances. He was not happy that Ian had left and was now in danger. He’s going to send the Boca Police to the clinic,” Doc answered, sharing Bigley’s strategy.

“But, what if they have Yev? Won’t that put him at risk?” Shawn questioned Doc. “No way they have Yev. Manuel would’ve let us know. They just used that story to get to Ian—to make him scared enough to leave here and meet them,” Doc said, shaking his head sadly. “So, you don’t think Ian’s manic right now?” Shawn continued with what was beginning to feel, to Doc, like an interrogation. “I didn’t say that…” Doc replied, “I didn’t say that.”
On The Road Again

Please, Uncle Manuel! I want to give her the necklace today!!" Yev begged. “I’m sorry, Yev, but as I’ve told you, I don’t have a key to the house, and I’m not willing to have you break in through a window!” Manuel responded. “You’re not being fair! You’re not my dad! It’s not your house! Call my dads! They won’t even care!” Yev whined.

“I’m sorry, Yev, but you have my answer,” Manuel responded, trying his best to remain calm, despite his nephew’s increasingly defiant attitude. “You can’t keep me here! I’m going to get my mom’s necklace! I’m tired of waiting! If Daddy and Daddy Ian were here…” “Enough, Yev!” Manuel said sternly. Yev scowled at him, turning abruptly on his heel and running for the door.

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“Who?” Bigley asked in an irritated voice, as he picked up one of his drop phones. “Mr. Bigley?” Damon asked cautiously. “Yes, Damon. What is it?” Bigley asked gruffly, genuinely beside himself, after the news he had received about Ian, coupled with what he perceived to be his minimal ability to control the situation in order to keep Ian, and everyone else involved, safe.

“I heard from Julio,” Damon answered, “He got them in. Terry’s in a lot of pain and has a high fever. They asked to be taken to the clinic where Ian works. I didn’t think that would be a good…” Bigley cut him off, “That’s perfect. Tell him to get them there. You have the address...Once they’re inside, you can show up and take care of business. I’ll let you know exactly when you should go in, once I have all the intel.” “It’s perfect?” Damon asked, sounding confused.

“Yes, now make the plans and get it done!” Bigley barked. “You want me to do it in the clinic?” Damon asked incredulously. “No, dumbass! Just handle it as you normally would. Got it?” Bigley asked, quickly becoming frustrated with Damon’s clueless ramblings. “Yes, Mr. Bigley.” Damon responded reluctantly, not quite knowing what to expect.

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Ian, afraid to use his phone to call for a car, set out on foot for the clinic, quickly becoming sunburned, drenched with sweat, and dehydrated, in addition to being in great pain, which radiated from his hip up into his back. He trudged on, a growing lump in his throat and ache in the pit of his stomach adding to his discomfort. He couldn’t stop worrying about Yev or get Mickey out of his head, fearing he might never see either of them again.

Finally, as Ian was nearing the point of passing out, a local man, seeing his condition, stopped to offer him a ride, which he quickly accepted, thanking him profusely. The man gave him a bottle of water, then dropped him off a block from the clinic, at Ian’s request. As Ian first caught sight of the clinic, he noticed two Boca squad cars there. As he got closer, he could see that the first of the cars was riddled with bullets, and that Officer McBride was inside, bleeding out. Ian approached the car cautiously, attempting to render emergency aid, but realizing quickly that it was no use.

“Your kid isn’t in there,” McBride managed to whisper, despite his extensive injuries, “and I’m as good as dead. They’re in there...You gotta get out of here…” Ian stared down at McBride helplessly as the life left his eyes, then shut them with his hand, pausing for a moment, out of respect, before taking off for the side of the clinic, where his car had been parked ever since Mickey had picked him up for lunch two days before, just before they ended up going together in Mickey’s car to the hospital to see Kayla.

Ian frantically felt all of his pockets, realizing, much to his terror, that he didn’t have any keys on
him, and that the only ones in the car were house keys. He very quickly and adeptly used his hot-wiring skills to start the car, taking off for Mandy and Manuel’s, planning to somehow keep Yev out of harm’s way. As he pulled up to Mandy and Manuel’s house, Yev came running out the front door. Ian rolled the car window down, yelling, “Get in!” “Daddy Ian!” Yevgeni shouted joyfully, running up to the car, opening the door, and jumping in.

“I thought you had to stay away from germs,” Yev questioned, looking genuinely worried about Ian. “I’m fine now,” Ian responded with a smile, putting his right hand on Yev’s shoulder as he drove. Yev leaned over, resting his head against Ian’s right side. “I missed you, Daddy Ian! I’m so glad you’re okay!” Ian squeezed Yev into him, tears of joy filling his eyes as it sunk in that he now had Yev and could get him to safety. “Where’s Daddy?” Yev asked. “He’ll meet us later,” Ian answered quickly.

“Aren’t we going home? Where are we going? Can we stop at the house for Mom’s necklace?” Yev began firing questions at Ian. “We can stop for the necklace, but we can’t stay at home right now. It’s not good for me. I have to get to a special doctor,” Ian explained. “Why? Are you okay?” Yev asked, a frightened look coming over his face. “I’m fine, Yev,” I just need some special medicine,” Ian answered, working hard to maintain his cool with his son as he pulled up in front of their house.

Ian unlocked the front door, Yev making a mad dash up the stairs to grab the necklace. Ian walked in behind him, immediately heading for the kitchen, grabbing the money stash that Mickey had returned to its original location in a box under the sink, after their post-incarceration return to Mexico. The box also contained their passports, real, as well as ones with aliases, other falsified identification, and three burner phones. This was Mickey’s ‘just in case’ box that had given Ian great comfort at one time, but recently, he had dismissed it as unnecessary, and the product of Mickey’s paranoia.

Ian teared up, realizing, once again, how right Mickey had been about so many things, and how scared he was to do all of this without Mickey. He felt, however, that he had no other choice, under the circumstances, and that getting himself and Yev out of Mexico would keep them and everyone else safe until everything blew over. He then carried it into the laundry room, where he gathered as many clean pieces of clothing for both himself and Yev as he could find, stuffing everything into a large suitcase, then zipping it and putting it by the front door.

“Got it!” Yev yelled, holding the necklace out in front of him as he descended the stairs. “Good! Let’s get going. We have a long way to go, and I want to get there before dark,” Ian reasoned, reaching for the suitcase. “Why are we taking that?” Yev asked. “Yev, just get in the car. We’ll get ice cream when we get there,” Ian promised. “Get where?” Yev pressed. “Do you remember the first time you went to a photo shoot with me and Dad? We stayed at a place on the beach, and we watched the sunrise all together?” Ian asked, his own description conjuring up such beautiful memories that he contemplated turning back to somehow get Mickey, right then.

“Hey, I gotta stop for gas. Looks like you might get your ice cream sooner than I planned,” Ian said enthusiastically, attempting to distract him. “I think I’ll stop right here,” Ian added, pulling up to a gas station with an ice cream shop right next to it. Ian pumped the gas, then turned to Yev, saying, “Let’s go! What flavor do you want?”

“I wanna go see Mommy. She’ll be worried. Uncle Manuel was just about to take me, but I wanted to get her necklace,” Yev protested. “Yev, you’ll get to see her when we get back. Let’s just get our ice cream and get back on the road. You’re glad to see me, right?” Ian asked, reaching his hand out
for Yev to hold. “Yeah,” Yev said quietly, grasping Ian’s hand.

Once Yev was in the ice cream shop, he perked up a bit, ordering three different flavors of ice cream, one scoop of each. This was something they typically did as a family, so they could try a lot of different flavors. “I ordered one for Daddy, even though he’s not here,” Yev grinned, “I know he would like the triple chocolate.”

“I’m sure he would,” Ian smiled faintly, Yev’s reference to Mickey stabbing him right through the heart. Fuck! He missed him, but tried not to let it show. “Gonna have to take it to go,” Ian said to the girl behind the counter, who immediately fitted Yev’s container of ice cream with an appropriately sized lid.

Ian walked Yev back to the car, again gripping his hand on the way. Once in the car, Yev sat quietly, eating his ice cream, feeding the occasional spoonful to Ian, as Ian navigated the car out of the gas station lot.

Ian had only been back on the road for a minute, when he heard a loud click behind his head, followed by the words, “Pull over,” spoken in a thick Russian accent. “Daddy!” Yev screamed in terror. “Shut up, kid!” the Russian gunman yelled, smacking Yev in the back of the head with the butt of his gun, knocking him out instantly.

Ian pulled over, barely able to see through the tears that now filled his eyes and spilled down his beet-red, sunburned face. The Russian repositioned the gun, pointing it at Yev, as he maneuvered himself out of the backseat, entering the front passenger door and seating himself next to Yev, placing the barrel against Yev’s temple, Yev’s head resting on the dash, his entire body slumped forward. “Drive,” the Russian commanded. “Wh---where are we goin’?” Ian asked nervously. “We are going back to your clinic.”

Shawn had fallen asleep in the bed, next to Mickey, utterly exhausted from the long shifts he had put in since their arrival, which had come on the heels of a series of twelve-hour shifts at Chicago Memorial, in anticipation of his trip to Boca. Mickey’s sudden movements woke him with a start, Mickey calling for Ian and reaching his arms out. Once Mickey’s hands came into contact with Shawn, Mickey rolled onto his side, pushing his back and bottom up against him. Shawn remained still, hoping Mickey was going to fall back to sleep. Mickey reached over, pulling Shawn’s arm around him and, after a minute or two, he was snoring softly.

Shawn gave Mickey five minutes to fall back into a deep sleep, then removed himself from Mickey’s grasp, heading for the other room. “What’s going on?” Shawn asked Doc, “I don’t think he’ll sleep much longer.”

“Manuel just called,” Doc shared, “Ian took off in his car with Yev.”
“Mandy...hello...Are you almost here? You are late. I wait long time for my Yevgeni. I get worried,” Svetlana complained via voicemail, after trying unsuccessfully to reach both Mandy and Manuel multiple times. Of course, Mandy and Manuel saw all of the calls come in, but were hoping to get Yev back, or at least instructions from Mickey or Bigley, before they answered. And they weren’t looking forward to hearing the reactions of Svetlana or Mickey, if they had to share that Ian had just grabbed him off the street and taken off.

For his part, Bigley had been focused on discovering Ian’s whereabouts and ensuring his safety. He had spent ten minutes on the phone with the Boca Police Chief, before demanding that he personally go to the clinic, since neither of his squad cars were responding, nor were any of the three officers answering any of their personal devices.

Bigley was genuinely worried, and Johnny, who was still with him at his beach house, was absolutely beside himself, extremely concerned about Marco, as well as both Ian and Mickey; he was highly upset that Mickey had been sedated, and was, therefore, presently unavailable. Johnny appreciated Mickey’s insight, as a fellow former street thug. He figured he might have a pretty good handle on the behavior of the Russian mob, since he had essentially grown up around them. He knew the key to dealing with the Russians was to stay one step ahead of them, but they had proven to have played their cards very well, and he felt they had definitely gained the upper hand as a result of Ian’s latest escapade.

“Bruno! Have you heard anything?” Doc asked in desperation, fearing that Mickey would wake up before he had any good news to share. “No. We haven’t been able to reach the officers that Chief Mendez sent to the clinic, so I asked him to go there himself. Hope to hear from him soon. “Well, in the meantime, Mickey’s going to be waking up. I can’t just keep wasting Ian’s valium to keep him unconscious. Ian may need it,” Doc explained, his voice full of concern, “So, what should I tell him?”

“I’ll talk to him,” Kayla piped up from her bed. “You don’t need that stress,” Doc quickly countered. “He’s my son, and I will handle him,” Kayla responded, a bit of an edge evident in her voice.

“Okay...keep us posted..PLEASE!” Doc said, ending the call with Bigley as he heard the doorknob to the room turning.

“Hey! He’s awake!” Shawn called out loudly as he hustled into the room, a drowsy Mickey following close behind. “…the fuck happened?” Mickey yawned, stretching, as he meandered into the room, still obviously feeling the effects of the sedation. Shawn and Doc both looked at him, Doc then turning to Kayla, “Mickey, your mother wants to talk to you,” Doc spoke softly.

“Ma...what’s goin’ on?...You okay?...Where’s Ian?” Mickey slurred, sitting down clumsily on the couch near her bed. “Mickey,” Kayla began, reaching her hand out for his, Mickey instinctively grasping it tightly, as if he knew bad news was coming. “I’m fine. Please don’t worry about me. Right now, we are all waiting to hear from Mr. Bigley. Do you remember that Ian went to meet the Russians at the clinic?” Kayla blurted out, Doc shooting her a doubting look. Doc, Kayla and Shawn all watched as Mickey’s facial expression changed from one of confusion to that of terror. “What?! What happened?! Who...why didn’t I go after…”

Mickey stopped talking as it slowly dawned on him that he had fallen asleep unnaturally. He felt his head with his hands, thinking at first that he, or someone, must have hit his head. Once he realized he
had no lumps or pain, his next conclusion was that he was drugged. He knew from experience that his friends in the medical profession wouldn’t hesitate to sedate him, if he got out of control, which he was certain he had, the longer he mulled the whole scenario over in his head.

“So...is he...is he...” Mickey couldn’t finish his sentence, the lump in his throat growing, trapping the horrible howls that would have otherwise accompanied his tears, deep in his throat. “Mickey...we don’t know where he is...but we know he has Yev,” Kayla responded, desperate to allay Mickey’s fears as much as possible, under the circumstances. “How the fuck did he...where the...what the fuck!!?” Mickey screamed, standing abruptly, then pacing back and forth, rubbing his eyes with the palms of his hands.

“Mickey, come here,” Kayla said sternly, Mickey immediately returning to her side. “Come closer,” she whispered, cupping his cheeks in her hands as soon as he was close enough for her to reach. “Look at me,” she continued, staring up into his sad, yet beautiful, tear-filled, crystal blue eyes, which looked as they had so many times during his childhood. The sight of them nearly broke her, but she kept her composure, for his sake.

“You are strong, and you have us,” she said, motioning over at Doc, “Whatever happens, remember that. We love you, Mickey,” she finished, wiping his tears away and pulling his head down to rest on her chest. Mickey broke down and sobbed like a child in need of his mother’s comfort, which is exactly what he got. She held him close, stroking his hair and murmuring more words of encouragement and affection.

Their moment was interrupted by the ringing of Mickey’s regular phone, which Shawn had brought from the other room, along with the drop phone Ian had been using. Shawn pulled it from his pocket, his face turning white as a ghost as he read from the screen, “It’s Ian’s iPhone.”

“Gimme the fuckin’ phone!!” Mickey hollered. Shawn immediately handed the phone to Mickey, who answered it just as quickly. “Daddy??” Yev’s frightened little voice came through the phone. “Yev!!” Mickey breathed, barely able to speak. “I’m...supp...osed... to... tell... you to...to come to...” Yev was crying so hard that he was heaving to catch his breath between each syllable. “Spit it out, kid!” Mickey heard a Russian voice yell in the background, followed by a loud thud and more crying. “Here...you try,” the Russian ordered, Ian’s voice suddenly audible. “Come to the clinic or they’ll kill us both...Now...please stop!! I’ll do anything you want!! Just stop hurting him!” Ian begged. “Ian!!! Ian!!!” Mickey screeched as the phone went dead.

Mickey looked around the room, all eyes fixed on him, awaiting his reaction. “I’m goin’ to the fuckin’ clinic! You wanna stop me, you’re gonnal hafta fuckin’ shoot me!” he growled. Mickey rose from Kayla’s bed, pushing past both Doc and Shawn, who stood motionless, their jaws hanging open in total shock.

As Mickey walked out the door, headed for his room, they could see him scrolling through his contacts. Once he got inside his room, he removed a picture of Chicago that was hanging on the wall near the couch, opened the safe behind it, and retrieved a briefcase, unholing it to expose a cache of guns, each of which he painstakingly loaded, then strapping them to various parts of his person.

Once he was fully suited up with his weaponry, he proceeded to make a call, “Johnny...need ya to pick me up at the deli a block down from the factory...and bring everything you got...” Mickey snarled, still wiping tears from his face. “But...Mick...” Johnny tried to respond, Mickey interrupting, “Just fuckin’ DO IT!!”

Johnny, who was still at Bigley’s house, was hard-pressed to get up and walk out without an explanation. Bigley had seen who called, since they had been waiting nervously for a return call from the chief. “Bruno...I have to go...” Johnny began. “You know this isn’t safe,” Bruno warned.
“Yeah ...nothin’ is, at this point…” Johnny replied. “I’m coming with you,” Bigley said in his usual gruff manner. “No…You have a family. Stay here,” Johnny insisted, gathering his guns and heading for his car. “Johnny!” Bigley called after him. “My family needs me...and I’m gonna be there!” Johnny shouted over his shoulder, just before hopping into his car.

“Okay, this is the place,” Iggy announced, pulling up outside the clinic. “Looks like we missed all the action,” he added as he took notice of the bullet-riddled cop car, as well as the one behind it. “Dad?” he called out, after he got no answer from Terry. “Dad!” he yelled, again trying to get a response, but getting nothing.

Iggy pulled up behind the squad car, put the car in ‘park’ and shut off the engine. It was then that he could hear a child crying inside the clinic. “Dad!” he screamed, turning and shaking Terry, who finally let out a cry of pain. His body was extremely hot to the touch and, upon closer examination, Iggy could see that he was sweating profusely, even through the facemask, which seemed to be growing into Terry’s face.

Realizing that he would not be able to get Terry inside by himself, he decided to go into the clinic and ask for help. As he walked past the squad cars, he took notice of the dead cop in the driver’s seat of the lead car. “Fuck!” he muttered, stopping for a brief moment to look inside the car, before continuing on to the clinic.

Upon entering the clinic, he found two more dead police officers inside, as well as a total of four Russian mobsters, most of whom he recognized from the ‘hood. Three of them had a gun on Ian, while the other, a tall lanky guy with a large facial scar, seemed to be focused on trying to keep Yev quiet, by whatever means necessary, his latest attempt being to put a gag in his mouth and threaten to beat him if he didn’t shut the fuck up. Earlier attempts had obviously included violence, since Yev had two black eyes, a bloody nose and a bloody lip, all likely done both to shut him up and to coerce Ian into following their orders.

Hearing Iggy’s footsteps, one of the three shorter, stockier Russians turned his gun on him. “Oh, we’re here to see Ian. He’s gotta help my dad...you know...Terry?” Iggy explained, hoping to get the guy to lower his gun and perhaps help him get his father into the clinic. The Russian held his gun steady, sending the other two out to the car. “They will see about him. You come and tell me who you are,” the remaining Russian commanded, his gun cocked and ready.

“I’m Iggy...Iggy Milkovich,” he said introducing himself. “Your brother and family will die. You don’t try to stop this. Or we kill you, too. Understand?” Iggy stood, silently staring over at the Russian gangster that still held his gun on him. “DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!” he screamed at the top of his lungs, scaring the hell out of Yev, who began to cry again, this time, being kicked and thrown to the ground. Ian instinctively made a move to help him up, but stopped dead in his tracks when the tall mobster demanded, “Don’t move a muscle...or I blow his fucking head off!” pointing his gun at Yev, who now lay, curled up in a ball on the clinic floor, whimpering softly.

“Please,” Ian pleaded, “Let us go!” “Not an option. You take care of our patient,” the tall Russian clarified, “or I take care of your boy, here and now. And when your man lover come, we kill him, too!” Ian knew they were serious, and didn’t want to take a chance on Yev and Mickey’s lives, so he went ahead and agreed to render medical care to Terry, who, ironically enough, was being wheeled into the clinic at that very moment.

Ian took one look at Terry’s face, which had become basically interwoven with bandages in some spots, the facemask in others. As Ian eyed up the grand mess that was Terry, he shrugged his shoulders, “I don’t know what I can do for him. I can check with the doctor, but I don’t know...May
Ian spoke persuasively.

“No, no!! You do it...or the kid dies,” the largest Russian, whom Ian had now pretty much determined was in charge at this point, hissed hatefully, regripping his gun as he took two steps closer to Yevgeni, still aiming at him. Yevgeni cowered against the wall in utter terror, afraid even to make eye contact with Ian, who had resumed begging for Yev’s life to be spared, “Please, let him go! I’ll do what I can...please!! But can I please have some water first. I’m feeling like I might...”

“No!! You work now!!” the Russian barked, a second goon approaching and burying the butt of his AK47 deep into Ian’s gut, doubling him over and knocking the wind out of him.

Once Ian caught his breath and was able to stand, he gingerly approached Terry, who was now propped up on a gurney, only semi-conscious. “I will need to sedate him, in order to do this,” Ian explained. All of the Russians looked at him like he had three heads. “Drug? Put him to sleep?” Ian attempted to clarify, the Russians suddenly nodding in unison.

Ian turned toward the hallway, headed for the medical supply closet, when the Russian with the AK called out, “Stop! I go with you!” following close behind Ian, AK in tow. Ian’s hands shook wildly as he reached for a large vial of sedative and a syringe. He also took three rolls of bandage and some gauze, as well as a large pan and some antiseptic cleanser. He really was out of his depth here, also having grave concerns about infection, as well as the amount of Terry’s face that might be exposed, since he believed a lot of the grafting had failed and would need to be removed.

As he turned to leave the supply closet, the Russian aimed his AK at him, “He dies...YOU DIE! And the kid, too!” he growled.

As Mickey crossed the street to get into Johnny’s car, his drop phone rang; it was Manuel. “Ojos!” Manuel exclaimed in a panic, as soon as Mickey picked up, “What are you doing?!” “Goin’ to get my family and take ‘em home!” Mickey snorted into the phone. “But you’re risking...” “I know what I’m riskin’! Nothin’ that ain’t already at risk!” Mickey interrupted. Manuel sighed deeply, then asked, “What do you want me to tell Svetlana? She was expecting Yev...and has been calling.” “Tell her the fuckin’ truth! Goddamn Russian goons kidnapped our kid, lured Ian outta his sickbed by threatenin’ to kill Yev...and I’m on my way now to get ‘em the fuck back!”
Svetlana had contacted everyone she knew in the Russian mob, except for Vladimir, her older brother, whom she hadn’t seen or spoken to since her father, with his help, had sold her to a black-market trading company, the one that was responsible for selling her to Sasha, her pimp in the U.S. Vladimir’s story, however, was well-known by Russians throughout Southside.

He had made quite a name for himself, along with a fat wad of money, which he had used to distance himself from the seedier aspects of Russian business in Chicago, opting to purchase several upscale clubs in the ritziest sections of the Northside, going pretty much legit, other than the occasional big-ticket coke sale, just to quench his thirst for the illegal, which had been ingrained in him from a young age. His decision to continue this activity is what kept him connected with the kind of people Svetlana would need, in order to ‘call off the dogs’ in Mexico.

Svetlana told herself she didn’t give a shit about Ian, and that she was only worried about having Yevgeni spared, but, even after the short period of time she had gotten to spend with him so far, she could already see how much her son loved Ian, and how involved Ian had chosen to make himself in Yev’s upbringing. He was obviously a great dad, something Svet really appreciated, and, if she were entirely honest, had seen, even back in the day, when they all lived together.

Ian had certainly cared much more for Yev than Mickey had, back then, although Svet had come to realize, also through her brief contact with Yev, that Mickey had really stepped up to the plate in the parent department, since he and Ian had basically fallen into having full custody of Yev, because of her legal problems. And now that she knew both of their lives were at risk, because of their love for Yev, and their attempts at rescuing him, she had to admit, she cared a little.

She hoped Vladimir might be able to exert some pressure on whomever had come to Mexico, at least enough to get Yev to safety, and hopefully Ian, too.

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Ian was sweating, dizzy and lightheaded, near collapse, and yet he continued to work to debride Terry’s colossal goat-fuck of a face, while the Russians and Iggy looked on, all taking their moments to look away in nauseous disgust. When Ian needed to look away, he glanced over at Yev, trying not to catch his eye, for fear that he would break down. When he looked at Yev’s battered face, all he could see was Mickey, when Terry had beaten and pistol-whipped him after finding them together at his house, just before Yev was conceived.

The room started spinning and the sounds around him began to take on a far-off, echoing quality, almost as if he were in a strange, psychedelic dream. The tall Russian, who had apparently been addressing him without his knowledge, approached him from behind, poking him harshly in the hip with his gun, “Hey! I talk to you—you answer! Where is Marco Sacramone?” Ian winced in pain, the gun having irritated, and possibly drawn blood from his donation site, which had already been burning from all of the sweat that had collected beneath the bandage, and aching from the extensive walking he had done. He took a deep breath, then gave his answer, “I don’t know Marco...but his Uncle Johnny told me he died. Someone... kidnapped him...from Chicago Memorial and killed him.” Ian lied breathlessly, the vocal labor of stringing that many words together weakening him further. His eyes scanned the room quickly, resting for a moment on Yev’s crouched, trembling form. As his eyes caught Yev’s, he could feel himself falling, his surroundings bouncing, then turning black.

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As Johnny pulled up to the clinic, Mickey saw the cop cars, the dead cop, and the old Buick with
Illinois plates, and instantly started going ballistic. “Motherfuckers!! I swear if they hurt Ian or Yev, I’m gonna fuckin’ KILL THEM!!” “And here comes Chief Mendez,” Johnny commented, diverting Mickey’s attention momentarily. “Oh...he needs to stay the fuck outta this!!” Mickey roared, pulling his Glock out and cocking it.

Just then his regular phone rang. It was an unfamiliar number, but he answered it anyway. Under the circumstances, he couldn’t take any chances on possibly missing out on communication with any important people, of which there was a long list, at this point. “Hello!” he answered impatiently, regripping his gun as Chief Mendez approached Johnny’s car on foot, Johnny’s Ruger also at the ready. “Mickey, It is me,” Svetlana said in a calm, yet deadly serious tone. “They will release Yevgeni...to you….” she began, Mickey interrupting.

“What about Ian?!” Mickey screamed into the phone. “He works on face of your father,” she responded. “They let him go after,” she explained. “I’m not fuckin’ leavin’ without Ian!” Mickey yelled. “They send Yevgeni out, if you have no gun,” she added. “This is only way. Do not piss them off, Mickey,” Svetlana warned, “or it is bad for Yev and Orange Boy, which is bad for you and me!”

“So I go in there with no gun?! ...the fuck I know they ain’t gonna shoot my ass?” Mickey asked with an attitude. “Trust me…” Svetlana replied, Mickey letting out a slight chuckle. “My brother will get revenge on their families if Yevgeni is not safe. You come to make Yevgeni safe.” “Fuck it!” Mickey mumbled, throwing his glock down on the seat, Johnny exiting the car and ducking down behind it so he wouldn’t be visible. “I got ya, if anything goes screwy,” Johnny assured Mickey. “We got a deal,” Mickey said to Chief Mendez, motioning for him to return to his car.

Mickey strode up to the clinic door and knocked, yelling, “No gun. Gimme my fuckin’ kid!” Vladmir must’ve scared the fuck outta somebody, because, within seconds, the door opened and Yevgeni ran into Mickey’s arms. “Daddy…” he cried, just as the Russian at the door aimed his gun at Mickey. “Take the kid and go...or man lover dies!” “I’m waitin’ for Ian. He almost done?” Mickey asked, Yev’s battered face still buried in Mickey’s chest as he whimpered, and, as yet, not clearly seen by Mickey. “He must finish. You go or he dies!” the Russian screamed into Mickey’s face, terrifying Yev so much that he hid behind Mickey. It was then that Mickey caught sight of Yev’s face. “What the fuck did you do to my son!?” he bellowed. “I kill him if you don’t go!” the Russian said, pointing the gun at Yev’s head.

Mickey turned away, his blood boiling as he walked Yev back to the car. He fully intended on going back to the door and demanding to have Ian, once he had Yev safely tucked into the back seat of the car with the doors locked. Then he saw a large truck pulling out from the side of the clinic. Mickey took off after it on foot, but stopped when he saw an AK hanging out the passenger side window. “Johnny! Did you see who was in that truck?” Mickey yelled breathlessly as he ran back toward the car. “No, but Chief Mendez took off down the alley. I'm sure he's tailing them. Let's get Yev somewhere safe, then we can head back here to get Ian,” Johnny suggested.

“No!” Yev suddenly screamed from the backseat, where he had been hiding on the floor. “You have to get Daddy Ian now!” he begged. “But they want him to finish fixin’...” Mickey began. “He can’t! He fell and he won’t wake up!!” Yev wailed. “What?!” Mickey asked, turning around in his seat. “Yev, did they hurt him...the way they hurt you?” Mickey questioned Yev as delicately as he knew how. “Not...not really...” Yev murmured. “What do you mean?!” Mickey pressed him, quickly losing patience. “Well, one of the mean men hit him in the belly with the back of his gun...and another time he stuck his gun into Daddy Ian and I could tell it hurt him very bad...but they never punched him...like they...like...” “Okay, Yev...sorry for makin’ ya think about that...and I’m sorry for what they did to ya...Johnny, where do ya think Yev will be safest?”
Mickey was talking fast, and his mind was spinning. He couldn’t get the image of Ian, lying unconscious, out of his head. He saw him as he had found him so recently, sprawled out on their kitchen floor, his head bleeding onto his beautiful face, his eyes closed, his bright lashes resting flawlessly against his pale skin.

“Probably at Manuel’s. I think you should take the car and stay with him. I’ll stay here and wait for Ian,” Johnny offered. “Nope…can’t leave without him,” Mickey answered stubbornly. “Mickey, Ian would want you with Yev, and you know that,” Johnny argued.

Before Mickey could respond, he was getting another call from Ian’s iPhone. “Ian!!” Mickey screamed into the phone desperately. “If you want your man lover, you bring doctor!” a Russian voice spat into the phone. “We need doctor now!! You bring him, yes?” a second Russian voice piped up, sounding desperate. Mickey could hear groaning in the background that sounded like Terry, his stomach instantly beginning to churn. The idea of putting Doc at risk for Terry’s benefit was disgusting to him, but since they had Ian, he figured he had no choice.

“Johnny, we gotta get Doc and bring him here. It’s the only way we’re gonna get Ian back,” Mickey explained, working himself up into a panic. “Not necessarily…” Johnny said quietly, in order to avoid Yev hearing him. “At least two people left in that truck,” he added, Mickey catching onto what Johnny might be thinking. “Yev,” Mickey turned, calling into the backseat. “Yes, Daddy?” Yev mumbled, sitting up so Mickey could, once again, see how badly beaten he actually was, which instantly reignited Mickey’s temper. “How many Russians were at the clinic?” Mickey asked through gritted teeth.

“Four, at first…but then two other people came…the sick one with the mask, and another one. I heard him say he was Iggy Milkovich, and that the guy with the mask was Terry. Are they our family?” Yev wondered out loud. “Yev, they are related to us, but the people we know in Mexico, like Johnny here, are our real family,” Mickey explained. “And Uncle Manuel, Aunt Mandy, Grandma and Doc?” Yev questioned. “Yeah, ya know that already… haven’t seen Iggy for years. He IS my brother, though, and, as for Terry, he’s my dad, but he ain’t a good one, so…”Mickey trailed off, trying to change the subject.

“Let’s take Yev to Shawn and his grandma, and get Doc, but wait to decide if he is actually needed until after we arrive. I might have another plan…” Johnny said, clamping up abruptly and pointing toward the back seat, then adding, “later.” Mickey understood that Johnny didn’t want to discuss things any further while Yev was in the car, which only meant one thing: it was going to get ugly. And that was fine with Mickey. He was okay with just about anything, as long as it landed Ian safely back in his arms. His heart physically ached for him, and if he thought about him for more than ten seconds, his eyes started to fill up.

“Alright, Johnny, I’m leavin’ this up to you. I’ll do whatever ya think is best,” Mickey said nervously, although there was literally no one on the planet that he trusted more than Johnny, when it came to something like this. Mickey knew the kind of past Johnny had, and that he’d be dead by now, if he wasn’t damn good at this stuff.

As Johnny headed for the factory, Mickey called Doc to let him know everything that had happened, and to plan for their arrival. Once he hung up, he turned to Johnny, speaking in a low tone of voice, “Okay, they’ll be ready for us. I’m gonna call Svet and let her know…nah…Yev, here! Call your mother. Let her know you’re safe, and you’ll see her soon…And tell her ‘thanks’,,” Mickey said, turning to hand the phone to Yev.

While Yev was talking to his mom, Johnny told Mickey, “I wanna see Marco…before we go.” “Course ya do. We’ll all go up to the crow’s nest. I can get Yev settled in with Shawn, since he
probably doesn’t remember him,” Mickey responded with a half-hearted smile, opting to avoid the topic of Johnny’s decision to see Marco. In his heart, he knew Johnny was insisting on seeing Marco now because he was unsure whether he’d have another opportunity, which made Mickey feel terrible. He always knew Johnny would gladly risk his life for them, but he never wanted him to actually have to do it.

As Terry continued to regain consciousness, it was clear that he was quite disoriented, having no understanding of where he was or who he was with. Iggy attempted to talk to him, to calm him, while the two remaining Russians, neither of whom was nearly as big as Terry, fought to subdue him.

Terry had already managed to pull the facemask entirely off his face, which closely resembled a raw, bloody steak. The work Ian had done was good, but not even close to being complete, so his overall look was that of a science experiment gone horribly wrong.

As Terry continued to fight his Russian friends, whom he currently viewed as his captors, they became increasingly frustrated. Their guns could not be used to threaten, as they were accustomed to, since Terry was completely irrational. “Iggy! He keeps fighting, I shoot him!” one of the Russians finally yelled in desperation. “No, don’t do that,” Iggy pleaded, reaching for the syringe Ian had used to sedate him.

“Bruno!” Chief Mendez bellowed into the phone as he continued to chase the large truck that had sped away from the clinic. “What is it, Chief?” Bigley responded anxiously. “Chasing a truck with at least one passenger that sped away from the clinic,” he reported. “Yev was released to Mickey and Johnny,” he added. “And what about Ian?” Bigley questioned emotionally. “I think he might still be inside. You said they expected Ian to provide Terry with medical care, right?” Mendez answered. “That’s right. Okay, please keep me apprised,” Bigley grunted, ending the call suddenly, after which he made another call:

“Damon...need you to get your ass over to the clinic. Wait there for further instructions.”
“Bruno!” Chief Mendez began, sounding even more on-edge than he had when he called previously. “Yes, Chief,” Bigley answered, his voice faltering slightly. “I ran out of fuel! I think they are headed to the States. Must have legal documents, since they were nearing Laredo Bridge 4. Gotta be completely legal to get through there. Plenty of random searches, too. Must have a secret storage for all that firepower,” he surmised, speaking rapidly, his accent thickening, the faster he spoke. “You think they’re all in there? What about Ian? And Terry and Iggy?” Bigley asked, rapid-fire, growing more concerned by the second.

“Truly, I do not know what to think...I do not think they could load everyone that quickly ...unless it had been done in advance. You should talk to Mickey and Johnny...see what they know about who was where. The child will likely know the most, since he was trapped inside with them,” Mendez concluded, adding, “So you want me to gas up and try to catch them at the border? I think it will be fruitless. Better that I contact US Border Patrol. I know you prefer to avoid that, but...”

“By all means...whatever it takes! I don’t want that truck getting into the States until we know who’s on it!” Bigley said in his typical brash manner, throwing his support wholeheartedly behind Mendez’s idea. “What do you think is best to say? I know Mickey struck some sort of deal with them. I can say I suspect they are transporting firearms...or drugs...or I can say I have reason to believe they have kidnapped someone...or are smuggling illegals...It is your call, Bruno...your business, so I leave it in your hands,” Mendez spoke candidly.

“I want to keep them in Mexico until all of our people are safe, so whatever you feel will best accomplish that goal...” Bigley sighed, overwhelmed by the whole situation. “Okay, I will say they broke into the clinic, heavily armed, are believed to have stolen some medication, and may have kidnapped an employee,” Mendez decided, sharing with Bigley. “Alright, please keep me informed. I have to go,” Bigley muttered, before ending the call, immediately taking another from Johnny.

“Bruno, I want you to know that Yevgeni is safe, and that I’m on my way to see Marco,” Johnny began immediately upon hearing Bigley’s voice. “Johnny, I’m glad you called. I need you to ask Yevgeni some questions,” Bigley responded. “Oh...I think you should talk to Mickey about that,” Johnny suggested. “Fine, put him on the phone,” Bigley croaked, Johnny passing the phone to Mickey, just as they pulled up in front of the factory.

“Yeah, Bruno,” Mickey spoke softly into the phone. “Do you know who is left inside the clinic now?” Bigley asked. “Yev said there were four Russians, at first. Then my dad and brother showed up. And...ya know...Ian...” Mickey began to get choked up, pausing to pull himself together. “Yev told us that Ian was asleep...and...wouldn’t wake up,” he finally managed to say in little more than a whisper, amid many deep breaths. “And...and there were at least two Russians in the truck Mendez was tailing...”

“So...am I to assume there are, at most, two Russians remaining, plus your dad and brother, and Ian?” Bigley asked, for clarification. “Yeah, that’s what I figure,” Mickey mumbled as he opened his car door and stepped out. He then opened the back door, Yev jumping out and immediately clinging to him. “That all?” Mickey asked, leaning the phone against his shoulder so he could hoist Yev up onto his back. “Yes, I’ll be in touch,” Bigley replied, ending the call. Johnny grabbed the phone from between Mickey’s shoulder and face, then opened the factory door, allowing Mickey to walk straight in, as he gave Yev a piggyback ride into the factory, up the stairs, and down the hall to the room where Kayla, Doc and Shawn were waiting.

Kayla had insisted upon being helped out of bed, so she could be sitting on the couch when Yev
arrived. “Grandma!” he yelled, hopping down from Mickey’s shoulders and running straight into her arms. “My baby!” Kayla screeched with excitement, trying her best not to react to the condition of Yev’s face. She mouthed the words, “My God!” at Mickey and Johnny as she held him close, comforting him as only a grandma could. “Grandma loves you so much!” she whispered as she kissed the top of his head. “Are you all better?” Yev asked, pulling his head back so he could get a look at her. “Yes! Your other daddy saved my life!” she answered, Mickey looking away, his eyes brimming over with tears, as they did each and every time he was reminded of Ian. “I’m sorry, Mickey!” she added softly, realizing her mistake.

“Let’s get you all fixed up,” Doc said to Yev, leading him to the kitchen sink, where Shawn had prepared a first-aid station of sorts, in anticipation of Yev’s arrival. “This is Shawn,” Mickey said, walking over to make the introduction, “He’s a nurse…” “Like Daddy Ian?” Yev interjected with a smile. “Yes…” Mickey paused, again needing to collect himself, “And Shawn took very good care of me when I was sick in Chicago, when you first came to stay with us. Do you remember?” he finished. “Daddy Ian takes care of you when you’re sick,” Yev answered, “And me, too.”

“Yes...he does...but today Shawn’s gonna do it...so me, Johnny and Doc can go get Ian,” Mickey managed, with great difficulty, to say. “Be good for Shawn, and let him fix you up,” Mickey hugged Yev into him for a moment, then turned away, heading back toward Kayla to say goodbye to her.

Meanwhile, Johnny had made his way over to Marco’s bed, shuddering at the mangled sight of him. “Marco,” he said quietly, so as not to startle him. “Uncle...Johnny,” Marco breathed, almost inaudibly. Johnny took Marco’s hand in his own, gripping it tight. “We’re gonna settle this with these bastards, once and for all!” Johnny hissed, angrily vowing revenge for what the Russians had done to him. “Uncle Johnny…” Marco whispered at such a low volume that Johnny had to lower his ear to within an inch of Marco’s mouth in order to hear him, “Just...don’t...nothin’s gonna change...just don’t die…”

Johnny held back the tears, responding, “I love ya, Marco...see ya soon,” as he walked out the door. “I’ll be in the car,” Johnny called back to Mickey, who was finishing a tearful goodbye of his own with his mother. Doc was next in line, holding Kayla in his arms, guaranteeing their safe return, and reminding her of their promise to each other with a wide smile, “As soon as this is over, you’ll be my wife!” “Yes, I will!” she agreed with a vigorous head nod, “Yes, I will!”

The ride back to the clinic was silent, up until the last few minutes, when Johnny began to give instructions, “Doc, you will stay in the car until Mickey or I motions to you or calls you to come. The situation may have changed, and we don’t want to put you at risk unnecessarily. Mickey will go to the front door, while I stay behind the car, just in case…” Johnny paused as he noticed, upon pulling onto the street of the clinic, that Damon’s car was parked two blocks down. “Change of plans…” Johnny continued, “Damon will cover Mickey out front. I’ll go around back to see if I can possibly gain entry. I figure there’s a chance the others left the back door open when they left in the truck.”

Johnny texted Damon, drop phone to drop phone, to inform him of his role, then cracked the burner in half, slipping out of the vehicle as Mickey moved into the driver’s seat to pull up in front of the clinic.

“Okay, so I’m goin’ to the front door alone,” Mickey confirmed with Doc, “And it ain’t gonna be without this,” he added, grabbing his Glock, stuffing it into the back of his pants and pulling his shirt over it. He also had two Beretta Picos, one strapped to each ankle, one of which he removed, insisting that Doc wear it, just in case. As he neared the clinic entrance, he caught a glimpse of Damon, hiding behind a nearby trash barrel. How the hell Damon had gotten out of his car and up the road without Mickey seeing him, Mickey couldn’t understand. He guessed that maybe Damon was a good hit-man after all, just a little ‘thick’ at times.
Mickey knocked three times, then waited. When the door opened, it was Iggy who was standing at it. “Mickey,” Iggy said with a half-smile, “Where the fuck’s the doctor?” he asked. “Just checkin’ to make sure everything’s cool first,” Mickey answered. “Well, Dad’s a fuckin’ mess, so we need the fuckin’ doctor!” Iggy said impatiently.


“Let’s do this!” Doc said, mustering up as much courage as possible to step out of the car. As Mickey and Doc approached the door, the Russian who had been standing behind Iggy opened it. “Send Ian out first,” Mickey demanded. “Your man lover needs doctor. He cannot walk,” the Russian countered. “Doctor come to help both,” he explained. Mickey took a deep breath, then continued walking with Doc the rest of the way to the door. “Stop there!” the Russian hollered, just as Mickey was about to walk in. “No guns?” he questioned, grabbing Doc and yanking him into the clinic, then pointing a gun to his head, threatening, “You bring gun, I kill him.”

Mickey pulled the Glock from his pants, tossing it into the bushes, then putting his hands in the air as the Russian quickly frisked him, missing the gun Mickey had strapped to his left inner ankle. As he walked in, he immediately noticed wide streaks of blood covering a good portion of the floor. Obviously, more than one body had been dragged from the lobby to the back of the clinic. “Hey! I wanna see Ian now!” Mickey barked, the Russian readjusting the gun he held at Doc’s temple. “You...fix his face...NOW!” he demanded. “You...fix his face...NOW!” the Russian hollered, just as Mickey was about to walk in. “No guns?” he questioned, grabbing Doc and yanking him into the clinic, then pointing a gun to his head, threatening, “You bring gun, I kill him.”

Doc’s hands were trembling so violently that he was unable to manipulate the syringe as he normally would, and Terry’s reemergence into the conscious world was not helping matters. This time Terry seemed to have awoken pissed off, muttering to himself, “Fuckin’ whore...thinks she’s gettin’ married to some sugar daddy...probably has him talked into thinkin’ she loves him...fuckin’ bitch… He’s the one responsible for this shit...him and that albino, ginger ass-fucker!”

“Shut the fuck up!!” Mickey yelled, approaching Terry with his fists raised, the second Russian immediately turning his gun on him. “Mickey!” Iggy called out, “You’re gonna get us all killed!” “So you’re just gonna let him talk shit on Ma like that?” Mickey asked incredulously. “She ain’t my mother,” Iggy replied coldly.

“...the fuck you talkin’ about?” Mickey asked. “That’s what Dad said...He also said my mom’s
dead...And somethin’ else...You ain’t even his kid. Your dad is Uncle Alex, which I never knew we had. Guess he was Dad’s brother...knocked her up while Dad was in prison,” Iggy finished, reaching out toward Terry to try and calm him, as Doc continued to struggle with the syringe.

Once Doc finally got it filled, Iggy fought to hold Terry still so he could inject him. Suddenly, Terry, with the strength of ten men, rose up from the gurney, throwing Iggy off, then yelling, “You worthless piece of shit! Look at me! You did this!” Terry began taking wild swings at Iggy, connecting on one that sent Iggy flying against the wall, then proceeding to attack the Russian mobster closest to him, wrestling his gun away, then aiming it at him.

“What now, you Commie bastard?” he growled, hitting him in the face with the butt of his gun. The other Russian took a non-lethal shot at Terry, hitting him in the thigh, just above the knee. Terry, faltering only slightly on the injured leg, took aim at the shooter, striking him right between eyes, killing him instantly.

By this time, Johnny, having heard all of the gunfire, entered through the rear door, slipping in the pool of blood that had collected on the floor, but quickly regaining his footing and taking a shot at the only Russian left standing, felling him expertly.

As Terry turned his attention to Johnny, Iggy, grabbing the first dead Russian’s gun, held it on him. “Dad!” he yelled, “Drop the gun! The doctor can’t help you until you do!” “Fuck you!” Terry yelled, pointing the gun in his own hand at Doc. “Drop the guns! Both of you...or I’ll shoot this motherfucker! Get over there...with him,” Terry demanded, motioning for Iggy to move to where Johnny was standing.

While Terry’s attention was on Iggy and Johnny, Mickey reached for his Beretta, sneaking up behind Terry and putting it up to the back of his head. “Drop it, you motherfuckin’ piece of dogshit!” he screamed, smacking Terry in the back of the head, hard. As he fell to the floor, the gun slipping from his hand, it went off, a bullet lodging itself in Terry’s chest. As he lay, bleeding out on the floor, looking up at Mickey, he yelled, “You faggot-ass bastard! Never regretted killing your father! He was never gonna have her! I made sure of that!”

“Dad!” Iggy yelled, crouching down beside him as he took his last breath, “And I killed your mother, too,” he hissed, his jaw suddenly going slack, his bowels unloading in his pants, his eyes remaining open in a fixed stare. Iggy shut Terry’s eyes with his hand, then stood up, walking toward Mickey. “I’m sorry about Uncle Alex—I mean, your real dad. I never knew...” Iggy paused, at a loss for words. “Me neither, and I’m sorry about your real Ma, even though I know our Ma loved ya like her own. She told me,” Mickey smiled, “Wanna see her?” he asked. “Sure,” Iggy smiled back.

“Gotta get Ian first,” Mickey said, breathing a sigh of relief, now that there was no one dangerous left standing. He walked toward the back door. “Come help me, Ig—,” he called out, stopping mid-syllable when he found that Ian was not where he expected him to be. “Iggy!! Where the fuck is Ian?” Mickey screamed. “You mean he ain’t back there?” Iggy answered. “Fuck No!!” Mickey yelled in a full-on panic. He started running from exam room to exam room, then checked the supply closet, even both restrooms—no Ian. “Ian!!” he screeched so loudly that Damon came running in from his post, where he had remained for the duration of the shootout, “What the fuck, Mickey?” he asked. “Ian’s not fuckin’ here!” Mickey answered, the tears that had been welling up in his eyes throughout his search, finally finding their way down his terrified face as he fell to his knees.

As soon as Johnny realized that Ian was missing, he had begun going through the pockets of the deceased Russians, collecting a total of five cell phones. Four of the five phones were registering missed calls from the same number, the fifth one having received a text. Unfortunately, it was in Russian. The only words that Johnny could decipher were ‘Marco Sacramone’ and ‘Ian Milkovich’.
Love Child

Sunday had come and was nearly half-over, without so much as a word from Bigley, Chief Mendez or the Russians, except for their continued attempts to reach the two dead ones, Johnny had also been surprisingly non-communicative, other than when he had come for another visit with Marco, during which he and Doc had discussed Marco’s need for extensive plastic surgery, including a complete reconstruction of his eye socket. Doc thought, and Johnny agreed, that any and all trips to Boca General should be avoided, pending confirmation that the two Russian mobsters who remained alive were no longer in Mexico.

Doc had also decided, however, that it would be best to take Kayla back to his house Monday morning, once first shift started to arrive, figuring that, from home, he could come and go freely to get supplies, rather than having them delivered to the factory. He agreed to make himself available to help Shawn, if and when he needed help with Marco, until such time that he could be taken to Memorial. One thing Bigley had made quite clear, in their conversation immediately following all of the chaos that had ensued at the clinic, was that, under no circumstances was anyone supposed to go anywhere near there, until further notice.

Mickey was absolutely beside himself, pacing, cursing under his breath and pulling frantically at his hair. Each and every person who was currently staying up in the crow’s nest, which now included Iggy, had told him to calm down, and to not let Yev see him this upset—-but it was no use. Mickey could barely speak, let alone be present enough to mask his emotions. He was like a bundle of nerves, a tightly wrapped one that could explode at any moment. His state of mind was one of the many reasons it had been decided that Svetlana should come and assume the role of Yev’s primary caregiver, at least until Ian was found safe and returned to Mickey.

Being that Doc and Kayla would be leaving in the morning, it was decided that Svetlana could come to stay in the room Mickey and Ian had occupied, once it was cleaned and restocked, which Kayla had called Manuel about having done, first thing in the morning. Mickey, who normally would have handled that, was nowhere near ready to handle business transactions, or any transactions at all, really.

He did sit down with Iggy and Kayla when they talked, but it was obvious to both, that his mind was entirely focused on Ian’s MIA status, and nothing was going to change that. Iggy and Kayla’s talk began with a long, heartfelt hug, one that reassured Iggy that what Mickey had said at the clinic was 100% true—-Kayla loved him like he was her own. She had raised him since he was a baby, knowing that she was the only mother he would ever know.

Iggy’s mother had been a dancer at a club in the Southside, so, naturally, her job involved talking to other men, something Terry didn’t allow. One day he just walked in the door with Iggy and handed him to Kayla, mumbling, “He’s yours now,” then walked back out of the house. Within days, it was all over the news; the body of a female, matching her description, had been found in the Chicago River. She appeared to have been severely beaten, then thrown in the river to drown. Kayla never said a word about it to Terry, or to anyone. She knew better.

Iggy, and even Mickey, managed to share what had happened with Terry at the clinic, as well as the new information they had learned about their lineage, with Kayla, who told them both that she would be happy to answer any questions they had, to the best of her ability. She seemed to be remarkably unaffected by the story of Terry’s death, noting only that what happened had been an accident, and that she knew, despite all they’d been through, that neither of her boys would ever harm an innocent person.
Both men did have questions, Iggy, about his mother, and Mickey, his father. Kayla told Iggy what little she knew about his mother—her name was Katarina, that she was a dancer, young and beautiful, and that, by all accounts, she had done her best to care for him, despite her lifestyle and tumultuous relationship with his father. Kayla also told him that she felt blessed to have had the opportunity to be his mother, from the moment Terry had brought him to her.

When it came time to tell Mickey about his father, Kayla’s eyes filled with tears. “Mickey, I loved him so much,” she sobbed, pulling Mickey in close to her. “Ma, why didn’t you tell me the truth before?” he asked softly. “Terry put you through enough...I just couldn’t bring myself to tell you that you had a dad who loved and wanted you, but never got to meet you,” she stammered, once again holding Mickey tightly to her as she shook with anguish.

“You mean he never even saw me?” Mickey asked, holding back his own emotional response in order to protect his mother. “Mickey, the first time I laid eyes on your father, I knew he was the one,” Kayla began, despite her knowledge that this story was going to be impossible to tell without upsetting both Mickey and Doc, in addition to herself.

“He was with Terry at the docks when I came from the Ukraine. Our eyes met, and there was magic. We both talked later about having felt it. Then Terry grabbed me and told them all, “This one’s mine,” and that was it...until shortly after our wedding. Terry was arrested and taken to jail on a racketeering charge. He had just beaten the daylights out of me, so I looked just awful,” Kayla paused, taking a shuddering breath as she mentally relived her injuries and how she had gotten them.

“That’s when Alex stopped by to pick up some papers for an attorney that was supposed to be helping Terry get out. Sometimes I still wonder if he ever even gave the papers to the guy...” she trailed off, grinning like a schoolgirl. “Anyway, while he was at the house, he started talking to me...wanted to know how my face got so bruised...said I was beautiful...even with two black eyes. And he was...he was...amazing! He just glowed when I looked at him! I couldn’t take my eyes off him. He was so handsome and kind...treated me so much differently than Terry ever did. And he was a complete gentleman...never laid a hand on me that day, although I really wish he had. The time I spent with him was not nearly enough,” she explained, her smile slowly shrinking away, Doc and Mickey’s faces, like Kayla’s, also growing sad as she continued her story.

“Alex visited me every single day while Terry was in jail, bringing food, helping with the housework, anything he could do to make my life better,” Kayla smiled again, as she continued, “It was only a matter of time until we were so drawn to one another that it happened,” she said, blushing, “and you were conceived.”

“When I discovered I was pregnant, I was afraid, but he was happy. He told me we had nothing to be ashamed of, and that when Terry got out, he would handle telling him what had happened. Mickey, we were so looking forward to raising you together, to being married and having a family. Never, until I met Doc, have I been so happy in my entire life!” she announced, batting her big, blue eyes at Doc, who sat, still looking melancholy, on the other side of the room.

“Terry ended up being in prison for just over a year. A blissful year I got to spend with Alex! Mickey, you just can’t imagine…” Kayla murmured dreamily. “Yeah, Ma, I can…” Mickey responded, his thoughts hearkening back to the first time he and Ian had been together, then rolling on through every incredible moment of their lives as boyfriends, husbands and fathers. Mickey smiled wistfully, tears rolling down his cheeks.

“I’m so sorry, baby,” Kayla whispered, hugging his head into her chest, wiping his tears away, and stroking his hair, as she finished her own painful tale, tears streaming down her own face, “When the time came for you to be born, we were so excited that I forgot my overnight bag, so Alex left me at
“I’m sorry, Ma,” Mickey reacted quickly, hoping to spare his mother and himself the details of his father’s demise at Terry’s hands. “But thanks for tellin’ me,” Mickey expressed with great gratitude, “I wish he coulda been with us, but just knowin’ he gave a shit makes me feel better...ya know...about myself...” he finished, swallowing hard. “And Mickey, having you was like having a little part of Alex that Terry could never take away...although at times, it seemed like he might...” she frowned.

Damnit, I fuckin’ need Ian back! Ma...where the fuck is he?! I can’t fuckin’ sit here like this!!” Mickey cried out, leaping to his feet and pacing like a madman, muttering under his breath as he had been before their talk. “Mickey, you have to relax! How about taking some valium? All this anxiety isn’t doing you, Ian, or your son any good,” Doc asserted, Shawn nodding his assent. “Come on, Mickey. If Ian were here, he’d...” “Ian ain’t motherfuckin’ here!! I gotta find him!!” Mickey exploded. “Okay...let’s call Bruno,” Doc suggested. “Hey, why not have Svetlana look at those drop phone messages?” Iggy piped up, seemingly out of nowhere, “Maybe there’s somethin’ on one of those phones that might help find Ian.”

Mickey’s eyes lit up. “Thanks, bro!” he called over to Iggy, who was preparing some fruit for their mother. Yev, who had been in the bedroom, watching the sequel to the Ninja Turtles for the umteenth time, at Mickey’s suggestion, called out to Mickey, “Is Mom coming tonight?” “No, Mickey answered, Yev quickly returning his focus to the movie. The Turtles had always seemed to have a calming effect on him, from a young age, something he definitely needed, after all that he had endured recently.

“Svet!” Mickey spoke excitedly into the phone. “Mickey? Is Ian back?” Svet responded. “No, and I know you’re coming here tomorrow, but if I send ya some texts, can ya translate ‘em for me? They’re gonna come from strange numbers cuz they’re on the drop phones from the Russians who were at the clinic with us. Just need to know what they say...Might help us find Ian,” he explained.


“Shawn, can ya help me?” Mickey asked. “Sure,” Shawn replied, approaching Mickey to grab a phone, then looking over Mickey’s shoulder to get Svet’s number. The two sent all messages that had been sent or received on all five phones over the previous 24 hours, a process that took all of five minutes.

“I bet translating all this, so we can understand it, will take a lot longer than this did,” Shawn said with a snicker. “It’s not funny!” Mickey chided, “This is my husband’s life we’re talkin’ about!” “Mickey, I didn’t mean to...” Shawn began. “Well, ya did!!” Mickey yelled in his face.

“Mikhailio!” Kayla called out to him, raising her voice. “Yes, Ma,” he responded, trotting over to her, like a little boy whose mother had to call him for dinner a second time. “Shawn is only trying to help. I know you’re upset, but please be kind,” she scolded him in the most delicate of ways. “Okay, Ma. I really am sorry, Shawn. I’m just fuckin’ scared. I can’t fuckin’ imagine a life without him.”

While they all awaited Svetlana’s translation, Mickey received a call from Bigley. “Finally!” Mickey said with such enthusiasm that everyone thought the call was from Svetlana. “Hello!” Mickey squawked impatiently, upon answering. “What did it say?” Iggy questioned, his curiosity about the
Mickey stood silently, listening to Bigley’s long explanation, “Still no sign of the truck at any of the border crossings in the area. Chief Mendez is putting out an APB on the truck itself, hoping this means they are still on the road in Mexico, although by all accounts, they could and should have been to the crossing by now, if that’s where they were going. How’s everyone there?” Bigley paused, awaiting Mickey’s reply.

“We’d all be a fuck of a lot better if we knew where Ian was,” Mickey whined. “Svet’s gonna translate the texts from the Russian drop phones. Maybe we’ll learn somethin’,” he said hopefully, before ending the call as a return call from Svet came in.

“Mickey!” Svet yelled loudly into the phone. Mickey, uncertain whether she sounded excited or panicked, shot back, “...This good news?” There was a long silence, followed by a deep, heavy sigh. “C’mon, Svet, spit it out. We gotta know,” Mickey said bravely, although his insides were trembling, his stomach churning. He opened his hand as Shawn approached him with a small white pill and some water. He washed it down with a sip of water, then sat down next to his mother, for fear that, if he continued to stand, his legs might buckle under him.

Svetlana sighed deeply for a second time, before finally speaking again, “I still have more to translate. This I think is important though.” Svetlana then began to read her translation, “We cannot take these with us. Where can we dump them without getting caught? They start to smell very bad and make big mess.” “And what is the reply to that?” Mickey asked, almost afraid to hear the answer. “No reply. Just another text, sent after this same text was sent to all phone numbers you sent,” Svetlana clarified, before continuing, “Since you do not answer, we leave truck with them inside.”
Waiting Game

After an uncomfortable silence, Mickey finally spoke, “...Okay...thanks. I’m...I’m gonna call Bigley. Chief Mendez needs to know they’re not drivin’ the truck anymore...Ian’s out there bein’ dragged around on foot! I swear, if anything fuckin’ happens to him, I won’t stop ‘til every last one of them bastards is dead! I wanna let Bigley and Mendez know about this, so they can update the APB,” Mickey said. Since Mickey had put Svetlana on speaker phone for the translation, there wasn’t a person in the room who didn’t fear that Ian’s body might be among those left in the back of the truck—except for Mickey. He hadn’t allowed that thought to even enter his mind. He couldn’t. In his head, a world without Ian simply did not exist.

He called Bigley, who immediately got Mendez on a conference call. Once Mickey had shared the new information and where it had come from, Mendez insisted on having the translations sent to him as well. Mickey explained that he had heard them over the phone, and that Svetlana was still in the process of translating them all and trying to make sense of them, since they had come from five different phones. “It is of vital importance that all of those translations come straight to me, via text. I need as much information as possible, if we want to find these people,” Mendez clarified. “Mickey, here is the Chief’s number,” Bigley said, Chief Mendez’s contact information coming through on Mickey’s phone as he spoke. Please send it to Svetlana, and ask her to send everything to him.”

“Will do,” Mickey responded, ending the call and immediately redialing Svetlana’s number. “Svet,” he began as soon as he heard her voice, “I’m sendin’ ya the Chief’s number. He wants you to text the translations to him as you’re doin’ ‘em...says he needs as much info as possible to help with findin’ Ian.” “Of course,” she responded. “But I still wanna know what they said, too,” Mickey added. “Fine! I send translations to both of you,” Svet answered, “I must go. There are many more to translate.”

Mickey waited, for what seemed like hours, to get the rest of Svetlana’s translations. The valium had relaxed him just enough that he began talking with everyone about all of the things he planned to do to the Russians if they so much as harmed a hair on Ian’s head. Everyone stayed quiet on the subject, for the most part, fearing that if Ian was among the bodies in the truck, Mickey would surely end up in prison or dead.

The only exception was Iggy, who pledged his loyalty and willingness to do whatever it would take to help Mickey get his revenge. “Iggy!” Kayla yelled over from her bed, “Don’t encourage your brother to do things that will get him locked up or killed!” Iggy nodded, shooting a sideways grin at Mickey when he thought Kayla wasn’t looking. “I saw that!” she added, smirking slightly herself. She had to admit that, deep down, it gave her great pleasure to see Iggy and Mickey together again, behaving like brothers, even if they were planning out some sick, Milkovich-style vengeance.

Finally, the translations started to come through on Mickey’s phone, most of them involving communication prior to the departure of the first two Russians, whom, Mickey believed, had taken Ian. There was discussion of how they would get back to the States, as well as how they might discover Marco’s whereabouts. It was quite clear that both Marco and Ian were on some sort of ‘hit list’. Apparently, the Russian boss in Chicago demanded that both be brought to him, dead or alive. At one point in the exchange, Ian was quoted as having said, in answer to the question, ‘Where is Marco Sacramone?’, ‘I don’t know Marco, but his Uncle Johnny told me that he’s dead...kidnapped and killed in Chicago.’

One of the Russians’ text response to this was, “So Johnny Sacramone is in Mexico! Milkovich must know where. We get it out of him. Then we pick him up!” Mickey was putting a scenario together as
he read the texts aloud. “According to this,” Mickey began, “it doesn’t make sense that they’d be heading for the States yet, since they haven’t found Johnny...And it means they still need Ian...so he can’t be...can’t be...he’s gotta be alive,” he finally squeaked out, managing to avoid using the word ‘dead’ in the same sentence as ‘Ian’.

Of course, Chief Mendez, as he was receiving the same text translations, was conjuring up his own scenario, based on what he was reading. He already had all of the police departments within a 100 mile radius combing the area for a box truck fitting the description of the one the Russians had taken off in, but now he decided he also needed to warn Johnny, who had returned to Frontera, following his visit with Marco, figuring the coast was clear and wanting to prepare to reopen for lunch on Monday. The Chief no longer believed that anyone was safe, and suggested that everyone remain at the factory until further notice.

The trouble with that strategy was that it would involve Johnny returning to the factory right away, despite all of the effort everyone had put into avoiding traffic into the factory until it was time for the morning shift on Monday. Believing that a new arrival at the factory before Monday’s first shift could put those already there at risk, Mendez decided on having Johnny return to Bigley’s beach house, where he told him to stay, until he heard differently from him. Mendez called Bigley, who readily agreed with him on all counts.

Once the plan for Johnny had been decided, Doc and Shawn set about considering various different arrangements to accommodate all of the people who would be sleeping in one suite, starting on Monday night, assuming the Russians were still at large by then. Iggy thought it seemed silly to give Svetlana all of that space to herself, under the circumstances. Of course, she would have Yev, but still, it wasn’t as if she hadn’t lived with a large group of people before, something Iggy reminded Mickey about.

Iggy bringing up that living arrangement was not a good idea. It sent Mickey into a major tailspin, conjuring up many memories of his time there with Ian, beautiful and ugly, happy and sad. “I’m gonna stay where me and Ian been stayin’, at least for tonight,” Mickey mumbled dejectedly. “Yev, you can come and stay with me,” he added. “‘S’go!” He put his arm around Yev and, within seconds, they were gone.

Once they got into their room, Yev immediately began asking about going to school in the morning. “Please!” he begged, after Mickey’s initial refusal. “Yev, look...I’m gonna say this once...so listen...” Mickey spoke slowly and deliberately, “It’s unsafe for ya to leave here, plus ya look like a fuckin’ child abuse victim...and your mother is comin’ to be with ya anyway. Gotta stay here. Sorry, little man.”

Yev frowned, looking down at his feet, then starting to cry, “I want Daddy Ian!!” working himself up into a full-blown wail. Mickey wrapped his arms tightly around Yev’s little body as he consoled him, “Shhh...me, too...me, too.” It took everything in Mickey not to start bawling right along with Yev. Somehow he managed to keep it all inside, save for a few tears that made their great escape, trickling down his sunken cheeks. Mickey hadn’t been eating. He couldn’t think about food, or anything, for that matter, except Ian, and whether he’d ever see him again.

As Mickey’s body became increasingly rigid, the result of his holding his emotions in, he attempted to pull away, “Gotta use the bathroom,” he muttered as he tried unsuccessfully to wriggle free of Yev’s embrace. “Daddy,” Yev whispered, now calm enough to speak, “It’s okay if you cry.” “What?!” Mickey asked, thinking he must have heard him wrong. ‘Why would he say such a thing?’ Mickey wondered.

Yev cleared his throat and began to speak softly, actually using his voice this time, “Grandma told
me you need to cry, but you won’t do it in front of me...But it’s okay, Daddy. I really miss Daddy Ian and want him to come home, but I know you miss him even more...so It’s okay if you cry, Daddy.” More tender and meaningful words had never been spoken to Mickey in his entire life.

“Thanks, Yev,” Mickey breathed, letting himself go, sobbing convulsively as his son comforted him.

A knock at the door interrupted them, Yev quickly running and swinging the door open, before Mickey had the chance to tell him not to. “Mickey...I know you wanted to be...alone, but I made dinner and thought you guys must be hungry...” Shawn began, presenting a large serving bowl, filled with macaroni and cheese. “Wow...Yev’s favorite. Look Yev! Let’s get ya some dinner,” Mickey responded with put-on enthusiasm, wiping his face in an attempt to quickly collect himself.

“You need to eat, too!” Shawn interjected, walking over to the island to set the bowl down. “How about if you two sit down here, and I’ll get everything you need,” Shawn offered.

“I got it,” Mickey insisted, making a move for the cabinets to grab plates and glasses, “Have you eaten?” Shawn shook his head. He’d been so busy cooking and serving everyone that he had all but forgotten how hungry he was. “Not yet,” he answered. “Sit down then. Ya can eat with us,” Mickey said with a half-smile, setting the places and serving Pellegrino while Shawn dished up the macaroni.

After a good ten minutes of awkwardly silent eating, Mickey looked up from his plate, addressing Shawn, “Think I could get a couple more of those pills...so I can try to sleep? Gonna need rest for tomorrow...when we find Ian.” “Let me talk to Doc...” Shawn began, Mickey cutting him short. “Nah...don’t need to bother him. He’s got enough to worry about. Just get ‘em, okay?” he said, pleading with his devastatingly sad, yet beautiful eyes. “Uh...alright, Mick,” Shawn responded uncomfortably, “I’ll get them a little later.”

“I kinda need ‘em now,” Mickey pressed, before getting up to retrieve a bottle of Johnny’s wine from the fridge. As he opened the bottle, Shawn approached him, speaking in a low tone, “Mickey, you really shouldn’t be drinking when you use that medication...and I...” Shawn stopped speaking abruptly upon seeing how badly Mickey’s hands were shaking.

“See,” Mickey commented, realizing that Shawn had noticed his tremors, “I’m a fuckin’ wreck. Not a chance I’m gonna sleep without ‘em. Want some?” Mickey asked, pouring himself a full glass of Chianti, then reaching for a second glass. “Maybe a little bit, Mickey, but I’m serious; you gotta be careful,” Shawn warned.

Shawn could definitely see how Mickey was able to get his way in almost every situation. He was very persuasive, and knew how to manipulate people. And he’d never seen anyone who could resist Mickey’s charms. In all his experience with him, first at Chicago Memorial, then later, at family gatherings he had been invited to, he’d never seen anyone shut Mickey down, nor did he know anyone who didn’t secretly adore him, himself included.

Still, he worried about Mickey drinking and taking the medication. He did, however, understand how distraught Mickey was, so he told himself Mickey needed to be medicated to prevent him from stupidly going out on an all night search for Ian, risking his own safety, as well as everyone else’s.

Yev helped Mickey and Shawn clean up after dinner, then asked if he could finish watching the
Turtles. Realizing how full the other room was, and wanting Yev to get accustomed to staying in the room he would soon be sharing with his mother, Mickey took some time getting the Turtles cued up in their bedroom, then returned to the kitchen, pouring himself a second full glass of wine.

“So...you gonna get me that medicine or what?” Mickey asked, his speech pattern a good bit more relaxed than Shawn had ever heard it before. “I’ll get them, Mickey, but you have to stop drinking,” Shawn admonished, finishing the last of the wine in his glass. “Relax,” Mickey countered, refilling Shawn’s glass and topping off his own. Now Shawn knew for sure that Mickey was feeling his drinks. He had only eaten half of what Shawn considered to be a normal portion for someone Mickey’s size to eat, and had consumed a fair amount of Chianti in a relatively short period of time.

Mickey’s drop phone rang. It was Bigley, “Mickey, are you alone?” “No, why?” Mickey questioned. Bigley sighed heavily, “I have news.” All the blood drained from Mickey’s face and his hands began to tremble again.

“What is it?” Shawn asked nervously. “Think I’m gonna need those pills now,” Mickey slurred, chugging the rest of his second full glass of wine.
“Mickey, I need to know you’re with whoever…” Bigley began slowly. “Bruno, just...just fuckin’ tell me...tell me already,” Mickey stuttered, standing and beginning to pace, his stomach in knots, threatening to bounce the bit of dinner and wine he had managed to consume only a short time ago. “Now Mickey, keep in mind that we don’t know for sure who this is that I’m about to tell you about…” “What the fu...please...NO!” Mickey was unraveling even faster than Bigley had imagined.

Shawn ushered Mickey out the door, steering him toward the other suite, thinking it would be best for him to be surrounded by his family—and away from Yev, who was busy watching the Turtles, for the time being. “NO!” Mickey screamed, sitting down in the middle of the hallway, between the two doors. “Mickey...are you…” Bigley didn’t quite know how to share this news to begin with, but Mickey’s reaction to the mere idea that there was news, that could be bad, really threw him, and he was at a loss for words.

Mickey was absolutely beside himself, screaming, “Just say it...just say it…” Finally, Bigley asked, “Who’s with you?” “Fuckin’ Shawn!” Mickey screamed, “Now, tell me!” Shawn sat down on the hallway floor next to Mickey, offering him his hand, which he promptly waved away, turning his back to Shawn, as if he wanted to hear the news privately. Shawn, however, felt someone needed to be with him, in case it was the worst news. Who knew what Mickey would do, under those circumstances? And since he had refused to go to his family, Shawn figured his presence was better than him being alone.

As Bigley began to explain, Shawn only caught bits and pieces, Mickey holding the phone firmly to his ear as he listened, “Okay...Chief just called me. There was an abandoned box truck, matching the description of the one the Russians were last seen in, found about 20 miles east of Monterrey. Upon further investigation, the back was found to be empty, but heavily stained with blood and vomit. A search of the area revealed evidence of a recent fire and, upon closer examination, the charred remains of three men.”

Bigley took a deep breath, then continued, Mickey’s face becoming ashen, his mouth dropping wide open. “The clothing had all been burned beyond recognition, but there were two badges and three rings recovered, although they were pretty heavily damaged. Mickey, I’m having the remains rushed to Boca, where samples will be taken and immediately sent to be cross-checked with Ian’s pre-transplant labs. And Mickey, I know...blah...blah...blah…” Mickey’s mind had been spinning, ever since the mention of the three charred bodies, and his brain shut completely off just after Bigley said he was having the DNA testing done.

He had been on overload for days, and it finally happened—-he short-circuited. He sat, deathly quiet, completely still, a single tear rolling down his otherwise expressionless face. “Mickey? You there? Mickey?” Bigley’s voice came faintly through the speaker of Mickey’s drop phone, which now lay inside the circle that Mickey’s legs and feet made on the floor. Shawn, hearing the desperation in Bigley’s voice, reached for the phone, putting it to his ear. “Mr. Bigley,” Shawn spoke into the phone timidly, “It’s Shawn. Mickey’s...well, he’s...he’s not talking right now, but I’m...I’m gonna do my best to help him…”

“Thanks, Shawn! I sure appreciate that...and all you’ve done to care for Marco, Kayla, Yevgeni...and Ian, before all this happened,” Bigley said, expressing his sincere gratitude. “I need Mickey to know that I’m not giving up. We don’t know who these people were. We are assuming at least two of them are Boca officers, and possibly all three, although only two badges were found in
the ashes. As soon as we can get the DNA samples to Boca Memorial, we will know,” Bigley said confidently. “But I gotta believe none of them were Ian,” Bigley croaked, his voice thick with emotion, “...and you gotta get Mickey to believe it, too...please!” Bigley pleaded with Shawn.

“Can I ask one thing?” Shawn inquired. “Sure. And I hope I have an answer,” Bigley replied sincerely. “Were there inscriptions on the inside of any of the rings that were found?” Shawn asked, praying the answer would be ‘no’. “I’m afraid I don’t know. I’ll check on that with the chief and get back to you. Again, thanks for all you have done for us,” Bigley said sincerely, “I won’t forget it.”

“Mickey, c’mon! You can’t just sit out here like this!” Shawn said softly, rubbing his back sympathetically, while also trying to get Mickey on his feet. Shawn tugged and pulled on Mickey for a good ten minutes, to no avail. Mickey was dead weight, sitting cross-legged with a deadpan look on his face, as if he were comatose, or had turned into a giant paperweight.

Doc, seeming to have a sixth sense about what was going on, exited the first suite, taking one look at Mickey and immediately deducing that there had been some news that wasn’t good. “Mickey,” Doc spoke softly, affectionately putting his arm around him, “let us help you to bed. You need your rest.”

When Mickey didn’t answer even Doc, Shawn became very concerned, relaying as much of Bigley’s news as he had been able to put together from what he’d overheard, and what little Bigley had told him directly. “Stay with him,” Doc instructed Shawn, before running back to his room. Within a minute, Doc returned with a full syringe. “Mickey, I’d like your permission to administer this sedative to help you sleep tonight. I know you’re upset, but we don’t have all the facts yet, and from what Shawn says, it seems we probably won’t, until morning. So you might as well get some sleep. What d’ya say?” Doc implored him. “C’mon, Mick,” Shawn added, as he and Doc each attempted to lift him to his feet by the arms, Doc now holding the syringe precariously between his teeth.

“Daddy? Are you hurt?!?” Yev, having opened their door to look for Mickey, called out with tremendous worry in his voice. “He’s okay, Yev,” Shawn replied, “Doc’s gonna give him some medicine to help him sleep. Right, Mickey?” Mickey nodded absently, as he stared blankly at Yev. “Go on in. We’ll be right there,” Doc said, after pulling the syringe from his mouth, preparing to inject Mickey.

Yev closed the door reluctantly, Doc immediately administering the sedative. “Keep walking for as long as you can,” he instructed Mickey. By some miracle, the two men managed to get Mickey back into his room and tucked safely into bed, before he completely passed out.

“Shawn, if you don’t mind, I’d like you to spend the night over here,” Doc requested, adding, “If he wakes up during the night, who knows what he might do?” “Right,” Shawn acknowledged, “I’ll go get my things.”

Doc took advantage of the time alone with Yev to talk with him about Mickey’s emotional state, without disclosing any of the new information they had received. Yev was quite understanding, and promised to look after his dad. Doc suggested he get into bed and try to get some rest himself, and was getting him settled when Shawn returned.

Doc said goodnight and told Shawn to call him if he needed anything. Shawn waved in assent, heading to the bathroom for a quick, and much-needed shower. He finished quickly, then went to set up the cot, where he planned to sleep. He was just about to crawl into bed, when he heard Mickey’s voice, calling for Ian. As Shawn approached Mickey, he could see that he was still asleep, but tossing and turning, his voice becoming progressively louder and more alarmed. Yev, who was lying
next to him and had been asleep, woke with a start, “Daddy! Where is Daddy Ian?”

“Yev,” Shawn whispered. “I think you should try sleeping in the other room, on the small bed. I’ll sleep on the couch, nearby.” “Why?” Yev protested. “Because your dad is restless, and may keep you awake. You need your sleep...so you can heal,” he explained.

Once Yev was nestled in the cot in the other room, Shawn went to call Doc to request more sedative for Mickey. As he opened the drop phone, he noticed a missed call from Bigley. He called back immediately, his heart pounding with anticipation. He knew he was about to get some significant information, and was feeling nervous about the prospect of being the first among Mickey’s ‘people’ to hear it.

As a nurse who had experience in dealing with inmates and mobsters, this really wasn’t new to Shawn, but this case was different. He had become extremely close with both Mickey and Ian, then later with their family, on a personal level, so much so, that the earlier news Bigley had shared had hit him really hard.

“Who?” Bigley asked, his voice sounding quite hoarse, beyond his normal raspiness. “It’s Shawn,” Shawn muttered into the phone, hoping not to disturb Mickey. “I have some additional information to share,” he continued, exhaling loudly into the phone, “And...please don’t share this with Mickey...just yet,” he spoke haltingly, obviously grappling with his own emotions.

“Okay…” Shawn responded, his mouth becoming dry, his breath, shallow, as the image of Ian, the way he looked the first time he’d met him, popped into his head. He had come to the hospital in his prison uniform and handcuffs to convince Mickey to have a PICC line put in. Shawn shook his head, hoping to erase the image from his mind, but it persisted. He remembered the way Mickey’s face lit up when he first saw Ian there. He could see then, what he had come to know so well---that they were two halves of a whole---soulmates.

Bigley continued, Shawn listening intently, “I am hopeful to have the DNA results by early tomorrow morning. Chief Mendez was able to talk with the officer who has the ashes and personal effects in his custody. He has confirmed that there is an inscription inside one of the wedding bands, but it is illegible, due to the amount of fire damage done to the ring. I tell you this, not because I believe the ring belongs to Ian...but because it could...and I want someone to be ready...to deal with Mickey, if the DNA tests confirm...that it IS Ian’s ring.” Bigley spoke disjointedly, fighting to maintain his composure, finally pausing in expectation of Shawn’s acknowledgement, but the line was dead silent.

“Shawn? Are you there?” Bigley questioned. “Yeah…” Shawn answered, having been distracted by Mickey’s incessant calls for Ian. “Please let me know when you get those results. I’m staying in Mickey’s suite tonight to keep an eye on him...been kinda nuts since your last call...I gotta go give him a bit more sedative before I try and get some sleep myself,” Shawn finally finished, maintaining a business-like tone. “Thanks for being there for him,” Bigley responded quietly, then ended the call.

“Mickey,” Shawn addressed him as he neared the bed, making a call to Doc simultaneously. Mickey’s eyelids fluttered slightly, but he continued calling for Ian in his sleep. “Yes,” Doc answered quietly. “Mickey needs more sedation. He’s calling for Ian, non-stop, and he’s getting louder! I don’t want him to wake Yev...or himself,” Shawn explained. “I’m on my way,” Doc whispered, so as not to wake Kayla, who lay asleep next to him.

Doc arrived quickly, Shawn speaking to Mickey as Doc injected him, “Mickey, this will help you sleep through the night, so you can be ready for tomorrow.” As the needle penetrated Mickey’s arm, he reflexively reached out, latching onto Shawn and pulling him toward him. “Maybe stay here until the sedative takes full effect. Make sure it’s enough. I’ll leave this here, just in case,” Doc whispered,
setting the sedative and syringe on the nightstand next to the bed, before heading back to the other suite. Shawn nodded, officially abandoning his plan to discuss Bigley’s call with Doc. He couldn’t say anything in front of Mickey, for fear he might, even in his sleep-like state, overhear him and go off the deep end, and with the death grip that Mickey now had on him, he couldn’t follow Doc out into the hallway either. So Doc slipped out of the room, blissfully ignorant, leaving Shawn with the sole burden of knowing ...thinking ...worrying.

Shawn watched and listened, seated beside Mickey on the bed, his upper body now in a reclined position, facing Mickey, as Mickey’s calls for Ian became more faint, his grasp on Shawn loosening, enabling him to, at last, free himself. As Shawn slowly moved away, his eyes lingered compassionately on Mickey’s forlorn face. “Please, God, let him be alive,” Shawn breathed, bending to kiss Mickey’s forehead, then heading for the couch.
FaceTime

Shawn had put in one hell of a night, waking up to Mickey’s sobbing, cursing, and yelling, sometimes focused on the current situation with Ian, others clearly involving incidents with Terry, including the most recent. Ian had told Shawn a little bit about Mickey’s nightmares, but what he had just witnessed was off the charts! He wondered if it was a lot worse than usual, or if this was the sort of night Mickey, and Ian, often endured.

Each time he heard him, Shawn did his best to comfort Mickey, administering more sedative and remaining with him until it took effect. He had also dealt with Yev twice, once because Mickey had woken him, the other being a response to a nightmare of his own, which seemed to have emanated from his and Ian’s recent hostage experience. At one point, during the wee hours of the morning, Yev demanded to sleep in his dad’s bed. Shawn, completely exhausted by this time, acquiesced, and, miraculously, that was the last time he heard from either of them.

As Shawn was finally able to enjoy a few back-to-back hours of sleep, the ring of the drop phone interrupted him. Seeing that it was Bigley, he scrambled to open the phone as quickly as possible. “Hel-Hello!” Shawn stuttered apprehensively, fearing the response he might get on the other end. “Shawn,” Bigley began. “Is Mickey awake?” “No, he and Yev have finally both been asleep simultaneously for about three hours,” Shawn replied, then asking, “Should I wake him?”

“I’m afraid so. I need him to do something right way. It is of the utmost importance,” Bigley responded, Shawn’s ears perking up at what he felt had to be good news. “I’m going to wake him now. Yev is in the bed with him. Okay for him to hear?” Shawn questioned. “It would be best if he didn’t,” Bigley responded, much too quickly for Shawn’s liking. Shawn approached Mickey, swallowing hard just before he began to shake him awake.

Mickey, true to form, woke up with a start, his body jerking into a defensive position before his eyes had a chance to open. “Mickey--wake up!” Shawn said in a low tone, then again with more volume, in an attempt to get a verbal response.

“Ian!” Mickey yelled suddenly, as if he were searching for him in a dream. “It’s Shawn,” Shawn identified himself, before continuing, “You need to get up and come into the kitchen. Mr. Bigley is on the phone.”

Mickey’s eyes flew open, Shawn, having now garnered Mickey’s full attention, pointed at Yev, who was still fast asleep, right beside Mickey, then at the door. Mickey leapt out of bed, following Shawn into the kitchen. Shawn handed the phone to Mickey, then set about making a much-needed pot of coffee.

“Bruno,” Mickey began, his voice trembling, despite his concentrated effort to control it. “Good Morning, Mickey. I’m sorry to have to wake you. I’m sure you haven’t been…,” Bigley spoke softly, Mickey interrupting, “Get to it, PLEASE!” Mickey pleaded, literally beside himself with nervous anticipation. “Yes, of course, Mickey,” Bigley responded, clearing his throat, then continuing, “Ian’s DNA didn’t match any of the remains that were recovered. However, there was a match, both to the blood and the vomit, which were swabbed from inside the back of the truck.”

Mickey breathed a huge sigh of relief, Shawn looking on and following suit, once he saw Mickey’s facial expression change from panic to, well, less panic. “So they still have him, those motherfuckers… and he’s bleedin’!” Mickey hissed. “That’s certainly the way it looks to me,” Bigley concurred. “But where? And in what fuckin’ condition?! He needs his goddamn meds!!” Mickey exploded. “And he’s fuckin’ sick, too!!”
“Mick...Mickey…” Bruno raised his voice to interrupt long enough to share, essentially, the reason he had Shawn wake him, “Chief Mendez needs to update the APB, but we need your help. I’ve already provided a recent photo of Ian, from one of his Surfin’ photo shoots, and I tried making a request through Apple to access GPS information for his iPhone, using his name and phone number. Unfortunately, since I’m not related or the account holder, they cannot help me. Chief could probably get a court order, allowing access, but we believe that you, as Ian’s husband, might be able to get this done more quickly,” Bigley explained.

“Okay, I’m on it,” Mickey replied, ending the call prematurely. The phone rang again, almost immediately, Mickey answering with frustration, “What?!?” “Mickey, when you call, please also check to see if Ian has made a request to track your iPhone. And also ask whether the phone can be tracked if it is turned off,” Bruno instructed. “Alright!” Mickey responded, very agitated at first, then quickly apologizing, “Sorry, Bruno. I’m just a fuckin’ mess! Gotta find these motherfuckers and get Ian the fuck back!!”

Mickey tiptoed into the bedroom, reaching for his iPhone, which lay on the nightstand, mere inches from Yev’s head. “Daddy?” Yev called out, stirring as Mickey lifted the phone from beside him. “Go back to sleep, Yev; it’s okay,” Mickey whispered, kissing Yev lightly on the temple, as he knew Ian often did to both of them. “I love you,” he added, realizing now, more than ever, how important it was for loved ones to hear that often.

The transaction between Mickey and Apple went smoothly, Mickey confirming that there had not been any requests made to track his phone, and also accomplishing the goal of having Ian’s phone tracked. He was told that he would receive a message if and when the whereabouts of the phone were determined. He was also told that an iPhone, if powered down, cannot be tracked, but its last location, prior to being shut off, will have been recorded and, per this particular set of circumstances, would be shared with Mickey, if the phone were discovered to have been powered down.

Mickey thanked them, ended the call, and stared at his phone, awaiting word on the location of Ian’s phone. As he sat, waiting, Shawn poured him a cup of coffee. “Are you gonna tell everyone?” he asked, causing Mickey to look up from his phone momentarily. “You tell ‘em! I gotta wait to hear…” Mickey answered, pointing down at his phone. “Well, time might go a lot faster, if you were around your family,” Shawn suggested. “Nah, I’m good,” Mickey mumbled, his eyes firmly fixed on his phone, the lock screen of which featured a picture of Ian, Yev, Mikhaila and himself at the beach.

For some reason, this whole waiting process was very private for Mickey. He seemed, to Shawn, to be closing himself off from everyone, and he couldn’t figure out why. In the end, it didn’t matter, Shawn told himself, choosing to respect Mickey’s wishes and do as he asked. He texted Doc to warn him of his arrival, then headed for the other suite, leaving Mickey with his phone and his sleeping son.

The news was well-received by all, except for Marco, who was mumbling something about all Russians being inhumane monsters. Of course, everyone wanted Mickey to bring his phone and come over, so they would know right away if there was news, but Shawn explained that Mickey wanted to stay where he was, and that he was extremely preoccupied with physically watching his phone as he waited.

Meanwhile, as Mickey willed his iPhone to receive a text from Apple, he, instead, received a call from Manuel’s drop phone. “Mickey, I’m having all employees searched as they enter, so the door is backed up a bit. Svetlana just arrived. How would you like me to handle her admittance?” Mickey, wanting to end the call as quickly as possible, so he could focus, once again, on staring at his screen, simply answered, “Let her in.” “Alright, Ojos, whatever you say. When you get the chance, it would be great if you could stop down,” Manuel responded, obviously not up-to-date concerning the latest

Within minutes, there was a knock at Mickey’s door. He scurried to throw some clothes on, never once taking his eyes off the phone as he did. As he opened the door, he explained that Yev was still asleep, ushering Svetlana into the bedroom so she could see him. She inhaled sharply, absolutely aghast as the sight of her son’s bruised and beaten face. “Those motherfuckers!” Mickey growled, shaking his head with disdain, “And they still have Ian!”

“How long does he sleep?” Svetlana asked. “We had a rough night. He’s tired,” Mickey answered, “Probably should let him sleep.” Before she could comment, a call came in on the drop phone that had been Ian’s, from one of the numbers that had been in text contact with the phones Johnny had collected from the dead Russians’ pockets at the clinic.

Mickey answered immediately, doing his best to calm himself enough to speak. “HELLO!” he barked into the phone, unable to mask his anger. “Where is Marco Sacramone? He is in Mexico! Tell us where, or we kill Ian Milkovich!!” a Russian voice demanded. “Marco’s DEAD!” Mickey shouted, Svetlana shooting him a look for getting so loud around Yevgeni, then dragging him to the kitchen. “...the fuck you want from me?!” Mickey snapped, absolutely distraught. “Where is Johnny Sacramone?” the Russian snarled, “You give us a Sacramone, you get Ian Milkovich.”

“Where the fuck is Ian?! Put him on the phone! I wanna talk to him!!” Mickey screamed into the phone. “Daddy? Is Daddy Ian on the phone?” Yev’s voice wafted into the kitchen, where Mickey and Svetlana had retreated. Svetlana rushed to intercept him, hugging him into her, then asking him to take her to see his grandma. “No!” Mickey mouthed to Svetlana, unable to explain, under the current circumstances, that he would need to text first.

Luckily, Shawn showed up at precisely the right moment, asking Yev to go with him to have his wounds cleaned. Svet and Yev followed Shawn to the other suite, leaving Mickey alone to handle the developing situation solo. “We talk to Sacramone, then you talk to Ian,” the Russian bargained. “How the fuck do I know if he’s even alive? I want fuckin’ proof!” Mickey roared, tears pouring from his eyes and streaming down his face, faster than he could wipe them away.

“I send picture,” the Russian said with a smart-assed tone, then ending the call. Not even a minute later, a tiny picture message came through on the antiquated flip phone. Mickey struggled to focus in on what had been sent. He could clearly see it was a picture of Ian, looking to be tied up in the bed of an old pickup truck, his face bruised, swollen, and bloody, his eyes shut, his body emaciated. “FUCK!!!!” Mickey let out a blood-curdling scream, Svetlana pushing the door open and approaching him. “I leave Yevgeni with your family. I come back to talk to these animals that beat my son!” she explained.

Mickey held the picture in front of her face. “Shit!” Svetlana said under her breath, “Is he...” she began, then thought better of it. “I don’t fuckin’ know! I want to talk to him. Need to know he’s fuckin’ alive!!” Mickey howled. “Give me phone! I tell him where big bear shits!” Svetlana threatened. “Careful! I don’t want them hurtin’ Ian more than he already is!” Mickey warned.

Svetlana called back, a stream of rapid-fire, unintelligible Russian gibberish flying from her lips. The only words Mickey could understand were ‘Vladimir’, ‘Ian’, and ‘FaceTime.’ They call you on other phone. You see Ian is alive on FaceTime. Then you give them this...Sacramone, and they give Ian back to you and Yevgeni,” Svetlana smiled, thinking she had solved all of his problems in a matter of seconds.

“But I can’t...” Mickey’s response was interrupted by a FaceTime coming in on Mickey’s iPhone. Sure enough, it was from Ian’s iPhone. Mickey answered and, right away, could see the same image of Ian that he had just seen in the picture they had furnished. “Ian!!!” Mickey bellowed desperately.
Ian remained motionless, his eyes shut, as if he were sleeping. “Ian!!” Mickey repeated, in absolute agony. “You see him. Now we see Sacramone, or he dies,” the Russian threatened. “...he alive? I gotta know he’s alive!!” Mickey argued.

Mickey watched as the other Russian forcefully slammed the butt of his AK into Ian’s ribs, Ian letting out a barely audible groan, his body still limp and otherwise unresponsive. “Again!” the first Russian commanded, the second repeating the same action, with the same result. “FUCK!!” Mickey screeched, falling to the floor as if he had been the one on the receiving end of two crushing blows to his own ribs. “Okay! Okay!” he responded. “Can you buy me some time?” he whispered to Svetlana, looking up pleadingly at her from the floor, “I’m gonna need it.”
“What the fuck!?” Mickey yelled, as he read the text message from Apple. “What is it?” Svetlana asked, looking up from the correspondence she was having with her brother, Vladimir, regarding the way the Russian mobsters had treated her son, and were now treating Ian. She had requested that he negotiate Ian’s release, telling him that Mickey had no knowledge of the whereabouts of Marco or Johnny Sacramone. Mickey had insisted that she say that, although Svetlana knew full well, after her visit to the other suite, that Mickey was currently harboring Marco. Thanks to the barbaric treatment of their son by the Russians, in direct contrast with the way which she had now seen that Yev had been treated at home, throughout her seven year absence, Svetlana was now securely in Mickey and Ian’s corner.

“Message from Apple,” Mickey replied, “Don’t make any sense!” he muttered in frustration. “Let me see,” Svetlana responded, pulling Mickey’s iPhone from his hand. “These are coordinates,” Svetlana announced, immediately upon viewing the message. “…the fuck am I supposed to know where that is?!” he spouted off, kicking at the wall angrily. “You are not. Cops know. You have cop friends, yes?” Svetlana asked with a smirk, not missing a chance to allude to the idea that Mickey was a bit of a sell-out, according to Southside rules.

“Fuck, no!!” Mickey countered, “Got a business associate that’s got the PD down here bought and paid for though.” “This is what I say. You are pig lover,” Svetlana snickered. Mickey waved her off, excusing himself to the bedroom to make a phone call. “Oh, so now is private conversation after I talk to Russian shitheads for you,” Svetlana complained. “Figured Yev might be back soon...is all,” Mickey explained, finishing his walk to the bedroom and shutting the door behind him.

“Mickey!” Bigley bellowed, picking Mickey’s call up on the first ring, “You heard from them?” “Yeah...heard from Apple and the fuckin’ Russians. But not in that order, which worked out real well...but only if ya know where these coordinates are,” Mickey explained. “You got coordinates? Send them. Mendez can find the location. Not sure why you didn’t get an address. Maybe it’s an area without any nearby addressed property. “Will do,” Mickey said, ending the call and immediately sending the coordinates to Bigley, via his drop phone.

No sooner had Mickey sent the coordinates, than Bigley was calling him back, this time on a three-way call with Chief Mendez. “Hello!” Mickey answered right away, despite not having expected a call back so soon. “Mickey, I want you to tell us about this conversation you had with the Russians. They talked to me first. They wanted Marco...said he was in Mexico. I told ‘em Marco was dead. They sent me a picture of Ian. Bruno, he’s all fucked up... and barely alive. Svetlana talked to them. Then I asked for FaceTime...to be sure Ian wasn’t...Ian wasn’t…”

“Okay,” Bigley interjected. “And?” “They smashed his fuckin’ ribs with the butt of an AK...just to get a sound outta him...and it was so low that...that they did it to him again,” Mickey broke down as he described the horrible violence that he watched them inflict upon Ian’s barely-living form. Then they told me if I give ‘em a Sacramone, they’ll give me Ian,”Mickey relayed. “Mickey, what did you tell them?” Bigley demanded. “I just said okay! What the fuck would you say if they were beatin’ the shit outta the person you love more than anything in the fuckin’ world, who’s already half fuckin’ dead?!” he screamed. “But I didn’t tell ‘em nothin’ about where anyone is... alright?” Mickey finished, struggling to remain calm enough to speak.

“Okay, I’m going to send word to the PD in that jurisdiction and get them on this,” Chief Mendez chimed in, adding, “right away.” “No way! No fuckin’ way! If they see cops, they’ll fuckin’ kill him!” Mickey argued. “Give me a minute to think,” Bigley sighed, “I’ll call ya back.”
The call ended, Mickey crying out in utter despair, “Goddamnit, Ian!! I fuckin’ need you!!” Mickey walked out of his bedroom, expecting to find Svetlana waiting there with a fuck-ton of questions. Instead, he found he was alone. He now knew that the remaining Russians were some distance away, and felt it was safe to leave the factory. He armed himself with his remaining firepower, and descended the steps into the conference room, Manuel, catching sight of him as he neared the bottom.

“Ojos! Where the hell are you going?” Manuel called out to him, as he brushed by him, heading for the front door. “You gonna lend me your car?” Mickey asked. “Of course,” Manuel replied, without giving it a second thought. “Now, where are you going?” he asked again.

“Goin’ to kick some commie ass and get my husband back, before they fuckin’ kill him!” Manuel ran to the office, then doubled back with his keys. “This goes against my better judgment, but I know better than to waste your time and mine, trying to talk you out of this. I do suggest, however, that you check in with Johnny and Bigley before doing anything,” Manuel expressed, a look of worry etched into his forehead as he pulled Mickey into him for a heartfelt hug.

“I’m plannin’ on it,” Mickey answered, returning Manuel’s hug warmly. Thanks, man!” he added as he snagged Manuel’s keys from his hand and turned for the door. He raced out into the parking lot, hopping into Manuel’s car and taking off for his house, where he hoped to gather anything and everything he might need.

Mickey pulled up to the house quietly, let himself in with Manuel’s key, and stood in the doorway, listening to be sure no one was there. As he proceeded into the kitchen, he noticed the under-sink cabinet door was open, and, upon closer examination, that his emergency box, containing his stash, was gone. “Fuck!” he muttered under his breath, pulling his Beretta Pico from his ankle holster, now concerned that someone might still be in the house. He investigated every nook and cranny of the house, looking for someone or something that might give him a clue as to what had happened.

In the midst of it all, his drop phone rang. It was Doc, who said, right away, that he was calling at Svetlana’s request. “Where are you?” he asked, “Yevgeni is very concerned, and so is everyone else!” “Can’t just sit there anymore. Don’t want the cops fuckin’ this up! I’m gettin’ Johnny and I’m goin’ to get Ian!” he said, speaking at an uncharacteristically low volume.

“Where are you now?” Doc asked, as Svetlana requested to speak with Mickey. “I’m…uh…at the house,” he mumbled, “and someone’s been here. Took all my shit…passports, guns, money…all of it!” he began speaking a bit more loudly, having cleared all areas of the house, at this point.

“Vladimir has instructions…but you are not here to follow. You risk everything, being pussy husband who does not THINK before you DO,” Svetlana chided Mickey, Doc having given the phone over to her.

Mickey was fuming mad—already upset about his missing emergency box, and now really pissed that Svetlana would say such things, especially in front of Doc. He might have really gone off on her, if it weren’t for the fact that he knew, in his heart of hearts, that she was right. He had run off, half-cocked, reacting emotionally to the situation, instead of making a plan, like he had always stressed to Ian and Yev as being of vital importance in virtually every conceivable situation.

“What the fuck? Why I gotta be there?” Mickey asked impatiently, as he headed for the car. “You give Marco’s ashes to Russians…and they give Ian. Doc tells Johnny, when we call, looking for you,” Svetlana explained.

“…the fuck you mean, Marco’s ashes?! Why the fuck didn’t ya call me?!” Mickey complained. “We call three times. You don’t answer,” she replied in an irritated tone. “Well, I didn’t get any fuckin’
calls!” Mickey was yelling at this point.

“Mr. Bigley and Johnny go to clinic. You must meet there.” “At the fuckin’ clinic!? Why?” Mickey asked, fighting to keep his cool. “You move bodies. Iggy must also go.” “So, I’m comin’ to get Iggy and we’re goin’ to the clinic? You sure this is what Bigley wants?” Mickey asked, completely baffled as to what had been planned so quickly, and without his knowledge. “Yes!” Svetlana responded. “I keep Yevgeni in our room,” she continued, “You come now...for Iggy!”

Mickey ended the call, hitting the gas hard as he drove back toward the factory. His mind was racing. Had Marco died in the short time since he had left the factory? What kind of arrangements had Vladimir made? How did he know he could trust him? Saving Yevgeni, his nephew, was one thing; negotiating Ian’s release, quite another.

As Mickey sped up to the factory entrance, the front door opened, Iggy exiting with a large medical waste bag, which looked to be nearly full. Iggy opened the back passenger-side door of Manuel’s car, throwing the bag into the back seat, then getting into the passenger seat, next to Mickey. “...the fuck’s goin’ on?” Mickey barked at Iggy, the moment he sat down.

“After we load the bodies from the clinic, we’re burnin’ the shit in the bag and meetin’ the Russians,” Iggy explained in his typical, overly-casual tone. “Why we burnin’ that? What the fuck is it?” Mickey asked, wrinkling his nose as the odor emanating from the bag began to permeate his sinuses. “It’s all the dressing, samples and shit from Marco, since Doc and Shawn been takin’ care of him.” “And so...that’s supposed to be his whole fuckin’ body? The Russians ain’t gonna buy that,” Mickey responded critically.

“Vladimir told them there was an explosion at the clinic, and that’s what killed everyone. We’re gonna torch the place, then Bigley’s gettin’ all the bodies cremated…and mixed together. You know, like would happen with an explosion,” Iggy explained, relaying the plan to Mickey as best he could. “That gonna work?” Mickey asked skeptically. “Well, if they do any DNA testin’, they’ll find everyone’s DNA,” Iggy reasoned.

“Hey, if they buy it long enough for me to get Ian back…” Mickey began, stopping short. He actually needed them to be good with it, long-term. The last thing he wanted for himself and his family was to be looking over his shoulder again. Ian had been so right about the value of getting his name cleared. He had become quite accustomed to being an above-board citizen, free to travel anywhere without worrying about who might see him or be looking for him.

“It’s gonna work,” Iggy assured him. “Bigley says it’s been done before!” Iggy added with a confident grin. Mickey let out a sigh of relief. If Bigley was sure, THAT Mickey could trust. After all, the guy didn’t get where he was, coming from the streets, without knowing a thing or two.

Mickey pulled up outside the clinic, Johnny’s car already sitting there empty, along with the box truck that had delivered Marco, Ian, and Kayla to the factory. Upon closer examination, Mickey could see two men setting up explosives at various locations under and around the clinic. The front door was open, and a third man was inside.

“C’mom, let’s get this shit over with,” Mickey said to Iggy, as he opened his car door to get out. “This gonna upset you?” he asked Iggy. “What?” Iggy asked cluelessly. “You know, seein’ Dad’s body and shit,” Mickey clarified. “Hell no!” Iggy answered. “Motherfucker was always forcin’ me into shit I didn’t wanna do. Gettin’ me arrested for shit he did...beatin’ the fuck outta me when he was drunk. He pulled a gun on me to get me to bring him to fuckin’ Mexico. Had some fuckin’ Russian goons threaten me, too.”

busted aidin’ and abettin’ an escaped felon? That’s a lot of fuckin’ time…Plus, I still got scars from all the cigarette burns…” Iggy mumbled. “Yeah, me, too,” Mickey nodded matter-of-factly, as they entered the front door of the clinic together.

“Mickey, just need your help loading. Got everybody bagged up,” Johnny panted, his brow dripping with sweat. As Mickey scanned the room, taking inventory of the body bags, he noticed that Bigley, too, was sweating, and had quite clearly assisted Johnny in his efforts. The pair were both dressed more casually than Mickey had ever seen them, and looked genuinely worn out.

“Thanks, Johnny...Bruno…” Mickey said with great gratitude, gesturing for Iggy to grab an end of the first body bag he had come to. “Straight out the front?” Mickey asked. “No, Raul is pulling the truck around back as we speak,” Bigley answered, still huffing and puffing. “And don’t forget this,” he added breathlessly, pointing at what Mickey recognized as his family’s largest suitcase. “…the fuck’d that come from?” he asked. “I’m assuming Ian packed it for himself and Yevgeni...before they were abducted,” Bigley answered, having read the recent baggage claim tag with Ian’s name on it.

“Alight…” Mickey said, refocusing himself on the task at hand, “On three...one...two...three,” Mickey called to Iggy, the two making quick work of a job they’d obviously done together before. In no time, everyone and everything was loaded up, the small caravan taking off and making it two blocks down the road before the thunderous boom that engulfed the clinic in flames. “Gonna look like a gas leak,” Mickey commented to Iggy. “Yeah, oxygen, Bigley said,” Iggy responded.

As Mickey followed the box truck to the crematorium, he flipped his drop phone open, checking to be sure he hadn’t missed any more calls. As soon as he opened it, another picture text popped up from the Russians. The picture showed Ian, looking ashen and gaunt, a few fresh cuts and bruises, including a severely bruised and bloody eye that looked to be swollen shut, all of which contributed to his overall frail, near-death appearance. The text beneath it read, “Tick-tock! Your man needs doctor NOW!”
Even Exchange

While the cremations were being performed, the mortician having been schooled on the idea of mixing the remains and topping all four urns with the materials from Marco’s medical waste bag, in order to hide the fact that there was very little of Marco’s DNA, Bigley and Johnny filled Mickey and Iggy in on the details of the next phase of the plan, Bigley also returning Mickey’s Glock, which one of the explosives guys had found outside the clinic.

The plan involved setting up a meet and having Mickey appear to be arriving alone with all four urns in tow. The others would already be staked out in the vicinity, ready to use the element of surprise to assist, if necessary. Bigley indicated, however, that he didn’t anticipate any problems, citing to Vladimir’s scare tactics, which he wasn’t privy to, but had acknowledged as being quite effective, nonetheless.

Mickey called the Russians to set up the meet, settling, with Bruno and Johnny’s guidance, on a remote lot in the Arroyo Moreno Nature Reserve, which Bigley knew well from the many family excursions he had taken there. He and Johnny quickly figured out the logistics of making themselves easily accessible, but unseen, in case Mickey ran into a problem.

The Reserve was closer to them than to the place they had tracked Ian’s phone to be, so they figured they might have time to survey the area, once they arrived, to be sure there was no one else there in advance to see them.

Mickey couldn’t concern himself with anything beyond getting Ian back. He was prepared to do literally anything to achieve that goal, up to and including killing both Russians, regardless of the consequences he might face. If he had to spend the rest of his life on the run, he’d gladly do it, as long as he had Ian by his side.

In fact, he insisted that, once they got Ian back, they take him straight to the hospital, despite the very real possibility that Bigley or Johnny might perceive that to be a safety risk. Ian was near death; Mickey could feel it within his own being, exhibiting symptoms of nausea, fatigue and ague himself. He shivered and shook as he drove to the rendezvous point, unable to get the image of Ian, unconscious, badly beaten, and tied up in the back of that truck, out of his head.

It was a short drive, but he had been asked to hang back, thereby allowing the others to position themselves in advance, using Mickey as a test of whether they were visible or not. Once he finally arrived, after what seemed, to Mickey, like forever, he called to say that he could not see anyone or anything that would alert him to their presence.

He pulled into the lot, rolling down the windows of Manuel’s car, and waited. He had all four urns in the trunk, along with $1000 that he had stashed under the spare tire, just in case he had to offer any money to hasten the transaction. While offloading the bodies at the crematorium, he had also unloaded the suitcase, opening it to find his emergency box, untouched, inside. He marveled at the fact that the Russians, who had taken Ian, left it behind. They must have figured the other two, both of whom were now temporary inhabitants of Manuel’s trunk, would bring it with them. Who knows if they ever even looked inside? The important thing was that it was now back in Mickey’s possession, safely tucked away in Johnny’s trunk.

Mickey waited, sweating and shaking, like an addict in withdrawal, beginning to think they weren’t going to show, and that he’d never see Ian again. Finally, a rusty old pickup appeared, heading for the lot. Mickey pulled his Glock from the back of his pants, holding it at the ready, in case they tried anything funny. At first blush, Mickey got the feeling that everything was on the up and up.
The driver rolled the window down and called out, “He is in the back,” the passenger then asking, “Where are the bodies?” Mickey had to agree with Bigley, the Russians seemed nervous, like they had been threatened by both Vladimir and their boss in Chicago with serious consequences if they didn’t get this whole transaction done right. They did have to collect Marco, before they could give Ian up, but were also being held accountable for Ian’s safe return to his family.

“The urns are in my trunk,” Mickey answered, somehow managing to control the tremor in his hand well enough to pop the trunk, and stuff his Glock into the front of his pants, just before getting out of the car.

As he walked to the rear of the car, he heard the Russian driver open the truck door. Mickey pulled his gun, holding it on him as he demanded, “I wanna see Ian...NOW!!” That’s when the passenger made his way around the back of the truck, Mickey catching sight of his AK, before he got all the way around, and firing a shot off, which grazed the guy’s hand, causing him to drop his weapon reflexively, before he even knew what happened.

“I ain’t tryin’ to shoot no one,” Mickey yelled, although he would have liked nothing better than to have turned both of these Russian motherfuckers into swiss cheese. “Just wanna take my husband and get him some medical attention. I brought ya what ya asked for,” he reasoned, gesturing toward the trunk with his weapon as he moved closer to the back of the truck to kick the AK well out of the injured Russian’s reach.

It was then that he first caught sight of Ian, looking even worse than he had in the last picture they had sent to him, if that was even possible. His face was now a mixture of bruises, blood and a pervasive, gray skin tone, not unlike Mickey had seen on many corpses.

By this time, Iggy had snuck up on the driver, and was holding him at gunpoint. “Let’s go,” he growled, pushing his gun against the Russian driver’s back as they walked together to the rear of the car. “See,” Mickey hissed, “They’re all there.”

“These are not bodies,” the Russian driver barked. “Yeah, cuz ya can’t take bodies across the border, but these, ya can,” Mickey explained. “How do we know they are as you say? These could be anybody,” the Russian responded.

“Have ‘em tested. We’re here to end to this shit between us. We held up our end. Now give me my fuckin’ husband, before I say, ‘fuck it’ and put a bullet in your fuckin’ head,’” Mickey threatened, leaning down to pick the AK up from the ground, while still holding his gun on the Russian with the bloody hand.

The driver had already begun to unload the urns from Manuel’s trunk, when Mickey bellowed, “Stop!” The Russian froze, Iggy’s gun still poking him in the back. “Not until I get Ian! Get in the fuckin’ trunk, both of you,” he demanded, shoving the wounded man in the back with the AK. “But first, take your goddamn shirt off and wrap that fuckin’ hand,” Mickey added with disdain.

Within seconds, both Russians were shut securely in Manuel’s trunk, along with the urns. As soon as he slammed the trunk, he turned and lowered the tailgate on the pickup truck. He leapt up into the back, immediately working to untie Ian.

“Fuck, Ian!” he muttered as he struggled to free him, a strong odor of gasoline filling his nostrils. “You hear me?” he questioned frantically. He got no response, but continued to talk to him. “I missed ya so fuckin’ much, Ian! You got no idea. I’m gonna get ya to a hospital, and you’re gonna get better.” Mickey’s eyes filled with tears, as his hands worked feverishly to loosen the knots in the rope that confined Ian.
As Mickey removed the last piece of encumbering rope from Ian’s legs, he hoisted him up, throwing him over his shoulder and carrying him to the end of the truck bed, from which he then jumped, holding Ian’s limp body as tightly to him as possible.

“Iggy!” he panted, “Get the back door!” Iggy left his post at the rear of the car slowly, keeping his weapon aimed in that direction, just in case the Russians somehow managed to get out of the trunk. He opened the back passenger side door, then helped Mickey, as best he could, to get Ian safely inside.

Once the brothers had accomplished that goal, they returned to the trunk, Mickey using the fob on Manuel’s key ring to pop it. “Get out! Then take two urns each!” Mickey commanded. “You’re gonna give those to your boss...tell him to test them if he wants...we’re legit...and we’re square.”

He and Iggy held their guns on them until they loaded all four urns into the truck. “And you’re gonna fuckin’ apologize to Ian for the way ya treated him. If I wasn’t in such a hurry to get him to a doctor, I’d do the same fuckin’ things to you, that ya did to my family!” he snarled menacingly, turning the AK backward and ramming it mercilessly into each Russian’s ribs, as he forced them toward the backseat of Manuel’s car, where each took his turn telling Ian he was sorry.

“Good! Now get the fuck outta here, or I can’t be held responsible for what I might do!” Mickey shouted, as he pushed them into the cab of the pickup truck with the AK, taking one last opportunity to jam it into each of their guts, causing one of them to double over and puke, just as he entered the truck’s cab.

Mickey and Iggy stood, guns raised, until the pickup disappeared from sight, then got into the car, Iggy in the driver’s seat, Mickey in the back, where he held Ian’s head in his lap. “Ian... Ian...Ian!” Mickey called his name repeatedly, hoping to somehow rouse him. “He alive?” Iggy finally asked awkwardly. Mickey put his fingers under Ian’s nostrils. “He’s breathin’” Mickey replied, cradling his head in his arms, “Barely.”
“Iggy! Drive faster! Hold on, Ian! We’ll be there soon,” Mickey pleaded, stroking Ian’s face, from his temple to his jawline. Mickey’s drop phone went off in the front seat, Iggy grabbing it to answer, “Yeah?” “Iggy, this is Bruno. Are you driving?” he asked. “Yeah,” Iggy replied, generally being a man of few words. “I need you to bring Ian to the air strip. Mickey knows where to go,” Bigley continued. “Okay,” Iggy answered, ending the call.

“...the fuck’s the airstrip?” Iggy called into the backseat. “Airstrip? Why we goin’ there?” Mickey asked, “Ian needs to get to the hospital ASAP!” “How the fuck should I know? BIgley said so!” Iggy answered, “So, where is it?”

Mickey sighed deeply, questioning this move, but not wanting to call Bigley to ask about it. He didn’t want to risk Ian hearing anything that might cast doubt in his mind as to whether he was going to be okay, and he also didn’t want Bigley to get the impression that he didn’t trust him. After all that had just happened, nothing could be further from the truth.

He decided to just keep quiet and go along with Bigley’s plan, directing Iggy from the backseat, as he continued to run his fingers through Ian’s hair, up and down his face, careful to avoid any wounds or bruises, even lightly tracing the line of his neck, his index finger gently gliding over his Adam’s Apple. The love Mickey felt for this man was without equal, compared with anyone or anything else that was or had ever been meaningful in Mickey’s life.

As Iggy pulled into the airstrip, he could see a group of people huddled around a gurney...waiting. As soon as Iggy stopped the car, Mickey could see Shawn running behind a gurney as he pushed it toward the car. Within seconds, he, Mickey, and Iggy had Ian loaded onto the gurney, Shawn calling out, “Straight onto the plane. They can visit there!”

They hustled up the ramp and onto Bigley’s jet, where Shawn had prepared his workstation, Marco, already set up on one side of the aisle. As soon as Shawn had Ian’s gurney secured, he set about giving Ian IV fluids, including a strong antibiotic and IV lithium.

“Oh Ian, you poor thing, you are a beautiful mess,” he breathed as he worked to clean and disinfect his wounds, all while Mickey and Iggy looked on. “He gonna be okay?” Mickey asked. “He will get the best care available, once we get to Mt. Sinai in New York,” Shawn answered.

“New York?” Mickey questioned, a look of genuine surprise on his face. “Yes, Bigley Enterprises sponsored the building of a new wing, dedicated to reconstructive surgery. It hasn’t opened yet, but Bigley is flying in a world-renowned plastic surgeon...for Marco. He’s also got a trauma team on standby, as well as the best psychiatrist money can buy, who is taking time away from his book tour to treat Ian.

“Book tour?” Mickey asked, looking puzzled. “Yes, he has been conducting research on bipolar disorder and has published a book outlining a new treatment protocol that has had some very impressive results,” Shawn explained.

Mickey was speechless. Bigley had been so incredibly good to them already, essentially turning their small business into a huge, multinational corporation. And now this? Once Mickey was able to collect himself after such monumentally good news, he spoke to Ian, “Ya hear that? Bigley’s got everything all set. You’ll be good as new in no time.” Mickey’s emotions got the best of him, by the end, tears beginning to spill down his face. He quickly wiped them away, as he heard voices approaching. The family had boarded the jet and were all clamouring to see Ian. Even Svetlana had
come to accompany Yev.

As everyone gathered around Ian, Mickey noticed that Johnny was at the rear of the group, carrying their suitcase. “Gimme that...and get over there to see Marco!” Mickey said with a faint, but sincere smile, tiny crinkles appearing around the outer corners of his teary blue eyes.

Mickey stayed out of the way, allowing everyone to approach Ian and talk to him. Reesie became overwhelmed at the sight of Ian’s face in such condition, but Mikhaila seemed unfazed, choosing to rest her head softly on his chest. “I love you,” she whispered, Reesie looking on as Brach supported her lovingly.

Mandy, Manuel, and Manny also came to see Ian off, each of them kissing his forehead lightly, Mandy lingering as she whispered something so softly that no one could hear. Behind them was Doc, wheeling Kayla up. They took a moment to express their love and gratitude, also reminding him of their upcoming nuptials, which they intended to schedule as soon as they knew when he’d be home.

Throughout all of this visitation, Ian remained completely still and unresponsive. Finally, it was Yev’s turn to say goodbye. “Daddy,” he called back to Mickey, stretching his arm out. Mickey made his way up, squeezing past everyone and grasping Yev’s hand. As the pair stood together, looking at Ian’s motionless form, Yev spoke up. “I know why you came to get me, Daddy Ian. You wanted to save me...and you did! I’m sorry you’re hurt...and sick, but Daddy and I love you so much...We know you’ll get better.”

Yev then turned to Mickey, hugging him hard, “I can stay here with Mommy. You should go with him,” he said softly, with an understanding far beyond his tender age. “You sure, Yev?” Mickey asked, his eyes, once again, wet with tears. Yev was quiet for a moment, grabbing his father’s hand and squeezing it tightly, then reaching to hold Ian’s. “Yes, Daddy! I think he needs you...and I know you need him.”

The pilot’s voice interrupted all interactions, the group falling silent as he announced that they needed to leave ASAP, in order to avoid an approaching storm. It was then that Bigley, himself, boarded the plane, making a beeline for Ian. “Ian, my boy, I’ve got it all set up. You’re gonna be good as new, before you know it. I’ve come to love you like a son, and I’ll be stopping in often to check on you,” he said in his typical, brash tone, before heading toward Marco’s gurney. As he brushed past Iggy, he commented, “Fine work you’ve done for us all, Iggy. There’s a job waiting for you in New York, or here in Mexico, if you want it. But I understand if you prefer to return to Chicago. That I can also arrange.”

“Thanks, Mr. Bigley. Can I think about it?” Iggy responded gratefully. “Certainly! And you should. Decisions like this should not be taken lightly. Are you planning to accompany us to New York?” Bigley asked. “My brother goin’?” he asked. “I believe he is,” Bigley answered. “Then, yeah,” Iggy decided, glancing over at Mickey, who was still standing next to Ian’s gurney with Yev.

“I think everyone who’s staying here needs to go, so these guys can get to the hospital as quickly and safely as possible,” Johnny piped up, as he said his final goodbye to Marco. Doc spun Kayla’s wheelchair around chivalrously, the couple being the first to disembark, followed by Mandy and her family, then Reesie with her people. Bigley headed to the front of the jet, seating himself with the pilot.

“Come, Yevgeni,” Svetlana called to him, as she took a moment to survey the damage that the Russians had inflicted upon Ian’s battered face. “I am sorry, Orange Boy. You have been good father to my Yevgeni. Get well. He needs you,” Svetlana said with a degree of emotion that she reserved only for situations involving her son. She took Yev’s hand, pulling him toward the exit.
“Wait!” Yev protested, throwing his arms around Ian’s head, then putting his mouth up to his ear. “I miss you, Daddy Ian. Please come home soon!” he whispered tearfully. Mickey watched as his son poured his heart and soul into that moment with Ian, wishing he could take Yev with them, but realizing he needed to stay in Mexico, to return to school, and to spend time with his mother.

As Yev spoke, Ian’s eyelids fluttered briefly, and Mickey thought he saw his lips move, but there was no sound. When Ian didn’t wake up, Mickey told himself he had imagined the whole thing, choosing to keep what he thought he saw, to himself.

Mickey descended the ramp with Svet and Yev, saying goodbye to everyone, taking an extra minute to hug his mother and both of his children into him. As he turned to board the jet, he looked around one last time. “Where’s Iggy?” he yelled over the sound of the jet’s engine. It was Manuel that pointed up at the plane. Mickey grinned as he ascended the ramp.

As he entered the cabin, Mickey saw Iggy sitting in a seat, close to Ian’s gurney, next to Shawn, who was busy, calculating something on his phone. As Mickey took his seat, the one nearest to Ian’s head, he couldn’t help but smile, a feeling coming over him, from somewhere deep within himself, that he HAD actually seen what he thought he did. He took Ian’s hand into his own and brought it to his lips, closing his eyes as he prepared for takeoff.
All The King's Horses

The flight had been pretty uneventful, other than the benefit of all passengers getting some much needed shuteye. Mickey was able to lean over and lay his head on the gurney next to Ian, holding his hand until he fell asleep. Shawn rested his head on Mickey’s other shoulder, while Iggy, moving himself to a window seat, propped his head against the window cover.

It was the plane’s descent for landing that awakened everyone...except for Ian, who remained in the same position he had been in since he had been loaded onto the gurney at the airstrip. His skin tone did look better, as Shawn was quick to point out, once everyone was awake enough to look. He also tested his skin turgor, noting that Ian had become much better hydrated, as a result of the IV fluids. “He’s gonna wake up soon,” Shawn shared optimistically. “How you know that?” Mickey asked, trying unsuccessfully not to let Shawn’s statement get his hopes up too much.

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“Hydration’s good, skin color’s good. No reason for him not to,” Shawn concluded. “What about his head? Looks like they beat the shit outta him!” Mickey pointed out. “Yeah, but I checked his pupils. Doesn’t look like a skull fracture or any buildup of intracranial pressure. “Inter...what?” Mickey asked. “His brain’s not swollen, Mick,” Shawn explained. “Of course, we’ll double check, once we get to the hospital, but I really think he’s gonna wake up,” Shawn said with a smile, as he checked his blood pressure, pulse and oxygen level, all of which were normal. “Aren’t ya, Ian?” he added, massaging his unencumbered arm gently.

Shawn moved to the other side of his work space, giving Marco a quick once over, then telling him, “You’re gonna be the most handsome dude in New York City when they’re done with you. Bigley’s got the reconstructive surgeon of the stars coming to rebuild your face, good as new!” Shawn’s enthusiasm was infectious. Even Marco couldn’t help but give him a thumbs up, along with as close to a smile as he could get, under his current circumstances.

“Hey!” Iggy piped up from his seat, “Ain’t he gonna get arrested, as soon as he gets outta the hospital, seein’ as how he was in Cook County when this happened?” “Who the fuck knows? That’s probably why we’re goin’ to a wing that’s not open yet. Bigley has his ways, Iggy...and I learned not to question ‘em,” Mickey answered, regripping Ian’s hand and lowering his face to Ian’s to kiss his lips. ‘Mmmmm...’ Ian moaned softly, his eyes fluttering open, if only for a moment. “Ian!” Mickey exclaimed. Ian blinked slowly, obviously disoriented.

“We’re flyin’ into New York. We’re goin’ to a hospital there,” Mickey began to explain. “Where’s Yev?” Ian asked, forming his words slowly, in a barely audible whisper. “In Boca, with Svetlana,” Mickey answered. Ian frowned, closing his eyes. “But I heard him. He was talking to me,” Ian finally countered. “Yeah, he was on the plane...to see ya off...Told me to go with ya. Remember?” Mickey asked, recounting what Yev had said. “Mmmmm...I guess...” Ian answered, exhaling harshly through his nose in disappointment.

“Ian, he’s fine,” Mickey assured him. “You weren’t there,” Ian mumbled. “What’s that supposed to mean?” Mickey asked. “It means they beat the fuck outta both of us...trying to get information---they hurt him so bad, I almost told them what they wanted to know. Only thing that stopped me was realizing that, if I told, they’d probably kill us both.

“We’re here, folks,” the pilot announced, as the jet touched down perfectly at Bigley Enterprises’ private airfield, two fully-equipped ambulances ready and waiting. As Shawn prepared both Ian and Marco to be moved, Ian tried sitting up, instantly lying back down and screaming in pain. “...the fuck’s the matter with him?” Mickey asked, looking over at Shawn. “Not sure. Could be a number of things. Ian, we’re gonna get you off the jet, then get a CT of your chest and abdomen...see what’s
“Yeah…” Ian hissed through clenched teeth as he held his left side with his left hand. “Fuck!” Mickey yelled, gripping Ian’s right hand. Ian squeezed Mickey’s hand so tightly that it hurt, but Mickey revelled in the pain, absolutely thrilled to feel Ian’s touch again, in whatever manner possible. He only wished he could take on Ian’s anguish, physical and mental, and give him the peace he so richly deserved.

Mickey walked alongside Ian, still holding his hand, as Iggy and Shawn maneuvered the gurney, down the ramp and into one of the waiting ambulances. Two paramedics followed behind them, retrieving Marco from the plane and securing him inside the other ambulance. A car, driven by one of Bigley’s personal drivers, pulled up, just in time to collect Bigley and anyone else who needed a way to the hospital. Mickey, of course, insisted on riding in Ian’s ambulance, Shawn opting to ride in Marco’s, which left Bigley and Iggy to ride in the car together.

This gave the two a chance to have a heart-to-heart talk, wherein Iggy intimated to Bigley that he felt there was nothing left in Chicago for him, and that he would like to start a new life in Mexico with his family, but that he, as a convicted felon, could not legally travel back there.

“This is not an issue,” Bigley replied. “I will also be offering Marco the option to return to Mexico, rather than going back to prison. My guess is that he will take me up on it. I will arrange for both of you to be transported as we were today, in order to avoid the need for passports and such,” Bigley shared, Iggy grinning with satisfaction, quite amused by the fact that Bigley, who seemed, on the surface, to be such an above-board businessman, operated in much the same way as many people he knew from Southside Chicago.

“Thanks, Mr. Bigley! I’ll be glad to do any kinda work you need,” Iggy offered. “Well, there’s quite a lot going on in Boca. Plenty of opportunities. When I take you guys back there, we’ll explore a couple...see where you fit best,” Bigley assured him. Iggy nodded, quite pleased with the outcome of the conversation.

“Drive around to the right,” Bigley directed the driver. It’s the new wing,” he clarified. As the car pulled up to freshly-constructed, state-of-the-art complex, Iggy could see Mickey walking alongside Ian, holding his hand. ‘That’s my family,’ he thought to himself, smiling at the notion that he would be around Mickey, Mandy and their families again, just like old times, only without their dad wreaking havoc in their lives.

Mickey struggled to keep up, as Ian was quickly taken by a team of medical professionals and whisked away for a CT scan. “Can I go in with him?” Mickey asked hopefully, already missing the feel of Ian’s skin against his, the sensation of his hand being gripped so tightly, expressing Ian’s need for him, which Mickey so desperately craved. “No, just have a seat in the waiting area. This won’t take long,” a nurse responded.

As Mickey sat, fidgeting nervously in his seat, he caught a glimpse of Iggy and Bigley, out of the corner of his eye, as they approached him. “Hey, Bro,” Iggy said with more of a smile than Mickey was accustomed to seeing on his face. “Hey, Iggy, glad you came with us, man,” Mickey responded, happy to have his attention diverted from his helpless waiting. “Me, too!” Iggy shared, adding, “And that’s not all! I’m goin’ back to Mexico with you guys. Mr. Bigley offered me a job!”

“Oh yeah? What’re you gonna be doin’?” he asked, looking over at Bigley for confirmation. Bigley nodded in affirmation, then elaborated, “Not sure yet. A lot of possibilities for a young man with Iggy’s talents—deliveries, maybe.” Mickey raised his eyebrows, preferring that Iggy stay out of the reverse coyote shit, but choosing not to mention it to Bigley. “I see,” Mickey replied, looking over at the CT area as Ian was being wheeled out.
Mickey rushed over to him. “You okay?” he asked, taking his hand again and rubbing his thumb over Ian’s softly. “I’ll know in a few minutes, but my guess is...there’s internal bleeding,” he muttered, his brow furrowed, his breathing somewhat labored. “Think my ribs are broken, too,” he added, after taking a moment to catch his breath.

“Please...” Ian begged breathlessly, “Check Yev, too.” “I’m on it. I’ll call Doc right now,” Mickey promised, reaching for his phone. “Let me talk to him,” Ian insisted, reaching out for Mickey’s phone, then wincing in pain. “Let me get him on the phone,” Mickey replied, as he scrolled for Doc’s number.

“Ian!” Shawn called out, as he ran up the hall, “Did the doctor talk with you yet?” “Nope,” Ian panted, his pain not subsiding. “Was just about to talk to Doc,” he said, gesturing slightly toward Mickey, who had just begun talking with Doc.

Just then, a tall, thin doctor, about Ian’s age, rounded the corner. “Hello, my name is Dr. Monaghan. I’m a general surgeon, here to remove your spleen, which has ruptured. Small side note, you also have three broken ribs. I’m told you are a nurse. Are you familiar with the two options for spleen removal?” he asked.

Ian nodded, his eyes squeezed shut tightly in pain. “Good,” Dr. Monaghan continued, “I’d like to begin with laparoscopic surgery. I’m hoping I will be able to perform the procedure that way. ‘Wait! What’s goin’ on?’” Mickey’s voice cut through, as he put his conversation with Doc on ‘pause’.

“I was just explaining to Ian that I am going to be removing his spleen. It’s ruptured. He also has three broken ribs,” Dr. Monaghan repeated, for Mickey’s benefit. “MOTHERFUCKERS!!” he yelled, gazing down at Ian’s tortured face with pity and anger.

Doc had just shared with him, after a brief check of Yev’s abdomen and back, that he was quite bruised, obviously having been beaten with something other than bare hands. Yev had never said a word to anyone about being hit anywhere, other than in the face. Doc had hypothesized that there may have been more, but didn’t want to ask Yev to completely disrobe in front of his mother and grandmother.

Upon hearing about Ian’s impending surgery, Mickey asked Doc to keep him posted as to the details of Yev’s newly discovered injuries, and ended the call, safe in the knowledge that Yev was in good hands, turning his focus 100% to Ian, for the moment. “He gonna be okay?” he asked Shawn, as Dr. Monaghan and the rest of the medical team prepared Ian for the OR.

“This is a fairly routine surgery. And if they are able to do it laparoscopically, his recovery time should be quick,” Shawn replied. “You goin’ in?” Mickey asked Shawn. “They have two staff OR nurses here. You want me to scrub in?” Shawn responded, making eye contact with Ian, then with Mickey. “Mickey will feel better if you do,” Ian answered, his eyes fixated on Mickey’s frightened face.

“Okay, I will then,” Shawn replied, smiling at them both, as Mickey lowered his face to Ian’s, kissing him tenderly, his lips lingering on Ian’s as he breathed him in, basking in his sweet essence. “All set!” one of the nurses announced. “I love you,” Mickey whispered into Ian’s mouth, the sudden motion of the gurney, bound for the OR, tearing Ian from him abruptly.

Mickey’s brain was so flooded with rage, worst-case scenarios, and ‘what if’s’, his head spinning, as he struggled to find a chair to catch his weary body. ‘Please let him be okay,’ he repeated to himself, looking up at the door Ian had just been wheeled through. In the window, Mickey watched as Shawn’s face appeared, flashing him a confident smile and a ‘thumbs up’.
Mickey breathed a reluctant sigh of relief, Iggy dropping into the chair next to him. “Thanks for bein’ here, man,” Mickey said with heartfelt gratitude. “Nowhere else I’d rather be, bro. Ready to be a Mexican Milkovich...like the rest of ya,” Iggy smiled, leaning back into his chair. And suddenly, everything seemed, to Mickey, to be just a little bit brighter.
Bigley sauntered over, seating himself across from Mickey and Iggy. He had just returned from Marco’s appointment with the plastic surgeon. “Dr. Greenwell says he’s healed enough to begin the process of reconstructing his eye socket. His left cheekbone also needs attention, possibly a bone graft. This will be extensive, but the finished product looks fantastic, according to the computer-generated picture he showed us,” he explained, then asking, “Any word on Ian?”

“Just waitin’,” Mickey responded with a sigh. The sound of the OR door opening caught the attention of all three men, Shawn stepping out with big news, “Dr. Monaghan waa amazing! I’m so glad I scrubbed in, so I could see this!” he said with great excitement in his voice. “…the fuck happened?” Mickey asked impatiently. “He saved part of Ian’s spleen! Do you know what this means?” Shawn asked.

“Tell us!” Mickey shouted. “Ian’s spleen will heal and continue to protect him from potentially life-threatening infections. And since it was done laparoscopically, he can get back to normal activities in about two weeks, although the ribs are gonna hurt for a while.”

“Fuck, yeah!” Mickey yelled. “Can I see him?” “They’re gonna move him into a room here, where they want him to stay for a few days to monitor his organ function and mental status, as well as his donor site, which is infected. When he’s ready, you can follow him to the room, where you can stay with him while he’s here. After that, he can go to The Soho with you. Mr. Bigley has booked a suite for you. He will need to come back here for check-ups though, and to see Dr. Fisher, the psychiatrist I was telling you about,” Shawn explained.

“How long we gotta stay in New York?” Mickey asked, still in shock over the great news he had just heard. “When you and Ian meet with Dr. Fisher, he should be able to give you a pretty good estimate, although his treatment protocol is very different from the one Ian is used to,” Shawn answered.

“So why we switchin’?” Mickey asked. Bigley cut in, “It’s really up to Ian, but I thought now might be a good time to investigate this new treatment option, since it involves less medication and fewer side-effects. Plus, it has worked miracles in the lives of so many,” Bigley elaborated.

“Yeah...well, me and Ian’ll talk about it,” Mickey responded. “Yes, I’m sure Ian will want to read about it and ask some questions,” Bigley agreed. “Just want him to know the options that are available.” “Thanks, man,” Mickey said with a nod, rising to his feet and proceeding to pace in front of the OR door, anxiously anticipating Ian’s return to him.

“Hey, how about if we head to the room and get things set up?” Shawn suggested. “I’m assuming you’re gonna stay with him?” “Uh...yeah...” Mickey answered, agreeing to go to the room and confirming Shawn’s assumption. “This place have a gift shop?” Mickey asked suddenly. “Yes, it does,” Bigley replied, “Would you like me to show you where it is?” Mickey nodded, the two heading for a nearby elevator.
“Bigley got us each a room at The Soho, too,” Shawn told Iggy. “I’ve never stayed in such a fancy place before,” he added. “Me neither,” Iggy yawned. It certainly had been a long day, the sleep on the jet helping somewhat, but Iggy was still beyond exhausted, not to mention sweaty and dirty, the same as Mickey, after moving bodies in the Mexico heat, and loading and unloading Ian from the car and plane. Likewise, Shawn had been nursing people back to health around the clock for days, leading up to his latest stint as a flight nurse.

“When you think we can go?” Iggy asked. “I’m good to go, just as soon as Ian gets settled in his room,” Shawn answered. “Can’t wait to shower and get some shuteye!” Iggy commented, Shawn nodding in agreement.

Shawn stood up as he saw Ian’s gurney coming out the OR doors. Ian looked to be still unconscious, although Shawn knew it wouldn’t be long before he woke up. Just then, Mickey and Bigley came around the corner, Mickey toting a small, brown paper bag and two Snickers Bars. As he caught sight of the gurney, Mickey hastened his pace to a near-jog, his face lighting up like a Christmas tree. Shawn, Iggy and Bigley all watched in complete awe of the magic that Ian so obviously brought into Mickey’s life.

Ian’s entourage followed his gurney like he was the pied piper, Shawn taking great care to equip the room with everything that both Ian and Mickey would need for the night, including fresh water and their suitcase, which someone had brought into the hospital for them. Iggy helped him push a second hospital bed over to abutt Ian’s, once he had been transferred into his own bed, and Bigley unpackaged a new blanket he had purchased from the gift shop.

As everyone buzzed busily around Ian’s room, Ian slowly began to regain consciousness, mumbling intermittently. Mickey walked over and stood next to his bed, bending down to Ian’s mouth to listen. “I...love you, too. Please check…” he trailed off, clearly still really out of it. “Check what, Ian?” Mickey asked, hoping he would become more lucid and reply with more details. “Yev...that stick…” he muttered, his eyes suddenly opening. As he focused on Mickey’s face, he smiled, but his eyes were so sad that Mickey immediately dialed Doc’s number.

“Mickey,” Doc answered on a half ring, “Listen...I was just going to call you,” he continued in a very serious tone of voice, “Yev is quite bruised, from his shoulder blades, all the way down his legs. There are a few hematomas that may need to be drained. Mickey, what this poor child endured, no one should have to.”

“Jesus Christ!! How did we not know this!?” Mickey screamed, his heart pounding in his chest, as the reality of all his son’s suffering began to hit him. “Busy with Ian and Marco, and Yev was quiet about it,” Doc reasoned, “Plus, Ian was unconscious. I’m sure he has plenty to share.” Doc paused, taking a deep breath, then continuing, “I have him at Boca General for a CT of his abdomen, to look for possible internal bleeding, and he is being checked to rule out sexual abuse...Mickey, Svetlana came with me. We had to tell them that he had been kidnapped. I told them to call Chief Mendez to confirm it.”

“Wh...What? Sexual abuse!?” Mickey exclaimed, his eyes wide, immediately starting to sting from the back, his head swirling, as if he might pass out. “Yes, I’m taking this precaution for two reasons, 1) because Yev was so reluctant to share the details of what happened to him, and 2) Svetlana shared with me some of the torture and coercion tactics she has known the Russian mob to use, in her personal experience.”

“I shoulda never fuckin’ left him! Can I talk to him?” Mickey asked, his voice cracking, tears streaming down his face. “He’s being seen by a pediatrician right now, Svet’s with him, Mickey. Can we call you back, as soon as he’s done?” Doc asked. “Please...and tell him Daddy and Daddy
Ian love him so much…” Mickey broke down, doing his best to hold the sounds of his mental anguish inside, but failing miserably.

“Mick…” Ian called to him from his bed, “C’merel!” Mickey ran to him, immediately lowering his mouth to within inches of Ian’s ear. “Doc’s gettin’ him checked out, but you gotta fuckin’ tell me what happened. I’m goin’ nuts here,” he begged frantically.

“Mick, I’m not sure what all they did, but they threatened things that…horrible things….I just…” Ian began to sob, “I begged them not to hurt him, that I’d do anything they wanted…Mickey, I watched them beat him with a night stick…same one they beat me with, but then they took him into one of the exam rooms…I could hear him screaming, then one of them came back and asked me again where Marco was…Mickey, I don’t know what they did!!” Ian cried so hard that he reached for his left side, fearing his stitches had come loose.

“No! No! No! Don’t touch your dressings!” Shawn yelled from across the room. “What did Doc say?” Ian whimpered, now quite alert and oriented, but highly upset. “Said he has a lot of bruising, all the way down his body…even his legs…and some…hema…hema…somethin’ that’s gotta be drained?” Mickey was trying his best to relay these details to Ian, despite feeling as if the earth was falling out from under him.

“Hematomas…I wish that was a surprise, but I knew…” Ian managed to respond, before completely losing it again. “I’m gonna kill those motherfuckers!!!!” Mickey howled. “Mickey,” Shawn interjected, walking toward Ian’s bed, “You’re all alive and safe. You gotta let this go…or things will only get worse!”

By this time, all of the commotion attracted the attention of Bigley and Iggy, who had been in the hallway talking, in an effort to give Mickey some time alone with Ian, as he woke up. “I’m afraid Shawn is correct,” Bigley stated, as he made his way across the room. “Mickey, please know that I hate all that has happened, and am doing all I can to get everyone back to normal, but at least you are all safe now.”

“My son may never fuckin’ feel safe again!!” Mickey bellowed, the veins in his neck bulging. Mickey’s display of love and anger really did a number on Ian, in ways that he could never explain with words. “Mickey,” Ian breathed softly, “I love you so fucking much,” he spoke emotionally, lifting his hands to cup Mickey’s face. Mickey swallowed hard, then lowered his face, kissing Ian softly, Ian returning the kiss and deepening it, the salty taste of one another’s tears mixing into their frenzied display of affection—so deep, so heartfelt, and yet so sorrowful at the same time.

Mickey tore his lips from Ian’s begrudgingly, as he felt his phone vibrating against his left asscheek, where he had stowed it, in order to have both hands free. As he pulled it from his pocket, he saw that it was Doc, and answered immediately. “How is he?” he asked as soon as he picked up. “Good news…and bad news…Is Ian there?” Doc inquired. “Yeah, he’s right here with me. Doin’ good, except for bein’ worried sick about Yev,” Mickey responded. “Can you put me on speaker? I’d like him to hear this, too,” Doc requested.

“Done!” Mikey announced, hitting the speaker button on his phone. “Ian! How are you?” Doc asked. “I’ll be a lot better if I know Yev’s okay,” he replied, trying like hell to keep his shit together. “Okay…I’m gonna start with the bad news…get it out of the way,” Doc began. Ian and Mickey both held their breath, bracing themselves for what could be the realization of their worst fear. Mickey gripped Ian’s hand tightly, Ian squeezing Mickey’s in return.

“Yev needs to have some hematomas drained…and it’s not gonna be comfortable. The pediatrician also suggested that he stay out of school for a while, which Yev is quite upset about. Svet asked that you guys call and have a talk with him about this, when the time is right.” Doc explained.
“Absolutely,” Ian agreed.

“And he also said Yev needs therapy to deal with the aftermath of this experience. Says he definitely has PTSD...and Ian, he said he’s sure you do, as well,” Doc shared. “But the good news is that there are no physical signs of sexual abuse, and Yev claims they made threats, but didn’t carry them out. He told the doctor they had said those things to scare his daddy, and also described how badly both he and Ian had been beaten. Ian, I’m just so glad you’re both back with us safely. Now you just need some time to heal,” Doc said, his voice beginning to crack audibly.

“Doc…” Ian said hoarsely, the lump in his throat making it difficult for him to speak, “Thanks for being there...We love you. How’s Mom?” “Ian, we love you, too, and she is doing as well as can be expected, with all that’s been going on. She can hear you now,” Doc answered, pressing the speaker button on his phone. “Anything you two wanna say to her?”

“We love you, Ma! And we’ll be home soon!” Mickey said in as cheerful of a voice as he could manage, as he continued to hold Ian’s hand firmly, running his ring finger up over Ian’s ring, which he was thrilled to find still securely surrounding Ian’s ring finger. “Love you, Ma,” Ian chimed in weakly. “I love you, too!” she sang back to them, the positive energy in her voice instantly giving both Mickey and Ian a boost. “Now get some rest, boys, so you can come home to all of us! You have a wedding to attend!” she screeched joyously.

They said their goodbyes, both to the family in Mexico, and to Shawn, Iggy, and Bigley, Mickey then excusing himself to get a much needed shower. While he was gone, a young crimson-haired nurse, who reminded Ian of Reesie, came in to check on him. Upon seeing the two beds pushed together, she gave a brief warning,

“Mr. Milkovich, you are still quite ill, and need your rest. And please...I’m not going to restrain you, but you and your partner need to take great care not to bump or otherwise touch your newest incision, or your donor site. Don’t hesitate to buzz me with any problems or concerns. I will be checking in with you often...and please...don’t try to get up. You have a catheter, so there is no need.”

As quickly as she had appeared, she was gone, leaving Ian alone to reflect on all that had happened. He was damn lucky to be alive, and he knew it. He didn’t remember being rescued, but he knew Mickey was responsible. He spun his ring on his finger, anxiously awaiting Mickey’s return to the bed.

During his captivity, before he became delirious, he could scarcely think of anything besides getting Yev, and finding a way back into Mickey’a arms. Finally, he was nearly there, with butterflies in his stomach, as he anticipated holding Mickey to him. He knew it would be different, because of his condition, but he was determined to sleep without any space between himself and his husband.

Finally, after what seemed like forever to Ian, Mickey returned, smelling like heaven, an envelope and two Snickers bars in his hand. He gave the envelope to Ian, who set it aside on the table next to his bed. “Thanks Mick,” he smiled, despite the sudden, overwhelming exhaustion that had hit him, just moments before, his eyelids drooping.

Ian had fought hard to keep them open, so he could see Mickey before he slept. “Can I please read it tomorrow? Right now I just need you next to me, so I can sleep. That okay with you?” Ian asked sleepily. “Fuck yeah!,” Mickey yawned, crawling into the bed next to Ian and pressing himself against his side. “Closer,” Ian whispered under his breath, just before dropping off into a deep, restful sleep, Mickey nestling in and following closely thereafter.
Be sure to read both chapters that were published today, 69 and 70! Happy reading!
Once Yev’s hematomas had been successfully drained, the pediatrician sent him home, Doc driving both Yev and Svetlana to the factory, then taking Kayla home with him. Yev had begun to open up more about his experience now with his mother, who was horror-stricken by his accounts of the extreme violence, yet not surprised by it, given her upbringing. Yev seemed particularly troubled by all that Ian had been through, talking incessantly about how brave he was, and how he had saved him.

Svetlana knew that she had actually been the one responsible for his release, but remained quiet about it, choosing to have Ian remain the hero in Yev’s eyes. After all, she had merely made a phone call. Ian had endured, at a minimum, an ungodly beating, although she suspected, from Yev’s description, that there may have been a lot more to it than that.

There was no question in her mind that Ian had done everything humanly possible to minimize Yev’s suffering, without further jeopardizing his life, and she was fucking grateful. She knew, firsthand, the unspeakable things the Russian mob were capable of, and she was happy that Yev had escaped at least some of them.

Mickey was sleeping peacefully, like a baby, pressed firmly against Ian’s warm, comforting body, for the first time in what seemed like forever to him, when Ian suddenly started to squirm and yell, “Don’t! No...No...No!” Mickey comforted him, rubbing his chest lightly and kissing him lovingly, eventually lulling him back to sleep.

Only minutes after Mickey had managed to calm himself enough to rest, Ian was yelling again, pleading, “Okay...anything...just please don’t hurt him anymore!! I Do it! Do it!” Tears oozed from under his eyelids, as he seemed, to Mickey, to be silently enduring something horrible. Mickey was so disturbed by what he saw, that, as it persisted, he couldn’t help but wake him.

“Wake up, man!” he murmured, shaking him. “Ian, it’s okay. You’re with me,” he continued in a soft, soothing tone of voice, as he nuzzled his nose against Ian’s neck. “I love you...I love you...I love you,” Mickey breathed as he stroked Ian’s face, “Go back to sleep. I’m not gonna let ‘em hurt you or Yev...ever again.”

It really was ironic. Ian’s return to him seemed to have put an end to Mickey’s nightmares, but now Ian was plagued by them, so severely that Mickey worried they might never get a good night’s sleep again. He tried everything he could to assuage Ian’s anguish, but it resurfaced again and again, until Mickey finally, out of desperation, and concern that Ian might rip his stitches or IV out, buzzed for the nurse.

“Hey,” Mickey whispered to the nurse as she walked in, although Ian seemed to be half-awake, writhing miserably under the blankets, as he mumbled assorted supplications, “Think you could give him somethin’ so he stays asleep? He’s havin’ nightmares real bad,” Mickey explained, utterly exhausted from the night he had put in thus far. “I’ll have to call the doctor. My name is Kelly, by the way,” she responded, turning for the door.

Mickey caressed Ian’s arm, then wrapped his legs around Ian’s, causing Ian to flinch, his eyes flying open wide. “It’s okay,” Mickey murmured, backing away from Ian’s now kicking legs. He stroked his cheek lightly, kissing his temple, while being careful to avoid bodily contact, which seemed to have set him off.
“...the fuck’d they do to you?” Mickey muttered, essentially to himself, although Ian answered. “Mickey? Mickey!” he mewled, suddenly grabbing for him. “I’m right here,” Mickey responded, as Kelly entered, syringe in hand.

“Dr. Fisher ordered some light sedation,” she began, adding the sedative to Ian’s IV. “He doesn’t want him overly medicated at this point, since he will be in to see him in the morning, first thing. He feels this is PTSD, although he did ask whether Ian seemed delusional or disoriented.

“Maybe a little,” Mickey admitted reluctantly. “Should I move onto the other bed?” he asked. “No! Stay!” Ian yelled, squeezing Mickey’s arm so hard, Mickey could almost feel the bruises forming already. “Okay! Okay! Let go! I ain’t goin’ nowhere!” Mickey promised, trying not to sound too agitated, although he knew he did. He was utterly exhausted, and now also in pain.

“You can stay, but Dr. Fisher said I should restrain him, if he was exhibiting any disorientation. This is for his protection...and yours,” Kelly explained, pulling the straps from the sides of the bed and attaching them to Ian’s limbs, now that Ian was sleeping peacefully, the sedative having taken effect.

“Let me know if you have any problems, although I think he’ll sleep through the night now,” Kelly called over her shoulder as she exited. “Hope so. Thanks,” Mickey mumbled, staring over at his gorgeous, yet battered and broken partner. “Fuck, Ian...what the hell did they do to you?!” he stammered, giant tears rolling down the side of his face onto his pillow.

Mickey cried himself to sleep, hugging his own body with his arms, too afraid to touch Ian, lest he should disturb him and get him all worked up again.

The sun was up when Mickey opened his eyes the next morning, a slim, short, dark-haired doctor standing over the bed. “Good Morning! You must be Mickey,” he began, Ian still snoring obliviously next to him. Mickey nodded sleepily. “I’m Dr. Fisher. I’m very glad to meet you because you will have an important part in Ian’s treatment. We can’t do it without you.”

“I’m real worried about him,” Mickey admitted. “He was havin’ some bad nightmares last night--- kickin’ his legs and yellin’ like someone was gonna kill him. He went nuts when I wrapped my legs around his, which...we sleep like that all the time,” Mickey explained, shrugging his shoulders. “Somethin’s wrong, real wrong,” he added, shaking his head, “I know they beat him, but he’s safe...with me now. Don’t he know that?”

“Mickey, have you ever in your own life had something terrible happen to you, and then you relive it...or fear it might happen again...or see it happening repeatedly in your mind?” Dr. Fisher paused, but Mickey gave no answer, seeming to be mulling it over silently in his mind.

“If the answer is no, then you can’t possibly understand what your husband is going through, but I can assure you that post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, is a very real thing...and it can be devastating to someone’s life,” Dr. Fisher explained patiently, still awaiting a response from Mickey.

“Yeah, I get it. Been through some real fucked up shit myself, but it don’t make it any easier to see HIM go through it. Doc, Ian is...well, he’s part of me. I’m fuckin’ lost without him,” Mickey confided, struggling to maintain his composure. “Him flinchin’ when I touch him...it fuckin’ killed me,” Mickey added, looking to the doctor pleadingly, “Please help us.”

“Mickey, I’m gonna do all that I can. I really want to assist with the treatment of his bipolar disorder as well,” Dr. Fisher said with a compassionate, sincere smile. “Well, his old meds were workin’, so...” Mickey trailed off, his focus turning to Ian, who was waking up, calling to him under his breath. “Right here, Ian, I told ya, I ain’t goin’ nowhere,” he assured him, brushing his hand over Ian’s lightly to gauge his reaction. Ian immediately flipped his hand over in its restraint, doing his
best to reach for Mickey’s.

“Hello, Ian. My name is Dr. Fisher,” the doctor introduced himself, Ian opening his eyes and focusing in on him. “Mornin’, Ian responded, beginning to struggle against his restraints. “What the fuck, Mickey?” he questioned, raising his voice in frustration. “You were havin’ weird-ass nightmares and sayin’ some wild shit. They…” Dr. Fisher cut Mickey off,

“It’s not Mickey’s fault,” the doctor began. “When Kelly called and said you were disoriented, I asked her to restrain you, so you wouldn’t open up your incision or try to get out of bed. If you’re feeling okay right now, we can remove them,” he finished.

“Please!” Mickey answered, before Ian had the chance. “I understand, Dr. Fisher, and I am feeling fine now, if you wouldn’t mind…” As Dr. Fisher loosened the restraints, Mickey stared off into space, deep in thought. He had to admit, Ian did seem to be acting normal, now that he was awake, and, consequently, he began to second-guess his assessment of Ian the night before.

Perhaps he hadn’t been disoriented at all, just scared. After all, how many times had he woken Ian with his nightmares, requiring his comfort and attention in order to fall back to sleep. Not once had Ian ever restrained him, or threatened to leave their bed. ‘Yep! Ian is just a better fuckin’ husband,’ Mickey told himself guiltily.

“Doc, I think I’m the one who needs the help. Ian needs me...needs me to understand what he’s been through...and help him get through it...and instead, I’m callin’ the nurse to drug him, and tryin’ to go sleep in the other bed...for myself! I’m selfish! Ian deserves better!” Mickey berated himself angrily.

“Listen, I’ve known you for all of ten minutes, and I can tell you, Ian couldn’t ask for a better, more caring husband. You’re sleeping in a hospital bed with a man who, according to your own account, was kicking you and behaving unpredictably. You’re worried about him...willing to do whatever it takes to help him. He’s lucky to have you,” Dr. Fisher complimented Mickey, Ian nodding in acknowledgement.

“Now, in order to begin any type of treatment, I’ll need some background information. Mr. Bigley shared with me your history of bipolar disorder, as well as the fact that you were recently kidnapped and held against your will. He also mentioned that you were a stem-cell donor last week. Clearly, you’ve had an eventful week, and have a notable mental health history. What I need to know is, what happened to you while you were being held captive?” Dr. Fisher questioned.

Ian recounted the same story he had intimated to Mickey the night before, including his concerns for Yev and all that he’d been through. He also mentioned having great guilt over picking Yev up at Mandy and Manuel’s, which was what had put Yev in harm’s way in the first place.

When Dr. Fisher pushed for specifics concerning his experience at the hands of the Russians, he described, in detail, the beatings that both he and Yev had received with a baton. He also discussed the fact that he knew he had become delirious, most likely due to dehydration, and had passed out, everything after that being a big, yet painful blur.

Mickey chimed in, describing the pictures he’d been sent, as well as the FaceTime call he had received. He also detailed Ian’s condition when he found him, including the fact that he appeared to be completely unconscious, both when he found him and when he had received the FaceTime, although he did describe the AK incident, acknowledging that Ian did let out a groan both times he was struck in the ribs.

“Do you know how you came to be in the back of the truck, where Mickey found you?” Dr. Fisher asked. Ian thought for a moment, then answered, “No...I don’t. In fact, I don’t even remember them
hitting me in the ribs with the gun. The last thing I remember is being forced to work on Terry…and then… I don’t know…I just know I wanted them to stop hurting Yev…wanted to get him and take him home to Mickey…” Ian paused, hissing through his teeth in pain. “Think you could hook me up with some pain meds? I hurt all over,” Ian requested.

“We can get you some pain meds. I just want to be careful of how much medication we give you at one time. Once you’re feeling a bit better, I want to discuss my new treatment protocol with you and Mickey. For now, however, I want to try to help you with your PTSD. We need to determine what specifically triggers your fight or flight response, which will then enable us to start working to desensitize you to whatever is bringing it on, so you can sleep, and ultimately live more normally.”

“Yeah, and how we gonna do that?” Mickey asked skeptically. “Well, obviously the severe beating was traumatic, so we’ll start there, but I’d also like to help Ian to piece together the disjointed parts of the experience that he remembers, hopefully by bringing the rest to the surface so it doesn’t continue to haunt his subconscious mind, which I suspect is what we’re currently dealing with,” Dr. Fisher paused, awaiting a reaction from Ian, who remained silent.

“Ian, I believe you may be blocking parts of your experience out, because they are too painful, or because your mind was not fully functional at the time,” Dr. Fisher continued, “How do you feel about hypnosis?”

Ian reached for Mickey’s hand, once again getting a death grip on it. “Ian, you okay?” Mickey asked, gritting his teeth as he attempted to loosen Ian’s hold on his hand. “Mickey…” he muttered, “I’m scared.”
“Good Morning!” a middle-aged brunette nurse sang as she entered, “My name is Erika. How about trying some food this morning?” “Okay,” Ian answered sluggishly, “I am kinda hungry, now that I’m in less pain.” “Yes, and we’ll be taking that catheter out today, too,” she added with a smile, which Ian returned promptly.

“I’ll leave you to your morning,” Dr. Fisher cut in, “but please think about the hypnosis...and I’d like to have my P.A. do a complete physical exam, once you’ve eaten and had some time to get comfortable.” “Thanks, Doc,” Mickey answered, tracing the contours of Ian’s hand lightly with his index finger.

“Mr. Bigley has ordered your breakfast from Cafe on Fifth, complete with a full smoothie sampler. It should be arriving soon,” Erika announced, still smiling brightly. “Hey, well, you think we could do the catheter now? Get it over with?” Ian suggested. “As long as you don’t think you’ll lose your appetite,” she replied. “Doubt it,” Ian replied, adjusting himself in the bed, “I’m feeling pretty good!” “I’ll bet you are,” she responded, eyeing up the bag of morphine that was feeding into his IV.

“Be right back,” she called over her shoulder, as she turned on her heel to fetch the needed supplies. “This won’t be pleasant,” Ian sighed. “Yeah, I remember,” Mickey said softly. “How ‘bout if I sit here with ya? You can squeeze my hand when it hurts,” Mickey suggested. “Sure,” Ian answered, just as Erika returned, walking over to drape an extra sheet over Ian, before she got started.

Ian tried not to focus on what he knew was happening—the balloon deflating, then exiting through such a tiny opening. “Mr. Milkovich,” Erika addressed Ian, interrupting his mental timeline of the procedure, “You have some unusual discolorations on your scrotum. They are quite small, but it appears to...do you have pain here?” she asked, gently palpating his sack. “It’s a little sensitive, yeah, but, again, I’m on some pretty kick-ass pain meds,” he chuckled uncomfortably. “I want Dr. Fisher to see this, if you don’t mind,” she continued. “Sure,” Ian grunted, squeezing Mickey’s hand as she finished the catheter removal. “I’ll be right back,” she said, jogging for the door.

“Mickey!” Ian spoke anxiously. “Look at my balls! What did she see?” Mickey laughed, “Never thought I’d have ya ask me to look at your balls!” Mickey pulled the extra sheet away, exposing Ian’s entire lower body. “Fuck! That shit must really hurt!” he commented, taking note of all of the bruising and discolorations that covered his body, basically from head to toe.

He could feel the anger building inside him, as he examined Ian’s body more closely, honing in on his scrotum, as Ian had asked. He took a deep breath, then began describing what he saw, “It’s like...you got real small red marks, they’re like dots almost...all over it...and I see the same thing on your thighs...up here,” he clarified, very carefully encircling the marks on Ian’s upper thighs with his index finger. “It almost looks like…”

“Okay,” Dr. Fisher interrupted, striding quickly over to the bed. “Erika wants me to look at your scrotum... I see you are investigating as well, Mickey,” Dr. Fisher added, acknowledging Mickey’s efforts. Mickey shifted out of the way, allowing the doctor access to his husband. Dr. Fisher shined a penlight on the area as he examined it. “Yes, these do look to be tiny burns,” he concluded fairly quickly. “I am going to roll you carefully onto your right side, so as not to disturb your incision; If you don’t mind, I’d like to examine the backs of your thighs, as well as your buttocks,” Dr. Fisher requested politely.

Ian’s eyes widened, a look of terror abruptly overtaking his face, as he focused on Mickey’s eyes while Dr. Fisher, with Erika’s assistance, gently rolled Ian onto his right side. There was a long,
uncomfortable period of silence as the doctor examined Ian, a sudden, excruciating pain shooting through Ian’s entire body as the doctor’s hand grazed his left buttock. “Ian, I’m going to perform a rectal exam. I need you to relax, as much as possible. Ian instinctively reached for Mickey’s hand, Mickey taking it, then bending to sit on the bed next to Ian. “You’re fine,” Mickey assured him.

As the doctor separated Ian’s checks, he tensed up, hissing through his teeth, “Stop!!” Dr. Fisher immediately abandoned his efforts to perform the rectal exam, instead taking a closer look at the sensitive area between Ian’s buttocks, which was burned so badly that it had blistered. “Erika...Mickey...if you will excuse us, I need to talk to Ian privately. “Mickey can stay,” Ian shuddered, the residual pain ripping through him, despite the medication.

As Erika disappeared out the door, Dr. Fisher began, “Ian, I have to ask you some tough questions. I truly believe, even more so, now that I’ve begun to examine you, that there are parts of your experience that you are blocking out.” “Doc, please just tell me what’s there,” Ian pleaded. “I can handle it. I’m a nurse and I’ve seen…“

Dr. Fisher cut him off, “Ian I’ve seen a lot, too, but nothing like this! I’m going to be honest with you. I believe you were tortured...beyond the beatings that you recall...in fact, I know you were, based on what I’m seeing. You’ve been burned, slowly and methodically, over time, it looks like, with...with small pins of some type...and with a larger superheated implement, too---almost like...uh...” the doctor paused, searching for the right words, then continued, omitting the thought he had begun to share. “At this point, you are in too much pain for me to conduct a rectal exam, but I’d like to perform one, to see if you have any internal damage,” he finished awkwardly.

“Are you sayin’ they fucked him?” Mickey asked bluntly. “I can’t rule that out until I perform the exam, but I can tell you that he has second-degree burns on and between his buttocks, and surrounding his anus. These findings, together with the small, pin-sized burns, are, in my opinion, more consistent with torture, than with a sexual violation.

“Let Mickey see,” Ian requested. “Mickey, do you want to look at this?” the doctor asked kindly. “I guess,” he answered apprehensively, fighting to keep his burgeoning anger in check. As he rounded the bed and made his way to the other side, where he had a view of Ian’s ass, he swallowed hard, his stomach beginning to churn, as his anger was replaced with extreme nausea. “I’ll be right back,” he muttered under his breath, running for the bathroom. Ian and Dr. Fisher could both hear him vomiting, but neither said a word about it.

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“Ian, do you remember them burning you? Putting anything into or near your rectum, or on your buttocks?” the doctor asked. “...I don’t know...“ Ian stammered, beginning to feel sick himself. “With your permission, I’d like to take a photo of this, so you are able to see it for yourself,” the doctor asked. “Okay,” Ian answered, without hesitation.

“Sorry,” Mickey called over to them, as he exited the bathroom and headed for the bed, pouring himself some water and sipping it slowly. Dr. Fisher snapped the picture, then gently rolled Ian over onto his back, Ian stiffening in pain as his now-irritated bottom made contact with the bed. “I can’t photograph the rest of the affected area without causing you more pain, so I’ll wait to do that when we perform the exam, which I can do with you under a ‘twilight sleep’ sedation, so you won’t feel any discomfort,” Dr. Fisher suggested.

“Doc, can I see you for a minute?” Mickey requested, “before he looks at that picture?” “Why?” Ian demanded, “Whatever you have to say, just say it!” “Okay...” Mickey began, taking the phone from Dr. Fisher’s hand, “They fuckin’ branded you!” Mickey snarled, seething with rage, as he turned the phone toward Ian. “This,” he hissed, pointing to a star-shaped combination of burns on Ian’s left ascheek, “is a fuckin’ Russian mob symbol!”
Ian stared hard at the photo, his mind rejecting the idea that the ass in the picture was his, although he knew that it was. “Mickey...I’m sorry,” Ian mumbled, as he began to sob. “What the fuck are you sorry about, Ian!? I’m fuckin’ sorry! My fucked up family is the whole reason you’re goin’ through all this shit!” Mickey yelled, more at himself, than at Ian. “Doc, can I please have some time alone with him?” Mickey asked.

“Sure. I’ve got an interview at noon anyway. But I want you to discuss the possibility of the hypnosis. It could give us valuable information needed for your treatment, both psychological and physical,” Dr. Fisher replied. “Thanks, Doc,” Mickey expressed sincerely.

Before Dr. Fisher could get out the door, Erika popped her head in, “Okay to bring breakfast?” she asked. Ian nodded his permission, and within seconds, he and Mickey were looking at an impressive cart, filled with two full breakfasts, five different smoothie samples, and a decanter of coffee, with all of the necessary condiments. “Thank you,” Ian said softly as she parked the cart next to Mickey, who was now sitting on the bed beside Ian. “Enjoy!” she answered brightly, turning for the door.

“Hungry?” Mickey asked, attempting to sound cheerful. “Nah, not so much,” Ian frowned, the sickening image of his desecrated backside etched into his mind. “Ian, listen,” Mickey said soothingly, “You got nothin’ to be sorry for. Whatever they did to ya, it wasn’t your fault.” Mickey gazed into Ian’s brilliant, yet painfully sorrowful green eyes, losing himself in their beauty, hopelessly drawn in, lowering his bountifully full lips ever closer to Ian’s, until they brushed against them so softly that Ian lifted his head to feel them more intensely.

Ian grasped Mickey’s face, pulling it down forcefully to his own, as he rested his own head back onto the pillow, kissing Mickey with a passion that got Mickey hard, in spite of himself. “Mickey, I thought I’d never see you, never touch you again…” Ian panted, between kisses. “I’ll be okay...as long as I have you,” he breathed seductively, trying, subconsciously, to assure Mickey that no further exploration of his recent experience would be necessary.

Mickey, completely disarmed by Ian’s irresistible charms, returned the kiss desperately, having craved his husband for so long, and now finally feeling whole again, his body responding reflexively to his touch. “Ian, I fuckin’ want you,” Mickey moaned into Ian’s mouth, reaching down instinctively to rub Ian’s thigh. Ian flinched, then stiffened and held his breath. All at once, Mickey came to his senses, realizing how wrong it must be to say and do such things, given the prevailing circumstances.

Mickey pulled himself away, a single tear escaping from below his left eyelash, as he batted it away. “Ian, I’m an asshole. I’m fuckin’ sorry,” he apologized. “No, Mick...I want you, too,” Ian confessed, reaching for Mickey’s hand, “It’s just…” Ian paused, at a total loss for words, not even understanding his reaction, himself.

Mickey took this opportunity to speak honestly to Ian about his situation. “Ian...ya gotta do the hypnosis. We gotta know what we’re dealin’ with,” Mickey begged, his crystal blue eyes burning into Ian’s, imploring him to agree.

Ian sighed deeply, squeezing Mickey’s hand, even tighter than when he was having the catheter removed. “I don’t wanna go there alone,” Ian admitted. “Ian, I’ll be here...through all of it...through everything...’til death do us part, man. I fuckin’ meant that shit,” Mickey expressed emotionally, leaning down to kiss Ian’s forehead.

“And what if I’m weird now?” Ian asked. Mickey looked at him, then answered, without hesitation, “You’re not weird.” “You know what I mean, like...what if when you touch me, I…” Ian’s eyes filled with tears.
“We’ll get through it,” Mickey responded, pulling Ian’s hand to his lips and kissing it lovingly. “I’ll...well, I’ll jerk off, if I have to. Can I look at ya when I do?” Mickey cracked a silly smile, melting Ian instantly. “Absolutely,” Ian grinned, adding, “Hungry?”

“Sure,” Mickey replied, pulling the cart closer to the bed and putting two straws into one of the smoothie pitchers. “Here,” he said, putting the pitcher next to Ian, propping him up and putting one of the straws to his lips, “Says it’s strawberry-banana.”
Premature Evacuation

By early afternoon, Ian was going stir-crazy lying in the bed. Dr. Fisher had increased his pain meds slightly, after the morning’s events, so he was feeling well---and trapped in bed. Erika had come in to give Ian a sponge bath, which he refused, demanding to get into the shower. “Maybe tomorrow,” she had told him, offering again to bathe him.

“I’ll do it!” Mickey piped up, remembering how insanely wonderful it had felt when Ian gave him a sponge bath in the private room at Cook County Correctional. Of course, it had turned into something more than a sponge bath, which Mickey had thoroughly enjoyed, but also knew would not happen, in this case. He was, nonetheless, determined to make it pleasurable for Ian. There was no doubt that Mickey, himself, was going to revel in every blessed second, since the mere thought of touching Ian, under any circumstances, gave him such a feeling of complete contentment, unlike anything else in the world. Of course, that was only if he could pull it off without causing Ian any discomfort.

“Alright,” Erika replied, pulling a basin from the closet and taking it to the bathroom. She returned quickly, the basin filled with warm, soapy water, handing Mickey three washcloths. “Please don’t get his dressing wet, and be careful not to…” “I know. I ain’t gonna hurt him. I’d never do that,” Mickey interrupted, his voice wavering throughout his last sentence.

Mickey could feel Ian’s pain, psychologically, and it twisted his stomach into knots. He wanted so badly to make all of Ian’s misery go away---to fix him, good as new---as if none of those terrible things had ever happened to him.

“Alright...ya gotta tell me if anything hurts,” Mickey began, dipping one of the washcloths into the water, then beginning to touch Ian’s face with it lightly. Ian closed his eyes, his face immediately taking on an angelic look of profound innocence, his bright, curly lashes resting softly against the contrasting swollen darkness beneath them. Even beaten, bruised and burned, Ian, to Mickey, was the most beautiful creature on earth. Just the sight of him this way got Mickey all choked up.

Mickey moved from Ian’s face to his torso, lightly sponging him off, then lifting each arm, one at a time, to wash his pits. “Okay,” Mickey sighed, realizing he was about to embark upon the most challenging stretch of their bathing journey together, “I’m gonna try washing your legs. If anything hurts ya, or scares ya, just tell me,” he said in his typical, no-nonsense way, which made Ian smile slightly, despite what he knew was likely to be a pretty unpleasant couple of upcoming minutes.

“Okay,” Ian answered, taking a deep breath. Mickey traced over Ian’s legs so gently that Ian scarcely realized he was touching him, choosing to focus his attention on the top of Mickey’s head, as he bowed it over him, rather than looking at what he was doing with his hands. Mickey struggled to remain silent, wanting instead to scream in horror at what he was seeing, then take off running, with the goal of killing those two fucking commie bastards that he had turned over to the mob.

As he proceeded to tenderly sponge his man off, he silently wondered which of the Russians had done this to him. Was it the ones who had been killed? More likely, he felt, this had been done after they took him, unconscious, from the clinic, as Yev was being freed. Those fucking bastards that he returned to the Russians, who had escaped the entire incident completely unscathed, had done this to him! But how? And why?

Mickey’s mind raced through all of the possibilities as he continued to delicately bathe the sadistically beaten, tortured, and broken love of his life. ’How could he even withstand this?’ Mickey asked himself. Maybe Ian wasn’t even coherent enough to understand what was happening to him.
Or maybe he didn’t care.

Then it hit him. Ian probably didn’t know that Yev had been rescued. Yev had said Ian was lying inside the clinic, passed out on the floor, when he was released. That could explain a lot: Why he didn’t respond to even this extreme torture, why the Russians had resorted to calling Mickey, dangling Ian’s life in order to get Mickey to give up Marco.

Yes, this had to be the case. Ian had completely given up on his own life, believing his son was still in danger, and that his silence was the only way to guarantee Yev’s survival. So there was nothing they could have done to him to make him jeopardize Yev’s life. Maybe he was right---had it all figured out---but he still wanted to hear it from Ian, to know his perception of what had happened to him, to have everything out in the open, so they could deal with it and move on.

Once Mickey had finished Ian’s legs, he asked, “Do ya want me to try to wash your junk here?” “Uh...yeah?” Ian responded, realizing that he was probably quite dirty, and in need of a good sponging, yet feeling a bit apprehensive about the whole thing, due to his injuries.

“Oh...here I come,” Mickey announced, dipping a fresh washcloth into the water, then slowly and softly patting Ian’s genitals with it. “It doesn’t hurt!” Ian exclaimed, exhaling with relief as Mickey continued, lifting Ian’s legs and gingerly moving toward his anus.

Suddenly, Mickey thought better of it, instead rinsing the cloth and not ringing it out completely. He put the third, still-dry cloth beneath the lower half of Ian’s buttocks, then squeezed the soapy water from the wet cloth, allowing it to trickle down over Ian’s opening. “Hurt?” he asked fearfully. “Nope, feels...nice,” Ian replied, putting it kindly. Mickey repeated the process twice more, feeling confident and happy that he was not hurting Ian, and that Ian was actually feeling good.

In reality, nothing was going to actually feel ‘nice’ until the burns were healed. Ian knew that very well, before Mickey even started. But Mickey had successfully minimized his discomfort, and he wanted to acknowledge it, to make Mickey feel good about what Ian saw as one of the most caring, compassionate things Mickey had ever done for him---and there was a long list, so this was truly significant in Ian’s mind.

“Gonna go look for one of those little yellow spit pans so you can brush your teeth,” Mickey said with a smile, as he very gently patted Ian dry. “I found your toothbrush in the suitcase,” he added, “and Yev’s, too. I think we should call Svet and check in on him,” Mickey suggested.

Ian’s face fell as he recalled all that he had witnessed the Russians do to his beautiful son. “Ian, he’s gonna be okay. He’s a tough kid. He’s a Milkovich, for Christ’s sake,” Mickey assured him as he headed for the bathroom, having basically just read his mind, by the look on his face.

Ian knew Yev was a badass. He had endured a lot, even by Gallagher standards, before he finally gave in and cried. They had been so brutal, having total disregard for the fact that he was an innocent child, which sickened Ian. Had he believed that giving Marco up would have stopped the abuse they were piling onto Yev, Ian may have caved, but he knew better---knew that spilling the beans would only have made them both expendable.

But it wasn’t so much the physical harm that Ian worried about. He wondered how his child’s mind would be affected by such a horrific ordeal. How could he return to ‘normal’ after something like this? Ian did acknowledge that the ‘Milkovich badass gene’ did extend beyond the physical. They were definitely a mentally tough bunch as well. They had to be, the way they had been raised. He also knew, however, that he and Mickey had given Yev a much softer life than Mickey and his siblings had---a good life---but also one free from these kinds of situations. At least until now.
“Okay,” Mickey smiled, carrying a yellow emesis basin, Ian’s toothbrush and some toothpaste, “Got everything.” “Thanks, Mick,” Ian mumbled as he readied his toothbrush and stuck it into his mouth. “But after this, can you PLEASE help me outta this bed? I can’t take it anymore!” Ian pleaded, rinsing his mouth, then batting his eyes at him seductively. Damn, Mickey hated when he did this! No matter how outlandish or ridiculous the request, Ian could wear Mickey down, and they both knew it.

“Ian, you been through hell. You’re probably gonna be a little weak. Don’t want ya to get hurt,” Mickey reasoned. Ian laughed, “In case you didn’t notice, I’m already hurt pretty fucking bad. In fact, I don’t think it can get much worse,” he chuckled, pushing himself up into a sitting position, then grimacing. “See,” Mickey chided. “No, it’s cuz I’m sitting on my burn. I gotta stand up,” he insisted, swinging his feet down over the side of the bed.

“Ian! Your IVs!” Mickey warned nervously. ‘Oh, no problem,” he responded, waving Mickey off as he stood and unceremoniously disconnected the lines. “I’m ready to go home now,” he announced abruptly, clearly under the influence of some kickass pain meds.

“No, you’re not,” Mickey countered, grasping him by the arm in defeat. We was now officially assisting Ian in going against doctor’s orders. “You have to talk to Dr. Fisher...about the hypnosis...and about the new meds he wants ya to take.”

“Nah, I’m good. What I got is working just fine. I just wanna get home, back to our house, the family, you know...US! Like we were before...” Ian trailed off, making his way, with Mickey’s begrudging help, over to the bathroom. “Hey, let me...” “Don’t need any more help, Mick,” Ian said, pulling away from him, “but if you want, you can pick out some clothes for me to wear,” Ian insisted, cutting Mickey off, mid-sentence.

All of a sudden, Ian stopped, turning his head to look at Mickey, “I guess I am a little dizzy,” he muttered, beginning to falter, Mickey rushing to his side to hold him up. “You gotta use the bathroom?” Mickey asked, annoyed, but trying his best to hide it. “Yeah, I’d like to try,” Ian answered, his arm now tightly wrapped around Mickey’s waist, and Mickey’s, his. “Okay,” Mickey responded, acknowledging Ian’s need and assisting him in the remainder of his walk to the toilet.

Ian was able to piss readily, Mickey beginning to steer him toward the sink as soon as he was done. “Wait,” Ian called out, “Think I gotta poop.” Now Mickey was worried. He knew eventually this would happen, but now that the moment was upon them, he was dreading the pain he knew Ian would feel, as if it were his own.

Mickey helped Ian lower himself down onto the toilet, which was, in and of itself, an agonizing experience. Once he was seated, they waited for what seemed, to both men, to be forever. Finally, as Ian was able to go, he stopped as quickly as he had started. “Fuck!” he yelled in excruciating pain, his face twisted up into one of the most unpleasant faces Mickey had ever seen Ian make. “It’s okay, man. We can try later,” Mickey said calmly, in a fruitless attempt to comfort him.

“No!” Ian yelled, “Get Erika!” Mickey immediately jogged to the bed and pressed the nurse call button, then full-on running back to the bathroom to check on Ian, who was sitting, just as Mickey had left him, only seconds before. “Wha...Mr. Milkovich, where are you?” a new nurse called out as she entered the room, but saw no sign of Ian. “It’s Ian, and I’m in the bathroom,” he replied.

“Why are your IV’s...” “Just bring me some lidocaine spray, would you please?” Ian interrupted impatiently. “Ian...I understand you’re a nurse, but disconnecting your IV’s was not a good idea. And you, as a nurse, should also know that you need a doctor’s order for lidocaine.”

Mickey knew she was right, but he didn’t like her tone. “Then get one!” ne snapped, just as she
knocked on the bathroom door. “Come in when you have the lidocaine,” Ian barked. Just as the nurse was about to respond, she heard footsteps approaching her from behind.

“Ian,” Dr. Fisher called into him as he entered the room, “I’m guessing you needed to use the bathroom,” he continued, stating the obvious. “Yes, and I’d like some lidocaine spray. Can you do that for me?” he asked, his tone quickly changing after Dr. Fisher’s arrival. “I think I can manage that,” he responded, typing an order into his phone. “Please bring this to him STAT,” the doctor said to the nurse, who was fuming mad at this point about the way both Ian and Mickey had treated her. “Yes, doctor,” she answered politely, although her face was flushed with anger.

“Now, Ian...I have to ask, why didn’t you ASK to use the bathroom? I had put an order in for your IV to be removed, at such time that you asked to use the bathroom, the idea being that you would have the assistance that you needed,” Dr. Fisher paused, awaiting an answer.

Ian looked up at the doctor from his seated position on the toilet, shrugging his shoulders, “I don’t know. Maybe because I’m stubborn and don’t like being helpless,” he admitted. “Yes, I can see why you are feeling this way, but protocols exist to keep you safe. I know you know this, but apparently you need a reminder.” Dr. Fisher was a bit upset, and he wasn’t trying to hide it.

“I’m sorry, Doc. And Mickey, I didn’t mean to scare you either. I also need to apologize to that nurse,” Ian said remorsefully, looking down at the floor. “Yes, well, her name is Jeanine. She is here today specifically to assist with your hypnosis, which I would like to begin, just as soon as you are finished there,” Dr. Fisher shared.

“Doc, I don’t think I need to…” Ian stopped talking as Jeanine handed the lidocaine to Dr. Fisher. “You didn’t think you needed this either,” he said, handing it off to Mickey. Ian smiled weakly as he stood, with Mickey’s assistance, “You wanna do the honors?” Ian asked Mickey sheepishly. “Sure. What’d I gotta do?” Mickey responded. “Just open my ass cheeks enough to spray the burns between them. “Mmmm…” Mickey muttered under his breath as he began executing Ian’s instructions, the doctor backing away to give them privacy.

“Does it hurt? Am I doin’ okay?” Mickey asked anxiously, frightened to death of causing Ian any measure of unpleasantness. “Perfect, Mick,” Ian responded, feeling instant relief from the intense burning that had been plaguing him since his first attempt at going.

In a matter of minutes, Ian was able to go, with little to no discomfort, Dr. Fisher suggesting that he use the wet wipes on the sink counter. “That wasn’t so bad,” Ian said, smiling at Mickey. “Thanks, Mick,” Ian said softly, standing up and planting a sensual kiss on Mickey’s irresistibly plump lips.

“I love you so fucking much, Mick. Don’t know what the hell I’d do without you,” Ian gushed, the relief he was feeling translating into a much better mood, and better treatment for all concerned, but especially for Mickey, whom Ian just about wanted to bend over the sink—he was feeling that good.

“If ya love me, then let’s get this hypnosis thing goin’. Sooner we do, sooner we can go home. I don’t wanna take ya home and then have problems, so...Please? If ya love me…” Mickey appealed to Ian, batting his eyes with his own to-die-for lashes, dark and thick, highlighting the striking ocean blue of his irises.

Reliving Hell

Ian and Mickey had a very positive conversation with their family back home, wrapping it up with a discussion with Yev about the online school work that he was doing, thanks to Reesie, who had spoken with the school and helped Svetlana get him enrolled. He explained that, while he was healing, he would be in a virtual classroom, with a real teacher and real kids that asked and answered questions, all while being home with his family. He went into detail about his math with Ian, sounding as excited as ever to share it with him.

“You and Mom still stayin’ at the factory?” Mickey asked, after waiting patiently for Yev an Ian to finish talking about math. “Yes, Daddy,” Yev answered, Mickey hearing the smile on his face. He was obviously so happy to hear from them, but also very content being with the rest of the family. “I think I will stay with Grandma later this week though for a night or two. Doc says he has the internet, too!” he explained.

Then the inevitable question came, “When are you coming home? I miss you.” Mickey and Ian looked at each other, Mickey shooting a non-verbal warning Ian’s way, a look that said, ‘Don’t commit until we know more’. “Yev, we’ll have to let you know. We’re not sure yet. It depends what my doctor says,” Ian answered, frowning at Mickey.

“While we’re away, how ‘bout if you guys stay at the house?” Mickey suggested, Ian glaring over at him in disapproval. “What about the coconut oil in the bedroom...and some of our other things?” Ian mumbled under his breath. Mickey waved him off, thinking that Svet surely knew what they were about, after their previous cohabitation, although, upon further consideration, he decided that he and Ian had become a bit more unconventional over the years. Nothing that would shock Svetlana, however.

“Really, Dad?” Yev asked, his voice full of excitement. “Yeah, just have your Mom stay in Mikhaila’s room,” Mickey answered, smiling over at Ian, who nodded his agreement with the arrangement. “Well…” Yev paused, seemingly at a loss for words, which was very much out of character. “You okay, little man?” Mickey asked, sensing that something was wrong.

“Mickey, he sleeps with me,” Svetlana interjected. “It is easier to comfort him this way,” she explained. Under normal circumstances, Mickey and Ian would have balked at that, having set a firm rule for both of their kids, early on, to sleep in their own beds. They both agreed that any kid lucky enough to have their own room should damn well sleep in it. And, truth be told, they liked their privacy---a lot!

Given all that Yev had been through, however, neither of them said a word about it. “There’s a big bed in there. You can get the keys from Manuel,” Mickey said matter-of-factly. “Thank you, Mickey,” Svetlana said, adding, “Yevgeni stays with your mother later this week. I go tend bar at Johnny’s place. He needs help and I am good bartender and businesswoman.”

“Okay, Svet. We have an appointment. Can we say goodbye to Yev?” Mickey asked. “Bye, Daddy...Daddy Ian! Good luck with your appointment. I have one tomorrow,” Yev said brightly. “Doc told us,” Ian responded. “Yev, when you go, you have to do your best to tell the therapist everything you can remember, so he and the doctor can help you, okay?” Ian continued, his heart breaking at the thought of some of the experiences Yev might share. “I will, Daddy Ian. Did you tell your therapist everything?” Yev asked.

Mickey grinned at Ian, awaiting his response. “Well...not yet, but...but I’m going to...today,” he responded, “Just as soon as I’m done talking to you,” he added, Mickey widening his smile, the
corners of his eyes taking on their signature crinkle. “Okay, Yev, we gotta get to Dad’s appointment,” Mickey jumped in.

“Work hard at school, Yev. We love you,” Ian said, in his typical, positive manner. “And we’re proud of ya for bein’ so tough...but now, it’s okay not to be. If somethin’s botherin’ ya, tell Mom...or Grandma...or Doc,” Mickey added. “Yeah, and you know you can call us...and we’ll be home as soon as possible,” Ian spoke with heartfelt sincerity, trying like hell to keep it together until Yev hung up. “Okay! Love you! Bye!” Yev said, as if everything was just a-okay, ending the call. Ian immediately fell apart, tears streaming down his face. “He’s so strong!” he sobbed. “And so are you!” Mickey said softly, pulling Ian’s face into the crook of his neck and wrapping his arms tightly around him. They sat this way, silently comforting one another, until Jeanine walked in. “Ready?” she asked, smiling at them as they looked her way. “Yep,” Ian said, wiping the residual tears from his face. Mickey had helped him put on some loose-fitting hospital scrubs, and he was wearing a pair of flip-flops that Mickey had retrieved from the suitcase. “Ready as I’ll ever be,” he added. “Okay, we’re going to do this in a small room down the hall,” she explained, pulling a wheelchair in from the hallway.

“Oh no,” Ian reacted instantly, “I’m walking.” Mickey gave Ian a look, but then helped him up and held him steady as he made his way, on foot, out the door and down the hall, Jeanine just shaking her head. Once they reached the room, Jeanine showed Ian to a comfortable-looking sofa, which he reluctantly took a seat on. Mickey quickly sat down next to him, hoping he might help to put Ian more at ease. “Mr. Milkovich,” Jeanine began, both Ian and Mickey turning to look at her. “I mean Mickey,” she clarified, then continued, “Patients usually do this on their own...there’s a waiting room outside.”

“No, Mickey’s gonna stay with me,” Ian insisted grabbing his hand and pulling it, together with his, over to his bouncing leg. He was very nervous, understandably so, and was unwilling to proceed without his partner. “S’right,” Mickey said, throwing his full support behind Ian. “Well, it’s just this has never...” Jeanine began, Dr. Fisher’s entry interrupting her.

“Ian! So glad you are going through with this!” Dr. Fisher said with a disarming glint in his eye, “And Mickey, although it’s not common practice, I believe, after seeing your recent interactions with Ian, that he could benefit from your being here, but I have to ask you to remain completely silent, and to sit away from him, once we’ve begun the exploratory portion of the session. Are you both alright with that?”

“Well, it’s just this has never...” Jeanine began, Dr. Fisher’s entry interrupting her.

“Ian! So glad you are going through with this!” Dr. Fisher said with a disarming glint in his eye, “And Mickey, although it’s not common practice, I believe, after seeing your recent interactions with Ian, that he could benefit from your being here, but I have to ask you to remain completely silent, and to sit away from him, once we’ve begun the exploratory portion of the session. Are you both alright with that?”

“Whatever’s gonna help Ian, that’s what I’m okay with,” Mickey replied, squeezing Ian’s hand supportively. “Thanks for letting him stay,” Ian added, smirking at Jeanine. He truly had planned to apologize to her, after the way he had acted earlier in the day, but she just kept saying and doing little things that pissed him off to the point that he decided against it.

“Okay, Ian, first, Jeanine is going to give you an injection of sodium pentathol, which will help you to relax and to recall some of the events that I believe you are repressing,” Dr. Fisher began. As Jeanine administered the injection, Dr. Fisher continued, “I’m going to need you to lie back and focus on the blue sphere above you.”

Relaxation music suddenly began to play softly over four, strategically-placed speakers in the room. Ian leaned back, reclining his side of the couch slightly. “Uh...I gotta move now?” Mickey asked. “No...but please stay quiet,” Dr. Fisher answered, adding, “I am going to have you move, once he closes his eyes and I begin giving him instructions.” Mickey nodded in understanding, his hand still firmly interlocked with Ian’s.

After a few minutes, as Dr. Fisher instructed Ian to shut his eyes and focus on only his voice, Mickey
slowly and quietly moved away, seating himself in a nearby chair. After a few other cursory comments, Dr. Fisher began to set Ian up to recall his experiences.

“Ian, I want you to think to the day you and Yevgeni were taken forcibly to the clinic. You’ve left your house. Where are you headed?” Dr. Fisher asked. “To Corpus Christi,” Ian replied off-handedly.

“For what purpose?” the doctor asked, continuing with his line of questioning. To which Ian responded, “So the Russians don’t hurt Yev, like they threatened.” “And you didn’t make it to Corpus Christi, right?” Dr. Fisher asked, for clarification.

“No,” Ian answered, “A Russian mobster hijacked us at gunpoint and pistol-whipped Yev. He made me drive to the clinic—held a gun on Yev and threatened to kill him.”

Dr. Fisher continued, asking Ian to describe his surroundings and the people who were there. Ian detailed the beatings of both himself and Yev, along with the threats made in conjunction with the interrogation. He also described his forced medical care of Terry.

Tears were rolling down Mickey’s face as he listened to Ian’s painful retelling of the ordeal he and their son had endured. He had a tough time staying in his seat. He wanted, with everything in him, to comfort Ian, to hold him and tell him how sorry he was for all that had happened, but he refrained, not wanting to jeopardize the session.

When they got to the point when Ian had passed out, while attempting to work on Terry, Dr. Fisher tried to determine when or if he woke up, prior to being loaded into the back of the truck, asking, “What do you see?” “Everything is black. I don’t know where I am,” Ian answered. The doctor followed with, “What do you hear?” “I can’t hear anything,” Ian shrugged.

Dr. Fisher shifted gears, “And where is the next place you recall being?” “I don’t...I don’t know. It’s dark and it stinks so bad, I’m getting sick!” Ian stammered, beginning to wretch at this point, obviously reliving the experience in his mind. Dr. Fisher set a garbage can in front of him, just in case, although Ian seemed to be calming down, for the moment.

Dr. Fisher plodded on, “What is the first thing you recall seeing?” “Blinding light. It hurts my eyes!” Ian winced, shielding his eyes, although they were still closed.

Then Ian began speaking spontaneously, as if he were in the situation currently, “I’ll walk! I’ll walk! Please! It hurts!” Dr. Fisher interjected, “What hurts?” Ian shouted, “My whole body! And there are cops being dragged out after me. Oh...they’re...dead...Am I alive!”

“Ian, you’re alive,” Dr. Fisher assured him. “Do you recognize these policemen?”

“One of them,” Ian answered, “McBride...pulled me over...Oh...they are what smells...musta been dead for a while.” “Ian, Who is dragging you?” the doctor questioned. “The Russians...bastards...”

Dr. Fisher acknowledged his response, then proceeded, “Okay, can you see where you are now? What’s happening? “There’s nothing...something over my face...I hear a fire crackling. Are they gonna burn me?” Ian was beginning to panic, then suddenly began to throw up on himself, Jeanine rushing to put an emesis basin under his mouth as Ian moaned in discomfort. Once Dr. Fisher was satisfied that Ian's stomach had settled, he resumed his questioning.

Dr. Fisher inquired, “Ian, do you know what made you sick?” “The smell...burning flesh,” he answered, gagging again, then becoming highly upset, yelling, “No, please! Don’t hurt him anymore!! No! I told you...I don’t know...heard he was dead...Johnny...yeah...I DON'T
KNOW!!...PLEASE!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

“What’s happening, Ian?” Dr. Fisher asked, trying to remain unemotional, despite the fact that Ian’s entire case was starting to get to him on a personal level.

Ian kept repeating, ‘I don’t know’, then, “Stop!” in a pleading tone of voice, his breathing ragged, his face filled with pain and fear, for the better part of fifteen minutes, during which time, he didn’t respond to any of Dr. Fisher’s questions.

Then, all of a sudden, he let out a blood-curdling scream that went right through Mickey, instantly bringing him to tears again. Ian was sweating profusely, breathing heavily and screaming at the top of his lungs for what seemed like forever to Mickey, who sat in his chair sobbing uncontrollably, his fists clenched, his eyes suspended in a fixed, dead stare.

When Ian finally quieted down, Dr. Fisher asked, “What just happened Ian?”

Ian began his lengthy reply, gasping for air, “I can’t breathe...Whatever’s on my head is suffocating me. They...they...strip me naked...ask me again about Marco. I didn’t tell...they yell, demanding an answer. I scream ‘I don’t know!’ as they burn me...it felt like...hot pins...singeing me...all over...Then the air rushes in, and it’s bright...I see one, standing over the fire pit...he’s holding a nightstick in the fire, then he holds it up to my face...glowing red...He asks me again, threatening to burn me with it. I scream, ‘I don’t know!’ He pours gas over my legs and feet...asks me again. ‘I DON’T KNOW!!’”

Ian began to tremble violently as he continued his account of his horrific experience, “He sticks the night stick into the fire, then walks behind me. I feel the heat as he brings it closer to my backside. He continues to question me, burning me every time I don’t answer. I can feel my flesh melting under the stick’s scorching pressure, my mind forcing my body to accept it,” Ian paused, catching his breath.

“He...he reheats the stick each time and threatens to drop it into the gasoline...burn me alive. He burns me at least five times...asks me once more, then heats the stick and... I feel it...searing the sensitive skin between my asscheeks...he wedges it there...I fight the urge to let it fall...I hold it there...though I’m sure they’re gonna kill me somehow... it’s burning the fuck outta me...but I know if I let it fall, I’m gonna go up in flames. The longer I hold it, the more intense the burn, ripping through me like nothing I’ve ever felt before...I think of Yev, and I hold it there...I taste blood...must have bitten through my lip,” Ian concluded, falling silent.

“And then what?” the doctor prodded. “I...I don’t know...I see black, nothing, then hear Yev’s voice. He sounds okay. He says he loves me. He tells Mickey to go with me,” Ian said with a weak smile, the first of the session.

“And do you know where you are, at this point?” Dr. Fisher asked. “Mickey’s with me. Says we’re going to New York,” he answered, a peaceful calm coming over his entire body as he sank into the couch, completely exhausted, yet somehow seeming to be at least temporarily free of the tortured experience he had just shared.

“Can I go home now?” Ian asked, Dr. Fisher choosing to bring the session to a close at this point, giving Ian the following instructions, “Ian, I’m going to count to three, then you will open your eyes, retaining a memory of all that we discussed today, but understanding that this entire experience is in the past, that you are safe, and that you are not responsible for anything that happened to you while you were held captive. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” Ian answered. “One...Two...Three,” Dr. Fisher counted, after which Ian opened his eyes.
“Oh, what did I…” Ian began, looking down at his shirt, which was soiled with vomit. “I got it,” Mickey responded, approaching Ian with a handful of Kleenex. “Why don’t I just get him a clean set of scrubs?” Jeanine asked kindly, offering Ian a cup of water and a mint.

“Thank you,” Mickey responded, acknowledging her helpfulness as she turned for the door. “Ian, I think your session was extremely productive,” Dr. Fisher began. “We have quite a bit to work through, but at least we have an idea of what happened, and just as important, what didn’t happen. Ian, you have been brutally tortured, both physically and emotionally. It will take a good bit of time and therapy to help you deal with this, but it can be done.”

“I think I’ll be fine, now that I remember,” Ian argued. “Yes, well, the fact that you were not sexually assaulted is a plus, but the level of torture you endured was harsh enough to produce severe PTSD, which will definitely have an impact on your life, one that must be addressed, and that we can minimize through therapy,” Dr. Fisher explained. “I’m going to go get your prescriptions. I’ll be right back,” he said, excusing himself.

Mickey got up from his chair, sitting down next to Ian, then turning to look him in the face, “Look at me,” he commanded, lifting Ian’s chin and making eye contact, “I want you… and I want you well…to enjoy life with…to raise our kids with…to fuckin’ be with…forever…” Mickey said softly, then pulled Ian in to kiss him. “Mickey…” he mumbled uncomfortably, “They’re gonna come back.”

“I don’t fuckin’ care. I coulda lost your ass… and then I’d never be able to kiss ya… so I’m gonna do it… whenever I want… I don’t give a fuck who’s watchin’! Let ‘em see that I fuckin’ love you! So fuckin’ what?” Mickey snorted, enveloping Ian’s lips in an even hotter kiss than the first, Ian giving in this time, returning it hungrily.

“And now that I know no one’s been where only I should be, I’m takin’ your ass to our hotel suite ASAP,” Mickey began, interspersing his thoughts with his desperately sensual kisses, “… and we’re gonna do… anything ya want… slow, if that’s how ya want it… or not… I’ll do it however you say… or we could just eat ice cream in bed… but I want you with me… want ya so fuckin’ bad, “Mickey breathed into Ian’s mouth, taking Ian’s hand and putting it in his lap.

Ian smiled at the feel of Mickey’s erection, poking the palm of his hand as Mickey arched up to meet it. “You know I’ve been wantin’ to get outta here all day!” Ian grinned, beginning to rub Mickey slowly, Mickey grinding upward to increase the friction. “Ian…” Mickey hissed, squeezing his eyes shut, his smile, among other things, growing by the second.
Dr. Fisher handed Ian his prescriptions, then scheduled another appointment for the next day, explaining that he had decided against cutting his lithium dose, and to table introducing any new medication, until the remaining portion of his spleen began to function more normally. Additionally, the lithium could possibly raise his white blood count, which was currently low, because of the spleen rupture.

So, despite Dr. Fisher having carefully designed a state-of-the art treatment plan, he was opting, given Ian’s circumstances, to stay the course with his medication protocol, focusing instead on his physical and psychological healing, first and foremost.

His psychological treatment, the doctor explained, would involve continued hypnosis sessions, combined with EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) to treat his PTSD, the practice also being helpful in combating bipolar depression.

The final part of his plan for Ian was to send him to the hotel to relax in more of a home-like setting, and to spend time with Mickey, which was obviously at the top of both of their lists, based on the behavior he had witnessed, upon re-entering the room.

Mickey smiled brightly at hearing that Ian would be able to leave, shaking the bag of pill bottles, promising, ‘He’ll take ‘em. I’ll make sure!’ He was scarcely listening to the incision and burn care instructions, or Dr. Fisher’s admonition about staying hydrated, he had instantly become so excited at the thought of Ian and he being alone together, with Ian seeming, in his mind, to be ‘fine’. Fortunately, Ian was listening, and Dr. Fisher had also printed the instructions and stuffed them into the medication bag.

Jeanine reappeared with a change of scrubs for Ian, which he promptly excused himself to put on. “Let me help ya,” Mickey called after him, mouthing the words, ‘thank you’ to Jeanine as he followed Ian into the restroom. Dr. Fisher smiled, realizing that Ian would be in good hands. What Mickey didn’t understand medically, Ian could work through, and no one was going to be more attentive to Ian’s needs than Mickey. That much was very clear.

Mickey could hardly contain his excitement as he packed up all of Ian’s belongings from the hospital room. He called an Uber and helped Ian to the entrance of the new wing, their suitcase in one hand, Ian wrapped into his other arm. It had been a harrowing day for Ian, and a rough one for Mickey as well. Mickey could not wait to get to the suite and relax.

Then it hit him, all at once, that they would likely be staying in the same suite they had occupied the weekend prior to their incarceration. While they had made the best of it, fucking like rabbits, he wondered what kind of memories it might conjure up for Ian. He thought, briefly, about calling the hotel to make a change but then decided to ask Ian about it first.

“Hey,” he said softly as they stood in front of the hospital, awaiting their Uber, “How you feel about stayin’ in the same suite we had before at the Soho?” “Nice place,” Ian responded absently, as if the question held no significance to him. “Okay,” Mickey responded, tightening his grip on Ian’s waist in anticipation.

Mickey helped Ian into the car, encouraging him to lean against him, so as not to put too much pressure on his incision, and in no time, they were pulling up to the front of the Soho. “Just like I remembered,” Ian smiled as they walked into the lobby, Mickey’s efforts in supporting Ian, while also carrying the heavy suitcase, beginning to take their toll.
Mickey was happy to set the suitcase down while he checked them in, stealing admiring glances at Ian throughout the whole process. Sure enough, they had been booked to stay in the Penthouse Suite, and Mickey did catch Ian smiling when the concierge told them. Mickey was relieved to know that Ian had positive memories of their last stay, and began to recall some himself.

He recalled that he had decided to punish Ian for boarding the plane and risking his freedom to go to New York with him, and also remembered how aroused Ian had been throughout the entire punishment, as well as the hot sex they’d had afterward, Ian requesting he be the bottom. Mickey sprouted an instant woody, just thinking about it, although he knew both of those activities were off the menu indefinitely. Still, recalling the level of trust and intimacy that those behaviors required strengthened his belief that they would overcome this most recent ordeal, becoming even closer, if that were possible.

Upon entering, Mickey’s brain was flooded with memories. He and Ian had fucked each other in bed, in the tub, on the couch, over the kitchen island, and on the floor. It had been the weekend of their wedding, and they also knew that Mickey, and probably Ian, too, was going to jail, so it had been a no-holds-barred fuckfest.

Mickey eased Ian onto the couch, watching as Ian’s eyes bounced around to all of the places they had been, a slight grin playing at his lips. Mickey headed immediately for the kitchen area, grabbing himself a beer and offering one to Ian. “Thanks, man!” Ian exclaimed brightly, adding, “And I’m getting a fucking shower!” “Okay if we relax a little first?” Mickey asked, sitting down next to Ian. “Yeah, I got it though,” Ian responded, Mickey shaking his head, “No fuckin’ way! Finally got your ass outta the hospital bed! Not a chance I’m lettin’ ya go back!”

The two sat quietly, drinking their beer, Mickey’s phone breaking the easy, natural lull in their activity and conversation. “Sup?,” Mickey answered, seeing that it was Manuel on the other end. “Hey, I don’t know what’s going on there, but Reesie is really sick, so Brach asked if you might be able to cover for him at Surfin’. It would involve limited modeling and….” Mickey cut him off, before he could finish his sentence, “Nope! I gotta take care of Ian. He literally just got outta the fuckin’ hospital, for Christ’s sake!” Mickey barked indignantly.

“Well, can you at least do a conference call?” Manuel pleaded, “...and the only other male model we have going is Justin, so we really need…” Mickey interrupted Manuel again, “How ‘bout Shawn? He’s here with nothin’ to do.” “Great! Then he can stay with Ian while you go,” Manuel reasoned.

“What part of ‘no’ didn’t you understand!?” Mickey yelled, really beginning to lose his cool at this point. “Shawn’s hot as fuck and walks like a goddamn model already! He’ll be perfect! Send me the ‘when and where’, and I’ll make sure he’s there...And get me the time of the fuckin’ conference call, so I ain’t busy when they call...I’m goin’ to the hospital tomorrow afternoon at 2:30, so don’t even bother, if it’s at 2 or later!” Mickey blasted Manuel, then ended the call.

“Damn, Mickey!!” Ian yelled. “Think I went a little too nuts?” Mickey asked with a smirk. “Not really, but I never knew you thought Shawn was hot,” Ian replied, chuckling. “Why? You don’t!” Mickey asked. “Oh, hell yeah!!” Ian answered, without batting an eye, “Especially when he’s eyeing you up.” “What the fuck, Ian?!” Mickey protested. “Yeah, just one more person in love with MY husband!” Ian kept going, Mickey starting to bristle. “...the fuck’s that s’posed ta mean?”

“Oh Mickey, come the fuck on! Don’t act like you don’t know how damn irresistible you are,” Ian mused, ogling Mickey’s profile, then following his chin down to his luscious, heaven-scented neck, until he couldn’t help but lean over and suck on it, which he did quite gingerly, so as not to chance opening his incision up.

“Fuck!” Mickey moaned, so completely overwhelmed by the sensation of Ian’s mouth on his skin,
he feared he might just spontaneously cum in his pants. This was the longest he’d been celibate in recent history, the last comparable situation having been back when they were both incarcerated, most of which time he had been deathly ill, so this had been, by far, the most uncomfortable span of time for him in quite a while.

Mickey sat passively, reveling in Ian’s attentions as his hand caressed his cheek, then slowly made its way down his chest, stopping just shy of the button on his jeans, Ian’s nose buried in Mickey’s neck as he inhaled him, while simultaneously licking, biting and sucking at it ravenously. Mickey squirmed in desperation as Ian’s thumb and fingers worked to unbutton and unzip his jeans.

Mickey, not wanting to push Ian at all, refrained from tackling him to the couch the way he was most certainly dying to do. “Mick, take ‘em the fuck off!” Ian finally hissed in frustration. Mickey didn’t need to be told twice, literally jumping to comply, stripping his jeans off in seconds flat. Normally, he would have followed up with the hasty removal of Ian’s pants, but Mickey didn’t want to chance hurting Ian and ruining the mood, so he held back, his now fully-exposed manhood standing at attention flawlessly, so ridiculously enticing that Ian could scarcely resist lowering his head onto it immediately.

“Mickey,” Ian breathed longingly, “Stand up!” Mickey stood instantaneously, Ian turning Mickey’s body so his beautifully rock-hard cock was right in his face, then reaching between Mickey’s legs with his right hand to gently massage his balls, while he used his left to pull Mickey in to him by the hip. The first caress of Ian’s velvety full lips on Mickey’s swollen cock sent shivers up Mickey’s spine, Mickey again feeling as if he might explode at any moment. And by the enraptured sounds rising from deep in Ian’s throat, he seemed to be enjoying it equally, his own painfully erect rod throbbing with desire. “I should be…” Mickey began, genuinely feeling guilty that Ian was sucking HIM off, and not the other way around, after all that Ian had been through. “Shhhh…” Ian whispered, after removing Mickey’s dick from his mouth long enough to speak, “This is what I want.” Ian cupped Mickey’s gloriously round asscheeks in his hands as he continued to maneuver his capable mouth over Mickey’s well-formed, ample cock, as if it were made out of candy.

Mickey wanted more than anything to please Ian, but hearing him say he wanted this made it a bit easier for Mickey to relax and enjoy himself. He closed his eyes, letting out a sigh of pleasure and relief, but couldn’t keep them shut, the view from above being far too breathtaking. Mickey watched as Ian slid his mouth over him, sucking hard around the tip intermittently, before deepthroating his entire length, like a pro. Mickey moaned his name so loudly, Ian was glad they were in the penthouse. Otherwise, he would most definitely have been overheard.

As Ian felt Mickey getting closer and closer to climax, he slipped his index and middle fingers into his mouth, sucking on them briefly to lubricate them, before beginning to play with Mickey’s asshole, all the while continuing to expertly suck him off.

“Oh fuck! Oh fuck! Oh fuck!” Mickey bellowed, as Ian began fucking his asshole with his fingers, while he sucked fervently at the tip of Mickey’s now twitching tool. Ian drove his fingers in with increasing force, rocking Mickey’s prostate every time, Mickey at the point of nearly screaming, “Ian! Fuck! Ian...Ian...Ian!” as Ian took him deep into his throat again. Mickey came so hard, he nearly fell over, fighting himself not to pull at Ian’s hair, like he normally would.

“I gotta fuckin’ sit,” Mickey panted, using his shirt to wipe himself dry, then offering Ian his nearly empty beer. “I’ll get ya another one in a minute,” he promised as his breathing began to slow, his legs still shaking, his head still reeling from such an intense orgasm. “I’m fine,” Ian responded, “Missed that taste so much!” Ian smiled over at MIckey, a devilish look in his eye.
After a few minutes, Mickey got up to get two more beers, returning to the couch, having resolved to just ask Ian, “Can I...uh...do you want me to...” Mickey struggled to find the right words, but Ian made it easy. “Yes, please,” he purred. Mickey smiled, bigger than life, absolutely thrilled at his good fortune of getting this opportunity so soon. “You wanna go lay on the bed?” he asked. “Want a shower,” Ian replied. “Okay,” Mickey began, “but you better fuckin’ hold on to somethin’!”

“Oh yeah? Is that right?” Ian teased, as Mickey helped him up from the couch, guiding him to the bathroom. “Mickey, I can’t get this wet,” he suddenly exclaimed, pointing at his incision as he struggled to pull the top half of the scrubs he was wearing, over his head. “Lemme hlep,” Mickey insisted, removing the shirt the rest of the way, then checking to be sure the tape was secure on his dressing.

“And can I...can I also help with these?” he asked, tugging gently at the drawstring on his scrub bottoms. “Sure,” Ian smiled tentatively, shuddering slightly as the material grazed his thighs on the way to the floor. “It’s okay,” Mickey comforted him, pulling Ian’s naked body to his own, “It’s only me. It’s only me.”

Mickey could feel Ian’s body stiffen, so he backed away, starting the water in the shower. “You want this on the cool side?” he asked, thinking that hot water might aggravate his burns. “Yeah...let’s start with that,” Ian responded.

Once Mickey was satisfied that the water temperature was appropriate for Ian, he eased him into the shower, gradually moving him under the sprinkling water. He had purposely kept the water pressure low, in an added attempt to protect Ian from any discomfort. Ian seemed to be okay, so Mickey tried introducing a bit more water pressure, since he had started with little more than a trickle. “Okay?” he asked, holding Ian’s face between his hands, forcing eye contact, so he could read his true feelings.

Ian nodded, his eyes sparkling sadly. “Can I...?” Mickey asked, reaching for a washcloth to bathe Ian with. Ian looked like he might begin to cry at any moment, but nodded again, silently.

Mickey slowly began to wash him with a light touch, artfully avoiding the worst of the bruises, and leaving his thighs, junk, and ass for last. Ian abruptly grabbed Mickey’s washing hand, stopping Mickey dead in his tracks, just as Mickey had dropped to his knees, approaching Ian’s inner thighs and genitals with the soapy washcloth. “What’s wrong?” Mickey asked, relinquishing the cloth to Ian. “I...I really want you to,“ Ian began, “Just...just not today...”
Private Showing

Ian had put in a fairly restful night, compared with the previous one, a feat he believed himself to have accomplished by taking two of his pain pills, along with a third beer, just before bed. The first thing he noticed, upon waking, was that Mickey had unwrapped himself from his embrace and was, apparently, already up and busy with something. Ian could hear his voice from the bedroom, but was still too groggy to get up to investigate, so he did the next best thing; he texted him, “Come see me when you’re free...and bring me a pain pill.”

Within mere seconds, Mickey appeared in the bedroom doorway, carrying a pill bottle and a glass of water. “You okay?” he asked nervously. “Yeah...I’m good,” Ian replied sleepily, holding up two fingers, then stretching his arms out for him, his heavy, drowsy eyes imploring him to join him. Mickey approached the bed, dropping two pills onto Ian’s tongue, then tilting the glass for him to wash it down.

He then slowly edged himself onto the bed, Ian quickly wrapping his arms around him, hugging Mickey’s body into his own, basically putting him back into the same position in which they had slept. “Mmmm….” Ian hummed into Mickey’s ear as he breathed in his essence, a lazy smile creeping over his face. “I love you, Mickey Milkovich,” he whispered softly into Mickey’s ear, as he nudged Mickey’s left asscheek with his raging hard-on. “Today?” Mickey asked hopefully. Ian nodded, adding, “Sure gonna try.”

Mickey grinned, lying still as Ian continued to press himself against Mickey’s backside, now having added a slight hip thrust that was getting Mickey insanely hard in record time. “Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey muttered, his smile widening with each successive stab. “You feel so…” Mickey muttered, Ian interrupting with a sexy growl, “You don’t know how I feel...but you’re gonna!”

Mickey shivered, goosebumps overtaking his whole body. “Be right back,” Mickey whispered, excusing himself. While Mickey was out of the room, Ian carefully sprayed his thighs and between the cheeks area with lidocaine, spreading some upward from his thighs to his balls, careful to avoid his swollen member. He wanted to feel Mickey, 110%.

Mickey was gone for under a minute, returning with a bottle of canola oil he had found in a kitchen cabinet. “This is gonna hafta do us,” Mickey murmured, setting it on the side table next to the bed. “How do you want me, sir?” Mickey asked subserviently, which only made Ian that much harder. “Been thinking about that for a long time,” Ian replied with an evil grin, “But in a few minutes, I’ll feel good enough that I can leave that up to you!”

“You sure?” Mickey asked with great concern in his voice, “I don’t wanna hurt ya.” “Oh, I’m sure,” Ian answered with a smirk, pulling Mickey on top of him and beginning to stroke his stiff cock with one hand, while he reached for the oil with the other. “I got it!” Mickey insisted, grabbing the oil from Ian’s hand and opening it, setting the cap aside and pouring as much as he could hold into his other hand. He dipped his fingers into it, slowly slathering it onto Ian’s cock, then his own, and finally, he began lubricating, then fingerling his own asshole, all while Ian looked on, completely enrapt. “So fucking sexy for me, Mick,” Ian breathed, pulling Mickey’s face and upper body down to his own and kissing him hard, his mouth licking and sucking at Mickey’s pink, engorged lips desperately, as if Mickey might turn into a pumpkin at any moment. “Fuck, Mick!” he moaned softly as Mickey’s bottom lightly grazed his dick, while he was fondling himself.

Mickey, skillfully manipulating himself into a frenzy as he imagined the feeling of Ian’s cock, rather than his own fingers, sliding into him, started to moan loudly, completely oblivious to the knock at the door to the penthouse, which he had left ajar, expecting Shawn and Iggy to show up for breakfast.
for a discussion about Shawn modeling for Surfin’, and Iggy possibly making an appearance in Mickey’s stead at a meeting there.

Mickey had spent the morning on the phone, attempting to coordinate all of these things in order that he might spend the entire day, uninterrupted, with his husband. He had planned to take him out, if he was up to it, then go with him to his session with Dr. Fisher. After what had happened the night before, this was certainly the last thing he expected to be doing.

And yet, here he was, straddling his husband, fingering himself manically and being kissed, and soon to be fucked, like a goddamn newlywed. “Mickey,” Ian panted between kisses, “are you ready for me?” “Oh fuck yeah!” he breathed, then sucked Ian’s lower lip into his mouth, biting at it playfully.

“Want you NOW!” Ian growled, grasping Mickey roughly by the hips and lowering him aggressively onto his throbbing organ, Mickey’s breath catching in his throat, in response to Ian’s forceful, overzealous entry, which Mickey had been relishing for quite some time, but had taken him by surprise, nonetheless.

“Your incision, is it…” Mickey began to ask. “It’s fine,” Ian assured him, arching his hips up to counter his own manhandling of Mickey as they repeatedly slammed together, Ian burying his massive manhood relentlessly into Mickey’s perpetually taut opening. “Oh fuck!” was the first of many curse words to spew from Mickey’s lips, punctuated by Ian’s rabid kisses and suckerbites, which he planted wantonly over nearly every inch of Mickey’s face and neck, as he continued to fuck the living shit out of him. “You feel...so fucking amazing!” Ian yelled, his own pulse reverberating through his entire body, his face reddening with exertion, his brow furrowing with intensity.

Meanwhile, Shawn, who had arrived first for the breakfast meeting, had let himself in, upon finding the door partially open and getting no response to his knocking. He was concerned that something might have gone wrong, and felt the need to investigate. What he found was quite unexpected, under the circumstances.

As he neared the bedroom, Shawn could hear their fervent grunts, groans, and cries of ecstasy, simultaneously catching sight of Mickey, riding the hell out of Ian, the torrid lovers devouring each other as if they were starving. His first instinct was to turn quietly and head back to his room, but he couldn’t tear his eyes away from what was the most incredibly exquisite display of unbridled passion that he had ever seen in his life.

He took note of the white-hot urgency of their kisses, the intense, yet harmonious noises they made, as well as the gorgeous curve of Mickey’s plump derriere, as it bounced so hungrily on and off of Ian’s impressively immense cock. He marveled at the movement of their flawless physiques, so impeccably in tune, so interwoven, it was as if they were a single, breathtakingly beautiful entity, releasing unmitigated love, lust and carnal energy into the world. And they appeared to be insatiable, the pace and intensity of their lovemaking continuing to increase, along with the volume and frequency of their erotic utterances.

Shawn could feel his own cock pressing tightly against the zipper of his jeans, his jaw hanging open in complete disbelief that ANYONE could fuck like that, but especially Ian, just after a splenectomy and all that he’d endured at the hands of the Russians. “Damn!” he muttered under his breath, reluctantly turning to flee, lest he should be discovered, feeling guilty for having stayed for as long as he did, and also needing to get back to his own room and take care of himself.

As he strode toward the door, he could hear what he was certain was the two insanely-aroused adonises climaxing, of course, together, both moaning, panting and yelling wildly, in what could only be described as divine---complete and total satisfaction.
“Look at me! I wanna see your face when you cum!!” Ian commanded, amid all of the other euphoric gasps, cries and moans that were emanating from both his and Mickey’s lips, as he took Mickey’s painfully erect cock into his hand, massaging it vigorously as he continued to fuck him hard.

Mickey stared down at him lovingly, his blue eyes twinkling brightly, completely captivated by Ian’s incredible beauty and the heavenly feel of their bodies moving in concert, Ian fucking him so right, so perfectly—sending him helplessly over the edge, his body completely overwhelmed with pleasure.

“Just like that, Ian...SO FUCKIN’ GOOD!” Mickey yelled as Ian finished him, tapping his prostate one last time, Mickey’s ass clenching down on him as he screamed Ian’s name, over and over, erupting atop Ian’s fist, Ian immediately exploding up into him in response, like a rocket into outer space. “Mick...I love you...and your sweet ass!” Ian hissed into Mickey’s face, both men covered in sweat, breathing as if they had just run a marathon. ‘Ian, I fuckin’ love you...so much...you don’t even know...’ Mickey panted, utterly spent, his eyes filling with tears in spite of himself, yet using his last ounce of energy to bend down and kiss Ian, before collapsing beside him into a heaving ball of flesh.

Shawn had stopped dead in the doorway, so totally drawn in by the amorous murmurs and moans of Mickey and Ian’s session, that he stood, transfixed, motionless, except for his right hand, which was instinctively rubbing his own chub, without him even realizing it. Once he became conscious of what he was doing to himself, Shawn was so close to jizzing in his pants, that he quickly ran into the main bathroom of the penthouse, finishing himself off to the sounds of Mickey and Ian’s orgasms, quickly bringing himself to climax with ease, then cleaning himself up and returning to the front door area, where he again knocked in an attempt to get their attention.

“Shawn? Iggy? That you?” Mickey called out from the bedroom, Ian shooting him a puzzled look. “It’s me,” Shawn replied weakly, feeling ashamed at having pleasured himself to what should have been their private encounter. “I’ll be right out!” Mickey responded, then turning to Ian to explain what his plans for the morning had been, prior to what turned out to be their impromptu romp.

Ian smiled after Mickey’s explanation, the idea of Mickey putting him in front of all else speaking volumes as to the affection Mickey felt for him. Not that Ian didn’t already know how much Mickey loved him, despite what Mickey might say, but hearing something like this just brought it to light with such authenticity; Ian knew his importance—and he loved it. And adored Mickey for all he had done and continued to do for him, ever since this terrible nightmare had ensued.

As Mickey dragged his exhausted frame out of bed, dressing and heading for the kitchen, Ian piped up, “Mind if I stay in bed a while? I’m kinda tired,” a sheepish grin overtaking his face. “Nope, s’where ya should be. Restin’ up for round two,” Mickey smirked as he walked into the kitchen, turning to see Shawn standing in front of him. “Hey,” he mumbled, reaching for the coffee pot to pour himself a much-needed second cup of coffee, “Want some?”

‘A loaded question,’ Shawn thought to himself, before answering, “Sure! Thanks!” with a smile. “Where the fuck’s Iggy?” Mickey asked, annoyed with the idea of having to give his spiel twice. “I don’t know. I can call...” Shawn began. “So can I,” Mickey quickly interrupted, reaching for his phone to call Iggy.

Just then, Iggy slunk in, looking like yesterday’s breakfast, his jeans unzipped and wrinkled, like he’d slept in them, sporting a severe case of bed head, his breath stinking of booze. “Late night?” Shawn asked in a smart-assed tone of voice. “What the FUCK!?” Mickey yelled, “Forget it! Just go the fuck back to your room and sleep it off.” Iggy turned for the door, staggering out into the hallway, Mickey slamming the door behind him.
“Okay, listen,” Mickey began, sitting at the island, sipping his coffee, “I need you to do something for the business today, and it’s a little outside your area of expertise, although Ian and I think you’re a natural.” Shawn, feeling himself blushing, averted his eyes, then answered timidly, “Sure, what’s up?”, trying to sound casual, as if he hadn’t just watched and listened to Mickey and Ian fucking each other’s brains out, then jerked his cock in their bathroom.

Mickey went on to explain that he wanted him to do some surf modeling, and to possibly sit in on a meeting, since Iggy obviously wasn’t going to be able to go. He did say he might be available for the meeting himself, over the phone, depending on when it actually happened, but his top priority was to be with Ian for his hypnosis session. Finally, he shared that there would be another male model there, Justin, who could give him a crash course of modeling, just as Brach had done for him.

Shawn snickered at the notion of Mickey modeling. He just couldn’t see a badass like Mickey doing that, although he had to admit to himself, he WAS taken aback a bit, at first blush, seeing Mickey as the bottom that morning, although he assumed it might have been because Ian’s injuries would likely make it next to impossible for him to take it up the ass.

“So! Fine! Justin, huh?” Shawn responded, again making an awkward attempt at nonchalance. “Yeah, Justin,” Mickey sighed. “We’re cool now, but the dude nearly died the first time I met him. He had the fuckin’ balls to hit on Ian, and I caught him in the act!” Mickey commented, a disgusted look on his face.

“So, what happened?” Shawn couldn’t help but ask. “I walk into the place I reserved for us in Costa Rica. Ian’s nearly passed out drunk on the bed, and there are three half-naked models there, one of which is fuckin’ Justin, sitting on the bed next to Ian, tryin’ to fuck with him.”

“So, what did you do?” Shawn asked curiously. “So I flipped the fuck out, grabbed him and threw him across the room,” Mickey answered, starting to get pissed off all over again. “Wow, so you still employ this douche, after he hit on your husband?” Shawn asked incredulously.

“Yeah, it was all a big misunderstanding,” Ian interjected, as he sauntered into the kitchen, wearing nothing but a pair of boxer briefs, looking sexy as fuck, even with the bruises. “Really,” Shawn expressed doubtfully, as he eyed Ian, up and down. “Yeah,” Ian continued, “I wasn’t wearing my ring…” “It’s a long story…one I don’t feel like hearin’ right now,” Mickey barked, “so here’s the address.” Mickey texted the address to Shawn, then turned to start breakfast.

“Eggs and bacon okay?” Mickey asked, changing the subject as he searched the refrigerator to see what was in stock. “Yep,” Ian answered happily, clearly still enjoying the afterglow of their session, and probably his pain meds as well. Shawn nodded his agreement, offering to help with the cooking. “Knock yourself out, man,” Mickey responded, shoving the eggs at him, then continuing to prep the bacon for the microwave. Once he finished, he turned toward the island, where Ian half-stood, leaning against his stool, which was about the most comfortable sitting position he could muster on a seat like that.

“Let’s get ya over to the couch,” Mickey suggested, wrapping his arm around Ian’s bare waist, the silky feel of Ian’s skin under his fingertips setting him afire all over again. He gently traced the contour of Ian’s side, from his ribs to his hip, with his index finger, just to torture himself. Mickey just couldn’t get enough of Ian, no matter how much time he spent with him. He figured he never would, after nearly losing him forever.

Mickey eased Ian onto the couch, leaning him backward into the corner to afford him the most advantageous position for his condition, then straddling him again and lowering his face to brush his lips against Ian’s. Although they barely touched, Mickey’s lips quivered with electric excitement, the mere thought of abandoning Ian for the kitchen, or anything else, for that matter, tearing at him on
the most primal level.

He literally could not bring himself to leave Ian, choosing instead to resume the kiss, slowly finessing his tongue between Ian’s invitingly parted lips, the kiss deepening and intensifying until Ian was rocking his hips up against Mickey’s ass, their passion growing, the two dry-humping like two horny teenagers. “Want some more,” Mickey breathed into Ian’s sexy mouth, Ian moaning, “Mmmm Hmmmm,” as he struggled to remove Mickey’s jeans.

“Ahem,” Shawn cleared his throat, Ian and Mickey both turning to see him standing over them with two plates, filled with eggs and bacon. “Breakfast is served,” he announced dramatically, setting their plates on the coffee table. The husbands scrambled to adjust themselves and regain their composure as Shawn looked on, trying, without success, not to stare at their substantial, bulging packages.

As the three sat on the couch, eating, Shawn reflected on all that he’d seen that morning. He had always known that Ian and Mickey were deeply in love, but after witnessing their intensely impassioned love-making, the way they always took care of each other in times of sickness, and how hopelessly impossible it was for them to keep their hands off each other, he was certain they were soulmates, and he wanted what they had, more than anything in the world.
You ARE My Life

Mickey, Ian and Shawn ended up sharing an Uber, once Ian pointed out that the Surfin’ USA fashion show was being held literally minutes from the hospital. Shawn, who was still feeling nervous and uncomfortable after what he had secretly witnessed, not to mention his upcoming stint as a surf model, was very talkative, asking a bunch of questions, first about how Ian was feeling, pertaining to his surgery, his donor site, and his injuries, then about modeling, so he managed to keep Ian talking and answering his questions throughout the entire trip. Shawn was genuinely perplexed as to how on earth Ian could perform the way he had, in his current condition.

Shawn tried his best to focus on what Ian was saying, rather than envisioning Mickey riding him, but he just couldn’t ‘unsee’ it, the replay in his mind getting him hard, as he watched Ian’s lips move. He imagined what they would look like encircling Mickey’s beautiful cock. He was so embarrassed, but turned on at the same time. He’d never witnessed anyone actually having sex, up close and personal, although he’d watched his share of gay porn, beginning during his teen years, like most young gays, as a means of learning what to do, and, of course, to spank his monkey to.

He told himself that he shouldn’t feel weird about an accidental invasion of their privacy, that no one would ever know, and that he’d be best off if he forgot about it himself. The trouble was, it was pretty damn unforgettable, which was exactly Mickey’s thought as he replayed it in his mind throughout the entire trip, as he listened to his lover’s voice, watched the expressions on his face change, breathed in his scent, thanked his lucky stars to have him back, and promised himself he would NEVER take him for granted again, as long as he lived.

The Uber stopped at Chic Loft first, where Justin stood outside, awaiting Shawn’s arrival, Mickey having asked that he be escorted and made to feel at ease, probably because of his memory of his own nerve-wracking ordeal, having been called upon to model with no previous experience or even remote desire to do so. “Okay, that’s him---Justin---he’ll help ya out,” Mickey said to Shawn, noticing, right away, both that Justin had grown his hair long, and had built up his pecs, fully embracing the surfer vibe, which had pretty much made him the most frequently used, not to mention ‘hottest’, model for both Sutfin’ USA and Ojos Azules. Brach always raved about his work, and, since he had basically taken over responsibility for that part of the business, Justin was constantly working for them.

“Wow!” Shawn said under his breath, Mickey immediately reacting. “Okay, Okay...get outta the fuckin’ car!” Mickey snapped. Shawn hopped out, turning back to give Mickey a puzzled look, but then scampering on in Justin’s direction enthusiastically. “Damn, Mickey! Chill!” Ian chided him, “The guy’s doin’ us a favor!” “I know, it’s just...” Mickey trailed off, counting to ten in his head in an earnest attempt to calm himself, before he said or did something stupid.

While Mickey certainly understood Justin’s motivation for hitting on Ian, back in Costa Rica, since he was, after all, drop-dead gorgeous, and wasn’t wearing his wedding band, that didn’t prevent the twinge of jealousy and anger Mickey still felt every time he saw the guy. “Mickey,” Ian spoke in a soft, soothing voice, “You know...” he began, sliding over toward Mickey and putting his mouth up to his ear, “...that I only want you,” he breathed huskily, Mickey abruptly turning his head, enveloping Ian’s mouth in his own, making love to Ian’s face with his lush lips, his tongue darting about Ian’s lips wildly, encircling Ian’s, then trailing down Ian’s neck, devouring it ravenously. Ian moaned softly, recapturing Mickey’s lips with his own, then reciprocating his passion as he made his way down to the most sensitive spot on Mickey’s neck, sucking at it and swirling his tongue over it in alternation, as he reached between Mickey’s legs to fondle his impressive, denim-wrapped package.
“You know your appointment’s in ten minutes, right?” Mickey gasped, trying desperately to maintain control over himself, despite Ian’s wickedly arousing onslaught. “Yessss,” Ian hissed into Mickey’s ear, as he continued to rub his bulging cock over top of his jeans. “Just wanna make sure you don’t forget about me while I’m in there,” Ian purred teasingly.

Mickey suddenly sat straight up in the backseat, completely taken by surprise. “What? I’m goin’ in with ya, right?!” Mickey asked defensively. “Actually, I think I’m okay by myself today,” Ian replied, equally astonished by Mickey’s sudden about-face, amid what Ian knew damn well was as hot for Mickey as it was for himself. “Thought you might wanna go check on Shawn at the show,” Ian added innocently. “No! I came to be with you!” Mickey snarled, “But if you don’t want me there…”

“Mick...you know I always want you with me,” Ian began, nuzzling Mickey’s cheek with his nose, “I just feel like I’ve been monopolizing your time. I want you to have room to be ‘you’, to live your life, to run the business, do conference calls, go to meetings...all the regular shit I’ve been keeping you from doing,” Ian sighed, running his fingers through Mickey’s hair affectionately, as he stared into Mickey’s blazing blue eyes. “I want you to love me, not pity me...like some wounded animal…” Ian mumbled under his breath, suddenly averting Mickey’s eyes, this conversation obviously triggering something inside him.

“Ian,” Mickey said earnestly, tilting Ian’s chin up with his hand to re-establish eye contact, “You ARE my life! More important than any meeting, conference call, or...or the whole fuckin’ business. I LOVE you! How can you not fuckin’ know that? And I’ll tell ya right now, if this appointment wasn’t so damn important, we’d be on our way...back to the fuckin’ hotel...RIGHT THE FUCK NOW...so I could show you just how fuckin’ much I love you!”

“You know this don’t come from pity,” he growled, repositioning Ian’s hand on his still swollen, pent-up package and arching upward to increase friction. “Hospital’s up here on the right,” the Uber driver informed awkwardly, having pretty well surmised what had been happening in the back of his car, after overhearing a good portion of their pillow talk.

Mickey adjusted himself in preparation for vacating the vehicle, as it came to a stop in front of the new hospital wing. “Thank you,” Ian said with a bright red blush to his face, as Mickey handed the driver a fat tip on their way out of the car.

Mickey grasped Ian at his waist, as had become his habit, ever since Ian had undergone the splenectomy. Ian didn’t mind it one bit, enjoying the attention of his mate even more, now that Mickey had reassured him that he was not a burden or tiresome obligation to him. The fact was, nothing could be further from the truth. Mickey wanted so badly to be with Ian through everything, to be sure he was getting the care he deserved, and to be a comfort to him if and when things became difficult. To Mickey, this was both as important, and as natural as taking his next breath. He couldn’t even imagine wanting to be anywhere else, doing anything else.

Dr. Fisher welcomed them into the same small room they had occupied the day before, noticing immediately that Ian seemed more at ease. In fact, he seemed downright happy. Mickey helped Ian get comfortably situated on the couch, seating himself as close as possible to him, so he could hold his hand for the beginning, just like the last time.

The purpose behind the EMDR Therapy was not for Ian to merely remember his traumatic experience, but to process it differently, to in effect, desensitize himself to it, once he uncovered the aspects of it that had been most terrifying and traumatic, as well as the reasons why. Dr. Fisher explained that Ian would identify one particular incident during each session, hopefully beginning with whatever was bothering him the most, Once he identified the event and how it made him feel,
he would go back to the actual experience in his mind, using the EMDR techniques to see the experience in a different, more innocuous light, the goal being for him to recall it in this new, less threatening way, the next time it came to mind outside of a session.

Before beginning, Dr. Fisher asked Ian and Mickey if they were both comfortable with Mickey being in the room for the entire session, acknowledging that some of the experiences Ian would likely have in the session could be quite unpleasant. Both agreed that Mickey should stay, reiterating his desire to be there for Ian through every minute of his suffering, so he could understand what he was dealing with, and better help him live with it.

Mickey held Ian’s hand as Dr. Fisher slowly put him into a hypnotic state, just as he had before, then moved across the room while Dr. Fisher gave Ian the necessary commands in order to begin the EMDR session. Ian quickly identified the placement of the burning stick between his buttocks as the most traumatic event he had endured. As Ian relived the experience for a second time through hypnosis, Mickey was, once more, reduced to tears, Ian’s screams ripping through him like a bull’s horns through a matador’s flesh. At one point, early on, Dr. Fisher had been able to dissuade Mickey nonverbally from returning to the couch to consol Ian, Mickey sitting back in his chair upon seeing Dr. Fisher’s, ‘What the hell are you doing?’ look.

As Ian worked through his feelings during this part of his ordeal, it became clear that he had not been violated sexually with the stick, but his extreme fear that he would be, was what caused the terror of the experience for him. He was able to verbalize what he had been thinking at the time, which was, if he were to be sodomized with the stick, or raped, even, he would somehow be rendered ‘broken’—no longer worthy of Mickey’s love, respect and companionship. It was as if he held himself accountable for anything and everything that was, and could have been done to him, as if he had control over it, had somehow chosen it, or had given them permission to do it. At one point, Ian began to sob uncontrollably, calling Mickey’s name plaintively, begging to see him, just once more.

“That’s it!” Mickey yelled, leaping up from his chair and hurling himself at the couch. “Ian!! Ian!! I’m here!! I love you!!’ he professed tearfully as he took Ian into his arms, despite Dr. Fisher’s protests. “Okay...Okay... we will have to pick this up tomorrow...Please let me close the session. Hopefully he will remember and have gotten something out of today,” Dr. Fisher said in an exasperated tone, just before he counted Ian out of the session, giving him the same spiel about remembering what he had said, once he was awake.

As Ian opened his tear-soaked green eyes, they met Mickey’s equally wet and bloodshot blue ones. “Jesus Christ, Ian...I’m so fuckin’ sorry!” Mickey cried as he held his husband tightly against his body, both men weeping sorrowfully. “No one and nothin’... would ever make me stop lovin’ ya...you’ll always be... more than I fuckin’ deserve...Please don’t fuckin’ worry about that...ever,” Mickey whimpered in short, truncated phrases.

“Doc,” Mickey began, turning briefly toward Dr. Fisher, “Sorry I fucked it all up today...but can I...please...take him back to the hotel? He needs me,” Mickey finished, appealing to Dr. Fisher’s sense of compassion. “Of course,” Dr. Fisher answered, “But I want you two to seriously consider Ian coming to tomorrow’s session alone. Mickey, I know you love him and want to protect him. And while that is admirable, he needs this therapy,” Dr. Fisher contended, “And I don’t think you can withstand all that he has to do, without intervening, which, unfortunately, is counterproductive. Understand?”

Mickey nodded his head, indicating that he did understand. “Before you go,” Dr. Fisher called out to them, as they approached the door, “Ian, I need you to have some blood-work done,” he continued, tapping the lab chit into his phone. The signs for the lab are posted. Do you mind heading down, while I talk with Mickey for a moment?” Dr. Fisher looked to both Ian and Mickey for their
“Sure,” Ian answered, Mickey nodding reluctantly.

As soon as Ian was out the door, Dr. Fisher began speaking, “Mickey, Ian needs you to allow him to continue this treatment. And you need to encourage him. It’s not easy, but it can improve his quality of life immeasurably. One thing you can do to help is, when he wakes up screaming or crying after a nightmare—and he will—comfort him, just the way you did here today. Ian hearing that he did nothing wrong, and that you will not turn your back on him because of anything anyone may have done to him is incredibly valuable to his recovery. Your unconditional love means so much. “Doc, I’d a done that anyway,” Mickey replied, heading for the door, then down the hall toward the lab, where Ian was just finishing up, by the time Mickey arrived.

“All set!” the phlebotomist said with a smile. “C’mon, Ian. Let’s go,” Mickey mumbled, helping him to his feet, then wrapping his arm around his waist. “I got ya. And I’m not goin’ anywhere.”
Taking Control

“I need to talk to Yev!” Ian blurted out, after a nearly silent trip back to the hotel from the hospital. Ian was unusually quiet, feeling a bit out of sorts after the abrupt end to his appointment. His memory of what had taken place during the session was strangely cloudy, with events that occurred in the office, such as Mickey approaching him to console him, interspersed with those he was reliving. He knew Mickey hadn’t come to rescue him amid the torture with the burning stick, but somehow, when he thought about it now, it was as if he had been there. He just couldn’t seem to reconcile it in his mind. It did feel somehow less responsible for his own torture, although he didn’t think he could put it into words.

Mickey, not knowing the reason behind Ian’s silence, wondered if he might be upset with him for intervening during the session, but was afraid to broach the subject, in case he was wrong and Ian had been able to put the terrifying experience out of his mind, at least temporarily. Now that Ian had suddenly expressed a need to speak with Yev, Mickey was pretty sure there was another reason for his silence, but he had no idea what it was.

“Okay…” Mickey responded with uncertainty as to where he should go from there. “Whatcha thinkin’?” he continued warily, hoping his question was innocuous enough that it wouldn’t cause Ian to be upset or angry. “Need him to know that everything they did to him wasn’t his fault,” Ian replied, his eyes filling with tears. “Alright. We’ll call as soon as we get upstairs,” Mickey responded, helping Ian out of the car and holding him by the waist.

By the time they reached the penthouse, Ian was leaning against the wall of the elevator, his body limp with exhaustion. “You okay?” Mickey asked as he helped Ian to stand and walk out of the elevator. “Can you just help me to the bed...and grab me a couple pain pills? Ian groaned softly. “Yeah, sure,” Mickey answered, his heart sinking as he caught sight of the pained expression on Ian’s face as he eased him back onto the bed, propping him with a few pillows. Ian winced as he struggled to get himself into a comfortable position, as best he could.

Mickey ran for the pills, noticing that there were only a few left. “Holy fuck, Ian! How many a these did ya take already?” Mickey yelled, alarmed by the discovery. “Mick...I take them when I need them. And right now...I need them!!” Ian spat through gritted teeth, his volume escalating toward the end. “Alright, alright!” Mickey responded, pouring two pills out onto Ian’s outstretched hand. “I’ll grab you some....” Mickey paused as he watched Ian down the pills without even a sip of water. “...water,” he finished slowly. “Thanks,” Ian murmured, closing his eyes and sighing deeply.

When Mickey got back to the room with the water, he asked, “So ya wanna call Yev now?” “Just...just gimme a minute…” Ian sighed, his eyes still closed, his brow furrowed in distress. “Anything I can do?” Mickey wondered out loud. Ian shook his head subtly, Mickey grasping his hand and bringing it to his lips. “Sorry if I fucked up your session today,” he finally acknowledged, uncertain as to how Ian might react. “It’s okay…” Ian breathed, still obviously in agony. “I was damn glad you were there,” he admitted, “In fact, now when I remember it, it’s almost like you were there. It feels...safer now. I mean, I can still feel the pain...like it’s happening now, but...it’s like I know you’re somehow...I don’t know...It’s hard to explain,” Ian spoke haltingly, sucking air in between his teeth as he shifted his weight on the bed.

“We shoule never done what we did this mornin’. This shit here is all my fault,” Mickey said, referring to Ian’s pain, which he attributed to their morning fuckfest. “Nah...wouldn’t have mattered. I fucking hurt like hell whenever the meds wear off. And I think I tensed all that shit up when I was in the session...when it was happening, ya know?” Ian explained, adding, “I don’t know about these
“Ian, Dr. Fisher said…” Mickey began, before Ian cut him off. “I don’t care! He’s not the one feeling everything over and over!! Now that you were there…I’m...good!” Mickey could see that Ian was getting quite irritated, and that now was not the best time to pursue his continued therapy. “Okay, okay,” Mickey said soothingly, letting go of Ian’s hand, then circling the bed to lie on the other side.

As Mickey stretched out on his side of the bed, Ian reached for him. “I love you,” Mickey said in a barely audible whisper, as he gingerly moved his body closer to Ian’s, once again taking his hand. As the pain medication began to take effect, Ian dozed off, the even, rhythmic sound of his breathing lulling Mickey to sleep shortly thereafter. Mickey’s nap was short-lived, however, the vibration of his phone in his pocket startling him awake. “Mickey,” Kayla’s voice came through the phone softly. Ma...sorry I haven’t called...Ian…” Mickey began to explain, his guilt for not staying in touch with his mother getting the best of him.

“Oh, honey...please don’t apologize! I know you and Ian are busy, and that Ian has been through hell! I just called to check on you guys, and to thank Ian again for giving me my life back. Yev is coming to stay with me tomorrow, and Mikhaila is here now. Would you like to say hi?” Kayla asked sweetly. “Sure,” Mickey answered, having rolled out of the bed and walked into the kitchen, so Ian could continue to sleep. “Daddy!” Mikhaila’s tiny voice squeaked into Mickey’s ear.

“Hey, Mik! I miss you. How’s Mommy?” Mickey asked. “She’s very sick,” Mikhaila answered, “So I’m staying with Grandma and Doc tonight. Brach is taking care of her.” “That’s good. I’m sure he is. How’s school goin’?” he asked. “Good, Daddy! But I miss Yev,” Mikhaila answered, the second half of her answer taking the wind out of Mickey’s sails. “Oh...you haven’t seen him?” Mickey asked. “No, Grandma says he’s sick, too,” she answered. “Well, I’ll talk to Grandma. Maybe, if he’s feeling better, you can see him tomorrow,” Mickey said hopefully, suddenly feeling the need to get an update on him.

“When are you coming home, Daddy?” Mikhaila whined, “I wanna see you!” “Not sure yet...but soon, real...soon,” Mickey spoke hesitantly, a hint of uncertainty in his voice. There was a brief silence, then Mickey heard Kayla hesitantly, a hint of uncertainty in his voice. There was a brief silence, then Mickey heard Kayla’s voice again, “Mickey...Can you have Ian call Yevgeni ...please? He’s been really quiet lately, over the phone and in person. I can tell he’s worried about him.” “Yeah...sure, Ma,” Mickey answered, his mind a million miles away, as he fixated on when he and Ian would actually be able to go back to Mexico. He was definitely ready. Had been, ever since they arrived, but Ian was a different story, and Mickey wasn’t going anywhere without him.

Kayla chattered away, detailing the latest, concerning the plans for her and Doc’s wedding, which included dinner and entertainment options, as well as colors, and a wedding party list. “Sounds great, Ma,” Mickey remarked absently as he walked back into the bedroom to check on Ian, “Hey, sorry but I gotta go. I think Ian’s wakin’ up. I’ll have him call Yev,” Mickey whispered, quickly excusing himself.

Ian was, in fact, still sleeping, just as he had been before Mickey left the room, but Mickey needed to be off the phone, to watch over his husband for a moment, and to feel close to him again. As he stared down at Ian, Mickey could see Ian’s eyelashes fluttering. Assuming he was about to wake up, he crawled into the bed next to him, reaching out to lightly rub his back. As soon as Mickey’s hand made contact with Ian’s back, Ian yelped, cringing as if Mickey’s fingers were hot coals, burning into his skin.

Mickey quickly recoiled, fearful that he had hurt Ian somehow. When Ian’s eyes remained closed, his body twitching irradically, Mickey surmised that Ian must be dreaming. He attempted touching Ian again, this time beginning by taking hold of Ian’s hand and whispering, “Ian, it’s me...Mickey,”
into his ear. Mickey watched as Ian sighed in relief, gripping Mickey’s hand firmly with his own, a faint smile beginning to curl up from the corners of his mouth.

Encouraged by Ian’s reaction, Mickey continued to whisper to him, “Ian...let’s go. You’ll be safe with me. C’mon.” Ian nodded his head in his sleep, Mickey then taking a chance and moving his body flush against Ian’s and wrapping his arms around him. “Mickey...” Ian mumbled softly as Mickey pressed only his upper body against him, careful not to touch or otherwise make contact with Ian’s backside or legs.

Mickey’s chest heaved, as his mind and body responded emotionally to his closeness to Ian, and to whatever he sensed Ian was enduring in his own mind. “Go back to sleep,” Mickey breathed, comforting him with the lightest of kisses over the back of his tender neck. Ian lay still, his eyes now open, the velvety sensation of Mickey’s soft lips raising goosebumps over his entire body. He shivered, Mickey pulling him even closer, until his dick was nearly touching Ian’s ass, the warmth of Mickey’s body radiating onto Ian’s.

Mickey could sense that Ian was becoming aroused, but didn’t want to chance spooking him yet again, so he remained still and quiet, awaiting Ian’s next move. Mickey honestly hoped Ian would not opt for a second session. He genuinely feared they had overdone it that morning, and didn’t want to slow Ian’s physical healing process, especially since he felt he’d already had a negative impact on him, both physically and psychologically.

Mickey knew Ian would never blame him, but that didn’t change the fact that he blamed himself. All he wanted was his Ian back—the way he had been before all of this shit happened. Before the splenectomy, before the Russians, before the donor surgery, before the medication change, before their lives went completely haywire. But if that wasn’t possible, he was willing to accept Ian, however he was. He just wished it didn’t hurt so much to watch him suffer, and to be powerless to help him.

“Ya wanna call Yev now?” Mickey asked quietly, his voice tentative and sweet. “Mmmm,” Ian responded, something in the tone of Mickey’s voice bringing his cock instantly to attention. “Want you...” Ian breathed in response, rolling onto his back, as if there wasn’t a damn thing bothering him. “But your...” “Feel better now,” Ian growled, before Mickey could finish his sentence, turning toward Mickey, then pulling him up onto his knees and ripping his boxer briefs off so fast, it made Mickey’s head swim. “I really don’t think...” Mickey began. “Shut the fuck up!” Ian hissed into Mickey’s ear as he poured canola oil down between Mickey’s ass cheeks, rubbing it in quickly. “Be right back,” he barked, suddenly rising from the bed and heading for the bathroom. “Get it ready,” he demanded.

Mickey obliged him without further argument, slipping his index finger in and out of his hole, gradually increasing the depth, while simultaneously stretching it open in preparation for his well-endowed, obviously horned-up husband. He could hear Ian spraying the lidocaine in the bathroom, but decided not to address his concerns about Ian’s condition, since Ian was obviously in no mood to give audience to that topic at the moment.

Instead, he made quick work of readying himself, surmising correctly that Ian was not planning to take things slow. Ian walked with purpose, back to the bed. “Ready for it?” he called out, his cock so fucking big and stiff, it looked to Mickey like he could split him in half, were he not already very well accustomed to Ian, his cock and the way he used it. Mickey smiled seductively and gave a slight nod in response, finger-fucking himself slowly, giving Ian a clear view as he moaned loudly for effect.

Ian crawled onto the bed, approaching Mickey quickly from behind, immediately licking and
sucking at Mickey’s neck and earlobes, then lightly grinding an earlobe between his teeth as he breathed into Mickey’s ear, “You...are...so...fucking...hot!” Mickey swallowed hard, his dick throbbing with carnal excitement as Ian began fucking him briskly, increasing the depth of his penetration significantly with each stroke, until he quickly bottomed out, Micky panting and moaning wildly as Ian angled himself, just so, pushing Mickey masterfully to the brink in record time. “Shhh...Don’t say a fucking word,” Ian ordered, covering Mickey’s mouth with his hand as he controlled Mickey’s body skillfully, moving it under his own as if it were one of his appendages.

Mickey was so physically, mentally and spiritually maxed out that he couldn’t even think; he was a mere extension of Ian, rolling through this intensely gratifying experience, completely under Ian’s capable command.

Ian rolled his hips rhythmically against Mickey’s quivering buttocks, hammering away at Mickey until he could feel he was about to explode, then abruptly slowed his pace and intensity, Mickey letting out a sigh of frustration. “What’s the matter? Not fast enough? Hard enough? Hmmm?” Ian teased. Of course, he already knew the answer, but he wanted to hear it from Mickey.

“I...can’t...” Mickey stumbled over his words, every fiber of his being so desperate to climax with his lover’s sweet cock buried deeply inside him, that he was really struggling to express himself verbally. “Can’t what?” Ian hummed sadistically, clearly enjoying the fuck out of Mickey’s torturous dilemma. “Arghhhhh,” Mickey groaned, arching his back and rutting himself against Ian violently, without even considering Ian’s condition. Not that it mattered in this moment. Ian had successfully numbed all of his affected areas and was completely pain free.

Ian countered Mickey’s every move, thrusting into him with a renewed voracity, gradually recommencing their prior rhythm, while sliding his hand expertly over Mickey’s swollen shaft, both men reaching climax within minutes after resuming their frenetic pace. “HOLY FUCK, IAN!!” Mickey screeched in ecstasy. “He speaks!” Ian yelled amid his own mind-blowing orgasm. “You’re un-fucking-believable!!” Mickey muttered into the pillow beneath him, as he collapsed onto the bed, his entire body fatigued and slackened.

“I just needed to feel...control over something,” Ian struggled to explain. “Over me?” Mickey asked, finding the thought of that tremendously intriguing. “Over you, me, our sex, our orgasms...all of it. I’m sorry…” Ian sighed with embarrassment. “Are you fuckin’ kiddin’ me right now?” Mickey laughed.

“No, why?” Ian responded defensively. “Cuz that shit was so ridiculously hot...s’why…” Mickey answered, turning toward Ian and kissing him softly. “You were a fuckin’ animal...and I’d love if you’d fuck me like that again sometime...soon,” Mickey grinned, staring into Ian’s fucked out eyes with his own. There was no denying the intensity of their session, or that it was completely driven by Ian. Mickey was more than okay with it and, for Ian, it was a chance to, at least briefly, feel some measure of control over something in his life.

“Now we can call Yev,” Ian said after a few minutes of quiet cuddling. “Yeah, okay. Ma says he’s worried about you,” Mickey shared. “I’m worried about him, too,” Ian answered, reaching for his phone.
Ian had tossed and turned for hours, unable to sleep after his conversation with Yev. He just couldn’t seem to get himself settled or pain-free, despite the inordinate number of pills he had taken. In fact, he had used them up in the middle of the night in a last-ditch effort to get to sleep. He ended up walking the floors for at least half the night. Mickey, who had tried everything he knew to help him, had become essentially punch-drunk from lack of sleep, and beyond frustrated with Ian’s state of mind, yet still managed to pace right alongside him, the two mumbling disjointedly at one another until the sun came up.

“...s’get some coffee,” Mickey muttered, resigning himself to a day without sleep. “I gotta go home...be with Yev,” Ian muttered, under his breath, for about the hundredth time since he and Mickey had lay down to try and sleep. “Can’t go yet,” Mickey replied, also for about the hundredth time. Mickey wanted to say, ‘Hey, you been takin’ your lithium?’ He could actually hear himself asking Ian in his mind, but the words just wouldn’t come out. He knew they’d be wasted on Ian right now anyway, and his own mind was far too befuddled to broach the subject, even if Ian were to answer.

The reality was, Mickey had promised Dr. Fisher to keep Ian’s meds regulated, in exchange for Ian being able to leave the hospital—and he had failed miserably. Not only had Ian gone through an entire prescription of pain meds in two days, but Mickey also had no idea whether Ian had taken his lithium at all, since being discharged.

He had taken it on faith that Ian would do as he had promised; he trusted Ian. He also didn’t want Ian to think he was trying to police him. He knew from experience how much Ian hated that; it had been the source of numerous arguments in the past, ugly fights that Mickey never wanted to experience again. He loved Ian too much. And that was exactly the problem; Mickey’s judgment and decision-making were clouded by his blinding love for him.

As Micky slowly plodded through the necessary steps to brew a pot of coffee, Ian continued to pace, seeming, out of nowhere, to have boundless energy and a brain made of mush, although he thought he had everything figured out. “Mickey, I can help him. He needs me!” Ian insisted, raising his voice and getting in Mickey’s face.

“Well, you ain’t ready to leave!” Mickey countered, shoving Ian against the wall to stop his constant motion long enough to get his attention. “Well...I’m leaving! You can stay here with Dr. Fisher, if you want, or you can come with me...Your choice!” Ian snapped, wiggling free from Mickey’s wavering grip. “Jesus Christ, Ian! I’m tired, you’re tired. Can’t we just talk about this later...after today’s appointment?” Mickey pleaded, his head so dizzy with exhaustion that he feared he might fall.

Mickey staggered back over toward the coffee pot, pouring them both a cup of coffee. “Mickey, I’m going home...today!” Ian insisted, traipsing across the kitchen toward the bedroom, where he immediately began to pack the suitcase with all of his things.

Mickey took two sips of his coffee, then headed into the bedroom, carrying both cups of coffee, although Ian didn’t seem to need any. “Ian...please...” Mickey pleaded with him, “I wanna get home to Yev just as bad as you, but ya can’t help him, if ya don’t help yourself! Now, can we please just go to your appointment today? We can talk to Dr. Fisher about Yev. Hell, maybe he can come here with us and Dr. Fisher can help him!”

Ian looked at Mickey, the expression on his face softening slightly. “You think he would?” Ian
asked. “Sure!” Mickey responded, having no earthly idea if he actually would, but wanting to deescalate Ian and get him to his appointment, in any case. Ian stopped packing, giving Mickey a look. The kind Mickey was much too tired to entertain. “Ian, I need some sleep first. Think we can try?”

“You sleep. I’ll cook some breakfast,” Ian suggested, adjusting himself as he walked out of the bedroom. “Just come and lay with me… ’til I fall asleep?” Mickey requested. “Oh... I don’t know if that’s a good idea. Might molest you in your sleep!” Ian chuckled, raising an eyebrow seductively.

‘Wow,’ Mickey thought to himself, ‘What the fuck?!” He stayed quiet though, falling fast asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow. When he woke up, he could hear voices in the kitchen, one of which was his husband, chattering away happily. As he listened more closely, he could hear Iggy’s voice, what he was pretty sure was Shawn’s voice, and a third that he couldn’t identify. There was also the heavenly aroma of Ian’s pancakes wafting into the bedroom, tickling Mickey’s nose enough to get him up out of bed, despite the fact that he had only slept for about an hour and a half.

“You save me any?” he called out to Ian as he strutted into the kitchen in his boxer briefs with a half-chub. “I always have plenty for you,” Ian replied with a smirk, Shawn subtly checking out Mickey’s package as the banter between Mickey and Ian ensued. “That right?” Mickey countered, eyeing Ian, who looked to be freshly showered and was definitely dressed to kill. Then his focus turned to Iggy and the owner of the third voice he’d heard, which turned out to be Justin.

“Mickey!” Justin called out, doing his best to avoid checking Ian out in front of him, as he interrupted Ian and Mickey’s shameless flirting, “You should’ve seen your boy Shawn yesterday!” “Oh yeah?” Mickey responded, turning to gauge Ian’s reaction. “Yeah! He was fucking amazing! Best first-time model I’ve ever seen,” he bragged, putting his arm around Shawn’s neck affectionately, then adding, “Except for you, of course,” after which he laughed heartily.

Mickey did his best to hide the scowl that was washing over his face as he watched Justin try unsuccessfully to avert his eyes from Ian, who, Mickey had to admit, was looking absolutely stunning in the clothes he was wearing. It was the first he had put on anything besides scrubs or sweats, and he looked good enough to eat. He had on some ass-hugging faded jeans with holes in the knees, and a snug-fitting jade-colored henley that accentuated the gorgeous flecks in his eyes, the bruises around which had begun to fade, just enough to be sexy as fuck. Damn, if Mickey didn’t wanna grab him by the hair and drag him into the bedroom, right then and there.

It didn’t matter that Mickey was exhausted, or that Ian might very well be manic at the moment. Mickey wanted Ian so badly that nothing else mattered. Maybe it was all of what he perceived to be competition or, at the very least, adoration in the room, or maybe he just found his husband to be utterly irresistible at this particular moment. Whatever the reason, Mickey’s cock was stiffening by the second for all to see.

“Geez, bro!” Iggy yelled, “You wanna keep that shit on a leash, or what?” he scoffed, bringing full attention to the elephant in the room, which both Shawn and Justin were doing their best to ignore. Mickey was sure he had seen both Shawn and Ian adjusting their own packages, and if he were a betting man, he’d put money on Justin also having wood. At this point in time, however, all eyes were on Mickey’s cock, since he was the one in nothing but boxer briefs, his junk so damn big, hard, and prominent that it was impossible to miss, or to pretend to miss, for that matter.

“Sit down, Mick,” Ian finally said, hoping to put an end to what was fast becoming a very uncomfortable situation for all. “Got some fresh, hot pancakes for ya,” Ian added, setting a plate in front of Mickey, then pecking him on the cheek lightly, before breathing into his ear, “I wanna suck that sexy cock of yours,” Mickey’s dick instantly becoming rock-hard again, in spite of himself. He
could feel his face burning as he looked down at his pancakes, trying to focus on cutting them up, hoping everyone in the room would stop staring soon.

Ian stood surprisingly still for a time, watching Mickey as he ate two helpings of pancakes, his full, sticky lips glistening, keeping Ian completely enthralled. The others talked less boisterously among themselves, Ian’s silence seeming to have a calming effect on the entire group. He had, after all, spent the majority of Mickey’s nap sharing crazy stories about his modeling escapades, Justin filling in a few around the edges, including his run-in with Mickey in Costa Rica.

Shawn had sat quietly through it all, thoroughly enjoying the retelling of Justin’s run-in with Mickey, as well as his recounting of Mickey’s stroll down the runway with a semi-woody. To Shawn, everything about Mickey was sexy, and, as he was quickly learning, Justin could spin a tale, so this whole story was quite captivating for Shawn. Moreover, Justin definitely had a tail Shawn would love to take for a spin.

He pretty much knew that pining away after Mickey was a lost cause, especially after seeing the way he and Ian fucked. And it wasn’t like he had designs on Mickey from the start. In fact, it was quite the opposite. It was Ian’s beauty and compassion that Shawn was first taken with, back when Shawn had treated Mickey at Chicago Memorial as a gravely ill prisoner. He had seen the way Ian came to convince him about the PICC line, as well as the frequency and duration of his visits, along with the ‘activities’ that took place during them. Simply put, he thought Ian was a God! But seeing the way he loved Mickey, he would never have thought of interfering.

And that remained the case over the many years of their friendship. It wasn’t until the most recent issues surrounding Ian’s health cropped up, and Shawn saw how damned loving and attentive Mickey was, that he began to look at him differently. Yet still, he never would have acted on any of his thoughts or feelings. Ian was too good of a friend. It was only when he began to doubt Ian would return to Mickey alive that his mind began to go wild with ‘what ifs’. He hated himself for even thinking that way, but once he lay next to Mickey in the bed for the first time, he knew what he was feeling was more than friendship.

Never once, however, had he thought of competing with Ian for Mickey, for he knew, as anyone who’d seen them together recognized, they were inseparable, and made for each other. And after seeing them make love, Shawn was all the more certain, despite his confidence in his own skills---and he certainly felt he was adept and versatile---he could never replace Ian, even if the worst had happened. Mickey would never love that way again, and Shawn felt that deeply, each and every time he was around them. It was that certain ‘x-factor’ that was so obviously there between them. They were so in tune! There was such magic! It was palpable—an electricity in the air that they produced---together. He got chills just thinking about it, not to mention some embarrassing swelling between the legs. But that was it. He told himself he had to put Mickey out of his mind---forever.

It was at the very moment that he made his pact with himself that he noticed Justin, noticing him. “So you done modeling or you think you might wanna do some shows on the side?” Mickey asked, pulling Shawn out of his head abruptly. “I...I…” Shawn stammered. “Don’t take ‘no’ for an answer, Mickey!” Justin piped up, “I’m telling you, this guy has a real talent!” he continued, putting his arm around Shawn’s neck again, “It’s like the first time I saw Ian…”

“Okay, okay...we get it!”’ Mickey interrupted, not wanting to hear another word about his husband, coming from Justin’s lips. Ian glanced over at Mickey, definitely feeling a strong jealous vibe emanating from him, which made Ian just that much hotter for his man. “Listen...why don’t you two go back to Shawn’s room or somethin’? Maybe you can teach him some new tricks...and Iggy, sorry, but Ian and I gotta get ready for his appointment, so…” Mickey trailed off as he opened the door briskly, conveying his wish for everyone except Ian to walk through it, without uttering another
As soon as he slammed the door behind Iggy, who was the last to leave, he turned to Ian, fully prepared to surrender himself to Ian’s potent magnetism, despite his concerns with Ian’s state of mind. He decided to leave ‘the talk’ for later, hoping the sex might settle Ian a bit, making him more reasonable and open to having a discussion. Ian dropped to his knees, intending to make good on the plans he had for Mickey, as he made quick work of removing Mickey’s underwear. Mickey was so incredibly excited, he could barely contain himself. “This ain’t gonna take long,” he breathed, his desperation evident in the cadence of his words.

“That’s good...cuz I gotta talk to you before my appointment,” Ian replied, just before he began sucking Mickey off hungrily, like his dick was a fucking lollipop. “Fuck, Ian!!” Mickey yelled, “What the fuck you gotta talk to me about?”

“Later,” Ian hummed over Mickey’s rock-hard cock, “Want you to enjoy this first...Just sit the fuck down!” he hissed, pushing Mickey onto the couch, then proceeding to bombard Mickey with so much pleasure, he couldn’t think straight, his hungry mouth moving over Mickey expertly. “Fuck it,” Mickey sighed, running his fingers through Ian’s fiery red hair roughly, tugging at it lightly as he moaned Ian’s name, Ian continuing to fellate him like there was no tomorrow…
Ian refrained from teasing and edging Mickey, in favor of a quick, intense climax, sending him over the edge in a matter of minutes. “Damn, Gallagher!” he panted as he arched himself up off the couch, cumming hard. “Good?” Ian asked with a smirk, lifting his head to look at Mickey’s flushed face, his pupils blown, his lips parted slightly. “...the fuck you think?” Mickey answered breathlessly. Ian’s grin widened, knowing full-well that Mickey was beyond sated, and exhausted, to boot.

“Let’s get you to bed,” Ian suggested, lifting Mickey into his arms and carrying him, stark naked, into the bedroom. Mickey stared up into Ian’s eyes, tired, yet willing to do whatever it was going to take to please his man and get out of him whatever was on his mind.

Ian leaned down and kissed Mickey soulfully, then rolled him over onto his stomach. Mickey instinctively pulled himself up onto his knees, but Ian pushed him back down. “Lay still and close your eyes,” Ian commanded, Mickey readily obeying without a single word. “Don’t move. I’ll be right back,” Ian continued. Mickey figured Ian was going to spray himself with lidocaine again, as it seemed he needed it in order to fuck without pain.

Mickey waited, but never heard the spray, as he had before. He did hear the beeping of the microwave and smelled something, but couldn’t identify the scent. When Ian returned, Mickey felt the mattress sink down on one side of him, near his torso. Then he felt Ian’s hands, moistened and warm, moving over his back, rubbing Mickey’s muscles sensually, the scent of vanilla filling the air.

“But don’t ya wanna…” Mickey began, Ian quickly silencing him. “Shhhh...Just relax, Mick,” Ian whispered into his ear, as he continued to massage Mickey tenderly, moving up his back, onto his shoulders and upper arms.

Mickey felt as if he’d died and gone to heaven. He was also completely astonished that Ian hadn’t yet begun to prep him. He was certain Ian was dying to fuck---he always was. Instead, he proceeded to give Mickey the most pampering, perfect total-body massage he’d had in a very long time, pausing every now and again to plant a sweet kiss on each body part, before moving on to the next.

Mickey could feel himself coming close to dropping off to sleep, so he began to speak, determined to stay awake until it was time to leave for their session with Dr. Fisher, for fear of missing it, otherwise. Besides, he really needed to ask Ian about his lithium, and also wanted to know what was on his mind that was important enough for him to bring up during his blowjob. “So...what’d ya wanna tell me?”

“Oh...yeah...well...I...uh...” Ian faltered, Mickey flipping over and looking at him expectantly. Ian scooped another handful of warm lotion from a bowl that Mickey could now see, sitting on the nightstand. Ian began massaging Mickey’s pecs deeply with the palms of his hands, moving them in a circular motion. Mickey moaned softly, shutting his eyes as a feeling of utter peace came over him, Ian’s touch seeming to magically remove all the tension he’d been holding in his body.

Ian worked his way busilly down Mickey’s torso, artfully distracting him in order to stall the conversation that he had suddenly decided he wasn’t ready to have. The buzz of Ian’s phone rudely disrupted Mickey’s momentary tranquility, his eyes flying open, his hand reflexively reaching for the phone. “It’s Dr. Fisher,” he said softly, his heavy eyelids only halfway open as he passed the phone to Ian. “Put him on speaker. We can ask about Yev,” Mickey suggested, his voice calm and even.

Ian looked at the phone nervously, reluctantly answering with the speaker on, “Hello...Dr. Fisher…” “Hello, Ian. Listen, I know we talked about you coming to today’s session alone, but I have some
things to discuss with you that I believe Mickey also needs to hear. Is he able to come with you
today?” Dr. Fisher asked.

“Yeah,” Mickey answered, before Ian could say otherwise, adding, “Doc, I got somethin’ to ask ya
when we get there, too...a favor…” “Well, I’m here at the hospital now. My morning wrapped up
early, and I don’t have anything scheduled until after your appointment, so if you’d like to get here a
little early...We need to talk…” Dr. Fisher replied. “Sure...we’ll get ready and head over...Wanna tell
me what this is about?” Mickey asked, fidgeting with his wedding band as he spoke.

“We’ll discuss it when you get here. And if you still have that other nurse with you here in New
York...Shawn, was it? I’d like to speak with him as well. “Okay, see ya soon.” Mickey answered,
ending the call, then shooting a look up at Ian, who glared back at him, evidently not happy with
Mickey’s comandering the conversation with HIS doctor.

There was complete silence, Mickey showering and shaving while Ian scoured the entire penthouse
for his bottle of pain pills. Mickey, upon entering the bedroom to get dressed, noticed that Ian was
searching frantically for something, and decided to speak, despite the rage he felt. He was sure Ian
was keeping something from him, especially after Dr. Fisher’s call, but had been too angry about it to
say a single word, for fear of what he might say.

Mickey took a deep breath, then snorted, “Whatcha lookin’ for...huh?” “Pain pills,” Ian muttered,
completely tossing the place, at this point. “Bottle’s empty, remember?” Mickey reminded him,
wondering how he could possibly think he had any left, after commenting about taking the last of
them in the wee hours of the morning.

“Well, I...uh...I found some more,” Ian responded haltingly as he continued ransackng the entire
penthouse. “Oh yeah? How’s that?” Mickey asked, waiting patiently for the next lie Ian was about to
tell him. “Mickey! If you’re not gonna help me look, the least you could do is stop distracting me!”
Ian yelled. “How ‘bout if we just get goin’? You can get a refill from the doctor when we get there,”
Mickey reasoned, after counting to ten in his head, trying like hell to keep his cool.

“I can’t be out of them yet!” Ian whined, “He won’t give me more, if he knows...I mean, if he thinks
they’re gone already!” “Okay, so we’ll tell him you have more, but want the refill...I don’t know,
Ian! Why don’t you tell me where the fuck ya got the extra pills? That why Shawn was here this
mornin’? He bring ya more?” Mickey questioned Ian, rapid-fire. “Or was it Iggy? Or Justin?”

Mickey was getting really pissed, really fast. It wasn’t even about who gave Ian the pills, but rather
the fact that Ian had been secretive about it. Then again, maybe this was what Ian had wanted to talk
to him about. Damn! Mickey hated when Ian wasn’t straight up with him from the start. He could
always feel the deception, as it was happening, but had to wait for Ian to come around to getting
honest about it. Mickey was fast reaching his boiling point, already conjuring ideas up in his mind of
how he could teach Ian a lesson, realizing his options were definitely limited by Ian’s recent
experiences with the Russians.

Then suddenly, as Mickey recalled the details of Ian being tortured, about all Ian had been thinking,
feeling---enduring---throughout the entire ordeal, as Ian had retold it, in his own words, reliving it all
so painfully in his sessions, he immediately changed his attitude and perspective on the current
situation.

“S’okay, Ian. I know you’re in a lotta pain. We’ll find ‘em...we’ll find em,” Mickey reassured Ian,
hugging Ian’s body into his own as he scanned the kitchen, where they now both stood. Then, as he
walked over to the coffee pot, hoping some caffeine might help, he kicked something on the floor.
When he looked down, he could see it was a pill bottle, and by the sounds of it, there were quite a
few pills in it.
“Thanks, man,” Ian said, his voice oozing with gratitude as he grabbed them from Mickey’s hand, laying a sloppy, wet kiss on his lips before cracking the pill bottle open and dumping four pills out onto his hand. “Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! What the fuck? You’re takin’ four of these fuckers?” Mickey hollered, lunging at Ian and knocking the pills, both the bottle and the loose ones, out of Ian’s hands, every single one spilling down onto the kitchen floor.

“What the fuck?! Mickey!! What the fuck are you doing?!” Ian cried out in desperation. “Help me pick them up! Hurry! Can you see them?!” “I’m gonna pick these fuckers up,” Mickey agreed, “But you ain’t eatin’ four of ‘em all at once! I think you better talk to Dr. Fisher about all this...cuz this ain’t good!”

“M..Mickey! Listen…” Ian began, attempting to sound rational, through he was anything but. “If I don’t take them, I can’t function...You understand...It hurts too bad,” he explained, the forlorn look on his face tugging at Mickey’s heart. “Ian...Ian...Let’s just...Let’s just go,” Mickey stammered, wrapping his arms around Ian’s waist, as he faced him, and pulling him in for a tight embrace. ‘I love you, but you’re scarin’ me,” Mickey whispered into Ian’s chest as he buried his face into it.

“Mick, can I tell you something?” Ian asked, bending his neck to kiss the crown of Mickey’s head. “Mmm Hmmm,” Mickey answered, his voice muffled. “You sure? Cuz I think you’re gonna be mad...and I can’t handle that right now.” “I’m fuckin’ sure ya should tell me, but can’t promise I ain’t gonna get mad,” Mickey replied in his usual no-bullshit manner.

Ian took a deep breath, letting it out slowly between his gritted teeth. “I really don’t wanna tell ya...but...if I don’t, Dr. Fisher’s gonna do it anyway,” Ian began to confess, his voice trembling as he spoke. Mickey could feel his blood pressure rising. He felt it in his gut. He knew what Ian was going to say. He had feared it, but expected it, nonetheless.

Ian tilted Mickey’s chin up with his fingers, establishing eye contact, then went in for a kiss, Mickey pulling away at first, but then, upon seeing the sorrow in Ian’s eyes, leaned back in, returning the kiss passionately, because, regardless of what Ian had done, he couldn’t kiss him any other way. “I love you,” Ian breathed amid their rather lengthy show of affection, Mickey finally ending it, pulling away to look at Ian again. “So...spill! We gotta get goin’!” he demanded impatiently.

“Ian, I’m sorry,” Ian continued pleadingly, as Mickey turned for the door without saying a word. “C’mon, let’s fuckin’ go,” he finally said as he stood at the door. Ian followed compliantly, tears now streaming down his face.

The couple sat on opposite ends of the backseat for the first five minutes of the Uber ride, Mickey taking sidelong glances a Ian every few seconds. Ian was fidgety, unable to sit still or to calm himself. Mickey thought Ian looked like Mickey felt: both sad and agitated at the same time. Mickey,
himself, was so mad, he could spit nails, however, and didn’t want to chance blowing up at Ian, for fear that Ian might flee the vehicle. Mickey knew Ian wasn’t thinking clearly, so he spent those first five minutes in the car thinking through how best to handle their current situation.

After considerable thought and deliberation, Mickey slid over to Ian’s side of the backseat, until they were sitting side by side, their bodies touching. Ian’s legs bounced incessantly, the balls of his feet, which he had planted aggressively into the floor, generating the movement.

Mickey moved his right hand onto Ian’s left leg, just above his knee, and began to lightly trace tiny circles onto it with his index finger. Ian sighed deeply, his legs slowing, then coming to a complete stop, his head relaxing onto Mickey’s right shoulder, where it remained for the balance of the car ride.
"Hello Ian! And Mickey, so glad you could make it," Dr. Fisher spoke genuinely, a kind smile on his
face as he welcomed them into a shiny, new office near the nurse’s station. “Please, have a seat,” he
added, motioning for Ian and Mickey to sit in the chairs in front of the desk he was heading for.

Once all were seated, Dr. Fisher turned the computer screen in front of him around for Ian and
Mickey to see, then began, “Ian, these are your lab results from your most recent blood work. As you
can see…” “I know my lithium levels are low! I told Mickey...I haven’t been taking it!” Ian blurted
out nervously. “Actually,” Dr. Fisher cut in, “There’s more to it than that, but that does play a role in
what I am about to suggest.

Ian began to study the results more closely, although his mind was bouncing, his thoughts
concerning Yev, as well as Mickey being upset with him, interfering with his ability to concentrate.
“So...my white count is elevated...a lot…” Ian muttered slowly, as the information before him began
to sink in. And it’s not from the lithium...since I’m not taking it...but…”

“Yes, Ian, that’s right. In this particular case, your stopping the lithium for now may help us, but I am
concerned that these results may indicate the presence of a postoperative bacterial infection. Have
you been taking your antibiotic?” Dr. Fisher asked. “Honestly, I’ve been a little off my game,” Ian
admitted.

“These infections are common after splenectomies,” Dr. Fisher continued, “and often vaccinations
are given, although typically not until two weeks, post-op. However, in light of your spotty
medication regimen and your lab results, I’d like to vaccinate you today. Then I’d like to speak with
you about treatment of your bipolar disorder and hear from you on your pain level and pain
medication use.”

Mickey looked over at Ian, awaiting his response. Ian nodded in agreement, then reached for
Mickey’s hand, which Mickey offered freely. Dr. Fisher called Jeanine into the office, where she
administered three injections. “And would you please prepare the hypnosis center?” Dr. Fisher
asked. “I think we may be able to get an early start today.” “Yes, Doctor,” Jeanine answered, turning
for the door.

“Now, Ian, may I ask why you chose to discontinue the lithium, without consulting me? Was this a
decision you and Mickey made together?” Dr. Fisher inquired, as soon as Jeanine shut the door
behind her, on her way out. “I...uh…” Ian stalled, Mickey taking the opportunity to answer for him.
“He said it made him feel stupid and not like himself, when he took it with the pain meds. But, no, I
didn’t help him decide. I just found out today.” Mickey explained, Ian squeezing his hand, hoping to
stop him from discussing the amount of pain pills he’d used already. Mickey looked over at Ian,
catching a fearful look in his eyes, then choosing to end his story there.

“So, Ian, can you describe for me exactly how you were feeling, and why it was so unacceptable to
you, that you felt the need to stop your medication?” Dr. Fisher asked, hoping to get an answer
directly from Ian this time. “I just...our son...he...I need to have my head straight, so I can help him
through his issues. That’s why I need to go back to Mexico...to care for him. He worries about me,
when he needs to be concerned with his own recovery,” Ian explained in the most cohesive, coherent
statement he’d made all day.

“Yeah,” Mickey interjected, “And I told him maybe you could help Yev, if we got him here.”
“Mickey, let me first address Ian’s statement. Then we can talk about that,” Dr. Fisher responded.
“Ian, I can certainly understand your motives. I know how important your son is to you, and how
strongly you can empathize with what he’s been through. What I question are your methods. How do you expect to have your head straight without your meds? Can you honestly tell me you have not had any symptoms of mania?”

Ian sat in stony silence. His lack of response leading Dr. Fisher to draw his own conclusion. “My guess is that you have, and that is why you shared the fact that you had stopped taking your meds with Mickey. Am I correct?” Ian remained quiet and motionless, almost disconnected from the world around him. “S’right, Doc,” Mickey answered for him, “And I didn’t know he was goin’ through the pain pills like he has been,” Mickey added.

Ian looked down at his feet, humiliated, then abruptly dropped Mickey’s hand, rose from his chair, and charged toward the door. “Ian...please,” Dr. Fisher called to him, “I’ll see your son...try a similar therapeutic approach with him...get him on track. Please, sit. We need to talk.”

Mickey jumped up, grabbing Ian by the backs of his arms and attempting to steer him back to his seat. “What the fuck, Mickey!?” he yelled, shoving Mickey away from him. “How could you do this?”

“Ian, all I’m tryin’ a do is help you. You need help!” Mickey attempted to reason with Ian. “Fuck you!” Ian screamed in his face, pushing him away again. “Ian...please...” Mickey begged, blinking his tears away as he gripped Ian’s arms once again, this time, face to face with him.

As the tension between the two escalated, Ian taking a few swings at Mickey’s face, one of which connected, landing Mickey on the floor, Dr. Fisher picked up his phone, summoning Jeanine, who entered quickly. She managed somehow to inject Ian with a hefty dose of Haldol, rendering him nearly unconscious within seconds, thus preventing Mickey’s retaliation, which he was poised to unleash as he staggered up from the floor.

“Get a wheelchair!” Dr. Fisher commanded, Jeanine immediately heeding his instructions. “Mickey, I was hoping your friend, Shawn, was going to be able to oversee Ian at the Soho, but after this episode, I’m afraid hospitalization is necessary, in order to stabilize him, so we can proceed with his treatment, which, at this point, I think should include the alternate protocol I have established. As you are aware, many of my patients have had great success. He’s off the lithium anyway, and based on his labs, it would be best for him to stay that way, as long as the new plan works for him. I must warn you though---Starting off with him manic will be challenging. It will take time, and it’s not going to be easy on him...or you,” Dr. Fisher explained honestly as he helped Mickey up.

“Neither is this!” Mickey huffed indignantly, glaring over at Ian’s basically comatose body, so pissed off he almost wished Ian was still standing so he could take a shot at him. Instead, he helped Dr. Fisher put Ian into the wheelchair, Dr. Fisher continuing to talk on the subject of Ian’s treatment.

“Mr. Bigley put me in touch with your family doctor in Mexico...Dr. Montemurro, who faxed me more of Ian’s records, which include a Medical Power of Attorney, allowing you to make decisions on Ian’s behalf in cases such as this. Mickey, I want you to consider signing off on Ian’s involuntary admission today. If he decides to sign voluntarily, we can change it, but, Mickey, it is a risk to his life for him to leave here in his current state. I will not allow that to happen. I could commit him myself, but it would be much better for him if you sign. So...will you sign?”

Mickey took a deep breath, letting it out slowly through clenched teeth. He knew Dr. Fisher was right. He also knew that Ian was going to be pissed---probably for a long time---but he had learned his lesson about trusting unmedicated Ian, back in their early days, and he wasn’t going to forget it, no matter how much begging, or now many massages and blowjobs Ian showered on him. This was a matter of life and death---and Mickey knew it all too well.
“Yeah...I’ll do it,” Mickey mumbled, struggling to swallow past the growing lump in his throat, as his eyes poured wistfully over Ian’s limp, angelic form. “Thank you, Mickey. I know this is hard, believe me, but you’re doing the right thing,” Dr. Fisher spoke in a reassuring tone. “I know. It just fuckin’ hurts,” Mickey admitted, Dr. Fisher’s expression changing from sympathetic to surprised, after Mickey’s revelation.

“You know, Mickey, if you think it would be helpful, I’d be happy to set up some time for us to talk. Bipolar Disorder doesn’t only affect the person with the illness. The family is also deeply impacted. We could discuss some coping strategies for you, along with the other things you will need to know, regarding Ian’s treatment,” Dr. Fisher offered.

Mickey looked up at him, not sure how to respond. “Think about it,” Dr. Fisher added, as he gave Jeanine the ‘go ahead’ to wheel Ian out of the office, also asking that she print the necessary paperwork for his admission.

“Yeah, okay...I’m goin’ with him!” Mickey shouted, taking off after Jeanine and Ian. “Mickey...wait,” Dr. Fisher called after him, Mickey stopping in the doorway and turning begrudgingly to face him.

“I know you want to be with Ian, and your support is extremely vital to his treatment,” Dr. Fisher began, “However, I’m not sure you should stay here with him...at least not at first,” he finished, pausing as Mickey reacted.

“Doc, I ain’t leavin’ him!” Mickey insisted. “And I can’t force you to,” Dr. Fisher conceded, “but you should know that he won’t be himself...for a while...And that’s a tough thing to handle, day in and day out. You might want to consider just visiting at first,” he suggested. “NO!!” Mickey yelled stubbornly, his tough exterior starting to crack as the reality of the situation began to dawn on him.

“When your son gets here, he will need you...and it will not be healthy for him to be around Ian for any prolonged period of time, until he is stable. If you choose to stay with Ian, Yevgeni will need to have another caregiver, so that would need to be set up, prior to his arrival,” Dr. Fisher warned.

“I...I gotta think...” Mickey frowned, a look of utter devastation overtaking his face. “Yes, please take some time for that. These are big decisions that will impact the rest of your lives. I’m glad to know that you are not taking them lightly. Is there a family member or friend that you typically discuss such matters with?” Dr. Fisher asked.

“Yeah,” Mickey answered without hesitation, “but he’s knocked out cold right now...and when he wakes up...the fuck knows...” Mickey trailed off, rubbing his eyes with the palms of his hands.

Dr. Fisher could see that Mickey was distraught, exhausted, and in no shape to make any plans, so he decided, diverging from anything he had ever done in the past, to do for Mickey what he felt he needed at that moment. “Okay, Mickey, let’s get you settled into the room. If you give me a few phone numbers, I can have Jeanine handle some of the preliminaries, concerning your son...and tomorrow, after you’ve slept, we’ll talk again.”

Jeanine and Dr. Fisher worked to get Mickey through the paperwork, then to situate him in Ian’s room, where Ian was now tucked in and sleeping comfortably...in full restraints, of course. “You’ll have to sleep in the other bed,” Dr. Fisher instructed, adding, “Jeanine will bring you something to help you sleep.” “Thanks, Doc,” Mickey replied graciously.

Once Dr. Fisher and Jeanine had left the room, Mickey walked over to Ian’s bed, standing over him, watching him breathe, doubting his own decision to have him committed, and willing him to get well. “Ian...I’m sorry...I didn’t know what the fuck else to do! Me and Yev need you...you’re
right...but you need help,” Mickey whispered, choking back tears as he bent down to kiss Ian’s lips lightly, “I love you...so fuckin’ much...”
I Ain't Leavin', Bitch!

Ian woke with a banging headache, struggling against his restraints as he slowly became aware of his surroundings, although he was still quite groggy and disoriented. “Mickey!” he slurred, the guttural sound of his voice shocking both Mickey and himself. “What the f...How did I get...Mickey!! You motherfucker!!” Ian screamed. Mickey covered his head with his pillow in an attempt to shield himself from the barrage of expletives that tumbled sporadically from Ian’s heavily medicated lips.

Before long, Erika strode into the room, in response to Ian’s persistent, obnoxious cursing, quickly injecting Ian’s IV port with a mild sedative. “Good morning to you, too, sir,” she said sarcastically as Ian began to settle a bit. “Mickey, Mr. Bigley sent breakfast, if you’re hungry. Ian, you can’t eat until after I draw some fasting samples,” she added matter-of-factly, as she left the room.

Mickey peeked one eye out from behind his pillow, catching sight of Ian without his knowledge. Damn, if that shithead wasn’t still sexy as hell to Mickey, despite his derisive ranting. He had managed to knock his sheet to the floor, even with all four limbs restrained, and was still battling his confinement to the bed, albeit a bit more languidly after the sedative.

Maybe it was all the swearing and nasty name-calling that had preceded this moment, or maybe Mickey was just a sick fuck, but something about seeing Ian’s lightly clad, partially disrobed body, writhing in wrist and ankle restraints, turned him on, if only for a second, the grave reality of their situation resurfacing all too quickly in Mickey’s mind, hitting him like a punch to the gut, punishing him for that fleeting, filthy thought.

As he slowly rose from the bed, making his move toward the bathroom, he stopped to resheath Ian’s body, first with his hospital gown, which had ridden up over his hips, unveiling his manhood, then with the sheet, attempting to maintain some measure of dignity for him, although he knew medical personnel were accustomed to seeing overly-exposed patients. Mickey didn’t want his husband to be one of them. All necessary medical exams aside, Ian’s junk was for his eyes only, as far as he was concerned, no matter how unaware Ian was, at the moment.

Once he had Ian properly covered, Mickey leaned down to kiss his forehead, Ian’s drugged, expressionless eyes blinking open slowly. “I love you,” Mickey breathed against Ian’s brow. Ian muttered something unintelligible, his eyes promptly falling shut, mid-mumble. Mickey lingered briefly, taking in Ian’s essence, in all its fucked up glory, before retreating to the bathroom.

As Mickey took a piss, he heard Erika’s voice, as she informed Ian she was taking a blood sample, his response, more garbled gibberish. Mickey had been awake for all of ten minutes, and already he understood all too well what Dr. Fisher meant. Seeing Ian this way, day after day, was going to tear him apart. He washed up, then retrieved his phone from the side table, next to the bed he had slept in. He sent a text to both Iggy and Shawn: “Yo! Anyone up? I need a favor.” Shawn immediately responded: “Yeah, what’s up?” “Need ya to bring Yev’s passport to the hospital. Gotta overnight it to my mother. It’s in our suitcase. I’ll have the concierge give you a key card to the penthouse.” Mickey texted back. “What’s going on?” Shawn texted. “I’ll explain when you get here. Thanks,” Mickey answered. “NP,” Shawn sent back.

“Are you going to eat?” Erika asked politely. “Ian can eat now, too,” she added, although, to Mickey, Ian looked far too sedated to eat. “Sure,” he answered. “Okay, I’ll bring your breakfast. And Dr. Fisher will be in soon to discuss the plans for your son...and Ian,” Erika informed him as she walked out, blood samples in hand.

Mickey needed a shower and some clean clothes, if he was planning to stay much longer. And he’d
pretty much decided to remain with Ian, at least until he could arrange to get Yev to New York. In truth, Mickey didn’t have many clothes with him in New York, since Ian had packed the suitcase with only Yev’s clothes and his own. He decided to just call Shawn so he could bring everything he would need.

He hit ‘send’, and Shawn picked up on the half-ring. “Hey, man, sorry to be a pain in the ass, but...think ya could pick up some clothes for me, too? Probably gonna be stayin’ here awhile...” Mickey requested. “Sure, Mickey,” Shawn replied, without hesitation. “And if ya can wake Iggy’s ass from his drunken stupor, maybe ya could bring him?” Mickey added. “Yep, I can try...” Shawn responded, less than optimistically. Mickey was really beginning to worry that Iggy had an issue with his drinking, but he forced that notion from his mind, needing to limit his concerns to Ian and Yev, for the sake of his own sanity.

Erika returned with the breakfast Bigley had sent, Dr. Fisher trailing behind her. “Mickey, mind if I sit with you and have my coffee while we talk a bit?” he called across the room, as Erika wheeled a cart, filled with breakfast food, up between the beds. “Sure,” Mickey responded, although he didn’t have much of an appetite. “You think he’s gonna be able to eat?” Mickey asked, motioning toward Ian’s seemingly unconscious form. “We need to try to get something into his system, to keep his blood sugar regulated. Otherwise, he will need a feeding tube, which I’d really like to avoid,” Dr. Fisher explained.

“Okay, well, he fuckin’ hates me right now, so...doubt he’s gonna eat shit for me!” Mickey warned. “You might be surprised, Mickey,” Dr. Fisher began. “Yeah? Why?” Mickey asked skeptically. “The Ian we dealt with last night was completely irrational. At some point, he will realize that,” Dr. Fisher explained. “Well, it wasn’t this mornin’!” Mickey attested, “He was M-F-in’ me...calling me all kinds a names...” Mickey trailed off as Ian’s face caught his attention. His eyes were about half open, and he looked to be searching the room, maybe looking for him, he thought.

“Ian, I’m here. About to have breakfast. You gonna eat with me?” Mickey tried asking, hoping for the best. Ian nodded his head slowly, Mickey’s countenance instantly perking up with hope. “How we gonna do this, Doc?” Mickey asked, realizing very quickly that Ian would not be able to eat while lying down, fully restrained. “I’m willing to let his hands free and sit him up, if he agrees to behave himself,” Dr. Fisher said, making eye contact with Ian, whose eyes were now open a bit more.

“I don’t know, Doc. You sure?” Mickey whispered. “The Haldol should be wearing off, and he was given a short-acting sedative, so he should be coming around a bit. I started him on IV Tegretol early this morning to treat the mania, and it should also help with his pain. I don’t want him on an opioid any longer. I’m concerned he was overusing them, and they can be...” “Yeah, I know, Doc,” Mickey interrupted, “s’why I said somethin.”

“Okay, then,” Dr. Fisher said as he walked over toward Ian, coffee cup in hand. “Ian,” he began, “Are you in pain?” Ian nodded his head again slowly. “Okay, we’ll make an adjustment to your medication here in just a second. First, I’m going to remove your upper body restraints, so you can eat. Mickey would like to sit with you so you can have breakfast together. Is that okay with you?” Ian’s expression changed, although Dr. Fisher could not associate it with a particular emotion. “You still pissed at me?” Mickey just came right out and asked, Dr. Fisher shaking his head silently.

Ian nodded his head slightly, with less conviction than before. “You gonna take another swing at me, if the doc unties ya?” Mickey continued with his questioning, despite Dr. Fisher’s obvious contention about it. Ian shook his head, mumbling, “Too drugged for that...unfortunately.” Mickey’s heart sank. Not only was Ian still mad as hell at him, he was too medicated to even express it fully. And while he welcomed the break from Ian’s earlier tirade, it killed him to see Ian this way.
While Dr. Fisher busied himself with freeing Ian’s hands and making adjustments to his IV medication, Mickey opened a container, filled with eggs and vegetables, offering some to Dr. Fisher, then moving the entire container over to the side table. “You want a plate...or could I help ya?” Mickey asked, offering Ian a forkful of food. Ian just sat there, his eyes glazed over, appearing as though he hadn’t even heard Mickey. “Ian!” Mickey raised his voice, “Here!” Mickey pushed the food-filled fork against Ian’s lips, Ian finally opening his mouth just enough for Mickey to shove the food in sloppily. “C’mon, Ian. Help me out,” Mickey said in a lower, kinder voice. “I know you’re hungry. Maybe you’ll feel better...Ian!” Mickey called out, trying to retain Ian’s attention, to keep him focused on the task at hand, to no avail.

Mickey sighed heavily, taking a break from his futile attempt at feeding his husband to eat a few bites of food himself. “Okay, let’s try again...Ian!” Mickey yelled, when he was unable to get Ian to even look at him. “Mickey, I can have Erika come in and try, if you’d rather,” Dr. Fisher suggested. “No!” Mickey responded stubbornly. “You think you could let us have breakfast alone, then we can talk after?” Mickey asked, hoping some time alone with Ian might help. “Certainly, but keep the call button handy, in case you have any problems,” Dr. Fisher responded, turning to walk away.

“Thanks, Doc,” Mickey said graciously.

As soon as Dr. Fisher was gone, Mickey sat on the bed beside Ian, then leaned back onto the pillow next to him. He then pulled his legs up onto the bed, so he was lying, side by side, with Ian. Ian made a face that looked like he might shit himself, then elbowed Mickey in the ribs. “What the fuck, Ian!?” Mickey protested, moving his body even closer to Ian’s, instead of further away, like any normal, rational human being would.

Mickey counted to ten in his head, then turned onto his side, his mouth less than an inch from Ian’s ear. “I’m not leavin’, bitch,” Mickey hissed defiantly, “so ya might as well fuckin’ forgive me now. It’ll make things a fuck of a lot easier on both of us.” Ian made no attempt at a response, but also refrained from inflicting any further physical harm on Mickey, which he took to be a good sign.

Mickey lay perfectly still, his heavenly scent wafting its way over to Ian’s nose, calming his body, in spite of his irritated, cloudy mental state. “Mmmmickey...” he murmured, a sigh of contentment unexpectedly escaping his lips.

Meanwhile, Shawn had shown up at the nurse’s station, carrying three large shopping bags, filled with clothing options for Mickey, along with Yev’s passport, and his shopping buddy, Justin. “May we visit?” Shawn asked Erika. “I’ll walk you down,” Dr. Fisher interjected, “Want to be sure they are up for a visit. It has been a rough morning.”

While Dr. Fisher really wanted to get a plan put into place for Yev, as well as one for Mickey’s living arrangements during Ian’s treatment, he couldn’t really discuss anything specific in front of Justin. “Shawn, would you mind if just the two of us went in, for now?” he suggested, just before they reached the hallway to Ian’s room. “Sure, I totally understand,” Justin responded, finding a chair in the corridor to sit in.

As Shawn and Dr. Fisher proceeded toward Ian’s room, Dr. Fisher began to share some of his concerns with Shawn. “I am aware that you have been quite involved with the treatment of Ian’s bipolar disorder recently, and also that Ian and Mickey consider you to be a close friend.” Shawn nodded in affirmation.

“As I’m sure you realize, there will be some extremely tough times, during the coming weeks, occurrences that are part of the process, but that will be nearly unbearable for Mickey to witness. I would really like to convince Mickey to stay at the Soho, and to visit when Ian is doing well. I truly hope that, after this morning’s difficulties, Mickey might have seen the light, and decided to distance
himself a bit from the day-to-day treatment of his husband.

Upon entering the room, they found both Ian and Mickey fast asleep, Mickey’s head resting on Ian’s chest, Ian’s arms wrapped lovingly around Mickey’s body. Dr. Fisher shook his head in disbelief, as he turned to continue his briefing with Shawn, although he couldn’t help but smile, commenting, as he gestured at the entwined husbands, “If everyone with a mental illness had this much love and support, the world would be a better place!”
Shawn ended up just leaving Mickey’s items for him, Dr. Fisher having suggested that they not disturb the couple, since they had both been sleep-deprived. Dr. Fisher did, however, take the opportunity to speak with Shawn regarding his plans, requesting that he remain in New York for as long as possible, in order to provide follow-up care at the Soho for Ian. He knew already that both Ian and Mickey would be chomping at the bit to get Ian out of the hospital ASAP, and didn’t relish a repeat occurrence of what they’d just endured. Mickey was not the person who should or could monitor Ian’s medication regimen, and was too easily manipulated into allowing Ian to do all sorts of things he shouldn’t be doing. Dr. Fisher figured that Shawn, being a nurse, should be impervious to Ian’s powers of persuasion, although, after seeing the way Shawn looked at him, he wondered.

Shawn took some time to explain his situation: how he had come to be in Mexico with Ian and Mickey in the first place, where he had been working, the issues with the Russians and Italians at Chicago Memorial, and also his recent foray into the modeling industry. He confided that he was considering relocating to New York, if he could find a part-time nursing gig that would allow him to pursue modeling, as he had instantly fallen in love with it, not to mention his newly found affection for Justin. He also weighed in on the subject of Mickey staying with Ian throughout his hospitalization, sharing some details about Mickey’s hospital stay in Chicago, and how often he had looked the other way, allowing Ian to remain with Mickey overnight.

“They’re just so good for each other,” he remarked, at one point, Dr. Fisher countering with his concerns about Ian’s violent outburst, to which Shawn had replied with a laugh, “Trust me, when it comes to violence, it’s not Ian you need to be worried about!” “I guess Mickey did seem a little rough around the edges, when I first met him,” Dr. Fisher admitted, “but he’s been overwhelmingly tolerant and supportive, ever since their arrival here.”

“And he is, which is why you should just leave them together. Trust me on this. I’ve known them for years. They don’t do well when they’re apart,” Shawn related, his own words reinforcing his resolve to put his misguided designs on Mickey out of his head. There was no longer any danger of Ian not being there for Mickey, and, therefore, no room for him, something he realized, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the moment he laid eyes on the two making love. ‘Wow!’ he thought to himself, ‘Un-fucking-believable! Like two halves of a whole. And so damn hot!’ Shawn was certain they should never be separated, and he made sure Dr. Fisher understood that.

Mickey woke to the news that Shawn, Jeanine and Bigley had worked together to get Yev’s passport in the mail to Kayla, who was waiting for a call from Mickey or Ian to make decisions regarding Yev’s travel. Kayla had mentioned that Svetlana preferred Yev travel with someone, even though she understood that it couldn’t be her, because of her previous deportation.

Mickey had also received three texts, one of which was from the seller of the building he had arranged to purchase for the new Surfin’ USA location in Boca. He wanted to move up the date of the closing, and was willing to discount the price, in order to make it happen. The other two texts, one from Johnny, the other from Svetlana, involved a pending business relationship, each expressing their respect and admiration for the other, but wanting confirmation from Mickey that their instincts were correct.

Mickey was instantly overwhelmed, feeling as though he had stayed in bed too long and had a million loose ends to tie up. He had been awake earlier on, but didn’t want to disturb Ian, so he lay there, perfectly still, until Ian’s heartbeat lulled him back to sleep. He loved having that closeness with Ian, especially under the current circumstances, but he was paying for it now.
Ian, for his part, seemed a bit more like himself, although he was still in pain and mildly agitated. “Mickey,” he mumbled sleepily, Mickey looking over from the chair, where he was sitting, poised to begin making his phone calls. “Yeah?” Mickey answered, his tone the least accommodating it had been, since Ian’s period of captivity and torture. “I’m ready to go,” Ian continued, Mickey rolling his eyes, then glaring at him. “Ian, what the fuck!? Ya know ya can’t leave. Dr. Fisher’s gonna work on your new treatment,” Mickey said, Ian’s departure from reality annoying him more than it usually would. Mickey knew it wasn’t Ian’s fault, but with everything else he was dealing with, he wasn’t up for any more of Ian’s bullshit.

“No, I’m leaving,” Ian insisted. “No...you’re fuckin’ NOT!” Mickey yelled, immediately feeling like an asshole, once he read the bewildered look on Ian’s face. Mickey suddenly realized that Ian didn’t really understand what had happened, or what the new plan was. Hell, he didn’t even know that Yev was coming to New York to be treated.

“Ian, I’m sorry. I wanna explain, but I gotta make these calls first. Yev’s comin’, and I gotta get his shit scheduled. “Yev’s coming?” Ian chirped happily, his eyes lighting up the moment Mickey said it. “Yeah, man. Dr. Fisher is gonna work with both of you...and with me, too,” Mickey said with a half-smile. “S’why you gotta stay here and get started with the doctor now...and I’ll stay with ya.” “When? Is he gonna stay here? What is Dr. Fisher gonna do with him?” Ian pelted Mickey with questions until he thought he might haul off and punch him, but, of course, one bat of Ian’s eyelashes, and the urge passed.

At this point, Mickey realized he wasn’t going to get any phone calls made until he settled Ian’s ass down, which would only happen if he told him everything that was going on. And even then, Ian might tell him to go to hell. Mickey moved back over to the bed, sitting beside Ian, facing him, staring into his big, beautiful, green eyes. “Fuck...” he breathed, the reality of Ian’s incredible power over him making itself all too well known.

Mickey took a deep breath, looking away from Ian’s mesmerizing face in order to collect his thoughts. Mickey was really struggling with what could only be described as a revisiting of the way he felt for Ian in the beginning---the butterflies, the nausea, the feeling of being unable to think straight in his presence, a pervasive feeling of literally being ‘under his spell’---all occurring every time he looked into Ian’s hypnotically intense eyes . He didn’t know what to make of it, assuming it was yet another response to having nearly lost him.

All was going smoothly, at first, Mickey detailing Dr. Fisher’s willingness to work with Yev, but also mentioning his desire to proceed with an alternate treatment for Ian’s bipolar disorder. That’s when Ian bristled. “I thought we agreed to stick with the lithium,” Ian countered. “Yeah, well, ya weren’t takin’ it, Ian,” Mickey said as calmly as possible, given the anger that was slowly bubbling up inside him. He really didn’t have the time or inclination to battle Ian on this, and right about now, he wished Dr. Fisher would come in to share the wisdom behind the new treatment approach, since espousing the merits of a new treatment protocol to an apprehensive patient, who also happened to be a nurse, was well outside of Mickey’s skill set.

Deciding to fall back on the blunt honesty to which Ian was accustomed, Mickey finally said, “Look, I can’t explain it all to ya, but I trust Dr. Fisher, and so should you.” “Oh yeah, and why’s that?” Ian asked, really pissing Mickey off at this point. “Cuz Bigley pulled this guy off an international book tour...he’s a pioneer in this shit. He’s the fuckin’ best doctor money can buy! And besides that...he’s fuckin’ great! How many doctors would’ve untied your ass, after ya went fuckin’ nuts and punched your fuckin’ husband, who was only tryna help, by the way?” Mickey paused as he watched Ian’s expression change to one of profound sadness.

“I punched you?” he asked, his eyes filling with tears. “Fuckin’ right, you did!” Mickey answered,
raising his voice. “You’re damn lucky I didn’t hit ya back. I fuckin’ wanted to…” Mickey trailed off, seeing that his words had begun to make Ian see things differently. “Mick...Sorry…” Ian muttered, his voice thick with emotion. “Yeah...you fuckin’ should be. But I get that you’re not yourself, man. So let’s give this guy a fuckin’ chance, huh?” Mickey said earnestly, reestablishing eye contact and hoping to hell Ian was done arguing with him.

“Okay,” Ian answered softly, reaching his arms out for Mickey, who dove right into them, his entire body relaxing in Ian’s warm embrace. “Fuck, I missed you,” Mickey breathed. Ian gripped him tighter, holding onto him for dear life. “I ain’t goin’ nowhere,” Mickey added, perceiving Ian’s worry, given his newfound knowledge of some of his recent behavior.

“Now...you gonna let me make Yev’s arrangements, or you wanna do it?” Mickey asked, extricating himself from Ian’s unyielding grasp. Ian nodded his head, removing himself from Mickey so he could conduct his business. Mickey grabbed his phone to make a call to Kayla, putting the phone on speaker and taking a seat, once again, in the chair. “Hey, Ma,” Mickey said, both he and Ian smiling as they heard her response, “Hi honey! How’s Ian?” “I’m doing okay, Mom,” Ian answered, his face suddenly glowing at the sound of Kayla’s voice. “How are you feeling?” Ian asked. “I’m feeling like I was reborn, thanks to you, my angel!” Kayla replied brightly, adding, “I can never thank you enough, for the donation, and for being so wonderful to my son and grandkids. Ian, you’re the best!”

Ian, just noticing the bruise under Mickey’s left eye, started to cry. He didn’t feel like a wonderful person. After all, he had taken it upon himself to stop his medication, and he’d punched Mickey in the face, not to mention making Mickey’s life an unpredictable roller coaster ride, from the moment of his return. Ian was an emotional mess, up one minute, down, the next, and easily agitated, on top of everything else. He was almost afraid of his own reactions to things, not quite knowing what to expect, moment to moment. “My pleasure, Mom,” Ian managed to get out, despite his emotional lability.

So, Ma, I wanna get Yev to New York ASAP. You should get his passport tomorrow. I’m planning to ask Brach if he’ll travel with him. I need someone here for some meetings and conferences anyway. Before I call him though, I wanted to be sure Reesie’s doin’ okay,” Mickey explained. “Actually, I just spoke with her. She’s feeling much better, but I’m afraid she may be having some periodic stomach issues for the next few months,” she paused, allowing what she had just said to sink in. “What?!” Mickey exclaimed, shocked by his mother’s implication. “She told me it would be alright if I told you...she’s pregnant!” Kayla announced with great excitement. “Wow! They didn’t waste any time!” Mickey laughed, a big grin stretching across his face as he glanced over to get Ian’s reaction. When Ian stayed quiet, Mickey said, “Looks like you’re gonna be an uncle...again,” hoping Ian would say something. Mickey could see that Ian was a million miles away. In fact, he wasn’t even sure Ian had heard the news.

Mickey stood up, walking over to the bed with the phone. “Did you hear what she said? Reesie’s pregnant!” Mickey announced, repeating Kayla’s words, as he cupped Ian’s face in his hands, sitting down next to him, lifting his chin, and locking eyes with him. Ian nodded absenty, leaning his forehead against Mickey’s. “Ian...you okay?” Mickey asked, prompting Kayla to say, “What’s wrong?” “Nothin’, Ma. It’s alright. Can you...can you just do me a favor and talk to Brach and Reesie for me? See if at least Brach can travel with Yev? Tell him I’ll make the flight arrangements. I just need a text from him, saying he’ll do it. I gotta go,” Mickey spoke hurriedly, having pulled Ian in close, running his hand up over his back and into the hair at the nape of his neck, rubbing softly in attempt to provide him with some comfort and support to combat whatever inner demons were so obviously plaguing him.

“Okay, Mickey! Call me back...please! I need to know what’s going on there!” Kayla insisted,
reading the sudden change in her son’s mood and focus. “Okay, Ma,” Mickey answered, “Love you.”

“Ian...we’ll get through this. Ya just gotta stick it out, man,” Mickey whispered into Ian’s ear. Ian’s limp body rested, silent and motionless, against Mickey’s for the better part of five minutes, before Ian finally spoke, “I gotta talk to Dr. Fisher...right away! Alone.”
Go! Please Don't Go!

“I know you’re gonna say this is all normal, but…” “I’m going to stop you right there,” Dr. Fisher said, interrupting Ian’s preface to what he was about to share, “There’s nothing normal about anything you are, or have experienced, Ian. And that’s not your fault. It’s important that you do your best to identify your feelings. Then we can work on where they are coming from, and how to deal with them. Now...please continue.”

Ian breathed a sigh of what sounded like relief, at Dr. Fisher’s suggestion that he was not at fault for anything that had happened, or was happening now. Ironically enough, this was exactly the message he had tried to convey to Yev, and yet, he was struggling with accepting it himself. “Okay…” Ian began, not quite sure how to communicate his feelings, his brain still dulled with medication, his mind bouncing erratically from one emotion to another, “I guess I just feel...I want...I need to have Yev with me, when he gets here.”

“Can you explain to me why you think your son should bear witness to the unpredictability of your moods, given your current condition, relative to both your PTSD and your bipolar disorder?” “Well, I know it sounds selfish, but...” Ian paused, reluctant to say what he was thinking, out loud. “Ian, you can say anything in here. I want to hear what’s going on in your head. It’s vital to your treatment and recovery,” Dr. Fisher encouraged. “Alright!” Ian snapped, “I feel like Yev’s the only one who understands!”

“Ian, there are support groups. I was hoping to get a little bit further into your treatment, to stabilize you...” “Doc, I don’t need a support group. Just my son,” Ian asserted impatiently. “I hear you, and we will arrange for you to spend time together, but Yevgeni needs to be focused primarily on his own therapy. I have spoken to Dr. Montemurro. He suggests something intensive, but condensed, so as to enable him to return home as soon as possible, as I know is your goal as well.” Dr. Fisher said empathetically.

“But...Mickey...I...” Ian began, before Dr. Fisher continued. “I’ll make sure you all get the family time you need,” Dr. Fisher assured him. “It’s just...I’m worried...I get so pissed, so fast...and sometimes Mickey says something, or gives me a certain look, and I wanna...I just wanna make him...make him feel...what I feel,” Ian struggled to share his unsettling revelation.

“Are you saying you want to harm Mickey?” Dr. Fisher asked. “Not...not usually...but then it just comes over me...this overwhelming rage...I really can’t explain...” Ian fought against himself to put these disturbing feelings into words.

“Is there something common in all of the situations during which you’ve felt this way?” Dr. Fisher asked. “I...I don’t know,” Ian replied honestly. “Well, I definitely think Mickey should go back to the hotel to stay for a few days, at least until we can work through this in a session,” Dr. Fisher concluded, “And you need to make a list of all of the occasions during which you recall feeling rageful, or having the desire to cause harm to Mickey, or anyone else, for that matter.”

“Thanks, Doc. I know it’s gonna kill Mickey---and me---for him to leave, but the last thing I wanna do is hurt him...and I’m afraid...” Ian frowned, looking like he’d lost his best friend. “Would you like to share this with him?” Dr. Fisher asked. “Normally, I would automatically opt for breaking it to him myself, omitting the details. But I do see your relationship as a tremendously strong one, despite your current difficulties, one that is based upon honesty and trust. I don’t want to see you jeopardize that,” Dr. Fisher offered earnestly, adding, “I would be more than happy to be there to help you to explain, if that is something you are interested in.”
“That sounds...like a good idea, I guess,” Ian concluded, “But right now I’m already reconsidering it. I don’t know...” Ian said in a far-off, disconnected tone of voice that seemed to come from out of nowhere. “Ian, I’m going to make the executive decision that we meet all together after lunch today,” Dr. Fisher expressed authoritatively.

At that moment, Ian felt something snap inside him. He stood up and lunged at Dr. Fisher, yelling, “No!!” as he literally knocked him from the chair he was sitting on. “Ian!” Dr. Fisher yelled, struggling to free himself from Ian’s dominating force. “Jeanine! Ten milligrams of Haldol!!” Dr. Fisher screamed as loudly as he could as he could with Ian now sitting on his chest.

As luck would have it, Mickey was approaching the nurse’s station to share Yev’s flight itinerary and projected arrival time with Jeanine, when he heard the scuffle and Dr. Fisher’s cries for help. He ran for the office, beating Jeanine, who was still busy retrieving the medication.

“Ian!” Mickey yelled, jumping on top of him and wrestling him off of Dr. Fisher, just in time for Jeanine to arrive with a Haldol-filled syringe, which Mickey knew would turn Ian into a zombie for another twelve hours. “No! Please!!” Mickey begged Dr. Fisher, who was now lifting his disheveled form from the floor. “Jeanine, wait!” Dr. Fisher called out, seeing that Mickey had subdued Ian, and was instructing him to relax and breathe slowly.

“It’s alright, Ian. Whatever’s buggin’ ya, we can talk about it, okay?” Mickey panted, speaking as calmly as possible, under the circumstances. Ian was still trying unsuccessfully to wrestle free of Mickey’s control, Ian’s superhuman strength matched by that of Mickey’s desperation. He did not want his husband to be drugged, and knew that holding him down was the only way to avoid it.

“Ian...stop fightin’ me!!” Mickey yelled, as his task became more difficult. “You really wanna hurt somebody?” Mickey growled incredulously, “We’re all here to help ya...Please!!” Mickey was begging now, sweat pouring off his brow, tears down his cheeks.

“Mickey, we’re gonna have to...” Dr. Fisher asserted, Mickey interrupting, “No!! Please!! I got ‘em! I got ‘em!”

Ian seemed to be fighting less, although his body was still wriggling around underneath Mickey’s. “I’m gonna let ya up, Ian! And if you wanna hurt someone, hurt me!” he hissed into Ian’s face, his grip on Ian’s wrists loosening with exhaustion. Mickey let go, collapsing on top of Ian, who began to sob, “I’m sorry, Mick...sorry!” He rested his arms and hands loosely around Mickey, breathing heavily as he continued to weep softly into Mickey’s sweet-smelling neck.

“Are you done?” Mickey asked, raising his head to look Ian in the eyes. Ian nodded, pulling Mickey to him, once more. Mickey could feel Ian trembling beneath him, his own body moving against him reflexively. Mickey kissed Ian tenderly, holding his head up off the floor with his hands. Dr. Fisher looked on in utter amazement, Jeanine shrugging her shoulders as she set the syringe aside to go and fetch a wheelchair.

As Ian caught sight of Jeanine with the wheelchair, he shouted, “No! I’ll walk! I’m good! Mickey...help me...” Mickey was standing, by this time, and reaching his hand out to Ian, in response to his request for help, pulling him easily to his feet, then wrapping an arm around his waist, assuming the position that had become second nature to him in recent weeks. “Mickey, do you want...” Dr. Fisher began, Mickey talking over him, “We’re good, Doc. But we got some things to discuss...just the two of us.”

“Mickey, I...” Ian mumbled, Dr. Fisher interjecting, “If you’d like, we can all talk together,” Dr. Fisher suggested, giving Ian the option, this time. “Ian, if you think Dr. Fisher can help ya, I’ll wait in the room,” Mickey said, turning to face Ian. “No, I think you should stay, Mick. In fact, I
should’ve had you come in the first place,” Ian admitted shamefully.

“Ian, don’t be so critical of yourself. There was a reason you wanted to speak with me alone first, and it made sense. Now, let’s sit down together and formulate a treatment plan for you and your son,” Dr. Fisher entreated him. “Yeah, c’mon, have a seat,” Mickey agreed, guiding Ian into one of the chairs and standing behind it, rubbing Ian’s shoulders delicately.

“So, Mickey, Ian and I discussed some feelings he’s been having lately. And I had actually asked that he make a list of the circumstances under which he had felt as he described, but then he became upset when I told him I’d decided we would all meet together after lunch,” Dr. Fisher explained briefly, attempting to encapsulate the essence of his conversation with Ian in a few sentences.

“Mickey, the truth is, I’ve been getting really mad, really quick...and I don’t know why,” Ian confessed. “At me?” Mickey asked. “Well, it doesn’t happen that often, but...yeah...and when it does, I’m afraid I might hurt you,” Ian said, making the entire admission in a single breath, then gasping for air.

Mickey laughed, “Nothin’ you could do to me would hurt more than just knowin’ I’m the reason you’re pissed!” “No...you’re not the reason. It’s...it’s hard to explain. Shit, I don’t really understand it myself,” Ian spoke uncertainly, grappling with the difficult nature of the conversation as best he could, in his current condition.

“Doc, can you tell me what the fuck the problem is, so I can fix it?” Mickey asked, looking to Dr. Fisher with great concern. “Mickey, unfortunately, there is no easy fix...and it’s not for you to do the fixing. When Ian and I spoke earlier, we discussed the need for you to go back to the hotel, and to give Ian some space to work through his treatment, and to heal.”

“That what ya said, Ian? You want me to go?” Mickey asked, swallowing hard and blinking repeatedly, as he felt his eyes beginning to sting again. “Mickey, it’s not that. I just see that everyone else’s life is so normal back home...and mine’s a fucking mess. I don’t want yours to be that way...but when I’m pissed, then I kinda do...and you don’t deserve that,” Ian expressed his unsavory, ill-conceived thoughts with the kind of brutal honesty that typically only came from Mickey’s lips.

Mickey looked down at the floor, feeling hard-pressed to look at Ian, fearing the expression he might find on his face. And he was at a complete loss for words. What could he say, after hearing that his own husband wanted to hurt him, that he felt rage, rather than love toward him. His world was crumbling around him, with no way for him to stop it.

Ian may not have realized it, but he had definitely succeeded in making Mickey suffer, in some sense, the way he was---being powerless over his entire situation. Ian had felt this way during his captivity, and again afterward. Despite his attempts to regain some type of stewardship over his own life, doctors, nurses, and his husband all seemed to be conspiring to force his compliance to their collective will, not unlike the Russians had done, albeit with much less violence and physical pain.

Mickey was slowly beginning to realize how emasculated Ian felt. Now even the wild, post-surgery sex they’d had, had new significance in Mickey’s mind. Ian needed desperately to have control over some aspects of his life, and in their own ways, both Mickey and Dr. Fisher had taken that away from him on a regular basis. His reaction to this was primal, visceral---emanating from his subconscious, from deep within him---from where his anger bubbled up until it exploded.

“Alright, well, I gotta go. Yev’s plane’s landing in a few hours, and I gotta get the room ready for him,” Mickey explained, excusing himself so he could fall to pieces privately, rather than in front of Dr. Fisher. He truly did want to work with him, but not with Ian practically kicking him out, and Dr.
Fisher all too willing to support his exclusion from Ian’s treatment. Mickey hadn’t felt this unwanted by Ian since he’d left him at the border, seven years back.

“Just let me know when ya need him here, and I’ll make sure he’s here,” Mickey assured Dr. Fisher weakly, choking back tears as he backed away. Ian nodded silently in agreement.

As Mickey turned for the door, Ian watched him sorrowfully, calling to him frantically as soon as he disappeared down the hall, “Mickey...wait!!” Mickey turned around instantly at the sound of his lover’s voice, Ian leaping to his feet and running to him. “I’m sorry! I don’t know what the fuck is wrong with me! Please...don’t go!!!” Ian begged, “PLEASE!!” Mickey threw his arms around Ian instinctively, his mind reeling as it struggled to catch up. “Jesus Christ, Ian! The fuck am I gonna do with your crazy ass?!” Mickey breathed into Ian’s heaving chest, utterly exasperated. “Just please don’t give up on me,” Ian pleaded, taking a deep breath, his nose buried in the crook of Mickey’s neck, “Please...”
Brach and Reesie were also booked at the Soho, and offered to Uber there with Yev, which allowed Mickey a bit more time to get back to the room and set up a comfortable space for Yev. Dr. Fisher had said it was important for Yev to feel as ‘at home’ as possible in order to make his temporary relocation to New York for therapy less traumatic.

Mickey went out shopping, buying whatever White Sox posters, pennants, etc. that he could find in a city filled almost exclusively with Mets and Yankees items. He also texted Svet, asking for any pictures she had of herself with Yev, and had large prints made of those, along with pictures of Yev, Ian and him, including some of the early modeling work they had done together.

His last stop was Whole Foods, where he picked up all of the needed ingredients for Yev’s favorite, macaroni and cheese. He’d decided to hold off on making it, since he knew how much Yev enjoyed cooking it with him. He didn’t know how long Yev would have to stay, but he wanted to make things as easy on him as possible, and for him to be as happy he could be, under the circumstances.

As he was making these preparations, Mickey’s mind kept returning to the scene he had walked in on, earlier that day at the hospital, Ian’s words ringing in his head, “Everyone else’s life back home is so normal...and mine’s a fucking mess!” Mickey felt so powerless to help him, and yet also responsible for all of the damage that had been done, not only to Ian, but to Yev, as well.

After all, it was his father and his family who had all of these mob connections, in the first place, and, while he had been made aware that Terry wasn’t actually his biological father, he was still married to his mother and unwilling to give her a divorce. And it was Mickey’s insistence on getting that matter resolved that had brought this entire horrific sequence of events down upon his family. He refused to see Ian’s complicity, or Doc’s or Johnny’s, for that matter. In Mickey’s mind, he was to blame, and he had to make it right.

What he wanted most to do was to get revenge, to kill those two motherfuckers that he had freed from his trunk, in order to leave with Ian, free and clear. But he knew that would only serve to start another war, which would jeopardize his family’s safety all over again. Still, Mickey, like Ian, felt rage.

The big difference was that, while Ian’s manifested itself as violent outbursts directed at others, Mickey turned his inward, pressuring himself to make things better for everyone, to fix all of their problems. And when he couldn’t, he blamed and punished himself.

He told himself that he didn’t deserve Ian, and that was the reason Ian had wanted him to leave. Simply put, he believed he just wasn’t good enough, a lesson he was taught repeatedly as a child by the man he believed was his father. The reality was that Mickey needed therapy every bit as much as Ian and Yev, but he was keeping himself far too busy as their caretaker to ever realize it and take action to help himself. Instead, he castigated himself relentlessly, feeling like a failure, as he’d always figured he would be. All of his success in the business world was no longer significant, its importance paling in comparison with the welfare of his family, which he felt completely incapable of ensuring.

Once Mickey had put away the groceries and hung all of the assorted wall hangings in the room where he planned for Yev to sleep, he stood at the door to the penthouse, awaiting Yev’s arrival in the elevator. He paced nervously, hoping for the best, but fearing the worst at the same time. He knew Yev would immediately ask to see Ian, and he dreaded having to explain where he was and why. He knew he wanted to keep the discussion brief and simple, but he also understood his
inquisitive son would bombard him with questions, not to mention how worried he would instantly become about Ian, regardless of how hard Mickey might try to allay his fears.

As he heard the elevator door open, he practiced smiling, inhaling and exhaling deeply in a last-ditch effort to calm himself before swinging the door open. “Daddy!!” Yev squealed happily, Mickey instantly opening his arms so Yev could fly right in. “Hi Mickey!” Reesie said, smiling brightly, Brach nodding respectfully. “So...uh...congratulations!” Mickey stuttered awkwardly.

He really was happy for them, but thinking about their unborn child made him miss Mikhaila, who had stayed behind with Grandma. He reflected briefly on the circumstances surrounding her conception, suddenly becoming more at ease with Reesie’s current situation. Brach was a great guy, after all, and besides, who was he to be critical of Reesie’s decisions? At least she was in a relationship with the father of this one. He figured this kid might have a shot at a normal life, which made him smile. After all, he’d sure made enough mistakes himself to last a lifetime, and yet, Yev had turned out, at least so far, to be a loving, respectful, highly intelligent child.

“Where’s Daddy Ian?” Yev asked, right on cue, less than one minute after his arrival. “Yev, how ‘bout if we cook some dinner and we can talk. “Okay, Daddy, is Daddy Ian eating with us?” Yev asked. “No, but maybe we can call him after we eat. ...s’go cook. I bought everything we need for mac n cheese!” Mickey spoke with manufactured excitement, for his son’s sake. “Yeah!” Yev cheered, running to the kitchen area, grinning from ear to ear.

“You wanna stay and have dinner?” Mickey asked Reesie and Brach politely, although, in truth, he hoped they would decline, not relishing the kinds of questions Reesie was certain to ask, especially in front of Yev. “We’d love to, but I’m so tired…” Reesie yawned, “I just want to get settled in so I can get some rest. I promise we’ll go out before we go back home.”

Home. Reesie had said it innocently enough, and yet, it sent Mickey’s mood plummeting to new depths. He honestly wondered if they’d ever get back home to Mexico, and if they did, he questioned whether they’d even all be together. For the first time in what seemed like forever, Mickey was having doubts as to whether his marriage was going to last, over the long haul.

Ian was just so sick. Not that Mickey would ever leave him. He promised to love him in sickness and in health, ‘til death do they part, and he meant every goddamn word. It was Ian that concerned him. He was starting to see less and less of the Ian whom he believed loved him, and more of an Ian that was angry, resentful and, at times, deranged.

This went beyond his bipolar disorder, which was challenging enough, in and of itself. Being manic brought completely unpredictable episodes of insane and/or psychotic behavior, while being depressed raised the specter of suicide. Mickey knew both of those conditions all too well. But these random violent outbursts, followed by deep remorse, only to be repeated at another completely unexpected time, were extremely difficult to handle, not to mention the blows Mickey’s self-esteem and the marriage, as a whole, were taking, each time it happened.

Brach and Reesie had excused themselves politely, leaving Mickey to entertain and distract Yev. He didn’t think a visit tonight was a good idea, but he knew Yev would insist upon it, if he talked to Ian. And yet, he was hard-pressed to deny him the phone call he had already promised.

As Mickey entered the kitchen area, he could see that Yev already had a large pot of water boiling, to which he had added the package of macaroni, and he looked to be hunting through the refrigerator for the cheese. “Cheese’s in the drawer,” Mickey called to him. “Thanks, Dad. Can we call Daddy Ian after this goes in the oven?” Yev asked brightly, clearly anxious to talk to Ian. “Where is he,
anyway?” he added, before Mickey could address his first question. Mickey paused, taking a deep breath as he drained and poured the pasta into the casserole dish.

“Yev, he’s at the hospital. They’re workin’ to get some of his medications right for him,” he explained as simply and briefly as possible. “Oh, well then, can we just go see him after dinner? Or maybe we could take him some and eat all together. Grandma says hospital food is the worst!” Yev rattled on excitedly, as he added the cheeses. “I’m just not sure he’s up to visitors,” Mickey sighed, popping the casserole dish in the oven, and hoping his response would be enough. “But Dad, we’re not visitors! We’re his family!” Yev protested. “And he told me he couldn’t wait to see me! And I can’t wait to see him!!” Yev was getting worked up, and Mickey could tell he was about to cry.

“Alright, but I have to call the doctor first. And if he says no, then we ain’t goin’. Period,” Mickey acquiesced reluctantly, setting the conditions bluntly. Yev immediately ran to his suitcase, which Mickey had stowed in the room he had decorated for him. “I brought something for...Wow! Dad! How did you get all these pictures?” Yev asked, just as Mickey had walked in behind him. “Look how little I was in this one!” he shouted cheerfully as he pointed to one from a Surfin’ photo shoot. “Yeah, you weren’t even four,” Mickey remarked, admiring his gorgeous husband’s beautiful smile. “Let’s take this one with us! I want Daddy Ian to see it!” Yev asked, pulling the framed photo from the wall. “I told ya, I gotta call first,” Mickey reiterated, trying not to be harsh with Yev, despite his own concerns with the prospect of visiting Ian, one of which was the possibility of another outburst or, worse yet, that Ian might reject them. Mickey really didn’t know if he could handle hearing that Ian didn’t want him around, twice in the same day.

“Call! Call!” Yev yelled impatiently. Mickey picked up his phone, walking away into the living area as he rang Dr. Fisher’s cell phone, which he picked up in one and a half rings. “Mickey!” Dr. Fisher answered, “I was going to call you, but I wanted to give you time to get Yev settled in a bit, although I…” Mickey interrupted, “I know you might think it’s a bad idea, but Yev wants to bring Ian dinner.” “I think that would be a great idea, and I have something to ask you that may surprise you, especially after all that happened earlier today. “Yeah, what is it?” Mickey asked, intrigued by what he’d heard so far. “What do you think about giving Yevgeni a room here in the new wing, near Ian’s, but separate?” Dr. Fisher asked, adding, “He needs to be here for therapy anyway, and it’s not like any of the other rooms are being used yet. I wouldn’t ask this early, but Ian has been absolutely insistent upon it, and we had a pretty good session after you left. I’d hate for this to cause a setback.”

“I don’t wanna decide that for him. You gonna be there, if we bring dinner? It’s almost ready,” Mickey replied, feeling a bit left out of the equation, but choosing not to voice his discontent. “Yes, Mickey, if you’re coming, I’ll definitely wait here. I’m looking forward to meeting Yevgeni, and to seeing the interaction between him and Ian. “Okay, Doc. I’ll pack a bag for him and we’ll see how it goes then,” Mickey said, preparing to end the call, when Dr. Fisher added, “I also want you to consider the possibility of staying with Yev, so you might want to pack a bag for yourself, as well.” Mickey’s heart began to race, a wide smile slowly spreading across his face. “Ian okay with that?” he asked. “Mickey, it took me over an hour to calm him after you left this afternoon. Ian is in a lot of pain, both physically and psychologically, and he’s very troubled, but I can tell you one thing for sure: he loves his family, and he’s fighting hard to hold onto what you guys have,” Dr. Fisher expressed confidently.

“We’re on our way!” Mickey exclaimed, absolutely beaming as he ended the call, yelling to Yev, “Need ya to bring your suitcase into my room, while I take the macaroni out!” “So we’re going?” Yev asked eagerly. “Yep! I’m just gonna throw some of my clothes in with yours, just in case,” Mickey explained. “In case, what?” Yev asked curiously. “Yev, just get the suitcase! We gotta go!”
Mickey called out breathlessly as he ran from the kitchen to his bedroom to grab some of the new clothes Shawn had selected for him. Yev met him there with the suitcase, and within minutes, they were in an Uber, headed to the hospital for dinner with Ian.

When they arrived, both Mickey and Yev could barely contain their excitement. It was an absolute toss-up, as to which of them was more keyed up. As they walked into the hospital, Mickey whispered, “Tonight you will meet the doctor who’s helpin’ your dad, and he’s gonna help you, too!” Yev smiled and nodded his head as they made their way to the nurse’s station, where Dr. Fisher was standing.

“You must be Yev,” he said, using the nickname in hopes of sounding less formal, “I’m Dr. Fisher. I’ve heard a lot about you.” “Nice to meet you, Dr. Fisher. I’ve heard you’re helping my dad. Thank you!” Yev smiled sweetly as he shook Dr. Fisher’s hand. “You and Ian certainly have raised a wonderful son,” Dr. Fisher commented as he headed down the hall toward Ian’s room, Mickey and Yev trailing behind him, suitcase and dinner in tow.

“Ian, Look who’s here?” Dr. Fisher called into Ian’s hospital room. Ian’s eyes opened wide as he took in the sight of his son and his husband, trundling in with delicious-smelling food and a suitcase. “Does this mean…” Ian began, Dr. Fisher cutting him off. “Let’s see how things go.”

“Daddy Ian, are you okay? Dad said they’re fixing your medicine,” Yev said softly as he ran over to Ian’s side. “I feel better now that you guys are here! This is family! You guys are what I need to get better. Come here. Give me a hug!” Ian chirped joyously, Yev lifting himself up onto the bed, then wrapping his arms about Ian. “Dad, family hug!” he squealed, reaching for Mickey, who was quick to respond, joining in from the other side of Ian’s bed. “I love you guys so much!” Ian spoke emotionally, squeezing them both tightly.

“Are you hungry?” Yev asked, moving away to dish up some macaroni for everyone. “I’m starving,” Ian replied, pulling Mickey’s face down to his for a slow, passionate kiss. Mickey could feel a twinge between his legs, but returned the kiss aggressively anyway, wondering if his body would ever stop reacting this way to Ian, even at the most inopportune moments.

Yev carried the dinner plates over to the bed, one at a time, sitting them on the side table, then opened the suitcase, removing the picture he had packed inside. “Daddy made this for me, but I want you to have it in your room, while you’re in the hospital. Then I want it for my room when we go home. Is that okay, Daddy Ian?” Yev asked, holding the picture of the three of them up for Ian to see.

“Sounds perfect, Yev!” Ian responded, “You always have the best ideas! Speaking of which, how’s the math coming?” Ian’s face brightened as he listened to Yev detailing his progress in his online math class, both Mickey and Dr. Fisher looking on in amazement. Dr. Fisher took the opportunity to watch the family dynamics, marveling at the positive change he saw in Ian, with the introduction of Yev into the equation.

Once the family was nearly finished eating their dinner, Dr. Fisher asked Yev what his thoughts were about staying in another room in the hospital with Mickey, before excusing himself for the evening, “Yeah, I wanna stay! But why can’t we stay with Daddy Ian?” Yev answered, then putting Dr. Fisher on the spot. “I’m hoping you all will be leaving the hospital soon, but for now, until your dad’s medications are in balance, I need you to stay in the room we set up for you,” Dr. Fisher replied delicately, Ian throwing his support behind the idea. “Yeah, Yev, they have to wake me up a lot for blood work and stuff. This way, you and Dad can sleep.”

“I’m hoping you and your dads will work hard in therapy, so you all can get the most from it. “We will, Dr. Fisher. We promise, right, Daddy Ian?” Yev’s little voice squeaked. “That’s right, Yev,”
Ian said with a smile, holding Mickey’s hand in his own and rubbing his thumb over Mickey’s, as Mickey fed him his last bite of macaroni, Yev having wrapped himself securely in Ian’s other arm. “That’s good, Yev! I’ll look forward to seeing you tomorrow! Take care of your dads,” Dr. Fisher called over his shoulder as he left the room. “I will! Thank you, Dr. Fisher!” Yev exclaimed.

Mickey breathed a huge sigh of relief, clearing the plates and taking his place on one side of Ian, Yev on the other, Mickey laying his head on Ian’s chest. Ian stroked the side of Mickey’s face tenderly. “Thanks for coming back,” he whispered, “I love you.”
Giddy Up!

Mickey woke up in the middle of the night, immediately looking over at his son, who was fast asleep in the other bed, which was now flush against his. The night had gotten off to a rough start, Yev having fallen asleep briefly, after reading a chapter from the book he brought with him, but then waking up screaming for his Daddy Ian. Mickey, who had been struggling to fall asleep himself, responded immediately, consoling him in his bed, then making the suggestion that they push the beds together, which they were able to do pretty easily with some help from a semi-burly, not-too-bright security guard, who, from what Mickey could tell, had been hired, probably by Bigley at Dr. Fisher’s behest, to keep an eye on Ian, just in case the nurse on night duty needed any muscle to subdue him.

While Mickey didn’t like the idea, it sure enabled him to sleep a bit better, knowing he didn’t need to be the one on ‘Ian watch’ all night, although at the moment, all he could think about was laying eyes on him. He craved him, like an addict craves his drug, and had been fighting the urge to sneak into his room, every waking moment of his night. He knew if he tried paying a visit, the guard would surely see him, so, after a painful hour and a half of wakefulness, during which his cock was as hard as a rock, he made the decision to talk with the guard, silently sliding out of bed and stealing into the bathroom, where he donned a robe and headed for the hallway.

Mickey knew he should probably weigh his words carefully, but that just wasn’t his style, so he resorted to what he knew, his typical, blunt, no-bullshit way of handling such matters. “Yo, rent-a-cop, I know you’re supposed ta watch Ian, make sure he ain’t doin’ nothin’ stupid, but see, I need to go in there for a while. And I don’t need you, or anyone else, checkin’ up on us. I’m tellin’ ya now, we’ll be fine, so go take your fuckin’ smoke break, or get a sandwich, or whatever...and take your time, cuz I got this handled. I’ll let ya know if we need ya,”

Mickey needed to be next to Ian, to feel Ian’s perfectly warm, comforting body against his own, although he definitely wouldn’t object to a conjugal visit. As the guard nodded at Mickey, heading down the hall toward the exit, Mickey sidled into Ian’s room, planning, at first, to sneak into the bed with Ian, unannounced, but after recalling the fear, pain and jumpiness Ian had exhibited recently when he had been startled awake, he opted to whisper into his ear, making Ian aware of his presence, as he crawled into the bed next to him.

“Ian, it’s Mickey. Okay if I lay with you awhile?” Mickey breathed into Ian’s ear. Ian mumbled softly, seemingly in response, changing his position slightly, then appearing to return immediately to sleep. Mickey wondered if he’d heard him or not, and wasn’t sure how to proceed. He stayed very still, careful not to touch Ian, for fear of scaring him, or even possibly sparking a violent reaction. Mickey could feel an arousing, electric heat emanating from Ian’s body. It was absolutely killing him to be so close, and yet not be able to touch him. And he was so focused on not disturbing Ian, that there was no way he could possibly fall asleep. He was really beginning to think he had made a mistake, when he heard Ian mumbling, “Mmmmickey...fuck, I want you…”

Ian was lying on his stomach, apparently having an erotic dream, literally humping the bed, at this point, and all Mickey wanted was to be under him, to feel him pressing himself against him—and damn it, if he wasn’t going to make it happen. He rolled Ian onto his side, then rolling his own nearly naked body over so his ass was just inches from Ian’s gown-cloaked cock. He then began to rut his hips backward against Ian’s junk rhythmically, Ian reciprocating and countering his movements almost immediately. Ian moaned with pleasure, his excitement building by the second, the energy transfer between the two men so strong that Mickey’s cock was throbbing torturously the moment Ian began to thrust up against him.
“Ian,” Mickey whispered, “You awake?” “What do you think?” Ian growled, flipping Mickey onto his back, then crawling down the bed until his mouth was hovering over Mickey’s boxer-clad, swollen cock. “Mmmm…” Ian hummed as he yanked Mickey’s boxers down over his hips and lowered his sexy mouth onto Mickey, sucking lightly at the tip of Mickey’s dick, swiping his tongue over Mickey’s sensitive slit intermittently. “Oh fuck yeah, Ian!” Mickey groaned, his brain and body reverberating with pleasure.

“So you don’t want me to stop?” Ian teased, sucking more slowly, more intermittently, his tongue teasing Mickey as it trailed languidly up and down his shaft. “Fuck no!” Mickey answered, although he could tell, knowing his husband the way he did, that he was in for it. Ian was going to take his good old time, and Mickey was going to be begging before the night was over. There was no point in Mickey even trying to modify the plan, so he took a deep breath, settling into the idea that Ian would control his pleasure: when, how, and in what way it was going to be achieved.

Ian took command of Mickey’s body, pumping his cock vigorously with his hand as he continued to expertly manipulate its tip with his mouth and tongue. Mickey began to breathe heavily, thrusting himself up into Ian’s mouth reflexively. Ian brought Mickey so close to the edge, so fast, Mickey knew he could erupt at any moment, especially since it had been a few days since their last encounter.

That’s when Ian slowed everything down to a snail’s pace, moving his hand away, in order to take Mickey’s full length into his moist, hot mouth, ever so slowly, painstakingly, savoring every glorious inch as it passed his lips. “Fuck!” Mickey whined, letting out a heavy sigh. As he exhaled, the tense air hissing from between his teeth, Ian taunted, “What’s the matter, Mick? You don’t like to have your dick sucked?”

“Yeah, fuck yeah, I do, but…” Mickey breathed, squirming under Ian’s tantalizing tactics. Ian continued, running Mickey through the cycle again, this time stopping completely, just after Mickey had muttered, under his breath, “I’m so fucking close.” Then he he resumed, hitting Mickey’s ‘restart’ button, his desire caught in a hopelessly frustrating loop of near climax, followed by a lack of stimulation, lasting just long enough to stop him, then leading to a slow, gradual build, until he was about to blow again. “Arghhh!” Mickey bellowed in utter exasperation. “What? You don’t like how I’m doing it?” Ian teased, slowing down yet again.

Ian repeated this pattern for what seemed like an eternity, adding two lubricated fingers up Mickey’s ass, just to sweeten the pot a bit more. “Ian, fuck me!!” Mickey finally wailed, writhing in absolute agony, muttering expletives and pulling at Ian’s hair desperately, as Ian persisted in his maniacal methods of making Mickey so insanely hot for him, that Mickey was just about in tears.

And then it happened; Mickey gave up his last shred of dignity, in a last-ditch effort to get Ian to let him cum. “Ian, I swear...I’ll do...anything you want, just PLEASE!! I fuckin’ need you NOW!” Mickey whimpered, tears of ecstatic suffering rolling from the corners of his eyes, down the sides of his face, now tugging so hard at Ian’s hair that even Ian worried he might be pulling it out.

Mickey could see Ian’s monstrous cock poking out of his gown, so incredibly engorged, it looked as if it, too, could burst at any moment. “C’mon, Ian,” Mickey begged, “I know you want me, too...what the fuck?!” All of a sudden, Ian stopped completely, his eyes trailing up Mickey’s body, an intense, almost sadistic look in them. “You’re gonna cum when I decide you’re gonna cum! You got that?” he snarled, giving Mickey’s begging cock one last swipe with his tongue before lifting himself up to straddle Mickey. He stared down into Mickey’s ice blue eyes, their expression, one of complete resignation, giving over complete control to his husband.

“Now, I’m gonna take my time...and you’re not gonna rush me. Got it?” Ian hissed down at Mickey,
as he began to rub himself all over Mickey, grinding on him slowly, antagonizing him nearly to the point of climax. Mickey moaned loudly, the sounds floating from his lips, between his rapid, shallow breaths, like a desperate S.O.S. signal.

Finally, just as Mickey began to believe his body might betray him and explode onto his own stomach before Ian even fucked him, Ian grabbed Mickey’s ankles, twisting his legs into a cross-legged, pretzel-like position. “Hold ‘em,” he grunted, as he reached down to guide his dew-drizzled cock into Mickey’s waiting ass.

Mickey tucked his legs up into his arms, while Ian lubed himself, then slowly began his entry, lowering his head to kiss Mickey, his tongue sweeping over Mickey’s swollen, pink lips, then pushing past as they parted, anxiously awaiting the full unveiling of Ian’s passion. “Feels so amazingly fucking tight for me, Mick,” Ian breathed into his mouth between sensual kisses, as he pushed himself further into Mickey. Mickey moaned deeply, completely overtaken with desire, his erotic euphoria growing by leaps and bounds with every successive thrust. “Oh fuck...Ian...you...you’re so fucking…” Mickey couldn’t even string a sentence together, he was so far gone, his body’s base cravings dominating his brain, the pleasure far too intense for words, his mind completely focused on Ian and the monumental gratification he was now providing, one fantastic stroke at a time. Mickey lifted his head from the pillow, moving his mouth to Ian’s neck, sucking and biting wildly, his lips making their way up to Ian’s earlobe. Mickey gripped the lobe between his teeth, then sucked on it feverishly, his low, guttural groans vibrating against Ian’s eardrum, sending shivers over his entire body.

“Mickey, Mickey, Mickey...so fucking good!!” Ian called out as he continued to fuck his husband adeptly, increasing his speed, in spite of himself. “Fuck it!” Ian screamed, after he could hold off no more, pulling Mickey’s legs straight up into the air, Mickey immediately encircling and hugging Ian’s body with them frenetically, rocking up and down, counter-thrusting against Ian’s hips as Ian gazed down at him, lost in the celestial beauty of Mickey’s sweat-soaked face, his pale skin glowing, his crystal blue eyes burning into him, mesmerizing him as he brought them both ever closer to their inevitable climax.

As Mickey’s eyes locked onto Ian's gorgeous green eyes, he made another attempt to communicate his thoughts, which were limited, at this point, to signalling his release, “Ian...I’m gonna…” “Yes, I know...because I’m gonna make you do it! Right now!” Ian hissed, grasping Mickey’s cock and stroking it swiftly to intensify Mickey’s orgasm. “Oh, fuck!!!!” Mickey squealed in a voice that was an octave higher than usual, Ian pounding into him for his final few strokes, before erupting, deep into Mickey’s tremendous ass, Mickey clenching tightly around Ian’s breathtakingly beautiful phallus as they came explosively together, moaning each other’s names as they watched one another’s furrowed brows, blown pupils, and flushed faces reach the ultimate in pleasure, each taking pride in the fruits of their sexual labors.

“Damn, Gallagher!” Mickey panted, collapsing atop Ian’s spent frame, his own, equally so. Ian continued to breathe hard himself, remaining uncharacteristically quiet. “So...what the fuck got into you?” Mickey finally asked, referring to the insanely intense edging he had endured at Ian’s ever-capable hands. “Did you like it?” Ian responded, an evil glint in his eye. “Fuck, yeah! Now I did! But at the time…” he trailed off, licking and nibbling playfully at Ian’s nipples. “Too much?” Ian asked, to which Mickey remained silent, beginning to bite at his nipples more aggressively.

“Oh....so you looking for more?” Ian inquired with a sexy smile. “Maybe I am....” Mickey replied, now making a meal of Ian’s nipples and pecs. “So...” Mickey began, pulling his mouth away from Ian’s chest momentarily to look up at him, “Did you like it?” he asked, knowing full-well the answer, before he asked. “Of course,” Ian laughed, “I especially loved dominating you, controlling every aspect of your reality, making you wait, making you beg, feeling like you might be pissed, but you
couldn’t do a damn thing about it! You still have to rely on me for your pleasure, your release, your everything.”

“Jesus Christ, Ian! That’s fucking nuts!” Mickey commented, off the cuff. “Really? I was afraid…” Ian began, Mickey cutting him off, “But crazy hot, at the same time. I fuckin’ loved every goddamn second of it, and hearin’ what you were thinkin’ makes it even hotter,” Mickey expressed with a growing grin that made Ian’s insides tingle.

Deep down, Ian worried that his experiences as a tortured kidnappee had turned him into an evil, sadistic fuck. In fact, some of the scenarios he conjured up in his head made him shiver with excitement and revulsion at the same time. He knew he could seriously hurt Mickey, if he got too carried away. But there was just some kind of sexual rush that he got, when thinking of taking Mickey to the brink in every way humanly possible: pain, pleasure, desire, affection, rejection, happiness, sadness---he wanted to control it all! He was getting hard again, just thinking about it.

“Ready to go again?” he asked Mickey, smirking salaciously, grinding himself against Mickey. “Yep!” Mickey answered, without hesitation, “Giddy up!!”
Jekyll and Hyde

Mickey and Ian had fallen asleep, their exhausted bodies intertwined in the usual way, both men completely at ease, when they were awakened suddenly by Yev’s cries, “Daddy! Daddy! Where are you?” He was obviously in a complete panic, and both fathers scrambled to get dressed to attend to him. As they approached the room, they could see that he was up out of bed and already near the door to the hallway. “Where were you, Dad??” Yev yelled as Mickey walked in, before he noticed that Ian was right behind him. “Oh!” Yev exclaimed, his frightened scowl quickly becoming a smile, “Can you stay with us, Daddy Ian? Please?” he begged, his adorably pleading face tugging at both Ian and Mickey’s heartstrings.

Ian and Mickey turned and looked at each other, neither knowing how to answer. “It’s…it’s almost morning, Yev, so…” Ian paused, trying to find a way to let him down as easily as possible. “So maybe just this once…” Mickey interjected, Ian shooting him his ‘Are you crazy?’ look. “It’ll be alright,” Mickey assured them both, “I’ll talk to the guard,” he smirked as he made eye contact with Ian again. Ian rolled his eyes, a momentary giggle escaping from his lips, at what he knew, in his mind, Mickey had done in order to gain entry into his room in the first place, although Mickey hadn’t told him a thing.

Yev was completely oblivious to all of the looks being exchanged, his parents’ non-verbal communication remaining between the two of them, as Yev cheered in celebration, “Yay! The whole family together!!” “Shhh...Yev! Be quiet!” Ian scolded. “I’m sorry, Dad,” Yev began, his eyes filling with tears, his head turning suddenly to look toward the door. “Are we in trouble?” he continued in a tiny, fearful whisper. “No...no, of course not,” Ian responded, quickly approaching Yev and pulling him in for a reassuring hug. “Yev, I’m sorry I got upset. Sometimes I get mad and react to things before I even realize it,” Ian explained. “Me, too!” Yev said softly, his face brightening as he realized his father understood something about him that he didn’t even understand himself.

“Hey, don’t leave me outta this!” Mickey objected, “I been gettin’ pissed and losin’ my temper over little shit my whole life!” “That’s different!” Ian argued, Yev nodding his head in agreement. “Alright, in the beds, both of ya!” Mickey ordered as he shut off the overhead light, Yev scurrying back to his bed without a single word of protest, Ian turning to follow Mickey to the other side of the two beds.

Once all three were in bed, Mickey added, “Now, go to sleep! We have a big day tomorrow!” And there was complete silence for a moment, Ian pulling Mickey up against him, nestling his nose in the crook of Mickey’s neck, then breathing into his ear, “You were fucking incredible tonight.” “Mmmm Hmmm,” Mickey muttered, pushing his ass backward against Ian’s hips, ever so lightly, so as not to be detected by Yev, who was lying on the close edge of his bed.

While Yev was none the wiser to his father’s movements, Ian certainly was. “Can’t wait to get you alone...really alone,” Ian purred at such a low volume, Mickey questioned whether he’d actually heard him say it, but the goosebumps all over his body wouldn’t lie. Many times over the course of their marriage, Ian’s comments had made Mickey miserably hot for him, when there was no chance of relief. This was one of those times. Mickey couldn’t seem to get enough of Ian, and he knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that it was the same for Ian. He couldn’t wait either, but he knew they had a long road ahead of them, between Ian and Yev’s PTSD treatment and Ian’s new bipolar protocol.

Once Mickey finally settled his ass down, he was able to fall asleep fairly easily, Yev following suit, shortly thereafter. Ian, on the other hand, couldn’t seem to settle in. His body was still tired, but his
mind was racing. He mulled over his interactions with Mickey during their session from a clinical standpoint, attempting to determine where all of these bizarre, disturbing thoughts were coming from.

Part of his brain told him that it was his desire to dominate, which he knew he inherently possessed, and that it was simply heightened, due to the decreased frequency of their lovemaking, that he was squeezing each session for all it was worth. He also advanced an alternative theory; the thoughts were the product of a heightened sex drive, which he had read could be a temporary side-effect of the Tegretol he was currently taking for his mania and pain.

It was true—he was horny as hell anytime he was anywhere near Mickey. In fact, when Mickey had left the day before, after Ian’s revelation, Ian had been so distraught that he picked up a shirt Mickey had worn, burying his face in it and inhaling deeply, Mickey’s ambrosial scent filling his sinuses. This helped him to relax, but also gave him a tremendous hard-on. But there seemed to be more to this than sexual desire, Ian forced himself to admit. Some of his thoughts were quite dark, exceeding, by far, even his most wicked BDSM pre-kidnapping fantasies.

Ian concluded, much to his horror, that these new ideas, desires—obsessive thoughts—emanated from his experiences as a torture victim, and it scared the living hell out of him. He knew he didn’t want to hurt Mickey. He was, after all, the love of his life, his everything. But try as he might, he couldn’t drive these disturbing thoughts from his head. He rubbed his whole face into the nape of Mickey’s neck, his body shaking as he expressed his profound, intractable sadness silently, his tears moistening Mickey’s neck and the pillow below them.

He tried his best to pull himself together, to tell himself he was overreacting, and that this was nothing more than a fleeting condition—time would heal him, make him the way he was. He promised himself he’d never hurt Mickey; he couldn’t, because he loved him too much. None of these mental self-assurances, however, could calm him, and after so much crying, he needed to blow his nose. When he pulled himself away from Mickey to get out of bed, Mickey turned to him, whispering, “...the fuck’s wrong?”

Ian wanted so badly to share all that was on his mind, to be completely open and honest with his husband, as he knew Mickey would want, and fully expected from him, but he just couldn’t bring himself to do it. The mere mention of this kind of stuff to Dr. Fisher had nearly cost him his husband and son’s presence at the hospital with him, and he feared Mickey might find it necessary to share this with the doctor, once he heard the extent of his malevolent ideation.

“Can’t sleep,” Ian mumbled as he hoisted himself out of the bed, heading for the bathroom. Mickey jumped up, following him closely. When Ian went to push the door closed behind him, Mickey caught it with his hand. “Nope. Ya ain’t gettin’ off that easy,” he muttered, trying to keep his voice down so he wouldn’t wake Yev. As he pushed his way into the bathroom, closing the door, then advancing toward Ian, Ian just burst into tears again, Mickey grasping him by the waist with both hands, pulling his body into his own, then enveloping him in a warm, comforting embrace and whispering into his chest, “Whatever it is...let me help. We got this, Ian. Trust me.”

Ian cried harder at the sound of Mickey’s tender, supportive words. ‘If he only knew...’ Ian thought to himself. Then his mind returned, once more, to how much he wished he could share all of it with Mickey. “I guess I’m just worried,” Ian spoke generally, hoping Mickey would just drop the subject. No such luck. “Yeah? What’s on your mind?” Mickey asked, taking a step back to look Ian in the eye. ‘Fuck!’ Ian said to himself, realizing he couldn’t lie to Mickey’s face, which was exactly why Mickey was looking at him. He knew Ian was holding something back, and he wanted the full story, regardless of how unpleasant it might be to hear and/or handle.

“Well?” Mickey sighed impatiently. Ian stood, frozen and mute, his lips trembling, literally incapable
of forming a single word, his eyes welling up with tears, yet again, his nose running, trickling down over his top lip. “Jesus Christ, Ian! You’re a mess!” Mickey muttered, grabbing a tissue to wipe his nose and lip. “Here! Blow you’re fuckin’ nose!” Mickey added, handing him a fresh tissue.

“Are ya depressed? Is that it?” Mickey questioned, taking a wild stab, at this point. Ian shook his head. “What then!” Mickey growled, now completely frustrated and feeling utterly powerless to help Ian. Finally, Ian broke his silence, “Tomorrow,” he said softly. “You gonna bring it up in your session?” Mickey asked hopefully. Ian shrugged his shoulders, looking so miserable that Mickey backed off with his interrogation. “C’mon, let’s go back to bed,” Mickey suggested, picking up the box of tissues, then wrapping an arm around Ian’s waist as they left the bathroom, bound for the bed they were sharing.

“Relax,” Mickey breathed as he nestled himself into his personal cocoon that was his husband’s body. He wanted to wrap himself around Ian, to give him a full body hug, but knowing the sensitivity of Ian’s legs and rear end, he decided against it, choosing what Ian was accustomed to, in hopes that it would be comforting. As it turned out, that position, coupled with Mickey’s soothing reassurances, eventually lulled Ian back to sleep, the warm, repetitive cadence of Ian’s breath on Mickey’s neck, easing him into a light doze soon after.

Mickey and Ian were awakened simultaneously by the sound of someone clearing his throat. Both sets of eyes opened abruptly, immediately recognizing the man who was approaching the foot of the bed as Dr. Fisher. “I thought I might find you here, Ian,” he began with an uncomfortable smile. “Yev was afraid last night,” Ian offered quickly. “Yes, I see you’ve made a family bed of sorts,” Dr. Fisher responded, glancing over at Yev, who was still fast asleep.

“My early live via satellite appearance was postponed until this afternoon,” Dr. Fisher continued, choosing to table any further discussion of the sleeping arrangements for the moment, “So I was hoping to get started this morning. Any preference as to whom I see first?”

“Well, Yev’s sleepin;” Mickey responded. “No...I’m not,” Yev replied, yawning and stretching in his bed. “Would you like to be first today, Yev? We could all have a quick breakfast together, since Mr. Bigley seems to be having enough food for an army delivered each morning, then you and I could have a little chat. How does that sound?”

“Okay, I guess. Can my parents come?” Yev asked timidly. “How about if we all talk together at breakfast, and if you’re feeling good about it, the two of us can talk? If not, I’ll talk to your dad first,” Dr. Fisher negotiated. Yev nodded, still acting very shy, which was out of character for him. “Yev...I’ll go first,” Ian offered. “And I wanna talk to ya, too,” Mickey interjected, Ian casting a subtle look of disapproval in Mickey’s direction.

“Okay...first things first. Let me know when you all are up and ready, and we’ll eat,” Dr. Fisher said kindly, before walking out of the room. “Yev, how ’bout you shower and get dressed in here, and we’ll use the bathroom in the other room, since all of our things are in the suitcase in there,” Mickey suggested. “Okay, Dad,” Yev answered, moving slowly toward the bathroom. “There’s soap and shampoo in there,” Ian told him, “And did you bring your toothbrush?” Yev rolled his eyes at Ian, looking so much like Mickey that he couldn’t help but chuckle, “I’ll take that as a ‘yes’,” Ian said, walking out of the room.

As soon as Ian and Mickey got into the other hospital room, Ian took one look at Mickey, and something inside him ignited. He was filled with rage, desire and sexual excitement, all centered on the goal of inflicting pain on Mickey as a means of self-gratification. He wanted to make Mickey suffer, for the sake of proving to him that he had no choice but to endure the punishment he was about to inflict. He could feel the excitement building inside him, the more he thought about all he
was going to do to him.

He lifted Mickey off his feet and threw him onto the bed. “Get on your hands and knees!” Ian commanded authoritatively. “What the f…” “NOW!!” Ian barked, making a move to barricade the door with the visitor’s chair. “Ian, what the fuck’s your problem? Yev, or anyone else, could walk in here any second!” Mickey countered, completely bewildered by Ian’s sudden, bizarre behavior.

“I don’t fucking care!” Ian ranted, jumping on top of Mickey and tearing his boxers off. “Okay...okay! Can...can we at least go into the shower, where we can lock the door?” Mickey reasoned, trying to remain calm, hoping it would have a pacifying effect on Ian. “No!” Ian growled, “I’ll decide where we’re gonna go...and you’ll like it...or else!”

Now Mickey’s temper was flaring. Sure, he and Ian had done some wild shit to each other, some of it, in fact, had become a regular part of their sex life, but it had always been consensual. Well, pretty much, anyway. Only once had anything ever even bordered on being an involuntary situation in the past, and it had been Ian who was on the receiving end. It was the first time, and it was spur of the moment, brought on by something Ian had done to Mickey. Plus, he ended up loving it anyway.

Was that what was in Ian’s head now? ‘Does he think I’m gonna love it?’ Mickey wondered. He’d certainly enjoyed Ian thoroughly the night before, but this felt as if it were escalating to a whole new level. “Ian, I’ll do whatever ya want, but I don’t…” “Damn right, you will,” Ian growled, biting Mickey’s ear hard as he began shoving himself into Mickey forcefully. “Hey, man...Lube?” Mickey yelped, his asshole burning as it hadn’t in ages. “Shut the fuck up!!” Ian hissed into Mickey’s ear, grasping his neck tightly between his hands and squeezing hard, his teeth still clenched onto Mickey’s earlobe and now drawing blood. “Now give me what I want! Scream for me, bitch!!” Ian growled into Mickey’s bloody ear as he pounded into Mickey’s unlubed, unprepped asshole.

“That’s it!” Mickey yelled, gasping for air as he fought to free himself from Ian’s cruel, unrelenting control, “I ain’t nobody’s bitch!” Once he had finally wrestled himself out from under Ian, he turned the tables, flipping Ian onto his back so fast, Ian didn’t know what hit him.

Once he got his bearings, Ian fought like a demon to get loose from Mickey’s unyielding grip. “Your not gonna do this to me, you motherfucking piece of shit!” Ian screamed at the top of his lungs, at which point Dr. Fisher, hearing all of the commotion, had pushed his way in, past the barricade, to find Mickey’s naked ass atop Ian, blood dripping from his earlobe, down the side of his red, hand-mark encircled neck, Ian continuing to shout derisive expletives at Mickey as he fought to overpower him.

Dr. Fisher fumbled for his phone nervously, as he watched the wrestling match between the two husbands ensue. “Jeanine! Haldol!” was all he said, once she answered.

“Ian, do you even know who I am right now?” Mickey asked, breathing hard and clearly desperate to get through to his beloved. “It’s Mickey...Your husband! You love me...You really wanna hurt me?”

Ian stopped fighting, and stared up into Mickey’s shimmering, gorgeous, forgiving eyes, too frightened and ashamed to say anything. “Ian, it’s okay,” Mickey panted, reading the look on his face. “We’ll get through...but you got talk to Dr. Fisher about this,” Mickey insisted. “This ain’t gonna just go away.”

Mickey’s own words echoed in his head as he moved toward the bathroom to shower, leaving Ian on the bed to answer to Dr. Fisher.

Mickey started the shower, then panicked, running back out into the room to address Dr. Fisher.
“Please! No more drugs!” he pleaded. “Mickey, he could have killed you!” Dr. Fisher countered, as Jeanine walked in with the syringe. Mickey looked at Ian, then countered, “I’d rather be dead than have you do that to him...Please!”
“Mickey! What the fuck’s going on?” Reesie’s asked, her voice bordering on sounding frantic.
“Where are you?” Mickey responded. “We’re out in front of the entrance to the new wing, where
Shawn said you were staying, but they won’t let us in! They won’t say anything other than that they
have a situation! Are you guys okay?!” “We will be,” Mickey answered, sounding much more
confident than he actually was, a defense mechanism he’d developed expertly over the course of his
life.

“Well, can we see you? We were hoping to take you guys to dinner, before we leave, but since it
doesn’t seem like that’s possible…” Reesie trailed off as Mickey interrupted, “Not a good time,
Reesie. Sorry,” Mickey answered. “So...you’re not gonna tell me what’s going on?" Reesie asked
indignantly. “Can’t,” Mickey replied, looking over at Ian, Yev and Dr. Fisher, who were seated just
a few feet away, having breakfast. “Can you at least answer a question?” she asked. “What?!”
Mickey muttered into the phone. “Is something wrong with Ian?” she followed up with. “Yeah...you
could say that,” Mickey said softly, his voice cracking slightly.

“Mickey! Please step out and talk to me! I can’t leave without knowing what’s going on! And when
will you be home? Mikhaila asks about you guys every day!” Reesie whined, now near tears herself.
“Alright...gimme a few minutes,” Mickey answered, ending the call immediately afterward.

When Mickey returned to the table, Dr. Fisher was talking with Yev about different types of feelings
he might be having, as a result of what he’d been through, one of which was fear, the other, anger.
“Dad and I both have the anger, Yev volunteered, “And my other dad says he has it, too, even
though he wasn’t there with us. I think it’s because he loves us so much.”

“That’s right,” Mickey chimed in, taking a seat across from Ian and Yev, who were sitting, side-by-
side. “We love you, too, Dad,” Yev said with a sad smile that was beyond his years. Ian nodded
silently, his eyes moving over Mickey’s now-bandaged ear. Mickey had told Yev he had cut it
shaving, after Jeanine cleansed and bandaged it for him.

Dr. Fisher continued, explaining the process Yev would be going through, in order to understand
and deal with the feelings he had identified, as well as others he may not yet understand enough to
describe with words. Again, Ian nodded, his eyes indicating a deep level of comprehension and
empathy.

“Hey, I gotta handle something, so I’m gonna give you guys a few minutes to talk without me. I’ll be
back soon,” Mickey interjected, excuseing himself as politely as possible, under the circumstances,
and heading for the hospital entrance.

“Mickey!” Reesie called out to him as he exited the building, approaching him with open arms and
pulling him in for a heartfelt hug. “So tell me about Ian,” she spoke nervously, after they separated.
Mickey took a moment to shake Brach’s hand, before responding, “Ian is havin’ major anger issues.”
As Mickey spoke, Reesie looked at him more closely, noticing his ear. “What happened?” she asked,
pointing to the bandage. “Uh...he bit me...” Mickey mumbled, his eyes downcast, his face turning
red with embarrassment. “Oh my God! Mickey!! Are you okay? Is there more?” Reesie asked, her
mind instantly reflecting back on the many injuries she had treated him for while he was in prison.

Mickey nodded silently, still avoiding eye contact. “C’mere,” she said quietly, stretching her arms out
to him again, Mickey reluctantly going in for the hug. “You poor thing,” she breathed, quickly extricating himself from her embrace and
turning for the door. “Can I at least see Ian?” she called after him. “Not a good idea. I gotta go. Ian needs me,” Mickey called over his shoulder, just before disappearing back into the hospital.

Reesie just let him go. She didn’t have the heart to tell him what Shawn had shared with her. Iggy had been perpetually drunk, ever since their last gathering, and had been thrown out of every bar within a two mile radius of the Soho. Both Shawn and Justin, between modeling gigs, had attempted to sober him up and talk some sense into him, but it was no use. They had wanted Mickey’s permission to contact Bigley about it, in hopes that he might be able to help, since one of the things Iggy consistently rambled on about, when he was sober enough to speak, was his new job, working for Bigley.

As Mickey returned to the makeshift breakfast table in the otherwise vacant waiting area, Yev was nowhere to be seen, and Ian and Dr. Fisher were talking, but stopped as soon as they saw Mickey approaching. “...I interruptin’ somethin’?” Mickey asked, looking at one, then the other. When neither offered an immediate answer, Mickey added, “Where’s Yev? I can go sit with him, if ya need ta talk in private.” “No, it’s okay, Mickey. Yev just went to the bathroom, and we were talking about what happened this morning,” Dr. Fisher explained. “Oh yeah?” Mickey asked, raising his eyebrows as he looked at Ian. “Yeah, Mick, I told him everything,” Ian said in reply to the question Mickey had asked him without words.

Mickey looked away in embarrassment. “Mickey, you have nothing to be ashamed of,” Dr. Fisher began, Mickey holding his hand up, communicating nonverbally that he didn’t want to pursue the current subject any further. “Mick, we gotta talk about it,” Ian said, Mickey countering, “No...you gotta talk about it! You’re the one that did it...to me!”

Mickey stormed off, unsure of where he was even going, only that he needed to be away from Ian as he discussed the violent attack he had endured at Ian’s hands earlier that morning. He was doing his best to put it out of his mind, to move on and be supportive of Ian’s treatment, in hopes that he would get better, that they could resume their normal lives. Was listening to Ian discuss how he humiliated him really part of what he had to do, in order to be ‘supportive’?

Mickey continued to ponder his role in Ian’s treatment as he searched for Yev, deciding he should try to keep him occupied so Ian and Dr. Fisher could continue their conversation. When he finally found Yev, he was on his way back to the breakfast table, but stopped to talk to Mickey. “Dad,” he began slowly, “Dr. Fisher said there was a change in plans. He said he’s going to have Daddy Ian’s session first, and then he’s going to talk to you.

“Me?” Mickey asked incredulously. “Yes, probably about your anger,” Yev guessed, based on the earlier discussion they’d all had together at the breakfast table. Mickey nodded, putting his arm around Yev’s shoulder as they walked toward Ian and Dr. Fisher.

“We are going to reconvene in the hypnosis room,” Dr. Fisher explained, as he and Ian rose from their seats at the table. “Yev and I will sit here awhile. Think I’ll grab some breakfast myself, then maybe you and me, we can go for a little walk,” Mickey responded, looking over at Yev, who nodded with a smile.

“Okay then, Mickey, I’d like you to be here in an hour to begin your session,” Dr. Fisher requested. “Alright,” Mickey agreed, for the sake of setting a good example for Yev. Had Yev not been there, Mickey might quite possibly have balked at the idea of a session, given the recent turn of events. Yev’s treatment was too important, however, to jeopardize in order to cater to his own insecurities.

Once Ian and Dr. Fisher reached the hypnosis room, Dr. Fisher suggested that, rather than delving into a hypnosis session, they begin with some discussion of other traumatic experiences. “Were they any other events in your life, Ian, that made you feel particularly helpless, and where someone other
than you controlled the situation in a violent way, whether it be actual, physical violence, or the threat of it?” Dr. Fisher began. “Tons of them,” Ian answered right away. “Okay, can we start with one that you feel was one of the most severe?” Dr. Fisher continued.

“Sure,” Ian mumbled, thinking to himself for a moment. Okay, there are two...no, actually three, that...Wait, do I have to be the one who was in physical danger?” he asked. “Well...not necessarily. Are you saying two of your most traumatic experiences, outside of those during your recent captivity, involve danger to someone other than yourself?” Dr. Fisher asked. “Yes...well, I was in danger, but I felt more helpless when Mickey was,” Ian replied.

“Okay, please tell me about them,” Dr. Fisher requested. “Okay...One time, when I was around 17, Mickey’s dad...he caught us together. We were...well, we were...uh...not dressed...and he attacked me...started beating me, but then Mickey jumped on him, and he turned on him...and started beating him...pistol-whipped him...and I couldn’t do anything. He held a gun on me when I tried,” Ian paused, taking a deep breath.

“And can you identify your feelings during this event?” Dr. Fisher asked, clearing his throat in order to keep his composure. “Well, at first, I was scared to death, but then I got really pissed, like I wanted to kill Terry! I hated him for what he was doing to Mickey that day, and for how he always treated him! If he wouldn’t have had that gun, I don’t know what I would’ve done...But he did, so I couldn’t do a thing to stop him...had to watch Mickey suffer...just like Yev,” Ian explained, his eyes tearing up.

“Alright, I want you to...” Dr. Fisher began. “No! I’m not done with the story!” Ian protested, bouncing his leg on the ball of his foot as he continued, “He beat Mickey until he was basically unconscious. Then he called Svetlana, Yev’s mother, who was a whore at the time, and made Mickey fuck her in front of me, at gunpoint.” Dr. Fisher tried not to get flustered, but this was quite the story, not that he hadn’t heard worse, but for he and Mickey to have endured this together, it explained a lot about the closeness of their relationship. They were victims together. He instantly began wondering about other instances there might have been in Mickey’s life, and of those, how many Ian had experienced with him.

“And can you identify your feelings during this event?” Dr. Fisher asked, clearing his throat in order to keep his composure. “Well, at first, I was scared to death, but then I got really pissed, like I wanted to kill Terry! I hated him for what he was doing to Mickey that day, and for how he always treated him! If he wouldn’t have had that gun, I don’t know what I would’ve done...But he did, so I couldn’t do a thing to stop him...had to watch Mickey suffer...just like Yev,” Ian explained, his eyes tearing up.

“Okay, so how did Mickey react to all of this, from your perspective?” Dr. Fisher continued to probe. “He...he wouldn’t talk to me. One day, when I tried...he was drunk, and he beat me up...” Ian recalled painfully. “I didn’t fight back. I thought Mickey had been through enough. But I guess his dad didn’t agree. Svetlana ended up pregnant, with Yev...and Terry forced Mickey to marry her. I went to see him at the church. He wanted me to leave...probably cuz he was afraid we’d get caught together, but we ended up making love in the church basement, before the wedding.”

Ian rattled on with this heart wrenching story, and ended up basically giving a history of their early lives together—the marriage, Ian’s leaving for the military, Mickey’s coming out, his job as a stripper, the porno he did, his kidnapping of Yev, his initial hospitalization and diagnosis with bipolar disorder, his arrest and brief military incarceration, Mickey’s subsequent, related incarceration, his escape, their flight to, and subsequent break up at the Mexican border, and finally, their reunion, after Ian’s near-death experience in Lake Michigan. He also mentioned Mickey’s mother’s illness, of which Dr. Fisher was already aware, as well as his own mother’s death.

Dr. Fisher looked at him in utter disbelief. “Good God, Ian! Your life with Mickey has been...well, it’s beyond my ability to put it into words, the cruelty and pain you two have endured, some of it at each other’s hands. Ian...we’ve got to find a way to get at the heart of the motivation behind your current desire to harm Mickey. It seems to be rooted in a wish to make him suffer. Do you feel that he has made you suffer?” Dr. Fisher questioned.
“That’s just it. He’s been so fucking good to me, for so long, I just…” Ian trailed off, seemingly in deep thought. “Continue,” Dr. Fisher prodded. “I don’t know...maybe I wanna make him mad enough to treat me like shit, cuz I think I deserve it? I don’t know. But there’s a part of me that wants to inflict pain, just for the reaction...ya know? And that’s fucking sick, right?”

“Ian, I think you’ve identified two very large issues we need to deal with, before we can continue with the hypnosis. I’d like to start with some cognitive behavioral therapy. Are you familiar with that?” Dr. Fisher inquired. “Yeah, I figured we might be doing that,” Ian responded. “And I’d like, with your permission, to have a second session, each day, with you and Mickey together, once I’ve talked with him individually today,” Dr. Fisher suggested. “That’s fine,” Ian said softly, his face suddenly looking sad. “What is it, Ian?” Dr. Fisher asked.

“I...I have this overwhelming feeling of guilt and remorse...and I just want Mickey to know how much I love him,” Ian shared. “I think he knows, but certainly, you can tell him,” Dr. Fisher responded. “Can...can I have some time with him...please?” Ian pleaded. “Well, I really need to meet with him, and I don’t want to lose the opportunity to talk with Yev either, since he seems to have become more open to it today. How about if you say a few words to Mickey before his session, then the two of you can talk at more length during Yev’s session?” Dr. Fisher recommended.

“Sounds like a plan,” Ian said with a smile, his heart suddenly feeling lighter, knowing he would get to spend time with Mickey, to make up for all that he’d done. “Why don’t you go see if they are back from their walk yet?” Ian made a beeline for the door, racing to the waiting area, but it was empty, the remnants of breakfast having been cleared, as if they’d never even been in there. Ian pulled his phone from his pocket, calling Mickey. The phone rang and rang, then went to voicemail. Ian left a message, his voice trembling with trepidation, “Mickey...I’m so fucking sorry! I wanna make this up to you! Please forgive me! I love you so fucking much!” after which he sat at the table, breaking down and sobbing into his own hands.

Within minutes, Mickey came around the corner from outside---alone. “Hey...just met up with Reesie at the park. She’s gonna hang out with Yev during my session, in case you wanna sit in,” Mickey said with a weak smile. “Did you get my message?” Ian asked, looking away, ashamed of all he’d done and not wanting to see Mickey’s ear. “What message?” Mickey replied. “Nevermind, I’ll tell ya in person,” Ian said, wiping his own tears vigorously as he made eye contact with Mickey.

“Can I hold you?” Ian asked timidly. “You gonna bite me?” Mickey snorted, Ian not really sure whether he was joking or not. “Only if you want me to,” Ian replied, the corners of his mouth perking up ever so slightly, as he tentatively reached for Mickey, a look of sad desperation in his eyes. Mickey allowed himself to be taken into Ian’s arms, and he was home again, his body relaxing into Ian’s as if they were one. Ian breathed softly into Mickey’s healthy ear, “I’m sorry, Mick. I’ll do better...I promise.”
Hearing about Ian and Mickey’s traumatic history from Mickey’s perspective was quite different from the way Ian had shared it. The story was the same, as far as the sequence of events, and all of the scenarios Ian described were consistently detailed by Mickey. The major contrast between the two was the manner in which the tales were told. When Mickey spoke about these horrific, sometimes life-threatening ordeals, he had a casual, resigned tone, as if all of these terrible things happening was just a part of life, to be accepted and moved past.

Talking with Mickey had certainly shed light on the reasons behind his reactions to the attacks Ian made on him, as well as his handling of the earlier shared trauma involving his father. Mickey had been an abuse victim for nearly his entire life, and had come to accept much of his suffering, particularly at his father’s hands, as ‘normal’. As a result, he had a much higher tolerance for these types of things than Ian, and tended to bounce back better. The ability to recover from repeated abuse and continue to thrive is a blessing that not all victims are gifted with, but Mickey definitely was.

As Dr. Fisher pondered their situation, he felt certain that Ian’s love had carried Mickey through many of his hardships, even when they weren’t able to be together. Somehow, it seemed that, for Mickey, knowing Ian was out there somewhere, loving him, kept him going. Now Dr. Fisher hoped the converse would be true. After all, Mickey had been there consistently for Ian, ever since their reunion. He knew he needed to underscore Mickey’s devotion, to make Ian see it for the tremendous benefit that it could be, and for the self-sacrificing gift that was being so freely given to him by his loving husband. To Dr. Fisher, Mickey was nothing short of phenomenal.

And as they were nearing the end of the session, Mickey asked that Ian come in, so they could discuss how best he could be a help to Ian’s recovery. Dr. Fisher assured him that he would be made aware during their daily sessions together, but Mickey insisted they start right away. Dr. Fisher, having compassion for all that Mickey had been through that day, as well as throughout his life, acquiesced and brought Ian back in.

“Ian, Mickey has asked that you come in to talk with us briefly about what his role should be in your recovery. Of course, I have my ideas on the subject, which will likely become the basis of my plan, once we’ve worked through some things, but I’d like your input, and I know Mickey would, as well. Mickey nodded in agreement, gazing over at Ian, his eyes still, miraculously, filled with hope. “Well, one thing that he can do is let me make this up to him,” Ian began. “I’m so fucking sorry for what I did to you! And Doc, you gotta fix me so I won’t EVER do something like that again.” “Ian, your treatment is going to take time. You know that,” Dr. Fisher interjected. “Yeah, I know, but I just gotta be with him...alone...to know that he’ll trust me again...you know, give me a chance to be his husband again,” Ian begged.

“If you mean getting into a sexual situation again, I don’t...” Dr. Fisher couldn’t finish his sentence, before Mickey cut in, “I’ll do it! And if ya need to feel in control, ya know I can handle that. Just gimme a heads up,” Mickey spoke honestly, obviously much more at ease discussing such matters in front of Dr. Fisher than Ian had expected. He looked over at Mickey, his expression one of total shock. Mickey assumed Ian was surprised he would say such things in front of anyone, but, in reality, Ian was equally shocked by Mickey’s willingness to allow him total control, after what had just happened.

“Really, Mick? Wow! I’m not gonna fuck this up. Promise,” Ian said earnestly, now readying himself to make an even more daring request. “Can I take him to the hotel? You know, during Yev’s session?” Ian asked, adding, “Please?” which was accompanied by the most pitifully pleading face
he could muster.

“Ian, I don’t think that’s a good idea, and even if I did, you won’t have enough time to get there and back, even. I plan to keep Yev’s first session on the short side, due to his age, and the newness of our relationship,” Doc explained politely. “My sister’s in town, and can take him after his session,” Ian argued. “Yeah, and I’m good with it...really,” Mickey said, brave as fuck. “Mickey, how can you be?” Dr. Fisher asked incredulously.

“Because, Doc, I love him more than me. He’s more important to me. If he ain’t happy, doesn’t matter about me, cuz I won’t be either. Get it?” Mickey reasoned, Ian’s eyes filling with tears. As it turned out, Dr. Fisher wasn’t going to have to draw attention to Mickey’s devotion, in order for Ian to see it. Mickey was putting it out there himself, plain as day.

“And if ya try to stop us...and I’m not bein’ disrespectful...I’m gonna walk right outta here with him anyway. Ian’s gonna get what he needs from me. Period,” Mickey said in his usual, blunt manner. Dr. Fisher loved Mickey’s straightforward approach to things. He could already see that it was going to save him a lot of time. He wouldn’t need to ponder how to best address something with Ian that pertained to Mickey, at least not too often, because Mickey was, nine times out of ten, going to tell Ian himself.

“Well, then, I guess we’ll save the rest for tomorrow. You two should get going, though I have to say again that this course of action is against my best judgment. But, for the record, I understand. I, too, have been in a situation when there was nothing I wouldn’t have done to help someone I loved. Go! And Ian, look at what you have in Mickey---really see it---not many people get what he gives to you, every day of your lives,” Doc spoke frankly, almost as if Ian and Mickey were his personal friends.

“Yeah, well, Doc, you don’t know what he gives me either,” Mickey countered. “Oh, I think I’m starting to understand. Our session today did shed some light on it,” Dr. Fisher commented. “No, Doc, not on this,” Mickey said with a grin, raising an eyebrow at Ian, which resulted in an instantaneous twinge in Ian’s fast growing cock, just as Mickey knew it would. Dr. Fisher chuckled at the whole scene, waving them off, while in utter disbelief that any of this was actually happening.

Ian’s fingers flew over his phone as he texted Reesie to ask her to wait for Yev and take him out for lunch after his session. He suggested a pizza place near the hotel, promising to meet them there, once he and Mickey had some time alone to ‘talk’. Not wanting, in her mind, to deny them the opportunity to fix whatever had resulted in Mickey’s ear being bitten, and God knows what else, she agreed readily, indicating that they were almost at the hospital, after walking from the park. She said Yev was in good spirits and looking forward to his session with Dr. Fisher.

Ian smiled seductively over at Mickey as he read her message, then reached for his hand. “Call an Uber,” he requested softly. “Already did,” Mickey returned with a mischievous grin. As he took Ian’s hand and headed for the door, where they ran into Reesie and Yev. “You feelin’ okay?” Mickey asked, glancing down at Reesie’s tiny belly. Normally, a woman wouldn’t show this early, but because she was so thin, naturally, she already had a barely visible, tiny baby bump. “I feel great, Mickey! We had a wonderful time, and are looking forward to lunch. Brach will be there, too. He wants to talk to you about the beachfront building---something about an early closing---he said you’d know...” Mickey cut Reesie off, “Yeah, I know, “ then turned his attention to Yev. “How’s my little man doin’?” he asked, tousling his hair and putting an arm around him. “I had fun, Dad. How was your session? Did Dr. Fisher help you?” Yev responded.

“Yeah, a lot!” Mickey smiled. “We’re going to talk about some of the stuff now,” Ian explained, Yev’s smile brightening at the thought of his family getting back to normal. “After pizza, I want to
log into school, if it’s okay. I really want to go to math class. I’ve missed some days and need to get caught up,” he explained. “Okay!” Ian said, absolutely beaming. He was so proud of their son—his strength and resiliency, his work ethic, and especially his caring heart. To Ian, Yev was just like Mickey, only not so rough around the edges. He often thought Mickey would likely have been just like Yev, had he not had so much hardship and pain, growing up.

Both Yev and Mickey were a lot like Kayla. He wondered what Mickey’s real dad would have been like, and also wished he knew more about his own. Reesie had told him some, but even she had only limited contact with him. Ian had always promised himself, over and over, that he and Mickey would be together always, and that their children could rely on them. Now he was deathly afraid that all of his psychiatric issues, both new and old, could threaten that, if he didn’t get a handle on things.

He was tremendously frightened of losing Mickey, and felt he needed to take full advantage of this small window of time he had, to prove he wasn’t the monster he seemed to have been, only hours before. As he and Mickey approached the Uber, hand-in-hand, his thoughts were whirling through his head, ideas of how he could spoil his husband and satisfy him, beyond measure, while still keeping things short enough so they could somehow make it for at least part of the lunch he had planned with Reesie, Yev, and now, Brach.

He knew, of course, that he’d love to give Mickey a relaxing massage, but really also wanted some time with him in the hot tub. He also had some other activities planned though, ones he definitely didn’t want to rush.

As soon as the Uber pulled up to the Soho, Ian jumped out, leading Mickey by the hand, as he dashed into the lobby, heading straight for the elevator, then immediately fumbling for his wallet, in order to find the key card. He could hardly contain himself during the elevator ride up to the penthouse, glancing over at Mickey longingly as he held off, with everything in him, so as not to start anything in the elevator.

Mickey returned his look, clearly feeling amorous, himself. Ian could tell by the expression on Mickey’s face, as well as its slight blush, that he was already imagining their encounter, and by the looks of the bulge in his pants, it must have been in the most favorable of ways. Ian sighed with nervous anticipation, rubbing Mickey’s shoulders lightly as he steered him out of the elevator, then made a quick card swipe, and they were in.

“Anything special you want, before I give you what you deserve?” Ian purred into Mickey’s good ear, as he led him to the bedroom. Mickey, his body electrified with excitement at the sound of Ian’s voice, speaking those words, turned to him, pushing him backward slowly, toward the bed, capturing his lips in a slow, sensual kiss. Ian’s cock was so hard, it was nearly sticking out the top of his pants, the sensation of Mickey’s full, velvety lips on his own only making matters worse. “I was gonna…” Ian began as Mickey toppled him gently onto the bed, removing both Ian’s and his own pants handily, all while engaging Ian in a steamy, hot, french kiss, during which he bit playfully at Ian’s lips, much to Ian’s pleasure.

Once both men were on the bed, Mickey straddling Ian at the waist and hips, he began to slowly grind himself on Ian, Ian’s hips rocking up to counter Mickey’s motion, their hellaciously hard cocks beginning to throb in response to the sweet, sweet friction they were creating together, sparks flying as both lovers moaned softly, their hips rolling against one another, like waves on the ocean.

Ian couldn’t fathom a better, more exhilarating feeling in the world, than having Mickey all up on his shit, especially after the morning they’d had. The only problem was, in Ian’s mind, this, alone, didn’t seem like it would be enough to make up for what he’d done. He had so much in mind, ways to gratify Mickey that involved servicing him like his king, while Mickey expended little to no effort,
Ian’s overthinking came to an abrupt halt when Mickey slid his straddle further south, lowering his head to within mere inches of the pouch of Ian’s pre-cum-soaked boxer briefs, which Mickey lazily inched down over Ian’s flawlessly round bottom, exposing his gloriously massive manhood. Ian could feel Mickey’s breath cascading over his cock, as he took his time, examining every beautiful inch of it, before settling in on a starting point for his talented tongue. When, at last, Mickey’s mouth moved over Ian’s member, he began sucking lightly on just the tip, while he simultaneously ran a lone fingernail lightly over his balls with one hand, slowly stroking his swollen shaft with the other.

“Mmm...Mickey...fuck…” Ian breathed, wondering, with what remained of his brain power in such a heightened state of arousal, what the hell he had EVER done to deserve this angel.

Then he lifted Ian’s legs straight up into the air and pinned them back near his ears. “Hold these for me,” he growled as he trailed his way back down Ian’s torso, swiping his tongue down the midline of his abs, stopping every few inches to kiss and pull some tender skin between his teeth, leaving delicious, crimson marks, all the way down to his parted thighs, his mouth finally landing back on Ian’s waiting cock, this time Mickey taking more and more of his length, until he was deep-throating as much of Ian as possible, his hand ringed around the remainder, pumping at the same, moderate tempo, until Ian began to moan again.

“Wanna give ya somethin’ to moan about,” Mickey mumbled, amid his oral pleasuring of Ian. “Yeah?” Ian responded, egging him on. “Yeah, but I don’t wanna hurt ya. You feelin’ better here, or what?” Mickey asked, taking a break from sucking, but using both hands as a worthy substitute, while he lightly tongued at Ian’s hole. “Yeah...much better,” Ian smiled, thoroughly enjoying Mickey’s tongue’s travels around the perimeter of his anus. “Yeah?” Mickey muttered, to confirm. “Feels real fine, Mick,” Ian assured him, between shallow, impassioned exhales through his nose.

Clearly Ian was two things: nervous and horny as hell.

Mickey continued his tentative tasting, now moving to the bullseye, but still not penetrating.

“Mmmickey!” Ian suddenly screamed. Mickey, uncertain as to whether Ian’s cry was one of pleasure or pain, reluctantly continued, following his instincts, as he continued to stroke Ian’s cock rhythmically. “Soooo...fucking...gah!” Ian was rambling nonsensically at this point, a sure sign, to Mickey, that Ian was thoroughly enjoying what he was doing to him. And now Mickey realized, if the outside didn’t hurt by now, it must be healed, and the inside should be fair game, too.

Mickey slowly began to delve into Ian’s hole with his tongue, running it vigorously over the opening between each penetration to keep it nice and slippery. By now, Ian was moaning and writhing in ecstasy, begging Mickey, “Fuck me! Fuck me! Fuck me, please!!” “You sure?” Mickey asked, completely in shock over how quickly Ian had progressed from not allowing any bodily contact with his entire ass, to this!

“Oh fuck yeah!” Ian panted, pushing himself back against Mickey’s index finger, which Mickey had just begun to introduce, along with his tongue. Really?! Mickey screeched incredulously. “Mickey! I said yeah! I’m healed and I fucking want you...and your amazingly beautiful cock! All of it! Now...you gonna fuck me...or what?” Ian shouted, looking down at him from between his ankles, which he was still holding up by his ears.

“Alright,” Mickey breathed, continuing to prep him with a combination of tongue and finger entries that, in combination with Mickey’s fondling of his cock and balls, had him so fired up, he’d probably have let Mickey fuck him with a Coke bottle, if he wanted to.

Finally, Mickey lubed himself and Ian up well with some lube he’d scored at the hospital, just before
they left. “Where’d ya get that?” Ian puffed, amid the various other choice words that were escaping his lips as Mickey carefully entered him. “Hospital...Probably for exams, but still does the trick,” Mickey grunted, as he continued to finesse his way into his husband’s tight little asshole. “Hurt?” Mickey questioned, genuinely worried about doing anything that might cause a setback in his recovery. “Yeah...in a good way...like always, at first.” Ian explained, Mickey, of course, understanding completely, and taking it a bit slower, just to be sure.

“Fuckkkkkkk!” Ian murmured, his eyes rolling back into his head as Mickey fucked him, taking his time, nudging his prostate ever so slightly harder with each successive stroke. Ian held his legs, held his breath, and bit the inside of his upper arm to distract himself from how insanely desperate he was to cum. Mickey was fucking him so good, but purposely holding him off, he felt. In reality, Mickey was genuinely concerned with hurting Ian, but that was completely lost on Ian, who wanted more. Finally, he couldn’t take anymore teasing. “Damnit, Mick! Fuck me! Harder!! Harder!! Mickey!! Yes! Yes! Yes!” Ian bellowed, as Mickey obeyed, hitting him like a freight train, over and over, now bottomed out and stroking Ian’s cock with the same ever-increasing intensity and he continued to rock himself in and out of his husband expertly.

Within minutes, Ian let out a primal scream to rival anything Mickey had ever heard come from a human being---EVER. Again, Mickey was almost scared to continue, and actually paused, if only for a second, when Ian piped up, “Don’t you fucking stop, Motherfucker!!! I want it all---all of you, with everything you got!” Mickey stared down into Ian’s magnificent, green orbs, so filled with wanton lust, that Mickey could feel his skin prickle as he picked up his pace again, jerking Ian vigorously for the ten seconds it took for him to explode over top of Mickey’s fist, Mickey then allowing himself to let go, deep into Ian’s tightly clenching asshole. “Fuck, Ian!!! Un-fucking-believable!” Mickey hollered, his eyes still fixed on Ian’s, their electric chemistry, undeniable and inextinguishable, setting the entire room ablaze.

“Was that what you wanted?” Ian asked, pulling Mickey’s face to his own for a soft, tender kiss, which Mickey returned lovingly. “Ian, I want you...And that’s what I fuckin’ got. Yeah, I got exactly what I fuckin’ wanted.” Mickey breathed, lowering his head to rest on Ian’s chest. “Me, too,” Ian agreed, stroking Mickey’s face lightly, “Me, too.”
“Over here!” Yev yelled, with a smile as big as Texas, once he caught sight of his dads entering the pizzeria. Ian and Mickey made their way over to the table where everyone else was already seated, having drinks with salad. “Well...you two are positively glowing!” Reesie began, “I take it your ‘talk’ went well?” she questioned with a slight smirk, although there was no need for either of them to answer; it was written all over them.

Mickey extended his arm, shaking Brach’s hand firmly as he sat down, while Ian remained standing, Yev having gotten up from his seat to run and hug him. “You look better!” Yev called out with great excitement, just before literally crashing into Ian for a warm, loving hug. “I feel better!” Ian responded, giving Yev a tight squeeze, before letting him go. “Me, too!” Mickey chimed in, his face still a bit pink with embarrassment from Reesie’s initial comment.

Not long after the couple was served their salads and drinks, the pizza arrived, the two diving into it, as if they hadn’t eaten in weeks. As the whole family stuffed their faces, Yev took the opportunity to share his positive experience with Dr. Fisher. “He’s so nice!” Yev began, “He let me do math!” “Oh yeah?” Ian reacted with a genuine smile. “Yes, and he told me it’s normal for me to be scared...especially at night...but we’re gonna work on it. He says I’ll sleep better, once we start the hypnosis,” Yev explained. “So you’re good with doin’ that?” Mickey asked. “Yes, Dad. It’s important for all of us to do it, so we can feel normal again,” Yev answered.

Mickey got a puzzled look on his face, and was about to speak, when Ian rubbed his back, whispering in his ear, “Not now. Let him talk.” “He said I should definitely do my online classes while we’re here in New York. He told me that school, and especially math, can help me feel more comfortable, so I can work on the stuff we need to in my sessions,” Yev chattered on cheerfully, seeming to be completely at ease with all that he was going to be doing with Dr. Fisher. “So you don’t mind havin’ a session every day for awhile?” Mickey asked. “I think it’s great!” Yev smiled, “Thanks for bringing me to see him. I think he can really help me!”

Yev’s enthusiasm was contagious, and Mickey had soon forgotten his concern with being hypnotized, himself. He was willing to do whatever it was that Dr. Fisher thought would help their family. Dr. Fisher had, after all, allowed them to leave the hospital, basically so he could go fuck Ian, despite what must have seemed, to him, to have been a significantly violent episode, although, Mickey thought, if he knew their full history, it might not have seemed like such a big deal. Mickey had already minimized the entire experience, chalkling it up to a ‘bad morning’, and choosing to focus on the fantastic nooner they’d just had. His cock began to stiffen again, every time he thought about it, even for the briefest of moments.

The mood at the table was jovial and laid back. Even Mickey’s business discussion with Brach went smoothly, the two quickly devising a plan for moving up the closing on the building, as the seller had requested, thus earning them a big discount. Mickey would sign papers, later in the afternoon, have them notarized, and Brach would take them back to Mexico with him, so that he and Manuel could close without him. Mickey hated to miss it, since he was the one who had negotiated the deal, initially, but under the circumstances, New York was where he needed to be.

All was so perfectly well, that Reesie hated even bringing Iggy up, but she had to. She and Shawn really believed Bigley might be able to talk some sense into him, but didn’t want to contact him without Mickey’s okay. “Brach, why don’t you take Yev to play some video games?” Reesie suggested, pointing to a small game center in the back corner of the pizzeria. “Sure! Wanna go?” Brach asked Yev, who had already stood and was moving in that direction. “Yes!” he exclaimed.
happily, trotting back to a driving game he’d played before.

“Okay...the fuck’s goin’ on?” Mickey asked, his facial expression one of fearful concern. “Ma okay?!” he questioned in an alarmed, but muffled tone, not wanting Yev to hear him from across the room. “Your mother is doing great, hanging out with Mikhaila, making her wedding plans and enjoying life,” Reesie assured him. “Then what?” Ian asked, again rubbing Mickey’s back to calm him.

Reesie sighed heavily, hating to be the one to share this news, “It’s Iggy. He’s been constantly drunk. Every time I see him, he reeks of booze and can barely walk. Shawn and Justin have tried to help, but he just tells them to fuck off. He’s been barred from every bar, restaurant and club within walking distance of the Soho, and I’m worried he’s gonna get kicked out of the Soho, if he doesn’t get a handle on his drinking.” Reesie paused, surveying the looks on Mickey and Ian’s faces, before continuing, “The one thing he is most proud of, and he’s constantly bragging about it, is working for Bigley. I thought if we could talk to Bigley, maybe he could do...I don’t know...something!”

Mickey stood up, clenching his fists at his side and muttering something under his breath. “Mick...what did you say?” Ian asked, not having understood him, despite having been right next to him. “This is Terry bullshit. He was a fuckin’ drunk, too!” Mickey hissed with disgust. Ian shot Mickey a look, but stayed quiet. “Think we could at least try talking to Bigley? I mean, Iggy wasn’t like this before...” Reesie stopped talking abruptly, a possible explanation for his sudden binge drinking hitting her like a ton of bricks.

“What?!” Mickey asked again, beginning to get frustrated. “He’s grieving, Mick,” Ian said softly. “What? Why the fuck would he miss that piece of shit?!?” Mickey asked, completely baffled by the theory that Reesie and Ian seemed to share.

“Well, it’s kinda hard to explain,” Ian began to explain, stopping to clear his throat, but...well...you know what my mom was like. I told everyone I couldn’t stand her, especially after her advice almost caused me to lose you, Mickey...but when she died...I mean, not at first, but...after awhile...I missed her. In fact, it was like she was influencing me from the grave. I really think my grief over her death had a lot to do with me quitting my meds...And you know what that caused,” Ian recollected, rolling his eyes in disgust at his own foolishness.

“Yeah, caused ya ta end up in Mexico,” Mickey chuckled. “Well, yeah...I guess you’re right, but...the point is, I fucking missed her. There was no real reason for it, other than that she was my mother...so maybe that’s what’s up with Iggy,” Ian suggested. Mickey got very quiet, a far off look in his eyes, as he seemed to be considering all that Ian had just said. Then he broke the silence, “Think Dr. Fisher could help him, too?” He looked hopefully at Reesie, then Ian, both of whom seemed to be reluctant to answer.

Finally, after some thought, Ian replied, “I...I think he has his hands full. I mean, with all of his interviews and appearances, plus the three of us crazies...Maybe I’m being selfish, but I wonder if he can do it all.” “Well,” Reesie began, smiling at Mickey, “We won’t know if we don’t ask. My brother is getting the best care possible. I’m sure Mickey wants the same for his,” she finished, looking over at Ian, awaiting his response. “Okay, okay, we’ll talk to him tomorrow, but I think maybe Bigley should know about this, too. What do you think, Mick?” Ian inquired. “Yep,” he answered quickly, “I’ll text him.”

And so the conversation turned to whether or not they should have to go back and stay at the hospital overnight. Ian was of the belief that there shouldn’t be a problem with them going to the hotel, as long as they were all back for their appointments, but Mickey wasn’t too sure about it. “I think we’re better off at the hospital, in case ya have one of those fucked up nightmares and decide you wanna
“kill me,” he said with a chuckle, although, in reality, he was quite serious. Ian’s moods had been anything but stable and now, especially since they had Yev to worry about, he wanted to play it safe.

Mickey was definitely a risk taker, but not when it came to his family. As he had said in his session, earlier that day, he loved Ian more than he loved himself, and the same was true of Yev. As much as Ian saw Mickey when he looked at Yev, Mickey could see Ian, in the serious way that he approached his schoolwork, in the thoughtful comments he often made, in the way he was able to see when he and/or Ian were upset and comfort them. In Mickey’s eyes, Yev was just as much a part of Ian as he was a part of himself, and there was no amount of danger he was willing to put him in.

“Let’s just stay there tonight. It’s what Yev’s expectin’, and I don’t wanna change things up on him,” Mickey reasoned, his adorably furrowed brow, coupled with a pitifully worried tone of voice, working Ian into submission. “O...Okay,” Ian agreed reluctantly, shaking his head at his husband’s blatant use of his irresistible charms to get his way. And so it was settled, the family saying their goodbyes and heading back to the hospital for the night, Mickey making the promise to sign the necessary paperwork and send it back, the moment the messenger arrived with it.

As the trio walked together, back to the hospital, Ian asked, “So, what are the sleeping arrangements?” looking Mickey up and down. “Oh, I figure we’ll all stay together, like we ended up last night,” Mickey replied with a mischievous grin. “Just like?” Ian asked, for clarification. “Just like,” Mickey answered, without hesitation. “Yay!” Yev celebrated, skipping down the sidewalk, getting a bit too far ahead of them for Ian’s liking. “YEV!!” Ian yelled, in a booming voice that frightened Yev, who immediately stopped and began to cry. Ian ran up on him, screaming, “Don’t EVER do that again! You understand me?!” “Yes,” Yev responded in barely more than a whisper, his eyes wide with fear. Ian grasped his hand tightly, yanking him backward toward Mickey, who had begun to walk faster, in order to catch up.

“Chill out, man! Everything’s fine,” Mickey said as he met up with Ian, rubbing his back softly. “No! He has to learn!” Ian insisted, his voice still loud enough to be heard by everyone on the same block as them. “Anyone could just...” Ian stopped as he felt Mickey’s hand tighten around the back of his neck. “We’re cool, Ian. You gotta chill,” Mickey said under his breath, attempting to keep the comment between himself and Ian, while still diffusing the situation.

“I’m sorry, Daddy Ian!” Yev whimpered shamefully, his tear-filled eyes meeting Ian’s. Ian took a deep breath, Mickey having moved his hand to his shoulder, which he was now rubbing softly. “No, I’m sorry, Yev. I just don’t want anything to happen to you...like before...and I...” Mickey gripped Ian’s shoulder firmly, Ian clamming up and turning to look at him.

“You’re both safe now,” Mickey comforted, now with one of them on each side of him, one hand on one of each of their shoulders. “You’re with me, and I’m not gonna let anyone hurt either of ya...ever again!” Mickey spoke confidently, though suddenly feeling as if he couldn’t get close enough to either of them. Yev sunk into his father’s side, visibly shaken by what had just happened.

Once they were inside the hospital, Ian suggested that they go and rest. “You guys go ahead. I gotta call Bigley. He texted me back. “Okay,” Ian replied, “C’mon, Yev, let’s go get settled in for a little nap. “Okay,” Yev answered timidly, still reeling from the scary public reprimand he had received from Ian, but afraid to say he wanted Mickey to go with them to the room.

As Mickey sat in the waiting area, ringing Bigley’s phone, Bigley, himself, walked up behind him. “Bruno! Good to see ya! What’s crackin’ here?” Mickey asked, ending the call and rising to his feet to shake Bigley’s hand. “Well, I was here to visit Marco, who, by the way, is up and around and asked about coming to visit you guys. He’s very grateful for all that you and your extended family have done for him,” Bigley paused, his expression suddenly turning serious. “What?!” Mickey asked,
instantaneously recognizing that something was amiss.

Bigley exhaled harshly, then cleared his throat, seeming to be stalling until he could find the right words. “I gotta get someone outta Chicago safely, and I think Iggy’s the right man for the job. You guys need him right now?” Bigley asked. “No, but...hey, is it safe for him to be there? And...and ya gotta know first, he’s been drinkin’...a lot!” Mickey replied.

“Misses his dad, huh?” Bigley responded, right away. “Don’t know. Been so fuckin’ busy dealin’ with Ian’s shit,” Mickey shrugged, sighing deeply. “Listen, I know something about missing someone who’s not even worth missing. It’s hard...and it can really fuck with you, if you don’t stay busy. It’s what I had to do,” Bigley explained, adding, “If you guys are okay without him, I’m going to contact him about going. I think it’ll be good for him.”

“Okay, but if this don’t work, can he see Dr. Fisher?” Mickey asked. “I’m sure that can be arranged,” Bigley replied, without a second thought. “And you give me your word that he’ll be safe?” Mickey questioned, looking for clarification. “Mickey, he’ll be as safe as any of us,” Bigley answered, the rasp in his voice even more pronounced than usual.

Before Mickey could say anything more, he looked up to see Ian standing in the doorway. “Hey, what’s up?” Mickey asked, attempting to sound casual. “What do you mean, ‘as safe as any of us’?” Ian demanded, looking Bigley dead in the eye, “Who will be as safe as us? Mickey, what’s he talking about? Are we in danger?”

“Naw, everything’s cool, right, Bruno?” Mickey asked, requesting assurance, for Ian’s sake. Before Bigley could answer, his phone buzzed. “I have to take this. I’ll call you later,” Bigley said, excusing himself quickly.

“I wanna take Yev and go home. All three of us! I just want everything back to the way it was. I’m tired of being scared, of being pissed, of losing my shit every minute. Mickey, we gotta get outta here. Something doesn’t feel right,” Ian explained in a panic, reaching for Mickey’s hand, which he quickly pulled to his mouth, kissing it and holding it there, breathing him in with a desperation that communicated his fear, without a single word, as he led him back to their hospital room swiftly.

“Shhh...Yev’s asleep. I just couldn’t…” Ian began, Mickey stopping him, mid-sentence. “Get undressed and get in the fuckin’ bed. I’m too tired for your crazy shit right now. We’re gonna sleep first. Then we’ll talk,” Mickey ordered. “But I can’t…” Again, Mickey cut Ian off, “Yes...you will. Now take your fuckin’ clothes off and get in the bed.”

Ian complied without further protest, Mickey also disrobing, then wrapping himself in Ian’s invitingly warm body, turning briefly to kiss him lightly on the lips, breathing the words, “I love you,” as he nestled himself into Ian a bit more snugly, determined that they were both going to rest. And they did.
Getting back into school had been a glorious opportunity for Yev to reconnect with something familiar and comfortable, outside of his parents. The fact that he was such a curious and industrious student, by nature, only added to its cathartic effects. Yev truly was in his element, and it was written all over him.

While Yev spent the afternoon in class, Mickey and Ian retired to Ian’s hospital room for a shower and some privacy, to talk. Ian was still dead-set on leaving New York to return home, citing Bigley’s cryptic reply to Mickey’s inquiry, pertaining to Iggy’s safety in Chicago. Mickey argued strenuously against any major alterations to their treatment plans, having the clarity, which Ian seemed to lack, to recognize that their therapy was the most important key to a safe and stable future for their family.

“Whatever the fuck’s goin’ on in Chicago ain’t gonna touch us here in New York!” Mickey screamed in frustration. Ian began packing his things, as if Mickey weren’t even there. “Jesus Christ, Ian! No one in Chicago even knows where the fuck we are!” he continued, Ian stopping to look up at Mickey’s angry, reddened face, the veins in his neck protruding prominently as he yelled.

As Ian stood, silently staring at Mickey, a look of complete terror in his eyes, Mickey took a deep breath, counting to himself, then approaching Ian, pulling him onto the bed and holding him. “Ian,” he breathed into his ear, somehow having managed to calm himself and hoping to do the same for his husband, “I promise I’ll keep you guys safe...won’t let anyone hurt ya, ever again. Trust me?”

“I trust you, Mick. It’s other people I have issues with. I just can’t feel safe here!” Ian protested, turning to look into Mickey’s hypnotically beautiful blue eyes. “Awww,” Ian mumbled, feeling himself being irresistibly drawn in, his lips meeting Mickey’s, his magnetism pulling him closer---closer, as he fell more and more deeply under Mickey’s enticing spell. “Relax,” Mickey purred between torrid, sensual kisses, the kind that drove Ian wild with desire.

None of this was by accident. Mickey had attempted to reason with Ian, but saw it was getting him nowhere, so he had no choice but to connect and communicate with him physically--to make Ian see things through his eyes, as one being, with no space between where one begins and the other ends---and that’s exactly what he had undertaken to do.

It wasn’t as if Ian didn’t know it; he was just powerless to stop it. Mickey reached down between Ian’s legs with one hand, unzipping the jeans he had put on after their nap with the other, and slowly began massaging Ian’s package, as he trailed sweet kisses from Ian’s mouth, down his chin and onto his neck, settling in to leave his mark, before continuing onto his chest, taking each nipple, one at a time, into his mouth, sucking, biting, and flipping it with his tongue.

Ian called Mickey’s name softly, his eyes squeezed tightly shut, his body reacting powerfully to Mickey’s potent influence. “Shower,” Mickey whispered, amid his oral assault on his gorgeous, amply aroused mate. Without a word, Ian repositioned himself, gripping Mickey around his svelte, muscled waistline and throwing him over his shoulder, completely ignoring Mickey’s playful protests.

Ian set Mickey down on his feet, taking a quick second to turn on and adjust the shower temperature, before diving at Mickey, immediately attacking his neck, zeroing in on his most sensitive spot, biting, licking and sucking at it, all while pressing Mickey’s body against the wall, grinding on him mercilessly. Ian wasn’t one to be outdone. He wanted Mickey to be just as desperate for him as he was for Mickey, a goal he knew he could readily achieve. He knew exactly which buttons to push,
and just how to push them.

That was the beauty of being married to his soulmate, a mere extension of himself. Ian knew every square inch of Mickey, like the back of his hand, the converse being equally true. And yet, neither could ever get enough of the other, the passion between the two of them, absolutely off the charts.

Mickey allowed himself to be taken by the love of his life, Ian’s hands, mouth, and body adeptly moving over him, eliciting the desired effect with ease, goosebumps rising over Mickey’s silky smooth skin at the mere touch of Ian’s. The fact was, Mickey’s attraction to Ian was so all-consuming, he couldn’t help but think that, regardless of what brand of fucked up shit Ian dished out next, he would be there, for the long haul. Neither Ian nor himself would permit him to be anywhere else.

What puzzled Mickey was that he knew Ian was well aware of his ability to command complete obedience, when it came to their encounters, and yet he had come to feel the need to force it, to somehow make it be against Mickey’s will. He silently hoped that Ian would never do that again, but if he did, he resigned himself to the idea of making the best of it. He would not live without Ian---no matter what---period.

The only non-negotiable, for Mickey, was leaving New York---THEY WERE NOT LEAVING! He knew he had to be strong, and to somehow make Ian realize the importance of their staying. He hoped their time together in the shower, their union, body and soul, might bring about agreement of their minds. He could, after all, be quite persuasive without words, something of which they were both also well aware.

Ian lifted Mickey again, the two now both completely naked, Mickey wrapping his legs around Ian’s waist as he carried him into the shower. It was a large shower, for a hospital, designed to allow for a bathing chair with leg attachments, as well as a second person, in case a patient needed assistance, so there was an abundance of room, and about a half dozen stability bars, installed at different heights.

Ian leaned back against the shower wall, allowing Mickey to position his feet on his choice of bars, gripping them with his toes, thus freeing Ian’s hands to play with Mickey’s asshole, while maintaining the desired amount of bodily contact. Mickey’s arms remained wrapped around Ian snugly, so as to provide for his own stability.

Once Ian had Mickey nice and soaped up, as well as properly prepped, he began his slow ascent into him, Mickey panting and moaning softly, as his feet maintained their hold on the bars, his hands now making their way into Ian’s fiery locks, his fingers weaving themselves into them and beginning to tug at them fiercely.

Mickey was trying to remain as quiet as possible, the occasional “Fuck!” flying from his gaping mouth, amongst the myriad other delicious sounds he was making involuntarily, all of which excited Ian more with each utterance. Ian pushed deeper into him with every successive thrust, the angle of which sent the most exquisite currents of satisfaction throughout Mickey’s entire body. Ian, feeling Mickey’s muscles tightening around him, curtailed his movements, Mickey immediately beginning to beg, “Ian...please...faster...harder...I’m so...” “What’s your hurry?” Ian sang softly into Mickey’s ear as he rolled his hips slowly and deliberately, extracting still more pleading and moaning from Mickey’s now trembling lips.

At this point, Mickey could no longer speak intelligibly, his body moving against Ian’s as if it had been crafted exclusively for that purpose, his asshole tightening rhythmically on Ian’s throbbing cock, literally milking it, Ian instinctively speeding up his movements to sate his own desperate need, while simultaneously providing Mickey with precisely what he craved.
“Fuck, I love you!” Ian gasped as he exploded into Mickey. Mickey braced himself against the shower wall, his own cock rubbing against Ian’s body, the steel bars digging unforgivingly into the tender bottoms of his feet as he fought, with all he had left, to keep himself steady throughout his own wickedly intense climax, his entire being feeling as though it had been literally liquified by Ian’s masterful fucking. Mickey managed to form Ian’s name with his lips, although it came out as little more than a quivering whisper, as he spewed his release upward between their bodies.

“Yessss!” Ian hissed in quiet celebration, absolutely delighted by what he had just done to Mickey, and equally satisfied with his own experience. He held Mickey tightly against him, devouring his entire mouth ravenously as he spun in circles, the warm water cascading over their spent bodies, Mickey finally regaining his ability to speak. “So we’re stayin’ here for our therapy,” Mickey said, more as a statement than a question, Ian, nonetheless answering, “Mmmm Hmmm. Can’t afford to fuck this up. By the way, can you stand? I wanna wash you up!”

Mickey gingerly removed his feet from their precarious position, allowing them to fall, while Ian still held him for support. “I think so,” he replied apprehensively, his hands now latched onto Ian’s arms. “I gotcha. Take your time,” Ian replied, kissing Mickey on the forehead as he continued to steady him.

“Fuck!” Mickey muttered under his breath, reacting to the extreme degree of shakiness in his legs, “You really nailed it this time.” Ian grinned, loving Mickey’s reaction. “Okay, think you can handle leaning against the wall, so I can clean you up?” Ian chuckled, pushing Mickey against the shower wall. Mickey leaned his head and shoulders against the wall, allowing Ian to give him a thorough scrubbing, which he did with a wide smile. He loved touching Mickey, in any context, and this was no exception. The feel of his skin against his own was nothing short of magical, especially right at this moment.

“I love you, too,” Mickey piped up, as he, after finally regaining his footing, turned to look admiringly at Ian, just before beginning to wash his sexy, sculpted body for him. The two finished up, dried off, and quickly dressed, after thinking they may have heard voices in the room. As they opened the bathroom door, they caught sight of Yev, who was on the phone. He looked over with a smile, upon seeing them emerge from the bathroom, mouthing the words, “It’s Mom,” as he continued to press the phone up to his ear, apparently listening to something Svetlana was saying.

“Dad,” Yev finally said, holding the phone out in Mickey’s direction, “Mom wants to talk to you.” Mickey took the phone from Yev’s hand, not really sure what to expect. “Yeah,” Mickey said, holding the phone up to his good ear. “Is he doing better?” Svetlana asked. “Yeah, seems pretty good,” Mickey responded, not wanting to share any detailed opinions in front of Yev. “You know Vladimir...he must leave Chicago?” she continued. Mickey remained silent, hoping Svet would elaborate without him having to say anything. “He can come to Mexico to run business, yes?” she asked, Mickey exhaled sharply, his blood immediately beginning to boil. The last thing he wanted was any of this Russian shit following them to Mexico again.

“I ask Bigley. He says decision is yours,” she explained. “Listen, now ain’t the time for me to be...” Svet cut him off as soon as she realized he wasn’t going to give her an answer, “He saves Orange Boy’s ass for you. You help him.” Mickey walked out of the room, the expression on his face instantly sending Ian into panic mode. “Listen, I got enough problems here,” Mickey growled into the phone. “I can’t deal with this shit right now!” he barked. “This cannot wait. He is in trouble...for what he does for you...for us! Boss in Russia wants him dead! He will be dead if he does not leave America...soon!”

“Is this why Bigley wants Iggy to go to Chicago?” Mickey asked. “He is already gone. On his way. Bigley says you decide if Vladimir comes to Mexico or stays in New York, but New York is not
safe for him,” Svetlana replied. “Yeah, well, now it ain’t safe for us either! Tell Bigley to call me...ASAP!” Mickey demanded, ending the call abruptly, as he saw Ian approaching him.

“What the hell’s going on?” Ian asked, “And don’t fucking lie to me!”
“I’ll take care a’ this, Ian...Please...just go check on Yev!” Mickey responded, trying to buy himself some time to figure things out a bit more, before sharing anything that would have Ian ‘off to the races’ again. “Don’t just fucking wave me off, like I don’t matter!” Ian yelled back angrily. “That ain’t what this is,” Mickey spoke calmly, approaching Ian, looking him in the eye as he reached for him, lovingly cupping his face in his hands as he continued, “Look, I don’t know for sure...I gotta talk to Bigley. Gonna contact him now, in fact...insist on a sit-down,”

“Damnit, Mickey! I wanna know what you DO know!” Ian screamed at his back as Mickey strode briskly down the hospital corridor, toward the exit. He knew that Ian would be worried enough about the current situation, even without being given any specifics, that he wouldn’t leave Yev, even to chase Mickey down.

As soon as he hit the door, Mickey had the phone up to his ear, having placed a call to Bigley’s newest drop phone. Bigley picked up quickly. “Bruno!” Mickey barked, before Bigley could even get a word out, “You at your office?” “Yes, but...” Bigley began, Mickey cutting him off impatiently. “I’m comin’ there. Gotta discuss somethin’ with you NOW!”

“I’m afraid that’s impossible, I...” Before Bigley could finish his thought, Mickey interjected again, “Don’t tell me what’s impossible! This shit with Vladimir...It can’t wait,” Mickey began, Bigley talking over him, once again attempting to communicate the reason why he couldn’t see Mickey, right then. “Ian’s losin’ it! I gotta tell him somethin’! He’s gonna fuckin’ take off, otherwise. Probably with Yev again!” Mickey bleated in a panicked tone.

Hearing about Ian shut Bigley up instantaneously. Even after all these years, Ian held such significance to Bigley, that he would move heaven and earth to keep him safe. Mickey, having seen this happen so many times in their past, knew emphasizing that Ian was in peril was the best strategy for getting Bigley’s undivided, uninterrupted attention, which was exactly what he needed.

“I’m headed for a business meeting across town. I’ll stop by the hospital. Find a private place for us to meet---Bring Ian,” Bigley enunciated, his words clipped, his voice, tense. “Yes, sir,” Mickey acknowledged, attempting to show respect, in case he’d overstepped his bounds with his demands. He’d never spoken to Bigley like that before. His outburst had been born of absolute terror---the demands he’d made, the strong words, the threat of Ian’s disappearance ---Mickey was scared to death of losing his family again, and had successfully conveyed that to Bigley, the only way he knew how.

“Okay, he’s comin’ here,” Mickey called to Ian, who was standing in the hallway, just outside Yev’s hospital room, watching and listening as Yev attended his online math class. “Shhhh...” Ian hissed, puckering his lips and resting his index finger against them, as he turned to face Mickey. Mickey continued his approach quietly, whispering in Ian’s ear, once he got to him, “You’ll know everything I know. Just promise ya ain’t gonna go all nutso on me...that we can make a plan...together, alright?” Ian nodded silently, his gaze still fixed on their son, who was answering a question that had been posed by his online teacher. Ian smiled brightly, somehow able to set his fear and anxiety aside to enjoy seeing his son in his element. “Good,” Mickey breathed, squeezing Ian’s shoulder with his hand, as he leaned against him, also taking the opportunity to see Yev shine.

“Wow,” Mickey muttered under his breath as Yev explained, in detail, the steps he had taken to solve a problem. This was what Ian was protecting---the reason he was ready to pack and run, his motivation for endangering himself to leave the factory, why he refused to speak, despite the Russians torturing the ever-loving shit out of him---their beloved son, Yev. Mickey teared up at this
The buzz of Mickey’s phone interrupted their proud moment, Mickey immediately whisking Ian off to meet Bigley at the hospital entrance. “Ian...Mickey! Hello!” Bigley bellowed as Mickey held the door for him. “Hello, Bruno,” Ian replied curtly, his lips pressed tightly together into a thin line. “I can see you’re upset,” Bigley continued, Mickey ushering them both into the vacant office, where he and Ian had met with Dr. Fisher twice before.

“Thanks for coming, Bruno. We appreciate it,” Mickey said, motioning for Ian and Bigley to sit in the two chairs in front of the desk, hoping to break the ice. “Well, Mickey, you didn’t leave me much choice,” Bigley responded, taking a deep breath, then looking over at Ian, before continuing, “There is a situation in Chicago, involving Vladimir, Svetlana’s older brother.”

Mickey nodded, raising his eyebrows in an attempt to communicate to Bigley, non-verbally, his desire for him to get to the point. “I don’t know if you know this Ian, but Vladimir was instrumental in negotiating your release, as well as Yevgeni’s.” Bigley explained, Ian looking to Mickey for confirmation that this was, in fact, accurate. Mickey nodded in affirmation, his eyes riveted to Bigley’s face, his full attention on him, in anticipation of the portion of the story that he had not yet heard.

“As it turns out,” Bigley pressed on, appearing to become more uncomfortable as he continued his tale, “the head honchos of the Russian Mafia, back in Moscow, were not happy with the way Vladimir manipulated the situation for OUR benefit.” “...the fuck’s that s’posed ta mean?” Mickey questioned. “Well, there’s really no nice way to put this...He offed their top guy in Chicago, so he could strong-arm the next-in-line and get his way...and I guess, somehow, at some point, that became common knowledge among the members, and it got back to Moscow,” Bigley explained.

“...And?” Ian shrugged impatiently. “And...they want Vladimir’s head!” Bruno muttered, glaring at Mickey, seemingly irritated at having to come right out and say that. Clearly, Ian had been the one to ask the stupid question, but, Ian being Ian, and Mickey having been the one to request or, more accurately, demand this meeting at this time, Bigley was misdirecting his anger in Mickey’s direction. Mickey could feel his fists tightening and his blood pressure rising. He paced back and forth, looking away from both Ian and Bigley as he counted to ten silently, the numbers matching the steps he was taking.

“Guys, we owe him to get him to safety. Had it not been for him, I don’t know what might have happened to you and Yevgeni,” Bigley concluded, looking at Ian for approval. “I know what would’ve happened,” Ian piped up, “We’d both be dead, or at least permanently disfigured.”

“So, now we’re gonna send him to Mexico or bring him here to New York, so the Russians can...” Mickey had begun to yell, but then stopped suddenly, upon seeing the horrified look on Ian’s face. “There’s more to it than that,” Bigley responded, shooting Mickey a look that seemed to convey the sentiment, ‘Shut the fuck up, and let me finish!’

Mickey exhaled harshly through his nose, gesturing for Bigley to proceed with what was fast becoming a can of worms, in Mickey’s opinion, one that was likely to set Ian off at any moment.

“Yes, I would like to have Vladimir relocate to Mexico, but only after his funeral has been arranged.”

“What?” Ian asked incredulously, the wheels inside Mickey’s head beginning to turn. “You’re gonna fake his fuckin’ death?” Mickey scoffed, shaking his head at what he thought was both a ridiculous and dangerous plan.

“Yes, Mickey. These kinds of things are routinely done...by people who I know and trust,” Bigley answered, without batting an eye. “But aren’t they watchin’ him?” Mickey questioned dubiously.

“Mickey, you worry about your family here in New York and getting the treatment that you all need,
and let me take care of the rest. All I need from you is an assurance that you will have Manuel place him in a good position there, where he will be out of sight, until things cool off. He is arranging to have all of his money left to Svetlana, the idea being that he will invest it in a business that she and Johnny have been discussing, since shortly after your departure.

“Okay…” Mickey replied skeptically, “So…what’s Iggy’s role in all this?” “Mickey, Iggy works for me now. He is aware of what he needs to do. I’d rather not go into detail...The less you know, the better,” Bigley warned, Ian’s eyes growing as big as saucers. “Look...Iggy works for you. I get it, but he’s my brother, and I’d just feel better knowin’ he’s safe. He’s been...he’s...well, you know...he actually gives a shit that our piece of shit father’s dead...and…” Bigley finished Mickey’s sentence, “You’re worried about him. I understand. But, believe me, having a purpose will do him good. This is the kind of thing I had always envisioned him doing for me, in a pinch...because he’s good at it!”

“He is?” Mickey asked, a puzzled look coming over his face. He’d always loved Iggy, but never considered him to be the brains of the Milkovich Family, if there even was such a thing. “Mickey, getting your father out of Chicago and all the way to Mexico was no easy feat. And yet, Iggy pulled it off---No problem. Not to mention all of the other tasks he completed for us in Mexico. Mickey, Iggy’s like you—he gets shit done, even in the worst of situations. I know that talent when I see it, because it’s what I did for much of my young life. It was how I got my start, and it’s important work. Iggy’s in Chicago because I trust him to do what I need him to do,” Bigley finished, looking, for a split second, like he might be getting choked up. But only for a split second.

Ian looked over at Mickey, “Okay...so he’s not coming to New York?” he asked. “Guess not,” Mickey answered, “And from the way it sounds, he’s proven himself to be loyal...to our family. We owe him to keep him alive...same as he did for you and Yev,” Mickey reasoned. Ian remained uncharacteristically quiet, which made Mickey nervous. “Whatcha thinkin’?!” he finally asked, almost afraid to hear the answer.

“Bruno,” Ian began, addressing Bigley as he looked him square in the eye, “You’ve been nothing but good to me, from the first time we met. You’ve been fantastic to my family...like a father to me...and I love you for it, but I need you to know...and you, too, Mick...if I feel like Yev isn’t safe, I’m gonna do something about it!” Ian spoke with conviction, his voice trembling with emotion. “Ian,” Mickey said in return, “Do us all a favor. Talk to one of us before ya take off...Make sure what you’re plannin’ is what’s best, huh?” Ian just looked at Mickey, his mind running wild with ‘what if’s’, scenarios that might not allow for a conversation.

“I feel what you’re thinkin’,” Mickey said knowingly, “but none of that shit’s gonna happen, cuz I ain’t lettin’ you two outta my sight, not even for a minute. Speakin’ of which, we gotta check on Yev!”

“Actually, I’ve already arranged to have security here 24/7, to be sure all of you are safe!” Bigley said with a confident smile. “24/7, huh?” Mickey repeated, sighing deeply as he eyed his beautiful husband up, like the forbidden fruit he was certain that he was to become ---effective immediately.

“So...we can’t leave the hospital?” Ian asked, a look of disappointment flashing across his face, as he looked Mickey up and down, in much the same way Mickey had done him. “If Dr. Fisher says you are able to go, I can get you outta here, without anyone seeing you, although, as far as any of my people know, the Russians don’t know you’re here.” Bigley said reassuringly.

“I would prefer, nonetheless, to be as careful as possible, at least until the funeral is over and Vladimir is safely out of the country. Let’s just take things a day at a time, for now,” Bigley suggested, adding, “I really have to go now. I’ll be in touch.”

As Bigley disappeared out the door, Ian and Mickey gazed at one another longingly, the new
knowledge of their heavily surveilled ‘imprisonment’ only serving to fan the flames of their desire, a burgeoning wildfire consuming both of them, from the inside out. “Hope that security guard likes to do math!” Mickey commented, raising an eyebrow flirtatiously. “Hope someone else will be around watch over and protect me while he does!” Ian responded with a grin, rising from his chair to approach Mickey, who was now leaning against the wall in the office.

“For sure,” Mickey breathed into Ian’s mouth as he kissed him hard, Ian pinning him against the wall, grinding himself against him sensuously. Mickey moaned softly in response, “Fuck, I want you.” Ian reached for the doorknob, pushing the door closed tightly and turning the lock, then dropping to his knees and unzipping Mickey’s jeans to expose his gloriously engorged cock.

“Ian…I…” Mickey began, Ian pausing briefly to address him, “Mick, just please…fucking relax and enjoy this. You fucking deserve it! And your cock…” Ian continued, his mouth moving over it expertly, licking and sucking on it like a fucking popsicle, “It tastes … so… fucking …sweet!”

Mickey closed his eyes, wove his fingers softly into Ian’s sexy, crimson locks, and thanked his lucky stars for Ian and the wonderful life they’d built together.
Heartbeat

The family’s lives had fallen into somewhat of a predictable routine, all three members, now released from the hospital, were attending sessions regularly, Ian and Mickey having an additional session, as a couple, about twice a week. Yev had made amazing progress in the few short weeks he was in New York, and was hoping to return to Mexico, and his regular school soon.

Vladimir’s secret departure from Chicago with Iggy, after a brief viewing and a well-publicized memorial service, went off without a hitch. Vladimir was injected with a temporary paralytic to make him appear ‘dead’. The whole ordeal left no lasting effect on Vladimir, other than the loss of his thumb, at the boss’ request, which was surgically amputated, prior to the service, then packed in ice and sent to Moscow as positive proof of the identity of the corpse.

Bigley had spared both Ian and Mickey the details, only for them to end up being told, in gruesome detail, by Svetlana, during a conversation concerning Yev’s plans to return to Mexico and the progress that had been made concerning the new business she, Johnny and Vladimir were now nearly ready to open.

The major sticking point in making Yev’s plans centered on whether Mickey would return to Mexico with Yev, but without Ian. Although Ian had made some progress, he, self-admittedly, was not ready to return home. His medication regimen was still being tweaked by Dr. Fisher, and his hypnosis sessions, although helpful, had not completely eradicated his unreasonable fears, or his tendency toward violence. He was still reacting strangely in certain scenarios that he perceived to be, in some way, dangerous to Yev, and had also turned on Mickey once, while they were in bed together.

Mickey had been fast asleep, Ian wrapped around him, as always. Ian had woken up, aroused and agitated at the same time. He had been struggling in his sleep, Mickey shifting his position slightly in response, but remaining asleep himself. During his movement, he had bumped Ian in such a way that aggravated both of Ian’s conditions, his cock swelling, his irritation escalating to full blown anger. He pushed Mickey onto his stomach and began to hump him, growling into his ear, “On your knees!”

Mickey complied, reaching for the lube he now had stashed in the side-table drawer. Mickey had begun to prep himself quickly, anticipating, based upon some recent experiences, that Ian wasn’t going to wait long. It was during this process that Ian flipped Mickey onto his back impatiently, entering him hurriedly. “Ian! Chill, man!” Mickey grunted pleadingly, needing a moment for his body to catch up to Ian’s.

Ian slowed his pace slightly, staring down menacingly into Mickey’s eyes, his teeth clenched tightly, animal-like groans escaping from around them as he fastened his hands firmly around Mickey’s neck and squeezed—hard. Mickey could hear and feel his pulse rushing in his ears, Ian’s face appearing to ripple before his eyes, the room beginning to spin. They’d done this sort of thing before, but the context, degree of severity, and overall feeling were completely different, the timing and intensity designed to maximize Mickey’s pleasure, rather than to breed terror or cause harm, as seemed to be the case this time.

As Ian continued to apply unrelenting pressure on the veins in Mickey’s neck, the world around him began to grow dark. Mickey, instinctively fearing for his life, struggled frantically against Ian’s powerful grasp—fighting, with all he had, to free himself—to get the oxygen he so desperately needed.

A knock at the door, followed by Yev’s frightened voice, seemed to snap Ian out of whatever lethal
trance he had been in, Ian instantly withdrawing his hands from around Mickey’s neck. “I threw up and I feel really…” Yev moaned from outside the door, stopping mid-sentence and making a mad dash for the bathroom again.

“I’ll go check on him,” Ian muttered, rolling off of Mickey, tumbling out of the bed, and heading for the door, snatching a pair of boxer briefs up from the floor on his way. Mickey was still coughing and gasping for air, the clarity of his surroundings gradually returning, as his dizziness and blurred vision subsided.

‘What the fuck just happened here?’ Mickey thought to himself. The reality was, his husband had strangled him, to just a hair short of the point of unconsciousness. The story Mickey told himself, however, was that Ian had been a little more rough than he expected, but it had all been with the goal of spicing up their sexual experience that day. It was the only way he could live with it.

The two took turns looking in on Yev, and cancelled their sessions with Dr. Fisher for the day, citing to Yev’s illness and their desire to care for him together. It wasn’t until much later in the day, once Yev was feeling good enough to do some schoolwork, and Mickey and Ian were alone, sitting together, having some beers, that the subject resurfaced. “Ya know, you almost fuckin’ killed me this mornin’,” Mickey commented nonchalantly, gauging Ian’s reaction.

“Mick…I…I know, and I’m…sorry. Whatever happened the last time I hurt you…it…it happened again. Something inside me just…snapped. I’m gonna keep working on it in my sessions, but…could we…I mean, I’m asking…will you...uh...keep this between us?” Ian pleaded, his eyes burning into Mickey’s in abject desperation. “I don’t wanna be locked up in that hospital again!” Ian begged after getting no response, allowing his eyes to fall shut, his bright lashes set off by his fine, porcelain skin, a pair of tears trickling down his cheeks.

Mickey stared back at Ian, his soft, forlorn face so striking that Mickey had to look away in order to focus sufficiently to respond, Mickey took a deep breath, doing his best to erase Ian’s pitifully sad expression from his mind. “I ain’t sayin’ shit, but if I end up fuckin’ dead, you got yourself to blame.” “Oh Mickey, come the fuck on!” Ian retorted, his face instantly morphing into what had, of late, become its characteristic, annoyed snarl.

“Ian, what d’ya think woulda happened if Yev didn’t knock?” Mickey asked, now less enamoured, turning to fix his eyes on Ian in anticipation of an answer. Ian looked down at the floor, averting Mickey’s gaze. He knew the answer to his question, but couldn’t bring himself to say it out loud.

“Okay…you’re right, “ Ian finally got the courage to say. “I’ll get this shit in check…I don’t ever wanna hurt you,” Ian confessed, moving closer to Mickey on the couch and gingerly putting his arm around him. Mickey flinched, his body recoiling instinctively.

“Fuck!” Ian wailed, pulling his arm away. “Ian, it’s cool. Leave it there. I didn’t mean…” Mickey began, Ian interrupting. “No! You don’t trust me! And I don’t blame you! Jesus! I’m so fucked up! Maybe you and Yev should go home without me…until I can handle being your husband again. I’ll tell Dr. Fisher, and I’ll just stay at the hospital until he fixes me---if that’s even possible!” Ian ranted, teeming with self-loathing.

Mickey wanted so badly to say that he wasn’t going anywhere, as he had always done in the past, but he couldn’t seem to get the words out. Ian had counted on hearing those words, just as much, if not more than Mickey had wanted to say them. He craved reassurance that, somehow, everything would be okay, that they would persevere. Mickey had always been good for that in the past. Ian knew he could count on Mickey to be there, through thick and thin, to support him through all of his bullshit.
And yet, this time Mickey had remained strangely silent, mulling it all over in his own mind. He knew Yev needed to get back to his normal life, to be a regular kid again. Mickey, having grown up in such a fucked up environment, wanted that normalcy for Yev so badly, he was willing to do whatever it took. He did believe, however, that Yev needed his parents, not just Svetlana, and was particularly wary of Vladimir’s possible influence, especially if he were not there to oversee Yev’s interactions with him.

He thought more about the prospect of leaving Ian in New York, and returning with Yev to Mexico, than he ever had before. He conjured up scenario after scenario, in which he would be helpful, even essential, to Yev’s well-being, back at home in Mexico. The trouble was, in each situation he imagined, Ian was also there, and was every bit as significant to Yev as Mickey was, if not more so.

“Goddamn it, Ian! We need you!” Mickey broke down, pressing his face into Ian’s chest, filling the room with muffled sobs of pained frustration. Ian tilted Mickey’s chin up, brushing his lips lightly against Mickey’s, luring him in, like a moth to a flame. The couple kissed passionately, Ian breaking the kiss only to absorb Mickey’s tears with his mouth, then resuming, until they were interrupted by a phone call, once again from Svetlana.

She was calling to arrange Yev’s return, Brach having offered to have Shawn fly with him as far as Corpus Christi, where he and Justin were scheduled to do a Surfin’ photo shoot. Ian balked at this, refusing to allow Yev to travel alone, under any circumstances. It was at this point that Mickey tentatively agreed to make the trip with Yev, as soon as their schedule permitted, Ian shooting him a disapproving glare.

Once he had ended the call, Mickey defended his response, claiming that he hadn’t really committed to anything yet, and assuring Ian that they would table making the final decision until things felt normal again.

Ian turned away from Mickey, pouting like a child, until Mickey made a fuss over him, assuring him that everything would work out, and picking up where they had left off, sucking Ian’s lower lip into his mouth fervently as he ran his fingers through Ian’s bright, shimmering hair. Mickey knew that his own behavior defied logic, every bit as much as Ian’s did, and yet he felt powerless to resist Ian, his very soul inextricably bound to Ian’s, his body aching to be taken and made whole.

Ian lay Mickey back onto the couch, climbing atop him and beginning to grind himself rhythmically against Mickey’s quickly stiffening cock. Mickey’s hips rocking upward against Ian’s equally aroused member. “I won’t hurt you, I promise you that,” Ian breathed huskily into Mickey’s ear, licking and gently biting at it, raising every hair on his shuddering body, readily coaxing him into complete acquiescence. “You want it?” Ian purred, politely asking permission for what he already knew damn well was his for the taking. “Yesss!” Mickey hissed breathlessly.

Ian lifted Mickey from the couch, carrying him in his arms into their bedroom, chuckling under his breath, “Yeah, I could tell...and you’re gonna beg for it.” Ian lay Mickey crossways on the bed, removing the underwear they’d both spent the majority of the day in, then whispering softly, “Don’t move.”

Mickey lay completely still while Ian took his time moving his hands and mouth over the entirety of him, from head to toe. Before long, Mickey was writhing uncontrollably beneath Ian, as he proceeded at a snail’s pace, kissing, licking, sucking and caressing all of his most sensitive areas---beginning at his neck, trailing his hands and lush lips down over his shoulders, his fingers tracing the fine contours of his clavicles, then his nipples, then his navel, swirling his tongue inside it sensually, before lightly licking down the midline of his taut stomach to the tip of his engorged cock, close, but not touching. Mickey’s breathing quickened in steeped anticipation, becoming more and more...
ragged, as Ian continued to taunt and tease him.

Ian slid his hands, one over each hip bone, around to Mickey’s invitingly round posterior, gripping each of his full ass cheeks firmly, while his lips and tongue traveled languidly from one hip to the other, pulling gently, with his teeth, at the perfectly pale, thin layer of skin that covered each, setting Mickey ablaze with desire, his fast, shallow breaths now interspersed with faint sighs of frustrated expectancy.

“Still want it?” Ian asked mockingly, as he feasted on Mickey’s tender flesh, his sexy mouth leaving its signature in its wake, traveling leisurely on down to Mickey’s balls, which he simultaneously massaged gently. Mickey moaned softly, his parted lips forming Ian’s name, Ian’s eyes open and scanning Mickey’s trembling form, from crotch to chin, tracing Mickey’s every movement, Ian’s ears honing in on the sweet sounds of Mickey’s pleasure, his eyes taking in each individual muscle twitch, as Mickey's acutely stimulated body thrashed and twisted involuntarily under Ian’s magical touch.

“So fucking hot, Mick!” Ian growled as he lifted Mickey’s legs, folding them back toward his face, further exposing his sack and allowing complete and total access to his opening. As he continued to lightly graze Mickey’s increasingly tight scrotum with his fingers, he began feathering the outer edges of his hole with his tongue, slowly and lightly at first, gradually speeding up, intensifying it further by alternating finger and tongue, until Mickey was begging for Ian’s cock, his voice filled with desperate want, pleading with Ian to fuck him, just as Ian had promised he would.

“Mmmmm Hmmm...yep, you’re gonna get it,” Ian smirked, finessing a second finger into Mickey’s rectum, while still maintaining his swift rimming pattern, his tongue dancing and delving at lightning speed. “When?!?” Mickey panted, his need so dire, it was as if he couldn’t breathe, for wanting Ian so badly. “Right the fuck now!” Ian replied, easing his massive manhood into Mickey so gradually that Mickey was reaching for his ass with his hands, in hopes of hastening the process. “Oh no, I’m gonna take my time,” Ian insisted, sliding only the tip of his cock in and out of Mickey’s fine ass at such a torturously slow pace, even he was having difficulty holding back.

Slowly and deliberately, Ian pushed further into Mickey, his own excitement building until he could no longer maintain his composure, as he had planned, low, guttural groans escaping from somewhere deep within him. Their bodies moved in concert, so beautifully, like precision parts of a fine piece of machinery, their lovemaking literally a work of art to behold.

“Mickey…” Ian blurted out, every fiber of his being synched up with Mickey's, their magnificent collaboration so erotically charged, even the sheets felt as if they were on fire as Mickey tightened himself around Ian. Ian was literally seeing stars, the electricity emanating from his lover’s supercharged body reverberating through his own, waves of ecstatic pleasure washing over him.

“Oh, fuck!” Ian yelled, suddenly slamming into Mickey ferociously, Mickey letting out a series of staccato yelps that coincided with the masterful placement of Ian’s tremendous thrusts. “That’s right,” Ian coaxed, as he pounded into Mickey mercilessly, “Cum for me! I’m gonna watch!”

“Oh fuck!!” Mickey screeched, gazing up into Ian's smoking hot, green eyes, as he began to explode onto his own chest, his hole spastically clenching tightly around Ian’s now throbbing cock as he erupted, both men singing each other’s praises amid a chorus of curse words.

After a moment of what could only be described as still, quiet, blissful exhaustion, Ian gently guided Mickey’s legs down onto the bed, then collapsed atop Mickey once again, laying his head on his chest and listening to Mickey’s strong, steady heartbeat, the perfect metaphor for what Mickey was in their relationship. No matter what the issue, or how badly Ian fucked up, he knew, without Mickey having to say a single word, that he would be there, strong and steady, brave and self-
sacrificing. Not only was Mickey precisely what he wanted, what he had always craved in a mate, but he was also just what he needed. From Mickey’s point of view, Ian was so smart and fiercely independent, Mickey often marveled at how much Ian truly needed him—and somehow, that need, which gave Mickey such significance to Ian, was a gift, allowing Mickey to feel his importance, and to learn to value himself.

Both unconsciously felt, without ever putting it into words, that two souls had never before been so deeply connected, so hopelessly intertwined. “Yev and I will go when you go,” Mickey announced, after a long silence, kissing the top of Ian’s head softly. “Thank you,” Ian breathed, “Mick, I…” Ian stalled, overcome with emotion. Mickey, caressing the side of Ian’s face comfortably, whispered, “I know.”
A Cautionary Tale

Mickey had taken great care to say as little as possible to Ian about his mother’s upcoming nuptials, fearing it would put too much pressure on him to be ‘well’ before he was ready. Mickey felt strongly that the family should stay the course in New York until Dr. Fisher was satisfied that it was time for Ian to go home. They had been working on his tendency toward aggression, practically non-stop, ever since Ian had finally shared the choking incident in a session with Mickey present. This was quite valuable, not only to Ian’s treatment, but for Mickey’s as well. From that day forward, Mickey was present for all of Ian’s hypnosis sessions, holding his hand and talking to him as he recalled and learned to deal with his experiences at the hands of the Russians.

Likewise, Ian was there for Mickey when he relived some of his childhood experiences, including some violent abuse of a sexual nature, inflicted upon him by his father. Mickey had not been able to understand what was going on when it happened because he was so young---too young to know what sex was. What he and a friend had been caught doing amounted to ‘playing doctor’, but because Mickey was Mickey, and Terry resented him for not being his, he was punished harshly and inappropriately.

Ian cried like a baby as he listened to Mickey recount the details of the abuse, pulling Mickey in close to comfort him, although it was Ian who needed more comfort. Mickey had become so accustomed to being abused, his retellings were often matter-of-fact. This particular instance, however, he had completely blocked from his mind, hypnosis having dislodged it from his mental trash bin, so there was a bit of surprise on Ian and Mickey’s part, since it was essentially new information to both of them. Ian couldn’t understand, for the life of him, how anyone could treat a beautiful, innocent child the way Terry had treated Mickey. Even his parents weren’t THAT cruel.

As a result of all of this shared therapy and new knowledge of one another’s experiences, Ian and Mickey became even closer, if that was even possible, Ian’s love and appreciation for Mickey becoming the driving force in their day-to-day lives. Ian just couldn’t stop showing and telling Mickey how much he loved him. Of course, Mickey had been this way all along, and continued to love and cherish Ian beyond measure.

After two weeks of smooth sailing, free of violence and filled with love and phenomenal sex, Mickey decided to broach the subject with Dr. Fisher of the family returning to Mexico. Mickey had been transacting business from New York as best he could, and had become more involved with some of the events in the New York Surfin’ office, but he was quite anxious to return home, especially since the new Surfin’ location in Boca was set to open its doors. He definitely wanted to be there for the grand opening. He was also looking forward to being able to tell Kayla and Doc that they could set their tentative wedding date in stone, since they had been waiting to find out when the family would be coming home.

He also had two pretty big surprises in the works for Ian, and literally could not wait to share them. Both of them, Mickey believed, would be extremely helpful to Ian’s recovery and, thanks to the recent doubling of sales in the new Asian market, Surfin’ and Ojos’ financials were able to support some pretty nice ‘extras’. The only thing standing in the way of their happy ending, at this point, seemed to be Ian’s pending release from daily psychiatric care, something he hoped, with all his heart, he could convince Dr. Fisher of during the between-sessions discussion he was about to have with him. Ian had gone to the waiting area to check on Yev’s progress on his schoolwork. He had a fairly large assignment due, and had been up early that morning, making last minute edits and additions, which had to be put on hold in order for them to get to the hospital on time for their sessions.
Mickey had hung back to use the bathroom, catching Dr. Fisher in the office on his way out. Dr. Fisher welcomed him in, excusing himself briefly to take a phone call. Mickey sat in the first chair, in front of the large desk, his leg bouncing nervously as he considered how best to broach the subject of Ian’s release.

At first, he thought of leading with all of the reasons they needed to get back to Mexico, but then reconsidered, figuring a better rationale might be Ian’s psychological progress and readiness to re-enter his normal life. Then he thought about just sharing the idea from his own perspective, explaining what their return home would mean for the family, as a whole, for their healing.

Upon Dr. Fisher’s return, Mickey was still uncertain as to his plan of attack. Fortunately, Dr. Fisher stepped in and took the lead, rendering any real strategy, on Mickey’s part, unnecessary. “Mickey...I know why you are here,” Dr. Fisher began, pausing to sip from his coffee, then continuing, “And I feel the need to share something with you, before we discuss this, not because it is relevant to your immediate situation, but because I see something in you that is like me, and I feel, as much as I hope this will not to be the case, that your knowledge of one of my personal experiences might serve you well, when considering your responses to situations in your own life...with Ian.”

“You’re scarin’ me, Doc,” Mickey responded, holding his breath as he waited for Dr. Fisher to share his story. “Before I start, you should know that you are the only person I will have shared this with, in nearly twenty years,” he confided, making eye contact with Mickey for emphasis. “I ain’t gonna tell anybody,” Mickey promised, figuring the doc might have done something illegal.

“No...Mickey...That’s not why I said that. I just want you to know that this is a very tough subject for me, but the costs to me are outweighed by the prospective benefits to you,” Dr. Fisher clarified. “Okay…” Mickey acknowledged, not sure what else to say.

Dr. Fisher cleared his throat, then began his story, “Mickey, I, too, grew up in a poor, dysfunctional family. My parents did their best, but they had one really big challenge to face, one they were completely ill-prepared for, and that they didn’t have adequate help to address.”

Mickey’s curiosity was piqued. He sat completely still, listening intently, as the doctor continued, “My older sister was ‘crazy’, as my parents put it. She was completely unpredictable, given to fits of rage, suicide attempts, and periods of profound depression. Like I said, we were poor, so she didn’t get diagnosed with bipolar disorder until after the first time she tried to take her own life. My mother found her in the bathtub, bleeding out, and called an ambulance.”

Dr. Fisher stopped momentarily, his downcast eyes gazing wistfully into his coffee cup, then resumed, “The ambulance bills added up quickly, and since we had no medical insurance, she wasn’t able to get the care she needed. It wasn’t long before my father took to locking her in her room and nailing her window shut. She used to beg me to let her out, but I knew if I did, I’d get it, so I stayed out of earshot as much as I could.”

“One day she...and I don’t know how...managed to get her window open. She jumped, breaking a leg and smacking her head against a tree, causing a severe concussion. My mother had to take time off work to care for her, and once she was healed, my father took to locking her in our hall closet before he went to work each day...My mother had to sleep in her room, and waited for my dad each morning, before she got up for work.” Dr. Fisher’s eyes had begun to tear up, but he plodded on, recounting the horrendous childhood experiences he’d had.

“Doc, ya don’t have to...I get it,” Mickey interjected, feeling his pain as if it were his own. “No...this is important,” Dr. Fisher insisted, continuing, “She would hear me getting ready for school, and often tried talking to me...trying to get me to open the closet and let her out. One particular morning, I
guess I was feeling especially badly for her...I don’t know...and I...I...opened the door for her. She immediately thanked me, throwing her arms around me emotionally. She told me I was the best brother in the world! I figured I had done the right thing. When I left for school, she was in the kitchen, getting something to eat. Later that day, when I came home, I found her there, dead, in a pool of blood.” The tears were streaming down his face as Dr. Fisher recalled his parents’ horrific reactions, his mother completely broken, retreating into herself for years, his father blaming and beating him incessantly.

There was a long, uncomfortable silence, during which Mickey had been struggling with what to say. “So...you don’t think Ian’s ready to go home yet?” Mickey finally asked, attempting to change the subject, “That’s not it, Mickey,” Dr. Fisher replied, after composing himself a bit, “Ian just needs to have continued care, to be evaluated regularly...and...this is so important--- You cannot allow him to convince you that he is well and doesn’t need to see anyone, or to take his medication. And I’m going to insist upon seeing him, once a week, until further notice,” Dr. Fisher finished, looking at Mickey for confirmation that he would agree to these terms.

“But, we’ll be in Mexico,” Mickey reminded him. “I need to see him. He can fly to wherever I am. You are a man of means, and this is vitally important to his mental health, and to the safety and happiness of your family. Eventually, he can see someone else, but for now, if you are going to leave earlier than I would prefer, it has to be this way.” Mickey nodded in silent affirmation.

“All too often, people who have undergone my treatment protocol return to their regular lives and do not get the care they need. I am not willing to allow that to happen to Ian. Your family has become quite important to me. In fact, there may be times when I am able to visit you in Mexico, depending upon my schedule. I would very much like to do that. I don’t want to see your family end up like mine,” Dr. Fisher intimated, Mickey touched by his dedication, nearly to the point of tears. “Thanks, Doc! I’ll do whatever it takes,” Mickey responded, smiling through the residual sorrow he felt, after hearing Dr. Fisher’s harrowing tale.

A knock at the office door interrupted their conversation. “Can I come in?” Ian asked, a goofy grin overtaking his face. Mickey instantly smiled in return, asking, “‘Sup?” “Yev’s presentation is hilarious! And so well done! I wanted you to see it!” Ian explained with great enthusiasm. Mickey immediately stood, heading for the door. “Ian, how about sitting with me for a bit while Mickey checks in with Yev?” Dr. Fisher asked. “Sure!” Ian agreed readily, his face still glowing joyfully. Mickey nodded his assent as he walked away, headed for the waiting area.

After about fifteen minutes, Dr. Fisher called the entire family together to discuss future treatment plans and a possible date for their departure. They resolved for them to leave at the end of the week, with a planned session scheduled for Ian the following Friday, back in New York.

“I know it’s a pretty quick turnaround, but this is important. I understand there are many arguments in support of your early departure, but ongoing treatment is essential, as I’ve discussed with each of you,” the doctor reiterated. “So, it’s settled then?” Mickey questioned, seeking approval from all concerned. “Yep!” Ian said in a chipper voice, squeezing Mickey’s hand with excitement. “Yes,” Dr. Fisher chimed in, Yev jumping up and down, yelling “Yay!”

Once the family returned to the hotel after their sessions, Mickey set about making all of the travel plans, then made calls to both Kayla and Svetlana, letting them know all of the details. There were also some additional calls, concerning business that needed to be resolved prior to their arrival, which included things Ian had no knowledge of.

As Mickey slipped into the bedroom for privacy, Ian walked in behind him. “Wanna go swimming?” he asked, reaching for the swimsuits they had bought on a shopping trip they’d made the weekend
before. “We did promise Yev that we’d swim before we left,” Ian reminded Mickey, the beauty of his cheerful face wearing Mickey down with ease. Mickey was waiting for some business calls, still needed to make others, and had figured he wouldn’t be doing anything with the family until after Yev finished school for the day.

“Yev’s got school,” Mickey said flatly. “Yeah, but he has an hour. C’mon, the kid’s been working hard all morning. Just for a little bit?” Ian pouted, reading Mickey’s face and claiming victory, tossing Mickey’s suit at his face. Mickey sat his phone down and began to undress, donning his suit in under a minute. “S’go!” he growled, though Ian could tell he was more than pleased to make the excursion. Ian and Yev were ready in a flash, the family taking the elevator to the pool, where they were the only swimmers.

“You’re the best dads in the world!” Yev shouted before jumping in for the first time. “You really are the best!” Ian said softly, turning to kiss Mickey, as they both stood in the shallow end of the pool. Mickey returned Ian’s kiss passionately, his heart the lightest it had felt for as long as he could remember. “Ian,” he breathed into his mouth, “You’ll never know…” Ian shushed him, kissing him hard, as he pulled Mickey’s body into his. After a short-lived, but intense make-out session, Ian broke the kiss, holding Mickey at arms length, admiring his beauty, hopelessly lost in his gorgeous blue eyes, the shimmering water reflecting off them, producing a most hypnotic sparkle. “But I do,” he whispered, still completely enamoured with the celestial sight of his husband, standing in the pool he’d coaxed him into, “I do.”
Hello Beloved Readers,

I'm guessing there are maybe ten chapters or less remaining in this story. Some of you wanted a heads up, so I am giving it. I hope this doesn't ruin anything for the rest of you. It has truly been a pleasure to write about these fantastic characters and to receive feedback and kudos from readers.

I can't say there are many things in my life that I have enjoyed more than this process! Thanks for being a part of it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ian, Mickey, and Yev arrived at the house late in the evening, the living room packed with all of their family and friends, clamouring to greet them with hugs and kisses. Even Marco, who had returned to Mexico the week before, was there, a giant smile on his newly reconstructed face. Johnny had pulled out all the stops, providing a large selection of hors d’oeuvres, buffet style, he, Svetlana, and Vladimir supplying a sampling of wines, as well as descriptions of the varieties of grapes they were growing in their newly acquired vineyard, the wines from which were to be sold from the winery they were in the process of building, in addition to being served at Sur de la Frontera.

Kayla was absolutely beaming, looking the picture of health as she hugged her babies tightly—all three of them. “So glad you’re finally home!” she exclaimed, releasing them from their group hug to squeeze Yev tightly and kiss him on the crown of his head. Svetlana was next, grabbing her son for a loving welcome.

Meanwhile, Mandy, whose belly was now bulging with baby, did her best to embrace them all, as did Manuel, Manny, Mikhaila, Reesie, Iggy, Doc, Brach, Johnny, and Bigley, who spared no show of emotion, when it came to this part of his adopted family. Also there for their homecoming was Carlos, who was to be the music coordinator for Kayla and Doc’s wedding. He had done some parties at Frontera, including celebrations held by Mickey and Manuel for Ojos, before, and had come highly recommended by Johnny. The plans were to coordinate both live and DJ entertainment for the wedding, so he had come to provide the music for the ‘welcome home’ party, as an audition of sorts.

Once everyone had seen and hugged Ian, Mickey, and Yev, the wine began to flow, and Carlos made the announcement that there would be karaoke. Yev was overwhelmed with excitement, calling out a long string of songs he wanted to sing, and insisting that his dads sing with him. “Yev, I’m not a singer,” Ian replied, right away, “I’ll dance though...and so will Dad. Right, Mickey?” Mickey looked away in embarrassment, hoping Ian would just drop the subject and shut the fuck up. Clearly, he had not had nearly enough to drink to even consider dancing. Ian was much better suited for it than he was, as were Mandy and Manuel, a point that he was quick to make.

“Oh no,” Kayla agreed, “Mickey can’t dance...but he can sing! Boy, can he sing!” She shared this little tidbit of information with a smile that was so full of pride, everyone in the room was instantly dying to hear Mickey’s voice. “Ma!” Mickey yelled, “I can’t. I haven’t…” “Nonsense!” she shouted back, cutting him off, mid-sentence. “Sing what you always sang when you played guitar. That
really badass, screamy one," Mandy encouraged, wrapping her arm around his shoulder, like they were kids again.

Then Mandy walked away, approaching Carlos to ask him to play “The Kill”, by 30 Seconds to Mars, which was the song she had been coaxing Mickey to sing. “Later, Mandy!" Mickey barked, adding, “Please!” as he gulped the remaining wine in his glass down in a single swallow. “I’ll go first, Daddy!” Yev volunteered, requesting, “Stitches”, by Shawn Mendes.

After Yev’s first line, all eyes were on him, all ears listening intently, all conversations put on pause. He had the voice of an angel and the poise of a seasoned performer. As soon as Yev finished, Mickey, his eyes moist with tears, scooped him up into his arms, whispering, “I’m so proud a’ ya, Yev! You were so good!” “Mickey, he sounds just like you did, the last time I heard you sing,” Kayla remarked, complimenting both Mickey and Yev in a single, well-phrased sentence. “He’s even better now, Ma!” Mandy insisted, “Wait ‘til you hear him!”

By this time, Ian was looking at his husband and son quizzically, never having heard either of them sing, other than “Happy Birthday” at birthday celebrations. He was completely aghast at not knowing something this big about them. As the night went on, several of their guests embarrassed themselves trying to sing a number of different songs, the wine serving to loosen them all up pretty well. Ian did a lousy vocal rendition of Justin Timberlake’s “Can’t Stop the Feeling” although his dance moves were spot-on, garnering quite a bit of attention, not to mention how hard Mickey’s dick got, watching him move like that.

By the end of the night, most people were pretty intoxicated, including Mickey, who finally agreed to sing, the room falling completely silent, except for the music and Mickey’s voice, which was nothing short of incredible. And the emotion that he put into it was both touching and powerful.

Ian, despite having had several drinks, noticed that the lyrics seemed to have special meaning to Mickey, and by the end, he had determined that this song, for Mickey, was about his coming out, as well as the tumultuous period of their relationship that followed, involving his illness and their eventual breakup.

Apparently, the meaning behind the song was not lost on Mandy either. She moved across the room to hold Ian as he wept. He was obviously reliving the guilt he felt about what he had put Mickey through back then, and also considering how much Mickey was still enduring for him now.

As soon as Mickey finished, the entire room erupted with applause and accolades, Ian running straight up to Mickey and throwing his arms around him. “I love you so much, Mick!” he sniffed, burying his nose into Mickey’s neck as he continued to sob. “You were so fucking good...and you smell so damn...perfect...” Mickey pulled Ian in tightly to him. “And you’re so fuckin’ drunk,” Mickey chuckled, lightening the mood a bit.

“Thanks, everyone,” Mickey announced without warning, “For all this! It’s great ta be back home and see ya, but I gotta get my family ta bed now, so...” This was as polite as Mickey was going to get, and everyone there, knowing him the way they did, realized it was time for them to go. Mickey made sure to shake Vladimir’s hand and thank him again for all he had done to keep his family safe and sound, during the fiasco with the Russians. He was well aware that Yev, and probably Ian, too, would be dead, if it weren’t for Vladimir.

Within minutes of Mickey’s announcement, everything was packed up, torn down, and being carried out to the appropriate vehicles. Ian, although tipsy, made it a point to thank and say goodbye to each and every person in attendance, taking some time to give their daughter, whom they hadn’t seen in what seemed like forever, some extra attention, summoning Mickey to join them. Her big blue eyes lit up at the sight of her dads, her little arms stretching wide to reach around both of them, as much as
Svetlana asked Yev to come and stay with her in the new apartment she had recently moved into above Frontera, explaining how much she liked it and how safe he would be. She provided details about the security system Johnny now had, as well as the layout of the apartment. It was Ian that was the deciding factor in Yev going with her, nodding his head in approval as Yev looked to him for assurance. Mickey, for his part, was far too wrapped up in the thought of having Ian all to himself in THEIR bedroom, for the first time in a long while, to weigh in without being asked directly.

No sooner had Ian closed the front door behind their last guest, than Mickey piledrived him, throwing him over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes, carrying him up the stairs, then tossing him onto the bed. “Take off your clothes,” he commanded, planting teasingly soft kisses all up and down Ian’s neck, before getting up from the bed to rustle through their nightstand drawer. He returned to the bed, tossing two sets of anal beads and a jar of coconut oil on the bed, then quickly stepping out of his pants and pulling his shirt off over his head.

Mickey lowered himself onto Ian, grinding on him sensually as he kissed him like he hadn’t seen him in weeks, sucking and biting intensely on Ian’s lower lip. “Mickey…” Ian moaned, arching his ass up off the bed to counter Mickey’s movements, “Want you…"

Mickey grinned down at Ian, having interrupted their romp to grease up both sets of beads. He then resumed rubbing his own cock, balls, and ass all over Ian’s rock-hard cock, this time from a seated position, as he reached around to fondle Ian’s tightly puckered hole with his oil-lubricated fingers. “Mick…” Ian whispered faintly, his breath hitching in his throat at the surprise entrance of Mickey’s index finger. “You like that?” Mickey breathed, staring down into Ian’s gleaming green eyes, alit with lustful longing, as he exchanged his finger for a set of beads. “Fuck, yeah,” Ian panted, impatiently gyrating his hips in order to maximize both friction and penetration. “Mmmm...someone wants it bad,” Mickey taunted, painstakingly pushing the beads in, one at a time, while slowly the rocking of his own ass against Ian’s package.

“Been waitin’ for this for a long fuckin’ time,” Mickey purred, bending down to bite at Ian’s lips playfully, then kissing him hard. “Fuck! I want you, Mick!” Ian blurted out desperately, Mickey chuckling in response. It was amid all of Mickey’s toying with Ian that Mickey’s phone buzzed, interrupting the most pleasurable brand of torture Ian had experienced in quite some time. “Uhhhh!” Ian groaned in annoyance, as Mickey reached for his phone, reading, “Svet” from it.

“Hello,” Mickey answered, trying his best to sound as if he had been asleep. “Mickey! Yevgeni is hysterical! He demands to see Ian! I cannot calm him. You must come and get him,” Svetlana explained. “Fuck!” Ian moaned, under his breath, causing Ian to panic. “What’s wrong?! Is Yev okay?” Ian asked in a frightened tone of voice as he yanked the anal beads unceremoniously from his ass, tossing them onto the nightstand. “We’ll be right over,” Mickey sighed in resignation, ending the call. “What?!” Ian yelled. “Put your fuckin’ clothes on. We gotta go get Yev. He’s real upset...Wants ta see ya,” Mickey said, exhaling harshly with disappointment.

Ian dressed himself in record time, cleaning up their sex toys, while Mickey finished dressing, then dragging Mickey down the hall and the stairs. “Hurry!” he supplicated, “He’s scared! He needs me!”

Ian tried getting in the driver’s seat, Mickey objecting because he was “drunk”. In reality, Mickey had had just as much, if not more wine than Ian, but because of Ian’s medication, Mickey was concerned with his ability to drive.

Not wanting to delay their arrival at Svetlana’s, Ian gave in, allowing Mickey to open the passenger side door and push him inside. “Sorry, man,” Mickey said softly, reaching over to rest his hand on Ian’s thigh as he got behind the wheel, then beginning to trace tiny circles onto it with his index
finger, the same one that had, only a few minutes ago, been in his ass. “I really wanted our first night home to be just the two of us. I’ve fuckin’ missed the hell outta that,” he admitted, looking over at Ian to see if he was pissed about not driving.

Ian appeared to be more worried than mad, his mind clearly preoccupied with Yev’s fear. “Me, too. Me, too,” he sighed deeply as Mickey continued to soothe him with his finger. “Got a few surprises in store for ya,” Mickey continued talking, hoping to keep Ian as calm as possible, until they could get to Yev. “Oh yeah?” Ian responded, more out of courtesy than interest.

“Mmmm Hmmmm,” Mickey replied, “Think you’re gonna like ‘em!” “If they’re from you, I’m sure I will, but you didn’t have to…” Mickey interrupted Ian, “Sure, I did. One of ‘em’s kinda for me, too, anyway.” Mickey grinned over at Ian, trying, with all he had, to get Ian to at least crack a small smile. No luck. Ian was definitely still a nervous wreck, but Mickey didn’t give up.

“I’m gonna eat that sweet ass of yours, next time I get the chance,” Mickey growled, squeezing Ian’s thigh. And there it was—that tiny half-smile that graced Ian’s face when Mickey said or did something, at the most inopportune time, that was so adorable that Ian couldn’t keep a straight face. Mickey smiled widely in return, having achieved his goal, just as they pulled up to Frontera.

Before Ian or Mickey could even get out of the car, Yev ran out, hopping into the passenger seat, literally sitting on Ian’s lap and throwing his arms around him. “I love you, Daddy Ian! I’m so glad you’re okay!” he whimpered, squeezing Ian even tighter. “I’m fine, Yev. Are you okay?” Ian responded, hugging him back and kissing him on the forehead. “I am now!” Yev answered. Ian held Yev in silence for awhile, rubbing his back and reassuring him with the occasional, “It’s okay. It’s okay.” After a few minutes of comforting, Ian made a tough decision.

“C’mon. I’ll walk you back up to your mom’s,” Ian said firmly, Mickey’s jaw dropping in complete disbelief. “Okay,” Yev mumbled, the two getting out of the car and heading up to the side entrance.

About ten minutes later, Ian returned to the car—alone. “Why did you make him stay with Svet?” Mickey questioned Ian incredulously. “Mickey, you know Dr. Fisher said it’s important to set boundaries. If we don’t, we’ll have him sleeping with us forever. And I really don’t want that. Not only is it unhealthy for him, but how am I ever gonna have my ass eaten, if he’s always in the bed with us?” Ian giggled. Mickey responded with a sexy smirk, hitting the gas and speeding home, massaging Ian’s swollen package the whole way.

Chapter End Notes

Hello Beloved Readers,

I'm guessing there are maybe ten chapters or less remaining in this story. Some of you wanted a heads up, so I am giving it. I hope this doesn't ruin anything for the rest of you. It has truly been a pleasure to write about these fantastic characters and to receive feedback and kudos from some of you.

I can't say there are many things in my life that I have enjoyed more than this process! Thanks for being a part of it!
Mickey had opted to go into the office the morning after their first night back, postponing the unveiling of surprise #1, until the next day. He felt this would give him time to check it out for himself first, although, once he had, he was absolutely dying for Ian to see it. There was a second component to this surprise, one that also involved Doc. In fact, the original plan had been to wait until after Doc and Kayla’s wedding, but Mickey had determined, with some input from Reesie, that this surprise should not wait that long, one of the deciding factors being the Grand Opening of the Surfin’ store in Boca, which was scheduled for the end of the week.

So, fortunately for Mickey, he only had to wait until the following morning to share surprise #1 with Ian. Surprise #2 was set for the weekend, immediately following the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Surfin’ Grand Opening. Mickey was absolutely thrilled to be in a position to do these things for his husband. He knew how happy Ian was going to be with both, and couldn’t wait to see the look on his beautiful face.

Mickey felt badly for leaving Ian alone on his first morning home, but he had really missed working. He had entertained the idea of taking Ian with him, but had decided against it, since Ian was still sleeping soundly by the time he was showered, dressed and ready to go. He had slipped out without so much as a goodbye, and as the day went on, he started to feel worse and worse about it. He checked his phone often, but had not received anything from Ian all morning. Only Svet had texted to say that Yev had gotten up on his own, and was very excited to be getting back to school.

As Mickey later learned, Ian had driven over to Svet’s that morning to see Yev, and had ended up driving him to school. Ian’s car had been repaired and returned while they were in NY, so to Ian, whose memory was foggy on the events the had led up to his hospitalization after the police chase, it was as if nothing had ever happened.

Mickey was a bit disappointed that Ian had not discussed with him the possibility of riding Yev into school, but to Ian, it was where he belonged and what he should be doing. He was, after all, in essence, a stay-at-home dad, for the moment, with both Mickey and Svet working outside the home. He figured he might as well step up and do all he could to smooth Yev’s transition back to school, although Yev seemed to be more than comfortable with his return, actually looking forward to it with great excitement.

Once Ian had dropped Yev off, he decided to take a drive around town, ending up in front of the dusty, vacant lot where the clinic had stood, only a short time ago. Naturally, not having been told about what happened to the clinic, Ian was completely shocked by what he was seeing in front of him. He wondered, instantly, what the fuck happened, and also what Doc and Reesie were doing everyday, now that the clinic was gone, seeming to have vanished into thin air.

Granted, his last memories of being there were quite unpleasant, but he could hardly believe that would be cause to tear it down. He called Doc to ask about what happened. “Ian, it’s a long story,
one that you probably don’t want to hear. Just know that it was necessary in order to keep Marco alive, as well as to ensure your safety,” Doc explained, purposely leaving out as much detail as possible. Ian, reluctant to accept such a general answer, began to bristle, demanding details.

“Ian...please...just know that your friends and family had to do some ugly things in exchange for your life. Many people died there, and it needed to be destroyed in order to satisfy the Russians,” Doc explained, again choosing not to be overly specific. “Mickey?” Ian asked. “Yes, your husband was there, doing all that was necessary,” Doc answered.

By this time, Ian realized that Terry, as well as some others, must have been killed there. “Did Mickey have to kill his dad?” Ian blurted out, wondering why he hadn’t heard about the fate of the clinic or the specifics surrounding Terry’s death in any of their joint sessions with Dr. Fisher. “No,” Doc answered. “Would you like to meet me for lunch?” he asked, hoping to put this subject to rest. “Sure,” Ian answered. “Frontera?” Doc suggested, figuring he could address any further questions to Johnny, who had been there, having borne witness to it all.

“Sounds good! What time?” Ian asked. “How about 11:30?” Doc suggested, hoping to beat the lunch rush, which had become fairly substantial, Svetlana being quite the attraction behind the bar. “I’ll be there,” Ian responded, ending the call and resuming his ride about Boca, passing by the factory, his heart racing upon catching sight of Mickey’s car. He loved that man more than he could even express, and realized that Mickey had been through even more than he knew, all for him. So now that they were home, he really wanted to do something special for him.

He immediately thought of the villa Mickey had rented for them, and had wanted to buy, Ian, at the time, discouraging the move. Now he wished he hadn’t, thinking a getaway there would be something Mickey would really enjoy. He thought about renting it for a weekend and surprising him, but he didn’t have any contact information or even an address to go by. What he did have, he realized, looking at his phone, was just enough time to drive there before lunch. He was certain he could find it; all he had to do was follow the coastline. Then he would have an address and could perform a search online.

Ian drove for the better part of an hour before arriving at the group of villas he recognized as being the community where they had stayed. He parked the car and began the trek toward the ocean, remembering that their villa was the closest to the water, as well as the most private, separated from all of the others.

Ian was sweating by the time he arrived at what was, without a doubt, the breathtakingly beautiful, secluded villa where he and Mickey had spent one of the best weekends of their lives together. He sighed deeply as he gazed at it’s sunny presence and the serenity of the surrounding seascape, a profound feeling of peace and joy reverberating through his entire body. He recalled the circumstances under which he and Mickey had arrived, Mickey, although thoroughly pissed at Ian, unable, if only for a moment, to resist the unrelenting physical attraction between them. He had backed Ian over the threshold and shoved him onto the round bed. But that was only the beginning of what he had in store. Ian’s cock stood at attention as he recalled the highlights of their incredibly private and pleasurable time there together. Yes, this was exactly what he wanted to do for Mickey!

Just as he pulled his phone out, preparing to take a photo of the villa, the address clearly visible beside the door, two men, carrying cabinetry, came out. “Oh, hi!” Ian said, completely caught by surprise, “Maybe you can help me. I’m interested in renting this villa...I...I’ve been here before, but don’t have any contact information for the owner, or the rental company or whatever…”

“It’s sold. New owners move in this weekend,” one of the men answered. “Great! Do you have their contact info? I’d like to schedule a weekend rental...soon,” Ian continued, a smile spreading across
his face at his good fortune to have run into someone who could help him. “No...sir...the new owner
does not wish to rent the villa,” the worker replied. “Well, maybe if I talked to him...I can pay...”
The man stopped Ian, before he could finish his thought, “Trust me. There have been many requests.
He’s not interested. Plans to use the place often himself. Doesn’t want anyone else staying here.

“Thank you,” Ian responded dejectedly, turning, then trudging back to his car. He looked at his
phone. 10:20. Plenty of time to get back to Frontera in time to meet Doc for lunch, although his heart
wasn’t in it, after learning that he wouldn’t be able to arrange his weekend with Mickey, as he had
hoped. He thought about cancelling, but decided against it, hoping that seeing Doc might lift his
spirits. He did want to talk to him about clothes for the bridal party, and also wanted to find out a bit
more about what had happened at the clinic, before it was destroyed.

Ian drove with purpose, up the coastline, distracting himself with music and trying his best to just be
grateful to be back home. He truly was happy to be back, so he told himself that should be enough,
that he’d plan some other type of excursion soon, and that Mickey and he would be happy together,
no matter what.

As he arrived at Frontera, he could see that Doc’s car was already there, so he hustled in, allowing
his car to be valeted for expediency. Doc was sitting alone in the alcove and rose right away, upon
seeing Ian, stepping toward him to welcome him with a warm hug. “It’s so good to have you back!”
Doc said with a sincere smile, before reseating himself and pouring them each a glass of wine from
the chilled bottle that sat on ice, next to the table.

“What’s wrong?” Doc asked, noticing that Ian seemed unhappy, “Still thinking about the clinic?”
“No really. Actually, I’m just kinda bummed out. I tried to get contact info for the villa where
Mickey and I stayed a while back...really had a nice time. I wanted to see if I could book it for us
again, maybe this weekend,” Ian explained. “Oh yeah?” Doc said with a slight grin. “Yeah, but it’s
been sold...and the new owner won’t rent it out!” Ian whined. “Well, I guess maybe he wants it all to
himself. You said it’s a nice place. Is that so hard to understand?” Doc asked, annoying Ian with his
devil’s advocate routine. “Yeah...okay...take his side!” Ian muttered angrily.

“Wow! I’m sorry!” Doc began, reaching for his phone to read, then return a text, before continuing,
“I guess I didn’t realize just how upset you were! But you know Mickey is happy just to be back in
Mexico...with you!” Doc said comfortingly. “Yeah, I know…” Ian pouted. “I just wanted to surprise
him!”

Just then, Mickey walked up behind Ian, having heard the last thing he said. “I got one for YOU!
Both a’ ya,” he announced, putting his hands on Ian’s shoulders and beginning to massage them. As
Ian looked across the table at Doc, Doc’s eyes got wide, his head turning to look at something. Ian
spun around and saw that Reesie, Brach, Kayla, Mandy and Manuel were walking up to the table.
“Please...join us,” Doc offered, standing up to meet Kayla, kissing her sweetly, then pulling the chair
next to him out for her to sit on. The group quickly filled in the empty seats, Johnny rushing over to
greet this impromptu party of seven of his closest friends.

“I’m so thrilled to have you all today!” Johnny spoke with great excitement, pulling a bottle of wine
from under his arm and opening it, then gesturing toward Svetlana, who arrived moments later with
two more unique varieties. “You should have told me! I could have prepared a sampling of food
from the wedding menu!” he added, absolutely beaming.

“It’s okay, Johnny,” Mickey assured him, “We have to make this quick anyway.” Ian and Doc both
simultaneously gave Mickey a puzzled look. “Uh...yeah...we gotta go somewhere. All of us,”
Mickey explained, Ian and Doc now appearing to be even more confused. “Don’t worry ‘bout it.
You’ll see, after we eat,” Mickey insisted, pulling Johnny by the arm and whispering in his ear.
In less than ten minutes, Johnny appeared with two sandwich rings, one was a turkey club, Ian’s favorite, the other, a traditional italian sub, Svetlana following him with a large container of minestrone. Svet served the soup, and Johnny poured a sampling of each bottle of wine for each of his friends, then toasted, once again, to Mickey and Ian’s return, thanking Mickey for his help in saving Marco’s life, then kissing him on the cheek, Italian style.

The group conversed jovially, enjoying their magnificent meal and the great company. Ian could feel his mood lifting, his eyes darting over to take in the satisfying sight of his hotty of a husband enjoying himself. Nothing in the world made Ian happier than seeing Mickey feeling at ease and engaged in a group situation. He had seen the opposite so many times in their young life together. Mickey deserved so much better than what he got, for most of his life, and Ian, at that very moment, decided to make it his mission to make up for that— to give Mickey the life he deserved.

He reached under the table, resting his hand on Mickey’s thigh, then squeezing it lightly. Mickey turned toward him, his face flushing in the most adorable way, “What?” he asked with a sheepish grin, clearly embarrassed, and thinking everyone knew he had a hard-on, thanks to his grabby husband. “No one knows,” Ian whispered into Mickey’s ear, allowing his hand to ride further up his thigh, grazing his stiff cock lightly.

Mickey looked away, doing his best to focus on the conversation the others were having, but failing miserably, as his mate continued to tease him mercilessly. Mickey turned to Ian, pulling his ear to his mouth. “You’re gonna get it!” he growled, prompting a smirk from Ian that said, “I dare you,” without Ian uttering a single word.

“If you’ll excuse us,” Mickey interrupted, “Ian and I have something to discuss. We’ll be back.” Mickey grabbed Ian by the wrist roughly, whisking him off to the restroom, leaving those who remained at the table wondering what was going on. Their concern was short-lived, however, the subject returning to that of the wedding and all the last-minute details that had yet to be resolved.

Meanwhile, Mickey had backed Ian into the restroom, locking the door behind them, yanking both of their pants down, then bending Ian over the sink, lathering his hands with soap, and quickly lubing up Ian’s hole. “Ya think you’re funny?!” Mickey muttered in an agitated tone of voice. Ian was pretty sure it was put on, for effect, but Mickey sounded so angry, he couldn’t be positive.

“No,” Ian responded, attempting to sound as ashamed as possible, since he knew, from experience, how much Mickey would get off on that shit, “Sorry, sir,” he added, as Mickey began finger-fucking him. Ian moaned with pleasure, sliding his own hand over his cock rhythmically.

Mickey didn’t take his time, as was his usual way when he fucked Ian. Instead, he just fucked him hard, growling, “That what you want? Huh? Huh?” into his ear. “Yesss! Yesss! Yessss!” Ian hissed, continuing to jerk himself, more and more vigorously, as Mickey pounded into him with reckless abandon. “Mick!” Ian screamed, “Feels so fucking good!!!” as Mickey continued to fuck him so hard he had to bite his lip to hold back the squeal that was rising up from his throat.

Once he got acclimated, Ian was in pure ecstasy, Mickey nailing him just right with each and every driving stroke. “Oh fuck yeah! Fuck me! Fuck me! Yeah, Mick! Yeah, Mick!” he moaned with increasing intensity, feeling himself coming closer and closer to climax.

“C’mon, Gallagher! That’s right!” Mickey panted, feeling Ian’s asshole begin to pulse. “Gonna cum for me? Cause I’m about ta fuckin’ explode!” Mickey’s warning came mere seconds before Ian shot off like a rocket, spewing his liquid pleasure up over the sink, some of it defacing the mirror above it. “Fuck!” Ian screamed, Mickey following with, “That’s fuckin’ right! Oh fuck yeah!” as he blew his load up into Ian’s tight little asshole.
Mickey spun Ian around, kissing him tenderly, his eyes filled with reverence. “You’re so fuckin’ gorgeous!” Mickey sighed with contentment, between impassioned kisses. “I love you, Mick!” Ian breathed, pulling Mickey’s forehead to his lips, “So fucking much!”

“Hey! We gotta go!” Mickey exclaimed, suddenly returning to reality. “Got somethin’ ta show ya!”
Full of Surprises

Chapter Notes

Great YouTube channel for people like us, FYI:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqzVvg5qxJfF4uzuTKDC3Pg

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

The group formed a caravan, Mickey leading the way, driving Ian’s car with Ian riding shotgun. Mandy rode with Manuel, Reesie with Brach and Kayla with Doc. Mickey left his car at Frontera, the idea being he would grab it on his way back to work with Manuel. Ian would then drive Mandy home. The two sets of best friends had been separated for what seemed like forever, so Mickey thought this would be a great opportunity for them to catch up. Even though he had seen Manuel at the factory that morning, it had been all business, and he was looking forward to hearing how he was doing, on a personal level. Mandy and Ian, of course, had wedding talk to do, particularly pertaining to clothes for the wedding party.

Ian squirmed impatiently in his seat, demanding to know what was going on, but Mickey refused to give anything away anyway, simply repeating, “You’ll see,” in response to each and every one of Ian’s inquiries. He was literally dying to get wherever it was they were going, both so he could see his surprise and so he could get up off his ass, since, after the fucking he just got, standing up felt better to him, for the moment.

Luckily, the trip wasn’t too long, and the group found themselves parking in front of the recently purchased building that was to be the site of the grand opening of the new Boca location of Surfing’ USA. Even Mickey hadn’t seen all that had been done since the purchase, so he was just as excited as everyone else.

Once everyone had parked and were standing on the sidewalk, Mickey pulled the keys from his pocket and unlocked the door, ushering everyone in to see the fully remodeled and merchandised surf shop. It was absolutely beautiful, everything inside being brand new and high end. “Mickey...it’s gorgeous!” Ian said sincerely, as his eyes moved over everything in amazement. Mickey stood still, admiring all of it, as other members of his entourage Ooooed and Ahhhed, Manuel smiling with satisfaction.

“Manuel and Brach are the ones who deserve the praise, man,” Mickey began. “They got all this shit together for me while I was gone,” he finished proudly, hugging them both in appreciation. “This was a wonderful surprise!” Kayla said enthusiastically, looking admiringly at Mickey. “Oh, this ain’t all,” Mickey quickly replied, taking Ian by the hand. “C’mon,” he called out, pulling Ian along behind him.

He led Ian out the door, allowing everyone else to follow, then locking the door behind him, before heading for the stairs that were immediately to their right. “Doc!” he called out, as he and Ian ascended the stairs hurriedly, “I want you up here with us!” he hollered, stopping short to wait for him to catch up, Kayla right by his side the whole way.

As the quartet reached the top step, the others following close behind, Mickey piped up,
Ian...Doc...Close your eyes. Ma! Guide Doc up here behind us.” Mickey led Ian up to the door, then waited for Doc. Once they were both standing there, he yelled, “Reesie! I need you, too. Just didn’t want ya hurryin’ on the stairs.” Now all three were standing there in suspense. “Okay, open your eyes!” Mickey shouted with delight. There before them stood a frosted door with large, bold lettering that read, “Boca del Río Emergency Medicine Clinic”, below which was additional smaller lettering, reading “Dr. Michael Montemurro, Ian Milkovich, R.N., and Teresa Lewis, R.N.”

“Mickey!” Ian cried out, his eyes filling with tears faster than he could wipe them away. He threw his arms around Mickey and began covering his entire face with kisses, Doc, all the while, saying, “Mickey! This is too much! This is too much!” as his eyes brimmed over with happy emotion. Reesie, who had been in on the plan, was equally surprised to see her name on the door. “Hope you can change that last name,” Brach chimed in, pulling a tiny box from his pocket, then getting down on one knee.

“I had planned on doing this in the restaurant, but Mickey was in such a hurry, I figured I should wait,” Brach stammered nervously. “Reesie,” he continued, as he took Reesie’s hand in his own, his voice wavering as no one there had ever heard before, “Will you marry me?” “Yes!” Reesie squealed instantly with delight, pulling Brach up to her for a giant, sloppy kiss, in front of God and everybody.

Everyone in their little group took turns hugging and congratulating the couple, Mickey, growing impatient, finally interrupting, “Yeah, congratulations! Now, can I show them the place?!” “Sorry, Mickey,” Brach mumbled, Mickey having taken the wind out of his sail. “Mickey!” Ian chided, mildly embarrassed by his husband’s behavior, but chomping at the bit to see the clinic, nonetheless.

“Sorry, man,” Mickey said to Brach softly, realizing his mistake, as he turned the key to open the clinic door. “Mickey!” Ian screamed, this time in utter amazement! It’s so fucking beautiful!! I just can’t…” Ian couldn’t find words strong enough to reflect his sentiments, so he resorted, once again, to kissing him, this time on the lips, slowly, sensually, like they were making love with their clothes on. Often, Ian, having learned from Mickey, chose actions over words, when it came to expressing himself to his husband. This was definitely one of those times, and Mickey couldn’t have been happier. Ian was quite talented, when it came to this mode of expression, and left no guesswork for Mickey, in terms of how thrilled he was with his surprise.

Mickey’s heart felt as if it might explode with joy at the reaction he got from Ian, and then Doc approached him, hugging him tight as he expressed his sincere gratitude, promising to make the clinic a big success. “Never doubted it, Doc. Ya don’t know how ta do anything but succeed,” Mickey responded. “And you two,” Mickey said, smiling at Ian, then Reesie, “Doc couldn’t ask for two better nurses.”

Doc, Ian, and Reesie made their rounds, checking out all of the exam rooms, the equipment, the office, the kitchenette—all state-of-the-art! They couldn’t have been more thrilled. “You three are welcome to stay to get ready for the grand openin’,” Mickey suggested. “And when will that be?” Doc asked curiously. “Was hopin’ we could have the grand openin’ for the clinic the same day as for Surfin’,” he said hopefully. “Well, what do my nurses say? Feel like staying a bit to figure out a few things?” Doc asked eagerly. “Sure,” Ian said, more than thrilled to be called a nurse again. “Sounds great!” Reesie added, smiling down at her dazzling new engagement ring.

“Okay, so I’ll get the kids after work. Alright with you, Reesie, if we keep Mik for a couple days? Then maybe she can stay with you guys this weekend? Me and Ian got plans,” Mickey shared, rattling off his ideal schedule for the week, as if he were in charge of planning everyone’s lives. Surprisingly, everyone agreed to everything, Ian being the only one to question anything. “We do?” he asked, “What plans?” To which Mickey gave the same answer he’d been giving for the past hour,
“You’ll see…” Ian’s face lit up with excitement. He had to admit to himself that Mickey taking charge was positively exhilarating! “And sexually arousing, too,” he thought to himself, recalling their frenzied fuckfest in the Men’s Room at Frontera. “Damn,” Ian thought, a shiver running up his spine, “Mickey is a fucking beast...and I love it!” Right about then, he wanted to change his mind and convince Mickey to take him straight home and fuck the shit out of him again, but he decided against it, figuring maybe he should hold off for whatever plans Mickey had for the weekend. Then he chuckled to himself, realizing that they NEVER wait that long between sessions.

Brach, Kayla, and Mickey said their goodbyes to their mates, heading out the door and down the stairs, Mandy and Manuel leading the way. As it turned out, Mandy would be riding with Manuel and Mickey, but Mickey still hoped he could get caught up on some of the goings on during his absence. He wondered how Iggy was doing. He hadn’t gotten the chance to talk to him much at the welcome home party, but he had noticed that he had gotten pretty drunk. He worried that alcohol might be a problem for him. He knew that Iggy had been staying in Svet’s old room above the factory, but he wasn’t there that morning when Mickey got to work.

“So...what’s up with Iggy?” Mickey asked, out of the blue, as he rode with Manuel and Mandy back to Frontera to pick up his car. “He’s been workin’ with Damon,” Manuel answered matter-of-factly. “So you thought Iggy, a convicted felon, would be better off workin’ reverse coyote operations at the border, than workin’ here for us?!” Mickey questioned, his level of annoyance greater than usual, as evidenced by the volume and tone of his voice. “No, Mickey. This was Bigley and Iggy’s decision. They figured it out together. I am not involved,” Manuel clarified.

“Well...uh...maybe ya should be,” Mickey corrected him. “What? How is it my job to convince your brother and Bigley that Iggy should be a factory worker? Huh?” Manuel barked, sounding equally bothered by the entire subject. “Just don’t want Iggy hauled back to prison in the States, man. That’s all,” Mickey explained. “And Damon ain’t the sharpest tool. It’s the reason me and Ian had to leave him in Texas when we were on our way here. Too risky to be with his dumb ass. Always doin’ stupid shit...Real stupid shit!” Mickey elaborated.

By this time, Manuel was beginning to feel responsible for not speaking up on Iggy’s behalf. “So, is he okay? I mean, when we were in New York, he was drinkin’ a lot. Got himself barred from lots a places up there. Just don’t wanna see him doin’ shit down here to get in trouble, is all.” Mickey spoke with great concern. “I really don’t know, but if it’s that important to you, I could ask Bigley if maybe we could assign him to work the new store or something.” Mickey thought that prospect through briefly, deciding against it. “Naw, he’d never be happy doin’ somethin’ so slow-movin’,” Mickey admitted, realizing that Iggy was, very likely, a big part of the decision for him to do reverse coyote work.

Mickey knew Iggy was something of an adrenaline junky, always pushing the envelope to do crazier and crazier shit. It was like a rite of passage among the Milkovich Clan, to do highly illegal and risky shit, in order to earn the respect of the others. The thing was, Iggy never stopped. He loved living on the edge—everything from running guns and drugs, to stealing from the mob—you name it, he had done it. In fact, Mickey, after thinking about it for awhile, concluded that his drinking in New York might have gotten its start out of boredom, further realizing that Iggy wasn’t going to take direction from him or Manuel. He had to make it look like it was his own decision.

“Forget it,” Mickey said, back-pedalling. “Ima call Bigley when we get back ta my car. See what he thinks ‘bout Iggy.” “Mick, ya know Iggy’s gonna do what Iggy’s gonna do,” Mandy offered, reinforcing his on thoughts on the subject. “Yeah..I know…” he sighed in frustration.

“Hey! What’s Marco been up to?” Mickey inquired, changing gears. “He has been helping out with the winemaking,” Manuel answered. “Really?” Mickey asked, surprised. “Yeah, apparently
winemaking is a large part of the family business. They all know how to do it,” Manuel explained.

“Where’s he been stayin’?” Mickey continued with his line of questioning. “In the apartment above Frontera,” Mandy smirked. “But…” Mickey began, stopping suddenly as the wheels in his head began to turn, adding things up. “Well, now that Yev’s back…” Mandy raised an eyebrow and started to giggle. “So… I’m assumin’ Marco ain’t stayin’ in Yev’s room,” Mickey concluded. “Now ya got it, bro,” Mandy teased. “Hmmm…” Mickey grinned, amused by both Marco and Svetlana’s choice of sex partner.

“Well, I need someone to do one last thing for me. Gonna call Bigley… see if Iggy’ll be available,” Mickey said, hopping out of the car to get his own, as soon as they arrived back at Frontera. “Thanks for the ride! See ya in a few,” Mickey shouted back at Manuel, as he grabbed his keys from the valet.

Once he was underway, he dialed Bigley up, Bruno catching his call on the first ring. “Mickey? Everything okay?” he asked, sounding a bit worried, considering he was Bruno Bigley, and didn’t typically scare easy. Mickey understood it, right away. He cared very much for Ian, and whenever he saw a call from Mickey, he feared there might be a problem with Ian. He had come to expect it, just as Mickey had come to expect so many terrible things to happen as he was growing up. He figured Bigley had his own little touch of what Dr. Fisher called PTSD, so he did all he could to allay his fears as quickly as possible.

“Everything’s fine, man! Better than fine!” he smiled to himself, feeling Ian’s tight hole squeezing his rapidly swelling cock, literally wringing it dry, reliving their restroom excursion in his mind, as he considered the second half of the answer he had just given Bigley. “I’m so glad to hear that,” Bigley responded, jolting Mickey from his smoking hot daydream. “So what can I do for you?” Bigley continued.


“Tell him to meet me at the Boca Firehouse, sometime after five. Have him text me when he’s close.”
“Harder! Harder! Yeah, Mick! Fuck me!” Ian grunted as Mickey railed him from behind. Ian reached for the headboard to brace himself as Mickey intensified his onslaught, in response to Ian’s demands. “So fuckin’ tight, Gallagher!” Mickey grunted as he knelt behind Ian, pounding deeper and deeper into his husband.

Mickey, seeking to intensify Ian’s pleasure further, yanked Ian’s hand from the headboard forcefully. “Get up here!” he snarled, lifting Ian upright from under his waist so that he, too, was now in a kneeling position. Ian moaned loudly as Mickey continued, steady fucking him, as he pulled him backward by his waist, altering his angle of penetration until each thrust pushed a high-pitched wail from between Ian’s clenched teeth, signaling to Mickey that he had him right where he wanted him. “Oh fuck YES!” Ian managed to squeak out between what were fast becoming what sounded remarkably like whimpers, brought on by exquisite gratification, rather than pain or sorrow, as one might expect.

“So fuckin’ good, Ian,” Mickey breathed huskily into Ian’s ear, as he pumped faster and harder, pressing Ian’s back firmly against his chest with his hands. “Oh Fuck! Mickey!!” Ian squealed, reaching for his own cock. Mickey removed one of his hands from Ian’s chest, grabbing Ian’s hand so he couldn’t jerk himself off. “Gimme that,” Mickey growled, gripping Ian’s hand and forcing it onto his own torso with one hand, then stroking Ian’s cock with the other, all the while fucking him to the point of enraptured delirium, Ian mumbling incoherently. “Yeah...gotcha...uhhh...Ian...” Mickey moaned, “So...damn...perfect...”

“Oh, FUCK!” Ian screamed in a moment of clarity, reaching for Mickey’s ass, “I’m gonna cum!” “Damn right, you are,” Mickey hissed into Ian’s ear as he continued to nail him expertly, increasingly intense waves of pleasure rolling over their entire bodies.

Just as they were about to explode in unison, the sounds of a beeping horn and a siren interrupted them, both men jumping, duck-and-cover style, in response to the loud, unexpected noises. “Oh shit!” Mickey exclaimed, realizing what was going on. “What the fuck?” Ian whined, looking over his shoulder, an air of profound disappointment in his voice.

“Get dressed,” Mickey mumbled. “Got somethin’ ta show ya.” “Are you kidding me right now? My balls feel like their gonna explode!” Ian mewled in frustration. “Yeah, tell me about it,” Mickey replied, rumpling Ian’s hair lovingly, his own cock and balls throbbing painfully. “I’m sorry...But I know you’re gonna love this,” he added, throwing some clothes on quickly and dashing down the stairs, Ian dressing and following behind him begrudgingly.

Mickey stopped short of opening the front door, turning back toward Ian, who was still pouting and sporting a half-chub. “Close your eyes,” Mickey commanded, pecking him on his swollen red lips. “Am I under arrest?” Ian muttered sarcastically, wishing to hell that, whatever this was, it could have waited just thirty seconds longer. Mickey led him out to the curb, Yev and Mikhaila both yelling, “Surprise!” after which Ian opened his eyes to see a shiny new ambulance with its lights on, parked in front of their house, with Iggy behind the wheel.

“Sup, dude?” Iggy called out with a nod, jumping down from the driver’s seat and heading for the rear of the vehicle. “Wanna check out the back?” he asked, opening the back doors. “Sure” Ian responded, finally beginning to smile, after reading from the side of the ambulance, “Boca Del Rio Emergency Medical Service”. “Is this ours?” Ian shouted, like a kid on Christmas morning, as he lifted Mikhaila into the back, then hopped up himself, pulling Yev up, once he was in. “Yeah, man,” Mickey answered, grinning from ear to ear, soaking up Ian’s happiness like a wilted flower in need
of hydration.

Ian was in awe of all of the state-of-the-art equipment this ambulance had, but chose to mess with the basic stuff so the kids could be involved. “Mickey!” he called out with a wide smile, “C’mere! We need a patient!” Ian reached for Mickey’s hand, helping him up into the ambulance, then asking him to sit on the stretcher, as he put the stethoscope on Yev and handed him the blood pressure cuff. “I’m pretty sure you have an idea how this works,” Ian said softly, guiding Yev’s little hands through the process of fastening the cuff around Mickey’s arm, then talking him through the rest. Mickey and Mikhaila looked on, absolutely in awe of Yev’s ability to perform this task with so little training.

“122 over 78,” Yev announced, once he was finished, adding, “That’s really good, Dad!” “Yev, how’d you do that?” Mickey asked incredulously. Then Yev fessed up, “Me and Dad used to do this sometimes while you were in session with Dr. Fisher, so I guess I sort of had some practice.” Mickey smiled over at Ian, marveling at what a fantastic father Ian was.

“I love you,” Mickey whispered into Ian’s ear, as he stood up, preparing to jump down. “Oh! Wait!” Ian hollered, stopping Mickey dead in his tracks. “Mikhaila needs to take your temperature!” Ian said, smiling at Mikhaila as he handed her the electronic thermometer. “Put this under your tongue,” Mikhaila told Mickey. He obeyed, Mikhaila watching the read-out screen as the numbers went up. “Ninety-eight point six,” she read, as soon as the machine beeped, displaying his temperature. “That’s normal, Daddy!” she concluded, hugging him tightly, adding, “I missed all of you so much!”

“Family hug!” Yev said, his voice joyful and full of gratitude. The Milkoviches came together, squeezing into one cohesive lump as they lavished affection on one another. “Thank you,” Ian breathed into Mikhaila’s ear, lifting Mikhaila down onto the street. “Forgive me?” Mickey asked in return. “Yeah,” Ian answered, ushering the kids into the house, then turning back to finish the conversation. “But I can’t get that shit out of my head. So...so fucking...Uhhhhh!” Ian groaned, at a loss for words to describe the intense feeling of ecstatic pleasure he had experienced and was reliving in his mind.

“Oh, I get it...and so will you...Soon as we get some time,” Mickey assured him flirtatiously, before turning to thank Iggy. “Thanks, man. I really appreciate it!” Mickey said with a quick Milkovich-style nod of approval. “No problem, bro!” Iggy returned. “How’d ya like drivin’ the ambulance?” Mickey asked. “Pretty fuckin’ cool! Too bad I’m not an EMT. It would be awesome ridin’ ‘round town in this bitch!” Iggy replied with a silly smirk. “Yeah, well, they might need a driver so Ian can ride in the back with the patients, right Ian?” Mickey pleaded, hoping Ian would catch his vibe and go along with what he was saying. “Yeah, Iggy. I can’t drive and treat patients at the same time. So, if you’re serious, I could put a good word in for you with Doc,” Ian explained, smiling over at Mickey, who smiled back at him as he nodded in silent agreement.

“So that’s all I’d be doin’?” Iggy began, “I don’t know. Bigley might want me to…” Mickey interrupted Iggy. “Nah, might have ya help at Surfin when the ambulance isn’t needed...And about Bigley...he’ll understand. We need ya here, right Ian?” Mickey asked. “Yeah, Mick. Gonna text Doc right now,” Ian answered, disappearing into the house.

“So, you guys really need me?” Iggy wondered out loud. “Yeah, Igg, we do. So...we good?” Mickey confirmed. “All good,” Iggy responded, hopping back into the driver’s seat to head for the clinic, where he would be parking the ambulance. “You wanna spend the night at our place?” Mickey asked. “Sure,” Iggy answered, “I’ll walk over after I drop this off.”

“How ‘bout if I ride with ya? We can catch up,” Mickey suggested. “Yeah, alright,” Iggy smiled, unlocking the passenger-side door so Mickey could get in.

The two talked about everything from their mother’s upcoming wedding, to Iggy’s new job, to
Iggy’s life in Chicago, prior to his being basically hijacked by Terry. Iggy explained how deeply involved he had become in the family business, since their dad had been in prison for so long, and how he’d lost the only girlfriend he ever really gave a shit about, under suspicious circumstances.

“Naw, you ain’t gettin’ away with that stupid shit!” Mickey yelled as they arrived in front of the clinic, hopping out of the ambulance, the minute Iggy parked it, and circling over to Iggy’s side, demanding, “Tell me what the fuck happened.”

As it turned out, Mickey knew the girl, Sadie McDade, from school. “So, I’d been seein’ her for ‘bout six months. She was stayin’ at the house with me most nights, but her dad was a drunk...sometimes beat on the door and dragged her outta the house by her hair. He always carried, so I didn’t fuck with ‘em. Didn’t wanna kill ‘em neither, since I was on probation and all.”

Iggy paused, lighting a smoke, then continuing, “One day she tells me she’s pregnant. I was happy as fuck! I mean, I really gave a shit ‘bout this chick. Next thing I know, she quits comin’ around, her phone goes straight to voicemail when I call, she doesn’t text back...nothin’!”

“Jesus Christ, Igg, I’m fuckin’ sorry,” Mickey said, genuinely feeling badly for his brother. “That’s not all,” Iggy continued, “I finally figured, I’m gonna go to her fuckin’ house...see what the fuck’s goin’ on. That’s when her sister tells me she took off and’s missin’.” Iggy stopped abruptly taking several hits off his cigarette, seeming to need a break before he could finish the story.

“So, what the fuck happened?” Mickey asked impatiently. “I never fuckin’ saw her again. They found a partial body in the river...cops thought it might be her, but they couldn’t be sure,” Iggy finished his cigarette, crushing it out, then looking over at Mickey, making eye contact for the first time during the walk home. “So that’s it? No one’s tryna find her?” Mickey inquired, in complete disbelief.

“Nope,” Iggy answered, “And I think her fuckin’ piece a shit father killed ‘er.” Iggy alleged with more emotion in his voice than Mickey had ever heard. “I tried to figure shit out...did a lot of favors for the wrong people...risky shit...cuz they said they’d help me...but they didn’t. Even fuckin’ dad...said he was gonna get her found, but really just wanted me to do shit for him...motherfucker!” Iggy yelled.

So you ain’t grievin’ Dad’s death then?” Mickey asked. “Fuck no! I’m grievin’ Sadie and my baby...’s what I’m grievin’. And it’s a bitch!” Iggy looked like he’d been crying, by the time they arrived at the house. Mickey had definitely been quite upset, his mind going back to the day he thought he’d lost Ian forever to the Russians.

He definitely knew what it was like not knowing. Iggy was right. You do start to grieve when you think someone you love might be dead. You can’t help but begin to think that way. Now everything made so much more sense to Mickey---all Iggy’s drinking and isolating---but that wasn’t enough. He knew he needed to get Iggy some help. Whether Sadie was dead or alive, he needed closure---the not knowing was killing him.

“We’re gonna figure this shit out,” Mickey promised Iggy as they walked into the house. Iggy nodded, taking a seat on the couch, his eyes fixed on the floor, in order to avoid having anyone see how wet they were.

Ian was in the kitchen with Yev, preparing dinner, Mickey’s favorite Italian dish, spicy Sicilian pasta with meatballs. “C’mer,” Mickey purred, yanking Ian to him, then kissing him passionately. “I fuckin’ love you so much, Ian!” Mickey panted between smoldering kisses that lit Ian’s loins instantly afire. “Just wanna make sure ya know that...And I’m so fuckin’ lucky you’re here with me!” Mickey continued to punctuate his sentences with sexually charged affection, Ian struggling to
keep his dick from coming to full attention in front of his kids and his brother-in-law. But it was no use. Ian, embarrassed as hell, finally extricated himself from his husband’s grasp. “I love you, too, but...Gotta finish dinner,” he said softly, kissing Mickey lightly on the temple, before whispering into his ear, “But I haven’t forgotten what you owe me...and I WILL collect!”

“Fuck!” Mickey breathed, sprouting a raging hard-on before the last word had even left Ian’s lips, “I’ll be waitin‘.”
Crunch Time

The first half of the week had flown by, various preparations for the wedding taking their chunk of time from Mickey and Ian’s already busy schedules. With two grand openings on the horizon, nearly everyone associated with either business was working their tails off in preparation for the cluster of big events that were fast approaching.

It was amid all of this hustle and bustle that Dr. Fisher contacted Ian, attempting to set up a session. The call really meant a lot to Ian. It showed that Dr. Fisher really cared about him and his family, that he was not motivated merely by however much Bigley had paid him to completely change his touring schedule, and that he was serious about keeping Ian well.

The only trouble was, in Ian’s mind, that there was way too much going on, for him to be making travel plans. After all, they had just gotten home. As luck would have it, Ian was helping Doc make some preparations at the clinic when he got the call, Doc picking up on the purpose of it, and feeling compelled to butt in. “Ian, I can spare you for today, if you can get a flight out,” he interjected, as Ian was making his excuses. Ian glared over at him, pausing a moment, then deciding to go ahead and address him, with both doctors listening, “Hey, I know this is important, but trying to get to New York and back before the grand openings is nearly impossible and, honestly, would do me more harm than good. I just can’t...”

Mickey, who had been downstairs in the new Surfin’ shop all morning, had walked in during Ian’s spiel, a concerned look on his face. “...’goin’ on?” he questioned, his eyes fixed on Ian’s. “Hello, Mickey,” Dr. Fisher said loudly enough to be heard by Mickey and Doc. “Hey, Doc, how ya doin’?” Mickey asked with a smile, though his eyes were still burning into Ian’s uncomfortably as he pulled Ian’s phone from his ear, pressing the speaker button. Ian rolled his eyes in response, sighing in frustration. “I’m well, Mickey. I was just talking to Ian about when we can schedule his next session. He and Doc seem to have a different opinion on the matter. What’s yours?” Dr. Fisher asked innocently.

Mickey could see that Ian was pissed, definitely at him, for taking his phone from him, as if he were a bratty teenager being punished, and most likely also with Doc, for butting into his conversation with his psychiatrist, so he chose his words carefully, “I think Ian and I need to talk…” He had planned to say more, but the look on Ian’s face told him that the less he said at the moment, the better. “Can I call you back?” Ian asked, clearly still annoyed with the whole scenario. “Sure, Ian, but let’s get a plan in place as soon as possible,” Dr. Fisher said in closing, just before Mickey ended the call.

“Mind if we use your office?” Mickey asked Doc. “Go right ahead, Mickey,” Doc responded kindly, Mickey handing Ian his phone back, then taking him by the hand and leading him there, straight away. As soon as Mickey had Ian inside the office, Ian pushed the door shut, locked it, and dropped to his knees, unzipping Mickey’s pants in seconds flat. “Nah, nah, nah...We ain’t doin’ this. We need to talk,” Mickey insisted, attempting to pull Ian up onto his feet. Ian resisted, proceeding to fondle Mickey’s balls as he spoke, “I don’t feel like talking.” “Well, ya can listen then,” Mickey said with great authority, considering Ian now had his balls in his mouth. “When we left New York,” Mickey began, taking a few deep breaths to focus himself on what he was trying to say, while Ian moved on to sucking the tip of his dick, while lightly stroking his balls, “you agreed to see Dr. Fisher once a week, and…” Just then, Ian took Mickey deeper into his mouth, sliding two fingers in next to Mickey’s rock-hard member to moisten them, then beginning to fondle his asshole in a slow circular pattern that drove Mickey to incessant moaning, in spite of himself.
As various sounds of immense pleasure tumbled from Mickey’s lips haphazardly and uncontrollably, he began to breathe increasingly more rapidly, heavily, a tiny chuckle emerging from deep within Ian’s throat, despite that fact that it, along with his mouth, was currently stuffed full with Mickey’s beautifully thick, insanely delicious cock. “Mmmmm…” Ian hummed, the incredible vibrations, combined with Ian’s expert oral and tactile skills nearly sending Mickey over the edge instantaneously.

“Damnit, Ian!” Mickey panted breathlessly, completely losing his train of thought as Ian continued to suck and finger him, rubbing his prostate until, finally, he couldn’t take anymore. “Fuck you, Ian!” Mickey cried out ecstatically as he erupted explosively down his husband’s throat, Ian fighting to stave off his satisfaction with himself at having tripped Mickey’s trigger so adeptly, until Mickey was completely finished.

Mickey’s eyes felt as if they were glued shut, his entire body tingling as he struggled to remain standing. Ian rose to his feet, just as Mickey opened them, their eyes meeting, Mickey proceeding with his angry admonishment, despite feeling extremely light-headed and weak in the knees. “Ian, I believed ya when ya promised to do this shit! You ain’t gonna make me look like an idiot! Gotta do what Dr. Fisher says and…” Mickey trailed off, once he noticed tears rolling down Ian’s pristine, porcelain cheeks, reaching for him to wipe them away.

“Awww, Fuck!” Mickey muttered, a lump quickly growing in his own throat at the very sight of Ian’s tear-soaked face. “Look...I can see you’re usin’ every fuckin’ weapon you got on me,” Mickey restarted, his voice now calmer, taking on a softer, soothing quality. “I don’t wanna fight with ya. I’m only sayin’ this cuz I love ya, and I don’t want ya gettin’ sick again,” Mickey tried to explain.

Ian just cried harder, Mickey pulling his body into his own, holding him for what seemed like forever, the two crying together, Ian suckling at Mickey’s sweet-tasting neck as if it were his only means of nourishment, Mickey weaving his fingers into Ian’s hair, sending electric chills over Ian’s entire body.

Finally, once they had successfully calmed one another, Mickey broke the silence. “How ‘bout if we take the red-eye on Sunday night?” he suggested. “Ya want me ta go with ya, don’t ya?” Mickey asked, for confirmation. Ian nodded, his face still projecting such a pitiful sadness that Mickey instinctively hugged him tightly again, whispering, “It’s okay. We’re okay. Everything’s fine,” as he rubbed Ian’s back softly.

“Okay,” Mickey said, Ian having relaxed himself entirely into Mickey’s firm embrace, “It’s settled then. I’ll call for plane tickets. You let Dr. Fisher know, alright?” Ian nodded, inhaling his man’s familiar, yet intoxicating scent one last time, before pulling his phone from his pocket and walking out into the waiting area of the clinic, where Doc was still busy working to set up the computer system. “All settled?” he asked, looking at Ian for a response. “Yeah,” Ian answered quietly as he texted Dr. Fisher to inform him of the plan.

As it turned out, Ian had actually fucked himself over royally. Not only was he still going for a session with Dr. Fisher way sooner than he wanted, but now he was so fucking distractingly horny for Mickey, it was going to be a very long day. “All set!” Mickey called over to Ian with a dazzlingly infectious smile as he walked out of the office, his phone still in his hand. “You tell Dr. Fisher?” he asked. “Yeah,” Ian replied, Mickey noticing the obvious bulge in Ian’s pants as he spun in his direction. “Good. Good!” Mickey grinned, turning on his heel and walking out the clinic door.

After trying to resume work, for the better part of an hour, obsessive thoughts of Mickey, laid out before him, his beautifully round, bare ass irresistibly curved upward for the taking, overtaking his mind completely, he had to excuse himself.
“Be right back,” Ian told Doc, rushing to the restroom. Once inside, Ian whipped out his cock and finished himself handily, conjuring up images of him fucking the hell out of Mickey, just the way they both loved it, and of Mickey bending him over the sink, one very much like the one he was currently standing before, and fucking him hard. “Oh fuck! Mick!” he muttered to himself as he blew his load powerfully onto the countertop and mirror.

Once Ian had cleaned up after himself, he returned to work, better able to focus on the tasks at hand, although he was still plagued by occasional daydreams of himself and Mickey, enjoying each other in every possible way. He felt like he could never get enough of Mickey, the sight, smell, taste, even the thought of him, getting him aroused over and over again.

“Fuck!” he thought to himself, wishing like hell that he could have gotten that villa for the weekend for the two of them. He knew Mickey was planning for them to have a weekend alone, which was great, but somehow he just couldn’t get that place out of his mind.

By day’s end, the clinic was really pretty much ready, Ian heading out to pick up the kids from school with a real feeling of accomplishment. “Thanks for all of your hard work, Ian! This place is going to be a great success. You have already been, and will continue to be, a huge contributor. I just want you to know how thrilled I am to be working with you again, and to have this amazing, state-of-the-art facility to do what I love!”

Doc was absolutely beaming! And why shouldn’t he be? His life, after all, was nearly perfect: a brand new clinic, an upcoming marriage to the woman of his dreams, an extended family who loves him. What more could he possibly ask for? “Thanks Doc! I’m excited about it, too,” Ian responded, just before the door closed behind him, “See ya tomorrow!”

Mickey had gone back to the factory after his session with Ian, his mood lighter, yet his mind still troubled by the knowledge that his brother had what amounted to a missing family---his family. The thought of the depth of Iggy’s despair nearly brought Mickey to tears. He had to do something, but what? He definitely didn’t want to bother Bigley with this, although he knew he was probably the one person he knew with the most resources to initiate such an impossible search. He felt obligated to at least do some of the legwork, before he could comfortably ask for Bigley’s help.

He didn’t want to bring the subject up with Iggy again, so he finally decided he should ask some people if they knew how to get in touch with her younger sister, Brianna. The first person he thought of was his sister-in-law, Debbie. Brianna was pretty close in age to Debbie, and Mickey was pretty sure they knew each other.

Under normal circumstances, he would have asked Ian to handle it, but seeing how easily stressed out Ian could become, since their return home, he decided to do it himself. He left a voicemail, asking that she return his call ASAP, adding that the family was fine, so as not to worry her.

Debbie returned his call, just as Mickey was about ready to leave the factory, having just called in a take-out order from Frontera, since he didn’t want Ian to have the added stress of preparing dinner. He really just wanted Ian to relax, as best he could, and get through the rest of the week, since he knew, if he could make it until then, he had the most relaxing, enjoyable weekend planned for them—one the likes of which they hadn’t had in a very long time.

“Debbie Gallagher!” Mickey answered with a song in his voice. She was divorced now, and had taken her maiden name back, not that it would have stopped Mickey from using ‘Gallagher’ anyway. “Hi Mickey! What’s up? You said Ian and the kids are okay, right?” she asked right away. “Yeah, everyone’s fine here...except my bro, Iggy,” Mickey began.
“Oh yeah? What’s wrong?” Debbie asked with sincere concern in her voice. “Well, did ya know he was seein’ Sadie McDade?” he asked. “Oh,” Debbie said with a sigh that spoke volumes. “What?!” Mickey responded, panicking right away. “Well…” she paused, then continued, “You know they thought they found her body in the river, right?”

“Yeah, well, the fuck don’t they know for fuckin’ sure?” he barked, “This shit’s killin’ him.” “Body was in too bad of shape to do the right tests, I guess,” Debbie postulated. “Okay, well, ya know Brianna, right?” Mickey questioned. “Yeah...Married a real asshole who beats her,” Debbie remarked off-handedly. “Well, have ya talked to her lately? Wondered if she knows anything about Sadie,” Mickey continued with his questioning, despite the sick feeling he felt in his gut, hearing about Brianna’s abusive husband.

“I see her sometimes at the grocery. Usually looks pretty beat up, and she’s with him a lot. He doesn’t like to let her outta his sight,” Debbie explained. “Jesus!” Mickey sighed in disgust, “Look, I don’t wanna put ya on the spot, but if ya could see what ya can find out—-that girl was pregnant with Iggy’s kid...and he fuckin’ loves ‘er. He's a fuckin’ disaster, from not knowin’. Tryna get him some fuckin’ closure, one way or the other,” Mickey said, laying it all out for her.

Yeah, well...where’s Iggy been anyway? I figured he was in jail, but then I heard he left town with your dad,” Debbie inquired. “He’s here in Mexico with us. So...will ya see what ya can find out?” Mickey pleaded. “Yeah, I’ll stop over there, next time I see his car’s gone,” she promised, “But, even if she knows somethin’, I seriously doubt she’d say a fuckin’ word. Between her dad and her husband, that poor girl’s afraid to look at anybody. She never says a word, whenever I see her either.”

Mickey thanked her, ending the call, then calling Ian, “Hey, I’m pickin’ up dinner at Frontera. Kids have their homework done?” “Yeah,” Ian replied. “What d’ya say we take them to the beach after dinner?” Mickey asked, “They can swim and play, and you and me can have some Margaritas and just chill a little.”

“Sounds perfect, Mick!” Ian responded, “Just like you!”
“C’mon, Mik! We’re gonna be late!” Yev yelled impatiently, pounding on the bathroom door. “Just a minute!” Mikhaila replied. “Dad said they’ll fix you up when we get there!” Yev explained, trying his best to remain calm, despite the pressure he felt from his parents, Ian in particular, to be ready to go.

“Want some more?” Mickey asked as he poured himself what must have been at least his third cup of coffee, since waking up at 5. The grand opening for Surfin’ was scheduled for 10, so he still had plenty of time, but he had promised Ian that the entire family would leave with him in time for the clinic’s grand opening, which was set for 8. As he watched Ian pace nervously back and forth in the kitchen, he began to regret making the promise, since the kids seemed to be taking forever to get ready. “No, thanks,” he answered, looking at the time on his phone, then shaking his head. It was 7:40, which meant Ian still had enough time to get there, but he had wanted to be there early.

“Shoulda just sent them to school,” Ian muttered under his breath, Mickey glaring over at him in response. Mickey was planning to have the kids model some gear, and had made the executive decision that they should not attend school that day. “Look, if you’re that anxious, take your own fuckin’ car! I’ll come see ya when we get there!” Mickey barked in frustration. “No...I’ll wait,” Ian sighed, tapping his foot nervously.

At that very moment, the front door swung open, Kayla waltzing in with her sweet smile and sparkling blue eyes, “Good Morning, boys!” she chirped happily, before catching sight of both of their equally agitated faces. “Don’t know what the problem is, but get in the car and go figure it out! I’ll bring the kids when they’re ready,” she said calmly, having read the situation and decided the best and least painful way to rectify it.

Without a single word, Ian and Mickey bolted for the door, Mickey popping his head back in, briefly, shouting a heartfelt, “Thanks, Ma! There’s coffee, if ya want some,” before slamming the door shut again and running for the car. Kayla smiled lovingly, never tiring of seeing the happiness Mickey had found with Ian, despite their many trials and tribulations. She knew how deeply they loved one another, and it made her heart sing.

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“She won’t come out of the bathroom, and…” Yev stopped speaking abruptly, once he saw his grandmother. “You both can take your time, sweet boy,” Kayla said in a soothing voice that immediately put Yev at ease, “They’re gone.” Yev grinned at the superhuman individual that stood before him, seeming to be able to erase any and all problems effortlessly, in the blink of an eye.

“Thanks, Grandma! I’ll go tell Mik!” Yev responded cheerfully, his mood brightening instantaneously.

Yev was very intuitive. He could nearly always sense when one of his dads was upset about something. This morning it had been both of them, Ian, because he wanted to be early for his already-early start time, and Mickey, in response to Ian’s impatience. Their collective mood had rubbed off on Yev, causing him to become uneasy, and to begin pressuring Mikhaila to prepare herself more quickly than she felt she could. It had really been fast becoming a tense morning in the Milkovich house, until Kayla walked in and, with two sentences, had calmed all concerned.

“Grandma! Grandma!” Mikhaila screeched excitedly as she descended the stairs swiftly. “Can you braid my hair?” “Sure, sweetie!” Kayla beamed, absolutely thrilled to be chosen for such an important detail. Mikhaila rushed at her, arms wide open, nearly knocking her over with an overzealous hug. Yev followed behind her, also hugging Kayla, the three enjoying some much needed pre-chaos family love.
“Go get your brush, barrettes, and hair ties, honey,” Kayla instructed Mikhaila. “Want coffee, Grandma?” Yev offered, pouring her a cup before she could answer. “You know I do,” she replied as he poured, a confident smile spreading across his mini Mickey face.

It was truly amazing how much Yev and Mikhaila were beginning to look alike, except for Mikhaila’s bright orange hair, which caused many who saw her with Ian to comment that she looked just like him. To Kayla, both children were the spitting image of Mickey, when he was small, and sometimes she teared up, just looking at them.

Once she had finished fixing Mikhaila’s hair, Kayla fixed them each a bagel, then they were on their way.

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Ian and Mickey rode together in silence, Mickey focusing on the road ahead of him, rather than engaging in the argument he surely knew he and Ian would have, if he opened his mouth at this point in time. Ian was far too tense to have a conversation. Mickey wanted to say that he didn’t think crowds of people would be gathered at the clinic door at 8 AM, all begging to be seen, but he didn’t, choosing, instead, to rest his hand on Ian’s thigh, using his index finger to trace the soothing circles that had calmed Ian so many times in the past.

At first, Mickey could feel the rigidity of Ian’s quad, which matched the rest of him. He was clearly a nervous wreck. In fact, he had stirred several times during the night, waking Mickey, but Mickey had somehow managed to lull him back to sleep each time. As Mickey continued with his consistent, even, circular pattern, he could feel Ian relaxing, little by little, then finally letting out what sounded like a deep sigh of relief.

As Mickey pulled up in front of the store and clinic, he looked over at Ian, whose eyes were closed. He seemed almost as if he were meditating, so Mickey, figuring this was something he learned from Dr. Fisher, decided not to disturb him. It wasn’t until Iggy arrived in the ambulance, tripping the siren off briefly to announce his arrival, that Ian’s eyes popped open with a start, his body jolting in such a way that made Mickey think he might actually have been sleeping. Ian glanced down at his phone, then hollered, “Fuck!” and jumped out of the car. It was 7:55 and he was not happy at having arrived this close to the actual opening time.

“Ian! Wait!” Mickey called after him. “I...I thought you were meditating,” he stammered. Ian scowled at him, shaking his head. “It’s not like everyone’s gonna show up at once anyway!” Mickey argued, sensing that Ian was blaming him, at least in part, for his tardiness. Before Ian could reply, a bus, filled with people, most of whom turned out to be patients, pulled up outside the clinic, the driver exiting the bus and following Ian and Mickey up the stairs.

“What did you say?” Ian growled sarcastically, as he reached the top of the stairs and pushed the clinic door open. Mickey swallowed hard, then did the only thing he could do---apologize and offer to help.

Reesie welcomed the driver, while Ian informed Doc of the large number of people likely to be descending upon the clinic in a matter of minutes. As all of this was happening, a news crew, prompted by a request from Bigley to provide some publicity, stopped short of the door, just in time to film the bus riders as they climbed the stairs, some with the assistance of loved ones.

“Here. Start taking names and find out what’s wrong with each of them,” Ian instructed Mickey, handing him an iPad. Reesie ushered them all into seating, then she and Ian began a walk through, seeking out anyone that appeared to need immediate medical attention and triaging them, filling all of the exam rooms in a matter of minutes.
“I was gonna say ‘Surprise’, but I’m the one who’s surprised,” Shawn called out to Ian and Mickey as he sauntered in the clinic door. “...the fuck are you doin’ here?” Mickey asked, completely shocked by his arrival. “Oh...I was in the neighborhood...” he laughed. “Exam Room 2, severe dehydration,” Ian told Shawn, handing him a makeshift chart, which amounted to a folder with a piece of paper inside, bearing the patient’s name and symptoms. “Supplies are in the drawers. They’re all marked,” Ian added, just before ducking into an exam room himself.

“Got it!” Shawn responded, springing into action. The addition of Shawn into the rotation was the shot in the arm the clinic needed in order to turn the chaotic start to the morning into a well-oiled machine, which was how it appeared to Kayla, when she walked in with the kids an hour later. She was quite surprised to see the number of people sitting in the waiting area, but equally impressed with the way the team was handling it all. “Mickey!” she called out, as he scooted by, iPad in hand. “Ma, here. Everyone’s checked in right now. Can you grab any new patients when they come in? I gotta get downstairs.”

“Sure, honey,” she said with an assuring nod, grabbing the iPad from his hands. “C’mon, Yev...Mik...You guys can come with me,” Mickey said, smiling admiringly at his beautiful children. “Can we say goodbye to Daddy first?” Mikhaila asked. “Sure, if ya can catch him between patients,” Kayla answered, before Mickey could say otherwise. “Hurry up!” he added, as they walked back toward the exam rooms, having heard Ian’s voice.

“Daddy!” Mikhaila yelled, throwing her arms around Ian’s legs, the moment she caught sight of him. Ian wrapped one arm around her, then reached for Yev with the other. “You make sure you help Dad as much as you can,” he told Yev. “Unfortunately, it looks like we’re gonna be too busy up here for me to come down when Surfin’ opens,” he explained. “I will,” Yev promised, giving Ian one last squeeze before taking Mikhaila by the hand and leading her toward the door, where Mickey was standing.

“Wait!” Ian called to them, “Where’s Dad?” he asked, before noticing him waiting by the clinic entrance. “Mick!” he said, raising his voice a bit, to be sure Mickey would hear him over the hubbub in the waiting area. Mickey looked up, just in time to see Ian rushing toward him. “Thanks for all the help this morning. We couldn’t have done it without you!” Ian spoke sincerely as he turned the doorknob, opening the door and pushing Mickey outside.

Once the clinic door was closed behind them, and they stood alone in front of the entrance, Ian pulled Mickey up against him, enveloping his entire mouth in a soulful kiss, then lingering, his nose near Mickey’s neck, inhaling deeply as he rubbed Mickey’s shoulders. “I love you, Mick,” he whispered into Mickey’s ear, just as the kids opened the door, running outside, fearing that Mickey might have left without them.

“See ya when things slow down here,” Ian said softly, adding, “Good luck!” before disappearing back inside the clinic. “You ready to try on some cool clothes?” Mickey asked the kids. “Yeah!” they cheered in unison, following him down the stairs to the store, where there was already a line of tourists waiting to get in, as well as the same camera crew that had been at the clinic earlier that morning. “Excuse me...sir? Are you Mickey Milkovich?” the reporter asked.

After a brief moment of panic, brought on by his past experience with people trying to identify him for less than honorable reasons, he realized, in large part, thanks to Dr. Fisher, that he didn’t have to be ashamed of his name anymore, but rather, proud of it. He nodded in affirmation. “And these must be your adorable children!” the reporter continued. “Yeah, models for the day!” he said with a confident smile, his hands perched atop one of each of their shoulders.

“Mind if I ask you a few questions about the new store and the clinic upstairs?” came the next
question. “Sure!” Mickey responded, his eyes twinkling with nervous excitement. “Just give me a minute,” Mickey asked, ushering the kids into the store, then continuing. “I want ya ta meet my business partner and brother-in-law, Manuel. He’s worked just as hard as I have. Then I’ll take ya up ta meet the clinic staff, if they’re not too busy.”

“That would be great!” the reporter responded enthusiastically, “I understand they are treating a busload of people from Cordoba. Their state-run clinic shut down a month ago, so they’ve been waiting for this one to open. Nice to know there are still clinics out there that provide humanitarian care.”

“Yeah, well, I’m sure Doc can talk more about that when ya meet him. I’m gonna grab Manuel. Gimme a minute…” Mickey said, excusing himself. Moments later, Mickey reappeared with Manuel, both grinning from ear to ear. As Mickey introduced Manuel, the reporter shook his hand, then began promptly with his introduction,

“Good Morning, Boca! I’m here with the co-founders of Ojos Azules and co-owners of Surfin’ USA on the day of the Grand Opening of their newest Surfin’ USA location, right here in Boca del Rio! So, I’ll start by asking, How did the two of you meet, and what made you decide to go into business together?”

Mickey and Manuel looked at each other and laughed, both thinking about how much things had changed since then, and how far they’d come. “It’s a long story,” Mickey began. “Yeah, let’s just say, we clicked, and knew we could be successful,” Manuel put it nicely, Mickey nodding in agreement.

“Now, Mickey, you also co-own the clinic upstairs. How is it that you came to venture into the medical arena?” the reporter asked. “I fell for an EMT,” he mused, Ian’s bright smile instantly popping into Mickey’s head, causing him to smile himself, the corners of his eyes crinkling the way they always did when he was really happy, “And that was it!”
We Did It Our Way

The remainder of the business day had zipped by, Mickey managing to squeak out early to pack a bag for himself and Ian, for the surprise excursion he had planned for them. He had gone up to the clinic before he left to see if there was a possibility that Ian could leave early himself, but they were still pretty busy, and Mickey didn’t want to overburden Reesie, since she would be caring for Mikhaila while they were gone. Shawn was also still there, seeing patients along with the rest of them, so Mickey, realizing that they needed all hands on deck, opted for going home alone to make preparations.

Once he arrived at the house, he realized that they didn’t really need much. He had already arranged to have the refrigerator, freezer, and pantry of the place where they would be staying stocked with all of their favorite foods, and they basically only needed shorts, a few shirts, and swimsuits for what he had planned. Of course, he was throwing in a few extras, things they could use to have some fun with each other, this time without any interruptions.

Mickey’s adrenaline was pumping, his heart racing as he pulled up in front of the clinic to wait for Ian. Brach had already come earlier in the afternoon to pick up both kids, dropping Yev with Svet, and taking Mikhaila back home to await Reesie’s arrival. As Mickey sat alone, watching for the clinic door to swing open, releasing the stunningly beautiful, fiery-locked love of his life, the time seemed to crawl, Mickey squirming in his seat with anticipation.

Finally, at long last, Ian emerged, looking absolutely exhausted, like he’d completely had it, a disconcerting grimace twisting his otherwise flawless face. He looked pale, even more than usual, and weak, both of his feet dragging as he walked. Mickey jumped out of the car, rushing to his side to wrap an arm around him for support. “You okay?!?” Mickey asked, his voice quavering with concern. Ian nodded silently, making his best attempt at a smile to acknowledge Mickey’s compassion.

“Let’s get ya ta the car. See...brought your favorite pillow,” Mickey said, gesturing toward the passenger’s seat, “How ‘bout ya just get in and ya can sleep while I drive?” Mickey suggested. “Nah...I can make it home,” Ian replied in a low, tired voice. “Ian...that’s the thing...we ain’t goin’ home. Got somethin’ planned for us this weekend. Somethin’ special,” Mickey said with an adorable smile that made him look like he was about twelve. Ian looked at the seat hesitantly. “Get in the fucking car!” Mickey said with a thin air of authority that only partially masked the pleading urgency in his voice, as he reclined the seat and ushered Ian into it.

Once Ian was comfortable, Mickey shoved the door shut, getting back into the driver’s seat and taking off in the direction of the airport, his goal being for the motion of the car to lull Ian to sleep, so he could reverse direction, heading for their actual destination, without Ian knowing. As he drove, Mickey traced tiny circles onto Ian’s leg and, within minutes, Ian was asleep, allowing Mickey to change course without Ian’s knowledge.

Just under and hour later, Mickey pulled up to their destination, grabbing their suitcase from the trunk and taking it inside. Mickey dropped the suitcase next to the bed, opening and pouring champagne into two glasses, from the chilled bottle that sat in a bucket beside the bed.

As Mickey turned, heading for the front door to retrieve Ian from the car. Ian leapt through it, clothes-lining Mickey, sending him flying backward onto the bed, then landing on top of him. “Mickey,” he breathed seductively into Mickey’s ear, as he inflicted ravenous bites and kisses upon the side of his neck. “How the fuck did you get this place? I tried...Was told the new owner wouldn’t rent it,” Ian continued, zeroing in on the one spot on Mickey’s neck that made him beyond crazy,
licking and sucking at it furiously. Mickey moaned softly, rocking his hips up off the bed, to increase the contact between their now fully aroused, bulging packages.

“Always gotta do me one better,” Ian panted, grinding himself against Mickey, until even his loose-fitting scrubs lacked the capacity to comfortably house his monstrous cock, now putting a painful stretch to the inflexible material. “Now it’s my turn,” he purred, nibbling at Mickey’s lower lip teasingly, while still humping the fuck out of him. “Gonna make sure you know how goddamn hot you get me...how much I fucking appreciate you...And you’re damn well gonna appreciate me...by the time I’m finished with you!” Ian hissed, a devilish laugh rising from somewhere deep down, Mickey shivering beneath him, as goosebumps overtook every inch of his body.

“But first, I wanna hear some things from you,” Ian said, a serious look abruptly washing over his face as he pulled away, gazing down at his woefully worked-up lover. “What?!” Mickey whispered hoarsely, grabbing desperately at Ian’s body, in an attempt to re-establish that torturously sweet friction Ian had so callously interrupted and was now deliberately withholding.

“First, how the fuck did you get the guy to rent this place?” Ian questioned, his gorgeous green eyes afire with his own unyielding desire, as he stared down into Mickey’s. “I didn’t,” Mickey answered shortly, following up with a cocky smirk, pausing momentarily to lean up from the bed just enough to lightly brush his soft, full lips against Ian’s, prompting Ian to start grinding on him reflexively, before he could manage to stop himself.

Mickey chuckled, adding, “It’s ours!” “Really?!” Ian blurted out enthusiastically, after which Ian lowered himself back onto Mickey, kissing him tenderly, as he grazed Mickey’s swollen, cloth-imprisoned cock with his own a few times. “Yeah, really...Fuck!” Mickey gasped.

“Uh huh, I really wanna...but I gotta know a few more things first…” Ian continued, standing up next to the bed, pulling the drawstring on his scrubs and allowing them to fall down around his ankles, then shimmying his boxer briefs over his sexy hips and down off his thighs, causing them to hit the floor as well, before stepping out of both.

Mickey’s eyes moved amorously over Ian’s beautifully exposed body, hungrily taking in every square inch, before honing in on that gorgeous cock of his, which was standing at full attention, Ian turning his focus to the garments that currently encumbered Mickey’s deliciously thick, flawlessly formed phallus, which pressed unrelentingly against the zipper of his pants, until Ian so humanely freed it from its bondage, immediately enveloping it with his swollen, ruby red lips, then slowly sliding them over its ample length.

“Oh fuck yeah, Gallagher!” Mickey moaned, after which Ian paused, posing his next question. “What exactly do you want? Tell me. Your wish is my command.” “Well...that was fuckin’ great!” Mickey replied with a smile, hoping Ian would resume with the blowjob and shut the fuck up. No such luck. “Yeah, but is there anything in particular you’d really enjoy? If I was your sex slave, what would...how would you have me please you?” Ian asked persistently, still completely abstaining from any contact whatsoever.

“I fuckin’ love it all,” Mickey answered calmly, trying not to let his current sexual frustration be heard, in hopes that this answer would put an end to Ian’s ridiculous line of questioning so they could get on with it. “Oh yeah?” Ian smiled, reaching for the suitcase, then setting it on top of the bed, next to Mickey. “Let’s see what my fine-as-fuck husband brought with us for our weekend away,” he continued, rummaging through the suitcase, finding everything from handcuffs, to nipple clamps, to riding crops, to anal beads. “Hmmm...likes it all, does he?” Ian muttered under his breath, then making a quick swipe of his hand over Mickey’s fully engorged and expectant cock.

“I think this calls for a toast,” Ian announced, lifting both glasses of champagne from the night table
and handing one to Mickey, who sat up in the bed as he took the glass from Ian. “Here’s to the best husband in the fucking world...and a long night of...of anything and everything he loves!” Ian grinned mischievously, tapping his glass against Mickey’s, then downing his entire serving in one gulp. Mickey drank about half of his, then handed the glass back to Ian, who set it aside.

Mickey had to admit, he was warming up to this idea. After all, they had the entire weekend to enjoy each other. What was the rush? Sure, his cock was hard as a rock, and he wanted Ian so fucking bad, he could taste it, but he knew he would get as much as he could handle, and, knowing Ian, much more than that, before they left for New York. So, Mickey finally relaxed himself, surrendering to the idea of being edged into oblivion, as well as being teased, tortured, and even terrified, to Ian’s heart’s content. Whatever Ian chose to do, he could handle it.

In fact, he was more than thrilled with the idea that Ian seemed to be getting back to his old self, their relationship settling into a familiar, albeit slightly different, pattern that was becoming, at least to some extent, predictable, in terms of their day-to-day interaction, despite some occasional rough spots. This evening was definitely going to be ‘outside the box’, but it would be fun and un-fucking-forgettable, to be sure.

Mickey, embracing his decision to be adventurous, and to allow Ian to take his time, finished off his first glass of champagne, pouring a second for each of them, then making a toast of his own, “To us—all we been, all we are, and all we’re gonna be—and how fuckin’ lucky we are to still have each other…” Mickey sniffed, wiping at his eyes and nose in one quick, fluid motion, then continuing,

“After all the shit we been through. Ian, I fuckin’ love you more than I know how ta say in words.” Ian raised his glass, tipping it toward Mickey’s, but Mickey stopped him, “Tonight I want it to be your way...you want it my way, how ‘bout we make it both? Don’t have ta decide nothin’ in advance.” Ian smiled, clinking his glass against Mickey’s, then downing the entire thing, Mickey following suit.

“Alright, but if you could pick one thing from this pile, what would it be?” Ian asked, pulling Mickey toward him to peck him on the lips affectionately. Mickey lifted the string of large anal beads up off the mattress, handing them to Ian with a shy half-smile that melted Ian’s heart instantly, taking him back all those years to when Mickey had bashfully requested their use for the first time. Of course, they’d used them many times since, over the course of their relationship, but there was just something so irresistibly endearing about Mickey when he asked for something sexual, outside the throes of a hot session.

Ian stared into Mickey’s shimmering, crystal blue eyes, falling totally and completely under his spell. He kissed him slowly and delicately, Mickey’s entire being aching for each one, before, and longing for more, after. “Fuuuuuck,” he murmured, so completely enraptured with Ian that he could scarcely breathe. Ian, for his part, wanted nothing more than to flip Mickey over and fuck the hell out of him, he was so goddamn alluring, but instead, he forced himself to take it more slowly than even he, himself, was sure he could sustain, Mickey’s whispers, whimpers and coos serving to egg him on, yet tempt him at the same time.

As Mickey repositioned himself, gaining a bit of control, their kisses became more urgent, Mickey cupping Ian’s finely-chiseled face in his hands as his tongue delved further and further into his sexy mouth, Ian sucking fervently at it, and feasting on Mickey’s bountiful lower lip. Their breathing heightened, Ian, once again, beginning to grind himself against Mickey’s now-naked and utterly irresistible frame.

As Mickey reciprocated, rocking his hips up to meet Ian’s downward motion, Ian moaned softly into Mickey’s ear, Mickey shivering as his cock stiffened, even more than he believed possible. “Fuck,
Ian!” he breathed, more as a reaction than a response. “Shhhh,” Ian whispered softly, shoving two of his fingers into Mickey’s mouth, which he immediately began to suck on, like they were made of candy. Ian extracted them quickly, despite the obvious pleasure he was deriving from Mickey’s oral efforts, and somehow, amid all of their grinding and kissing, began to rub Mickey’s opening, running his fingers over it in rapid succession.

The longer this continued, the further Mickey arched up into Ian, which gave Ian a better opportunity to penetrate Mickey with his fingers, a feat he accomplished effortlessly, Mickey’s moans escalating in both volume and frequency, until Ian stopped abruptly, yanking Mickey by the ankles and dragging his body down the bed, until his ass was at the edge.

Ian knelt on the floor at the foot of the bed and dove right in, spreading Mickey’s gloriously round orbs, then tonguing his asshole vigorously, while massaging his balls lightly. “Fuck!” Mickey hissed, among a collection of moans, groans, and sighs, as Ian began alternating tongue and fingers, then moving his mouth to Mickey’s begging cock, as he scissored his opening, adding a generous amount of lube, which he also slathered onto the huge anal beads he would soon be working with.

Mickey grabbed the pillows from above him on the bed, propping his head, which gave him a direct view of Ian’s bobbing head, in addition to what he could already see in the mirror that adorned the ceiling above them. Mickey’s cock throbbed with excitement as Ian’s cheeks hollowed, his mouth descending repeatedly, while his fingers performed their own special brand of magic, preparing Mickey for what was to come.

Mickey weaved his own fingers into Ian’s bright, shiny hair, running them through it zealously as his breathing became heavier and more rapid. Ian pulled Mickey’s legs out of the air, using them to flip him onto his stomach, then wedging the first of the amply-lubed anal beads between his slicked up asscheeks. “Ready?” he purred into Mickey’s ear, the warmth of his breath sending electric chills through Mickey’s body. He nodded silently, giving Ian the go ahead. Ian, using the combined force of his own thrusts and Mickey’s countering ruts, finessed the first of the large orbs into Mickey’s ass, both men panting and grunting with effort and gratification.

Ian continued the process, reaching beneath Mickey’s hips to stroke him as he rammed two more of the king-sized spheres painstakingly into him, pausing between each, then again afterward. “More?” Ian asked quizzically, although he knew, from experience, that Mickey’s answer would be ‘no’. Mickey’s head rolled from side to side, one of the pillows having muffled his response, along with much of his verbal reaction to the insertion of the beads.

“Turn over!” Ian commanded, “I’m gonna suck you off now...and you know what else I’m gonna do.” Ian had added the second part of the sentence for the sole purpose of watching Mickey’s expression change and his dick grow, two reactions with which he was intimately familiar, but never tired of seeing. Ian grinned down at Mickey’s face as it exhibited the most pitifully desperate display of carnal excitement he’d seen since the last time he’d done this to him.

Ian chuckled as he bowed his head over his beautifully aroused man, lowering his mouth, once again, onto his nearly-bursting cock, rubbing his balls with one hand and tugging teasingly at the handle of the beads with the other. Ian proceeded to blow him expertly, incorporating the occasional soft grazing of his member with his teeth, as he knew Mickey loved, increasing his ferocity, while continuing to manipulate his sack and tug gently on the beads. “Oh fuck! Ian! Fuuu…” Mickey mumbled, his brain hopelessly scrambled as he wriggled ecstatically, instinctively trying anything and everything humanly possible to get himself off faster.

“What’s your hurry?” Ian hissed sadistically, slowing his pattern. Mickey exhaled sharply through his nose, arching himself up reflexively. “Is this what you want?” Ian teased, deep-throating him
consecutively for a few seconds and rubbing his balls, while exerting just shy of the necessary amount of force to dislodge the first bead. Mickey gasped and moaned, literally incapable of speech. Ian stopped again. “Well, is it?” he asked, before resuming again. “YES!! FUCK!!!” Mickey finally yelled in pleasure-laced misery. Without another word, Ian brought him to the brink yet again, then pulled at the beads, tormenting Mickey, who was literally about to explode, until he threatened, “IAN!! If you stop again, I’ll fuckin’ kill ya!”

“No, you won’t…but okay…” Ian laughed as he lubed himself up, cock and ass, sitting atop Mickey’s all-but-erupting dick and beginning to ride him tentatively, backwards, all the while yanking at the bead handle with one hand and jerking himself with the other. Ian hastened his pace, pulling a bit more aggressively at the handle and at his own cock, Mickey arching up into him lustfully. “Oh FUCK!! I’m gonna cum!” Mickey screamed, as Ian dislodged the first of the three balls, the next two following more easily after. Within seconds, Mickey blew his load straight up into Ian’s tight little asshole, triggering Ian’s hasty release, almost immediately thereafter, the room filling with their sweet sounds of satisfaction.

“Damn, Gallagher!!” Mickey exclaimed, sighing with profound contentment and relief. “Fuck! Don’t even know if I can give YOU what ya want…after all that,” he breathed, feeling beyond spent. “You just did, Mick,” Ian responded, lowering his head to kiss Mickey passionately. “Besides, we have all weekend,” Ian smiled, “And when ya wake up in the morning, your ass is mine!”

“My ass is always yours,” Mickey mumbled as he re-positioned himself, turning onto his side and wrapping Ian’s body around his own, pulling Ian’s hand to his mouth. “Fuck, I love you,” he breathed, puckering his lips against the back of Ian’s hand, before closing his eyes and passing out. Ian pulled Mickey in tight, nuzzling the back of his neck with his nose, whispering, “Love you, too, Mick.”
Ian awoke to the heavenly scent of Mickey, his nose still buried into the nape of his neck. He took one last glorious breath, before extricating and dragging himself out of bed to make brunch for his sleeping angel. He couldn’t help stealing one last look, before heading for the kitchen, the mere sight of his beautiful, innocent face nearly bringing him to tears.

For as perfectly wonderful as everything was between them, Ian still felt guilty for all he had put Mickey through over the past few months. He loved Mickey and the villa more than words could say, but the combination did remind him of the circumstances under which they had stayed there the last time. His decision to be tested as a possible donor for Mom had started a whole chain of events that put Mickey, and himself, albeit through his own doing, through absolute hell, and yet, here he was---asleep in a villa that he’d surprised Ian with, driving the entire way, after a full day of work and putting up with Ian’s shit.

Ian knew he could be a pain in the ass, and had been, quite literally, to Mickey a number of times in recent history. He felt as if he needed to do something to let Mickey know how sorry he was, to reaffirm his love and devotion to him, and to their life together. He knew Mickey wouldn’t ask him for anything specific. He’d already pushed him to do that the night before. He would have to come up with something himself, but before anything else, the first order of business was to feed him, and feed him well.

He knew Mickey would want to hit the beach, so he decided to pack them a picnic brunch, with all of his favorites, which, upon opening the refrigerator and cabinets, he found to be in ample supply. Mickey had managed to have the place stocked with everything they enjoyed most, making it quite easy for Ian to put together a stellar meal, which he set about doing as quietly as possible, so as not to disturb Mickey’s much needed sleep.

Ian had finished making close to a dozen pancakes, a very large omelet, using the pre-cut vegetables from the fridge, and was grabbing for a container of fruit salad, when Mickey snuck up behind him.

“Mornin’,” Mickey yawned, reaching his arms around Ian from behind and squeezing him lovingly, then making a beeline for the coffee maker. “Want some?” Mickey mumbled softly, as he pulled two mugs from one of the cabinets. “Yeah, thanks,” Ian smiled, as he packed the large picnic basket with the fruit he had just retrieved, as well as everything he had prepared, adding, “Hope you’re hungry.”

Mickey smiled, rolling his eyes. Of course he was hungry, and Ian knew it. He could tell that something was on Ian’s mind. That was his way of avoiding a subject---to make small talk. Basically, from Mickey’s point of view, he would pop off with stupid shit until Mickey finally had enough, and had to pry it out of him, to save himself. “Yeah, I’m starvin’,” he answered, though he knew he really didn’t need to. “Guess we’re gonna eat on the beach?” Mickey asked, trading one stupid question for another.

“Yes...figured you’d wanna...unless ya don’t…” Ian stammered nervously. “...Course I wanna go. Why...why don’t ya just tell me what’s on your mind, Ian? Everything okay?” Mickey asked, sounding a bit uneasy himself, at this point. “Everything’s way better than okay. It’s fucking perfect...you’re perfect...I...I’m so...I can’t believe this place is really ours! And...and the clinic...and...” Ian became so choked up, he couldn’t continue.

“C’mere,” Mickey commanded, reaching for Ian, who rushed to him, resting his head on Mickey’s shoulder and, once again, pressing his nose into Mickey’s neck, inhaling Mickey’s soothing scent. Mickey held him close, not entirely sure what to make of this sudden, profound show of emotion, but determined to comfort him, nonetheless. Mickey tightened his grip on Ian’s body, rubbing his right
hand up and down his back, whispering, “I love you,” after which Ian started to full-on sob.

“There somethin’ ya need ta tell me?” Mickey prodded, beginning to worry that this might be something serious. “Yeah,” Ian mumbled, his lips, along with his nose, still smashed firmly against Mickey’s neck. “Well?” Mickey questioned, after holding an oddly silent Ian, for what seemed like more than enough time, under normal circumstances, for him to share whatever it was that was troubling him so deeply.

He pushed Ian away from him, holding him at arm’s length to make eye contact. Tears were rolling down Ian’s cheeks, something that was becoming a bit too common for Mickey’s liking. He wondered if there might be a problem with his meds; then his mind began to sift through a series of scenarios, including the possibility that Ian may have stopped taking them altogether. Of course, he didn’t dare accuse him of that, lest he should start World War III.

“What?!” Mickey yelled impatiently, as he stared into his lover’s hauntingly beautiful eyes, wiping Ian’s tears away with his thumbs as he held his devastatingly handsome face in his hands. “Sorry,” Ian breathed, unable to push more than a single word out of this mouth, without completely breaking down again.

Now Mickey had had it! He was scared to death to find out what it was that Ian was so sorry about, that he couldn’t bring himself to even speak of it. “What the fuck, Ian?!” Mickey finally exploded, resetting the whole cycle with Ian. “Okay!” Ian responded, trying his best to compose himself enough to talk.

Mickey took Ian by the hand, leading him to the bed, where he sat him down, kneeling in front of him, then counting to ten in his head, before he addressed him. “Ian, whatever it is...we can deal with it...but only if ya tell me...” Ian stared into Mickey’s mesmerizing blue eyes, so filled with love and concern that he finally forced himself to say something...even if it didn’t come out the way he might have wanted.

“Mickey...I just...I know how fucked up I’ve been...how hard it’s been on you. And still you’ve been here for me,” Ian paused, taking a deep breath and wiping at his eyes. “And, not only that,” he continued, his voice quivering with emotion, “You did all these really great things for me...and I...I don’t deserve it, after all I put you through.” Ian took both of Mickey’s hands in his own, standing him up, planting his lips firmly against Mickey’s, then pulling Mickey’s lower lip gently into his mouth and running his tongue over it, before backing away to continue, “Mickey I’m so fucking sorry...I gotta find a way to make this up...to show you how fucking much you mean to me, and how much better I’m gonna be...”

“Ian,” Mickey interrupted, “I already fuckin’ know...and we’re cool. I did all this shit cuz I love you...and I know these things’ll be good for ya...help ya stay well. I know you’d never hurt me on fuckin’ purpose!” Mickey kissed Ian hard, pulling away as abruptly as he had come on. “Now...I’m fuckin’ starvin’! Ya ready ta go ta the beach?” he asked, although he had already picked the basket up off the counter, and clearly wasn’t taking ‘no’ for an answer.

“Yeah...ready,” Ian replied, smiling through his tears. “Hold on!” Mickey exclaimed suddenly, setting the basket on the floor. “Hey, can ya put some coffee in the travel mugs for us?” he asked, Ian immediately obliging him with a hearty, “Sure!” Meanwhile, Mickey reached into the fridge, grabbing some condiments and tossing them into the basket.

Finally, they were on their way, Ian snagging the large beach blanket from the closet, then following his man out into the sand. As they trudged out onto the beach, Ian looked for the perfect spot to spread their blanket. He marvelled at how quickly and adeptly Mickey was able to put him at ease about all that had happened. Mickey truly was the best medicine for Ian’s fucked-up head, although
Dr. Fisher had discussed him taking alternating courses of antimanic and antidepressant drugs, eventually with some med-free time in between. This was, after all, the basic idea behind his state-of-the-art protocol. He had shied away from doing that with Ian though, initially due to the PTSD, in general, then later, because of his violent attacks on Mickey. ‘Everything is fine,’ he told himself, reliving Mickey’s strong, supportive embrace in his mind, as they walked, side-by-side.

“How about right here?” he asked Mickey, beginning to spread the blanket out about ten feet from the water. “Yeah, man...wherever...” Mickey answered, dropping the basket onto the blanket as soon as Ian had it down, reaching for Ian and pulling him down next to him. He then laid out the two plates Ian had packed and began serving everything. “Smells so good!” he commented, smiling over at Ian, “Ya really outdid yourself!”

Once both plates were overflowing with food, Mickey pulled the syrup and whipped cream from the basket, using the syrup, then handing it to Ian. “Easy on this shit,” he smirked, shaking the can of whipped cream, “I got plans for this later.” He dispensed a small amount onto his pancakes, passing it on to Ian with a look that reinforced what he had just said. Ian grinned at Mickey, squirting a tiny amount onto his finger, then pushing it playfully into Mickey’s mouth, Mickey, of course, taking the opportunity to tease Ian with his tongue, lips, and teeth. Ian closed his eyes, feeling his cock growing in his shorts. “Damn!” he muttered under his breath. “What’d ya expect, puttin’ it in there?” Mickey chuckled, after letting go, “I’m hungry as hell!”

The couple enjoyed their meal together, talking casually about everything from the kids, to the upcoming weddings and births, to their impending trip to New York. Mickey had given it a lot of thought, and had decided against attending any business meetings during their stay, opting, instead, to make plans for an evening out on Sunday, followed by some shopping, either before or after Ian’s appointment, depending on how long he ended up being there.

The important thing, to Mickey, was to make the trip enjoyable for Ian, so he would look forward to going again in the future, thus keeping to the agreed upon weekly sessions. Mickey felt these were essential to Ian’s mental health, and was committed to doing everything in his power to ensure Ian’s religious compliance.

Ian balked at spending so much time in New York, at first, citing to the clinic’s need for him to be there. Mickey explained to him that he had arranged for Shawn to stay awhile, scheduling him to do some magazine shoots for the new store over the weekend, then asking if he could stay to work the clinic on Monday and Tuesday. Shawn had agreed readily, his only request being that he have an opportunity to talk with them, upon their return. Apparently, he had run into a few snags in his developing relationship with Justin, and was seeking advice from the most perfect couple he knew.

Full stomachs led to dozing off in the sun, both waking to the realization that they had been out for way too long, Mickey immediately pressing a thumb into Ian’s forearm to see how badly burned he was. “C’mon! Gotta get ya some sunscreen!” Mickey insisted, grabbing Ian by the elbow before he was even fully awake. “I’m fine!” Ian protested, wrestling himself free of Mickey’s grasp. “C’mon, Ian!” Mickey whined, as he took off after Ian, who was now running at a pretty good clip, heading for the water. Ian had Mickey beat on both land and water, but that didn’t stop Mickey from trying his ass off, Ian turning back in his direction, once they were both in the water.

Once Ian was close enough to Mickey, Ian wrapped his arms and legs securely around Mickey’s body, rendering him completely immobile, after which he moved his face an inch from Mickey’s, taunting him, “Got ya in the water! Now whatcha gonna do?” Mickey laid a smoldering kiss on Ian,
slamming his hips against him and moaning softly into his mouth as he continued to grind against him sensuously. “Fuck!” Ian breathed, his cock instantly threatening to pop out the top of his shorts. “S’right!” Mickey chortled, intensifying his movements until he had persuaded Ian to carry him out of the water.

Once they were back to the blanket, Mickey purred into Ian’s ear, “Now...I’m gonna eat that ass, but I thought you might wanna take our freak show inside, since it’s noon on Saturday and your ass is burned like a motherfucker…” Mickey paused exhalng heavily into Ian’s ear, then licking it, inside and out, mimicking the tongue movements he fully intended to use, as soon as he stripped Ian of his shorts. Ian shivered with excitement, reluctantly setting Mickey down on his feet so they could gather their belongings, which both undertook in a frenzied, haphazard manner, reflecting their potent desire for each other.

The pair made a mad dash for the villa, Mickey dropping the basket at the door, then hoisting Ian up into his arms. “My turn…” Mickey muttered under his breath as he carried Ian across the threshold of their new home-away-from-home, adding, “I been waitin’ to do this for a long fuckin’ time,” as he threw Ian onto the bed, doubling back for the picnic basket, from which he immediately retrieved the whipped cream, which had miraculously remained chilled, thanks to the ice packs that Ian had thrown in the basket that morning. “Hold on,” Ian called out, raising his index finger, as Mickey began to tear hungrily at his shorts.

“Nature calls!” Ian shouted, a small giggle escaping from his lips, as he ran for the bathroom. “Yeah, okay...When you’re done, meet me around back,” Mickey responded, discreetly grabbing the whipped cream and some lube, then heading outside to prepare the last remaining surprise he had for Ian. Once he was done, he waited for what seemed like an eternity, before finally deciding to go back inside to check on Ian.

Mickey started to panic, imagining all of the possible reasons Ian hadn’t come outside. Thankfully, once he re-entered the villa, he could hear the shower running, so he used the toilet, then slid the shower door open, intending to join Ian for a quick shower. “Ahhhh!” Ian screamed, Mickey having startled him.

“Just me,” Mickey snorted, recoiling as the cold water hit him. “A cold shower?” Mickey asked, puzzled. “Yeah, trying to take some of the burn away,” Ian explained. Mickey rinsed off quickly, then excused himself, repeating, “Just meet me around back,” before drying off and traipsing into the kitchen, naked, to pull a bottle of Johnny’s Chianti from the fridge, along with two chilled wine glasses.

Moments later, Ian, clean shaven and smelling heavenly, arrived on the back patio, completely blown away by the splendor of all that stood before him. Mickey was sitting in a six-foot wide hot tub, cascading water flowing into it from the apex of a stone backsplash, the water glistening in the rainbow-colored lights that glowed behind it, its multi-colored reflection dancing magically over Mickey’s strikingly toned form, enhancing the glow of his crystal blue eyes as they silently beseeched Ian to join him.

Ian blinked repeatedly, unsure as to whether he was actually seeing this. “C’mon! Get in! I adjusted the temperature for your sun-baked ass!” Mickey called to him impatiently, raising his voice a bit, in order to be heard over the sound of the rippling water. Ian crept in tentatively, one leg at a time, followed by the remainder of his bright, salmon-colored body. “Too hot?” Mickey asked as he handed Ian a glass of Chianti, hoping he had cooled the water enough for Ian to be comfortable. “No, it’s fine...” Ian answered, taking a quick swig of wine, then setting his glass aside, “But you are...definitely...too...hot,” Ian breathed between the white hot kisses he and Mickey were now exchanging. “Fuck!” Mickey hissed, fearing how tempted he was to cut to the chase, rather than
executing his initial plan, in light of his rock-hard rod that was throbbing unmercifully against his own body.

As Mickey closed the gap between their bodies, he could feel Ian’s molten manhood grinding on his, Ian’s breath hitching in his throat each time Mickey swiveled his hips, intensifying the titillating sensation for them both. “Oh Mick...fuck me...” Ian breathed into Mickey’s open mouth, feeling certain he was going to explode any minute, either way.

“Not yet...” Mickey whispered, lifting Ian out of the water and leaning him backward onto the wooden deck, opposite the backsplash. “Told ya...I’m gonna eat that ass!” Mickey growled, spreading Ian’s legs wide, then slowly tracing the perimeter of Ian’s hole with the index finger of his right hand, while he squirted a generous serving of whipped cream across Ian’s entire ass with the other. Mickey licked a stripe into the pile of whipped cream, spreading it over Ian’s anus, then sucking it away slowly, his tongue darting in and out of Ian’s sticky, sweet ass. Ian moaned loudly as Mickey licked, sucked and tongue-fucked his asshole, all the while massaging his mammoth cock with one hand, his painfully tight-drawn-up balls with the other.

“Mick...PLEASE!” Ian pleaded, Mickey making a point to eat every last drop of whipped cream, all of it straight from Ian’s asshole, save for the one thick line he had traced onto Ian’s cock with his finger, which he sucked off slowly, while he lubed Ian’s ass up.

“Mick, I’m gonna...” “Nope!” Mickey objected, interrupting Ian’s sentence and impending climax, all at once. Mickey flipped Ian onto his stomach, crawling out of the tub and onto the deck, his soaking wet body dripping onto Ian’s as he mounted him. “Ready?” Mickey asked, certain of Ian’s reply before he asked. “Fuck, YES!!!” Ian answered with a desperation in his voice that matched the fierce craving Mickey felt at that very moment. Mickey, forcing himself to be gentle, in light of Ian’s grandiose performance the night before, navigated his beautifully thick cock into Ian, bit by bit, Ian rutting against him ardently, reaching back greedily to push him in by the ass, fighting in every way possible, to hasten Mickey’s entry. Ian moaned and begged until Mickey, unable to resist any longer, thrust his entire length into him, Ian gasping in response, their bodies adjusting readily as they moved together, in that familiar, delicious rhythm that was theirs and theirs alone, practiced to perfection, each pleasing his partner as only he could. “Yes! Yes! Fuck me, Mick!! Harder!” Ian screamed, as Mickey railed him with all he had, Ian rocking his ass backward against Mickey’s hips, so right and so intense---blissful satisfaction rolling over Mickey like a tidal wave. “Ian...gonna...” “Me, too!” Ian confessed breathlessly, Mickey reaching forward to grasp Ian’s cock and finish him.

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The two men, bodies lovingly intertwined, slide back into the tub, the foamy water washing over them as they enjoyed their Chianti, the salty ocean breeze, and each other. “Did I ever tell you how much I love fucking you?” Ian asked playfully. “Once or twice...I think...” Mickey laughed, holding him close, then shutting his eyes, inhaling him deeply. “But I love YOU more...” Ian breathed, relaxing his body against Mickey’s, melting into him, until he felt hard-pressed to tell where he ended and Mickey began.

Mickey took in the beauty around him---the villa, the hot tub, the lights, and his gorgeous husband---
wondering what the fuck he ever did to get so damn lucky. “Love you, too, Ian,” he sighed with a contentment that reverberated through his entire being, “So fuckin’ much.”
Hello Faithful Readers,

I’d like to thank all of you for your loyal readership. Looks like one to two more chapters (since I agreed to the two extra that I have already done) and then an Epilogue. I’d much prefer to write about them forever, and I very well might, but, for now, that is the plan. I promised a few readers I would give a heads up, so that’s what I’m trying to do.

I will likely begin a new writing endeavor after this—details to come soon. Also, I am interested in any requests you might have for Gallavich short-stories. I got a very good suggestion before, which became the basis for my short-story that many of you have read, "Ian Gets a Surprise (or Two)". Many thanks for TysFan for the great ideas!

Much love to all of you! Please feel free to comment on "The Milkoviches" as well.

Mickey’s memories of the night before came flooding back the moment he woke up with Ian’s rigid cock pressed firmly against his right asscheek. His dick was hard as a rock, too, despite his entire body aching like he’d been through a war. Ian had been absolutely insatiable. They had polished off every last drop of available alcohol, and had managed to fuck each other on every flat surface in the villa, up against the wall, in the shower, the hot tub, and, finally, out on the beach after sunset, leaving virtually no stone unturned, when it came to positions.

And now it started again. Ian was awake and actively grinding himself against Mickey’s ass. “Mmmmmickey…” Ian hummed into his ear sensually, Mickey’s cock stiffening more as Ian’s silky smooth voice reverberated against his eardrum. “Sup?” Mickey yawned, countering Ian’s movements, rutting his ass against Ian in a rhythmic, circular motion, in spite of himself. Ian had a knack for getting Mickey going, even when he’d had way more than he could handle already.

“I’ll be gentle,” Ian purred into Mickey’s ear. Mickey snickered, fully aware of how this would play out. Ian meant what he said. He was more than capable of taking things slow and easy. In fact, he was fucking amazing at it; so good, in fact, that he’d get Mickey to the point where he was so fucking horny, he’d beg to get fucked hard, obviously suffering the consequences after the fact, which usually included extreme soreness and difficulty walking or sitting for many hours afterward.

“I don’t know, man…Got a long-ass plane ride tonight. Lotta sittin’. How ‘bout if we try somethin’ else?” Mickey suggested, attempting to reposition himself so he could suck Ian off. Ian loved Mickey’s blowjobs, but for some reason, and Ian thought it had a lot to do with how long he’d waited to have this time alone with Mickey, Ian really wanted to fuck him, just once more before shoving off for New York and preparing himself for all of the stress that the trip held for him.

“I promise…you’ll be okay on the plane,” Ian pleaded, taking the opportunity provided by Mickey’s change of position to fondle Mickey’s asshole lightly with a moistened finger, while taking Mickey’s fat cock in hand, beginning to jerk it slowly as he lowered his head into the crook of Mickey’s neck, sucking, biting, and tonguing at Mickey’s hyper-sensitive spot.
Within seconds, Mickey was putty in Ian’s skillful hands, moaning softly as Ian toyed with him gently, taking his time to prep him, while continuing to masterfully manipulate Mickey’s robust rod. “Gonna watch you while you take it,” Ian hissed, amid his subtle, yet effective attack on the most erotically responsive parts of Mickey’s anatomy, his face still buried in Mickey’s tender neck.

“And I’m gonna take my time,” Ian added, pulling his head up to stare into Mickey’s longing eyes. “You good with that, gorgeous?” Ian breathed seductively, as he added extra lube to both his own cock and Mickey’s tender hole. Mickey nodded silently, only wild, unbridled gasps and moans escaping from Mickey’s gaping mouth as Ian continued to finger him slowly. Ian’s impatient cock throbbed at the scintillating sight of Mickey’s fantastically full lips, as he, too, fought to maintain control. Mickey was dying to beg, but instead surrendered to Ian’s pace, his utterances and movements telegraphing his intense desire, in spite of his efforts, stoking the fire in Ian’s loins.

Once Mickey was adequately prepped, Ian took to frotting him languidly, Mickey’s hips bucking up urgently in response. Ian smirked triumphantly, Mickey’s desperation strengthening his resolve to maintain his torturously slow rhythm. The electricity pulsing through both of their bodies crescendoed, each successive brush bringing exponentially more pleasure to both. “So hot, Mick,” Ian murmured as he took in the breathtaking beauty of Mickey’s body arching up into his in slow motion, like a warm, inviting tide, rolling in, then dragging with it everything in its wake. Ian continued, keeping their passionate foreplay on simmer until he could take no more.

Then, in one fluid motion, Ian lifted Mickey from the bed, Mickey instinctively wrapping his arms and legs around Ian’s body. Ian then carried Mickey out to their cloistered patio, as the sun rose in the distance, stepping down into the hot tub, the water’s warm effervescence stimulating their every nerve ending as it enveloped their quavering bodies. Ian seated Mickey among the jets, redirecting a few to massage him from beneath, as he posed him so they faced one another, then resumed his teasing, rubbing himself up against Mickey and fingering his hole, Mickey reciprocating voraciously.

“Please,” Mickey breathed in a barely audible whisper that raised the hair on the back of Ian’s neck. Without a single word, Ian positioned himself for his long awaited entry, losing himself in his husband’s magical, baby-blue eyes as he filled him up, little by little, so very mindful of Mickey’s tender condition that Mickey felt the need to remind him, “Hey! I’m sore, not made a’ fuckin’ glass! Fuck me!”

“With that, Ian increased his pace and force, but only marginally, encouraging his mate to, “Be patient!” with a confident grin, as he slid Mickey down to the end of the submerged seat, reclining him back, then lifting Mickey’s right leg high, holding it with his left hand, while he slow-fucked him. Ian rolled his hips exquisitely, pulling one ecstatic moan after another from Mickey’s trembling lips, as Ian’s mammoth cock lightly massaged Mickey’s prostate with each skillful stroke. “Jesus Christ, Gallagher!” Mickey screamed, his pleasure so intense that he was no longer able to stifle his vocal expression of it.

Ian lowered his head, kissing Mickey passionately as he continued to fuck him closer and closer to his inevitable explosion. Mickey did his best to return the kiss, amid the incoherent babbling that Ian all too often brought out of him, a side effect of Ian having fucked him so damn well. Ian continued to rock slowly into Mickey, driving him absolutely out of his mind with frustrated anticipation.

“FUCK!” was the word that accompanied the strident shriek that finally flew from Mickey’s quivering lips, as he grabbed a hold of his own cock, just in time to erupt onto his own chest, neck and chin, his tight little ass constricting and pulsating around Ian’s nearly bursting cock. “Damn you and that sweet ass of yours!” Ian yelled in response, shooting his load deep into Mickey, both men panting like dogs in heat as their bodies crashed perfectly into one another for the final time.
“I must be the luckiest fucking guy in the world,” Ian said softly, still breathing hard, as he slid down next to Mickey in the hot tub. “Oh yeah?” Mickey responded with a slight grin, his eyes appearing to be almost focused on Ian’s face, but not quite, his brain still swimming in intoxicating endorphins.

“Oh fuck yeah!” Ian affirmed, pulling Mickey close to him, adding, “Not only is my husband the most thoughtful, kind, loyal, forgiving person I know…” Ian trailed off, tearing up as he stared into Mickey’s eyes, lost in their mesmerizing allure and completely bewitched by Mickey’s charms. “Yeah?” Mickey prodded, hoping Ian would finish his fucking sentence. “Oh Mick,” Ian sighed contentedly, pressing his lips lovingly against Mickey’s temple. “You’re just so goddamn sexy, too,” Ian finally added, finishing with, “And that ass…” as he groped it, squeezing its luscious roundness with his hand, then kissing Mickey deeply.

The shrill sound of Mickey’s ringing phone from inside the villa abruptly poked a hole in their blissful bubble, Mickey reluctantly rising to retrieve it. “Who the fuck is it?” Ian called out in an annoyed voice, his tone softening as Mickey headed back toward the hot tub, his taut, water-soaked physique glistening in the morning sun. “Missed it. It was your sister,” Mickey reported. “Better call back. Make sure Mikhaila’s okay,” Ian responded, his brow furrowing with concern. Ian knew Reesie wouldn’t bother them on their vacation, unless there was a problem.

“Naw...not her! Debbie!” Mickey clarified. “Debs is calling you? Something must be wrong!” Ian concluded, beginning to panic. “Relax,” Mickey said in a soothing voice. “I asked her to look into somethin’ for me,” he explained, Ian breathing a sigh of relief. “What was that?” Ian questioned, looking puzzled as to what Debs could be looking into for Mickey, as well as to why the fuck he knew nothing about it.

“It’s about Iggy’s kid and its mother,” Mickey answered shortly, as he called Debbie back. “Iggy has a kid?!” Ian exclaimed, completely baffled by this entire storyline. “Yeah...Maybe...I don’t know! Just listen!” Mickey barked, falling instantly silent, upon hearing Debbie’s voice. “Mickey,” she began, “I think she’s alive!” Ian stared at Mickey in utter disbelief, as Mickey spoke with HIS sister about something he knew nothing about, up until this very moment.

“Where the fuck is she?” Mickey was becoming visibly upset, and Ian didn’t like it one bit. “She said she didn’t know,” Debbie explained, “But I think she does. Probably doesn’t want her dad finding out, ya know?” “Alright, can ya text me Bri’s address?” Mickey asked. “Yeah, but you didn’t get it from me, okay?” Debs answered. “Yeah, alright,” Mickey mumbled. “Say ‘hi’ to Ian for me,” Debs said, getting ready to end the call.

“Hey, Debs!” Ian piped up. “Hi!!” Debs replied joyfully. “How’s everything?” she asked brightly. “It’s great, Debs! Really, really great!” he gushed, his eyes moving over Mickey’s face adoringly. “So glad to hear that, Ian!” she said with sincerity. “You and Franny gotta come and visit sometime soon!” Ian spoke with a genuine excitement in his voice that made Mickey smile. “I want to, but…” Debs began, not quite sure how to end her sentence. “Debs...lemme know when ya got time off, and we’ll fly ya down,” Mickey interjected, seeing how happy a visit from his sister would make Ian, and wanting to do anything and everything within his power to make him happy.

“Ok, I will,” Debs answered. Ian was beaming, completely overwhelmed by Mickey’s kindness, toward both Debs and Iggy. “So...you need me to do anything else? Talk to Bri again, or…” Mickey cut Debs off, “Nah...ya did plenty. Keep yourself outta this. Just send the address. I’ll handle the rest. Thanks, Debs.”

“And don’t forget to let us know when you can visit,” Ian added. “Will do. Love you guys!” Debs offered, both men responding with a heartfelt, “Love you, too,” before saying their goodbyes.

The husbands spent the remainder of the day at the villa, packing and relaxing a bit, taking the
opportunity for a quick dip in the ocean, before driving to the airport. Ian didn’t press Mickey for details regarding Iggy’s situation. It was enough for him to know that Mickey was handling something that would be helpful to Iggy, his only concern being hands-on involvement that could be dangerous to the family, which Mickey had already assured Ian was not the case.

As they set off, bound for the airport and, eventually, New York, Ian was remarkably calm. If he felt himself getting anxious, he simply looked over at Mickey, reminding himself, as Dr. Fisher had discussed with him, of Mickey’s promise that he would always be there for him. Mickey seemed to read his mind, each time responding to Ian’s looks of momentary insecurity with a reassuring smile and those relaxing circles he had grown so accustomed to tracing onto Ian’s thigh with his index finger.

The airport wasn’t busy, so they pretty much sailed through, taking a brief moment to revisit the restroom where they had first seen each other, way back when Ian had flown into Mexico with Mandy, under the guise of being her ‘plus one’ during a ‘boyfriend experience’ she had supposedly been hired to do. Ian and Mickey now agreed that neither of them had ever been so happy to have been duped, before then or since.

“C’mere,” Mickey growled huskily, drawing Ian in for a searing hot kiss, during which he steered Ian backward into the stall where it all began, his hands cupping Ian’s face as their kissing intensified, Mickey smashing Ian’s body against the stall wall with his own and grinding on him lustfully. “Okay, I’m good now,” Mickey chirped, abruptly pulling himself away from Ian.

“What the fuck was that for?” Ian asked, his dick half-hard, his head spinning in confusion and disbelief. “Just wanted to see if it still felt the same,” Mickey responded off-handedly. “And?” Ian smirked, knowing, full well, what Mickey’s answer would be, based on his own experience. “Yep,” Mickey answered predictably, “And for you?” Mickey questioned. “Yeah, only now it’s even better!” Ian grinned. “And why’s that?” Mickey asked, his curiosity getting the best of him. “Cuz...now I know…” Ian giggled.

“Now you know WHAT?” Mickey demanded, heading for the restroom exit. “This sweet ass is MINE!” Ian roared, cupping both of Mickey’s beautifully full asscheeks in his hands and squeezing them hard, as they walked back out into the airport. Mickey’s face blushed bright red, Ian maintaining his grasp as he hissed into his ear, “Isn’t that right, Mick?” To which Mickey laughed, responding, “Is that really a fuckin’ question?”

The plane ride was quiet and uneventful, both men sleeping most of the way. As the plane began its descent, Mickey, who was always sensitive to changes in air pressure, woke up, briefly disoriented and panicked. He opened one eye tentatively, catching a glimpse of Ian’s fiery red hair, then closing it again, calm and relieved. He reached for Ian’s hand and smiled.
Ian and Mickey were both starving by the time they arrived at the Soho, but neither of them were up for sitting in a restaurant, feeling half-groggy and in need of a freshening up, after having slept for most of their flight. Ian volunteered to order and pick up some breakfast for them from the restaurant in the hotel lobby, starting the water in the hot tub, adding a squirt of soothing bubble bath, and asking Mickey to keep an eye on it, while he was gone. Mickey considered suggesting they have their food delivered to their door, but Ian was gone before he even had the chance to mention it.

Mickey put some coffee on, then returned to the hot tub area, lighting some candles and stripping his clothes off, the hot, bubbly water calling his name. Mickey waited for the coffee to brew, then poured two steaming cups, carrying them over to the tub and depositing them on its edge before sitting down next to them, shutting off the spigot, and dangling his feet in the warm, swirling suds. Mickey sipped his coffee slowly, hoping Ian would be returning soon for breakfast in the tub. Before he knew it, he was nearly done with his first cup, which had begun to get cold. He pulled his feet from the tub, drying them, then heading to the kitchen to fill his own cup and to dump and refill Ian’s with fresh, hot coffee. As he carried the fresh coffee over to the hot tub, he began to wonder what was taking Ian so long. His stomach started to get that sick feeling, like something was wrong, but he didn’t know what. He reached for his phone, then stopped, convincing himself that there was nothing to worry about, that Ian would be back soon, and that they would enjoy a nice breakfast and bubble bath together.

After another twenty minutes, Mickey was going stir-crazy, and was drying his feet again, in preparation for a trip down to the lobby, when Ian waltzed in with their breakfast and a disarming smile. “They were fucking busy!” he announced, before Mickey had an opportunity to question him. “C’mon over here!” Mickey called to him, “Thought we’d eat in the tub,” he explained, sipping from his second cup of lukewarm coffee. “Might wanna dump this and get fresh,” he suggested, lifting both cups, as Ian sat the food bag down next to Mickey, “Gettin’ kinda cold.”

Ian took both cups from Mickey’s hands, walking them to the kitchen for refills, dropping them on the counter, then rustling through their suitcase briefly, before filling them and returning to the tub. Mickey figured he might have been taking his meds, but didn’t want to raise the question. He knew that Ian was uptight about this whole trip already, not really wanting to be there again so soon after being back at home, especially once he found out about the clinic. So Mickey opted to stay quiet, removing their breakfasts from the bag and preparing Ian’s the way he liked it.

Mickey smiled as Ian returned with the coffee, watching intently as Ian removed his clothes. He knew sex was off the table for the morning, but he still found it pleasurable to admire his husband’s sexy body, the way his muscles tensed as he undressed, coupled with his smooth descent into the water reminding him of their private time together over the past weekend.

The two enjoyed their breakfast, the tub jets massaging them both lightly while they ate, Ian playfully rubbing his toes across the soles of Mickey’s feet. Mickey giggled softly, his toes curling under his feet as he instinctively pulled them away. Ian wrapped an arm around Mickey, moving closer to him, then speaking in a low, husky voice, “So...would you do it all again?”

Mickey turned to look at him, wondering what the fuck Ian was talking about. “C’mon, Mick...Knowing what you know now, would you? Marry me again? I mean...I know you’re here for me, and you love me, but what if you could go back in time and avoid all my crazy shit?” Ian asked.

“Why? You ‘bout to pull some more?” Mickey chuckled, laughing Ian’s question off, but
wondering, in the back of his mind, why the fuck he was being asked. ‘Was Ian gauging how much more he would be willing to take? Was he considering backing out of his appointment with Dr. Fisher? Were the meds not fucking working? Was he not taking them!?’ Mickey’s mind churned out one unsavory possibility after another, and all while he sat silently, offering no answer, a dumbfounded look on his face.

“It’s okay, Mick...I get it...and I don’t blame you,” Ian finally spoke up, obviously crushed, but making his best attempt not to seem so. “I know you love me, and we’re together. That’s enough for me,” he continued, looking away and loosening his grip on Mickey’s shoulder as a profound sadness overtook him.

“What kinda stupid fuckin’ question is that? ‘Course I would,” Mickey responded, at last, seeming to suddenly emerge from some sort of glitch that had rendered him unable to speak, up until that very moment. “Took ya long enough to answer,” Ian countered, still skeptical about Mickey’s response, though he told himself that Mickey had always been honest to a fault with him, ever since he admitted to loving him all those years ago.

“Yeah, well, I’m over here wonderin’ why the fuck you’d ask such a stupid fuckin’ question. Somethin’ wrong?” Mickey asked, Ian immediately picking up on the terror in Mickey’s intense, icy blue eyes. “No...why?” Ian responded, reaching for Mickey again, this time to wash his back. ‘Just a fuckin’ weird thing ta bring up…’less your plannin’ ta do somethin’ nuts…” Mickey trailed off, really not wanting to upset Ian, but still fearing the worst of his invented scenarios at the same time.

“Nope,” Ian answered, kissing Mickey softly on the lips, “I’m gonna do something...but it’s not nuts,” he finished, pushing his tongue past Mickey’s parted lips and kissing him passionately, until they both had massive hard-ons. The two made out like teenagers, hungrily groping each other like there was no tomorrow, like one of them might evaporate at any moment, like if they lived forever, they couldn’t possibly get enough of each other.

“Fuck!” Ian whined, the sound of his ringing phone interrupting what was proving to be the beginning of a tremendously hot session, brought on by what he now realized was his own senseless insecurity. Whatever the cause, he was pissed at whomever had the balls to interrupt. It was, after all, still pretty early in the morning, and he had his divinely enticing husband all to himself.

“Hello,” Ian snarled begrudgingly, Mickey shooting him a horrified look. “Good Morning, Ian!” Mickey could hear Dr. Fisher say, despite the fact that Ian was not using his speaker phone. “I made it to the office early today. I ended up flying in from Boston last night and I…” Ian interrupted him. “Yes, I can come early. I’ll get ready and be there as soon as I can.”

“You mean ‘we’ will be there,” Mickey corrected him with a sweet smile. “Yes, ‘we’ will be there,” Ian clarified. “Very good! Then I’ll see the two of you soon!” Dr. Fisher concluded cheerfully, ending the call.

The couple dried each other off quickly, Ian lingering with the towel around Mickey’s fine ass, making an extra effort to be sure Mickey was completely dry in all areas. Mickey grinned shyly, having a full understanding, by this point in their marriage, how highly Ian prized this part of his anatomy, yet still not feeling at ease with flaunting it, outside of a sexual situation.

After dressing quickly, Ian asked, “Does this look okay?” referring to his choice of clothing. “Ian, ya look fuckin’ great, like always, but we’re gonna go shoppin’ after your appointment, so ya can pick out some new shit,” Mickey replied. Ian’s face lit up. “Really?” he asked incredulously. He could count on one hand the number of times Mickey had gone clothes shopping with him, always deferring to Ian and Mandy to select and purchase his clothing, the only exception being the clothes he had been given to wear at photo shoots, when he did them.
Mickey didn’t like clothes shopping—plain and simple—but for as much as he regarded it as drudgery, he knew how Ian loved it, and was really striving to brighten this trip for him. “Yeah, man. Unless you don’t…” Mickey began, Ian talking over him excitedly. “Of course I wanna go! Can’t wait to see that ass in the jeans of my choice!” Ian snickered, grabbing at Mickey’s luscious cheeks. “C’mon. S’go,” Mickey prodded, Ian following behind him more than willingly, eyeing him up from behind.

The two sat close in the back of the Uber, scarcely able to keep their hands off each other. They arrived at the hospital quickly, much to Ian’s disappointment. Mickey, on the other hand, considered it to be a blessing, figuring the sooner they got there, the sooner they could get on with their day together. He kept quiet about it though, not wanting to discount the importance of Ian’s session. He knew Ian really did need to see Dr. Fisher, in order to continue to heal, and to receive the proper treatment for his bipolar disorder.

Dr. Fisher was waiting by the entrance as they walked in, greeting them both with warm hugs. He had grown quite attached to them, and was glad to see them each looking so well and so happy. “Can you make this quick?” Ian asked with a silly smile, “Mick’s taking me shopping!”

“Well, let’s get started right away, and we’ll see how things go,” Dr. Fisher replied. “Okay,” Mickey responded, pulling Ian by the hand as he headed for the hypnosis room. “How has the medication been working?” Dr. Fisher asked, as they walked. “Okay…I’ve been a little emotional at times,” Ian explained. “Can you elaborate?” Dr. Fisher asked. “I don’t know. It’s like sometimes I really feel things, like more than normal,” Ian continued. “More than ever, or more than when you were on lithium?” Dr. Fisher asked. “Well, I guess I used to be more emotional before…you know, when Mickey and I were younger,” Ian answered.

“Was that before you started taking the lithium?” the doctor asked. “Yeah, it was before I even got sick,” Ian confirmed. “Ian, I’m going to ask you to continue with these meds for awhile, with the idea that you may be taking a break soon,” Dr. Fisher explained. “Now, wait! You sure that’s a good idea, Doc?” Mickey asked, a look of worry etched into his brow.

“We will see each other often. I will know if and when it is a good idea. For now, I’d like you to stay the course. The idea behind this regimen is that, combining it with your therapy and hypnosis sessions, the need for medication will become less, allowing you drug-free periods as part of your cycle. Over all, you should be feeling more like your real self, so your emotions will be less dulled than with the traditional lithium treatment. We talked about this, and you said you would like to try. Have you changed your mind?” Dr. Fisher asked, looking first at Ian, then at Mickey.

“Well, whatever makes Ian hap…,” Mickey began, Ian stopping him. “No! Whatever’s gonna keep me from acting crazy. Mickey has put up with that for long enough!” Ian interjected emotionally, looking over at Mickey as their conversation earlier that morning replayed in his head.

“Ian, look, I want ya ta be yourself…feel like yourself…be the fuckin’ guy that fell for me. I love ya, no matter what. When ya asked me this mornin’ about us, if I’d do it again…Yeah, I would! I just thought somethin’ was wrong, ‘s all,” Mickey explained, taking Ian by the hand as they sat down together on the couch. “Let’s leave the psych shit to the doc. It’s all gonna be good, if ya listen to him,” Mickey finished, squeezing Ian’s hand in his own, then kissing him on the forehead. “Okay, then, let’s get started,” Dr. Fisher suggested, beginning the hypnosis process.

Everything went well, their next appointment being set for the following Monday, but in Mexico this time, as Dr. Fisher was going to be in Texas and offered to visit. Ian left with a genuine sense of accomplishment and confidence—in his doctor, his husband, and himself. “You ready to model for me?” Mickey asked as they walked toward the Uber. “Yeah, you ready to do it for me?” Ian
responded with a devilish grin. “Anything...Always,” Mickey murmured as he gripped Ian’s hand, feeling completely at peace and looking forward to the rest of their day, “For the rest of my life.”
The Milkoviches were busy getting ready for what all hoped would be a smooth and brief rehearsal, followed by a nice dinner at Frontera. The week had been nothing short of utter chaos, Mickey, Manuel, and Brach entertaining representatives from multiple new clothing lines, all clamouring to have their pieces featured in the window of Surfin’s newest and poshest location in Mexico. The store itself was bustling with patrons. Iggy pretty much ran the shop, while the others tended to business, with Mandy helping out as much as possible.

The clinic had been jammed to the gills all week. Ian, with Bigley’s help, convinced Shawn to stay for a month, with the possibility of maintaining a part-time schedule that would work around his modeling gigs. Doc didn’t anticipate any break in sight for the clinic, and he fully intended to go on his honeymoon, as planned, so Shawn was an essential piece of the puzzle.

This worked out well for Shawn, who got plenty of opportunities to talk with both Ian and Mickey about his situation with Justin, for whom he had fallen head over heels. He explained that, while Justin seemed to care for him, the modeling lifestyle to which he was accustomed included spending time with other models, which made Shawn bristle, so much so, that they had decided to take a break, which was what had prompted his visit for the clinic Grand Opening.

The kids had their last day of school, and were looking to go and do things, but everyone had been too enraptured in business dealings and wedding preparations. Even Kayla was involved, working as a receptionist at the clinic, since no one had the time to interview anyone, and the clinic was far too busy for any of the nurses to work in that capacity. Yev had been largely saddled with keeping an eye on his sister and Manny, when Mandy was helping at the shop. He seemed to enjoy it, though, holding ‘classes’ for the kids in Doc’s office, and helping Mandy at the check-out.

Yev had also been instrumental in helping Mikhaila and Manny to prepare for the rehearsal and the wedding. Mikhaila was going to be the flower girl, and was pretty nervous about it. He spent time rehearsing with her and Manny, since he and Manny were to be ring-bearers, throughout the week, in addition to all of the other activities he entertained them with.

When the day of the rehearsal arrived, once he and Mikhaila were dressed and ready, Yev made sure to run through everything with his sister yet again. Meanwhile, Ian and Mickey dressed up in some of the new clothing they had purchased in New York during their shopping spree. Ian truly had a gift for dressing Mickey, and himself, for that matter. He absolutely loved having Mickey try on outfit after outfit, though it was difficult for him to restrain himself at times, the way Mickey just exuded sex appeal. And that cocky strut of his when he walked in something he knew damn well he looked killer in—that was enough to put Ian over the edge.

For as much as Ian enjoyed all of it, Mickey had been happy to be done, taking great care not to let that show, for Ian’s sake. Seeing Ian so happy did help to make the entire process bearable and, of course, Mickey reaped the benefits, once they got back to the hotel. Ian had promised to spoil Mickey, in return for all of the attention Mickey had showered on him during their shopping excursion, and boy did he deliver! They both returned home very happy men, and now they were dressed to the nines, nearly ready for the rehearsal.

Ian gave both kids a quick once-over, smoothing Yev’s hair a bit, before calling out, “All set, Mick! Can you please take them to the car? I gotta grab something real quick!” “S’go!” Mickey barked with enthusiasm, motioning for the kids to follow him. Yev and Mikhaila trotted after him obediently, chirping back and forth excitedly about their roles in the ceremony.
Ian emerged a short time thereafter, and they were on their way. Mickey rested his right hand on Ian’s left thigh, as was his habit, and Ian reciprocated, turning his eyes toward Mickey, after which they were completely riveted, Ian absolutely hypnotized by Mickey’s sexy smile, flawless profile, and strong jawline. He inhaled deeply, quickly adjusting himself with his right hand, all the while continuing to bask in the delight of his lover’s incredible beauty and alluring scent. ‘It’s gonna be a long evening,’ Ian thought to himself, already chomping at the bit to get Mickey alone.

As he drove, Mickey thought about his own wedding, over seven years past, yet still fresh in his mind, as if it had all just happened. It was hard to believe he and Ian had been together that long, and somehow, he was lucky enough to still have Ian, despite all they’d been through.

He smiled over at Ian, admiring his freshly-cut, military-style hair, faint patches of red stubble gracing his temples and neckline, gradually evolving into short pieces of vibrant red hair, approaching the top of his perfectly-shaped head. They had both decided on haircuts while they were out shopping, but Mickey was convinced that Ian had gotten the military cut just to drive him crazy. Seeing his hair that way always brought memories flooding back to Mickey, some sad, but others just plain hot as hell!

As they arrived, they could see everyone gathering in the private courtyard of Bigley’s beach house, which was entirely decorated for the occasion. A valet greeted Mickey, helping everyone out of the car. Doc and Kayla had wanted to have their wedding out on the beach, just as Mickey and Ian had, but Boca’s beaches had become so much more populated in the seven years since their wedding. Even those designated as ‘private’ had become overrun with tourists, so Bigley insisted upon them using his courtyard, which was on the second floor of his beach home, and further privatized by a wall that was just short enough to allow for a breathtaking view of the beach and ocean beyond it.

The house itself was nothing short of palatial, encompassing what would normally constitute three beachfront lots, in addition to having two floors. It was definitely the ideal setting for this wedding, or any wedding, for that matter.

The rehearsal went off without a hitch. Kayla was positively beaming the entire time, praising the children, and their parents, for how well prepared they obviously were. Ian spoke up, refusing to take credit, Manuel quickly seconding his sentiments. Both men made sure the proper person, Yev, was acknowledged for his hard work in practicing with the younger children. Reesie and Mandy, who constituted the bridal party, also had plenty of ‘thank you’ hugs for the kids, as well as some kind words for all of the daddies, and their role in raising such fine children.

Upon arriving at Frontera, Mickey was surprised to see that Johnny had prepared a special feast, and had invited nearly everyone that would be attending the wedding itself. Iggy and Shawn sat together at a second large table, along with Vladimir, who had been invited as a show of appreciation for his role in saving Yev and Ian’s lives. Jose, as well as many of Mickey and Manuel’s most loyal employees, were also there. Marco and Svetlana had seats reserved for them as well, although they were busy helping Johnny put the finishing touches on everything, and preparing the wine service.

Once everything was set, Ian, being the Best Man, made a toast to the happy couple, wishing them the best that life has to offer, sharing a few emotional moments, and concluding with, “No one deserves true happiness more than the two of you!” Everyone in attendance clapped heartily, Mickey’s eyes shining with pride. Ian was so well-spoken and sincere, Mickey had a difficult time holding it together as he listened and watched in amazement.

Then, much to everyone’s surprise, Ian continued to speak. “Before we get to enjoying all this fantastic food,” he began, “I have an important question for Mickey,” he continued, kneeling down next to his chair, then clearing his throat dramatically, “Mickey, it has never set right with me, after
all I put you through, both before and after our wedding, that you were the one who asked me to get married. Just like you wanted to carry me over the threshold at our new place, I want the chance to ask you...Mickey, will you marry me...again?” he asked, his voice cracking with emotion, as he pulled a small black box from his pocket, opening it to expose a shimmering, diamond-studded ring, “Because I would marry you again every day, until I take my last breath.”

Mickey was utterly stunned by Ian’s tremendous show of love and devotion, to the point of being absolutely speechless, so he did the only thing he was capable of, at that moment; he nodded his head and threw his arms around Ian’s neck, kissing him tenderly on the cheek. Then he pressed his lips against Ian’s ear and whispered shyly, “Course I will.” With that, Ian slid the opulent ring onto Mickey’s finger. Mickey admired it, counting the seven diamonds that adorned it, to himself, then kissing Ian’s other cheek and, finally, his soft, sweet lips.

Both tables erupted into thunderous applause, at which point Mickey began to realize why everyone had come to the rehearsal dinner, and why Johnny had taken the trouble to prepare such an elaborate feast, that just happened to include Mickey’s favorite pasta dish. Everyone knew that Ian planned to do this.

‘How the hell did they pull this off without me knowin’?’ he thought to himself, realizing, almost immediately afterward, that he had been so unbelievably busy that entire week, he had barely laid eyes on Ian, hadn’t even fucked him since they were in New York, and hadn’t had many conversations with him or anyone else, with the exception of Shawn, that weren’t business- or wedding-related. Therefore, it wouldn’t have been too difficult for all of this to have been planned, pretty much right under his nose, now that he thought about it.

“Thank you all! Especially you, Mick! Let’s eat!” Ian toasted cheerfully, after freshening both of their glasses of wine. Ian then reseated himself next to his blushing groom-to-be, his insides aflutter with anticipation. The group engaged in small talk casually, several side conversations ensuing throughout the evening, most centered around the details of the next day’s event. “So, did you tell him the rest yet?” Kayla shouted loudly across the table. “Not yet,” Ian answered, Mickey instantly shooting him a curious look.

Kayla fixed her gaze upon Ian, maintaining eye contact until he felt he had no choice but to tell Mickey, even though he had planned to wait until---well, he didn’t know when, but definitely not in front of everyone. Kayla wanted them to renew their vows at her and Doc’s wedding. She regretted missing both Mickey and Mandy’s wedding days, and longed to share hers with Mickey and Ian, in light of Ian’s proposal. Ian wasn’t sure how Mickey would feel about it, so he figured they would discuss it one-on-one, rather than him putting Mickey on the spot. Now, Kayla having effectively taken that option off the table, Ian was forced to share it right then, in front of everyone.

Ian swallowed hard, reaching over to rub Mickey’s leg lightly with his hand as he spoke, doing his best to keep his voice low, in hopes that he could avoid capturing the attention of everyone in the room. It was too late for that, however, Kayla’s shouted question from across the table having effectively garnered everyone’s undivided attention. “Mick, Mom wants us to renew our vows tomorrow, right after she and Doc say their ‘I do’s’,” Ian explained timidly. “What d’YOU want?” came Mickey’s immediate question. “I...I told you, I’d do it everyday!” Ian replied with a sheepish grin.

Mickey sat quietly, in deep thought, for what seemed like an eternity to Ian, but was actually only about thirty seconds, before announcing, “Guess we’re doin’ it tomorrow, then!” with a wide smile that made his crystal blue eyes twinkle. He then leaned in to kiss Ian, more deeply this time, before whispering, “Means you’re all mine tomorrow night!”
The remainder of the night was jovial, various family members recalling both touching and humorous incidents involving one couple or the other, and sometimes both. Just before the party was about to break up, Johnny, who had stepped away to greet a guest, returned to the table, calling Mickey aside. “I have news,” Johnny began softly, a somber look on his face. Mickey stared at Johnny, awaiting some elaboration. “Bigley has some information on Sadie,” Johnny muttered. “Should I get Iggy?” Mickey asked hopefully. “No, not now,” Johnny answered, adding, “Bigley’s gonna call ya, but he doesn’t want ya sittin’ at the table when he does.”

Mickey nodded in understanding, his stomach dropping as he headed for the restroom, phone in hand. Ian had already been craning his neck, surveying the situation and considering whether he should join his husband. When he saw Mickey walking toward the restroom, he jumped up, rushing over to him.

“What’s up?” he asked, holding the door open for Mickey, then walking in behind him. Mickey could have answered that question in a number of ways, some that didn’t even involve words, but, given the situation, he wasn’t in that kind of mood. He sensed that this news wasn’t going to be good, and already, he was worried about how he would break it to Iggy.

“Bigley’s gonna call,” he replied, drawing Ian in with his sad eyes and the melancholy tone in his voice. “Yeah?” Ian asked, wrapping his arms around Mickey instinctively. “Yeah, it’s about Sadie,” Mickey mumbled into Ian’s chest, as he held him. Within seconds, Mickey’s phone started to vibrate.

“Bruno!” Mickey answered on the half-ring. “Mickey...I found where he sent her...the father. To a place where girls give birth, and then the babies are taken from them to be adopted,” Bigley explained in his usual gruff manner. “She okay?” Mickey asked, hoping, for Iggy’s sake, that he could give him at least some good news. “She’s not there,” Bigley answered. “Took off when they told her about the adoption plans. I guess she didn’t want to give the child up.”

“So where is she now?” Mickey questioned, a look of desperation overtaking his face. “This is what I don’t know…” Bigley replied, “I’ll be flying in overnight for the wedding. We can talk more there.” “Okay...thanks, Bruno…” Mickey spoke graciously, before ending the call.

“Fuck!” Mickey screamed, his voice still muffled by Ian’s body, which Ian, once again, pressed firmly against his. Ian rocked and swayed in an attempt to comfort his distraught husband, who was not making any moves to loosen Ian’s grip on him. In fact, Ian felt as though Mickey was holding him more tightly, the longer they stood there together.

“Listen...you’ve done all you can do, for now. Let’s go back out there and say goodnight. Tomorrow’s gonna be a big day! We gotta get some rest,” Ian said with a reluctant smile, as he pulled away to look at his beautiful husband. “Really big!”
Come To Fruition

The rehearsal had gone a long way to ease the nerves of the kids, but Mickey, not so much. He was fine with his role as a groomsman, but being a groom again was a different story. He knew Ian would have a new set of vows in mind, and, most likely, would be able to put them across as if he had been rehearsing for weeks. Hell, for all Mickey knew, he had been. And he’d given Mickey less than 24 hours to prepare himself.

Mickey wasn’t mad; he wanted to give Ian everything, and he definitely thought this was among the sweetest things Ian had ever done for him. He just knew how much more easily public speaking came to Ian than to himself. As it was, he had woken up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat, his heart pounding, his body trembling. It got so bad, he got up so he wouldn’t disturb Ian and went into the bathroom to try and rehearse the little bit he had composed earlier that night.

He had managed to get back to sleep for a few hours, before he was awakened by Ian’s stirring. He turned himself toward Ian, whispering, “Mornin’!” hoarsely. “Good Morning! I’m the luckiest man on the fucking planet!” Ian chirped happily, enveloping Mickey in his arms and squeezing him tightly, his hard-on pressing unrelentingly against Mickey’s hipbone. “Mmmm…” Mickey breathed into Ian’s ear as he rolled his hips urgently against Ian’s, figuring a little morning sex might relieve some of his anxiety, and would definitely address the ridiculous build-up of sexual tension between the two of them. Mickey couldn’t recall waiting this long for sex without a medical or geographical impediment EVER!

Surprisingly, Ian wanted to wait longer—until after the wedding, which was another ‘first’ for them. Ian definitely enjoyed fucking with Mickey, but he had never before just out-and-out told him ‘no’, unless there was a problem.

The more Ian refused him, the more Mickey wanted it. He rubbed himself against Ian mercilessly, but Ian wouldn’t give in. “I love you, Mick, but you’re just gonna have to wait ‘til tonight,” Ian told him calmly, in spite of himself, his own cock throbbing with desire. In Ian’s mind, they’d waited this long, why not make their second wedding night as special as the first? He knew it would be a struggle to get through the day, but, in the end, it would be well worth it.

Their morning was set up to make things easy on them. Both kids had left Frontera with their respective mothers the night before, leaving Ian and Mickey to themselves, in order that they might make last-minute preparations. Once Mickey had finally given up on getting any, he dragged himself out of bed and headed for the kitchen to get some Milkovich Brew started. He figured if he wasn’t going to get laid, he might as well get the next best thing—coffee. Once he got it going, he sat down at the island with the scratch paper on which he had scrawled his ideas for his vows. They were partially complete, but disjointed, at best, and, try as he might, he couldn’t get them to flow smoothly from his lips.

When Mickey heard Ian coming down the stairs, he stowed the paper in the silverware drawer quickly, before Ian could see it. Ian was taking his time, making a leisurely descent, once he got to the point where he could see Mickey sitting in the kitchen. ‘Damn, is he gorgeous!’ he thought to himself, just before he called out, “Lookin’ good enough to eat, Mick…but how about if I make some eggs?” Mickey nodded his head vigorously, having worked up an appetite already, between his attempts to coerce his husband into sex and his continuing struggle with his vows.

The two enjoyed a quiet breakfast together. Mickey was obviously deep in thought, and Ian, knowing him well enough to guess what was on his mind, chose not to engage him, at least for the time being. The last thing he wanted to do was get him more flustered, especially because, if he did,
he might feel obligated to calm him with a mind-blowing orgasm, which he was determined to save for after the day’s events.

So they sat in relative silence, until Mickey’s phone rang. It was Bigley, so he picked up on the first ring. “Bruno...Good mornin’!” he said in as chipper of a voice as he could muster, under the circumstances. “Mickey...I won’t keep you,” Bigley began. “Just wanted you to know that I’m following up on some leads, but I’d rather you didn’t say anything to Iggy just yet, since we don’t really know much,” he explained.

“Yeah, I get it,” Mickey responded, “Thanks! We’ll see ya in a bit!” Once Mickey had ended the call, Ian, picking up on the gist of the conversation, from Mickey’s end, asked, “Don’t you think it would be better if Iggy at least knew she was alive?” “Yeah...if we knew for sure. All we know is she wasn’t the one they found before…” Mickey trailed off, his mind clearly having returned to his vows already.

“Okay then, gonna get my shower,” Ian said with a smile. “Yeah, well I’d come with ya, but…” Ian cut Mickey off, “That’s right. It would only frustrate us both.” Ian smirked as he made his exit, running briskly up the stairs, after which Mickey pulled his vows out again, reading them over, under his breath.

Once they were both ready and it was time to leave, Mickey asked Ian if he could please drive. Mickey’s hands were literally shaking, and he thought he might be able to settle his nerves a bit, if he sat in the passenger seat and rehearsed his vows in his head. Ian agreed readily, and they were on their way.

Upon their arrival, Johnny was already standing at the end of the courtyard where the weddings would actually take place. Since he was the officiant presiding over both ceremonies, he was filling out some paperwork, but stopped when he saw them. “Big day! Big day!” he called out to them enthusiastically. It was at that moment that Mickey caught sight of his mother, looking more beautiful than he could ever remember having seen her before, which was really saying something, since she was a very attractive woman, who had always taken great care to look her best. “Ma, you look fuckin’ great!” he complimented her, Ian adding, “Yeah, gorgeous! I see where Mickey and Mandy get it!”

Kayla smiled warmly, approaching Mickey to adjust his bowtie. “You two both look so handsome!” she exclaimed, kissing Mickey on the cheek, then Ian. Ian blushed, which made Mickey snicker. He had to laugh, to distract himself from the thoughts of all that he wanted to do to him at that very moment.

Before long, all of the guests had filtered in and were taking their seats, Justin, having made a surprise appearance at Ian’s urging, sauntered up behind Shawn, wrapping his arms around him and pressing his lips to the back of his neck. Shawn spun around, absolutely beaming, to return the kiss. Mickey called Ian’s attention to the scene. “You did this, didn’t ya?” Mickey questioned. Ian gave him a knowing nod, accompanied by a smug smirk that made Mickey grin.

The wedding party found their places readily at the end of the aisle. Bigley had hired a string quartet that was playing softly throughout the procession, then cued Kayla and Iggy, who was giving her away, with the Wedding March.

Mickey watched in amazement as his mother approached Doc, who had the biggest smile on his face that he’d ever seen. He glanced over at Ian, reminded of the sacrifice he had made for Kayla, and how pissed off he’d been that he had pursued it behind his back.

As he reflected back on the entire scenario, he realized that Ian had withheld the information,
knowing that telling him would only have caused a fight and made it more difficult for him to accomplish his goal, which was to leave no stone unturned when it came to saving Kayla’s life. Had things played out differently, they very well could have been attending a funeral, instead of a wedding. Mickey also now understood just how much Ian had been willing to go through for his mother, and all without a single complaint or regret.

It was at moments like this, Mickey was certain that having Ian was worth all of the chaos, insanity, and heartache he’d been through. His love and admiration for Ian ran so deep, he didn’t think anything could make him change his mind. This opportunity to renew his commitment to Ian and their life together couldn’t have come at a better time, and he was going to tell him so. “I love you,” he mouthed to Ian, when their eyes met during the ceremony. Ian smiled warmly in return, his eyes lighting up with affectionate delight.

Ian couldn’t have been happier and more in love, himself. Mickey was everything to him—so incredibly strong, supportive, and loving, not to mention how divine he looked in a tux. Kayla and Doc decided on the traditional vows, both of them being on the old-fashioned side. Kayla was tearing up before Doc got his first words out. She could scarcely believe this was actually happening. She had dreamed of this wedding for so long, half the time believing she wouldn’t survive long enough to see it happen.

Once their ceremony was over, both rings delivered safely and securely placed on the appropriate finger, Johnny introduced the couple, the attendees giving them an enthusiastic reception, after which Johnny announced that there would be a second ceremony, the renewal of Ian and Mickey’s vows. Nearly everyone was aware already, but he made sure there was no question.

Ian pulled his phone from his pocket briefly, then stowed it inside his lapel, before beginning to speak, “Mickey, there really are no words strong enough to express what you mean to me. Even what we are doing today, the symbolism of your ring, without beginning or end, our friends and family bearing witness, our beautiful children and their part in this magical day, these are all significant representations of our love, but none can compare to the feeling of peace, comfort, and belonging that I feel when I’m in your arms.

You have loved me unconditionally through so much insanity. I’ve caused you such anguish—misery. And yet you’ve remained strong in your resolve, in your support, and in your incredibly forgiving ways, always caring for me, even when I was incapable of caring for myself. I can never repay you for all you’ve done to make my life complete, to allow me to feel ‘normal’, accepted, and worthy of love, but I will promise to love, honor, and respect you for the rest of my life. I meant it the first time, and I only love you more, standing here with you today. I cherish what we have, and wouldn’t trade it for the world. I’m yours, faithfully, until death do us part.”

Yev handed Ian Mickey’s diamond-studded ring, which he slipped onto Mickey’s available right ring finger, his left one still bearing the original ring that Johnny had helped him to get all those years ago. A single tear ran down Mickey’s face as he watched his husband’s confident hand push the ring onto his trembling one. He cleared his throat, reached for his crumpled, barely legible, handwritten notes, and began to speak,

“Ian, you know it ain’t easy for me to get ready for this kinda stuff, and still you left me just under a day to get ready. But really, I didn’t need that long, and its cuz everything I’m gonna say is comin’ straight from my heart.” Mickey began, as he straightened the note he was about to attempt to read from. “I live it and breathe it everyday of our life together, from the minute I wake up in your arms each mornin’, to the last time I see your perfect face before I close my eyes each night. You’re the best thing that ever happened to me, always have been, from the minute I saw ya. I loved ya from the start, even before I was willin’ or ready to admit it, and it’s only gotten stronger over the years.
You’re so smart and so good at everything—helpin’ the kids, savin’ people’s lives, makin’ me feel like I’m worth you bein’ with me, even though I been sure, for a long time, that I’m not.” Already, Ian had begun to weep, but Mickey continued, “You made me the kinda person I’m proud to be. And ya keep me on my toes, man. It’s not always easy bein’ your husband, but it’s always worth it. There’s never been anything else I wanted so damn much in my whole life. You’ll probably never know how much of a difference you made in my life, but I plan on tryin’ to get you to, for the rest of mine. Ian, I love you and I’m yours forever, for better or worse, til death do us part.”

Yev then approached Mickey, handing him a ring exactly like the one on his own finger, which Johnny had custom-made for him, upon Mickey’s last-minute request. As he took the ring from Yev’s hand into his own, he reached for Ian’s, brushing his right thumb over the top of Ian’s right hand as he used his own left hand to slide it onto Ian’s right ring finger. It was a perfect fit, and looked absolutely phenomenal on Ian’s slender finger.

Ian, who had been crying steadily throughout Mickey’s vows, reached for Mickey, before Johnny even got the chance to utter the words, “You may kiss the groom,” pulling him in close and planting an affectionate kiss on him, for all to see. Mickey returned the kiss passionately, behaving a bit overzealously, for him. He was simply overtaken with emotion, and also desperate to make love to his man. He just couldn’t manage to push it from his mind, even in the presence of all of their friends and family. It was as if the onlookers faded away, completely non-existent in this moment, Mickey feeling as though he and Ian were one in spirit, and wanting the same to be true of their bodies.

Johnny introduced them as husband and husband, and the rest was a whirlwind of congratulations for both couples, followed by everyone’s departure from Bigley’s fancy digs, all en route to Frontera for what promised to be a finely catered reception. Doc was quite anxious to get on his way with Kayla to their honeymoon. They were going to be staying in a private villa, just under an hour away from Boca.

Mickey had made an exception to his ‘no guest’ policy, and had gone all out, having the place decorated and stocked for Doc and Kayla with everything they could possibly want. He and Ian were both so pleased that they were finally able to marry, there was nothing they wouldn’t do to make their celebration the best that it could be.

Likewise, Reesie and Brach made the offer to keep Mikhaila, and Yev, too, although Svetlana insisted that Yev come to stay with her for the night. Ian and Mickey, having just returned from a romantic getaway the week before, had declined having the kids away from them for more than a single night. They had agreed that they needed to re-establish a home routine for them at their place, since it had been disrupted by all they’d been through recently.

Once Doc and Kayla excused themselves from the reception, taking off like a couple of twenty-somethings, giggling and groping each other, Ian and Mickey weren’t far behind. The look on Ian’s face said it all. His eyes moved over Mickey, from head to toe, as he licked his lips without even realizing it. Mickey noticed, of course, his cock swelling immediately thereafter.

They said their goodbyes, thanking everyone for their part in making the day so special, then making a mad dash for their car, Ian hot-footing it back to their house, rubbing Mickey’s crotch the whole way there. There was an unspoken understanding between the two at this point. What was about to happen would not be slow, nor would it be pretty. It was going to be passionate, desperate, and positively messy. Mickey could feel his pulse thudding through his entire body, on fire, body and soul, for his lover. Likewise, electricity surged through Ian’s body each time he touched Mickey, his stomach aflutter with butterflies—the kind you get when you know he’s the one, and you can’t get him home fast enough.
At last, Ian pulled up in front of their house, throwing the car into ‘park’, hopping out, then circling the car to open the passenger-side door for Mickey. But Mickey was already up and out by the time Ian got there, diving into Ian and throwing him over his shoulder. “Carryin’ ya over this one, too,” Mickey muttered, rushing the door and kicking it open, then running into the living room and throwing Ian onto the couch, where he immediately began kissing, licking and nibbling at him everywhere, as he undressed him hurriedly. “Fuck! I want you so fuckin’ bad,” he panted as he struggled to remove Ian’s tux, which, Mickey decided, was far too complex. He finally took to feverishly tearing at Ian’s clothes, buttons popping off in different directions as he forcibly removed every last stitch of fabric from Ian’s body. Then he went straight down for Ian’s massive cock, taking it into his mouth hungrily.

Ian moaned softly, whispering, “Take it easy,” fearing he might cum before they even got the chance to make love. Mickey just couldn’t help himself. He tried to slow down, but he was far too excited. Instead, he shoved two fingers into Ian’s mouth, presumably to lubricate them, but also to quiet Ian, whose sweet-sounding grunts and moans were bringing him dangerously close to the brink. Ian sucked his fingers the way he did Mickey’s dick, rolling his tongue over the tips and grazing their length lightly with his teeth. Mickey gasped, the feeling of his own cock pressed against the zipper of his pants serving as a painful reminder that he was still fully clothed.

As Mickey relocated his fingers to Ian’s exposed asshole, Ian fought to remove Mickey’s constraining clothing as best he could, although Mickey’s mouth and fingers caused quite a bit of distraction. Mickey worked at Ian’s hole quickly, rimming and fingering him intermittently, while allowing his hand to take over stroking his incredibly stiff cock, prepping him adeptly, as Ian finished disrobing him. Mickey’s deliciously thick, rock-hard cock springing free of his boxer briefs and standing at complete attention.

“S’go,” Mickey breathed as he brought his face back up in front of Ian’s, sucking intensely at his lips before, once again, throwing Ian over his shoulder. Mickey seemed to have the strength of a bull, bounding up the stairs, carrying Ian as if he were a ragdoll. As quickly as he had scooped him up, he tossed him onto the bed. He then retrieved the coconut oil from their nightstand and applied it liberally to Ian’s asshole and to both of their cocks, then to his own opening, conducting a brief, just-in-case prep, in order to comfortably accommodate Ian’s massive cock, should the situation present itself.

Ian raised himself up onto all fours. “Fuck me, Mick,” he begged, egging him on by presenting his ass in a most tempting position, pressing his hips up and back, his buttocks appearing beautifully full and round. “Ian, that ass is fuckin’ gorgeous,” Mickey began, as he flipped him onto his back, “but I wanna see that face of yours while I do this, see how I make ya feel, watch for when you’re done and can’t take no more.”

Ian nodded impatiently as Mickey entered him as quickly as was possible with a tight ass like Ian’s. “Damn, Gallagher,” Mickey breathed, “Gonna hafta do this more often!” As Mickey sunk himself more deeply into his love with each stroke, he became more aggressive, pounding into him, angling to maximize Ian’s pleasure, a feat he accomplished with ease and expertise, while also managing to massage Ian’s magnificent manhood to near explosion. “Mick...Mick...Mick…” Ian moaned ecstatically, countering Mickey’s movements desperately, as though he couldn’t get enough of him.

Mere seconds before Ian was about to blow his load, Mickey stopped abruptly, pulling himself from Ian’s hole, then lowering his mouth to Ian’s ear. “Want ya inside me,” he begged in a pitifully small, less than whisper.

In what felt to Mickey like a magically smooth transition, Ian repositioned himself to allow his husband to ride him; and ride him he did. “Oh fuck yeah!” Mickey screeched at a volume that caught
Ian off-guard, yet spurred him on, just the same. Ian bucked his hips upward, while Mickey skillfully descended upon him relentlessly, as Ian pumped Mickey’s cock with his fist.

The sweet sounds that spewed from Mickey’s puffy, pouty lips, combined with the incredibly intense feel of his tight, little hole working its magic on him, stirred Ian to the point of no return. “Oh fuck, Mick!!” he screamed as he felt himself about to let go. Ian gripped Mickey’s hips, lifting Mickey up and and slamming him down onto his throbbing shaft, Mickey grasping onto his own cock to intensify his impending eruption.

“Yeah, Ian! Just like that!!” Mickey squealed, amid a continuous stream of grunts, groans, and expletives, Ian nailing him so right, he thought he might spontaneously combust. Mickey fought to keep his eyes open, as both he and Ian wanted. The pleasure was so wickedly overwhelming, he could scarcely keep them from rolling up into his head. “Hey…” Ian breathed, capturing the attention of Mickey’s shimmering blue eyes. “You’re so fuckin’…” Mickey mumbled deliriously as he came hard, spraying over Ian’s stomach and chest, while Ian shot forcefully up into Mickey’s sweet ass, his hips thrusting wildly.

“Fuck, Mick! That ass of yours!” Ian yelled, rolling Mickey to his side, turning his own body, then wrapping his arms around him affectionately. Mickey rubbed his gloriously round ass against Ian’s spent cock lovingly, a child-like grin spreading across his face. “Worth the wait, Gallagher!” he sighed, nestling his head into his pillow. “Mmmm Hmmm,” Ian purred into Mickey’s ear, bending his knees to press his legs against the backs of Mickey’s, “I’d wait forever for you.”
Mickey had arranged for as many family members to attend as possible, flying them in. Bigley insisted that the entire Gallagher clan stay at his place, providing them with food and transportation to and from the ceremony. This was quite an accomplishment! Mickey, Ian, and Svetlana were beyond proud of their son! Ian had helped Yev write his Valedictorian speech, and had listened to it at least 80 times, assuring Yev that it was just perfect. Yev was going to be giving it in both English and Spanish, which Ian thought was quite impressive. Yev had become fluent in Spanish, just through his schooling with other students who spoke the language, choosing to take Latin as his foreign language at school, since Doc told him it would help him in medical school, which was what he aspired to do after college.

Not only was he poised to be the first Milkovich to graduate from high school, but Yev was also the first to be admitted into college, and on a full scholarship to Johns Hopkins University. As the bleachers began to fill, a considerable number of seats occupied by Gallaghers and Milkoviches, Yev paced nervously behind them. Ian seemed equally ill-at-ease, appearing to be feeling Yev’s emotions right along with him. Mickey drew tiny circles on Ian’s leg for a solid five minutes, before excusing himself to go to their son.

“Yev!” Mickey called to him from beside the bleachers, once he had descended the stairs. Yev looked up, surprised to see Mickey. Of his three parents, he was the last one Yev expected to see, coming to comfort him. And yet, there he stood, his arms outstretched and welcoming. “Dad!” Yev responded, “What are you doing down here? You’re gonna lose your seat!”

“Better not take my seat! They’ll be sorry if they do!” Mickey growled in his Southside thug voice, though he had not needed to use it to scare anyone in a very long time. Life had been good to Mickey for so long, he had all but forgotten what it had been like, before he had married Ian, before he had met Manuel, before he had escaped to Mexico. It all seemed like nothing more than a terrible nightmare that he had woken from so long ago, he could scarcely recall the details.

Yev chuckled, “Yeah, okay, Dad,” Mickey seeming to have successfully distracted him from his pre-speech jitters. Yev walked briskly toward his father, allowing Mickey to embrace him. “Yev, I’m so proud of ya. Never thought I’d see this day,” Mickey commented. “You mean you didn’t think I’d graduate?” Yev asked in surprise. “I...I didn’t mean you, specifically. I meant a Milkovich, in general. Never thought there would be one that’d graduate. Course, once I saw how smart you were, I knew ya would, but you’re still first...is all I meant,” Mickey stammered uncomfortably, hoping his son believed him and didn’t think he had doubted him.

“Okay, Dad. But I couldn’t have done all that I have, without my family. Everyone has supported
me so much in everything I’ve tried to do in my life...and I love you all so much for it,” Yev spoke emotionally. “Yev, you’re a great kid! Better than a guy like me deserves…” Mickey began, Yev stopping him, mid-thought. “Stop it, Dad! You’re the best dad anyone could ask for...well, you and Dad, both of you!” Yev said with a bright smile. As the principal began to speak, Yev headed toward the field, motioning for Mickey to return to his seat.

Mickey’s seat was waiting for him, upon his return, Ian having put his program and a bottle of sunscreen on it, so no one would sit there. Yev’s graduating class was fairly large, so Ian had come prepared, not wanting to get a sunburn. He quickly retrieved both items, after which Mickey nodded silently in thanks and took his seat.

Once all of the graduates had received their diplomas, Yev was called forward to speak. All of the members of Yev’s family listened in quiet reverence as Yev gave his speech flawlessly, and with tremendous confidence and sincerity. His conclusion was met with thunderous applause, after which the crowd began to disperse. Yev waited patiently on the track, where the family had agreed to meet after the ceremony.

Once they had all congregated on the track, they moved in one large cluster to the parking lot, from which they departed, in multiple vehicles, some of which were limousines, sent by Bigley, bound for Uve Italiane, the now world famous winery, whose private courtyard was typically booked, years in advance, but because Svet, Vladimir, Johnny, and Marco owned it, Yev’s graduation party took precedence above all else.

Yev was told he could invite whoever he wanted, but he chose to keep it primarily a family celebration, with the exception of his friend and former biology lab partner, Louisa, with whom he had become quite close of late. She, too, had earned a scholarship to Johns Hopkins, as well as one to Harvard.

As usual, Johnny insisted that he cater this event. This was, after all, his true love, as evidenced by the large kitchen he had built into the back of the winery, precisely for these types of occasions, Reesie and Brach’s, followed by Iggy and Sadie’s wedding being the first and second large events to be supplied and hosted entirely by Uve Italiane, followed soon thereafter by the giant post-Christening party for their daughter, Molly, Mandy and Manuel’s daughter, Noelle, and Reesie and Brach’s son, Blaze.

Not long after that, one of Johnny’s wines was featured in Bon Apetit magazine, after which business took off so quickly, the winery owners had to hire a team of winemakers, in order to keep up with the demand.

Needless to say, all of this success brought them great wealth, and with that came significant fame, most of which was enjoyed publicly by Svetlana, primarily, since she was the only one who could be photographed. The others, all hiding either from the Russian mob, law enforcement, or both, maintained low profiles, despite their monetary success.

Doc’s clinic had continued to thrive, so much so that Shawn had recently joined Ian as a full-time employee, choosing to retire from modeling, along with Justin, shortly after they had gotten married, while on a shoot in Vegas. Kayla continued to help out, part-time, as a receptionist, agreeing to be ‘on call’ on her off days, just in case.

Meanwhile, Justin had followed in Brach’s footsteps, taking on some of the travel-requiring business aspects of Surfin’ and Ojos Azules, so Brach, Mickey, and Manuel could stay in Mexico more with their families.

Of course, Mickey was still committed to traveling with Ian to all of his appointments with Dr.
Fisher, which had only recently been reduced to once a month again, following a manic episode, coinciding with an experimental decrease in his meds. Ian ended up having to be briefly hospitalized, until he could be stabilized, during which time Mickey insisted on staying with him, despite the fact that Ian allowed him no sleep and was completely irrational, hyper-sexual, and, basically insufferable---to anyone besides Mickey, that is. Mickey seemed, remarkably, to take everything in stride, refusing to leave Ian, no matter how much Dr. Fisher, Doc, and even Ian, at one point, insisted upon it.

It wasn’t long before they were back home and their lives regained some semblance of normalcy. For Mickey, this aspect of their life together had just become part of the deal. Mickey accepted it without anger, fear, or regret, citing to his undying love for Ian, along with his inexhaustible belief that the real Ian would always come back to him, and that he would love him even more deeply than he had, before he’d lost him.

Yev’s graduation party went off without a hitch. He received many checks to help him with incidentals at college, as well as many sincere wishes for his continued success, but probably the most exciting gift was a set of car keys that were accompanied by a note from his parents, explaining that these keys were for a new car for school that would be waiting for him at the BWI, when his plane landed.

Bigley had sent a card with the details concerning a parking lease that he had arranged for Yev at the University, which Mickey handed to Yev immediately after he had read their note. He knew that, once Yev had thanked and hugged his parents, he would immediately begin asking questions about where he was going to keep his car, which he did. Mickey just pointed to Bigley’s card, signaling him to open it. A contented sigh of relief, followed by a bright smile from Yev made the entire evening for his parents, all of whom were absolutely beaming.

Once Yev had opened all of his cards and gifts, Yev asked for everyone’s attention. He then announced that Louisa had decided to attend Johns Hopkins with him, rather than going to Harvard, and that they hoped to get an apartment together after their first year at school. The entire crowd was speechless, taken completely by surprise. It was Kayla that finally spoke up, congratulating them. “Good for you, you two!” she called out as she rose from her seat, approaching the couple to give them both a hug.

“Ma…” Mickey began, before being promptly stifled by the elbow to the ribs that he got from his husband. Kayla seemed to know what Mickey was going to say, and responded, “Mickey, I met my first love, your father, when I was younger than Yev...and so did you…” she quipped, pointing at Ian, who was grinning at this point.

“Yev, we are all very happy for you,” Ian interjected with a warm smile, turning to gaze lovingly into Mickey’s eyes, before adding, “You know she’s right,” after which Mickey, unable to resist Ian at that moment, leaned in to kiss him. “...Yeah, and I only love ya more now,” Mickey breathed, forcing himself away from Ian before they became a spectacle.

As their guests approached Yev to congratulate him, Ian whispered, “Mick, when we hooked up, I just knew…” Ian whispered, the reflection of the candles’ flames dancing in his gorgeous green eyes as he spoke.

Mickey smiled over at Yev and Louisa, then reached under the table, grasping Ian’s hand and squeezing it hard. “Mickey, you’ve given me more than I ever dreamed possible: our beautiful family, two fantastic homes, and your unconditional love and support. I want the same for Yev. And believe me, if I figured out how to get it, he definitely will. He’s so much smarter than both of us put together,” Ian paused, Mickey snickering at the last part of his statement.
“Yeah, as smart as I think you are, ya still ended up with me,” he chuckled. “And I wouldn’t change a thing,” Ian breathed, brushing his lips lightly over Mickey’s, resisting the urge to drag him off to someplace private. “Later,” Mickey mouthed, reading Ian’s body language. “Can’t wait,” Ian breathed into Mickey’s ear, sending shivers up his spine.

‘Some things never change,’ Mickey thought, eyeing his partner lustfully, ‘Never.’
Hey guys! Just started a new fic, "Prison Bitch", which picks up just after Mickey and Ian's season 9 reunion in prison. I am going to post the first chapter now! Hope you will read!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!