What They Deserve
by existential1rony

Summary

Jay gets injured during an undercover case that's gone horribly wrong. Hailey and him are no longer on the best of terms, but can they put their differences aside to get through this together? Or will they get what they deserve for how things turned out?

Notes

[Disclaimer: It pains me that I have to do this because I sadly still have hope in humanity and morals, but alas... It's been brought to my attention that some people have been stealing my stories. I ONLY post on FanFiction and ArchiveofourOwn... so if you come across anything of mine on Wattpad or any of the socials, please report it. Thank you! And to the offenders, be better people!]
Chapter 1

Jay Halstead turned just in time to see the gun go off from the drug dealer he'd been working. They had gotten made in that dive bar meeting and bullets started flying everywhere. He observed Chip, his CI and fellow undercover, smash into Tony Greico's arm right as he aimed it at Jay. It was too little too late though. He felt the bullet pierce him in the chest and recognition sets in as he falls to the ground. For a quick second his senses are heightened and he registers all the bullets still whizzing by above his fallen body. He surprisingly feels no pain, just numbness. His eyes start to close and he knows he's about to pass out; he also knows it's very, very bad if he doesn't stay conscious. It could be the beginning of the end. That's when he envisions her, and complete happiness takes hold. He knows he shouldn't, but he closes his eyes so he doesn't lose the image he has; the image of her smiling and teasing him in the van that he wants to hold onto forever. That's the last thing he remembers before it all goes black…

The next time he wakes is when he feels a rush of electrical current shoot down his body, and cold and sticky paddles pressed on his chest. For a second he catches a glimpse of blonde hair hovering over him and he gets his hopes up, starting to close his eyes in relief. It's then he recognizes the voice of the blonde hair and disappointment sets in.

"Stay with us Jay, ok!? Stay with us, we're almost there…" he hears Sylvie Brett say, like her voice is being muffled through a solo cup down a really long hallway.

He tries his best to keep listening to her because he knows he has to fight this. And if there's anything he learned as a soldier, it was how to fight. He drifts in and out of consciousness for the remainder of the ambulance ride.

His next conscious memory is feeling like he's being wheeled down an alley with a bunch of people in white coats standing above him. It's far too much for him to handle without having her next to him. She was always his light. She was the one to ground him. She was the one to guide him through the dark. It only made sense that he recessed to the deeper crevices of his brain to conjure her again as he felt his mouth and nose be engulfed with some kind of plastic mask.

"Not in time for this unit, for us…"

"We'll be alright…"

"I should have told you, I'm sorry…"

"We're good, and we're always gonna be good…"

"Why'd you back me?...

"I trusted you… I've trusted you since the day I met you…"

He thinks he softly smiles before the blackness takes hold again…

Hailey Upton is walking out of the grocery store when her cell phone rings. She doesn't recognize the number, but since it's a Chicago area code she answers anyway.

"Upton" she says in her typical formal greeting.

"Miss Upton? Hailey Upton?" a female voice she doesn't recognize questions her.
"Yes, this is she. Who is this, what can I help you with?" suddenly not liking the formality of the voice on the other end.

"Miss Upton, this is Nancy Delgado from Lakeshore Hospital, do you know a Detective Jay Halstead?"

In that moment Hailey's whole body fills with dread. She's from a hospital, calling about Jay. She's talking about Jay, in a hospital. She doesn't know if she can handle whatever dreaded news she's about to receive. She knows there's always a possibility in their line of work, but not him, it can't happen to him.


"Ma'am, Detective Halstead has been shot. He's in surgery right now. Unfortunately that's all the information I can give you over the phone. His forms said to notify you in case of emergency, so if you can come to the hospital we can release more details as to the extent of his injuries."

Hailey's already sprinting to her car before the woman can finish her sentence. "I'm on my way, I'll be there as soon as I can!"

She hangs up as she hops in her car, lights flashing, speeding to the hospital. There are so many thoughts racing through her brain. The most prevalent- I can't lose him. She knows they haven't been on the best of terms recently, but she still cared… probably more than she should. She wonders how it happened, he always promised her to be extra careful when he was undercover. She knows she needs a distraction to help her get through the long ride, so she blasts some music, but nothing will drown out her thoughts and worry over Jay. She continues to take deep breathes throughout the remainder of the ride to help her survive it. She just wants to wrap Jay in her arms and hold him tight, even if she doesn't deserve to anymore. No point in dwelling on the past though, Jay needs her energy in the present.

Finally, she pulls up at the hospital and barely parks as she runs inside. She runs up to the help desk in a panic.

"Hi, I'm here for Jay Halstead, Nancy called me. Is Nancy around, is he ok?"

A middle-aged woman hears from across the counter and turns around to walk over. "Miss Upton?"

Hailey just nods, all formulated sentences failing her. "Miss Upton, I'm Nancy… Detective Halstead just recently made it out of surgery. Let me page Dr. Lee to come down and speak with you, alright? Why don't you take a seat right over there, he'll be down shortly."

Hailey nods numbly and sits down. She stares at the floor, rubbing her hands back and forth for what feels like forever, when the doctor finally comes over.

"Miss Upton? I'm Dr. Lee" he says as he shakes her hand before delving right in. "Jay was brought into us with a bullet wound to the right of his heart. He coded in the ambulance, but the paramedics were able to revive him…" Tears start streaming down Hailey's face at this point. "Luckily the bullet went all the way through, so we were able to repair most of the damage. He did lose a lot of blood, so we're giving him constant transfusions. He's not out of the woods yet, the next 24 hours will be touch & go, but I'm fairly confident he can make a full recovery."

Hailey breathes a slight sigh of relief. "Can I see him?"

"Once the effects of the anesthesia start to wear off, absolutely. Until then we're still closely
monitoring him. I'll have one of our nurses come get you once we move him to a room."

"Thank you so much doctor, I really appreciate it!"

He smiles at her as he starts to walk away, Nancy coming back over to her soon after. She comfortingly puts her hand on Hailey's shoulder. "I'm sure he'll be alright, he sounds like a fighter."

Hailey smiles softly at her, thinking of Jay fondly. "He is!"

"Well it shouldn't be too long before they let you in. In the meantime, why don't you get yourself something to eat, I'm sure you had a long drive. Unfortunately are café is already closed, but the upscale vending machines over there are surprisingly good."

Hailey glances over at one and her eyes go wide. "Deep Dish in a vending machine? Now I've really seen it all!"

"I'm glad I'm not the only one, my kids tell me I need to get more with it; 'Mom, it's 2023"…

[A/N: So this wasn't planned, especially two stories in one week. And this wasn't even the next multi-chapter idea I had... but this story popped into my head & I figured I'd run with it. It's going to be an interesting ride, so bare with me; and be sure to pay close attention to the very last sentence… or year I should say ;) Thanks so much for journeying with me!]
Chapter 2

Jay wakes to a face he hasn't seen in 10 months, to the most beautiful face he's ever seen, even with her sparkling blue eyes red from obvious tears. It brings him equal amounts happiness and sadness. He wishes he could go back, he wishes he could make her happy again, but he knows it might be too late.

"Hailey! What are you doing here?" he manages to get out despite the severe cotton-mouth he's experiencing.

She leans back more in her chair next to his hospital bed, studying him silently; he knows she's pondering her words carefully like she always did back in the beginning. "You still have me as your emergency contact, so…"

"Hailey, I'm sorry, I just never thought to change it…"

"It's okay, I'm glad they called me." She smiles at him sadly.

"Me too, you're certainly the best looking thing I can imagine waking up to after this…" he tries to smile at her, but his lips are so dry he can feel them cracking and stops himself. She instantly notices and grabs him some ice chips.

"Jay, try not to exert yourself too much, please."

He nods as much as he can and they fall back into their old pattern of sitting quietly and harmoniously for a while, just glad to be by the other again despite the dreaded circumstances. During that time span, nurses and Dr. Lee all come in to check on Jay, all pleasantly surprised to see how well his body is recovering thus far. It's still going to be a long road, but Jay seems to be out of imminent danger at least.

Once they're alone again, Hailey starts to talk again. "I should go call Will, I doubt anyone has since I'm the one who was in your file… unless you think your current unit did?"

"No, probably not… but please don't, at least, not yet… I don't want him rushing in from Wisconsin when I'll be alright. Natalie and him are finally in a great place again and I don't want to disrupt that!"

"Jay, he's your brother! He has a right to know!"

"I know, and I'm not saying we won't tell him, let's just wait a day or two so he doesn't feel like he has to drop everything to be here. Besides, I'm sure he's over picking up after my messes anyway… I'm sorry that you have to even…"

"Jay…" she starts to say in her calm, disbelieving voice she only reserved for him, but stops herself. He knows she's contemplating her words again. "Alright, well, let me at least call Voight or…"

He cuts her off. "No, absolutely not, I'm sure he hates me. He has to blame me for losing two of his people. He could barely look at me when I asked him to sign the transfer papers for me to go back to Organized Crime."

"Jay, there's no way Voight could ever hate you. I'm sure he was disappointed when we left, but he knows what it's like. Besides, I'd like to at least see him while I'm here and the rest of the team…"
Jay doesn't want to have a discussion about the past right now, or the people he chose to leave behind because he couldn't let go of his pride, or sadness over her. So he does what he does best and tries to deflect. "Speaking of that, how long are you staying?"

"I don't know Jay, I literally just drove straight from Detroit the second I got the call, it's not like I had time or was thinking about updating my superiors. I'll call them in a bit."

"Yea, we wouldn't want the DEA missing you for too long…" Jay says glumly with a hint of snide.

Hailey sighs; at this point she may have actually preferred him still unconscious. "We're not doing this again, Jay, not now, not here… you know why I took it, we can play the blame game all day! I drove here because I still care, and I wanted to make sure you're ok, but if you're gonna be like this, I'll leave right now and I'll call Will on my way home!"

Jay mentally checks himself for being an ass. He thought he had gotten this all under control, but seeing her again just reminded him of all he lost due to his own stupidity. And she drove all the way here, fearing the worst about losing him, and this is how he treats her? His mom would have slapped him upside the head if she was still alive.

"You're right, I'm sorry… it's just, I've missed you and seeing you again is just bringing all the pain back. But please stay if you can, there's no one else I'd rather have here…"

He notices fresh tears start to well in her eyes before she evades his eyes and looks down at the floor. When she looks back up at him her emotions are already back under control. "It's ok, why don't we start over… how about you tell me about the case you had that put you in this hospital bed. What the hell happened?"

"I don't really remember fully to be honest. I was under for a month to bring down crime lord, Tony Greico, and everything had been going well until it wasn't. Chip, my CI and I…" Chip, shit! Jay thinks and wonders if he's ok, he does remember the hail of bullets reigning all around them. "Chip! Do you know if he's ok? Was anyone else hurt other than me? We were deep undercover so we weren't in contact with the rest of the unit much."

Hailey looks at him apprehensively, generally not knowing. "I really don't know, but I haven't heard of anyone else from the scene being brought here. I'll find out when I call Voight, which I should probably do soon."

Hailey is about to stand up to go make the call in the hall when a woman walks in, clearly looking like she's from the administrative department.

"Sorry to bother you guys, I'm Gail, I just wanted to come in to verify some of your form info and fill in the blanks if you're up for it?"

Jay nods at her to go ahead. After she asks a bunch of the normal generic questions like his birth date and insurance info she turns to look at Hailey.

"And I assume you're Hailey Upton? You're listed as the emergency contact. May I ask the nature of your relationship, are you related, or married?"

Hailey's eyes go wide as she stammers out, "No… we're not… we're…"

Jay helps out by cutting her off, really wanting this woman gone from his room now. "It's complicated…"

Gail looks between the two of them and senses the awkward tension, not realizing such a question
would cause it and clearly embarrassed. "Oh, I see... well, I'm just going to leave that section blank, and you can fill out the rest at your convenience Mr. Halstead. I'm really sorry to have troubled you..." she says before she leaves the form in the holder at the end of bed and exits as quickly as she can.

Jay and Hailey both close their eyes, clearly not ready to drudge up the past, but both getting lost in a memory they can't get out of now....

Hailey's just making the bed after getting out of the shower when she hears Jay call out to her from the kitchen.

"Hey hun, can you bring me my pocket knife when you come out here? I think it's in my bottom drawer."

Hailey smirks to herself, he's always forgetting things. "Yea, sure." She yells back to him.

She makes her way over to his side of the dresser and opens his bottom knickknack drawer, not seeing his knife. She walks back over to their nightstand thinking maybe he left it there before going to bed, but no such luck. Hmm...

"Jay, I'm not seeing it..." she again hollers out.

Not wanting to give up so easily, or have Jay tease her for being blind, she decides to check his sock drawer, knowing he sometimes leaves random stuff in there. She pushes through the garments, feeling out for anything hard, when her hand brushes against a small box. A small ring box. Hailey gasps in shock... she knows she shouldn't open it, but she can't help herself. Tears start to well in her eyes as she stares down at the ring when Jay walks back into their room.

She looks at him, and he looks at her, and for a good while they each just stare at the other in surprise, not knowing what to say. Jay knows he's a goner when Hailey's smile lights up the room and he can't stop himself from grinning too as he walks over to her.

"Jay...?" she says questioningly.

He softly grabs the box from her hand and sighs. "You weren't supposed to see this until next week, I rented us a boat for the day and everything..."

"YES!" she quickly says as she wraps her arms around him.

"Hailey, I didn't even ask you..." he teases her, loving the mild eye roll and nose scrunch he gets out of her.

"Well, ask Halstead, before I get out my gun!" she teases right back.

Jay sighs while chuckling, "This is so not how I wanted this to go, this isn't romantic at all..."

He pleads while she folds her arms looking at him and waiting.

"Alright, alright!.." he says as he gets down on his knee and extends the ring up to her. "Hailey Upton, you're the love of my life, will you do me the honor and be my wife!?"

They both burst into laughter at his corniness, but Hailey juts out her ring finger anyway for him to put it on her.

"Yes... but only if you still rent the boat!" she responds as she winks at him before yanking him
back up to kiss him. He gladly responds to her kiss by wrapping her in his arms, lifting her slowly off the ground, and spinning them around.

When they break apart she decides to reiterate again, knowing he won't want his master plan fully ruined and trying to take the blame. "I mean it, I still want that boat ride!"

"Yes ma'am!" he responds as he leans down and kisses her again.

She wraps her arms around his neck again and drags him over to the bed, not caring that it was just made or how they fall on it.

"Hailey, we're gonna be late for work, and you're like, never late..." Jay manages to get out between kisses.

She uses the opportunity to yank his shirt off. "Some rules were meant to be broken..." she murmurs out before she drags his lips to hers again. This is one argument Jay will gladly not win...

Jay opens his eyes first, snapping himself out of the memory, savoring for a second watching Hailey lost in hers. She senses him watching and they both know with a glance at the other that they were caught up in the same recollection.

Jay smiles sadly at her. "It wasn't all bad..." he says, his voice drifting off, lost in the hurt.

She purses her lips at him and nods, sorrow clouding her eyes. "No, no, most of it wasn't... but that was a long time ago... I'm gonna go call Voight..." she says as she practically runs out of the room, as if she's suffocating.

Jay watches on, completely mute, lost for words much like that day so many moons ago outside the Observation Room. Now, like then, all he can get out is, "Yea..." as he watches her exit.

He closes his eyes and wishes for sleep, wanting to forget, knowing neither will come...

[A/N: Wow, thank you all so much for the amazing response to this thus far. The bar seems pretty high so I hope I don't let you down, but I appreciate all the love, truly. There's some more hints & clues filling in the blanks in this chapter, so I hope it helps after the cliffhanger. Sadly, I do have to return to being a productive adult soon & head back to work unfortunately, so I can't promise the recent aggressively steady updates... but I am pretty impressed with the content I've gotten out the past couple weeks, honestly didn't think I'd be able, but here we are- Upstead motivates me ;) ...so until the next update, thank you all again, I hope you enjoy this one!]
A near day after Jay's wake up from surgery and Hailey's arrival, Voight and the rest of their old unit, along with a couple of the newer folks arrived at the hospital to visit Jay, much to his dismay. They had all headed over as soon as they could after Hailey called. Voight was the first to enter as Jay was only allowed a couple of visitors at a time anyway. He had already said his hellos to her while she met up with the whole unit in the waiting room. As much of a hard outer-shell Voight had, he missed her like hell, Jay too. He was devastated when he lost them both, the whole team was. Jay suspected all this and the guilt ate at him every day for it.

"Good to see you on the mend, kid!" Voight says to him in his usual gruff voice as he sits in the chair Hailey had occupied and squeezes his shoulder.

Jay chuckles as much he can. "There's something I haven't been called in a while."

Voight smiles at him and Jay continues, wanting to get any awkwardness out of the way. "I told Hailey not to call you, I'm fine, you guys didn't have to come, it's getting late."

"Jay, we're still family, it's what we do!"

"Yea, well, I feel like I gave up that right…"

Voight shakes his head at him. "I understand why you wanted to transfer, I didn't agree with it, but I got it. I just wish you hadn't, you're like a son to me. Just because things didn't work between you and Hailey didn't mean you both had to run away."

Jay closes his eyes, willing away tears. "It's complicated…"

Voight quickly pats Jay's hand. "It always is…"

Jay takes a deep breath and pulls himself out of the past. "Anyway, Hailey said you could fill me in on what happened with Chip and the rest of the op?"

"Commander Valente said they breached the second they started hearing shots being fired. Apparently they had been monitoring more closely than you guys thought since it was the day of the buy. Chip did take one to the shoulder after he helped save you, and he's getting treated over at Med. Valente told me it was brilliant of you to bring Chip on; with his intel and your work, they managed to arrest Grieco. A couple of his guys who survived already flipped on him too."

"So a happy ending?" Jay frowns, echoing his exact words from the last time he was shot, remembering how much he had let them down and scared Hailey and everyone.

"About as happy as we can get in our line of work!" Voight agrees.

They look up hearing a knock on the door, seeing an emotional Trudy leaning in the doorway.

"Well, aren't you a sight for sore eyes Prince Charming."

Jay genuinely smiles again for the first time since seeing Hailey earlier, he's missed everyone from his old team terribly, but boy he didn't realize how much he'd miss Platt until he did… she really does find a way to grow on you.

"Hey Sarge! Don't worry, I'm fine!" he assures her as she softly leans in to hug him, making sure
not to disrupt anything he was hooked up to or his chest wound.

"You scared us, Halstead, don't do that to us again!" she reprimands in her mother hen way.

"I won't!" Jay assures.

The three of them talk for a little while longer until the pain meds start making Jay drowsy again. He tries to stay alert for them, but is slowly fading.

"We're gonna get out of here Jay so you can rest a bit. Everyone would like to get their chance to see you before visitor hours end." Voight announces.

"Ok. Before Kev comes in, tell him I said my bullet wound is a cooler story!" Jay jokes, getting a rare smirk out of the two elders.

Before Trudy walks out completely, she turns back around to whisper to him. "Hey Jay, not many of us get second chances, y'know?... And I'm not talking about life or death..."

Jay nods at her knowingly, appreciating the advice even if he's unsure how to use it. As his eye lids get heavier and heavier, he envisions her again, and that's all that matters for this brief moment of peace.

Hailey had been catching up with everyone for about a half hour while Voight and Platt got their turn with Jay. God did she miss them all so much, but she knows she made the right decision for the time. After the whole Kelton ordeal, the unit as a whole had just grown so much closer together. They realized how much they all meant to each other. It was almost six months after it all went down that her and Jay finally got their shit realized and took that next step. It was full-throttle from there and the happiest years of her life... until it wasn't. All felt like a lifetime ago now.

Kim, sensing the change in Hailey's mood suggests they take a walk to the mini coffee stand at the other end of the hospital. Grateful for the distraction, Hailey agrees, plus she could really use the caffeine since she has no intention of leaving Jay. They sit down with their cups at one of the few small tables provided.

"So, how are you handling all of this?" Kim asks her.

Hailey shrugs. "As well as can be considering Jay could have died."

Kim shakes her head at her old friend. "That's not what I mean… I mean, how are you handling seeing him again?"

Hailey sighs, really trying to process the magnitude of that question. "Hard to say, it's strange... on some level, the comfort I still have with him makes it feel like nothing's changed between us. There are moments I forget that we've barely spoken in months. Then so many memories keep resurfacing and it all comes flooding back."

Kim nods at her sympathetically. "I remember when Adam and I broke up, it was hard to find the proper balance of what to say, be, or do. Of course, we still saw each other every day, so it allowed us, and forced us, to ease into being apart again. I can't imagine what it would be like though to not see him, but constantly be worrying about him and how he's coping, then get a dreaded call like you did today. But, everything happens for a reason, right? Just look at the two of us now, I wouldn't change how it worked out for the world...."

Kim's words send Hailey's brain spiraling into another memory, and she can't help herself from
It was 8 months until their wedding (and one month before their world came crumbling down, but Hailey didn't know it at the time) and she and Jay were planning things out over the coffee table. They had just secured the Greek Church that she promised her mom she would book.

"So I've been thinking, I know we already have my niece being the Flower Girl, but I really think it would mean a lot to Kim and Adam if we included Emily somehow. It would mean a lot to me too, she feels like our niece too, y'know?" Hailey says as she stops looking at the videography pamphlets and turning to face Jay.

Jay's face lights up in a huge smile. "I think that's a great idea! Why don't we just have two of them? Of course, with Emily loving walking now that she's learned, we're probably going to have to have someone chase after her down the aisle!"

They both get a chuckle at that, knowing how much mischief she gets into just like her father. Hailey writes Emily's name with a heart around it under the bridal party list.

"At this rate, Emily will definitely be in our wedding before she's ever in her parents!" Jay continues.

"Kim was telling us all again when we were getting the bridesmaid dresses that her and Adam are still loving being 'officially unofficial' as she called it. She claims not feeling pressured to get married has helped to fix their fears from their first relationship and in turn has made things so much simpler and clear." Hailey laughs as she shrugs, not fully understanding it, but happy for her friends.

"Hey, as long as it works! I'm thrilled for them, they deserve it. I, however, couldn't imagine not putting a ring on it!" Jay smirks at her as he grabs her left hand and kisses it, right by you guessed it- the ring.

Hailey rolls her eyes at him. "Gee, thanks Beyonce, I appreciate it."

He looks her up and down flirtatiously. "What can I say, I liked it..."pausing to wink at her for full effect.

"Oh my God! Is it too late to cancel? I don't know that I can take a lifetime of your lame jokes." She laughs.

He feigns hurt. "You told me you loved my sense of humor!"

"I was lying, just wanted to get in your pants!" she says grinning, turning the tables on him.

He starts to tickle her while half bear-hug tackling her into the couch. The sounds of their laughter, especially Hailey's, are all that's heard echoed across the room until a more serious passion takes over...

Hailey snaps out of the memory with that, realizing Kim is still talking.

"So maybe this is you and Jay's reason!" she hears Kim say.

"What?"Hailey asks, trying to act like she wasn't just off in a past life in her head.

"As awful as it is, maybe Jay getting shot happened to bring you two together again."
Hailey sighs. "Kim, I don't think life just works out that simply…"

"Sure it does, eventually. Every winding road leads to somewhere. You and Jay are meant for each other, I don't know anyone else who is more!"

"I thought we were, but Jay made it clear he no longer wanted me around. There are only so many times you can try to dig someone out of a hole before you fall in it yourself…"

Kim shakes her head sadly. "Don't give up on him… the few times Adam has seen Jay these past few months, all he does is come home and tell me how distraught Jay is over losing you. That he'd do anything to get you back…"

Hailey picks at her coffee lid, severely over the conversation. She knows Kim means well, but there's only so much her heart can handle in one day. "Yea, well, saying & doing are two different things…"

Kim reaches her hand over, placing it on Hailey's and stopping her from almost destroying the empty cup without realizing it. "Hailey, just, for me, promise me you'll never lose all hope. I know you two will find your way back once both your stubbornness subsides…"

Hailey takes a deep breath and closes her eyes before standing up, signaling an end to this topic. "C'mon, we better get back so you can see him before visiting hours end. As much as I love you being here for me, he needs you more right now…"

After an extremely draining day, Jay and Hailey are finally alone again in his room. They've been making small talk, each just catching up on everything they heard about their friend's lives these past months. Neither of them are ready to dive into that subject about the other just yet.

"So I spoke with work earlier, I told them I was taking a Leave of Absence until you were healed and could manage again on your own. If you're feeling okay tomorrow, I'll drive back home and pack a bag to get by." Hailey tells him.

"Hailey, I appreciate it, really! But that's too much, are you sure?"

"Of course! Do you honestly think I'll be able to work and be four hours away until I'm completely sure you'll be alright?"

He nods at her emotionally, knowing that's a big thing for her to say these days. "Thanks…"

They get quiet for a while, not knowing what else to say, afraid to say too much. Luckily one of the nurses comes in shortly after with a pillow and hands it to Hailey, surprising Jay again.

"Hailey, what are you doing? I'm fine, you don't actually have to stay here, you'll be so uncomfortable. Why don't you go stay at our pla-" He catches himself, sadly realizing his slip up. "My place…"

When they parted ways, and Hailey was moving, they both thought it just made the most sense to sell her townhouse. Jay couldn't be there without her in it, and they could both use the extra money to get settled again. Even though it was just a house, it destroyed another part of their hearts to give it up. Not only did they have so many memories of them together in it, and their dreams of starting a family there, but it held so many nights of their friendship there too. It was countless late nights of drinking over the kitchen island after a bad day, or relaxing to a game or movie on one of their rare weekends off, that they still usually spent together, even before they were actually together. They both brush the slip-up off, not wanting to go down memory lane again. Hopefully its walls
are bringing another couple joy now.

"It's fine, Jay. The chair reclines, I'll be able to sleep... as well as I can anyway..."

"I'm sorry I scared you..." Jay says softly.

"It's ok. Just don't do it again, you've already run up your 'get shot quota' for this decade, alright?" She smiles tenderly at him and he smiles back, enjoying the brief peaceful moment despite the subject matter.

Hailey pushes the reclining chair back and adjusts the pillow. Her back will definitely hurt tomorrow, but she won't tell Jay that. Despite their falling, he's still worth everything to her.

Jay yawns, the pain meds catching up to him again as his eyelids suddenly get super heavy. He's secretly glad she's here with him because he doesn't know if he'd feel as calm without her there; knowing today was something that could bring out yet another trigger to the darkness of his mind and past. As if sensing his thoughts she turns on her side to face him, their eyes meeting as he moves his head slightly to look over at her. He'll fight sleep for as long as he can to be able to stare into her eyes again.

"It's ok, I'm not going anywhere, ok? Try to get some rest, I'll be here when you wake..." she gently whispers to him, her words lulling him into the most peaceful night's rest since he was last with her. Despite machine beeps and nurses coming and going throughout the night, they were finally in their own little world again, albeit for only a few hours...

[A/N: Hope the little wait was worth it. Wanted to get this chapter done a couple days ago for ya's, but as we all know life doesn't always go as planned. I know you're dying to read the reason for their break-up, but filled in a few more tidbits along the way to hold you over, hopefully. Thank you so incredibly much for all the wonderful reviews, likes, and reads. Next chapter isn't fully planned out in my head yet, but I promise you more answers with it for sure! ;) ]
Chapter 4

A few days have gone by now since Jay was shot. In that time span, Hailey managed to make another day trip to Detroit to gather some belongings and sign off on all the papers for work. While she did go to Jay's new apartment to leave most of her stuff, she still spent every night at the hospital with him. Jay hated to see her do it, and her body hated her for doing it, but both were secretly glad they got to be so close to each other again. Sometimes during the night, one of them would wake to find that their hands entwined during their slumber, hers outstretched from the recliner and his from the bed, but neither of them ever mentioning it to the other.

Also in that time span Hailey had finally called Will. Naturally he was pretty pissed he wasn't alerted until four days after it happened, but he knew it was only his stubborn brother he had to blame, not what should have been his sister-in-law. Once Will tied things up at the hospital he was working at and with Natalie, he made it back to his hometown the next day. He of course made sure to spend an hour with Jay's doctors demanding to be briefed on everything. After spending a few minutes catching up with Will, Hailey left Jay's hospital room to give the two brothers some privacy.

Once Will was sure Hailey was out of earshot he reprimanded Jay. "I can't believe you made her wait so long to call me! I'm your brother, don't you think I had a right to know!?"

Jay looks at him guiltily, knowing he would be just as pissed if Will did it to him. "I'm sorry. I just didn't want you to worry about me any more than you've been."

"That's not for you to decide, Jay. You don't get to dictate how you want people to care about you!"

"Yea, I know." He looks down at his hands glumly. "Besides, if I'm being fully honest, I wanted this time with Hailey also. I figured if you came down, she wouldn't have a reason to stay…"

Will looks at him in disbelief. "I didn't possibly think you could get any dumber. Are you sure they shot you near the heart and not the head? No matter what's happened between you and her, Hailey would still stay even if you had 100 family members around. And that is a lot of Halsteads even for me!" Will shivers as he says it and they both smirk.

"Yea, you're right, she's as stubborn as I am, and still the most caring person I've ever met."

Will gives him a look. "Are you gonna tell her?"

Jay stares back at his brother, knowing exactly what he's referencing. "Not yet, man. She's already been doing so much for me, and we're finally in an okay-state again… I don't want her response to be out of guilt, or worry because I got shot…"

"She'd be proud of you, y'know."

"I know. I just fear it's all a little too late for a grand gesture."

"Are you kidding? Girls eat that shit up!" Will jokes and Jay shakes his head.

"Alright, enough of this. How's everything with you? Is the Land of Cheese treating you well? You better not turn into a Packers fan on me!"

"Never!" Will smiles back and starts to fill Jay in on his new life.
Before they know it almost an hour has gone by and Hailey pops her head back in the room, not wanting to fully interrupt their brotherly bonding time. It had been a while since she saw the two of them laughing and joking like they were. She missed those days. She missed a lot of things.

"Sorry to disturb the dynamic Halstead duo, but I'm gonna grab something to eat from the café; just wanted to see if you wanted anything, Will?" she smiles at the brothers.

"No, thank you, I'm alright. I'll probably head out soon, and grab a hotel. It's been a long day, and I know Jay's in good hands." Will smiles back warmly and Hailey blushes, trying to avoid seeing Jay's look of awe.

"Alright, well I'll be back shortly to say goodbye."

Hailey walks away from the room again and Jay turns to his brother. "How long are you going to stay?"

"Probably just a couple days just to make sure you're still progressing well. You should probably be out of here in a week as long as there are no setbacks."

Jay is thrilled to hear that, but also slightly disappointed because he knows the faster he heals, the sooner Hailey will be leaving him again. He doesn't want to think about that now though.

"You know, Hailey's been staying here, so you can totally crash at my place. No reason to drop money on a hotel."

"You sure? I don't want to impose."

Jay gives him a look that reads, 'not like I'll be using my place!' "Yea man, might as well. Hailey just goes there to shower and change, so you guys can just coordinate."

Something that Jay says triggers a memory for Will and he can't help but drift back to it…

Will had been calling Jay's phone since last night and his brother still hadn't called him back. At first he just assumed Jay had gone out, had a few drinks, and passed out… but now that it was bordering lunch time, he was starting to get concerned. He thought about calling Hailey since she was his partner, thinking maybe they were on some big case, but if they weren't he didn't want to worry her as well. Normally he wouldn't be this concerned, but he knows Jay's head has been everywhere these past few months with everything from Kelton to Voight to Adam to Antonio, so he just hopes nothing triggered him.

He finally made up his mind and decided to ride over to Jay's. He still had a key from those few months he lived with him, so if anything, he could let himself in. When he arrives he knocks loudly at the front door and receives no response. Will sighs, knowing Jay's truck is outside and starting to really wonder what happened to his brother. He resigns and unlocks the door. A quick glance into the small living room reveals nothing amiss. He sees that the bathroom door is closed and walks over to it.

"Jay?" he calls out, knocking softly on the door. He hears a gasp and something clang inside. Thinking something is up he quickly turns the knob and pulls the door back, his jaw dropping in shock at what he sees.

His eyes widen in embarrassment and surprise as the person staring back at him is no other than Hailey, fresh out of the shower, holding up a towel, and wrapping it around her. Both relieved she managed to cover herself fully before he could see anything he shouldn't.
"Holy shit! I am so sorry!" Will says while quickly backing out of the room.

"WILL! What are you doing here?" she loudly whispers, following him out now that the towel is completely wrapped around her.

"Me!? I should ask the same of you!" he gives her a wink and she tries to hide her blush, unsuccessfully. "I'm sorry, but I've been calling Jay since yesterday and got a little concerned when I never heard back."

"Shit, I'm sorry. We uh, we... got a little distracted last night and he must have left his phone in the living room. It probably died."

Will gives her a knowing smirk. "I see... so... how long has this been going on with you two?"

Hailey rolls her eyes at him smiling, knowing that they're caught. "A couple weeks... we just wanted to keep it under wraps for a little and enjoy the privacy and newness. I'm sorry we didn't tell you."

"Don't be, I totally understand. Hell, I'm actually surprised it's only been a couple weeks, probably should have been a couple years at this point..." Will jokes.

"You Halsteads man!" Hailey laughs, shaking her head.

"I'm happy for you guys, really. You're good for him, Hailey. I've always thought that. Glad both of your stubborn asses finally woke up... now I should probably go before Jay actually wakes up. You must have worn him out good if he's still sleeping this late."

"Oh my God!" Hailey says while trying to swat at him as he cracks up. They make their way to the front door so he can exit. Will content knowing his brother is way more than fine now.

"Always a pleasure, Will!" she says as she starts to close the door again.

"Yes, tell my brother I say, 'get it!'"

Hailey chuckles as she makes her way back into Jay's room, entering quietly, but he's stirring regardless. Jay's eyes pop open fully and he gives her a huge grin seeing her only in his towel.

"Were you talking to someone?" he questions.

"No... Must have been my music you heard." she feigns confusion.

"I can't believe you showered without me... Didn't even get a morning kiss..." he pouts and outstretches his arm, signaling for her to come over to him.

She walks over to the bed and casually sits on it, keeping the towel in place. "You mean a third morning kiss... pretty sure you got two things this am."

"Mmm, well, they do say 'third time is the charm.'" He says as he grabs her to him and as she yelps he pins her under him, kissing her neck as the towel gets bunched up.

"Jay..." she can't help but moan out, running her fingers through his hair. "We can't stay in bed all day..." she feebly tries to protest.

"Like Hell we can't, it's Sunday... and you're the only thing I have planned for today!" he grins before he kisses her, both gladly willing to end the debate that way.....
Will continues to smirk at that long ago memory. He's pretty sure Hailey and him have kept it a
secret to this day still; Jay none the wiser how early on in his relationship with Hailey that Will
catched him. He finally came clean to his brother about a month after that day, and Will pretended
to act completely surprised over the news.

"What are you grinning at?" Jay asks him.

"What? Oh, nothing… just that I think Hailey is way more chill and understanding than you're
giving her credit for these days.'

"Oh, not this again, please, she'll be back any second…"

"I'm just saying, talk to her, tell her everything while she's still here. Do what you couldn't do
months ago…" Will drifts off as he notices Hailey making her way back to the room. Jay nods at
him, silently promising to try and fix things.

As Will says his goodbye before he heads off to Jay's apartment, he pulls Hailey into a hug and
whispers into her ear, "He's done good these past few months, really tried, you'd be proud. Don't
write yourselves off completely yet… I have a feeling you guys are due for countless more days of
you in a towel all afternoon…"

Hailey catches the reference and her eyes slightly well up with tears, remembering how happy they
were. She nods her thanks at him and does her best to compose herself again before Jay can notice.
It's going to be a long few weeks…

[A/N: So this one is just a happy little filler chapter. Originally planned to do more, but it's late,
and figured I'd leave you off on a good note instead of a depressing one. Enjoy this, cause those
sad moments are coming… but it will all be worth it in the end, I hope? ;) Also, a Will addition,
who I wasn't sure I was going to include, but I know a faithful reader, Mary, wanted to see him in
this, as I'm sure others did too. He assists a lot in this chapter, so surprise! Thank you all again for
reading, you guys have been awesome.]
It's 7 months until Jay and Hailey's wedding and finally just about everything is booked, bought, and planned. Neither of them found the process too stressful since they were both relatively easy-going and had the same ideas anyway; but they were glad to have it over and done with so they could just relax and enjoy the rest of the way. There had been no coasting this weekend however, as they had offered to babysit Hailey's niece and nephew while her brother and sister-in-law went away to celebrate their anniversary.

While it had been the perfect Friday-Sunday of fun, spoiling, and bad food for all, Hailey and Jay were both thrilled when their doorbell rang signaling it was time for the kiddies to go home to their parents. They were bushed, but it did make them have a pleasantly serious discussion the night before realizing how good they would be at this parenting thing once their time came. It even spurred Jay to make a joke that they should try for one then... but that got quickly squelched once they heard Hailey's niece knocking on their door, still scared to sleep alone in an unfamiliar room.

Needless to say, they were very eager to make up for the lost three days of alone time. It was a little past 11pm and Jay had Hailey right where he wanted her... just the two of them, in bed, with Hailey only wearing one of his t-shirts - driving him insane.

"Someone's very eager..." Hailey laughs as Jay is making quick work of yanking his clothes off.

"You bet, partner... no interruptions tonight!" he smirks before he starts kissing her, wiping the grin off her face.

Things are starting to get very heated when they hear Jay's phone begin to buzz, both ignoring it the first time, too into each other to care. At the sound of the second call, Hailey feels she should be responsible and tries to separate her lips from Jay's.

"Jay... maybe you should answer, it could be work or something..."

Jay shakes his head and murmurs with his mouth on her collarbone, "Let them leave a message, or they'll call you too if it's really important!"

Hailey sighs, knowing she should be more proactive to answer, but too worked up herself at this point to care all that much. She even ignores the third call, or just doesn't register it with the things Jay is doing to her. By the time they hear his phone ring for the fourth time they both realize the severity of someone wanting to badly get in contact. She pushes Jay off her slightly so he can grab it from the table, and he groans, really grumpy to have to postpone his much-needed time with his fiancé.

His eyes go wide however once he realizes who is calling, knowing it must be important if they're this incessant and at this time of night.

"Hey! What's wrong, everything alight?" he says into the phone.

Hailey watches the conversation with ever-growing concern as she notices the changes in Jay's face; gone is the euphoria mixed with annoyance, now replaced with shock... and sadness?

"What!!? There's no way, did you get a second opinion? Let's go talk to Will, he knows the best... yea, no, I get it, but..."

"Jay..." Hailey says questioningly as she comfortingly puts her hand on his shoulder. He responds
by shaking his head and putting his finger to his lips, then grabbing her hand attempting to comfort himself.

"I just don't understand, you're not even 40 yet! You're coming with me to Med later in the week... no, don't argue, you are... we'll get through this like we have everything else!... Yea man, ok... Yea... Ok, I'll talk to you tomorrow... take care of yourself!"

Jay finally clicks off, dropping the phone in his lap, a look of grief on his face, inhaling deeply. Hailey rubs his back, her anxiety raised as well at how bad this news appears to be.

"Jay, what's wrong? Who was that?"

He looks at her, as if deep into her soul, conveying all the hurt he's feeling as he fights back not only tears, but anger. "It was Mouse..."

"What's going on? Did he have another episode?"

He takes another deep breath and shakes his head, holding her hand tightly. He finally manages to whisper out; "He'd been having pain in his stomach and side the past month so he finally went to the doctor this week. He got the test results back on Friday..." he pauses, not wanting to verbally commit to the next part as Hailey strokes his hand, closing her eyes in fear of what's coming. "... It's Stage 4 Colon Cancer..."

"Oh my God..." Hailey's eyes fill with anguish as well and Jay can no longer hold back the tears in his. She wraps her arms around him and pulls him close, his sobs shaking his body as he cries into her chest. Hailey loses it then too... both knowing what kind of sentencing this means for their friend...

Jay wakes with a jolt and gasp, sweat dripping down his body, trying to gather his surroundings. He realizes he's in his hospital room and it all comes back to him right as Hailey's head pops up from her position in the chair.

"Jay, what's wrong? You feel okay? Should I page the nurse" Hailey quickly asks, worry evident in her voice.

"No, I'm sorry, I'm fine!" he tries to smile at her reassuringly, of course she doesn't buy it.

"JAY..." she responds in her 'now is not the time to bullshit me' voice.

"It's, just... bad dream... nothing to be concerned about."

Hailey sighs; she's a bit agitated now, not wanting to return down this road again of Jay's deflection. She turns her attention to her pillow, molding it forcefully, focusing on that in hopes of avoiding saying something she'll regret.

Jay senses it and also doesn't want to push her away, he's made such progress, as well as they have these past couple weeks... the last thing he wants to do is screw it all up again.

"I dreamt about the night we found out again..." he whispers so softly Hailey almost doesn't hear him. When she realizes what he said, she instantly knows what he's referring to and looks at him sympathetically.

"Are you still having the nightmares?" she quietly asks him, tentatively reaching out her hand for his. He smiles and gladly takes it.
"No… for the most part it all stopped a few months ago. I've been dealing with the coping, I swear…"

"Well, that's good. You deserve some peace of mind, Jay."

"Hailey…" he hesitates slightly, trying to gather his thoughts; not wanting to reveal all, but enough for her to know he's serious. "There are a lot of things I want to tell you, and I promise you I will… but I just want to heal from this shooting first. I don't want either of our judgments clouded because of fear or guilt of me taking this bullet. We're and you're too important for me to play it any other way…"

Hailey closes her eyes and Jay watches a single tear slip through them… giving him hope that maybe not all is lost forever, a small smile forms on his face. When she reopens them she gives him one of her classic looks.

"Since you're being released tomorrow, your wound is probably healed enough that a little contact to it probably wouldn't hurt it, right?" she asks.

He looks at her oddly. "Yea, I guess so. It certainly doesn't hurt as much as it did… why?"

"Ok good…" is the only response she gives him before she cautiously pulls his covers back slightly and slowly makes her way on the bed with him. His eyes go wide and he smirks in wonder and surprise.

"Get your mind out of the gutter, Halstead! Just figured we could both use the comfort tonight…"

She turns to look over at him and they both smile at each other. "Besides, my back is killing me! I deserve a night of being able to extend my legs completely."

"I KNEW IT! Hailey, I told you that you should have taken a couple days and slept at my place!"

"Don't start, Jay, we need our beauty sleep… Let me know if I'm hurting you at all, ok?"

"You won't. Besides, this was definitely some kind of teenage fantasy of mine."

"Shutup!" they both chuckle before they get quiet again and start to drift.

Jay still can't turn fully, so to his dismay there's no way for him to wrap his arms around her. But as they both lie on their back, he makes sure to entwine his arm with hers, holding hands as well. He recalls grinning at the thought of his nurse finding them in the morning before he peacefully falls back to sleep.

[A/N: A shorter chapter, but two in one week, so there's that. Also, this provides one answer for ya's, sort of.. Sorry for the roller coaster of emotions, but full-disclosure: it's going to continue. I am incredibly grateful for all the kindness you're showing this story and all the time you're investing in it. Enjoy and thank you!]
Chapter 6

The day had finally arrived for Jay to be released from the hospital. It had been a slow and physically painful couple weeks, as well as a resurrecting of emotions, but Jay was at least grateful to have his shining light back. Maybe in Hailey's eyes it was just until he got better, but little did she know Jay intended to find a way to make it permanent again. He had learned from his mistakes before he got shot and he would find a way to prove it one way or the other.

Will had returned back to his new home a week ago (assured his brother would be fine), their pals in Intelligence were stuck working some major case for the time being, and since Jay was in a bad place and in no mood to really make friends with his new unit when he joined, that left just him and Hailey waiting to sign his discharge papers. Which was all fine by him, she was all he needed anyway. He would like to get to see Chip at some point though, after all, he probably owed his CI his life... but his personal life was priority number one.

When it was time for Hailey to wheel him to her car, he inhaled deeply as his chair hit the pavement and his nose felt the outside air. He never realized how much he would appreciate the Chicago weather after being cooped up in a hospital bed for over half a month. He felt revitalized for the first time in months and was incredibly grateful for this in-so-many-ways second chance.

Hailey smiled down at him as she stepped away from the back of the wheelchair. "Must feel pretty good, huh? A new day."

She always could read him. "I haven't felt this free in a while. Y'know I hate having to rely on others to help me, especially those I don't know."

"OH, I know!" she gives him one of her looks and he chuckles, knowing she's only teasing him, this time.

He carefully stands up with her help and they both manage to get him comfortably seated in the car, mindful of his wound which will remain sensitive for another couple months and require occasional checkups. Once Hailey is satisfied he's situated, she makes her way to the driver's side.

"So, where to?" Jay asks as Hailey hops in.

Hailey looks at him like he has five heads. "Um, your apartment, where else?"

"I was thinking we could grab some Portillo's then go for a walk in the park."

"I know you're serious, but you can't be serious?"

"What? The doctor said I have to gradually build my strength back up."

"Yea, I know... but baby steps, Jay! You were just shot in the chest only two weeks ago!"

"Alright, fine... but can we still pick up Portillos? My treat, I'll even spring for you to get that shake you love!" he smiles at her charmingly; the boyish one he knows was always so hard for her to refuse, even before romance entered the picture.

"You drive a hard bargain, Halstead, but alright. We're just ordering out though, you need to get home and settled to continue your rest."

"Yes, mom!"
He smirks at her as she rolls her eyes at him, putting her car in drive without even justifying a response. Even though he's jokingly trying to rile her up, secretly he's missed her worry and concern about him. He just wished he never had to put her through so much of it.

An hour later, stomachs full, and Hailey super appreciative of the shake she hadn't had in months, the two of them are finally settled in Jay's living room. Jay insisted on eating at his tiny kitchen table to regain an ounce of normalcy again, then it was off to plop on the futon. Jay's new place could be summed up in two words: "basic" and "bachelor." He didn't even attempt to make it homey when he moved in… the only home in his mind was with Hailey. The living room consisted of a TV, a fold-up style chair reminiscent of dorm living, an old coffee table straight from "Craigslist," and the futon. Hailey had made joke after joke in the hospital room after she first saw it, "What, Organized Crime pay you in Ramen these days?" The one personal item he had unpacked and on display on the TV stand was an old photo of him and her when they first started dating. The team had all gone on a group outing to a Bears game and at the tailgate Hailey had smushed her hot dog into Jay's face, leaving mustard all down his cheek. Kim captured a photo of Jay wrapping his arms around Hailey and rubbing his cheek against hers to get her back; Hailey's face a mixture of shock and laughter with Jay's in gleeful awe. Hailey didn't dare mention the photo at the hospital, nor did she tell him it brought her to tears when she saw it.

Once Hailey was certain Jay was comfortable, propped up and surrounded by enough pillows to put teenage girl sleepovers to shame, she made her way back in the kitchen to start on a supplies list. If she was going to be here another couple weeks to help with his recovery, she might as well make it easier on both of them. She went through the near-bare cabinets and the almost-empty fridge; beer, old milk, a random takeout container, and a few condiments were the only occupants.

"Jay, seriously, are you sure you even live here?" she calls out to him.

"Don't forget, I was undercover for a month, so I really haven't been here recently."

"Oh, so then this totally looked different before you went under? I'm sure you had all your food groups stocked then."

Jay chuckles to himself, all these years later and she's still calling him out on his bullshit. "Well, I definitely had more beer, that's for sure!" He can feel the eyeroll she must be making without even seeing her face, her back turned to him.

"This is crazy, I haven't made a grocery list this big since I was in my early twenties and had three roommates. What am I gonna do with you? You have to take care of yourself, Jay."

He stares at her through the kitchen opening, watching her run back and forth, constantly getting sidetracked and finding something else to clean, move, or do along the way. The setting and her words somehow take him back to the time their world came crumbling down around them…

It was 5 months to their wedding, and instead of being joyous and simply worrying about last minute late items that normal engaged couples do, Jay and Hailey had just buried one of their groomsmen. Mouse had fought valiantly, but the disease was too far along. There was nothing anyone could do. He assured his friends that he had made peace with it, but that was unacceptable to Jay. How can one make peace with dying so young? Not when they had come this far, it wasn't fair. His death was hitting everyone hard- Hailey, the team, Voight… Mouse was in his prime, vibrant, in good shape, finally taking care of himself, it didn't make sense. They were all struggling with it, but none more than Jay. Before Erin, before the team, before fixing his relationship with Will, even before Hailey, there was Mouse. He had been Jay's best friend, and next to Hailey probably the only other person who truly understood him. Sure they had fought and lost touch for
a couple years when he insisted on going back to war, but they had made up when he returned stateside, so much so that outside of Will, Mouse was the first person Jay asked to be in the wedding. In what should be the happiest time in all of Jay's existence, life was just cruel.

Hailey and Jay had just returned home after the Repass and both were completely emotionally drained. As sad as Hailey was, she was more worried about Jay. The road had been dark the past couple months and she was concerned he would spiral again. All things considered, he'd been okay so far, but she knew when it hit him, really hit him, the grief could consume him again. He'd already lost so much.

Jay made his way over to the couch after grabbing a beer and Hailey followed, the two of them just sitting quietly for a few minutes, taking it all in. When Jay started undoing his tie, Hailey rested her hand on his shoulder.

"Jay, I know you don't want to, but you have to let it all out... please..." she says to him as soothingly as possible.

"Hailey, what's the point? It's over, he's gone, end of story! It's definitely not like he's the first person I lost." Jay says bitterly, taking another sip of beer.

"Jay, Mouse wouldn't want this to bury you again, he'd want you to continue living as best as you can."

"Well, that's too bad, isn't it? Cause I had to bury him. It's not fucking fair... he survived a horrible youth, THREE tours overseas, mercenary work, saw the worst the world had to offer, he survives all that, only to be taken out like this!? We lock up the scum of the earth every damn day and they get to go on and live long and healthy lives? How is that fair, Hailey? It's fucking not!" He stares into her eyes, those beautiful blue eyes now filled with such pity, anguish, and sadness, and for the first time since he got the call with the dreaded news, he breaks down. His sobs shaking his whole body, lying down and crying into Hailey's lap as she strokes his back.

"I know, I know, Jay... but we're gonna get through this ok? We will find a way to get you through this. But you have to take care of yourself, Jay, please... it's what Mouse would want."

He should have listened to her. He should have listened to Mouse, believing he was at peace... but of course he didn't. Not until it was too late....

"So I'm gonna hit the store now and get it out of the way. You sure there's nothing you want me to add to the list?... Jay?"

Hailey's words bring him back to the present, thankfully breaking him of that horrible memory.

"Jay, you alright?" she walks over towards the futon again looking alarmed.

"Yea, no, I'm sorry, I'm fine. I just spaced out for a minute there. I was enjoying the view when you bent over the bottom cabinet." He grins at her, really trying to sell it.

"You're so stupid... Seriously, anything else you want from the store?"

"Maybe some ice cream?" he looks at her innocently like an eager child and she smiles.

"Sure, chocolate chip?" she asks, already knowing his answer.

"Is there any other?" Their mouths beam at the other, pleased at how natural it all still feels.
"Alright, I'll be back soon. Try not to get into any trouble while I'm gone!" she says as she makes her way out, leaving Jay staring after her longingly.

Hours later after a few watches of bad sitcoms, a couple of 90's comedies and of course the ice cream, an awkward silence falls over them. It's getting late and the sleeping arrangements will have to be decided soon. With Jay's tiny apartment, of course the only options are his bed and the futon.

"I'm gonna have to move you to your room soon, I'm getting tired and you're kinda sprawled on my 'bed.'" Hailey finally says.

"What? No way, you've been cooped up in a chair for two weeks, you're taking my bed. It's the least I can do."

"You're the one who is injured and needs the rest Jay, you're sleeping in the bed… no ifs, ands, or buts!" she tells him in her stern motherly voice again.

"How about we compromise… why don't we share the bed?"

"Ha, your pickup lines still need work there, Halstead!"

"C'mon, seriously, I just mean sleep, Hails. Hell, we shared the bed again last night and it was fine."

"I know… and that was different… I just don't think it's a good idea…" she says softly. "I'll be fine with the futon, I promise. It will already be way more comfortable than the hospital was."

Jay sighs. "Fine, as long as you're sure. But don't say I didn't try to be a gentleman."

Hailey smiles at him fondly. "You were always a gentleman, Jay, at least to me."

"Speaking of being a gentleman… when do you start giving me sponge baths?" he replies, winking at her.

She steals one of his pillows, raising it up over her head as if to hit him, but stops.

"You're so lucky you're injured!" she laughingly says.

"When it came to you Hailey, I was always the luckiest guy in the world!"

He says sincerely while staring at her, as she blushes. The moment is quick, but they both feel it.

Hailey swiftly reverts to her old deflecting mechanisms. "Nice try, but you're still sleeping alone in your bed mister!"

He smiles warmly at her, allowing the moment to pass… he's never been more confident that there will be more, and that's enough for him tonight.

[A/N: Deepest apologies for the darker road some of this story will take. I promise to alleviate it some with lighter moments as well… just like real life. I actually have lost a friend to the same diagnosis I gave Mouse, he was in the age group too. With every drop of darkness eventually comes light though, and that's what this story will really be about. So as always, thank you for continuing to follow along, hopefully it's a fun journey for us all. As for this chapter, this one's for Joe… will always miss ya bud, as well as everyone else we've lost along the way!]

Chapter 7

"Listen Jay, I know you don't want to hear it, but I'm not making the wedding."

Jay stares at Mouse in his hospital bed making such a bold statement. It had been two months since Mouse had been diagnosed. He started his treatment a month ago and had come down with a really bad cold these past few days, the extra concern over his condition forcing the hospitalization.

"Don't say that man, you'll be fine. The treatments will work!" Jay likes to think of it as the positive approach, but just about everyone else would take it as denial.

"Jay..." Mouse just shakes his head at him. "It's ok, I've made peace with it. I'm just worried how you're gonna handle it. In all these agonizingly long years of knowing you, I've never seen you as happy as you are now, as you are with her. I don't want little old me throwing a wrench in that... promise me, no matter what, you won't revert back to your old ways. You deserve to be happy..."

Jay holds back tears. "I don't know how I'm gonna do this without you Mouse."

"Eh, you'll be fine. You've got Hailey, she's all you need. Y'know though, as much as I love you bro, she deserves better than you, poor girl." He starts to joke to lighten the mood.

"I know..."

"Speaking of, how you've gotten such babes over the years with your boring personality is beyond me!"

"You're friends with me, what's that say about you!?!" Jay quickly retorts.

"Well, we always knew I had a screw loose." Mouse smirks at him and they both get a small chuckle out of it.

It was one of the last conversations they had. Mouse didn't make it through the week. With his weakened immune system, pneumonia fully overtook his lungs and him nor the medicine could fight it off. He was 37 years old.

It's been almost a week since Jay was released from the hospital. He's been progressing every day, the remnants of the wound healing nicely and the pain lessening each day. Jay's most grateful for his time with Hailey though. They've been getting along well, and it feels exactly like old times... before they turned for the worse. He's enjoyed his visitors, most of the old team has been by at some point and despite the circumstances, for the first time in a while he can say he's feeling happy.

A couple days ago Hailey let him get out to try and start a walking regime to slowly build all of his strength back up. He enjoyed watching the tourists, always in awe, as he leisurely walked through Millennium Park today. Eventually he made his way to sit by the waterfront, just overlooking all the docked boats and people walking by behind him, simply reflecting and utterly appreciative for another chance.

"Hey, what are you thinking about?" Hailey asks him, her legs swinging back and forth hanging along the dock.

Jay just looks at her and gives her the biggest smile before answering. "Just that I'm incredibly
happy to be alive!"

Her head snaps back slightly and she looks a little shocked. "Yea? Well, that's certainly good to hear."

They get quiet again for a minute as they both look back out at the lake. "I'm happy you're alive too." She speaks again finally, playfully hitting his knee with hers.

Jay gives her a knowing smile, staying silent and not pressing for more. She's always been there for him, she'd never abandoned him, and he's so angry at himself for thinking she would and accusing her of such things all those months ago. He deserved all that came to him for pushing her away. After another few minutes of silence, he notices Hailey shiver slightly. With dusk now approaching, the Fall chilliness is starting to make its self more known.

"You wanna head back? It's getting a little cool out here." he asks her.

"Yea, plus I'm starting to get hungry. And now that your appetite is fully back, I know you can eat."

"What? I have no idea what you're talking about. After breakfast, I only ate my lunch and the other half of yours."

They grin at each other as she helps him stand up and get stable on his feet, just for precaution. After a few steps as they head back towards the park, Jay shrugs out of his brown jacket and wraps it around her leather one; the motion causing him to hug her to him a second longer than necessary. Hailey thinks about objecting for a minute, fearing he'll be too cold and worrying about his condition, until she realizes it would be a moot point. Jay will in no way take the jacket back, so she silently smiles to herself as she wraps it tighter around her neck, taking a second to inhale Jay's scent while doing so. She knows these old habits are going to get her be in big trouble again, but she can't for the life of her seem to care right now.

Later on back at Jay's, once all stomachs had been satiated and the temperature regulated, the two of them were just chilling on his futon watching TV. They had settled on some "Friends" marathon because there's always some marathon of a 90's or earlier 2000's sitcom going on. It was also one of their favorite shows to just veg out to and relax after a stressful time or case back in the day. They had made some popcorn and settled in comfortably, just quietly enjoying the other's company again like every other day this past week. It was an unspoken mutual agreement to not go too deep or overly discuss the past. The third episode they watched ending up being the one where Ross was getting married to Emily and ended up saying Rachel's name instead. While this episode was not as obvious as the TV couples' breakups or reconciliation ones, it still brought thoughts of their own relationship to the forefront in Jay and Hailey's minds.

Jay debates for a moment on whether he should speak, but finally decides screw it, what's the worst that can happen? "Hailey, I have a confession to make…"

She raises her brow at him, curious but tentative.

"On that day I blocked my number and called you twice, but hung up…"

He doesn't specify what date he's referring to, but she knows. That day would have been their wedding day. It ended up being a gorgeous Spring day for the Midwest, complete with sunshine and neither too hot nor too cold. She bites her lip before turning to face him more, bracing herself for what's to come.
"There was so much I had wanted to say, but I just couldn't... it had only been a few months since we parted and I still wasn't in a good place. I didn't know how to start... but I just needed to hear your voice, even if it was just the one-word 'Upton' or 'Hello.'"

He's looking at her very similar to how he looked at her in the break room the day Kelton got murdered, and just like then it's almost too much for her to handle. "I know... I mean, I figured it was you. The second time you called I even think I whispered out 'Jay' but you had already hung up again. It took every fiber of my being to not call you back. I wanted to talk too, but like you said, I didn't know how... and the last thing I wanted was to get into another fight. I cried myself to sleep that night, it was probably the roughest one of them all."

Jay hesitantly reaches out and grabs her hand, stroking it lightly. "Hailey, there's so much I have to apologize for, that I never did, and..."

She cuts him off. "It's water under the bridge... we both made mistakes... let's not resurrect old wounds."

Jay sighs, not wanting to force the issue, she's already dealt with so much thanks to him. Hailey gets silent again for a bit. They're on the next "Friends" episode now where Rachel decides she's going to tell Ross she still loves him and Monica thinks it's a horrible idea. *Man, TV relationships are strange* she thinks to herself and can't help but laugh at the irony. She decides to ask Jay a question that's been nagging her, even though she 1) knows she shouldn't, and 2) isn't entirely sure she wants to know the answer. It's a question she's been wondering even more about ever since she found out he went undercover.

"Jay... I know it's no longer my business, and you're completely allowed to do whatever you want, but I can't help but be curious..."

"Hailey, you know I'll always tell you whatever you want to know..."

"Have you... is there... have you been with anyone else since..." she trails off, unable to bring herself to say 'broke up,' it always seemed so permanent.

Jay smiles slightly, pleased at the question because he knows it means there's a part of her that considers him hers still. "I went on a couple dates more recently, mostly because Will insisted that maybe it would be good for me... but no, none of them went anywhere."

Hailey releases a breath she didn't know she'd been holding as Jay continues, "I've gotten to know my hand a lot better again, though!"

"Oh my God!" Hailey says while rolling her eyes and he cracks up before getting serious again, wanting to give her a second before really laying it on.

"No one will ever be you..." he says it so earnestly and she looks at him like she's about to cry. He decides to roll the dice and ask her too, praying for the same response. "Have you been with anyone?"

"No..." she manages to stutter out.

He lets his thumb stroke her chin then, catching a stray tear. "Hailey..." he murmurs out and the look she gives him kills him.

*Fuck it* he thinks as he leans in to kiss her. It takes her a second, but she does start to kiss him back. The kiss deepens when her hands make their way to his collar and she pulls on it lightly. Jay's just pulling her even closer to him when she eventually breaks away.
"Jay…" it comes out all raspy and strained, driving him even crazier. "You can't do this, your injury…"

He smirks at her as he signals down to how ready he already is. "I beg to differ…"

Smiling back she says, "Ok, we can't do this… it's probably not a good idea…" She leans her forehead on to his as she says it, her actions negating her words.

"Probably has a lot of leeway room to work with… and you do keep preaching how I have to build my strength back up…" he mumbles as he takes a chance again and starts kissing her neck. He feels her resolve start to slip away as his lips hit one of her erogenous zones right below her ear… he knows them all more than he knows almost anything.

"Jay…" she makes one final attempt at restraint and warning before she pulls his lips to hers again. She'll worry about the repercussions tomorrow.

They barely remember to breathe as neither wants the kiss to end. Eventually, to Jay's surprise and delight, Hailey carefully makes her way to straddle him. She finally ends the kiss to his dismay, but makes up for it by pulling off her shirt. His eyes take her in, even though every little detail of her body is embedded in his memory, he's terribly missed seeing it in person all these months. She gives him a second to ogle her before she cautiously starts to take off his shirt too with his help. She gets a wave of dread as she sees the bandage covering where the bullet went through again, remembering how close she came to truly losing him. She quickly shuts the thought away, but it does make tonight's decision seem more justified, despite what tomorrow will bring.

"After tonight, you're going to forget your hand ever existed…" she tells him flirtatiously, quickly kissing him again before he has a chance to respond. He moans into her mouth as she grinds her hips against him. He may have started this game, but she intends to win it…

[A/N: A semi-lighter chapter for your enjoyment. The past is about to get bumpy though, so brace yourselves. Thank you all so much for continuing to read and review, it means a lot. Hope everyone is enjoying the final remnants of Summer... on the upside, at least it mean we're closer to the show being back!]
Jay wakes up on the futon with a smile on his face. He moves his arm around to feel for Hailey, only to realize she's no longer there with him. He sits up slightly and glances around the small living room/kitchen, seeing no sign of her. He grabs his phone to see it's only 7am still and wonders if maybe she snuck away to go sleep in his room. He feels a wave of disappointment at that thought, really hoping she didn't; in his mind last night was a step in the right direction again for them. As if on cue, he hears the key turn in his lock and watches as Hailey steps inside with coffees and a bagel bag. She looks at him like a deer in headlights when she sees he's awake. She's also in her running attire, which is never a good thing because she only goes for early-morning runs when something is troubling her.

"Hey, what are you doing up already? I figured you'd be asleep for a while longer. Everything okay?" she says casually, but he knows she's trying to quickly distract from the obvious.

"Yea, I'm good… I can ask the same of you though?" he carefully asks with his brow raised.

"Yea, just went to get us some breakfast… got your fave, bacon, egg, and cheese on an everything-bagel."

"You went for a run though?"

Hailey starts shuffling around nervously, ruffling through the kitchen like she needs fifty items to eat a damn bagel. She knows she's caught and can't put anything past him. "Yea, y'know, it's nice out and I just wanted to clear my head. I haven't gotten a chance to work out since being here."

"Clear your head about last night, right?" Jay asks sadly but accusingly.

"Jay…"

"I'm a big boy, Hailey, come out with it. I thought last night was great, hell, I thought it was AMAZING, but clearly you thought otherwise."

"It was amazing, of course it was… We both needed the closure, but you already knew I thought it was a bad idea. Things are different now Jay, we're not together anymore. We don't even live in the same state anymore. We shouldn't add more complications to an already complicated situation." Her eyes, brimming with sadness the whole time while staring at him, quickly looking down at the floor unable to bear seeing his reaction.

"Things don't have to be that way though, Hailey. We can figure this out. We can make it work. This all didn't happen for nothing. You can't tell me you don't agree…" he slowly starts to make his way off the futon, wanting to wrap her in his arms. "Hailey…"

She takes a step back, her lip now quivering, trying not to break. She has to be strong, even as the tears threaten to spill over and the memories start to overwhelm…

It was four months until their wedding and a month since Mouse had passed away. Needless to say, Jay had not been in a good place these last few weeks. Hailey has done everything she can think of
to help get him through, but she realizes it's not enough. He wants her to be because he doesn't want to admit defeat again, but she knows he's going to need something extra for this.

Jay's once again drowning his sorrows in whiskey after a long work day, everyone on the team on edge when he's around because his mood is so shifty. Hailey sighs as she watches him from the kitchen. He has the game on, but she knows he's just staring up at it trapped in his own head. She thinks maybe her idea will perk his spirits a bit, get him thinking about the happiness of the wedding again and finding some way to still include Mouse. She grabs the DVD out of her purse and thinks, 'here goes nothing.'

She walks over to him tentatively and rests her hand on his shoulder. He glances up at her with glassy eyes and a far-off look. "Hey hun, I had something made and was wondering if I can show you?" she holds up the DVD for him to see.

"Might as well, not like the Hawks are gonna come back, they suck! Typical!"

She figures that's the most positive response she'll get and pops the movie in. She grabs the Blu-ray remote and goes to sit next to him on the couch. She snuggles close to him and breathes a sigh of relief when he drapes his arm around her. She hits play and holds her breath again.

Jimmy Eat World's 'Hear You Me' starts to play as photos of a young Jay and Mouse start popping up on the screen from when they met in Boot Camp. The montage intertwines from pictures of Mouse alone doing silly things while out drinking or what not to ones with him and Jay together. Before the tenth photo even hits, Jay's speaking and taking his arm off Hailey.

"Turn it off…"

"Jay…"

"I said, TURN IT OFF!"

Hailey slightly jumps back at his sudden anger and quickly stops it, her face filling with hurt.

Jay sighs, realizing how sour his reaction is. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to yell… I just… this looks great, but what is it for?"

"It's for the wedding. Kim and I went to Mouse's moms and she was kind enough to give us a bunch of photos to use."

"Why?"

"What do you mean?" she looks at him confused.

"Like, what's it have to do with the wedding?"

"We thought it would be a good Memoriam. I know how rough it's going to be not having Mouse physically there now, so I thought maybe this could fill the void a little bit…"

"What does it matter? He's dead! He's just not going to be there... like Mom, like Dad, like Uncle Tim, like Al, and y'know, countless other soldiers and cops I've known. It is what it is…""}

The fact that he says it so casually is what concerns Hailey the most. She can't do it anymore. She can't pretend she'll be able to pull him out of this. He needs help, more than she can give. She scoots closer again after her initial scare and grabs his hand in both of hers, stroking it comfortingly.
"Jay... I know you don’t want to hear this, but it's time you see somebody again. You need to talk
about this, with a professional."

"I'm not going back to therapy, Hailey. I've done it, it helped, I'm fine. I have you, I talk to you. You're the only one I need to open up to."

"Except you're not fully opening up to me, Jay... You're pretending like everything is okay, and it's
not. You're angry all the time, you even bark at Voight & Will, and the only time you let me in with
this is when you're drunk and start crying in my lap. You need more than me, Jay."

"So you just wanna pawn me off to someone else, is that it? I'm sorry, am I getting to be too much
to handle these mere FEW WEEKS that I just lost my best friend?"

Hailey instantly drops his hand looking wounded. "How can you even say that!? Of course I don't
want to pawn you off. I love you! But you need more than I can give right now, you don't want to
open up to me, you're fighting it."

"You're crazy, you're about the only one I do open up to!"

"Not anymore, Jay, not since Mouse... it's like you put up a wall and you don't even see it. Even
physically, you just go through the motions now, like you don't want to feel any ounce of emotion
for it at all."

Jay drops his head into his hands and rubs his temples. "Look, I'm sorry, alright. It's just been a
rough few weeks... can't you just give me another couple to work this out in my head. I don't need a
shrink, I just need you to be there for me."

"I'll always be there for you, Jay, but I need you to believe it too."

"Of course. I promise I'll get better!" he says as he grabs his glass of whiskey again and takes
another long gulp. "Now can we just watch the Blackhawks lose?"

Hailey looks at him as disappointment fills her, but she knows there's no point forcing the issue
anymore tonight. "I think I'm gonna go to bed, I'm tired."

"Okay, night!" is all he says as she makes her way to stand up, he doesn't even look at her again or
attempt to kiss her good night.

Hailey sighs as she walks into their bedroom, holding back tears. Frankly, she's tired of crying.
She walks over to the dresser and opens her drawer, staring down at the offer letter from the DEA.
A couple months ago she was going to ask Jay his thoughts on if they should make the move, she
didn't know if it was a good idea for them and wanted to know how he felt. Before she got the
chance, everything with Mouse arose and there was no point thinking of it then. Now, for the first
time she's actually contemplating taking it, even if it would mean she'd be moving just herself...

Hailey yanks herself back from the past, not wanting to relive those wounds. As much as she sees
Jay in front of her, seemingly looking like he's in a better place again, her heart is too scared to take
the chance. She can't fall back into old habits for someone who is not willing to help themselves.
So she says the only viable thing she can think of.

"You're next check-up is on Friday. I'll stay through that and make sure you'll be good, then I think
I'm gonna head back to Detroit..."

"Hailey..."
"Jay, please. Let's not ruin what we have going, I'm so happy we built our friendship again these past few weeks. It means the world to me."

"Friendship?" he quietly asks, implying the only.

"Yea." She says back softly as they sit down to eat their sandwiches. Her face staring down at the bagel like it's the most fascinating thing in the world, avoiding his eyes at all costs.

"Okay." He says defeated, knowing now is not the time to push or for any other confessions. After all, he made this bed, he'll have to lie in it a little longer.

They were supposed to be getting married in three months, and instead of being happy, Jay is stewing after what he found, waiting for Hailey to get home from shopping. When she finally walks in he stares at her angrily from the kitchen, barely letting her settle before he goes off.

"So this is why you've been pushing me towards therapy; want my head fully functioning so you don't feel guilt when you say you want to leave? I knew it. You're just like everyone else."

Hailey puts the bag of groceries on the counter and stares back bewildered. "What!?"

He just shoves her DEA letter across the kitchen island at her.

"Jay, I got this months ago and was going to discuss it with you, then everything else happened... I wasn't going to take it, especially behind your back! And ME? You've got some nerve! You're the one who has been pushing me away the past couple months!"

"Pushing you away? I've just asked you for time. You're the one who's been acting like there's something wrong with me and telling me I need help."

"Because you do! How can you not see that you've spiraled again? How are we supposed to get married in twelve weeks when you barely talk to anyone, and when you do it's either pointless or yelling?"

"So then maybe we shouldn't get married."

Hailey gasps, those words hurting worse than almost all others the past few months. "What?"

"I'm just saying, you clearly don't think I need you or others, and maybe you're right. Maybe cutting ties now will save me all the heartache down the line."

Hailey purses her lips at him and nods her head, clearly angry now herself. "Well, great! If that's how you feel, maybe I will take that job!"

"Good! You should, you deserve it!"

"Good! I'm glad we agree, it's the first thing we have agreed on in weeks."

"You're right. And now you won't have to worry if I'm fine anymore, it's perfect. I wanted a wife, not a nag." Jay says, instantly regretting it, but it's far too late now.

Hailey's eyes cloud over with hurt before they turn vile on him. Her old wall comes up instantaneously. He's about to say he's sorry, but she quickly responds. "I'm gonna go give Voight my notice and fill him in. That should give you a few hours without me bothering you!"

"Hailey..." he tries to stop her, but she's already grabbed her keys again and is storming out.
When she leaves Jay takes his beer bottle and throws it against the wall, glass shattering everywhere, but he doesn't care. He slides to the ground against the counter and with his head falling into his knees, he finally lets the tears stream down. He knows he just lost the love of his life and it feels worse than anything. Mouse is probably looking down at him in disdain.

When Hailey returns hours later, he does manage to apologize and they make up some, but she still insists maybe this is for the best. Maybe they both need a new start. The breaking point had finally hit. Hailey moved to Detroit two weeks later. Jay couldn't help but feel he got what he deserved...
Chapter 9

Hailey was sitting in Kim and Adam's living room having a coffee date with Kim. It had been a couple days since her and Jay slept together again, and she still intended to leave at the end of the week provided he was okay enough. There were just too many old wounds to postpone the inevitable for either of them. She wishes there was a world where the two of them could be together again, but she fears their past mistakes ruined it all. Not wanting to be trapped in her own thoughts anymore, she takes the opportunity to watch little Emily as she runs around playing, so innocent and full of life.

"I can't believe how big she got! It's only been a few months since you guys came to visit." She says to Kim in awe.

"Yea, it's crazy! Time is just flying by, and every day she picks up more and more of Adam's boundless energy." Kim responds as both women share a laugh at that.

Hailey shakes her head. "I don't know how you do it!" she's utterly amazed Kim finds the time to still be full-time in Intelligence, along with being a mom and in a serious relationship.

"Eh, you'd be surprised how it just suddenly all falls together when it's this worth it."

Kim notices the pang that flashes quickly across Hailey's face and instantly regrets her wording and tries to backtrack.

"Hailey, I'm sorry, I didn't…"

"It's fine, really. I get what you mean." Hailey raises her hand at her friend in assurance, cutting her off.

"Speaking of, are you really leaving at the end of the week?"

"Yea, I think it's for the best. Jay should be okay to be on his own the rest of the way."

"I'm sure he will be. It just seems like maybe you were meant to be here, at least a little longer. I still think you two could and should work things out!" Kim looks at her sympathetically.

"I don't know, Kim… some wounds are just not meant to be reopened. I mean, I left him… he needed me and I left him. He was grieving and maybe I should have done more to help him through it, even if he was pushing me away. I shouldn't have let it get to me and tried harder; of course, he should have fought harder to not lose me too…" she says sadly.

"No, don't you dare say that, Hailey! We were all there; we all saw how hard you tried to be there for him. Jay needed to help himself. At the end of the day, we're the only ones who control our happiness, not others, no matter how much we love someone. Maybe Jay needed to realize what losing you would be like in order for him to fix himself. It was a horrible situation you both had to deal with and you did what needed to be done at the time."

"Yea, maybe. I think he'd like to work things out, I just don't know that either of us should trust the mirage. He almost died, so of course our emotions are gonna get the best of us, but it doesn't mean things fixed themselves."

"Maybe not yet, but they could. Trust me, if it's worth it, it'll work itself out… and you and Jay are definitely worth it!"
Hailey gives Kim a sad smile, simply nodding at her advice. It's not that she doesn't believe her or think it can't happen, she just doesn't want to get her hopes up. That's why it's best for her to leave sooner rather than later, at least their friendship is repaired. She has to protect her heart in case their relationship may never be.

Jay is on the phone with Will as he has some rare time alone while Hailey is hanging with Kim. He can't believe she'll be leaving him again in four days. It's a thought that should crush him, but he's ok with it for the moment because it will allow him to follow through with the plan he had before getting shot anyway. Of course, things would be easier if they could just work stuff out while she was here, but Hailey is worth the extra mile to prove how serious he is, was, and will always be about her.

"So you're just gonna let her leave? You didn't even tell her yet?" Will asks from the other end.

"No, I haven't, and yes I am. This is probably the best way anyway… I want her knowing that this was in motion long before a near-death experience. And I want her response to not be conflicted from almost losing me."

"Yea, that all makes sense. I just can't believe you're gonna let her leave again. Seems kind of crazy when she's right there for the taking now."

"Haven't you ever heard that 'some things are worth the wait', Will? It took a while to get her the first time, I deserve the struggle the second go-around because I should have never let her go the first time! That's on me, and I'm gonna fix it the right way."

"Fair enough. I'm proud of you, y'know… you've come a long way and for once it wasn't for anyone else, even Hailey, it was for you. That takes a lot of courage."

"Thanks man!" Jay says gratefully into the receiver. "I just realized after Hailey left that she deserved the best version of me possible, as does everyone else, so it was time to admit I needed help. The road leading here surely sucked, but I learned a lot."

"I'm happy for you, but I'm gonna miss you!" Will replies, revealing more emotion than usual for him.

"What? You're the one who moved to Wisconsin!" Jay says laughing.

"Yea, I know, but still."

"I miss you too, bro."

"There, see, that's all I'm asking for… I don't know why Hailey gets all your love, sometimes I want to be reminded too." Will jokes and they both crack up.

Jay has no idea what the future will hold, but he certainly feels brighter about it then he has in a while.

_Hailey and Jay were on a rare vacation in Mexico. They had been together almost a year now and they finally got the time to step away for a little bit. They'd been having a great time so far, days of sunbathing, excursions, and pool bars… and nights of hardly leaving their room. They kind of never wanted to leave, but knew reality would have to return eventually. As they're lounging on the beach, Hailey turns to him and asks him something she realizes she never has before; the different setting making her realize it._
"Have you ever thought about leaving Chicago?"

"You mean like moving away?"

"Yea."

He looks at her contemplative. "I never thought about it too much, why?"

"Just, being here, I don't know, other countries and states are nice too."

"Do you want to move?"

"No..." she assures him. "Like, I love Chicago, it's home... but this is gorgeous! I could get used to not having to wear an obnoxious coat for more than half the year."

Jay laughs. "Getting out of the cold would be nice. I don't think I could do this climate year-round though, too humid. I think I could live somewhere like California maybe. I could get used to seeing you tan all year." He winks at her.

"Yea, that would be nice... imagine how many more freckles you would get though?" she teases.

Jay's mouth drops open as he grabs her and yanks her atop him on his chair, tickling her just enough to make her squirm.

"I'm kidding, I'm kidding!" she giggles, admitting defeat.

"Alright, Upton, where would you go?"

"I do like the change of seasons, I'd probably still choose the Midwest or Northeast. Maybe even Canada!" she jokes. "Would that suffice for you?"

"Like I told you last year, I'm going where you go... even Antarctica!"

She smiles adoringly at him. "I guess I'll get used to being stuck with you then..." she murmurs before kissing him sweetly. It didn't matter where they ended up, as long as they were together.

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[A/N: Thank you all again for all the positive love you've given this story. As always, you guys rock! It is now officially my longest Upstead story, at least chapter-wise. So I appreciate you sticking with it. This particular chapter is a little bit shorter, but a set-up for the rest of the way. The final countdown is upon us in so many ways :) I may have another chapter or two once the show returns, or maybe I'll wrap it before, we shall see. I do know that I am excited to see where Hailey & Jay end up in a week when the show returns though, woohoo! We've almost made it :) ]
Jay watches as Hailey zips up her duffel bag, the last of her belongings tucked away to go. He got the cleanest bill of health he could from the doctors yesterday, recovering incredibly well over the past month. It was news that brought relief and elation to the former couple, but also slight sadness knowing their time together was coming to an end again. Hailey was more depressed over it than Jay because he knew what she didn't... that he had some hopeful tricks still up his sleeve. Still, he hated to see her leave, no matter the circumstance. When she looks like she's all set, he walks over to her and wraps her in a big hug. They stand like that for a while, neither saying anything, just taking solace in each other's arms as Hailey fights back tears.

"Who's gonna keep my fridge stocked with food now?" Jay jokes trying to lighten the mood.

Hailey finally pulls back slightly to look at him after sniffle-chuckling into his chest. "Hopefully you Jay." She smiles up at him.

"I'll try to keep the beer-to-food ratio pretty even." He says smiling back at her, earning him another laugh. Hearing her laughter was always music to his ears.

"I'm really going to miss you, you know!" he continues.

"I'll really miss you too. The past few weeks have meant a lot to me. I'm glad we got to clear the air some." She says earnestly.

"Yea, maybe I can come visit soon? You can give me a tour of Detroit."

"Yes, I'd love that. I'd be lying if I said it wasn't lonely sometimes." She says quietly as she pulls away completely, grabbing her stuff.

"Here, I got it..." Jay quickly interjects, stealing the duffel from her and opening the front door.

They silently make their way over to Hailey's car, at loss for how much more to say. She unlocks the door and Jay puts her stuff in the back seat. She turns and gives him one last hug, holding for a beat too long.

"Sure you don't want to have a quickie for the road?" Jay asks with his serious-joking face, eyebrow raised.

Hailey laughs. "We were never good at quickies, Jay. I have to give you that." She winks then leans up to kiss his cheek. Jay looks all proud.

"That might be the nicest compliment you ever gave me! Can't blame a guy for trying though, right? Don't be a stranger, Upton!"

"You either, Halstead. And please take care of yourself! Call me if you need anything."

He kisses her forehead before she gets in the car, fighting so hard to beg her to stay. He knows this is the smartest play though. "Don't worry, I will."
She smiles sadly at him and with that she finally closes the door. With one last wave she puts her car in reverse and starts backing away. Jay watches her car get smaller and smaller the further it goes, standing there until he can no longer see it at all…

**Hailey placed the very last box into the U-Haul. She then stands back to look at almost her entire life crammed into a 10 x 10 truck. It had been quick, but for the most part she and Jay had cleared out the townhouse almost completely. She tucked away some stuff in storage to circle back to when she had more time, and the two of them managed to split or give away most of the big furniture they had. Jay promised to stay in the house for another few weeks until the realtor could find the appropriate buyers. This was up there as one of the saddest days of her life… not only was she giving up the place she called home, made so many memories in, and worked so hard for… but it was the day her and Jay would officially be over. There'd be no pretending or denial once she stepped behind the wheel.**

She turns to see Jay coming out of the house with the final item. It was her small nightstand. For some reason it takes her back to the day when they first got engaged. She looked in it to try to find Jay's pocket knife after having no luck in the dresser, only to fail in that too, coming across the ring shortly after. She feels the familiar pang in her chest and quickly tries to push the feeling, and memory, aside. It's right about now she wishes their friends were here to distract her more. They had all offered to help, but both Jay and Hailey felt it was something they should do alone; especially if this was to be there last time together. Her brothers were already all set to meet her in Detroit and help her unpack.

"I think that's the last of it..." she hears Jay say, breaking her from her thoughts.

"Yea, I think so too. I'm gonna go grab my purse than I think I'm gonna head out."

Jay nods sadly. "Yea, you should probably get going so you can make it there before dark."

**Hailey makes her way back inside and almost breaks down at the near-empty home. She knows she has to get out of there before she loses all sense of willpower. When she grabs her purse off the kitchen island, she catches a glance at the fridge, which Jay was going to keep. There's still a couple magnets left on it and one remaining picture. It's a selfie of them at their favorite restaurant. Hailey feels her lip quiver as a single tear falls down. She sighs, realizing she has to leave, now. It's far too early to go down the rabbit hole of what was and what could have been.**

*She exits the house to Jay sitting hunched over on the steps, elbows on his knees, head tucked down into his hands, looking completely dejected. Her heart breaks all over again and she wills herself to be strong.*

**She steps down past him and quietly speaks. "Alright, I think I'm all set."**

"Okay." He looks at her glumly before he stands again and they make their way over to the truck.

She throws her purse on the passenger seat and braces herself for the goodbye. She knows she has to make it quick because it's the only way she can survive it.

"Please promise me you'll take care of yourself, alright?"

"I will Hailey, don't worry! You've had to enough." They look at each other sadly, staring for entirely too long, not knowing what else to say.

They finally hug each other awkwardly and wonder how they got to this point.

"You take care too, Hailey! Make sure whoever your next partner is has your back!"
"Don't worry, I'll be alright..."

"Alright."

"Bye Jay."

"Bye Hailey."

She hops in the truck and slams the door closed. With a deep breath she turns the key in the ignition. It's now or never. She finally puts the truck in drive and starts to take off. As she goes, she can't help but notice in the side-view mirror Jay staring on as she moves further away. She keeps glancing at him in her rear as he gets smaller and smaller, and once she can no longer see him at all, she finally lets the tears take hold...

It's been two weeks since Hailey had gone back to Detroit. Unlike the last time she left, this time the two of them have kept in touch via phone a couple times a week; making the transition apart easier on both of them. They still missed the other terribly, but neither would dare speak it at this moment in time. Jay is almost 100% recovered, at least physically, and mentally he finally got an official cleared bill of health as well. He had started therapy six months ago (four months after Hailey left) to work out his thoughts on people leaving him, the loss of Mouse, and finally putting to bed any PTSD remnants he unknowingly had. This time was different than when Hailey forced him into it when they first became partners. Back then, he treated all the surface wounds for a few weeks, and put a Band-Aid on it if you will; becoming closer with Hailey and them helping each other, made it seem like it was all good enough. She was there and understood him and he felt better. There had been other triggers along the way of signs pointing to that not being true, like some tough cases and the death of his dad… but it wasn't until the loss of Mouse that he officially spiraled again. He pushed Hailey away because he felt if he didn't, she'd be the next to leave him—whether intentionally, or worse, not. In doing so, he actually forced her into leaving, and that really destroyed him.

After stewing for months, quitting Intelligence, and keeping his distance from anyone else he was close to, he had an awakening and finally came up with a plan. The one thing he knew for certain was that he needed Hailey back in his life, everything else be damned. And the only way he could do that was by finally get help for himself and prove to her that not only was she worth it to him, but he was worth it to himself. There was no room for stubbornness or pride anymore. So that's what he did. Before he got shot he had only had two more sessions left of the goal him and his therapist had come up with. Once he was officially finished, he had intended to go to Detroit to win Hailey back. He already had some things in motion before the injury derailed him. When Hailey was here, Will had wanted Jay to tell her all of this, but he knew the circumstances weren't the wisest for that. He wanted her to accept him back because she trusted him again and realized he accomplished helping himself without leaning on her, not because she was distraught over him nearly dying. No, he waited this long to get her back, he could wait a little longer to prove how serious he was.

So that's what he did!.. He finished his therapy this week, gave his official notice to the CPD (even though he was still technically on state medical leave), and started to box up the little belongings he had in his shitty, lonely apartment. Jay hadn't felt better in months. He was already envisioning Hailey's surprised face for when he shows up at her door. He's just hoping she'll see it as a happy surprise.

"So you're really gonna do this? What are you going to do if it doesn't go the way you want?" Adam asks as he finishes taping up a box. He and Kevin had come over to help Jay after he informed them of his plan.
"Yea bro, what are you gonna do if she doesn't want your ass back? I'm not helping you unpack all this stuff again." Kevin jokingly chimes in.

"Wow, thanks for the vote of confidence guys, real nice, really helps my formally fragile state of mind." Jay laughs.

"Oh c'mon, y'know we're just kidding! One conversation with Kim and it's clear Hailey will never be over you." Adam says.

"Yea, who can resist those eyes of yours, Halstud!?" Kevin almost gets it out without cracking up, before all three burst into laughs.

"Thanks guys, I really appreciate it… I know I don't deserve your help with how I treated everyone this past year, but it means a lot you're here. I miss Intelligence a lot."

"Don't sweat it!" Kevin says as he friendly punches Jay's arm.

"Yea, you miss us, except now you intend to move completely like Hailey did." Adam responds, a little disappointed to be losing another friend to semi long-distance.

"Hey man, I miss you guys… but I miss Hailey more! She is way better-looking than you two idiots." Jay says, finally joining the joking.

"That's fair!" Adam nods in approval in typical Ruzek fashion.

"So what time's your train again?" Kevin asks.

Jay didn't have full clearance to drive yet, and since he only intended on bringing a suitcase to start, he figured the train would be his best option. He was going to leave most of his belongings boxed up and ready to go in the living room for when he'll be able to make the official move. He had already decided a few months ago that even if Hailey didn't want him back, he was still going to move anyway. Having her as just a friend and close by was better than nothing at all.

"It's in a couple of hours." Jay responds.

"Aight, we'll drop you off. Wanna grab some lunch and a drink at Molly's one last time?" Kevin says.

"Yea man, that'd be great!"

Jay grabs his duffel bag and they all grab their jackets as they start to head out. He gives one last look at the apartment he never quite made a home, and smiles that this chapter of his life is over with. As he turns his key to lock it behind them, Adam offers one last anecdote.

"I do have to say you're gonna owe me Jay… when Kim found out what you intended to do, she fan-girled so hard. She practically swooned as she said 'that's the most romantic thing ever!' …I'm never gonna be able to compete man, you ruined it for me and all men. Now I'm probably gonna have to give her four more kids just to try!"

All three of them burst into laughter as they head down the hallway to outside. Yea, Jay will definitely miss this, but some things are just far more important…

Hailey is sitting in her living room winding down for the night. She had returned to work that very Monday after she left Jay's. It's been practically non-stop with a big drug bust since and she's
actual super glad for the distraction. Staying busy is helping her keep her mind off Jay and how much she misses him again. There was a small part of her that almost stayed, but she knew they'd just fall back into the same pattern- which wouldn't fix anything. She's glad it does seem like the old Jay is back and that they repaired a lot of their old mistakes. Still, it is incredibly painful that they can't be together.

She flips through her channels while sipping on her wine, not focusing on anything, but wishing to find something to focus on... something that doesn't start with a "J" and end in a "Y." She lets out a big sigh as she settles on the Red Wings game; reminding her again that if she wasn't a cop who was now with a government agency, she'd seriously consider some of those jail-broken streaming devices to get Chicago sports. Right as the first period was ending, she hears a knock on her door. Who the hell can that be? She hasn't made all that many friends since moving here, and she's certainly not close to her coworkers like she was with Jay. Stop thinking his name, Hailey, she scolds herself again.

She makes her way over to the door and almost drops her glass of wine when she sees who is behind it through the peep hole. So much for not thinking about him, she laughs to herself but is incredibly happy to see him. With one last deep breath, she finally opens the door.

"Jay! What are you doing here?!" it doesn't go unnoticed by her that he has a suitcase duffel in his hand.

"Hello to you too, Hailey! Aren't you going to at least let me in?" he laughs at her astonishment.

"Yea, of course, come in." she says as she steps aside to let him pass through, shutting the door after. "Is everything ok? How did you get here, I thought they didn't want you driving for too long yet?"

Jay just shrugs his shoulders. "I took the train."

He plops his bag down on the floor and envelops her in a hug. She freezes for a second, but then quickly hugs him back. They stand like that for a bit just enjoying the moment.

"This is a nice place." He comments after letting her go and looking around.

"Yea, it serves its purpose I guess..." Hailey says quietly, still confused to his unannounced arrival. "So what are you doing here Jay?"

"I just figured it was finally time for us to talk. Or well, more me to tell you about everything I promised I would once I got better."

"So you took a five-hour train ride just for that?"

Jay just smiles knowingly at her. "You're worth the in-person."

Hailey tries to ignore the feeling of her heart swelling with love. Instead she makes her way to the kitchen to grab him a beer and nods her head for him to follow her to the couch. If she had to suffer through the Red Wings, than so did he.

"So what's up?" She asks, trying to be casual, even though she feels the complete opposite.

Jay takes a deep breath, wondering where to start. "Well, as you know, everything with Mouse sent me on a downwards spiral, that I wasn't willing to admit. And even though you begged me to get help, I refused because I didn't want to believe I needed it again. I mean, I was so happy with you, with work, with our friends... So, so happy, why would I need help again? I just thought I needed
time to get over his death. And well, as usual, you were right and I was wrong…"

Jay watches Hailey nod at him with a small smile, quietly and patiently waiting for him to get everything out, like she always did. He finally continues after the pause.

"Anyway, after you left, things only got worse… Until one day I realized not only had I pushed the love of my life away, but just about everyone else I cared for. It was then, completely alone, that I realized maybe I did have bigger issues than I knew. So I checked into therapy. And I went twice a week for months and months. And I slowly dug myself out of the hole. It helped me to realize that a lot of my issues went deeper than the war. With dealing with so much death, and the loss of my parents so young, and things like Erin just taking off without a goodbye, apparently I had bigger abandonment issues than I realized. Which is why I started pushing you away… because I figured I'd eventually lose you too. And it's why I freaked out so much when I came across your job offer. In reacting to what I feared, I actually made it come to fruition… And I am so, so sorry for making you feel like I didn't want to open up to you, because you're the only one I've ever wanted to, and fully have… next to my therapist now of course."

He jokes slightly as he watches Hailey's lip start to tremble and her eyes well with tears over all the emotions his words are bringing her. He brushes them off her cheek with his thumb before continuing.

"So with learning all that, my therapist and I came up with a goal to work on all these things aggressively for six months. If she was confident that I had finally overcome these demons, she would give me the validation I needed to move…"

Hailey looks at him confused through her watery eyes. "Move where?"

"To be by you of course… getting shot kind of deterred the path though. I would have been sitting here doing this a month and a half ago if it wasn't for that. And I would have told you all this when you were taking care of me, but I didn't want you to react solely because you almost lost me."

"I'm still not understanding, Jay…"

"Hailey, this last undercover case I had was always going to be my last. I quit and I'm leaving Chicago to move here, to be by you. There's even a counseling program I looked into run by a few former cops who like me, had been in the army too. They're trying to help all the veterans returning to not only deal with their issues, but also helping to place them in law enforcement. When I told them everything about my background and history- even the sad parts, they loved it and told me I could start whenever I wanted. Not saying I want to give up being a cop forever, but if I can help just one person like me get through it, then it's worth it, y'know?"

The tears flow from Hailey's eyes now, but happiness is starting to seep in. "You've been planning all this for months? And you didn't say anything?"

"I wanted my head to be on completely straight again so you knew how serious I was."

Hailey wraps her arms around his neck and hugs him tight. "I'm so proud of you! Everything you've done takes so much courage, Jay. Admitting you needed help and getting it is more courageous than going to any war or taking down any criminal."

Jay smiles. "Yea, including the courage to show up at your door step and tell you I didn't bother to find a place to stay…"

She pulls back from him again to stare into his face. "This program really is right here in Detroit?"
"Of course! I told you I go where you go!"

He gives her his classic smirk and she can't take it anymore. She brings his head down to hers and kisses him, her tears melting into his smiling lips.

"So does this mean you'll let me stay here? I'm in a foreign city, it'd be really scary on my own!" He says as they finally pull apart.

Hailey rolls her eyes at him. "All these years later, I still don't know what I'm gonna do with you Halstead!"

He grins at her suggestively. "I can think of a few things… but first…" He carefully slides down off the couch and onto her floor, putting down one knee and pulling out a ring, her ring from his pocket. "Will you re-fiancé me? If there's something else I learned in this whole ordeal it's that life is too damn short. I'm 38, I don't want to wait anymore! We should be celebrating our seventh month anniversary at this point, and I'll never forgive myself for us not being… but I intend to make up for it for the rest of our lives!"

Damn him Hailey thinks as the tears start flowing again. She slides onto the floor with him, not wanting to yank him to her in fear of his wound. No matter how healed it is, it will always be a reminder how close she came to truly losing him. She can't imagine not having him around, even though they did it for all those months, deep down they both knew it was a temporary separation. They would always be meant to find their way back to each other.

"Yes… and yes I'm going to hold you to that! We have a whole lifetime to make up for the lost time." she smiles as she holds out her hand for him to return the ring to its rightful place on her finger.

"I love you, Hailey! I always have, so much…"

"I love you too, Jay!"

She pulls him to her again and kisses him as if her life depended on it. Jay shifts and uses all his acquired-back strength to swoop her up into his arms. She yanks her lips off his in shock.

"Jay, are you sure you're alright enough to be lifting me?" She asks concerned.

Jay smiles, so happy to have her worry back in his life again. "I've never felt better! Now where's the damn bedroom?"

She points in the direction and laughs as he starts running towards it. Yeah, he was definitely feeling better in all aspects of life. And he proved it over and over again that night…

[A/N: We're approaching the final bend, people. There will be an epilogue soon, until then, thank you for following along thus far. I appreciate it immensely. What a journey it's been- and finally leading up to the end of the show's hiatus. With the few things I know about Upstead in the premiere, I hope to update my "Feelings" story at some point this week as well if I have time. Can't wait to see our faves on the TV again :) ]
A Final Conclusion

It had been almost a month since Jay and Hailey officially got back together. In that time span Jay finished moving all of his stuff from Chicago into Hailey's place in Detroit. Adam and Kevin gladly agreed to help, which also spurred on Hank, Kim, and Trudy to make the trip as well... all excited to see their friends in this new, happy opportunity that unfortunately wasn't so for Hailey's original move. Jay was going to start his new counseling position in another few weeks once he got his complete health clearance to return to working. In turn, Hailey had asked work to be placed into a more active desk job role; the two had had enough scares to last a lifetime at this point and didn't want to take the risks as much anymore. She surprisingly didn't hate it as much as she thought she might, it gave her the opportunity to use her quick wit for more than just jokes. All in all, everything had been going tremendously well. It was like the beginning days of their relationship all over again.

Today was the best day of them all though. Today, on a brisk, but gorgeous November day on a return trip to Chicago, Jay and Hailey finally made it official. The star-crossed lovers made it down the aisle at last. There was no formal church, extravagant reception, or professional photographers-just Hailey and Jay surrounded by their closest friends and family and the Justice of the Peace. They had decided they had waited long enough as is, and this was really all they needed anyway.

Hailey thought she felt herself get emotional as she looked around the courthouse to see the smiling faces of those most important to her all in one room... Trudy, Hank, Adam, Kim, Kevin, Emily, Will, Natalie, her parents, her brothers and sister-in-laws, her niece and nephews... but it wasn't until she looked back up to see Jay's smile beaming down, looking the happiest and most carefree she ever saw him, that she let the tears truly well; knowing she hit the jackpot. They hit the jackpot, despite the long and winding road.

"I now pronounce you husband and wife, you may kiss the bride..."

Jay and Hailey hardly heard the words register over their euphoria as they kissed, lost in their own world, until the sounds of applause erupted in the room. They went around to everyone and got enveloped into huge hugs. This meant as much to their loved ones as it did them, knowing the journey it took the two of them to finally reach this point. It was an incredibly joyous day for all of them.

Once they took pictures and wrapped at the courthouse, everyone made their way over to Jay and Hailey's favorite restaurant for a group dinner. The mood was jovial, everyone laughing and telling their favorite stories. After a couple of drinks, an emotional Trudy made her way over to Hailey.

"I'm so happy for you guys. I was always rooting for you, no matter the moronic moves you both sometimes made. Thank you for including me in your special day!"

Hailey chuckles, "Of course, Sarge! Thank you for your endless advice and unwavering, albeit tough-love, support."

Trudy leans down to give her a hug. "Oh, here we go, you're gonna make me all emotional again."

Hailey just hugs her tighter. "I really miss you, Sarge. I owe you a lot."

They remain in that position for a while, trying to gather their composure again. In the interim,
Voight had made his way over to Jay.

"I really am proud of you, Jay. You've come a long way since that hotheaded kid a few years removed from the army. It's been a pleasure seeing you mature and grow… and watching Hailey put you in your place along the way when you faltered."

Jay laughs and extends his hand to him to shake. "Thanks, boss!"

"I wish you could still call me that. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't hoping you and Hailey would return to the unit before I retired. But we're all so happy for you; you guys have to do what's best." Voight says sadly.

Jay smiles in understanding. "Maybe one day…' he pauses as he looks over at Hailey's beaming face as she plays with her nephews. "But Detroit's not all that bad."

The rest of dinner moves much too quickly for all of them. While Hailey and Jay will remain in Chicago for the remainder of the weekend, everyone says their goodbye to them as if it's the last time they'll see them for months. For some of them, maybe it is. They make the return to their hotel in Adam's vintage car that he decked out specifically for the occasion. He even donned the back of it with a sign that read, "Halstead got Upped." Everyone got a good chuckle out of it as Jay just shook his head smirking. At this point, he just wanted some alone time with his wife. He doubts he'll ever get tired of hearing that.

A few hours later, well satiated, Hailey and Jay are lying together in their king-size "Honeymoon" suite. Hailey's resting her head on his chest as she softly runs her fingers over his gunshot scar. Another forever reminder of just how important it is to be happy and live in the now, you just never know. She moves her head slightly to look at his handsome face. His expression one of peace as his eyes bore into hers.

He softly strokes her arm, realizing there's more than she's saying. "What's on your mind?"

"I have something to tell you…" she whispers quietly.

Curiosity peaked, he moves them to a more sitting position in the bed. "What's wrong?"

"I didn't want to say anything until I was sure, so I took the test the other night…"

Jay waits patiently for her to continue, cluelessly male.

"Jay, I'm pregnant…" she says softly, smiling, watching his face turn from confusion to awe. A huge grin spreading as he holds her tighter.

"What? How could you know already? Wow, that was fast… I AM impressive!"

Hailey rolls her eyes smirking. "That night in your apartment, Jay… I wasn't back on the pill yet."

Realization dawns on his face. "OH, wow! …But wait, you were drinking wine tonight!?"

She cracks up. "Actually, I wasn't… I kept passing mine on to Platt while she wasn't looking."

"That explains it. I thought she was way too drunk for what she seemed to drink! She actual pinched my cheek while saying goodbye tonight!" They both burst into laughter.

When they finally recover from their amusement, Hailey insecurities slip through briefly. "So, you sure this is ok? It's not too much, too soon?"
Jay just grins, pulling her in tighter. "Are you kidding? This is the best news ever! I'm so happy, aren't you?"

She gives him her most beautiful smile. "I am. I'm really happy!" He kisses her tenderly, not knowing there's one last thing she has to mention.

"So, I did some math... and if my calculations are correct, it looks like the due date will be around July 10th..."

She gives him a minute to process this information. Watching on as that registers with him internally in his mind. July 10, 1984 was Greg 'Mouse' Gerwitz' birth date. She's hoping this only triggers good things with Jay. It's a completely random chance that she'll actually give birth on this day, but the way the universe seems to work itself in mysterious ways, the newlyweds know the odds are high.

Jay's eyes well up with tears and he exhales deeply in appreciation. He kisses Hailey softly and smiles.

"Well, if our kid wasn't already going to be the greatest in the world, this just confirms it to be true... They're probably going to be the most stubborn thing in the world though!"

They both laugh as happy tears stream down their face. Jay looks up towards the ceiling, silently thanking his old friend, knowing he's somehow oddly watching over him, over them. While Jay may have suffered great loss in his lifetime, he was gifted the greatest award in return... a family of his own with his best friend, his Hailey...

Jay and Hailey are sitting in his truck on another long stake out. It was like any of the countless others they've done, except it wasn't. It was a week ago today that the two had finally taken that long-awaited "next step." It had been the most amazing week ever, but naturally with anything new, it didn't come without hesitations. And especially for them, there was so much at stake.

After a few hours, it was Hailey who finally broached the subject. "Jay, are we sure about this?"

"What? That Demarco is inside looking to make a big sale? Your CI assured us it was happening at some point tonight."

"No, not the bust... I mean... Us?"

Jay turns to look at her now, the two of them sharing one of their famous looks. He reaches out for hand, lightly stroking it, making her shiver from the electric touch.

"Hailey, this has been the best week of my life. And unless my detective skills are slacking, it seems like it's been that way for you too."

"It has... but Jay... I don't know, what we had was great. You're my partner, my best friend, the only one I turn to when something gets too tough. What happens if it doesn't work out between us? I don't want to lose that."

"Hailey, we're never going to lose this. And worst case scenario, if something does happen... we'll find our way back to each other!"

"How can you be so sure?"

"It's simple- because you'll follow me blind, and I'll go where you go..." he smirks, so straightforward and confident, and all she can do is smile back.
"You are pretty cute when you're cocky..." she leans over and quickly kisses him.

"Good, my plan is working!..."

He responds as Hailey recognizes the words instantly, they both burst into laughter. Yea, they'll be alright...

[A/N: Well, we've now officially reached the end. Thank you for joining me on this journey. Lots of ups and downs, but hope it was all worth it in the long run. I tried to make it as true to real life as I could. I appreciate you all, not for just reading and reviewing, but for sharing in the Upstead love. What awesome people y'all are. So, truly, thank you! It's always a pleasure. Until next time... xoxo]

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!