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**Who Would Have Thought?**

by **bccalling**

**Summary**

When Mickey is released from prison after only a year and a half, he and Ian work to build a life together. Set in s7, canon divergent fluff.

**Notes**

Inspired by Darren Hayes’s “Who Would Have Thought?”

Also, I know fuck all about the legal system, but I figure if *Shameless* can send Mickey to prison for *fifteen years* with no evidence against him other than the chick who chased him down with a fucking gun, then we’re just gonna call this fiction and pretend, yeah?
Who Would Have Thought?
Chapter Summary

When Mickey comes home without notice, Ian has some decisions to make.

“Hey! Lookin’ good, Gallagher,” Mickey shouts from his stool as he sees a near frantic Ian shove through the door of the Alibi.

Ian’s gaze shoots to Mickey, and he rushes to other man’s side, murmuring out, “You motherfucker. How could you not tell me?! C’mere, Mick,” before crushing his lips against Mickey’s right there in the middle of the bar. It only lasts a few moments before Kev leads a cheer, and Mickey’s pulling away to flip him off.

“Heard you’re a fuckin’ EMT now, man. How’d that happen?” Mickey questions playfully, and Ian shakes his head again in disbelief.

“We’re not talking about me right now, asshole. How the fuck’d you get out of prison?! And how the fuck’d you think it was a good idea to text me to meet you at the fuckin’ Alibi instead of telling me you were getting out? Christ, Mick. I woulda picked you up or something.”

“Okay, Romeo. I can handle my fuckin’ self,” Mickey shoots back with that faux bravado he uses to fool everyone but Ian. “Wanted to surprise you or some shit.”

“Fuck you, it would have been a goddamn surprise either way.”

Ian can’t help it. He’s smiling, as he leans against the bar, closer to Mickey than they should probably be comfortable with.

“Yeah,” Mickey agrees, tilting his head toward Ian with a little eyebrow raise, “but then we woulda had to wait that whole damn drive to fuck around. Didn’t want to wait.”

A slow smile spreads over Ian’s lips again, and he lets out a little huff of a laugh as he leans the few inches forward to press another kiss to Mickey’s lips. “You coulda just come to the house, dumbass. I’m not gonna fuck you in the middle of the fuckin’ Alibi.”

“Yeah, well,” Mickey pauses, pulling back to down the rest of his drink, “I also needed a fucking drink.”

“I fuckin’ hate you,” Ian laughs as he tackles Mickey from behind and drags him close, matching carefree smiles stretching across their faces.

After a brief catch-up in the Alibi, Mickey takes Ian back to the Milkovich home, mostly because he’s not quite ready to deal with the entire Gallagher clan just yet. He wants time with Ian, just the two of them, before they bring in the rest of Ian’s giant family. Mickey had already told his brothers to split before he got home, and to his disbelief, they had actually listened, leaving the house empty and waiting for Mickey and Ian’s return.
Ian stops Mickey just outside the bedroom door, Ian’s eyes full of what Mickey thinks might be panic. Mickey rests a hand against Ian’s cheek to calm the other man as Mickey watches him carefully. “Hey,” he asks gently, “you okay?”

Ian half nods, half shrugs and then takes a deep breath that leaves Mickey nervous. Finally, Ian sputters out “I have a boyfriend. I want to be with you, but I have a boyfriend. I didn’t know you were getting out, and I was trying to move on, and I have a boyfriend, Mick.”

Ian’s talking so fast, Mickey thinks he might run out of breath. “Hey,” Mickey calms, eyebrows raised as he lays his hand against Ian’s chest to ground him, “it’s okay, Ian, we can—”

“I don’t want to be a cheater again, Mick,” Ian interrupts with wide, desperate eyes. “I just—I finally got my shit together, and I don’t want to fall back into old patterns.”

“Ian,” Mickey calls Ian’s attention back, catching his eye and making sure Ian holds his gaze, “It’s okay. We don’t have to do anything right now, okay? You can take all the time you need to figure things out. Let’s just catch up, okay. No sex, just. Just talking, yeah?”

Ian nods, but after dropping his gaze for a moment, he locks eyes with Mickey once again. “I just—I need time to end it. That’s all.”

Mickey’s taken aback for a moment. “You’re just gonna leave your fuckin’ boyfriend? Just like that?” His voice is incredulous. He’s happy, but he also doesn’t want to push Ian into doing something he’s going to regret.

“Yeah,” Ian confirms, all certainty.

For a moment, Mickey watches Ian, his eyes soft but wary. “Why?” Mickey can’t help himself; he wants to know.

Ian stares at him for a moment, eyes full of regret for memories long past. After a moment, he gives Mickey a gentle smile. “Because there’s only one fuckin’ guy I want, and it’s not fuckin’ him,” Ian answers, tone dripping with confidence.

It puts Mickey at ease near immediately, and he thinks he lets out a sigh of relief at the certainty in Ian’s eyes. Mickey’s tone turns a touch playful again, as he shoves open the bedroom door and nudges Ian’s shoulder with his own as he moves into the room, drinking in the sight of his own space, unchanged since he’d last been there. “That’s cold, Gallagher,” Mickey calls back as he flops himself down onto the bed, sinking back into the pillows. Once upon a time he’d thought this bed was shit, but after a year and a half on a prison bed, he’s never been more comfortable.

Ian follows him in, sitting down on the edge of the bed, a safe distance from Mickey. “No more so than if I string him along,” Ian explains, as he shifts around so he can look at Mickey. “I don’t want to do the cheating thing again, Mick. That was the bipolar. I don’t want that to be me, okay. I just. I want you. I want to be with you. I have since that fucking day I wandered into your damn bedroom looking for that gun. It took me some time to get myself together, but I’m together now, and we can finally be happy. If you want me, Mick, I can make you happy, but I can’t do that if I’m still with him. So just—just don’t question it, okay?”

Mickey smiles a little sadly at Ian’s insecurity and shifts forward a bit to rub a hand up Ian’s arm. “Hey,” Mickey says, pulling Ian’s eyes to his own, “I’m in this for the long haul, all right? We’re good. I get it. Do what you need to. I’ll be here, Ian. I’ll be here.”

In the end, Ian breaks things off with Trevor via text message. It’s shitty, and he knows it, but he’s
not going to wait around, and he needs it to end for his own piece of mind. He does it as gently as possible. Lets Trevor know he wants to meet and talk things through, but he’s made up his mind. He’s not sure it’ll be a shock anyway. They haven’t really been on the same page lately, and Ian thinks this was probably coming soon either way. Mickey’s return just upped the urgency.

Ian insists they wait to start having sex again until he hears from Trevor. Needs the confirmation before he’ll move forward. Ian sits toward the end of the bed, legs crossed under him as he flips the phone in his hand over and over, waiting for a response. Mickey starts to wonder if Ian’s making himself dizzy. It’s endearing, though, this new version of Ian. Ian isn’t different, exactly. In every way that counts, he’s still the same, and Mickey’s actually relieved at the new stance on cheating. Hopes it means they won’t be dealing with what they’d experienced a few years before.

Mickey can see that Ian’s getting antsy, though, and he smiles softly down at Ian from his place against the pillows, rubbing Ian’s back reassuringly. “Hey, you okay?” Mickey asks gently as he feels Ian lean back into his touch.

After a moment, Ian lets himself fall back into the bed, shifting until his head is cradled in Mickey’s lap. Mickey gives Ian another gentle smile and combs his fingers through Ian’s hair. Ian smiles up at Mickey, but it’s a little forced, and Mickey hates seeing Ian stressed like this.

“Just want to be with you. Hate making you wait like this,” Ian finally admits, glancing down at the phone in his hands again and sighing.

Mickey continues brushing his fingers through Ian’s hair as he tries to offer any relief he can. “Look,” Mickey begins, pulling Ian’s eyes up to his own, “I’ve waited a year and a half, Ian. I can wait a little longer, okay? You’re doing what’s right for you here. That’s what matters.”

For a while, they’re quiet, just lying together as Mickey runs his fingers rhythmically through Ian’s hair, and Ian breathes steadily in time with the sensation, eyes closed as he savors the time with Mickey. Ian’s phone stays silent, and Ian’s nervousness is beginning to wear off on Mickey. He can tell Ian’s frustrated, and Mickey wants to provide some kind of distraction.

“Hey,” Mickey says quietly, drawing Ian’s attention to him, “you gonna tell about how you became an EMT?”

“Only if you tell me how you got out of prison first,” Ian counters with a little smile when Mickey rolls his eyes. “Come on, Mick. You gotta tell me, man. It’s killing me.”

“All right,” Mickey surrenders with a chuckle, “all right, already, Gallagher.”

Ian smiles up at Mickey and waits for the story, prompting Mickey with a raise of his eyebrows when Mickey’s quiet for too long.

“Got out on appeal, man,” Mickey finally confides. “There wasn’t any actual evidence, and I didn’t actually try to kill her. It was all hearsay. And since she was the one caught chasing me down with a gun, they figured the conviction was kind of suspect, I guess. I just—well, I don’t really make a particularly sympathetic picture on the stand, and with a jury full of soccer moms, they managed to push through a guilty verdict pretty easily. It was bullshit, though, so we appealed, and here I am.”

Ian glances up at Mickey. “How did I not know you were appealing?” Ian asks, confused. He regrets the question near instantly, though, when the answer hits him.

Mickey sighs sadly as Ian tenses, stroking his fingers through Ian’s hair before letting them stray to
trace Ian’s jaw gently in reassurance. “You weren’t really around, Ian. Even the few times you visited, you weren’t really there. Not all of you. And I get it. I know you were trying to get everything under control, and I know you didn’t need to add a criminal boyfriend on top of all that. I didn’t want to bother you with my shit. Didn’t want to get your hopes up, either. So I did what I did, and now I’m here.”

“I’m sorry,” Ian whispers, voice tight. “It was selfish of me to stay away. I thought about you every minute, Mick. Missed you like crazy. It was like part of me was missing. And seeing you through that glass—having you so close, but still so far—it broke me, man. Every time. But it still wasn’t fair to you, and I am so sorry.”

Mickey smiles down at Ian, and it’s full of love and a touch of sadness. “I’m not going to pretend it didn’t hurt,” Mickey admits quietly. “It hurt really fuckin’ bad. But I get it. And it doesn’t matter anymore because we’re here now.”

With a gentle tilt of his lips, Ian carefully lifts himself onto his elbows, and Mickey leans down to meet him in a sweet, chaste kiss that holds all the promises of their future. And they both believe it in those moments.

The kiss is on the verge of turning into more when Ian’s phone suddenly breaks the silence. Ian looks down, stunned, and then suddenly he’s murmuring out a harsh “shit” before pressing the phone to his ear with a quiet “Hey” that he’s not really feeling as he shifts away from Mickey and back down to the end of the bed.

Ian had hoped Trevor would be petty enough to just text back, but no such luck.

Mickey watches Ian intently as he listens to the person on the other end. Mickey assumes it’s the boyfriend by the way Ian tenses and pushes himself off the bed to begin pacing the room. In the silence, Mickey can hear the frustrated voice on the other end of the line. Can’t hear what’s being said, but there are hints of anger and desperation there, and Ian hasn’t been able to get a word in, even though he’s tried—Mickey can see it in the shifts of Ian’s body language as he preps for a statement he can’t quite get out because the other party just won’t stop talking. And Mickey gets that, too. Good way to hold off the inevitable.

“Trev, it’s over,” Ian finally forces out, quiet, but sure, cutting off the man on the other end of the line and effectively silencing him. “We’re done. We can talk about it if you want, but you’re not going to change my mind. I’m moving forward. Without you. I’m sorry.”

Ian sighs heavily then, and Mickey can hear what he thinks is panicked begging. Mickey gets that, too. Ian’s not easy to let go.

“Sorry,” Ian repeats with finality, and this time the other line is quiet. “Goodbye, Trevor.”

And that’s the end of it. Ian ends the call, staring for long moments at the phone in his hand. “Harder than I thought,” Ian admits quietly as he sits himself back beside Mickey. Mickey reaches out, rubbing soothing circles into Ian’s back once more, and Mickey feels Ian relax almost instantly.

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“If you need time, it’s okay,” Mickey offers quietly, leaning forward to press a kiss to Ian’s shoulder and looping his arms loosely around Ian’s waist as he hooks his chin into the crook of Ian’s neck. “We don’t have to jump back in right away. If you want to take some time—think about this—I get it.”

“No,” Ian tells him firmly, body settling back against Mickey’s chest. “I want to be with you. I’m
not questioning that, Mick. It’s just hard. Feel a little guilty, you know? I didn’t want to admit it before—thought it’d be years until I could have this again—but I was just biding my time, waiting for you to come home. I tried so hard to convince myself it was more than that. That I was moving on. But having you back? I never moved on, Mick. Never even really wanted to. It’s always been you. I just feel like an ass.”

Mickey smiles a little at Ian’s confession. There are so many emotions warring inside him at the revelation, and he hates that Ian’s hurting, but he also feels a surge of warmth at finally knowing he’d never lost his place in Ian’s heart. Gently, Mickey presses kisses down Ian’s neck, fingers coming to play at the cut of Ian’s hips as he snakes his hands up under the loose tee Ian wears. They should probably take things slow, he thinks briefly—even though he knows they won’t. But then, there’s more than one kind of slow, and they’ve always been good at one of them.

“You sure?” Mickey asks gently one more time, searching for that final confirmation.

Ian nods, and Mickey can feel the slow, seductive smile that spreads across Ian’s face from where his lips are pressed just beneath Ian’s ear. “Want you, Mick,” Ian admits, breathless, as he turns in toward Mickey to meet his lips. They get lost for long moments, trading gentle kisses until they finally turn desperate, and Mickey can’t help but pull himself from behind Ian as he presses the other man down into the bed, claiming Ian’s lips again. They have a lot of lost time to make up for.

They start out with Ian pressed into the pillows, Mickey riding him slowly, but it’s not enough for either of them. With all of the desperation he’s feeling, Mickey pulls Ian up, shifting him until Ian’s sitting upright with Mickey cradled in his lap, and Mickey wraps his arms firmly around Ian’s neck, tucking his face into Ian’s hair and inhaling the scent that’s uniquely Ian. He'd missed this so much. They both had.

And this time it feels right, more intimate somehow, and Mickey takes full advantage of the easy access he has to Ian’s lips. They kiss slow and sweet as Mickey finds the rhythm again, rocking gently in Ian’s lap as they cling to one another, bodies pressed tight together as they make love for the first time in what feels like ages. They haven’t been close like this in so long. Haven’t had the extra layers of love and adoration and freedom. Too much time spent pretending. But they’re here now, and Mickey feels like he’s flying—like he could live here, in Ian’s arms, for the rest of his life. And that thought is more than enough to have Mickey gasping and shaking in Ian’s arms as Ian presses up into him at just the right angle, leaving Mickey a quivering mess. Ian smiles at how responsive Mickey is, more so than usual, really; the long separation leaving them both desperate.

“Marry me.”

Ian whispers the words against the corner of Mickey’s mouth, and they’re full of certainty and love and devotion, and Mickey hears them clear as day.

Mickey’s taken aback for a moment. Feels like he must be dreaming. Like any moment he’s going to wake up and find himself back in that prison. But when he presses his eyes shut tight and then opens them again, Ian’s still there, and they’re both still riding the high of their lovemaking, and Mickey has never in his life felt more complete. In their relationship, it’s always been Mickey who’s given like this.

But now it’s Ian, holding Mickey close and asking for forever.

Mickey feels his eyes well with tears as he pulls back to stare into Ian’s eyes. “What?” he breathes out, eyes full of adoration as he frames Ian’s face in his hands and holds his eye.
“Marry me,” Ian repeats, eyes glowing with love. It’s barely a question. Ian knows the answer.

“Fuck off,” Mickey answers, all playful heat as he leans in to capture Ian’s lips in a searing kiss. After a moment, he pulls back, lips still close enough to brush over Ian’s as a giddy smile takes over Mickey’s face. “You know I will.”
The Best Thing

Chapter Summary

Ian and Mickey work to settle into their new life together after Mickey’s recent return from his time in prison.

Chapter Notes

I don’t know where this is going, but I already have at least half of Chapter 3 written, and so we’ll see what happens.

Title from Savage Garden’s “The Best Thing.”

When Ian wakes, he’s pressed up behind Mickey, their bodies flush against one another, and Ian feels like he’s finally alive again. He hadn’t realized—not fully, at least—how lost he was without Mickey by his side. But with Mickey back, Ian finally feels whole again. Ian smiles softly as he nuzzles into Mickey’s neck, breathing him in and curling closer before pressing playful kisses down Mickey’s neck.

After a moment, Mickey groans and pushes back against Ian as he bites his lip and lets a smile stretch over his face. “You’re gonna tease me?” Mickey mumbles out sleepily as he squeezes at Ian’s hip gently. “You gotta be to work, man.”

“Maybe I’ll call in sick,” Ian offers, as he pulls away just a bit and leans up over Mickey on an elbow, reaching out with his free hand to trace gentle fingers down Mickey’s arm. “Stay here with you? We could spend the whole day in bed.”

Mickey smiles as he shifts over enough to catch Ian’s lips. “Won’t that get you in trouble? Don’t wanna mess with your shiny new career, man. Seems like it makes you happy.”

“It does,” Ian agrees with a little nod. “But so do you. And one day won’t be a big deal.”

For a moment, Mickey watches Ian. Then, decision made, he reaches out and pats Ian on the chest gently. “Nope. You gotta go to work. And I’ve gotta go find work. No messing up patterns, right? You’re doing good. I don’t wanna fuck with that, okay?”

Ian thinks on that for a bit, watching Mickey with a hint of longing in his eyes. He’s a little disappointed by the answer, but Mickey’s right, he knows. With a sigh, Ian murmurs out a quiet “All right” as he drops back onto the pillows and runs a hand through his hair. “You’re right.”

“Hey,” Mickey soothes, shifting until he’s lying on his side facing Ian, “I’ll be here when you get home. I’ll make us dinner; we’ll talk about our day. Like old times, yeah?” Ian nods as Mickey strokes Ian’s hair back behind his ear. “Trust me, man, I’d rather be here with you, too, but we’ve gotta jump back into reality, and I think nearly twenty four hours in bed is probably enough.”
Ian smiles and kisses Mickey again. “Yeah, I know,” he agrees. “You’re right. I’ll head in to work. You wanna join me in the shower at least?”

Mickey gives Ian a little smirk before pulling him in for a harsh kiss. “Fuck yes,” Mickey affirms before shoving at Ian’s shoulders and then following him to the shower when Ian finally takes the hint and rolls out of bed.

After they’d spent the last twenty four hours basically cut off from the world, Mickey’s not sure who even knows he’s back. He knows everyone at the Alibi knows, but the regulars there don’t necessarily interact enough with the Gallaghers for the news to have traveled so quickly. Mickey doesn’t think Ian’s told any of his family yet. Part of Mickey hopes, though, that Kev or V or Svetlana might have passed on the news so he and Ian won’t have to.

No such luck, though, Mickey realizes when he wanders into Patsy’s to a wide eyed Fiona who looks like her jaw is about to hit the floor. “Hey,” he offers in greeting, his voice quiet and a little nervous as he watches Fiona from across the room.

After a moment, the shock on Fiona’s face is replaced by a happy smile as she approaches him. “So you’re the reason Ian’s been MIA. Was gettin’ worried. Guess I didn’t need to be,” her smile never fades as she reaches him and pulls him into a tight hug that Mickey was not expecting. He stands stock still, frozen until she pulls back and pats his cheek. “How the hell’d you get out?”

“You going straight, then?” Fiona asks, a hint of surprise in her tone. “Never thought I’d see the day when Mickey Milkovich decided to ditch the life.”

“Appeal,” he admits, still a little shocked at her affectionate display. “Got out yesterday morning. Ian was with me at the house. I sent him off to work, and he recommended I stop by and talk to you about finding a job. Said you might need some help here with Carl off at military school. Thought I’d try.”

“You going straight, then?” Fiona asks, a hint of surprise in her tone. “Never thought I’d see the day when Mickey Milkovich decided to ditch the life.”

“Yeah, well,” Mickey shrugs and his eyes shift to the floor, “don’t really wanna get thrown in prison again, you know. Don’t wanna leave Ian high and dry like last time. And he’s gone legit, so I figured I’d give it a shot, too.”

“No shit,” Fiona’s smiling, and her hands are resting on her hips as she shrugs at Mickey. “Well, I could use another dishwasher with Carl gone. It’s not glamorous, and it’s only part time, but the job’s yours if you want it. Start tomorrow afternoon?”


“No problem,” she offers. After a moment, though, her gaze turns a little concerned, and Mickey watches her curiously. “So, uh,” she starts, running her fingers over her forehead nervously, “you and Ian are back together?”

Mickey smirks a little, but he doesn’t give anything away. “You could say that, yeah.”

Fiona takes a breath and she eyes Mickey warily. “Ian tell you about Trevor?”

And now Mickey gets it. She’s worried Ian’s not being entirely honest. Which Mickey gets, if only because it’s only been twenty four hours and Fiona knew nothing of Mickey’s return. She probably assumes Ian and Trevor are still together, at least technically.

Mickey nods. “Yeah. Uh—I don’t know if I’m supposed to tell you this—but Ian broke things off with him yesterday. Before we, uh. Before we got back together.”
Fiona’s trying to hold back a smirk at Mickey’s discomfort, but she also looks relieved at the news. “That’s good,” she offers. “Trevor’s a good guy, but he’s not you. Glad Ian made the choice up front.”

Mickey nods. He’s not sure what to say to that. He’s not exactly uncomfortable around Fiona—they’d developed a decent relationship before Mickey was locked up—but he was kind of expecting a different reception after the whole prison stint.

After a moment of silence, Fiona glances over her shoulder at the chaos happening behind her with her staff. She takes a breath and then turns back to Mickey. “All right, well. I gotta get back. I’ll introduce you to the team tomorrow. Be here at noon?” Mickey nods in affirmation, and she smiles again before giving him another little squeeze. “It’s good to have you back, Mickey. Why don’t you and Ian come by the house tomorrow night? We’ll have a little welcome home party, yeah.”

Mickey smiles. “Sure,” he agrees. “I’ll check in with Ian, and I’ll let you know.”

“Good,” Fiona smiles, clapping him on the shoulder. “Now go tell everyone you’re home.”

“Thanks again, Fiona,” Mickey offers up a thankful little grin before turning to walk away as Fiona waves him off and wanders back to return to work.

Later, after he’s done a bit of grocery shopping, and spent too much time feeling bored at the uncharacteristically quiet Milkovich house, Mickey finds himself standing on Kev and V’s doorstep. He’s spent a lot of time away from Yevgeny, and Mickey finds himself wanting to see his son now that he’s home. It takes him a bit, but Mickey finally gets up the nerve to knock at the door. It opens near instantly, and Kev’s staring back at him with an eyebrow raised.

“Took you long enough,” Kev tells him as he steps aside. “Thought you were just gonna stand out there all day.”

Mickey narrows his eyes at the back of Kev’s head, and he feels like maybe he should be irritated already, but he can’t quite find that place when he spots Yevgeny’s blond head on the play mat across the room. Mickey can’t help but smile at the little guy, wandering closer as Kev lifts Yevgeny into his arms before turning to Mickey.

“Figure you came to see this guy, huh?” Kev asks with a smile as Mickey reaches out and Kev passes Yev over to Mickey. “Svetlana’s been a little weird since you got back. She’s not sure it’s a good idea you see him. But I figure, if you’re here and you wanna see him, might as well, right? Kid deserves to have his dad around.”

Mickey nods along, but he’s barely listening as he holds his son for the first time since Yev was just little. The little guy is heavier than Mickey remembers, by a lot, and it makes Mickey’s heart ache a bit that he’d had to miss so much time with his son. Mickey had spent a long time fighting not to care and even more time locked away where he wasn’t allowed more than a few minutes with Yev through that damn glass. It feels surreal now, holding Yevy in his arms, no time limit in sight, free to be a dad. Part of Mickey fears he’ll fuck it all up—afraid he’ll turn into the next Terry or, hell, even Frank, and leave the boy to fend for himself while Mickey’s locked up or some shit.

But Mickey’s made up his mind that he’s going to try to change that. For all of them. He’s going to work to leave that life behind, to put himself in a position where the cops aren’t a threat and he can have his family back without that fear of loss. Because Mickey’s missed Ian and Yev more than he ever could have imagined he would, and leaving them behind again is no longer an option for him.
With a smile, Mickey presses a little kiss to the top of Yev’s head, and Yev reaches up to pat Mickey’s cheek with his little hand. “Da!” the boy shouts with a happy little smile, and Mickey’s sure it doesn’t mean anything, but he can’t help but hope that someday it will as he rocks his son in his arms and admires how big the boy has gotten and how well he’s growing up.

After a moment, he notices Kev staring at him with his arms crossed over his chest as he leans against the nearest wall. Mickey gives him a glare, embarrassed at being caught in such a vulnerable moment, but Kev’s not easily intimidated.

“Hey,” Kev says, raising his hands in surrender, “I won’t tell another soul, man. But dad to dad? I’m glad you’re back. Deep down, you’re a good guy, and Yev deserves to know his real dad. He’s a real good kid, Mickey. Learning fast. Loves Svet and the girls, pretty attached to me and V. And he still seems to think of Ian like a dad. They don’t see each other as much anymore, but when they do, it’s like they’ve never been separated, you know? We’ve all got an interesting little family unit here, and I think you’ll make a good addition.”

Mickey’s not sure how he feels about that, exactly, but he’s happy to hear that Yevgeny’s surrounded by so much love, and he can’t help but smile. “Thanks, man,” Mickey offers. “For everything. Especially for taking care of him.”

Kev nods with a smile, and then sighs when one of the twins starts wailing from upstairs. “Looks like duty calls,” Kev says, crooking a thumb over his shoulder toward the stairs. “Sit and stay a while. I could use the help.”

Mickey considers for a moment, watching Kev disappear up the stairs. Thinks about heading out to avoid the chaos he’s sure is about to start. But when he hears Yevgeny shout “Da!” one more time with a happy smile, Mickey decides he’ll stay after all.

“Hey, babe,” Ian calls as he pushes through the door of the Milkovich house, finding Mickey sitting on the couch with a beer in hand. Mickey scrunches his nose up at the term of endearment, and Ian laughs. “Yeah, okay,” he agrees with a smile as he pllops down beside Mickey and grabs the beer from his hand, “I’m not feeling that one either.”

“Good,” Mickey insists with a touch of heat behind his words. “Don’t fuckin’ use it again.”

Ian laughs again and leans over for a kiss. “Whatever you say, babe,” he jokes, and it earns him a playful little punch in the shoulder as Mickey tries to hold back his own chuckle. “How’d you make out with Fi?”

“Not bad,” Mickey admits. “She fucking hugged me, man. Which was weird as shit, but she gave me a job, so that’s a win, I guess.”

Ian smiles and hands the beer bottle back over to Mickey after taking a long swig of the cool liquid. “Sounds like Fi. She always liked you. Just pretended not to,” he offers, and Mickey scoffs, even though they both know Ian’s right. “You tell her the news?” Ian asks tentatively as his eyes lift to meet Mickey’s.

Mickey bites his lip and drops his eyes down to his hands for a moment. He’s nervous, and it’s clear in the change in his posture as his body tenses under Ian’s gaze. “No,” he admits, fingers picking at the label of the beer bottle he holds, “was that real? I mean, were we serious about that?”

Ian shrugs a little, Mickey’s nerves contagious it seems, as Ian’s eyes fall to his lap and Mickey’s
shift over to Ian. “I don’t know,” Ian admits, lifting his gaze to meet with Mickey’s. “I was. I meant it. Did you?”

For a moment, it’s silent, both of them sitting frozen, Ian waiting for Mickey’s answer, and Mickey letting Ian’s words sink in. And then, suddenly, Mickey’s entire face lights up with happiness, and he’s leaning in to catch Ian’s lips in a gentle kiss, the fingers of his free hand coming up to cradle Ian’s cheek. When Mickey pulls back, he’s wearing the sweetest smile Ian’s ever seen, and Ian can’t help but smile back.

“We’re engaged,” Mickey whispers, tone dripping with barely contained joy. “We’re getting married, Ian.”

Ian’s grin grows impossibly brighter as he leans in to catch Mickey’s lips again. “Yeah,” he murmurs against Mickey’s mouth. “Yeah, we are.”
The Wrong Way

Chapter Summary

Ian brings Mickey to the Gallagher home to announce their news. Trevor shows up looking for answers.

Chapter Notes

I actually really like Trevor, and I feel like he and Mickey would legitimately get along, so this is what came out of that.

Chapter inspired by Darren Hayes’s “The Wrong Way.” Mostly for the exchange with Trevor toward the end. Also, I suck at titles, so I just steal the titles of the songs I listen to while writing, whether they make sense or not.

Mickey’s first shift at the diner goes well. It’s only a four hour, and Fiona makes sure he sticks to the schedule. She has plans for them for the evening, and she’s intent on making sure Ian and Mickey both show up on time, so she’s shooing him out of the kitchen at exactly 4:00pm and babbling about expecting them at the Gallagher house no later 7:00pm.

“All right, all right,” Mickey waves her off as he shucks his apron and wanders toward the front of the diner. “I got it. We’ll be there at seven. No later.”

“God damnit!”

Mickey jumps at the raise in Fiona’s voice, and he glances over his shoulder at her with an irritated shrug. “What the fuck?!“ he questions before following her eyes to the booth near the door.

“The hell are you doing here?!” Fiona shouts, as she hightails it across the restaurant to where Ian’s nursing a cup of coffee.

He smiles wide when he sees her and scoops her up into a hug. “Hey, sis,” he murmurs before he lets her go and glances over to Mickey, who’s leaning against the counter with his arms crossed. A little raise of Ian’s eyebrow, though, gets Mickey moving toward him with a little scoff, as Ian continues, “Just thought I’d drop in and share a cup of coffee with my man after his first shift. That a crime?”

When Mickey reaches them, Ian shifts close and leans over to press a quick kiss to Mickey’s mouth. For a moment, Mickey tenses, still a little out of practice with the whole public affection thing. But when Ian pulls away, Mickey smiles up at him and lets Ian loop an arm around his waist to tug Mickey close.

Fiona shakes her head and rolls her eyes. “You two are disgusting,” she murmurs with quiet affection before she’s back to shoosing them. “Not happening today, so get the hell out. We’ve got a welcome home party at seven, and you two idiots are going to be there on time if I have to drag
you there myself. Now go home, shower, and get your asses to the house. On time.”

Ian laughs and Mickey shakes his head. “You see what I gotta deal with here,” Mickey chas...
Debbie lets him go, but Mickey can’t help but notice the little sneer Debbie throws at Fiona as she steps away. Mickey shoots a look at Ian, and Ian gives him a little told you shrug as Fiona steers Mickey to her now empty chair. “Sit down, I’ll get you a beer,” she tells him with a little tap to his shoulder.

Mickey sits, and all of a sudden, the room erupts into chaos again, Mickey suddenly at the center of it all.

As he’s surrounded, though, Mickey notices an unfamiliar face, hanging back near the kitchen doorway, keeping free of the action. Mickey catches Ian’s eye and tilts his head in the direction of the unexpected visitor, and Ian sighs harshly when he catches the eye of the man in the doorway. Ian glances back at Mickey and mouths the word Trevor over his shoulder as he moves toward the living room and catches the other man’s arm.

Mickey watches as Ian shifts into the other room, until the two are out of sight, and then he’s forced to turn his attention back to the hoards of people surrounding him as Yevgeny is placed firmly in Mickey’s lap, and Mickey’s left to answer a hundred questions from the curious Gallaghers and friends.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” Ian hisses as he tugs Trevor out of the eyeline of the crowd in the kitchen. He’s frustrated. He’d said they could talk, but he hadn’t meant here or now, in the middle of Mickey’s welcome home party.

“You said we could talk,” Trevor offers, a hint of frustration in his tone, “so I came by. Wasn’t expecting you’d be here with another guy, though.”

“Look,” Ian starts with a sigh, crossing his arms over his chest defensively, “I—"

Trevor cuts Ian off, though, before Ian can continue. “How could you do this, Ian? I thought we had something.”

Ian shakes his head. He’s angry, frustrated that this is happening now of all times. He wants to be back in the other room with Mickey. Wants to share their happy news with the family. He doesn't want to be here, arguing with Trevor over something they both know is over. “We dated for a month. Let’s not make this into more than it is, all right?”

Trevor scoffs, and his eyes are glassy. “You’re just gonna walk away without even giving me a real explanation?”

Ian spins on him, facing off with the other man. “I’m fucking engaged,” he spits, his frustration growing. “Okay, Trevor. I’m engaged.”

Trevor’s eyes are wide, and the sadness has been replaced by anger and disbelief. “Are you fucking kidding me? You’re engaged to him? The guy in the other room acting like he’s your fucking family?”

“He is my fucking family,” Ian shoots back, crossing his arms over his chest. “I get that you’re angry, and I know this isn’t fair to you, but Mickey is—he’s fucking Mickey. And I’ve been in love with him since I was fifteen years old. He’s home now, and we’re engaged, and it is what it is.”

Trevor’s silent for a moment, eyes full of anger. “And how long have you been cheating on me, exactly?” he questions, the heat behind his voice weakening a bit as the hurt seeps back in.

“I never once cheated on you,” Ian tells him, and he’s hurt by the insinuation. “I broke it off before
anything happened again with Mick.”

“That was three days ago.,” Trevor shoots back. And yeah, okay, Ian knows how bad this looks. “You expect me to believe you got back together with some random ex and got engaged in three fucking days, Ian.”

“You know what,” Ian gives up, throwing up his hands and shaking his head in frustration, “believe whatever the fuck you want. My conscience is clear. How about you get the hell out if you’re gonna act like a dick.”

Trevor deflates a bit, and Ian can’t help but feel a little guilty. Trevor doesn’t know his history with Mickey; couldn’t possibly understand what they have. And without that history, Ian knows how bad this all looks.

“Can I at least meet the man who stole you away?” Trevor asks with a sigh, locking eyes with Ian. “I think I deserve that much, don’t you?”

Ian sighs, shrugging his shoulders and dropping his arms in defeat. “If you can be civil, then yeah, you can meet him. He’s probably going to be an ass, though. He gets jealous. And also, he’s just kind of an ass.”

Trevor can’t help but smile with a little chuckle at that, and Ian breaks then, too, letting a half smile of his own tip at his lips.

“Yeah,” Trevor agrees with a shrug. “I can be civil. Long as he’s not too much of a dick.”

Ian’s eyebrows lift, and he tips his head in a little gesture of doubt. “Good luck with that,” he throws over his shoulder as he leads Trevor back into the kitchen where the entire Gallagher family is laughing and joking with Mickey at the center, bouncing Yevgeny on his knee as the little boy giggles up at his dad. Ian can’t help but smile at the sight. Ian knows Mickey loves Yev. Mickey tries to hide it from Svet and, really, pretty much everyone other than Ian and Yevgeny himself, but after the long separation, Mickey seems more content to let it be known that he cares about his son.

Ian hangs back a bit as Trevor moves past him, and Ian watches with a fond little smirk as Mickey’s eyes narrow at the sight of Trevor. It doesn’t take long, though, before Mickey spots Ian and his eyes soften as a smile tips at the corners of his lips. Ian returns the gesture before glancing briefly to Trevor and mouthing the words be nice back at Mickey, who scoffs with a roll of his eyes and mouths back un-fucking-likely and Ian shakes his head with a laugh.

As Trevor rejoins the group, Ian feels a tug at his elbow and he turns to find Fiona, who pulls him back away from the bustling kitchen.

“I just hear you say you and Mickey are engaged?” she questions with wide eyes, brows raised in curiosity once they're safely in the living room and out of earshot.

Ian can’t keep the little smile from touching his lips. “Yeah,” he admits quietly. “That okay with you?”

Fiona considers for a moment, a few thoughtful expressions dancing across her features as she thinks over the question. “It wasn’t just a heat of the moment thing?” she settles on, watching Ian carefully.

“No,” he shakes his head, smiling again at the fond memory. “I mean, yeah, I guess technically it was definitely the heat of the moment. But it was real, you know? We’re engaged, Fi. Mickey and I are getting married.”
At his response, Fiona finally allows a big, genuine smile to stretch over her features, lighting up her face and making Ian sigh in relief. “In that case,” she starts, reaching out to squeeze Ian’s shoulders, “I’m happy for you. And I’m proud of you. You deserve the happy ending. I’m starting to think you’re the Gallagher who’s gonna make it. And for whatever reason, Mickey Milkovich is good for you, and you’re good for him. So. Happy engagement, kiddo.”

Ian’s eyes light with happiness as he reaches out to pull her into a hug. “Thank you, Fi.”

“You’re welcome,” she offers, squeezing him tight for a moment before pulling away and shooing him toward the kitchen. “Now go make your announcement so we can all be happy for you two idiots.”

As they re-enter the kitchen, Ian can’t help but notice that the smile on Fiona’s face never falters. She looks light and free, and she seems genuinely happy for Ian and Mickey. It feels good, having her support, and he thinks maybe that’s a good sign for the rest of the family.

“All right, listen up!” Fiona announces to the cheery room. “These two assholes have some news, so shut the fuck up and let ’em speak!”

“Fi, what the fuck?” Ian asks with a laugh.

Fiona just smirks and sweeps an arm out for a little dramatic flair. “Your audience awaits.”

Ian shakes his head with a chuckle as he shifts over to stand behind Mickey, pulling the other man’s left hand up into his own and squeezing gently as he entwines their fingers. Everyone in the room is staring at them expectantly, and there’s a little half smirk playing on Mickey’s lips as he glances up at Ian before returning his eyes to their audience. Ian takes a deep breath, letting it out slowly before he begins to speak.

“Most of you know Mickey and I have a pretty intense history,” he begins, and Mickey rolls his eyes.

“Just fuckin’ spit it out, Gallagher. We don’t need a fuckin’ speech.”

Ian shakes his head and pinches the skin on Mickey’s wrist. “Fine, asshole,” Ian concedes with a fond smile. “We’re fucking engaged.”

It takes a minute for the news to settle. For a bit, the entire room is silent, and Mickey and Ian can see their family working to process the news. But then the slow smiles start to form, and their fears are put at ease when they hear Kev’s voice break the silence with that giddy, happy tone he gets when he’s excited.

“Holy shit!” Kev shouts into the quiet room. “Congratulations!”

And that’s all it takes for the entire room to explode into well wishes and congratulations and smiles and hugs that feel like they’ll never stop. Ian kind of hopes they won’t. And he thinks Mickey might feel the same, even if Mick is pretending to be annoyed by all the affection.

After a bit, Mickey and Ian finally find their way back to one another. Mickey’s still holding Yevgeny—Ian thinks as a buffer to avoid the hugs the family has been throwing at him—and Ian smiles wide as he pulls Yev from Mickey’s arms with a little coo of affection before pressing a kiss to Mickey’s lips. Mickey settles into the kiss. It’s mostly innocent, and they both love that they’re allowed the gentle displays of affection here with their family and friends.
They get a little bit lost in one another as Fiona turns up the music and the celebration really begins in the living room. Ian pulls Mickey close, kissing Mickey’s hair as they watch their family in the other room. It’s surreal, Ian thinks, having Mickey home and having him close as the entire Gallagher clan and their closest friends celebrate their engagement announcement.

When Trevor approaches, though, Ian feels Mickey tense a bit and their little bubble is broken by the sudden intrusion. Ian rubs Mickey’s shoulder gently to calm him, and he hopes Mickey’s eyes aren’t shooting the daggers at Trevor that Ian fears they are.

“Hey,” Trevor offers, and his voice is tight, but he’s trying. “I guess congratulations are in order.”

“Fuckin’ right,” Mickey mumbles under his breath, and Ian pinches his shoulder in warning.

Trevor smirks a little with a raised eyebrow. “You weren’t kidding,” he offers with a glance to Ian before extending a hand to Mickey. “I’m Trevor. The ex, I guess. And, uh, I hear you’re Mickey —”

“The fiancé,” Mickey finishes for him, voice smug and possessive as he crosses his arms over his chest and refuses to shake Trevor’s hand.

“Be nice,” Ian reminds, as he rocks Yevgeny on his hip. He thinks they probably make a jarring family picture for Trevor. It’s unlikely he was expecting this level of intimacy between them.

“Fuck off,” Mickey shoots back at Ian, and Ian shakes his head with a laugh.

Trevor looks uncomfortable as he watches them warily. For a moment, Ian think Trevor may be assessing Mickey like a threat. As though the casual exchange of crude expressions somehow implies Mickey’s not good enough. It makes Ian want to roll his eyes. But then again, Trevor’s entitled to his opinion and, well, it’s probably unlikely to be a positive one under the circumstances.

Trevor keeps it together, though, and gives them all a smile that doesn’t even look entirely forced. “You guys look like a family,” he offers. “Is Yevgeny yours, Mickey?”

Mickey raises an eyebrow at the small talk, but softens a little. Just a little. “Yeah,” he admits, shifting so he can smile softly at Yev as he tickles the toddler’s tummy and Yev giggles at his dad. “He’s mine. And we are a family. Have been for a long time. Just lost our way for a bit.”

Mickey’s voice is soft as he smiles loving up at Ian and Yev, and Ian can’t help but lean down to press a soft kiss to Mickey’s lips. It’s been a long time, but they’re back and they have each other again, and Ian’s happier than he has been in a long time.

Even Trevor lets a genuine smile cross his face as he watches them, even if there is a touch of sadness behind it. “You look happy,” Trevor admits, glancing up at Ian. “Are you happy?”

Ian smiles softly, pressing a kiss to Mickey’s temple and nodding in confirmation. “Yeah,” Ian admits, voice drenched in certainty. “I don’t think I’ve ever been happier.”

Trevor nods before his eyes turn to Mickey. “Both of you?” he asks, honest curiosity in his tone.

Mickey stares back for a moment, and the softness in his eyes extends to Trevor. Ian can see Mickey’s developing a bit of a soft spot for his ex, and it makes Ian smile. “No one has ever made me happier than this man right here,” Mickey admits as he takes Ian’s free hand and squeezes it gently.
“Good,” Trevor says, honestly. “I’m happy for you both. Really. I should, uh, probably go, though. Don’t really belong here anymore.”

“You’re always welcome here,” Ian counters, and he means it. “You were important to me, Trev. And we were friends before we ever started seeing each other. I’d like it if we could be that again.”

Trevor’s eyes flick to Mickey. He’s clearly unsure whether Mickey’s likely to accept the possibility of Ian remaining friends with an ex. Mickey nods, offering a bit of reassurance, and Trevor’s lets out a little sigh of relief. “Yeah,” he offers, eyes turning to Ian’s. “I’d like that. But, uh, for now, I’m gonna go. Congrats, guys. Really.”

As Trevor turns to leave, Mickey clears his throat to stop him. “Hey,” Mickey offers, voice unsure. “I’m sorry, man. For all of this. You seem like a good guy, and you didn’t deserve this. I just. I love him, you know. And I’m pretty sure he feels the same way. But it was shitty how it all went down, and I’m sorry for that.”

Trevor smiles sadly at the apology. “I get it,” he nods. “Ian’s tough to let go. He deserves the world. Make sure you give it to him.”

“I’m gonna do everything in my power to do just that,” Mickey agrees. And after a moment, he reaches out his hand, offering it to Trevor. With a raised eyebrow, Trevor smiles and takes the offered hand, shaking it firmly. “Thanks for coming, man.”

“Yeah,” Trevor nods. “Thanks for having me. Hopefully, I’ll see you again soon, Mickey.”

And with that, Trevor heads toward the living room to offer his goodbyes to the rest of the family. Ian stares after him for a moment, eyes wide in shock. “Holy shit,” Ian exclaims in disbelief as Mickey reaches out and takes Yevgeny back into his arms, Ian’s eyes never leaving Trevor’s retreating form. “I think he liked you. And you liked him.”

“Shut the fuck up,” Mickey snaps as he rolls his eyes at the smile that stretches across Ian’s face. “I fuckin’ hate you, man.”

“Mmhm,” Ian murmurs, leaning in until his lips are just a breath away from Mickey’s, “sure you do.” And with that, he captures Mickey’s lips in a sweet kiss that leaves them both breathless. “I love you, Mickey Milkovich.”

“Jesus Christ,” Mickey mutters under his breath with another roll of his eyes. “Love you, too, you fuckin’ asshole.”
“Morning, Mickey,” Fiona offers as Mickey heads into the diner. He’s a little early, but she knows Ian had an early shift, and she figures Mickey was likely bored at home alone. She’s certainly not going to complain about good help.

Mickey gives her a little nod in acknowledgment and offers a smile. He looks happy, Fiona thinks, as he wanders to the back to get himself set up for the day. She’s happy for the both of them, and she thinks if anyone can make it, it’s Mickey and Ian.

She wanders back after him a moment later. It’s a slow morning so far, still early enough that they’re between their late night rush and the breakfast crowd, so she has a minute, especially with the girls up front.

“So,” Fiona starts, leaning back against the nearest surface and crossing her arms over her chest, eyes full of curiosity. Mickey jumps a bit—he wasn’t expecting her to follow him—but he covers it quickly, and Fiona laughs a little to herself, “you guys make any plans for the wedding yet?”

Mickey looks at her, confusion evident in his eyes. He’s still not used to the affectionate fawning the entire Gallagher family has been doing since he and Ian announced their engagement.

“I don’t know,” Mickey admits with a shrug. “We were thinking we might just head down to the courthouse, get a marriage license, you know? Don’t know that we need to make a big deal.”

Fiona gives him a look, her face scrunching up in disbelief. “Really?” she asks, and when he nods, she shakes her head as if trying to clear the distaste she’s feeling. Mickey almost wants to laugh.

“Yeah,” Mickey tells her, all matter of fact, as he watches her cautiously.

“Look,” Fiona offers after a moment, watching Mickey closely, “I’m not exactly an expert here. I got married—or tried to—twice. First time, I did the courthouse thing. Second, tried for the big wedding. Neither one ended very well, so I might not be the best person to give advice here. But
you and Ian? You’ve been in love for a long time. And you’ve been through a lot together. The big ceremony doesn’t mean much, really, in the grand scheme of things. But if anyone deserves the celebration, it’s you and Ian.”

Mickey watches her for a moment, quietly, as he tries to take in everything she’s saying. He’d never really thought of it that way, and he doubts Ian has either.

Finally, he takes a deep breath and lets out a sigh as he shrugs his shoulders. “We’ll think about it,” he offers honestly. “We don’t really have a lot of money, though, and we’re looking to find a place of our own. Not sure we can swing a big ceremony.”

Fiona nods and reaches out to give Mickey’s shoulder a squeeze. “If you guys want the big celebration, we can figure it out, money or no. We’re Southside, Mick. We’ll get it done.”

Mickey smiles at that as Fiona wanders away to leave him with his thoughts. He’s not sure, really, what he wants, and in the end, as long as he comes away from it all married to Ian, he’ll be happy. But it’s worth thinking about, at least, so he resolves to chat with Ian about their options when he gets home.

Ian’s sitting on the porch of the Milkovich house with Lip. It’s starting to get dark outside, and there’s a cool breeze making the summer heat more bearable. Mickey’s working an extra shift at the diner, and he won’t be home for a while yet, so Ian had taken the opportunity to invite Lip over for a bit. The house is still empty, save for Mickey and Ian—Mickey’s brothers apparently on a run that’s taken them out of town for a couple of weeks, and while that seems like an awfully long run, Ian’s not one to argue with good fortune.

“So, you and Mickey, huh?” Lip asks, passing the cigarette he holds over to Ian. “How’d that happen? Thought you’d moved on?”

Ian shrugs, taking a long drag. “He’s back. I hadn’t. So, you know, here we are?”

“He seems different,” Lip admits, watching Ian closely. “How long you think that’ll last.”

Ian shoots a glare at Lip. He’d thought Lip might be different about this—stop pretending he somehow knows what’s best for everyone’s life but his own. No such luck, though, apparently.

“He’s not that different,” Ian insists, defensiveness coloring his tone.

Lip scoffs, taking the cigarette back from Ian and taking a drag. “He’s talking about leaving the life. That sound like Mickey Milkovich to you?” Lip argues.

Ian shakes his head, wondering if this little meet up was a bad idea. “Not far off, actually,” Ian insists, and his voice is honest. “He wants to be a good dad, Lip. Wants to marry me. He can’t do any of that if he’s locked up.”

Lip nods, and Ian thinks maybe that got through to him. Hopes at the very least that Lip will be civil with Mickey. Ian understands that his brother’s protective, but Lip’s not all there right now, and the last thing Ian wants is for Mickey to get caught in the crossfire of Lip’s issues.

“What about the marriage thing?” Lip asks, and this time he sounds genuinely curious. “That’s different, isn’t it?”

Ian smiles softly at the implication. He’d never shared the details of his previous breakup with Mickey, and even Ian sometimes has trouble believe that Mickey Milkovich had essentially fucking
proposed to him that day. “Not really,” Ian admits, glancing over to catch the confused look on Lip’s face, “back when we broke up—right before Sammi chased him down—he, uh, he said some things. Sounded like he was thinking about it then, too.”

“Huh,” Lip nods, letting the new information sink in. “So, how’d he propose this time, anyway? You guys didn’t share the story at the party.”

“I proposed,” Ian corrects with a little smirk. “We were in bed.”

Lip freezes, turning wide eyes on Ian, and Ian nods in confirmation. “No shit,” Lip laughs, and Ian joins him. “You proposed while you were fucking him?”

“Yeah,” Ian admits with another smirk. “I proposed. He said yes. We talked about it the next day to make sure it was what we both wanted, and it was. So. Here we are.”

“Shit,” Lip nods, some of the tension leaving him, “you’re getting married, man. To Mickey Milkovich. Who woulda guessed that, huh?”

Ian smiles honestly, watching Lip for a moment. “You happy for us?” Ian finally ventures. It’s a dangerous question, but Ian wants to know.

Lip looks at Ian for a minute, and he seems unsure. “Are you happy?” Lip finally asks.

A smile breaks across Ian’s face, and he answers near immediately. “Yeah. Yeah, man. I’m really, really happy.”

“All right,” Lip says, clapping a hand on Ian’s knee, “then I’m happy for you. For both of you.”

Ian smiles again and nods. There’s not much more he could ask for, really.

When Mickey gets home, Lip’s heading down the block, and Ian’s still on the porch finishing his smoke. Ian’s face lights up when Mickey approaches, and Mickey can’t help but smile back happily.

“Hey,” Mickey offers quietly, as he leans down to press a kiss to Ian’s mouth.

Ian sinks the fingers of his free hand into Mickey’s hair to hold him close, and he smiles against Mickey’s lips. “Hey, babe,” Ian greets, smile turning mischievous, “Missed you today.”

Mickey rolls his eyes at the pet name. Ian had taken to using it the moment he’d discovered how much Mickey disliked it just to poke fun. Now, though, Mickey finds that it’s growing on him. He’s not interested in letting Ian in on that little secret, though.

“Let me take a quick shower, and then we can spend some time,” Mickey says as he straightens back up and strokes a hand through Ian’s hair.

“Want me to join you?” Ian asks over his shoulder as Mickey moves toward the house, shifting to catch Mickey’s eye.

Mickey smiles but shakes his head. “Nah, man. I’ll be quick. Then we can have a little fun, yeah?”

Ian smiles at the wink Mickey throws his way and nods in agreement. “Sounds good. I’ll be in in a minute.”
Mickey chuckles when he slips into the bedroom in nothing but a towel to find Ian stripped down to his boxers, waiting impatiently for Mickey.

“You’re not wasting any time, huh?” Mickey questions with a smirk as he leans down to kiss Ian soundly.

When the pull apart, Ian tugs at the towel Mickey still holds around his waist. “Missed you,” Ian insists. “We’ve had weird work shifts the past couple days. Haven’t had nearly enough fiancé time.”

Mickey smiles at that. Ian’s been taking any and every opportunity to verbally enforce their new relationship status, and Mickey loves it. “Seems like you’re looking for sex time,” Mickey jokes as he crawls up the bed to meet Ian, and Ian laughs.

“Yeah,” Ian agrees, dragging Mickey down to him and rolling them over so Ian has the upper hand, “still got a lot of time to make up for,” he insists as he catches Mickey’s lips and presses Mickey’s hands to the pillow above his head.

“Love you,” Mickey murmurs with a smile as Ian’s lips slip down Mickey’s neck, and Mickey can feel the grin that stretches over Ian’s lips where they’re still pressed to Mickey’s skin.

“Love you, too,” Ian whispers out, shifting back up for a sweet kiss as he rolls his hips against Mickey’s and presses their bodies close.

“So,” Mickey says as he lays beside Ian, still working to catch his breath and sneering at Ian’s cocky smirk, “you hang out with Lip today?”

“Yeah,” Ian nods, tucking an arm behind his head, so he can watch Mickey more comfortably.

“How’s he doing?” Mickey asks as he shifts himself up into a sitting position, leaning over the bedside table to dig out a pack of cigarettes. Mickey’s genuinely curious. Mickey and Lip have never been close, exactly—they hardly get along, really—but he knows Ian’s worried, and Mickey wants Lip to be good, even if only for Ian’s sake.

“I don’t know,” Ian admits, drumming his fingers against his chest. “Think he’s doing a little better, but he’s got a problem. Won’t admit it, but his drinking’s out of control.” Mickey nods a little and watches Ian closely. “He said he was happy for us, though,” Ian continues after a moment, eyes lighting up a little. “Think he even meant it, too.”

A grin stretches across Mickey’s features at that, and he leans down over Ian to press another kiss to his lips, holding the lit cigarette in his fingers far away from the two of them as he does.

Ian laughs at that when Mickey pulls back. “Just set it in the ashtray for three seconds, Mick,” Ian chastises, pinching Mickey’s hip playfully.

“Fuck off,” Mickey answers with another smile, shifting to sit himself back up and taking a drag from the cigarette.

They both laugh after a minute, and once Mickey’s done, they settle into the covers, cuddling close to one another and trading soft kisses in the quiet until they’re ready to drift off to sleep.

The next morning, Mickey wakes beside Ian, sunlight streaming in through the window, and leaving Mickey blinking at the unwelcome light. He’s not sure he’s ever been more comfortable.
Mickey smiles despite the light, and shifts onto his back so he can see Ian’s face. Ian’s smiling beside him, arm still thrown over Mickey’s middle, and Ian shifts up onto an elbow so he can press a good morning kiss to Mickey’s lips.

“Morning,” Ian murmurs, eyes shining with the adoration he feels for the man beside him.

Mickey smiles back and mumbles his own quiet “Mornin’” at Ian as he shifts over onto his other side, facing Ian and tucking his face into the crook of Ian’s neck, pressing his lips there tenderly.

It feels good, waking up like this, next to Ian. It’s been a few days since they’ve had this, odd work schedules throwing them off. But they both have the day off today, thanks to Fiona’s offer to make sure Ian and Mickey have the same off schedule. Mickey hadn’t asked for it, but she’d insisted they needed the time to talk about the wedding and spend time together. Something about the ‘honeymoon phase’ or some shit that Mickey thinks they’re probably long past, but he’s not going to argue if it gives him more time with Ian.

Mickey pulls back a bit, smiling at Ian. He figures now’s as good a time as any to broach the wedding subject. “Hey,” Mickey begins, just a touch hesitantly, “Fiona kind of cornered me about the wedding yesterday. She thinks we should do the whole big ceremony thing. Made some good points. Told her I’d talk to you about it.”

“Yeah?” Ian asks, his eyes lifting to the stray piece of raven hair that’s fallen into Mickey’s eyes. He reaches out to tuck it back with a little half smile. “What do you think of the ceremony idea?”

“I don’t know,” Mickey shrugs. “Doesn’t really matter, as long as we’re married. But the ceremony thing sounds kind of nice. Having the whole family there, friends, celebrating with them. The Gallaghers certainly know how to throw a party.”

Ian grins at that, sees the hesitation in Mickey’s eyes and reads him like an open book. “You don’t have to pretend, Mick,” Ian insists gently. “It’s okay if you want the big celebration. I’ve been thinking about it, too. Kind of want the chance to show you off.”

“We don’t really have the money,” Mickey reminds, trying to keep himself grounded at the realization that they might both want the same thing. “Could be tough.”

Ian smiles and strokes his fingers down Mickey’s jaw. “We can figure it out. Got lots of friends and family to help. Doesn’t have to be crazy. I think I’d like the ceremony and the party, though. A real wedding. It sounds nice.”

Mickey nods, and he can’t keep the smile out of his eyes. “Yeah,” he agrees, claiming Ian’s lips in another soft kiss, “yeah, it does.”
“Hey, Mickey,” Fiona greets as he wanders into Wendell’s looking for her, “How’s it going?”

Mickey shrugs and leans back against the nearest machine. “Not bad. Not the biggest morning rush, but steady. How’s it going over here?”

“Pretty good,” Fiona admits, handing him a cup of coffee. “It’ll be a while before I start seeing any real profits, but that’s normal, from what I’m told. Family hates me, though. Thinks I’m a screw up.”

“You?” Mickey questions, raising his eyebrows in disbelief. “They hate you for buying a laundromat?”

“Not exactly,” she explains, sipping at her own coffee. “They hate me ‘cause I asked them to start chipping in their share for bills. Ian seemed okay with it before he moved in with you, but Lip and Debbie are pretty pissed.”

Mickey scoffs. “Like they’ve got any right to be. You sacrificed your whole damn life for those kids. Raised ‘em when Frank refused. They’re grown now. It’s your turn. Nothin’ wrong with wanting to make something of yourself, Fiona. You shouldn’t feel sorry for that.”

Fiona stares at him for a moment in disbelief. She and Mickey had been getting on well since his return, but she hadn’t necessarily expected the direct support. “Wow,” Fiona continues to watch him for a moment, arms crossed over her chest and shock written across her features, “Not sure I expected my only line of support to come from Mickey Milkovich.”

Mickey laughs at that. “Yeah, well,” he offers, downing the last of his coffee with a shrug, “if it helps, you’ve got Ian’s support, too. He’s just trying to stay out of the way to avoid pissing off the entire family. We’ve been really happy lately. He doesn’t want to jeopardize that by starting shit.
“Hey, babe,” Ian greets as Mickey comes through the door. Ian had worked an early shift, and he’s been waiting impatiently for Mickey since he got home an hour ago. “You talk to Fi?”

Mickey presses a gentle kiss to Ian’s lips in greeting before tossing his jacket onto the nearby arm chair. “Yeah,” he affirms, making himself comfortable beside Ian, sitting close as Ian loops an arm around Mickey’s shoulders. “She’s happy to help. Seemed kind of excited actually. Your sister’s a shark, man. If anyone can get us the prices we need, it’s gonna be her. How we doin’ on the budget, anyway?”

“Not bad,” Ian shrugs. “It’s gonna be tight, but I think we can swing it. Depends on locations and stuff, but I figure if we go with the Alibi for the reception, we can probably get a decent ceremony space. Bet Kev’ll let us use the Alibi for free. Just have to pay for the booze.”

Mickey nods. “Yeah. Sounds like a plan.” After a moment, he continues, glancing up at Ian curiously. “You excited?”

The corners of Ian’s lips tip up in a little smile. “Gettin’ there,” Ian admits, pressing a kiss to the side of Mickey’s head. “Starting to feel more real, the longer we plan, you know? I feel like we might actually pull this off.”

“We will,” Mickey grins and pats the hand Ian has draped over his shoulder gently. “I’ll make sure of it. Gonna marry you, Ian. Not a damn thing on this earth is gonna stop me.”

A few days later, Mickey and Ian are hanging out at the Gallagher house, and Ian and Lip have stepped outside for a smoke, while Mickey and Fiona are sitting on opposite ends of the couch, nursing a couple of beers and trying to find their way out of the awkward small talk they’ve stumbled into. They’ve been unsuccessful so far, so they’ve fallen into quiet for a few long
moments.

Finally, Fiona breaks the silence, avoiding Mickey’s eyes. “Thinking about selling the ‘mat,” Fiona confides, giving Mickey a look of uncertainty. ’Etta’s not doing well. Not sure how much longer she can take care of herself. Think she needs to be in assisted living. Plus, I was offered double what I paid to sell the place. Hundred and sixty thousand. Not sure I can turn it down.” She pauses for a moment, staring down at the bottle dangling in her hand. "That make me a sellout?"

“Fuck, no,” Mickey counters from where he’s sitting beside Fiona. “That’s just fucking smart, Fiona. You’re Southside, you’re Southside. That doesn’t change just ’cause you make a little money.”

“Really?” Fiona questions with a raised eyebrow. “Cause I seem to remember you calling out Lip for goin’ to college.”

“Lip’s an ass,” Mickey shoots back, and Fiona shrugs in acquiescence. She’s certainly not going to deny that one. “Plus, that wasn’t really about Lip. That was back when Ian had that bad break. I was struggling with it, too. Took it out on Lip. But seriously, Fiona. You deserve to make something of yourself. You’re good at this stuff, and yeah, you put a lot of work into that place, but you also deserve to get something out of it. For you.”

Fiona looks at Mickey for a moment, and she can’t help but smile. “Damn,” she finally says with a little huff of a laugh, “never thought you and I would get along so well. Second time you’ve offered your support in a week. Startin’ to feel like I got something to live up to.”

“Yeah, well,” Mickey shrugs and crosses his arms over his chest at the discomfort he feels at the affectionate smile Fiona’s throwing his way, “you raised Ian. Plus, you’re his favorite. Means I kinda gotta get along with you, right?”

“Yeah, yeah, you keep telling yourself that, Mick,” Fiona mocks with a smile as she bats at Mickey’s shoulder playfully. “You’ve got a soft spot for me.”

Mickey lets out a little laugh at that. She’s not wrong, he knows. Fiona’s strong, stronger than most, and he admires her for that. She’s got a big heart, and she deserves to make something of herself after devoting such an important chunk of her life to her siblings. Mickey’s not going to deny that.

“Hey,” Ian calls as he re-enters the room, shucking his coat on the way and leaning down to press a kiss to Mickey’s forehead from over the back of the couch. Mickey smiles and closes his eyes at the affection, leaning back against Ian. “What’re you guys chatting about,” Ian asks as Fiona’s fond smile catches his eye.

“Nothin’,” Fiona covers with a smile. “Nothin’ at all. Should probably talk about the wedding, though. Get the plans started.”

Ian nods at that, and Mickey raises a brow at Fiona. Part of him regrets the big wedding decision. Seems like all they do now is plan. Which would be okay, except since they’ve brought Fiona in on the planning phase, they haven’t had a whole lot of alone time to spend together, especially with work interfering. Mickey still smiles fondly, though, when Ian hops over the back of the couch and starts discussing dates and colors and whatever the hell else with his sister. Because as much as Mickey wants Ian all to himself, he’s also finding himself beginning to get excited about the whole thing, and he appreciates the help Fiona’s providing.
Later that night, Mickey’s fallen asleep on the couch, and Ian and Fiona have settled themselves in the kitchen in an attempt to avoid waking him.

“Mickey seems excited,” Fiona offers with a little smile. “It’s nice seeing him so happy. How’ve you guys been doing?”

“Good,” Ian confirms. “Happy. Past few weeks have been a little rough with the schedules. Haven’t had much alone time, you know? And I don’t even mean sex. Just, you know, not a lot of time to be with him. We’ve missed each other a little. We’ve managed to spend a decent amount of time with Yev, though, which is good. I can’t wait to be his step-dad officially. Mick has already taken to calling him our son, which I love. Be nice when it’s official, though.”

Fiona smiles softly. She knows everything that had gone down a couple of years before with Yev. Knows the story of his conception. And she’s impressed with Mickey’s ability to move past it all and love the little boy despite the circumstances. “Mickey really loves that little boy,” Fiona observes, catching Ian’s eye. “Impressed with the turn around there.”

“He always loved him,” Ian confides. “Just had trouble showing it around most people.”

“Let me guess,” Fiona gives Ian a fond little smirk with a raise of her eyebrows. “You’re not most people?”

“Thought you already knew that,” Ian jokes, “’m about to be Mr. Mickey Milkovich.”

Fiona laughs at that, and her smile matches Ian’s, big and carefree. “What’re you guys thinking on your names, anyway? You gonna change ‘em? Officially become Mr. Ian Milkovich? Or is Mickey gonna become a Gallagher?”

Ian shrugs, uncertainty written across his features. “Not sure. We’ve talked about it a little. Our families are both a fuckin’ mess, though.” Ian laughs at that, but there’s mostly irritation behind it. And Fiona gets that. Neither family has a stellar history, that’s for sure. “Not sure we want to pass along either of the family names. Considering hyphenating. Gallagher-Milkovich. At least then it’ll be ours, right? Less negative history or some shit? Or maybe double. I don’t know. We haven’t really settled on anything yet.”

Fiona nods and she’s silent for a moment, eyeing Ian closely. “Talking about passing on the family name, huh?” Fiona questions. “You guys thinkin’ about having more kids?”

“Nah,” Ian denies with a shake of his head, “don’t mean it like that. I mean, it might be nice someday. But with Yev, it’s, uh, it’s tough, you know? Considering the circumstances of his conception. Mick’s just starting to learn how to be a dad to him. He wants to be, but it’s hard sometimes.” Ian’s silent for a moment, thinking back on that horrible morning when Terry had caught the two of them together. After a bit, he breaks the silence with a harsh laugh, no real humor behind it. “Guess on the bright side, we both got to be there for our son’s conception, huh?”

Fiona doesn’t laugh, just watches Ian carefully, eyes holding sympathy she knows Ian doesn’t want. “Terry was really a piece of work, huh?” she asks, voice gentle as she watches Ian with soft eyes.

“Understatement,” Ian tells her with a scoff, trying to hold back the tears that come to his eyes at the memories. “And I was shitty to Mick back then. Pushed him, you know? More than I should have. And I think part of it was the beginnings of the bipolar, mania, whatever. But part of it was just me, refusing to understand, unwilling to hear him. He was trying to protect me as much as he was himself. But I didn’t really get it because I grew up here. And as shitty as Frank and Monica
may be, they never cared that I was gay. Everyone in my life has always been okay with it, at least peripherally. Mickey never had that. Didn’t have anyone supporting him or loving him for who he was.”

Fiona reaches out to squeeze Ian’s hand. “He had you,” she offers, and it provides a little bit of needed comfort for Ian.

“Just wish I’d loved him better,” Ian admits quietly.

Fiona smiles. “You’ve got the rest of your life to love him the way he deserves. He’s trusting you with that. Mickey loves you, Ian. He’s marrying you. You must’ve done something right.”

Ian smiles at that. She’s right, he knows, but it doesn’t stop him from regretting some of those choices. But then, Ian thinks, maybe they wouldn’t be here without all the tough times, and maybe that makes it all worth the suffering. Ian’s not sure, though. Still wishes he’d done better by Mickey. He resolves then to do exactly that for the rest of their lives together.

Ian nods at Fiona then and gives her a little smile. “Guess you’re right,” he agrees. “Now, how can we make this wedding perfect without breaking the bank?”

Fiona laughs at that, and pats Ian’s hand gently, accepting the change of subject happily. “Good question,” she offers, pulling out a frilly little notebook she’s insisting on using for the wedding planning. Ian rolls his eyes, but there’s a gentle fondness behind it, and he smiles at Fiona’s eagerness. She’s good at this stuff, he knows, and he trusts her to help them make the right decisions.

It’s been a couple of weeks, and they’ve been making some good headway in the wedding planning. Mickey’s starting to think they might have it all together, and he’s looking forward to making it all happen. First, though, he wants to get home to Ian, and spend some time just being with his husband-to-be.

Fiona stops him, though, when Mickey’s about to head out for the day, cornering him just before he reaches the front of the diner. “I called Ian,” she tells him excitedly. “He’s here, and we’re gonna talk about the wedding for a bit. I had some ideas I wanted to run by you guys. Will you stay? Help with the planning?”

Mickey smiles at her. He’s tired, worked a double shift and all, but all he wants right now is to be with Ian, so if Ian’s here, Mickey’s not going to argue. “Course,” he agrees gently, shifting around her to move to the front of the diner to find Ian. Fiona sees right through him, he knows, and he can nearly feel the smirk she sends his way, but he doesn’t let it deter him. Just heads straight for Ian and kneels in the booth beside the redhead before leaning down to capture Ian’s lips in a quick kiss. Ian laughs a bit at the way Mickey’s fingers linger in his hair as Mickey slides down into the booth beside Ian. Ian loves the affection Mickey’s learned to show in public, and Mickey knows, so he offers those affections whenever he feels safe, and the diner does that for him now.

“Missed you,” Mickey murmurs, resting his head on Ian’s shoulder. They’ve both been picking up extra hours where they can, and Ian’s been on some early, early morning shifts with Mickey covering the late mornings and afternoons at the diner, sometimes staying on for a double like today and getting home late to a sleeping Ian. They’ve been trying to spend as much time together as possible, but they’re also working hard to pull off the wedding, and it’s all starting to weigh on them—especially the separation.

“Missed you, too, Mick,” Ian agrees as he wraps an arm around Mickey’s shoulders and kisses to
top of his head, fingers stroking over Mickey’s upper arm as he tries to soothe the tired man in his arms.

“All right, lovebirds,” Fiona interrupts with a playful grin, whipping out her notebook and settling herself on the other side of the booth. “Time to get to work.”

Mickey groans and Ian laughs as he pulls away from Mickey just a touch so he can lean closer to the table to see her notes.

“Now,” Fiona starts, “we’ve got a decent plan started for the ceremony, and we’re doing good cost wise so far, but we need to get on a plan for the reception.”

“We can just potluck it,” Ian offers with a bit of a shrug. “Set up at the Alibi, you know. Kev’ll let us do it for free, I bet.”

“Yeah, but the Alibi’s a hike from the ceremony spot,” Fiona counters. “You ever think about doing it here? In the diner? Could give you a good price. Might even be able to get it free, ‘cept the booze, but I bet Kev would comp you that. Wedding gift and all. We’ve got good food. Could open the whole menu, not worry about rsvp meal cards or whatever. Not a lot of room to dance, but we can make it work. Done it before, with the launch party. And your guest list isn’t crazy, only about thirty people, right? We could do that easy. Bet the girls would be happy to chip in and waitress. I’ll pay ’em extra, and once everyone’s fed, they can join the party. I mean, I get it if you’re not interested—diner’s not exactly a traditional party place—but we could make it happen if you’re into the idea.”

Ian and Mickey are both staring at her with wide eyes, brows drawn together at Fiona’s enthusiasm, and neither of them can help the smiles that tug at their lips as they watch her.

After a moment of silence, Fiona drops her eyes back to the notebook. “You hate it,” she blurts, worried that they’re uninterested and feeling a little insecure but waving it off. “It’s all right. We can just go with the Alibi. I’ll talk to Kev tomorrow, and we’ll nail it down, and—”

Ian reaches out then, laying a hand over Fiona’s gently to stop her from crossing out the notes she has scribbled on the page in front of her. “Fi,” he offers gently, calling her eyes up to his, “we love it. It sounds amazing. Can we really pull it off?”

Fiona stops, looking up at them with soft eyes and a touch of question. “Really?” she asks quietly. “You like it? Both of you?” She’s looking at Mickey now, unsure but hopeful.

Mickey gives her a genuine smile. “I think it’s perfect,” he confirms, and he means it. “You can make it happen?”

“Absolutely!” Fiona confirms excitedly. “I can make it happen.”

Ian smiles and shoves at Mickey’s shoulder until he groans and lets Ian out of the booth before Mickey collapses back down into the cushioned seat dramatically and Ian rolls his eyes. “Make it happen,” Ian tells Fi happily as he leans down to kiss her cheek. “Thanks, Fi.”

She smiles proudly and waves him off. “No problem. I’m gonna make sure you two have the perfect wedding. Just leave it to me, okay?”

“Will do,” Ian agrees. “Got any more ideas you want to run by us today, or can I take my drama queen of a fiancé home to sleep it off.”

“Yeah. Sleep. Sure,” Fiona laughs with playful sarcasm, as she waves a hand in Ian’s direction.
“Go, go. Take your man home and spoil him. I’ll let you know when I’ve got more for you to approve.”

“Thanks, Fi,” Ian repeats as he grabs at Mickey’s hands and tries to pull him up. “Okay asshole,” he chastises, “get up so I can take you home.”

“Fuck off,” Mickey shoots back. “This is my home now. I’m not fuckin’ moving until I’ve gotten at least six hours of sleep.”

“I will leave your ass here,” Ian threatens with a raised brow, and it pulls a heavy sigh out of Mickey.

“Fuckin’ fine, man,” he agrees begrudgingly. “But I’m fucking sleeping when I get home.”

“Whatever you say,” Ian rolls his eyes in Fiona’s direction as she smirks at the two of them as Ian steers Mickey out of the diner after dragging him up from the booth.
Random Blinking Light

Chapter Summary

As they finalize their wedding plans, Trevor throws out an unexpected offer, and Ian and Mickey are left with a big decision.

Chapter Notes

Next chapter might take a while. It’s the wedding, and I know shit about wedding ceremonies, so. It might be a bit while I try to figure it out.

Title from Darren Hayes’s “Random Blinking Light.”

“What’re you guys thinking for the ceremony? You exchanging rings?” Fiona asks Mickey, sliding into the booth across from him. “If you are, we should probably start looking. Might be tough finding matching groom’s rings in a Southside pawn shop.”

Mickey shrugs and smiles at her a little bashfully. “We were actually thinking we might go with tattoos,” Mickey admits. “More permanent, you know? Plus, cheaper.”

“Really?” Fiona asks, eyeing him carefully for a moment, and Mickey shrugs again, pulling out a napkin.

“Got a pen?” he asks expectantly, raising a brow in her direction.

“I do.”

Fiona hands it over, amused smile touching her lips as Mickey sets to work sketching out the idea with careful concentration. After a moment, he passes the sketch over to Fiona, and her amusement turns to genuine shock. On the paper in front of her are Mickey and Ian’s names drawn in delicate script, extending out on either side in lovely twining loops that Fiona knows are meant to close, leaving the ink unbroken when it’s etched into their skin.

She blinks slowly up at Mickey, at a loss for words for a moment before pressing out a soft “Jesus,” and meeting Mickey’s eye.

He drops his gaze then, suddenly insecure. “You hate it,” he supplies nervously, dragging the paper back from Fiona’s gaze.

“No,” Fiona insists immediately, eyes wide as a smile stretches over her lips. “I think it’s really fuckin’ beautiful.” With that, Mickey’s eyes lift to meet hers and the honesty in her tone brings back a touch of his confidence, but he says nothing, so Fiona smiles and quips, “Just shocked you’ve got such impressive artistic skills.”

Mickey laughs at that and-shoves the napkin back toward Fiona. “When it matters,” he tells her
playfully. “Now shove that in that little notebook of yours so we can make the plan official.”

A few days later, they’re finalizing the last of the plans at the Gallagher house, waiting for Fiona to get home, and Ian’s down to worrying over the way they’re going to decorate the reception space. Mickey’s mildly amused at the way Ian keeps jumping around ideas and obsessing over every last detail. But as much as Mickey loves Ian’s excitement, he’s starting to worry about the stress on Ian, so he’s glad they’re nearly finished with the planning end.

“Should we do flowers?” Ian asks curiously as he settles down beside Mickey on the couch and flips through a wedding magazine.

When Mickey sees it, he rolls his eyes. “Oh, Jesus Christ,” he mumbles at Ian, but there’s no heat behind it. Instead, there’s a fond playfulness to his tone. “The fuck you on about?”

“I mean, flowers are traditional, right?” Ian asks, and there’s excitement in his tone. “Feels a little weird—we’re not really flower guys, I know—but it could be nice, right? What do you think?”

Mickey glances at Ian for a moment and takes a deep breath. He can see from Ian’s excitement that he’s not getting out of this one. He sighs and gives in. “Red roses. Not many. One per table. Seven on ours for the number of years since we started this whole thing. Just the roses. No frilly shit. Maybe petals or a couple bundled at the end of each row of chairs to decorate for the ceremony?”

Mickey stops then when he notices the way Ian’s blinking at him with wide eyes.

“Holy shit,” Ian breathes out as a smile stretches over his lips.

“Ah, Christ. What?!” Mickey questions, a touch of defensiveness coloring his tone as he watches Ian closely.

“You’re really fucking into this,” Ian accuses and Mickey rolls his eyes. “You are! You’re excited!”

“Fuck off,” Mickey tries through the wide smile he can’t shake from his face.

Ian doesn’t let him continue, just tackles Mickey back into the couch and captures Mickey’s lips desperately, before letting out a giddy laugh and squeezing Mickey tight.

“Jesus Christ,” Fiona’s voice wakes them from where they’re curled around one another, and they both raise their eyes to her curiously. “Did you two fuck on my couch?!?”

Mickey and Ian glance between one another, realizing too late that they’re both still sex rumpled and stripped down to their boxers.

Ian shrugs and looks up at Fiona. “No?” he ventures unconvincingly, guilty little smile playing across his features, and Fiona shakes her head at him before mumbling her way to the kitchen.

As she goes, they hear her murmur the words I’m gonna change the fucking locks, and they can’t contain their laughter as Ian presses his face into Mickey’s chest. A moment later, though, when they manage to get themselves under control, Ian’s shoving off of Mickey and then dragging him up off the couch so they can throw the rest of their clothes back on and follow Fiona into the kitchen. They’ve still got a bit of work to do on finishing up the wedding plans, and they’re going to need Fiona’s help with the last of it.
A few days later, Ian wanders into their bedroom to find Mickey propped up against the pillows, stubbing out a cigarette in the ashtray on the bedside table.

“Ran into Trevor on my way home today. At that little coffee shop on the corner,” Ian confides, leaning over to kiss Mickey in greeting.

“Okay,” Mickey draws out the response, eyeing Ian cautiously. “And?”

“Don’t get fucking jealous,” Ian retorts when he notices the way Mickey’s features have twisted into an annoyed glare he’s trying to hide. “You know there’s nothing going on there. Plus, you like Trevor, remember? We’re friends?”

Mickey rolls his eyes. “Yeah, all of us,” he counters, but there’s not much heat behind his tone. “You, me, him. We don’t hang out in separate little groups or some shit.”

Ian sighs as he starts stripping out of his work clothes. Mickey watches him appreciatively, and Ian can’t help but smirk a little when he catches Mickey staring. “It’s not like I set up a date, man. We were both there. We sat together. End of story.” Ian pauses for a moment to climb into bed beside Mickey, where he presses another kiss to Mickey’s lips in reassurance. It’s not exactly late, but they’re both exhausted and Mickey’s brothers have taken over the living room anyway, so Ian settles in next to Mickey. “He had some ideas. I think they’d be worth considering.”

“Ideas?” Mickey raises an eyebrow in confusion. “‘bout what?”

“The wedding,” Ian confides, shifting closer to Mickey and entwining their legs as he settles himself along Mickey's side, resting his head against Mickey's shoulder.

“Seriously?” Mickey questions, a hint of disbelief coloring his tone. “Thought we were done with the planning?” Ian shrugs a little, and he’s trying to look innocent. Mickey sees right through him and gives him a little glare. “What is it?” he questions, tone hinting at exasperation.

Ian glances up at Mickey and he looks a little guilty, but there’s also excitement behind his eyes, and it brings a soft smile to Mickey’s lips. For the past couple of weeks, Mickey’s been trying to pretend he’s over the planning shit, but Ian’s excitement is fucking contagious.

“We request any of the permits for the park venue yet?”

“No fucking way,” Mickey counters immediately, his voice full of disbelief, and his amusement suddenly disappearing. “We are not changing the ceremony space, Ian. It took us weeks to agree on that. Plus, we’re barely a month out. We can’t just change venues.”

“But, Mick,” Ian’s voice is near a whine, and Mickey can’t help but shake his head at that. He should probably be more annoyed than he is, but he gives Ian his full attention as Ian babbles on about the ideas Trevor offered. “Trevor has this friend who owns this unique little local bookshop. It’s just a couple blocks from the park,” Ian explains, all desperate enthusiasm as he tries to convince Mickey to at least consider a new plan. “And I know, bookshop, not really our scene, but Mick. It’s beautiful. Plus it’s indoors. We wouldn’t have to worry about rain or cold or, hell, snow —and you know that’s a possibility around here. The guy’s a friend of Trevor’s, and we could get the space for just a couple hundred more than we were gonna pay for the park space. They do small events there sometimes, so they’ve got plenty of seating that they’ll provide as part of the package. It’s eclectic and there’s incredible woodwork, a fireplace—we wouldn’t have to put in a lot of work to make it look nice because it already does, and—”

Mickey finally cuts Ian off with a little wave of his hand, and he can’t help the loving smile he’s
been wearing since the moment Ian started speaking. “All right, Ian. All right. If you wanna check it out, we’ll check it out. Haven’t applied for any of the park permits officially yet, so we’ve got options. If you wanna look into this place, we will.”

Ian beams at Mickey then, and Mickey thinks for a moment that Ian’s going to start crying from joy. As much as Mickey had hoped they were done with the planning, he can’t help but be awed at Ian’s attachment to the idea, and he thinks maybe that’s a good thing. They’d both settled on the park idea for financial and timing reasons, and it would have been beautiful, but Mickey knows neither of them had their hearts set on it. And he’s still a little unsure about the idea, but he knows from the reaction that Ian’s having that he’s probably going to love it just as much as Ian does—even if only because it puts that smile on Ian’s face. And he has a feeling they’re going to be married in an eclectic little bookshop in front of a fireplace instead of in a park pavilion in the cold November air.

“Fi!” Ian calls as he shoves through the door of the Gallagher house, Mickey stumbling along after him, hand firmly held in Ian’s. Once they’re inside, Ian finally lets Mickey go and drags off his coat, tossing it over the back of the couch. “Ceremony update!”

“What?” Fiona questions in confusion as she appears in the doorway of the kitchen, laundry still in hand. “What do you mean ceremony update? Thought we had everything down?”

“Not anymore,” Ian insists. And that should be fucking terrible news, but the thrill of excitement in Ian’s tone leaves Fiona smiling from ear to ear.

“What do you mean not anymore, asshole? We had a plan. What’re we doing to the plan?” Her hands are resting on her hips now, and she’s trying to look perturbed, but the amusement shining in her eyes gives her away.

“New ceremony space!” Ian’s grinning so hard, Mickey thinks his face must be hurting. It’s fucking adorable.

When Ian brushes past Fiona, he catches her wrist and drags her over to the table where he immediately hands over his phone so Fiona can flip through the images of their new venue.

Mickey and Ian had just come from the space where they’d met with Trevor and his friend to look the place over and discuss potential details. The moment they had walked through the door and Mickey had seen the look of awe on Ian’s face, Mickey knew this was where they were going to be married. There was no way he’d be able to deny Ian after seeing his fiancé’s face light with joy just from walking through the fucking door. And Mickey had to admit, the space was nice—cozy and warm with a rustic quiet he wasn’t sure how to even describe, but it was incredible. They’d be paying a little more this way, but work and savings had provided them a cushion and they’d be able to pay it off easily. Plus, they’d be able to ditch some of the annoying decorative bullshit they would have had to put together for the park space, so the money would likely even out anyway.

Fiona and Ian are both fawning over the new space, and Mickey can’t help the amusement he feels at their excitement. After watching them fondly for another moment, Mickey steps up behind Ian with a gentle smile and presses a kiss to the top of Ian’s head. Ian leans back into Mickey for a moment as Mickey ruffles his hair before stepping back to sit beside Ian. As Fiona continues chattering about the new plan, Ian smiles at Mickey gratefully and mouths a quiet thank you. Mickey just smiles at that with a nod and reaches out to take Ian’s hand in his own, entwining their fingers and giving Ian a little squeeze of assurance. Because as much as Mickey hates to admit it, Trevor’d been right on this one—the ceremony space was the last little missing piece; the one thing that didn’t quite fit. But it had all fallen into place with Trevor’s suggestion, and Mickey was
grateful for that.

After a bit more back and forth about the plans and what they’re scrapping and what they’re transferring over, they all feel pretty confident that they have a solid plan for how they’ll be using the new space, so they settle into more mundane conversation as Fiona tucks away her wedding notebook and returns to the laundry that had been left half finished with the couple’s arrival.

“So,” Fiona begins with a little eyebrow raise over her shoulder as she shoves another load of laundry into the machine, “I also have news.”

“Really?” Ian questioned with a curious flair, eyeing his sister carefully. “What’s up?”

“I bought an apartment building,” she tells them, eyes beaming. “Most of the units are already rented, but I’ve got a two bedroom that just needs a few basic renovations, plus a one bedroom I just had to kick somebody out of, both of which need renting. You wanna check it out? I know you guys have been looking for a place. Thought maybe you’d want first crack at it? We could go take a look. See what you think.”

“First of all,” Ian says, pushing himself up out of his chair and moving to Fiona’s side to pull her into a hug, “that’s awesome, Fi. Congrats!”

Fiona smiles as Ian pulls back. She’s glad to have their support. She’d been nervous they’d be pissed at her for making such a crazy purchase with so little experience. But Ian’s being genuine, and Mickey’s giving her that soft smile he usually reserves for Ian, and she can tell they’re happy for her.

When Ian steps away a bit, Mickey takes his place, pulling her into a little hug, and she can’t help but smile brightly at the affection.

“You’re getting better at the whole hugging thing,” she teases, squeezing him tight.

“Yeah, well,” he counters, pulling back so he can look her in the eye, “I’m proud of you.”

Fiona’s eyes get a little watery at that. As odd as it seems sometimes, Mickey’s been her biggest support in this whole new journey she’s on, and it means a lot to her to have that support.

“Ah, fuckin’ hell,” Mickey sighs, drawing away and rolling his eyes. “Don’t start crying.”

“Shut up,” she scolds with a laugh, swatting at his chest. “You two fuckers wanna go see this place or what?”

When they make it back to the Gallagher house a couple of hours later, they find Frank camped out on the couch, flipping through the wedding magazine Ian had left behind.

“The fuck you doin’ here, Frank?” Mickey questions in irritation, tossing his jacket over the nearest surface and moving into the kitchen to grab a beer.

“It’s my house,” Frank sneers back, eyes still trained on the magazine in his hands. “Who’s getting married?”

“It’s my house, Frank!” Fiona counters, ignoring his question and making her way up the stairs, leaving Ian and Mickey to deal with an inebriated Frank.

Ian’s standing back near the archway to the front foyer, arms crossed over his chest in irritation,
and Mickey emerges from the kitchen, leaning against the doorframe with a bottle dangling from his fingers. They both watch Frank warily as he ambles up from the couch and approaches Ian.

Mickey gives Ian a worried look as Frank approaches, but Ian just shrugs with a little shake of his head. Mickey accepts the confirmation and moves to take up Frank’s vacated spot on the couch, picking up the discarded magazine to distract himself from Frank’s antics, but keeping an ear to the exchange behind him in case Ian needs his support.

Frank notices the exchange between the two, and immediately huffs out a laugh. “You two? Well. Didn’t expect that one. Be an interesting affair, huh? My batshit crazy son and his prison escapee. Looking forward to seeing that one.”

Ian tenses at the implication, and Mickey catches Ian’s eye over the back of the couch. “Who the hell said you were even invited, Frank?” Ian questions, the irritation evident in his voice.

“I’m your father,” Frank insists. “I’m gonna be at your wedding. Even if you are marrying the lowest of the Southside trash.”

“Thanks, Frank,” Mickey shoots over his shoulder sarcastically as he continues to thumb through the magazine in his lap. “Appreciate the vote of confidence.”

“Oh, fuck off,” Frank tosses at Mickey, and Mickey throws him the finger over his shoulder, refusing to spare Frank a glance.

Ian presses his fingers against his temple and sucks in a deep breath before crossing his arms over his chest and refocusing on Frank. “You’re not my father,” Ian reminds him with an angry smirk, “Your brother is, if you remember. And you are not welcome at our wedding. You’ll fuck it up, Frank, and we’ve put too much time into this to let you fuck it up. So how about you get the hell out and move on. You are not invited.”

“You know, I expect this from that ungrateful sister of yours, but—”

“Jesus Christ, Frank. Just fuck off before I make you,” Mickey threatens. He still hasn’t moved from the couch, but he’s watching Frank now, eyes angry and cold.

“Ah, this is all your doing, huh?” Frank accuses. “Turning my son against me—”

“All right,” Ian interjects, grabbing Frank by the elbow roughly and steering him toward the door, “time for you to get the fuck out.”

Ian shoves him through the door and slams it behind him, turning the lock, and shaking his head as he listens to Frank’s insane ramblings from the other side. He catches Mickey’s gaze, eyes tired, and runs his hands through his hair as he moves to his fiancé’s side, sitting beside him and resting his head against Mickey’s shoulder with a sigh. “He’s gonna fuck this up for us,” Ian worries, snuggling closer to Mickey for the support and comfort Mickey’s touch brings.

“He’s not,” Mickey insists, reaching up to stroke Ian’s hair. “I won’t let him, Ian. We are going to have our perfect wedding, and Frank is going to stay the fuck out of it. I will throw his ass back in the river if I have to.”

Ian laughs as he settles into Mickey’s arms. “Thank you, Mick,” Ian murmurs quietly, letting his eyes drift closed and savoring the rare quiet moment with Mickey. Mickey just nods and pulls Ian closer, reaching out for Ian’s hand to entwine their fingers as they drift into a quiet sleep.
Alive

Chapter Summary

Mickey and Ian are finally tying the knot.

Chapter Notes

So, after completing some research on wedding ceremony scripts, I have come to the realization that all wedding ceremony scripts annoy the hell out of me—they’re beautiful in the moment, but they’re so awkward out of context, and I just couldn’t manage to write that way—and as such, I have chosen to skip many of the ceremony details. Hopefully, it works. Also, this whole thing is so corny and probably ooc, but this is the way it came out, so here we are. I’m kind of low key proud of it.

Title from Darren Hayes’s “Alive.” Basically the track that inspired me to continue this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Is that a fucking coffee bar?” Mickey’s voice is incredulously as he scrunches his nose up in confusion.

“Yeah,” Trevor nods with a little shrug. “I know it’s probably not your thing, but Casey offered it. Figured it’d be nice while people wait on the ceremony.”

“Hey, man, I’m not complaining. I’m about to marry Ian in a fuckin’ bookshop. All bets are off,” Mickey insists, and when Trevor laughs at that, Mickey cracks a half smile. “Thanks, Trev. For all of this. This place? Gettin’ it for the wedding made Ian so happy. Made us both happy. I appreciate it. Especially considering how everything went down.”

“Don’t sweat it.” Trevor waves it off, voice honest. “Water under the bridge. Ian and I never would’ve worked. You two are like the fucking definition of meant to be. Everything worked out the way it was supposed to.”

Mickey’s eyes narrow playfully for a moment as he stares Trevor down. “I still feel like you should be more pissed than you are, but I guess I’ll take the win.”

Mickey notices Ian approaching then and nods as he reaches out an arm, tucking Ian under it and kissing his forehead as Ian beams at him. “Hey,” Mickey murmurs before pressing another kiss to Ian’s lips. “Trev got us a coffee bar.”

“I saw,” Ian smiles at Trevor then, and adds, “It’s fucking awesome, man. Thank you.”

“You should be thanking Casey,” Trevor insists. “Whole thing was his idea. Keeps insisting it’ll be good for business, bring back some of your guests. But I’m pretty sure he’s just got a big soft spot for weddings.”
Trevor’s smiling fondly in Casey’s direction, and Mickey and Ian share a look. “Something going on between you two?” Ian asks curiously, a playful shine to his eyes.

Trevor whips his gaze back to Ian and Mickey with an embarrassed scoff. “No! He’s just a friend.”

“Mmhmm,” Mickey mocks playfully with a little smirk. “You’re lookin’ at him the same way Ian used to look at me when he thought I wasn’t payin’ attention.”

“Fuck off,” Ian throws at Mickey, jostling him with a shoulder as Mickey laughs with that carefree smile on his face that Ian loves. “He’s not wrong, though.”

“All right,” Trevor counters, throwing up a hand to try to stop them both, “It’s weird chatting about my love life with my ex and the guy he left me for.”

“You’re at our fuckin’ wedding,” Mickey shoots back, pulling an incredulous face and throwing his hands up in question.

Both Trevor and Ian laugh and that and Trevor shakes his head in surrender. “Okay, yeah, there might be something going on. But I don’t wanna jinx it, so just leave it alone, all right?”

“Whatsoever you say,” Ian smiles. “We’ve gotta head back anyway. Finish with the setup. We’ll see you at the reception. Bring Casey.”

Trevor rolls his eyes and shakes his head at the two of them as Ian twines his fingers with Mickey’s and tugs Mickey away to finish prepping for the ceremony.

When Fiona finally finds Ian and Mickey, they’re in the main space helping to set up the seating. Not one of the lovely wooden chairs are the same, but each one has been wrapped with a soft, cozy knit throw, all in varying shades of cream and beige. It’s an eclectic collection, but somehow every one works with the others, and it’s becoming a lovely space.

When she spots Ian and Mickey, though, Fiona rolls her eyes and crosses her arms, trying her best to look stern. “The fuck are you two doing?” she calls, stopping them in their tracks. “You’re supposed to be getting ready.”

“We are getting ready,” Ian insists.

“Somebody’s gotta get the place set up,” Mickey chimes in, still carrying in chairs.

“Really?” Fiona throws up her hands at them in exasperation. “We literally have an army of Milkoviches and Gallaghers here. You two can relax. Enjoy your day. All of it.”

“Fiona—” Ian attempts to protest, but Fiona cuts him off.

“I’ve got this under control. Now go. Get dressed,” she insists, pointing toward the back room that houses their tuxes. After a moment of contemplation, Ian shrugs at Mickey and tilts his head in the direction of the back room in surrender. Mickey sighs with a smile and a shake of his head, and they both comply, Mickey reaching out to draw Ian’s hand into his own before heading off. Fiona notices the looks they’re wearing immediately, and she calls after them quickly. “And if you two are late because you’re fucking back there, I am going to lock you in that fucking room and commandeer your fucking party!”

“Your sister’s fucking bossy, man,” Mickey complains as they shove through the door to the little
Ian laughs as he hooks his arms around Mickey’s waist to drag him into a hungry kiss. “Yeah,” he agrees when Mickey pulls back for air, “but she’s got some great ideas.” Ian’s eyebrows raise in expectation as he smirks down at Mickey, who bites his lip against the sudden surge of want that hits him at Ian’s display.

“Ian, we can’t,” Mickey counters, but his voice is soft and yielding, and they both know his heart isn’t in the protest. “We’re getting married in a couple hours. Fiona’s gonna be back here looking for us.”

Ian scoffs at that, pressing a playful little kiss to the corner of Mickey’s mouth. “We’ve got plenty of time.”

“We don’t even have any stuff,” Mickey protests again, but his words hold little weight when his voice wavers with the feel of Ian’s lips where they’ve moved to ghost down Mickey’s jaw. Without breaking contact with Mickey’s skin, Ian pulls a packet of lube and a condom out of his back pocket and presses them into Mickey’s hand. When Mickey realizes what he’s holding, he lets out a sharp, amused laugh. “Are you fucking serious? You planned to fuck me in the back room before our fucking wedding?”

“It’s tradition,” Ian deadpans, and after a moment, they both break down into happy laughter, faces beaming with bright smiles.

“Looking to switch things up, huh?” Ian smirks down at Mickey, lifting an eyebrow. “I could go for that if it’ll get me laid.”

“Jesus Christ. Stop with the jokes and let’s fucking go, Gallagher,” Mickey counters, dragging Ian back against the little table that stands by the wall and hiking himself up onto it, wrapping his legs tightly around Ian’s waist and pulling Ian down into a harsh kiss.

The space is amazing. It’s warm and inviting, and Mickey and Ian are standing before a blazing fireplace with intricately carved bookcases lining much of the open space, framing the rows of blanket-wrapped chairs that only add to the cozy feeling that emanates from the space. The lighting is dim, most of the light coming from the stained glass lamps that stand in the empty spaces and hang from the ceiling. It’s strange for Mickey, really, because it’s not a space he ever would have imagined, but he has to admit that it’s amazing and the joy it brings to Ian’s face is well worth it.

Most of the ceremony is a blur. Mickey hears next to nothing their officiant is saying, his eyes focused only on Ian as he holds Ian’s hand gently in his own, Yevgeny perched on Mickey’s hip. They’d decided early on that they wanted the toddler to be part of the ceremony. It was just the two of them and Yevgeny, though. Briefly, they had considered asking Fiona and Mandy to stand up with them, but something about the idea just didn’t sit right. Mickey had suggested instead that they forego a wedding party altogether, and Ian had agreed quickly, enamored with the idea of an intimate ceremony between just the two of them and their son.

So now here they are, ceremony rushing by in a blur of words, and Mickey’s paying next to no attention. All he sees is Ian, smiling softly at Mickey from a couple of short feet away, happy tears shimmering in Ian’s eyes. Mickey thinks his own might match Ian’s, as he tries to blink away what threatens to fall. No one but Ian Gallagher has ever been able to turn Mickey Milkovich into a
Partway through the ceremony, Mickey tunes back in when their officiant mentions their readings, which they’ve all agreed Ian and Mickey will read themselves. After a bit of research, and in honor of their venue and Yev’s presence, they’d each chosen a ceremony reading from Yev’s favorite books, and they’d planned to read them together, Yev settled in their arms. It felt less awkward that way, having a reason to read the excerpts aloud, and reading with Yev has become one of their favorite pastimes with their son—something Mickey never would have predicted, but that had somehow happened along the way. Ian and Mickey hadn’t shared their choices with one another, though. Instead, they’d handed them over to their officiant to be sure there was no overlap and moved forward with a plan to surprise one another on their wedding day.

So when their officiant hands over the first book, Ian and Mickey shift close to one another, Yev still cradled on Mickey’s hip, and Ian holding Mickey’s choice for him, smiling down at the book in his hands with happy tears in his eyes.

“Can we read you part of a story, Yev?” Mickey asks quietly, bouncing Yev on his hip.

At the question, Yevgeny glances down at the book in Ian’s hands and his bored face lights up as he squeals in excitement. “Story, daddy! Rabbit!”

Ian laughs, resting his chin on Mickey’s shoulder as they stand, shifted toward their guests so their voices carry, as Mickey begins to read:

**The Velveteen Rabbit, Margery Williams**

“What is REAL?” asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. “Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?”

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don’t mind being hurt.”

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”

“I suppose you are real?” said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse only smiled.

“Someone made me Real,” he said. “That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can’t become unreal again. It lasts for always.”

By the time Mickey’s finished, he can feel Ian’s tears dripping onto his shoulder, and he can’t help
but turn to Ian to whisper, just for the two of them, “You make me Real, Ian.”

And when Ian inhales a sharp breath at that, another rush of tears dripping silently from his eyes, Mickey smiles gently and turns his head to drop a kiss to Ian’s hair. In response, Ian’s lips fall to press against Mickey’s neck as he closes his eyes and breathes slowly to get his emotions under control.

After a moment, Mickey laughs softly and jostles Ian a bit. “Your turn,” he reminds softly with a little smile.

Ian takes another sharp breath and presses one more kiss to Mickey’s shoulder before pulling himself back together. Ian draws away from Mickey then, just far enough so he can reach out for Yevgeny. Mickey passes Yev into Ian’s arms so they can resituate, Mickey holding the book in his hands open to Ian’s choice of excerpt and making sure Yevgeny can see the pages, a big smile covering the child’s face.

Ian kisses Yev’s cheek, blinking away the last of the tears that linger on his lashes before he begins to read:

**Now We Are Six, A.A. Milne**

**Wherever I am, there’s always Pooh. There’s always Pooh and Me. Whatever I do, he wants to do. “Where are you going today?” says Pooh. “Well, that’s very odd ‘cos I was too. Let’s go together,” says Pooh, says he. “Let’s go together,” says Pooh...**

“Let’s look for dragons,” I said to Pooh. “Yes, let’s,” said Pooh to Me. We crossed the river and found a few. “Yes, those are dragons all right,” said Pooh. “As soon as I saw their beaks I knew. That’s what they are,” said Pooh, said he. “That’s what they are,” said Pooh.

“Let’s frighten the dragons,” I said to Pooh. “That’s right,” said Pooh to Me. “I’m not afraid,” I said to Pooh, and I held his paw and I shouted, “Shoo! Silly old dragons!” – and off they flew.

“I wasn’t afraid,” said Pooh, said he, “I’m never afraid with you.”

**So wherever I am, there’s always Pooh. There’s always Pooh and Me. “What would I do?” I said to Pooh, “If it wasn’t for you,” and Pooh said: “True, it isn’t much fun for one, but two can stick together,” says Pooh, says he. “That’s how it is,” says Pooh.**

The fingers of Ian’s free hand are resting gently against Mickey’s waist, and as Ian finishes, he squeezes Mickey’s hip gently, offering the grounding the touch provides. Mickey has tears in his eyes again, but he presses them away with the palm of his hand as he shifts away from Ian and they return to their rightful spots, Yevgeny staying with Ian this time as they prepare for the exchange of vows. Mickey tunes out again for a moment, too enamored by the sight of the man he loves cooing to their restless son. For most of his life, Mickey had believed this kind of happiness was an impossibility for him. But then, Ian came along and turned his entire goddamn life upside down, and now here they are, pledging their lives to one another in front of everyone they care for—the most important cradled in Ian’s arms—and Mickey has never been happier.

When their officiant calls their attention back with the announcement that they’re approaching the exchange of vows, Mickey feels like his heart is about to beat out of his chest. For Mickey, this was going to be the hard part—bearing his soul and love and adoration for everyone to see. But he’s ready for this, and he squeezes Ian’s hand gently in his own to help hold himself in the moment.
Ian smiles softly at Mickey, squeezing back just a touch. Before moving forward, though, Ian turns to Yevgeny for a moment, tickling the toddler’s tummy to draw his attention.

“Hey, Yevy?” Ian whispers, just loudly enough to be heard by Yev and Mickey and maybe a few of their guests. “Is it okay if I marry your daddy?”

Yev shrieks in excitement and claps his hands together. “Daddies!” he shouts happily, and that’s all the confirmation Ian needs. With a happy smile and a little laugh, Ian kisses Yev’s forehead and turns his eyes on Mickey.

“I think he’s okay with it,” Ian murmurs playfully to Mickey, and Mickey laughs and reaches out to run his fingers over Yevgeny’s blond hair.

“I think you’re right,” Mickey confirms before they turn back to their officiant, faces alight with joy, and awaiting the moment when they will officially recite their vows.

In the end, it’s Ian who begins, still holding Yev. He entwines his fingers with Mickey’s then, choosing to ignore the script their officiant attempts to pass his way. He knows he’ll remember the important parts, and he’ll speak from the heart for the rest.

“I have loved you since I was fifteen years old,” Ian begins, his voice soft and yielding. “Since that first time, when we were supposed to hate each other but found so much more because you let me in; you let yourself trust me. There have been times when I’ve taken that trust—that love—for granted. But I swear to you, Mickey, that I will spend the rest of my life loving you the way you deserve. You’ve taken care of me, loved me more than I’m worth, given me a family.” Ian squeezes Yevgeny, then, kissing the boy’s cheek and drawing happy giggles from him before turning back to Mickey with a watery smile. “You are my everything, Mickey Milkovich. And I will love you every moment for the rest of our lives.”

Mickey lets out a little laugh in a huff as he tries to hide the sob that nearly escapes him, and he presses the fingers of his free hand against his eyes to stop the tears that threaten, just barely managing to pull himself together before the officiant is looking to Mickey expectantly.

Finally, Mickey gathers himself with a deep breath as he begins: “Not so long ago, I had to live without you for a year and a half. I never want to be without you again, Ian. You taught me how to love. How to be me. You gave me a safety I’d never had before. Welcomed me into your home, your family—your heart. You broke down all my walls, saw through everything I tried to hide. I have never in my life loved anyone the way I love you. It will always be you, Ian. And I promise you, no matter what this life throws at us, I will stand by your side. I love you. And that means we take care of each other. It means thick and thin. Good times, bad. Sickness, health, all that shit. You and me, Ian. For the rest of our lives.”

Ian breaks at that, drawing a long, shaky breath and swallowing hard. He’d always known Mickey had meant those words the last time he’d said them as much as he does now, and hearing them again, here, a promise they’re both willing to make in this moment erases all the bad and the loss and the loneliness that had come with them before. This time, they mean forever, and Ian can’t help but collapse into Mickey’s arms, tucking his face into the crook of Mickey’s neck as Ian lets a few tears fall freely. Mickey smiles, drawing Ian as close as he can with Yevy still perched on Ian’s hip, and he presses a kiss to Ian’s hair, stroking his fingers through the soft locks and savoring the moment with his little family.

When Ian gets himself together, though, he pulls back with a quiet laugh, wiping at his tearstained cheeks for a moment before capturing Mickey’s fingers in his own once again. “Sorry,” he whispers, and it’s meant for their officiant, but his eyes never leave Mickey’s, and Ian can see the
tear streaks that decorate Mickey’s own features. Ian has never felt happier or more complete than he does in that moment, and the soft, affectionate smile Mickey offers him only enforces the feeling.

Finally, when it’s all official and Mickey’s allowed to kiss Ian, he leans forward to press his lips to Ian’s gently, fingers coming up to cradle Ian’s cheek. It’s soft and sweet, and just before they move to pull back, Yevgeny leans forward to smack loud little kisses on each of their cheeks, and Mickey can’t help the laughter that bubbles up in his chest as he drops his head to the crook of Ian’s neck. A moment later, when he gets his laughter under control, he leans up to smack his own kiss to Yevy’s cheek and the boy giggles while Ian rocks him.

And as the officiant announces them for the first time as Ian and Mickey Gallagher-Milkovich, Mickey can’t help but lean forward again to capture Ian’s lips, fingers finding their way into Ian’s hair and joy shining from his eyes. “We’re married,” he whispers against Ian’s lips, his voice wavering with excitement.

“We are,” Ian agrees with a bright smile, pecking Mickey’s lips again before using his free arm to pull Mickey into the closest hug they can manage with Yev still balanced in Ian’s arms.

Chapter End Notes

I hope the reasoning behind the reading choices is clear (and, I hope they’re correctly quoted because I just found them online—it’s been awhile since I’ve had these texts in hand). I didn’t want to spell it out too obviously here, but I feel like each excerpt really captures their history together and the role of their personal struggles. So. Hopefully that came through.
Mickey and Ian enjoy their reception, and Fiona surprises the newlyweds with a major wedding gift.

Updates are definitely going to slow down a bit due to real life responsibilities, but there is so much more of this. It’s getting out of control, to be honest.

Also, I was trying to set something up with the whole Frank thing a couple of chapters ago, but I have since discovered that I hate writing Frank, so that didn’t really go anywhere. There’s a mild attempt at resolving it here, but I just cannot get Frank’s characterization right, so I decided not to push it.

Title from Darren Hayes’s “Love Is In Everything.”

They join their guests immediately following the announcement, choosing to forego any kind of tradition, for what they assume will be a few minutes of hugs and thank yous before the whole crowd heads to the diner for the reception. A few minutes into greeting their guests, though, they hear Fiona’s voice from the front of the room calling for everyone’s attention, and Mickey and Ian are turning to her curiously, confused at the new development.

Fiona smiles brightly at them once she has the attention of most of the room. “All right, people,” Fiona announces, watching Mickey and Ian mischievously. “Thank you all for being here. In about an hour, we’re going to head over to Patsy’s for the reception, but before we do, the owner of this wonderful venue would like to invite everyone to help themselves to some coffee and hot chocolate, and in just a bit, we’re going to bring out a little surprise for our guests of honor. So stick around, have some refreshments, and enjoy this lovely space.”

A moment later, she’s stepping back and approaching Mickey and Ian, both of whom are staring at her in confusion.

“The fuck’s going on?” Mickey questions when she’s within earshot, raising a brow at her.

“Casey and Trevor are giving you a cocktail hour, and I’m about to surprise you fuckers,” Fiona announces, slapping Mickey on the shoulder and grinning at him playfully before she wanders away, presumably to prep her so-called surprise.

Mickey turns to Ian in confusion. “The fuck’s a ‘cocktail hour’?” Mickey asks and Ian just laughs brightly and grabs Mickey’s hand.

“Don’t know,” he confides, pulling Mickey toward the coffee bar, “but I need some fucking
“Decaf,” Mickey insists, and Ian waves him off, but complies with the request with a smile and a wink.

A bit later, Fiona finally shows up again, and she’s carrying a simple, two-tier wedding cake. The tiers are circular, lovely intricate lines looping out around them in the same pattern Mickey had drawn out for Fiona months ago—a pattern that matches the ones they have etched on their skin in promise to one another. It’s subtle, the design completed in the same cream colored frosting that adorns the rest of the cake, lovely burgundy roses lining the top of each tier to add contrast.

Mickey and Ian quickly appear by Fiona’s side as she gingerly lays the lovely confection beside the coffee bar.

“The fuck did you do?” Ian asks, pulling Fiona into his arms, even while his eyes remain glued to the surprise she’d planned. “We were just going to do pie at Patsy’s.”

“Yeah, well, this is a wedding, and you two idiots deserve the tradition. Bottom tier is for serving. Top gets boxed up for you to freeze until your first anniversary. Tradition. It’s chocolate with a mocha mousse filling and a white chocolate buttercream, and it is delicious, so stop complaining and enjoy!” she insists, hugging Ian back, and then moving to kiss Mickey’s cheek as Mickey pulls her into a half-hug.

“This is amazing, Fiona,” Mickey insists, squeezing her shoulder. “Thank you. You didn’t have to do this. You’ve already done so much—”

“Yeah, well, it’s done,” Fiona argues with a smile. “No going back now, so enjoy it. I’m happy for you two. Let me spoil you, okay?”

Mickey laughs at that and lets her go. “All right, all right,” he waves her off, and moves to join Ian where he’s examining the fresh tattoo on his skin against the design on the cake. Mickey sidles up behind him, wrapping an arm around Ian’s waist and peeking over Ian’s shoulder, laying his left hand atop Ian’s so the matching ink on their skin stands side by side. “Your sister’s kind of amazing,” Mickey murmurs, and Ian turns to him with a smile and a nod.

“Yeah. She really is,” Ian agrees, twisting until he can wrap his arms around Mickey’s neck to kiss his lips softly.

A moment later, Mandy appears beside them, her voice shrill as she pulls a face in mock disgust. “Jesus Christ. Could you two assholes keep it in your pants for two minutes? I’m your fuckin’ sister for christ’s sake. I don’t need to see this shit.”

Ian laughs and breaks away from Mickey immediately to drag Mandy into his arms for a tight hug.

“Good fuckin’ luck,” Mickey shoots back as he watches Ian rock Mandy playfully for a moment. Mandy jabs Mickey in the shoulder over Ian’s back and gives him a glare. “Hey,” Mickey protests indignantly. “It’s my fuckin’ wedding, bitch.”

Ian laughs at the two of them as he draws back to look Mandy over. “You look good, Mands,” he tells her with a smile. “Missed you.”

“Yeah, well, I missed you, too, asshole.” She turns to Mickey then, giving him a glare. “And you, too, dick. Although, I’m still fucking pissed that I had to hear about this shit from my best friend instead of my own fucking brother.”
“What the fuck’s it matter?” Mickey counters, throwing his hands up in exasperation. “It’s his fucking wedding, too. We called, you heard, end of story.”

“Ian called,” Mandy counters, “not we. And it matters because you’re my goddamn brother, and it would’ve been nice to hear it from you, asshole.”

She gives him another playful little punch in the shoulder before dragging him into a hug. ‘I’m so fuckin’ happy for you two. Congratulations.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Mickey plays it off as though he’s not near tears at finally seeing Mandy again, looking healthy and happy, and Ian watches them fondly as Mickey hugs her back and teases, “Shut the fuck up.”

She rolls her eyes and pulls back to turn to Ian again, her voice sincere. “Really.”

“He knows, Mands,” Ian smiles back at her, reaching out for Mickey’s hand. “And so do I. Thank you.”

“Whatsoever,” she brushes it off. “I’m gonna go harass your brother and leave you two to bask in your shiny new relationship status. Love the rings, by the way.”

She winks at them and wanders off as Ian pulls Mickey into another gentle kiss with a smile. They hadn’t made a big show of the tattoos. They’d gotten them done the night before—the ink and the redness surrounding it still fresh against their skin, the vibrant black standing out sharply, no time to fade and dull. They’d gone just the two of them, without telling anyone, including Fiona, and they hadn’t incorporated the choice into the ceremony. Because this one little element was just for Ian and Mickey—the branding on their skin a deeper promise of forever than any they’d made at that altar just minutes ago. It was nice, though, knowing that that promise was visible on their skin, noticeable to those around them who bothered to look.

A few minutes later, they find themselves wandering away to a little nook off to the side of the main space. They both know they should be greeting their guests and mingling among them, but they’d planned to do that at Patsy’s, and they’d quickly found themselves wanting some alone time in the lovely little shop to just be together. So they snuck off, cozying up in a comfy leather loveseat in a dimly lit corner. They sit together, Ian leaning back into Mickey’s arms, his head pillowed against Mickey’s chest as they examine the ink on their skin silently, just enjoying the quiet time together.

They’ve only been in the space for a few minutes, though, before they hear footsteps approaching, and the disappointment they feel is palpable as they prepare for their inevitable return to the festivities.

When they glance up, though, it’s Fiona who rounds the corner, Yevgeny tucked in her arms with his little hands wrapped tight around the worn copy of *The Velveteen Rabbit* that Mickey had read during the ceremony. Yevgeny’s face lights up in a smile when he sees Ian and Mickey, and he reaches out a hand, nearly dropping the book that Fiona catches at the last moment with a little smile.

“Hey,” Fiona greets quietly, resituating Yev until he has the book firmly in his hands once again. With a smile she smooths back the child’s hair, and he grins at her, tucking his head against the crook of her neck. “Yevy’s getting a little sleepy,” she explains with a smile. “He asked for a story from his daddies.”
Mickey’s face lights into a smile at that, and he and Ian shift until Mickey can reach out for Yev. Fiona passes him over carefully, and Mickey situates Yev on his lap so that Ian can sit close. “You want to read a story, Yev?” he asks gently, eyes soft as he watches his son.

Yev nods, as he makes himself comfortable in Mickey’s lap. Over the past several months since Mickey’s been back, Mickey and Ian have learned quickly that Yev gets quiet when he gets sleepy, and sleepy always means storytime to Yev.

Fiona smiles softly at them as Ian strokes a hand over Yevy’s blonde locks and opens the book in his lap. “I’ll let you guys be,” she promises, keeping her voice low. “And I’ll run interference for you, in case anyone tries to interrupt. I’ll let you know when it’s time to cut the cake.”

Mickey smiles and whispers a quiet, “Thank you,” as Fiona waves him off and wanders away to leave the three of them in peace.

“Hey, Trev. Casey,” Fiona greets as she wanders back into the main space, keeping close to the little nook Ian, Mickey, and Yev are hiding in to keep away unwanted interruptions.

“Hey,” Casey offers back with a smile; Trevor giving a little wave in her direction. “They duck away? Was this too much?”

“Nah,” Fiona responds honestly. “Think they just needed a little time to bask in the whole married thing. Plus, Yevgeny wanted some time with his dads.”

“Makes sense,” Trevor responds, sipping at the coffee he holds. “They really love that little boy.”

“Yeah. Yeah, they do,” Fiona agrees, leaning back against the wall behind her with a fond smile on her lips. After a moment, though, she snaps out of it with a shake of her head. “Hey, I just wanted to thank you guys for all you did here. They loved it. Even if they are off in their little family bubble. And, Casey, I want to make sure you know you’re expected at the reception, all right? No arguments. Order of the grooms.”

Trevor smirks a bit and raises his hands in innocence when Casey glances his way. “Wasn’t me,” he insists.

Fiona laughs at that, fond little smile playing at her features. “Look, they want you there. For real. Not just a formality or some shit. They love this place, and they like you. So. Be there,” she threatens playfully before turning to Trevor. “And you. Make sure he’s there.”

“Will do, boss,” Trevor offers with a playful salute as he takes Casey’s arm to lead him back to the party, leaving Fiona to keep watch over the little family around the corner.

Later that evening, when they’ve finally all made it over to Patsy’s and everyone’s been fed, they find themselves out on the dance floor—or at least the open space that’s serving as one. Even Mickey’s dancing, rocking playfully in Ian’s arms and laughing with his husband as they watch Yevgeny bopping along to the music with Amy and Jemma. The little boy had found a second wind after spending a little time napping in his dad’s lap, and now he’s back to enjoying the festivities.

They’re due to make the rounds with their guests—they’d been avoiding that particular responsibility, opting instead to stay close to one another in their little bubble of happiness. There’s a fear lurking that letting the rest of the party in might somehow dampen the evening, and it’s not entirely unjustified considering some of the family who’d shown.
For the most part, it’s Frank they’re worried about. They’d managed to keep him away from the actual ceremony, but somewhere along the way, he’d forced himself into the reception with Monica on his arm. Ian’s tense for a bit after they arrive, but Lip is keeping them under control for the most part, and part of Ian is happy to have them there. He knows he should be over the attachment, and for the most part he is, but even through the worry he’s feeling, some part of Ian is still grateful to have both his parents there celebrating with them.

All that appreciation fades, though, when they finally drag themselves over to say hello.

The first thing Monica does when they get there is hand Ian an unsealed envelope full of cash, cooing about how proud she is of him, and Ian’s defenses are instantly raised as he shakes his head in frustration.

“Goddamnit,” Ian forces out, anger tightening his voice as he shoves the envelope back at Monica. “We don’t want your fucking dirty money, all right?”

“Oh, sweetie,” Monica reaches out, laying her hands gently on Ian’s cheeks, “it’s not dirty money, I promise.”

“Then where the fuck did you get it?” Ian insists, pulling back and reaching for the gentle hand Mickey lays on his shoulder for comfort.

“Ian, honey,” Monica tries again, eyes gentle, but Ian’s not buying it. “We just want to leave something for you and your new husband. We want you to be happy. We want to help.”

“We don’t need your help,” Ian counters as he pushes away from the table, standing close to Mickey. “We are doing just fine on our own, and I’d appreciate it if you both left us the fuck alone.”

Ian grabs Mickey’s hand then, drawing him away, and Ian can feel the tension in Mickey’s form, the waves of protective frustration rolling off of him. He hears Frank call after them, a loud shout, That’s how you talk to your mother?! You ungrateful little shit. But Frank’s cut off by Monica who’s begging him to let them be and Lip who steps in to get Frank back under control, and Ian can feel his own tension starting to melt away the further they move from the scene.

“It’s okay,” Ian whispers quietly to Mickey, placing a gentle hand on Mickey’s cheek and guiding his eyes back to Ian’s from where he’s turned an angry gaze to Frank. “Lip’s got it. It’s okay. I’m okay.”

Mickey sighs at that, reaching out to stroke his fingers through Ian’s hair, eyes soft with concern. “You sure?” Mickey asks, eyes locking on Ian’s.

With a little smile, Ian leans forward to kiss Mickey softly, nodding as he pulls back and whispers a quiet, “Yeah, Mick. I’m good.”

After the debacle with Frank and Monica, they jump back into making their rounds, assuming the worst is over. So they wander the space, chatting with their guests, and it should be easy—it’s just their family and closest friends—but Ian can see that exhaustion is starting to wear on Mickey. Mickey’s not used to the full Gallagher experience. It’s not often that they’re all in the same confined space. Ian’s pretty sure, in fact, that this hasn’t happened since they’d announced their engagement.

At some point, though, Mickey ends up with Franny in his arms while they’re chatting with Debs,
and his face lights immediately. Ian’s trying to listen as Debbie offers her congratulations and updates them on Franny and Neil, but Ian can’t seem to focus on anything but the bright, happy smile Mickey wears as he coos at the baby in his arms. Ian’s never seen him with a baby other than Yev. Back when they’d been staying in the Gallagher house, Mickey had always been good with Liam, but Ian has never seen him interact with a baby who wasn’t his son. It made Ian’s heart ache at the sweetness.

After a moment, he realizes Debs has gone quiet and both Debbie and Mickey are watching him expectantly. Debbie has a knowing little smirk on her lips, and Mickey’s smiling openly.

“The fuck you lookin’ at?” Mickey teases. He’s rocking Franny, fingers tickling at her back with her little head resting against his cheek. Ian thinks it might be the sweetest thing he’s ever seen.

“Language, Mickey,” Debbie scolds, and Mickey doesn’t even roll his eyes, just smiles a little and offers a quiet apology that Ian thinks he might even mean. It makes Ian smile.

Debbie stares at Mickey for a moment in disbelief. “Wow,” she offers, turning her eyes to Ian. “Either you’ve seriously tamed him, or your husband really likes babies.”

“It’s cute, isn’t it?” Ian agrees, the corner of his lips tipping up as he and Debs watch Mickey with Franny.

Mickey scowls at them both, and Ian can see the silent fuck off in his eyes that he contains to avoid Debbie’s wrath, and Ian laughs happily at Mickey’s antics.

“All right, Mick. Time to give the baby back. We’ve gotta keep making the rounds,” Ian insists as he gives Debs a little hug and thanks her for being there.

Mickey frowns, the disappointment obvious on his face as he presses a gentle little kiss to Franny’s hair before handing her back over to her mom. Ian wraps an arm around Mickey’s shoulder and nuzzles at his hair, smiling in fond affection as he steers Mickey on to the next group of guests.

Once they’ve finished circulating with their thank yous, Ian insists Mickey join him back out on the dance floor. They’re laughing and happy and Ian’s not sure he’s ever felt so complete. He has Mickey now, for always, and he’s determined not to fuck it up.

“The fuck you thinkin’ about, man?” Mickey questions after a moment, the carefree smile on Ian’s face catching his attention.

“I’m happy,” Ian insists, grin stretching wider as he nuzzles at Mickey’s neck.

Mickey laughs at that and continues to rock Ian in his arms, holding Ian close as they bask in the joy of finally having one another so completely.

It’s not long, though, before Monica’s asking to cut in, cooing apologies at Ian, and Ian sighs but gives in, pressing a reassuring kiss to Mickey’s cheek before breaking off to dance for a bit with Monica.

For a moment, Mickey watches them, his protective instincts flaring. But Ian seems okay, and Mickey’s not about to argue until something goes down, so he moves to wander off to their table. Before he can make it, though, Fiona’s stopping him with a grin and a raised eyebrow.

“Any chance I can get a dance with my new brother-in-law?” she asks playfully, and he can’t quite bring himself to deny her the request.
“Come here,” he smiles, grabbing her hand and dragging her forward. She laughs and rocks with him to the mid tempo music that’s flowing through the speakers, and she chatters happily at him about how beautiful the whole wedding turned out and how happy she is for them, and he tries to pretend like it’s no big deal, but Mickey is really fucking happy there dancing with Fiona and watching Ian from across the room.

As the evening is ticking away, Mickey and Ian are beginning to get restless, ready to head home and spend their first night together as husbands. Fiona has instructed them that they’re not allowed to go anywhere until she can hand over their wedding gift, though, so they’re trying to hold out until she can get a moment away.

When she finally does, she approaches them happily, a bright smile on her face as she hugs them both close and kisses their cheeks as she whispers congratulations. After a moment, she hands over a small box wrapped in delicate shimmering pearl paper with a small cloth bow adorning it. Ian smiles when Fiona places the gift in Mickey’s hands and then nudges Mickey with a shoulder and a raised brow. Mickey raises his eyes, dumbfounded, and Fiona scoffs playfully.

“Open it!” she insists, bright eyes shining with excitement.

So Mickey does, tugging gently at the bow, and then opening the paper carefully. Curiously, he lifts the cover off the small box in his hands, and gasps softly when he sees a key nestled on a bed of tissue paper. “Fiona?” he asks, fingers tracing the cool metal of the key delicately, afraid to hope. “What is this?”

Fiona smiles brightly. “It’s the key to your new apartment. In my new building. The two bedroom you liked with the little office you could easily turn into a nursery someday, if you ever decide to extend your little family. Renovations are all finished, and it’s move-in ready. Could even stay tonight, if you want.”

Mickey’s silent for a moment, disbelief and utter joy written across his features.

With Mickey indisposed, Ian cuts in, wide eyes locking with Fiona’s. “Are you serious?” he asks. “We couldn’t afford the two bedroom, Fi. Best we could do was the one bedroom.”

“Yeah, well,” Fiona waves him off with a grin, “I’m givin’ it to you for the price of the one bedroom. With the other units rented, I’ll be turning a decent profit. I can swing a deal for my family. I’m even giving you the first couple months free. Happy wedding, assholes.”

When Mickey looks up, there are genuine tears in his eyes, and he presses a palm into them to stem the flow before he finally breaks and pulls Fiona into a hug. “Thank you,” he whispers, squeezing her tight before pulling back so Ian can take his place and hug his sister close.

Mickey’s overwhelmed by all the emotion as Ian turns to him and pulls Mickey into a delicate kiss, pressing their foreheads together when he pulls away. Mickey can see the tears shining in Ian’s eyes then, and Mickey let’s a little laugh escape his lips. “We have our own home,” Mickey murmurs with a smile. “With room for Yev. We have a home, Ian.”

Ian laughs loudly, then, joy radiating off of him as he kisses Mickey again happily. “Yeah,” he nods, tears threatening to fall from his own eyes, “yeah, we do, Mick.”

Chapter End Notes
I feel like this chapter is a little all over the place. I was trying to capture the awkward quick pacing that always seems present for the newlyweds who are expected to greet and chat with everyone, but I don't know if it worked. I imagine Mickey and Ian as finding this process exhausting, so I was trying to bring that forward, but I don't know. It is what it is.
I Need You

Chapter Summary

Mickey and Ian are finally married. Fiona’s given them the best gift they could ever ask for, and they spend their wedding night in their new home.

Chapter Notes

I call this the “how much sex can I write without using any variation of the word ‘dick’?” chapter. AKA: the wedding night. This probably doesn’t actually move the story forward all that much. But Jesus Christ did it turn into an emotional roller coaster.

I blame the song that served as inspiration: Darren Hayes’s “I Need You.”

Also, I'm upping the rating to an E, but that's mostly just to cover my bases. It's probably still an M level, but I figure an E is safer, so. Yeah.

When they walk through the door of their new place, Mickey feels giddy. The place isn’t large, exactly, but the open floor plan makes it feel spacious. There’s no furniture, but they resolved to spend their first night as a married couple in their new home the moment Fiona had given them the key. Which, really, was probably a crazy idea, but here they are.

As soon as the door is closed behind them, Mickey’s spinning around to wrap Ian up in his arms and kiss him gently, both of them wearing matching smiles. They break apart, and Mickey will deny it for the rest of his life, but he’s fucking giggling and Ian is, too, and they have never been happier.

“Holy shit,” Mickey murmurs, still laughing against Ian’s lips. “We’re fucking married, Gallagher.”

Ian laughs along, stumbling through the living room still wrapped around Mickey. “And this is ours,” Ian adds, kissing Mickey again and nearly knocking the both of them over.

Mickey beams at him, thrilled at the thought that they’re about to start their brand new life in their brand new home. And they’re married.

“Let’s check out the bedroom, huh?” Mickey offers with a wink, and Ian rolls his eyes.

“It’s just an empty room, Mick. We don’t have any furniture. There’s nothing to—”

Ian’s protest dies on his lips, though, as Mickey shoves open the door to the master bedroom. They both freeze. The room is illuminated by the dull glow of a decorative lamp that sits on a simple bedside table. Beside it stands a large king bed that’s covered in silky burgundy sheets and piled
with matching pillows. There’s a bottle of champagne chilling in an ice bucket on the end table and a note sitting in the center of the bed, written on sharp white paper.

It’s Mickey who finally shakes out of the shock and moves to the side of the bed, lifting the paper into his hands and scanning Fiona’s messy scrawl:

Figured you could use a place to sleep if you’re gonna insist on spending your first night together as husbands in your new place—which I assume you will. We stocked you up on basic necessities. Rest of the furniture’s on you, though. Don’t go expecting me to furnish the whole place for you. I hope you love it. Love you guys. Wishing you all the love and happiness in the world or some shit. You deserve it.

—Fi

Mickey smiles fondly and then hands the note over to Ian who reads it quickly with a matching smile on his face and then shakes his head before laying it safely on the bedside table.

Mickey grins at Ian, and it’s almost a smirk. “Guess she really likes us,” he ventures. “Or she really wants you to get laid.”

Ian laughs and tugs Mickey into his side with an arm around the other man’s waist before pressing a kiss to Mickey’s temple. “Wish she’d stop spending her money on us,” Ian gripes without much feeling, and Mickey pinches Ian’s side before throwing himself down onto the bed.

“I don’t,” Mickey disagrees with a contented sigh. “This shit’s comfortable.”

“Oh yeah?” Ian smirks with a raised eyebrow. “Maybe I can get over it, then.”

“You damn well better, Gallagher,” Mickey chastises, nudging Ian with a foot before reaching out for Ian’s hand and lacing their fingers to give a little tug at Ian’s hand, “cause I’m gettin’ fucked by someone tonight, and I was hoping it’d be my new husband.”

With a slow smile, Ian shifts onto the bed at that, crawling up over Mickey until he can claim the other man’s lips. Ian has been dying to have Mickey alone like this all damn day, and he’s determined to make the most of every fucking moment.

“Love you, Mick,” Ian murmurs against Mickey’s lips, his fingers tugging at the buttons of Mickey’s shirt, desperate to find Mickey’s skin. Ian feels Mickey smile then, Mickey’s own hands coming up to shove the tux jacket away from Ian’s shoulders, his fingers delicate and gentle as he shifts them up to cradle Ian’s cheek, pulling Ian’s eyes up to his own.

“I love you, too, Ian,” Mickey whispers out, eyes searching Ian’s face, savoring the look of awe he finds there. “And I am so fucking happy. I love you.”

Ian swallows hard against the emotion that chokes him, letting his face fall to tuck against the crook of Mickey’s neck when he thinks the sheen of happy tears that collect in his eyes might fall. “Fuck,” he whispers out, nuzzling at Mickey’s skin, “don’t think I’m ever going to get sick of hearing you say that.”

Mickey grins, fingers stroking through Ian’s hair for a moment before shifting down to continue stripping Ian of his clothes. “Same,” Mickey offers, tugging at the ends of Ian’s shirt where they’re still tucked into his slacks until he can get his hands up under the offending material to trace his fingers over Ian’s sensitive skin, leaving Ian gasping at the sudden soft skin to skin contact. “But right now,” he continues, mischief dancing in his eyes, “right now I want to have a little fun with
Ian laughs, joy tickling at his senses as he presses little kisses down Mickey’s jawline. “Never gonna get sick of that either. I’m your fucking husband, Mick,” Ian beams, lifting up to kiss Mickey’s lips again. “And you’re mine.”

“All right,” Mickey gripes with mock annoyance, “let’s move the fuck on and get down to business here, Gallagher. Fuckin’ want you.”

“Okay, okay,” Ian acquiesces with a little chuckle. “Impatient, huh, Mick?”

“Fuckin’ yes I am,” Mickey agrees with raised eyebrows, fingers never leaving Ian’s skin. “Spent the whole day right by your side without being able to really touch you. Been killin’ me, man.”

Ian smiles genuinely at the confession and dips down to kiss the corner of Mickey’s lips. “Me, too, Mick,” he agrees, fingers settling on Mickey’s cheek just to dance their way down Mickey’s neck until Ian can settle them against the ink on Mickey’s chest, tracing the letters of his name where they’re etched in Mickey’s skin, a little smile touching Ian’s lips.

Mickey reaches out then with his left hand, capturing Ian’s and lacing their fingers. “Like this one better,” Mickey insists, eyes focused on the delicate lettering of Ian’s name that adorns his finger, his own tattoo sitting just beside the matching one on Ian’s that holds Mickey’s name in the midst of the delicate lines that curve around their skin.

Ian smiles, raising their joined hands to his lips so he can press them delicately to the spot where their permanent wedding bands lie. “I like them both,” Ian admits, eyeing Mickey with a contented expression. “But I think I like what this one means more,” he admits, indicating the ink on Mickey’s finger, emotion building in Ian’s voice. “Because this one means forever, Mickey. And it’s forever for both of us this time.”

“Ian,” Mickey’s voice is soft, the fingers of his free hand lifting to stroke at Ian’s hair in an attempt to soothe, “don’t, love.”

Ian lets a watery smile cross his lips at the sentiment—it’s a new one, and Ian can’t deny the surge of affection it brings. But he continues. He needs to say it, and he thinks Mickey deserves to hear it. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry for all the crap I put you through back then. You loved me so much. Took care of me. And I fucking spat in your face because my own fucking mind betrayed me, and I couldn’t believe you’d still want me when I was so broken. I should have trusted you, Mick. I should have loved you the way you deserved. And fuck, Mickey, I swear to you, in my heart, I did. I have always loved you so fucking much. But my head wouldn’t let me show you. I was so fucked up, Mick, and I loved you and I missed you every day, but I didn’t know how to show you, and I am so sorry.”

Mickey lets Ian finish, fingers still wrapped in Ian’s and eyes gentle as he watches the man he loves pour his heart out. When Ian stops, there are tears dripping down his cheeks, and Mickey reaches out to wipe them away with his free hand, refusing to break the contact he has with the other.

“Ian,” he finally calls gently, drawing Ian’s sorrowful eyes to his own. “All that is the past. None of it matters now—or maybe it matters because it got us here. But it doesn’t have to hurt anymore. Because we’re here now, in this room—in our new home—together. We’re married, Ian. You stood with me today and you promised to love me for the rest of our lives and I promised the same. And that’s what matters, Ian. What we have here, now, today and every day for the rest of our lives. We don’t have to hurt anymore.”
“Fuck, I love you,” Ian insists, voice wavering with emotion as a few stray tears drip down onto Mickey’s chest. Ian falls forward then, capturing Mickey’s lips as he presses their bodies close and holds tight to Mickey.

“Then show me,” Mickey presses out in a heated whimper against Ian’s lips.

It takes Ian next to no time at all to strip them down to nothing, Mickey laid out bare and wanting beneath him, eyes never leaving Ian’s. It’s fucking intense, being so close and intimate after the day they’ve had, the promises they’ve sworn, and the constant surge of emotion swirling around in their hearts. Part of Ian feels shocked—after all the time they’ve spent together, fighting and caring and loving, that there could be new emotions and feelings attached to this. But here, as Ian shifts his body back up over Mickey’s, his lips capturing Mickey’s own in a sweet, slow kiss, he feels everything so vividly and desperately that he thinks his heart might stop here, now, for Mickey Milkovich. Gallagher-Milkovich, his mind supplies, as Ian tries to wrap his head around the newness of that. The different and raw and intense that exists in their every breath. Because they are new. In this, they are new because they’re suddenly one. Two halves of a whole. And maybe, in many ways, that was true before as well, but here, in this moment, with Mickey’s name branded on his skin and the promises of forever finally official, it’s new and it’s real, and Ian has never felt more in love.

After a moment, Ian drags himself away from Mickey’s lips, drawing deep, uneven breaths as he tries to calm the emotion that surges in his chest, and Mickey watches him with careful concern, reaching out to brush away a tear Ian hadn’t noticed had dripped from the corner of his eye.

“Hey,” Mickey whispers, calm and gentle with so much softness Ian feels suddenly unworthy, and he knows he’ll never stop loving the incredible man beneath him. Mickey gives him a little smile, just a touch at the corners of his mouth, as he continues, “You okay, love?”

Ian huffs out a little laugh at that, working to steady his breathing enough so he might speak without breaking down. “Yeah, Mick,” Ian promises, leaning down until his lips are ghosting over Mickey’s. “Just love you. So fucking much, and it’s a lot—having you like this, here, in our bed, on our wedding night. A little overwhelmed is all. In a good way. Promise.”

Mickey nods in acceptance, falling quiet on a gasp as Ian trails his lips gently down the delicate curve of Mickey’s neck, his fingers playing in Mickey’s hair.

Ian works at Mickey’s neck in a way that makes Mickey desperate, leaves Mickey helpless and wanting and able to do little more than grasp at Ian’s skin as he rolls his hips up to meet Ian’s. But Ian’s teasing, refusing to give Mickey the pressure he’s seeking, moving away just a touch instead of pressing forward, and Mickey wants to fucking scream because it’s both the most frustrating and the most intense experience Mickey’s ever had with anyone, and he feels like he’s flying, riding a high that’s just out of reach but that promises to be fucking epic. Because this is different. They’re different. And Mickey can’t get enough of this new desperation.

After a few moments, though, Ian stops, shifting back on his haunches and watching Mickey closely, a hesitation in his eyes Mickey doesn’t quite understand.

Mickey stares up at him, lips twisting up into a confused scowl. “The fuck, man?” he questions, brow furrowed, fingers sinking into Ian’s hips in an attempt to draw him back.

“I, uh—” Ian starts nervously, searching for the words. Finally, he settles and continues, “I’ve been thinking maybe we could try a first? It being our wedding night and all?”
At that, Mickey’s lips tip up a bit as his eyes soften and he watches Ian fondly. “Want to, uh, switch things up a bit, huh?”

Ian nods gently. “Yeah?” Ian admits, voice wavering with uncertainty. “I know you’ve never really been that into the idea, but I just—I don’t know. I like it sometimes. Feels good. Think it’d feel even better with you. Not always, just—just sometimes, you know? Thought tonight would be a good time? Least for round one? If you want it, too.”

As Ian’s stuttering through the words, Mickey’s fingers have turned gentle on Ian’s hips, rubbing little soothing circles with his thumbs to help calm Ian. Mickey nods when Ian’s finished, soft smile on his lips. “C’mere,” he murmurs finally with a little tilt of his head, and that’s all Ian needs to press forward over Mickey, allowing their lips to meet for a slow, heated kiss that lasts only moments before Mickey’s pulling back and framing Ian’s face with his hands, drawing Ian’s eyes to his own. “I love that idea, Ian. Want this night to be special for you. For us. Seems like the perfect time, hmm?”

Ian lets out a soft laugh in relief as he lets himself collapse into Mickey’s strong arms, tucking his face into the crook of Mickey’s neck and pressing soft kisses to the delicate skin there. “Thank you, Mick,” Ian presses the words into Mickey’s skin, lips never lifting from his lover’s neck. “Thank you.”

With gentle hands and a soft smile, Mickey shifts them until he can lay Ian out beneath him, hands teasing along the length of Ian’s body, tracing the hard lines of muscle with tickling fingers. Ian’s breathing quickly, eyelashes fluttering as he savors the feel of Mickey’s touch on his skin, and Mickey can’t help the breath that catches in his throat at the picture Ian makes beneath him. “Fuck, Ian,” Mickey breathes, voice wrecked. “You’re so fucking gorgeous. Every fucking inch of you. Can’t ever get enough. Jesus.”

“I know the feeling,” Ian agrees with a little tilt of his lips, reaching up to sink his fingers into Mickey’s hair as Mickey smirks back, lips dropping to Ian’s chest, dragging gentle kisses down his lover’s body.

Mickey preps Ian slow, draws out his lover’s pleasure until Ian’s panting harshly, teeth sunk into his bottom lip as his fingers grip at Mickey’s hair, mussing the raven strands. “Feels good, Mick,” Ian murmurs out, a groan falling from his lips as Mickey leans down to suckle at the sensitive skin of Ian’s inner thigh, trailing his way up to the v of Ian’s groin as his fingers work Ian open, leaving the redhead a desperate, gasping mess. “Please, Mickey,” Ian whines, shifting his hips forward in search of the warmth of Mickey’s mouth. Mickey chuckles against him then, and Ian can feel Mickey’s grin pressed into his skin as he nuzzles rights where he is, leaving Ian a wanton mess as he begs for Mickey’s attention. “We’ve got all night, baby,” Mickey reminds, fingers pressing just right until Ian’s arching up with a groan, and Mickey grins again, pressing another little kiss to Ian’s thigh. “Gonna take this slow. Make you fucking beg for it, Gallagher.”

“Fuck, Mickey,” Ian protests, eyes wide and breath coming heavy. “I am fucking begging. Fucking suck me off or get in me, please. Just—just fucking do something.”

“So impatient,” Mickey scolds, crooking his fingers just right and earning another gasp from Ian as Mickey crawls back up over Ian’s body to capture his lover’s lips. “Gonna be worth it, though. Promise.”
“Mick,” Ian begs, latching onto Mickey’s shoulders and dragging him back down for another heated kiss, pressing their bodies close. “I’m fucking ready, Mickey. Please. Need you.”

Mickey smiles down at Ian, the heat in his eyes shining alongside the softness that he feels at having Ian like this, so open and loving and trusting. “Okay, love. Okay. I’ve got you. Gonna make you feel so good, Ian.”

Once Mickey has Ian’s eyes, he doesn’t let them go, holding focus on his husband to search for any signs of discomfort as he pushes forward, filling Ian up for the first time and earning a harsh, desperate gasp from Ian as he tries to keep his eyes from rolling back so he can hold Mickey’s gaze.

“It’s okay,” Mickey soothes, running his fingers through Ian’s hair before trailing them down to rest against Ian’s jaw. “Let yourself feel it, Ian. Let me fucking take you apart.”

“Fuck.” The word slips through Ian’s lips without permission at Mickey’s words, and he can’t resist the urge to let his head fall against the pillows, eyes rolling back and body arching up into Mickey to force him deeper.

Mickey gasps at that, falling against Ian, as he nuzzles into the crook of Ian’s neck.

“Fuck, you feel good, Ian. Could get used to this,” Mickey murmurs out against Ian’s neck, fingers tracing Ian’s sides as Mickey rolls his hips, desperately chasing the pleasure he feels at the connection.

Ian smiles, fingers tugging gently at Mickey’s hair. After a moment, Mickey catches on and lifts his head so Ian can capture his lips in a kiss, leaving them both breathless as they move together, bodies pressed tight, not a breath of space between them.

“Fucking love you, Mick.” Ian breaths the words against Mickey’s lips, one hand straying down to run the length of Mickey’s back before gripping tightly at Mickey’s ass to tug him impossibly closer. Ian’s never felt so fucking right before. They’re in their new home, their new bed. They’re married. Ian has Mickey, for the rest of their lives, and he’s never letting go. Never again. “Love you.”

At Ian’s words, Mickey’s rhythm falters, a heated gasp falling from his lips and his eyes dropping closed. Mickey’s not sure he’s ever going to get past the shock of emotion that hits him every time he hears Ian say those words.

“Fuck, Ian,” Mickey murmurs, dragging his hips along Ian’s jaw as his hips shift to push deeper inside. “Fuckin’ love you, too. So fuckin’ much. I love you.”

Chapter End Notes

This probably ends abruptly, but it was all I had for this one. Hopefully, it's not too disconcerting.
Like It Or Not

Chapter Summary

Mickey’s grumpy and Ian’s amused.

Chapter Notes

I mean, honestly, this is mostly just filler, but sometimes that’s necessary, right? Also, I just really like Trevor and the idea of Ian and Mickey developing a friend group, so yeah. This happened. Some bigger stuff coming up, but I need to work everything up to it, so bear with me.

Ian wakes wrapped around Mickey, the comfort of their new bed leaving him warm and cozy as he nuzzles his face against Mickey’s shoulder, pressing a gentle kiss there and breathing deeply, taking Mickey in, fingers drifting to stroke along Mickey’s upper arm.

“Mornin’ sleepyhead,” Ian murmurs when he feels Mickey stir just a bit against him. He can see the way Mickey’s features shift with a grin as Mickey rolls onto his back so he can lean over to capture Ian’s lips in a sweet good morning kiss.

“Mornin’,” Mickey mumbles back with that adorable sleepy grumble Ian loves. “Now let me go back to sleep. Fuckin’ tired, man.”

Ian laughs at that, reaching out to pinch at Mickey’s hip playfully. “Uh uh,” Ian protests as he swings himself up and out of bed, “time to get up. I need to refuel. Pancakes?”

“Then fucking make ‘em,” Mickey shoots back, scrunching up his brow and pinching his eyes closed against the sun as Ian throws open the curtain that covers the large window to the side of the room. “The fuck, man. I just married your ass. I deserve sleep.”

“Not happening,” Ian argues with a playful singsong to his voice. “We don’t even have stuff to make breakfast.”

“Then fuckin’ order it. And you go pick it up. Let me sleep,” Mickey whines, dragging the bulky comforter up over his face. “Besides, your sister said they got us necessities. Probably includes some fucking eggs and bread.”

“First of all, I doubt it,” Ian argues, trying and failing to keep the amusement out of his voice at Mickey’s muffled protests. With a smile, Ian crawls himself back up onto the bed beside Mickey, tugging at the covers until Mickey finally relents and lets Ian strip away the blanket. “Second of all,” Ian continues, pressing another kiss to Mickey’s lips, “I wanna show off my new husband.”

After a moment, Mickey sighs wearily, shaking his head and giving Ian a little glare. “Fuckin’ hate you, Gallagher.”
“Hey, Trevor,” Fiona greets when she spots him in the diner. “What’re you doin’ here?”

Trevor gives her a smile and sips at his coffee. “Got a date,” Trevor explains, “Figured I’d bring him in for the best damn pancakes this side of town.”

“Cute,” Fiona scolds with a grin. When Sierra approaches to refill Trevor’s coffee, Fiona lays a hand on Sierra’s forearm before she can leave and whispers, “This table’s on us, all right.”

Sierra smiles with a nod. “You got it, boss,” she agrees, throwing Trevor a wink.

“You don’t have to do that,” Trevor protests.

“Yeah, well,” Fiona waves him off, “you and your new man didn’t have to comp my brother and his new husband a cocktail hour, and yet, here we are. Take it. It’s the least we can do.”

“Fine,” Trevor gives in, offering her another little smile. “How’re they doing anyway? Off on their honeymoon?”

Fiona tilts her head in thought for a moment. “I mean, they’re taking ten days off, but they’re not going anywhere. Spending it in their new place. Shutting themselves off from the world. Guess it’s a type of honeymoon?”

Trevor laughs at that. “That certainly sounds like Ian and Mickey, huh?”

Fiona lets a bright grin stretch over her features at that. “Yeah, guess it does, huh?” she agrees. “They’re excited about it. Happy. I like seein’ ‘em that way, you know. Took ‘em a long time to get there, but they deserve it.” She pauses for a moment, realizing who she’s talking to and backpedaling a bit. “Sorry. You probably don’t wanna hear this.”

“Nah,” Trevor disagrees with a little wave and a shake of his head. “It’s all right, Fiona, really. We’ve all moved on. We’re friends now. And I’m working on building a new relationship. It’s all good. I’m glad they’re happy.”

“You are a better person that I would be,” Fiona insists, giving him a little pat on the shoulder as she notices Casey approaching the diner. “I’ll leave you to your man, all right? Make sure my girls take care of you two.”

“Thanks, Fiona.” Trevor gives her a smile. “And when the boys come up for air, tell ‘em Casey and I wanna take them out for lunch.”

“Will do,” Fiona offers heading away, but giving Casey a little wave and a bright “hey” as he heads through the door.

“The fuck are you two assholes doing here?!” Fiona shouts across the diner when she spots Mickey and Ian. “You just got fucking married. You’re supposed to be basking in the afterglow or some shit.”

“Yeah, well,” Mickey counters, voice sleep rough and grumbly, “my husband’s lazy as fuck and he didn’t want to help me make breakfast this morning.”
“Actually,” Ian corrects with a little smirk, “my lazy ass husband didn’t want to get out of bed this morning.”

Mickey’s rubbing at his eyes and he looks legitimately exhausted. Fiona laughs when she approaches them. “Wore him out last night, huh?” Fiona directs at Ian, rubbing playfully at Mickey’s shoulder.

Mickey scrunches up his face into an annoyed glare as he shrugs her hand away. “Just bring me some fucking coffee.”

With a bright smile that makes Mickey scowl, Ian gives Fiona a little laugh. “Definitely wore him out.”

“Shut the fuck up,” Mickey shoots at Ian, turning back to Fiona in irritation. “The fuck is my coffee?”

“All right, grumpy,” Fiona rolls her eyes and taps his shoulder again. “I’ll get you your coffee.”

“Thank you!” Mickey shoots over his shoulder as she walks away, and his voice is halfway between annoyed and sincere.

“Hey!” A voice interrupts from over Mickey’s shoulder, and when they turn, it’s Trevor and Casey who are just slipping out of their booth. Mickey gives a little scowl, but Ian shoots a bright smile their way.

“What’re you guys doing here?” Ian asks, scooting over and motioning for Mickey to do the same. “Sit, guys.”

“That okay with you?” Trevor asks Mickey with an eyebrow raise, as he takes in Mickey’s questionable mood.

“Why the fuck not,” Mickey offers, and his voice is agreeable. “Maybe you two can entertain this asshole so he leaves me alone.”

Casey looks confused for a moment, even as he slides into the booth beside Ian, and Ian just laughs. For a moment, Casey catches Trevor’s eye, and Trevor gives him a nod. “It’s fine. Just Mickey. And Ian. They do this a lot.”

“Interesting,” Casey offers, unsure what to make of the display, but there’s amusement playing behind his eyes. “Not a morning person, huh?” Casey asks Ian then, the amusement evident in his tone as he watches Mickey closely.

“It’s fucking adorable, isn’t it?” Ian teases with a little smile.

“Fuck you,” Mickey throws back and Ian raises his eyebrows with a smirk.

“That would be Mickey Milkovich speak for I love you, Ian, and I am so happy I married you last night,” Ian jokes with a little smile in Mickey’s direction.

Mickey throws him the finger and Ian just laughs.

They’re all making small talk; Ian and Mickey working to get to know Casey a bit. They’re thankful for everything Casey’d done for them, and they’re both happy that Trevor’s working to move on, even if their motives are a touch selfish, what with the way everything went down
between the three of them. Ian and Mickey both know Trevor’s not holding a grudge, but it doesn’t stop them both from feeling a little guilty about the whole situation. Mickey’s still not entirely awake enough to make decent conversation with actual human beings, though, so Ian’s carrying the brunt of the burden. Mickey’s mostly just hoping to avoid saying anything that’ll freak out Casey, so he keeps himself focused on his pancakes and coffee and let’s Ian be his usual charming self.

When Fiona shows up to freshen Mickey’s coffee, Mickey tunes back into the conversation. He’s out of food, so he doesn’t have much excuse anymore to avoid.

“So, you guys really aren’t going on a honeymoon, huh?” Casey asks curiously, and he’s watching Mickey as he asks it. “Seems like you deserve one after all you’ve been through.”

“Nah, no honeymoon,” Ian explains, sipping at the water in front of him. “Don’t really have the money. Got a new place to furnish, you know? We’re gonna spend today stocking up on anything important we need for the apartment, and then we’re gonna spend the next ten days in bed.”

“Fuckin’ liar,” Mickey grumbles with a little glare in Ian’s direction. “That’s what you said about today, too, and here we fucking are, asshole.”

Ian tries to contain the amused little smile that plays at his lips before tilting his head toward Casey. “My husband loves me,” Ian offers with affection and Mickey gives him a little scowl.

They’ve been there for a decent stretch when Fiona grabs Mickey to chat for a minute about work. Part of Mickey wants to tell her to fuck off—he’s supposed to be off for the next ten days, and he plans to take full advantage. But if he’s being honest, he’s a little exhausted with the prospect of continuing to entertain their friends, especially after the day they’d had yesterday, so he gives Ian’s hand a little squeeze before following Fiona back to the little office.

“Ian doing good?” Fiona asks as she shuffles some of the papers on the little desk, motioning for Mickey to sit.

For a moment, Mickey watches her cautiously. He’s not sure what to make of this. “Yeah,” he answers, brow furrowed in question. “Why, Fiona? What’s up?”

“Oh, nothing bad,” she assures with a little wave. “Just wanted to be sure that with the stress of the wedding and all that he’s still in a good place. ‘Cause I’ve got an offer for you, if you’re up for it, but I think it’s important that Ian’s good before we move forward.”

“The fuck are you talking about?” Mickey crosses his arms over his chest, tone reflecting confusion and a touch of curiosity.

Fiona takes a deep breath and then meets Mickey’s eyes. “Look, Mickey, I’m hoping to move away from the diner soon. With the apartment building, I’m going to be bringing in a decent amount of money, and I’ve got a friend who wants to partner on some commercial real estate deals. He’s looking to flip some properties, get in cheap, fix ‘em up, and then sell to the highest bidder. People are convinced the neighborhood’s up and coming or some shit. Means, if we move quick, we can make some serious money. I’m not leaving Patsy’s yet—it’ll be a while. But I thought, maybe, I could bring you on full time with a plan to move you into management down the road if everything works out the way I hope. But what that means is that I’m not going to be able to be as flexible with your schedule. Might not be able to keep you on the same shifts as Ian. So, I just want to be sure he’s in a good place before we make any choices.”
For a moment, Mickey’s silent as he works to process the information she’s just given him. “What about the girls?” he finally asks, concern in his eyes. “They’ve all been here longer. Shouldn’t one of them be first in line for management?”

“I’ve talked to them,” Fiona admits honestly. “They’re not really interested in a potential management gig. Sierra’s really the only one who’d be able to handle it, and she’s got her son. Doesn’t want the extra time commitment. Plus, when you’re waitressing, tips are usually where the money is. And in all fairness, the management thing might not even happen. Right now, this is just me offering you a full time position. You’ve been taking on a lot of extra responsibilities lately anyway, and you’re basically working full time with the shifts you’ve been covering, so I figured it’d be worth a shot. Try full time, see how it goes for you and Ian, and then if the management spot opens up, we can think about that then. Thoughts?”

Mickey leans back in his chair, crossing his arms over his chest as his brow furrows in thought. After a moment, he shifts forward a little as he meets Fiona’s eye. “I need to talk to Ian,” he confides honestly. “I’m interested if he’s okay with it, but I also don’t want to put too much pressure on up front. Already a lot of big changes here, you know? So let me talk to him, and I’ll get back to you.”

“That’s fair,” Fiona nods with a little smile, reaching out to shake Mickey’s hand.

Mickey rolls his eyes at that but indulges her, and she just laughs. With a smile of his own, Mickey stands to leave but thinks better of it just before he steps out the door. “Hey,” he calls, turning back to catch Fiona’s eye, “we still good for the ten days off?”

“Oh course!” she confirms immediately. “Promise I have no plans to interrupt your honeymoon. You two enjoy the time. We can talk about this officially when you get back. Just figured, since you were here, might as well put it out there. Especially since you were dying for a break out there.”

She throws him a little wink at that, and Mickey can’t help but raise his eyebrows a bit in confirmation. “You’re not wrong,” he admits before giving her a little wave. “I’ll let you know when we get back to work.”

“Hey,” Mickey greets again as he rejoins the group, standing beside the table and locking eyes with Ian, but not moving to sit back down, “what do you say we head home and explore? See what Fi and the Gallagher clan stocked us up on and figure out what we need asap, so we can get back to the honeymoon.”

“A couch,” Ian supplies quickly.

Mickey just shakes his head with a little smirk and fixes Ian with a challenging eye. “Who the fuck said I was lettin’ you outta bed for the next ten days?”

“Fuck off,” Ian singsongs back as he slips out of the booth after Casey who steps to the side to let Ian past. When Ian’s within range, he reaches out to wrap a hand in the material of Mickey’s shirt so Ian can tug him close for a kiss. It’s quick, but there’s promise there, and Mickey can’t help the playful smile that stretches across his face at that.

“See ya!” Mickey throws over his shoulder at Trevor and Casey, eyes never actually leaving Ian as he tosses a hearty tip on the table despite the protests he hears from Sierra and drags Ian out the door, the two of them nearly tumbling over one another as they hurry away down the street.
When they get home, they immediately begin with the once over. Ian digs up a pen and some paper from the bag he’d grabbed from the Milkovich house before heading over the night before, so he can take stock of everything they have and everything they need. Ian’s excited at the prospect of making the place their own, and he can tell Mickey’s feeling the same, even if Mickey’s trying to hide it.

They start with the little linen closet in the hallway beside the main bathroom. It’s mostly empty, but there’s a shelf full of towels and washcloths, and on the very top shelf, they find the crocheted blanket that usually lays over the back of the couch at the Gallagher house. Ian smiles fondly when he sees it, running his fingers over the soft, worn yarn. It reminds him of home and Fiona—all of the happy memories from his childhood—and Ian’s glad to have that little piece of home to help them settle in. Mickey sees the happy reminiscences written across Ian’s face, and he ghosts gentle fingers over the small of Ian’s back, smiling softly at his husband when Ian turns happy eyes to him.

There are a couple of boxes at the bottom of the built in shelving unit, and Mickey nods toward them. “Think we should see what kind of crazy shit she tossed in those?” he asks with a raised brow, and Ian nods in confirmation.

They each grab a box and settle themselves on the floor of their bare living room, dragging open the worn corners of the cardboard. Inside the first, Ian finds some old clothes—the stuff he used to love when he lived in the Gallagher house. There are a couple of pairs of jeans, some t-shirts and flannels—even a couple of Mickey’s old shirts Ian had squandered away in the bottom of his dresser drawer for all those times when missing Mickey got to be too much—and Ian’s old winter coat, all freshly washed, along with a note from Fiona that just reads: Thought you might like some of this stuff.

In the second, Mickey finds an envelope full of pictures on the very top. There are some of the Gallagher family, a few from their time since Mickey got out. But most are from all those months they spent together as a couple before Mickey was sent away to prison. Mickey lets out a little laugh when he sees them, shifting close to Ian, so they can flip through them together, laying aside their favorites to tack up later.

Mickey smiles when he finds one of he and Ian, sound asleep in Ian’s old twin bed in the Gallagher house, the two of them curled tight around one another in the tiny space. Part of Mickey misses that—the way the ridiculously small bed forced them to cuddle close, gave them an excuse to be intimate where anyone could see. It was freeing.

Still, Mickey probably would have killed whoever took the picture if he’d found out about it back then.

But he’s feeling light and happy and nostalgic, so he lays it in Ian’s hands with a smile that Ian returns. Mickey’s not sure he’s ever felt so complete as he does now, sitting beside his husband on the floor of their own little home and flipping through an envelope full of memories. Something about the solid real of the past they’ve shared together in the photos he holds makes Mickey feel like they might really have forever in front of them.

As he catches Ian’s eye, Mickey reaches out to twine their fingers loosely. “Can’t wait to get the wedding photos back,” Mickey admits quietly. “Still feels a little surreal, you know? Looking forward to having that solid reminder.”

“Look at you,” Ian teases gently, “all soft and sappy. Who would’a guessed I’d be able to soften up Mickey Milkovich?”
“Fucker, I married you. Of course I went fucking soft,” Mickey counters, pinching Ian’s side before pressing a kiss to the redhead’s temple as Ian swats at Mickey’s hand.

“All right, all right,” Ian laughs, as he drags the box over to him so he can keep exploring, “let’s see what else is in this thing.”

“Whatever you say,” Mickey agrees with a smile.

Later, after they’ve finished their explorations, they’re lying together on the living room floor. The pictures back in their hands as they flip through them together, Ian’s head pillowed on Mickey’s chest. They both know they should get up, do some shopping to make sure they at least have food for the next few days, but they can’t quite bring themselves to burst the domestic little bubble they’ve settled into. It feels good just being together in their new little home, and they’re not ready to disrupt that again just yet.

When Mickey finally lays aside the photographs, Ian shifts a bit—just enough so he can meet Mickey’s eyes at that angle. Ian raises up for just a moment to press a kiss to the corner of Mickey’s mouth before settling back into his husband’s arms. They’re quiet for long moments, just savoring the closeness they have now, the happiness they’re finally allowed.

“What did you ever think we’d end up here?” Ian asks after a bit, his chin resting on Mickey’s chest as he meets the other man’s eyes. “Married, happy, together?”

Mickey lets his mouth tip in a little half smile as he considers the question, running his fingers gently over Ian’s shoulder. “I don’t know, man,” Mickey admits honestly. “I used to think about it—it was this crazy fantasy I never would have admitted to anyone. This idea that I might be able to live with you and love you and stand up by your side to promise forever without the fear that was always there, you know? That was way back, though. Before you took off for the army. Before I married Svet. A little bit before my dad caught us. But it was mostly after. That time when I was being forced into marrying this chick my dad forced me to bang to fuck the fag outta me. I was so fucked up from it all. I used to think about what it would be like to say fuck it all and marry you instead. Sometimes, I’d think about what it’d be like if we took the baby and ran off together, just the three of us. Wondered if we’d be able to do it, you know? Start a little family, go straight. Thought about gettin’ a job at a shop, fixing up cars to get us by. It was this crazy fucking story I created in my head to help get myself through it all.”

“That what you wanted to be?” Ian asks curiously, unsure what else to say, really, as he works to process Mickey’s confession. “A mechanic?”

Mickey shrugs against Ian, gives it a little thought before answering. “Don’t know,” Mickey admits. “Not sure if it was what I wanted to be, exactly, or if maybe I just thought I’d be good at it. Was the only thing my dad ever taught me I didn’t hate him for, you know?”

Ian nods a little, and lets his fingers come up to play at the hem of Mickey’s shirt. “I’m sorry I left,” Ian tells Mickey honestly. “I know you needed me. Back then, though, I didn’t really get it. I was young and stupid and selfish, and all I could think about was how hurt I was that you were marrying someone else. Didn’t think about how much it was hurting you. ‘m sorry for that.”

Mickey kisses the top of Ian’s head at that, giving his shoulder a little squeeze. “In all fairness, I wasn’t exactly open about it. I pushed you away. Wasn’t fair to you.”

“None of it was fair,” Ian agrees. “Our whole fucking lives have been unfair. But I love you, and I’m glad we went through it all because we’re here now. Never leaving you again, Mick. I promise
Mickey smiles at that, nuzzling into Ian’s hair and cuddling him close. “Same,” Mickey agrees quietly, sure that whatever they might come up against, they’re both in it together this time.

And, for now at least, that’s enough.
Mickey discusses the possibilities for full time at the diner with Ian the day after Fiona brings it up. He’s a little nervous, unsure of how they might cope with the change. Ian’s good—has been since Mickey got out. Ian’s been staying on top of his meds, keeping Mickey informed any time he’s feeling a little off, and even the stress of the wedding hadn’t deterred him. Mickey thinks Ian’s work as an EMT has made a world of difference. Back when Ian had been at the club, the whole atmosphere had really fucked him up, left him desperate to self medicate and missing the high he felt when he was manic. But his work as an EMT has left Ian with a purpose that makes him feel whole. And having Mickey back doesn’t hurt, either, Mickey knows. Ian has a reason to be happy, to get up in the morning and make sure he’s stable, and Mickey loves that he’s a part of that. But Mickey also worries about putting too much stress on their relationship so soon after the wedding. Ian might need a break from the high stress, and Mickey wants to make sure Ian’s really okay with a change like this.

So Mickey stops Ian before he can climb out of bed the next morning, grabbing his husband’s hand as Ian tries to slip out from beside him, and asks if they can talk. Ian gets a little nervous at that, but Mickey just sits himself up and kisses Ian’s cheeks with a little laugh before tickling Ian’s ribs and calling him a dumbass. It takes a minute, but Ian finally nods and rolls his eyes as he shoves Mickey playfully and sits up beside him so they’re facing each other.

“What’s up?” Ian asks with a smile as he locks eyes with his husband, his fears put at ease with the sweet playfulness Mickey’s showing him.

“Got somethin’ I gotta talk to you about,” Mickey begins, and Ian raises an eyebrow.

“Yeah. Got that, babe. What’d’ya wanna talk about?” Ian teases, and he can’t help but smile at the way Mickey rolls his eyes at the pet name but doesn’t argue.

“All right,” Mickey begins, shifting a bit so he’s facing Ian straight on, legs crossed in front of him as Mickey reaches out to lay his hands on Ian’s knees. Mickey’s not sure why, but he’s feeling a little nervous about this conversation. Partly, he thinks, because he hates the idea of spending time away from the man he loves. “Fiona offered to up me to full time yesterday, with a possible opportunity to move up into management down the road.”

“Mick, that’s amazing,” Ian cuts in, hands dropping to blanket Mickey’s and giving a little squeeze.
“I’m so proud of you, baby.”

“All right,” Mickey deflects, avoiding Ian’s eyes at the praise but trying not to be obvious about it. “Nothin’ to be proud of—nobody else wanted it.”

Ian looks a bit pained at that, and he stops Mickey immediately. “Hey,” Ian murmurs, waiting to continue until he has Mickey’s eyes, “First of all, I promise you, my sister would have hired someone off the damn street before she would have offered a potential management position to anyone she didn’t think could cut it. Second of all, that diner has never run smoother. You’ve taken on so much there—you cover all the time, pick up everyone’s slack. You’re fucking amazing at your job, Mickey. If Fiona offered you this opportunity, she sees that, and she believes in you, okay? And I believe in you.”

Mickey’s quiet for a minute, eyes dropping to his hands where they still rest beneath Ian’s. He’s still not used to this kind of praise, even from Ian, and sometimes it’s hard to see himself as anything other than a southside thug destined to spend his life behind bars. He appreciates it, but sometimes it’s hard to hear—makes him feel like a fraud.

Finally, eyes still downcast, he whispers a quiet “Okay” that he’s not sure he believes, but that still has Ian reaching out to lift Mickey’s face, drawing him forward until Ian can capture Mickey’s lips in a sweet kiss. Ian wants to keep working to convince Mickey of his worth, Mickey knows—can see it in Ian’s eyes—but Ian must not want to push, so he drops it and waits for Mickey to continue.

After a moment, Ian gives Mickey a little smile, and reaches down to squeeze Mickey’s hands again. “Is everything all right, Mick? You seem nervous about this. It’s a great opportunity. Why are you acting so timid?”

Mickey takes a breath then and continues, watching Ian carefully. “I just—I want to make sure you’re good. I know you have been, but just. I wanted to talk about it. See how you felt about the whole thing. Make sure we’re on the same page.”

“If you want this, Mickey. If you’d rather stick with part time, or—fuck—if you want to do something else entirely, we can figure that out. We’d do fine on my salary alone. It’s not a lot, but we could get by easy.”

“Fuck, no,” Mickey counters immediately. “Things are good at the diner, and even if they weren’t, Ian, I would never leave the burden of supporting us entirely on your shoulders. I think I’d like to try this out, at least for a bit—see how it works for us. But I also need to know that if this change gets to be too much, you will tell me, and we will make whatever changes we need to in order to
make it okay. Because Ian, there is nothing more important to me than you.”

Ian nods at that, giving Mickey a little smile before leaning forward to press another gentle kiss to the corner of Mickey’s mouth. When he leans back, just a bit, Ian holds Mickey’s eyes. “Then I think you should go for it, Mick. And I promise, if anything—even the littlest thing—feels off, I will tell you, and we will figure it out, but I think you should do this if it’s something you want.”

“All right,” Mickey agrees then with a broad grin, “then let’s do it.”

“Good,” Ian gives Mickey’s hand another little squeeze before shifting to get up. “Now let me make you breakfast.”

They spend the next several days exactly as they’d planned—mostly in bed and getting comfortable in their new home.

The place is still mostly bare. They’d found themselves a decent couch at a little discount furniture store, where a strategically placed mention of their new marital status had gotten them an extra twenty percent off the floor model, and they’d left mostly tapped out on the money they wanted to spend on new furniture. But it gives them a place to sit, and it’s comfy as hell, so they’re happy with the choice. Once they’d taken care of that, they’d resolved to put off the rest of the shopping for sometime after their pseudo honeymoon—at least the big purchases.

It all feels a little surreal to Mickey, and he thinks Ian must feel the same way. Being together, happy. Fucking married.

Not long ago, Mickey never would have believed that their new life together was a possibility. Just six months ago, Mickey was mostly convinced he’d spend the next fucking decade of his life locked away while Ian moved on to start a family of his own. But now, here they are. So fucking happy. And Mickey can’t bring himself to regret a moment of it because everything they’d gone through, all of the bullshit and pain, was exactly what brought them here.

“What’re you thinkin’ about?” Ian asks with a smile, sidling up behind Mickey and squeezing his shoulders before leaning down for a kiss.

Mickey accepts happily after a moment of confusion. Mickey hadn’t even heard Ian approach. “Just happy. Thinkin’ about us,” Mickey explains with a smile, reaching up to squeeze Ian’s hand. “That was quick. When’d you get home?”

“Doesn’t take long to pick up a pizza, Mick. And it’s on the counter, by the way, so let’s eat,” Ian offers, leaning down again to catch Mickey’s lips, and this time there’s a little more hunger behind it. “Wanna get you back in bed. Enjoy the last of our honeymoon.”

“I am gonna be walking funny for a fuckin’ week,” Mickey gripes, but there’s not much heat to his tone, and he’s wearing a broad smile.

Ian laughs and shifts to the other side of the couch so he can drag Mickey up off of it. “Fuckin’ right. Now come on. I’m starving.”

The next morning, Mickey wakes in Ian’s arms, Ian’s mouth hot against Mickey’s neck as Ian’s gentle fingers open him slow. “Fuck, Ian,” Mickey murmurs out as he presses back into Ian’s touch, letting his hand trail up into Ian’s hair to pull his husband closer. It’s fucking incredible, waking to Ian’s talented body, his husband happy and willing to give Mickey everything he has.
“Christ, Mick,” Ian breathes out, hips shifting to press against Mickey as Ian’s lips work at the skin of Mickey’s neck. “Always feel so fucking good, babe.”

“Mmm,” Mickey murmurs softly, fingers dropping to cover Ian’s where they rest on Mickey’s hip. “Last day of freedom. Gotta make the most of it, hmm?”

“Plan on it.” Ian presses the words to the shell of Mickey’s ear, teeth worrying the lobe as Ian’s hands explore Mickey’s naked skin. “Gonna take my time with you. Go nice and slow. You want that, baby? Gonna let me take you apart?”

“Fuck, Ian, please” Mickey arches back against Ian, tilting his head until he can capture Ian’s lips in a desperate kiss. Mickey’s going to miss this—having all day to just be together like this. He’s damn well going to make the most of their last hours before they have to come up for air and return to the real world.

A few days later, they're tentatively returning to their regular patterns, and Ian has a plan to make sure the place is all set up for the two of them and Yevgeny.

He catches up to Fiona just outside the diner one night when she’s on her way home from work.

“Hey, Fi,” Ian greets as he catches up to her.

She jumps a bit in surprise and laughs as she gives Ian a playful little shove. “Watch it, asshole. You fucking scared me.”

“Sorry,” Ian laughs as he wraps an arm around her shoulder and gives her a little squeeze. “Have a favor to ask.”

Fiona laughs at that, loud and happy. “You’re lucky you’re my favorite. What’d’ya need?”

“Mickey and I were wondering—now that you’ve got a mostly empty nest—if maybe we could snake my old twin bed? We want to get the second bedroom set up for Yev, but money’s still tight,” Ian explains as he catches Fiona’s eye. She’s smiling, and he hopes that’s a good sign. “We can swing a new one if we have to, but I thought I’d ask first.”

“Look at my baby brother. All grown up and starting a family of his own. So fucking proud of you, kid.” Fiona reaches out to pat his cheeks and gives his face a little squeeze as she grins happily. “Course you can have the bed. Don’t have any use for it anymore, really. Best place it could go is to my little nephew, huh?”

Ian smiles bright at that and leans down to pull Fiona into a hug. “Thank you, Fi.”

“No problem, kiddo,” Fiona offers, stepping back after giving Ian a little squeeze. “You and Mickey can stop by to get it anytime. You’re due for a visit anyway.”

“Sounds good,” Ian agrees, as he gives Fiona a little wave and lets her start back for home. “See you soon, Fi.”

Ian wanders into the diner as soon as he’s finished talking to Fiona. It’s their first week back to the real world, and Mickey’s working a late shift, but he’s off in an hour, and Ian figures he might as well grab himself some food and wait for his husband to head home.

Ian catches Mickey’s eye immediately and gives him a nod before making himself comfortable at
the counter. “Hey, Mick,” Ian greets before leaning forward to catch Mickey’s lips in a quick peck from across the counter. The place is mostly empty of customers, and Mickey’s getting more and more comfortable with the idea of showing affection in public, so Ian takes full advantage anytime Mickey will let him.

Mickey accepts the kiss with a bright smile. “The fuck you doin’ here? Thought you were heading home after work?”

“Nah,” Ian scrunches up his nose before letting a bright smile stretch over his features, “was hungry. Plus, I wanted to see my husband. Weird being back to work after being with you twenty-four seven for a week and a half. Missed you.”

Mickey gives Ian a little half smirk at that. “Missed you, too, asshole. Gotta get back to work, though. You want pancakes?”

Ian gives Mickey a nod in confirmation and Mickey pats the back of Ian’s hand before turning to head to the back. Ian smiles after him; he’s proud of Mickey, and as much as he misses their constant time together, he thinks this is good for both of them.

“So,” Ian begins as he drenches his plate in syrup, “ran into Fiona on the way in tonight.”

“Oh, yeah?” Mickey questions as he busies himself with the counter. “You accosting my boss in the streets now, huh?”

“Fuck off,” Ian laughs and directs a little smile in Mickey’s direction, “I talked to her for like three seconds. She said we could have my old bed. Give us a chance to start getting Yev’s room together. With the money we’ll save on the bed, we could really go all out for the rest of the room. Decorate a little. Maybe get him a nice bookcase. Fill it with children’s books from the library book sale this weekend. Could even take him shopping. Let him pick out some stuff.”

Mickey smiles bright at that, coming to stand just in front of Ian. When Ian lifts his eyes to Mickey’s, he can’t help but return the gesture. Mickey looks thrilled, and it makes Ian all warm and fuzzy inside knowing he helped create that in Mickey.

“I love that idea,” Mickey mutters around his smile, leaning down to peck Ian’s lips again. “Now eat your food, bitch. ’m looking to get home sometime tonight.”

That weekend, they take Yevgeny out to the local public library to explore the book sale. They let Yev help them browse the children’s books, searching through the worn hardcovers and paperbacks that have clearly been well loved in their time. Yevgeny’s excited at the prospect of new books, and he’s even more excited to be allowed to help pick them out. They end up with a stroller full of books, some of them much too advanced for Yev to get anywhere near anytime soon. Mickey argues for a moment when Yev starts going for the children’s novels, but Yev throws a fit when Mickey tries to put them back, and Ian insists that it’s worth the investment, since Yev will get there eventually. After about half a minute of Yevgeny’s silent tears and quivering lip, Mickey rolls his eyes and gives in, and it’s like a switch has been flipped when Yev’s face immediately lights up and his tears evaporate like they were never there.

Yev goes back to browsing carefully, and Mickey turns astonished eyes on Ian. “Our kid is manipulative as fuck,” he murmurs quietly, half to himself and half to Ian, and Ian let’s out a loud happy laugh at that.
“Like father like son,” Ian smirks as he gives Mickey a little wink and returns to Yevgeny’s side, quietly helping the boy make his decisions in the midst of all his excitement.

When they’re finished, they have enough books to fill the little bookshelf they’d picked up for Yev’s room at least three times over, and Yev can’t stop smiling and babbling about his new stories. Mickey and Ian have never been more at peace as they head toward home to drop off Yev’s new treasures before they head out to find some new bedding and a couple of toys for the toddler to make sure he feels at home in Mickey and Ian’s new place.

In the end, they wind up with a meticulously organized bookcase—Ian and Mickey don’t quite understand Yev’s organizational system, but the boy is adamant that everything stay in it’s rightful place, and they’re not about to argue with the toddler and his insistence that things stay put away. They’d also picked up a handful of new toys, some stuffed animals, and a new bedding set covered in jungle animals that Yevgeny had fallen in love with immediately, citing elephants as his favorite animal.

Everything comes together nicely once they get the room set up. The pale yellow paint already on the walls sets off the decorative bedding and the new odds and ends they’ve bought to help make the place more homey. There’s a little bedside lamp with animals adorning the shade, and a rug shaped like a cartoon elephant that matches Yev’s new comforter, along with a little elephant nightlight. When they’d found it, Mickey had been adamant about making sure it was the best one for Yev—the little bit of light it gave off seeming awfully dim for a toddler’s night light. But Yevgeny had insisted, nodding happily when Mickey had asked if he was sure, and mumbling “He ‘tect me, daddy. El’phant scare monsters.” And, really, who was Mickey to argue with that logic?

So, after a long day of shopping, Yevgeny’s left with a place of his own in Ian and Mickey’s new home, and the boy is thrilled to have his very own room he’d had a hand in decorating. The three of them end up napping together on the couch when Yevgeny asks for a story and not one of them makes it past the halfway point of the book.

But the plan is not for Yev to stay the night, since both Mickey and Ian have to work in the morning, so when they wake a couple of hours later it’s nearly time to take Yev home for the night. After a quick dinner of mac and cheese and some veggies, Ian and Mickey bundle Yev up and head for Kev, V, and Svetlana’s place. When they drop him off, there are a couple of tired tears from Yevgeny as he clings to both Mickey and Ian, asking quietly to stay with them. It makes Mickey feel like his heart might burst. They’ve all come so far from where they began, and Mickey can’t help the joy he feels every time he’s reminded of how much his son has come to love both of his dads. Mickey knows he hasn’t always been the best father, and he had his reasons—legitimate ones, he knows—but he’s happy, now, to have his son care so much for both himself and Ian, and Mickey can’t get enough of that knowledge. Even if he hates to see Yevgeny sad.

After a few quiet promises that they’ll spend some time together in a few days and lots of kisses and hugs, Yevgeny finally lets Mickey shift him into Svetlana’s arms, the sleepy boy immediately clinging to his mother as he whispers about all the fun he’d had.

They leave Svetlana and Yevgeny to head home, and—if Mickey and Ian are being honest with themselves—the place is feeling a little empty without their son’s laughter and playful chatter.
Mickey and Ian spend some time with Yev and the family.

Remember when I thought this was a one-shot? Ha. There’s another 10,000+ words of this already drafted.

Chapter title from Savage Garden’s "Affirmation."

About a month in, Mickey and Ian are back on similar schedules for a couple of weeks, and Ian’s taken to showing up at the diner when he gets off work to wait for Mickey before heading home. It’s been a bit of a relief for both of them, having the extra time together again as they adjust to married life. Overall, it’s not all that different, really, but the addition of their new home and their attempts at working out a more stable visitation schedule with Yev have left them stretched a little thin.

For the most part, they’re both adjusting to the changes without too much stress, but they also miss one another more than is probably normal when their schedules don’t match up. Ian’s proud of Mickey’s commitment to the job, though, and they’re both excited to have a little extra money to tuck away. It’s nice, really, not having to live paycheck to paycheck the way they once had. Money’s still tight, of course, and they’re working to keep their expenses as low as possible, so they can build a bit of a nest egg, but they’re better off than they’ve ever been in the past.

They’ve even managed to finish furnishing the rest of the apartment relatively cheaply. It took time, but Craigslist and nearby moving sales provided most of what they needed for next to nothing, and they finally have the place looking pretty well put together, if a little eclectic.

All in all, they’ve developed a good pattern, they have a home of their own, and they’re both settling in well to married life and fatherhood.

When Ian walks into the diner for the third night in a row and takes up his regular spot at the counter, Mickey already has a hot cup of coffee waiting for him. Mickey’s nowhere to be found, though, and Ian’s curious for a moment about where his husband has disappeared to when he’s obviously waiting on Ian’s arrival. Ian doesn’t have much time to process his confusion, though, when Fiona pops up behind him and gives him a little shove before settling onto the stool at his side.

“What the fuck, asshole,” she teases playfully, “this the only place I’m gonna get to see you now that you got your fairytale ending?”

Ian gives her a little laugh and a lopsided smile. She’s right—it has been a bit since they’ve been to
the house to visit. Since the day they picked up the bed for Yev, Ian thinks. “I know, I know,” he concedes, waving her off, “we know we’re due for a visit. We’ve just been settling in to it all. Weird schedules. We’ve been spending all our downtime together or with Yev.”

“Your kid lives two doors down from the house. You couldn’t stop by?” Fiona challenges, and her voice is still mostly playful, but Ian knows there’s a little truth behind her words.

“You’re right,” Ian agrees, as he sips his coffee. He still hasn’t seen Mickey, and Ian has a feeling his husband might be hiding out because he’s been listening to this very same mantra for days.

“Damn right I am,” Fiona insists with a smile. “So when am I gonna see my little brother and my new brother-in-law outside of work, huh?”

Ian thinks for a moment, cataloging their plans for the next few days before an idea hits him. “How about you and Liam come by for lunch at our place Saturday?” he offers with a bright smile. “Mickey and I are both off, and we have Yev. We’ll ask Debs to come by with Franny, too. Get all the kids together and make a day of it.”

Fiona smiles bright at that. She and Debbie still aren’t on the best of terms, but things are getting better, and Ian thinks some time together would do them good. Fiona seems to agree.

“That sounds amazing,” she agrees, her smile never faltering as she gives Ian’s shoulder a little squeeze. “I’m gonna head home and leave you to your man. We’ll see you Saturday. At noon?”

Ian gives a nod in confirmation. “Sounds perfect. We’ll see you then, Fi.”

As soon as she’s out the door, Mickey finally shows his face, giving Ian a punch to the shoulder to grab his attention.

“What the fuck?” Ian exclaims, rubbing at his shoulder and giving his husband a half-hearted glare.

“What the fuck, me? What the fuck, you, Ian! Did you just volunteer us to host a fuckin’ dinner party?” Mickey questions, his voice colored with disbelief as he stares Ian down with wide eyes.

Ian can’t help but laugh at the exaggerated horror on Mickey’s face. “Okay, drama queen,” Ian scoffs, amusement in his tone. “It’s just lunch with the family. Not a fuckin’ formal dinner.”

“I’m not doing shit,” Mickey threatens, raising his eyebrows at Ian in challenge. “Not a fuckin’ thing. It’s my day off, Ian. I’m spending time with my son and my husband. The family can be there, fine, but I’m not fuckin’ making ‘em lunch.”

Ian laughs at that and leans forward to kiss the frustration off Mickey’s face. “We’ll order a pizza, babe. No extra work. Less work than usual, actually.”

When Ian stays close and looks at Mickey expectantly, Mickey can’t help but sigh in defeat. “Fine,” he concedes, shaking his head and pulling back from the counter. “Guess it’d be good for Yev to hang out with the kids. I gotta finish up here. You want anything other than coffee?”

“Nah,” Ian waves him off with a happy, triumphant smile, “I’m good.”

“All right,” Mickey smiles as he tops off Ian's coffee before replacing the pot and heading toward the back. “I’ll be done in a bit.”
When Saturday rolls around, Mickey heads over to pick up Yevgeny early, while Ian stays home to get the place set up. There’s not a whole lot to do, really, but he wants to make sure the place is picked up and safe for Franny.

Yev notices Ian’s absence near immediately, and his face falls just a bit when Ian doesn’t appear at Mickey’s side for a hug. He looks up at Mickey in question, giving an exaggerated shrug as he stares at Mickey. “Where daddy Ian?” Yevgeny asks, his eyes big and curious. It makes Mickey’s heart swell with pride that his son is so attached to Ian. Mickey knows this, of course, but seeing it first hand always leaves him feeling happy that they’re legitimately becoming a little family in their own right.

“Daddy’ll be at the house when we get there, bud,” Mickey assures with a smile, as he reaches down to adjust Yev’s hat to make sure it covers his ears before scooping the boy up into his arms. “Your cousin Franny is coming for a visit today, and daddy Ian wanted to make sure everything was safe for her, since she’s still so little.”

“Baby Fanny?” Yev asks curiously, eyeing his father for an answer.

Mickey smiles at Yev. “Yeah, bud,” Mickey tells him, settling the boy more comfortably on his hip. “You remember her from your daddies’ wedding?”

“Yes,” Yev answers enthusiastically, throwing his hands up in excitement. “Fanny cute baby.”

Mickey laughs at that and gives Yev a little squeeze. “That’s right, buddy. She is a cute baby. Now, how about you say bye to your mommy, and we’ll go see daddy Ian, huh?”

“’k,” Yev nods with a smile, reaching his arms out to hug Svetlana goodbye and giving her a little kiss. “Bye, mama.”

“Bye, Yevgeny,” Svetlana whispers, smiling at the boy before turning to Mickey with a raised brow. “Home by eight.”

“We’ll have him back,” Mickey promises, giving Svetlana a half smile.

Svetlana nods her approval and gives Yev a little wave as Mickey heads off with the toddler in tow.

By the time they get home, Ian’s got the place picked up and ready for their guests, and he’s smiling big when Mickey walks through the door with Yevgeny, the boy’s hand held tight in Mickey’s. Yevgeny’s face lights up immediately when he sees Ian, and he drops Mickey’s hand to run to Ian as fast as his little feet will take him. “Daddy!” he cries in delight, and Mickey can’t help but laugh at the exaggerated look of surprise and excitement that Ian plasters on his face as he kneels down and opens his arms to catch the toddler up in a big hug.

“There’s my little man!” Ian exclaims as he hugs Yev tight and then pulls back to help the boy out of his winter gear, stuffing the mittens and hat into the sleeve of Yev’s jacket for safe keeping before handing it over to Mickey to hang by the front door.

“Boots, please!” Yev requests, grabbing hold of Ian’s shoulder for balance and lifting a foot off the floor for help.

Ian laughs and starts working at the zipper of the little winter boots Yev wears. “Yep, we’ll get ‘em,” Ian agrees. The zipper sticks a little on the first one, so it takes a moment, but Ian manages and the moment the first boot is off, Yevgeny shifts his weight to his other foot. Ian works the other off quickly, and then hands those over to Mickey, too, before turning back to Yev. “All right,
“kiddo,” he says, patting Yev’s cheeks, “go get your slippers so your feet don’t get cold.”

“Okay, daddy!” Yevgeny agrees, running off to his room to dig out his little elephant slippers.

Mickey laughs after Yevgeny’s retreating form and then leans down over a still kneeling Ian to catch his lips in a kiss, fingers stroking through Ian’s hair. “He was devastated that you weren’t with me to pick him up,” Mickey chastises with a playful smile and an eyebrow raise.

Ian shakes his head with a laugh and pushes up to his full height. “I will never miss a pick up, again,” Ian agrees with a smile as he catches Mickey around the waist and kisses him playfully, turning a moment later at the shuffle of little feet and scooping Yevgeny up into his arms before the three of them settle in the living room.

“We still doing pizza?” Mickey asks curiously as he scans the fridge.

“Yeah,” Ian calls from the living room, where he’s playing with Yev, “Fiona’s picking it up on her way here.”

Mickey nods his approval, even though Ian can’t actually see him from his spot on the floor with their son. “What do you want with your pizza, Yevy?” Mickey asks, shuffling through the vegetable drawer.

“Ice cream!” Yev shouts back excitedly.

Ian laughs, and Mickey shakes his head in amusement. “Ha ha, kid,” he calls back, trying to hide the humor in his voice. “Healthy choices, Yev.”

Yevgeny giggles along with Ian and then answers his dad happily, “Celery.”

Mickey pulls the bunch of celery out of the fridge, and then grabs the bottle of ranch. “You want dip, kiddo?”

“Yes, please, daddy.”

Mickey smiles and sets to work washing and slicing up a couple of celery stalks before grabbing an apple out of the bowl on the counter. “How about an apple, Yev?”

“Oh!” Yev responds pleasantly before returning his attention to the blocks in front of him. Ian smiles and presses a kiss to the boy’s head before popping up to meet Mickey in the kitchen.

“Sounds like that’s a ‘yes,’” Ian laughs as he sidles up beside his husband and starts pulling down plates for the rest of the family. “Thank god he hasn’t learned to be picky yet, huh?”

“You’re tellin’ me,” Mickey agrees as he shines a happy smile in Ian’s direction, transferring half the celery sticks and apple slices onto Yev’s plate and the other half onto a plate for Liam. “Just don’t give him any ideas.”

Ian laughs at that. “Wouldn’t dream of it, babe,” Ian agrees as he presses his lips to Mickey’s temple. “They’ll be here in a few.”

Mickey nods at that, cleaning up the cutting board and paring knife and tucking them away. “Sounds good,” he offers to Ian before calling to Yev. “Go get cleaned up for lunch, bud. Aunt Fiona and Aunt Debbie are gonna be here soon with the kids.”

“k,” Yev answers as he begins packing away his blocks into their little tub, “but pick up first.”
“Good job, Yev,” Ian agrees with a smile, watching the boy as he finishes putting away the blocks before running off to the bathroom to wash up. Ian turns his eyes to Mickey, asking curiously, “How long do you think that’ll last.”

“I don’t know, man,” Mickey laughs, “but let’s enjoy it while we can.”

Once everyone’s there, Ian busies himself preparing the plates for Yevgeny and Liam, making sure that Yev’s pizza has cooled down enough to be safe for him to eat before passing it over to the boy who’s sitting beside Liam. Liam’s always been quiet, but he’s happily chatting with Yevgeny, and Yev’s nodding along like Liam holds the secrets to the universe. Ian ruffles Yevgeny’s hair with a smile, and leaves the two to their own devices as he fixes a plate for himself and one for Mickey and settles in beside his husband. Mickey’s already chatting with Fiona and Debbie, and Franny’s napping nearby in her carrier.

Ian comes in in the middle of the conversation, smiling brightly at the excitement he hears in Fiona’s voice. “What’d I miss?” Ian asks, looking to Fiona expectantly.

She returns his smile and tips the beer bottle she holds to her lips before responding. “I’m working on another real estate deal. Made a good chunk of cash off the last one. Looking for some new opportunities. Think I’m getting good at this shit. Makin’ more money than I ever would have imagined. Can’t fuckin’ believe I’m actually going somewhere with this,” she explains with excitement.

Apparently, it’s contagious, because even Debbie looks happy for her. For his part, Ian’s proud of her, and he can see that Mickey is, too. Fiona’s worked hard her entire life, and it’s about time she caught a break. Ian just hopes she stays smart about it, but he trusts her to make the right choices, and clearly she’s been doing something right so far.

“We’re proud of you,” Mickey offers for the both of them, tipping his bottle to Fiona, and giving her a little smile. Ian nods his agreement, and Fiona looks thrilled at the support. Debbie doesn’t say anything, but she doesn’t argue either, and Ian thinks that’s a step in the right direction.

“I’m kind of excited,” Fiona admits, a little timidly. “It’s been a long time since I’ve had the chance to think about my own future, you know?”

Ian nods at that, and Debbie looks a little guilty as she drops her eyes away from Fiona. Ian hopes his youngest sister is starting to understand everything Fiona’s given up for them, because it’s a lot.

“Thank you,” Ian tells Fiona honestly, catching her eye even as Fiona tries to avoid his gaze. “I know that sometimes I was an ungrateful little shit, but I really do appreciate everything you did for us. I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for you. If anyone deserves this, Fi, it’s you.”

“All right,” Fiona insists, “enough—”

“He’s right.” Debbie’s voice cuts in, and they all turn surprised eyes on her. “You put your life on hold for us. I don’t always appreciate it the way I should, and I’m sorry for that. But I’m glad you’re doing some stuff for yourself for a change.”

Fiona’s eyes well up a little with tears. It’s been a long time since she and Debbie were on decent terms, and the apology from the girl leaves Fiona overwhelmed. With a smile, Fiona leans over to wrap an arm around Debbie and pull her into a half hug, stroking at Debbie’s hair and then giving her cheek a little pat before letting her go. Debbie rolls her eyes at the display, but she returns the
smile Fiona gives her, and Ian thinks the two of them might legitimately be on their way to making things right.

“Okay, okay,” Debbie says, waving off the emotional display and gesturing to Liam and Yevgeny, who are still munching away happily and babbling at each other, the presence of the adults at the table completely escaping their notice, “let’s eat before these two finish and decide to drag us away.”

Ian laughs a little at that as they all return to their food and to lighter conversation, but he’s happy that the family’s in a good place all around.

A little later, Mickey’s sitting on the couch in the living room holding Franny and chatting with an excited Liam as Yevgeny colors at the coffee table. Ian, Debbie, and Fiona are gathered by the breakfast bar watching them. They’ve all been quiet for a moment too long, and Ian’s starting to get a little nervous. After a few more silent minutes pass, Fiona’s quirked eyebrow finally gets the best of him, and he gives an exaggerated sigh. “What?” he questions, and there’s a touch of amusement playing in his tone.

“What?” he questions, and there’s a touch of amusement playing in his tone.

“Nothing,” Fiona defends, with a little shake of her head and an obvious smirk on her lips. “Nothin’ at all.”

“We are not having more kids,” Ian insists with a little eyeroll directed at his sister.

“Never?” Debbie asks in disbelief, giving Ian a half smirk of her own and raising an eyebrow in question.

For a moment, Ian stares them both down, determined not to give them the satisfaction. In the end, though, he gives in with a sigh and a head shake. “All right, maybe not never, but not anytime soon. Ever since we got married, you people keep running around acting like we’re about to start collecting babies at any second. We’re happy just the three of us.”

“All right,” Fiona concedes, lifting her hands in surrender. “I’m just saying, your husband seems pretty comfortable around the little ones. Maybe it’s worth considering.”

Before Ian has a chance to respond, both Fiona and Debbie are wandering away to join Mickey and the kids, and Ian’s left to stare after them in disbelief.

“Fuuuuck. I’m tired,” Mickey complains, falling into Ian’s arms on the couch and cuddling close. They’d just gotten back from dropping Yevgeny off at home, and they’re both exhausted from a day full of entertaining their family.

“My family wear you out?” Ian asks with a little laugh as he strokes his fingers over Mickey’s upper arm.

“Yes. Fuckin’ Christ, man,” Mickey gripes as he buries his face against Ian’s neck. “Three kids is a lot fuckin’ harder than one. Even with a house full of adults. And Debbie.”

Ian laughs big and loud at that, and then rubs softly at Mickey’s shoulder. “Yev’s also just easy right now,” Ian agrees with a smile. “Don’t know how long it’s gonna last, but it’s a lot simpler having Yev for the day than the other kids, you know?”

“Yeah, man,” Mickey nods as he untucks his face and rubs a hand over his eyes. “No babies anytime soon. Tell your fuckin’ sister she can pop one out if she wants one around so much.”
Ian laughs again in surprise. He’d had no idea Fiona had been hounding Mickey about the whole kid thing, too. “She on you about that, too, huh?” Ian asks curiously with a little smile.

“Oh, yeah,” Mickey admits with an eyebrow raise as if he can’t believe Ian wasn’t already aware. “Every time there’s a damn baby in the diner, she gives me this *look*. Fuckin’ irritating.”

Ian smiles and kisses Mickey’s forehead. “You said ‘anytime soon,’” Ian murmurs after a moment, watching Mickey’s face carefully.

“What?” Mickey asks in confusion, his brain refusing to keep up with Ian’s train of thought.

“You said ‘no babies anytime soon,’” Ian clarifies with a soft look and a raised brow. “That mean you want a baby eventually?”

Mickey scoffs at that, shaking his head. “I don’t fuckin’ know, man,” Mickey argues with a hint of annoyance in his voice. “I’m too fuckin’ tired for this conversation. No babies. For now. If something changes, we’ll talk about it then.”

“Okay,” Ian agrees happily, eyes fixed on Mickey. For now, they’re both happy where they are, but Ian’s glad to know that Mickey’s open to a change someday down the road.
“Babe?!” Ian calls when he walks through the door. He sounds a touch panicked and Mickey’s not sure what to make of it.

“What, man? You okay?” Mickey questions, concerned, as he leans forward on the couch, eyes seeking Ian’s as Ian moves into the living room, shedding his jacket on the way.

“Christmas is in like two weeks,” Ian deadpans, as he watches Mickey expectantly. Ian’s on edge. It’s obvious from his demeanor, and Mickey’s wary, but unsure of what’s inspired his husband’s sudden frustration.

Mickey shakes his head in confusion, staring at Ian like he’s grown two heads. “So?”

“So?” Ian throws back at him in disbelief, eyes wide with desperation as he throws his hands up in frustration. “So what are we doing, Mickey?”

“What do you mean, what are we doing? Nothin’, man. We don’t need to celebrate that shit,” Mickey offers, and he’s attempting to calm Ian down, but it backfires, and from the look on Ian’s face, Mickey thinks Ian might be about to strangle him.

“Mickey!” Ian chastises, shaking his head in frustration. “We have a kid now. We can’t just not celebrate.”

“Why the fuck not, man? Yev’s not gonna know the difference,” Mickey shrugs, unconcerned and confused by Ian’s panic.

“Yes, he is, Mickey,” Ian argues, his voice a touch softer but no less frustrated. “He’s three. He’ll fucking remember. Svet, V, and Kev celebrate with the kids. We can’t just not. He’ll be devastated. We are not fucking up our first Christmas as an official family, Mickey.”

“Fuckin’ hell, Ian,” Mickey murmurs under his breath as he rolls his eyes. “Really? We just fuckin’ bought the kid a bunch of shit.”

“Well, then, we’re gonna have to go out and buy him a bunch more shit. We’re not fucking up Christmas for our kid, Mickey,” Ian sounds almost desperate, and Mickey’s becoming a little
concerned at Ian’s irritation.

For a moment, Mickey searches Ian’s eyes—tries to figure out what exactly has his husband so riled up about a holiday they’ve never given a shit about before. He can’t quite figure it out, but he can see that Ian is genuinely upset, and he hates that he can’t understand Ian’s frustration. Mickey sighs a little, his eyes immediately softening, and he gestures for Ian to sit. It takes him a moment, but Ian finally moves forward, taking the spot next to Mickey. Mickey wastes no time in pulling Ian to him, and resting his husband against his chest, stroking gentle fingers through Ian’s hair. “Okay, love,” Mickey promises quietly, his tone calm and soothing as he presses a gentle kiss to Ian’s temple. “We’ll do it up for Christmas. That’s fine. I’m all for it if you are. But what’s going on, Ian? Why are you so on edge?”

It takes a moment, and Mickey almost thinks Ian’s not going to answer. But he finally does, after a deep, steadying breath. “I almost forgot about it, Mick.” Ian’s voice is shaky, and he’s obviously fighting with his own emotions to keep himself steady. “With everything, I haven’t been thinking about shit like this, and when I realized today, I just—fuck, Mickey, I don’t wanna mess this up for Yevgeny. I love him so fucking much, and I always have, but I basically fucking abandoned him after everything went down, and I was barely in his life for a year and a half because of my own fucking bullshit. It wasn’t fair to him. He lived two fucking doors down, and I couldn’t be bothered to take the time to go see him. I don’t want to let him down again, Mickey.”

Mickey nods his understanding, and smiles sadly at Ian as he wipes at the tears that have gathered in his husband’s eyes. “Ian, listen to me,” he offers, shifting until he can frame Ian’s face with his hands, leaning forward to press a gentle kiss to Ian’s lips. “Yevgeny loves you. He’s our son, Ian. It doesn’t matter what happened in the past. We’re here now, and he loves you. A lot of shit happened back then. I was a shitty dad, too. But it’s different now, Ian. We’re different. We’re a family, sweetheart, and that’s all that matters now, okay?”

Ian takes a deep breath at that, nuzzling deeper into Mickey’s touch, savoring the comfort he finds in his husband’s arms. “Okay,” he murmurs, and Ian’s not sure he really believes it, but Mickey does, and for now, Ian thinks that’s enough.

“So, you guys make a plan for Christmas?” Fiona asks as she settles down beside Ian, sipping at a cup of coffee.

Mickey and Ian are visiting, mostly at the behest of Fiona, who’s been hounding them for days about stopping by the house, even with their recent visit. Ian’s pretty sure she’s feeling lonely with the mostly empty house, after so many years with the bustle of a handful of siblings and the revolving door of partners she’d become accustomed to.

“Yeah,” Ian admits with a little half smile. “We’re gonna have Yev Christmas Eve. He’s gonna sleep over, and we’ll do gifts Christmas Eve morning and make a day of it before we take him home after dinner. That way he can be with Jemma and Amy Christmas morning.”

“You okay with that?” Fiona asks gently, eyeing Ian carefully. “I know you were kind of worried about the whole thing.”

Ian tenses just a bit—he’s not even sure he’s fully comfortable talking with Mickey about that whole episode, much less Fiona. But Mickey feels him tense and sinks gentle fingers into Ian’s hair from where his arm rests around Ian on the back of the couch. Mickey’s touch soothes him near instantly, and Ian reaches out to give Mickey’s thigh a gentle squeeze in reassurance, tilting his head to smile softly at his husband. It still amazes Ian sometimes that they’re finally really here, together and happy and building a family. Knowing Mickey’s close and so in tune with Ian’s
feelings is a constant relief.

“Yeah,” Ian assures. And he means it. “We’ll still get to have our Christmas with our son. Doesn’t really matter what day it all happens. And we’ll be here for dinner with you guys on Christmas, so it’s kind of a win-win, you know?”

Fiona nods with a smile. “Yeah. Makes sense. I’m glad you guys are gonna join for dinner. It’ll be nice to have the whole Gallagher clan together.”

If Mickey’s being honest, he had hated the idea of celebrating Christmas—even if only with the three of them. Especially if only with the three of them, really. Because Mickey has never been a part of a family who gave a shit about holidays, and the pressure of trying to somehow live up to all the hype to make their son happy is a lot for him. He knows Ian’s right—knows they need to develop traditions and routines as a family to make sure Yevgeny understands that they are a family, even if they’re all a little eccentric. Mickey wants Yev to be happy and to love the holidays and family time. He wants to make sure Yevgeny has hundreds of happy family memories to draw on for the rest of his life, and Mickey knows that starts here for the three of them.

But that doesn’t change the fact that Mickey doesn’t know how to do this right. All he has to go on are sappy Christmas movies and Ian’s ramblings, and if he’s being honest? He’s freaking the fuck out. Especially since Ian’s sent him to fucking Walmart for cheap decorations, and, apparently, shit to make Christmas cookies, and Mickey is fucking lost. He’s in the middle of a sea of red, green, and silver, and everything’s fucking sparkly, and Mickey is going to kill his husband when he gets home.

After about twenty minutes of staring at a wall full of shimmery plastic shit, Mickey feels like he’s losing his mind. So, in the hopes of getting some help, Mickey pulls out his phone and dials Ian’s number. Just as he’s about to send the call, though, Mickey feels a hand creep up his back, and he spins on his heels, instantly ready for an altercation.

When he spots the familiar shock of red hair and that infuriating fucking smirk, though, he softens immediately, giving Ian a gentle shove before leaning back into his husband’s touch. “The fuck you doin’ here, asshole? Thought you were working late?”

“Nah,” Ian smiles mischievously at that, giving Mickey’s hip a little squeeze, “just wanted to surprise you. Figured you might need a little help over here.”

“Nah,” Ian smiles mischievously at that, giving Mickey’s hip a little squeeze, “just wanted to surprise you. Figured you might need a little help over here.”

“Fuck off,” Mickey scoffs, jostling Ian with a shoulder. “Was doin’ fine.”

“Really?” Ian teases, raising his eyebrows at Mickey’s empty cart. “You’ve been standing here looking confused for the last half hour.”

Mickey narrows his eyes and shakes his head incredulously. “I fuckin’ hate you.”

“Mnhm,” Ian offers noncommittally, amusement playing in his tone as his eyes scan the shelves in front of him. After only a handful of moments, Ian settles on a couple of lengths of garland and tosses them into the cart before tugging the front of it to get Mickey moving with him. “Whatever you say, babe.”

In the end, though, it’s worth it. More than, in fact. Because Mickey has never seen Yevgeny happier.

And it’s not the gifts or the sweets or any of that, really. It’s the way the boy’s face lights up from
his spot on Ian’s lap as they sit at the kitchen table decorating cookies and it’s the excitement in the boy’s eyes as they hang ornaments on the little tree and the way he babbles on and on about how happy he is to stay with his daddies.

In the end, it’s all the stuff they do as a family that makes it worthwhile. Mickey’s never had this before, but he’s really fucking glad he’s sharing it with his son.

That night, the three of them snuggle up on the couch and watch *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. Mickey can’t really see the appeal of the film, but Yevgeny spends most of the movie giggling at the characters and the music—to Mickey’s confusion, really, because frankly, most of the film is fucking depressing. But Yevgeny loves it and begs to watch it again, and Mickey tries to say no—tries to promise they’ll watch it again in the morning but that it’s time for bedtime tonight—but Yevgeny gets Ian in on the puppy dog eyes, and Mickey just can’t bring himself to stick to his guns. So instead, they end up watching another time through while Yev tries to babble along to the songs. Mickey can’t help but smile, leaning his head back on the couch and turning toward Ian, who’s already watching Mickey fondly.

For a moment, they hold one another’s gaze while Yev remains oblivious to the exchange. When Mickey mouths a quiet ‘*love you*’ to Ian, though, Ian leans toward Mickey, and Mickey meets him halfway for a kiss. They stay close for a moment, smiling at each other until Yevgeny notices and scolds them.

“*Daddies!*” Yev insists, throwing his hands up and rolling his eyes as he shakes his head in exasperation. “No kisses! Watch Rudolph!”

Ian and Mickey both laugh, and Ian murmurs “Okay, okay,” as he tickles Yevgeny’s sides gently. The boy giggles before snuggling into Ian’s chest and stretching his legs out over Mickey’s lap. Mickey’s pretty sure he’s never been more content.

When the movie finishes, they finally get Yevgeny up and headed to bed. He begs for a story, though, and digs out a Christmas book before handing it over to Mickey with a little pout. Mickey gives in almost immediately, and the three of them begin a new goodnight ritual as Yev drifts off to sleep.

By the time Yevgeny is finally down, though, it’s after 10pm, and Mickey’s exhausted.

“Christ, man,” Mickey complains as he glances at the clock. “It’s fuckin’ late.”

“Sure, grandpa,” Ian laughs as he tickles Mickey’s sides to brighten him up. “It’s not that late.”

“Late for the kid,” Mickey protests as he raises an eyebrow in Ian’s direction. “You gotta learn to say no to him, man.”

“Oh, hush,” Ian teases playfully. “I wasn’t the only one in there. Besides, It’s our Christmas Eve. If there was ever a time to spoil him, it’s tonight.”

Mickey rolls his eyes a bit at that, but there’s a little smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. “*We still have to do the presents,*” he whines as he steps up close to Ian, wrapping his arms around his husband’s neck.

Ian shakes his head as he settles his hands at Mickey hips and leans down to give Mickey a peck on the lips. “You’re whinier than our three year old,” Ian laughs, before kissing Mickey again, just a little deeper this time. “It won’t take long to get everything set out, Mick. Plus, this means Yev
will probably sleep a little later in the morning. You’ll get your sleep, you big baby. I promise.”

“You’re such a dick,” Mickey mocks, as he pokes Ian in the side to break his husband’s hold. “Now, come on. We’ve gotta get everything set up for morning.”

“Sure thing,” Ian agrees, as he allows Mickey to grab his hand and drag him down the hall toward their bedroom, where the gifts are safely tucked away.

In the morning, Mickey wakes to find Yevgeny tucked between himself and Ian. Yev is still fast asleep, and Mickey smiles softly, reaching out to stroke Yevgeny’s hair gently before he raises his eyes to Ian.

Ian’s lying on his side facing them both, head propped on his hand as he smiles back at Mickey. “Hey,” Ian whispers quietly, trying to avoid waking the slumbering toddler. “Merry Christmas.”

“Merry Christmas to you, love,” Mickey answers softly, leaning forward to kiss Ian carefully. “When’d Yev show up?”

“About a half hour after you fell asleep, I think,” Ian admits, as he gazes down at their son. “I was almost out until he wandered in. He was really careful not to wake you, but he said he was too excited to sleep. I asked if cuddles would help, and he got all excited at the idea of sleeping in the big bed.”

Mickey lets out a little laugh at that. “He wasn’t scared, then?” Mickey asks curiously.

“Nah, don’t think so,” Ian assures. “Think he was too excited about Christmas morning to be scared.”

Mickey nods at that, a fond little smile playing on his lips. He and Ian fall into a comfortable quiet for a bit, as they watch Yevgeny sleep.

After a bit, the boy stirs slightly, nuzzling closer to Mickey as he opens sleepy eyes. “Daddy,” he asks groggily, “’s it time for Christmas yet?”

Mickey and Ian both smile at that, and Mickey leans a bit until he can press a little kiss to the top of Yevgeny’s head. “Yeah, little man,” Mickey agrees happily. “It’s time for Christmas.”

“What do say daddy and I make you some breakfast, and you can watch a little TV while we do?” Ian offers, reaching out to ruffle Yev’s hair.

“Rudolph!” Yevgeny insists excitedly, happy smile radiating up at his dads.

Mickey huffs out a surprised laugh at that and shakes his head fondly. “You and that reindeer,” he murmurs out, amused, as Ian lets out a little laugh of his own and Yevgeny shrieks in excitement as Mickey tickles the boy’s sides. “Yes, you can watch Rudolph while we make breakfast.”

“Thank you, daddy!” Yevgeny smiles up at Mickey, pushing his blonde hair out of his eyes and scooting out from under the covers and down the bed. “I set up!”

Ian and Mickey both laugh after him as Mickey shifts to lean against Ian, pressing his face into the crook of Ian’s neck and smiling against his husband’s skin.

Mickey’s not sure he’s ever been happier.
Once they’re up and out of bed, Mickey gets Yevgeny set up in front of his movie, still in his pajamas and wrapped in a cozy blanket. Right away, Ian starts in on breakfast for the three of them. When Mickey returns to the kitchen, Yevgeny is humming happily from the living room, and Ian has a pancake batter mixed up.

“Can you grab the strawberries and whipped cream, babe?” Ian requests of Mickey, still mixing the batter in his hand.

“You trying to give him a sugar high already?” Mickey teases popping the fridge to pull out the requested items.

“Ha ha,” Ian offers sarcastically, finishing with the batter and heating the griddle, “just slice ‘em for me, smart guy.”

Mickey laughs lightheartedly, setting to work washing and hulling the berries before slicing them up via his husband’s instructions. He’s not quite sure what Ian has up his sleeve, but he’s certainly not going to argue if Ian’s going to take care of the cooking.

Ian starts with a smaller pancake for Yev before pouring out a couple for each of them. Mickey takes his time plating each, making sure to set Yevgeny’s aside to let Ian work his magic. As Ian tends to Yev’s plate, Mickey busies himself brewing some coffee and pouring a glass of milk for Yev, sneaking a peak at Ian every now and then and smiling at his husband’s concentration.

A few minutes later, Ian announces that he’s finished, and Mickey sidles up beside him to check out Ian’s handiwork. Mickey smiles immediately as he takes in the little pancake version of Rudolph that sits in front of him. Ian’s used a couple of lengthwise slices of strawberry for the ears, a small, whole berry for the bright red nose, and a couple of pretzel nubs for the antlers. At some point Ian also must have dug out a little bag of chocolate chips, because there are little chocolate chips sitting atop a couple of tufts of whipped cream for the eyes.

“What do you think?” Ian asks, quirking an eyebrow and smiling back at Mickey proudly.

“You’re a fuckin’ dork, man,” Mickey shakes his head in amusement, “and I love ya for it.”

“No bad words, daddy!” Yevgeny scolds from the other room.

Mickey and Ian both laugh at that, a little surprised the boy was paying attention to anything except his movie.

“Sorry, Yev,” Mickey calls back, rolling his eyes at his smirking husband and giving Ian a playful little shove. “Time for breakfast, bud.”

Yevgeny pouts a bit, but he gets up to amble to the table. He brightens when Mickey tells him they can leave the movie on, and the moment Ian sets the plate in front of him, Yevgeny shrieks with joy.

“Rudolph!” he squeals—again—and Mickey and Ian just laugh, settling in beside their son. After a moment of admiring the pancake reindeer, Yevgeny smiles up at Ian and reaches over to pat his dad’s hand, murmuring a happy, “Thank you, daddy.”

Ian smiles genuinely. “You’re welcome, Yevy. Now eat up, so we can open presents.”

Once they’ve finished eating, Mickey clears the table while Ian scoops Yev up into his arms and carries him into the living room before plopping the toddler onto the couch to the boy’s delight.
When Mickey joins them, he finds Yevgeny giggling uncontrollably as Ian tickles Yev’s side and scoots onto the couch next to the toddler. Mickey laughs, and Yevgeny’s giggles slowly die down as he sits himself up and leans happily against his dad’s side.

After a moment, the boy reaches out for Mickey, who sits down beside Yev, giving his son a moment to snuggle next to him before Mickey breaks in. “You gonna open your presents, kiddo?” Mickey asks giving Yev a little squeeze.

“Yes, please!” Yevgeny agrees, excitedly.

“Well, then, we better get down there, huh?” Mickey asks with a grin before swinging the boy down to the floor and following to sit beside him, nodding at Ian to follow them. Ian does, scooting around the coffee table to sit with his boys in front of the tree and grabbing his phone from his pocket on the way.

As Ian preps the camera, Mickey helps Yevgeny pass out the gifts. To make it easier on the toddler, they’d wrapped the gifts in specific paper for each of them. Mickey points out which paper goes to which person, and Yevgeny sets out making sure he’s cleared out everything under the tree. By the time he finishes, the boy is amazed at the pile of gifts in front of him and the few in front of each of his dads. He stops a minute in confusion scratching his forehead and scrunching up his brow.

“Where are all your presents?” Yevgeny asks curiously, watching Mickey and Ian expectantly.

Mickey gives a little laugh at that and pulls Yev into his lap. “Well,” Mickey begins, a little unsure, but careful to keep his voice confident, “Christmas presents are mostly for little ones like you, Yevy. Grown ups like daddy and I already have all we need to be happy, because we have each other and we have you.”

“But I happy, too, daddy,” Yevgeny insists.

“And we are so, so glad about that, Yevey,” Ian interjects, reaching out to squeeze Yev’s arm. “You’re such a good boy, though, that your daddies wanted to give you lots of presents. Is that okay?”

After a moment, Yevgeny nods thoughtfully. “’k,” he agrees after a moment.

“All right,” Mickey smiles, giving Yev another little squeeze. “What’d’ya say we open these up, then, huh?”

Yev nods in excitement then, immediately diving in to tear the paper off the first gift he can reach, leaving Mickey and Ian to laugh along as Ian films the whole thing.

By the time they drop Yevgeny off at home, Ian’s heart is hurting a bit. He knows it’s only fair for the boy to spend Christmas morning with his mom and sisters. It would be unfair to ask for anything else. But Ian loves spending time with their son more than anything, and he still feels like he has a lot of time to make up for.

So, despite himself, he finds a couple of tears slipping out when he and Mickey turn away to head home. Mickey notices immediately and wraps a comforting arm around Ian’s shoulders as they head down the street, pulling Ian gently against his side.

“I know, love,” Mickey soothes quietly, “but we’ll have him again in a few days. And we had a perfect little family Christmas together, hmm?”
“Yeah, Mick, I know,” Ian agrees with a little smile, “Just miss him, is all.”

Mickey nods, tugging Ian a little closer against the cold as they make their way home.

When they wander into the Gallagher house the next day, Ian and Mickey are greeted with friendly chatter and smiling faces. They manage to hug Fiona in greeting before dropping the bags of gifts they’ve brought by the tree and heading toward the kitchen where most of the family is milling around.

After a moment, they hear a bright little voice squeal in excitement. All they hear is the word “Daddies!” before they each have half an armful of an overexcited Yevgeny.

“Hey, little man!” Ian exclaims, his own excitement matching Yevgeny’s as he boosts the toddler up onto his hip and gives Yev a little kiss on the cheek. Yevgeny returns the affection before reaching out for Mickey. Ian passes Yev into Mickey’s arms, Mickey beaming brightly at the new turn of events, as Yevgeny greets his dad and begins chattering about his Christmas morning. Ian can’t help but notice that the boy is wearing the Christmas sweatshirt he and Mickey had left with Svet to leave under their tree for the toddler to open on Christmas morning, and his heart swells just a little more.

After watching Mickey and Yev for a moment, Ian raises his eyes to meet with Fiona’s. “What’s this all about?” he asks, a little apprehensive that Yev might only be staying for a short while.

Fiona shrugs with a little smile. “You seemed a little down about not spending Christmas day with Yevgeny. Talked to V and Kev, who talked to Svetlana. Didn’t take too much convincing to get them all here for dinner.”

Ian thinks he might have tears in his eyes as he wraps his sister up in a hug and squeezes her tight. “Thank you,” he murmurs into her hair before pulling back to watch his husband and their son, Mickey completely oblivious to everything other than their little boy.

“Don’t mention it,” Fiona insists as she smiles at her brother’s little family. “Merry Christmas, kiddo.”
Chapter Summary

Mickey and Ian work to continue building their relationship with Yevgeny, and Mickey gets an offer from Fiona.

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for the comments! I haven’t had a chance to respond, since I’m on mobile 99% of the time, and Ao3 won’t let me comment properly, but I greatly appreciate the support. ❤️ I’m glad there are still some people out there reading this one after my long absence.

Title inspired by Darren Hayes’s “Good Enough.”

A few months later, Ian and Mickey have settled firmly into their new routine as a married couple and they’ve continued to build their relationship with Yev. Sometimes, Mickey still can’t believe how trusting Yevgeny is of both of them. It’s incredible, the sweet, innocent acceptance the boy has shown toward his dads. He’s never once questioned their love for him, even if Mickey and Ian had been absent for more time than they like to admit. Now, though, Mickey finds he’s glad they moved past all that while Yev was still young enough not to remember the long absence of his dads. Because Mickey knows, really, that Yevgeny has every reason not to trust either of them, and Mickey’s just happy that he’d come around to being a dad early enough to win back his son.

Svetlana, however, hadn’t been quite as trusting when they’d wandered back into Yevgeny’s life. Still, even she had started to come around. More and more frequently, Svetlana was willing to let Ian and Mickey spend time with the boy with little protest. She was still apprehensive about overnights, though, since Yev was still so young. It didn’t really help that they lived so close, either. It just added to Svetlana’s insistence that there was no reason for Yev to stay at Mickey and Ian’s overnight, if they could be there within a half hour to drop him off or pick him up. As a result, they hadn’t had Yev overnight since Christmas, and even then, it had taken quite a bit of pushing to get Svetlana to agree. They’d let it be for a bit, figuring it wouldn’t help to push again so soon. Yev was getting restless for another chance to stay with his dads, though, and Mickey was hopeful the boy might wear his mom down soon, since Mickey and Ian were both hoping to get into a more consistent visitation routine.

Mickey’s starting to get restless, too, though—worried that Yevgeny might think the choice is Mickey and Ian’s to make. Especially since they’ve been trying hard to put up a united front with Svetlana to build their family as a whole. Overall, she’s proven supportive, regardless of her wariness. She was even the one to encourage Yevgeny to call Ian dad, and she’d worked hard to overcome their past for the sake of their son—something Mickey and Ian would always be grateful for. But Mickey’s starting to worry that the long months since Christmas are starting to wear on their relationship with Yev, since the boy has been a broken record about staying over with his dads since that first overnight.
“Morning, babe,” Ian greets with a smile when Mickey wanders into the kitchen. Mickey gives him a little sneer in response, and Ian lets out a laugh at that. “Okay, grumpy, don’t start,” Ian teases, stepping away from the stove for just a moment to meet Mickey at the breakfast bar where he presses a quick kiss to Mickey’s lips as his husband plops himself down, still grumbling.

“Woke up without you, asshole,” Mickey scolds. “You know I fuckin’ hate wakin’ up without you.”

“Oh, hush,” Ian smiles despite himself as he turns back to the stove, hoping Mickey doesn’t catch the fond little tilt of his lips, “I’m makin’ you breakfast, you dick.”

“Yeah, yeah. And I appreciate it,” Mickey insists honestly, pushing back up off the stool he’s occupying to wander up behind Ian, slipping his arms around the other man’s waist and leaning up to press a kiss to Ian’s cheek before resting his head against Ian’s shoulder and holding on. “Just hate wakin’ up without you. Fucks with my head.”

Ian nods a little solemnly at that. He gets why it unnerves Mickey to wake to an empty bed after the year and a half in prison, and really, after all the time Ian had spent when he was manic getting up at the crack of dawn—Ian imagines it probably reminds Mickey of times when Ian had been less than faithful. “I’m sorry,” Ian admits quietly. “Didn’t mean to freak you out. I know it probably brings back a lot of shit, and I—”

“Hey,” Mickey cuts him off when he hears the tremble of guilt in Ian’s voice. He steps away from Ian just a bit until he can turn the other man towards him, reaching up to frame Ian’s face with gentle hands. “Not what I meant, love. I just don’t think I’ve woken up without you since the day I got out. Usually you wake me before you even so much as leave the room. It’s stupid to think we can keep that up forever. Nothin’ you need to feel guilty for. That shit’s in the past, and I trust you, Ian. Just like wakin’ up beside the man I love. Okay?”

Ian finally lets himself smile genuinely at that as he leans in again for Mickey’s lips. “Okay,” he agrees brightly, letting himself get just a little lost in Mickey’s eyes.

After just a moment, though, Mickey gives Ian a playful little swat on the ass and pulls away to return to his spot at the breakfast bar, smirk playing on his lips. “Don’t burn the bacon, bitch.”

Once Ian’s finished making them breakfast, he settles a plate in front of Mickey and sits beside his husband, quickly noticing the slight cloud of discontent that continues to shroud Mickey’s mood.

“You worried about the whole thing with Yev?” Ian asks after a moment, recognizing the way the tension quickly drops Mickey’s shoulders as he lets out a deep sigh.

“I guess,” Mickey admits, averting his eyes from Ian’s. “Just hate that Svetlana’s so against letting him stay over again. I kinda get it, you know—she’s protective; we haven’t always been the most reliable. But I hate sayin’ no to him about this. Don’t want him to think we don’t want him here, you know? He’s our kid, Ian, and I want him to know he’s always welcome here. I don’t wanna piss off Lana, but I don’t want to hurt our boy trying to placate her, you know?”

Ian nods, watching Mickey carefully for a moment. He’s been feeling the same—worried and restless and missing the time with their son. So Ian makes a mental note to try to talk to Svetlana on his own. See if he can make any headway to help her feel more comfortable at the separation. Because he knows he and Mickey need her to trust them more completely if they ever want to make things right and guarantee that their little family stay intact.
A few days later, Mickey’s weary after a long day of work as he unlocks the door to their apartment, hoping to find Ian still awake. It’s not late, really, but Ian had worked a long shift that had started early, beating Mickey home by a few hours, and Mickey assumes Ian must be exhausted. But Mickey’s hoping for some time with his husband, and he’s relieved when he spots the living room lights on and sees Ian’s red hair from where his husband is sitting on their couch.

“Hey,” Ian greets softly as Mickey approaches, smiling up at Mickey for a moment before dropping his eyes to indicate the cozy bundle he holds in his arms. Mickey’s face lights up genuinely then, his exhaustion evaporating immediately when he takes in the sight of his husband cradling their son, Ian trying his best not to rile up the sleepy toddler in his lap. “Got ourselves a Yevy sleepover.”

“Hey, little man,” Mickey greets, keeping his voice quiet as he moves to Yev to press a little kiss to the child’s forehead before leaning over Yev to kiss Ian gently. “Got my two favorite people for the night, huh? How’d I get so lucky?”

Ian laughs lightly up at Mickey. “Was Svet’s idea, actually. She knew we were getting a little restless about the whole thing and asked if we wanted to try another overnight. I figured now would be a good time. We’re both off tomorrow. Can take him out for breakfast. Maybe to the park. I thought it’d be fun.”

“I love that idea,” Mickey grins at Ian before pressing another kiss to Ian’s lips.

Yev reaches up between them then, patting both their cheeks with his little hands. “Read stories, daddies,” he requests quietly, drawing a smile from both Ian and Mickey.

“You want a bedtime story?” Mickey asks quietly, lifting Yevgeny into his arms when the boy reaches out for him. Yev nods, rubbing his tired eyes, and Mickey rocks him before nodding toward Yev’s room.

Ian gives him a smile in acknowledgement and follows Mickey and Yevgeny into the toddler’s room, where Ian grabs Yev’s favorite picture book off the top of the bookshelf. Mickey situates Yevy in the middle of the twin bed, and he and Ian make themselves comfortable beside him. After a moment, Yevgeny cuddles up to Ian so he can see the pictures in his story, and Ian strokes Yev’s hair gently as he reads, both Yev and Mickey drifting at Ian’s soft tone.

Once Yev’s down, Ian and Mickey busy themselves getting ready for bed. While Ian’s brushing his teeth, Mickey strips down and drags on a pair of flannel pants before making himself comfortable in their bed, leaning back against the headboard. When Mickey hears the water shut off, he looks up to lock eyes with Ian, who’s just stepping back into their bedroom.

“Hey, babe,” Mickey calls, scowling to himself when he realizes he’s used the dreaded pet name, “can I talk to you for a minute?”

Ian eyes Mickey cautiously for a moment as he crawls into bed beside Mickey, settling close. “Should I be worried?” he asks, eyes narrowed playfully.

“All right, dumbass,” Mickey scolds, elbowing Ian playfully in the ribs. “You know better than that.”

“Okay, I got it,” Ian chuckles with a smile. “What’s up?”

“Fiona made me an offer today,” Mickey starts, watching Ian closely. “She’s doing really well
right now, and she’s looking to ditch the diner so she can focus on renovating her properties. So, uh, she officially offered me the management position at the diner. It’s not a ton more money, but it’s something. We’ve also got a good staff right now, so the extra hours I’ll have to put in should be minimal. Fi said we could give it a trial run to make sure you and me are okay with the change. Couple months to decide if I want to take it on permanently.”

Ian nods, eyes focused on Mickey’s as he tries to read how Mickey’s feeling. “What do you think?” Ian asks, reaching out to smooth a stray strand of hair away from Mickey’s forehead.

“I don’t know,” Mickey shrugs. “Might give us a chance to save a little more. Maybe spoil Yev a bit. Figure it wouldn’t hurt to try it out for a couple months.” Mickey’s not just thinking about Yev, but he’s not ready to admit that yet, so he leaves it at that and looks to Ian expectantly.

Ian nods, smiling at Mickey genuinely. “Then we try it out for a couple months,” Ian agrees as he leans over to kiss Mickey softly. “I’m proud of you, Mick. Love you.”

Mickey smiles and strokes a finger over Ian’s cheek. “Love you, too,” he murmurs as they settle into bed, curling tight around one another.

After a moment, though, Mickey breaks the silence, a little smirk playing at his lips. “So, earlier, when you said it was Svet’s idea to let us take Yev for the night, what you meant was that you fuckin’ begged her on your hands and knees, right?”

Ian immediately lets out a loud, irritated sigh at Mickey’s perceptive nature. “I fuckin’ hate you,” Ian teases, pinching Mickey’s hip playfully.

Mickey just laughs at that, snuggling back into Ian’s hold. “Sure you do, tough guy.” After another moment, he whispers quietly, “Thank you.”

Ian just nuzzles at Mickey’s neck and drops a couple of soft kisses there in answer as they both drift off to sleep.

The next morning, Mickey wakes early in Ian’s arms; Ian’s fingers stroking gently over the skin of Mickey’s forearm. Mickey smiles groggily after a moment, pressing back into Ian’s touch and sighing happily when his husband presses little kisses to the back of Mickey’s neck. After a few moments like that, just savoring Ian’s touch, Mickey finally shifts over until he’s facing Ian, kissing him softly and murmuring a quiet “Good morning.”

Ian smiles back, happily accepting the gentle affection Mickey’s showing him. “Mornin’,” Ian returns, eyes drifting over Mickey’s sleepy features. “Seems like the kid slept through the night. Think we should go check on him?”

Mickey sighs a little at the prospect of leaving their bed, but he acquiesces, patting Ian’s chest softly before pushing himself up and digging up a long sleeved shirt—the March air still chilly enough to leave Mickey immediately missing the cozy comforter on their bed. Ian grins and follows suit, dragging on a pair of sweatpants and a light sweater.

When they peek into Yevgeny’s room, the little nightlight and the early morning sun are giving off just enough light to illuminate the boy. Yevgeny’s still lying down, tucked under his covers, but playing quietly with his favorite little elephant stuffed animal. He still looks sleepy, so Mickey pushes the door open gently and inches in with Ian. Yevgeny notices them near immediately, smiling up at them brightly.

“Good morning, daddies,” he slurs out, voice still sleepy and small.
“Mornin’, little man,” Ian whispers, trying his best not to disturb the peaceful atmosphere. “How’d you sleep, kiddo?

“Good, daddy,” Yev insists, rubbing a little at his eyes to wake himself more fully. “Love my room.”

Mickey smiles at that, sitting himself down on the edge of Yev’s bed and stroking the boy’s blonde hair. “That’s great, Yevy. Daddy and I are so glad you like your room.”

Yevgeny nods and gives his dads a big smile before pushing himself up into a sitting position. “Time to get up?” Yev asks curiously with an exaggerated shrug.

At that, Mickey and Ian both laugh softly, and Ian answers quietly, “Yeah, bud. How about we get up and get dressed, and then we can go out for breakfast, huh?”

“Yes, please!” Yevgeny insists excitedly, throwing off his covers and reaching out to grip the hand Mickey offers to help him hop off the bed.

Yevgeny’s thrilled when they walk into the diner and he spots his aunt Fiona, who spoils him with Mickey Mouse chocolate chip pancakes. He babbles at Fiona happily, telling her all about his room and his toys and how much he loves staying with his dads. Fiona grins happily at him, entertained at the boy’s excitement. Fiona knows a bit about the struggle Mickey and Ian have been dealing with, and she’s happy to hear that Svetlana’s starting to loosen up a bit. She can see how thrilled Mickey and Ian are to have Yev there with them, and it’s nice to see them all so happy. After a bit, though, she leaves the little family to their own devices, reminding Mickey briefly about the management offer. He promises to talk with her about it on his next day in, and they finish their breakfast just the three of them, Yevgeny chattering happily about his sisters and his mom and how he can’t wait to start school.

After breakfast, they spend the rest of the day out and about with Yev.

They spend a lot of their time at a little local park, where Yevgeny spots a cheery little dog. The owner lets him play with the puppy, who Ian thinks might be a pug. Whatever it is, it’s friendly and spends most of its time lapping at Yevgeny’s cheeks while the boy giggles uncontrollably. Ian laughs right along, and Mickey shakes his head at the pair, insisting to Ian that they are not getting a dog. Ian just laughs and agrees, but Mickey can tell his husband has a soft spot for the little animal, and Mickey would be lying if he said he didn’t think the little guy was cute. So Mickey just stands back and watches Yevgeny play happily while Mickey hopes their son won’t think to ask for a dog of his own.

By the time they wander back home, it’s time for a late lunch and a nap for Yev.

For a bit, Yev fights the nap. He’s tired and fussy, and it manifests in tears and frustration when his dads try to get him to lie down. They manage to distract him with a story, though, and he drifts off to sleep quickly once he’s calmed down and Mickey’s started reading for him. Once Yevgeny’s fallen asleep, Mickey and Ian wait for a bit before untangling Yev from Mickey’s lap to make sure the boy doesn’t wake when they shift him further onto the bed. Ian smiles softly as Mickey tucks Yev’s blanket up around his shoulders before pressing a little kiss to the boy’s hair.

When they finally manage to slip out of the room, they both breathe a sigh of relief, laughing quietly as they move out into the living room and drop down onto the couch. After a moment,
Mickey shifts closer to Ian to lay his head on Ian’s chest.

“Well, that was an ordeal,” Mickey admits, his own exhaustion whispering through in his tone. He’s happy, though—it’s clear in the little tilt of his lips. Ian smiles back, kissing the top of Mickey’s head and tucking an arm around Mickey’s waist.

“He was a little fussier than usual, huh?” Ian admits. It feels good, really, knowing that they’re finally getting to know every side of their son. For so long, they’ve only had a few hours here or there with Yev, Christmas being the only notable exception. It should probably be a little unnerving for them, finally experiencing the fussy side of their son, but Ian can’t help but feel like they’re growing as a family—learning Yev’s limits and how to effectively soothe him. It feels good.

Mickey nods in answer to Ian’s question, nuzzling closer to his husband, and letting his eyes drop contentedly. “Just glad we get to have this time with him. Thank you, Ian. For talking to Svetlana. Know she can be tough to deal with. She means well, I know, and we’ve fucked up a lot in the past. I’m glad she loves him so much, and I’m glad she’s protective, but sometimes it’s tough, you know? When it’s directed at us. Just wish we could move past all the bullshit.”

“I know, Mick,” Ian admits, stroking his fingers gently over Mickey’s arm, “but I get it, you know? I scared her. Back when I took him. And we both kind of ditched after that. Left her to find her own way. And she did, because she’s strong as fuck and nothing was going to stop her from taking care of herself and her son, but we really fucked up, Mick. And maybe we needed to go through that to get here, but it wasn’t fair to her or to Yev, and we’re probably lucky she lets us see him at all, you know?”

“Yeah,” Mickey agrees sadly. Ian’s right. Until recently, they were never particularly reliable. “Yeah, I know. Just want to move past it. Prove ourselves.”

“We’re gettin’ there, Mick,” Ian promises. “We are.”

A couple days later, Mickey wanders into the diner, a bright smile on his face. “Morning, Fi,” he greets with a little wave.

She’s sitting at the counter mulling over paperwork for her most recent renovation project, and she looks stressed. Even still, she offers him a smile. “Hey, Mick. Any news?”

“Uh, yeah,” he offers, nodding, eyes nervous. “I think I want to try it out. Ian and I talked about it. Think it’d be a good opportunity. Little more money. Maybe help us save for the family, you know?” Fiona nods at that, but her brow furrows a bit at his words, and he realizes too late that she’s learned to read him almost as well as Ian. “So, uh, I’m gonna get to work.”

“Oh. My. God,” Fiona’s eyes are huge as she watches him, lowering her voice to hiss, “You want another baby!”

“Don’t,” Mickey warns, giving her a withering look.

“You do.” Fiona’s smiling brightly. “Oh my god, Mick, this is huge. What’s Ian think?”

Mickey sighs and hushes her. “Look, Fi, I’m not ready to tell him. We’re not there yet, okay. Yes, I’d like another baby sometime in the future, but we’re still miles away from where we need to be financially. Adoption and surrogacy are crazy expensive, and we’re doing well, but not that well. Want to see how the management gig goes, and then I’ll talk to Ian about it, but I’m not ready yet, so keep your mouth shut, please.”
Fiona grins at him. “Of course,” she agrees, pushing herself up from her stool, “I won’t say a word. Promise.”

When he notices her approaching him slowly, he sighs heavily and whispers out “Jesus Christ” before shaking his head and turning to her. “Do we have to?”

“Yes, we fuckin’ do,” Fiona insists with outstretched arms as she smiles mischievously at Mickey. “If I’m gonna be a goddamn aunt, I’m gonna get a goddamn hug.”

With a harsh sigh, Mickey lets her wrap him up in a tight hug as she laughs happily. “You’re a fuckin’ pain in my ass,” he tells her as she pulls away with a smirk and throws him the finger before she settles back down in her seat.

After a moment, she speaks up again. “You know, if you guys need help with the financial end of things, I’m here. I’ve got more money than I know what to do with now, and if there’s anything in this world worth investing in, it’s family. I know how much you guys love Yev, and I know you’re both great dads. If you need help, I’m here.”

Mickey watches her closely for a moment with grateful eyes, but he shakes his head slowly. “We couldn’t ask that of you, Fiona. Adoption can cost $50,000. Surrogacy, $100,000. We can’t just ask you to pay for something like that. You know you need to reinvest the money you’re making. It’s too early in this stuff for you to be handing out money.”

There’s a little smirk on her lips when he stops talking, and she sips nonchalantly at her coffee before meeting his eyes. “You’ve been doing your research,” her smile turns bright and happy as he rolls his eyes with shake of his head. “I’m impressed. And seriously, Mick, I could write you a check right now. Call it a loan if you want. Whatever. If you and Ian want to have a baby, I will help you make that happen. I’d be honored.”

“All right, Daddy Warbucks,” he kids, voice sarcastic but appreciative, “how ‘bout you give me some time to talk to my husband before you order a baby for us, yeah?”

Fiona laughs and throws her hands up in surrender. “Whatever you say, boss. We’ll get the paperwork drawn up for the management position, and whenever you’re ready, we’ll talk more about the baby thing.”

Mickey sighs in disbelief and heads toward the kitchen, throwing an annoyed “never” over his shoulder at her.

“Mmhm,” she murmurs with raised eyebrows sipping at her coffee and smiling to herself at the new development with the Gallagher-Milkovich family.

“Look at you,” Ian teases, voice still sleep groggy as he watches Mickey fix a tie around his neck. He’s decked out for the new job in a pair of black slacks and a white button-down, the tie he wears a deep black with a subtle striped shimmer running the length of it. “You look like a good, upstanding citizen.”

“Yeah, well, that’s fuckin’ good ‘cause I’m pretty sure I am now. Gotta look the part for the new job, man,” Mickey shoots back playfully, crawling up the bed toward Ian to press a kiss to his lips. “Didn’t mean to wake you. Go back to sleep, love.”

Ian smiles up at Mickey, soaking in the pet name happily. Mickey’s taken to using it more and more often because he still hates using babe, and Ian fucking adores it.
“Hush,” Ian scolds with a little smirk, drawing Mickey’s lips back to his own with a little tug at his tie.

“Hey, now,” Mickey scolds with a smile, “don’t wrinkle the merchandise.”

“You love it,” Ian shoots back, shifting his hands to work at Mickey’s belt. “How pissed do you think Fiona’ll get if you’re late? ‘Cause I’m thinkin’ I’d like to sample the merchandise.”

“You are so fucking corny,” Mickey laughs with a smile, kissing Ian one last time before pulling away reluctantly. “Sorry, love. Gotta get to work on time. I am not dealing with Fiona’s wrath just because you’re lookin’ for a quickie.”

“Mmm, come on, Mick,” Ian whines, leaning back against the pillows to watch Mickey continue getting ready. “I’ll suck you off, babe. Make it all about you.”

Mickey scoffs with a playful shake of his head, moving back toward Ian one more time. “As tempting as that is, I gotta go. Work to do and shit.” He presses another little kiss to Ian’s lips—won’t let it become anything other than chaste because he knows if he does he won’t ever leave the apartment. “Rain check. Tonight. Love you, Gallagher.”

At that, Ian smiles back at Mickey gently, pressing his own happy little “I love you” past his lips and letting his fingers linger on Mickey’s skin for as long as possible before his husband pulls away with a wink and heads out for work.

Mickey’s first day as manager goes well. Fiona’s already trained him on just about everything—has been working on preparing him since she upped him to full time—but Mickey had still been nervous. He hadn’t been entirely sure whether the girls would accept him in the role, and he’d already butt heads with a couple of their cooks on a few occasions, so he’d been worried about the expectations there. He’d started as a fucking dishwasher, for fuck’s sake. After most of his coworkers. He’d been a little concerned that at least a few of them wouldn’t take him seriously. But apparently, he hadn’t lost all his edge, and if there was one thing Mickey Milkovich knew how to use to his advantage, it was the intimidation factor that seemed to constantly follow him around.

And so, he’d gotten through day one smoothly, and he’d actually enjoyed himself.

When he gets home, he finds Ian cooking dinner. “Hey, love,” Mickey greets, slipping up behind Ian and wrapping his arms around his husband’s waist. Gently, he presses a kiss to Ian’s cheek, and when Ian shifts a bit in Mickey’s direction, Mickey captures Ian’s lips in a soft kiss.

“How’d it go?” Ian asks curiously, eyes locking with Mickey’s.

Mickey smiles genuinely. “I think I can do this,” Mickey admits with a little smile, and Ian returns it with a wide grin of his own.

“That’s awesome, Mick,” Ian offers, pressing another kiss to his husband’s lips. “I’m proud of you, babe.”

“Hush,” Mickey teases with a contented look as he tucks his face into Ian’s neck and gives him a little nuzzle.

Ian knows Mickey’s still easily embarrassed by such praise, so he doesn’t push. Just drops his free hand to rub gentle little circles into the skin of Mickey’s forearm as Ian smiles happily. “Set the table for me?” Ian asks, changing the subject and smiling at the breath of relief he feels Mickey release.
“Yeah,” Mickey agrees immediately, shifting away from Ian after dropping a little kiss to Ian’s shoulder, “I’ll take care of it.”
A couple of weeks later, Ian comes home nearly two hours late, and Mickey’s beginning to get nervous. When he finally hears Ian come through the door, he’s halfway between pissed and terrified.

“What the hell, man?” Mickey questions as he moves from the kitchen to meet Ian at the front door. There’s no real bite to his words, though, and Mickey’s glad for that when he sees Ian’s rumpled appearance and his tear stained face. “Hey. Hey. What happened?” Mickey’s tone shifts into gentle as Mickey takes Ian into his arms and holds him close while Ian draws in a shaky breath.

“Lost a patient today,” Ian admits softly, clinging to Mickey. “Wasn’t in good shape, so I stayed at the station for a bit.”

Mickey nods, holding tighter and stroking Ian’s hair.

Ian breaks then, a quiet sob falling from his lips. “It was a little boy,” Ian admits against Mickey’s neck. “He was about Yevy’s age. We couldn’t save him. I couldn’t save him.”

Mickey doesn’t know what to say to that, so he just holds Ian tighter as his own eyes fill with tears at his husband’s broken tone.

That night, Mickey manages to get Ian to eat, if only just a little, but Ian refuses to talk about it. He’s hurting and Mickey knows he needs time, so Mickey stays close but doesn’t push. Once Ian’s eaten a bit, Mickey tucks him into bed and wanders away for just a moment to make sure the place is locked up and to grab a glass of water for Ian. When he heads back into their bedroom, Ian’s pulled the covers up tight around him, and he’s crying softly into his pillow. Mickey’s heart breaks immediately, and he wanders around to Ian’s side of the bed, setting the glass on the bedside table and sitting himself down beside Ian. With gentle fingers, Mickey reaches out to stroke his hand over Ian’s forehead, soothing Ian enough to have his husband leaning forward just a bit into Mickey’s touch. Mickey’s glad that Ian’s responding to the affection, and he smiles sadly, letting his palm rest against Ian’s cheek.
“Got you some water, love,” Mickey announces softly, voice near a whisper. “You feel okay otherwise?”

Ian nods near imperceptibly and turns his head just enough to press a kiss to Mickey’s palm in thanks. Ian can’t quite find his voice, so he just nuzzles into Mickey’s touch, but Mickey understands. “You need anything else, baby?” Mickey asks, voice still quiet.

Ian shakes his head, a fresh sheen of tears glistening in his eyes. “Just you, Mick,” Ian finally murmurs when he finds his voice. “Just you.”

Mickey feels some of the tension leave him at that, relieved that Ian wants him close and isn’t shutting him out. He nods, lips tilting up in another sad little smile as he stands to strip quickly out of his shirt and jeans.

For his part, Ian draws back the covers, making room for Mickey to cuddle up beside him, and the moment Ian’s wrapped up in Mickey’s arms, he lets out a soft sigh of relief, relaxing instantly against his husband’s touch. Ian’s whole body is trembling, the emotion he’s feeling keeping him on edge. But he relaxes into Mickey’s arms, letting his husband hold him close, and it soothes Ian’s nerves just enough to have his labored breathing returning to normal and his shaking subsiding.

As Mickey watches the younger man for a moment, he feels both fiercely protective and utterly helpless. But Ian’s calming slowly, so Mickey holds him close and strokes his skin as he presses kisses into Ian’s hair. Ian clings to Mickey, both of them seeking comfort and support in one another as Ian works to overcome the grief of a long night while Mickey tries to console his broken husband. It’s a lot for both of them—something Ian has never experienced before, at least not with a patient so young. Mickey can’t keep his mind from wandering to thoughts of losing Yevgeny and he imagines the image is one hundred times worse for Ian after what he’d seen.

So Mickey holds Ian close, and though Ian drifts into sleep after a bit, Mickey never does manage to close his eyes—too worried for the man he loves to take his gaze off Ian’s sleeping form for even a moment.

The next morning, Mickey calls in sick. He hates to do it so early in his new position, but Mickey can’t bring himself to leave Ian home by himself. When Ian wakes, he’s in bad shape—he refuses to talk about what he’d experienced and he barely utters a word to Mickey, just pulls the covers over himself until he can avoid Mickey’s worried gaze as tears leak from his tired eyes.

Mickey’s terrified, flashes of a time a few years ago when Mickey had been afraid he might lose Ian to the lows of his bipolar leaving Mickey fearful that they might end up right back there.

So Mickey stays home with Ian and tries to get him to talk. Even succeeds a little, and manages to get Ian up and out of bed. Mickey can’t convince Ian to leave the apartment, though, so instead, he settles onto the couch with Ian, the two of them cuddling close and just holding one another. Ian opens up a bit after a while. Tells Mickey about the call, about the guilt he’d felt—is still feeling. It hurts to hear Ian so broken.

But Ian’s trusting Mickey enough to confide in him, and Mickey feels relief at that. Because it’s bad—it’s really fucking bad—but Mickey can’t imagine any other reaction, and Ian’s not shutting down on him.

So Mickey spends the day holding Ian close and providing any comfort he can, hoping beyond hope that everything will be okay.
Mickey’s struggling at work the next day; his mind constantly on Ian, and he knows everyone around him can see it. He tries to ignore it, though, move on and keep working, but when a plate slips from his hands and he slices his palm open on the shards as he tries to clean them up, Fiona finally stops him with a gentle hand on his shoulder.

“Hey, Mick, leave it, okay?” she tells him gently, motioning to Sierra. “Sierra, can you sweep this up for me? Mickey cut himself.” As soon as she has a nod from Sierra, she’s helping Mickey up and sitting him down in the little office while she moves for the first aid kit.

He hisses at the pain as she starts blotting away the blood to clean up the wound. It’s deep, but not likely deep enough that he needs stitches, so she stays quiet on suggesting an ER to avoid shutting him down before she can get him to talk. Once she’s bandaged his hand, she looks up at him carefully, eyes soft but worried.

“What’s going on, Mickey?” she asks quietly. “You’ve been off all day, and I’m pretty sure the only thing that gets you this riled up is Ian.”

Mickey shrugs, taking a deep breath and dropping his eyes down to his hands. “I’m worried about him,” Mickey finally confides. “There was an incident at work. He lost a patient. A little boy. Was nothing he could’ve done, but it hit him hard, you know? They gave him the day off yesterday to deal with the grief or some shit. Was tough getting him out of bed.”

Fiona watches Mickey for a moment, eyes unreadable. “He having a depressive episode?” she finally asks cautiously. Ian’s been good since Mickey’s been back, and she’s unsure how Mickey’s likely to deal with all this, considering the change in his life with Ian.

“I don’t know,” Mickey admits honestly. “He wasn’t completely unresponsive like the last time, you know? Just down. I brought him breakfast in bed, held him, made sure he knew I was there. And he talked to me about it—what he was feeling. Said he kept picturing Yev there, just gone. Lost. It really messed him up, you know? So I’m not sure if it’s the bipolar or just the situation or both, but it was tough seeing him like that. I got him out of bed, but couldn’t get him out of the house yesterday. He did get up for work today, so that’s good, but I don’t know. Just worried.”

Fiona nods, giving him a sad smile. “That why you called off yesterday?”

Mickey nods, sucking in a breath through his nose. He’s trying to keep most of his emotions in check, and Fiona can see it in the tightness of his jaw.

“You know, Mickey, if something’s going on with Ian, I want to know about it.” She’s trying to keep her tone gentle, but Mickey reads it as hostile, his body language closing off immediately.

“I can fucking take care of my husband, all right?” he snaps, moving to push away.

“Mick,” she calls, placing a gentle hand on his forearm and keeping him there across from her. “I am not saying you can’t. I know you can take care of him, Mickey. You care for him better than anyone else ever has, including me. But you don’t have to do it alone. I love you both, and I want to know if something’s going on, okay? You don’t have to pretend to be sick. It’s okay for you to take a day when you need to be with Ian for something like this. And if you need help, I want you to tell me.”

Mickey sighs, meeting her eyes. “Listen, we’ve got it under control right now. He’s doing okay. We have an appointment with his therapist for tomorrow, and when I get off work today, I’m going to go find Svet and see if she’ll let us take Yev for a few days. I think it’d be good for Ian, having him close, considering the situation. But if anything changes, I will tell you.”
“Damn,” Fiona smiles softly at Mickey. “You really do have it under control.”

“I told you,” Mickey insists, “I can take care of my husband.”

“No kidding. He never would have agreed to any of that with us,” Fiona tells him, and it feels a little heartbroken the way she says it.

“That’s not because he doesn’t want to be better, Fiona.” Mickey explains, and he’s trying to be gentle, but he’s also still a little upset about the way he knows they treat Ian’s illness. “It’s because you guys all treat him with kid gloves. You talk about him like he’s not even in the goddamn room. You coddle him like he’s a child. And part of me gets that, because that’s how you always had to deal with Monica. But Fiona, Ian is not Monica. They may have the same illness, but he’s not her. He needs you and everyone else to trust that. The difference isn’t that he loves me or trusts me more. It’s that the only person I know with bipolar disorder is Ian. And that means I know Ian. You know Monica, and you project that onto him. He needs you to understand that he is not Monica. Period. And once you and Lip and Debbie and Carl and everyone else in that goddamn house come to understand that, then he’ll respond to you the same way he does to me. He is not Monica.”

Fiona looks a little guilty at that, her eyes dropping for just a moment. Finally, she looks up at Mickey, offering a gentle smile as she murmurs a quiet, “I know,” as she gives him a little nod. “I’m trying, Mickey, I swear. It’s just hard sometimes with all the history there. But you’re here now, and I know you know how to take care of him, so I will absolutely defer to you. You’re his husband. You’ve earned that right. But I think I deserve to know if something’s going on with my little brother, don’t you?”

For a moment, Mickey gives her a hard stare. He loves Fiona—loves all the Gallaghers, really—and she’s done a lot for them. But Mickey’s not willing to let this one go without making himself clear that he and Ian both need the Gallaghers to make a change in the way they treat Ian if they expect to be involved in discussions of Ian’s mental health.

“I get what you’re saying,” Mickey tells her after a moment, letting out a tired sigh, but refusing to drop her gaze, “but you have to let Ian and I handle this stuff—especially if you can’t separate your responses to Ian from your history with Monica. I need my husband to be okay, and that shit fucks him up. He is not a child. He is not a fucking druggie. He is not Monica. He’s Ian. And he is actively managing his mental health. If you’re going to jeopardize that, then we can’t involve you in these things.”

Fiona nods at that. “I get that,” she admits, eyes still a little guilty. “I will do my best, Mickey, and if I’m fucking things up, I will trust you to throw me the fuck out. All right?”

Mickey finally breaks a bit at that, a smile tipping at the corners of his lips. “All right,” he agrees, finally relaxing at the compromise.

Fiona smiles at him gently then, taking a deep breath and shrugging her shoulders in Mickey’s direction. “Well, now that that’s settled, I’m gonna let you get back to work. But how about you help me work the books today? Don’t need you getting your hand infected trying to do everybody else’s jobs for them—which, by the way, you’re a manager now. You can just tell them to do their jobs better.”

Mickey shakes his head at her but agrees to her rules. They’re still working through their trial period, and Fiona’s working to finish showing Mickey the ropes. He’s taking it well, and she hopes they can make it official soon so she can move on, but she doesn’t want to push him, especially if Ian’s struggling. So instead, she leads him back up front and makes him promise to head out an hour early so he’ll have plenty of time to pick up Yev and get him back to the
That afternoon, once he’s off work, Mickey heads over to talk to Svetlana. Ian needs some comfort right now, and Mickey thinks having Yev close for a bit would help. They’ve rarely done overnights before, though—and never longer—mostly due to Svetlana’s protectiveness, and he’s not sure how the request is going to go over.

It takes a bit of convincing before Svetlana starts to soften. It’s mostly the situation that breaks her down once Mickey explains what had happened. She’s still wary about too much time away from her son, and sometimes she’s not sure she fully trust Ian and Mickey, but she’s trying and they’re all coming to terms with their past. And when she hears about what Ian had experienced, she breaks, drawing in a soft gasp in surprise and sympathy. As strong-willed as Svetlana may be, she also loves her son more than anything and the thought of losing him so young instantly pulls at her heartstrings.

“You bring him back safe, yes?” Svetlana finally sighs out as she stares at Mickey, eyes soft but challenging.

“That’s just a sleepover. Just for a few days. Ian needs to have him close right now, and I’d like some time with my son. We will follow any rules you want to give us,” Mickey promises honestly as he watches Svetlana from where she’s eyeing Yev, who’s playing on the floor near Mickey. “He’s stayed with us before, Svet,” he reminds.

“Yes, over night. Never longer,” she argues. And maybe Mickey is asking for a lot. Maybe a few days is more than Svet can handle away from Yev.

“You can come by,” Mickey finally offers. “Hell, you can stay, if you want. But Ian and I want some time with our son. And Ian needs that right now. Please, Svet. I know I’ve fucked up before, but we’re all doing good. Ian and I are around all the time. Don’t you think it’s time to let us take the next step?”

Svetlana watches him for a moment, she’s trying to keep a glare on her features, but it’s not working, and she finally melts. “Fine,” she sighs. “You take Yevgeny. But only a few days.”

Mickey breaks into a smile. “Absolutely,” he agrees, and there are hints of uncontainable joy in his voice. “Thank you, Lana.”

She waves him off, and Mickey smiles wider, lifting Yevgeny into his arms. “You hear that, Yev?” Mickey whispers to him, as he rocks the boy in his arms. “You’re gonna come stay with your daddies for a few days. You like that idea?”

Yevy’s face lights up, and he claps his hands at Mickey before patting Mickey’s cheek with a sticky palm. “We see daddy Ian?” Yev asks, excitement obvious in the boy’s wide eyes. Mickey laughs happily at that, turning his head to kiss Yevy’s fingers.

“That’s right, Yev,” Mickey confirms before looking over at Svetlana, who’s watching them fondly.

“You’re good with baby,” Svetlana offers, and Mickey smiles, eyes returning to Yevgeny.

“I’m trying,” he admits, and Svetlana nods with a smile.

As Mickey continues babbling with Yevgeny, Svetlana gathers the child’s things and packs a bag quickly for Mickey to take with him before she hands it over and lists off the supplies she’s
packed. “You call if you need help,” she finally orders, her tone stern. “And just a few days.”

Mickey nods in agreement as he settles Yevgeny on his hip and throws the bag over his shoulder. There’s not much in it, really. Mickey and Ian have supplies for Yev at the apartment for visits, so Yev doesn’t need much. “I will,” Mickey tells her sincerely, before leaning down to kiss her cheek.

Svetlana accepts the affection and then turns to Yevgeny, stroking his hair and pressing a little kiss to his temple. “You be good for your daddies, yes?” Svetlana tells him, and Yev smiles and nods his head furiously. Both Mickey and Svetlana laugh at the display, and then she sends them off, giving Mickey an expectant look as he nods at her warning eyes and heads for the door with his son in tow.

“Aww, Yevy,” Ian coos as he spots the toddler on the floor with Mickey and wanders over to lift Yevgeny into his arms when Yev shrieks in excitement and reaches out for Ian. “What’re you doing here, little man?” Ian asks curiously, his eyes landing on Mickey in question.

“Stay daddies!” Yev explains with an enthusiastic shrug, and Ian laughs at the boy’s excitement, giving Yev a little squeeze.

“He’s staying?” Ian asks Mickey as Mickey pushes himself up off the floor and leans over to kiss Ian softly as a little welcome home.

“Yeah. Few days,” Mickey explains with a soft smile as he reaches out to tickle Yev, and Yevy laughs up at his dad. “Hope that’s okay. Thought it might help having him around, you know. And I missed the kid.”

“Of course it’s okay,” Ian coos as he bounces Yev in his arms. “Always okay to have the little man here, huh, Yev.”

Mickey smiles and rubs a hand over Ian’s back in soothing circles, happy that having Yev close already seems to be doing Ian some good. “I’m glad,” Mickey tells him as he pulls away. “I’m gonna go start dinner. You okay to watch him?”

“Of course,” Ian agrees happily, eyes never leaving the child in his arms as Mickey moves toward the kitchen. After a moment, Mickey hears Ian call after him with a quiet “Hey, Mick?,” and Mickey turns back to Ian with a raised eyebrow.

“No?” Mickey questions curiously, watching his two favorite boys fondly.

“Thank you,” Ian whispers honestly, cheek pressed up against Yevgeny’s temple as he holds the boy close. Mickey just smiles and nods before turning back to the task at hand and leaving Ian to coo over their son.

Later, they’re curled around one another in bed, Ian’s head pillowed on Mickey’s chest as Mickey strokes his fingers through Ian’s hair gently.

After a moment, Ian breaks the silence. “You ever think about having another baby?” he asks, voice low but honest as he avoids lifting his eyes to Mickey’s.

Mickey thinks on that for a minute before urging Ian’s eyes up to meet his with gentle fingers against Ian’s chin. “This about the little boy you lost?” Mickey asks gently.

“I don’t know,” Ian admits softly. “Maybe a little. Got me thinking about all that cliche bullshit
—live for the moment, seize the day, live every moment like it’s your last—all that stuff that’s fuckin’ stupid until you’re staring death in the face, you know?” Mickey nods, and squeezes Ian’s shoulder to offer a little support, and Ian continues tentatively. “I mean, it just brought all this to the surface. I’ve been thinking about it for a while. We’re in a good place. Happy, have a decent living situation, money saved up, stable jobs. I just—I don’t know—sometimes I think it’d be nice to have another baby. Give Yevy another little brother or sister. Don’t you ever think about expanding our little family? I think it’d be nice.”

Mickey smiles and presses a kiss to Ian’s temple. He’s not ready to admit the actual extent of his thoughts on the matter to Ian just yet, because he wants Ian to move past this tragedy without Mickey influencing him too much, but Mickey can’t bring himself to lie about it either. He wants another baby, and knowing that Ian does too has Mickey’s heart swelling with excitement. “Think about it a lot, actually,” Mickey admits quietly, a soft smile playing at his lips. “I think it’d be nice, too.”

Ian’s face lights up at that as he stares up at Mickey with happy eyes. “Yeah?” he asks, needing the confirmation.

“Yeah,” Mickey agrees. “But, uh, how about we let things cool down first. Give it a little time until you’re feeling a little better about all this, and then we can talk about some options, yeah?”

Ian looks up at Mickey, eyes filling with happy tears as he breaths in a little laugh and a smile breaks across his lips. “Yeah,” Ian agrees, lifting himself up and shifting until he can capture Mickey’s mouth in a sweet, desperate kiss. “I love you. Thank you.”

Mickey smiles up at Ian as he strokes soft fingers over Ian’s cheek. “Love you, too, Ian. Love you so much.”

Chapter End Notes

I hope my portrayal of Ian’s disorder is respectful and reasonable here. I have limited experience with bipolar disorder, as I have only ever been on the outside looking in with a couple of close friends. Beyond that, I'm simply relying on the internet research I was able to perform. As a result, I have avoided Ian’s perspective here to avoid misrepresenting his experience. However, I also don’t actually intend for this to be read as a depressive episode for Ian, but rather just a bout of grief that I imagine some in Ian’s profession may experience from time to time. So it’s really just discussions on the outside, but if this is in any way offensive or misrepresentative, I would be happy to hear constructive criticism so I can adjust.
Tiny Little Flashlights

Chapter Summary

Mickey and Ian begin exploring their options for extending their family.

Chapter Notes

Title inspired by “Tiny Little Flashlights” by Darren Hayes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They don’t talk about it again for a while after that. Ian works to come to terms with his grief, and Mickey gives him the space and the support to help him through it. Mickey’s hopeful that Ian’s still interested in expanding their family, but Mickey doesn’t want to push, and he wants to wait until Ian has fully dealt with his grief before they move forward with any plans.

But Mickey would be lying if he said he didn’t want a baby pretty fucking badly. He just refuses to put his own desires over Ian’s needs—not with a decision so big.

So, true to their agreement, they let it go until Ian is ready to broach the subject again. When Ian finally brings it up, it’s been a few weeks, and it’s a brief exchange—a promise that it’s time to revisit the idea when they have time to think it through, and they leave it for a few more days.

Finally, though, Mickey’s curiosity and worry get the best of him. He’s been mulling over what he knows of their options, and he’s terrified that their pasts might entirely bar them from having a child together. The thought has been whispering at the back of his mind for weeks, and he needs to talk to Ian about it—make sure they’re really on the same page.

“For real, Mick,” Ian interrupts the moment he recognizes Mickey’s worried tone. “I’m not being facetious. Do you really understand how much I love you? Because I love you so fucking much, Mickey Gallagher-Milkovich. You are everything. And the idea of having a child with you? Of choosing to have a baby—of extending our little family? Of being there from day one, every day, raising a child together? Mickey, I’m fucking tingling just at the thought. I want this, Mickey. I
want to have all of that with you. I want to give Yevgeny a little brother or sister, and I want to
watch our kids grow up together. I want a family. Honestly.”

Mickey smiles a little at that despite himself, tracing Ian’s chin with his fingers. He nods, and
intertwines his fingers with Ian’s. “I get that, Ian, I do,” Mickey admits quietly, tone gentle. He’s
not entirely sure how to voice his concerns without worrying Ian, but he feels like it needs to be
said. “I know you love me—I love you, too—and I know you want a family. But it’s not like we
can just have a baby. There are huge decisions we’re gonna have to make. Adoption, surrogacy. It’s
going to be crazy expensive. We’ll probably have to take out a loan. We’ll have to renovate the
office. That is if we can even get any agencies to take us on with my criminal history. It’s a big
deal, Ian. And I know you know that, but I also want to be realistic here because it’s a lot and it’s
expensive. Deciding to have a baby—for us—is going to be a lot.”

“You worried about the stress on me?” Ian asks, watching Mickey carefully.

Mickey sighs, dropping his eyes for a moment. “A little,” Mickey admits, rubbing a reassuring
hand up and down Ian’s shoulder, “but it’s more than that. I’ve got a fucked up past, Ian. I did a lot
of shit that I’m afraid might disqualify us before we even get started. And I fucking hate that I did
the shit I did, but I can’t change it now. I don’t want to fuck this up for us, but I’m afraid I already
have.”

By the time he’s finished speaking, there are tears stinging Mickey’s eyes, and Ian’s staring down
at him with loving sympathy in his eyes. “Baby,” Ian murmurs, shifting up over Mickey to press
sweet kisses below Mickey’s eyelids, chasing away the loose tears before he leans down to capture
Mickey’s lips, “you haven’t fucked up anything. We will find a way. I promise you. And, really,
my past is just as fucked up. This is not all on you, Mick. We will figure it out, and we will have
our family. Okay?”

It takes Mickey a moment to absorb Ian’s words, and he’s silent as he contemplates his husband’s
points, Ian staring down at him expectantly.

After what feels like forever, Mickey finally manages to murmur out a confirmation, whispering a
quiet “okay.” The word leave a sweet smile on Ian’s lips, and Ian leans down to kiss away all of
Mickey’s fears, determined to make good on his promises.

“Hey, sweetheart!” Fiona greets as Ian pushes through the door of the Gallagher house. “What are
you doin’ here? And where’s the hubby?”

“He’s over at the Alibi with his brothers. They haven’t seen each other in a while, and Iggy’s been
buggin’ him to hang out, so we figured we’d both head over here and go our separate ways for a
bit,” Ian explains with a smile, stripping off his jacket and tossing it over the back of the couch.
“I’m gonna meet him over there in a couple hours, but I thought I’d come visit for a bit first.”

“You two ever fuckin’ do anything apart?” Lip throws at him as he rounds the corner, shrugging
on his jacket and heading toward the door. Ian hadn’t even realized he was home.

“Hey, assface,” Ian scoffs, with a touch of a sneer, “I fuckin’ like my husband. Sue me.”

Lip thumbs at his mouth and shakes his head with a smug smirk as he brushes past Ian. Ian wishes
he could convince himself that it’s just friendly brotherly banter, but Lip’s been acting shitty
toward Ian and Mickey for a while now, and Ian knows there’s more heat behind Lip’s words than
Ian would like. Part of Ian thinks it’s because he and Mickey finally have their shit together, and
Lip is still drinking his fucking life away. Ian’s sick of the bullshit attitude, though, and he throws
Lip the finger as his brother disappears out the door.

"Ignore him," Fiona insists after a moment, prompting Ian to turn back her way. “He’s been a fuckin’ dick for months. Can’t seem to get his shit together. Not worth the headache trying to figure him out.”

Ian feels a little perturbed for a moment, but he lets it go with a sigh as he runs his fingers through his hair. “All right,” Ian agrees with a nod.

Fiona gives him a little smile and gestures toward the couch. “Sit. You want a beer?”

“Nah,” Ian denies, waving her off as he makes himself comfortable on the couch, “not supposed to have it on my meds. Maybe a water?”

“Sure thing,” Fiona agrees, disappearing into the kitchen for a moment. When she reappears, she hands Ian a glass of water and plops herself down beside him, planting a foot on the edge of the couch and drawing her knee to her chest as she sips at the beer in her hand. “So. What’s goin’ on with you, kiddo?”

Ian’s silent for a moment. He’s not sure if he’s supposed to tell, and he hesitates. He doesn’t know how Mickey feels about spreading their plans around, and Ian knows Mickey’s nervous about whether they’ll even be able to make it happen, but Ian’s bursting at the seams with excitement, and he has to tell somebody. So after a minute, he turns to Fiona, unable to contain the bright grin that stretches over his lips.

“Mick and I, uh,” he starts, his excitement sneaking into his tone, “we’re talkin’ about another baby.”

A big, happy smile stretches across Fiona’s face at that, and she shifts until she can drag Ian into a hug. When she pulls back, he’s laughing happily, his eyes sparkling. Fiona’s not sure she’s ever seen him so happy. “That’s amazing, Ian! I’m so happy for you guys!”

“Thanks, Fi,” Ian grins at her with a soft, fond expression. “We’re pretty excited about it.”

“Give me all the details,” she orders after watching him for a moment, elbowing him playfully in the side. “I wanna know what you boys have planned.”

“All right, all right,” Ian agrees with a laugh, “but don’t go tellin’ anybody else. I’m not even sure if I was supposed to tell you—”

“Oh fuck off,” Fiona teases, giving Ian a little shove, “I can keep a fuckin’ secret. Hell, I’ve known for nearly two months that Mick wanted another kid, and I haven’t said shit.”

Ian looks at her in disbelief for a moment before calling her out. “What the fuck do you mean you’ve known for two months?! I didn’t even know until a few weeks ago!”

“Yeah, but you fuckin’ knew,” Fiona teases. “So don’t get on my case here.”
“He talk to you about it?” Ian asks curiously, settling back into the cushions of the couch.

Fiona shrugs, pulling her leg back up by her chest and leaning back. “Little bit,” she admits, “but I kinda cornered him when I realized. He mostly just admitted it so he could tell me keep my mouth shut about it. He’d obviously been doin’ some research, though. Think he really wants another kid with you.”

Ian smiles softly at that, turning a little to catch his sister’s eye. “He does,” Ian tells her confidently. “He’s trying to hide it, and he’s a little nervous about some things, but he’s really excited. I can see it in his eyes every time we talk about it.”

At that, Fiona nods, considering Ian’s words. Finally, she asks curiously, “what’s he worried about?”

Ian sighs at that, his own mood shifting just a little. “He’s worried about his criminal record,” Ian admits, “and if I’m being honest, I’m a little worried about my mental health history. That kinda shit can disqualify you pretty easy, apparently. We’ll figure it out, though.”

Fiona smiles at his confidence, reaching out to squeeze Ian’s arm. “I know you will, kiddo,” she assures.

Ian can’t help but take comfort in the certainty he hears in her voice.

“So,” Fiona greets as Mickey wanders into the diner for work, “a little redheaded birdie told me you and Ian are talking about another baby.”

“Oh jesus,” Mickey sighs, rolling his eyes upward and shaking his head. “He fuckin’ told you already?”

“Yeah, he fuckin’ did,” Fiona insists as though it should be obvious. “He’s excited, Mickey. Don’t even try to tell me you’re not. You were thinking about babies at least a fuckin’ month before the idea was even on Ian’s radar, and you know it.”

“I know, I know,” Mickey admits, plopping himself down on the stool beside his sister-in-law. “And I still want a baby. I just don’t know if we should be runnin’ around announcing it yet. There’s a lot to consider. And the more research we do, the more bleak it’s looking.”

Fiona’s brow furrows in concern at the way Mickey’s tone wavers with worry, and she’s not sure what to make of it. She knows Ian had mentioned Mickey’s concerns, but she hadn’t expected Mickey to seem so down about it—not when Ian was so confident they’d figure it out. “What do you mean?” she asks cautiously, too curious to let it go.

For a moment, Mickey contemplates whether or not he wants to share the specifics. Everything’s still new, and he hasn’t even broached the subject with Ian yet—at least not completely. In the end, though, he gives in, a defeated sigh leaving him. “I still want a baby. I want a chance at doing fatherhood right, from the very beginning, with Ian,” he explains, eager to reassure Fiona that he hasn’t actually changed his mind. “But this shit is so expensive, Fiona. Unless we do a public adoption. But I don’t even know if that’s a possibility with my criminal past and Ian’s mental health history. Hell, I don’t know if they’ll accept us for private adoption with our pasts. And I don’t fuckin’ know how we’ll ever manage to pay for surrogacy. It’s too fuckin’ much, and I just feel like we’re never gonna get there, you know?”

Fiona nods at that, contemplating Mickey’s words for a moment before responding. Finally, only half kidding, she says, “You guys ever think about the turkey baster method? Worked for Kev and
Mickey lets out a laughs at that, but it seems forced. “Didn’t Kev have to fuck his mother-in-law for that shit to take?”

Fiona shakes her head, happy that the tone’s a little lighter. “I don’t know the details, but V tells me it actually took on the first try. Pretty sure they meant before that shit all even went down. But whatever—either way, could be worth a shot, right?”

Mickey thinks on that for barely a moment before he’s shaking his head against the suggestion. “Nah,” he argues, “don’t have anyone we could ask for shit like that. Plus, it’d be too fuckin’ weird.”

She nods again, both of them falling silent for a moment. Fiona’s determined, though—wants to help her brother and brother-in-law find a way to expand their family.

“What about me?” she finally asks after the silence becomes unbearable, her voice soft and a little wary.

For a moment, Mickey thinks he’s misheard, and he stares at her in utter disbelief. “What?” he questions, unsure.

“What about me?” she asks again, more firmly this time, as her eyes lift to Mickey’s.

“I just fuckin’ said that shit would be too weird,” Mickey insists, pushing away to stand.

“Wait,” Fiona stops him, her voice firm, “just hear me out, Mick. Please.”

She waits. Gives him a moment to decide whether he wants to hear what she has to say. When Mickey sighs and sits back down, murmuring a quiet “go ahead,” she finally continues, catching and holding his eye.

“I don’t mean the turkey baster shit. But if a family member serves as your surrogate, I bet you could save a ton on agency fees. And I also absolutely would not ask for compensation. That would have to save you a good $30,000 or so. Probably more. I have a decent health insurance plan—was the first thing I bought for myself and the kids when I started bringing in decent money—so you wouldn’t have to worry about that, for the most part. I know you guys don’t want to take money from me, but I could help with this. Carry the baby. Cover my own medical expenses. You guys could probably get a loan to cover the rest. I could co-sign if you need me to. You might even be able to find grants that could help. Plus, this way the kid would be part Milkovich and part Gallagher, right?”

Mickey sighs. He’s not sure what to make of all this. “I’ll talk to Ian,” Mickey finally says. “I really appreciate the offer, Fi, but I don’t know if that’s something we can take on. Adoption might be more reasonable, if we can get an agency to consider us—it’s generally cheaper, and there are a lot of resources, especially if we go with public adoption. But we’ll think about it.”

With a smile, she gives him a nod. “All right,” she says, patting his hand gently, “I won’t be offended if you’re not into the idea. Just wanted to put it out there.”

“Thank you, Fiona,” Mickey offers sincerely. “We’ll keep it in mind.

A couple of weeks later, Ian and Mickey have spent some time seriously exploring all of the information they can find on both adoption and surrogacy. If Mickey’s being honest, it doesn’t
look great, but he’s hopeful that they might be able to find a way around some of the legal stipulations. They had found a bit of vague information on the possibility of having some disqualifying conditions waived under certain circumstances, so Mickey’s hopeful they might have a shot at adoption with the help of a decent lawyer.

After some serious thinking and research, both Ian and Mickey had agreed that adoption was their most reasonable option. Neither of them was terribly concerned about the biological connection, and though Fiona still insisted that she’d be happy to help—even to serve as their surrogate if they wanted—neither Mickey nor Ian felt that it would be appropriate to ask so much of Fiona, especially when her own financial situation was still so fragile.

They both liked the idea of private adoption, though, and the cost was significantly more reasonable than surrogacy. For a few days, they’d considered public adoption, but after some long discussions and some further research, they’d decided the option wasn’t for them. Adopting through the foster system would likely mean taking in an older child, at least Yevgeny’s age, and Mickey and Ian both had concerns about the added stress of bonding with a child who’d spent time in the system. He and Ian both had some experience in foster care, and every time they’d both always wanted to go home to their own families—as shitty as those families had often been—even when they were just little. Though they’d initially thought it might be worth the challenge to help a child in the system, their worry over their own ability to handle that kind of stress won out, and they’d made the difficult decision that they were unlikely to be able to provide an appropriate home for a child adopted through the foster system.

So instead, they’d settled on private adoption. The costs were still high, but there were more opportunities for grants and interest free loans that would help them cover the financial burden, and they were more comfortable with the idea of asking Fiona for help if needed because of the significantly lower cost of adoption over surrogacy. So once they’d landed on that decision, Mickey had turned his mind to finding a way to make it happen.

Mickey doesn’t really know shit about most of the legal aspects of adoption beyond what he’d managed to find in their research, but Mickey does know one damn good lawyer, and once the decision is made, he finds himself dialing her number and asking for help.

“I’m not a family lawyer, Mikhailo. I don’t deal with adoption.”

“I fuckin’ know you’re not a family lawyer, Lydia,” Mickey shoots back in exasperation. He feels like they’ve been talking in circles. “I just wanna know if you think my husband and I have a shot at adopting.”

He hears her sigh harshly on the other end of the line, her professional demeanor wavering at Mickey’s persistence. “Fucking hell, Mikhailo. Fine. I will take a look at your record and some basic Illinois adoption law, and I’ll let you know if I think you’ve got a chance. But it’s a one time deal, and if I think you might be able to make it happen, you’re getting a good fuckin’ family lawyer and leaving me be, you got me?”

“Yes, fine. Great, even, just—” Mickey pauses for a moment, taking in a deep breath to calm his racing mind, “fuck. Thank you, Lydia.”

“She brushes him off, and Mickey can’t help but grin at the friendly tone she’s trying to hide behind faux irritation. “Give me a few days, and then we’ll set up a meeting. But I’m charging your ass.”

She hangs up before Mickey can even respond to that, and he shakes his head in amusement, the
bright, happy smile never leaving his features as he dials Ian’s number.

Chapter End Notes

Up until writing this ending, I had not made a decision about whether Mickey and Ian were going to approach adoption or surrogacy. So this chapter was basically me figuring it out through the characters. I have no personal experience with either adoption or surrogacy, so I’m going off the research I’ve been able to perform. Still, I am trying to keep this as realistic as possible, especially considering both Mickey and Ian’s pasts and their financial situation. So anyway, I hope this is reasonably realistic, though I’m sure there will be elements that require suspension of disbelief here.
On the Verge of Something Wonderful

Chapter Summary

Mickey and Ian meet with Mickey’s former lawyer to discuss the possibilities of adoption.

Chapter Notes

Here’s where suspension of disbelief is probably going to be important. Again, I know nothing about adoption beyond my limited research. I have based this chapter on the adoption guidelines I was able to find for Illinois and the conditions that might allow exceptions. However, most information I found was specific to foster licensing, so it may not be accurate for private adoption procedures, and I’m sure it’s much more complicated than I’m making it seem to get exceptions made. So, disclaimer: this is fiction, and I am sure it is wildly inaccurate. I am attempting to make it as realistic as possible within the confines of the story, though, so hopefully it’s at least vaguely believable.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Who is she?” Ian asks again—a question he seems to be stuck on. Mickey smiles a little, taking Ian’s hand in his own and giving it a little squeeze as they approach the building that houses Lydia’s office. Ian’s anxious, his eyes darting to Mickey warily every few seconds. Mickey’s answered this same question a dozen times now, and Mickey knows Ian knows the answer. But Mickey also knows that Ian’s terrified of the outcome of this upcoming conversation, and he understands Ian’s need to confirm every detail he can.

So, gentle smile still in place, Mickey stops walking, Ian’s hand still grasped in his own. He tugs gently at Ian’s hand to stop him, and after a moment of confusion, Ian pauses and turns to Mickey. “Ian,” Mickey says softly, reaching up to cradle Ian’s chin in his hands, “she’s the reason I’m standing here with you right now. You know that, love. Lydia was the one who took on the appeal process for me and won. If anyone can help us figure this shit out, it’s her. Okay?”

After a deep, calming breath, Ian lifts his hands to clasp onto Mickey’s forearms, thumbs sweeping softly against Mickey’s skin. The motion and the contact help, and Ian manages to lock eyes with Mickey to offer a slow, measured nod, indicating his calming demeanor. “Yeah,” Ian agrees, voice still a little shaky, “yeah. Okay.”

Mickey smiles again at that and lifts up onto his toes to press a brief kiss to Ian’s mouth. Ian grins and his body language loosens immediately at that, the sweet gesture leaving him suddenly relaxed. It’s not often that Mickey allows such obvious public displays of affection, and the openness he’s showing Ian now is immediately soothing.

“Okay,” Mickey agrees as he pulls back, patting Ian’s cheek playfully before nodding toward their nearby destination. “Let’s get this shit figured out then.”
Twenty minutes later, they’re sitting in Lydia’s office, the space comfortably decorated and not quite as intimidating as Ian was expecting. Ian’s nervous, though, as Lydia takes a moment to review the paperwork in front of her. Ian looks to Mickey, worry in his eyes as his leg shakes anxiously, and Mickey can see that Ian’s terrified. Mickey’s feeling it, too, if he’s being honest. There was something comforting in not knowing, really. The idea that they might receive bad news here, today—that they might find out that they’d never be trusted to care for a child—is fucking terrifying.

After a moment, Mickey reaches out, wrapping Ian’s hand tightly in his own and giving it a gentle squeeze. Mickey wants desperately to reassure Ian that everything will be fine and they’ll be able to adopt—or that they’ll be okay even if the news is bad. But it’s not the time for such reassurances, so instead, Mickey keeps Ian’s fingers trapped in his own as they wait quietly for Lydia’s verdict.

After another handful of minutes, Lydia finally addresses them, eyes never lifting from the file in front of her. “All right,” she says, voice calm and so clear Mickey and Ian can’t read it. She pulls off her reading glasses, placing them unceremoniously at the edge of her desk. “So. You boys want to adopt a baby?”

She knows the answer, so Mickey scoffs and rolls his eyes at her in irritation, but Ian squeezes Mickey’s hand none too gently in warning as he nods enthusiastically and murmurs out “Yeah. Yeah, definitely.”

Lydia smiles and Mickey knows it’s friendly, but she’s tough to read—as Mickey knows from experience. Mickey imagines it’s the lawyer thing. “Wonderful,” she states, tone still even and ambiguous. “Let’s talk a little bit about whether that’s going to be possible for you boys.”

“How the fuck get on with it!” Mickey snaps after a moment. “You’re chargin’ us too much fuckin’ money—by the hour—to be fuckin’ around with us, so just fuckin’ spit it out.”

Ian elbows Mickey and shoots him a glare, and Lydia just rolls her eyes at Mickey’s antics. “Oh, shut it, Mikhailo. I’m not charging your ass. And you’re fucking lucky I like your husband, because otherwise I would be,” she insists, attempting unsuccessfully to put Mickey in his place. “So hush and let me talk.”

“Fine,” Mickey shoots back after a moment, eyes narrowed in her direction. “But at least fuckin’ call me Mickey.”

“No,” Lydia tells him simply, face never cracking until Ian huffs out an entertained laugh that has her lips tilting up at the corners. Mickey rolls his eyes again and glares at Ian for the betrayal. Ian just shakes his head fondly and gives Mickey’s hand a little squeeze.

Lydia watches the two of them for a moment, the tiny smile she’d let slip still firmly in place. Ian’s still a bit surprised at her demeanor. She’s younger than he was expecting—probably early thirties—but she has an air of confident swagger that seems to extend well beyond her years. Ian’s not sure whether to be intimidated or relieved. He settles on impressed, and he feels like they’re in good hands. She certainly seems to be able to keep Mickey on his toes, which Ian knows firsthand is not an easy task.

Lydia’s still eyeing Mickey challengingly, waiting for him to push the issue again, and Ian decides to break the standoff. “So,” he offers, voice trembling just a bit as he locks worried eyes with Lydia, “how does it look?”
When Lydia hears the fear in Ian’s voice, she turns warm eyes on him, her smile genuine. “Well,” she starts carefully, “It’s complicated. So, I’m going to take some time and explain the complications for you, and then we’ll talk a little about whether adoption is a viable option for the two of you, okay?”

She’s speaking carefully, voice clear and confident as she seeks permission to continue. Ian knows she can see the fear in both of them, and she’s trying to ensure that they really and truly hear everything she has to tell them.

Ian nods at her, and he can feel Mickey’s eyes on him as tears gather at the corners of his eyes. None fall, but Ian’s scared and overwhelmed, and he can’t help the way the emotion manifests. “Okay,” Ian breathes out, barely audible as he tries to contain himself.

Mickey’s thumb begins rubbing gentle circles against Ian’s skin where their hands are still joined, and he scoots his chair just a little closer to Ian’s so his thigh is pressed tightly to his husband’s, offering a grounding point of contact for the two of them. Finally, once Mickey’s comfortable that Ian’s okay, he turns to Lydia. “Go ahead,” he prompts, worried but anxious to hear what she has to tell them.

“All right,” Lydia says, voice still clear and careful. “As you boys know, your criminal and mental health histories are going to make things tough. Now, Mickey, your past is actually a little less complicated than I was expecting, since you only have two previous arrests from when you were still a juvenile—which, I still can’t figure out how the fuck you managed that, by the way—and the minor shoplifting charge shouldn’t actually cause any issues since it wasn’t a violent crime. The assault charge against the cop might be a little more difficult, but it was still a minor assault charge, and since it was over five years ago and you were still a juvenile at the time, I don’t think you’ll have too much trouble getting it waived. Now, Illinois does require a ten year record check where most states only require five, but again, I think you can make a case to get it overlooked considering the circumstances with a good adoption lawyer and some strong recommendations. You’ll also need to be completely upfront and honest about the charges we appealed, but since the conviction was overturned, that also should not cause an issue if you don’t hide it.”

Mickey lets out a sigh of relief he hadn’t even realized he was holding, smiling at the new information. At least so far, things weren’t going as badly as they’d expected. Mickey nods frantically to confirm that he understands when Lydia raises a curious eyebrow at him.

“All right,” Lydia says, voice still clear and careful. “As you boys know, your criminal and mental health histories are going to make things tough. Now, Mickey, your past is actually a little less complicated than I was expecting, since you only have two previous arrests from when you were still a juvenile—which, I still can’t figure out how the fuck you managed that, by the way—and the minor shoplifting charge shouldn’t actually cause any issues since it wasn’t a violent crime. The assault charge against the cop might be a little more difficult, but it was still a minor assault charge, and since it was over five years ago and you were still a juvenile at the time, I don’t think you’ll have too much trouble getting it waived. Now, Illinois does require a ten year record check where most states only require five, but again, I think you can make a case to get it overlooked considering the circumstances with a good adoption lawyer and some strong recommendations. You’ll also need to be completely upfront and honest about the charges we appealed, but since the conviction was overturned, that also should not cause an issue if you don’t hide it.”

“Okay,” she nods, turning to Ian, “Now, Ian, I’m not as familiar with your situation, so I need to confirm some things with you before proceeding. Is that all right?”

Ian looks terrified, and he squeezes Mickey’s hand tightly for reassurance. “Yeah,” Ian agrees, smiling tightly to try to hide his trepidation. “Yeah, that’s fine. Whatever you need.”

Lydia takes a moment, glancing down at her paperwork again before catching Ian’s eye, a gentle, comforting smile on her lips. “First—I just need to clarify—a couple of years ago, when the incident occurred with Yevgeny, were you ever charged with any form of child endangerment?”

Ian takes a deep breath at that. He’d known, logically, that similar questions would come up, but it still jostles his nerves. After a moment, he gets himself together and manages to answer. “No,” he states confidently, shaking his head just a bit. “No, I wasn’t. I should have been, I know, but they chose not to pursue charges if I agreed to get help.”

Lydia smiles again reassuringly. “Okay. That’s good. And when that incident occurred, you had not yet been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, is that correct?”
Ian nods. “That’s right. My family had an idea, but I was never officially diagnosed until after the incident with Yevgeny three years ago.”

“Also good,” Lydia reassures again, jotting down a couple of notes before lifting her eyes to Ian’s. “And since your diagnosis, have you been keeping up with your medication?”

Ian takes a deep breath at that, trying to figure out the best way to explain the answer to that question. Finally, he settles on a response. “There was a brief period of time after my diagnosis that I refused treatment and medication. It was a couple of weeks following the diagnosis, and I was having difficulty adjusting to the meds. They made me feel numb—like life wasn’t worth living. But it was just the adjustment period, and I have since learned that while properly medicated, I am stable and happy, and I have been managing my illness with both my medication and therapy since then. It has been over three years now, and I have properly kept up with my treatment since that initial adjustment period.”

“And you’re generally stable while on your medication?” she asks, searching Ian’s eyes for confirmation.

Ian nods enthusiastically. “Yes,” he insists with certainty. “Absolutely. Occasionally, my medications need adjustment when I begin experiencing the beginnings of manic or depressive episodes, but I’ve become much more accustomed to the signs of those shifts, and I have consistently been able to tackle those challenges before they get out of control. I have not had a debilitating episode since before I was diagnosed and medicated, and with the help of my husband, I have been actively and successfully working to manage my illness.”

Lydia smiles at that, kind eyes locking on Ian’s. “That’s wonderful, Ian,” she tells him honestly, and Ian can’t help but answer with a grateful smile of his own. “I’m glad to hear you’re managing so well. It sounds like you’re on the right track. Now, I just have a couple more questions for both of you.”

“Shoot,” Ian insists eagerly. He’s ready to know where they stand, and he wants to get through the questions so they can at least have a preliminary answer.

“How’s your relationship with Yevgeny?”

She asks it gently, and both Ian and Mickey can tell she’s trying not to cause any unnecessary concern. Mickey rolls his eyes at her ridiculously calm demeanor, and Ian nudges Mickey with his knee to silence any snarky remarks Mickey might be cooking up.

“It’s great,” Ian tells her honestly, trying to keep his voice from seeming overly enthusiastic. “We have him with us every few days. He has his own room at our place. We lost some time with him when Mickey was in prison, but he’s our son, and we’ve been working hard to make up for it.”

Lydia smiles brightly at the loving tone that seeps into Ian’s voice as he talks about Yevgeny. Mickey’s face melts into a sweet smile at Ian’s reaction as well, and it doesn’t go unnoticed by either Ian or Lydia.

“We love our son,” Mickey tells her confidently. “We’re working to rebuild trust with his mother, and it’s going well. We’re slowly increasing our custody responsibilities—although, we don’t have any official legal custody arrangements—and our family is flourishing.”

Lydia blinks in surprise at Mickey’s choice of words, and Ian can’t help the amused smirk that settles on his lips. It takes Mickey a second, but he realizes quickly what they’re reacting to and scoffs, directing a glare in Ian’s direction. “Fuck off,” Mickey snarks in Ian’s direction, unable to
hide his own amusement. After just a moment, though, Lydia pulls them back to the task at hand.

“Okay,” she says firmly, her voice pulling both their gazes back to her, “also good. Now, can you tell me a little bit about how your current custody arrangement works? How often does Yevgeny stay with you?”

“It’s kind of complicated right now,” Ian admits honestly. “Yevgeny’s mom is still a little wary of allowing him to stay overnight with us. She’s protective, and we’re still rebuilding some of the trust we lost when everything went down a few years ago. But we spend at least a few hours with him nearly every day—all day when we can—and he does stay overnight about once a week now.”

Lydia nods, considering the response for a moment as she checks her papers again. “I have a few recommendations, then,” she tells them, pausing for a moment to be sure she has their attention. “I think it would greatly benefit you to try to work on getting your son about fifty percent of the time. If his mom’s not up for that, at the very least, I think it’s important that you have him in primarily your care for at least a few days every couple of weeks. More if you can make it happen. This will do a couple of things for you. First, it will help you show that you are successfully capable of providing a safe and loving home for a child. Second, it will force you to make childcare arrangements during times when you can’t be at home with him—which will allow you to develop a routine that will be useful for reducing stress if you add another child to your household. This will be good both for the two of you and your family, and again, it will help show that you’re capable of caring for a child and that you understand the intricacies of successful childcare.”

Mickey and Ian both nod at that. Ian feels like he’s holding his breath. He’s on the edge of his seat, worried to believe that this means good news, but desperately hoping it might.

She smiles again reassuringly before continuing. “Additionally,” she says conversationally, “you’re going to need strong references who can speak to your ability to care for a child. Ian, it will be important for you to get references from your doctors—your therapist and anyone involved in care for your bipolar disorder. Also, your employers. If they trust you to work successfully as an EMT, that means they believe you have your mental health under control. They’ll be important references for you. And, probably most importantly, you will need a glowing reference from the mother of your child. She has direct knowledge of your ability to care for your child, and that’s going to be hugely important if you’re seeking to have any potential red flags waived, since showing that you are successfully caring for a child and providing a stable home can help in those assessments. Understood?”

Both Mickey and Ian nod slowly at that, unsure, but hopeful.

At that, Lydia smiles again, genuinely, and makes a couple more notes. “Okay,” she tells them brightly. Ian’s still not sure what that means—she’s being friendly and reassuring, but she’s guarding her tone closely and she’s still unreadable.

Mickey’s getting anxious now, too, his eyes darting back and forth between Ian and Lydia. He wants answers, and Ian can see it in Mickey’s eyes. “So what the fuck does that mean, then?” Mickey finally snaps after a few too many moments of silence, his tone irritable. Ian knows that it’s just his husband’s nerves and he squeezes Mickey’s hand to calm him before flashing an apologetic smile in Lydia’s direction. She waves him off with a little shrug, though, as she turns her eyes fondly in Mickey’s direction. Ian thinks she must have been on the receiving end of quite a lot of Mickey’s snark during the appeals process a couple of years earlier—she seems to know his husband’s mannerisms rather well, and it puts Ian at ease.

“Well,” Lydia begins, watching the men across from her carefully with kind eyes, “You’ll need to find a good family lawyer—I can refer you to someone—and I can’t make any promises. But I
think you’ve got a good shot at getting in with an agency.”

Mickey sucks in a breath at that, the hand still cradled in Ian’s shaking slightly. After a moment of quiet, he finally speaks softly as Ian blinks up at him, eyes trained on Mickey’s face. “That mean we can get a baby?” Mickey asks, voice trembling, still afraid to hope.

Lydia gives him a little smile, her eyes kind. “Yeah,” she nods, happiness for the couple seeping into her tone, “yeah, Mickey. I think you’ve got a good chance at adopting in the near future. It’ll take some time, and you boys will need to jump through more hoops than most with your medical and criminal backgrounds, but you’ve both made positive changes and you’ve committed to them. With good references and your history with your son on your side, I think you can get any potential hurdles assessed and waived as long as you’re both honest and upfront about your pasts and where you are now during the process. So, yes. I think you’ll be adding to your little family sooner than you think.”

Mickey sucks in a harsh breath at that, swallowing hard against the emotion that catches in his throat as he presses his fingers against his eyelids to stop the flow of the tears that gather there. Mickey feels Ian lift their joined hands to his lips to press a kiss there, and the smile Mickey feels against his skin makes Mickey happier than he’s ever been. Once Mickey believes he has his emotions under control, he lets his other hand fall from his eyes, and he turns to Ian with his own happy smile. It’s a mistake, though, Mickey realizes as soon as he sees the bright tears streaking down Ian’s happy face, because Mickey absolutely cannot control his emotions when he sees the joy in his husband’s eyes. Mickey laughs again when he meets Ian’s eyes, happy tears rushing back as Ian reaches out to cup a hand around the back of Mickey’s neck, drawing him close until he can kiss Mickey sweetly. When they pull away, they stay close, lips still brushing gently as they breathe the same air and let all of the possibilities rush over them.

“We’re gonna have a baby,” Mickey whispers finally, lips catching Ian’s again as Ian nods and pulls Mickey into his arms.

Chapter End Notes

I know many of you mentioned you were looking forward to Mickey and Ian pursuing surrogacy in this fic (thank you for the comments, by the way!). I’m going to be up front here and tell you that I have abandoned that option at this point. It was actually my original plan to have Fiona serve as their surrogate—hence the way I’ve framed her character here—but the costs of surrogacy are astronomical and there don’t seem to be many financial resources from what I’ve found. So, essentially, I just cannot imagine the Mickey and Ian I have set up here making that happen in the timeline I’ve given them. As a result, after much thought and research, I decided that adoption—even with what I’m sure are ample inaccuracies—would be the more realistic route to take here. I hope that’s not too disappointing to you all. I still have big things planned for this fic, but the surrogacy element just didn’t work out.
Break Me Shake Me

Chapter Summary

Things get complicated when Mickey and Ian come clean about their plans to Svetlana.

Chapter Notes

Title from Savage Garden’s “Break Me Shake Me.”

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

For a while, they’re unsure of who they should let in on the news that they’re working to adopt. Both Mickey and Ian are well aware that the process will take time—probably more than typical, in fact, because of the additional hurdles they’ll have to jump. If they’re being honest, they’re also both nervous that it may never happen for them, and they’re not thrilled at the idea of announcing their plans to the family and then having to explain why nothing may ever come of it.

They’re both excited, though, and they’re eager to at least talk with Svetlana about adjusting their custody arrangements to help them all settle into the new routine before they’re thrown into the middle of the legal complications of trying to adopt.

They do decide that at the very least, Fiona deserves to be the first to know about their plans. She’s been supportive through their entire journey back to one another, and they both appreciate the help she’s offered.

So a couple of days after their initial meeting with Lydia, they ask Fiona over for dinner. When she shows up, she’s holding a six pack, and she immediately drags Ian into a hug, the cardboard corner of the beer carrier digging into his back as she does.

“All right, all right,” Ian scolds after a moment, letting out a little laugh and pulling back to wave her inside. “Get your ass in here, and stop jumping to conclusions.”

“Whatever you say, kiddo,” she teases, moving to drop the beer off in the kitchen, where Mickey’s preparing dinner for the three of them. “Hey, sweetheart,” she greets, leaning over to press a kiss to Mickey’s cheek. Mickey swats her away in faux annoyance, and Fiona just laughs and hops up on one of the stools at the breakfast bar, watching Mickey fondly as Ian settles down next to her. “Goin’ all out, huh? Must be big news.”


“Mhmm,” she murmurs, unconvinced, as she kicks her legs playfully. “Would you two assholes just fuckin’ put me out of my misery already?”

“Fuck no,” Mickey argues, giving Ian a glare when he notices his husband’s open mouth and
mischievous smile. “I’m fuckin’ cookin’ for your ass; you can fuckin’ wait.”

“He’s really excited,” Ian whispers to Fiona as he pushes off the stool to go join his husband by the stove. “Almost ready, babe?” Ian asks as he slips his arms around Mickey’s waist and hooks his chin over Mickey’s shoulder to peek at their dinner.

“Jesus, back off, man. I need like three minutes. Go get the fuckin’ salad or something,” Mickey insists, shimmying his shoulder to shake Ian off. He’s smiling, though, so Ian just laughs and does as Mickey asks, grabbing the salad he’d prepared earlier and setting it in the center of the dining room table before shuffling through the cupboards for plates and cutlery. Fiona just grins at the two of them, watching them fondly and waiting patiently for the news she knows she’s about to hear.

It takes Mickey another ten minutes or so to toss the pasta in sauce and transfer it to a serving bowl before setting it out on the dining table. “All right,” he announces as he throws himself down into one of the dining room chairs, “help yourselves.”

Ian grins and pulls the chilled beers out of the fridge before filling a glass of water for himself. As Ian moves to sit beside Mickey, Fiona takes up an empty spot at the table, reaching out to take the bottle Ian offers her. They all pile dinner on to their respective plates, and Fiona tries to pretend she’s not crawling out of her skin waiting for them to just tell her why she’s fuckin’ there.

They all settle down after a moment, and Fiona watches Ian and Mickey both from across the table. They’re trying to make small talk with her, pretending they don’t have actual news for her, and she’s pretty sure they’re fucking with her. She knows there’s something going on. This whole little get together is not their norm—they hang out all the time, but they don’t go all out with the invitations and dinner and shit—so she knows there’s more to this one. She also knows they’ve had babies on the brain for months, and she’s not sure if they’ve started seriously exploring their options, but she has an inkling they have. Finally, after watching them flirt shamelessly with one another for a few too many minutes, she plunks her beer bottle down on the table loudly to draw their attention.

“All right” she announces, a playful teasing tone to her voice, “would you two just fuckin’ tell me already? This little meetup mean good news?”

She knows the answer to that—has since they’d asked her over, really—but the little smiles they wear when she finally asks outright and the quick glance they share confirm her suspicions immediately. She raised her eyebrows, a grin breaking across her features as she awaits the official answer.

After another moment, Ian reaches out to take Mickey’s hand where it sits atop the table and Mickey might roll his eyes a little bit at the gesture, but his gaze is soft and loving as he watches Ian. Finally, Ian speaks, eyes still on Mickey. “Yeah,” he tells her, finally tipping his eyes in Fiona’s direction. “We met with Mickey’s former lawyer to see if we might have a shot at adopting, and she thinks it looks good. She’s putting us in touch with a good family lawyer, and we’re going to get the process started. It’ll still be a while. At least a year. Probably longer. And it’s still possible they’ll deny us. But we’re going to try to adopt.”

The moment Ian’s finished speaking, Fiona launches herself out of her chair to drag them both into a tight hug. “I am so fuckin’ happy for you two,” she murmurs out, her voice quiet and a little choked with emotion. They both hug her back, and when she pulls away, she notices the happy tears clinging to the corners of Ian’s eyes, and she thinks maybe she sees some glistening in Mickey’s eyes as well. After another moment, she huffs out a happy little laugh and pats each of their cheeks. “I’m so proud of you boys.”
“All right,” Mickey scoffs, shaking her off as he tries to stem the emotion he’s fighting to conceal, at least a little, “but keep your mouth shut, okay? We’re not telling anyone else until we know for sure that we’re getting a kid. If shit doesn’t work out, we don’t wanna be explaining it to every fuckin’ person we know, you got me?”

“My lips are sealed,” Fiona promises with another grin, still bouncing on her toes in excitement. “I won’t say a word to anyone else, but I’m fuckin’ thrilled for you boys.”

“Thank you, Fi,” Ian murmurs, wrapping her up in another hug and pressing a kiss to her cheek. “We’re really fuckin’ happy.”

“I know,” Fiona admits, pulling away from Ian just enough to lean back and pull Mickey to her again. He rolls his eyes at her, but his smile gives him away as he lets his sister-in-law drag him into another hug, Ian reaching out to take Mickey’s hand again before leaning over and pressing a kiss to Mickey’s hair, their own excitement shining in their eyes.

About a week after their meeting with Lydia, they decide it’s time to talk to Svetlana, so they stop by her place a little early to chat with her before they take Yevgeny for the day. It’s early, and Kev’s still at the house taking care of the girls when they get there, but he ducks upstairs after a quick hello. When Yevgeny spots them, he immediately wraps each of his dads up in a big hug and giggles when Ian squeezes him tight and tickles his sides. Mickey laughs along as Ian sets Yevgeny back on his feet, and Mickey crouches down to talk to Yev for a minute. When Yevgeny notices, he spins around immediately so he’s face-to-face with his dad, smiling brightly.

“Hey, little man,” Mickey greets happily, reaching out to ruffle Yevgeny’s hair as Yev continues to smile and leans against Mickey’s knee. “Why don’t you run upstairs with your sisters for a bit, okay? Daddy and I need to talk to mommy for a minute.”

For a moment, Yevgeny looks confused, but Mickey’s soft smile puts him at ease, and he nods with a happy “okay, daddy” before scampering off to find Kev and the girls.

Svetlana looks instantly concerned, her eyes narrowed and her arms crossed over her chest protectively.

“It’s nothing bad, I promise” Mickey insists immediately as he pushes himself back up on his feet. “In fact, it’s pretty fuckin’ great.”

Ian moves to Mickey’s side then, both of them smiling happily as Ian loops an arm around Mickey’s shoulders and Mickey reaches out to tug Ian tight to his side. They look thrilled, happy-go-lucky, their smiles rivaling those they wore on their wedding day. For a moment, they lock eyes, and Mickey lifts up to press a brief, sloppy kiss to the corner of Ian’s mouth before they turn their attention back to Svetlana, whose demeanor hasn’t changed, her body language guarded and closed off.

“We’re, uh—we’re working on adopting,” Mickey explains after another moment, smile beaming as he watches Svetlana with happy eyes before glancing to Ian’s own shining expression. “Yevgeny’s gonna have another little brother or sister.”

Ian jumps in then, eyes locked on Mickey’s smiling face. “It’ll be a while yet. Probably a year or two. But we’re starting the process.”

“And we can’t fuckin’ wait to expand our little family,” Mickey finishes for them.

They’re lost in each other; their excitement radiating off of them in waves.
Apparently, though, it never quite reaches Svetlana. It takes them a moment to notice, but her icy silence finally sinks in as their eyes shift to hers, and Ian’s face falls instantly—Mickey’s own smile fading quickly once he notices the shift in his husband’s mood and follows his eyes to his ex-wife. Svetlana’s stare is cold, her eyes shooting daggers at the two of them. For a moment, Mickey’s worried she might launch herself across the room at the two of them.

After a minute, Mickey steps forward, giving a gentle squeeze to Ian’s hip as he goes to reassure the other man. “Lana,” Mickey ventures carefully, catching her eye and trying to read her, “did you hear us? We’re adopting a baby. Little brother or sister for Yevgeny… Good news, ya know?”

She’s still silent, staring them down angrily, body stiff as she tries to contain whatever it is she wants to say. Mickey doesn’t know what to make of it, really.

After another long moment of silence, Ian breaks the quiet carefully. “Svet?” he questions, voice quiet and soothing. “What’s wrong?”

She won’t even look at Ian, her gaze cutting through Mickey as her anger grows. Mickey’s certain she’s about to explode, but he doesn’t know why—has no idea why she’s reacting so negatively to their news. He keeps quiet for another few long minutes, choosing to wait her out, rather than push. Finally, she breaks, taking an angry step forward, but stopping before she can fully launch herself at the two of them. Mickey stands his ground, but Ian stumbles back a few paces at her anger, giving her the space she feels like she needs.

“Why new baby? Yevgeny is not enough for you?” Her words are strained, she’s trying to hold in the frustration that’s threatening to burst from her, and it takes both men aback.

For a moment, Mickey stares at her in disbelief, unsure how to respond to her outburst. Once he gathers himself, though, he gives back as good as he gets. “The fuck you mean, Svet?” he questions, heat behind his tone. “We’re adopting a baby. We want another kid. The fuck’s wrong with that?”

“Out,” she commands, voice eerily calm as she stares him down.

“Oh, come the fuck on, Svetlana,” Mickey bites back harshly. “What the fuck is your problem? Just fuckin’ talk to us, so we can figure this shit out, because I’m happy as fuck, and so is Ian. You’re the only one who seems to think this is a bad thing, and I wanna fuckin’ know why.”

She shakes her head at him in disbelief, pushing further up into Mickey’s space. “Was not long ago he takes baby, and you trust him with new baby?” she spits, anger coloring her tone.

Ian stands, stunned, his heart breaking at Svetlana’s harsh words. Mickey sees the way Ian’s face falls with guilt and regret, and Mickey is fucking livid that she would say such bullshit when they’ve been working so hard to overcome that past.

“What the fuck, Lana?!” Mickey’s voice is dark with his own anger, but there’s also genuine hurt and confusion there, and Svetlana’s cold eyes waiver for just a moment before she steels herself against any softening emotions. Before she can speak again, though, Ian’s voice breaks the momentary silence.

“No,” Ian’s voice is quiet, broken, and his eyes are locked on the ground at his feet. “No, she’s right. I don’t know what I was thinking—I’m not cut out for this. It’s just a matter of time before I mess up again.”

“Ian,” Mickey tries, voice careful and soothing as he tries to meet Ian’s eyes.
“No,” Ian argues, voice broken as he walks slowly to the door, shoulders slumped and body language closed and dejected. “I’ll just, uh. I’m gonna go. I’m sorry.”

“Fuck!” Mickey exclaims, as he watches Ian go. Mickey’s fighting tears, his anger keeping them at bay. He’s angry and hurt and fucking pissed that Ian’s hurting. They’d come here full of hope and joy and love and he’s fucking livid that Svetlana’s squashed that. He decides to let it go for the moment though, give it time. He’s hoping, maybe, that it’s just the shock of the whole thing leaving Svetlana frustrated. “All right. We’ll fuckin’ deal with this later. Can I have my son, please, so my husband and I can head home?”


Mickey’s stunned. Hurt. Angry. He’s not sure how to even react. After a moment, he takes a deep, steadying breath, working to fight the emotion that he’s feeling. There are tears brimming in his eyes as he shakes his head in defeat, swallowing back his anger and pushing past her to the door.

“Fuck you,” he mumbles quietly, unable to keep the hurt from coloring his tone as he pulls the door shut behind him.

Mickey hadn’t actually thought Ian would leave without him—he expected to find him waiting on the porch or by the street—but Ian’s gone by the time Mickey gets outside, no sign of him in sight. It doesn’t take long before Mickey’s breaking down at the realization, silent tears creeping from the corners of his eyes as he sinks down against the wall behind him, collapsing on the porch of Svetlana’s place as he tries to calm his nerves.

“Fuck!” he shouts angrily, a little tremble overtaking his tone as he sucks in a deep breath and drags out his phone, hoping to get ahold of Ian. Leave it to Svetlana to fucking destroy all their hopes of adopting a child before they’d even gotten the process off the ground. Mickey knows they need her on their side to move forward, and it doesn’t look promising at the current juncture.

Carefully, he dials Ian’s number, pressing the phone to his ear and hoping. Ian ignores the calls, ending it before the first ring has even completed. With a scoff, Mickey pulls the phone away and glares at it in disbelief for a moment before slamming his head back against the wall behind him and forcing out another harsh “fuck” as he tries to pull himself together enough to get up and find his husband.

Before he can, though, the door beside him opens and Kev steps out, glancing around for a moment before his eyes fall on Mickey. For a moment, Kev’s silent as he moves to sit beside Mickey on the porch. Mickey thinks about punching him in the face for a moment, but Kev’s a good guy, and he doesn’t deserve the short end of Mickey’s anger, so Mickey contains himself.

“ Heard what she said,” Kev admits after a few too many long moments of silence.

“Fuck off,” Mickey scoffs, unwilling to accept whatever fucking sympathetic bullshit Kev’s about to throw at him.

“Look, man,” Kev tries after a moment, “she’ll come around. You just gotta give her some time. You guys kinda blindsided her with the baby talk. She’s still not fully over all the bullshit from before. She’s trying, but you know Lana. She closes herself off when she gets hurt. Tries to pretend nothing fucking matters to her, but it does, and she’s freaking the fuck out right now. Give it a day or two, and then come by. Talk to her. But give her a little time, man.”

“What, so she can fuckin’ keep me from my kid? You tellin’ me to just sit back and let this shit
happen?!” Mickey bites out, trying to shroud the hurt he’s feeling with anger.

“No, man, I’m tellin’ you give her a couple days and then talk to her,” Kev argues, giving Mickey a look as he tries to reason with the other man. “Lana knows how much you and Ian love Yev. She’s not gonna take your kid away from you. Just give her a little time.”

“Fuck you,” Mickey spits back as shakes his head, pushing himself up and off the porch. He needs to find Ian to make sure his husband’s okay.

Mickey finds himself at the Gallagher house once he’s left Kev, V, and Svetlana’s place. He has a suspicious that Ian had headed back home to their apartment after leaving Mickey behind, but he doesn’t want to head all the way home just to find out Ian had ended up at his sister’s place, so he stops anyway, pounding at the door in near desperation. After a moment, Fiona throws open the door, eyes landing on Mickey in confusion.

“What the fuck, Mick?” she questions, no actual heat to her words. “You know you can just come in. What’s with the knocking?”

“Not here for a visit,” Mickey bites out, immediately regretting the harsh snap to his words. “Sorry, just—Ian here?”

“No,” she answers carefully, worry settling over her features. “Why? He take off again or somethin’?”

“No!” Mickey insists a bit too quickly, backpedaling when he realizes he doesn’t actually know the answer to that. “I mean—I don’t know, Fi. I don’t think so. Not like the last time, anyway. But he took off on me, and now he’s ignoring my calls. Just wanted to make sure he didn’t end up here.”

“What the fuck happened?” Fiona asks, ushering Mickey inside. He tries to ignore her—wants to get on his way and find his husband—but she’s persistent, and she finally manages to maneuver herself behind him to give him a little shove through the threshold. “You’re not gettin’ outta this. Tell me what the fuck’s goin’ on, Mickey.”

Mickey lets out a harsh breath as he draws a hand down his face in exasperation. “I don’t fuckin’ know, okay?” he admits, and there’s pain in his voice that he tries to mask with irritation. “We tried to talk to Svetlana about the adoption, and she freaked the fuck out. Brought up shit I thought we’d fuckin’ buried, and it fucked with Ian’s head. He was hurt, and he fuckin’ took off. And now I need to fuckin’ find him before I lose it because a half hour ago we were fuckin’ happy, and now I don’t know how to feel, and I fuckin’ need to be with him, all right?!”

Fiona takes a little step back, holding her hands up in surrender. “Got it,” she tells him carefully, meeting his eye as she shoots him a sympathetic look. “I get it, Mick. I’m not tryin’ to pry. Just wanna make sure you’re both okay. Are you okay?”

Mickey takes a deep steadying breath, running a shaky hand through his hair as he tries to calm his own nerves. “I’ll be better when I find my husband,” he admits carefully, making sure to keep his voice level.

“I get that,” Fiona agrees, stepping up beside him and rubbing a reassuring hand over his shoulder. “I’ll let you go, just—Mick, be careful, okay? You’re freaking out right now, and you need to get home in one piece, all right?”

“Fuckin’ hell,” Mickey shakes his head with a roll of his eyes. “I’m not gonna do anything stupid. Just need my husband right now.”
Fiona gives him a nod at that, accepting his answer and pretending to be oblivious to Mickey’s irritation. “Sure. Go find Ian, Mick,” she tells him, giving his shoulder a little squeeze for good measure. “You want me talk to V at all? See if I can find anything out for you?”

“Nah,” Mickey insists with certainty, giving her a little smile to try to reassure her, “don’t wanna put you in the middle of it. Gonna give it a day or two to let Svetlana calm down, and then we’ll talk to her. I’ll let you know if you can help after we’ve had a little time to work it out with her. I promise.”

Fiona nods, concern still creasing her brow as she watches him. “Okay,” she concedes finally, giving Mickey a sympathetic little smile. “Just let me know if you need me.”

“Sure,” Mickey agrees, mostly to placate her as he moves for the door, hoping Ian will be at home when he gets there.

When Mickey finally makes his way back to their apartment, he finds Ian curled up in their bed, buried under the heavy covers.

“Hey, asshole,” he greets with no real bite in his tone, “the fuck’s with you ignoring my calls?”

“She’s right,” he hears Ian murmur, the blankets muffling his words. “It’s just a matter of time before I fall apart again and do something fucking stupid. I can’t fucking raise a baby like that. Not when I’m always two fucking seconds from breaking down.”

“Ian, love,” Mickey whispers, tugging away the covers and climbing into the bed beside Ian. Using gentle fingers, Mickey draws Ian’s eyes to his own, urging Ian to roll over and settle himself against Mickey’s side. Ian complies with the silent request, seeking the comfort Mickey’s arms provide as he nuzzles into his husband’s chest. “You are not going to fuck up. I’m here, Ian, and you’re much better at managing your health now. You are an incredible father, and that’s never going to change. I’m going to talk to Svetlana and figure this out, okay?”

“And Yevgeny?” Ian asks, his words bitter. Mickey can tell Ian knows that their son’s not with them—that Svetlana had refused to let Mickey bring him home—and Mickey hates the broken look that thought brings to Ian’s eyes.

“We just freaked her out, man,” Mickey assures, and he’s not entirely sure he believes it himself. “Brought up a lot of old shit for her when we started talkin’ about a kid. She reacted, and it fuckin’ sucks, but it’s not gonna last forever. I will fight for our kid if I have to, Ian. We are not gonna lose him.”

Ian nods against Mickey’s chest, but it doesn’t stop the fresh tears that flow from his eyes. Mickey just pulls Ian close and strokes his hair as he tries to keep his own emotions in check.

Chapter End Notes

We needed a little drama—everything can’t always work out perfectly for our boys. Although, if I’m being honest, I’m not entirely happy with this chapter. It feels clunky to me, but I couldn’t seem to fix it to my satisfaction, and I want to keep moving forward with this fic, so I’m posting as is. Hopefully, it’s still enjoyable. Thank you for reading!
Chapter Summary

Mickey confronts Svetlana.

Chapter Notes

I suck at writing accents, so I apologize for any butchering of Svetlana’s speech pattern.

Title inspired by “Hurt” by Darren Hayes.

The next day, when Mickey wakes, he finds himself alone in bed. It’s early—earlier than he’s usually up on his day off—the sun barely peeking through the curtains. Mickey reaches out to Ian’s side of the bed, finding it cold, and he’s suddenly terrified, his heart beating faster at the realization that it’s too fucking early for Ian to be up and about. That, coupled with the awful fucking day they’d had, has Mickey instantly worried. After taking a deep breath to calm himself, Mickey pushes up and out of bed, dragging a pair of sweatpants over his hips before shoving through the bedroom door in search of his husband.

After checking the main rooms, Mickey finds himself in the doorway of Yevgeny’s room. Ian’s there, curled around himself on the little twin bed, clutching at one of Yevgeny’s favorite stuffed animals.

Ian’s heartbroken. It’s obvious the moment Mickey spots him there. And he’d known, really, since the moment Ian had taken off without him the day before, but it really sinks in when Mickey finds Ian there in their son’s bed, so clearly lost and hurting.

Quietly, Mickey moves to Ian’s side, reaching out gently to stroke his fingers through Ian’s hair. Mickey’s relieved when Ian nuzzles into his touch, taking comfort in Mickey’s presence. “Hey, love,” Mickey whispers, lying down beside Ian in the tiny space available. It reminds him immediately of tense weeks spent in that very same bed following Ian’s diagnosis. “You okay, baby?”

Ian shakes his head slowly. “Not really,” he admits, lacing his fingers with Mickey’s and holding on tight. ‘Fuckin’ hate myself for the shit I pulled back then. We wouldn’t be in this position if it weren’t for me. I fucked up, Mick, and I don’t blame her for hating me.”

“Ian,” Mickey whispers, pressing his lips to Ian’s temple, “she doesn’t hate you. I don’t know why talk of adoption scared her, but it did. I’m gonna go talk to her today. We’re gonna figure this out, okay?”

Ian shakes his head, closing his eyes tightly against the flood of emotion he feels. He’s not so sure it’ll be so easy, but he wants to believe Mickey, so he kisses his husband gently and just lets
A few hours later, Mickey finds himself on Svetlana’s doorstep. He stands there nervously for a few seconds, unsure of how he’s likely to be received. Once he’s gathered his courage, though, he knocks carefully and waits—hoping Svetlana won’t slam the door in his face the moment she realizes it’s him.

When the door opens, she doesn’t seem nearly as confrontational as he’d expected, and instead of telling him off, she just sighs a bit and steps aside to let him in. Mickey accepts the invitation thankfully, stepping past her and into the living room. He immediately notices the absence of Yevgeny, though, and it worries him just a little.

“Where’s Yev,” he asks cautiously, glancing back at her and hoping for an honest answer.

She sighs again, shaking her head a bit and crossing her arms, eyes wary. “Napping,” she tells him. “Was long night.”

“What’d you tell him?” Mickey asks quietly, avoiding Svetlana’s eyes as he crosses his own arms over his chest, mirroring her gesture.

“I tell him you and orange boy are sick. Cannot look after him until you feel better,” she tells him, fluttering a hand in the air to wave him off.

Mickey breathes a sigh of relief. He’d hoped she hadn’t bad-mouthed them to their son, but he hadn’t known what to expect. After all, he’d somehow convinced himself she’d be happy for them.

“Thank you,” he offers sincerely, watching her carefully.

“Was not for you,” she insists, voice harsh. “Was for Yevgeny. He does not deserve to be abandoned.”

Mickey scoffs at that, shaking his head in irritation. “We didn’t fucking abandon him, Svetlana. You fuckin’ kicked us out.”

“Only matter of time,” she spits back angrily, a harsh glare pinning Mickey in place.

Mickey shakes his head in disbelief, dragging a hand over his face to try to calm himself. “Why are you suddenly hellbent on making it difficult for Ian and I to see our son, Svet?” he questions desperately, staring her down, his voice a mixture of anger and hurt. “Because you’ve never done this before. Not like this. Not since Ian and I were married. Fuck, Lana, you were the one who encouraged Yevgeny to call Ian dad. And now, all of a sudden, you don’t want us near him? What the hell is going on?”

Mickey’s angry and he’s hurt. He can’t keep the frustrated tremble from his voice or the tears from his eyes as he presses his palms against them to keep them from falling.

Svetlana’s watching him, her face unreadable as she stands, arms still crossed protectively over her chest. “Is my job to protect Yevgeny,” she tells him, matter of fact, as though Mickey’s somehow supposed to understand why Yevgeny needs protecting from himself and Ian. “You and orange boy? No good for Yevgeny.”

“What are you talking about?” Mickey asks desperately, throwing his arms up. “We’ve been there, every step of the way since I’ve been back. We love that little boy. I love him. You can’t just take our son away from us. I know for a while I was a really shitty husband and father, but that’s different now, okay? Don’t take my son away from me. Please.”
“And what happens when new baby comes?” Svetlana snaps, “You can’t just turn love for Yevgeny on and off. I won’t let you hurt him like that. You and orange boy—both the same. You love Yevgeny as long as you can play happy family, but when things get hard, you leave. You stop caring. I understand your hate for us. Yevgeny’s conception was bad. It hurt you. Kept you from man you love. But this is not Yevgeny’s fault. Is not fair to forget him for new baby.”

Mickey stares at her in disbelief for a moment, and he finally recognizes the fear in her eyes for what it is. His anger deflates a bit at that, and he steps closer to Svetlana, laying his hands gently on her upper arms. “Lana,” he offers softly, looking her in the eye and willing her to see the honesty in his, “I know I’ve fucked up in the past, but that will not happen. The new baby will not change the way we feel about Yevgeny. Ian and I love that little boy. He’s our son, Svetlana. And yes, he’s going to get a new little baby brother or sister, but we are never going to stop loving him, and we are never going to leave him behind. I’m sorry for all the shit we did that made you believe that might happen, but we have our shit together now, and we are not going to abandon our son. We’re just expanding our family.”

“And what if you change mind when baby comes?” she challenges, eyes still hard as she stares him down. There’s a tremble in her voice, though, and Mickey thinks he sees tears gathering in her eyes. “We were family. All four. You, me, Ian, Yevgeny. You both leave then. Why not now?”

Mickey sighs in frustration, stepping back and running a hand through his hair. She’s scared and she’s hurting and Mickey can see it behind the angry set of her eyes. He knows they deserve this. Knows it’s been a long time coming. But he’s not going to abandoned their son and neither is Ian. “There’s nothing I’m going to be able to say here that will convince you there’s no chance of that happening,” Mickey admits after a moment, “and I get why. But just—if the thing you’re afraid of is Ian and I abandoning Yevgeny, then how does it make sense to take him away from us now? I know you’re trying to protect him, but why hurt him like that now when there’s a chance he’ll never have to go through it at all?”

For a moment, she continues to stare Mickey down, her eyes still reflecting fear, but she finally gives in with a sigh as his words register, her shoulders slumping as she drops her eyes to the ground. “Okay,” she finally conceded, “just don’t hurt Yevgeny. Please. He needs his daddies.”

“We won’t hurt him,” Mickey promises with a little smile. “Never. I promise, Lana.”

When Mickey gets home, he has Yevgeny in tow, the little boy’s hand wrapped firmly in Mickey’s as Mickey leads him into the apartment. “Ian, I’m home” Mickey calls, as he glances around the living room, eyes searching for his husband. When he’d left to find Svetlana, Ian had still been pretty broken up, though, and Mickey suspects Ian may be hiding out in bed.

When he hears no reply, Mickey pushes the door shut and snaps the lock into place before kneeling down beside Yevgeny, who’s looking around the open space, eyes searching for Ian.

“Where’s daddy Ian?” Yevgeny asks quietly, sadness coloring his eyes. “Didn’t he want to see me?”

“Yeah, buddy, of course he wants to see you,” Mickey assures happily, a big smile on his face as he unwraps the scarf around Yevgeny’s neck and starts unbundling the rest of his winter clothes. “Daddy Ian just didn’t know you were gonna be coming home with me. How about we surprise him, huh? You wait quietly right outside the door while I go in and wake him, and then you can pop in when I wave to you, huh? That way we can make it a big surprise. What do you think?”

A bright smile breaks across Yevgeny’s face at that. The boy loves surprises, and he’s excited at
the idea of helping to surprise his daddy, so he nods enthusiastically and puts a finger to his lips to indicate that he’ll keep quiet until Mickey tells him. Mickey laughs and ruffles his hair before lifting up into a standing position and sneaking to the door on tiptoe with Yev. Yevgeny stops at the door and waves Mickey in as Mickey quietly pushes the door open.

Mickey gives Yev one last little wink as he flips on the dim bedside lamp and slides up onto the bed beside Ian, fingers tickling up Ian’s spine through the sheet that covers him. “Hey, love,” Mickey whispers quietly, leaning over to try to capture Ian’s attention. When Ian shifts slightly so he can gaze up at Mickey, Mickey nearly gasps at the redness rimming his husband’s swollen eyes. “Oh, Ian,” Mickey whispers out, reaching to cradle Ian’s face in his hands as he presses a kiss to Ian’s forehead, “you okay, baby?”

Ian nuzzles closer to Mickey and sniffs a bit before swallowing hard and catching Mickey’s eye. “I’m so sorry. I fucking hate myself for what I did, and I’m so sorry Svet doesn’t trust me. I don’t ever want to come between you and your son. I love you, Mickey, and I love Yevgeny so much, and I don’t ever want to be the reason you don’t get to see him.”

“Hey,” Mickey offers softly, stroking his fingers through Ian’s hair, “not your fault. Lana was just scared. Talk of a new baby brought up a lot of old stuff for her and she got worried we might bail once we have a baby of our own. I talked her down. Everything’s good.”

Ian shakes his head, his eyes swimming again. “How do you know that?” he protests weakly, voice breaking a bit with emotion. “She didn’t want us seeing our son, Mickey.”

“Yeah, well,” Mickey smiles and presses a little kiss to Ian’s lips to distract him as Mickey waves Yevgeny into the room, “told you I’d take care of it. I took care of it.”

Before Ian can protest, Yevgeny reaches out to pat Ian’s hand, drawing Ian’s eyes away from Mickey’s. Yevgeny smiles at the little gasp Ian lets out as he immediately pushes himself up in bed and reaches out for the boy, lifting Yevgeny up into his arms and pulling him into a tight hug. “Yevy?” Ian murmurs, joy suddenly evident in his voice as he holds his son close.

“Hi, daddy,” Yev greets, patting Ian’s cheeks when Ian pulls back to fix Yevgeny with a look of awe, “missed you.”

Ian smiles wide, his eyes filling up again, this time with happy tears as he pulls the boy back into his arms for another hug. “Missed you, too, kiddo.” Ian admits as he presses a little kiss into Yev’s hair. “Missed you, too.”

They end up at the Gallagher house a couple of days later. Fiona had been anxious, worried that Ian was in a bad place and eager to see Yevgeny, and they’d finally broken down and agreed to dinner with Fiona and Liam. Svetlana had agreed to let Yevgeny stay with his dads for a few days when Mickey had spoken with her, and they’d decided to swing by for dinner before dropping Yevgeny off at his mom’s.

When they get there, Fiona immediately scoops Yevgeny up into her arms, cooing at him and bouncing him on her hip before giving Ian a once over. Ian shakes his head, planting a kiss on her cheek as he pushes into the house, dragging Mickey in behind him by their clasped hands.

Once the kids are all settled in the living room, Fiona asks Liam to keep an eye on Yevgeny for a minute while the adults head to the kitchen to chat. Liam’s happy to do as she asks, smiling and chatting with Yevgeny as he pulls out a stash of crayons and a little stack of blank white paper.
“You wanna draw?” Liam asks Yevgeny happily with a raised brow, plopping down next to his little nephew and holding out a sheet of paper for Yev.

“Yes, please!” Yevgeny exclaims, smiling brightly at Liam and accepting the offered paper before shuffling through the box of crayons until he finds a color he likes and setting to work.

“I’m gonna draw a picture of you, okay?” Liam asks as he starts in on his own paper.

Yevgeny’s face lights up at that and he nods enthusiastically. “I draw you, too!” Yev announces, and Liam smiles back, the two of them continuing to chatter as the work.

After watching the boys for a moment from the doorway, the three adults finally duck into the kitchen, Ian and Mickey settling themselves at the kitchen table. Fiona grabs some sodas for the three of them from the fridge and then sits down beside Ian and Mickey, watching them carefully, but trying to act nonchalant.

“So,” she begins, “hope pizza’s okay. I ordered one for delivery.”

Ian scoffs in amusement, shaking his head just a little as a touch of a smile plays at his lips. “You know that’s fine,” Ian scolds playfully. “Just fuckin’ ask.”

“Fine,” she agrees, pulling a face at Ian. “How are things with Svetlana? I assume better, since Yev’s here with you, but are they, like, better better or temporarily better?”

Ian sighs a bit at that, eyes dropping. “Not sure,” he admits. Mickey attempts to protest, and Ian rolls his eyes, jumping back in quickly to silence his husband. “Mickey insists things are better. I’m not so sure. But I’m gonna give it a little time, and then talk to Lana myself. See if there’s anything I can do to help her feel better about the whole situation. Mick thinks it’s all unnecessary, but I want to be sure, you know?”

Mickey rolls his eyes, but Fiona nods in agreement. “I get that,” she tells him, giving him a sympathetic little smile before adding, with a playful smirk in Mickey’s direction, “Regardless of what your asshole husband says, I think it’s a good idea. You need Lana on your side for the adoption. If there’s any remaining bad blood between the three of you, you need to get it out on the table now, you know? So you can work through it.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Mickey agrees, and his words have a sarcastic bite to them, but he’s also perfectly aware of how important it is that they clear the air with Svetlana. “We’re gonna talk it out together. Need things to calm down a little first, though. Don’t want to push too far too fast. She needs time to wrap her head around the whole adoption thing, and if we push her, she’s gonna push back, and it’s gonna end badly.”

Fiona nods at that. It makes sense. Svetlana’s a little hot-headed and if they want her on their side, it’s unsurprising that they’ll need to bend a bit to Lana’s comfort levels. “Probably a good idea,” she agrees, and Mickey gives her a smug smile that almost makes her want to take back the words. Instead, she gives him a little kick under the table, and he just raises his eyebrows and shoots her the finger.

Ian rolls his eyes at the both of them and shaking his head. Before he can say anything, though, he hears a little voice from the living room.

“Daddy!” Yevgeny calls, wandering into the kitchen and holding up his picture proudly. He immediately heads to Ian, climbing up in his lap and smoothing the paper out on the table. “I drawed our family.”
“Look at that!” Ian exclaims, tucking his chin over Yevgeny’s shoulder and smiling brightly as he takes in the colorful drawing. “We have a big family, huh?”

“Uh huh,” Yevgeny agrees, pointing to the paper, “that’s me, and you and daddy, and mommy, and papa Kev and mama V, and Jemma and Amy and Liam. And there’s Aunt Fiona and Aunt Debbie and Franny. But I runned out of room for Uncle Lip and Uncle Carl and Aunt Mandy and everyone else.” Yevgeny gives an exaggerated shrug and let’s out an exasperated sigh at that, looking up at Ian. “I need a bigger paper!”

Ian, Mickey, and Fiona all laugh at that and Ian squeezes Yev’s sides before ruffling his hair. “I think you’re right!” Ian agrees.

Yev nods, happy for the agreement. “I try again after dinner,” Yevgeny decides, studying the drawing again, as all three adults smile at the boy’s antics.

The doorbell rings then, and Fiona grins at Yevgeny. “Well,” she says, pushing herself up from the table, “speaking of dinner. I think the pizza’s here. Wanna come help me pay the delivery guy, Yevy?”

“Yes, please!” Yev agrees, hopping down off Ian’s lap and grasping the hand Fiona offers him, disappearing into the living room with his aunt as Ian and Mickey watch the two of them fondly.

A little later that night, Ian’s sitting outside on the steps to the Gallagher house smoking a cigarette when Svetlana wanders up to the fence. For a moment she looks lost, avoiding Ian’s eyes as she wraps her arms around herself against the cold and shifts nervously from one foot to the other. She seems almost vulnerable in those moments, and Ian thinks it’s the first time he’s ever associated Svetlana with any such emotion. Ian can’t help but smile softly at her, raising his eyebrows and giving a nod to the spot beside him. She acknowledges him carefully, giving a little nod of her own and wandering closer, finally taking up the space beside him. She’s a bundle of nerves and Ian notices it immediately—it’s not a look he’s accustomed to on Svetlana. After a moment, he offers her the cigarette he holds and she accepts it gratefully, closing her eyes as she takes a deep drag. She tries to hand it back over to Ian then, but he waves her off.

“Nah,” he tells her, shaking his head, “you go ahead. I’m trying to quit. Don’t like to smoke around Yev.”

She nods, watching him from the corner of her eye. Finally, she murmurs, “You are good dad.”

And it’s simple. Not much of a declaration, really, but Ian’s heart swells at her words, and he can’t help the way the corners of his mouth tip up just a little. “I’m trying,” he tells her honestly, rubbing nervously at an invisible spot on the knee of his jeans.

Svetlana is silent for another long moment, eyes staring blankly out at the quiet night, watching the condensation of her breath and the smoke that swirls off the cigarette in her hand. After another couple of puffs, she stubs out the butt and then goes back to staring wordlessly for a bit. She wants to say something, though—Ian can see it in the way she’s holding herself.

Finally, she speaks. “We can talk?” she asks quietly, glancing toward him out of the corner of her eye, her gaze wary.

Ian nods, relieved. “Yeah. Yeah, Lana. We can talk.”

She returns the gesture, taking in a deep breath, still refusing to meet his eyes.
“I am sorry,” she confesses. “Did not mean to hurt you. Was scared by talk of new baby.”

“You don’t have to be,” Ian tells her carefully, his voice gentle.

“Yes. Logic says this,” she agrees, tilting her head in thought. “But sometimes heart does not follow head. I hear of new baby and think maybe Yevgeny is just practice, and you forget him for new baby. Maybe you remember all the bad and leave him behind. Would not blame you. Yevgeny is only here because Terry was awful man, and I understand if you leave. But I am hard and stubborn and not easy to hurt. Yevgeny is soft. He is sweet and loving and happy. I want our boy to stay soft. Never want him to hurt. If his daddies leave, he will hurt and he will turn hard against loss. This is not what I want for Yevgeny, and when you talk of new baby, I worry. Was unfair, but was out of love.”

Ian gives her a sad little smile at that, though she’s avoiding his eyes, and he’s not sure whether she catches it. Ian can see the streaks of tears that stain her cheeks even as she tries to wipe them away before he notices. “I get it,” he tells her softly, reaching out to wrap a gentle arm around her shoulders and tugging her to his side. She goes willing, tucking her head into the crook of Ian’s neck and accepting the comfort Ian offers.

After a few minutes of silence, she speaks up again, her voice honest and soft. “I know you are good dad,” she admits, and there’s an apology behind it. “Mickey, too. You love Yevgeny, and Yevgeny loves you. New baby will be lucky to have you both.”

Ian sucks in a sharp breath at that, trying—and failing—to keep the couple of tears that gather in his eyes from falling. With a shaky breath, he presses a kiss to her hair and gives her shoulder a little squeeze before murmuring quietly, “Thank you, Lana.”

Chapter End Notes

So, I know I made everyone mad at Svetlana last chapter, but Lana’s truly not my bad guy here—she’s just a young woman who’s been through a lot of shit and loves her son. While I have tried to set her up as warily supportive of Mickey and Ian’s relationship with Yevgeny, it was also intentional that we’ve seen relatively little of her. This confrontation, I think, was a long time coming, and I think she has every right to be angry with them. As much as I believe Mickey did come to love Yev in S5, he also essentially abandoned the boy to care for Ian. And while I don’t fault him for this—in fact, I wouldn’t fault Mickey for never bonding with Yevgeny at all, considering the circumstances—Svetlana also has very real reasons not to trust either Ian or Mickey. So essentially, no one’s really in the wrong here. They’ve just all been through a lot of shit that they never fully dealt with, and it was time for that to happen. So anyway, that’s where this all came from. I hope it works, and I also hope that I’ve portrayed Svetlana as sympathetic enough to win you all over to her side again. At least for the purposes of this fic.
Mickey and Ian get into a bit of a tiff that brings back bad memories.

I’ve been gone forever, and I’ll probably have to disappear again for awhile, but I have not abandoned this fic, nor do I plan to. If anyone's still reading, I hope you enjoy!

When Ian wakes, it's early, the bright morning sun pouring in through the thin curtains and blinding him as he blinks awake. Mickey's not beside him, Ian notices immediately, reaching out and running his fingers over the empty sheets next to him. With a little huff, Ian let's the corner of his lips tip up as he presses his fingers against his tired eyes. It takes him a moment, but he finally falls over onto his back, sighing heavily and fighting the desire to drift back off to sleep as he pushes himself out of bed and drags on a pair of sweatpants. Grabbing a t-shirt and pulling it on as he heads through the bedroom door, Ian pads down the hall in bare feet, the smell of coffee greeting him as he moves.

Finally, he spots Mickey at the kitchen table, body tense and seeping frustration as he stares blankly at the laptop that sits open before him, the cursor on an empty word document flashing back. Ian can feel the tension in his husband's frame, and he approaches quietly, wrapping his fingers tight around Mickey's shoulders and kneading at the knots he feels beneath his hands. Mickey responds immediately, leaning back into Ian's touch and allowing his head to pillow against Ian's chest.

"Morning," Ian murmurs, leaning down to catch Mickey's lips as Mickey tilts his chin up to receive the good morning kiss. Ian can feel Mickey melt a bit, letting go of some of the tension and letting Ian soothe him. Mickey's been on edge for weeks, nervous about the adoption process, and worried that, regardless of Lydia’s help, they'll never manage to have another child. Ian gets it—sometimes he feels it, too—but he’s trying hard to be the optimistic one, if only to help Mickey through his own doubts. It's been no time at all, really, and it certainly hasn't been long enough to worry.

“What's goin’ on, babe?” Ian asks carefully, hoping to head off any possible breakdown before Mickey has a chance to get too deep in his head.

It takes a moment, but Mickey finally sighs and squeezes his eyes shut tight. “I feel like a fuckin’ sellout,” Mickey admits, dropping his head into his hands.

Ian gives a last little squeeze to Mickey's shoulders before shifting to slip into the chair beside his husband. When Mickey finally lifts his eyes to meet Ian’s, Ian reaches out and drags Mickey's fingers into his own, pressing a gentle kiss to Mickey's knuckles. “All right,” Ian says after a beat, weaving their fingers together, “the fuck you mean, you feel like a sellout?”
Mickey rolls his eyes and shakes his fingers out of Ian's grips, but there's a tiny smile playing at his lips that betrays his attempts at passing for frustrated now that Ian's beside him. “I don't know, man,” he tells Ian, gesturing at the computer screen, “this shit, I guess. The idea that we gotta fuckin' sell ourselves to get a fuckin’ baby. I just wanna give a kid a good home—raise a baby with you. I don't wanna jump through fuckin’ hoops pretending to be some perfect little family.”

“Mick,” Ian soothes, reaching for Mickey's fingers again. Mickey gives in, and lets Ian squeeze his hand in reassurance. “It's a bio,” Ian whispers, forcing Mickey to meet his eyes. “That's it, babe. The agency needs it to show potential birth mothers. We're not selling out, and we're not pretending. We ARE some perfect little family, okay? We don't have to pretend to be anything other than what we are. This thing can be honest, Mick. I want it to be honest. So does the agency. And so do the people looking for adoptive families for their children. If we want a baby, we have to do this, and we have to be honest about it, okay? It can't feel weird anymore for us to admit that we're fuckin’ movin’ up, Mick. We're not just Southside trash anymore. We're a fuckin’ happy family, and it's time we let the world see it, so we can make this thing happen, babe.”

Mickey drops his eyes, uncertainty painted over his expression as he sucks at his lower lip nervously. When Ian’s fingers squeeze gently at his own, Mickey let's his eyes wander back up to meet Ian's.

“I want to raise a baby with you, Mickey Gallagher-Milkovich. So let's figure this shit out, huh?” Ian smiles big, catching Mickey's eyes when they swoop up to meet his.

“Fuck it, all right,” Mickey agrees with a scoff and a happy smile. “Let's sell the fuck out, then.”

Barely a week later, Ian comes down with the flu, and he's near bedridden for several days. Mickey doesn't take it well, really, and he spends most of his time fawning over Ian and trying to nurse him back to health. For a while, Ian accepts it gratefully, his exhaustion leaving him in no position to argue. As Ian begins to feel better, though, Mickey's hovering starts to wear on him, and they come to blows when Ian announces he's heading back to work the next day. Mickey's convinced Ian needs more time, and Ian's convinced he's going to lose his damn mind if he doesn't get out of the apartment really fucking soon.

It's more than Ian can take, though, when Mickey ignores Ian’s insistence that he's feeling near one hundred percent, and Ian finds himself rolling his eyes and stomping to the kitchen as Mickey hurries after him, listing reasons why it's too soon.

When Mickey hits a particularly sensitive nerve, Ian’s irritation breaks, and he can't help the angry scoff that slips out of his mouth. “I don't need a goddamn babysitter, Mickey!” he spits, yanking the cupboard open to dig out a glass. He's angry and he's irritated and he's fucking done with Mickey's coddling. “I'm a fucking grown man! You don't have to nurse me like a child!”

Ian can feel Mickey freeze behind him, the tension in Mickey's frame catching the corner of Ian's eye, but he refuses to turn and acknowledge it, instead opting to busy himself by filling the glass with water from the tap and gulping it down with his pills.

“You know,” Mickey finally speaks up, his tone biting and his anger barely restrained, “this feels really fucking familiar, Ian.”

And that brings back a flood of awful memories for Ian that he has no desire to revisit. “Fuck, Mick,” Ian snaps, slamming the cupboard shut a little harder than he’d intended as he shakes his head in disbelief, “This isn't like the last time. You can't just fucking assume I’m leaving you every time we get into it. We're trying to have a baby, Mickey! We can't be in this place if we're going to
bring another child into our life!"

For a moment, Mickey's face falls a bit, but it's replaced by anger. "How the fuck else am I supposed to respond to this, Ian?! All I ever wanted was to love you, to take care of you. And you fucking abandoned me for it! Do you know how that felt? To know that I wasn't enough? That you couldn't love me when I gave a shit?! That fucking destroyed me, Ian, and when this shit happens it takes me right the fuck back there, okay? I can't fucking help it. I don't want to feel this way, Ian. I don't ever want to feel this way again, but it's there, and I can't just fucking get over it, okay?"

Mickey's eyes are full to the brim with unshed tears, his body shaking in combination anger and fear, and Ian can see the desperate love Mickey holds for him behind the mask of frustration. It breaks Ian's heart because Mickey's right, he knows Mickey's right, and Ian doesn't fucking deserve the man laying his heart bare in front of him. A flood of guilt washes over Ian then, as he realizes just how much it must hurt when he rejects Mickey's attempts to care for him. Ian's eyes soften then, and he reaches out, closing the short distance between them. At first, Mickey flinches away, his own anger raising his defenses. It's not long, though, before Mickey gives in, falling into Ian's arms as Ian pulls him close and plants gentle fingers in Mickey's hair.

"I love you, Mickey," Ian confesses, lips pressing to Mickey's temple before he pulls back just enough to lock eyes with the other man, a sad smile tilting his lips. "I am so, so sorry. I know I deserve this. Fuck, I can't believe you trusted me enough to let me back in at all, but I need you to know that I love you more than life, and I will never leave you. Sometimes I'm gonna get irritated and sometimes you are—we're fuckin' hot-headed, man—but that doesn't mean I'm going to leave you, and it doesn't mean I love you any less. But Mick, sometimes I just need some fucking space, all right. Especially after I've been cooped up in bed for days on end. And I don't even need to be away from you—I just need you to let me do shit now that I'm feeling better. I fucking hate feeling helpless, Mickey, and I know that's probably exactly why you hover when I'm sick, but fuck, man, I need you to let up a little, all right?"

Mickey sucks in a shaky breath at that, his body relaxing in Ian's grip as he lets out a little sigh and reaches up to cradle Ian's cheek in his palm. "All right," he gives in, pressing his eyes closed for just a moment, "you're right. I know you're right, it's just—fuck, Ian, I just want you to be okay."

Ian smiles at that, his lips tipping into a little smirk as he lets his eyes wander over Mickey's features. "How about I take you to bed and show you just how okay I am?"

For a moment, Mickey tries to pull off an exasperated glare, but it doesn't last long when Ian leans in and latches his lips to Mickey's neck, leaving soft kisses in his wake and whispering his love against Mickey's skin.

"I love you," Ian murmurs the words over and over again as he presses open mouthed kisses to Mickey's skin, his body pressed tight to his lover's as deft fingers work to divest them both of their remaining clothing.
“Ian,” Mickey breathes out, letting his fingers wander into the soft strands of Ian's hair and tugging just a bit.

Ian smiles against Mickey's neck. “Need to show you how much I love you,” Ian murmurs, hands finding Mickey's hips as he raises his head to capture Mickey's gaze. “Please, Mick. Just let me show you.”

The pleading tone Mickey hears in Ian's voice leaves Mickey utterly incapable of argument. Instead, Mickey nods, eyes still a little wet with emotion as he holds Ian’s gaze. “Yeah, okay,” Mickey finally utters, lips tipping into a delicate smile, “Show me, love.”

Ian smiles at that, swooping down to catch Mickey's lips again as they melt against one another, Mickey surrendering easily to the man he loves.

Later, when they're both sated and resting comfortably against one another, Mickey's insecurities come flooding back. Everything about the whole situation feels too raw and familiar. It feels like all those times before Ian was medicated. All those times Ian hadn't wanted to talk. When he'd used sex as a distraction to avoid any discussion of his behavior. When he'd spent his time cheating and lying and Mickey had been left feeling like a fucking fool for how much he'd ignored.

When his stewing finally gets the best of him, Mickey speaks up, working to keep his tone gentle. He doesn't want to scare Ian off or reopen old wounds—he just wants to know where they stand. “We still need to talk about this,” Mickey whispers, his fingers stroking through Ian's damp hair. Ian turns to Mickey, a tiny touch of a smile tilting his lips. “I know we do,” he admits, shifting a little closer and tucking an arm around Mickey's waist. “We can talk, babe. I'm not avoiding, I swear.”

Mickey nods a little at that, eyes tracing over Ian's features. “I don't want to be shitty about this, Ian, but I need to know things really are different now. Because this is the first time you've needed caring for like this since I've been back, and you were pretty fuckin’ quick to lose it on me, man.”

“I know,” Ian admits, but Mickey's not done, and Ian shuts up quick to let Mickey finish. “I need to know this is different, Ian. Because you're fuckin’ right—we can't bring a baby into this if we're just gonna end up right back there,” Mickey insists, and Ian can hear the pain and fear in Mickey’s tone. “I'm your husband now. It's my fuckin’ job to take care of you. The last time you freaked out about that, you fuckin’ left me. That can't happen again, Ian. I can't fuckin’ lose you because you're too goddamn stubborn to let me take care of you.”

Ian reaches out then, wrapping his fingers up in Mickey's and drawing Mickey's hand to his lips. “You're right, Mickey,” Ian admits as he strokes back Mickey's hair. “It wasn't fuckin’ fair of me. Not now, and not then. But this is different. I swear to you it's different. I love you. I'm stable. But sometimes, when I feel helpless, it takes me right back there, too, to a time when I wasn't so stable. And that scares me just as much as it scares you, and I go fuckin’ stir crazy, man. Sometimes, I just need to do shit for myself. I love you for the way you care for me. But I also need you to let me recover on my own terms. And that goes for the fuckin’ flu and for anything else that comes at us.”

After a moment of staring into Ian's expectant eyes, Mickey finally lets out a deep sigh. “I get that,” Mickey gives in, leaning forward to catch Ian's lips in a sweet kiss. “But I need you to communicate that to me, not just fuckin’ stew until you go off. Just tell me, and I’ll back off.”

Ian smiles at that. “Yeah,” he agrees, pulling Mickey close and snuggling into his husband's chest,
“I can do that.”

They remain silent for long moments, Ian curled into Mickey’s arms. Mickey thinks this should be it. That he shouldn't be feeling the nagging pressure of doubt gnawing at the back of his mind, but he does, and he can’t help but voice it, even with Ian on the verge of sleep.

“Do you really think we’re ready for this?” Mickey whispers the words, as though he fears if he voices them too loudly he’ll make his doubts reality.

Ian tenses against his husband then, unsure as he lifts his eyes to meet Mickey's. “What?” he questions, disbelief coloring his tone.

For a moment, Mickey's silent, eyes downcast and avoiding Ian's as he blinks rapidly and tries to stamp away the overwhelming emotion he feels just at the thought before speaking again, voice still quiet and shaky. “Do you really think we're ready for this? For a baby?”

Ian shoots up then, leaning his weight on his elbow as he hovers over Mickey, eyes unreadable as he stares his husband down. “What are you saying exactly, Mickey?” Ian asks, voice guarded. “Because I have never wanted anything more than to have another child with you, but it sounds like you're having second thoughts, and I really fucking hope that's not what's happening here.”

“Ian, fuck,” Mickey forces out, trying to find his words, “it’s not that I don't want this. I really fucking do—you know that—but it's also really fucking scary, man. With Yevgeny, we didn't have a choice. And I love that little boy more than my own life, but to actually decide to have another baby? When a fuckin’ cold nearly just broke us? We keep doin’ shit like this, and we're gonna fuck up this kid. We have to be better at this if we're gonna have a baby, Ian.”

When Mickey's words sink in, Ian finds himself breaking into a smile as he presses a brief kiss to Mickey’s lips, laughing lightly at the confused expression Mickey wears when he pulls back. “You're just nervous, babe,” Ian informs as he reaches up to stroke at Mickey’s hair. “We had a fight, Mick. It lasted five minutes. It didn't almost break us. It was barely even a fight. We're fine.”

“But, Ian—” Mickey tries to protest, sighing when Ian cuts him off.

“I get why you're scared,” Ian confides softly, lowering his head back down to Mickey’s shoulder and interweaving their fingers. “I'm scared, too. And I know this whole thing brought back some bad memories. I'm sorry for that, Mickey. I really, really am, and I am going to do better. I promise you that. I will do my best to communicate with you about this stuff before it becomes a thing. But it's not going to break us. We're going to be just fine. And we're going to have a baby, Mickey, and you are going to be the most amazing father.”

“You don't know that,” Mickey insists, tone full to the brim with a vulnerability Ian knows no one else is allowed to hear.

“I do,” Ian argues gently. “I know because you already are.”

Ian stops there. There's nothing more to say, really, and he ends Mickey's argument with another soft kiss, shifting their positions until he can hold Mickey against him. Mickey moves easily in Ian's arms, letting Ian's confidence soothe away any remaining fears as he clings to the man he loves.

A few days later, Mickey's the one laid up in bed, and Ian can't help but laugh as Mickey yells a stuffy “I fuckin’ hate you,” after him as he’s headed out the door.
Don't Give Up

Chapter Summary

It’s been months since Mickey and Ian applied for adoption with no word. The wait is starting to wear on them.

Chapter Notes

So, it's been like two years… but like I said before, I truly have not abandoned this fic. But I did start a new job and move literally to the other side of the world, so things got crazy. But there really is more to come. Much of it already written. One day I'll finish it. Even if it takes two more years.

This chapter has been killing me, though--I have changed it around so many times, it’s insane. It ended up rather long, and not perfect, but I think overall, I’m happy with it, and it’s time to let it go and post it. Hopefully, if anyone’s still reading, you enjoy!

Title from “Don’t Give Up” by Darren Hayes.

“Hey!” Fiona greets happily, as Mickey and Ian shove through the front door, Yevgeny at their heels.

It's Thanksgiving in the Gallagher household, and the entire Gallagher clan is gathered in the living room, music playing loudly in the background, all chattering away as Liam and Franny play on the floor. Yevgeny rockets himself into Fiona’s arms, and she laughs as she scoops him up to give him a squeeze. Mickey nods a greeting himself, and then pushes through the sea of Gallagher’s on a path to the kitchen.

“Brought lasagna,” Mickey calls over his shoulder as he deposits the baking dish he holds on the kitchen counter. His voice is pleasant but guarded, and it worries Ian.

Ian watches him carefully. Sees the tension that’s taken up residence near permanently in Mickey’s shoulders. Mickey’s closed off. He hasn’t wanted to spend much time with the family, and Ian gets it, he does, but he's starting to worry.

It’s been over six months and they’ve yet to hear anything from the agency. The wait has been taking its toll on Mickey. Ian knows how much Mickey had been looking forward to diving head first into the adoption process, and he knows Mickey’s hurting because they haven’t had so much as a nibble at the line. They’d both known, of course, that it would likely take a couple of years before they’d actually manage to find a birth mother, but they’d been hopeful that they would have gotten at least an interview at this point. When their first wedding anniversary had passed them by with Mickey barely able to celebrate through his sadness, Ian had started to worry pretty deeply. He wasn’t sure, really, how Mickey would get through it if nothing ever came of their adoption application. Ian was starting to think maybe it was time to explore their other options again.
Mickey stays in the kitchen—grabs himself a beer and sets up at the table, and Ian sighs sadly in defeat. Fiona notices immediately and sets Yevgeny down with Franny and Liam, so she can pull Ian aside gently. She knows only a little about their struggles, but it’s enough that she recognizes the issue immediately and wraps Ian up in a comforting hug. He accepts it gratefully and gives her a sad little smile when she pulls back.

“Hey, Kiddo,” Fiona offers quietly, taking his face in her hands and catching his eye. “You guys okay?”

“Yeah,” Ian nods, his voice a little weak. “Just still haven’t heard from the agency. Been tough. Especially on Mickey, and especially with the holidays coming up. We knew it could be a while, but we’ve heard nothing. Hurts a little, you know?”

Fiona nods, giving Ian another little hug. “I know, sweetie. Just gotta have faith. It’ll work out.”

“Yeah,” Ian agrees, his tone less than convincing.

Only a few short days later, Mickey’s taken up shop in the Alibi. He’s been there for hours, since he’d gotten off work, and he’s well on his way to shutting the place down.

Kev’s watching Mickey warily as Mickey downs the last of his beer. It's pissing Mickey off. "Would you just get me another fuckin' drink, please," Mickey demands, eyebrows high in challenge as he glares at Kev.

Kev sighs but complies and pours Mickey another with a shake of his head. Can't bring himself to stay silent, though. "What's goin' on, man? Ian workin' late or somethin'? Thought you'd wanna be home with him by now."

"Mind your fuckin' business," Mickey demands, tipping his beer to his lips.

Kev sees the irritation and near-rage building in Mickey, and he knows he should let it go, keep his mouth shut. But Kevin Ball has never been one for self preservation. "You and Ian having problems or something?" Kev asks, concern showing in his eyes as he keeps them trained on Mickey.

For a second, Mickey considers the question—even thinks about answering it—but his irritation wins out, helped along by the buzz of too much booze. "Fuck. Off."

"All right, man," Kev gives up, raising his hands in surrender and makes his way to the other end of the bar. After giving Mickey a quick glance, Kev shoots off a text to Ian, hoping he's not about to make things worse.

When they finally get home, Mickey's pissed and still refusing to talk to Ian. Ian doesn't know what he did wrong, and he's scared. He knows Mickey's been off with the lack of news on the adoption, but he's started closing Ian out now, and Ian's fucking terrified.

Ian knows they need to talk, but he doesn't know if Mickey's up for it—or even if Mickey's sober enough for it—so he crosses his arms over his chest and closes in on himself as he leans against the kitchen counter. Mickey's dragging out another beer, and Ian feels like he's going to have a breakdown just watching his husband fall apart. Once Mickey's popped the top off the bottle in his hand, Ian's had enough, though, has to speak up.

"Mickey," he murmurs out carefully, eyes trained on his husband as Mickey tries to avoid Ian's
eyes. "Mickey, we need to talk," Ian begs, his voice breaking as Mickey continues to avoid his gaze. "Please."

Finally, Mickey breaks, picking at the label on the bottle in his hand. "The fuck you want?"

Mickey's voice is harsh, but Ian hears the waiver there. Hopes maybe that means could still be okay. He takes a moment, gathers his thoughts before finally speaking up. “Mick, you've been drinking. A lot.” Ian's words are near a whisper. "You're quiet. Closed off. This feels a lot like what you did after your dad caught us, and it's scaring me,” Ian admits quietly, his arms still crossed over his chest in a defensive posture as he watches Mickey carefully. “Please, Mick. I need you to tell me what's going on. Are we—fuck. Are we falling apart? Is this you leaving me?"

“No.” Mickey cuts Ian off instantly, a firm finality in his voice as his eyes raise to meet Ian's, his demeanor suddenly changing as he realizes just how much he's hurting Ian. “God, Ian, I am not leaving you. I would never leave you. I love you."

“Then what is it, Mickey?” Ian begs, eyes brimming with tears. “Because I'm fucking terrified over here.”

For a moment, Mickey shakes his head gently, but he's gathering his words and Ian can see it—relieved that at least he's talking—so Ian stays silent and gives Mickey his time. Finally, Mickey pushes off the chair and moves to Ian, reaching out to cup his husband's face as he looks Ian in the eyes before pressing a kiss to Ian's lips. "I'm scared, Ian,” Mickey finally admits with a little shrug and a couple of tears dripping from his eyes. “I know I've been fucked up lately. And I'm sorry. I'm just—I'm afraid I'm gonna fuck this up."

Ian's eyes soften and his posture opens. “Come here,” he whispers as he reaches out to pull Mickey into his arms, holding tight as his fingers sink into Mickey's hair and stroke for comfort. “What are you afraid of fucking up, Mick?”

Mickey swallows hard and sniffles a bit against Ian's chest, but his body relaxes in Ian's hold. “With Yevgeny, I was forced into being a dad. And I love him. I do—he's my son—but. Sometimes, Ian. Sometimes I worry that I'm a really fucking shitty dad. And now, here we are. Trying to bring another baby into this little family. And I want that so fucking much, Ian, but what if it's a mistake? What if I can't handle it? I don't want to fuck this up, Ian. And fuck, no one even wants us. Maybe that's a fuckin' sign.”

With a sad smile, Ian presses a kiss into Mickey's hair, fingers stroking at the nape of Mickey's neck. “It's still early, Mickey, you know that,” Ian reassures carefully. “It's not a fuckin' sign."

"Doesn't mean I'm not gonna fuck it up," Mickey murmurs, and Ian hates that Mickey's so self-deprecating, even now, after so many years.

Ian shakes his head, holds Mickey closer. "Mick, babe, you're not going to fuck up. You are going to be an incredible father to our baby, just like you are to Yev. The fact that you're even worried about this is proof of that."

"But how do you know?" Mickey whispers the words, clinging to Ian. "It hasn't even been long with Yev. Fuck. I don't know how to be a dad, Ian. Not really. I don't know how to raise a fuckin' baby—"

"Mickey," Ian murmurs, trying to drag Mickey back down to earth with him.

"No," Mickey insists. "I can't fucking do this. I can't be this, Ian. Look at my fuckin' father—that..."
piece of shit is all I ever had as a fuckin' role model. How the fuck am I supposed to be a dad? For the rest of my fuckin' life? We're signin' up for eighteen fuckin' years here, Ian. How the fuck can I be sure I'm not gonna fall the fuck apart and become my piece of shit father?!

For a moment, Ian just holds Mickey, stroking gentle fingers through Mickey's hair, trying to soothe him slowly. When Mickey finally calms a bit, Ian presses his lips gently to Mickey's temple. "Mickey," he whispers, voice careful, "you are not your father. Terry Milkovich is a homophobic piece of shit. You fought so fucking hard, Mickey, to get out of his grasp. People who do that? They don't become the people that hate." Mickey shakes his head in denial, but Ian can feel him relaxing a bit in his arms. "You are going to be such a good dad to our baby, Mickey. And it will happen, okay? Don't take this as some stupid sign. If the adoption doesn't work, we will revisit other options. It's not the end of the world, Mickey, and it's not a sign that we shouldn't have a baby."

Mickey takes in a deep, shaky breath, and he clings a little closer to Ian, nodding slowly as Ian rocks him in his arms and holds him just a little tighter.

They meet Daniella on a Tuesday. The day sticks out to Mickey, because it feels so mundane for such a life changing moment. But it's a Tuesday, nonetheless, and Mickey's not sure what to make of that.

When she knocks on their door, she's shy and nervous, fidgeting with her hands as her mother stands by her side trying to calm her. Mickey understands how the girl feels—he feels like he's about to freak the fuck out himself. But when Ian lays a gentle hand on his shoulder and smiles bright, Mickey can feel his anxiety melt away into nothing, and he thinks he sees Daniella's fade a bit as well. After a moment, Ian’s ushering everyone inside, and all of a sudden everything's really fucking real, and Mickey's just praying that they won't screw this up.

After a few moments, Ian has everyone set up in the living room. Daniella's sitting close beside her mother on the couch, and Ian's perched on the arm of the overstuffed chair where Mickey sits. It's a relief for Mickey, having Ian close, and Mickey feels all the tension drift away as Ian reaches out to link their fingers before laying their joined hands in his lap, his thumb painting soothing circles over Mickey's skin. Mickey can't help but smile up at his husband, sending a silent thank you to Ian for being his anchor when Mickey feels like he's about to lose his mind.

“So,” Ian begins; his eyes lingering on Mickey for just a moment before they shift to Daniella, “uh—we're not exactly sure how all of this is supposed to work, but we're more than happy to answer any questions you might have. And we just—we hope you might consider us.”

Daniella smiles up at Ian as her hand drifts down to cradle the tiny bump just emerging over her abdomen. It's a protective gesture, Mickey realizes immediately, and it fills Mickey with a softness he’s not sure he's ever felt before. It's clear, then, that Daniella may be parting with her child, but she still loves the tiny life she's supporting, and Mickey knows, instinctively, that she'll care for herself and the baby without question. It makes him feel a little better about the whole thing. There had been moments when he’d been fearful of how little say they’d have in their child’s initial growth—a symptom he knows had come from their early years in the Southside, and all of the mothers they’d watched sacrifice their child's safety for their own comfort. He’d never judged—it was just something that happened when you grew up the way they had, and hell, he never would have been able to exercise the kind of restraint expected of a pregnant mother—but now, as they sought a child of their own, it was wearing on him a bit. Seeing the fierce love and protectiveness in Daniella's eyes, though, helped to calm his fears immediately.

It's silent for a few moments, Daniella cradling her belly as she averts her eyes nervously, her gaze
shifting to her mother's as she searches for words. Daniella's mother—Clara, Mickey remembers, trying to force the name to stick in his mind—nods gently at Daniella. “It's all right, Dani,” Clara urges, giving the girl a reassuring smile.

For her part, Daniella still seems unsure as she moves her eyes back to Ian and Mickey. “I don't really know how this works, either,” she admits, clearly self conscious about her own lack of understanding. “I just want my baby to have a loving family. I can't take care of this child—I’m barely sixteen, and we just can't do it. I want this baby to have a family who will love it and care for it in a way I just can't.”

She pauses, her eyes filling with tears that remain unshed and Mickey's own mist with emotion. Mickey feels Ian's fingers squeeze his own and he glances up for just a moment to meet his husband's gentle eyes before turning back to Daniella. Mickey smiles reassuringly and gives her a little nod.

Finally, she takes a deep breath, calming her emotion, and steadying her words. “Why do you want a baby?” she asks confidently, her voice never wavering as she watches them carefully.

“We finally got our shit together,” Mickey speaks up first, all honesty, voice matter of fact. “For a long time, our lives were really fucked up. We went through a lot, but we got through it, and now we're here, together, married. Happy. And we're ready to give a child a good home. We're ready to raise a baby. To give our son a little brother or sister. We're ready to expand our family.”

When Mickey finishes speaking, he glances up at Ian, and his breath catches at the fierce love and pride he sees there—sometimes all the emotion Ian projects still knocks Mickey on his ass on the regular. Now that he has Ian, for good, he sometimes feels like the entire center of Ian's universe—and he feels that, too, for Ian—but fuck if it isn't overwhelming sometimes. After another moment, a soft smile, and a little squeeze of Mickey's hand, Ian's turning his eyes back to Daniella. "He kinds said it all," Ian insists playfully, and Mickey finds a way to pinch his thigh in retaliation, even as his own lips tip into a genuine smile.

Daniella smiles a little at that, her limbs relaxing just a little in relief. "Your son?" she asks after a second when all of Mickey's words fully sink in. "You've adopted before?"

"Nah," Mickey denies, tensing just a little. He's not sure how much to open up. Doesn't really want to, but also doesn't want to deny any information that might make Daniella walk away from them. "He's from a previous relationship. With his mom most of the time, really, but he has his place here. Trying to increase our time with him slowly. It's a process."

Clara looks a little concerned at that, studying them carefully—Daniella's smiling still, unaware of her mother's concern, but Ian sees it immediately and tenses a little, drawing Mickey's attention. Ian nods at Clara, directing Mickey's eyes.

"Listen," Ian begins carefully, "We'll answer any questions you may have. Just ask. Please."

Clara nods, hesitates a moment, but then asks, "your bio said your son was four, correct?" They both nod, but Mickey tenses, the muscles in his back tightening. Ian reaches down to rub soothing circles there, trying to will away the panic he can literally feel rising in Mickey. After giving them a moment, Clara continues, her voice careful, "if he's four, then shouldn't all custody arrangements be figured out by now?"

Mickey's so tense, Ian's sure he's on the verge of a panic attack. Knows Mickey wants to be honest, but fuck if some of the shit in their past doesn't still fucking crush him sometimes.
"Mick, babe?" Ian calls Mickey's attention to him, some of Mickey's tension melting away as soon as they lock eyes. "Breathe," Ian whispers. Mickey nods, takes in a careful breath and squeezes Ian's fingers tight.

"I'm okay," Mickey mumbles after a second. Ian doesn't really believe him, but he also knows he won't get away with calling Mickey out on that in their current circumstances.

Still, Ian knows Mickey can't tell this story. Not to two strangers they've just met. It's still too fresh. Ian thinks maybe it always will be.

"Mickey, why don't you take a minute," Ian suggests carefully, reassuring eyes locked on Mickey. "Go get some air, and I'll explain the situation with Yevy, okay?"

"I'm fuckin' fine, Ian," Mickey protests, eyes going just a little dark with anger. Ian just holds Mickey's fingers tighter in his own.

"You're about to have a panic attack, Mickey," Ian approaches carefully, making sure Ian keeps Mickey's eyes locked on him. "I know it's in the past, but that doesn't mean it doesn't still hurt. You shouldn't have to tell this one. I'll take it. You go get some air and come back in ten. You want to jump in then, that's fine, but you and I both know you need a minute. Let me take this one, Mick."

After a few more moments of hesitation, Mickey finally accepts—he's learned to let Ian care for him, even if Ian's not the best at doing the same. So Mickey nods silently, raising Ian's hand to his lips and pressing a kiss of gratitude to Ian's knuckles. When he rises, he whispers a quiet "sorry" to Daniella and Clara, and then walks out the door, trying to pretend he's not in a rush to leave the tension behind.

Once Mickey's safely out of earshot, Ian smiles a little sadly at the pair, taking a deep breath of his own. "Okay," he starts, a little exaggerated—he's not sure he knows where to begin. "So, our history with Yevgeny—our son—it's a little complicated, and it involves a shit-ton of trauma, especially for Mickey."

"Look," Clara interjects, leaning forward, but closing off her body language in a way that worries Ian instantly. Of all the fucking things to fuck this up. She looks sympathetic, but determined. "If this is some case of abuse. If—if Mickey used to be violent and turned it around or—"

"What?" Ian cuts her off, brows drawing together and anger he knows he shouldn't feel seeping into his tone. "No. Mickey's not—fuck," Ian shakes his head with an incredulous chuckle, "Mickey is not abusive. It's his fucking piece of shit father who's an abusive prick."

"Oh," Clara whispers apologetically, nodding at Ian to continue.

"Look, this is fuckin' heavy, okay, and I'd rather not revisit it. But you've got a right to know if we got any shot at making this happen." Ian hesitates then, sighing harshly as he runs his fingers through his hair. "His fuckin' dad caught us together. Was a homophobic piece of shit. Beat us both, and then literally fuckin' had Mickey raped at gunpoint by a Russian prostitute while I watched. That was Svetlana. Yevy's mom. She got knocked up from that one shit fucking encounter, and Mickey's dad forced him to marry her. The whole thing was really fucking traumatic. Took Mickey a long time to even be able to look at Yev, and then the whole wrongful prison sentence thing happened—but you know about that—and by the time Mickey was exonerated we'd been away from Yev awhile. We've built back his mom's trust for the most part, but it's still a process."

When Ian pauses to take in a shaky breath, Clara immediately apologizes, leaning forward and
watching Ian with remorseful eyes. "I'm so sorry," she insists, as Daniella nods in agreement. "I
shouldn't have jumped to conclusions. You shouldn't even have to tell us all this. I didn't mean to
bring up all that pain. I just—Dani's chosen to give up this baby. And I agree with her decision. But
we still want it to have a good life. To be loved and cared for the way every child deserves. And I
worry that we can't really know that we're doing the right thing or choosing the right people."

"We can't promise everything will always be perfect," Mickey's voice sounds from the doorway
where he's been listening for just a moment. Ian turns a soft smile on him as Clara and Daniella
turn to follow him with their eyes. After he deposits his coat on the hook by the door, Mickey
rejoins the group, locking his fingers around Ian's once more. "We've been through a lot. We'll go
through a lot more. We can't say if we'll always be financially stable forever or if things won't ever
get rocky between us. But if you choose us—if you give us the honor of calling this baby our own
—then we can promise you that we will love this child with everything we have and that we will
always do everything in our power to keep this baby safe and protected. Our families were abusive.
We're not."

"Can I see the baby sometimes?" Daniella's words are quiet—rushed and nervous—and Ian and
Mickey can both see the panic on her face as she glances warily between them and her mother.

"Danni," Clara scolds gently, placing a reassuring hand on Daniella's knee, "we talked about this."

Daniella watches her mother for a moment, her face falling and tears gathering in her eyes. "I
know," Daniella whispers softly. "Sometimes, I just feel like I want to see the baby grow up. Even
if it's only pictures."

"Like an open adoption?" Ian asks, thoughtful, but pleasant, careful not to sound like he's rejecting
the idea, because he's not. He and Mickey had only talked about the idea briefly, but they're open
to it.

Daniella nods slowly, the sadness still coloring her vibrant features, and her eyes downturned.

Mickey glances up at Ian, and they share a little smile while Ian rubs a strong hand over Mickey's
back. Once Daniella's eyes return to the two of them, Mickey gives her a genuine smile. "I think
we can do that," he assures her honestly. "Not like the kid's gonna think it fell outta one of us. No
reason you couldn't be around sometimes. If you wanna go with us, we can work somethin' out."

Before Mickey can even process what's happening, Daniella has launched herself off the couch and
into Mickey's arms, squeezing him tight for just a moment before she realizes she may be
overstepping and pulling back quickly. "Sorry!" she squeaks meekly, but she can't help the smile
she tries to hide behind her fingers. When she looks Ian's way, his amused expression stretches into
a smile, too, and she reaches out a little more carefully to hug him, Ian accepting it willingly. "I like
you guys," Daniella tells them honestly.

Clara steps in then, carefully, calling Daniella's attention back to her. "Danni," she insists gently,
"you know you're not supposed to decide until you've taken a little time to think about it. And we
have to meet the other potential families still."

Daniella turns back to her mother then, eyes puppy-dog wide as she locks her gaze with her
mother's. "I like them, mom."

Clara laughs a little at that, especially when she sees the light it ignites in both Ian and Mickey,
their expressions filling with pride. "I know, honey. I like them, too. But let's try not to make
promises we're not sure we can keep, okay?"
Daniella nods slowly at that, returning to her place beside her mother. "Yeah," she agrees, "okay."

After that, they spend the rest of their time together answering questions and discussing potential logistics; their plans for caring for the baby, how they'll deal with raising two children, how they'll fit the baby into their extended family. When all is said and done, Daniella hugs them again and promises she'll be in touch soon. Another week, and she'll give them her decision.

When they close the door behind her, they're warily hopeful, unsure of how likely it is their first interview will result in a happy ending, but feeling at peace with the possibilities.

"You think we got a shot here?" Mickey's asks, his voice trembling and his hands shaking as he reaches out to tug at the collar of Ian's button-down absentmindedly. He can't even meet Ian's eyes as he stares blankly down at Ian's chest, his breath hitching in fear even as he tries to hide the anxiety welling up in his throat. "You really think our first interview—after months of waiting with no interest—you really think this could be it?"

Ian smiles, reaches out to tug Mickey to him with a soft smile. He pulls Mickey against his chest and kisses the top of Mickey's head. "Don't know," Ian murmurs honestly; he doesn't want to mislead Mickey or get his hopes up too high when neither of them really have any idea. "But I think we've got a shot."

"I liked her a lot," Mickey confesses, his voice barely a whisper as he clings to Ian, soaking in the support Ian's giving him. "Think the open adoption thing could be a good idea."

Ian nods, rocking Mickey a little as a smile spreads over his lips. "Yeah," he agrees. "Yeah. Me, too."

Mickey swallows hard, smiling himself as he tugs at Ian's hand to intertwine their fingers. "I really want a baby," Mickey whispers.

Ian huffs a little laugh at that, squeezing Mickey's hand in his. "Me, too, Mick."
Chapter Summary

Happy New Year's Eve! Have a Christmas chapter.

Mickey and Ian receive a surprise in an unexpected Christmas gift.

Chapter Notes

Hey look, we’ve made it full circle back to Christmas again! But the chapter is actually semi-appropriately timed this time around. It did get out of control long, though. It's a grand total of 9,984 words. I thought about breaking it into two or three, but it just didn't make sense, so here we are. And it's pure fluff. I recently said that I could read a 100k fic of these two just sitting on the couch together, and frankly, that's basically what this is, just in 10k form this chapter. Hope you enjoy!

Also, I'm running out of appropriate Darren Hayes / Savage Garden tracks… The title of this one is from "The Tuning of Violins" by Darren Hayes. The song is absolutely gorgeous, and you should listen to it.

“Christmas is only a few weeks out at this point,” Ian mentions, pressing himself up close behind Mickey as he drops a kiss to his husband’s shoulder, fingertips lingering at Mickey’s hips.

Mickey smiles, sinking back against Ian and letting his eyes fall closed for just a moment. After giving himself a second to take Ian in, Mickey smiles and pulls away just a little, returning to the work he’s doing at the counter, trying to make their morning coffee. “No shit, man,” Mickey answers, dumping the water into the back of the drip machine and shoving the carafe back into place unceremoniously before flipping the power switch, “Yev hasn’t stopped talking about it since Thanksgiving.” With a fond smile, Mickey turns himself around in Ian’s arms and catches Ian’s lips in a soft kiss before letting his arms rest around Ian’s neck. “And neither have you.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Ian teases, eyes locked on Mickey’s, “just want to make it special like last year, you know? Make memories and all that. Yevy given you any idea what he might want? Keeps talking about Christmas, but he hasn’t given me a list or anything.”

“I know,” Mickey shrugs, breaking away to sit himself at the breakfast bar while they wait for the coffee to brew. “Lana doesn’t think we should be buying him a bunch more shit. Says he’s already got too much. I tend to agree. Keeps talking about turning him soft. I don’t fuckin’ know.”

Ian nods thoughtfully. “She’s not wrong, really. Not about turning him soft,” Ian corrects as an afterthought, “but he does have a lot of shit. We should probably keep it smaller. One or two really special gifts? He keeps asking for a dog.”

When he hears that, Mickey’s eyebrows shoot up in an incredulous glare. “You really thought you
were just gonna slip that one in there real easy, huh?” Mickey scolds, a playful fondness dancing around the edges of his tone. “Ian, we're not getting a dog.”

“Why not?” Ian questions, and his voice sounds almost identical to the whine Yev uses when he’s trying to get his way. Mickey’s not sure who learned it from who. “Dogs are great, Mick!”

“Ian, we’re trying to have a baby. We don’t need the added stress of a dog on top of that. The hell are we supposed to do if we actually manage to get a baby? How are we gonna deal with a dog and a baby and a four-year-old?”

“Oh, come on, Mick,” Ian protests with a roll of his eyes. “People with dogs have babies all the time. It’d be fine. We’d take all that into account. Find the right breed—"

" No , Ian," Mickey insists, voice firm as he stares his husband down.

"But—" Ian protests again, but Mickey's having none of it.

" No ," Mickey cuts in, and his tone is final in a way Ian's not used to hearing it.

So Ian gives in; his shoulders falling in defeat and his lips turning down into a bit of a frown. "Okay," Ian sighs, as he pulls down a couple of mugs and pours each of them a cup of freshly brewed coffee. When he's finished, he passes one to Mickey, and settles himself into a lean against the counter, sipping his coffee quietly and saying no more.

Mickey sighs a little at that. He knows Ian doesn't mean anything by it—that he's just a little disappointed, because he'd been itching for a dog himself since the moment Yev started asking. And if Mickey's being honest with himself, he thinks he'd like that, too. But Mickey also can't quite help but feel like doing so would be just another attempt at filling the hole in his heart that's been deepening with every passing moment that their family's not growing. He hasn't said it aloud yet, not even to Ian, but he feels like a failure. Like his past and his family and his entire goddamn life before Ian are conspiring against him to deny them their chance at a child. Saying yes to this feels like giving up.

And yet, the slump of Ian's shoulders and the sad little set of his mouth have Mickey sighing in defeat because fuck if he's ever been able to deny Ian anything.

"We can look into it," he finally agrees gently with a shake of his head.

And the way Ian's eyes light up and he swoops in to press a happy kiss to Mickey's mouth, smiling bright the whole time, leaves Mickey tingling all over. He's always been a sucker for making Ian happy like this.

Maybe a dog wouldn't be the worst idea.

"Why the fuck is it fluffy ?" Mickey questions, strangely intrigued at the dog's scraggly coat. Its fur is longer than any pug Mickey's ever seen, and it's nose seems a little longer than he'd expected, too. But otherwise, it's all pug. Which, in Mickey's book, makes it a strange little creature to say the least. But then, Mickey's never really been a dog person—he's not exactly against them, obviously, but just, well, a dog had never been an option, so he'd never given it much thought.

But even Mickey's willing to admit, it is a pretty cute little thing.

"It's a mixed breed, Mick," Ian explains, as he glances over the info sheet hooked to the pen the little pup is in. "Says they don't know what the mix is, but he's mostly pug. Good disposition. Good
with kids. Could take or leave other pets, but overall friendly. Sounds like a good fit, huh?"

"You don't think they lie on that shit?" Mickey counters, even as he's crouching down and holding his hand out to the wires of the pen, so the little dog can sniff at his fingers.

"I mean, even if they do, he seems pretty chill," Ian reasons, kneeling down beside Mickey and mimicking his husband's actions.

The little dog seems to have trouble deciding who to focus on, his little tail wagging a mile a minute, and his tongue lolling out. After a few moments of back and forth snuffles, the pup finally turns himself around and sits himself down as close as he possibly can to the edge of the pen, fur spilling through the wires. He manages to square himself perfectly so that both Mickey and Ian can reach him for a little scratch. Ian laughs at that, and Mickey smiles.

Without taking his eyes off the little pug mix, Mickey says, "What do you think, love? This our guy?"

Ian's lips tip up at the affectionate pet name, and he gives the pup some renewed scratches. "Think so. Don't you? Pugs are good for kids. Small, but sturdy, you know? I don't think we'll have an issue on that front with Yevy, though."

Mickey nods, a little unreasonably let down at Ian's failure to mention the baby Mickey's starting to think they may never have. But he tries to hide it, and turns a small smile to Ian. "Let's get this process started, then."

After all is said and done, Mickey's feeling drained. It was almost as hard to adopt the damn dog as it's proving to get a baby, and his irritation over everything is starting to win out. Ian had insisted it was a good thing, all the hoops they had to jump through, because it was better for the dogs. Making sure they were going to good families and shit. And Mickey gets it, he really does, but fuck if he wasn't annoyed at having to do a goddamn home visit to adopt a fucking dog.

But Mickey's not gonna lie. He's pretty damn fond of funny looking little thing.

And everything had worked out pretty perfectly with the timing. They've just brought him home, and it's a week before Christmas. They'd both hoped they'd be able to keep it from Yev until closer to Christmas, and at this point, they won't have Yev again for another two days, so things were working out in their favor. They'd managed to convince Svetlana to let Yev stay the weekend before the holiday, since Svet was apparently taking him to a Christmas Eve sleepover at Vee's mom's place with Kev, Vee, and the girls. So Christmas is coming a little early at the Gallagher-Milkovich house, and Mickey's looking forward to surprising Yevgeny with their new Christmas addition.

Fiona's given Mickey the whole week off at the diner to prepare. He's not sure how he feels about that—he's pretty sure Fiona's on the outs with Debbie and Lip at the moment, and he thinks she's avoiding the holiday drama—but she'd insisted that Mickey take a little time off to help the pup settle in and to get ready for Christmas with Yevgeny in a few days. Mickey's not sure what the fuck she wants him to get ready for. They're doing an overnight with Yev at her place on the 21st, and then their own little family Christmas on the morning of the 23rd, so they don't need to do anything particularly special at the apartment. Or at least, not anything that hasn't already been done.

But regardless, Mickey's been given the time, and he's been spending it getting to know the little monster that hasn't stopped following him around since they brought him home. And Mickey's
been trying not to admit it, but the little guy is really growing on him. They just need to figure out a name.

A few days later, they've concocted a plan to keep their surprise under wraps until their own family Christmas morning. Mickey wants Yev to meet the dog to make sure they get along before they break the happy news that he's theirs, and Ian agrees, though neither are particularly worried. The little dog is the friendliest thing they've ever met, and they have no doubt that he'll love Yevgeny and vice versa. But they want to be sure, so they work with Fiona to come up with a plan, and before they pick Yev up on the 21st, everything's all set to go.

When they pick up Yevgeny from his mom's place, he's excited to spend time with Aunt Fiona, and he babbles about her the whole way from his house to the Gallagher house. It makes both Ian and Mickey smile softly. Yevgeny has grown particularly attached to Fiona over the past year. He'd always been fond of her, but Fiona is excellent with kids, and as Yevgeny has gotten a little older and his personality has come forward more and more, she's actively taken to building a relationship with the boy. Ian feels a little guilty because Fiona's more attached to Yevy than she is to Franny, but he also can't help but feel a little swell of pride at that. He knows it makes him a shitty uncle, but he's so happy that his new little family fits so well with his original that he can't help but pride himself in the relationship he's helped to foster between his son and his big sister.

Once they get to the door, Yevgeny doesn't hesitate a moment, just throws the door open and wanders in. "Aunt Fi-fi?!" Yevgeny calls, his little voice carrying as his eyes search for Fiona. When he spots her, his eyes widen in excitement, and he launches himself at her. "Aunt Fi-fi!"

Fiona's whole face lights up as she catches him up in her arms and swing him up onto her hip as she exclaims happily, "Hey, Yevy-yev! I missed you, kiddo!" before smacking a kiss to his cheek. Yev turns and kisses Fiona's cheek in return, and then nuzzles his head into her neck, snuggling into her arms.

Ian and Mickey are both beaming at the display, and they give Yev another minute with Fiona as the boy starts babbling about his upcoming Christmas with the other side of his family. After a moment, though, once they've stripped off their own winter clothes, they know they need to get Yev out of his—and that Fiona's back probably needs a break from the four year old who's almost as big as her.

"All right, little man," Mickey finally cuts in, reaching out for his son. Fiona shifts Yevgeny into Mickey's arms with a little smile. "Time to get you out of your outdoor clothes. You're already dripping snow all over Auntie Fi's floor."

Yevgeny sighs dramatically, but doesn't protest any further as Mickey sets him down on the mat by the door and kneels down beside him, pulling off Yevy's boots and coat. Yevgeny takes off his hat and mittens himself and shoves them at his father as he hastily sets off again to find his Aunt. Mickey just smiles and rolls his eyes as he catches Ian's gaze and they share a little head shake.

After a moment, Mickey pushes himself up from the floor, making his way over to Ian and wrapping his arms around Ian's neck as he presses up close and kisses him softly. There's something about the soft glow from the Christmas tree and the smell of freshly baked sugar cookies and the quiet music playing from the kitchen that has Mickey feeling all loose and cozy and affectionate. Ian accepts the affection happily and rocks Mickey a little in his arms as they share gentle kisses.

"Hey," Ian whispers after a moment, pulling back just a little to smile at Mickey, but keeping him close, "Merry Christmas, love."
Mickey smiles and presses another kiss to Ian's lips. "Merry Christmas to you, too."

"All right, you two," Fiona scolds playfully from the kitchen, "Stop making out and get your asses in here!"

Mickey and Ian both laugh a little and shake their heads, Ian pressing one last kiss to the corner of Mickey's mouth before breaking away. They stay close, though, Ian slinging an arm over Mickey's shoulders, and Mickey slipping his around Ian's waist as they wander their way into the kitchen. Fiona has Yevgeny set up at the kitchen table with a glass of chocolate milk, and he's still babbling on about his Christmas plans. The three adults smile fondly at the boy, and Fiona ruffles his hair as he comes to a lull in his story.

"Yevy, Auntie Fi's got something to show you," she tells him, throwing a little smirk at Ian and Mickey. "I'll be right back with it, okay?"

Yev looks thoughtful for a moment, but nods in agreement. "Okay," he tells her with a big smile, "but hurry!"

"Aye aye, captain!" Fiona salutes, laughing happily as she bounds up the stairs and disappears from sight.

"What do you think she has, daddy?" Yevy asks, and it's aimed at Ian.

Ian just smiles, glancing to Mickey out of the corner of his eye as he moves to take the seat beside Yevgeny. "I don't know, bud. We'll have to wait and see."

"Do you think it's a present for me?" Yev continues thoughtfully. He's not really paying his dads much attention, mostly just chattering to himself, and it makes Ian and Mickey smile. Lost in thought, Yevgeny blows bubbles into his glass, and Ian laughs with a shake of his head as they rise dangerously close to the edge.

"All right," Ian interjects, reaching out to carefully pull the cup from Yevy's grasp, "Let's not make a mess, Yev."

"Sorry, daddy," Yev apologizes sincerely, "I's just excited."

"I know, buddy," Ian reassures with a smile, tickling Yevy's shoulder and making him giggle. After a moment, though, Yevgeny's attention is drawn to Fiona's footsteps on the stairs, and his eyes go wide as he spots the wiggling bundle in Fiona's arms. "Puppy!" Yevgeny shrieks happily, springing from his seat and rushing to Fiona's side. The little dog isn't phased in the least at Yevgeny's excitement; his tail actually picking up speed as he tries to wiggle his way to Yevgeny. Fiona kneels down next to Yev, and the pup immediately covers Yev's face in kisses. Yev giggles happily, smile beaming as he throws his head back and forth at the attention and brings his fingers up to cradle the puppy's head and scratch behind his ears.

It's love at first sight, and Mickey and Ian are both relieved, if not surprised.

"I think he likes you, Yev," Fiona tells him with a smile.

Yevgeny nods, his little giggle renewed as Fiona sets the puppy down and Yevgeny plops himself on the floor so they're on the same level. Yevgeny rubs the little dog's back, and the pup leans against Yev, still kissing Yevgeny's face and whining happily. "He's yours?" Yevgeny asks Fiona, and all of the adults in the room hear the little bit of hope that maybe Fiona might confirm he's a gift for Yevgeny. Fiona nods, though, and Yev hides his disappointment quickly with a smile and
another little rub of the puppy's fur.

"You can visit him any time you want, though," Fiona promises, never immune to Yevy's disappointed face, even when the boy tries to hide it—and even when she knows the real score. "And he needs a name still. You can help me pick one out." Another ploy to get Yev to help with the naming.

Yevgeny lights up at that, taking the little dog's face in his hands gently and studying him for a moment as the pup continues to wiggle excitedly. After a few seconds of contemplation, Yevgeny looks up at Fiona and shouts triumphantly, "Smushy!

Fiona laughs out loud at that, and both Mickey and Ian stare with wide eyes in morbid disbelief, shaking their heads desperately. "Uh-uh, Yev. Smushy is not a name for a dog," Mickey protests.

Yev just shrugs in undeterred defiance and looks back over his shoulder at his dad. "Not your dog, daddy. Aunt Fi-fi gets to name him, not you."

Ian and Fiona both let out surprised laughs at that, and Mickey's left shaking his head, at a loss for words. "Well," he finally says, a little huff of a laugh leaving him, too, "all right, then."

Fiona smirks up at Mickey and picks up the little dog again, straightening up to stand beside Yevgeny and reaching for his hand. "Why don't we keep brainstorming, Yevy. You want to come with me to take him outside?"

"Okay!" Yev agrees excitedly, latching onto Fiona's hand and allowing her to lead him toward the living room.

"All right, I'll put his coat on, while you get on yours, okay?" Fiona offers, and Yevgeny nods happily at that.

"Okay!" he agrees, and then pauses for a moment. "He has a coat?"

"Of course," Fiona insists, pulling a puffy little parka off the back of the couch as they wander by, "it's cold outside! He needs to keep warm, too!"

Once they're out of earshot, Mickey turns shocked eyes to Ian. "She bought the dog a coat?"

Mickey hisses, trying to keep his voice low until he's sure Fiona's outside with the pup and Yevgeny.

"I mean, it is cold out," Ian defends with a shrug. "Probably a good idea."

Mickey can't help but give an incredulous laugh at that, shaking his head a little in amusement as he mumbles, 'Fuckin' high maintenance dog, man."

The rest of the night goes off without a hitch. Debbie and Franny arrive not long after Ian and Mickey, and Liam comes home from a friend's house not long before dinnertime with Carl trailing him. Lip also wanders in at some point, but he's too drunk to really notice them, and ends up crashing in his room. Ian's frustrated with his brother's antics, but Lip doesn't cause any real problems, so he shrugs it off. Ian sometimes wishes Lip were sober enough to build a relationship with Yevgeny, but Ian's not sure he trusts Lip not to be a dick to his son, anyway, so he doesn't push it. And Ian knows, really, that it wouldn't work even if he tried. It's on Lip to figure out he needs help—trying to force it on him won't do them any good.

But the rest of the gang is there, and they've all gathered in the kitchen. Mickey's helping Fiona
with dinner, while Ian, Carl, and Debbie have set up shop around the table, catching up with one
another. The kids are nearby, playing with the puppy on the floor, with Yevgeny taking charge and
whispering quiet reminders to Franny to be gentle when she starts to get a little too rough with the
pup. Ian catches Mickey's eye from across the room, and they share a little smile, happy to see that
Yevgeny is bonding with the dog.

Once Mickey and Fiona have dinner on the table, Ian heads over to gather Yevgeny. "All right,
kiddo," Ian mumbles, pressing a little kiss to Yevy's cheek, "time for dinner. We've gotta let the
doggie be for a while, okay?"

With a little sigh, Yevgeny nods, reaching out one more time to run his fingers through the pup's
fur. "Okay, daddy," he agrees quietly, "I be back to play later, Smushy," he promises the little dog,
leaning over to kiss the top of his head.

Ian just laughs at that and scoops Yevgeny up into his arms, before heading to the kitchen sink to
help Yevy wash his hands for dinner.

Mickey watches them fondly, but shakes his head at the name their son is stuck on. Under his
breath, he murmurs, "We are not naming the damn dog Smushy." The rest of the table just laughs
at him, and scoot to make room for Ian and Yevgeny as they settle in at the dinner table.

Fiona's given up her room for them, opting to crash on the couch, so Ian and Mickey can share a
bed. They hadn't loved the idea, but she'd insisted, and they'd been exhausted enough by the end of
the night to take her up on it.

When Mickey opens his eyes the next morning, he finds Ian already awake, watching him quietly,
as his fingers trace gentle patterns over Mickey's forearm. "Morning," Ian whispers with a little
smile, leaning forward to kiss Mickey softly before reaching out to lace his fingers with Mickey's.
"Merry early Christmas, Mick."

"Merry early Christmas, love," Mickey echoes, returning Ian's smile and giving his fingers a little
squeeze. "Should we go get the kid up?"

Ian lets out a little chuckle at that and tips his head toward the end of the bed, where Yevgeny's
wrapped in an old crochet blanket, cuddled up close to the puppy. Mickey smiles softly at their son
before lifting his eyes back to Ian's.

"He wandered in a little after you fell asleep," Ian explains. "I was almost out myself. Guess it's
becoming a holiday tradition, huh?"

Mickey laughs quietly at that, shifting a little closer to pillow his head on Ian's chest, keeping their
fingers tangled. "Think he likes the dog," Mickey states the obvious, snuggling a little closer
against Ian, as Ian's fingers tickle down his shoulder, making Mickey smile.

"He is gonna flip his shit when we tell him tomorrow," Ian whispers, nuzzling Mickey's hair and
kissing his forehead.

Mickey laughs at that, a little louder than intended, and the noise causes Yevgeny to stir a little at
the end of the bed. Rubbing restlessly at his face, Yevgeny turns over to face his dads, giving an
exaggerated stretch for good measure. "Time for presents, daddies?"

"All right," Mickey laughs, sitting himself up and reaching down to hook his hands under Yevy's
arms to drag him up between himself and Ian, plopping him down and proceeding to tickle the
boy's neck until Yevgeny's giggling goofily and the little dog has joined them to bathe Yevgeny's
face in kisses at all the excitement.

"Okay, daddy!" Yev protests, still giggling happily as Mickey let's up. "I's kidding! Breakfast first!"

"There ya go," Ian praises, patting Yev's leg affectionately before sitting up and swinging off the bed. "Let's get you dressed, and then we'll take the puppy out for Aunt Fi before breakfast."

"Okay!" Yev agrees, scooting himself to the end of the bed and taking off for the door. "I go get my bag!"

Ian and Mickey both laugh when the little dog bounds out of the room after Yevgeny.

Once they're settled in around the tree in the living room, Yevgeny helps Liam pass out the neatly wrapped gifts under the tree. The adults make a big show of keeping a watchful eye on the kids' gift piles, and Yevgeny giggles every time he passes one to Fiona and she shakes it with wide eyes, pretending to guess what might be inside. With all the antics, it takes a while for all of the gifts to be distributed, but Yevgeny's happy as a clam as he crawls up into Fiona's lap, making sure his dads are close by as he chooses a gift from the top of the pile.

Fiona's gone a little overboard. Ian and Mickey had both expected it, but they're still left shaking their heads at her. She's excited, though, they know, since she and Yevgeny have gotten so close, so they don't actively protest. And Yevgeny is obviously thrilled at the attention from his Aunt. After every little gift he opens, Yevgeny claps happily, and throws his arms around Fiona, thanking her with a little hug. Ian and Mickey watch contentedly, unconcerned with Yevgeny's indifference to them—Ian's too busy snapping pictures anyway, and Mickey's nursing a beer, a firm hand resting gently on Ian's thigh. They're both feeling warm and cozy and happy, and the stress of everything else in their lives has managed to fade away into the background.

After a bit, once Yevgeny's unwrapped everything in the little pile and laid it out neatly on the coffee table, his attention turns back to his dads and he smiles bright. Scooping up a little pile of books, Yevgeny scoots down off Fiona's lap and carries them over to Mickey and Ian carefully, holding them out for his dads to see. "Look, daddies!" he announced excitedly, holding up his treasures for Ian and Mickey to inspect. "New books!"

"I see!" Mickey matches Yev's excitement, reaching out to scoop the boy up and settle him in his lap. Mickey watches carefully as Yevgeny flips through the little stack of books for his dads. Once Yev's done showing them the new collection, Mickey smiles and squeezes Yevy's sides, "They look like good ones, kiddo."

"They do," Ian agrees, reaching out to ruffle Yevgeny's hair. After a moment, he adds, "remember, though, Yev—new books in, old books out. When we get home, we'll need to pick some old ones to give to kids who need them, okay."

"I know, daddy," Yevgeny agrees with a smile, handing the books over to Ian. "Can you read me one now?"

Ian smiles at that, taking one from the top and giving the rest to Fiona, who sets them aside with the rest of Yevgeny's Christmas presents. Yevgeny smiles and pops a thumb into his mouth, snuggling back into Mickey's chest. For a moment, before Ian begins to read, he and Mickey share a fond little smile, Mickey resting his cheek against their son's soft blonde hair and waiting for Ian to begin.
Later that night, when they get home, Yevgeny's barely awake, nodding off against Ian shoulder as he carries the boy into the apartment, Mickey following close behind with the dog. Fiona had convinced Yevgeny she needed someone to puppysit, and Yevgeny had volunteered them happily, seemingly oblivious to the actual score. Mickey's relieved Yev hasn't figured it out yet—he and Ian are both hopeful they'll pull off the big surprise in the morning without confusing their son too much. Mickey thinks he'll be all right, though. The kid's smart as a whip—a trait Mickey insists he gets from Ian and maybe a little from his mother.

"Daddy?" Yevgeny murmurs groggily, dragging Mickey out of his reverie. Ian smiles gently at the way Yevgeny's eyes follow every move Mickey makes with the puppy.

"Yeah, bud?" Mickey asks as he unhooks the leash and takes the little harness off the dog. Once he's free, the little dog wags his tail and stretches up on two legs to get closer to Yevgeny.

Yev giggles a little at that, a sleepy smile spreading to his eyes. "Can Smushy sleep in my room with me?"

After locking eyes with Ian for just a moment for confirmation, Mickey smiles back at Yev. "Yeah, Yevy," Mickey agrees, reaching out to give Yevgeny's shoulder a little squeeze, "I think that'd be just fine."

"Thank you, daddy," Yevgeny says through a yawn, rubbing his fingers over his tired eyes.

"All right, Yev," Ian murmurs gently as he swings Yevgeny off his hip to deposit him carefully on the carpeted floor. "It's time for bed, kiddo. Why don't you go brush your teeth and get your jammies on. Daddy and I will come tuck you in in just a minute."

Once he has his feet under him, Yevgeny nods and wanders toward the bathroom to get ready for bed. Mickey smiles after him, glancing to Ian when Yev disappears around the corner. "Well, that went off without a hitch, huh?" he directs at Ian as he deposits a bag full of leftovers on the counter and begins sorting through them.

"Nice when he's easy like this," Ian agrees, dropping the backpack full of Yevgeny's Christmas gifts on the couch to deal with later. "Was afraid he'd get overtired and have a meltdown at some point."

"Yeah, man, we dodged a fuckin' bullet," Mickey agrees, opening the fridge to stock away the leftovers. "Kid's definitely overtired, but he's holding it together well. Think he'll let us sleep in tomorrow morning?"

Ian laughs out loud at that. "Doubt it, babe," Ian denies, sauntering over to Mickey and wrapping an arm around his shoulders before pressing a kiss into Mickey's hair. "He's gonna be just as excited to open presents here tomorrow morning."

Mickey sighs dramatically at that and shakes off Ian's arm, so he can finish putting away the leftovers. "Just lie to me, man," he gripes playfully, finishing his task and turning back to Ian. Ian just laughs at that, and steps a little closer as Mickey reaches up to wrap his arms around Ian's neck, pressing flush against his husband. "It was a good day," Mickey adds, leaning up to kiss Ian's lips.

Ian meets him halfway and rocks him a little in his arms. "It was a great day," Ian agrees. When he hears the bathroom door open, he pulls away a little, murmuring, "Okay, babe, let's go get the kid to bed."
Mickey nods, hooking his hand into Ian's and heading off toward Yevgeny's room to tuck him in.

It doesn't take long to get Yevgeny down. He's out cold before Ian's even half finished reading the first book Yev's chosen. When they're sure he's fast asleep, Ian carefully sets aside the little stack of books, and Mickey tucks the comforter up around Yevgeny's shoulders before leaning down to kiss the boy's hair gently. Ian follows suit, and then, for a moment, they both watch Yevy fondly before sneaking out of the room, leaving the door ajar, so the little dog can come and go as he pleases.

With Yevgeny settled, Mickey and Ian make themselves comfortable on the couch, sitting close and turning the TV on low to occupy themselves until they're ready to head to bed. With his time off earlier in the week, Mickey had made sure everything was ready to go for Christmas morning, so there's not much left to handle, really.

When the little dog wanders out of Yevgeny's room and makes himself comfortable in the nearby armchair, though, Mickey's reminded that he does have one thing on his mind. "We gotta figure out what the hell we're naming this dog, Ian," he insists, dropping his head back against the couch and turning his eyes to his husband.

Ian shrugs, eyes on the puppy in the chair. "Seems like Yev's already named him," Ian counters, and Mickey cannot believe his ears.

"We are not calling it Smushy," Mickey scolds incredulously, his eyes wide at Ian's suggestion that they entertain the ridiculous name Yev’s chosen. "You already made me get that frilly little fucker instead of a real dog. The fuck you think this is?!"

“Oh, please,” Ian scoffs, humor evident in his tone as he gives Mickey a little eye roll. “You fuckin’ love that dog. You let him sleep in our bed at night.”

“Fuck off,” Mickey counters, and he’s trying to sound intimidating, but he knows it comes out sounding more playful than anything. “Little asshole’s so tiny and vulnerable, I couldn’t resist the damn puppy eyes. Same look you used to give me, in fact. Whole dame reason we’re here. I got a soft spot for weaklings who give me that look.”

Ian laughs at that, big and loud, and it startles the little guy enough that he raises his eyebrows and perks his ears in their direction, but doesn’t move a muscle otherwise. Mickey breaks and laughs a little at that, too. “See,” Ian insists, shifting closer until he’s pressed against Mickey’s side, “you love him.”

“Yeah, well, I love you, too, asshole,” Mickey’s voice goes soft as he pulls Ian closer and presses a kiss to the top of his head. From the overstuffed armchair, the little pug lifts his head and tilts it curiously at the two. After a moment, he stands to stretch lazily before hopping off the chair and launching himself up onto the couch to curl up in the space where Mickey and Ian are pressed together. Mickey smiles and lets his free hand fall to the pup’s velvety little ears as he doles out pleasant scratches the little dog nuzzles into. “We seriously gotta find a name for him, though, man. He can’t just be Dog for the rest of his life.”

Ian nods at that, thoughtful. “I mean, we could just keep the name the shelter gave him…”

At that suggestion, Mickey glares down at Ian in disbelief. “They called him Buttercup. I’m not calling the damn dog Buttercup. That’s fuckin’ worse than Smushy.”

Ian chuckles a little at that—Mickey’s not wrong. Then, for a moment, he pauses, watching the
little bundle of fur sprawled in their laps. “What if we name him something from one of the movies Yevy’s into right now? He really likes that Disney movie— Moana , right? We could name him after the god guy. Maui? That’d be an appropriate dog name, wouldn’t it?”

When Ian looks up at him, Mickey’s eyes are scrunched at the corners, one side of his mouth pulling to the side in thought. He doesn’t look entirely convinced. “I don’t know, man,” Mickey counters, “still feels a little weird.”

“Bet it’d get the kid off our back about Smushy,” Ian reassures, “Choose something he likes—make it like he’s a part of the naming, even though it’s really us, huh?”

“You suddenly into Moana?” Mickey scoffs. “It’d be just like the kid named the fuckin’ thing. Nah, man, we gotta give him a normal name. Fuckin’ Spike or some shit.”

“We are not calling this lazy ass Spike, Mickey. That’s ridiculous,” Ian insists, moving nothing but his eyes between the snoring pup and Mickey.

Mickey sighs at that. Ian's right. "I don't fuckin' know," he grumbles, staring hard at the little dog for another moment. Finally, "How about Toast? 'Cause of his coloring, you know?"

For a moment, Ian turns thoughtful eyes to Mickey before dropping them to inspect the pup again, running his fingers through the soft fur on the dog's back and taking in the array of tan, brown, and black that speckles through the dog's fur. "That could work," Ian tilts his eyes to Mickey with surprise. "I kinda like it."

"Well, don't look so fuckin' surprised," Mickey scoffs in protest. "I've got naming skills."

"Mhmm," Ian agrees noncommittally, as he continues to run his fingers through the dog's fur before leaning up to catch Mickey's lips, "whatever you say, Mick."

The next morning, they find Yevgeny in their bed again, snuggled between them and wrapped up in his favorite cozy blanket. Mickey wakes first, only by a few minutes, but it gives him a moment to admire his little family. With a smile, he runs his fingers gently through Yevgeny's blonde hair, pushing the messy mop out of the boy's eyes, so Mickey can see the peaceful look on his son's face. Mickey's still hoping they'll be able to adopt soon—that their little family isn't done growing—but here, in this moment, he feels like maybe this is more than enough. More than he deserves. And his heart swells with love at the sight of the two most important people in his life. After a moment, his eyes raise from Yevgeny's slumbering features up to Ian's, and Mickey discovers he's been caught.

From his place beside them, Ian's smiling softly, eyes trained on Mickey. "Morning, love," Ian greets in a whisper, smile never falling from his lips.

"Morning," Mickey returns quietly, the corners of his lips tipping up as he watches Ian. "Looks like we've got our own little bedbug, huh?"

Ian lets out a little huff of a laugh at that, gazing down fondly at their son. "When'd he get here?"

Ian nods at that, reaching down to brush at Yevgeny's hair. "Think we should go get the pup ready before he wakes up?" Ian asks quietly.

"Don't know, man. Think he'll freak if he wakes up and we're not here?" Mickey questions, unsure.
Yevgeny doesn't crawl into bed with them all that often, but Mickey's pretty sure that on the few occasions he has, he's always woken before them.

Ian smiles fondly at that. "I think he'll be okay, babe. But we could wake him if you want. Or you could stay here while I get the pup ready."

Mickey nods thoughtfully, as he watches Yevgeny for a moment. "He'll probably be fine," Mickey finally decides, lifting his eyes to Ian's.

Ian nods, shifting a little, and Mickey can't help but lean up over Yevgeny to catch Ian's lips in a sweet good morning kiss. Watching Ian in the morning light always leaves Mickey feeling a little soft and giddy, and he's feeling especially sentimental here on their Christmas morning with his whole little family piled in the cozy bed.

When Mickey pulls back, they stay close for a moment, Ian watching him with so much fucking love Mickey's not sure he knows how to process it. Even after all this time, Mickey is constantly amazed by his husband's capacity for love, and Mickey is thankful every day that Ian chose him, all those years ago, even when Mickey was so hard to love. Mickey had decided a long time ago, back when he'd brought Ian home after he'd run off for the army, that he would never taken Ian for granted again, and Mickey hopes he can live up to that promise.

"I love you, Ian," Mickey whispers, moving forward to kiss his husband again.

The kiss, though, is interrupted by a little voice groaning in pretend disgust, and neither Mickey or Ian can stop themselves from letting out soft little laughs. When they glance down at Yevgeny, he has his nose crinkled up and his eyes narrowed dramatically. "Ick, daddies!" he mumbles playfully. "No kissies!"

Ian and Mickey both laugh a little louder at that, and Ian sits up and reaches out to drag Yevgeny into his lap. "No kissies? What if I give you kissies?" Ian exclaims playfully, planting little kisses all over Yevgeny's face while Yevgeny giggles and shrieks playfully at Ian's antics.

After a moment, Ian smacks one last kiss to Yevgeny's cheek, and the boy's giggles taper off, though his smile never wavers, as he snuggles up and lays his head against Ian's chest. Once he's settled down, Yevgeny gives Mickey a little wave before reaching down to pet the little dog who's crawled into Yevgeny's lap in response to all the racket. "Morning, daddy."

"Morning, Yevy," Mickey smiles, leaning over to kiss Yev's cheek. "You ready to get up?"

Yevgeny nods, his eyes still a little sleepy. "Can we watch Rudolph?" he asks curiously.

Mickey lets a wide smile split his lips at that. "Yeah, bud. 'Course we can."

Yevgeny nods happily, and then lifts his head to look up at Ian. "Will you make Rudolph pancakes again, daddy?"

"Sure thing, little man," Ian agrees, lifting Yevgeny up and swinging him down onto the floor, as Ian shifts his legs over the side of the bed. When he glances over his shoulder, Mickey is still laying contentedly against the pillows, and Ian laughs at that, reaching out to give his husband's leg a squeeze. "Let's go, lazy."

Mickey gives a playful little groan at that, but pushes himself up out of bed to follow his son and his husband. As they make their way through the door, Ian reaches out for Mickey's hand, and Mickey takes it without hesitation, allowing Ian to lead him forward.
An hour or so later, once Yevgeny's watched *Rudolph* and they're all finished with breakfast, the little dog starts whining and barking at Ian, a sure sign he's ready for a trip outside. Mickey's busy clearing the table, so Ian reaches down and gives the dog a little scratch on his head before standing and checking that he has the pup's attention.

"Gonna take him out," Ian announces, ruffling Yev's hair and leaning over to kiss Mickey's cheek before he starts heading toward the door.

"Hurry up," Mickey tells him, dropping the dishes he's holding in the sink before returning to the table to clear what's left. "Yev's still gotta open presents."

Ian nods at Mickey with a smile, swinging on his coat. "Will do, babe," he agrees.

Yevgeny's looking restless as he watches his dads' exchange, and after a moment, he blurts out, "I come with you daddy Ian!" before hoping up from his chair.

"No, Yev," Mickey counters, stopping the boy in his tracks. "Your daddy is going to take the dog out. You're going to go wash up and brush your teeth before presents."

"But, daddy!" Yevgeny protests, voice raising into a high whine and mouth forming an exaggerated pout, "I wanna go with Smushy!"

Ian catches Mickey's eye, a touch of amusement playing over his features, as Mickey sighs. "Yevgeny Milkovich," Mickey scolds, voice firm as he pauses in his attempt to clear the table and stares his son down to let Yev know he means business, "that might work on Papa Kev, but it is not going to work on me or daddy Ian. Now go brush your teeth. Your dad will be back with the dog in two minutes."

"You're mean, daddy!" Yevgeny exclaims, voice all angry bravado and eyes narrowed dramatically.

"Watch it, kid," Mickey warns with an eyebrow raise, "or those presents are gonna be put up the minute you open them. Now go."

For a moment, Yev has the wherewithal to glare at his father in defiance. It doesn't take long, though, before he gives up and sulks his way to the bathroom, pout out in full force and shoulders slumped.

Once Yev is out of earshot, Ian sidles up to Mickey with a sly grin, wrapping an arm around his shoulders and tugging him close. "He's got your pout," Ian teases with a smile, pressing a kiss to the side of Mickey's head.

"Fuck you," Mickey counters with an insulted scoff, giving Ian a playful little shove. "I don't pout, bitch."

"Mhmm," Ian hums in sarcastic agreement, "Never ever."

"Go take the dog out, you ass," Mickey insists with a smile, "before Yev comes back and has a real meltdown."

Ian smiles and smacks one more kiss to Mickey's cheek before heading out with the pup. Mickey can't help the fond grin that lights his eyes as he shakes his head at his giant ass of a husband and finishes clearing the dishes.
Once Mickey's finished in the kitchen, he heads to the living room and makes himself comfortable on the couch, awaiting Yevgeny and Ian. He's impatient, sipping at his coffee as his leg bounces nervously. He knows Yevgeny's going to love their surprise, but he wants to get it over with, so he and Ian can stop whispering over the secret.

A few minutes after Mickey's set himself up in the living room, he sees a timid Yevgeny peeking at him from around the corner. The boy's face looks crestfallen, and there are worried little tears clinging to the corners of his eyes. He keeps his head down, eyes lifting to Mickey every few seconds, only for the boy to look away almost instantly, dropping his gaze to the floor.

After a moment, Yevgeny finally speaks, playing nervously with the sleeves of his pajamas. "I sorry, daddy," he murmurs out quietly, a choked little sob leaving him and the tears in his eyes finally falling as he tries to blink them away, "I just really love the doggie."

"I know, Yevy," Mickey reassures, opening his arms and giving Yevgeny a gentle smile, "Come here." As soon as Yevgeny sees Mickey's reassuring smile, he runs to his dad, crawling up onto Mickey's lap and tucking his face into Mickey's neck. Mickey wraps the boy up in his arms and rocks him a little, rubbing soothing circles into Yevgeny's back as the boy cries a few more tears. "It's okay, bud. No need to cry, okay. Daddy's sorry, too. I know you're just excited."

Yevgeny nuzzles into Mickey's arms, his tears quieting quickly as he reaches up to rub at his damp eyes with his sleeve. Mickey smiles and pushes the hair out Yevgeny's eyes. Mickey knows he's a giant fucking softy when it comes to Yevgeny, and the kid is going to kill him one day because of it.

By the time Ian walks back through the door, Yevgeny's looking sleepy, his eyes heavy as he rests against Mickey. Yev doesn't hear Ian, Mickey thinks, because he stays snuggled in Mickey's arms instead of launching himself off the couch and making for the dog. Mickey smiles at that, savoring the last few moments of cuddles with his son because he knows the excitement's about to take over. "So, Yevy," Mickey murmurs quietly as Ian approaches them, "you said you love the doggie, right?"

Yevgeny nods, shoving his hair out of his eyes. "Wish we could keep him, daddy," Yevgeny admits, and Mickey and Ian smile wide at that. They couldn't have set this up if they'd tried.

"Well, Yev," Ian cuts in, moving around the couch with the dog in his arms, finally calling Yevgeny's attention to the fact that they've returned, "daddy and I have a big surprise for you."

Yevgeny smiles up at his dad as Ian settles himself on the couch beside them with the dog in his lap. When Ian's comfortable, Yevgeny sits up a little, leaning over to pet the dog his dad holds, his brow furrowing when he spots the big red bow that adorns the pup's collar.

"Daddy?" Yevgeny asks curiously, turning confused eyes up to Ian. "Why is Smushy wearing a bow?"

"He's your present this year, bud," Mickey whispers to Yevgeny, voice just loud enough for Ian to hear, too.

"He's all yours, Yev," Ian agrees, as he gives Yevgeny a bright smile, reaching out to push the hair out of his son's eyes as Yevgeny's gaze raises to dart between Ian's and Mickey's and his eyes go wide. "He's our doggie."

Yevgeny looks like he's about to vibrate out of his skin in excitement, but he's still a little confused, and it hasn't quite sunk in yet. "What about Aunt Fi-fi?" Yevgeny asks, watching his dads
expectantly, fingers still petting absently at the dog's fur.

"Auntie Fi was pretending," Mickey assures, "to help us keep the surprise for our family Christmas together."

Yevgeny nods thoughtfully as he looks down at the puppy, who's nuzzling his hand happily, and Yevgeny's voice gets a little quiet with awe and guardedly happy as he asks, "He's really mine, daddies?"

"Yeah, bud," Ian assures, soft smile playing on his features as watches the news sink in for Yevgeny, "he's really yours."

When Yevgeny finally takes in the news, his eyes fill with happy tears, and he pulls the little dog up to hug him tight as he kisses the pup's ears. His tears are happy this time, though, and after a moment, he settles the dog back down and reaches for both Ian and Mickey. They both lean in willingly until Yevgeny can wrap his arms around both of them in a big family hug.

"Thank you, daddies," Yevgeny whispers sincerely through little sniffles, squeezing his dads tight.

"You're welcome, Yevy," Mickey whispers, rubbing Yev's back to help calm him.

"We love you, kiddo," Ian adds with a smile, thumb stroking at Yevgeny's cheek gently as he wipes away some of Yevy's stray tears.

"Love you, too."

A little while later, after Yevgeny has calmed enough to open the rest of his presents, Mickey and Ian are snuggled close on the couch, and Yevgeny's playing happily on the floor with the dog. Ian keeps sneaking kisses from Mickey, and Mickey can't help but smile fondly at his husband's antics. They're both really fucking happy, and Mickey loves Ian for the way he just radiates that happiness here with their little family. Mickey's proud, to say the least. Proud of his son. Proud of his husband. Proud of the little family they've built from the wreckage that was once their life. And right now, Mickey thinks he could be happy here, just like this for the rest of his life.

So after a few more minutes of just sitting close with Ian, Mickey steals a kiss from his husband himself and then pats Ian's leg firmly. "All right, you two," Mickey announces, slipping down to sit on the carpeted floor beside Yevgeny, "what do you say we give this little guy a name?"

"He has a name, daddy," Yevgeny counters with a furrowed brow. "His name is Smushy."

Ian laughs out loud at that, and follows Mickey down to the carpet to take up the space on the other side of Yev. At Ian's laugh, Yevgeny looks at him curiously, and Ian ruffles Yevgeny's hair with a big, bright smile. "You gotta admit, Yev," Ian explains, all matter-of-fact, "Smushy is a pretty silly name for a dog. Why don't we call him Toast?" Ian offers, running his fingers through the dog's fluffy fur to call Yevgeny's attention to it. "See? His fur has all the colors of toast. Brown and tan and black. And they're all mixed in together. Just like on toast."

"But, daddy," Yevgeny argues with a little shake of his head, "Toast is a pretty silly name for a doggie, too."

And Ian wants to counter that, but he can't quite bring an argument to mind quickly enough, so he looks to Mickey for help.

"Toast is a little silly," Mickey comes to Ian's aid, "but it makes sense because of his fur, you
Yevgeny's face shifts in confusion. "Smushy makes sense, too, daddy," he insists, taking the pup's cheeks in his hands. "Look at his face. It's all smushy."

"Yeah, but Yev," Mickey tries again, but he's cut off by the little dog whining loudly and giving a little bark in indication he's ready to go out again.

Yevgeny recognizes the bark immediately and is up on his feet in no time. "He wants to go out, daddy. I go get his coat!" Yevgeny exclaims before he's off to the coat closet to dig out the dog's jacket.

Mickey sighs dramatically at that once Yev is out of earshot, and turns his eyes to Ian, voice quiet. "The god damn dog's name is Smushy, isn't it?"

Ian throws Mickey an amused little smirk and lets out a quiet chuckle as he scoots a little closer to wrap an arm around Mickey's shoulders and give a little squeeze. "Think so, Mick."

For his part, Mickey crosses his arms in irritation and huffs another little sigh. "Fuckin' hell."

On Christmas day, they have the place to themselves. They're not thrilled, of course, that Yevgeny's not there, but they both know it's all part of the deal with shared custody, and they're more than happy with the time they'd had with their son over the weekend.

Not to mention, the lazy morning love making is definitely a perk neither is going to complain about. So they spend a few extra hours there, in bed, together, until they're both sated and starving and ready to face the day.

Once they've found themselves some food, they take up in the living room, sitting close on the couch with coffee in hand, while Smushy naps in the little dog bed he'd dragged over by the Christmas tree. For a bit, they sit mostly in silence, Ian resting his head against Mickey's shoulder and absentmindedly running his fingers up and down Mickey's thigh. They're both feeling restless. Usually, they find the easy companionship of just the two of them at home plenty to keep them occupied, but there's something about the quiet that comes with Christmas, when nothing's open and no one's around and everything just kind of slows down that makes them want everything to just speed back up again, so they don't have to think too hard about all the things they don't have.

They're both feeling it, but they try their best to stay happy and upbeat. And they are. Happy. Together.

After a moment, Mickey shifts a bit to rest his head against Ian's, blanketing Ian's hand with his own and entwining their fingers. Mickey feels Ian smile against his shoulder then, and Ian shifts a little to press a kiss into Mickey's neck. They really are happy. Truly and completely, and Mickey loves every moment he has with Ian.

After a moment of their shared bliss, though, something catches Mickey's eye over by the tree, and his eyes narrow in confusion. Carefully, he extricates himself from Ian's arms to investigate.

"The fuck is this?" Mickey asks after a moment with a confused grimace as he holds up the festive box that had somehow gotten shoved up behind the tree.

Ian glances up from his spot on the couch, eyes crinkling for a moment in thought. "Don't know," he admits. "Came in the mail the other day. Note said not to open it until Christmas, so I put it under the tree."
Mickey throws him an incredulous eyebrow. "Ian there's no fuckin' name on this. Who sent it?"

"Don't know, Mick," Ian insists again, shifting a little so Mickey can take up the space beside him, the gift still clutched warily in his hand. "Thought maybe it was from Mandy or one of your brothers or something."

"Seriously?!!" Mickey questions, giving Ian an irritated glare. "You seriously thought those dumb-fucks would suddenly start sendin' Christmas presents?"

"I mean, sure?" Ian defends. "How the fuck should I know? We've only been married a little over a year; I don't know the Milkovich family traditions."

"Yes, you fuckin' do," Mickey argues with an eyeroll, shaking the box a little in curiosity. "There are none. We've been together for-fuckin'-ever; you know how shitty my family is."

"Not all of them!" Ian protests, leaning forward to grab his coffee from the coffee table. He takes a sip, and then draws his leg up on the sofa, so he can shift toward Mickey. "Mandy's fucking amazing! And Iggy's pretty cool when he's around."

"Iggy's a dumbass," Mickey scoffs, "Wouldn't know how to send a fuckin' package if his life depended on it."

Ian laughs involuntarily at that, nearly spilling the hot coffee he holds down his front. He saves it in time, though, and cradles the mug a little more carefully. "Don't make fun of your brother on Christmas, you ass!"

Mickey grins at that and gives his own smug little laugh before his attention turns back to the package he's laid out on the coffee table. After a brief pause, he asks, "Should we open it? Is that weird? Should we be worried it's, like, fuckin' dangerous or somethin'?"

Ian rolls his eyes involuntarily at that, nearly spilling the hot coffee he holds down his front. He saves it in time, though, and cradles the mug a little more carefully. "Don't make fun of your brother on Christmas, you ass!"

Mickey grins at that and gives his own smug little laugh before his attention turns back to the package he's laid out on the coffee table. After a brief pause, he asks, "Should we open it? Is that weird? Should we be worried it's, like, fuckin' dangerous or somethin'?"

Ian rolls his eyes at that, always the optimist. "It's a Christmas gift, Mickey," he insists, jostling Mickey a bit with his knee. "One of our friends just forgot to put their name on it. Just open it. It's not gonna bite you."

Mickey rolls his eyes in return, and takes to popping open the box. Once he has everything undone, he finds a shimmery envelop sitting atop white tissue paper. Mickey's eyes crinkle in confusion.

"Here," Ian insists, reaching out for the card, "I'll open the card; you open the gift."

Mickey nods, handing over the silver envelope without ever actually taking his eyes off the perfectly wrapped package. He's confused, but intrigued, as he slowly peels away the tissue paper. Something tells him not to rush this, though he doesn't know what—probably still his nerves over the idea that someone would send them some random ass gift without a fucking name attached.

Once he has the tissue out of the way, Mickey frowns in confusion. His fingers find soft fabric, and he doesn't know what to make of the tiny white cloth that lays before his eyes. For a moment, it feels like everything slows down. The only sound he hears the pounding of his own heart and the sound of Ian carefully shuffling the card out of the envelope he holds.

Another moment, and Mickey feels like he's holding his breath. "Ian," Mickey whispers, and he's not sure the word actually leaves his lips. Reaches in and delicately lifts the little onesie from its careful wrapping, turning toward Ian and holding it out, so Ian can see the words Hello Daddies scrawled across the front in delicate font. "What the fuck is this?"

Mickey thinks he might be dreaming. Needs Ian to reassure him. Snap him out of it. Something.
But Ian's not looking. His own wide eyes focused on the card in his hand.

"Ian," Mickey insists, a little bit desperate.

"Mick," Ian finally whispers, almost breathless, holding out a little photo and letting his eyes lift to Mickey's.

It takes Mickey a moment to register what he's looking at, but when he does, tears rush unbidden as he meets Ian's eyes.

It's an ultrasound photo.

And written carefully at the bottom in the little bit of white space, Mickey reads five little words that make his heart stop in his chest.

You're having a baby girl!

"It's from Danni," Ian murmurs, the awe in his voice palpable as he holds Mickey's eye, even as tears fill his own. Mickey's shaking, and so is Ian. "We're having a baby girl, Mick."

At Ian's words, Mickey finally breaks, a happy sound falls from his lips—somewhere between a laugh and a sob—and he launches himself into Ian's arms, kissing him softly and holding tight while Ian laughs happily right along with him, and Ian murmurs the words again, over and over, against Mickey's lips, like he can't quite believe they're real.

"We're having a baby girl."

Chapter End Notes

To those of you from Tumblr who helped me to choose the name Toast, thank you again! Unfortunately, in the end, my Yevgeny wasn't having it, and his dads never quite found a compelling enough counter argument, so he won, and the name Toast fell at the hands of a determined four year old.

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